

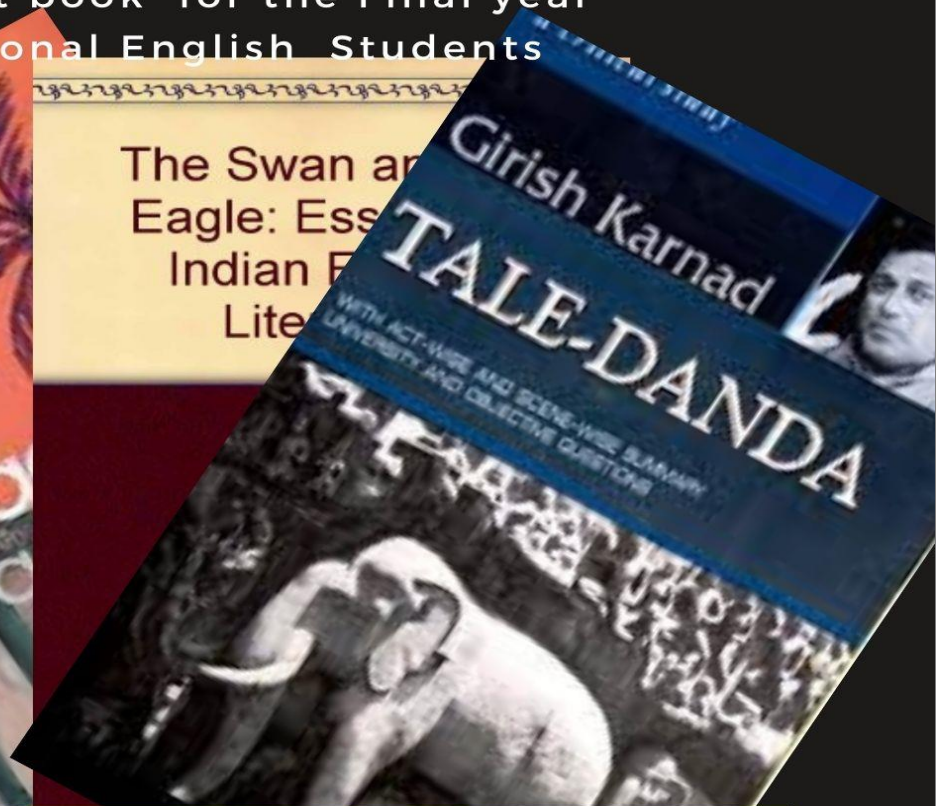
PAPER EIGHT

# INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

A Text book for the Final year  
Optional English Students



The Swan and  
Eagle: Ess  
Indian F  
Lite



**Compiled  
By  
Dr. Udaya Ravi Shastry**

**E-text book**  
**For private circulation only**

For the Students  
Of  
Pallagatti Adavappa  
Arts and Commerce College,  
Tiptur, Karnataka .

**Indian Writing in English**  
Paper Eight  
Prescribed Syllabus for  
The Optional English Students  
Of Final Year  
Tumkur University

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Good Luck.

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**Section A**  
**Poetry (TEXT)**

**1. Song Of The Hindustanee Minstrel**

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio

I

With surmah tinge the black eye's fringe,  
'Twill sparkle like a star;  
With roses dress each raven tress,  
My only loved Dildar!

II

Dildar! There's many a valued pearl  
In richest Oman's sea;  
But none, my fair Cashmerian girl!  
O! none can rival thee.

III

In Busrah there is many a rose  
Which many a maid may seek,  
But who shall find a flower which blows  
Like that upon thy cheek?

IV

In verdant realms, 'neath sunny skies,  
With witching minstrelsy,  
We'll favour find in all young eyes,  
And all shall welcome thee.

V

Around us now there's but the night,  
The heaven alone above;  
But soon we'll dwell in cities bright,  
Then cheer thee, cheer thee, love!

VI

The heart eternally is blest  
Where hope eternal springs;  
Then hush thy sorrows all to rest,  
We'll treat the courts of kings.

VII

In palace halls our strains we'll raise,  
There all our songs shall flow;  
Come cheer thee, sweet! for better days  
Shall dawn upon our woe.

VIII

Nay weep not, love! thou shouldst not weep,  
The world is all our home;  
Life's watch together we shall keep,  
We'll love where'er we roam.

IX

Like birds from land to land we'll range,  
And with our sweet sitar,  
Our hearts the same, though worlds may change,  
We'll live, and love, Dildar!

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio

## 2. Peace

Swami Vivekananda –

Behold, it comes in might,  
The power that is not power,  
The light that is in darkness,  
The shade in dazzling light.

It is joy that never spoke,  
And grief unfelt, profound,  
Immortal life unlived,  
Eternal death unmourned.  
It is not joy nor sorrow,  
But that which is between,  
It is not night nor morrow,  
But that which joins them in.

It is sweet rest in music;  
And pause in sacred art;  
The silence between speaking;  
Between two fits of passion -  
It is the calm of heart.

It is beauty never seen,  
And love that stands alone,  
It is song that lives un-sung,  
And knowledge never known.

It is death between two lives,  
And lull between two storms,

The void whence rose creation,  
And that where it returns.

To it the tear-dropp goes,  
To spread the smiling form  
It is the Goal of Life,  
And Peace - its only home!  
Swami Vivekananda

### **3. “Sea Breeze, Bombay”**

**Adil Jussawalla**

Partition’s people stitched  
Shrouds from a flag, gentlemen scissored Sind.  
An opened people, fraying across the cut  
country reknotted themselves on this island.

Surrogate city of banks,  
Brokering and bays, refugees’ harbour and port,  
Gatherer of ends whose brick beginnings work  
Loose like a skin, spotting the coast,

Restore us to fire. New refugees,  
Wearing blood-red wool in the worst heat,  
come from Tibet, scanning the sea from the north,  
Dazed, holes in their cracked feet.

Restore us to fire. Still,

Communities tear and re-form; and still, a breeze,

Cooling our garrulous evenings, investigates nothing,

Ruffles no tempers, uncovers no root,

And settles no one adrift of the mainland's histories.

**Section B**  
**Short Story (Text)**

**1. ENGINE TROUBLE**

**R K Narayan**

*Have you ever won a prize that has put you into trouble rather than making you happy? Consider how you would react in such a situation and initiate a group discussion.*

THERE came down to our town some years ago (said the Talkative Man) a showman owning an institution called the Gaiety Land. Overnight our Gymkhana Grounds became resplendent with banners and streamers and coloured lamps. From all over the district crowds poured into the show. Within a week of opening, in gate money alone they collected nearly five hundred rupees a day. Gaiety Land provided us with all sorts of fun and gambling and side-shows. For a couple of annas in each booth we could watch anything from performing parrots to crack motor cyclists looping the loop in the Dome of Death. In addition to this there were lotteries and shooting galleries where for an anna you always stood a chance of winning a hundred rupees.

There was a particular corner of the show which was in great favour. Here for a ticket costing eight annas you stood a chance of acquiring a variety of articles pincushions, sewing machines, cameras or even a road engine. On one evening they drew a ticket number 1005, and I happened to own the other half of the ticket. Glancing down the list of articles they declared that I became the owner of the road engine ! Don't ask me how a road engine came to be included among the prizes. It is more than I can tell you I looked stunned. People gathered around and gazed at me as if I were some curious animal. Fancy anyone becoming the owner of a road engine! " some persons muttered and giggled.

It was not the sort of prize one could carry home at short notice. I asked the showman if he would help me to transport it. He merely pointed at a notice which decreed that all winners should remove the prizes immediately on drawing and by their own effort. However they had to make an exception in my case. They agreed to keep the engine on the Gymkhana Grounds till the end of their season and then I would have to make my own arrangements to take it out. When I asked the showman if he could find me a driver he just smiled : " The fellow who brought it here had to be paid a hundred rupees for the job and five rupees a day. I sent him away and made up my mind that if no one was going to draw it, I would just leave it to its fate. I got it down just as a novelty for the show. God ! What a bother it has proved!"

"Can't I sell it to some municipality?" I asked innocently. He burst into a laugh. "As a showman I have enough troubles with municipal people. I would rather keep out of their way "

My friends and well-wishers poured in to congratulate me on my latest acquisition. No one knew precisely how much a road engine would fetch; all the same they felt that there was a lot of money in it. "Even if you sell it as scrap iron you can make a few thousands," some of my friends declared. Every day I made a trip to the Gymkhana Grounds to have a look at my engine. I grew very fond of it. I loved its shining brass parts. I stood near it and patted it affectionately, hovered about it, and returned home every day only at the close of the show. I was a poor man. I thought that after all my troubles were coming to an end. How ignorant we are ! How little did I guess that my troubles had just begun.

When the showman took down his booths and packed up, I received a notice from the municipality to attend to my road engine. When I went there next day it looked forlorn with no one about. The ground was littered with torn streamers and paper decorations. The showman had moved on, leaving the engine where it stood. It was perfectly safe anywhere!

I left it alone for a few days, not knowing what to do with it. I received a notice from the municipality ordering that the engine should at once be removed from the ground as otherwise they would charge rent for the occupation of the Gymkhana Grounds. After deep thought I consented to pay the rent, and I paid ten rupees a month for the next three months. Dear sirs, I was a poor man. Even the house which I and my wife occupied cost me only four rupees a month. And fancy my paying ten rupees a month for the road engine. It cut into my slender budget, and I had to pledge a jewel or two belonging to my wife! And every day my wife was asking me what I proposed to do with this terrible property of mine and I had no answer to give her. I went up and down the town offering it for sale to all and sundry. Someone suggested that the Secretary of the local Cosmopolitan Club might be interested in it. When I approached him he laughed and asked what he should do with a road engine. "I'll dispose of it at a concession for you. You have a tennis court to be rolled every morning/" I began, and even before I saw him smile I knew it was a stupid thing to say. Next someone suggested, " See the Municipal Chairman. He may buy it for the municipality." With great trepidation I went to the municipal office one day. I buttoned up my coat as I entered the Chairman's room and mentioned my business. I was prepared to give away the engine at a great concession. I started a great harangue on municipal duties, the regime of this chairman, and the importance of owning a road roller but before I was done with him I knew there was greater chance of my selling it to some child on the roadside for playing with.

I was making myself a bankrupt maintaining this engine in the Gymkhana Grounds. I really hoped some day there would come my way a lump sum and make amends for all this deficit and suffering. Fresh complications arose when a cattle show came in the offing. It was to be held on the grounds. I was given twenty-four hours for getting the thing out of the ground. The show was opening in a week and the advance party was arriving and insisted upon having the engine out of

the way. I became desperate; there was not a single person for fifty miles around who knew anything about a road engine. I begged and cringed every passing bus driver to help me; but without use. I even approached the station master to put in a word with the mail engine driver. But the engine driver pointed out that he had his own locomotive to mind and couldn't think of jumping off at a wayside station for anybody's sake. Meanwhile the municipality was pressing me to clear out. I thought it over. I saw the priest of the local temple and managed to gain his sympathy. He offered me the services of his temple elephant. I also engaged fifty coolies to push the engine from behind. You may be sure this drained all my resources. The coolies wanted eight annas per head and the temple elephant cost me seven rupees a day and I had to give it one feed. My plan was to take the engine out of the gymkhana and then down the road to a field half a furlong off. The field was owned by a friend. He would not mind if I kept the engine there for a couple of months, when I could go to Madras and find a customer for it.

I also took into service one Joseph, a dismissed bus-driver who said that although he knew nothing of road rollers he could nevertheless steer one if it was somehow kept in motion.

It was a fine sight: the temple elephant yoked to the engine by means of stout ropes, with fifty determined men pushing it from behind, and my friend Joseph sitting in the driving seat. A huge crowd stood around and watched in great glee. The engine began to move. It seemed to me the greatest moment in my life. When it came out of the gymkhana and reached the road it began to behave in a strange manner. Instead of going straight down the road it showed a tendency to wobble and move zig-zag. The elephant dragged it one way, Joseph turned the wheel for all he was worth without any idea of where he was going, and fifty men behind it clung to it in every possible manner and pushed it just where they liked. As a result of all this confused dragging the engine ran straight into the opposite compound wall and reduced a good length of it to powder. At this the crowd let out a joyous yell. The elephant, disliking the behaviour of the crowd, trumpeted loudly, strained and snapped its ropes and kicked down a further length of the wall. The fifty men fled in panic, the crowd created a pandemonium. Someone slapped me in the face it was the owner of the compound wall. The police came on the scene and marched me off.

When I was released from the lock-up I found the following consequences awaiting me: (i) Several yards of compound wall to be built by me. (2) Wages of fifty men who ran away. They would not explain how they were entitled to the wages when they had not done their job. (3) Joseph's fee for steering the engine over the wall. (4) Cost of medicine for treating the knee of the temple elephant which had received some injuries while kicking down the wall. Here again the temple authorities would not listen when I pointed out that I didn't engage an elephant to break a wall. (5) Last, but not the least, the demand to move the engine out of its present station.

Sirs, I was a poor man. I really could not find any means of paying these bills. When I went home my wife asked: "What is this I hear about you everywhere?" I took the opportunity to explain my difficulties. She took it as a hint that I was again asking for her jewels, and she lost her temper and cried that she would write to her father to come and take her away.

I was at my wit's end. People smiled at me when they met me in the streets. I was seriously wondering why I should not run away to my village. I decided to encourage my wife to write to her father and arrange for her exit. Not a soul was going to know what my plans were. I was going to put off my creditors and disappear one fine night.

At this point came an unexpected relief in the shape of a Swamiji. One fine evening under the distinguished patronage of our Municipal Chairman a show was held in our small town hall. It was a free performance and the hall was packed with people. I sat in the gallery. Spellbound we witnessed the Swamiji's yogic feats. He bit off glass tumblers and ate them with contentment; he lay on spike boards; gargled and drank all kinds of acids; licked white-hot iron rods ; chewed and swallowed sharp nails ; stopped his heart-beat, and buried himself underground. We sat there and watched him in stupefaction. At the end of it all he got up and delivered a speech in which he declared that he was carrying on his master's message to the people in this manner. His performance was the more remarkable because he had nothing to gain by all this extraordinary meal except the satisfaction of serving humanity, and now he said he was coming to the very masterpiece and the last act. He looked at the Municipal Chairman and asked: "Have you a road engine? I would like to have it driven over my chest." The chairman looked abashed and felt ashamed to acknowledge that he had none. The Swamiji insisted, "I must have a road engine."

The Municipal Chairman tried to put him off by saying, "There is no driver." The Swamiji replied, "Don't worry about it. My assistant has been trained to handle any kind of road engine." At this point I stood up in the gallery and shouted, " Don't ask him for an engine. Ask me. " In a moment I was on the stage and became as important a person as the fire-eater himself. I was pleased with the recognition I now received from all quarters. The Municipal Chairman went into the background. In return for lending him the engine he would drive it where I wanted. Though I felt inclined to ask for a money contribution I knew it would be useless to expect it from one who was on a missionary work.

Soon the whole gathering was at the compound wall opposite to the Gymkhana. Swamiji's assistant was an expert in handling engines. In a short while my engine stood steaming up proudly. It was a gratifying sight. The Swamiji called for two pillows, placed one near his head and the other at his feet. He gave detailed instructions as to how the engine should be run over him. He made a chalk mark on his chest and said, " It must go exactly on this ; not an inch this way or that." The engine hissed and waited. The crowd watching the show became suddenly unhappy and morose. This seemed to be a terrible thing to be doing. The Swami lay down on the pillows and said, "When I say Om, drive it on." He closed his eyes. The crowd watched tensely. I looked at the whole show in absolute rapture after all, the road engine was going to get on the move.

At this point a police inspector came into the crowd with a brown envelope in his hand. He held up his hand, beckoned to the Swamiji's assistant, and said :

" I am sorry I have to tell you that you can't go on with this. The magistrate has issued an order prohibiting the engine from running over him." The Swamiji picked himself up. There was a lot of commotion. The Swamiji became indignant. "I have done it in hundreds of places already and nobody questioned me about it. Nobody can stop me from doing what I like it's my master's order to demonstrate the power of the Yoga to the people of this country, and who can question me ? " A magistrate can/\* said the police inspector, and held up the order. " What business is it of yours or his to interfere in this manner ? " "I don't know all that ; this is his order. He permits you to do everything except swallow potassium cyanide and run this engine over your chest. You are free to do whatever you like outside our jurisdiction."

" I am leaving this cursed place this very minute/' the Swamiji said in great rage, and started to go, followed by his assistant. I gripped his assistant's arm and said, " You have steamed it up. Why not take it over to that field and then go." He glared at me, shook off my hand and muttered, " With my Guru so unhappy, how dare you ask me to drive ? " He went away. I muttered, "You can't drive it except over his chest, I suppose ?"

I made preparations to leave the town in a couple of days, leaving the engine to its fate, with all its commitments. However, Nature came to my rescue in an unexpected manner. You may have heard of the earthquake of that year which destroyed whole towns in Northern India. There was a reverberation of it in our town, too. We were thrown out of our beds that night, and doors and windows rattled.

Next morning I went over to take a last look at my engine before leaving the town. I could hardly believe my eyes. The engine was not there. I looked about and raised a hue and cry. Search parties went round. And the engine was found in a disused well nearby, with its back up. I prayed to heaven to save me from fresh complications. But the owner of the house when he came round and saw what had happened, laughed heartily and beamed at me : " You have done me a service. It was the dirtiest water on earth in that well and the municipality was sending notice to close it, week after week. I was dreading the cost of closing, but your engine fits it like a cork. Just leave it there.""But, but."" There are no buts. I will withdraw all complaints and charges against you, and build that broken wall myself, but only leave the thing there." "That's hardly enough." I mentioned a few other expenses that this engine had brought on me. He agreed to pay for all that. When I again passed that way some months later I peeped over the wall. I found the mouth of the well neatly cemented up. I heaved a sigh of great relief.

## **GLOSSARY**

**Resplendent** – attractive and impressive through being richly colorful or sumptuous.

**Streamer**-a long, narrow strip of material used as a decoration or symbol.

**Fancy**- (British informal) Feel a desire or liking for.

**Slender** - (of a person or part of the body) gracefully thin.

**Forlorn** - pitifully sad and abandoned or lonely.

**Deficit** -the amount by which something, especially a sum of money, is too small.

**Snap**- breaks suddenly and completely, typically with a sharp cracking sound.

**Desperate** - feeling or showing a hopelessness /impossible to deal with a situation.

**Wobble** - move or cause to move unsteadily from side to side.

**Harangue** - a lengthy and aggressive speech.

**Locomotive**- a powered railway vehicle used for pulling trains. **Pandemonium** - wild and noisy disorder or confusion; uproar. **Rapture** - a feeling of intense pleasure or joy.

**Indignant** - feeling or showing anger or annoyance at what is perceived as unfair treatment.

**Mutter** - say something in a low or barely audible voice, especially in dissatisfaction or irritation.

**Rattle** - make a rapid succession of short, sharp knocking sounds.

**Reverberation** - prolongation of a sound; resonance.

## 2. Swimming Lessons

**Rohinton Mistry**

### Critical Assessment

In “Swimming Lessons” the narrator (Kersi Boyce) describes his life in Canada as well as connects with his past and parents living in Bombay. The story begins with the narrator’s encounter with an old invalid man living in his building, who reminds the narrator of his own grandfather, another invalid. Both the old people were immobile, and both found it difficult to pass their time. The Portuguese woman across the hall is the inquisitive type, who disseminates information about people living in the building to anyone who will care to listen. She had informed the narrator that the old man’s daughter was taking care of him.

The narration goes back and forth in time and space, as the narrator dwells on the sick man in Toronto and his Grandpa in Bombay. He remembers how his mother used to take good care of grandpa too, till things became very complicated and he had to be taken to a hospital, He remembers even the minutest details of his Grandpa’s illness, and the straggle that his mother had to undergo single handed-changing dressings, handling bedpans etc. The narrator also helped, but didn’t go to the hospital as often as he should have. And Grandpa ultimately died in the hospital.

The narration of the story in Toronto is intersected by his parent’s reactions in Bombay to his letters, and these reactions are given throughout in italics, making it a sub-text tagged along with the main narrative. Kersi is alone in Toronto, writing a book of stories about his life in India, and taking swimming lessons, finding the chlorinated water of the local pool as foreign an element as the suburban life around him. Mistry cleverly includes within this story a commentary on and a critique of his own writing. Kersi has sent his book home to be read by proud but uncomprehending parents; their discussion about its contents, focus and certain omissions provides an interleaved sub-text on the story as well as the whole collection (Tales from Firozsha Baag). Mistry thus unites two traditions in the short story: the conservative, semi-autobiographical

mode that specializes in connected stories of childhood; and the newer self-reflexive mode in which the function of the story is to comment on itself.

The postman rang the bell for so long that the narrator's mother wanted to give him a piece of her mind, but she was afraid of the postman's vengeance, because after the Shiv Sena agitation about Maharashtra for Maharashtrians, bus drives, conductors and such other workers were at their worst behaviour. But when she saw the letter from Canada, from her son, she gave him some baksheesh, kissed the envelope and tried to tell her husband. He told her not to get excited because he knew the kind of

letters he wrote - a few lines of empty words. When the mother read the letter, her enthusiasm vanished - the letter described the weather more than anything else. The father commented, "everything about his life is locked in silence and secrecy".

The narrative shifts back to present, to Toronto. Two women were sunbathing on the stretch of a patchy lawn. Both look luscious and gleaming, and the narrator fantasizes about their bodies and breasts. He runs down to have a closer look at them, and finds, to his disappointment, wrinkled skin, aging hands and sagging bottoms.

He goes for his first swimming lesson. When he has gone for registration, the woman at the desk asks him "Is swimming not encouraged in India." On the contrary, most Indians swim like a fish, only he is an exception, replies the narrator. Then he remembers how he failed to learn swimming because the deep blue sea of Chaupatty beach was grey and murky with garbage, too filthy to swim in.

He examines his swimming trunks, which are a little tight and starts fantasizing about what a gorgeous woman in the class of non-swimmers could become interested and may come home "to taste the pleasures of my delectable Asian brown body whose

sensuality has intrigued her and unleashed uncontrollable surges of passion inside her throughout the duration of the swimming lesson". His fantasies suggest that the narrator has a very strong imagination and to a large extent, lives on dreams.

The scene shifts back to Bombay. Mother decides to reply because father did not want to write as all his previous questions remain unanswered. But after mother

started reading the letter he looked over her shoulder, and gave suggestions of how the narrator should work during the day and then take some courses at the night school;

Without hardwork, there can be no success. Mother took the letter to the post office herself.

The first swimming lesson was hopeless. The water terrified him. Swimming here comes a sort of metaphor for acceptability. First an instruction sheet is handed over

t them. As he enters the showers three young boys call him 'Paki Paki' and comment that soon all the water was going to taste like curry. Mistry only describes, doesn't comment on this racial taunt.

I was a mixed class but the gorgeous woman of his fantasy was missing. He has to ttle for a thirty five year old woman wearing a pink one piece suit with brown hair d bit of a stomach. The instructor Ron gives them pep talk and demonstrates oating on the back. When he asks for a volunteer, the pink one-piece suit wades rward. She does very well. He notices some of her pubic hair coming out and wells on them to a great extent. Then they are told to paddle. And when Ron wanted volunteer, unmindfully the narrator went forward. To his horror, he leads the class the deep end, where he almost drowned. The narrator becomes so frightened that he decides not to come next week.

On his way back, he encounters the old man again in the lobby, who tells him how he sed to swim a lot when he was young. The thought of going for the next lesson ightens him, but he vision of the straying pubic hair of the woman beckon him. owever, the next time, he is afraid of even venturing into the shallow end. But when e does get in, he is in for disappointment, the hair have been neatly tucked in, they re not straying any more. He feels betrayed. One feels an innocent naivette in such actions of the narrator. This makes swimming even more difficult to learn. He decides not to go again. The total loss is one fantasy plus thirty dollars - fifteen for swimming trunks and fifteen for swimming lessons.

Back in Bombay, the postman brought a parcel instead of a letter. Both the parents are surprised and pleased to find a book of stories written by their son. Now they understand what their son had been doing all the time, and the father had thought he was just clerking away in an insurance company. Father opened the book and started reading it, but the mother thought it was unfair as she would have to wait, and they agreed that he would read the first story, them give it to her so she could also read it, and they would take turns in that manner.

The weather is changing in Toronto, it is fall now and leaves have started to fall. Bertha, the building superintendent, is raking in the leaves. There is a commotion outside, and the narrator looks down the window to see the old man being taken for a drive by his son w'ho has brought a big car for this purpose.

Mother and father read the first five stories, and the mother was very sad, she said he must be so unhappy there, all his stories were about Bombay, she thought he must have been missing his home. But father did not agree; he said it did not mean he was unhappy, "all writers worked in the same way, they used their memories and experiences and made stories out of them, changing some things, adding some, imagining some, all writers were very good at remembering details of their lives." But mother is not convinced, "how can you be sure that he is remembering because he's a

writer, or lie started to write because he is unhappy and thinks of his past, and wants to save it all by making stories of it.”

It has become quite cold in Toronto. The old radiators do not function properly and the writer complains to Bertha. She mischievously replies that if the radiators don't work, he can always come to her, she will keep him warm, and she opens her arms wide, laughing.

The old man is staring outside, at the flakes of falling snow. “What thoughts is he thinking as he watches them?”. It finally happened. The heat went out-completely. Everything becomes stone cold. The narrator goes down where several people have already gathered and Bertha announced that she has telephoned the office, they are sending a man. As he walked down the long hallway, he found something different, something missing. The Portuguese woman opened the door and informed him that the old man had another stroke yesterday, and was taken to the hospital. Then, the narrator immediately realized, that it was the medicinal smell that was missing from the hallway.

The stories in the book were all about poor or middle class Parsi families and the stories were picked from the sufferings of their own lives; but there should have been something positive about Parsis, there was so much to be proud of: the Tatas, Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Dinshaw Petit were some of the great names. “What would people reading these stories think, those who did not know about Parsis - that the whole community was full of cranky, bigoted people; and in reality it was the richest, most advanced and philanthropic community in India, and he did not need to tell his own son that Parsis had a reputation for being generous and family oriented.” But mother was happy that he remembered everything. Father hoped that there will be some story based on his Canadian experience, that way they will come to know about their son's life there, if not through his letters. Mother is puzzled as to why he doesn't write some stories about Toronto, especially since father had maintained that writers use their own experience to make stories. Father explains that he was probably not using his Toronto experience because it was too early. It takes about ten years time after an experience before a writer is able to use it in his writing because, “according to the theory he is writing of these things because they are far enough in the past for him to deal with objectively, he is able to achieve what critics call artistic distance, without emotions interfering.” In this manner Mistry undertakes the exercise of self critiquing his own work. After reading the whole book, the parents felt that they had come to know their son better. They wished there were many more stories. The last story they liked best because it had the most in it about Canada (incidentally the book is ‘Tales from Ferozsha Baag’ and the last story is ‘Swimming Lessons’) “and father said if he continues to write about such things, he will become popular because I am sure they are interested there in reading about life through the eyes of an immigrant, it provides a different viewpoint; the only danger is if he changes and becomes so much like them that he will write like one of them and lose the important difference.”

The winter drags on. The medicinal smell is back in the hall, the narrator looks

forward to meeting the old man.

The narrator has spoken so often to the old man, but doesn't know his name. He decides to look it up in the apartment directory, and then surprise him by calling him by his name. He prepares to have his bath. For the first time, he fills the tub and soaks in it. Earlier he had only been taking a shower. He immerses in the water up to the neck. He feels good. This is the way the Canadians bathe. Suddenly, on an impulse, fighting his fear, he dunks his head in, holding his breath. He does it again, and then again and realizes that the fear of water had vanished. This gives him a lot of confidence and he decides to re-register for swimming lessons. He feels closer to the Canadians.

The winter is almost over, the snow banks are melting. The narrator goes to the board where are listed the names of all the residents. But before apartment 201, in which the old man lived, there is no name, just a blank. That's odd, but the narrator decides that next time, he would introduce himself, and then ask his name. As he walks the corridor, the Portuguese woman stops him and says, "you know the old man died last night." The narrator is stunned. "Did you know his name", he asks, but she leaves without answering. An example of the kind of superficial life the narrator was leading. He was living with them but was not one of them.

The best thing the mother liked in the last story was about Grandpa, how she had told her son to get the blessing of the elders. "Are you sure, said father, that you really told him so, because you said yourself the other day that he changes and adds and alters things." But she wants to believe that she said these things to him. The father told her not to confuse fiction with facts. "You must not confuse what really happened with what the story says happened. You must not lose your grasp on reality, that way madness lies." Then the mother stopped listening as she had told father so often, she was not very fond of theories, and she took out her writing pad and started a letter to her son. Father said write to him that they were very proud of him. The fluctuating sentiments expressed by the father symbolize the hopes and fears that the near and dear ones undergo for those who have left them and gone abroad.

## **Theme**

The story deals with the problems of adjustment and acceptability for migrant. Immigrants living in their adopted country face a typical dilemma about their sense of belonging. The chasm between the two cultures leads to a sense of alienation. In 'Swimming Lessons', as you must have already noticed, Mistry portrays the superficial existence of the immigrants, who live in Canada without actually knowing the Canadians. The tension between wanting to belong and wanting to retain one's identity is very well delineated in this story. The narrator's present is continuously affected by the narrator's past, between his memory of his parents and the present life of loneliness. This life in Canada becomes more meaningful when compared or contrasted with his life in Bombay. The old and invalid man living in his building reminds the narrator of his own grandfather. He also remembers how his

mother used to take very good care of his grandpa, comparing it with the care being meted out to the invalid. The narrator knows the old man quite well, has talked to him many times, but one day suddenly realizes that he doesn't even know his name. And the old man dies before the narrator gets an opportunity to ask him his name.

Swimming in this story becomes a metaphor for acceptability. If he wants to assimilate with the Canadians, he must allow swimming, otherwise he would remain on the fringe. This becomes very clear when he goes for his first swimming lesson, finding the chlorinated water of the local pool as foreign an element as the suburban life around him. In almost an autobiographical mood, Mistry points out the difficulties he faced in Canada; he was unable to swim with the tide and how learning swimming reflects the difficulties he faced as an immigrant. Once he learns to swim, that would symbolize his overcoming the problems of being an immigrant, he would become one with the Canadians, though, not necessarily Leif equal. There are sexual overtones to many of the narrator's dreams, which are handled very realistically as well as ironically- it is but natural for a young man living alone to have voyeuristic dreams.

### **Characterization**

The story revolves around four characters- the protagonist who is the narrator and the old invalid man in Toronto, and the narrator's parents in Bombay. Without giving details but with a few deft strokes, the author presents before us the narrator, and the three others who, in fact, add to our understanding of the narrator. The parents' reactions and comments not only help us understand their attitudes and preferences, but also enrich our understanding of the narrator. The diffidence and lack of assurance shown by the narrator makes him a typical immigrant trying to find his way in the maze of a new society, a new culture, or for that matter a whole new world. The difference of opinion between his parents' approach towards him also clarifies certain traits in him. The father swears of his opinion doesn't look forward to the letters that the narrator writes because these don't reveal anything about the kind of life the narrator is leading in Toronto. Yet he is curious, anxious and ready with his advice. The mother is more sentimental, more concerned and quite effusive in her love for her son. It is she who writes back to the son, who appreciates his stories and is happy that he remembers his days in Bombay. Though skeptical at first about his son's ability, the father, towards the end of the story feels proud of his son's achievement - he has become a writer. An interesting observation is that after reading the whole book, the parents felt that they had come to know their son better. In this way, their comments complement our understanding of the narrator, who is

struggling to find his feet in a new culture, a new society as well as a new country.

Mistry has very successfully given us a portrait of not only a struggling immigrant, but also of a struggling writer, as the story to a large extent, is autobiographical.

### **Narrative Technique**

The story is written in “the intimate first person narrative form, yet is unique and quite interesting. The narrator describes his life in Toronto as well as connects with his past and parents living in Bombay. As already mentioned, the narration of the story goes back and forth in time and space, as the life of his parents in Bombay, their reactions and expectations intersect the narration of his life in Toronto. It revolves around his present life and memories of his past. When he looks at the sick man in his building, he remembers his sick grandpa in Bombay and how his mother used to take good care of him till things became very complicated and he had to be removed to the hospital. When the narrator goes for registration for swimming lessons, he remembers how he failed to learn swimming because the deep blue sea of Chaupatty beach was grey and murky with garbage, too filthy to swim in.

The narration of the story in Toronto is intersected by his parents' reactions to his letters in Bombay. These reactions are given throughout in italics, making it a sub-text tagged along with the main narrative. Kersi has sent his book home to be read by his parents; their discussion about its contents, focus and certain omissions provides an interleaved sub-text on the story as well as the whole collection. These interjections are very cleverly handled and the most interesting aspect of the discussion between mother and father is the formal use of punctuation, the sentences run along very fluidly, presenting a kind of unbroken continuity. The Direct is mixed with the Indirect. The sentences are inordinately long, providing a

feeling of breathless excitement. One sentence covers a full paragraph, such is the flow of the language and emotion. Thus, Mistry cleverly includes within this story a commentary on and a critique of his own writing. He unites two traditions in the short story: the conservative, semi-autobiographical mode that specializes in connected stories of childhood; and the newer self-reflexive mode in which the function of the story is to comment on itself. The story thus gains in stature and becomes an excellent example of a complex yet effective narrative technique which achieves a double purpose.

### 3. SUMMARY OF THE INTRUSION:

The story “**The Intrusion**” begins with the woman protagonist, (here the woman is unnamed) describing about their honeymoon place as the newly-married couple moved through fishing village. She is aware of the physical surroundings as much as she is aware of her inner chaos and the unreasonable twinge of irritation against her husband. They walked out of the seaboard and were back in village, hiking up a steep rocky path and finally reached the top with the square stalk building.

The unease that the narrator experiences continues to grow when they are finally boarded indoors. In the room the man attending on them opened the window to let the wind in. The narrator aware of the man smirking and revealing an awareness of what they had come here for and the gaze that the man was giving made her feel uneasy and embarrassed.

The man left the room, having left alone to themselves, she felt a painful silence as if they were stranger left to themselves. His stress on the words complete privacy in describing their

honeymoon place made her feel extreme disgust at the thoughts of it. Her feeling of disgust and dislike is expressed in the lines which she states:

**There was something furtive about the place, something deadpan about the servant's face, which made me feel that the men who came here did so with 'other women', who would laugh and chat with the men, not go through what I was enduring now. Fear. Tremors. The way I averted my face from the beds.** The narrator here talks about the societal rules and institutions in which a woman is trapped and demonstrating the fact that female sexuality across classes is under male control.

The sexual urges on the parts of her husband sickness the narrator-protagonist and makes her want to avoid him, but to no gain. She was now looking back at her memories before she got married. She thinks about the exchanging words between the two families and not asking the girl about her wishes and desire. she was being binding in a relationship in which there is no returning point. The memories of pre-marital bliss fade away and she is once again reminded of the uneasy and awkwardness of being in the room with complete stranger which is her husband. They spent hardly a moment trying to know each other.

The writer projects the image of a woman who is vulnerable with her fear and annoyed being with a man who has his own vulgarity, insensitivity, selfishness and sexual urges. They had not been given time to know and understand each other wishes. The inner feelings of the woman protagonist are revealed here when she sees the sea from the balcony expressing her wish, except that there will be a difference in what she wishes for and what she gets. Imagining these things, she utters:

**He would swim, I thought, and call out to me in a lazy and friendly way and I would respond with a wave and a smile. But all this was in future, possibly, if at all. And at present we were not friends, not acquaintance even, but only a husband and wife.**

It was night and he asked her to change into her night-dress. She changes feeling glad that her night-dress was simple. However, escaping his sexual overtures seemed difficult now.

**Unwillingly I turned went to him, my legs as heavy as lead. And suddenly his arms were round me, his face close to mine, his rough chin scraping, hurting in cheeks. His embrace was too sudden, too rough and I wanted to scream, to cry out. But somehow I knew that this was just between the two of us. I turned my face away from him, trying to escape, so that the kiss he intended for my lips landed in the air. He let me go abruptly. There was a foolish, angry look on his face. [...] 'What's this? Why are you behaving like this?'**

Despite her stammering to him that they hardly know each other, her husband only protested that it had had nothing to do with their sexual act. The final act of violation and the moment of her sense of wounded dignity are apparent in the following lines, towards the close of the chapter:

**And then I woke up to realize that the sound of the sea was real but I was on a bed, not on beach. And it was not the sea that was pounding my body but he, my husband, who was forcing his body on mine. I was too frightened to speak, my voice was strangled in my throat.**

# **The Intrusion by Shashi Deshpande – Summary and Analysis**



By [The Solitude Seeker](#) Posted on 01/06/2020 15/06/2021

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## **Bird's eye-view- The Intrusion**

[Shashi Deshpande's](#) “The Intrusion” is an outcry of a newly-wed woman who could not protect herself from her insensitive husband intrusion into her body. It is an invasion of her husband. The Intrusion into her body was an act of violence where her ‘self’ was suppressed. In this act of intrusion, her husband is the intruder. “The Intrusion” is a short story that was published with the short story collection [The Intrusion and Other Stories](#).

## **The Intrusion by Shashi Deshpande – Summary**



The Intrusion by Shashi Deshpande

## The Journey

The short story “The Intrusion” begins with a description of a journey. They were a newly married couple who barely knew each other. The narrator along with her husband are on their honeymoon trip. They go through a narrow path, it was so narrow that if they stretched their arms they could touch the tiny houses on both sides. They crossed a fishing village. They reached the end of the lane, turned right, and there was the sea in front of them. The narrator was feeling uneasy about her companion.

## Two strangers

“Isn’t this nice?” he asked her with a smile. Yes was the reply from her side. The man asked her if she wanted anything. She asked for tea. Silence prevailed in the room between these them and even made two of them uneasy. He suddenly burst into speech, told her how fortunate he was to get this place for their honeymoon.

He was exultant and said that it was luck that one of the top executives, who was supposed to be there, had canceled his trip at the last minute. He was happy that they had “Complete privacy”. He kept telling without noticing her feelings. She turned her face from the beds.

The sheets looked dirty and even the pillow covers were disgustingly greasy. She wanted to ask him to change them but she couldn’t. She imagined of the situation where the man gave her meaningful looks which she did not want, and later, when, he would discuss with the other servants. “And all of them would make bawdy jokes and laugh aloud.”

She lied back in the chair, and she was having only the thought of being at home. The tea arrived. It smelt of kerosene, so did the bread and butter. She felt very hungry and her hunger reminded her of the sweets that her mother had packed for her. She ate the sweets before him like a greedy schoolgirl and satisfied her hunger.

Suddenly he broke her thought by asking why she was so silent. She told him that she was a little tired with an awkward smile. She wondered if she had said, "Now that I've had my tea, can I go home?" He came closer, looked concerned, and put his arm around her, but awkwardly, firmly. She tried to move but she could not. "Through his glasses, his eyes had a sardonic gleam that frightened me." "It's a bit stuffy here, isn't it?" She got up, tried to sound casual. She suggested that they should go out to the veranda.

## An escape

It was the last moment of the day. She suggested suddenly that they should go down to the sea. He was surprised to hear that and suggested that they should go in the morning. He smiled at me and said it was going to be dark soon. He put his arm around her waist. "You don't really want to go down, do you? It was said in my ear, almost a whisper, and it sickened me, like those furtive touches and glances from faceless, nameless men in crowds. My mind shied like a frightened horse from the words, from the thought."

He pulled at her arms into the room. Someone had made the beds. Upon seeing the bed she thought of her own narrow bed at home and of how she would lie on it, curled into a comfortable ball, reading into the late hours of the night. She felt a constriction in her throat, a longing for all the things she had left behind her forever. He was not concerned by her state of emotion and noisily opening his suitcase, took out some clothes, and went in to change.

She sat quietly for a minute, then flew to the veranda, and leaning against the wooden railings, tugging savagely at her hair. She wished if she were anywhere but she is stuck there with a strange man in a strange room. "Wishing that I could project myself into the future, gulf this intervening time and become all at once an experienced, mature woman; one who would not turn a hair at anything."

## Resistance to the Intrusion

He asked her to change her clothes. She went unwillingly into the room. She again opened the door to the veranda. He wanted her to stay with him and she went again unwillingly to him. He suddenly held his arms were around her, his embrace was too sudden, too rough that she was hurt and wanted to cry out.

"I turned my face away from him, trying to escape, so that the kiss he intended for my lips landed in the air. He let me go abruptly." There was a foolish, angry look on his face. His glasses had fallen down in the struggle. She silently picked them up and gave them to him. He wiped them and put them on and finally burst out into protest that she why she was avoiding him.

"Don't think I haven't noticed it. Ever since we came here you've been...been...avoiding me," he ended lamely." She denied his accusation. "What's the problem? Why are you acting so strange? I felt contrite at the sight of his bewildered face." She stood silent and "We...we scarcely know each other, I stammered at last."

“He seemed extremely shocked. “And how will we start getting to know each other if you put on such a touch-me-not air?” But she wanted to say that she wanted to know all about him. She stammered as she tried to explain, she flushed, she almost burst into tears looking at his angry face. “The eager look in his eyes died as I spoke, and finally he turned away from me, violently flung himself on a bed and lay there still. I felt as if I had committed a crime, yet there was a light-hearted sense of escape, too.”

She went quietly to her bed and tried to sleep, “But how can I, with a man I scarcely know? It’s not fair, I thought angrily. It’s indecent. He should have given me some time.”

## The intrusion

She felt sleepy after some time. At midnight she was struggling out of a confused dream that she was lying there on the beach, where she had so longed to go and that the waves were hitting her hard. When she woke up and realized that the sound of the sea was real, but she was not on the beach instead she was on a bed.

She realized that it was not the sea that was pounding her body but her husband. She put her hands on his chest to push him away, but it was heavy like moving a rock, she was helpless. “There was no talk, no word between us- just this relentless pounding. At last, mercifully, it was over, she looked at him. “He was lying on his back, legs flung apart, snoring loudly and steadily.”

### The Intrusion by Shashi Deshpande – Analysis

## Family stance

The parents of the narrator are the products of conservative society for whom marriage is a burden on their heads. For them the sooner the better. In the arrangement of marriage, a girl is like a commodity between two groups. In “The Intrusion” the narrator’s mother-in-law wants someone who is “simple but sophisticated.”

According to her, his wife must be able to entertain and mingle with foreigners. She selected her since she fulfills their requirements. Her parents happily accepted the proposal. For them, someone who works in a foreign company is a perfect husband for their daughter. Her preference has no importance in front of her economical security.

## Silent voice

The consent of the bride in marriage had no place; it had been taken for granted. Nobody wanted to know what she thought about the proposal. She could not protest properly about her disagreement with her father before marriage.

When she had approached her father a few days before the wedding to let him know her disagreement about the proposal, he wanted to know the reason and what she wanted to do instead. She had a thousand answers, but had no answer to the question “What’s wrong with him?” He said quietly, “I have two more daughters to be married.” For him, marriages of his three daughters were his only concern.

She finally had to take it for granted. She is reduced to a nameless thing that had no existence. Therefore in the patriarchal society, she is marginalized not only after marriage but also before her marriage.

In “The Intrusion” [Shashi Deshpande](#) highlights the husband-wife relation where she is supposed to follow the conventions submissively. The husband looked happy and excited from the beginning of their journey because he knew he could exert his rights on his wife. Her willingness, preference had no value in front of his hunger.

From the very beginning of the story “The Intrusion” the protagonist was aware of her sexual role which she was feeling constant uneasiness. During their journey, once she stopped and stared at him, then he stopped too, and looked at her with a very slight impatience “which aroused the faintest wisp of annoyance in me.” She was conscious of an unreasonable pang of irritation against him.

Therefore from the very beginning, there was a series of resistance on her part. For instance, during their walk on sand, he held her arm to help her to walk in sand; she wanted him to release her arm from his tightening grip. Therefore in order to loosen his hold, she bent down to pick up sea-shell.

Moreover, though he was in the room she had looked away from him, she was painfully aware of “a secret smile, a smirk on his face that showed an awareness of what we had come here for”.

In order to counter her thought, she suddenly wished the servant, who had come to ask for tea, had not gone from the room. She was feeling discomfort to have ‘sex’ with a man, who barely knew each other. Her husband’s emphasizing ‘complete privacy’ with a smile and sickened her completely. She was experiencing fears, tremors. As a result, she turned her face from the beds.

To escape from the turmoil, she longed to go to the sea. She thought about a distant future where he would swim and call out to her in a lazy and friendly way and to which she would respond with a wave and a smile. But at present, they were not friends, but only a husband and wife. They had not even heard of each other a month back. But his calling out her name with a tone of familiarly and authority surprised her.

His whisper sickened her like “those furtive touches and glances from faceless, nameless men in crowds.” She was feeling discomfort as there was something insinuating in his tone, something eager and excited about him that put her off. He was disappointed with her for not changing her clothes.

The protagonist was mentally unprepared for her sexual role. There was painful silence between the newly married couple because they hardly knew each other. She at first wanted to form an intimate friendship through which both could know each other. She wanted to know all about him: what he thought, what he felt and why he agreed to marry her, his likes, and his similarities with her. But she could not say a single word. She thought even if she told, he would not hear her.

She could not tell him how shy and frightened she was to expose the mysteries of her body to him and how homesick she was for her mother’s face, her father’s laughter, and her sisters’ chatter. She wanted to build a friendly relationship with him. “While I wished to talk now, sitting up the whole night, so that in the morning we could smile at each other like old friends.”

But her insensitive husband was unaware of her feelings. According to him, being married is enough for him. When he realized that his wife was avoiding him, he demanded the reason for doing so, her stammering “We .... we scarcely know each other” was her attempt to build a friendly relationship. Contrary to her expectation, she received the opposite reaction from her husband. She almost burst into tears looking at his angry face. She felt as if she committed a crime.

She wished that she could be back home, wished she were anywhere except that place. Although the erotic images from the book that she read before marriage were disturbing her mind, yet she was reluctant to engage in physical intimacy. She wondered if she was a frigid woman that she had read about. She would return to her parents’ home. She would become black sheep of the family and her sisters’ marriages would never happen for her and her parents would be disgraced.



The Intrusion

by Shashi Deshpande

## An act of intrusion- Justification of the title

The physical hunger in the husband in “The Intrusion” made him go against his wife’s will and fulfilled his lust. The protagonist was forced to cooperate with her husband in their respective sexual roles. When she denied, his sexual act turns into an act of brutality, an act of intrusion. His act of intrusion was no less than a rape; a legalized rape.

She was raped when she was sleeping. She wanted to cry out not for the physical pain, but for the intrusion into her privacy, the violation of her right to herself. His movements had the same rhythm, the same violence as the movements of the sea; yet sea could hurt but not humiliate like that act of intrusion. His selfish act of hunger becomes an act of intrusion.

Thus the story “The Intrusion” expresses the nasty experience of a helpless married woman and Shashi Deshpande voices out to the domestic issue of marital rape which often is suppressed under the feet of patriarchy.

