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Representation of Female Subalterns in Shashi Deshpande's
The Intrusion and Other Stories

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Letter of Recommendation

Ms. Sapana Bhattarai completed the thesis entitled “Representation of Female Subalterns in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Intrusion and Other Stories*” under my supervision. She worked on the research paper from December 2016 to May 2018. I recommend this thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

This Thesis entitled “Representation of Female Subalterns in Shashi Deshpande’s *The Intrusion and Other Stories*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Sapana Bhattarai has been approved by the undersigned member of the research committee.

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Representation of Female Subalterns in Shashi Deshpande's

The Intrusion and Other Stories

Abstract

This research studies stories from Shashi Deshpande's The Intrusion and Other Stories (1993) in which it explores how the vicious circle of power and social arrangements are responsible for double victimization because of their female biological body and other socioeconomic circumstances that largely shapes the social psyche. They are not only forced to observe the conventional gender roles, but they undergo situations where such discriminations and offenses are naturalized to an extent that they are considered 'normal'. The selected stories studied showcase that even educated women are being repressed in the society by their own family members and the female characters allow such treatment as natural and inevitable. This study brings theoretical insights from Gayatri Spivak's seminal essay "Can Subaltern Speak?" where she argues that females are subalterns in the sense they do not have the agency to overcome existing social hurdles and make their voice heard.

Key Words: Subaltern, Gender Roles, Representation, Ideology, Feminism, Gender Subalternity

This research focuses on how the women are represented as subalterns in *Intrusion and Other Stories* (1993) by Shashi Deshpande. The darkness and despair faced by the women throughout their lives will be the primary focus of this research. This study analyzes following five selected stories from the collection: "The Pawn", "The Cruelty Game", "It Was Dark", "The Intrusion" and "The Inner Rooms". These stories allow almost the same theme where most of the newly married female characters experience the situation where their self-respect and sense of being human is violated by their coarse and callous perceptive husbands. Later, the wives find

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themselves in intricate affairs because of her husband's indifference. But even after they forge new relationships with new male partners their situation does not change for better in most of the cases.

The selected stories describe the hardships experienced by women and how they are forced to observe fidelity to their husbands or family in the strict sense of the words despite however she is treated. They are presented as objects to be used for the convenience and satisfaction of the family. These stories present the problems and struggles women undergo and how they are emotionally or physically exploited by them to satisfy their desires. Women are asked to bow down to males as if they are below or have lower class than males in the society. They are asked to maintain composure and beauty as if they are some kind of attraction which is used to indicate how well they behave. Women are asked to follow males but never lead, even with all the talent that they have, they are asked to become less than males and less than what they can be. Is this the norm and rules set by culture? Why are norms of society so strict toward female but careless toward male?

Most of her stories show that even when females are the victims of the society, but they are blamed for being the cause of the problems. These stories describe how females go through a lot of emotional ordeals who have to pass all the tests set by so-called societal rules, just to live their own lives. They are subjected to live their lives with a total stranger and no one is bothered asking them about their desires. The story "The Intrusion," shows how the societal norms are required to be followed by a female which displays that even if females are unwilling they need to submit to their husbands. Women are made mentally wired in such a way that when they deny things that are asked by men they feel that they had committed crime. "The Intrusion" is also able to shed light on the marital rape, where women are forcefully and without consent

taken by a male. The book shows that the women were being used by males even at the early age of *Mahabharat* with the story “The Inner Rooms”, where a female is forcefully taken to marry someone who later rejects her. This shows that male use their honor and dishonor to stake lives of a female. Women are trapped by an ideology of male which leaves them with nothing to do but curse their fate and strangle themselves with social norms. The Inner Rooms indicated that burning alive was less painful than living in a society which favored male ideology.

The female voice is unheard in the society because society metaphorically contributes in making females keep their voice down. In all the selected stories, female characters are shown to be fragile and eccentric to things. Society tells girls to look pretty and behave rationally for males whereas males of the society are asked to keep their wives under their command and if they are not able to keep their wives under their command, they are seen as impotent. Objectification of women is also indicated in the story “Pawn” where female characters seldom speak and when they speak they rarely speak to strangers. The story indicates that males were the translators and the layer that forcefully keep women behind without their desire.

This paper analyzes the condition of women prevailing in the society as represented in Sashi Deshpande's, *Intrusion and Other Stories*. She has presented the story of such women who despite their efforts to voice themselves are but trapped in the rooted patriarchal social psyche that has naturalized the domination as ‘natural’. Her stories mainly depict the Indian societies and women's roles in those societies. However, the story of women described in her book is not only the problems of Indian societies. Deshpande is a credible writer on the issue of women and children. Deshpande does not present a radical view about men and women relationship. She rather aims to showcase how women are made to think that the ‘unfair’ treatment is

not unfair. The five stories analyzed for this research paper "The Pawn," "The Cruelty Game," "It Was Dark," "The Intrusion" and "The Inner Rooms" have demonstrated the different aspects of the life that women in general have to go through. These stories reflect both physical and mental pressure that women characters go through in their day-to-day lives.

Shashi Deshpande has a unique way of expressing herself and her thoughts to the readers of her stories. Something that gets the readers hooked in Deshpande's stories is her use of the first person perspective. The story writer is able to portray the anguish and the conflict that most of the modern, well-informed Indian women go through because of the views held by the people in the society which they live in. Her stories uncover many layers of the society that helps better understand women and their positions in the social power dynamics. The stories use a technique where the immersion is shattered by the abrupt endings.

This thesis burrows theoretical insights from Gayatri Spivak's seminar essay on gender subalternity: "Can Subaltern Speak?" Her idea is that though women try to speak out on various occasions, they are not heard. She views that even when they speak their voices makes almost no difference. Spivak argues that women have no proper agency to make themselves heard in the social construct where discrimination against women is considered natural or normal. Women themselves have grown believing the same notion and there is little they can do to challenge this ideology. "The Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it. This is widow sacrifice" (Spivak 93). Spivak has given an example of a hindu tradition prevailed in past which has supported the fact that women have remained dominated even by cultural means. The support from the religious culture and tradition have made their voices to be treated as an ignorant silence. "For the 'figure'

of woman, the relationship between woman and silence can be plotted by women themselves; race and class differences are subsumed under that charge” (Spivak 82). In other words, Spivak has meant to deliver that the relation between silence and women has long-lived because women have remained unheard. But Spivak obviously would want the females to speak up and find agencies to make their voices heard. “Whether this observation is correct or not, what interests me is that the protection of woman (today the 'third-world woman') becomes a signifier for the establishment of a good society” (Spivak 94) Making this statement, Spivak has stated the need of the protection and upbringing of woman to mainstream for formation of better society.

Women are represented in a different view and are not seen as people that are able to handle executive power which is set by a society which consists of males and females. Females are suppressed and seen as lower to men because they allow such things to happen to them. The thing about class and difference between male and female is deeply rooted in the society's consciousness. Female are excluded from their family in most of the cases regarding decision making and other important things because they are seen as incapable of performing such activities. The view of people is radical regarding providing women with the reign and one of the reason is female themselves who in term support ideas of male leading society.

The laws of religion and its regulations are deeply rooted in the country like India adds problems in bringing a proper unitary system of operation regarding women and their empowerment. As indicated by Spivak's women they are plotting their silence which brings the difference between women and class. The sexual difference between women and man are seen as one of the differentiating things used to differentiate. Women are kept in the shadow of a man, and the society overlooks or ignores the violence faced by women through the man.

Shashi Deshpande's women characters portrayed in her book seem to be in a severe need of freedom. Like many of the other Indo-Anglian female writers, her central focus lies in unraveling the hidden emotions of an Indian female. "The Pawn" is another story where she attempts to highlight the unpassionate outlook and ignorance of Indian women towards existence and life as a whole. She reflects on how women in India are under constant pressure of speaking only what is required. A narrator is a young man who forms an initial judgment of the girl as a pawn. He uses the word "pawn" in a derogatory manner to describe the girl. By observing her aloof, unsmiling, and emotionless attitude towards everything, he decides that she is a pawn. She doesn't speak at all, hides her eyes within the lids and avoids any interactions. He doesn't seem to be enticed by her gestures and looks at first. He mentions, "Short. Thin. Nothing anywhere one could appreciate. And that dull look on the face" (Deshpande 109). The story shows how men form a perception of girls just by their exterior features.

Deshpande's female characters don't seem to have a voice. She doesn't express what she feels. Instead, she hides her emotions deep within. The fear of being judged and considered inappropriate might be the underlying reason for her to do so. Her wisp of a smile is the only evidence of her affinity towards the narrator. The short smile holds an entire universe filled with words she can't decipher. The narrator, Ramaswamy suddenly finds her beautiful after that. He develops an infatuation towards her within an instant moment. When he first sees her, he considers her a pawn. Eventually, he leaves her as one. The guy in the story is the representative of an Indian society that has always failed to understand women. Deshpande, in her story, demonstrates the vulnerability of Indian women. Her central theme in the story is how

Indian women are projected continuously towards judgments and misunderstood by the people.

With the female character of the text as a reflection of a middle-class Indian girl, the author gives a subaltern touch to her story. For women in India, expressing opinions and raising their voices are not considered appropriate. Most of them are constantly dwelling in seclusion. They act reserved and don't bother to react or respond to unnecessary circumstances. Like the girl in the story, many women in India aren't open about themselves. They don't reflect their feelings and stay reserved. Although the family in the story seems modern, the daughter is not open about her choices. Even when they visit new places, she doesn't express how she feels. Even the mother doesn't talk to the narrator. The only conversations are between two males. Deshpande has portrayed a surprising truth about the Indians. Only men take initiatives and talk to strangers while women follow. It could be a family lesson she had been taught by her parents regarding not talking to strangers' esp. boys. In Deshpande's story, she shows how male and female conversations aren't taken lightly in India.

Deshpande's stories express a paradoxical overview of the Indian society. The society wants women to act in a certain way but judges them if they do the same. In most of her other stories, like "The Pawn," "she has revealed the unique and lonely condition of Indian women whose rights as human beings are axed by the orthodox society" (Hemalatha 42). Although modern women in India are not restricted that much, there lies a hidden boundary they must not cross. There is always an unspoken rule, an implied gesture about how a girl should behave and how she shouldn't. However, when the narrator sees how aloof the girl is and how she is distracted from the surroundings, he analyzes her as unattractive. Through this conduct of the man,

Deshpande has presented the condemnatory side of the Indian society. Considering her unappealing, the writer utters his feelings of regret this way: “And dammit, I thought, flashing the girl a covert look, she’s not even pretty” (109). It reflects how he frames an opinion about her just by observing her gestures.

The story owes its title to the guy's preconceived idea of the girl. Just like in the game of chess, a pawn gets used for other purposes; the narrator thinks of her as a pawn because she follows the directions of her family. She doesn't exhibit any leadership characteristic and remains passive in the entire story. After a while, she smiles, and it changes guy's perception towards her. He falls for her and gives her a word of mailing in future. However, he forgets about it and doesn't stay in touch with her. At last, when he reminisces about the day when he first saw her, he remembers that he had called her a pawn. The realization strikes his mind, and for a short while, he thinks if he was the one who made her a pawn. The story ends on a sad note on how even the narrator left the girl as a pawn. He played with her emotions for a day and kept her expecting the letters that will never arrive at her doorstep. As the guy forgets her, she is again used just like the rest of the society.

In Deshpande's opinion, the tragedy of being a girl in Indian society is not able to voice opinions. Like her other stories, she has beautifully portrayed the patriarchy pervading in Indian roots. Even in the modern age, it has not been able to get eliminated. With a touch of reality in all her stories, she depicts her observations regarding the Indian females. Women in India are dwelling in patriarchy in the absence of voices of their own. They are taken as dependents of men lacking any leadership quality. Till marriage, they are cocooned within the arms of parents. After the wedding, they are under the control of their husband. They have in a way imbibed the traditional culture of Indian society. So, they limit themselves and don't express

their opinions freely. They have been taught to depend on men since the childhood days. The underlying traditional mindset of people in India is projected in Deshpande's stories. She highlights the problems women face while following the conventional norms set by the society.

There is an unspoken definition of subaltern women. Usually, women living in the rural areas suffering from abuse and extreme disparity fall under this scope. However, the truth is entirely different. Even the girls with proper education and modern facilities living in a metropolitan city of Maharashtra aren't expressive about their opinions. Many writers have moved to rural India in their story plots ignoring the plight of the urban women. Deshpande, however, doesn't discriminate. She writes what she observes. The fact that many problems are prevalent in rural India can't be ignored. However, there is a need to address the sufferings of urban women as well. Even the women residing in cities are subjected to follow the biased traditional norms. Just like in the story "The Pawn," women let men lead. The mother-daughter doesn't share a single word with the narrator. It is just the father and the guy who talk throughout the story.

The women of India endure a history of injustice. From the times of Sita and Sati to the modern era, the prejudice has just changed its faces. When men enjoy all the pleasures ignoring the norms in the name of modernization, women don't share a similar fate. They are bound to sustain the pride of the family. Freeing women from oppression has been a familiar cry since ages. However, it hasn't been eradicated till date. Deshpande has shown the authoritarian system of society where women are the ones who can defame but don't hold any discreet power in the family. Their inappropriate actions hinder the family's reputation. However, they haven't bestowed any right of carrying out the decisions of the family. Women are merely subalterns

who are used as pawns. The patriarchy rules over the females restraining them from any behaviors that deviate from the traditional norm. Women are just meant to follow the path paved by the men.

Generally, Deshpande's works revolve around a social setting and portray stories of families and relationships, with a special focus on women. Specifically, she explores the side of women who are victimized by the contemporary patriarchal society. *Intrusion and Other Stories* is one of her collections that points out the demeaning and disregarding of women in a society, a family, a marriage or any social institution.

Deshpande's *Intrusion and Other Stories* has attempted to "show the fact that tradition is deeply ingrained in society, and for those women who have a mind of their own and a clear perception of the disadvantages of their position, one way to come to terms with the surrounding reality is the acceptance of loneliness as a factual part of their existence" (Lopez 126). Mainly focusing on the stories of middle-class educated women, she explains how women have already accepted their so-called fate and have partially agreed to and adopted the lives they are forced to live- a life of compromises, deprivations, sexism and blind docility.

The story "The Cruelty Game" depicts the miserable plight of a widow in an Indian society. Through the story of Pramila, a recent widow, and her daughter Sharu, the stigma and taboos related to widowhood in a typical Indian society have been reflected upon. Pramila and Sharu move to their village from Mumbai, a comparatively modernized city, to live with their joint family, who were supposed to support her. After failing to abide by the typical presumed roles of a woman in the society, Pramila, as well as her daughter Sharu, are traumatized by the taunts and criticisms from the family, and thus end up leaving the house.

Generally, becoming a widow is something agonizing in an Indian society, not just because of their loss, but because of the shame associated with widowhood. After arriving, Pramila and her daughter Sharu are not welcomed with sympathy, but with judgment and deprivation. In the narrator Maya's view, Pramila was someone who was always silent and looked calm and composed despite the death of her husband. Maya recalls, "She never spoke even when she saw us tormenting Sharu" (Deshpande 125). The women of the family had no interest in talking to her, for they were usually busy talking about her. Due to these reasons, she "(got) her work done, went to her room and stayed alone" (125). However, not only Pramila but her daughter had to become the victim of the never-ending nagging and pecking. Unlike Pramila, she tried to talk to the other children and bond with them. The children of the family, on the other hand, had targeted her making jokes and "tormenting" her by various means. This has given a general idea of the stigma and disgrace associated with widowhood in an Indian society.

Once a woman enters widowhood in an Indian society, she is bound by many limitations and is held in confinement from numerous normal activities. In the story, the family members have questioned her wearing of new sari, putting of 'kumkum' as well as the celebration of her daughter's birthday. "Widows shouldn't wear a new sari" (Deshpande 126). Things as simple as wearing a new piece of cloth are considered to be forbidden for a widow. These existing orthodoxies mentioned in the story, the author has represented the devaluation of a woman in the society after the death of her husband. "They go from being called "she" to "it" when they lose their husbands" (Sahoo 45). As stated above, the author hasn't provided her characters with individual identities and thus focused on how their privileges diminish in the absence of a man in her life.

The grandmother of the family has accused Pramila of killing her husband and has considered her as a disgrace to the family. On her attempt to getting a job and being economically stable, she is further criticized by the family members, saying “it’s only an excuse to go out. To avoid working at home” (Deshpande 126). With no regards to her financial difficulties, she is naturally judged and looked down upon. As rightly described by Meena Shirwadkar, a widow in an Indian society is thought to be “inauspicious, looked upon with suspicious, scorn and kept as a drudge on the pretext of giving protection” (104). In this story too, despite the efforts of a modern woman to live her life independently and support her daughter, she is shown to have faced a lot of obstacles created by the very society she lives in. Through these events, the author has put forward the subaltern image of women in the society.

Pramila, however, doesn’t give in to the hollow rules set by the society and decides to move to Mumbai, get married to a friend of her husband and start a new life. This decision, far from convention, undoubtedly comes out as a shock to the family. But, even daughter Sharu is perplexed. With a mind preoccupied with the traditional patriarchal values, she fails to accept the fact that her mother is going to marry another man. Although it has not been made clear in the society, slight hints regarding the deterioration of the relationship between Sharu and her mother are given. This represents the depth of orthodoxies impacting lives of women in the society, leading to the belief of them being the weaker gender.

When the story comes to an end, the narrator Maya has been shown weeping along with her mother. She comes to the realization of the wrongs she had done and feels bad for Sharu. Maya's mother also cries with her, which might indicate that she also wanted Pramila and her daughter to live a convenient and independent life. However, due to the traditional society, she lives in, she didn't have the courage to put

forward her opinions and speak up for Pramila. Through her character, the author has depicted women to be lacking the ability to stand by their opinions and shaping up themselves only in accordance with their societies

Therefore, through this story of a widow, the author has expressed that women are dominated in the contemporary patriarchal societies. The numerous efforts of the modern and educated women to break these barriers and live an independent life have been described. Although the character in this story succeeds in achieving her goals, this generally doesn't end up the same for all the women, especially in *Intrusion and Other Stories* by Deshpande. They are made to succumb to the conventional beliefs, mostly due to the obstacles and hurdles created by the authoritarianism in the society. The author has considered the restrictions and limitations in a woman's life, whether a widow or not, to be major reasons behind the backwardness of women. The lack of voice and opinion has been used to describe women as the weaker gender.

In India being the widow includes not the loss of the personal feelings but also the loss of the social status. Widows are left to mourn their whole life for their dead husband. The critical norms and the beliefs of the society do not give them the opportunity to live freely with their head high. Deshpande in her story of the cruelty of women has provided the various approach regarding the widowhood. She reflects on the humiliation that the widow has to go through from the side of the husbands' family and the society. The society has amended the rights related to the widow marriage but still not capable and powerful of changing the view and opinion of the people regarding it. A proposal of the second marriage becomes the subject of the scandals that creates the misconception between the mother and the daughter. Deshpande's has not only reflected on the scenario of the widow but also reveal the bitter truth hidden behind the torture suffered by the children of the widowed parents.

Deshpande in the story “The Cruelty of Game” has clearly reflected traumatic emotional situation that children unknown of situation of widowed parent has to go through the depiction of Pramila and her daughter. Moreover, every story portrait in the book of Deshpande’s shows women position in the society where they are dominated and suppressed of rights to live. It shows that they fall on the subaltern group because they do not have rights to speak and fight against the humiliation and question rose by the society. The characters of the women are portrayed as the protagonist characters, who consider herself as the strong characters with the feeling of the intruders in her own family and while standing at the strangers in front of her daughter. Women role as the wife, mother, and daughter are significant in case of the society. However, these functions are neglected by the community closing their eyes when they have to fight for the women rights. An uneasiness and humiliation are left for the women by the society.

The woman is also one of the reasons for the backwardness of another woman. Their rights are taken as the granted by the society. Widowhood is the stressful life events prevailing in the nation. The windows not being able to live independently and to tackle the fears of the humiliation of the community, many of them remarried. In the story “The Cruelty Game”, Pramila’s decision of getting married is viable in her case but not for her daughter’s Sharu case. Sharu never wants her mother to marry because she was teased by her friend about her mother getting married again which created the negative impact on the mind. So, she opposed the marriage. However, looking through the current situation the next wedding for the widow is the best option that she can choose if she wants to be safe from the humiliation and torture of the society. If she stays in the dead husband house, she always has to suffer through all the cruelty and brutality of the relatives and the outsiders till her lifetime. So, in

this comprehensive world, some of the women chose the remarriage to be far from the embarrassment that they had to go through. The rights of the widow remarriage should rely upon the individual preferably not to the society. If she wants to do remarriage, she should be allowed. Otherwise, she should have the rights to live independently in this modern world.

Women cover almost half of the population of the world as male counterparts even after the civilization starts to till date, but they are not given equal respect and opportunities. Although they do have equal rights as male in society, they are still dominated by males. We all know that "Men and women are equal. They both have the ability to be successful in anything they try because they are not defined by these stereotypes" (Carroll 3). Moreover, the scenario does not match with a present trend where women are not getting all the rights they deserve. They are taken as a means of entertainment and used only for the household purpose. Not only in the society but they are also facing the inequality in a family too. The society is termed developed only if the men and women are compared equally but in this dominating male world, they are not. They have to face terrorize harassment and pain only because they are women. They are not allowed to speak and share their anger and have to make a smile on their face in any worse condition. This domination had been shown in the story "It was Dark" which described the case of the rape. Where a fourteen-year-old daughter had been kidnapped and raped for three days. The life of the girls has been marginalized after the rape. The story wants to describe us about the society where girls are being treated. And the writer also wants to share the pain women face while they are not treated like a doll but not like a human. As we can see in the story "It was Dark," the girl is so shocked and in pain that she had lost the life which she used to be. She had turned herself into a stone and just "lies in bed and stares at the ceiling,"

(Deshpande 27). This shows that she is completely broken and doesn't want to share her feeling of pain and is only thinking about the incident she had. The so-called powerful fellows of the society; men are using the women for their enjoyment without realizing the impact that it can fully damage the life of the victim. "She had been silent; she had not cried, shown no awareness of our presence" (30). This makes us realize that the victim is not concerned about anything and is depressed about the fact that she has been treated badly by the men. This reveals the darkness of the society we are leading by not treating the women and men equally and preserving their rights. The girl in the story was also facing the same scene of fear and darkness that she is not finding any clue of the life and the word she is using to describe her situation is "It Was Dark" (30). This makes that she is mentally damaged and had no feeling for her life.

If we look at the story "It was Dark" it focuses on the maternal anxiety and the worries of the parents in handling the cases and medical treatment for the pregnancy. This does not mean that they are worried about the daughter, but they are worried about the society and the people that will raise a question of her daughter is pregnant before marriage. The honor of the family is determined by the virginity of the girl; this thought is also considered one of the reasons due to which women are forced not to cross the wall of their houses (Balci, 11). Deshpande emotively brings out the ugly mask of the society and their boundaries that are set to women. The story deals with the fact of our society that is not in favor of the women, but it is in favor of the society which behaves them as a thing to play, enjoy and a machine to born children not much than that. Women are facing violence not only from their childhood but even before their birth. According to data, "estimated 160 million female fetuses or newborns have been aborted or killed in China, India and other parts of Asia over the

last three decades, largely due to a cultural preference for boys” (Yee 340). This means that before their birth, we are destroying the right of the women and we are giving no importance to them.

The above scenario can be seen in the story "It was Dark" that when the parents of a raped girl are more concerned about the abortion and the case to remove pregnancy rather than making the strong evidence for the police case. They are consulting with the doctors about the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP). The words said by girl's father "Do you know her date?" (Deshpande 28). The date in the sentence refers to the menstruation period, which makes a clear sense that family is more concerned about the society's point of judgment rather than the point of her daughter. Deshpande is using this story to concern and warns us about the fact that women's feeling and sense of honor is not given any importance, but the society view is given. This is an important line in the story that tells about the power of men: "The enemy was not dark, it was not alone, it was the man" (32). This means that the main reason for the women violence was not the time that is not dark but not also the scenario that she was alone but the case is men. Yes, the man who thinks women are means for pleasure but not the things to respect. This scenario had arisen because men are taught that they are superior, and women are taught to give up not to defend with men. Men are given the power to disrespect the feelings of the women and women should always respect them. Deshpande wants to explain how badly women are treated although they are equal to men.

Women are not facing violence only outside the house, but also, they are facing in their own home. "The AMA now estimates that twice that number are victims of severe assaults by boyfriends and husbands each year, and about one in four women is likely to be abused by a partner in her lifetime" (Glazer 172). This also

reveals that women are not safe at their own house with their loved ones then how can we accept that they are safe outside their house. The story doesn't only tell us that the girl was raped and their condition, but it wants to describe the society we are creating. It wants to focus on the thing of discrimination we are creating can reflect ourselves. It wants to describe that women freedom is not the thing of the value but keeping them in the boundary is the honor. Right for women is away far away. According to Glazer, indeed women's rights around the globe often appear to take one step forward and two steps back (Glazer 179). This means that we are going backward in the case of providing the rights for women rather than going forward.

This incident can be expressed in the story "It was dark" in a way that the girl is saying nothing but looking at the ceiling and whispering that "it was Dark" (Deshpande 30). The next thing that we can reflect on the story is that we are teaching the women right from their childhood that men are superior from them and women should not question and argue about them. Women are weaker. We can find out that the major cause of violence is the reason we are teaching negativity, and course of superiority rather than the course of equality. They are forced to build the wall of fear from their childhood. "I have been warned enough like a girl. Don't- don't –don't. You are a female" (31). This statement from the book shows that the women are not given freedom from their early age not only from society but their loved ones too. They are always being dominated and not provided with the opportunities to be free and live. They have been taught to bow their head rather than raise it and defend. Women are forced to stay home to raise children rather than go out and contribute to the nation.

Similarly, another story "The Intrusion" also deals with the same kind of non-respect scenario where recently married women is in a honeymoon trip but she finds that her husband is insensitive towards her feeling. Women are looked to have a role

in the fulfillment of desires of men in the society. They are taken as reproductive machine and have to cope with their partner against their will. Refute women is considered as disrespect towards their companion. They are often dragged from their comfort zone and have to live as based on the needs of their partner and their family. They must limit their obligations while looking after the needs of the others. As illustrated in "The Intrusion," a woman is intervened in her privacy and compelled to have an unwanted and undesirable relationship with her husband. In many cases, two people get married and expect everything to work smoothly. Men have their perspective as they think that life will go on as a sexual relationship is build and the family generation get forwarded. But, this is not the case of women. They have their preference regarding marital life, family, and partner. They may have some expectations from their partners that is not a forced relationship in the bed. They may like to take some time to know each other and have a healthy relationship. For both men and women, it is awkward at first, but they need to overcome the awkwardness through good communication.

Moreover, in a story "The Intrusion", a husband forces his wife to get in the bed through physical dominance and not thinking about the condition of his wife it could be observed that emotions and feelings of women are neglected, and the thinking of the husband differ in that sense. The husband happens to get the feeling of going on a go and expect everything to work well. But in most cases, the wife seems to be unhappy about the situation and is compelled to follow the domination of her husband. "His embrace was too sudden, too rough, and I wanted to scream, to cry out" (Deshpande 39). This was the feeling inside the narrator who happens to be a wife that shows her unwillingness, unhappiness and her opposition to the whole situation. This is the situation and the condition of most women. They are not asked for their

opinion in most cases. Women bear to compromise with the whole situation and the events that follow. Their privacy is not looked after, and they must deal with all the consequences themselves. Opposing against the will of husband leads to several consequences for women. They may even have to face violence and assault from their partner. This can be very disturbing for them. "More than twice as many women are killed by their husbands or boyfriends as are murdered by strangers" (Glazer 170). This showcases the violent nature of men in the society. It is very less in the case of men. Decidedly fewer cases are seen where a husband is assaulted by his wife or beaten brutally.

Women get a weird feeling about opposing to their partner on anything mostly related to sex and other things. "What a way to spend our honeymoon, I thought, imagining him sulking the whole time, and I, moving around with a load of guilt, shame, and fear" (Deshpande 41). In other words, this statement reflects the mentality of a wife after opposing to her husband. This showcases the scenario about the concern of wife to everything that she has in her mind and heart. Women's world is not vast like as men, and they don't have the same feeling as men regarding relationship and family. They feel being overweight by the pressure of responsibility, tradition, ethics, and the norms of the society. Women in most cases don't find comfortable to have an intimate relationship without even knowing, and men look to be intimate to reduce the gap. They get the feeling that having sex will give them a slight notch to have a healthy relationship. The incident of a married couple is described by the narrator being the wife in the story. She must go through a situation when the only option left for her was to cope with her husband to have intimacy. That wasn't what narrator wanted but ended up having that intimacy with her husband. "And the cry, I gave was not for the physical pain, but for the intrusion into my

privacy, the violation of my right to myself" (41). This sentence by the narrator reveals the unwillingness of her in that part. This showcases that she was forced by her husband to have sex. She stated an intrusion in her privacy and the violation of her to herself. Women are compassionate in the matter of intimacy, and the intervention in the privacy can hamper her mental health for a very long time. This happens to many women and they must go through a lot of mental depression regarding the matter of forced relationship.

Women lose their self-respect in the process of making other happy. They compress their emotions and desires. They need to give their all to their partner and maintain the norms and values in retaining a friendly and ethical environment for all. The life of women after marriage becomes passive and they lose vulnerability and develop a feeling of submissive nature. That makes their character helpless, and they ought to face despair. She tends to suppress her feelings and voice within herself. She loses her dignity and independence and hence become a part of dominance by her partner. "Women, who are oppressed, are forced to forfeit their freedom; therefore, they adjust themselves to life as the 'Other,' while men can claim subjectivity for themselves" (Kumar 247). This statement fits very well with the fact that in most societies in considering women as subjective to men. Women have compromised every time and to adjust themselves for the sake of others. They can't look up for their aims and desires. This also complements the bitterness of the society where women aren't allowed to have their life as they desire, and men get to dominate them. "Thus, while exploring the role-relationships of a woman in Indian society, Deshpande in her short stories offers readers an intimate and domestic chronicle of the inner world of women and the pain of coming to self-knowledge" (Vyas 72). Deshpande focuses on the cry for assault and harassment of wife and her dislike towards the sexual act with

her husband, which seemed more a physical repulsion from her partner. Her suffering humiliation was compressed within her.

Moreover, the main argument can be looked upon the matter of "legalized rape." The societal portrayal that men can rape his wife after marriage and eventually it wouldn't be called wrong from the perspective of society if they have performed all the rituals is irrational ethics flourishing in the society. Performing social rituals make men valid to have sex with their wife even against their will. It doesn't matter whether the wife is prepared for that scenario or not. This doesn't matter to anyone, and everyone seems to take this issue easily. This doesn't concern the ethics and norms of society to a bit. The only person to whom this whole situation matters is the women who face that crime. She is the one who has to face-silent humiliation and mental distress. Men are in a hurry to utilize their conjugal rights over their wife that they don't care a bit about their feelings and emotions. The look from their husband resembles "those furtive touches and glances from faceless, nameless men in crowds" (38). Women develop a contrary feeling concerning the fearless and confident feeling of a man. "How can I, with a man I scarcely know? It's not fair. It's indecent" (41). This is the feeling that women get in being in a bed with a total stranger even though he may be her husband. They tend to have a very weird and unwanted feeling imagining the situation of her with a total stranger person. In an overall context, women hold an image of a tired, trapped and helpless wife in a plain society.

Women have a lower status and are in a subaltern state in the societies. The women ought to suppress their happiness and have to suffer in order to keep the family and the society happy. Their world is limited by the despair of their roles in this society. It is said from the past that the subalterns do not belong to the superior race and hence are not eligible to contribute anything to the society. The subalterns

were meant to be suffered. Although males and females have equal roles and responsibilities in the family, the females must suffer gender discrimination at the same time. As defined by a man, the woman is not someone who has her own identity but the person who is related to him. For example, when a man dies in our society, his wife has no other roles to play rather than joining the funeral. She is not given permission to live freely. And another marriage? It would be a big question for a female. But when a man loses his wife, the family itself will begin the conversation on re-marriage of a man. This scenario reflects a big question on the status of women in our society.

One thing we need to understand is both men and women are equally important for the sake of goodness and well-being of family and society. But the powers are held by the men only. Women are significantly excluded from contributing to the community. Females are considered as a secondary aspect of the society. "An example of gender stereotypes exists in the belief that it is the woman's job, simply because of her sex (female) to stay home and take care of their children" (Wolfe 7). This illustrates how women are seen in the society and directed with their roles to be played. Another reason that women are subaltern is that the contribution of women in the development of society and country are not data-based. Because women do not get the praise they deserve, they have been humiliated from the past and the same thing is repeating at the present. Women are called as a subaltern and due to this their identity seems to be fading away. Even though women have a significant contribution to the society, they are discriminated and not considered equal to men. With respect to this, Spivak in *Can the Subaltern Speak* argues:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figures of the woman disappear, not into a pristine nothingness,

but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the “third world woman” caught between tradition and modernization. (306)

In addition to this, Spivak gives an example of how women ought to sacrifice herself in the fire after the death of her husband. Neither women's contribution, nor her sacrifice is visible to the society. It is the fact that the status of the society depends on the status and treatment we provide to the women. But women are treated so badly and even threatened to hide their difficulties. They are forced to not to reveal the treatment done to them. Rather than revealing the way they've been treated and victimized, they prefer to hurt themselves instead. This scenario is described in “The Inner Rooms”

In this story, Amba, the princess of Kashi, burns herself as she gets rejected by her lover, Salva after he is defeated by Bhisma. Similarly, Bhisma, due to his vow to stay as a bachelor, wants her to marry with Vichitravirya. But Vichitravirya also rejects her after he finds her love for Salva. These scenarios prove that men think of women as their puppet. They want women to work and function as they want. The following lines explain this situation: “The world where life was lived according to the rules that made no sense to her. She had denied those rules. All the same, it had not prevented her from being a pawn in their game” (Deshpande 100).

This explains that no matter how hard a woman tries, she is always seen as a puppet by a man. Deshpande proves that women are being violated since the past as this is a scene from the Mahabharata. Women are forced to hurt themselves because of the humiliation they face and inner trauma. They pass through a certain point in life where they feel that they are a burden to the family and the society. These lines from the story describe such situation: “How foolish I was, she thought, to let my happiness depend on other people! My nurse at first, then my mother, my father, my sisters and

finally Salva. What a burden to put on others, the burden of your own happiness” (96).

The above lines explain woman’s view towards herself. When she gets humiliated by a man, she begins to think herself as a burden to the society. She feels as a burden to everyone who knew her right from the second she was born. Because of which, and the humiliation, women tend to hurt themselves by different means. In most of the aspects, women do not have a control over their lives. Women are forced to hurt themselves, not because they are defeated in the game of life, but they do not have control over their own life. At least, they can have control over their death. The conditions of women are tough in a society dominated by males. Symbolizing the requirement of women (as a pawn), they are shown to be eliminated and ignored by men when the time comes.

Women are deprived of their basic rights in most of the places. They are not provided with the right to speak freely. They are bound to talk in a society. Women are not allowed to move freely here and there or talk to any strangers like men. Women have a very painful condition in a society. Females of all ages need to suffer because of the male dominance over the society. According to the society and men, women should have a conservative nature. Women are told to stay inside the four walls that bound them, and they must keep a limit to themselves to exist in a society. "When we come to the concomitant question of the consciousness of the subaltern, the notion of what the work cannot say becomes important" (Pandit 31). Whenever something bad happens to women, rather than blaming the person who did those things to her, blame shift toward those women who have just been victimized. In this area women unknowingly take part, as rather than aiding and coming together to help fellow women they stick to their norms and values which are used to degrade women.

This limitation has made women suppress their voice and live with the rules and restrictions imposed on them by their husband. Deshpande, here, uses Amba to represent all women who face such kind of humiliation and difficulty to survive in the society ruled by males. Women who lack the support of their husband and family must suffer a big time to exist in a society. Sometimes, women are treated as objects who are meant to fulfill the physical hunger of men. This is what some kinds of husbands think of their wives and their marriage. The marriage plays no other roles than that of sex for the men. This is exactly how women are considered as a subaltern who exists in a society just to fulfill the requirement and follow the rules made by men. Except these, there is no any importance of the existence of women in a society. Deshpande describes the dilemma of women in the following way: "A spark, a small glow. And suddenly she was confronted by flames. There was a moment's panic as she realized she has trapped again. But where would she go" (101)? The only way women find out is to end their world because of the male dominant society. Because of lack of attention and importance to women, they do not feel the significance of their existence in the society. As a result, women, themselves, ought to suffer.

The main problem with the society is that it hasn't been able to reform its practices as per the needs of the time. The culture imposed by patriarchy hundred years ago is evident even today. Tanima Banerjee writes in her article, "Women were expected to cook food and eat only after the men, with whatever meager amount of food is left" (Banerjee 7). In a typical Indian family, the women were supposed to look after their household and take care of their children. They were not supposed to be active and should stay silent. Their job assigned by a typical middle-class Indian family was to be quiet and serve the man of the house. Women were led to believe that if they do everything they are told, they will not be judged. This tradition has

been passed down to generations as a legacy. Even today, when modernization has touched every sphere of society, Indian females do not fall under this scope. They are still under the control of patriarchy.

The women of India endure a history of injustice. From the times of Sita and Sati to the modern era, the prejudice has just changed its faces. When men enjoy all the pleasures ignoring the norms in the name of modernization, women don't share a similar fate. They are bound to sustain the pride of the family. Freeing women from oppression has been a familiar cry since ages. However, it hasn't been eradicated till date. Deshpande's stories also reflect the authoritarian system of society where women are the ones who can defame but don't hold any discreet power in the family. Their inappropriate actions hinder the family's reputation. However, they haven't bestowed any right of carrying out the decisions of the family. Women are merely subalterns who are used as pawns. The patriarchy rules over the females restraining them from any behaviors that deviate from the traditional norms. Women are just meant to follow the path paved by the men.

There is an unspoken definition of subaltern women. Usually, women living in the rural areas suffering from abuse and extreme disparity fall under this scope. However, the truth is entirely different. Even the girls with proper education and modern facilities living in a metropolitan city of Maharashtra aren't expressive about their opinions. Many writers have moved to rural India in their story plots ignoring the plight of the urban women. Deshpande, however, doesn't discriminate. She writes what she observes. The fact that many problems are prevalent in rural India can't be ignored. However, there is a need to address the sufferings of urban women as well. Even the women residing in cities are subjected to follow the biased traditional norms. Just like in the story "The Pawn," women let men lead. The mother-daughter duo

doesn't share a single word with the narrator. It is just the father and the guy who talk throughout the story.

Women in India are under constant pressure of speaking only what is required. They don't express what they feel. Instead, they hide their emotions deep within. The fear of being judged and considered inappropriate might be the underlying reason for them to do so, which can be Indian women, generally have an impassioned outlook and ignorance towards the existence of life as a whole. Shashi Deshpande's women characters seem to be in a severe need of freedom. They search for a spark of liberty in their dark, dull life. Like many of the other Indo-Anglian female writers, her central focus lies in unraveling the hidden emotions of an Indian female, which can be observed in almost all of her stories. Women in India aren't comfortable talking to a stranger. They don't speak much, shield their eyes with the lids and avoid any interactions. Such type of incident can be observed in 'The Pawn' when the mother and daughter do not interact much with outsiders and only men do all the talking and reach important decisions. Despite suffering in such ways, Indian men, however, do not comprehend them. Similarly, in the story of "It Was Dark", parents of raped girl try to cover an issue. Even the victim fathers know that her daughter was suffering, he tries to neglect fact and cared only about his reputation and judgmental posted by the society. Moreover, society negligence on suppression of woman is more tragic scenario of the modern world. While the educated and well-developed country has encouraged and empowered the equity campaigns, but due to the social and economic blockage, it has been a major challenge to experience the gender equality in India. In addition, the world perhaps has been much modernized and developed, but, women are still being dominated by the males in the Indian society. In spite of the educated community, it has not been able to readjust the gender

balance between men and women. Furthermore, With the domination and violence that Indian women face, they are still behind men who have higher privileges. However, It is true that now they are given equal rights and opportunities, but the stereotypical housewives still exist who are being commanded by their men to stay indoors and take care of the house and children. Additionally, women are also the primary victims of sexual harassment and domestic violence. Women are not only discriminated against men, but they are also victimized even by women of the society who has faced similar problems in the past. So, this cycle of women suffering will continue to prolong if this matter is not solved as soon as possible. Because of heavy inspiration by Shashi Deshpande's stories, this research paper has described various difficulties and problems that the Indian women must face. The female characters stay in the framework doing whatever it takes not to influence things to go to fragments, still, they can scratch the marks which society has put on them, through her stories Deshpande influences us to know the characters as their identity as an individual, and not under the societal names. By scrabbling the labels, which are persuasively put on a lady in Indian culture, Deshpande shows a feminist activist position in another concealed light. This attempt is prominent because it helps in another conception of a female as a being in an Indian setting. The western feminist activist focal points are kept separated, however, the women's activist philosophy is taken up by Deshpande to be investigated and found out in these short stories.

In her stories in *The Intrusion and Other Stories*, Deshpande has brought in multiple issues that Indian women ought to face as well as how they are judged and treated in the society. Along with texts from renowned authors, this research paper also carries substantial evidence to back Deshpande's claims regarding the status of women. While addressing the gender discrimination in her texts, Deshpande not only

rants about the existing problems but also provides possible solutions for the victimized women. On the other hands, she promotes the perception that women should struggle hard and try to be independent and economically sound so that they will not have to depend on men. What's more is they should be morally and mentally healthy and present themselves firmly in front of the society as an example so other female could be inspired and hope the chain of this continues. As it restricts its scope within the plight of Indian women and not the entire female population, this paper is an innovative approach towards discussing the concept of feminism according to Deshpande's ideologies.

The major findings of the research are that Indian women are suffering various cases of gender discrimination, including sexual violence. All the stories in some form shows domination over women by a male counterpart. All women in present in the story don't have a proper saying and treated as a physical object rather than being treated as human being. This goes on to prove the argument that women are considered as subaltern in Indian society. Being oppressed by men and not being able to do anything to prevent that Different instance of story shows severity of subaltern women, in the story *Pawn*, the interaction between the male and female are limited or non-existent but between male and male is present, which goes on to show the impact of society over females who are asked to never interact with male or not provided free reign over who they can talk to. It was found that women live under the structure of male domination and asked to behave and do things to please a male member of the society, which supports the core argument of this paper. Other findings of the research are that majority of Indian males are not concerned about the condition of women in the society. They are glad about their gender roles compared to their female counterparts.

Various solutions can be proposed to control, or even solve, such condition in Indian community. Women require and have a right to equal opportunity, we should develop the society in such way that one would not have to call other women subaltern. To do that first of all representation of women in the societies must be changed. The main idea is changing a view of society regarding women as a pawn by males in the society. Women should change their point of view and rather than falling into the trap which society calls as values and norms they should band together and fight. Not only uneducated women but educated women are also being victimized by this male dominant society, women should be properly represented in the society as they play an equal part in the development of society. With the change of ideology of society, society's views regarding women will be changed, which would help women to speak up and take their right raising the anticipation that they would someday would not be represented as women who are mute or would be ignored rather would be respected by the generation and generation of society to come.

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