Directorate of Distance & Online Education

UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU

JAMMU

SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

M. A. ENGLISH

Title of the Course : **Course Code: ENG-323**
Indian Writing in English **Unit : I-VI**
Semester : III **Lesson : 1-33**

2024 Onwards

Course Co-ordinator
Prof. Anupama Vohra

Teacher Incharge
Dr. Jasleen Kaur

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M. A. ENGLISH **Semester - III**

Indian Writing in English **Course No. : Eng-323**

Course Writers :

1. Ms. Harpreet Kaur

2. Prof. Himanshi Chandervanshi

3. Dr. Rabia Iqbal Mir

4. Dr. Anita Bhela

5. Prof. Rajesh lidiya

Editing & Proof Reading :

Prof. Anupama Vohra

Course Co-ordinator

Prof. Anupama Vohra

Teacher Incharge

Dr. Jasleen Kaur

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Welcome

Dear Distance Learners,

Welcome to Directorate of Distance Education !

In Semester III, you have four papers each of 6 credits and one paper of 4 credits. The detailed syllabus of each course is given in the respective study material. You are advised to read the prescribed texts in detail and consult the library for additional material. This course, that is ENG-323 comprises six units.

Do attend the PCP programmes though they are optional; the contact classes and counselling clarify many of your doubts, questions and queries. Do remember to submit the IAAs in time because no late IAAs are accepted, and in case of non-submission of IAAs you are ineligible to sit in the term end exam.

Wish you good luck and success.

Prof. Anupama Vohra
Course Coordinator

Course Code : ENG-323 **Duration of Examination : 3 hrs**

Title : Indian Writing in English **Total Marks : 100**

Credits : 6 **(a) Semester Examination : 80**

(b) Sessional Assessment : 20

Syllabus for the examinations to be held in Dec. 2024, 2025 & 2026

Objective : The objective of the course is to acquaint the students with the different genres of Indian Writing in English. The students will study poetry, drama and fiction. The course is specially designed to familiarize the students with the kinds of literature written in English in India.The course will also prepare them to offer an interpretation of Literature from an Indian perspective.

UNIT-I

Literary and Intellectual background of genesis and development of Indian Writing in English.

UNIT-II

Toru Dutt	(i) "Sita"
	(ii) "Lotus"
	(iii) "Our Casurina Tree"
Sri Aurobindo	(i) A Tree
	(ii) Life and Death
	(iii) Bride of Fire

UNIT-III

Nissim Ezekiel	i)	"Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher"
	ii)	"Enterprises"
	iii)	"Background, Casually"
	iv)	"Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S."
Kamala Das	i)	"An Introduction"
	ii)	"My Grandmother's House"
	iii)	"The Sunshine Cat"
	iv)	"The Invitation"

UNIT-IV

Raja Rao — Kanthapura

UNIT-V

Arundhati Roy — The God of Small Things

UNIT-VI

Vijay Tendulkar — The Vultures

MODE OF EXAMINATION

The paper will be divided into Sections A, B and C.

Section A **Multiple Choice Questions** **M.M=80**

Q.No.1 will be an objective type question covering the entire syllabus. Twelve objectives, two from each unit, with four options each will be set and the candidate will be required to write the correct option and not specify by putting a tick mark (P). Any ten out of twelve are to be attempted.

Each objective will be for one mark. **(10×1=10)**

Section B Short Answer Questions

Q.No.2 comprises short answer type questions covering the entire syllabus. Four questions will be set and the candidate will be required to attempt any two questions in 80-100 words.

Each answer will be evaluated for 5 marks. **(5×2=10)**

Section C Long Answer Questions

Q. No. 3 comprises long answer type questions from the entire syllabus. Six questions, one from each unit, will be set and the candidate will be requried to attempt any five questions in about 300-350 words.

Each answer will be evaluated for 12 marks. (5×12=60)

SUGGESTED READINGS

Alighieri, Dante. Inferno. Chartwell Books, 2021.

Braida, Antonella, and Calè Luisa. Dante on View: the Reception of Dante in the Visual and Performing Arts. Routledge, 2017.

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Eichenbaum, Boris, et al. “The Structure of Gogol's 'The Overcoat.” “ Russian Review, vol. 22,“no. 4, 1963, p. 377., doi:10.2307/126672.

Existentialism in The Trial by Kafka." ukessays.com. 11 2018. UKEssays. 07 2021 www.ukessays.com/essays/english-literature/existentialism-of-franz-kafka-english-“literature-essay.php?vref=1.

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Grass Günter. The Tin Drum. Vintage, 2006.

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Malcolm, Janet. Reading Chekhov: a Critical Journey. Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2014

Nemoto, Reiko Tachibana, et al. "Gunter Grass's The Tin Drum and Oe Kenzaburo's My Tear"A Study in Convergence." Contemporary Literature, vol. 34, no. 4, 1993, 740., doi:10.2307/1208808.

The Greatest Short Stories of Leo Tolstoy. Fingerprint Classics, 2019.

Watson, G. J. "Chekhov and the Drama of Social Change: 'The Cherry Orchard.'" Drama,"132-146., doi:10.1007/978-1-349-17121-7_7."13"Monika Le"Alt"B"Ctrl

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INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH : THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE

STRUCTURE

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Objectives

1.3 The Nature and Scope of Indian English Literature

1.4 British Rule in India

1.5 The Beginning of Education

1.6 Sir William Jones

1.7 Rammohan Roy and the Reformers

1.8 The Missionaries

1.9 Lord Macaulay and After

1.10 The Birth of Indo-Anglian Literature

1.11 Some Other Pioneers

1.12 Indian Literature in English : An Overview

1.13 Self -Assessment Questions (SAQs)

1.14 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

1.15 Let Us Sum Up

1.16 Examination Oriented Questions

1.17 Answer Key to Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

1.18 Suggested Reading

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian English Literature refers to the body of work by writers in India who write in English and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. It is also associated with the works of members of the Indian Diaspora. It began as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with the nature and scope of Indian Writing in English. This unit will also make the learner aware of the circumstances that led to the beginning of a new genre in literature, that is, Indian Writing in English.

1.3 THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Indian English Literature began as an interesting by-product of an exciting encounter in the late eighteenth century between Britain and India. As a result of this encounter, as F.W. Bain puts it, "India, a withered trunk...suddenly shot out with foreign foliage" (Naik 1). One form this foliage took was that of original writing in English by Indians, thus partially fulfilling Samuel Daniel's sixteenth century prophecy concerning the English language:

> Who (in time) knows whither we may vent
> The treasures of our tongue? To what strange shores
> This gain of our best glory shall be sent
> T'enrich unknowing nations with our stores.
> What worlds in th'yet unformed orient
> May come refined with th'accents that are ours. (11)

The first problem that confronts the historian of Indian English Literature is to define its nature and scope clearly. The question has been made rather complicated owing to two factors: first, this body of writing has, from time to

time, been designated variously as "Indo-Anglian literature," 'Indian Writing in English' and 'Indo-English literature'; secondly, the failure to make clear-cut distinctions has also often led to a confusion between categories such as 'Anglo-Indian literature,' literature in the Indian languages translated into English and original composition in English by Indians.

In the early nineteenth century, there set in a movement in India towards a new life and a new thought that is generally characterised as the Renaissance in India. This Renaissance, this new birth in India, became a thing of immense importance both to herself and to the world in due course of time. It became important to herself because of all that is meant for her in the recovery or the change of her time-old spirit and national ideals, to the world because of the immense possibilities involved in the reasserting of a force that is in many respects unlike any other and its genius very different from the mentality and spirit that have hitherto governed the modern idea in manhood. Subtle critics and thinkers like James H. Cousins and Sri Aurobindo have suggestively touched various sides of the Renaissance in India.

The term "Renaissance" carries the mind back to the turning-point of European culture to which it was first applied; that was not so much reawakening as an overturn and reversal, a seizure of Christianised, Teutonised, feudalised Europe by the old Graeco-Latin spirit and form with complex and momentous results which came from it. That is decidedly not a type of renaissance that is all possible in India. There is a closer resemblance to the Celtic movement in Ireland, the attempt of a reawakened national spirit to find a new impulse of self-expression which shall give the spiritual force for a great reshaping and rebuilding India something of the same kind of movement appeared and took a pronounced turn.

James H. Cousins puts the question in his book, *The Renaissance in India* (1918), whether the word "renaissance" at all applies in the Indian context since India has always been awake and stood in no need of reawakening. There is a certain truth in it and to an open minded person, struck by the

living continuity of past and present India, it may be especially apparent; but that is not how we, the Indians see it. There was a period, brief but extremely disastrous, of the dwindling of that great fire of life, even a moment of incipient disintegration, an adventure by chance, inwardly by an increasing torpor of the creative spirit in religion and art. All this pointed to a lowest point of setting energy, the evening-time of which, according to the Indian concept of *Yugas* (cycles of time), a new age had to start. It was that moment and the pressure of a superimposed European culture which followed it that made the reawakening inevitable.

While considering the question of the Renaissance in India, Sri Aurobindo takes three factors into account:

(i) the great past of Indian culture and life with the moment of inadaptive torpor into which it has lapsed.

(ii) the first period of the Western contact in which it seemed for a moment likely to perish by slow decomposition

(iii) the ascending movement which first broke some clarity of expression.

J. H. Cousins has fixed his eye on Indian spirituality which has always maintained itself even in the decline of the national vitality and which has always saved India at every critical moment of her destiny. It was certainly her spirituality which has been the starting-point of her renaissance. Any other nation under the same pressure would have long ago perished soul and body. But India kept her essential spirit, though a great change overtook the body. The shaping of a new body, of new philosophical, artistic, literary, cultural, political and social forms by the same soul rejuvenescent was the type of the Indian renaissance – forms "not contradictory of the truths of life which the old expressed, but rather expressive of those truths restated, cured of defect, completed" (Aggrawal 3).

1.4 BRITISH RULE IN INDIA

As a result of the Indian renaissance, nationalism along with spiritual forces began to assert itself. It sharply reacted against the imperialistic powers, especially the British regime. When the British came to India, the Mughals were still in the saddle. In coming over to India, their basic motive was to trade and 'get rich quick.' They succeeded in the pursuance of their design and established the East India Company in 1600 A.D. taking advantage of the disturbing situations in the country, they grew ambitious and won many estates and became rulers here. They continued to govern the country till 1947 when after a long struggle, Indian people compelled them to quit and go.

1.5 THE BEGINNING OF EDUCATION

While administering the country, the Englishmen gave attention to the problem of education. The burning question before them was whether India was to be given wholly Westernized system of education with English as the medium of instruction or she was merely to continue the study of Sanskrit and Persian and impart education with the various regional languages as media. Macaulay's celebrated "Minute" clinched the issue at last in favour of English.

Although the East India Company was founded long ago, the British cared little or nothing about the education of Indian people up to the eighteenth century. Thereafter, the Governors of the provinces and successive Governor-General showed little interest in Hindu or Islamic culture and hence they did not tackle the problem of illiteracy among the Indian masses. There were, at that time, four types of indigenous educational institutions in India:

1. Pathshalas of the Hindus
2. Madrassas of the Muslims
3. Persian Schools; and
4. Schools teaching through the modern Indian languages

Warren Hastings founded and liberally endowed the Calcutta Madrassa in 1781. In the previous year, James Augustus Hicky had brought out at Calcutta the first newspaper of India, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette.*

1.6 SIR WILLIAM JONES

It was actually Sir William Jones who showed real interest in the education of India and his researches in the educational field ushered the country in a new era. He was a liberal Englishman and tried to understand the Indian populace and its problems. He had respect for the sacred literature of India and looked upon himself "as a servant, rather than as a ruler, of the people in whose midst he had to live and move" (Aggrawal 4). In his poem, " Ode in Imitation of Alcaeus," he pointed out that not 'high raised battlement, or laboured mound' constitutes a state; 'starred and spangled courts' are but dens 'where low-crowned baseness wafts perfumes to pride'; in his opinion, 'high minded Men' alone make a strong and stable state. Jones founded Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal and published powerful renderings of *Shakuntalam* and *Hitopadesha.* He addressed a number of odes to Hindu Gods and wrote a long verse tale, *The Enchanted Fruit*, which is based on the *Mahabharata* episode. Jones was an enlightened Englishman, who was a source of inspiration not only to his countrymen, but also to Indians. He prompted them "to study the sacred Indian Literature reverently, to bring it to the notice of the masses, and to help the Indian renaissance to its fruitful blossoming in the fullness of time." (Iyenger 2-3). Jones and his comrades in Oriental scholarship were surely inspired by a stern, missionary zeal.

In 1791, Jonathan Duncan started the Sanskrit College at Banaras. Neither Charles Grant's "Observations," nor Lord Moira's "Minute," nor the British Parliament's initiative in 1813, nor yet the formation of the Committee of Public instruction in 1823, attempted any far-reaching solution of the educational problem.

In the meantime, three factors suddenly emerged and defined with great clarity the course of education in India for the next one hundred years and more. These were:

1. the new intellectualism and renascent ardour among the Indians, as symbolised by Raja Rammohan Roy;
2. the perseverance of the Christian missionaries;
3. the perseverance and metallic clarity of Macaulay's English prose style.

1.7 RAMMOHAN ROY AND THE REFORMERS

A selected band of Indians headed by Raja Rammohan Roy had tasted the fruits of Western literature and culture at close quarters and they naturally contrasted the West at its best with the decadence of Indian civilisation. They were seized by a spirit of intolerance and aggressive reform. They strongly pleaded for the introduction of a system of Western education with English as a medium of instruction. With the generous help of two Englishmen, David Hare and Edward Hyde East , Raja Rammohan Roy inaugurated the Calcutta Hindu College, which later developed into Presidency College. Starting with only one hundred students in 1817, the college steadily grew much and more popular and the number of students quadrupled within the next twenty years. In Bombay and Madras, however, people were rather slow to follow Calcutta's lead in educational matters.

The renaissance in modern India begins with Raja Rammohan Roy. Born in a village Radhanagar in Bengal on May 22, 1772, he died at Bristol on September 27, 1833. Roy was destined to act as a bridge between India and England. He had mastered many languages – Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Hindustani and Bengali. After travelling within and outside India and making some business ventures at Calcutta, he served in the districts under two British officials – Woodforde and Digby. While working with Digby, Roy completed the mastery of the English language. In 1821, he started a weekly paper, *Sambad Kaumudi,* which launched a sustained onslaught on the forces of prejudice and reaction. He was an intensely religious man, a Hindu and a

Brahmin, who was always ready to accept 'the best' of Christianity and Islam. His name is permanently associated with the abolition of *sati* system and child marriage. He was the founder of Brahmo Samaj.

Rammohan Roy published a number of pioneering works. In 1820, his *Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness* came out. It proves his intense respect for the gospels of Christianity. His other writings were: *Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance* (1822) and *Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India, and of the General Character and Condition of its Native Inhabitants* (1832). Besides these brochures, he published several other papers and pamphlets touching upon almost every aspect of national life. He was indefatigable and refused to spare himself.

Besides Raja Rammohan Roy, there were many other reformers working at the same time. Among the members of Brahmo Samaj, there were Devendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen and others. Inspired by Roy, Keshab, in 1870, founded the "Indian Reform Association," which launched a comprehensive programme of social and educational reforms. The programme of the association was carried through five sections, each with a Secretary of its own. These sections were:

1. Female Empowerment
2. Education of the working classes
3. Cheap Literature
4. Temperance
5. Charity

The Brahmo Samaj inspired similar other movements in India. The most important ones were the Prarthana Samaj and the Arya Samaj. The Prarthana Samaj was founded in 1867 in Bombay, its leader being Dr. Atmaram Pandurang (1823-98). Keshab Chandra Sen greatly influenced this Samaj; later, R.G. Bhandarkar and M.G. Ranade joined it and infused new

strength in worship and social reform. This Samaj subscribed to the beliefs of the Brahmo Samaj.

The Arya Samaj was a more potential force in cultural and social fields than the Prarthana Samaj. It was founded by Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1875 in Bombay. The Arya Samaj laid down some fundamental doctrines and rules of conduct. Three of them may be noted here:

1. The Arya Samaj shall regard the *Vedas* alone as independently and absolutely authoritative.

2. Every member shall cheerfully contribute a hundredth part of the money he has earned towards the fund of the Samaj, the Arya Vidyalaya and the *Arya Prakash* paper.

3. The *Vedas* and ancient *Arsha Granthas* shall be studied and taught in the Arya Vidyalaya and true and right training, calculated to improve males and females, shall be imparted on Vedic lines.

In 1877, these doctrines were replaced by the ten principles. Instead of No.1 above, it simply laid down that the *Vedas* are the Books of True Knowledge which the members should study. The other nine principles merely inculcated virtue and morality to which no religion can possibly take any exception. Apart from these Samajas and their distinguished followers, the names of Ramakrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda will always be remembered for their contributions to the furtherance of the cause of social and spiritual regeneration of the country. They were great saints and seers and had realized God. The reputation earned by Swami Vivekananda through the Parliament of Religions at Chicago (U.S.A) made him a world figure and raised the prestige of India and Hinduism very high. He laid the foundation of the great organisation – Ramakrishna Math and Mission – which bears the name of his guru. It was he who made it "the greatest spiritual force in modern India" (Majumdar 122).

1.8 THE MISSIONARIES

The second factor which determined the course of education in India was the advent and activities of Christian missionaries. The ultimate aim of the missionaries has always been the proselytisation of the Hindu, Muslim and other non-Christian communities in India. They did some pioneering work in the field of education and social service. The earliest among them were the three protestant missionaries – Carey, Marshman and Ward who began their work at the Danish Settlement of Serampore in 1793. They have become famous in history as the *Serampore Trio* and it must be admitted that they made an excellent combination from the missionary point of view because Carey was a great propagandist, Ward was a painter and Marshman was a school teacher. But their zeal outran among Indians by their publication entitled *Addresses to Hindus and Mahomedans*. The Company had to intervene and reaffirm its policy of religious neutrality. The missionaries and their friends began an agitation in England intended to show that the anti-missionary policy of the Company was opposed to the teachings of Christ and that its neglect of the education of the Indian people was absolutely unjustifiable. Their agitation obtained considerable support in Charles Grant (1746-1823) and led ultimately to the educational clause of the Charter Act of 1813. Side by side with this agitation in England, some of the Company's officials in India supported the cause of Indian education. Prominent among them was Lord Minto, who was the Governor-General of India during 1806-13. Minto was personally an admirer of Oriental literature and felt that its study would be useful to the Western nations themselves. He was, therefore, very anxious that Englishman should give all possible encouragement to the study and preservation of Indian culture. In a Minute, dated 6th March 1811, he wrote:

It is seriously to be lamented that a nation particularly distinguished for its love and successful cultivation of letters in other parts of the empire should have failed to extend its fostering care to the literature of the Hindoos, and to aid in opening to the learned in Europe the repositories of their literature. (48-49)

As a result of this combined agitation in England and India the question of Indian education came up for discussion when the Charter of the Company became due for renewal in 1813. The subject that was discussed most was that of a suitable agency for the spread of Indian education. One party, whose view is typified in that of Charles Grant, believed that the best education for Indians was to teach them English through the missionaries. The other party, which was represented by Minto, believed that the best education for Indians was that of their own classics through the liberal endowment from the Company. The Charter Act of 1813 reconciled the views of both parties and proved a turning-point in the history of Indian education. With it, agitation which Grant and Wilberforce carried on for nearly twenty years came to successful conclusion; the education of the Indian people was now included within the duties of the Company; a comparatively large amount was annually fixed for acquisition of land in India and establishment of English schools, thereby laying the foundation of the modern educational system.

The period of twenty years between the two great Charters of the Company, viz. those of 1813 and 1838, was one of the experiments in the fields of Indian education. The Charter of 1838 made the provisions that no Indian should be debarred from holding any post under the Company by reason of his caste or creed. It also threw India open to missionaries from all the countries.

1.9 LORD MACAULAY AND AFTER

The third factor to decide the course of education in India was Lord Macaulay's "Minute" dated 2nd February 1835, which is a document of great historical significance. Macaulay was of the view that it was necessary and possible to make natives of this country good English scholars and that to this end our efforts ought to be directed. About the medium of instruction on grounds of expediency and desirability, Macaulay observed:

All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor

scientific information, and are moreover too poor and crude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. It seems to be admitted on all sides that the intellectual improvement of those classes of the people who have the means of pursuing higher studies can at present be effected only by means of some language not vernacular amongst them. (70-71)

This condemnation of the spoken language of the people naturally left the choice of a medium of instruction between Sanskrit and Arabic on the one hand and English on the other. Macaulay admittedly did not have a knowledge of either Arabic or Sanskrit, but he gave it as the considered opinion that 'a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia.' On the other hand, Macaulay was eloquent in praise of English and its utility in India because of its being the language of the ruling class, the language of commerce throughout the East and because of the familiarity already gained with it by the higher classes of Indians. Macaulay strongly recommended that the object of educational policy in India should be the spread of Western learning through the medium of English language. He also suggested that the existing institutions of oriental learning should be closed forthwith and that funds thus released should be used for the promotion of English education.

On March 7, 1835, the Governor-General-in-Council accorded official sanction to Macaulay's policy. Lord William Bentinck passed the Resolution that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India; and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."

But the matter did not end with the adoption of Lord Bentinck's resolution. There was a conflict brewing between the Indian languages on one hand and English on the other. To close this conflict, Lord Auckland, the then Governor-General of India, put forth his formula of compromise, which is usually known as "Auckland's Minute." He shrewdly guessed that the real

cause of the conflict was financial and that each party – Oriental and Anglican- would allow the other to work undisturbed if adequate funds were made available for both. The entire additional cost was estimated at Rs. 31000 per annum and Lord Auckland gladly accepted it to satisfy the Oriental party without harming the interests of the Anglicists. However, the medium of instruction continued to be English as suggested by Macaulay. Lord Auckland turned down the recommendations of Adam regarding the improvement and extension of indigenous elementary schools. He considered Adam's plan as "utopian and impracticable," but had he accepted it, the history of mass education in India would have been different.

Of great historical significance was Wood's Despatch of July 19 1854, also known as *The Education Despatch of the Court of Directors*. Charles Wood was then the President of the Board of Control. The despatch was a long document of a hundred paragraphs and deals with several questions of great educational importance. It mentions the objects of educational policy pursued by the Company, the controversy between the Anglicists and the Company, the controversy between the Anglicists and Orientalists and the medium of instruction. It directs that English and Indian language should be cultivated together to spread proper education in India. It also spells out certain new schemes, such as the establishment of the Education Department in each of the five provinces, the setting up of universities, the creation of a network of Graded schools all over India, employment of educated Indians and female education. Soon after the receipt of the Despatch of 1854, every provincial Government in India organised a Department of Public Instruction under a Director. An adequate number of educational inspectors were appointed in order to assist the Director in his work. Large sums of money were made available to the Education Departments for the execution of their schemes and the organisation of the modern system of education in India began in the right earnest.

The above account of the beginnings of education in India informs us how English came to stay in this country. From it, we also learn that the germs

of Indo-Anglian literature may be discovered in the early days of English education in India.

Under the Macaulayan dispensation, which was the backbone of English education in India, education was to be imparted to the selected few in the government institutions. But it was expected that the young men who thus received education would return to their villages and spread new education to the masses. Thus, from the intellectual classes culture was to filter down and in a decade or two the Utopia of mass education would be within sight. But these expectations proved altogether illusory. The educated Indians made efficient teachers and patient clerks: some fared remarkably well as administrators and judges. There were publicists and platform orators too. People had even begun to believe that the future of India was bright and the redemption was near.

But the 'filtration theory' did not work. The hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. And also, the newly educated Indian tended to be "an absurd copy of his Western contemporary" (Iyengar 6). The educated community evolved into a superior caste that drifted apart and speedily lost touch with the masses. The alien culture learned at schools and colleges made Indian youth hanker after the thrills of urban life and finally made them "incredible anachronisms" in their own once happy homes. A new generation conversed and corresponded in English, 'Indianisms' and 'Babuisms' were the order of the day. Under such circumstances, the wit of the educated Indian seesawed between his mother-tongue and English and again between the Western and Oriental civilisations. It was surely an uncongenial atmosphere which would hardly permit any healthy literary growth.

1.10 THE BIRTH OF INDO-ANGLIAN LITERATURE

Even then, many Indians quickly mastered the intricacies of the English language and made it a fit vehicle for the communication of ideas. Poetic composition was not yet possible, but letters, memoranda, monographs and translations in English appeared in due course. Presently, Indians boldly

ventured into the domain of journalism; they published political and economic pamphlets, partial portraits of men of importance, even occasional skits and short stories. As more and more Indians received education in English, the Indo-Anglian found his audience increasing and this naturally encouraged him to write more frequently.

Another factor that inspired the Indo-Anglian to attempt self-expression in English was the meritorious work of the Anglo-Indian poets. Sir William Jones, John Leyden, Henry Derozio, Meredith Parker, David Lester Richardson, Sir Edwin Arnold, Sir Alfred Lyall, Trego Webb, Lawrence Hope and William Waterfield were among the many Anglo-Indian administrators and Orientalists who derived their poetic inspiration from traditional Indian themes and thus added a new chapter to the story of English poetry. Indians who read the works of these poets were in turn inspired to try their own hands at poetic composition. They had before them for their models the unique achievements of the Anglo-Indians and the great masters – Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, etc – of English literature, but spiritual sustenance was yet lacking. The Indo- Anglians of the early days were the creators of a civilization arrested on the way; their past was a hazy thing of humiliations and frustrations and their future was an intriguing and uncertain thing. They were, thus, in a state of spiritual drift and rudderlessness. By and by, the clouds began to clear and out of life-giving rains of a new culture they tried to re-discover their souls. Bengal took the lead and pulled the country out of stupor in the era of re-discovery.

1.11 SOME OTHER PIONEERS

The earliest writings of Indo-Anglians were in prose. The Indians of a century ago or so had to talk to or appeal to their English rulers on various subjects of public importance. A speech had to be carefully prepared for this and a pamphlet had to be written as published. As the number of English knowing Indians increased, publications also got diversified. The prose writings of Raja Rammohan Roy have already been discussed in this chapter. Roy

showed, through his pioneering books, a direction to talented people with creative urge. Beside Rammohan Roy, there were many other Indian prose writers in those days. Their works can be seen in old libraries of the country, although their intrinsic value is almost negligible.

Hassan Ali's *Observations on the Musalmans of India* (1832) is among the earliest books written by a Muslim on Muslims. P. Raja Gopaul's *Mission to Siam* (1820) and Mohan Lal's *Travels in the Punjab* (1834) are among the early travel books or memoirs, Kavali Venkata Ramaswami's *Biographical Sketches of Dekkan Poets* embodies crude attempts at biography. In the realm of poetry, too, the earliest attempt by an Indian was made in 1830 when Kashiprasad Ghosh's *The Shair and Other poems* appeared. Thus, English seemingly came to stay and Indo-Anglian literature became a reality. The contribution of Bengal to the growth of Indo- Anglian literature is immense and remarkable. The renaissance in India took place mostly because of Bengal.

1.12 INDIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH : AN OVERVIEW

Indian Literature in English might as yet appear as a conundrum. India is known for different vernacular language and English is the language of England. English in India still reflects the stereotypical colonial hangover. But without resorting to such platitudes like English being an international language, and writing in English in India being one major way of getting noticed overseas etc, I might state that there is as yet little need for pleading the case for the existence and flourishing of Indian writings in English. But in festivals like this one where we are celebrating poetry from India under several sections like women's writing and Dalit writing and writing in the regional languages, how do we envisage the situation of the writer in English? A fish out of water? Or a sore thumb? Barring the specific curio aspect of the language the experience of the Indian writer can unarguably be evidenced through this chunk of the Indian literary spectrum—this usually gets noticed in the west but sometimes for the wrong reasons. It is my argument in the following that the Indian writer in English is not a species apart but very much an integral part of the Indian literary scene. There is this feeling that writing in English from India is

substandard and middle class, barring of course a few exceptional cases. This might be true primarily because the language itself is currently in use in living situations only among the educated upper middle class. The working class do not have easy access to this nor do they require it, and in the case of the upper class there is virtually very little self-reflexivity nor commitment to the literary.

India is a land of violent contrasts—while the sweltering heat of summer blisters, the Indo- Gangetic plains, perennial snow showers quietly on the calm heights of the Himalayas in the north; while the monsoon racks violently in the deep-south, the northwest regions reel under severe droughts. Similarly, there yet survives the fabled rich image of the India with turbaned Maharajahs riding on bedecked elephants, of snake charmers, sadhus, curry and carpets—of unimaginable riches, ease and wealth, of promiscuity and extravagance, while alongside there exists the contradictory image of heat and dust, of brutalizing want and agonizing poverty, of inhuman exploitation and barbaric ignorance. For the most—a wounded civilization, with a glorious heritage. (See Naipaul, *A Wounded Civilization*, and A. L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*) Here is at once the sublime and the grotesque coexisting in one plane. Perhaps, this could also account for the multiplicity of voices in Indian writing. Of course, India is like any other country in the world with its own history of battles and conquests, of treachery and turbulence. Indian literature is like the literature of everywhere else, and yet it is like the literature of nowhere else. In its indigenous diversity of paradox and unpredictability, of reception and acquiescence, of adaptation and assimilation, it survives and prevails in its own identity. It is different and it is Indian.

Multiplicity of languages is among the fundamental experience of being an Indian, and a plurality of cultural experience constitutes its underpinnings. There is this oft expressed view that Indian Literature is one though written in many languages—*Ekam sat vipra bahuda vadanti* (truth is one the sages express it differently). Here are nearly two dozen languages that have official status, and living literatures of their own, with equally highly evolved vocabulary and scripts!

And yet there is something exotic and strange in the manner in which such writing is received in the West. Granted, Salman Rushdie and now Vikram Seth and Arundhati Roy and even Chetan Bhagat are household names, but still there are more than a few frills attached to the brown person who wields the English quill. Though slightly on this side of poetic exaggeration and humour, I would like to draw your attention to this one instance:John Updike has a poem called "I Missed His Book, But I read His Name," with this epigraph: *The Silver Pilgrimage*, by M.Anantanarayanan…160 pages. Criterion. $3.95— The Times.

Though authors are a dreadful clan
To be avoided if you can,
I'd like to meet the Indian,
M.Anantanarayanan.

We have the diametrically opposite reaction in the unceremonious references to Indian English poets in the posthumously published letters of Philip Larkin. Either way—whether he/she is received in the west with a mixture of exaggerated exoticism and awe or dismissed with racial derision and ethnic contempt—the Indian writer in English continues to create an international readership or, most certainly, a market overseas, as the phenomenal success of *The God of Small Things* would reveal. The only question that often has bothered me is, who the Indian writer is writing for? And because this occasion does not needlessly warrant a critical perspective, I do not propose to struggle with such socio-political issues related to class, economy, production, publicity and marketing. I shall now proceed, albeit in a rudimentary manner, to outline the growth and development of Indian Writing in English.

The end of the British Raj did not signal the end of English in India ; on the other hand, the language had by then very much seeped into the Indian creative psyche. By the time Prof. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar's comprehensive and detailed survey *Indian Writing in English* came out in 1962, there was no longer any necessity to debate the existence of a parallel literature in the

English language arguably similar in more than one way to the various regional literatures. In the last four decades, the number of Indians writing in English has increased considerably so much so that a pressing need for creative appraisal and evaluation in terms of a pan-Indian aesthetic surfaced of necessity (Many conferences and Symposia like the one hosted by Prof. C.D.Narasimhaiah at (Dhvanyaloka) to develop a *Common Indian Poetic* for all Indian literatures have taken place in many parts of the country.) There has also been a similar rise in the percentage of readership as the huge number of publishers and distributors of books and periodicals in English that have emerged of late would reveal. The language has not died out in India but survived and prevailed in indigenous artistry.

In the context of Indians writing in English, as with many others in their regional languages as well, the process of coming to terms with tradition and the contemporary towards developing an indigenous sensibility has indeed been a large and complex historical process, which has evolved through a variety of phases. Critics have been able to discern four major phases in this trajectory, that are obvious and, for the main, largely accepted: the first phase is one of complete subservience and intellectual slavery, the second one of total defiance and a falling back on desperate nativity and national identity, the third a sort of internationalism and universalisation (*sadharanikarana*), and the last, almost concurrent with the third, one of creative integration. These are of course, generalized views and as such are not strict compartments; there are overlappings, anticipations, and retrospective movements as well. However, this way of mapping out the geography of Indian Writing in English, certainly has its advantages, especially when one approaches the terrain for the first time. In the history of this literature as with any other, there have also been phases of experimentation with content as well as form. For a language that has been implanted from a different locale and culture, and that which has been absorbed and assimilated by a once-colonized mind, writing in the English language in India exhibits a dramatic and dynamic history. It has also generated a whole new tradition fully immersed in indigenous values and culture. Writers of the stature of Gandhi and Nehru with their clear-cut prose, R.K. Narayan

and Raja Rao with their sheer individualized imaginative recreations of characters, locale and territory, Kamala Das and Nissim Ezekiel with their poetic voices, as well as the new generations of postcolonial writers like Arundhati Roy who has been able to carve out a nativised idiom and language, have in their own individualized ways grappled with a living tradition while constantly renewing their tryst with modernity. In many ways too writers in the English language have concurrently struggled with their generative roots and inborn tensions similar to the ones confronted by their contemporaries writing in the regional languages.

Indian Writing in English, wrote M.K.Naik, "began as an interesting by- product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India." (M.K.Naik 1). The important words here are *vigorous and enterprising*, which imply a sense of ordered action or progress, and *stagnant and chaotic,* which in turn imply disorder and inaction. Postcolonial critics like Homi Bhabha and others have drawn attention to the colonizing strategy of dividing "colonial space" into binary opposites—that of nature and culture, chaos and civility etc. The colonizing enterprise of the British subsumed the Indian subcontinent through its strategic deployment of such culture shocks. As we gather from Naik's generalized statement, playing the Indian's distorted psyche against its own self-styled superior order and culture, the British, unconsciously though at first, set in motion a new literature of the subject race. The birth of Indian writing in English could be traced to this paradox of subjectivity and reclamation of the self. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his, *An Autobiography* (1947):

> I have become a queer mixture of the East and the West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me as she does to all her children, in innumerable ways… I cannot get rid of that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions… I am a

> stranger and an alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling.

But much before Nehru felt this sort of alienation in terms of a national identity, Indian intellectuals of the early part of the nineteenth century were compelled by the pressures of the colonial propulsion to subject their own selves to the superior civilizing culture of their colonial masters. They were branded with the need to de-school themselves and build up a newer Western identity. Thus the reformist zeal of a Raja Ram Mohan Roy or a Vidyasagar could be accounted for by this compulsive colonial ideology. Alongside Macaulay's celebrated "Minute" that drastically waved aside everything Indian as hardly of any worth, while simultaneously highlighting the civilizing force of everything English, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, gave a highhanded call to Indians to learn and master the English language. The need of the hour was felt to be a collective purging of the ill effects of a dormant and static culture coupled with a grafting of the Western culture and value systems on to the thus uncontaminated tree of Indian life. Of course the coloniser's intent remained distinct from the colonial's. In this regard, K.N. Panikkar points out:

> The nineteenth century intellectuals were firm believers in the efficacy of enlightenement as a panacea. They traced the source of all ills in Indian society, including religious superstition and social obscurantism, to the general ignorance of the people. The dissemination of knowledge, therefore, occupied a central place in their programme of reform. Their ideas on education were different both in purpose and detail from the educational policy of the colonial rulers. While dissemination of the colonial ideology and utility for administrative needs were the main objectives of the educational policy of the British government, the educational programme of the Indian intellectuals was oriented to the regeneration of the country. (p. 8-9)

As for the creative writers of this formative period, there was but one obvious option – to write in the "more elite" language, and find their continuities in the great English literary tradition. They easily succumbed to the prescriptive role played by English literary canons and thus the earliest Indian writers in English were more Anglo than Indian in that sense. Perhaps for them the second category never existed—for a non-English identity would have necessitated an ejection of a *civilized* image which was the last thing they wanted. Therefore, we have in these writings a double struggle: a struggle to find a different harmony and a struggle to infuse the English muse to accept and bless. The writers who could represent the first phase of colonial writing would be: Henry Derozio (1809-31) whom Iyengar dubs "the marvelous boy who perished in his prime," (p.40) Kashiprasad Ghose (1809-73), Toru Dutt(1856-77) ["Beauty and tragedy and fatality crisscrossed in the life of Toru Dutt, and it is difficult, when talking about her poetry, to make any nice distinction between poetry and what C.S.Lewis would call 'poetolatory.'—Iyengar p.55] and Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-73). It was natural for them to tune unto the nightingale's throat and gather the sheaves of the great British bards. They let themselves be most profoundly influenced by the nineteenth century Romantics.

It is certainly one of the noted paradoxes of history that the English language, originally the most powerful weapon of colonization would prove to be the equally powerful weapon of decolonisation in the hands of a few Indian litterateurs. It is now a recognized fact that the study of English literature stimulated literary creations in many Indian languages too, notably in Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Gujarati. Even newer literary forms like the novel were incorporated into other regional writings. In a similar manner there was the incorporation of Indian narratives into the English language writings. Most ambitious writers moved from the easily accessible lyrical form into the most complex *Mahakavyas*. Almost every writer of any consequence has attempted a longer narrative in English. This however brought in a paradigm shift. The transition from the first docile phase to one of violent nationalism

and self-willed individual identity is certainly a shift in sensibilities. The second discernable phase begins roughly from a point of speculative intersection— a meeting and passing of three phenomenal men of vision— in 1893 Sri Aurobindo set sail for India after his Cambridge exposure, the same year that Vivekananda set forth to preach his gospel of man-making to the Parliament of World's Religions, and Gandhi set off on his South African journey in pursuit of a career in law. Their vessels might have perhaps crossed. Anyway their destinies most certainly crossed.

After the fateful First War of Indian Independence in 1857, Indians were undergoing a period of political and cultural fermentation. And now a new resurgent nationalism came into being. This forms the hallmark of the second phase of Indian writing in English too. In finally managing to free themselves from the cultural smokescreen of British colonialism, the Indian writers in English of this period take up a most ferociously defensive stance rooted in Indianness and Nationality. Condemned to be tongue-tied in English, the writer seeks a new voice conceived in the rich heritage and tradition of his motherland:

> Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati
> Has called to regions of eternal snow
> And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,
> Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow. (Sri Aurobindo, *Envoi*)

Elsewhere Sri Aurobindo remarked that when the educated youth of Bengal bowed their learned heads at the feet of the childlike saint of Dakshineshwar, Indian literary renaissance had begun (see *The Renaissance in India,* 1920). Nationalistic fervour gave more than sufficient impetus to a surge of creative activity—Indian poetry in English had started to breathe and come into its own. Non-fictional prose and fictional narratives underwent drastic political fermentation, and Indian drama in English began to make its presence felt. Although Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) would never have made any claims

to be a writer in English, the coveted Nobel prize conferred on him in 1913, for his rough translation of *Gitanjali* , accord him a significant place among the writers in English. Tagore's was a vision founded on individual and universal levels at the same time. His ideal of a *viswamanava* was rooted in Indian culture and the Upanishadic tradition. Lines like:

> Where the mind is without fear and head is held high;
> Where knowledge is free;
> Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
> Where words come out from the depth of truth;
> Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
> Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way in to the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
> Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever widening thought and action—
> Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake…

Ushered in a new sensibility that was at the same time not too foreign to the Celtic mind. No wonder W.B.Yeats showered praises on these fragments:

> I have carried the manuscript of these translations with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on top of omnibuses and in restaurants and I have often had to close it lest some stranger should see how much it moved me. These lyrics… display in their thought a world I have dreamt of all my lifelong… As the generations pass, travelers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth. At every moment the heart of this poet flows

> outward to these without derogation or condescension, for it has known that they will understand; and it has filled itself with the circumstances of their lives. (W.B. Yeats on Tagore's *Gitanjali,* see Iyengar, p.162*)*

Tagore identified himself with his bardic role, wrote primarily in Bengali, and remained an aesthete till his death, quite unlike his contemporary Sri Aurobindo, who vanished like a meteor in the politically charged air only to reappear in the isolation of Pondicherry. The turn of the century produced the most disarmingly nationalistic of writings ever in the English language by Indians, while the long shadow of these two giants fill the literary scene. It may not be out of place here to venture to say that the oppressive burden of the English language together with its retinue of imperialistic cultural devices compelled the Indian psyche to "awaken" and seek total identity with what was considered at best Indian. While Tagore pursued the melodious strain of Baul mysticism, Sri Aurobindo sought the sublime in the Vedic and Tantric sources. Tagore's was a movement towards the lyrical while the Aurobindian lean was towards the epic. Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol,* that like Goethe's *Faust* took about fifty years in the making, needs to be seen as the culmination of the nineteenth century spirit of synthesis and spiritual enterprise. *Savitri*, running into 23813 lines in three parts with 12 books and 49 cantos is presumably the longest single poem in the English language. I believe that this stupendous epic of multiple-spiritual dimensions, would characteristically reflect the entire epoch's psyche. Taking for its central theme the well known tale of Satyavan and Savitri as narrated in the *Mahabharata* (*Vana Parva*) the poem has been transmuted into a modern Indian *Mahakavya* in the line of Vyasa and Valmiki by the poet who made its poetic treatment an integral part of his life.

However, it is equally unfortunate that the Indian Renaissance set into movement by the great nationalist awakening and pioneered by the

spiritual luminaries, who for the most part, chose to write in the coloniser's language, should have been curtailed in midflight and not allowed to flourish the full circle towards its natural culmination. The post- Independence condition after 1947 was one rather of exuberance and irony in an equal measure than any soul-searching for individual values or national ethos. In fact after the political withdrawal of the British there was felt scant need for any further nationalizing spirit. What was required was an assessment and a looking back at the immediate past:

> My tongue in English chains,
> I return, after a generation, to you.
> I am at the end
> Of my Dravidic tether…
> (R.Parthasarathy, "*Exile*")

The force that woke a nation from two hundred years of lethargy and shook it to its very foundation petered into the mere baseless vainglory of the self confronted by the imported European modernist tropes and a new poetics liberally transplanted from the West. Modernism in Indian literatures did not develop out of any historical necessity but was intellectually incorporated as an aesthetic strategy, and hence lacked in natural vigour and creative energy to sustain itself. As for any nativised experience and indigenousness , the post independence phase was more keen on breaking away barriers of all sorts than on negotiating such vital and crucial questions. For the pressing need for asserting one's cultural integrity was lost and now what appeared as desirable was to reach across to new cultures and continents in one's own right.

In the transition from the nationalist to the post Independence phase, Indian English Fiction evolved a great deal, alongside non-fictional prose. M.K.Naik in his *A History of Indian English Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982) has chosen to entitle an entire chapter "The Gandhian Whirlwind- 1920-1947." The withdrawal from the political sphere of both

Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Sri Aurobindo, in the first decade of the twentieth century set the arena ready for the entry of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi fresh from his *satyagraha* triumph in South Africa. Political writing drew immense strength from the Gandhian philosophy of non violence and soul-force, and Gandhi himself wrote in a deceptively simple English which had begun by then to achieve a national character.

It would be worthwhile to remember that both Gandhi and Nehru had their tremendous political images and hence their influence lay far beyond the mere literary. The men themselves were the influence. Their message was embedded in their life styles. We read in Gandhi's introduction to *My Experiments with Truth* (1940):

> The seeker after truth should be humbler than the dust. The world crushes the dust under its feet, but the seeker after truth should be so humble himself that even the dust could crush him. Only then, and not till then, will we have a glimpse of truth. (xi)

This is a kind of humility that the Mahatma practiced in his own life. Nehru on the other hand was a pragmatist and towards the end of his *The Discovery of India*, we read:

> Every culture has certain values attached to it, limited and conditioned by that culture. The people governed by that culture takes these values for granted and attribute a permanent validity to them. So the values of our present day culture may not be permanent and final; nevertheless they have an essential importance for us for they represent the thought and spirit of the age we live in. A few seers and geniuses, looking into the future, may have a completer vision of humanity and the universe; they are of the vital stuff out of which all real advance comes. The vast majority of people do not even catch up to

> the present-day values, though they may talk about them in the jargon of the day, and they live imprisoned in the past. (4th ed. London: Meridian, 1956.p. 573)

Suffice it to say that it is the combined vision of both these men that engineered the emergent postcolonial India. They were not *literary* in their writings and neither attempted the creative variety of writing, but their influence in the imagination of a people was so overpowering and far-reaching. More specially the influence of Gandhi reached deep down into the psyche, so much so that the greatest period of Indian fiction in English falls under his shadow. The much acclaimed Indian trio—Mulk Raj Anand (b.1905), R.K.Narayan (b.1907) and Raja Rao (b.1908)—were and continue to be hard-core Gandhians, while they trace, each in his own individualistic manner, the graph of Indian fiction in English. Anand's fiction has been shaped by what he himself calls "the double burden on my shoulders, the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalayas of the Indian past." (Quoted by Naik, p. 155) His is a fiction drawn from the dregs of life, of Dostoevskian scale, of the insulted and the humiliated. Among the three, Anand's style is direct and less embellished, and his influence on regional literatures has been deep. For R.K. Narayan his fictional *Malgudi* affords a locale to explore and create variations on an indigenous scale; his characters are life-like, and many, like Swami, most refreshingly endearing. Narayan's narratives are like "the boy's will," fresh and free. Of the trio, Raja Rao is more philosophically and theoretically sophisticated. His concerns are also deeper and more intense than the other two. In his forward to *Kanthapura* (1938), Raja Rao writes:

> We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.

Raja Rao gives utterance to the self-reflexivity of the Indian writer of English when he says that: "One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own." This self-consciousness distinguishes his style and narrative. His passionate attachment to the Indian soil has been sharpened by his long self-chosen exile. Perhaps it is the distance that has emboldened his vision. Very much like the sensibility that shaped these writers, the form and style of their work, although couched in "a language that is not their own," thoroughly impinges on the Indian.

The writers who followed in the trail of the trio succeeded in keeping up the momentum of the Gandhian whirlwind. Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgoker, Kamala Markhandaya, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee…the list of successful writers is endless. Perceptibly enough the woman's voice in Indian writing is most striking. The work of Anita Desai and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala especially ushers in a fresh sensibility to the sphere of Indian writing in English. The thematic and stylistic contours of this field are broadening day by day.

During the last three decades there has been a wild spate of publishing fiction in this country and so much of it has been marketed successfully overseas. After the phenomenal success of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, many Indian critics and columnists have taken upon themselves the role of investigators keying up to seek out the reason why Indian writers in English draw raving reviews and are quite successful in UK and the US while at home they hardly get noticed and often enough are severely discredited and derided. The reason, many Indian critics maintain, is precisely because much of the recent Indian English fiction fits in well with the west's preconceived notions of India, that so much praise is lavished on it by western critics. Either way, whether it is seemingly because of the big money involved in book business or whether there is a tremendous lack of knowledge about India in the West, the successful Indian writers in English often get the cold shoulder from their regional counterparts. Added to that is the sort of scalding remark regarding regional writing that a successful

writer of the stature of Salman Rushdie makes in his now famous (or infamous?) Introduction to the *Vintage Book of Indian Writing, 1947-1997* (edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West, London: Vintage,1997), that "the prose writing – both fiction and non-fiction—created in this period by Indian writers working in English, is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 official languages of India, the so called *vernacular languages*, during the same time, and indeed, this new and still burgeoning , Indo-Anglian literature represents perhaps the most valuable contribution India has yet made to the world of books." Such a claim, at the outset, certainly would go to the extent of proving only Rushdie's own ignorance of the rest of India, however, the fact that such a claim could be made for a literature that has such a short history is something worthy of consideration.

The Indian writer in English is not a creature from Mars or Jupiter, but just another writer using a different Indian language! Because of the vagaries of India's colonial history, English has developed to such an immeasurable magnitude in our country that we have to realize that we have given rise to a whole generation of men and women who speak in English, dream in English and write in English. How could we call them anything other than Indians like the rest of us?

As a unique instance of the postcolonial self-reflexive use of the language, the dedication that Arundhati Roy has given at the beginning of her book: "*To my mother who grew me up"* can be cited. Suffice it to say that this English is something that has been abrogated and appropriated to suit to the Indian say! We have indeed come a long way from *Matthew Arnold in a Sari*. Look, we have come through!

The new generation of writers who were born in the 1950's and who followed Salman Rushdie, have ushered in a new phase of Indian fiction. What marks off these writers, Amitav Ghosh with his *Circle of Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*, Allan Sealey with his *Trotter Nama*, Upamanyu Chatterjee with his *English, August*, Shashi Tharoor with his *The Great Indian Novel,*

and Vikram Seth with his *Golden Gate* and *The Suitable Boy*, is their peculiarity and distinctive otherness from all others and from each other as well. In our post technological world, the writer has long proclaimed her/his freedom and the political boundaries of state and country are simply privileged to survive on account of economic and administrative purposes. The sources of literature could never be kept at bay from any writer of any nationality, creed or culture. Now more than ever this process of reaching across cultures seems to prevail. Myth, legend, region, religion, symbol and image – all are ready for appropriation and marketing. Region and language proffer no disadvantage for the contemporary writer. In this phase of the Indian English writer the problems of the East-West encounter that so agitated earlier generations just do not exist.

Such problems, according to a present day academic, "were constructed, the differences lay in peoples' perceptions, and this generation belongs to the united urban world—moving with ease from hamburgers at the Golden Gate to ice-cream at the India Gate." ("Really Imagined," *Seminar,* 384, August 1991, p.23). We surely have come a long way from the first generation of Indian writers in English who had found it quite hard to distinguish between Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian. The postcolonial Indian is confronted with a vast library of books in English, published by Indians—books better in appearance, editing, proof reading, production, marketing and publicity.

There has been an unbroken tradition of poetic productivity in the English language in India for more than a hundred years now, and quite a lot has withstood and would easily stand the test of time still. The post-Independence phase which came too soon to supplant the earlier generation came on the wings of irony and equivocation. The sublime was lost sight of too soon and the ordinary and the commonplace became the objects of poetic quest.

When Nissim Ezekiel sharpened his wits against the jagged edges of self-doubt and self-exile, calling out for a "time to change," P. Lal transcreated the great Indian epics and established the Writers Workshop for new Indian

writing. His *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry: An Anthology and a Credo*, that he edited along with Raghavendra Rao, came out in 1959. However, ambitious in scope and possibility it was, the anthology set the tone and temper of post Independence poetry. While R.Parthsarathy sought rough passage from England to India, to his roots, A.K.Ramanujan sought to interpret the interior landscape of Tamil and Kannada Poetry and frame a newer poetics from those. Ramanujan's *Speaking of Siva, Hymns for the Drowning*, and *Poems of Love and War*, are in many ways reflective of the process of his coming to terms with his racial burden. Professionally trained as a linguist, Ramanujan's insight into Indian folk and poetic narrative combined with his skill at translating from the Indian languages remains yet unmatched. Adil Jussawala, Dom Moraes, Gieve Patel, Keki N. Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkar and Jayanta Mahapatra are among the many successful poets of our times. Freed from the colonial burden as well as any compulsive need to build upon an existing and alien culture or even to counter any such oppressive tradition, these poets show no anxiety of influence. The English they use is riddled with its Indianness, the images they create are built on the strong edifice of a multitongued culture. In his Introduction to his *New Writing in India*, (Penguin, 1974) Adil Jussawala wrote:

> …it is one of India's linguistic ironies that although the influence of the English language cannot be denied, and although a number of writers who write in the Indian languages teach, or have taught English literature at various colleges in India, contemporary writing in Britain has ceased to have much meaning for them….Perhaps the reason for the move away from British writing is not political. Indians will respond to a writer like William Golding but not to Allan Sillitoe. Still attracted to literature with a metaphysical or philosophical content, the Indian gravitates naturally to such European and Latin American writers as Voznesensky, Pablo Neruda, Borges, and Gunter Grass…It is no accident

that the most potent foreign influences on Indian writing today are Camus, Dostoevsky, Kafka and Sartre. (p.27)

The Indian poet in English cohabits the same world of his contemporaries who writes in the regional languages, and shares their anguish and anxieties. In the history of Indian English poetry, as I have pointed out earlier, there exists two major modes—one of the sublime as in the poetry of Sri Aurobindo and the other of the equivocal and conversational as in the poetry of Ezekiel and P. Lal. It is in Jayanta Mahapatra – the Physics professor turned poet from the state of Orissa—that these two contrary modes cease to be separate and opposing and integrate into one wholesome Indian poetic mode. Mahapatra's Orissa, the Kalings of yore, the Mahanadi, the Jagannath Temple and the Sun Temple at Konark, all speak through his verses. One is unsure whether his lines are couched in the English that Yeats and Eliot wrote in, or in his native tongue. He is undebatably the harbinger of the most fecund, holistic and integral phase of Indian writing.

The great tradition of Indian writing in English has in its evolutionary process, revealed the unconscious pulsations of the Indian creative psyche, in a remarkable degree of cohesiveness and integrity. That has certainly been its greatest achievement and value. It now remains for the newer generation of poets to find their own voice.

1.13 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q1. Write a short note on the beginning of English education in India.

Ans. While administering the country, the Englishmen gave attention to the problem of education. The burning question before them was whether India was to be given wholly Westernized system of education with English as the medium of instruction or she was merely to continue the study of Sanskrit and Persian and impart education with the various regional languages as media. Macaulay's celebrated "Minute" clinched the issue at last in favour of English.

Although the East India Company was founded long ago, the British cared little or nothing about the education of Indian people up to the eighteenth century. Thereafter, the Governors of the provinces and successive Governor-General showed little interest in Hindu or Islamic culture and hence they did not tackle the problem of illiteracy among the Indian masses. There were, at that time, four types of indigenous educational institutions in India:

1. Pathshalas of the Hindus
2. Madrassas of the Muslims
3. Persian Schools; and
4. Schools teaching through the modern Indian languages

Warren Hastings founded and liberally endowed the Calcutta Madrassa in 1781. In the previous year, James Augustus Hicky had brought out at Calcutta the first newspaper of India, *Hicky's Bengal Gazette.*

Q2. What was the contribution of Christian Missionaries in the spread of English language and literature in India?

Ans. An important factor which determined the course of education in India was the advent and activities of Christian missionaries. The ultimate aim of the missionaries has always been the proselytisation of the Hindu, Muslim and other non-Christian communities in India. They did some pioneering work in the field of education and social service. The earliest among them were the three protestant missionaries – Carey, Marshman and Ward who began their work at the Danish Settlement of Serampore in 1793. They have become famous in history as the *Serampore Trio* and it must be admitted that they made an excellent combination from the missionary point of view because Carey was a great propagandist, Ward was a painter and Marshman was a school teacher. But their zeal outran among Indians by their publication entitled *Addresses to Hindus and Mahomedans.* The Company had to intervene and reaffirm its policy of religious neutrality. The missionaries and their friends began an agitation in England intended to show that the anti-missionary policy of the Company was opposed to the teachings of Christ and that its neglect

of the education of the Indian people was absolutely unjustifiable. Their agitation obtained considerable support in Charles Grant (1746-1823) and led ultimately to the educational clause of the Charter Act of 1813. Side by side with this agitation in England, some of the Company's officials in India supported the cause of Indian education. Prominent among them was Lord Minto, who was the Governor-General of India during 1806-13. Minto was personally an admirer of Oriental literature and felt that its study would be useful to the Western nations themselves. He was, therefore, very anxious that Englishman should give all possible encouragement to the study and preservation of Indian culture. In a Minute, dated 6th March 1811, he wrote:

> It is seriously to be lamented that a nation particularly distinguished for its love and successful cultivation of letters in other parts of the empire should have failed to extend its fostering care to the literature of the Hindoos, and to aid in opening to the learned in Europe the repositories of their literature. (48-49)

As a result of this combined agitation in England and India the question of Indian education came up for discussion when the Charter of the Company became due for renewal in 1813. The subject that was discussed most was that of a suitable agency for the spread of Indian education. One party, whose view is typified in that of Charles Grant, believed that the best education for Indians was to teach them English through the missionaries. The other party, which was represented by Minto, believed that the best education for Indians was that of their own classics through the liberal endowment from the Company. The Charter Act of 1813 reconciled the views of both parties and proved a turning-point in the history of Indian education. With it, agitation which Grant and Wilberforce carried on for nearly twenty years came to successful conclusion; the education of the Indian people was now included within the duties of the Company; a comparatively large amount was annually fixed for acquisition of land in India and establishment of English schools, thereby laying the foundation of the modern educational system.

The period of twenty years between the two great Charters of the Company, viz. those of 1813 and 1838, was one of the experiments in the fields of Indian education. The Charter of 1838 made the provisions that no Indian should be debarred from holding any post under the Company by reason of his caste or creed.

Q3. Who was Raja Rammohan Roy? What was his role in the development of Indian Literature in English?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q4. Describe the importance of Macaulay's Minute in the spread of English language.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q5. What were the basic principles of Brahmo Samaj?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q6. Who was Sir William Jones? What was his contribution in the beginning of Indian literature in English?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q7. Who were the pioneers of Indian Writing in English?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q8. Write a note on the birth of Indo-Anglian Literature.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q9. Write a short note on the nature and scope of Indian English literature.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q 10. Who were the various Anglo-Indian writers who contributed towards the development of Indian Literature in English?

Ans _____

_____

_____

1.14 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Who wrote the book *The Renaissance in India* (1918)?_____.

   (a) Henry Derozio

   (b) James H. Cousins

   (c) Sri Aurobindo

   (d) William Jones

2. Which was the first newspaper of India?_____.

(a) *The Hindu*

(b) *Sambad Kaumudini*

(c) *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*

(d) *The Times of India*

3. When did Hindu College start?_____.

(a) 1772

(b) 1817

(c) 1813

(d) 1820

4. Raja Rammohan Roy was born in the year?_____.

(a) 1833

(b) 1770

(c) 1772

(d) 1775

5. Who was the founder of Brahmo Samaj?_____.

(a) Keshub Chandra Sen

(b) Dayanand Saraswati

(c) Henry Derozio

(d) Raja Rammohan Roy

6. According to which Act, education of the Indian people was included within the duties of the Company?_____.

(a) The Charter Act of 1813

(b) The Charter Act of 1838

(c) Lord Moira's Minute

(d) Charles Grant's "Observations"

7. *The Education Despatch of the Court of Directors* is also known as?_____.

(a) Macaulay's Minute

(b) Auckland's Minute

(c) Wood's Despatch

(d) Lord Moira's Minute

8. Who wrote *Biographical Sketches of Dekkan Poets*?_____.

(a) Mohan Lal

(b) Kavali Venkata Ramaswami

(c) Kashiprasad Ghosh

(d) Trego Webb

9. Which among the following is NOT an Anglo-Indian poet?_____.

(a) Meredith Parker

(b) Henry Derozio

(c) Lawrence Hope

(d) William Jones

10. Which of the following works are NOT wriiten by Raja Rammohan Roy?_____.

(a) *Precepts of Jesus*

(b) *Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments*

(c) *Sambad Kaumudi*

(d) *Mission to Siam*

1.15 LET US SUM UP

Indian English Literature as an interesting by-product of exciting

encounter between Britain and India in the late eighteenth century. FW Bain states, “India, a withered trunk... suddenly shot out with foreign foliage” (Naik 1). This lesson provides an overview of the historical and cultural context in which Indian literature in English has developed. This lesson will also cover the impact of British rule on the Indian education system through the educational policies and reforms introduced by the Britishers, including Macaulay’s Minute and Wood's Despatch, which saved the modern education system in India. The key figures like Sir William Jones and Raja Rammohan Roy and the contributions of reformers and movements like the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samay are also highlighted in this lesson.

1.16 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What were the major teachings of Arya Samaj?
2. How did Macaulay’s Minute contribute to the spread of English language in India?
3. Who were the pioneers of Indian Literature in English?
4. How did Christian Missionaries help in the growth and development of Indian Literature in English?
5. Explain Indian Renaissance and its impact on Indian people.

1.17 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. (a) Henry Derozio
2. (c) *Hicky’s Bengal Gazette*
3. (b) 1817
4. (c) 1772
5. (d) Raja Rammohan Roy
6. (a) The Charter Act of 1813
7. (c) Wood’s Despatch

8. (b) Kavali Venkata Ramaswami

9. (d) William Jones

10. d) *Mission to Siam*

1.18 SUGGESTED READING

Sri Aurobindo, *The Renaissance in India.* Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1973.

Syed Nurullah and J.P Naik. *A Student's History of Education in India: 1800-1947.* Bombay: Macmillan & Vo. Ltd., 1949.

Iyengar, K.R.S. *The Indian Contribution to English Literature.* Bombay: Karnatak Publishing House, 1954.

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INDIAN DRAMA IN ENGLISH

STRUCTURE

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2.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

2.7 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

2.8 Let Us Sum Up

2.9 Examination Oriented Questions

2.10 Answer Key to Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

2.11 Suggested Reading

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Drama has been a very influential and powerful medium in the English literature because of its audiovisual medium of expression. According to Supriya Shukla, "Drama is a mimetic representation of life combining in itself the real and the fictional, art and reality and representing the events and characters within a dimension of space and time. It combines the qualities of narrative poetry with those of visual arts. It is a narrative made visible." (11)

2.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with the history of Indian Drama in English and its indigenous roots.

2.3 THE ORIGIN OF ENGLISH DRAMA IN INDIA

India has a long history of drama from ancient times. Its journey begins from Sanskrit plays. "Indian tradition preserved in *Natyashastra* the oldest of the texts of the theory of drama, claims for the drama a divine origin, and a close connection with sacred Vedas themselves" opines A.B. Keith.

Thus the origin of Indian drama is found in the Vedic period. The most celebrated dramatists of the ancient era are Ashwagosh, Bhasa, Shudraka, Kalidasa, Harsha, Bhavbhuti, Vishakhadatta. Tragedies like *Urubhanga*, romances like *Abhijnana-sakuntalam* and historical plays like *Mudrarakshas* are the well known works of the Vedic period. The literature in Sanskrit is classified into two catageories- *Drishya* (that can be seen) and the *Sravya* (that can be heard). Drama falls in the catageory of *Drishya.* "Drama in Sanskrit literature is covered under the broad umbrella of „rupaka? which means depiction of life in its various aspects represented in „forms? by actors, who assume various roles" (Yadav 2)

The Indian English Drama is supposed to have begun in the 18th century when the British Empire strengthened its power in India. It is taken to have started with the publication of Krishna Mohan Banerjee's *The Persecuted* in 1813. It is a social play which presents the conflict between the East and the West. The real journey of Indian English drama begins with Madhusudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilization* which was published in 1871. He also translated his play *Ratnavali* (1859) and *Sermista* (1859) originally written in *Bangla* into English. Rankinoo Dutt wrote his *Manipura Tragedy* in 1893. Indian English drama exhibited its genius after a long time in the 20th century. The pre-independence era witnessed the emergence of many significant playwrights. They were Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh, T.P. Kailasam, A.S.P. Ayyar, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Bharati Sarabhai who made a tremendous contribution to the evolution and development of Indian English drama. R.N. Tagore and Sir Aurobindo Ghosh, the two great sage poets, are the first Indian dramatists of repute. Including Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, they are known as the "big three" who made an abiding contribution to the Indian English drama.

2.4 MAJOR INDIAN DRAMATISTS

2.4.1 R.N. Tagore

R.N. Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature and was considered as "the epitome of Indian spiritual heritage." He wrote his

plays primarily in *Bangla* but almost all his plays were translated into English. Some of them were translated by Tagore himself while the others, by Indian and English translators. His best known plays *Chitra, Sacrifice, The Post Office, Muktadhara, The Cycle of Spring, The King of the Dark Chambers* are the examples of Indian philosophy. Tagore was the first among those who used symbolism and allegorical significance as a prime technique in their plays. He combined the Indian and the Western literary traditions to present a synthesis between the East and the West. Diana Devlin writes "the philosopher, teacher and writer Rabindranath Tagore sets out to unify Indian and western traditions creating plays which have been described as a mixture of Bengali folk drama and Western medieval mystery plays."

2.4.2 Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) was also a major Indian English playwright. During 1891-1916, he wrote five complete and six incomplete verse plays. One of the most interesting features of his plays is the variety of periods (ranging from ancient Greece to medieval India) and places (diverse lands including Iraq, Syria, India, Spain, Britain and Norway). The two major themes of his plays are the idea of human evolution and love. All his plays are steeped in poetry and romance. The famous plays are *Perseus the Deliverer, The Viziers of Bassora, Prince of Edur, Eric, Vavadutta* and *Savitri*.

Sri Aurobindo employs ancient legends to highlight the contemporary urge for freedom and bondage and heighten the elements of heroism, adventure and mystery in the actions of his imaginary characters and as such, all his plays are imbued with a strong romantic impulse which appears to be the driving force behind all his plays. In spite of his vast learning, he seems to have overlooked the rich tradition of Indian drama especially dramatic techniques. In order to express his romantic impulse, he has focused largely on the models of Elizabethan Drama.

His plays are either in verse or a mixture of prose and verse. At times, he shows his ability in composing realistic dialogues in colloquial English. Regarding themes, he does not confine himself to one particular country and locale.

Last of the great Indian playwright trio, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya (b.1898) added a new dimension to Indian English drama. He was deeply influenced by the Progressive Writers Movement. Like Mulk Raj Anand, he sympathizes with the underdogs. He has been more eminent as a poet than a playwright. His social plays highlight social protest and ideas of revolution. His plays fall under four groups: Devotional, Social, Historical and Miscellaneous ones. *Five Plays* (1937) is a collection of his social plays- *The Windows, The Parrots, The Santry Lantern, The Coffin* and *The Evening Lamps*. These plays are marked by realism and have a didactic purpose.

In his social plays, Chattopadhyaya aims at presenting social evils and problems through symbols. In order to make presentation more effective, he presents many of his characters and situations in sharp contrast to one another. In his plays, he concentrates on a single topic which is an important feature of a short play. So far as models and techniques are concerned, Chattopadhyaya seems to have been less influenced by Western drama in regard to the depiction of the lives of the saints. Chattopadhyaya's social themes show his commitment to the Progressive Writers' Movement of the time, and symbolically present social problems like the problems of labour class, the evils of British rule. He sometimes indirectly suggests solutions to such problems.

2.4.3 A.S.P. Ayyar

A.S.P. Ayyar (1899-1963) is the next great dramatist in Indian English drama. He is primarily a social reformer who believes in exposing the ills of the contemporary Indian society. His first play is *In the Clutches of the Devil* and the last one is *The Trial of Science for the Murder*

of Humanity. In Ayyar's plays plot and characters are secondary as the message is given great importance. He writes drama with ethical and social purpose by raising questions against widowhood, religious orthodoxy, superstition and hypocrisy. As K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar remarks, "Ayyar handles the prose medium effectively and he is seen to be a vigorous critic of contemporary life."

A.S.P. Ayyar published a collection of three playlets, viz, *Sita's Choice*, *Brahma's Way* and *The Slave of Ideas* in 1935. His plays mostly dealt with discussions about the conflicting opinions on social customs. *Sita's Choice* is a play in five acts based on the theme of widow-marriage. *Brahma's Way* cannot be called a play as it is merely an interesting discussion on religious matters such as the existence of God, the caste-system in its right spirit, the unity among the three schools of Indian philosophy, vegetarianism, widow-marriage, balance between the material and spiritual aspects of life etc. The play is almost without a plot and the characters have their set attitude.

2.4.4 D.M. Borgaonkar

D.M. Borgaonkar's three-act problem-play *Image-Breakers* (1938) is the presentation of the growing discontent of the youth in India and their revolt against the conventional marriage system which cares only for caste, horoscope, wishes of the elders, dowry and totally discarding emotions and feelings of human beings. The conflict between love and social barriers is the theme of S. Fyzee-Rahamin's *Daughter of India* (1940) which has three acts with a prologue and an epilogue and it deals with the deep love of low-caste girl for an idealistic English-man. Balwant Gargi's *The Vulture* and other play (1941) is a collection of four playlets: *The Vulture*, *Mung-Wa*, *The Fugitive* and *The Matriarch*. He too seems to be interested in the social problems. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya remarks, "Balwant Gargi has dealt with themes which are engaging the attention of people everywhere."

2.4.5 T.P. Kailasam

T.P. Kailasam (1885-1946) is another worth considering dramatist on the Indian literary scene. He wrote both in English and Kannada. His dramatic genius is fully expressed in his English plays such as *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfillment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karna* (1946), *Keechaka* (1949). However, he was regarded as the father of modern Kannada drama. G.S. Amur has a very high opinion about Kailasam and rightly remarks, "A talented actor who appeared in the amateur as well as the professional stage, he brought to the writing of drama an intimate knowledge of the theatre. It is for this reason that his plays whether in Kannada or in English have a uniform technical excellence." He uses prose as a fit medium for the expression of tragic emotions. In regard to models and techniques, Kailasam shows his inclination towards the Elizabethan drama. In spite of having reverence for the rich past of Indian dramatic tradition, he too seems to ignore it. He uses prose in dialogue, sometimes blank verse and sometimes a mixture of both.

2.4.6 Bharati Sarabhai

Bharati Sarabhai (b.1912) is the maiden woman playwright who gave the Gandhian touch to Indian drama in English. Her two plays *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952) are inspired by Gandhian philosophy. The play *The Well of the People* is a poetic pageant than a play. It is highly symbolical. S. Mokashi Punekar comments on this play, "Bharati Sarabhai's *The Well of the People* is probably the only articulate work of literary art giving complete expression to the Gandhian Age." This play is about an old woman who builds a well for the untouchables of her village which clearly shows the influence of Gandhi. Sarabhai, though a high caste woman, became an ardent follower of Gandhi and worked in his Sabarmati Ashram. She had no practical experience of writing for theatre.

Moved by a story published in *Harijan*, Bharati Sarabhai wrote *The Well of the People*. The concept that God is within, is conveyed through this play. The same idea is expressed in *Two Women* in another way. The character Kanakaraya comes into conflict with his wife Anuradha who has decided to go to Himalayas in her quest for spiritual peace. At last, Kanakaraya gives up his rigid stand but his sudden death bring a new realization to his wife.

Sarabhai attempts to combine the ancient religion of India and the new culture. The old woman in *The Well of the People* acts as her mouthpiece in this regard. Sarabhai extends her theme of the practical realization of God in her play *Two Women* in a different way. The two women who represent the two faces of modern Indian womanhood are Anuradha, the wife of Kanakaraya and Urvashi, the widowed girl who becomes a devotional singer. The two women seem to be complementary, and true to *Vedantic* thought, they prove that God can be found everywhere. Sarabhai treats her themes in relation to the Indian tradition. The blend of material and the spiritual is focused. She takes her characters from the traditional world and leads them to the ultimate reality of the omnipresence of God.

2.4.7 J.N. Lobo Prabhu

J.N. Lobo Prabhu was the last great name in the pre-independence Indian English drama. Out of the dozen plays which he wrote only two were published before the Independence. They were *Mother of New India* (1944) a play in three acts and *Death Abdicates* (1945). His *Collected Plays* was published in 1955- which contained six of his plays- *Apes in the Parlour, The Family Cage, Flags of the Heart, Winding Ways, Love Becomes Light* and *Dogs Ghost.* Srinivas Iyengar remarks "Lobo's energy is obvious, he can write dialogues with facility, he can device situations, but his characters are rarely alive and his denouncement are seldom wholly convincing." His play *The Family*

Cage presents the plight of a widow, Leela in a joint family. *Flags of the Heart*, another play by Prabhu, expresses the sympathetic attitude of university students for the downtrodden.

> In the play, *Flags of the Heart*, Prabhu seems to give prominence to inter-caste marriage and the power of love. In his attempt to save his beloved Lucia, Raja, a low caste student suffers imprisonment. The whole play is full of action. The play *Apes in the Parlour* exposes the hypocrisy and the craze for sex and power among the elite. In the three-act play *The Family Cage*, Prabhu throws light upon the selfishness of man. Lobo Prabhu's plays show a variety of themes but his treatment of them is superficial. Even melodrama also gives the touch of artificiality to them though they do contain some effective scenes.

Apart from these major playwrights, a few writers who exhibited their talent in other forms of writing were also seen to have tried their hands in drama . For example, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, the critic and historian who has written two plays *Suniti and Her Spouse or Storm in a Tea-cup* (1942) and *The Battle of the Optionals* (1943), R.K. Narayan's dramatization of his own short story *The Watchman* under the title *The Watchman of The Lake* (1940), Kamala Das's *A Mini-Trilogy* which appeared in "Enact" in 1971, V.K. Gokak's *The Goddess Speaks* which was published in "Triveni" in 1948, Manohar Malgonkar's *Line of Mars* (1978), C. Rajagopalachari's *Naveena Uttarkandam* (1958) and K.S. Ramaswami Sastri whose plays *Draupadi* and *Harischandra* appeared in the dramatic form.

The plays written during the pre-independence phase were mostly short plays and even the few lengthy plays were not in prose and also did not prove to be successful. Most of the playwrights of this phase did not write with an awareness that plays are meant to be staged.

The Pre-Independence phase presents the large number of writers who preferred to write short plays in comparison to the full length plays. So far as the themes are concerned, social issues were prominent in the plays of this period. The plays dealing with legendary and historical themes occupied the place next to the social plays. Some of the writers drew their themes from ancient myth and legends and interpret them in terms of a contemporary social problem as in *Perseus the Delieverer* by Sri Aurobindo. Bharati Sarabhai and Krishnaswami also tried their hands in this direction. Playwrights like Kailasam and Ramaswami Sastri showed their interest either in highlighting the greatness of epic heroes and heroines or in giving importance to the neglected characters. Regarding social themes, many playwrights like Chattopadhyaya, Ayyar and Narayanan focus on the burning problems of contemporary society whereas V.V.S. Aiyangar and others made a farcical and melodramatic presentation of some problems. History and current politics drew the attention of only a few like A.S.P. Ayyar, Annayya and Mrinalini Sarabhai.

As regards models and techniques, most of the playwrights opted for the Elizabethan model. Sri Aurobindo adopted the Elizabethan models. Kailasam drew inspiration from Shakespeare for plot construction. Many playwrights did not adhere to the classical Sanskrit Drama and ancient techniques. “Many follow neither the Western nor the Indian tradition and show little sense of dramatic strategy as their main interest appears to lie in composing dialogue for discussion of topics of their choice.”Further, in case of few playwrights, the “acts” which their works are supposed to consist of, are nothing but scenes and this shows a lack of understanding of the structure of a play. Language also came out as a big problem to almost all the playwrights of the phase. Though they tried to overcome the problem in their own way but could not succeed. Sri Aurobindo’s long speeches created obstruction in the action of his plays. While Kailasam tried to enhance

the beauty of his language with his excessive rhetoric and archaism, Chattopadhyaya, Ayyar and others showed their command on the style of writing but it gave way to the artificiality of their dialogue on the stage. On the whole, most of the playwrights did not write stage worthy plays. Their plays were meant to be read only.

Indian English Drama showed little progress in the Post-independence period. Though the efforts were made but it could not gain much. The Five Year Plans after the Independence encouraged performing arts as an effective medium for public enlightenment and healthy entertainment. Institutions like National School of Drama was established in Delhi, Institutions for training in dramatic art were founded in many cities, Departments of Drama were opened in many universities. The National Drama Festival was started in Delhi by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. But all those developments promoted the growth of drama in regional languages. Though the Theatre Group in Bombay and some other agencies did successfully stage Indian English drama yet these performances could not give much popularity to Indian English drama. By and large, plays written in regional languages dominated the Indian theatre.

As a result of these advancements, many writers started writing plays meant for the stage. In this group, there are several writers. Nissim Ezekeil, Girish Karnad, Pritish Nandi, Pratap Sharma and Murli Das Melwani are some of the writers of this group who contributed in the development of Indian theatre.

2.4.8 Nissim Ezekiel

Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004) who has made a distinctive contribution to poetry wrote six plays on the themes- hollowness of urban middle class, futility of social mores and the institution of marriage. The *Three Plays* (1969) consists of *Nalini*, a comedy in three acts, *Marriage Poems*, a one act tragic-comedy and *The Sleepwalkers* an Indo-American farce.

Song of Deprivation is a one act comic morality play dealing with the theme of suppression and repression. After a period of twenty years, he wrote the play *Don't Call it Suicide*- a socio psychological analysis of suicide. *Nalini* is about the hollow life of two advertising executives, Bharat and Raj. In this, the playwright projects two pictures: the hollow world of the young executives and the contrast between the two Nalini's- the one of the dream and the other of reality.

In all three plays, Ezekiel remains content by projecting the cross-section of contemporary society. He does not give as much importance to the development of a plot as to the composing brilliant conversations. Thus, in spite of the stage-directions and sound effects suggested by author, these plays could not meet the full demands of the stage.

Unlike Ezekiel's picture of urban society, Arati Nagarwalla's three-act play *The Bait* (1969) deals with the loyalty of a villager and his love for justice. Knowing his wife is killed by a lion in a forest, Panna, the hero of the play, takes the oath to avenge her death. He kills the animal and is arrested on the charge of attempted homicide.

2.4.9 Girish Karnad

Girish Karnad (1938-2019), a recipient of the Jnanpith Award is a living legend in the contemporary Indian English drama. He is a playwright, actor, critic and a film star. He has received recognition nationally as well as internationally. He himself accepts, "I have been fairly lucky in having a multi-pronged career. You know, I've been an actor, a publisher, a film maker. But none of these I felt quite as much at home as in playwriting." His five plays *Tuglaq, Hayavadana, Nagamandala, Tale-Danda* and *The Fire and the Rain* have been translated into English, the first two by Karnad himself. His plays are steeped in Indian culture as the themes are taken from myths, legends, folk tales and history. He combines classical, folk and the Western dramatic techniques in his plays. He has made a great contribution to Indian English drama.

2.4.10 Pratap Sharma

Pratap Sharma (1939-2011) has written two controversial plays. *A Touch of Brightness* (1968) is about Bombay's red light district and the problems of people surviving there. This play was performed abroad but banned in Bombay as it presents the harsh reality of the red light area in Bombay. *The Professor has a War Cry* (1970) deals with the anguish and mental conflict of Virendra who comes to know that he is an illegitimate child of a mother raped by a Muslim and an English man and deserted by her lover, a Hindu professor. Sex remains the prime theme of his plays but Pratap Sharma shows "a keen sense of situation and his dialogue is often effective." In the play *A Touch of Brightness,* Sharma focuses on the dark side of the sophisticated city life that perpetuates the existence of brothels. He presents a realistic picture of a typical brothel like that of Bhabi Rani's.

However, after the Independence, most of the plays were written in prose, but at the same time poetic plays did not disappear in the Post-Colonial era. M.K. Naik rightly opines, "the Tagore-Aurobindo-Kailasam tradition of poetic drama continues, but with a difference in the hands of Manjari Isvaran, G.V. Desani, Lakhan Deb and Pritish Nandy." Manjari Isvaran's *Yama and Yami* (1948) is a dialogue in poetic prose, with a prologue and an epilogue, dealing with the love of Yami for her brother. G.V. Desani's *Hali* is a poem play in 300 pages. It was successfully staged at the Watergate Theatre London in 1950 and in India in 1951. "A short poetic play *Hali* is an attempt to project Hali's confrontation of the power of creation and destruction, his grapple with life and death, his surrender to the material world, his communion with love and his transcendence of the dualities of time and place."

2.4.11 P. A. Krishnaswami

P.A. Krishnaswami's *The Flute of Krishna* (1950) is a verse play dealing with the legend of a girl Murli and a young man Vidyaratna who

by their devotion to Lord Krishna become respectively His flute and the bamboo stick. Dilip Kumar Roy's *Sri Chaitanya* (1950) is a verse play in three acts dealing with the life of a devotee of Lord Krishna during fifteenth century Bengal.

2.4.12 Lakhan Deb

Lakhan Deb's *Tiger Claws* (1967), a verse play in three acts is based on the killing of Afzal Khan, the Muslim general of Bijapur by the Maratha ruler Shivaji. His two other plays are *Vivekananda* (1972) and *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976).

Other verse plays of this period include P.A. Krishnaswamy's *The Flute of Krishna* (1950) M. Krishnamurti's *The Cloth of God* (1951) Sadashiv D. Rawoot's poetic plays: *Immortal Song, Karna, The Killer* (1959), Satya Deb Jaggis, *The Point of Light*, Shree Devi Singh's *The Purple braided People* etc.

Lakhan Deb gives a picture of the last days of Gandhiji's life in his two-act verse-play, *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976). The title is drawn from T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. The plot covers the Mahatma's dominant role in politics just before partition, the events that followed it and the consequent communal clashes.

2.4.13 Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008) can be considered as the precursor of modern Indian English drama. His plays focus on the conflicts between the individual and the society. The angry and frustrated protagonists of his plays are actually the victims of harsh circumstances in life. Since he exposes the ugly side of the society, therefore, his plays are considered as controversial ones. His plays are *Silence: The Court is in Session, Kamala, The Vultures, Sakharam Binder.* The major themes of his plays are male domination, violence, exploitation of women and rejection of social norms. He explores human mind and its complexities in all its

depth and variety. He does not present human relation in relation to love and emotions but in sensuality and violence.

2.4.14 Gurucharan Das

Gurucharan Das (1943-) is one of the important writers of the post-independence era who attains great success for his play *Larins Sahib* (1970). This play focuses on the Punjab in the times of 1946-47. It is about the political career of a British Resident in Punjab who gives a good impression in the beginning but later turns out to be a power-drunk official. He is good with the people in the beginning. The queen trusts him so much that she offers him the famous precious Kohinoor for safe keeping but his hunger for power and glory leads to his downfall. However, he is dismissed from his post at the end of the play.

The play *Larins Sahib* is different from other Indian English plays for the use of Indian English for dialogues. On this ground, Gurucharan is similar to Mulk Raj Anand. What Mulk Raj Anand did in the field of fiction, Gurucharan Das did in the field of drama. Both gave a new direction to Indian English literature. In an interview, Gurucharan Das said:

The English theatre in India will have to project the kind of hybrid English we speak, interspersed with Indian expression. My approach is that the characters should speak the English that is spoken in India, using expressions like “Kya Yar,” “Chalo Bhai.” And actors can bring about a reversion in spoken English.

Apart from these writers, there have been a few writers who contributed in the development of Indian English drama. Vera Sharma has written two plays along with a number of one act plays. *Life is Like That* (1997) and *Reminiscence* (1997), both deal with the plight of women. In *Life is Like That*, Lata, a middle class woman takes up a job after her husband dies. In spite of having two sons, she remains an alone saleswoman in her old age. *Reminiscence* is a story of a childless woman who is ill treated by her husband.

2.5 POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN DRAMATISTS IN ENGLISH

In the post-independence era, several one act plays were also written. The most notable one act plays of this period are those of R. Raja Rao. The title of the play *The Wisest Fool on Earth and Other Plays (1996)* centres round the theme of homosexuality. It is a monologue in which the protagonist, who is a young man, is happy to be a homo. The setting for the play is a toilet. *The English Professor* and *White Spaces* expose the self seeking and hypocritical attitude of people in the society. While the play *Deadlines* is about journalism. Several historical plays were also written which highlighted the long history of glory, rich tradition, invasion, colonization and the struggle for freedom but it could not flourish to the expected level except a few notable plays which are T.S. Gill's *Asoka* (1983), V.D. Trivedi's *Gandhi: A Play* (1983) and Prema Sastri's *Gandhi Man of the Millions* (1987).

2.5.1 Gieve Patel

Gieve Patel (1940-), being a poet, has written three plays *Princess*, *Savaksha* and *Mr. Behram*. Out of the three, *Mr. Behram* is the only published work. Published in 1988, it is the first Indian English play which seriously deals with Parsi life. It is a psychological play focusing on the complex relationship between Behram and an old Parsi landowner in Southern Gujrat. Dina Mehta exposed the violence against women through drama and she succeeded in her efforts. *Brides Are Not for Burning* made her won the B.B.C. Radio Play Writing Contest in 1979 as it was about one of the social vices i.e. dowry system. *Getting Away with Murder* (2000) is a play highlighting another ugly aspect of exploitation of women and its psychological impact apart from the physical. The play *Mangala* by Poile Sengupta shows the members of a middle class Tamil Brahmin joint family commenting on a play about the victims of rape. The use of the play within play technique enhances the tragic effect.

2.5.2 Uma Parameswaram

Uma Parameswaram (1938-) is a critic and teacher in Canada. She founded PALT- Performing Art and Literature of India in Winnipeg, Canada where she also produces a weekly television show. The plays *Sons Must Die* and *Other Plays* (1998) were written over several years. *Sita's Promise* is a play presenting different form of Indian classical dances, *Meera* too is more a dance than a drama. *Sons Must Die* is a play about the Kashmir conflict in 1948. But she is known for the play *Rootless But Green are the Boulevard Tree*, a social play presenting the problems of immigrants in Canada. There have been a few experimental plays but none of them came up as a successful attempt. J. P. Das has translated his Oriya play into English Absurd Play (1959). S. Vasuki gave a mythological play *Fresh Rains* (1995). G. Prashant put his effort in presenting the Oedipus myth from an Indian point of view in *The Myth Resurrected* (1991).

The Post Modern era brings advancement in the field of drama as it introduces new changes in the Indian English drama which adds more dimensions to it. The new writers come up with a fresh and different approach towards life as well as theatre. R. K. Dhawan states: "Very recently Indian English drama has shot into prominence. Younger writers like Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan have infused new life into this branch of writing."

2.5.3 Mahesh Dattani

Mahesh Dattani (1958-) who has been acknowledged as a "playwright of world stature" has given a new direction to Indian English drama. He has written more than one and half a dozen plays which are different in themes, tone and treatment. He received the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his contribution to Indian drama in 1988. His plays deal with serious and sensitive issues like communalism, homosexuality, female infanticide, domestic abuse, child sexual abuse, condition of eunuchs in Indian society. In his preface to *Collected Plays*, Dattani says:

I am certain that my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio economic background. I am hugely excited and curious to know what the future holds for me and my art in the new millennium in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally.

Dattani is one of India's most bold and innovative playwrights. He has formed his play group named Playpen in 1984 and in 1986, he wrote his first play *Where There's a Will*. Since then he has written many plays such as *Tara, Bravely Fought the Queen, Final Solutions* and *Dance Like A Man*. All the plays of Mahesh Dattani are based on the social issues. *Tara* deals with the theme of gender discrimination in modern society. *Tara* is predominantly a play about gender discrimination and about the tendency of Indian society where parents prefer a male child over a female one. The play *Thirty Days in September* deals with the most heinous issue, child sexual abuse and throws light on its effect on an individual's psyche, which gets intensified with the passage of time. Dattani's best known play *Final Solutions* deals with the sensitive issue of communal tension. The play focuses on the Hindu-Muslim division, the prejudice and the deep-rooted mistrust.

However, compared to the plays of the pre-independence phase, plays of the post-independence period show a greater influence of the West. There are several experiments such as emphasis on the psychoanalysis of the character than to present the sequence. Another noteworthy experiment in this phase is the use of realistic language suited to the level and status of a character. Regarding themes, the playwrights have tried to deal with the contemporary social problems like inter-caste marriage, untouchability, sex, power and wealth along with the presentation of the usual conflict between old and new trends.

In the post-independence era, Indian English drama has not reached the high level like that of poetry and fiction. A prime factor for this is that

"drama-essentially a composite art involving the playwright, the actors and the audience in a shared experience on the stage-has its own problem of which the other literary forms are free." In the recent decades, Indian drama has progressed in regional languages along with the translations in English. A number of plays written in regional languages have been translated into English. However, Indian English drama has not achieved much as compared to other genres. There are several reasons for the dissatisfactory status of Indian English drama.

Srinivas Iyenger attributes "the failure to the fact that English is not a natural medium of conversation in India." It is the language of the elite class in cities and big towns and, therefore, used and understood by them only. Thus it is confined to the particular section of the society, i.e. the people of the sophisticated class only. Moreover, English is not the mother tongue of Indians. It is a learnt language or the second language. Natural conversation is an important aspect of drama for its impact over the audience. English language sounds artificial and fails to create the required impact on the audience. Only for the elite class, it sounds convincing. Even in the translated works, most of the time the original form is misrepresented. It is not due to the translation only but because of the inefficiency of the English language to express temperaments, sensibilities and realities which are essentially Indian. Raja Rao pointed out nearly half a century ago, "English is a language of our intellectual makeup and not of our emotional makeup." He himself could overcome this problem by making his characters speak a kind of Indian English as he has done in his novel *Kanthapura*. Thus M.K. Naik rightly suggests, "In making Indian characters speak in English, the playwright needs, therefore, no qualms at all. Let him first create living characters in live situations, and the language will take care of itself."

The other major reason is the lack of living theatre in our country. Drama is meant to be presented on the stage. As a genre it can never

flourish in the absence of its presentation in the theatre. An eminent Indian critic M.K. Naik in his article "The Achievement of Indian Drama in English" has rightly commented in *Perspectives on Indian Drama in English:*

Drama is a composite art in which the written word of the playwright attains complete artistic realization only when it becomes the spoken word of the actor on the stage and though that medium reacts on the mind of the audience. A play, in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience, thus needs a real theatre and a live audience.

The real success of the play is tested on the stage. Therefore a playwright needs a living theatre in order to evaluate his work. Besides this, many Indian plays do not get staged. As Rama Sharma in his preface to his "Collected Plays" remark, "Any play written in India in English has an inherent disadvantage in the sense that it is not very often staged. Stage worthiness being a basic test for a play….most of the plays written in English do not fulfill this requirement." The other reason of the setback in the development of Indian English Drama is that the Indian English playwrights do not give much importance to the rich and varied Indian dramatic traditions. They do not make use of the rich amount of Indian myth and Indian historical heritage.

Thus Indian playwrights writing in regional languages seem to succeed in comparison to the writers writing in English. As the former is more clear regarding the purpose of playwriting, their perception of the form of drama, the intended audience/readers etc. very few dramatists in English have been successful especially in theatre. Asif Currimbhoy is one exception.

2.5.4 Asif Currimbhoy

Among all the playwrights of the post-independence era, the most prolific playwright is Asif Currimbhoy. He has been called "India's first authentic voice in the theatre." He is among those few dramatists whose plays

have been successfully staged in India as well as abroad. He has published more than thirty plays within the period of eighteen years beginning in 1959. He has shown a deep concern in producing drama. His plays are appreciated outside India. Unlike other dramatists, Asif's plays are meant for the stage. He brilliantly succeeds in producing actable plays which have given international reputation to him.

The range and variety of his themes are wide. He has worked over the issues related to history, politics, socioeconomic problems and conflicts, religion, psychological conflicts, east west encounter, philosophy and art. K.R.S. Iyengar in his academic discourse appreciates Currimbhoy "Farce, comedy, melodrama, tragedy, history, fantasy: Currimbhoy handles them all with commendable ease."

Born in 1928, Asif belongs to a family of industrialists who were distinguished by the British government in the field of industry. His father was a liberal minded intellectual and his mother was a social worker. Both deeply influenced Asif in his teenage. He was brought up in an environment of education and innovative ideas which formed an integral part of his temperament later in his life. His school period also had an impact over his literary output. He studied at Xavier's high school, Bombay and pursued his higher education at Wisconsin University. It gave exposure to the English language and to some extent to western culture.

Though he studied in a Christian missionary school, he did not keep himself away from the Indian culture. He made a thorough study of the *Bhagvad Gita* and the *Upnishads* and also the Hindu epics like The *Ramayana* and The *Mahabharata*. The impact of this study can be seen in his works.

After schooling in India, he went to the United States for college studies and spent four years there. He studied at Winsconsin University before graduating from the University of California in Economics in 1950. He recalls his experiences in the University in U.S.A., "College was in

America, those beautiful mid-west landscapes of snow and loneliness. The love for language and life grew and in isolation of a groping search and hyper sensitivity." As a University student, he loved and admired Shakespeare. He visited different dramatic productions and was very well aware of the various trends in drama in the U.S.A. All this contributed in making him "a man of theatre."

Currimbhoy was motivated for writing by his wife Suraiya whom he married soon after he returned to India. In a letter he wrote, "I doubt if I would ever have been a writer were it not for my wife who gave me stability and sanity through home and love." The major incidents which took place in sixties influenced Currimbhoy. Independence to India led to the partition of the country which caused the anguish all over the nation but especially in Bengal and Punjab. Currimbhoy was deeply influenced by the violence prevailing in the country and the condition of people in those days.

Asif got several opportunities to visit different places all over the world and observe them keenly. He joined the New India Assurance Company in 1954 through which he came in contact with French culture. Soon he left the New India Assurance Company and joined Burmah-Shell in India. As a marketing executive he toured throughout India and came in contact with different locales and various problems of the people. In an interview with Rajinder Paul, he says:

> The place had always had a considerable fascination for me and dialogues always appeared to me especially when they incorporated a feeling of diverse opinion. In other words a conflict in theatre, conflict at every level- physical, mental, emotional- because from the time really you meet with other people, what is called human relationships, it's striking sparks with each other that brings about a feel of life.

From this, it is clear that Currimbhoy is a keen observer of people and particularly their mode of expression. All these influences left an impression on his literary output. He began writing in his late twenties. The literary career of Asif Currimbhoy can be divided into two periods, the first period ranging from 1959 to 1968 and the second period from 1969 to 1975.

During the first period he wrote *The Tourist Mecca* (1959), *The Clock* (1959), *The Restaurant* (1960), *The Dumb Dancer* (1961), *OM* (1961), *Thorns on a Canvas* (1962), *The Captives* (1963), *Goa* (1964), *And Never the Twain Shall Meet* (1964), *The Kaleidoscope* (1964), *Monsoon* (1965), *The Hungry Ones* (1965), *Valley of the Assassins* (1966), *The Temple Dancers* (1967), *The Lotus Eater* (1967), *Abbe Faria* (1968), and *The Mercenary* (1968).

In the second period, he wrote *An Experiment with Truth* (1969), *The Great Indian Bustard* (1970), *Inquilab* (1970), *Darjeeling Tea?* (1971), *The Refugee* (1971), *Sonar Bangla* (1972), *Om Mane Padme Hum!* (1972), *The Miracle Seed* (1973), *Angkor* (1973), *The Dissident MLA* (1974), and *This Alien… Native Land* (1975). Out of these he did not publish *The Restaurant, And Never the Twain Shall Meet, The Kaleidoscope, Monsoon*, *The Temple Dancers, The Lotus Eater, The Mercenary* and *The Great Indian Bustard*.

His plays are inspired by some incidents or situations he observed in his surroundings or experienced himself. In 1958, he was posted to Agra where he had to spend his time in drinking sessions at hotels. He wrote *Tourist Mecca* which deals with the tourists to Agra. It was during his stay in Agra when he faced some problems in his job and his inner tension found expression in the play *The Clock*. The play *The Doldrummers* portrays the lives of the youth living on the Juhu Beach. He might have been inspired for this play during his visits on Juhu Beach for holidays and weekends. He made a thorough study of

Indian mythology and Indian philosophy. He wrote *The Dumb Dancer* and *OM* which are influenced by Indian myth and philosophy. *The Dumb Dancer* is a psychological play based on the theme from *The Mahabharata* and *OM* reflects the playwright's obsession with the fear of death. *Thorns on a Canvas* was written due to the banning of *The Doldrummers* as it expresses the bitter experience of the playwright. The play *The Captives* takes up the issue of Indo-Chinese conflict of October 1962 but actually it probes into the human psyche after the partition.

The various places Currimbhoy visited became sources for his plays. During the second period of his literary career, Currimbhoy got more serious regarding his dramatic art. In 1969 which was the Gandhi centenary year, he wrote *An Experiment With Truth* which covers the whole life of Gandhi. While he was staying in Calcutta, he witnessed the revolt of the Naxals and wrote *Inquilab* which deals with the Naxalite movement. He was inspired to write *Darjeeling Tea?* After his tour in the tea gardens in the hill station of Darjeeling.

The major socio economic changes which Currimbhoy witnessed got expression in his plays. Such as the influx of the refugees and revolt within the city of Calcutta and Bengal became the theme of the play *The Refugee*. The emergence of Bangladesh provoked him to write *Sonar Bangla*. The plight of the rural society during the drought in Maharashtra in the seventies formed the background for *The Miracle Seed*. *The Dissident MLA* is about the riots in Gujarat which resulted in the abolition of the Assembly in 1974. The last play from Currimbhoy was *This Alien…Native Land* based on the identity crisis of Jews.

From his plays, it can be easily understood that Currimbhoy believes in depicting what he perceives in his surroundings. He has his own individual views on the art of drama. He is a dramatist with social purpose. This is made clear when he says that he is "A writer of plays which have a

certain amount of meaning. The fact that what I write is socially directed in an environment to which it has pertinence of relevance does put me into the classification of being a writer with a social purpose."

Though being a writer with a social purpose, he cannot be called a propagandist. As he states, "I am very much against propaganda because it does not allow people to think they come to a conclusion on their own. I do believe that you should try and place facts as correctly as possible and let people or the audience draw their own conclusion." He has his own views on dramatic art. For him, there should be a proper blending of artistic and social concerns of dramatists. Moreover, Currimbhoy considers conflict as the basis of life as well as theatre. Regarding the dramatic language, he feels, "Indian theatre in English has not grown much in the last generation as we always seem to be borrowing English language plays from the west either in original or suitably adapted." He gives his opinion to the Indian English playwrights regarding the use of language that the Indian dramatist in English must be conscious "English is our own language because the moment that you think of English as a foreign language you'll end up by writing a foreign play, which would be disastrous." The purpose of a playwright should be the perfect merging of theatre with life so that people could relate themselves with the situation they are watching on the stage.

Thus, Currimbhoy is a prolific playwright with social purpose. He has taken up unusual themes from contemporary Indian society and showed his excellence in dramatic art. He wrote more than thirty plays of varied themes regarding social, political and religious problems of contemporary India. H.M. Williams, a reputed literary critic remarks, "The English speaking theatre in India anxiously awaits a writer of Narayan's or Raja Rao's stature, one who might perhaps combine the poetic vision of Sri Aurobindo or Dom Moraes with the professional craftsmanship of Asif Currimbhoy."

The contribution of all the male playwrights is significant in the initial development of Indian drama in English. These playwrights belonging to different regions, ages and cultures have observed, analyzed, learnt and understood their own respective society and culture and have come out with social, serious, sensitive and most often disturbing plays while their counterparts the women playwrights have hardly been seen or heard till the mid twentieth century.

In the last decades of the twentieth century some women playwrights, though very less in number, came to the forefront. The names of Mrs. J. M. Billimoria, Dina Mehta, Kamala Subramaniam, Shree Devi Singh, Arati Nagarwalla, Poile Sengupta, Manjula Padmanabhan, Uma Parameshwaran, Tripurari Sharma etc. are worthy to be mentioned. These women dramatists attempted to utilize drama for the purpose of presenting cultural diversity, socio-political reality and above all as a mode of self expression. They have put their effort to erase the myths that try to prove that women cannot create excellent pieces of dramas. Through their plays they have also broken the silence persisted for almost hundreds of years in the history of Indian English drama. These women playwrights are serious in their tone, theme and characterization. They focus on the real Indian society, the violence against women and their struggle for survival and existence. Thus there is hardly any domain of life that has not been touched by these women playwrights. They long for an ultimate change in the society. In fact change is the motto they want through their plays.

Recently in Indian English drama, few writers have come up who raised the level of Indian English drama in quality and presentation. They have earned fame not only in Indian theatre but also in the world theatre. One of them is Manjula Padmanabhan. As Vinod Bala Sharma states, “Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan must be studied as two outstanding playwrights who belong to another category.”

2.5.5 Manjula Padmanabhan

Manjula Padmanabhan has worked as a playwright, cartoonist, journalist, novelist and a children's book author. She was born in 1953 and went to a boarding school. She was born in Delhi and grew up in Sweden, Pakistan and Thailand. After passing out from Bombay University, she began writing in the publishing and media industry. At the moment she lives in Delhi. Apart from writing newspaper columns she also created comic strips such as Suki, an Indian female comic character. Her comic cartoon strips have appeared in *The Pioneer* newspaper and *Sunday Observer.* She was known as a cartoonist before her play *Harvest* was staged. She has also written the plays entitled *Lights Out!* (1984), *Hidden Fires* (2003), *The Artist's Model* (1995) and *Sextet* (1996). She has illustrated 24 children's books. M.K. Naik comments on recent Indian English drama with special reference to the plays of Manjula Padmanabhan, Dina Mehta and Poile Sengupta in the following words, "Manjula Padmanabhan created history when her play *Harvest* (1998) won the first prize in the first Onassis International Cultural Competition. This is the first time that an Indian English dramatist has won an honour abroad." Her play *Harvest* was selected from 1470 entries in 76 countries for the Onassis Prize in 1997.

She has written several novels and stories for children. Her books include *Double Talk* (2005)*, Hot Death, Cold Soup* (1996)*, Mouse Invaders* (2004), *Unprincess!* (2005), *I Am DIFFERENT!* (2007), *Where's That Cat?* (2009), *Same & Different* (2010), *This is Suki!* (2000)*, Kleptomania* (2004) and her autobiographical novel *Getting There* (1999). *Escape* (2008) is her first novel for adults and is one of the few works of modern Indian science fiction. Prof. B. Parvathi remarks:

Manjula Padmanabhan belongs to that generation of Indian women writers in English who have boldly stepped out of conventions that define respectability to address issues of gender, woman, her body and its behavior, its exploitation in a family and social setting… Manjula

Padmanabhan has opened a fresh dialogue on a new angle of feminist concerns.

The theme of *Escape* is the declining sex ratio in India that resulted in less number of female in comparison to male. It is the outcome of bias against the girl child. Padmanabhan's book, *Getting There* is a semi-autobiographical novel about a young woman illustrator in Bombay. It is based on the events in the author's life between 1977 and '78. It is neither entirely factual nor totally realistic. It is about the journey of the author from Bombay to New York, then to Germany, and finally Holland. *Kleptomania* is the collection of stories in which the reader finds the wide range of themes from murder mystery to science fiction. Manjula Padmanabhan is among the recent playwrights who have not produced a large number of works but with the small collection of excellent works, she has occupied a respectable place in the world of Indian English literature.

Thus, Asif Currimbhoy and Manjula Padmanabhan are the two celebrated playwrights in recent Indian English drama. Both have raised English drama not only in Indian theatre but in the world theatre also. The most common aspect of their writings is their social commitment. Both write with a serious and definite purpose. Both are truly dramatists who believe in presenting the real picture of the society and aim at bringing the necessary changes in it.

2.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q1. Describe the origin of Drama in India.

Ans. India has a long history of drama from ancient times. Its journey begins from Sanskrit plays. "Indian tradition preserved in *Natyashastra* the oldest of the texts of the theory of drama, claims for the drama a divine origin, and a close connection with sacred Vedas themselves" opines A.B. Keith. Thus the origin of Indian drama is found in the Vedic period. The most celebrated dramatists of the ancient era are Ashwagosh, Bhasa, Shudraka,

Kalidasa, Harsha, Bhavbhuti, Vishakhadatta. Tragedies like *Urubhanga*, romances like *Abhijnana-sakuntalam* and historical plays like *Mudraraksha*s are the well known works of the Vedic period. The literature in Sanskrit is classified into two catageories- *Drishya* (that can be seen) and the *Sravya* (that can be heard). Drama falls in the catageory of *Drishya*. "Drama in Sanskrit literature is covered under the broad umbrella of "rupaka" which means depiction of life in its various aspects represented in "forms" by actors, who assume various roles."

Q2. What were the various circumstances that led to the emergence of Indian Drama in English?

Ans. The Indian English Drama is supposed to have begun in the 18th century when the British Empire strengthened its power in India. It is taken to have started with the publication of Krishna Mohan Banerjee's *The Persecuted* in 1813. It is a social play which presents the conflict between the East and the West. The real journey of Indian English drama begins with Madhusudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilization* which was published in 1871. He also translated his play *Ratnavali* (1859) and *Sermista* (1859) originally written in *Bangla* into English. Rankinoo Dutt wrote his *Manipura Tragedy* in 1893. Indian English drama exhibited its genius after a long time in the 20th century. The pre-independence era witnessed the emergence of many significant playwrights. They were Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh, T.P. Kailasam, A.S.P. Ayyar, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Bharati Sarabhai who made a tremendous contribution to the evolution and development of Indian English drama. R.N. Tagore and Sir Aurobindo Ghosh, the two great sage poets, are the first Indian dramatists of repute. Including Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, they are known as the "big three" who made an abiding contribution to the Indian English drama.

Q3. Throw light on the thematic concerns of Pre-Independence Indian Drama in English.

Ans _____

Q4. **Highlight the Western influence on Post-Independence Indian English Drama.**

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q5. **What are the various reasons behind the dissatisfactory status of Indian English drama**?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q6. **Who are the "big three" of Indian Drama in English? What is their contribution in the development of Indian Drama in English?**

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q7. **Highlight the contribution of Rabindranath Tagore in the development of Indian Drama in English.**

Ans. _____

_____

Q8. Throw light on the dramatic art of Asif Currimbhoy.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q9. How does Bharati Sarabhai attempt to combine the ancient religion of India and the new culture in his plays?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q10. How does Gieve Patel highlight the falling values on contemporary culture through his plays?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

2.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Krishna Mohan Banerjee's *The Persecuted* was published in the year_____.

   a) 1813

   b) 1815

   c) 1820

   d) 1821

2. The theme of Manjula Padhmanabhan's play *Escape* is?_____.

   a) Patriarchy

   b) Declining sex ratio in India

   c) Existentialism

   d) Female foeticide

3. Who has written the play *Double Talk*?_____.

   a) Asif Currimbhoy

   b) Sri Aurobindo

   c) Gieve Patel

   d) Manjula Padhmanabhan

4. "The emergence of Bangladesh provoked him to write *Sonar Bangla.*" Who is the writer referred to in the above lines?_____.

   a) Nissim Ezekiel

   b) Mahesh Dattani

   c) Asif Currimbhoy

   d) Vijay Tendulkar

5. Which playwright's plays are based on social issues?_____.

   a) Mahesh Dattani

   b) Gurucharan Das

   c) Pratap Sharma

   d) Lakhan Deb

6. Which of the following playwrights is awarded the prestigious Jnanpith Award?_____.

   a) Vijay Tendulkar

   b) Mahesh Dattani

c) Girish Karnad

d) Manjula Padhmanabhan

7. *The Post Office* is a famous play written by _____ .

a) Sri Aurobindo

b) Rabindranath Tagore

c) Harendranath Chattopadhyay

d) Girish Karnad

8. Which of the following plays is NOT written by Sri Aurobindo _____.

a) *Eric*

b) *Vavadutta*

c) *Savitri*

d) *Nagamandala*

9. The influx of the refugees and revolt within the city of Calcutta and Bengal became the theme of the play _____ .

a) *The Refugee*

b) *Sonar Bangla*

c) *The Miracle Seed*

d) *Hayavadhana*

10. *Getting There,* a semi-autobiographical novel about a young woman illustrator in Bombay is written by _____ .

a) Asif Currimbhoy

b) Manjula Padhmanabhan

c) Mahesh Dattani

d) Girish Karnad

2.8 LET US SUM UP

India has a long history of drama from ancient times. It's journey begins with Sanskrit plays. Drama has been a very influential and powerful medium in English literature because of its audiovisual medium of expression. Indian English Drama is supposed to have begin in the 18th century when the British Empire strengthened its power in India. It is taken to have started with the publication of Krishna Mohan Banerjee's The Persecuted in 1813. Indian English drama exhibited its genius after a long time in the 20th century with many significant playwrights. Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh, Mahesh Dattani and Manjula Padmanabhan who made a tremendous contribution to the evolution and development of Indian English drama.

2.9 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Explain with suitable examples the growth and development of Drama in India.
2. Describe the impact of Westernization on Indian Drama in English.
3. What were various themes dealt by post-independence Indian Dramatists in English?
4. Write a note on the dramatic art of Girish Karnad.
5. Describe the art of characterisation of Asif Currimbhoy.

2.10 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. a) 1813
2. b) Declining sex ratio in India
3. d) Manjula Padhmanabhan
4. c) Pratap Sharma
5. a) Mahesh Dattani
6. c) Girish Karnad

7. b) Rabindranath Tagore

8. d) *Nagamandala*

9. a) *The Refugee*

10. b) Manjula Padhmanabhan

2.11 SUGGESTED READING

K.R.Srinivas Iyengar: *Indian Writing in English*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962.

M.K.Naik: *A History of Indian English Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1992.

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INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

STRUCTURE

3.1 Introduction

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3.3 History of Indian Poetry in English

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3.14 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

3.15 Let Us Sum Up

3.16 Examination Oriented Questions

3.17 Answer Key to Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

3.18 Suggested Reading

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will introduce you to the history of Indian English verses. It will provide you with information of the growth of Indian English verses and its socio-cultural background. What are the various themes in Indian English poetry? Who are the major Indian English poets? This chapter is an answer to these questions with a thorough background to Indian English verses which will help you to get better knowledge of the various trends in Indian English poetry.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

Learner, this chapter deals with Indian English Literature and we are going to begin with Indian English Poetry. After studying this chapter you will be able to -

- Elaborate the literary background of the Indian English Poetry
- Take a review of the growth and development of Indian English verses
- Describe different phases and the influence of the contemporary social and political situations.
- Narrate recurrent themes in Indian English poetry.

3.3 HISTORY OF INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

Poetry is the expression of human life from times eternal. India in fact has a long tradition of arts and poetry from ages. Colonialism gave a new language, English for the expression of Indians. The poetry written by the Indians in English in the last 150 years may be said to have three phases: the imitative, the assimilative and the experimental.

The period from 1850 to 1900 is the imitative phase when the Indian poets were romantic poets in the Indian garb or in George Bottomley's words "Matthew Arnold in a saree" or as some derogatively observes "Shakuntala in a mini-skirt." The chief sources of inspiration were the British romantic poets: Wordsworth, Scott, Shelley, Keats, Byron. The period from 1900 to 1947 is

the assimilative period when the Indian poets still romantic tried to assimilate the romanticism of the early nineteenth century British poets and the "new" romantics of the decadent period for expressing the consciousness of the Indian renaissance between nationalism and political changes which ultimately led to the attainment of political freedom in 1947.

Indian English Poetry is now more than two hundred years old. In Indian English Poetry, Henry Derozio's *'Poems'* was the first volume in1827. To understand the development of Indian English Poetry and its proper perspectives, it is necessary to consider its origin and continuity. Some critics consider Indian English Poetry into two parts: Pre Independent and Post Independent. A group condemns the poetry written before independence while some hail the poetry written after 1947.

V.K. Gokak in his introduction to '*The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Verse'* and also in his studies '*Indo-Anglian Poetry'* traces the growth and progress of Indian English Poetry. He classifies the pre independent Indian poets as neo-symbolist and neo- modernist. The neo-symbolists have mysticism and neo- modernist's vision is coloured by humanism. The notable names in pre- independence poetry are Derozio, Toru Dutt, M.M. Dutt, Aurobindo, Manmohan Ghose, Tagore, Naidu, Harindranath Chattopadhyay and R. C. Dutt.

The post independent poetry is of modern poets who turned anthologists and self styled. It has acquired its own distinct characters. A large number of Indian poets in English appeared in sixties and after. The poets like Nissim Ezekiel, P.Lal, Dom Moraes, K. N. Daruwalla, Jayanta Mahapatra, A. K. Ramanujan, A. K. Mehrotra, Kamala Das, R. Parthasarathy, Keshav Malik, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Pritish Nandy, Gouri Deshpande, Adil Jussawalla, Shiv K. Kumar, Gieve Patel and others have enriched the post independent Indian English Poetry.

In order to understand the origin and development of Indian English Poetry in rather detail, the Unit divides Indian English poetry into three phases

like: Early Indian English Poetry (By the Indian Revolt of 1857), Indian English Poetry in the Period of Freedom Struggle (1857 to 1950) and the Post Independent Indian Poetry in English (After 1950).

3.4 POETRY OF FIRST PHASE

The first phase of Indian poetry was the period of literary renaissance in India. Derozio's poems, Kasiprasad Ghosh's *The Shair or Ministrel and other poems*, Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *The Captive Lady*, Manmohan Ghose's Love Songs and Elegies are a testimony to the creative upsurge occasioned by the romantic spirit kindled by the literary renaissance. Toru Dutt alone among these romantic poets of the first phase puts an emphasis on India and her heritage by putting into verse a large number of Indian legends. The romantic Toru Dutt is also a predecessor in respect to the use of the tree in verse as demonstrated by "Our Casuarina Tree," a predecessor in respect of childhood memories recalled with nostalgia or regret.

3.5 POETRY OF SECOND PHASE

The poets of the second phase, still romantic in spirit were Sarojini Naidu, Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh and Harindranth Chattopadhyaya. The poetic output of these poets was prolific. Romanticism of these Indian poets was fraught with nationalism, spirituality and mysticism. It was therefore different from English romanticism. Indian romanticism widened the poet's vision. While Aurobindo's was the search for the Divine in Man and Tagore's was the quest for the Beautiful in Man and Nature. Both were philosopher poets. Sarojini Naidu's romantic muse underscored the charm and splendor of traditional Indian life and Indian scene. She had a fine ear for verbal melody as she was influenced not only by English poetry but also by the Persian and Urdu poetry. She excelled in lyricism. She was a true nightingale of India. Poetry written in the colonial period with a view to establish Indian identity by the Indian poets was an explosion or rather outburst of emotions: the nationalistic, philosophical, spiritual or mystical emotions. The appeal was to the heart of the readers. The poetry of Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Sarojini Naidu could not be romantic since they had to express the ethos of the age. They were not merely

imitating the English romantics, Victorians and Decadents blindly. Their poetry was the best voice of the contemporary Indian time - spirit. It would be fair to say that Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu constitute a kind of watershed between the first two phases, in that they share their predecessor's individual nostalgia as well as their successor's sense of crisis and quest for identity.

3.6 POST-INDEPENDENCE POETRY

The ethos of the post-independence phase of Indian English literature is radically different from the first two phases. Its relation to the first two phases is that of the modern age in English literature to Victorianism. When the question of political independence was resolved in 1947 with the partition of India, the tensions of the Indian psyche suddenly relaxed. The post - independence era of hope and aspiration was replaced by an era of questioning and ironic exposure. The national identity achieved after independence gave Indian writers a new confidence to be the critic of the present, the past and of themselves. In this new spirit and confidence the Indian poets found themselves in line with Modern English and American poets. So once again there was borrowing up to some extent as in the first two phases of Indian poetry. While the pre - 1947 poets borrowed from the romantics, Victorians and "new" Romantics of the decadent period, the post - 1947 poets borrowed from the modernist poets like Yeats, Eliot, Pound and Auden. It is ironical that the word "romantic" should become a veritable red tag to the post-independence poets. If the word "romantic" is a red tag, the word "mystical" drives them to a fury. Adil Jussawalla, for example, finds Sri Aurobindo's Savitri "unwinding like an interminable sari." Parthasarthy declares that "Savitri fails as a poem because Ghosh's talent and resourcefulness in the use of English was limited."

About Toru Dutt, Parthasarthy says, "Toru Dutt's poems mean little to us because our idea of poetry has changed since her day." If the succeeding generation denigrates the preceding generation so vehemently, all past poetry - Valmiki, Homer, Dante, Kalidas, Shakespeare, Goethe, Whitman - would

become irrelevant. No true poet can escape tradition for tradition haunts the poet. The radical past is stored in the poet's deeper consciousness what the psychologist Jung calls "the blocked off radical unconscious." At the same time, no poet can escape the present also because he is in it and of it. The best that the poet can do is to relate the immediate present to the living past and if possible to a future that is in the process of becoming.

The later phase of Indian English poetry is of the modern and postmodern phase. The modern or experimental Indian English poetry is part of the process of modernization which includes urbanization, industrialization, mobility, independence, social change, increased communication (in the form of films, television, radio, journals and newspapers) national and international transportation networks, mass education and the resulting paradox that as an independent culture emerges, it also participates in the international, modern usually westernized world. Following are some of the factors responsible for the emergence of "new," "modernist," "experimental" Indian English poetry:

1. The economic progress achieved through the government's policies of democratic socialism and five year plans.
2. The social progress achieved through the rise in mass education.
3. The economic and social progress resulted in the broadening of the middle class sections of the society.
4. The spread of the English language and the evolution of the English culture alongside Hindi and the regional languages hastened the process of modernization. English has been Indianised in pronunciation, intonation, stress parts, idioms, word order and the syntax.
5. The scientific and technological advancement, the scientific temperament and modern sensibility has given rise to agnosticism and atheism among the educated intellectual. The modern educated intellectual Indian is critical of the formal and ritualistic religion.
6. The modern sensibility has led to an open mode of expression in social relationships.

7. Modern poetry deals in concrete terms with concrete experiences in free verse. Rhyme and other devices of meter and stanzaic forms are discarded.

The major post - independence Indian English poets are : Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, P. Lal, Adil Jussawalla, A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthy, Gieve Patel, Arvind Mehrotra, Pritish Nandy, Kamala Das, K. N. Daruwalla, Shiv Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Dilip Chitre, Saleem Peerdina, Santan Rodrigues, Eunice De Souza, Silgardo, Meena Alexander, Agha Shahid Ali, Vikram Seth, Manohar Shetty etc.

The models of the modern Indian poets are neither exclusively Indian nor British but cosmopolitan. Europe, Africa, America and Asia have all become a part of our cultural consciousness and offer impetus and stimulation. So the poets have cosmopolitan culture to fall back on, though the preference is shown for Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Auden, Dylan Thomas, Wallace Stevens, Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath, devotional poetry of saints like Tukaram. Contemporary Indian English poetry is the expression of certain attitudes and values believed in by certain sections of today's Indian society, wholly urban, middle class. The poets are realistic and intellectually critical in the expression of their individualized experience. The poets go in for precision at all levels. The poems are not didactic but thought provoking as they fall back on psychological problems presented in a psychoanalytical manner. So most of the poems do not strive for resolution of themes or conclusive stance. Modern Indian poems are by the poet turned psychologist, psychoanalyst, existentialist, surrealist etc. They are purely an expression of thoughts felt.

There is a lot of experimentation in the modern Indian poetry with a view to achieving modernity. Rhyme and stanzaic forms were replaced by free verse. Verbal melody came to be evoked through the use of alliterative and assonant words. The tone was one of intellectualized irony and sarcasm. The stance of the poets was one of complete detachment and objectivity. The other innovation of the modern Indian poets is the use of symbolism. The poets use modern techniques used by the film industry and advertising industry, besides

the stream of consciousness and free association of ideas. There is much "wordhunting" and "image-hunting" which reflects the medium of consciousness on the part of the poet. The Indian poets therefore borrow words from their regional languages. To be Indian, poets have to be rooted somewhere in India - geographically, historically, socially or psychologically.

Before Indians could write poetry in English, two related preconditions had to be met. First, the English language had to be sufficiently Indianised to be able to express the reality of the Indian situation. Secondly, Indians had to be sufficiently Anglicized to use the English language to express themselves. In 1780 India's first newspaper, 'Hicky's Bengal Gazette,' was published in English. In 1817, the Hindu college, which later became Presidency College, the premier educational institution of Bengal, was founded. More significantly, in 1835, Viceroy Macaulay, in his famous Minute, laid the foundations of the modern educational system, with his decision to promote European science and literatures among Indians through the medium of the English language. The result was that English became in India, as later in other British colonies, a passport to privilege. Indian poetry in English began in Bengal, the province in which the British first gained a stronghold. In addition, his poetry was largely an urban phenomenon centered in Calcutta. Infact, for the first fifty years, it was confined entirely to few Bengali families who were residents of the city. Then, gradually it moved to other urban centers such as Madras and Bombay; even today, Indian poetry in English remains largely urban. Moreover, because English was an elite language in India, Indian poets in English came from the upper classes and castes.

When Indians first began to write poetry, it was not distinguished from that of the British in India, or Anglo - Indians as they were called. Indeed, because India was a part of the British Empire, Indian poets in English were not given a separate national identity; their early efforts were considered tributary to the mainstream of English Literature.

Perhaps it is best to see Indian poetry in English as a phenomenon as valuable for what it symbolizes as for its own achievements. It embodies the

legacy of colonialism, our struggle against colonialism and oppression. It is also the site for the continuing Indo – western encounter and the evolving culture of post - colonial India. It is still a literature of major aspirations, a literature which has access to a national consciousness and to some of the best minds produced by this country.

3.7 EARLY INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY OR PRE-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

The nineteenth century saw the institutionalization of British imperialism in India. An oppressive economic, political and social system was put into place which emphasized the inequality between the minuscule British ruling class and a vast populace of Indian subjects. Indian English poets displayed various degrees of compromise and resistance to it. The fact that they wrote in English itself showed the extent of their capitulation. On the other hand, they tried to make up for this by writing in a manner which emphasized their difference, their Indianness. The tension between the alienating language and the Indian sensibility is as old as Indian poetry in English itself.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809 – 1831) is the noteworthy first Indian English poet. He was a son of Indo – Portuguese father and an English mother. He had started writing in his teens. Before joining as a lecturer in Hindu College, Calcutta he worked as a clerk. Here his spirit of enquiry, his passion of ideas, his reformist idealism and his romantic enthusiasm fired the imagination of many of his students. As a result the public opinion compelled the college authorities to dismiss Derozio from his service in 1931. He started a daily *'The East Indian'* and suddenly died of cholera. There are two volumes of poetry on his name: *'Poems'* (1927) and *'The Fakir of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems'* (1928). The short poems of him revealed a strong influence of British romantic poets in theme, sentiment, imagery and diction. His satirical verse and long narrative poems indicated his affinity with Byron. These verses showed energy and vigour. Burning nationalistic zeal was a notable feature of Derozio's poetry. His patriotic

utterances certified Derozio as an Indian English poet, a son of soil. He is also a pioneer in the use of Indian myth and legend, imagery and diction. E. F. Oaten's assessment of Derozio as, 'The national bard of modern India' can be rather debatable today.

In 1930, the first volume of verse appeared *'The Shair of Ministrel and Other Poems'* which was by a pure Indian blood, Kashiprasad Ghosh (1809 – 73). It was an outcome of an ambition to compose original verse in English. His study of prosody and criticism and reading of the best poetry revealed the correct verses. His use of Indian material and Hindu festivals in lyrics show his honest attempt, earnestness and true poetic talent.

The Dutts: Rajnarain Dutt (1824 -89), Shoshee Chunder Dutt (1815 - 65) and Hur Chunder Dutt (1831 - 1901) contributed to Indian English poetry with their undistinguished poetic works. Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1924 - 73) is also well known as an Indian poet. He wrote some sonnets, short poems and two long poems in English. The poets like Scott and Byron were his models. One of his long poems: *'The Captive Ladie'* (1849) deals with the story of the Rajput King, Prithwiraj. Here Dutt take liberties with history. The other long poem by Dutt, *'In Vision of Past'* (1849) is in the form of Miltonic blank verse, with weighty, abstract diction and Latin inversions. In this period of Indian English literature the British rule was accepted as a great boon. The holocaust of the Indian revolt of 1857 ushered in different ideas.

3.8 INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY IN THE PERIOD OF FREEDOM STRUGGLE (1857 TO 1950)

'The Dutt Family Album' (1870) is the first notable poetry work of this period. It is the only instance of family anthology in Indian English Poetry. This is a collection of 187 poems by three Dutt brothers. They are Govind Chunder, Hur Chunder and Greece Chunder. They treat their Indian material as something poetically serviceable. Their major subjects are Christian sentiment, nature and Indian history and legend. Ram Sharma (1837 – 1918) wrote occasional verse,

satires, narratives, lyrics on various themes and mystical verse. Hindu yogic experience was expressed through conventional western myth and frame.

Toru Dutt (1856–77) brought up Indian English Poetry from imitation to authenticity. Torulata was born in a Hindu family but was baptized with family members in 1862. Reading and music were her hobbies. She learnt English in France and England. She sailed for Europe in1869 and returned to India in 1873. She died at the age of twenty one when her talent was maturing. There are two collections of poems on her name. Out of which one appeared in her own life time. However it was not in the nature of original work. It was *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) which comprised 165 lyrics by about a hundred French poets. These lyrics are translated by her. To Edmund Gosse, the volume is 'a wonderful mixture of strength and weakness.' Toru Dutt's Keatsian progress during the last two years of her life is revealed in her posthumous publication *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882). The themes of these poems indicate that Toru Dutt is the first Indian poet who used Indian myth and legend extensively. Though she was brought up in Christian living or in a half anglicized environment, she gives the treatment of instinctive and spiritual understanding of the legends. Toru Dutt's poetic technique shows a sure grasp more than poetic mode. Her diction is naturally of the Victorian romantic school. She shows her prosodic skill in using different forms like ballad, blank verse and the sonnet. Unlike Kashiprasad Ghosh and M. M. Dutt, Toru Dutt's poetry is virtually free from imitation.

Behram Merwanji Malbari (1853 -1912) wrote *The Indian Muse in English Garb* (1876). It is a slender collection of 32 pieces. It has occasional verses and poems in social criticism. There were contemporary poets like Cowasji Nowrosi Vesuvala, M. M. Kunte and Nagesh Vishvanath Pai. They belonged to the then Bombay Presidency. But it is said that Bengal was the first home of Indian English literature. Moreover it continued its dominance on the Indian English poetry for many more years.

Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848 – 1909) wrote in both, Bengali and English. His all English verses are translations. Dutt aimed to produce

condensed versions of the great epics. *Lays of Ancient India* (1894) is a collection of verse translations from Sanskrit and Prakrit classics. To him, he has preserved the 'musical movement of the original in English translations for which he employed 'Anusthubh/Sloka' meter and reduced the complexity of these Hindu classics. But the use of this 'sloka' meter evaporated the spirit of the original. However, they have remained as the best introductions in English to our great national epics. Very accurately he has delineated basic human motives and emotions.

Manmohan Ghose (1869 – 1924) was educated in England. He was sent to England at ten. He is a classic example which shows an exile heart, sense of alienation and unhappy childhood and adolescence. Manmohan Ghose published *'Premveera'* a collection of verse in 1890, *'Love Songs and Elegies'* in 1898 and *'Songs of Love and Death'* in 1926. *'Immortal Eve'* and *'Mysteries'* are his poetic sequels. George Sampson rightly says, 'Manmohan is the most remarkable of Indian poets who wrote in English.' He is a poet as if trained in classic tradition. Sri Aurobindo (1872 – 1950), Manmohan's younger brother, had also same kind of upbringing. He had passed Civil Service Examination and was a master of many languages like Greek, Latin, French, English, German, Italian, Sanskrit and Bengali. In due course, he became Mahapurusha, a Mahayogi. He founded the centre of yoga at Pondicherry. Sir Aurobindo is well known as a poet and critic of life and letters. His *'Collected Poems and Plays'* is the best known. Sri Aurobindo has a parallel record of poetic achievements as a translator and narrative poet, as a metrical and verbal craftsman, as a lyricist and dramatist and as a 'futurist' poet. *'Urvasie'* and *'Love and Death'* are his beautifully articulated narrative poems. *'Baji Prabhu'* is a first rate action poem, *'Percus, the Deliverer'* is a blank verse drama. *'Thought the Paraclete'* and *'The Rose of God'* are the finest mystical poems in the language. His long poems *'Ahana and Ilion'* are the best examples of classical quantities' meters. *'Savitri'* has created a new kind of epic poetry. He has been aptly called as Milton of India.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was another prominent contemporary poet. Mahatma Gandhi called him as 'The Great Sentinel'. He touched and enriched modern Indian life in many ways. He was poet, dramatist, novelist, short-story writer, composer, painter, thinker, educationist, nationalist and internationalist also. He as a bilingual poet occupied the significant place in Indo – Anglican poetry. *'The Child'* and a few other poems are written in English. His *Geetanjali* (1913), a prose poem, compelled a world – wide attention and he won the Nobel Prize for literature. His prose works too were written originally in English for international public. After *'The Geetanjali,'* Tagore wrote *'The Gardener'* (1913), *'Stray Birds'* (1916), *'Lovers Gift and Crossing'* (1918) and *'The Fugitive'* (1921). W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound were the admirers of Tagore's poetry. Tagore's verse in English had lyrical quality; it had rhythm of free verse. He dealt with simplicity, seriousness and passion. He used colloquial idiom and archaic vocabulary like 'thee' and 'thou.'

Sri Ananda Acharya (1881 - 1941) wrote over thirty - five books, out of which ten were collections of verse. All of these have been collected in the volumes, *Snow Birds and other poems* and *Arctic Swallows and other poems* both edited by K. V. Sharma. Acharya's poems are spiritualist and mystical. They propound a philosophy of life which emphasizes self - transformation and pacifism. Many of his poems use esoteric imagery and symbolism. The poems show overall, a combination of Vedantic and Buddhist influences.

Puran Singh (1881 - 1931) is chiefly remembered as a pioneering figure in twentieth century Punjabi literature. Besides poems, novels, short stories, drama and criticism, he also wrote extensively on Sikh culture and history. His form and technique were influenced by Tagore, while his ideas were inspired by Sikh scriptures and devotional literature.

Sarojini Naidu (1879–1949) started her career as a poet but later she became a prominent politician of Gandhian era. She had recognition in England much earlier. Her first volume of poetry, *'The Golden Threshhold'* (1905) was followed by *'The Bird of Time'* (1912) and *'The Broken Wing'* (1917). Her collected poems appeared in *'The Sceptred Flute'* (1946). A small collection

of lyrics written in 1927, 'Father of the Down' was published posthumously in 1961. Her lyrics are strongly influenced by British romanticism and Persian and Urdu poets. In all the four volumes by Sarojini Naidu witness her unerring sense of beauty and melody. Her poems present a feast of delight to the reader. As a lyricist, she always spoke in a 'private voice' and never bothered to express the burning problems of her day. But she is the first rank artist having the strength of perfect rhythm with which she can be close to Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Though she appears hopelessly outdated by the standards of modern poetic taste, she is historically significant and intrinsically important.

J. Krishnamurti (1895 - 1986) wrote poetry for a brief but crucial juncture in his long career as a philosopher and teacher. From 1927 - 1931 he published three collections of poetry. His poems are all in a poetic prose, the form which Tagore popularized. They are basically devotional and mystical poems, passionately didactic but rich in imagery and metaphor. He underwent a spiritual transformation. Since then he toured the world speaking against occult hierarchies and authority in matters of spirit.

Humayun Kabir (1906 - 1969) was an individual of vast and varied accomplishments - scholar, educationist, administrator, politician, trade union leader, poet, novelist and translator. He wrote over thirty books in English and Bengali. Besides two volumes of poems, he wrote a novel, *Man and Rivers* (1945). His poems are far more concrete, realistic and modern in sensibility than those of his contemporaries; infact, in tone and character.

Harindranath Chattopadhyay, born in 1898, is also a well-known poet. He has written some brilliant pieces of poetry. Many of his poems are marked by a devotional note and his belief in Marxist ideology. He has remained as an idealist and seeker of spiritual truth. He published numerous volumes of verse like *'The Feast of Youth'* (1967), *'Virgins and Vineyards'* (1967), *'The Magic Tree'* (1922), *'Poems and Plays'* (1927) and *'Spring in Winter'* (1955). Chattopadhyay's better poems have been engulfed in a mass of middling. His

themes are the staple of all romantic poetry: nostalgia, melancholy; passion for beauty, the changing moods of love, idealism and humanitarian.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, many poets continued to write in the Romantic and Victorian fashion. The poets like Swami Vivekanand, Harindranath, Meherjee, A. F. Kabardar, N. V. Thadni, Nizamat Jung and Anand Acharya exploited Indian or oriental thought and legend. N. W. Pai produced a romance in blank verse, 'The Angel of Misfortune' (1905). Anand Acharya rendered his own prose poems like Tagore. But there were some poets who responded to the new trend, Georgianism. Robi Dutt, Joseph Furtado, P. Sheshadri, J. Vakil, G. K. Chettur, S. K. Chettur and Kabraji reveal Georgian love of the colloquial idiom and simple handling of poetical themes. In this period Indian English literature came into existence. India's rediscovery of her identity became vigorous. The Indian English literature began to progress, though by absorbing, learning and imitating from the West.

3.9 THE POST-INDEPENDENT INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH (AFTER 1950)

Like American, Australian and Canadian English literatures, Indian English literature used to express the British influence. But the post independent poetry of modern India discarded the so called influence of the West. The post independent Indian poetry in English shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours etc. of the society. The poetry gave wide range cultural trait through symbols, situations, themes and others. They presented the real world conditions, i. e. the contemporary India. Indian legends, folklores, situations, idioms, and themes became the features of Indian English Poetry. Naturally the variety of myths, symbols, images, emotions, sentiments became associated with Indian tradition and culture. The poets' attempts were consciously Indian. Even the conventional poetic language was replaced by colloquial. The modern Indian English poets reflected perspective and milieu after the independence. Due to the changes in the modern world, the nature, living standard and behaviour of the man was being changed. The persona in this poetry was also changed. His inner conflict,

alienation, failure, frustration, loneliness, his relations with himself and others, his individual, family and social contexts, his love, etc. became the themes of the poetry. At the same time the modern Indian poetry in English became complex, harsh and defiance of tradition. Indian poetry in a true sense was being appeared by the fifties. In 1958, P. Lal and his associates founded the Writers Workshop in Calcutta which became an effective forum for modernist poetry. The first modernist anthology was 'Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry' (1958) edited by P. Lal and K. Raghavendra Rao.

Nissim Ezekiel (1924 – 2003) was the first of the 'new' poets. He is aptly called the father/pioneer of modern Indian poetry in English. He is a very Indian poet in Indian English. He experimented with idioms and language of Indian's which became the matter of criticism and was looked down upon as 'Baboo Angrezi / Bombay English / Hinglish etc. Ezekiel's poetry was a kind of debut in the literary field. He wrote prolifically in addition to prose and drama. His published poetry collections are: *'A Time to Change'* (1952), *'Sixty Poems'* (1953), *'The Third'* (1959), *'The Unfinished Man'* (1960), *'The Exact Name'* (1965), *'Hymns in Darkness'* (1976) and *'Latter-Day Psalms'* (1984). His *'Collected Poems'* also appeared in due course. He is the poet of situations, human beings about which he wrote with subtle observations. He wrote with a touch of humour and irony but with genuine sympathy. The alienation is the central theme of Ezekiel's work. He is the poet of city culture especially of the city, Bombay. Obsessive sense of failure, self doubt and self laceration, exile from himself, love, marriage, art and artist are also themes of Ezekiel's poetry. Ezekiel's poetry also reveals technical skill of a high order. His talent and major poetic utterance will remain by virtue of opening new vistas.

Dom Moraes (1938-2004) is one of the new poets who won recognition in England. He has published several volumes of poems such as '*A Beginning'* (1957), *'Poems'* (1960), *'John Nobody'* (1968), *'His Poems* 1955 – 1965' (1966) and his *'Collected Poems'* (1969). He came in contact with poets like Ezekiel, Auden and Spender. He was deeply influenced by

Dylan Thomas and the surrealistic school. His verse often creates a haunted world in which classical, Christian, medieval and fairy tale myths are mixed and dragons and dwarfs, Cain and the unicorn, the tombs of Mycenae and Christ come together. However, Moraes' verse is of the finest rhythms, easy, refined and of controlled language.

P. Lal (1929-2010) is the earliest and one of the prominent poets during the 1960s. He led the Writers Workshop group of poets. He started the modernist reaction against the romantic tradition of Indian poetry but he ended up as a romantic poet himself. He is essentially a lyrical and pictorial poet. H. M. William finds in his poetry the brevity of Japanese Haiku and Tanka. According to K. R. S. Iyengar, 'Lal is undoubtedly a sensitive and accomplished lyrical poet.' Mc Cutchion found the sensibility of Tagore in P. Lal. M. K. Naik observes, 'Lal's early works remain the best, while his contribution as pioneer, popular and effective champion of the new poetry is undeniably substantial.' P. Lal is sensitive like Keats. He has love for nature like Wordsworth. He is deeply influenced by T. S. Eliot. His verse collections include *'The Patriot's Death and Other Poems' (*1960*), Love's the First'* (1962), ' *Change They Said'* (1966), *'Draupadi and Jayadratha and Other Poems'* (1969), *'The Man* of *Dharma and the Rasa of Silence'* (1974) and *'Calcutta: A Long Poem'* (1977). He has also published creative translations like 'The Bhagwad Gita' (1965), The Dhammapada' (1967), and 'Galib's Love Poems' (1971). Lal's early works still remains the best and his contribution as a pioneer, popular and effective champion is undeniably substantial.

Adil Jussawalla (b. 1940-) began to become an 'English poet' like Dom Moraes. His first collection '*Land's End*' follows Dom Moraes' footsteps. His next volume '*Missing Person*' is a mature and full blooded volume in which he emerges as a very Indian poet. As an Indian poet he is aware of contemporary social and political realities. His poetic world is of floods, famines, wars, riots, student-posters, Five Year Plan, colonial apes, police dogs, running dogs, cell-mates, stone throwers, refugees, immigrants, etc. In *'Missing Person'*

there is blending of public and private worlds and the major theme is exile. Jussawalla is concerned with disillusionment and defeat in poems. Sometimes he catches at hope, happiness and affirmation. He is a poet of loneliness and alienation, a poet of division between India and western association. Iyengar says, 'He is the 'missing person.' He must find himself first before other can recognize and respect him.'

A.K. Ramanujan (1929 -1993) is the most outstanding poet of the sixties. He wrote in Tamil and Kannada, *'The Interior Landscape'* (1967), and *'Speaking of Siva'* (1972) are translations into English respectively. Though A. K. Ramanujan settled in America, his poetry grows out of Indian experiences and sensibility with all his memories of family, local places, images, beliefs and history. His memories play a vital role in composing poems. Ramanujan's Indianness is notable in terms of Indian myths, history, culture, heritage and Indian topography and environment. His style is lucid and calm. He gives details in narrative technique by using exact and clear images. His love poems are of deep emotion and fineness of perception. His technical accomplishment is indisputable. His views of life are ironic, skeptical, controlled, refined finely, detailed, natural and unaffected. His vision is keenly microscopic. The volumes of his poetry are *'The Striders'* (1966), *'Relations'* (1967), and *'Second Sight'* (1976). *'Selected Poems'* (1986), *'The Collected Poems of A. K. Ramanujan'* (1995) and *'Uncollected Poems and Prose of A. K. Ramanujan'* (2001) are posthumous publications.

R. Parthasarathy (b. 1934 -) is a Tamil writer who is acutely conscious of complex relationship between Tamil mind and Europe. Though he was hoping for England, as a future home, he returned with 'a new understanding of myself and India.' His '*Rough Passage'* (1977) illustrates his intellectual and rational make-up. The volume is divided into three sections: Exile, Trial and Homecoming. In Exile there is a pain of isolation and alienation, Trial talks of his personal love which makes his life meaningful and Homecoming deals with death as a time changing process and a reality of human life. *'Rough Passage'* is an autobiographical poetry. The poet concerns with his

mother tongue, homeland and his personal experiences. He uses shocking but apt imagery and metaphors. It symbolizes rough passage in England and rough come-back in India.

Gieve Patel (b.1940 -) from Parsi community published his first book *'Poems'* (1966) and the second 'How Do You Withstand, Body' (1976). Like Ezekiel, an outsider, being neither Hindu nor Muslim in India, he is rather conscious. But he feels no rootlessness. Though he was a physician by profession, he has a surprising poetic art. R. Parthsarthy says, 'Patel's poems are unspectacular take-offs, on the Indian scene on which he comments with clinical fastidiousness.' His keen observation, passion of expression and integrity of language impress us. *'From Mirrored, Mirroring'* (1991) is his latest volume. M. K. Naik describes, 'His poetry is mostly situational. His style is colloquial and ironical and most directly reflective.'

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (b. 1947) writes poetry in which the image is all dominant. He began his career in 1966 with *'Bharatmata'* (Mother India), a long satirical poem on modern India. *'Woodcuts on Paper'* (1967), *'Pomes / Poems / Poemas'* (1971) and *'Nine Enclosures'* (1976) are volumes of poems on his name. He enjoys imaginative freedom and his world is of childhood fantasy and play. He is an experimentalist and force of liberty in Indian English poetry. Mehrotra is a surrealistic who returns to realism later. His poetry is an immediate reaction to his discovery of various modern and post-modern styles and poetics. Some of his poems are autobiographical and nostalgic. A. K. Mehrotra asserted, 'I am not an Indian poet but a poet writing a universal language of poetry, of feeling, of love, hate and sex.' He has also expressed his belief that 'poetry has no 'real public' anywhere in the world.' Thus he is the modern poet in content and technique.

Pritish Nandy (b. 1947-) produced a dozen collections including *'Of Gods and Olives'* (1967), *'The Poetry of Pritish Nandy'* (1973) and *'Tonight This Savage Rite'* (1977). He is an innovator in various stanza patterns, italicized expressions and metrical patterns like Eliot.

K. N. Daruwalla (b.1937-) is the most substantial modern Indian poet in English. He has published '*Under Orion'* (1970), *'Apparition in April'* (1971) and *'Crossing of Rivers'* (1976). 'The Keepers of the Dead,' and 'Sword and Abyss' are also his notable works. Northern India: hills, plains and rivers are evoked in many of his poems.

Shiv K. Kumar (1921-2017) is a senior who published his first collection of poems *'Articulate Silences'* (1970) when he was fifty. This was followed by *'Cobwebs in the Sun'* (1974), *'Subterfuges'* (1976), *'Woodpeckers'* (1979) and *'Trap falls in the Sky'* (1986). His poetry reveals boredom, horror and restlessness of modern man. He is the poet of city and urban images.

Jayanta Mahapatra (1928-2023) is a poet who is honoured both at home and abroad. He is a prolific, experimentalist, imagistic and post-modernist poet from Orissa. His volumes of poetry are *'Close the Sun Ten by Ten'* (1971), *'Svayamvara and Other Poems'* (1971), *'A Father Hours'* (1976), *'A Rain of Rites'*(1976), *'Waiting'* (1979), *'The False Start'* (1980), *Relationship'* (1980), *'Life Signs'* (1983), *Dispossesed Nests'* (1986), *'Selected Poems'* (1987), *'Burden of Waves and Fruit'* (1988), *'Temple'* (1989) and *'Whiteness of Bone'* (1992).

Arun Kolatkar (1932- 2006) is a bilingual poet of quality rather than quantity. He wrote bhakti-poetry. Commonwealth poetry prize winner '*Jejuri'* (1976) and *'Arun Kolatkaranchya Kavita'*(1977) are well known works of Kolatkar.

Dilip Chitre (1938-2009) is another Maharashtrian and bilingual poet whose *'Travelling in a Cage'* (1980) is a sequence of twenty-one poems. The second part ' From Bombay' contain fifteen poems and the third 'Ambulance Ride' is a funeral elegy of his friend. He is obsessed with sex, madness and death. 'Tuka Says' is a translation of the Abhangas by Marathi saint, Tukaram. Like Kolatkar, Chitre is an experimental poet in Indian English.

Kamala Das (1934-2009) is one of the women poets of this period. She wrote in Malyalam and English. She has published books of verse in

English like: *'Summer in Calcutta'* (1965), *'The Descendants'* (1967),*' The Old Playhouse and Other Poems'* (1973) and *'Stranger Time'* (1977). She is a confessional poet of love and tenderness. She gives living expressions of modern Indian women thoughts and feelings. Her poems are condensed with the images and symbols of love and lust. Her poetry is of feminist and religious rebel.

The post independent Indian poetry in English is abundant but the quality of its minor verse does not match its abundance. B. K. Das remarks, 'Indian poetry in English is Indian first and anything else afterwards. Its base is pan-Indian and it has audience all over the country.' Moreover, the Indian English poet is concerned with 'Indiannesss' of his experiences. Indian poetry in English stands in comparison with the poetry of the third world countries.

3.10 MAJOR THEMES IN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Indo-Anglian poetry, an offshoot of Indian English literature is about two hundred years old. It is next to the British and American poetry. Besides, it is far ahead of the poetry of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Henry Derozio, the bard of modern India, imitated Byron, Moore and Keats. K. Prasad Ghosh imitated Walter Scott. M. M. Dutt's poetry was influenced by the English romantics. Their poetry is derivative and imitative. It does not form in independent poetic tradition. It became mature and non-derivative in the hands of Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Tagore and Aurobindo. They formed the worth poetic tradition. They have revealed poetic insights, originality of themes and styles and technical excellence. Harindranath Chattopadhyay is noted for force and clarity, ideals and lyricism in poetry. The 19th century Indo-Anglian poetry ends with the poetry by Harindranath Chattopadhyay.

In the first quarter of the 20th century, many of the Indian poets in English wrote in Romantic and Victorian fashion. Anand Acharya was greatly

influenced by Tagore's English translations of his own prose poems. In the second quarter of the twentieth century, the poets like M. Krishnamurthi, V. N. Bhushan. K. D. Sethana, Manjeri Ishwaran and B. Dhingra continued to show a love of compact expression and new techniques. The third quarter of 20th century is the richest poetic harvest.

The modern Indian poetry in English has formed an independent poetic tradition of its own. Many of the modern poets contributed to the enrichment and growth of Indian English poetry. Today it is of international reputation and expressing the meeting of two vital cultures, i.e. the Indian and the English. Many of the pre independent Indian English poets hailed from Bengal. The history of Indo-Anglian poetry is mainly a development from neo-romanticism to mysticism and to neo-modernism. From Derozio to Naidu, the trend was of romanticism. Toru Dutt was the first neo romantic poet. She glorifies India's cultural heritage in her poems. The phase Indo-Anglian romanticism ended with the poetry by Sarojini Naidu. Sri Aurobindo's poetry was of mysticism. His poetry is lyrical, narrative and philosophical. His mystic poetry has a mantric quality and very close to Vedanta. In his poems we find a fusion of personal vision and spiritual personality of India.

The poets in the beginning explored Indian themes. Toru revealed utter Indianness of theme in her '*Our Casuarina Tree.'* Tagore, Aurobindo and Naidu helped to build Indian English poetry on Indian myth, legend and history. Since then Indian poetry has been Indian first and everything later. The changes in national climate have been expressed in the poetry. The poetry proved the glorious voice of the essential humanity and universality. Love, nature, life, nationalism, patriotism, motherland, man, myths, legends, fine arts and beauty are the major themes of this poetry. They are the poems of introspective and metaphysical qualities.

The post independence Indian English poetry became the vital body of Commonwealth and Third World literature. The political freedom changed not only the socio-economic features of India but creative literature also. The post colonial poets protested the imitation of the British and American poetry.

The modern Indian English poetry deals with the contemporary India. It evokes the tradition and culture of the country to establish its own identity. Many poets published their works in Writers' Workshop. The modern Indian English poetry won recognition in the country and abroad.

These 'new' or modern poets deal with themes like protest, escape, affirmation, self expression, rootlessness, loneliness, alienation, feminism, love, sex, religion Marx, Freud, romance, primitivism, sensualist, symbolism, spiritualism, etc. Some poets scrutinized the inner and outer world through the poetry of introspection. The exile is also one of the dominant themes of this period which accompanies the theme like cultural interaction. Birth, marriage, death, disillusion and life are also the major themes of this poetry.

3.11 EXPERIMENTATION IN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Prof. V. K. Gokak, in his introduction to *'The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Verse (1970)'* and in his '*Studies in Indo-Anglian Poetry,* (1972) traces the growth and progress of Indian English poetry. He claims that Tagore and Sri Aurobindo are the great innovators of the art of versification. Prof V. K. Gokak classifies Indian Poets as 'neo-symbolist' and 'neo-modernist.' They were the poets of mysticism and humanism respectively. Tagore's *'Geetanjali'* is a transcreation in English. Poets like Prof. P. Lal and K. Raghavendra Rao dismissed the old Indo-Anglian school of poetry. The poetry became the private voice to demonstrate their age, its mass approval and hysteria. It was a reaction against the Indian poetry written in English before and during the nineteenth century.

The Independence in India brought new movements in literature, for example the new uses of language. The new minds required new voices and new voices discovered the poets' genius to register the idiom of their age intimately. The 'new' poets of the post independent India have won recognition both in our country and abroad. They speak in new voice. Their idiom, style, syntax speak of their freedom.

The Indians won not only political freedom but also cultural freedom to creative literature. Post-colonial Indian English poets registered a protest against the imitative poetry influenced by the British and American poetry. Modern Indian English poetry depicts the contemporary India. The tradition and culture of India is depicted in order to establish its own identity. The Modern Indian English poetry has acquired the distinct features and its own voice. The ethos of the post-independence Indian English poetry and pre-independence Indian English poetry are different.

The modern Indian English poets became self-conscious about their language and form. They tried to make a creative use of English in the most effective manner. The themes of these poems are quite new regarding innovation and creation of modern poetry. Modernity, Indianness, Use of Indian idiom, Bilingualism, Exile and certain motifs are the distinctive features of Modern Indian English poetry.

The Modern Indian English poetry means a break with the past. It has three manifestations:

1. A past oriented vision associated with a sense of loss and hopelessness, a sort of cultural pessimism,

2. A future oriented vision, associated with a desire to remake the world and

3. A present oriented attitude, historical, immoral, neutral, stoic, ironic, and ambivalent and absurdist. This modernity has two modes of expression: a) Voyage within and b) Voyage without. The modernism in the post 60s Indian English poetry has been very strongly presented. The French symbolism and surrealism are also practiced very successfully in the Modern Indian English poetry. The present Indian scene is also commented brilliantly by Indian poets.

Indianness has been very distinct feature of Modern Indian English poetry. These poets reveal the Indian sensibility in their poetry. History, myths, legends, folklores all go together to establish a distinct Indian idiom and identity. Modern Indian English poetry is truly Indian which draws artistic material from

its heritage. Mostly the Indianness is expressed through imagery. The Indian idiom has been the validity of Indian poetry in English. Very few of the modern Indian English poets write in English only. Most of them are bilingual poets. The poets like Nissim Ezekiel writes only in English. Otherwise all these poets wrote in their regional languages as well as in national language. These poets tried to enrich Indian English in a true sense.

The Modern Indian poets are classified on the basis of their exile. Some Indian poets (Parthasarathy, Vikram Seth and Ramanujan) have visited foreign countries and lived there. However they contributed to Indian English poetry. Some (Ezekiel, Moraes and Jussawalla) went abroad but returned and settled in India. Some never visited the abroad. Therefore their poetry reflect accordingly. They express the feelings like anxiety, self identity and alienation.

We observe some motifs in Indian poetry. Some poets have written on rivers, Bombay life, childhood memories, personal life, etc. The living contemporary situations are largely presented by the modern poetry in Indian English. The poets try to bring innovations in both form and content. They are conscious in creating new images and idiom. There is variety in Indian poetry and they write in living Indian English.

3.12 INDIANNESS IN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Modern Indian English poetry is Indian first and everything else afterwards. In Indian English poetry Indianness is a matter not only of diction and syntax but also of imagery, myths and legends. The thoughts are Indian but drapery is English. M. K. Naik has raised three basic questions about the Indianness of Indian English poetry. These questions are:

1. Is Indian verse in English only sometimes 'Indian' and only occasional poetry?
2. Must Indian poetry be 'Indian' before it can be true poetry?
3. In what exactly lies the genuine 'Indianness of Indian poetry in English'?

It is true that all Indian English poetry, since Derozio to the present day poets, qualifies as genuine poetry. Of course it is occasionally poetry and sometimes 'Indian.' For example, Sarojini Naidu's *'India'* and *'Lotus'*; Humayun Kabir's *' Mahatma'* are about the motherland and national leader.

The nineteenth century Indian poetry in English was imitative. Sri Aurobindo's '*Savitri*' is essentially an expression of Indian sensibility but his brother Manmohan Ghose felt a stranger in India. Indianness may be assessed in respect of several forms and shapes but it has remained one of the major features of Indian poetry in English, especially of the modern Indian English poetry. Prof. David McCutchion speaks of 'Indianness' as 'life attitudes' and 'modes of perception.' Prof. V. K. Gokak defines Indianness as 'a complete awareness in the matter of race, milieu, language and religion.' C. Paul Verghese thinks Indianness is nothing but depiction of Indian culture. Indianness is sum total of the cultural patterns of India and the deep rooted ideas and ideals regarding political, economic, secular and spiritual minds of India. The true image of India is portrayed by the Modern Indian English poetry. Indianness has been the traditional and distinct feature of post independence Indian poetry in English.

Some critics disregard the Indian sensibility and argue that Indo-Anglian writers have imitated British and American literature. They have committed to the western consciousness and catered the western readers. But this is a blind criticism. Most of the writers have written on Indian traditions and cultures. They have presented a justifiable, artistic image of India to the people outside India. Hence Indianness striking feature of Indian poetry in English. According to K.R.S. lyengar, 'to be Indian in thought and feeling and emotion and experience is a novel experiment in creativity.' Indian English literature is conditioned by Indian Geography, Indian style of life, culture, the grammar and speech habits of Indians. They write only in an alien and borrowed medium, that is, English language. Most of the pre-independence poets took inspiration from Indian mythology, legends and philosophy. They have brought a true marriage of Indian poetic processes of poetic experience with English formula of

verse expression. Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Anand Acharya, Puran Singh, J. Krishnamurti and Kabir deal with Indian myths and legends and landscapes in their poetry.

Aurobindo's '*Savitri,'* Tagore's *Gitanjali'* and Derozio's poems show Indiannness in themes. The Indian poet's Indianness may also find expressions through his imagery. The feudal imagery in Tagore establishes his links with the medieval Indian saint poets; Naidu's imagery stamps the Indian soil. While the archetypal imagery of light and darkness in Aurobinodo's poetry shows his affinities with all mystic poetry, his use in *'Savitri'* of images drawn from science shows his modernity. The quality of Indianness can be seen in the ethos of the best Indian poetry in English. Tagore's '*Gitanjali*,' Aurobindo's '*Savitri,'* and Naidu's lyrics are the finest examples of Indian ethos in pre-independence poetry. In the post-independence poetry, Ramanujan shows how an Indian poet in English can derive strength from going back to his roots. The post-independence poets write not only for Indians but for non Indians also and their appeal is universal.

It is true that the achievements of the early Indian poets in English are not quite satisfactory. Their poetry is imitative and derivative. Yet Derozio's *'The Harp of India,'* Tagore's *'Heaven of Freedom'* and Aurobindo's *'Savitri'* reveal the glorious past of India and Indian culture. Naidu is purely Indian in thought and feelings. In Manmohan Ghosh and Toru Dutt, we observe experiments, imitation and innovation.

The question of Indianness is not only a question of material of Indian poetry or even of sensibility. The post independence poet faces a special problem related to the expression of an Indian sensibility. He lacks Indian sensibility. His poetic roots are superficial. His themes are alienation, restlessness and disillusionment. His poetry is city-centered and urban-oriented. But it does not mean that he does not belong either to India or to the west. The most important thing is the use of English language. He has to use English to convey the feel of the culture.

Since 1950, there is a change in the poets, attitude, outlook, themes, imagery and the use of English language. The new poets like Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Daruwalla, Shiv K.Kumar, Ramanujan, Mehrotra, Mahapatra, Kolatkar, Parthasarathy, P.Lal, Chitre, Patel, Dom Moraes, and many others have given Indian poetry in Enlgish 'a local habitation and a name.' Ezekiel's commitment is to India and he deals with various aspects of Indian life, the superstitious rural people, the Babu English and the city life in Bombay. Ezekiel creates Indian characters in their situation. He also recreates their language as well. His 'Very Indian poems in Indian English' are not caricatures. His language is typical Indian English. He creates new idiom. He brought everyday conversational language very close to poetry. Moreover, the Indian poet is concerned with the Indianness of his experience. The validity of Indian poetry in English depends on the creation of Indian English idiom. In the post -1960, poets have succeeded in it. In Ezekiel's poetry, we see a number of Indian words; Kamala Das and Kumar use a new kind of unconventional vocabulary in their love poems. Indian English poetry has now taken its themes and various Indian subjects from legends, folklore to contemporary Indian situations.

The images of Indian culture pervade in Mahapatra's poetry. He evokes history, myth and the tradition of his land of birth. He speaks of the myth of Sun God and Konark temple. Daruwalla evokes Indian landscape in his poetry. Kamala Das's feminine sensibility finds its true expression in her love poems. In a poem '*Ghanashyam,'* she invokes Lord Krishna with a heart filled devotion and joy. Indian sensibility is transparent in her poetry. She plays her roles of unhappy woman, unhappy wife, mistress to young men, and mother. She is a poet of love. From the woman's point of view, she uses English as an Indian speaks, writes and perhaps understands it. Shiv K. Kumar deals with the theme of landscape and national identity in '*Trap falls in the Sky.'* In *'Relationship'* Mahapatra creates myths out of folk-tales in Orissa. In *'Dawn at Puri,'* he shows his sense of faith and poor India immersed in superstitions.

A.K.Mehrotra says, "I am not an Indian poet, But a poet writing in a universal language of poetry, of feeling of love of hate and sex." Dom Moraes has a love for India. Daruwalla has Indiannesss and contemporary awareness. He knows squalor and poverty, and corruption of leaders. Kolatkar reviews his ancient Indian heritage in Jejuri. Jussawalla lacks Indian sensibility. Therefore Indian English poetry is Indian first and everything else afterwards. Indian English poetry presents mother India's aspirations, hopes, fulfillments, adours, achievements and oneness. It projects a consciousness of national identity. Undoubtedly, the modern Indian English poetry has successfully formed an independent poetic tradition of its own though it echoes western influences in plenty. However, Indianness is its distinctive feature which primarily expresses the multicoloured Indian life.

3.13 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q1. What are the features and themes of the pre-independence poetry in English in India?

Ans. Poetry in English written in the colonial period, though of a different order, cannot be just dismissed as insignificant however imitative or derivative it may be. Whatever its deficiencies, it has no doubt certain areas of excellence in the works of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, Tagore and Ghose. Literary history shows how the succeeding generation tends to run down and disown the preceding generation, the predecessors. Most of the early poetry was inspired by the Indian freedom struggle and the western romantics. Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose and the Dutt family wrote romantic poetry highlighting the Indian culture and ethos. The themes were vivid like Indian legends and myths, epics like *Ramayana*, childhood memories under the Indian sun etc. Sarojini Naidu with a deep sense of rhythm wrote romantic poetry basically. She also wrote about the unique Indian culture and nationality. Tagore and Aurobindo Ghose were philosophers and mystics. They put in the Indian philosophy of oneness of God, religion, childhood, spirituality etc. In fact they both are even today the most widely read and critically evaluated Indian English poets.

Q2. Write a note on Indianness in Indian Poetry in English.

Ans. Modern Indian English poetry is Indian first and everything else afterwards. In Indian English poetry Indianness is a matter not only of diction and syntax but also of imagery, myths and legends. The thoughts are Indian but drapery is English. M. K. Naik has raised three basic questions about the Indianness of Indian English poetry. These questions are:

1. Is Indian verse in English only sometimes 'Indian' and only occasional poetry?
2. Must Indian poetry be 'Indian' before it can be true poetry?
3. In what exactly lies the genuine 'Indianness of Indian poetry in English?"

It is true that all Indian English poetry, since Derozio to the present day poets, qualify as genuine poetry. Of course it is occasionally poetry and sometimes 'Indian.' For example, Sarojini Naidu's *'India'* and *'Lotus'*; Humayun Kabir's *' Mahatma'* are about the motherland and national leader.

The nineteenth century Indian poetry in English was imitative. Sri Aurobindo's 'Savitri' is essentially an expression of Indian sensibility but his brother Manmohan Ghose felt a stranger in India. Indianness may be assessed in respect of several forms and shapes but it has remained one of the major features of Indian poetry in English, especially of the modern Indian English poetry. Prof. David McCutchion speaks of 'Indianness' as 'life attitudes' and 'modes of perception'. Prof. V. K. Gokak defines Indianness as 'a complete awareness in the matter of race, milieu, language and religion.' C. Paul Verghese thinks Indianness is nothing but depiction of Indian culture. Indianness is some total of the cultural patterns of India and the deep rooted ideas and ideals regarding political, economic, secular and spiritual minds of India. The true image of India is portrayed by the Modern Indian English poetry. Indianness has been the traditional and distinct feature of post-independence Indian poetry in English.

Some critics disregard the Indian sensibility and argue that Indo-Anglian writers have imitated British and American literature. They have committed to the western consciousness and catered the western readers. But this is a blind criticism. Most of the writers have written on Indian traditions and cultures. They have presented a justifiable, artistic image of India to the people outside India. Hence Indianness is striking feature of Indian poetry in English. According to K.R.S. lyengar, 'to be Indian in thought and feeling and emotion and experience is a novel experiment in creativity.' Indian English literature is conditioned by Indian Geography, Indian style of life, culture, the grammar and speech habits of Indians. They write only in an alien and borrowed medium, that is, English language. Most of the pre-independence poets took inspiration from Indian mythology, legends and philosophy. They have brought a true marriage of Indian poetic processes of poetic experience with English formula of verse expression. Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Anand Acharya, Puran Singh, J.Krishnamurti and Kabir deal with Indian myths and legends and landscapes in their poetry.

Aurobindo's '*Savitri,' Tagore's Gitanjali'* and Derozio's poems show Indiannness in themes. The Indian poet's indianness may also find expressions through his imagery. The feudal imagery in Tagore establishes his links with the medieval Indian saint poets; Naidu's imagery stamps the Indian soil. While the archetypal imagery of light and darkness in Aurobinodo's poetry shows his affinities with all mystic poetry. His use in *'Savitri'* of images drawn from science shows his modernity. The quality of Indianness can be seen in the ethos of the best Indian poetry in English. Tagore's '*Gitanjali*,' Aurobindo's '*Savitri,'* and Naidu's lyrics are the finest examples of Indian ethos in pre-independence poetry. In the post-independence poetry,

Ramanujan shows how an Indian poet in English can derive strength from going back to his roots. The post-independence poets write not only for Indian but for non Indians also and their appeal is universal.

It is true that the achievements of the early Indian poets in English are not quite satisfactory. Their poetry is imitative and derivative. Yet Derozio's *'The Harp of India,'* Tagore's *'Heaven of Freedom'* and Aurobindo's *'Savitri'* reveal the glorious past of India and Indian culture. Naidu is purely Indian in thought and feelings. In Manmohan Ghose and Toru Dutt, we observe experiments, imitation and innovation.

Q3. Why is Sarojini Naidu known as the "Nightingale of India ?"

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q4. Who called Henry Derozio "The National Bard of Modern India" and why?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q5. Write a note on the contribution of the Dutt Family in the development of Indian Poetry in English.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q6. What are the thematic concerns of Post-Independence Indian Poetry in English?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q7. Who was Sri Aurobindo and what are the themes of his poetry?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q8. Write a note on the experimentation in Indian English Poetry.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q9. Name some confessional poets of Indian English Poetry?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q10. Name the post - independence poets who are preoccupied with the problem of roots.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

3.14 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Who published *'Poems'* as the first volume in Indian English in 1827 ?

_____.

(a) A.K Ramanujan

(b) Henry Derozio

(c) Sri Aurobindo

(d) Kashiprasad Ghosh

2. What is the translation of an early century Sanskrit poems by C. V. Ramswamy?_____.

a) Vishvagundarshana

b) Savitri

c) *The Shair and Other Poems*

d) *Gitanjali*

3. Who is the noteworthy first Indian English poet in Indian English ? _____.

a) Toru Dutt

b) Madhusudan Dutt

c) Henry Derozio

d) Raja Rammohan Roy

4. Which is the only instance of family anthology in Indian English Poetry ? _____.

a) *The Dutt Family Album*

b) *Cherry Blossoms*

c) *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*

d) *Savitri*

5. What is not a posthumous publication of Toru Dutt?_____.

a) *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*

b) *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*

c) *Bianca*

d) A Scene from Contemporary History

6. Who is the author of *Jejuri*?_____.

a) Dilip Chitre

b) Arun Kolatkar

c) Jayanta Mahapatra

d) Kamala Das

7. Whose poetry reveals boredom, horror and restlessness of modern man? _____.

a) Shiv K. Kumar

b) Pritish Nandy

c) Arun Kolatkar

d) Gieve Patel

8. Which of the following is not a work by Nissim Ezekiel ? _____.

a) *A Time to Change*

b) *The Unfinished Man*

c) *John Nobody*

d) *The Exact Name*

9. Who is known as the "Nightingale of India?" _____.

a) Krupabai Sattiandhan

b) Sarojini Naidu

c) Toru Dutt

d) Pandita Ramabai

10. Who is known as the "National Bard of Modern India?" _____.

a) Rabindranath Tagore

b) Raja Rammohan Roy

c) Henry Derozio

d) Sri Aurobindo

3.15 LET US SUM UP

Poetry is the expression of human life from times eternal. India in fact has a long tradition of arts and poetry from ages Colonialism gave a new language, English for the expression of Indians. The poetry written by the Indians may be said to have three phases - the imitative, the assimilative and the experimental. The first phase of Indian poetry was the period of literary renaissance in India. Derozio's poems, Kasiprasad Ghose's The Share of Ministrel and other poems, Michael Madhusudan Dutt's The Captive Ladie.

The poets of the second phase, still romantic in spirit were Sarojini Naidu, Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya.The poetic output of these poets was prolific. The later phase of Indian English poetry is of the modern and post modern phase. The poets use modern techniques used by the film industry advertising industry, besides the stream of Consciousness and free association of ideas.

3.16 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Explain the circumstances that led to the development of Indian Poetry in English.
2. Write a detailed note on the contribution of Dutt family in the development of Indian Poetry in English.
3. Why is Kamala Das known as a Confessional Poet?
4. Explain with examples mysticism in Sri Aurobindo's poetry.
5. Write a note on Western influence on Indian Poetry in English.

3.17 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. b) Henry Derozio
2. a) Vishvagundarshana
3. c) Henry Derozio
4. a) *The Dutt Family Album*
5. b) *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*
6. b) Arun Kolatkar
7. a) Shiv K. Kumar
8. c) *John Nobody*
9. b) Sarojini Naidu
10. c) Henry Derozio

3.18 SUGGESTED READING

Bruce King: *Modern Indian Poetry*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989.

K.R.Srinivas Iyengar: *Indian Writing in English*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962.

M.K.Naik: *A History of Indian English Literature*, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1992.

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INDIAN NOVEL IN ENGLISH

STRUCTURE

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Objectives

4.3 Background

4.4 Indian English Fiction from the Beginning to 1930

4.5 Indian English Fiction from 1930 to 1980

4.6 Plot Construction and Art of Narration

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4.9 Indian English Fiction After 1980

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4.12 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

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4.15 Examination Oriented Questions

4.16 Answer Key to Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

4.17 Suggested Reading

4.1 INTRODUCTION

"No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists; you cannot value him alone; you must set him for contrast and comparison, among the dead" (Eliot 294). This statement underscores the importance of Time: past, present and future, their inter connectedness, and acquainting with the past. The above statement reiterates the fact that the seeds of the present and future are sown in the past. Therefore for better understanding of any Indian author, a survey of Indian English fiction is a pre-requisite. Keeping in view the developments and shifts in themes and techniques, the Indian English fiction may be broadly studied under three phases. The first one is Indian English Fiction from the beginning to 1930, the second one is from 1930 to 1980 and the third one is after 1980.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson are:

- To familiarize the learner with a very important genre in literature called Novel.
- To acquaint the learner with the history and development of Indian Novel in English
- To make the learner familiar with various important literary figures in Novel writing.

4.3 BACKGROUND

Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In recent years it "has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad." It is now recognized that Indian English literature is not only part of Commonwealth literature, but also occupies a "great significance in the World literature."

Today, a number of Indian writers in English have contributed substantially to modern English literature. Ram Mohan Roy who heralded the Indian

Renaissance and Macaulay who recommended English language education in India were probably aware of what was in store for the Indians in terms of literary awareness. Today it "has won for itself international acclaim and distinction."

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks:

> …one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the West.

It was in Bengal that a literary renaissance first manifested itself, but almost immediately afterwards its traces could be seen in Madras, Bombay and other parts of India. The first Indian English novel was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Raj Mohan's Wife* (1864). It is different from his Bengali novels such as *Durgesh Nandini* or *Kopal Kandla*. In fact, it paved the way for *Anand Math* (1884), Indian's first political novel which gave the Indians their national anthem, "Vande Mataram." Then came Manoj Basu's Jaljangal in the form of English translation as *The Forest Goddess* by Barindra Nath Bose.

4.4 INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION FROM THE BEGINNING TO 1930

One of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction, though India was probably the fountain head of storytelling, the novel as we know the form today was an importation from the West. The earliest specimens of Indian English fiction were tales rather than novels proper, but their use of fantasy (though on a limited scale) shows their links with the ancient Indian tradition, in spite of the fact their subject matter is contemporary.

The Indian English novels from the beginning to the 1930 depict the greatness of India's past, superiority of Indian civilization in relation to Europe, ambivalence about western civilization on the one hand as a liberating and on the other as threat to Hindu Identity.

Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) is considered as the first Indian English novel proper and it is also viewed as the first birth of the Indian English fiction. This novel shows the awareness of the contemporary social scene. Its overt didacticism also has its roots in the Sanskrit tradition of the didactic tale or Dharma Katha, though this was religious and social in orientation. The urge for social reform was of course, a significant aspect of the Indian renaissance of the ninetieth century; it therefore naturally became an important theme in some early Indian English Fiction. The questions that engaged the minds of some of these novelists were the position of women, the plight of peasants and the decay of old aristocracy. Shevantibai M Nikambe's Ratanbai : *A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895), R C Dutt's *The Lake of Palms: A story of Indian Domestic Life* (1902), Lal Bahari Day's *Govinda Samanta* or *The History of a Bengal Raiyat or Bengal Peasant life* (1908) Sirdar Jogendra Singh's *Nasrin*, *An Indian Medley* (1911) are some of the novels which depict such themes.

The novels published from the eighteen sixties up to the end of the nineteenth century were written by writers belonging to the presidencies of Bengal and Madras. Most of these novels are on social and few on historical issues, and for their models they drew upon eighteenth and nineteenth century British fiction, especially that of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Walter Scott.

Other Novels published between 1864 and 1900 include Ram Krishna Punt's *The Bay of Bengal* (1866), Anand Prasad Dutt's *The Indolence* (1878), Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *The Young Zamindar* (1883), Trailokya Das's *Hirimba's Wedding* (1884), Krupabai Satthianandan's *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Child Wife* (1894) *and Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life*

(1895), Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Bijoy Chand: An Indian Tale* (1888) and Lt. Suresh Biswas: *His Life and Adventures* (1900) and Yogendra Nath Chattopadhyaya's *The Girl and Her Tutor* (1891).

One distinguished name to be mentioned in Indian fiction is that of Rabindranath Tagore, a prolific writer with at least two hundred songs, several plays and numerous novels to his credit. Tagore, who hailed from an aristocratic and affluent Bengali family, wrote most of his works originally in Bengali, but some of his novels have since been rendered into English – *The Home and the World* (1919), *The Wreck* (1921) and *Gora* (1923), all of which are socially relevant and thought provoking. Through these novels, Tagore has conjured up the vision of a modern India. The second novel is a social story highlighting in unequivocal terms the vexed problem of marriage.

The political theme is hardly to the fore in the fiction of this phase. Nevertheless – Sarat Kumar Ghose's *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (1909) is an interesting early attempt to deal with it. The novel propounds for the union of the best of the West and the East. The novel ends with a fervent hope for a strong bond between Britain and India. Tagore's *The Home and the World* (1919) depicts the story of Nikhil, his wife Bimala and his close friend Sandip, having the undercurrents of psychological portrayal and political consciousness. *Gora* (1923) is a patriotic novel, a political novel articulating vigorously the hopes and aspirations of the resurgent India. Gora is definitely one of the mostliked, finished products of Tagore and adds to his literary immortality like his celebrated *Gitanjali* (1913).

The religious life forms the chief motif in two prominent novels. B.R.Rajan Iyer's unfinished novel, True Greatness or Vasudeva Sastri offers an idealized portrait of a hero who has attained the stature of the Sthita Prajna of the Gita. Madhavaiah's Thillai Govindan (1916) is an absorbing account probably autobiographical, of the mental development of a contemporary south Indian Brahmin youth, who loses his faith temporarily under the impact of Western education but regains peace after his rediscovery of the Gita.

Historical romance made a fairly early appearance in this phase of Indian Fiction in English. Prominent examples are; Mirza Moorad Alee Beg's *Lalun the Beragun*, or *The Battle of Panipat* (1884),T Ramakrishna's *Padmini* (1903) and *A Dive for Death* (1911), Jogendra Singh's *Nur Jahani: The Romance of an Indian Queen* (1909) and Svarna Kumari Ghosal's *The Fatal Garland* (1915). The historical periods covered vary from Tamil times to Maratha history. While the locale ranges from the south to the north to fifteenth century Bengal.

Autobiographical fiction made its appearance palpable in this phase. Some of the early novels are true to the saying that there is material for at least one novel in the life of every person. As already mentioned, in both Madhavaiah's *Thillai Govindan* and Nikambe's *Ratnabai*, the autobiographical element is extremely thinly disguised. Krupabai Satthianadhan's *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1895) and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian life* (1895) are frankly autobiographies in fiction form.

Regarding the narrative technique the early Indian writers in English took care to align with the best in various ingenious ways. Epigraphs from Byron, Scott, Cooper, Shakespeare, and Coleridge were common practice and quotations and references were generously woven into the narrative, whether the context called for them or not. Echoes of canonical English novels are often perceptible in the texts.

Regarding the originality of narrative techniques K.S.Ramamurthi observes that the early Indian English novelists "were by no means imitators but conscious experimenters who adopted an alien form and medium to socio-cultural situation and sensibility which were specifically Indian" (Naik 12). But Dr. M. K. Naik does not agree with this and remarks that "the strong element of fantasy in some of this fiction establishes its links with the ancient Sanskrit fictional tradition, but there are clear indications of its debts to Scott, Bulwar-Lytton and also G.W.M Reynolds." He further remarks: "the sentimental romances of Henry Wood and of such other writers have influenced early Indian English social novelists" (12).

The poor technical values indicate lack of conscious creative experimentation. The only possible evidence of experimentation in this early fiction is to be found in Rajmohan's Wife which uses Indian words 6 liberally in the descriptive passages. But it is pertinent to note that Chatterjee's use of Indianism is generally limited to the employment of Indian words denoting objects (eg: 'Sari.' Dhoti,' 'Pan,' 'Mahal,' 'Supari,' 'Kacheri') alone and unlike, Mulk Raj Anand later, he makes no concerted effort to import a specifically Indian colouring to his style by literally translating into English colourful expletives, proverbs and expressions etc from an Indian language.

4.5 INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION FROM 1930 TO 1980

The period spanning the 1930 and 1980 was momentous both in the history of Indian nationalism and the Indian novel in English. Until this period Indian English fiction had not produced a single novelist with substantial output. During this phase there is a sudden flowering of Indian English fiction. So, this period is considered as the 'second coming' for the Indian English fiction. So, it demands discussion of sources or bases that led to the flowering the Indian English fiction.

The first important event is the national movement for freedom struggle and entry of great personalities like Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru. Mahatma Gandhi took the leadership of the national movement and gave call for the non-cooperation with the British Government. As he was the embodiment of self sacrifice and preached what he practiced attracted the mass across the country. Forgetting their religious, caste, regional, cultural diversities people followed Mahatma Gandhiji and got involved in the national movement not only for gaining freedom for the county but also for the amelioration of the village economy, backward class people , untouchables, and women.

Mahatma Gandhi propagated and communicated his ideas and vision through his writings. So, his works influenced many writers. Anand showed the script of his *Untouchable* to Mahatma and it reflects his influence. Rao's writing implicitly reflects the influence of Gandhi's autobiography. Several of

his contemporaries directly acknowledged their debt to this text. For instance, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Gandhi the Writer* (1919) celebrates "My Experiments with Truth as an indispensable model for the novel forms and praises Gandhi as a 'writer of writers' and claims that the best writing in the subcontinent bears his counter signature"(quoted in Mehrotra 172).

In a sense the 1930s and 1940s were also Nehru's decades. During this period Nehru entered into the most radical and Marxist phase of his political career, as early as 1933, he articulated "that the true civic idea is the socialist ideal." Nehru characterized himself as "a queer-mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere at home nowhere" (quoted in Mehrotra 171). Thus, there was a consequent rift between Nehru and Gandhi ideals and it had provided the source for contemporary fiction.

In Europe things were not so good. Inflected by the events of two World Wars, these decades sounded, the pessimistic note of civilization crisis and intellectual cosmopolitanism. So, many European intellectuals and writers being dissatisfied with the main stream Europe and its cultural baggage began to seek their creative resources both within popular culture as also in the wider non-western world. Native and foreign influences achieved a productive synthesis. For instance, Yeats and Eliot under took the study of Upanishads and Forster unearthed an enormous narrative resource in India. In this milieu, the expatriate Indian novelists were guided by the prevailing European fashion to 'return to Indian culture and scriptures'. At this juncture, modernism reached the peak point. It proved to be an ambiguous inheritance. It was increasingly under attack for its elitism and self serving engagement with other cultures. Several Marxist critics and writers raised cry against the abstruse verbosity and solipsism of modern writing and began a campaign for a more simple and accessible prose style. Faced with this new and curious bridge between East and West several expatriate Indian writers submitted to a gradual process of disengagement with the modernist creed. As a result of this, Anand rejected the intellectualism of Bloomsbury writers and Aubrey Menen likewise, found the beautiful people of Bloomsbury sadly lacking in human kindness.

A society compelled into self awareness like this provided a fertile soil for fiction and the time was ripe for the emergence of a few talented writers who could lift the Indo-English fiction form to an international status and universal recognition. The three names usually mentioned in literary circles in this context are Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao. They are known as 'The Big Three' an epithet coined by the noted English critic William Walsh. These three have laid the strong foundation for Indian Fiction in English. The history of Indian English literature had one most noteworthy event in the nineteen thirties which was appearance on the scene of its major trio; Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao, whose first novels were published in 1935, 1935 and 1938 respectively; and it is a mark of their stature that they revealed each in his own characteristic way, the various possibilities of Indian English fiction. Against cplonial background these writers have responded differently to the above mentioned situations. There is also a galaxy of writers like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandaya, Kushwant Singh, G.V. Desani, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Arun Joshi, Chaman Nahal and others who nurtured the Indian English fiction.

Rashipura Krishnaswamy Narayan (1906-2001) is the second of the "founding trio" of the Indian novel in English. His delicate blend of gentle irony and sympathy, quiet realism and fantasy stands poles apart from Anand's humanism. R.K. Narayan is a writer who contributed over many decades and who continued to write till his death recently. He was discovered by Graham Greene in the sense that the latter helped him find a publisher in England. Graham Greene and Narayan remained close friends till the end. Similar to Thomas Hardy's Wessex, Narayan created the fictitious town of Malgudi where he set his novels. For some critics, Narayan, the parochial, detached and closed world that he created in the face of the changing conditions in India at the times in which the stories are set. Others, such as Graham Greene, however, feel that through Malgudi they could vividly understand the Indian experience. Narayan's evocation of small town life and its experiences through the eyes of the endearing child protagonist Swaninathan in *Swami and Friends* is a good sample of his writing style. Simultaneous with Narayan's pastoral idylls, a very

different writer, Mulk Raj Anand, was similarly gaining recognition for his writing set in rural India; but his stories were harsher, and engaged, sometimes brutally, with divisions of caste, class and religion.

If Anand's art is committed to expose social injustice, economic exploitation and the plight of suppressed castes and classes in India while Raja Rao's interest lies in exploring the spiritual essence of India, an ideological movement of Narayan's work is much less discernible. William Walsh admires: "If Anand is the novelist as reformer, Raja Rao the novelist as Metaphysical poet, Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist."

The last of the 'big three' is Raja Rao. Close contemporary with Mulk Raj Anand and R.K.Narayan. Raja Rao has a very high sense of the dignity of this vocation as a writer. He looks to his work in the spirit of dedication. For him literature is *sadhana* not a profession but a vocation. He was deeply influenced by sages Sri Atmanand to whom he dedicates "*The Serpent and The Rope.*"

Raja Rao, unlike Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, has not been a prolific novelist, having written just four novels beginning with *Kanthapura* (1937) which is perhaps the finest evocation of the Gandhian age in Indian English Fiction. In *Kanthapura*, the story was told from the witness-narrator paint of view by an old illiterate village grandmother, a minor character in the novel, who, like a chorus in Greek tragedy, reflected on the circumstances which she witnessed. In this novel Raja Rao relates the story of a south Indian village - Kanthapura from which it derives its title- as it recalled Mahatma Gandhi's call of non co-operation. It gives a graphics and moving description of the National movement in the twenties when thousand of villages all over India responded in much the same way. In fact, the initial reaction of Kanthapura to Gandhian thought is one of bored apathy. But young moorthy, the Gandhian, who knows that the master key to the Indian mind is religion, puts the new Gandhian wine into the age old bottle of traditional story. The struggle is even harder for the simple. Illiterate village women who don't understand why and from where it all and know that the Mahatma Gandhi is right in his work. Iyengar sums up this novel in words, "A village, picturesque region, an epoch

of social and political change, a whole complex of character and motive, reason and superstition, idealism and cold calculation, are spring up before owe eyes demanding recognizing and acceptance: it is almost a tour de force….."

In the history of Indian fiction, the most prominent writer that contributed very significantly to Indo-Anglian literature is Mulk Raj Anand. He was indeed, the true representative of the 20th century Indian literary scenario. His literary works reveal that he was not merely great intuitive observer but penetrating commentator on life. The 20th century opened with gigantic upheavals in India. Strong forces came in steadily from outside and fertilized the vast areas of cultural decay and stagnation. The forty years (1917-1957) bristled with a host of complex influences and problems. The emergence of Gandhiji, with his steady vision of life as a whole, and the unique Freedom Movement of unparallel magnitude, forged a new moral order in the national and international spheres.

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) was "first" to his name among modern Indian authors who have chosen the English language as their medium of expression. He was one of the oldest practitioners in the field; he has sixteen novels, a novelette and nine collections of short stories to his credit which rank him the most prolific writer of Indian English prose.

Novelist, short story writer, art critic, art historian, author of children's literature, Professor Mulk Raj Anand's contribution to culture and literature is enormous. In the form of books it is around 100 volumes of highly creative, as well as profoundly scholastic, works, all in English. Mulk Raj was a path breaker. He, in company with Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan, inaugurated the age of what is labeled the Indian English or the Indo Anglian Novel. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, was the forerunner of this genre, and the western literary circles pricked up their ears and eyes to the birth of this new writing. Mulk Raj was highlighting the life of the poor and the hapless in his country through his novels and short stories, and he enriched the English language by introducing into its body a mix of the Punjabi and Hindustani elements.

Mulk Raj Anand, a stalwart in the field of Indo-Anglian fiction, was born on December 12,1905 in Peshawar (now in Pakistan), in a Kshatriya

family (a warrior class), the second highest caste in the fourfold order of Hindu social hierarchy, but status had been somewhat debased by his ancestors taking up copper and silver smithying. Lal Chand, his father, redeemed the situation somewhat by matriculating and slowly working his way unto becomes Head Clerk in the 38 Dogra Regiment of the British-Indian Army. Anand's mother, Ishwar Kaur, belonged to an agricultural family. He had inherited the typical qualities of both his parents. Moreover, the class of society to which he belongs must also have been responsible for endowing him with a great sense of compassion for the poor, exploited and downtrodden people. Anand's early life was lived in the midst of poverty and misfortune. It is possible that the suffering he saw and underwent in his childhood left a deep impression on him and later on reflected in his creative writings.

Mulk Raj Anand has made a significant contribution to the development of the Indo-Anglian novel, which has acquired an identity of its own over the years. Although Anand is at times prone to romanticizing his novels, he has largely freed the Indo-Anglian novel from the narrow confines of romance within which it had come to be posited by the earlier exponents. His novels undoubtedly project a lively image of India, and thus amply reflect his passionate concern with the surrounding social reality. They exemplify a realistic sensibility of an artist, capable to plumb the very depths of human personality crushed under the inhuman social structure.

As literature reflects the life of its time many of the writers wrote about nation. The theme of Mahatma got its birth, got deep-rooted, and became pervasive and strongly impacting. Gandhian economy – self reliant village based economy, giving up prestigious positions to devote to the greater cause of nationalism, amplifying the creed of Ahimsa, denunciation of modern and western civilization, preferring spiritual growth, anti colonial matters, programmes of national reform like amelioration of women, workers, untouchable, and peasants became the major themes of the fiction of this phase. "Nation and national identity has characterized both the period of anti colonial struggle and of post-independent India" (Riemenchneider 3).

The writers of this period depicted the society realistically. A group of writers depicted the social, economic and political oppression of individuals. Anand's *Untouchable* depicts the plight of the untouchables; *Coolie* depicts the exploitation of landless peasant; *Two Leaves and a Bud* depicts the exploitation of the teagarden workers; *The Big Heart* deals with industrial labour problems. K.S.Venkataraman's *Murugan the Tiller* depicts how an ideal rural colony is founded on Gandhian principles. And *Baladitya* throws light on the evils of the caste system pseudo religiosity etc. Most of the novels of Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, and Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* and *A Handful of Rice*, Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers,* and Manohar Malgonkar's *The Prince* belong to this category.

There is another group of works which concentrates on an individual's search for identity. This is to be seen in Anand's *Lalu Trilogy*, Markandays's *Some Inner Furry,* B. Rajan's *The Dark Dancer and Too Long in the West* and most of the novels by Anita Desai and Arun Joshi. In G.V. Desani's *All About H Hatterr*, Markandaya's *Possession*, Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*, and Khushawant Singh's *Train to Pakistan*, a slight variation of this theme is discovered.

Another group of writers deal with the theme of East-West and attempt to bridge the gulf between India and the West. They have attempted to present the manifold difficulties of cross-cultural understanding and to explore the possibilities of mutual tolerance. K. Nagarjan's *Chronicles of Kedaram* and Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* and Markandaya's *The Coffer Dams and Pleasure City* deal with this East-West theme.

Apart from these categories of novels, there is altogether a separate category of works which subtly portrays human nature in a psychological fashion. In this category, the protagonist is a victim of his own inner tensions and struggles; such are *The Dark Dancer* by B. Rajan, *A Silence of Desire* by Markandaya, the novels of Anita Desai and Arun Joshi.

The tragedy of partition provided the writers with the occasion to write about the plight of the people in the subcontinent in order to bring

home mainly to the western world the impact of British rule, which had previously boasted of "civilizing mission." India got independence through bloodshed and migration. Khushwant Singh wrote *A Train to Pakistan.* His next novel *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* presents an ironic picture of a joint Sikh family, illustrative of different Indian reactions to the freedom movement of the forties. In fact, the partition theme in Indian novels in English set the dystopian tune, which would be later on carried on to the tone of the postcolonial theories. Post colonialism began as recognition of the dominant post-war economic and political conditions prevalent all over the world.

'Indianness' formed part of major thematic concern of the novels of this period and they served the purpose of social as well as political reform. Strong didactic tone is characteristic of much of Indian fiction, influenced on the one hand by Victorian moralistic works and on the other by the authors' critical assessment of Indian customs and traditions. It is a combination of a nationalistic view point and an acute awareness of Western social ideals and customs. The novels of this period display an emerging national consciousness in India and at the same time a manifestation of the hybrid consciousness of the intellectual elite of the country. Hence, these authors are certainly not typical of the Indian population but represent a particular social segment. Therefore, Harrex feels that Indian fiction in English "manifests the mixed sensibility"(quoted Riemenscneider 15). Regarding the growth and authenticity of Indian English fiction Mukherjee says: "Novels must be rooted in the concept of history…few novels which have succeeded are usually the ones firmly rooted in time and place. Yet, most of Indo-Anglian novelists are constantly aiming at an Indianness bereft of temporal and spatial values" (213). Regarding this, V.K. Gokak remarks "Indo-Anglian writers come from a microscopic minority group and have merely succeeded in creating a hothouse plant rather than one that has sprung from the soil and sprouted and burgeoned in the open air" (quoted in Riemenscneider 9).

A critical assessment of any work of art requires a study of its 'matter' and 'manner,' or of its 'what' and 'how' both. The discussion of the major

thematic concerns would be incomplete without exploring the major technical devices used by the novelists to project their vision. By narrative technique we mean the pattern, coherence, and sense of perspective imposed by the novelist's selection and explanation. It is a means of expression of their total understanding of man, of Nature, of God. Such understanding and totality of the vision is communicated to us through appropriate means- language, form and technique.

Novel as a literary genre was new to India. So, the concern with the technique has been slow to evolve in the Indian English fiction. T.D. Brunton remarks Indian novel is "embedded in the tradition of 'Indianness' rather than that of the genre" (11). Regarding this Spencer holds that "Indianness appears to have prevented the development of the novel before the arrival of the British" (9). As the Indian English fiction attained maturity in the thirties the writers began to make new experiments in the technique of novel by assimilating the innovations of modern European novelists and adapting them to suit the treatment of Indian traditions and ethos. The novelists writing after independence appear to be attracted to new techniques in plotting, narration and characterization. The modern "stream of consciousness" method of narration is tried by a few of them like Raja Rao, G.V. Desani, and Anita Desai. However, most significant experiments were made in the sphere of technique.

4.6 PLOT CONSTRUCTION AND ART OF NARRATION

Plot is a story, a selection of events, arranged in time, its beginning leads through a middle to an end. A plot contains motives, consequences and relationships. All plots have some relationship to time because cause and effect take place in time. The writer's ideology affects his choice of plot. The Indian English novelists of the period from 1930 to 1980 have revealed their excellent mastery in narration and dexterity in the development of plot. The novels of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Sudhin Ghose and G.V. Desani are perfect manifestation of their narrative genius.

R.K. Narayan's craftsmanship in plot-construction does not reveal a consistent quality. Narayan's art, however, reached its maturity after independence. *The Guide* is the finest specimen of Narayan's artistic genius,

where in he handles with the skill the modern fictional techniques such as flashbacks, flash-forward, interior monologue and stream of consciousness. The narrative in this novel alternates between the past and the present. The blend of the omniscient and the autobiographical method of narration endow the story with a double perspective. His narration is marked by the quality of naturalness. He entertains but not at a brisk, rollicking pace. He evokes a gentle and simple laughter. Narayan has been recognized as "a born story teller" (Henry Miller), "a first-rate story teller (Anthony West) and "the story teller par excellence" (Christian Science Monitor, quoted by Shiv K. Gilra 104).

Raja Rao steps ahead Narayan in the art of plot construction. Though deeply rooted in vedantic philosophy and ancient lore – he is open to most modern stylistic experimentations and other technical innovations. For Narayan, the story is everything for Raj Rao it is a little more than a convenience. In *Kanthapura* the story is told from the witness-narrator point of view. *The Serpent and the Rope* because of its philosophical subject-matter requires a sophisticated and intellectual narrator. As the theme is the knowledge of the self and the action takes place in the thought process and psyche of the hero, the narrative perspective is focused on him. The story of the novel, therefore, is unfolded from the protagonist narrator point of view. In order to communicate his meditations and thoughts of the inmost recesses of mind, the hero-narrator uses the devices of introspective diary entries, self-revealing letters, and jottings of recapitulated poetry quotations from *the Vedas, the Upanishads*, Indian lore, and French poetry. In his narrative perspective he moves to and fro in space and time. Many critics consider *The Serpent and the Rope* as essentially a spiritual autobiography. While being interviewed by Annie Brierre, Raja Rao pointed out "Everything one writes is autobiographical. But it is a metaphysical novel" (26). In *The Cat and Shakespeare*, the author goes a step ahead and describes the state of spiritual serenity which descends in the life of a man who leads the life of detachment and resignation.

The novels of Sudhindra Nath Ghose are an exciting experiment in the expression of the Indian ethos in a form firmly grounded in the ancient native tradition of story-telling. His narrative technique shows his rejection of

Aristotelian concept of plot and use of the ancient Sanskrit device of the framing story interpolated with tales told by different characters from different sources such as the ancient epics and the puranas, legends and folk-lore and even history. Following the practice of the Sanskrit Champu Kavya, Ghose mixes prose and verse and introduces into the narrative songs in Bengali with musical rotations.

G. V. Desani's *All About H.Hatterr* is one of the most daringly experimental novels in Indian English literature. It is a novel extremely complex both in theme and technique. The novel may be said to be story of the hero's spiritual quest for understanding the meaning of life; a social chronicle revealing aspects of white, European and Indian character, an uproariously funny comedy, full of various kinds of humour ranging from sheer farce to subtle wit. Further, it is a triumphant experiment in blending western and Indian narrative forms. The plot of the novel seems incoherent and scattered. But a close analysis reveals its comprehensive form, perfect design and architectural symmetry.

Manohar Malgonkar in contrast to Desani is deft story teller, who knows how to function with verve and animation, with wit and detachment. Above all, the charm of his story never wears down, as it possesses the 'tang,' 'feel' or colour of life. As a narrator, he is smooth and straight forward, the narratives run spontaneously, not obscured by redundant situations or long incidental comments. Told in the omniscient style, there is very little scope for loitering here and there. The story is allowed to tell itself, and generally there is little that comes between the reader and the tale. Everything is in organic relation. A good plot presupposes some special tactics-the capacity for vivid portraiture, careful carpentry, subtle motivations, dramatic display, humour, wit, irony, intellectual interpretation and shrewd observations. Malgonkar's novels have such plots, undoubtedly. He has a lively talent and his novels are carefully contrived, neatly presented. *Distinct Drum* is a fine example of the old fictional technique which involves the use of memory as a narrative medium and helps the author to move back and forth in time and achieve a wide coverage. *A Bend in the Ganges* is a novel in which plot has

primacy over character. Epical in scale, it is intended to offer a panoramic view of the pre-independence period in Indian History. The book *The Combat of Shadow* is a skillful product of careful workmanship and its style never cramps. Malgonkar revolts against the psychological novel of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, which he considers a temporary aberration in the tradition of the novel. His favourite novelists are Kipling, Conrad, Maugham and Forster. What he finds common to the novels of these writers are well constructed plots, dramatic events and entertainment.

In general the novelists of this period formed perfectly designed, skillfully rounded and well constructed plots, epical in scale and episodic in nature, after the early Victorian concept of plot-construction.

4.7 ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

Aristotle laid utmost emphasis on the plot in a story, later on, this emphasis shifted to character. Character is less important in allegorical, satirical, stream of consciousness, technique novels or highly experimental novels. A great novel enables us to identify ourselves with hero or heroine and enjoy characters. The most enjoyable fictional characters seem to be very life-like. The pre-independence novelists showed marked tendency to construct symmetrical plot, so as to convey their messages to the readers more effectively. But with the popularity of psychological novels, the emphasis is being laid more on characters.

R.K. Narayan excels as an artful delineator of character. He says his focus is all on character. If his personality comes alive, the rest is easy. His novels have gifted us a richly varied portrait-gallery of students, teachers, parents, grand-parents, half hearted dreamers, journalists, artists, financiers, cranks, movie-stars, sanyasis and women-pious and suffering, coquettish and seductive. It is a veritable world of men and women, both real and exotic, brought to life with uncommon dexterity.

Mulk Raj Anand portrays different types of characters. His fiction is a huge country fair where all kinds of people rub shoulders. He covers practically

the entire gamut of society, from Maharaja to the mendicant, from the Anglo-Indian, to the untouchable. His understanding of child psychology is also par excellence. The most memorable of his characters are those who have either stirred his humanitarian compassion deeply or have evoked his admiration. Hence, Bakha and Anantha among his men and Gauri and Parvati (in the short story, *Birth*) among his women are perhaps his most outstanding creations.

Raja Rao's skill in portraying living characters is amply displayed in *Kanthapura. The Serpent and the Rope* reveals a further advance in his technique of characterization. He is no more concerned with delineating characters in their private aspects. He portrays them in relation to the broader and more impersonal objects that occupy mankind, their relation to public affairs, philosophy, art and religion. He also portrays a large variety of characters, drawn from different races and nationalities and they are all real and life-like. If little mother represents the Indian women of the older generation, Saroja does those of younger generation, Savithri is one of the emancipated girls. Even the minor characters emerge fully alive, breathing with life by a few strokes of his pen.

Kamala Markandaya reveals an excellent *sense of mansion workman* and resorts to mosaics in the delineation of her characters. A one-line comment here, a passing observation there, a casual description elsewhere and thus a fine picture emerges.

G.V. Desani follows the latest surrealistic technique of characterization. In *All About H. Hatterr*, all the seven sages ultimately resolve themselves into the pseudo-sage, and their various disciples into Hatter himself, of whom Banerjee is in a sense the 'alter ego.' Humor of character is a part of the intricate comic design of the novel. The name 'Hatterr' suggests a 'Sahib.' He is a tragic-comic character a lifelong prey to a nagging sense of insecurity.

Thus, we see that the novelists of the period imprint a marvellous skill in characterization. These novels mark a transition from stereotyped characters to a new and rich variety of them, from the depiction of their

outwardly idiosyncrasies, manners and charms to the deep and sharp penetration into their psyche and inner recesses of their mind.

4.8 OTHER NARRATIVE DEVICES

Among Indian English writers there seems to be an increasing awareness that English is a pliant language which each writer has to fashion it as the occasion demands. During the last forty years, there has been a great deal of experimentation in the use of the English language in Indian English Fiction. A few writers who wrote novels in English in the early part of 20th century used the language carefully, with stiff correctness, always conscious that it was a foreign tongue. In the thirties one notices a sudden development of Indian English Fiction, in quantity as well as quality and this is because of their confidence in the use of English language as one of India's many other languages. Out of this confidence arises their will to bend the language according to the situation, Mulk Raj Anand is the first conscious experimenter, followed closely by Raja Rao, and in the next decade by Bhabani Bhattacharya and others.

The Indian English novelist's writing displays the imprint of the region from which he/she hails. For example, Mulk Raj Anand, manages to convey a Punjabi flavour through his English. R.K. Narayan's novels breathe south Indian air. Raja Rao deals with Kannada-speaking characters and nuances of their language and Bhabani Bhattacharya's English succeeds in recreating a Bengali rhythm. Kamala Markandaya and Manohar Malgonkar do not associate themselves with the region they represent and their English does not betray their own region. They are as much at home in Standard English as any educated, cultured native speaker.

The major stylistic and linguistic experiments have been made in the Indian English novels of this period can be noticed in diction or literal translation of idioms, in syntax or in the structure of sentences. Further in the use of dialogue, employment of rich images, presentation of more modern and western devices as symbolism and irony, these novelists create a distinctive character and different colouring.

We see a marked change in the technique of the novels written in this period. The novelists writing before 1930 looked for their traditional western models and were largely influenced by their British counter parts in their concepts of plot, characterization, and other stylistic devices. But the writers from 1930 to 1980 feel more attracted towards the latest experiments in the field of the style and language. They have been working hard to evolve more flexible English that would convey the nuances of Indian life. The Indian English novelists, by using various linguistic and stylistic devices, have succeeded in infusing the rhythm of Indian languages into English and in conveying the Indian sensibility. In the words of Prof. Gokak, Indian English represents the evolution of a distinct standard, the body of which is English but whose soul is Indian in colour, thought and imagery.

There are different opinions regarding this experimentation in the style. Meenakshi Mukherjee states that the style is not integral to the author's point of view but something added to the material like "icing on the cake or embroidery on a sari." Further she writes: "No amount of experimentation with style, no amount of conscious innovations will succeed in fiction unless it has inevitability in the context of the particular theme the novel deals with" (201).

However, some of the writers like Raj Rao and Narayan have succeeded in experimenting western form to convey the Indian essence or Indian sensibility while confirming to the correctness of English usage. One critic remarks that the English of the early writers was that of babus, where as the English of later writers is that of Sahibs. An American writer Allan Wendt points out that "the new Sahibs have produced writing that can be judged by the best western standards"(quoted in Riemenscheneider 10).Thus, it can be emphatically stated that Indian English novelists of this period have enriched the English language considerably by annexing to it new forms of expression, idioms, phrases, imagery and symbols. The developments in theme and narrative technique in this period forecast the future developments.

4.9 INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION AFTER 1980

Indian Writing in English witnessed a renaissance in 1980s. The two cultural and literary events that led to the attempts of departing from the preceding period way of writing are: The first one, Edward Said's theoretical deliberations in *Orientalism* was instrumental to the emergence of the postcolonial discourse and the second one is the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* with departure from the predominant realist mode of the Indian English novel practised since the 1930s. *Midnight's Children* is perhaps the most outstanding and 'ground breaking' novel of this period. It is a multifaceted narrative; it is at once an autobiographical bildungsroman, a picaresque comedy, a surrealist fantasy, a political and existential allegory, a political satire and a stylistic experiment. Described by the author as a 'sort of modern fairy tale,' the narrative is an exciting blend of the natural and the supernatural, political allegory and ethical implications.

Such an epoch making work heralded the advent of a new generation with remarkable fresh insights and abundant fecundity and appearance of a certain post modern playfulness, the turn to history, an exuberance of language, the reinvention of allegory, the sexual frankness, even the prominent references to Bollywood, all seem to owe something to Rushdie's novel. As a result of this and a considerable degree of orientation in the Indian world view there is a paradigm shift in Indian English fiction's theme and narrative strategies employed to objectify the intended vision of life and world. The influence of Rushdie's work is acknowledged by critics and novelists alike. Shyam Asnani observes that *Midnight's Children* led to "the birth of a new kind of Indian English novel moving from the portrayal of the contemporary socio-political themes to the imaginative treatment of individual fantasies in the mythic/ archetypal, fabulist and satiric modes" (26).Paranjape has remarked that it has really jolted the very foundation of the Indian English novel. Anita Desai points out "Indian writing in the past was characterized by recurring portrayals of stock-scenes, themes and characters and a turn away from the circular to the linear narrative structure under the influence of Western literature" yet recently

in *"Midnight's Children* Salman Rushdie wound the straight line of narrative into a circle" while in *Shame* he "Mythologized still-living people and turned events in living memory into fantastic legends" (26). Besides, several other happenings in the literary circle around the world, *Midnight's Children* has changed the way of thinking of the Indian English novelists. A flood of young writers delighted to return to the old style of storytelling that was strangely the latest and 'newest' style. Similarly the use of English by this new generation is a break away from a literary language, towards the spoken language of the streets. Once again Anita Desai points out that Rushdie is leading the way followed by "a long trial of imitators" (26). She is certain that their writing points to a new beginning.

Thus, the work of Rushdie and other novelists writing away from India could not easily be accommodated within the prevalent, nationalist discourse. So, the idea of the 'New' Indian novel in English began to make its gradual appearance in the late 1980s. Regarding this change from 'old' novel to 'new' novel, Viney Kirpal remarks:

> Here (New novel) there is a lack of the staidness, solemnity, and self consciousness that once characterized the Indian novel. They are uninhibited and cosmopolitan in their reach. Unlike the earlier novels, they are neither idealistic nor are they sentimental. There is a great determination to experiment with new forms and themes. Politics- national and international- is their most important theme and the displaced, marginal modern man is their favourite protagonist. The writing is brisk, vigorous, racy, and irrepressible. The novels express the deep urge of the protagonist to speak out unfettered by restraints who virtually screams to be heard (quoted in Riemenchnieider 27).

Nonetheless, the 'old' and the 'new' are not totally severed, since the novelists of this period continue to employ techniques of traditional Indian narrative: "episodicity; plotlessness; the story-within a story," the new novelists'

manner suggests "anarchy, disarray, dizzy dislocation." The examination of the opinions of many writers and critics reveals that these radical changes are embedded in the economic, political and social upheavals of the 1970's. The new novel reflects "a recognizable change in the national sensibility, expression and literary form." Further, Viney Kirpal points out: "The 1980s novel reflects as never before, the theme of the mixed Indian tradition. The controlling temper of the period is synthesis, polymorphism where all religions, all communal groups including the minorities have an important place" (27).

The study of the Indian English fiction after 1980 unfolds the following changes in theme and narrative strategies. The first important theme is these novelists go back to history. Even the early novelists also went to history but objective of them was to portray the greatness and the glory of our civilization. They are the revisionist historiographers. Due to the impact of many literary social and political developments or changes these new novelists feel 'the reality is the matter of perspective.' In other words they are skeptical about the recorded materials. They depict how the historical events affected the lives of the individuals. They bring to light the untold stories and subjects. They strongly believe that since the history of postcolonial territories was, until recently, largely a narrative constructed by the colonizers, its fictions and languages in which they are written operate as a means of cultural control. Moreover, they read the present through the present. They resort to history with the purpose of finding its relevance to contemporaneity, to caricature the present personalities, to allegorize, to record the unrecorded, to give voice to the subaltern, to subvert it, to question the hegemony, to unfold the constructedness of many ideas, concepts and truths, to interrogate the concept of nation and finally to present their point of view through it. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children,* Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*. Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosomes* are good examples for this. "These post modern and post colonial writers seek to recast history as a redefinable present rather than an irrevocably interpreted past" (Helen Tiffin 170-176).

The important thematic concern of these novelists is that from the outset they have been attempting to establish or rehabilitate self against European appropriation or rejection. This establishing or rehabilitation of an independent identity involves the radical interrogation and fracturing of these imposed European perspectives and their systematic replacement by an alternative vision or the attack on or erosion of the very notion of system and hegemonic control itself. This also involves the dismantling, demystification and unmasking of European authority.

The writers of this period question the nature of unity. The issues of imagining the nation and the fate of children of *Midnight's Children* have become pressing one. The present world is plagued by neo-colonial catastrophe like economic disorder, social malaise, governmental corruption state repression, the tension of conflicting philosophies and incongruous forms of social behaviour. All these crises are highlighted by these novelists.

Due to poststructuralist influence novelists of this period bring together the past, the present and the future to solve many tensions prevailing in the present world. Also it is done to explore the residual effects of foreign domination in the field of political, social and economical spheres. These writers mix the imperial and colonial cultures. This is done to convey the idea that this is the order of the day in the globalized situation and to show the resistance to the idea of unity of place. So, the actions in the novels of many novelists take place in different places of the world. For instance Vikram Seth sets the scene of his *The Golden Gate* in the U.S.A. and *An Equal music* in European countries. In Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reasons* and *The Glass Palace*, the actions take place in India, the U. S.A., Burma and Egypt.

The fiction of this period reflects the cultural translations, cultural dislocations, cultural crises and cultural degeneration. Hybridity, heterogeneity and pluralism prevail everywhere. In Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* the characters are American, in *An Equal Music*, the characters are British and in Jayadeep Roy Bhattacharya's *The Gabriel Club,* the characters are mid European. Thus, the characters also have become globalized.

Some of the major narrative devices the writers of this period employ are non-linear plots, multiple narration, flash back and flash forward, anti-heroes and heroines, more about common men, magic realism, intertextuality, mixed genres, story within story, chutnification and so on. The discussion of some of these is as follows. These novelists have widely travelled, acquainted with many Western theories and got exposed to the consequences of modernism with more emphasis on science and reason. In order to show their displeasure and to write back resorted to "magic realism," the style of combining ordinary events with dream like events. These writers resorted to magic realism to tell their own stories to the world, to decentre the centre, to bring the peripheries to the centre and to reject the concepts of unity of time, place and action. In order to achieve this task they resorted to Indian traditions, beliefs, legends, mythologies and folklore. Thus, this Indian mine is being unearthed, familiarized to the West, written back and written home also.

The novelists of this period employ the device of intertextuality. They believe that all texts are free to swim with their linguistic or literary or generic companions, in a sea of intertextuality in which previously accepted distinctions between them hardly mattered. Meaning of a work is perceived better when it is red in relation to other texts. Through this technique these writers dismantle the binaries, hierarchy of disciplines.

The novelists of this period mainly depict metropolises, their inhabitants, their problems, plights, culture and their way of life. The reason for this is that "the nation itself has moved from the village centrism of the Gandhian era to the city centrism of the post-Nehru period" (Mee 320). Some critics, however, believe that Indian writers in English have taken advantage of this trend to retreat into metropolitan or cosmopolitan elitism which produces literature intended only for the English-reading privileged classes within India or the international public outside.

The very striking aspect of the Indian English fiction after 1980 is the playfulness in the use of language. The novelists before 1930s were very much meticulous and conscious in using English. Because firstly most of them were

writing after mastering that language, secondly they were writing to English readers. The novelists of the period from 1930s to 1980 started experimenting with use of English and many of these writers stayed abroad for at least some period until they got mastery over it and it became possible to experiment. The writers of this period used Indian words, phrases, idioms, proverbs and sometimes translated words from the regional language into English. All this was done by these writers to establish Indian identity, to convey the Indian sensibility through it and to give the Indian 'tang' and 'colour' to the language.

The novelists after 1980 have also experimented with the use of English. But here the objective is entirely different. First of all, the experimentation with use of English is not at all a problem for these writers because many of them have learnt it from birth and now it has become one of the Indian languages. The writer of this period uses the regional language words neither to establish the regional identity nor to privilege one language over the other. The novelists of this period feel that "The Indian 'tang' is not a pure essence but the masala mix of culture that has always been able to appropriate influences from outside. Indian identity lies in the chutnification not in the distinct language" (Mee 321). Again this experimentation with the English language strategy is used to decolonize, to dismantle the hegemonic structures to show the distrust and finally to convey the idea of cultural translation, cultural dislocation, cultural weightlessness, cultural crisis, hybridity, identity crisis and multiple identities.

4.10 INDIAN WOMEN WRITERS IN ENGLISH

The Women novelists also made significant contribution to the English novel. They are natural writers because they play various roles in their life. Woman education was not broad enough in earlier nineteenth century but at the start of that century women novelists came into light— Raj Lakshmi Devi's *The Hindu Wife, or The Enchanted Fruit* (1876). Toru Dutt (1856-77) with her limitation started writing on her own experiences. She passed her life isolated from the current world. She attempted an unfinished novel *Bianca, or The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878), and *Le*

Journal de Mademoiselled' Arvers in the form of English translation. It is a romantic love story set in Bengal. Mrs. Krupabai Satthianadhan's *Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life* (1895) and *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895) — "both thinly veiled exercises in autobiography."3 Shevantibai M. Nikambe, who produced *Ratanbai: A sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (1895). Then came Svarna Kumari Debi with her two translated novels into English— *An Unfinished Song* (1913) and *The Fatal Garland* (1915), a historical novel.

The first major women writer is Kamala Markandaya who is an immigrant writer, her ten novels present remarkable range of characters from poor peasant women in *Nectar in Sieve*, through the urban poor of *A Handful of Rice* to the higher class in *The Golden honey comb*. The conflict between tradition and modernity, East and West runs through all of her novels. She also throws light on how the development is amounting to a kind of neo-colonialism and racial prejudice, of which she has first-hand experience, against, Indian emigrants in Britain.

The next major woman writer is Nayantara Sahgal. Her novels reveal a close acquaintance with the political elite, major political and national events which form the background to each her eight novels. Her novels present the life of the richest sections of Indian society, their hypocrisy and shallow values. At the same time she is concerned with the heritage and its value for the educated Indian. *A Time to be Happy* articulates the problem of identity faced by the English-educated elite and exploration of the fate of women within domestic sphere. Her later novels *Rich Like us, Plans for Departure*, and *Mistaken Identity* depict the slow erosion of values among both civil servants and people at large.

Another important woman novelist is Anita Desai. If Sahgal depicts political circumstance, Kamala Markandaya social circumstance, Anita Desai concentrates on the psychology of her women characters. She believes writing is a process of discovering truth, the truth is nineteenth of the ice-berg that lies submerged beneath the one-tenth visible portion we call reality.

She says her novels are no reflection of Indian Society, politics or characters. Anita Desai depicts very confidently the plight of educated upper-middle class women. Desai's westernized, educated women protagonists seem to have the luxury of freedom of choice but deeper analysis reveals them to be frustrated and emotionally dependent. Her characters range from daughter, young wife, middle aged wife, mother, to grandmother. All these women tend to be fragile introverts. Most of her novels reveal the breakdown of relationships material or familial. In later novels *In Custody* and *Baumgartner's Bombay*, Anita Desai has switched over to male centred plots. Anita Desai's novels are experimentations in the latest narrative techniques. Her novels are marvellous presentation of the fever and fretfulness of the stream of consciousness of her principal characters. Anita Desai has found it necessary to explore the inner as well as the outer climate and to disperse the narration in the flow of several sensibilities. *The Cry the Peacock* consists almost entirely of Maya's interior monologue. It is a brilliant impressionistic novel. For the stream of consciousness technique Anita Desai is indebted to the pioneering attempts of Proust, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala is another woman writer whether she is an Indian writer or not is an interesting problem. But in an interview she herself has said that she should not be considered as an Indian writer, but as one of the European writers who have written about India. She has written many short stories and about twelve novels. The important theme of her work is reactions of the westernized protagonist and their conventional Indian families to the subject of arranged marriage and romantic love.

The major women writers who have started writing after 1980s are Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai. When their counterpart novelists after 1980s assert that they have a right to rewrite national history, these women writers also claim that they have their own say about what constitutes the nation. Shashi Deshpande is a leading writer dealing with situation of women in urban, middle class in her *The Dark Holds No Terror, Roots and Shadow*, *That Long Silence* and *Small Remedies*. *The*

Binding Vine depicts fears, hopes and uncertainties of an urban middle class consciousness. Here she has recorded the unrecorded and translation acts as a metaphor to signify the gaps. She employs a kind of stream of consciousness technique. Her characters and situation are presented in a realistic mode.

Gita Hariharan is another important woman writer who does show interest in experimentation, her *A Thousand Faces of Nights* and *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* are concerned with rewriting folktales and children stories. She insists the necessity of reconstruction from the dismantled parts of various ideas, beliefs and models because those are our inheritance. Traditions, beliefs and folklore should not be considered as mean, irrelevant, outdated and closed. But indeed they are tested truths, relevant, useful, vibrant and open source for writing about present needs.

Arundathi Roy is another important woman writer, who employs post modern and post colonial devices like magic realism, allegory and goes back to history, myths and traditions. She focuses on the identity crisis and records the unrecorded. In her Man Booker Prize winning novel *The God of small Things*, places her heroine, in the context of traditional Hindu narratives. Her divorcee heroine struggles hard against the fate laid out by convention. This novel provides a powerful imaginative statement of the way people can find themselves 'trapped outside' their own history. She also records the dislocations between the 'Small God' of individual lives and the 'Big God' of the nation.

Some of the common themes run through most the novels of these women writers are the discrimination against the daughter, the silence of women, no recognition of their talent, conflict between modernity and tradition, East and West and the lack of communication between the sexes.

A number of women novelists have made their debut in the nineties. Their first novels are quite effective in revealing the true state of Indian society when it comes to the treatment of women. All these writers were born after independence and English does not have any colonial associations for them. Their work is marked by an impressive feel for the language and authentic

presentation of contemporary India, with all its regional variations. Generally they write about the urban middle class, the stratum of society to which they belong and know best.

4.11 THE EMIGRANT/ DIASPORA WRITERS

English language writers from the erstwhile British and French Colonies in the last thirty years (1980 onwards) have become migratory birds flying away from their home land to U.K. or USA for occupation, international recognition and fame. For one reason or the other they choose not to return home. As a result they face the problem of identity both for themselves and their writings. How are they to be labelled as writers? – Indian, African, Caribbean etc. Again what should be the nomenclature of their writing? Indian English literature, African literature, Sri Lankan literature and so on. As a result of this question these writers are addressed differently in postcolonial terms- expatriate, immigrant, exile, immigrant, diaspora, these terms are often overlapping and confusing.

Expatriate writer is one who voluntarily leaves the country to promote his/her career and keeps the option open to return home. A.K. Ramanujan, Raja Rao, Meena Alexander, Kiran Desai belong to this category. Emigrant or immigrant writer is one who leaves the country and settles abroad permanently. Bharati Mukherjee, Rohintan Mistry, Salman Rushdie belong to the category.

The diasporic writers are those whose ancestors have left for another country V.S. Naipal belongs to this category. V.S. Naipal is for us a diasporic writer but for Caribbean's an emigrant writer. Salman Rushdie can also be treated as a writer in exile for almost a decade. Moreover, there are some writers who divide their time between UK, USA and their home land. To this category belong many African, Caribbean and Indian Writers. Names of Anita Desai, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Chandra, can be cited in the context.

The question that what are the themes these writers work on is a curious one, in spite of living in a different country. Firstly, it is about their former home lands and its culture. It is argued that most expatriate writers have a

weak grasp of actual conditions of contemporary India. And tend to recreate it through the lens of nostalgia, writing about "imaginary homelands" (to use Rushdie's Phrase). Ramanujan wrote more about India remaining in the USA. Kiran Desai writes about Darjeeling in her Man Booker Prize Award winning novel, *The Inheritance of Loss.*

These Emigrant or diasporic writers are always conscious of their identity. What Chinua Achebe said in an interview with Kwame Anthony Appiah in 1982 seems to be valid for all categories of English language writers (exiles, emigrants, expatriates, and diasporas). "I am an Ibo writer because this is my basic culture; Nigerian, African and a writer….. no, black first, then a writer. Each of these identities does call for certain kind of commitment on my part. I must see what is to be black- and this means being sufficiently intelligent to know how the world is moving and how the black people fare in this world. This is what it means to be black or an African, what does it mean to a white man" (Innes 208)**.** This signifies the necessity of being conscious about one's self, culture and country.

V. S. Naipaul in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech declared that this prize was tribute to the country of his living (UK) and the country of my ancestors (India); this is a clear example of a writer seeking a double audience. They deliberately keep the term 'post-colonial' to describe their writings, so that they can appeal to the readers of both the worlds. Most postcolonial writers are under the spell of migration. They feel that one has to be away from one's own country to understand it better from outside and at the same time, to understand other territories a new.

There are some critics who comment that the writing of these writers is not authentic and not rooted in the soil, time and space. But the writer like Ramanujan denied this; he says "I have done a lot of work on India since coming to this country (USA). I have done it more comfortably here than I could have done it in India" (52).In the same interview Ramanujan opines that "if colonization affected our own indigenous language, culture and literature, English has helped us fight against the colonizers. English has been the 'other'

through which we have returned to ourselves, it has taught us to be self critical and made us critical of English" (79). Thus, it is clear that these writers write back to the homeland and to the centre (former colonizer). There is a good deal of debates over the status of the emigrant writings. It is not like the mythical Shakuntala disowned by both the parents. On the contrary, the emigrants have endeared themselves both to the natives of their former home land and the country of their new home. But it is viewed these writers have rewritten particular works from the English canon.

Apart from these themes the emigrant writers have brought a sea change in the use of English language in their texts. They have made the use of English language flexible in their fiction one instance from Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* will suffice. The novel begins with the first person narrative. "I was born in the city of Bombay…… on the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I come. Oh, spell it out; spell it out, at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence. I tumbled forth into the world…. And there are so many stories to tell, too-many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane" (9). The diasporic literature represents displacement and its consequences like unhomeliness, identity crisis, hybridity and ambivalence and their contributions to their home countries. Thus the emigrant or diasporic writing has also contributed to the renaissance of Indian English fiction during this period.

4.12 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q1. Briefly describe the background of Indian Fiction in English.

Ans. Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In recent years it "has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad." It is now recognized that Indian English literature is not only part of Commonwealth literature, but also occupies a "great significance in the World literature."

Today, a number of Indian writers in English have contributed substantially to modern English literature. Ram Mohan Roy who heralded the Indian Renaissance and Macaulay who recommended English language education in India were probably aware of what was in store for the Indians in terms of literary awareness. Today it "has won for itself international acclaim and distinction."

Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time, and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks:

…one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the West.

It was in Bengal that a literary renaissance first manifested itself, but almost immediately afterwards its traces could be seen in Madras, Bombay and other parts of India. The first Indian English novel was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Raj Mohan's Wife* (1864). It is different from his Bengali novels such as *Durgesh Nandini* or *Kopal Kandla*. In fact, it paved the way for *Anand Math* (1884), Indian's first political novel which gave the Indians their national anthem, "Vande Mataram." Then came Manoj Basu's Jaljangal in the form of English translation as *The Forest Goddess* by Barindra Nath Bose.

Q2. Comment on the plot construction in Indian Novel in English.

Ans. Plot is a story, a selection of events, arranged in time, its beginning leads through a middle to an end. A plot contains motives, consequences and relationship. All plots have some relationship to time because cause and effect take place in time. The writer's ideology affects his choice of plot. The Indian English novelists of the period from 1930 to 1980 have revealed their excellent mastery in narration and dexterity in the development of plot. The

novels of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Sudhin Ghosh and G.V. Desani are perfect manifestation of their narrative genius.

R.K. Narayan's craftsmanship in plot-construction does not reveal a consistent quality. Narayan's art, however, reached its maturity after independence. *The Guide* is the finest specimen of Narayan's artistic genius, where in he handles with the skill the modern fictional techniques such as flashbacks, flash-forward, interior monologue and stream of consciousness. The narrative in this novel alternates between the past and the present. The blend of the omniscient and the autobiographical method of narration endow the story with a double perspective. His narration is marked by the quality of naturalness. He entertains but not at a brisk, rollicking pace. He evokes a gentle and simple laughter. Narayan has been recognized as "a born story teller" (Henry Miller), "a first-rate story teller (Anthony West) and "the story teller par excellence" (Christian Science Monitor, quoted by Shiv K. Gilra 104).

Raja Rao steps ahead Narayan in the art of plot construction. Though deeply rooted in vedantic philosophy and ancient lore – he is open to most modern stylistic experimentations and other technical innovations. For Narayan, the story is everything for Raj Rao, it is a little more than a convenience. In *Kanthapura* the story is told from the witness-narrator point of view. *The Serpent and the Rope* because of its philosophical subject-matter requires a sophisticated and intellectual narrator. As the theme is the knowledge of the self and the action takes place in the thought process and psyche of the hero, the narrative perspective is focused on him. The story of the novel, therefore, is unfolded from the protagonist narrator point of view. In order to communicate his meditations and thoughts of the inmost recesses of mind, the hero-narrator uses the devices of introspective diary entries, self-revealing letters, and jottings of recapitulated poetry quotations from *the Vedas, the Upanishads*, Indian lore, and French poetry. In his narrative perspective he moves to and fro in space and time. Many critics consider *The Serpent and the Rope* as essentially a spiritual autobiography. While being interviewed by Annie Brierre, Raja Rao pointed out "Everything one writes is autobiographical. But it is a metaphysical novel" (26). In *The Cat and Shakespeare*, the author goes a step ahead and

describes the state of spiritual serenity which descends in the life of a man who leads the life of detachment and resignation.

The novels of Sudhindra Nath Ghose are an exciting experiment in the expression of the Indian ethos in a form firmly grounded in the ancient native tradition of story-telling. His narrative technique shows his rejection of Aristotelian concept of plot and use of the ancient Sanskrit device of the framing story interpolated with tales told by different characters from different sources such as the ancient epics and the puranas, legends and folk-lore and even history. Following the practice of the Sanskrit Champu Kavya, Ghose mixes prose and verse and introduces into the narrative songs in Bengali with musical rotations.

G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* is one of the most daringly experimental novels in Indian English literature. It is a novel extremely complex both in theme and technique. The novel may be said to be story of the hero's spiritual quest for understanding the meaning of life; a social chronicle revealing aspects of white, European and Indian character, an uproariously funny comedy, full of various kinds of humour ranging from sheer farce to subtle wit. Further, it is a triumphant experiment in blending western and Indian narrative forms. The plot of the novel seems incoherent and scattered. But a close analysis reveals its comprehensive form, perfect design and architectural symmetry.

Manohar Malgonkar in contrast to Desani is deft story teller, who knows how to function with verve and animation, with wit and detachment. Above all, the charm of his story never wears down, as it possesses the 'tang,' 'feel' or colour of life. As a narrator, he is smooth and straight forward, the narratives run spontaneously, not obscured by redundant situations or long incidental comments. Told in the omniscient style, there is very little scope for loitering here and there. The story is allowed to tell itself, and generally there is little that comes between the reader and the tale. Everything is in organic relation. A good plot presupposes some special tactics-the capacity for vivid portraiture, careful carpentry, subtle motivations, dramatic display,

humour, wit, irony, intellectual interpretation and shrewd observations. Malgonkar's novels have such plots, undoubtedly. He has a lively talent and his novels are carefully contrived, neatly presented. *Distinct Drum* is a fine example of the old fictional technique which involves the use of memory as a narrative medium and helps the author to move back and forth in time and achieve a wide coverage. *A Bend in the Ganges* is a novel in which plot has primacy over character. Epical in scale, it is intended to offer a panoramic view of the pre-independence period in Indian History. The book *The Combat of Shadow* is a skillful product of careful workmanship and its style never cramps. Malgaonkar revolts against the psychological novel of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, which he considers a temporary aberration in the tradition of the novel. His favourite novelists are Kipling, Conrad, Maugham and Forster. What he finds common to the novels of these writers are well constructed plots, dramatic events and entertainment.

In general the novelists of this period formed perfectly designed, skillfully rounded and well constructed plots, epical in scale and episodic in nature, after the early victorian concept of plot-construction.

Q3. Who are known as "the Big Trio" of Indian Novels in English and why?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q4. Highlight the significant features of Indian Novel in English before 1930.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q5. Discuss the contribution of Raja Rao in the growth of Indian Fiction in English.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q6. Why is *The Serpent and* the Rope known as a Spiritual Autobiography?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q7. Name the major works of Mulk Raj Anand.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q8. Whose novels are known as Malgudi novels and why?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q9. What are the thematic concerns of diasporic novels?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

Q10. Who was the first Indian woman novelist? Name her works.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

4.13 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Which among the following is known as the first Indian Novel in English?_____.

   (a) *Govinda Samantha*

   (b) *Rajmohan's Wife*

   (c) *Bianca*

   (d) *Saguna*

2. Who among the following is NOT one of the "Big Trio" of Indian Novel in English?_____ .

   (a) Raja Rao

   (b) Mulk Raj Anand

   (c) G.V. Desani

   (d) R.K. Narayan

3. Who revolts against the psychological novel of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, which he considers a temporary aberration in the tradition of the novel ? _____.

   (a) A.K. Ramanujan

   (b) Manohar Malgaonkar

   (c) G.V. Desani

   (d) Bankim Chander Chatterjee

4. Who is the writer of *Thousand Faces of Night* ? _____ .

   (a) Gita Hariharan

   (b) Kiran Desai

   (c) Bharati Mukherjee

   (d) Kamala Das

5. Who calls R.K. Narayan "a born story teller ?" _____ .

(a) Henry Miller

(b) James Joyce

(c) Antony West

(d) Charles Dickens

6. *Imaginary Homelands* is written by _____ .

(a) Vikram Seth

(b) Salman Rushdie

(c) Anita Desai

(d) Siddharth Gigoo

7. Indian's first political novel which gave the Indians their national song, "Vande Mataram" is : _____.

(a) *Rajmohan's Wife*

(b) *Anandmath*

(c) *The Discovery of India*

(d) *The Guide*

8. Who is the creator of Malgudi ? _____.

(a) Raja Rao

(b) Bankim Chandra

(c) R.K. Narayan

(d) Manohar Malgonkar

9. Which of the following novels is written by Mulk Raj Anand ? ____.

(a) *The Serpent and the Rope*

(b) *Untouchable*

(c) *The Guide*

(d) *Anand Math*

10. *Anand Math* was published in which year ?

(a) 1884

(b) 1876

(c) 1880

(d) 1882

4.14 LET US SUM UP

The Indian English novels from the beginning to 1930 depict the greatness of India's past, the superiority of Indian civilization over Europe, and ambivalence about Western civilization on the one hand as liberating and on the other as a threat to Hindu identity. Bankimchandra Chatterjee's Rajmohan's Wife (1864) is considered the first Indian English novel proper and it is also viewed as the first birth of Indian English fiction. As the Indian English fiction attained maturity in the thirties the writer began to make new experiments in the technique of novel by assimilating the innovations of modern European novelists and adapting them to suit the treatment of Indian traditions and ethos. The novelists writing after Independence appear to be attracted to new techniques in plotting, narration and characterization. The 'Stream of consciousness' method is tried by Raja Rao, G.V. Desani, and Anita Desai.

4.15 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Explain the genesis and growth of Indian Novel in English.
2. Describe the thematic concerns in the Indian English Novel written between 1930 and 1980.
3. Comment on the contribution of women writers in the development of Indian English Novel.
4. Highlight the contribution of Mulk Raj Anand in the expansion of Indian Fiction in English.
5. Discuss Narayan's art of characterization with special reference to his novels.

4.16 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. b) Rajmohan's Wife
2. c) G.V. Desani
3. b) Manohar Malgaonkar
4. a) Gita Hariharan
5. a) Henry Miller
6. b) Salman Rushdie
7. b) *Anandmath*
8. c) R.K. Narayan
9. b) *Untouchable*
10. d) 1882

4.17 SUGGESTED READING

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INDIAN PROSE IN ENGLISH

STRUCTURE

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Objectives

5.3 The Emergence of Prose in India

5.3.1 Dr. Radhakrishnan (1888 - 1975)

5.3.2 Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897 - 1999)

5.3.3 Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948)

5.3.4 Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 - 1964)

5.4 The Indian English Short Story

5.5 Galaxy of Writers

5.6 A Brief Survey of Indian Short Story in English

5.6.1 A.S.P. Ayyar

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5.6.4 Mulk Raj Anand

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5.6.7 Santha Rama Rau

5.7 Indian Women Short Story Writers

5.8 Campus Novel in India

5.9 Major themes dealt in Indian English Prose

5.10 Self -Assessment Questions (SAQs)

5.11 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

5.12 Let Us Sum Up

5.13 Examination Oriented Questions

5.14 Answer Key to Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

5.15 Suggested Reading

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Indian Prose in English mostly developed after independence. The cross-fertilization of English literature, European thought and Indian Culture resulted in the development of prose writing.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson are :

- To familiarize the learner with the emerging trends in prose writing in India and to explain to them how cross-fertilization of two different cultures led to the formation of a new hybridized culture.
- To acquaint the learner with the development of short story as a genre and various writers of short stories.

5.3 THE EMERGENCE OF PROSE IN ENGLISH IN INDIA

The western impact, the infusion of English literature and European thought and the resulting cross - fertilization have been the means of quickening the interplay and circulation of ideas and the emergence of a new literature, a new climate of hope and endeavour in the country and a bold marching towards new horizons. From the great Ram Mohan Roy flowed diverse streams of renascent activity - religious awakening, social reform, the new education, women's emancipation, literary river and political consciousness - each carried

forward by its own dedicated spirits. India is blessed with many great political personalities, religious men, aesthetics, men of letters and scholars. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, M. N. Roy, Mahatma Gandhi etc. and the list goes endless. Vivekananda's appearance and speech in 1893 at the Chicago Parliament of Religions is a part of history. Several volumes of his complete works, published by the Advaita Ashram comprise courses of lectures on different Yogas, on Gita and numerous other essays. The great freedom movement brought various orators to the front. Rajaji, Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak, Nehru are only a few of them. Besides orators and journalists, there are historians, philosophers, the jurists, the biographers, the auto-biographers, essayists, critics, scientists, economists and sociologists.

5.3.1 Dr. Radhakrishnan (1888 - 1975)

Dr. Radhakrishnan is a philosopher - statesman with an international reputation, a scholar with a phenomenal memory, a resourceful and eloquent and effective speaker and a voluminous writer with an uncanny flair for lucidity and epigrammatic strength. The range of his interests, the sweep of his mind, the commendable Catholicity of his tastes and the temper and quality of his eloquence have marked Dr. Radhakrishnan a man of 'words and wisdom,' a Guru for his contemporaries. The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, Indian Philosophy, Eastern Religion and Western thought ,the English renderings of Bhagavad Gita, Dhamma Pada, The Principal Upanishads, Brahma Sutra were some of his works. An Idealist view of Life is unquestionably his most valuable contribution to constructive philosophy. He was indeed the greatest, gift given to Indians and to the world.

5.3.2 Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897 - 1999)

Nirad C. Chaudhuri is the 'Grand Solitary' among Indian writers. His works include *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, *A Passage to England*, *The Continent of Circe* and *To live or not to live*. The Autobiography made him suddenly famous. It is confessedly, more of a

'national than personal history,' the environment being given precedence over the product. The continent of Circe is described as 'an essay on the people of India.' Apart from his shortcoming as a writer - a sort of love hate relationship with India and the people of India - his great merit as an intellectual is that he is not ever too lazy to avoid doing his own thinking or too timid to hesitate to give outspoken expression to his own views. He has the supreme faith of the moral man in an amoral society.

5.3.3 Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948)

The period of thirty years of the Gandhian age was brought the revolutionary changes not only in the political scene but in all walks of Indian life. In the social sphere, the Gandhian movement led to removal untouchability, awakening among women, religious reform movements, awakening among the depressed classes etc. which has greatly influenced Indian English literature. His greatness is the greatness of an ordinary man who through a long process of trial and error, aspiration and endeavour achieved a greatness indubitably his own. His autobiography- *Experiments with Truth* (1925) which describes the unfolding process is one of the imperishable classics of Indian literature. His writings can be divide into three periods (1) The brief early London period (1888-1891) (2) The South African period (1893-1915) (3) The thirty three years of the Indian period (1915-1948). During the first period, he wrote Guide to London which is an essay in 55 pages based on his own experiences in London. During the second period, he wrote pamphlets 'An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa' (1896), 'The Indian Franchise' (1895) and 'Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa' (1896). He launched journal – Indian Opinion where his first major work 'Hind Swaraj' appeared in its columns in 1909. During the third period of his writing, he started two well known journals- Young India (1919-1932) and Harijan (1933-1948) in which all his major writings henceforth appeared. Among the writings of Gandhi, his autobiography *My Experiments with Truth* is

the most outstanding work. It is the detailed account of his personal life expressed with the frankness and honesty which became human document.

Mahatma Gandhi's writing covers social, political, cultural, ethical and spiritual issues. His writing has profound frankness which has attracted millions of readers and established itself as Gandhian literature. Even the writings of the followers of Gandhian philosophy are known as Gandhian literature. The time period of almost three decades enriched Indo-Anglian literature the most.

5.3.4 Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 - 1964)

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) is the most remarkable name in the history of India as well as in the history of Indo-Anglian literature. He was the true heir of Gandhi in politics and one in the greatest leaders of independent India. He played an important role for the development of India as he remained Prime Minister of India for seventeen years. Nehru was educated at Harrow and Cambridge. His first meeting with Mahatma Gandhi in 1916 brought him very close to him. In the national movement his real talent of leadership came out through his speeches. He was great orator and a prolific writer. His father Motilal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore influenced him a lot. Even Carl Marx and Lenin attracted Nehru very much. His first book-*Soviet Russia* (1928) is the collection of articles where Nehru views Russia as India's well wisher and strong supporter for the development. His first collection of letters published as-*Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1930) consists of thirty one letters written by him to his daughter Indira Gandhi. His most remarkable work-*Glimpses of World History* (1934) is written between October 1930 and august 1933 comprising the 196 letters written by Nehru from prison. This book is survey of world history from the beginning of civilization to mid-nineteenth century. *An Autobiography* (1936) is literary achievement of Nehru as writer. It

was written in continuous spell of about nine months. It is a literary expression of a man at the height of his power. It is a presentation of different aspects of his life. His narration includes and reveals his scientific outlook, his belief of religion, his praise for Marxism and his fervent nationalism. It is also a living record of moments of Indian History for well over a generation, present era and strong sense of history. In the words of M.K. Naik, "Nevertheless, by virtue of its sincerity and vividness and its manifest historical and literary importance, the work indubitably ranks among the major autobiographies in world literature."

Nehru always wanted to explore the great inheritance of India and for that he wrote *The Discovery of India* (1946). This historical survey of India from the Indus Valley Civilization to the mid-nineteenth century is considered as milestone in literary history and history of India where he stood at greatest height of literary and political orb of India. Up to the time of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indo-Anglian literature flourished and spread its beauty at the world. It is also important to mention that the literary genre-prose and poetry flourished at its height in India but novel a new literary genre yet to rise in the land of India by the master novelists.

5.4 THE INDIAN ENGLISH SHORT STORY

Aesop's *Fables*, Ovid's *Metamorphosis,* Boccaccio's *The Decameron* and the Indian Jataka tales, *The Panchatantra*, Somadeva's *Katha-sarit-sagara* are among the forerunners of the short story. The advent of its present form can be traced to the early 19th century and of its parent, the novel, to the 18th century. The brevity of its narrative, single action, and thematic focus naturally met with a wordwide reception and thus short fiction matured into an artistic genre, casting its net across the world. Murli Das Melwani's book makes a historical survey right from the beginning to the present-day. Such a wide-ranging critical survey has hitherto not been attempted. He raises two weighty questions that merit our attention. First, has the Indian short story writer contributed anything of value to it? and second, has his work made the

form more flexible, as say, Hemingway's or Chekov's did? Melwani subjects all short-story writers — 66 in all — from 1835 to 2008 to a close scrutiny. The stories are not discussed individually, though some specimens are closely read and locally analysed. But a writer's entire collection is examined and evaluated, with conclusions drawn at the end.

Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao, who represent the first flowering (1935-45) of this genre, responded to the nationalist movement, each in his own way — Mulk Raj Anand, the social activist, presenting a true vision of Indian life; R.K. Narayan, with his perception of the average as positive, exploring the nature of life and reality; and Raja Rao experimenting with form. The second flowering (1960-70) looked for answers to the question often raised in academic circles: can the Indian sensibility be expressed in English? Ruth Prawar Jhabwala's "detached involvement with the Indian situation," and Bhabani Bhattacharya's professionalism and the easy readability of his stories supply some answers to that question. The 1970s more than fulfil the expectations of the 60s. The decade is marked by an endless variety in the handling of themes and variations, coupled with varying modes and techniques of narration influenced by Russian and American short fiction.

5.5 GALAXY OF WRITERS

We have a galaxy of writers — Keki Daruwalla, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Arun Joshi, Kamala Das and a host of others — participating in the ongoing process of openness in form, reliable and unreliable narration with multiple points of view, and shifting focalisation. The period between 1980 and 2008 reflects, in the words of Melwani, a "burgeoning creativity." There are more women writers now than at any time in the past. Altering perspectives in man-woman relationships, alienation in modern life, and the impact of feminism and feminist theories on the academia have supplied meat and juice to a potential creative writer. As readership expanded across the world, Indian stories tended to get translated into foreign languages. The author is quite right in his assessment that the short story has covered a wider range of subjects with a larger gallery of characters and that the record of Indian life

is more authentic in this genre than in the novel. The 'little' magazine that is most selective in choosing the material for publication — getting a story published in it is considered highly prestigious — has done much to improve the quality of this genre. Paperback print editions and online literary magazines too have helped a great deal in popularising this form. He suggests that instituting literary prizes and bringing out a collection of the best short stories every year will encourage new talent.

Melwani adroitly integrates his critical comments on the works with the short introductory remarks of each section on the evolving political and social mores of the times. On the whole, the book is absorbing and well-researched. It is a convincing, lively narrative history of the short story that still remains a developing literary form. We need more — and yet more — of such narrative histories that can discuss changes in artistic trends, materials, techniques, et al. The scope for the Indian short story is indeed boundless.

5.6 A BRIEF SURVEY OF INDIAN SHORT STORY IN ENGLISH

Like the novel, the Indian English short story too came into its own during the Gandhian age. There are also writers who devoted themselves exclusively to this form. T. L. Natesan, who wrote under the pen name Shankar Ram, is an early example. His stories in *The Children of Kaveri* (1926) and *Creatures All* (1933) - a selection from both the books appeared under the title *The Ways of Man* (1968) - deal mostly with the rustic life in Tamil Nadu. Most of the stories are artless and some sentimental. Many others rest upon shaky conventional motifs like an estrangement between two near and dear ones, finally ending in reconciliation. Shankar Ram recaptures the village scene evocatively and his literal translation of rustic nicknames like 'Barrel - nose Grandpa' and 'spider - leg' anticipates Raja Rao's effective use of this device in *Kanthapura*.

5.6.1 A.S.P. Ayyar

A.S.P. Ayyar the novelist and playwright, published three collections of stories: Indian after - *Dinner Stories* (1927), *Sense in Sex and other*

Stories (1932) and *The Finger of Destiny and other Stories* (1932), besides retelling ancient Indian legends in books like *Tales of India* (1944) and *Famous Tales of India* (1954). As in his plays, Ayyar's constant theme in his stories is social reform and especially the plight of woman in traditional Hindu society. His women include young widows, who successfully re-marry in the teeth of opposition, young girls married by their parents to old men for money, abandoned or persecuted wives, victims of the dowry system or of the absence of birth control etc.

5.6.2 S. K. Chettur

His stories in *Muffled Drums and other Stories* (1917), *The Cobras of Dhermashevi and other Stories* (1957) and *Mango Seed and other Stories* (1974) seem to be based on material collected during his official tours as a member of the Indian Civil Services. Village feuds, murders and local legends about serpents, ghosts and omens are his staple themes and he seems to have a special fascination for fantasy and the supernatural. He uses a variety of narrative modes including the autobiographical method, the device of the observer - narrator, and the epistolary method.

Two other writers, who have a single collection each to their credit, are the novelists, *K. S. Venkataramani* and *K. Nagarajan*. In his *Preface to Jatadharan* (1937), Venkataramani characterizes his work as 'sketches rather than short stories.' Many of his heroes are the products of the Gandhian ferment. Of the dozen tales in Nagarajan's *Cold Rice* (1945), some obviously draw upon the author's experiences as a government pleader and read like court cases dressed up for narration, while others are anecdotes. His art is seen to better advantage in the roomy form of the novel.

5.6.3 Manjeri Isvaran

The most productive of the Indian English short story writers, Manjeri Isvaran, the poet, has not yet received the recognition, since most of his

books are now out of print. He is the author of *The Naked Shingles* (1941), *Siva Ratri* (1943), *Angry Dust* (1944), *Rickshawallah* (1946), *Fancy Tales* (1947), *No Anklet bells for her* (1949), *Immersion* (1951), *Painted Tigers* (1956) and *A Madras Admiral* (1959). Isvaran's keen interest in the form is revealed in his attempt to discuss the theory of the short story in some of his prefaces. Apart from Isvaran, the most single contribution to the short story of this period came from the three major novelists - Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao.

5.6.4 Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand has brought about seven collections of short stories. *The Lost Child and other Stories* (1944), *The Barber's Trade Union and other Stories* (1944), *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and other Stories* (1947), *Reflections on the Golden Bed and other Stories* (1953), *The Power of Darkness and other Stories* (1959), *Lajwanti and other Stories* (1966) and *Between Tears and Laughter* (1973). Anand has also retold the traditional Indian tales in his *Indian Fairy Tales* (1946) and *More Indian Fairy Tales* (1961). Anand's aims and methods are explained at length in his Prefaces.

Mulk Raj Anand's short stories are wide - ranging in mood and tone. First, there are stories of 'lyric awareness' (to use his own phrase). Another prominent group is that of the stories of strong social awareness revealing Anand's acute understanding of the complex social forces at work in the modern India. The range and variety of Anand's short stories are evinced not only in mood, tone and spirit but also in locale and characters, form and style. The forms Anand draws upon are the fable, the parable, the folk - tale, the narrative and sometimes even the well - made story and his style can be in turn lyrical and satirical, light - hearted and indignant.

5.6.5 R. K. Narayan

R.K. Narayan's career as a short story writer began almost a decade after Anand's, with *Cyclone and other Stories* (1943), *Dodu and other*

Stories (1943) and *Malgudi Days* (1943). His subsequent collections are *An Astrologer's Day and other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road and other Stories* (1956) and *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970). *Gods, Demons and Others* (1964) is a retelling of well - known ancient Hindu legends. Narayan's most characteristic note in his short stories is a gentle irony. In some other stories, the irony arises out of the comic complications creating predominantly humour of situation. Narayan's stories are uniformly compact and are told in his usual seemingly artless style. Though Narayan's stories are always readable, they are perhaps not as significant an achievement as his major novels.

True to his characteristic lack of fecundity, Raja Rao has published only a dozen stories which are collected in The Cow of the Barricades and other Stories (1947) and The Policeman and the Rose (1978). which is actually only a revised version of the earlier collection. containing all but two of its stories and adding three more. Nevertheless, these dozen stories exhibit considerable thematic and formal variety.

5.6.6 K. A. Abbas

Abbas's four short story collections, the first appeared in the year of Indian Independence: *Rice and other Stories* (1947), he others being *Cages of Freedom and other Stories* (1952), *One thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and other Stories* (1957) and *The Black Sun and other Stories* (1963). Most of these stories are strongly highlighted by Abbas' militant Leftism and not a few carry tell - tale marks of his journalistic and film - world experience, both in conception and technique.

5.6.7 Santha Rama Rao

Santha Rama Rao's two novels, *Remember the House* (1956) is a charming picture of the East - West encounter, particularly as it affects young Indira, whose growth from adolescence to maturity is another theme. *The Adventuress* (1970), the story of a young Philippino girl stranded

in post - war Japan, however, fails to raise above the level of superficiality, though the exotic setting is portrayed with some expertise.

After 1980, began the period of the so-called "new" fiction. In this period a breed of new novelists emerged. It includes Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande, Shashi Tharoor, Shobha De, Amitav Ghosh, Amit Choudhary, and Arundhati Roy.

5.7 INDIAN WOMEN SHORT STORY WRITERS

Indian English short fiction, which has a history of more than a hundred years, like short fiction in the Bhasha literatures of India, traces its genesis back to ancient Indian classics such as *Panchtantra*, the fables of *Brihatkatha*, *Kathasaritsagar* and *Yoga-Vashistha.* (See D.S. Mishra, Sisir Kumar Das, Bijoy Kumar Das, Charu Mehrotra, C.V. Venugopal, A.N. Dwivedi). Sisir Kumar Das in his book *A History of Indian Literature* mentions three stages in the development of Indian short story. He says, "The first stage is that of anecdotes, second stage belongs to tales and fables and the third stage may be referred to short fiction." According to him, these are autonomous forms and the modern Indian short story has only achieved its form after passing through these stages. Short story as a form has also been considered 'a by product of novel workshop.' However, apart from these obvious Indian influences, one can also trace the Western influence on Indian short stories written in English. The short stories of Guy de Maupassant, Anton Chekhov, Nikolai Gogol, Anatole France and many others like them have substantially influenced the sensibilities of short story writers in India. It can be pointed out here that in spite of being influenced by the Western writers in structure and substance, the form of short story took its own course in line with the social changes that were taking place in India. Shiv K. Kumar writes:

> [T]he early short story, whether written in English or any Indian language, grew under Western tutelage. The only difference was that while the writer in Indian language

> breathed in the Western influence as a part of the *zeitgeist*, the writer in English was ostensibly conscious of his indebtedness to the Western masters.

Though, short story emerged as a significant form of literature during the pre-independence period, it emerged as a dominant mode of writing only after the 1950s. One of the major reasons behind this sudden spurt and interest in the form was the promotion and support it received from major publishing houses. Many noted Indian publishers such as Writers Workshop, Penguin, Macmillan India, Oxford University Press, Rupa, and Kali for women provided ample opportunities for Indian authors to get their writings published. Short story was a preferred form for readers, writers and publishers. Readers demanded short stories instead of novels getting serialized in journals and periodicals. Even editors of reputed journals, therefore, encouraged the popular novelists of that time to contribute short stories. Even writers, many times, preferred short story to novel because it helped them in consolidating their ideas and present them in a compact form. The short story is short yet intense, deep as well as complex. In that sense, it is an author's perfect offering to the reader and a significant contribution to literature as well. Commenting on the merits of the form, Mary Rohrberger states:

> This is the accomplishment, perhaps of all great short story writers, the encompassing of time and motion in a present moment, while simultaneously suggesting past and future. All of the characteristic devices of the short story finally relate to this end: juxtapositions that create montage patterns, the accumulation of details forming networks of images that become metaphors, the layering of time and place, the meshing of antithesis-joy and sadness, waking and dream, even life and death – tonal reverberations operating paradoxically, as a means for non-verbal expression[…];and, of course, the epiphany, a point of frozen energy operating just beyond understanding.

Even a noted novelist such as R.K. Narayan wrote enthusiastically about short stories. Exhibiting how happy he was to experiment with the form, he writes:

> I enjoy writing a short story. Unlike the novel, which emerges from relevant, minutely worked out detail, the short story can be brought out into existence through a mere suggestion of detail, the focus being kept on a central idea or climax.

Women writers in India were quick to realize the potential of this form and hence began using it as a powerful tool to critique the patriarchal values that proved detrimental to the place and position of women. The form of short story became quite hospitable to them because, unlike the novel which required considerable time and energy, the short story writing required less time which they could practice during their leisure from the household chores. Added to these advantages, the short story also proved to be a preferred form because the marginalized position of the form of short story probably suits to express the voice from/of the margins. This was one of the potential reasons behind why women writers chose to write short stories; not just by compulsion of any sort but necessarily by choice: In short, the short story is, of itself, central to the human experience; so is the poem, the novel, and the play, but most naturally the short story.

The first Indian Women's Short Fiction collection in English was *A Story of Christian Life* (1898) by Kamala Satthianandhan. Scholars such as C.V. Venugopal, M.K. Naik, Bijoy Kumar Das, A.N. Dwivedi and Neeru Tandon state her as the first Indian woman writer of short story in English because of chronology; however, some critics such as Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, Joel Kuortti consider Cornelia Sorabji as the first Indian woman short story writer in English for two reasons: one, her 'considerable and significant literary output.' Sorabji has to her credit four short story collections: *Love and life Behind the Purdah* (1901)*, Sun-Babies: Studies in the Child Life Of India* (1904)*, Between the Twilights:*

Being Studies of Indian Women by One of Themselves (1908) and *Indian Tales of the Great Ones* (1916). The second reason to position Sorabji as the first short story writer is because Kamala Satthianandhan's short story collection was co-authored by her husband Samuel Sathianadhan (among twelve stories in the collection six are by each of them). In this technical sense, unlike Sorabji, Kamala Sathianadhan is not the sole author of the short story collection she published in 1898.

Just to give a historical perspective one can study the vast body of Indian Women's Short Fiction in English in three phases: the first phase is from 1890s to 1940s; the second phase is from 1950s to 1970s; and the third phase is from the 1980s onwards.

In the first phase, apart from Sorabji there were other writers who wrote short stories in English in the form of simple narratives, extended anecdotes and tales based on legends and history. Shovana Devi's *The Oriental Pearls*: *Indian Folklore* (1915), Sunity Devee's *Bengal Dacoits and Tigers* (1916) and *The Beautiful Moghul Princesses* (1918) are just to name a few. After 1920s, Indian Women's Short Fiction in English slightly matured in terms of its expression in language due to the spread of English education and the advent of periodicals shaping their writing in form of prose style. Writers such as Swarna Kumari Ghosal, Santa Chatterjee, Seeta Chatterjee, C. T. Ramabai and Ela Sen belong to this period. However, until the 1950, one doesn't find many women writers publishing their short story collections.

Though India won her independence in 1947, it was only politically free; but the experience of the freedom movement followed by the event of partition was agonizing to many Indians. The tension and bitterness brought in several social changes and these changes and transformations were visible in the writings of sensitive women writers. Charu Mehrotra comments:

> Like a barometer, the short fiction of this period faithfully registers the strain and stresses, the peculiar flux and gradation, the obvious and the not so – obvious features of the social milieu.

Similarly, Krishna Daiya too observes with particular reference to women writers :

> The post-independence women short story writers were living in a society where the Independence had also inspired women who had decided to throw away their veil, which had covered all their mental abilities and accomplishments. They had decided to move out of the four walls and go into the world with a new confidence and determination. However they had to face lot of hurdles, created not only by men but also by other women. There were a lot of actions and reactions. The women writers of this period have captured this situation in their works.

Ela Sen's *A Child is Born and Other Stories* (1948) and Krishna Nehru's, *Shadow in the Wall* (1948) were published after the Indian independence followed next by Attia Hossain's *Phoenix Fled and Other Stories* (1953). Hossain's stories deal with the tension, trauma and tragedy of the partition and bloodshed that took place in 1947 in India and Pakistan and the scope and vision of freedom especially for women. After a gap of about a decade, Usha John's *The Unknown Lover and Other Short Stories* (1960) and Shanta Rama Rau's *Gifts of Passage* (1961) were published. They were followed by Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, a major and a prolific Indian writer in English. She has to her credit six short story collections in English: *Like Birds, Like Fishes and Other Stories* (1963), *A Stronger Climate* (1968), *An Experience of India* (1972), *How I Became a Holy Mother and Other Stories* (1976), *An Out of India: Selected Stories* (1986) and *East Into Upper East: Plain Tales from New York and New Delhi* (1998). In these works, she portrays Indian life sometimes like an intimate insider, and at times, like a critical outsider.

Jai Nimbkar's *The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories* (1971) and Sunita Jain's *A Woman is Dead* (1971) came out in the same year. Sunita Jain published another collection of short stories, *Eunuch of Time* in 1982.

Nergis Dalal with a single volume of short stories, *The Nude* (1977) also contributed notably to the form of short fiction. Mainly famous as a confessional poet, Kamala Das has also published two collections of short stories: *A Doll for a Child Prostitute* (1977) and *Padmavati, the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992).

With the growing influence of modernist and postmodernist movements on women's literature, there was a constant struggle in women's writing to deal with the issues and ideologies that came loaded with the different critical schools. To begin with the concept of 'language,' they discovered that it could become a potential route for them to realize and recast their identities; hence, they took up writing with all the more vengeance. Writers Workshop, under the stewardship of P. Lal, who was himself a renowned poet, took an active interest in promoting the works of women writers. In 1978, this publishing house went on to publish short story collections of three major women writers: Raji Narsimhan's *The Marriage of Bela*, Shashi Deshpande's *The Legacy & Other Stories* and Juliette Banerjee's *The Boyfriend and Other Stories*. Shashi Deshpande has also published four more short story collections: *It was The Nightingale* (1986), *The Miracle* (1986), *It was Dark* (1986), *The Stone Woman* (2000) all focused towards the plights and rights of women. Anita Desai's *Games at Twilight* (1978) also got published the same year with William Heinemann, New Delhi. She has also published another collection, *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* (2001) that expresses hidden emotions and aspirations of her characters and subtly analyses their inner psyche. Malati Rao, a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award, published her first short story collection, *Passion Fruit and Other Stories* (1980) followed by *Come for Coffee, Please* (1981).

In the third phase of the evolution of Indian Women's Short Fiction in English, thanks to rapid expansions of markets and global communities in the 1980s, the short story explored the hitherto unexplored dimensions: themes and sub-themes such as quest for broken/hyphenated identity, diaspora, transnational relationships, onslaught of global forces on local cultures, etc. During this phase, as Usha Bande and Atma Ram aptly note:

> Nothing escaped the notice of the storyteller; political behaviour, the joint family system, the generation gap, the changing attitudes towards love, marriage and sex, the invasion by feminist ideology have all been subject to incisive analysis. These fiction writers are watching with concern, the shift in moral values and are trying to analyze the period of transition. Since the writer too is a part of the game of see-saw of old and new values, the tussle between tradition and modernity, he/she considers it his/her duty to focus on the issues that concern society.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), Chitra Banerjee's *Arranged Marriage* (1995) and *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) are the most discussed short story collections by diasporic authors of Indian origin. Gita Hariharan's single volume of short story, *The Art of Dying and Other Short Stories* (1993) is also important as it raises fundamental questions on the existential elements such as birth and death. There are many more collections of short stories in English written by Indian women, such as Shailaja Ganguli's *Festive Season and Other Stories* (1983), Shoma A. Chatterji's *Yes and Other Stories* (1987), Shakuntala Narsimhan's *Lucky Days & Other Stories* (1989), Malavika Kapur's *The Lost Soul and Other Stories* (1989), Nisha da Cunha's *Old Cypress* (1991), *The Permanence of Grief* (1993) and *Set My Heart in Aspic* (1998), Padma Hejmadi's *Birthday Deathday and Other Stories* (1992), Shefali Khanna's *In the Labyrinth of Life* (1992), Shalan Savur's *Renaissance Daughter and Other Stories* (1993), Neelam Saran Gaur's *Grey Pigeon and Other Stories* (1993) and *Winter Companions and Other Stories* (1997), Prema Ramakrishnan's *The Homemaker and Other Stories* (1994), Shobha De's *Small Betrayals* (1995), Tara Deshpande's *Fifty and Done: Stories and Verse* (1999). In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Rupanjali Baruah's *Amrita and Other Stories* (2005), Shama Futehally's *Frontiers*

(2006), Anita Nair's *Satyr of the Subway & Eleven Other Stories* (2006), Sudipta Chatterjee's *The Drumstick Tree and Other Stories* (2007), Mridula Susan Koshy's *If it is Sweet* (2009), and Kalpana Swaminathan's *Venue Crossing* (2009) are some of the most discussed short story collections.

Looking at this vast array of writing – more than eighty noted Indian women writers, writing in English, and more than one hundred fifty remarkable short story collections – one is invariably reminded of what Shiv K. Kumar wrote with admiration about Indian Women's Short Fiction in English:

> Our women writers seem to have lent a new dimension of sensitivity and perception to the short story in English. They find its limited canvas quite congenial to their sensibilities in confronting their brief, often muted, experiences.

5.8 CAMPUS NOVELS IN INDIA

Though the campus novel is considered as an Anglo-American genre, its practitioners in India are found in abundance. It indeed had a slow beginning in India. The first Indian Campus Novel – *The Long Long Days* by P.M. Nityanandan was published in 1960 and then there was a long gap of eleven years before the second campus novel *The Farewell Party* by M.V. Rama Sarma was published in 1971. After this K.M. Trisanku's *Onion Peel* was published in 1973 and Saros Cowasjee's *Goodbye to Elsa* in 1974. Then again there was another long gap of eight years and then Prema Nandakumar's *Atom and the Serpent*, which is considered by critics as campus novel proper appeared in 1982. After this there is a proliferation of writers and "attempts have been made to portray the collegiate experience in India." A survey of the campus novels in India reveals that they can be grouped into various categories. The main categories can be taken as – 1) Campus novels focused on Students, 2) Campus novels focused on Faculty, 3) Campus novels focused on Vice Chancellor, 4) Campus novels focused on all the malfunctioning of the campus, 5) Bildungsroman. In the first category, novels like '*The Long Long Days,'* '*The Truth (Almost) About Bharat*' can be considered. Here

the campus life of students as seen by students themselves is portrayed. The bustle and buoyancy of hostel life, the intimate bond between friends, their boisterous mischief, are being discussed in great detail. The attitude of the students is conspicuous in these novels. The common factor in the majority of these novels is love affairs or attraction between the students of opposite sexes. As college students are in an age which is vulnerable to falling in love, the love affairs are invariably delineated. In *The Long Long Days* by P.M. Nityanandan, Gopinath who comes to Vikrama College to do his Junior Intermediate opens up to new friendships. The typical student activities like ragging, outing, Graduation Day Celebration are described. The opening itself is made with an inter-collegiate cricket match. The students' respect and consideration for teachers and the principal Natarajan are noteworthy. Unlike the modern students in recent novels, the students in this novel are unselfish. They are not only polite but also think of the reputation of their college. *The Truth (Almost) about Bharat* deals with the life of Bharat who is a medical student. During a student strike, students pelt stones at the staff cars and the stone which Bharat throws hits chawkidar Shaffruddin. He is put in the ICU and Bharat flees from there fearing grave consequences. He undertakes a journey across the country on his motorbike. In Tellicherry he also falls in love with a girl Rajee but is heartbroken to know that she is already married. Later on he returns with his friend Shanks. In the second category, novels like '*The Awakening,*' '*Corridors of Knowledge*'; '*The Farewell Party*' can be enlisted. Here the protagonist would be a lecturer or a professor. The goings on in the fraternity of teachers are being presented by him/her. Most often, the protagonist, an honest teacher is confronted with corrupt aspects of the college or university. He struggles to stay away from the unwholesome aspect and tries to get the campus away from corruption. *The Awakening* by Rita Joshi is unique in two aspects. The first aspect is that it is written in verse form and the second one is that the characters are not given names but initials. The protagonist is JR who comes from Cambridge to Delhi, to become a lecturer. She is confronted with the corruption, lion hunting and dominating nature of the principal and protests against her and finally succeeds in eliminating

that negative factor from the college. *Corridors of Knowledge* deals with the life of Madhava Rao. Madhav loses his father at a very young age and grows under the shelter of his uncle. The novel is totally descriptive about his schooling, his studies at the college and university, and later his job as a lecturer and a professor. It also throws light on the corruption which is present in the various fraternities of campus. *The Farewell Party* by M.V. Rama Sarma is about an upright teacher Prakasam. He does not get scholarship until his principal retires. Later, one of his colleagues supersedes him. Prakasam gets disturbed by the teacher-politician of the changing world and the commercialization of teaching. Finally he resigns and joins a new rural university and derives peace and contentment from the serene environment in the lap of nature and the fresh new campus. He works there for five years and decides to get retired at the normal age of sixty and to get involved in philosophic and spiritual attainment. The third category of campus novels is focused on the Vice Chancellor of university. In these novels, the point of view of the Vice chancellor is presented. The problems and tensions of the VC are explained highlighting the darker side of the VC's position. The personal life of the VC is also touched upon in some novels. Considerable light is being thrown on the problem-solving and decision making capabilities of the VC. In some novels, the deterioration of the standard of the campus, due to the Vice Chancellorship of an inefficient person is delineated. Novels like '*Campus*' '*Atom and the Serpent,'* '*Miracles Happen*' can be grouped under this category. '*Campus'* by K.L. Kamal is about Chandrakant, a very ambitious Vice Chancellor. He aspires to upgrade his university to the level of a National University and to create a research conducive atmosphere. But he is disheartened by the gheraos, strikes, slogan shouting etc. He is even threatened by the syndicate members to resign from the post and even pressurized by a politician to stray from the correct procedures to favour his candidate. But Chandrakant does not yield to anything and gains fortitude by great sayings. Finally people who were against him begin to understand his genuine concern and far-sightedness and approve of him. In Prema Nandakumar's '*Atom and the Serpent,'* one can observe the clashes between the Employees' Union and

Karmachari Sangh, the gheraos and demonstrations or agitations, the indifference of the staff members towards recent research, power politics, etc. The Vice Chancellor of the University Dr. D.K. Adhyaksha displays chanakyan intelligence in coping with these agitations. He knows every staff member and their doings - good and wily ones. He addresses even the menial staff members by their names. Adhyaksha himself was a very good teacher; his turning into a politician is referred to as an academic tragedy. 'Miracles Happen' by D.R. Sharma illustrates how even a brilliant university gets sick when an inefficient and meek Vice Chancellor comes to power. It shows how his cunning subordinate gradually takes administration in his hands and makes him just a rubber stamp. At the end everything gets right as the VC overcomes his negative influences and restores his power. The malfunctioning in the campus forms the focus of the next category of novels. '*The Farewell Party,*' '*The Drunk Tantra,'* '*Corridors of Knowledge,'* '*Miracles Happens,'* '*Atom and the Serpent*' are some of the novels which can be enumerated here. Malfunction encompasses faulty administrative system, power politics, irresponsible non-teaching or teaching faculty, etc. The way these malfunctionings contribute to the setback of the university or college is portrayed in these novels. In Ranga Rao's '*The Drunk Tantra,'* Hari Kishen, a totally corrupt and unfit person continues to be a lecturer though he never handles classes. He is even raised to the level of Principal by sheer recommendation and influence. Injustice is meted out to the sincere and really deserving candidates like Dr. Daas and Mrs. Mocham in this process. Though bungling is a popular term with principal Hairy, he always manages to overcome them and it is ironic that he is considered to be the biggest antibungler. It is because of his servitude to the VC, he is called 'the best Principal in the University.' Hairy is the best example of how a rogue can progress and prosper in the faulty and vulnerable system of Education and Politics in India. The last category includes novels like *'The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta,*' '*Goodbye to Elsa,'* '*The Narrator'* and 'Corridors *of Knowledge.'* These novels concentrate on the growth of the character of the protagonist. In most of these novels, the protagonist develops from a

student to a lecturer or even a professor. And so, unlike the other categories, here we get the point of view of the protagonist both as a student and as a teacher. Anuradha Marwah Roy's '*The Higher Education of Geetika Mehendiratta'* casts light on the difficulties faced by students at the hands of lecturers during post-graduation and at the hands of supervisors during research. Diversity in the fraternity of professors is brought about from the perspective of a student, by bringing in Prof. Ranganathan into picture as a comparison to her supervisor. Later on Geetika too becomes a lecturer and decides to lead the rest of her life independently. In Saros Cowasjee's *Goodbye to Elsa,* the protagonist is a student in the first part of the novel and then becomes a lecturer. The novel encompasses his misadventures as a student at the Universities of Delhi and Leeds and later as a lecturer at Erigon College in Canada. In Makarand Paranjape's *The Narrator*, the central character Rahul Patwardhan is a lecturer when the novel begins, he describes his past, when he was a student at college. He recounts how students get involved in bad habits like smoking, drinking, consuming drugs, involving in illicit relationships, etc.

In the present scenario, many Indian novelists are getting fascinated by campus novels and are contributing to this sub-genre, with a lot of experimentations and variations. Some novels concentrate on the positive as well as the negative attitudes of the faculty, some others on the behaviour of the students whereas others throw light on the predicament of the VC. Some others focus on the non-teaching staff and corruption in the campus. These variations contribute not only in increasing the varieties of campus novels but also in rectifying the follies of the people related to the campus. It would not be a surprise if campus novel emerges as one of the principal sub-genres in India in the near future.

5.9 MAJOR THEMES DEALT IN INDIAN ENGLISH PROSE

Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In recent years it has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad. It is now

recognized that Indian English literature is not only part of Commonwealth literature but also occupies a great significance in the World literature. Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in the Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks:

> …one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story- telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the West. Indisputably, the Indian English novel has gained a unique viability, vibrancy and vitality, attracting a remarkably wide readership and universal acclaim to which the new novelists have made a positive contribution.

The Indo-English fiction has so many novelists but very few sympathetic critics. Meenakshi Mukherjee expresses her sympathy to conclude her *Twice Born Fiction* with a comment: "Indo-English fiction, which has served for so long as a file or document or sociology or anthropology or educational theory must now be regarded as literature and evaluated as such."

5.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Q1. Write a short note on emergence of Indian Prose writing in English.

Ans. The western impact, the infusion of English literature and European thought and the resulting cross - fertilization have been the means of quickening the interplay and circulation of ideas and the emergence of a new literature, a new climate of hope and endeavour in the country and a

bold marching towards new horizons. From the great Ram Mohan Roy flowed diverse streams of renascent activity - religious awakening, social reform, the new education, women's emancipation, literary river and political consciousness - each carried forward by its own dedicated spirits. India is blessed with many great political personalities, religious men, aesthetics, men of letters and scholars. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, M. N. Roy, Mahatma Gandhi etc. and the list goes endless. Vivekananda's appearance and speech in 1893 at the Chicago Parliament of Religions is a part of history. Several volumes of his complete works, published by the Advaita Ashram comprise courses of lectures on different Yogas, on Gita and numerous other essays. The great freedom movement brought various orators to the front. Rajaji, Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak, Nehru are only a few of them. Besides orators and journalists, there are historians, philosophers, the jurists, the biographers, the auto-biographers, essayists, critics, scientists, economists and sociologists.

Q2. Highlight the contribution of women writers in the development of short story in English.

Ans. Women writers in India were quick to realize the potential of this form and hence began using it as a powerful tool to critique the patriarchal values that proved detrimental to the place and position of women. The form of short story became quite hospitable to them because, unlike the novel which required considerable time and energy, the short story writing required less time which they could practice during their leisure from the household chores. Added to these advantages, the short story also proved to be preferred form because the marginalized position of the form of short story probably suits to express the voice from/of the margins. This was one of the potential reasons behind why women writers chose to write short stories; not just by compulsion of any sort but necessarily by choice. In short, the short story is, itself, central to the human experience; so is the poem, the novel, and the play, but most naturally the short story.

The first Indian Women's Short Fiction collection in English was *A Story of Christian Life* (1898) by Kamala Satthianandhan. Scholars such as C.V. Venugopal, M.K. Naik, Bijoy Kumar Das, A.N. Dwivedi and Neeru Tandon state her as the first Indian woman writer of short story in English because of chronology; however, some critics such as Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, Joel Kuortti consider Cornelia Sorabji as the first Indian woman short story writer in English for two reasons: one, her 'considerable and significant literary output.' Sorabji has to her credit four short story collections: *Love and life Behind the Purdah* (1901)*, Sun- Babies: Studies in the Child Life Of India* (1904)*, Between the Twilights: Being Studies of Indian Women by One of Themselves* (1908) and *Indian Tales of the Great Ones* (1916). The second reason to position Sorabji as the first short story writer is because Kamala Satthianandhan's short story collection was co-authored by her husband Samuel Satthianadhan (among twelve stories in the collection six are by each of them). In this technical sense, unlike Sorabji, Kamala Satthianadhan is not the sole author of the short story collection she published in 1898.

In the first phase, apart from Sorabji there were other writers who wrote short stories in English in the form of simple narratives, extended anecdotes and tales based on legends and history. Shovana Devi's *The Oriental Pearls*: *Indian Folklore* (1915), Sunity Devee's *Bengal Dacoits and Tigers* (1916) and *The Beautiful Moghul Princesses* (1918) are just to name a few. After 1920s, Indian Women's Short Fiction in English slightly matured in terms of its expression in language due to the spread of English education and the advent of periodicals shaping their writing in form of prose style. Writers such as Swarna Kumari Ghosal, Santa Chatterjee, Seeta Chatterjee, C.T. Ramabai and Ela Sen belong to this period. However, until the 1950, one doesn't find many women writers publishing their short story collections.

Though India won her independence in 1947, it was only politically free; but the experience of the freedom movement followed by the event of partition was agonizing to many Indians. The tension and bitterness brought in

several social changes and these changes and transformations were visible in the writings of sensitive women writers. Charu Mehrotra comments:

> Like a barometer, the short fiction of this period faithfully registers the strain and stresses, the peculiar flux and gradation, the obvious and the not so – obvious features of the social milieu.

Similarly Krishna Daiya too observes with particular reference to women writers:

> The post-independence women short story writers were living in a society where the Independence had also inspired women who had decided to throw away their veil, which had covered all their mental abilities and accomplishments. They had decided to move out of the four walls and go into the world with a new confidence and determination. However they had to face lot of hurdles, created not only by men but also by other women. There were a lot of actions and reactions. The women writers of this period have captured this situation in their works.

Ela Sen's *A Child is Born and Other Stories* (1948) and Krishna Nehru's *Shadow in the Wall* (1948) were published after the Indian Independence, followed next by Attia Hossain's *Phoenix Fled and Other Stories* (1953). Hossain's stories deal with the tension, trauma and tragedy of the partition and bloodshed that took place in 1947 in India and Pakistan and the scope and vision of freedom especially for women. After a gap of about a decade, Usha John's *The Unknown Lover and Other Short Stories* (1960) and Shanta Rama Rau's *Gifts of Passage* (1961) were published. They were followed by Ruth Prawer Jhabwala, a major and a prolific Indian writer in English. She has to her credit six short story collections in English: *Like Birds, Like Fishes and Other Stories* (1963), *A Stronger Climate* (1968), *An Experience of India* (1972), *How I Became a Holy Mother and Other Stories* (1976), *An Out of India: Selected Stories* (1986) and *East Into Upper East: Plain Tales from*

New York and New Delhi (1998). In these works, she portrays Indian life sometimes like an intimate insider, and at times, like a critical outsider.

Jai Nimbkar's *The Lotus Leaves and Other Stories* (1971) and Sunita Jain's *A Woman is Dead* (1971) came out in the same year. Sunita Jain published another collection of short stories, *Eunuch of Time* in 1982. Nergis Dalal with a single volume of short stories, *The Nude* (1977) also contributed notably to the form of short fiction. Mainly famous as a confessional poet, Kamala Das has also published two collections of short stories: *A Doll for a Child Prostitute* (1977) and *Padmavati, the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992).

With the growing influence of modernist and postmodernist movements on women's literature, there was a constant struggle in women's writing to deal with the issues and ideologies that came loaded with the different critical schools. To begin with the concept of 'language,' they discovered that it could become a potential route for them to realize and recast their identities; hence, they took up writing with all the more vengeance. Writers Workshop, under the stewardship of P. Lal, who was himself a renowned poet, took an active interest in promoting the works of women writers. In 1978, this publishing house went on to publish short story collections of three major women writers: Raji Narsimhan's *The Marriage of Bela*, Shashi Deshpande's *The Legacy & Other Stories* and Juliette Banerjee's *The Boyfriend and Other Stories*. Shashi Deshpande has also published four more short story collections: *It was the Nightingale* (1986), *The Miracle* (1986), *It was Dark* (1986), *The Stone Woman* (2000) all focused towards the plights and rights of women. Anita Desai's *Games at Twilight* (1978) also got published the same year with William Heinemann, New Delhi. She has also published another collection, *Diamond Dust and Other Stories* (2001) that expresses hidden emotions and aspirations of her characters and subtly analyses their inner psyche. Malati Rao, a recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award, published her first short story collection, *Passion Fruit and Other Stories* (1980) followed by *Come for Coffee, Please* (1981).

In the third phase of the evolution of Indian Women's Short Fiction in English, thanks to rapid expansions of markets and global communities in the 1980s, the short story explored the hitherto unexplored dimensions: themes and sub-themes such as quest for broken/hyphenated identity, diaspora, transnational relationships, onslaught of global forces on local cultures, etc. During this phase, as Usha Bande and Atma Ram aptly note:

> Nothing escaped the notice of the storyteller; political behaviour, the joint family system, the generation gap, the changing attitudes towards love, marriage and sex, the invasion by feminist ideology have all been subject to incisive analysis. These fiction writers are watching with concern, the shift in moral values and are trying to analyze the period of transition. Since the writer too is a part of the game of see-saw of old and new values, the tussle between tradition and modernity, he/she considers it his/her duty to focus on the issues that concern society.

Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988), Chitra Banerjee's *Arranged Marriage* (1995) and *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives* (2001) and Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008) are the most discussed short story collections by diasporic authors of Indian origin. Gita Hariharan's single volume of short story, *The Art of Dying and Other Short Stories* (1993) is also important as it raises fundamental questions on the existential elements such as birth and death. There are many more collections of short stories in English written by Indian women, such as Shailaja Ganguli's *Festive Season and Other Stories* (1983), Shoma A. Chatterji's *Yes and Other Stories* (1987), Shakuntala Narsimhan's *Lucky Days & Other Stories* (1989), Malavika Kapur's *The Lost Soul and Other Stories* (1989), Nisha da Cunha's *Old Cypress* (1991), *The Permanence of Grief* (1993) and *Set My Heart in Aspic* (1998), Padma Hejmadi's *Birthday*

Deathday and Other Stories (1992), Shefali Khanna's *In the Labyrinth of Life* (1992), Shalan Savur's *Renaissance Daughter and Other Stories* (1993), Neelam Saran Gaur's *Grey Pigeon and Other Stories* (1993) and *Winter Companions and Other Stories* (1997), Prema Ramakrishnan's *The Homemaker and Other Stories* (1994),Shobha De's *Small Betrayals* (1995), Tara Deshpande's *Fifty and Done: Stories and Verse* (1999). In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Rupanjali Baruah's *Amrita and Other Stories* (2005), Shama Futehally's *Frontiers* (2006), Anita Nair's *Satyr of the Subway & Eleven Other Stories* (2006), Sudipta Chatterjee's *The Drumstick Tree and Other Stories* (2007), Mridula Susan Koshy's *If it is Sweet* (2009), and Kalpana Swaminathan's *Venue Crossing* (2009) are some of the most discussed short story collections.

Q3. How did Nirad C. Chaudhuri contribute in Indian Prose writing?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q4. Briefly describe the emergence of Indian Short Story in English.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q5. Name some major short story writers of India.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q6. What are the thematic concerns of Indian Prose in English?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q7. Describe the impact of Gandhian whirlwind on Indian English Prose.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q8. How did prose emerge as a distinct literary genre in India?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q9. Comment on Bharati Mukherjee as a short story writer with reference to her works.

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

Q10. What is the theme of prose works written by Jawaharlal Nehru?

Ans. _____

_____

_____

_____

5.11 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* is a well known work by ?

   (a) Mahatma Gandhi

   (b) S. Radhakrishnan

   (c) Nirad C. Chaudhuri

   (d) Raja Rammohan Roy

2. In which year was Mahatma Gandhi born ? _____ .

   (a) 1869

   (b) 1889

   (c) 1892

   (d) 1867

3. Which of the following works is written by Jawaharlal Nehru?_____.

   (a) *Interpreter of Maladies*

   (b) *Darkness*

   (c) *The Discovery of India*

   (d) *The Policeman and the Rose*

4. What is the name of Mahatma Gandhi's Autobiography?_____ .

   (a) *The Discovery of India*

   (b) *Letters from Father to Daughter*

   (c) *India Calling*

   (d) *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*

5. T.N. Natesan writes under the pen name_____.

(a) Shankar Ram

(b) Nirad Chaudhuri

(c) Tuka Ram

(d) Sant Ram

6. Who wrote *India Calling?*_____.

(a) Cornerlia Sorabji

(b) Toru Dutt

(c) Swarna Kumari Devi

(d) Krupabai Satthiandhan

7. Which is the first Indian Campus Novel?_____.

(a) *The Farewell Party*

(b) *The Long Long Days*

(c) *Atom and the Serpent*

(d) *Onion Peel*

8. *A Doll for a Child Prostitute* is a collection of short stories by ____.

(a) Keki N. Daruwalla

(b) Bharati Mukherjee

(c) Kamala Das

(d) Jai Nimbalkar

9. Which of the following short story collections is NOT written by R.K. Narayan ? _____ .

(a) *Cyclone and other Stories*

(b) *Dodu and other Stories*

(c) *Malgudi Days*

(d) *The Policeman and the Rose*

10. Who among the following women writers is the first woman short story writer in India ? _____ .

(a) Swarna Kumari Devi

(b) Cornelia Sorabji

(c) Nergis Dalal

(d) Pandita Ramabai

11. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote *Glimpses of World History* in _____ .

(a) 1934

(b) 1946

(c) 1931

(d) 1935

5.12 LET US SUM UP

Indian Prose in English mostly developed after Independence. The cross-fertilization of English literature, European thought, and Indian Culture resulted in the development of prose-writing. India is blessed with many great political personalities, religious men, aesthetics, men of letters and scholars. Raja Ram Mohan Roy Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, M.N. Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, etc. and the list goes endless . Though India won her independence in 1947, it was only politically free; but the experience of the freedom movement followed by the event of partition was agonizing to many Indians. The tension and bitterness brought in several social changes and these changes and transformations were visible in the writings of sensitive women writers Charu Mehrotra comments : "Like a barometer, the short fiction of this period faithfully registers the strain and stresses, the peculiar flux and gradation, the obvious and the not - so - obvious features of the social milieu."

5.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Describe the importance of short story as a literary genre.

2. Explain with suitable examples the impact of Independence movement on Indian prose writings in English.

3. Comment on the contribution of the "Big Trio" in the development of short stories ?

4. What are Campus Novels? How did they emerge in India?

5. Highlight the importance of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawahar lal Nehru in the expansion of Prose writing in English.

5.14 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. c) Nirad C. Chaudhuri
2. a) 1869
3. c) *The Discovery of India*
4. d) *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*
5. a) Shankar Ram
6. a) Cornerlia Sorabji
7. b) *The Long Long Days*
8. c) Kamala Das
9. d) *The Policeman and the Rose*
10. b) Cornelia Sorabji
11. a) 1934

5.15 SUGGESTED READING

Mehrotra, A K., ed. *An Illustrated History of Indian Literature in English*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006.

Naik, M. K., ed. *Twentieth Century Indian English Fiction*. Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004.

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INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

STRUCTURE

6.1 Introduction to the Recent Indian Poetry in English

6.2 Objectives

6.3 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

6.4 Let Us Sum Up

6.5 Examination Oriented Questions

6.6 Answer Key (MCQs)

6.7 Suggested Reading

6.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RECENT INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

It is in poetry of the post-independence period that Indian writing in English experienced the most crucial developments. In the fifties, the school of New Poetry, different from the poetry of the established romantic tradition appeared. The poets like P. Lal and his associates founded the Writers Workshop in Calcutta that soon became an effective forum for modern poetry. The Workshop manifesto described the central purpose of the school as consisting of "a group of writers who agree in principle that English has proved its ability as a language to play a creative role in Indian literature, through original writings and transcreation." The Workshop was meant to be 'devoted to creative writing giving preference to experimental work by young and unpublished writers.' The first modern anthology was *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry* (1958) edited by P. Lal and K. Raghavendra Rao. In the introduction

to this volume the editors condemned "greasy, weak-spined purpled-adjectived 'spiritual poetry' and 'the blurred and rubbery sentiments of ...Sri Aurobindo' and declared that 'the phase of Indo-Anglian romanticism' ended with Sarojini Naidu." There were certain marked changes in the notion of poetic language and poetry which was prompted, among other significant factors, by the cultural background of the modern world. First of all these poets affirmed their faith in 'a vital language' which according to them "must not be a total travesty of the current pattern of speech." Such an approach also commanded "the effort to experiment" besides advocating a poetry that dealt "in concrete terms with concrete experience" and emphasized 'the need for the private voice' specially because "we live in an age that tends so easily to demonstrations of mass-approval and hysteria." This is how Prof. Naik summed up in his famous book *A History of Indian English Literature.*

The tempo of change in the twentieth century has been so baffling that it is indeed difficult to keep track of it. We have credited the poets with a keener sensibility and quicker reactions than the common man. At the same time the irony is that what he senses and says too seems to be beyond our comprehension. It is specially so because to convey the rapidity of change, the modern poet has changed his technique of composition and his poetry makes a demand on our own intellectual and imaginative resources. That is why many people find it obscure and an ineffective exercise. Yet, countless readers discover limitless possibilities and significance in modern Indian English poetry. They believe that "Poetry is of little *use*, but of great *value;* like Beauty, or Goodness, or Love" as writes Prof. Iyengar.

It is interesting to know the history of the Indian Writing in English. It was E.F. Oaten who won the prize at Cambridge by writing an essay on Anglo-Indian literature and also contributed an essay on the same topic to *Cambridge History of English Literature.* Oaten included writers of English origin who wrote on Indian themes. Prof. P. Seshadri delivered a lecture at Osmania University on Anglo-Indian Poetry in which he included English and Indian writers who had writen in English. George Sampson's essay on "Anglo-

Indian Literature" in the *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature* carried both Indian and English writers. Prof. K.R. Srinivas lyengar and C.R. Reddy termed this body of literature in English as Indo-Anglican literature. But he admits being discontented with both types of nomenclature– "Anglo-Indian" and Indo-English"– because of its hyphenated Indianness which also suggested a subjugation to the colonial past. So Indian Writing in English, or for that matter Indian Poetry in English, became the new name acceptable to the writers, readers and critics. Thus, a new trend set in to define an Indian identity and English being merely a medium chosen because of the post-independence socio-cultural realities which made the use of English inevitable as the link language binding people, states and nations together. No longer perceived as a foreign imposition English has become an inalienable component what Raja Rao calls 'language of the intellectual make-up-of India.' It is the language of modern India and the medium that reflects the ethos of the changing society.

After coming to terms with the choice of the name and of the creative medium, the Indian poets in English began to come to terms with their nativity and identities. They felt an inner need and compulsion to define their identities, commitments and rootedness as their works carried the linguistic refraction of one culture through the medium of another one. In context of the subjects of their choice, in the post-independence scenario, their preoccupation was no longer with the issues of freedom struggle or with the retellings of history, myths and legends to arouse patriotic fervour and national pride. They focused on the general human condition and the problems of the changing world, the concerns with the struggle of the individual and the complexities of human relationships. To a great extent, it made their poetry autobiographical with an attempt to balance cultural duality. As one of the critics aptly stated, "The most important appeal of their work in their introspection, each poet searches for his/her own song in a medley of its melodies." For example, take the case of Nissim Ezekiel who grapples with the lived experiences and insists, My backword place is

where i am. 'Bombay' occupies such a creative place in the consciousness of Ezekiel and when he is away from Bombay in Edinburgh he remembers the place as such a fruit that has sustained his existence. A.K. Ramanujan could relate himself to India in an innovative way. He falls back on his past childhood experiences where he ransacks the deposits of an Indian and linguistic identity richly. For him, though family remains the central metaphor that meaningfully organizes his poetic utterances but he also attempts to find out the limits of his Hindu heritage. Like Ramanujan, R. Parathasarathy, a fellow Tamilian, is equally concerned with his Hindu and Tamil and Kannada linguistic heritage. He treats the problem of identity as central to one's consciousness that encounters two cultures–the eastern and the western. Parathasarathy's sense of exile in a foreign country makes him learn the significance of his own roots, both linguistic and cultural. He writes in the "Homecoming " section of *Rough Passage* that he has been "whoring after English gods."

My tongue in English chains,

I return, after a generation, to you.

The effort to be back is not easy but there is an urgency of reaching out to one's own roots. The identification with the place is important to understand the values as well as the problems of living.

Jayanta Mahapatra, the most Anglophone poet, living in the city of Cuttack, Orissa, registers a commitment to his own birthplace. Falling back on his ancestral and cultural past of Orissa, he tries to revitalize his relationship with Orissa and reaffirm the bliss attached to his roots there. Kamala Das, "the most outstanding among post-independence women poets" decides to come to terms with herself in a male-dominated society by falling back on the memories of a lost childhood. Her poetry retains the intensity of a confessional poet. She frankly exposes the depths of the body and passion in her early poetry and attempts a leap into the mysteries of an ideal love, manifested in Lord Krishna, in her later poetry.

It is once again through her childhood experiences that she clings to her roots in the unselfish love and security in the personality of her own grandmother.

Keki N. Daruwalla, who has chosen to settle in Delhi, makes North-India a storehouse of his image-oriented poetry. He admits in the introduction to the volume *Two Decades of Indian Poetry* (1980) edited by him that :

> My poems are rooted in landscape which anchor the poem. The landscape is not merely there to set the scene but to lead to an illumination. It should be the eye of the spiral. I try that poetry relates to the landscape, both on the physical and on the plane of the spirit. For me a riot-stricken town is landscape.

Arun Kolatkar's *Jejuri* (1976) is about a place thirty miles away from Pune and having one of the most prominent temples in Western Maharashtra as the god to whom it is dedicated and worshipped in all castes and communities. This work is often regarded as a quest as it juxtaposes metaphors of religion and science so as to reject an acceptance of either because both, in trying to impose their dominance, prove meaningless as both deny the spontaneity of a life-spirit which is essential for an individual to discover a suitable meaning for himself in the course of living. Kolatkar's sense of rootedness to a place reaffirms his faith in landscape. Likewise, Dilip Chitre's poetry reveals his love for sights and smells of his native city which happens to be Bombay where he settled after leaving Baroda. He honestly strives to unravel his quest for the roots and the members of his family who are no more. Chitre depicts minutely the effect of the dehumanizing forces of the urban life in "Ode to Bombay."

Shiv K. Kumar, who has often been considered as an academic poet, does not hesitate to expose the poverty of his subcontinent. He insightfully understands the plight of Indian rustic women and generates a sympathy for them. In one of his poems included in his collection *Subterfuges* (1976) he notices them sitting "like empty pitchers/on the mouth of the village well." He

spent long years in the US and other countries but never lost his Indian identity as in "A letter from New York" he writes, "my soul is still my own."

Thus, in the post-independence Indian poetry in English, the trends and the tendencies are quite obvious. M. Sivaramakrishna sums up the characteristics of Parathasarathy's poem "Exile" in his article entitled "The 'Tongue in English Chains' : Indo-English Poetry Today" which pinpoints three crucial features of the present day Indian poetry written in English :

> First, there is the transcendence by the poet of the Anglo-mania of his predecessors which ensures the necessary aesthetic detachment to contemplate his predicament; second, this predicament is rooted in the fact that the return of the exile does not necessarily imply a renewal of the self unless the poet rediscovers 'a usable past.' Third, this rediscovery is linked inextricably with the problem seminal for the creative writer: that is language.

Thus, in this sense, the analysis of a poem can be regarded as a paradigm of the entire Indo-English poetic milieu today. This triadic frame of reference-the transcendence of Anglo-mania through an assertion of Indian identity, the discovery of a 'viable past and the residues of linguistic significance-map out the central features of Indo-English poetry today.

Soon after defending the creative medium, the poets began to discover for themselves their authentic and persuasive idiom. Once it was discovered to authenticate and legitimize the identity, the quest for roots vis-a-vis place assumes an enormous dimension so as to intensify and identify what has already been achieved through the discovery of the medium and the idiom. It is true that there is a shift in terms of vision between the poets of the colonial and post-independence India. If there is a subtle degree of craft in contemporary poets, their predecessors, who wrote like the Romantics with a lot of sentimental outpourings, had a much larger canvas and vision. They

held their entire country with all its diversity, richness and cultural heritage within their preview. Perhaps such a vision was a historical necessity rather than a mere accident. Today we don't find in poets Derozio's nationalistic fervour nor Aurobindo and Tagore's universal philosophical grandeur. Indian poetry in English these days has narrowed down its canvas. If Ezekiel and Chitre write about Bombay and whatever makes Bombay so special, Ramanujan and Parathasarathy, who advocated for the formation of an indigenous tradition in Indian poetry, concentrate on their South Indian experiences. Jayanta Mahapatra celebrates the richness of the Orissan culture. Kolatkar critically examines the role of religion, engendered by Jejuri and science. Kamala Das falls back on her Malabar day of childhood to save herself from being faceless. 'Region' and whatever makes that region central to the creative consciousness, and family or home constitute and govern the space of the creative writer's thinking and feeling. The authenticity and intensity of experiences have contributed to the immediacy of an expression which is at once original, human, meaningful and significant.

However, the number of poets, major or minor voices, who have chosen English as their creative medium has increased. The fecundity of post-independence Indian English poetry is amazing. The new poets who have earned some degree of recognition, both in India and abroad, are Meena Alexander, Roshan Alkazi, Margaret Chatterjee, Lakshmi Kannan, Shanta Acharya, Rukmani Bhaya Nair, Bidhu Padi, Markand Paranjape, Sudip Sen, D.C. Chambial, O.P. Bhatnagar, Rakshat Puri, Tabish Khair, Sukanta Chaudhary, K. Raghvendra Rao and many others. They constitute and represent a kind of heterogeneity that defies all enclosures. If not all, at least "a dozen poets stand out by the virtue of unmistakable authenticity, significance and power," to use the expression of M.K. Naik from his book, *A History of Indian English Literature.*

6.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the lesson is to familiarize the learner with the recent Indian poetry in English

6.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Name the first anthology of modern English_____.

   a) *Modern Anglo-Indian Poetry.*

   b) *Indian English Poetry.*

   c) *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry*

   d) *Modern English Poetry*

2. Who writes "Poetry is of little use, but of great value; like Beauty, or Goodness, or Love." _____.

   a) George Sampson

   b) P. Seshadri

   c) A.K. Ramanujan

   d) K.R. Srinivas Iyengar

3. Who among the following poets settled in Delhi and makes North-India a storehouse of his image-oriented poetry ? _____.

   a) Keki N. Daruwalla

   b) Kamala Das

   c) A.K. Ramanujan

   d) Arun Kolatkar

4. Who among the following is not a Post-independence Indian English Poet? _____.

   a) Tabish Khair

   b) Sudip Sen

   c) Meena Alexander

   d) Henry Derozio

5. In which poet's consciousness, Bombay occupies a creative space _____.

a) Dilip Chitre

b) R. Parathsarathy

c) Nissin Ezekiel

d) both (a) and (c)

6.4 LET US SUM UP

In the post-independence period Indian writing in English experienced the most crucial developments. In the fifties, the school of New Poetry, different from the poetry of the established romantic tradition appeared. Poets like P. Lal and his associates founded the Writers Workshop in Calcutta which soon became an effective forum for modern poetry. The Workshop was meant to be "devoted to creative writing giving preference to experimental work by young ..... ." The first modern anthology was Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry (1958) edited by P. Lal and K. Raghavendra Rao. First of all, these poets affirmed their faith in 'a vital languag' which according to them "must not be a total travesty of the current pattern of speech." There were certain marked changes in the notion of poetic language and poetry which was prompted, among other significant factors, by the cultural background of modern world.

6.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) Trace the development of Poetry of the post-independence period in Indian writing in English .

b) Write a short note on the history of "Indian Writing in English."

6.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. c) Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry

2. d) K.R. Srinivas Iyengar

3. a) Keki N. Daruwalla

4. c) Meena Alexander

5. d) both (a) and (c)

6.7 SUGGESTED READING

C.R. Visweswara Rao. *Indian Writing Today.*

K.R. Srinivas Tyengar. *Indian Writing in English*

Reghunath Sahoo. Tension and Moral Dilemma in Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry. Sarup Book Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

A Raghu. The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi

Bruce King (ed). Three Indian Poets, 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press.

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STRUCTURE

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Objectives

7.3 Toru Dutt : Life and Works

7.4 "Our Casuarina Tree"

7.4.1 "Our Casuarina Tree" : Introduction

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7.6 "The Lotus"

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7.6.3 "The Lotus" : Glossary

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7.7 A Note on Toru Dutt's language

7.8 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

7.9 Let Us Sum Up

7.10 Examination Oriented Questions

7.11 Answer Key to Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

7.12 Suggested Reading

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Toru Dutt (1856-1877) was a Bengali poet who wrote during the times of the British occupation of India. Apart from writing in English, Toru is well known for her compositions in French. Her work got favourable reviews and now she is included in the literary canon of the Indian writers in English.

7.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson are:

i) To acquaint the learner with the life and works of Toru Dutt.

ii) To familiarize the learner with some selected poems by Toru Dutt.

iii) To help the learner prepare for the semester end exam.

7.3 TORU DUTT: LIFE AND WORKS

Toru, the youngest of the three children of Mr. and Mrs.Govin Chunder Dutt, was born in her father's house in Rambagan, 12, Manicktollah Street, in

the very heart of Calcutta, on the 4th of March, 1856. “The childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day”is peculiarly true in her case. The intelligence shown in her early years, while going through the alphabet and the rudimentary parts of education under the eyes of her loving father, foreshadowed her astonishing literary achievement. Her mother exercised great influence over the formation of her children’s character, and the old songs and stories of the country recited by her had an irresistible attraction for Toru and fired her youthful imagination. At the same time Mrs.Dutt inspired in her heart a deep reverence for Christ. The glimpses we get of Toru in those early years gave promise of those Christian graces with which she became so richly endowed in after life.

Toru’s early years were spent in Calcutta and in the country house at Baugmaree—an extensive garden in the suburbs of Calcutta, covering many acres of land and shaded by fruit trees and having in the centre a comfortable and spacious house, a perfect place for repose and a fitting place for poets. In after life Toru Dutt described the country house and its surrounding garden in a beautiful sonnet. It was the delight of Toru’s childhood to spend her holidays there and to share rural sports with her brother and sister. In 1863, the family went by sea to Bombay, in one of the Peninsular and Oriental Company’s steamers, there being no railway in those days between the two cities. They returned to Calcutta in 1864. On July 9, 1865, Toru’s brother Abju died at the age of fourteen years, and the two sisters were then left the only hope and solace of the bereaved parents. Mr.Dutt never left his daughters, taking them always with him, either to the city house in Rambagan or to the country residence at Baugmaree. This continued till 1869, when he decided on taking his wife and daughters to Europe. They were, in fact, the ûrst Bengali ladies to visit Europe. Mr.Dutt and his family landed at Marseilles and spent a few months in the South of France, at Nice, where Toru and her sister went to school, at a French boarding school. This was the only school to which they ever went, and there was laid the foundation of that proûciency in the French language which afterwards distinguished the younger sister and left

fruitful impressions on their minds. “One would like to have fuller details,” says M. James Darmesteter, “of their brief sojourn in France, which had a wonderful inûuence on the ideas and imagination of Toru. French became her favourite language and France the country of her election.” After several months Mr.Dutt went to Paris with his family. Twenty-five hours of continuous railway travel had so completely exhausted his companions that be resolved to make some stay in what he has called the capital of the world. After a prolonged stay in Paris, they started for England, via Boulogne, in the spring of 1870. On arriving in London they stayed at the Charing Cross Hotel, and afterwards took a furnished house at Brompton. It was here that Toru began to develop a taste for translating poetry and later wrote poetry herself. The sisters passed their days happily in London in reading books and in intercourse with earnest-minded Christians. Not the least remarkable trait of Toru’s mind was her wonderful memory. She could repeat almost every piece she translated by heart, and whenever there was a hitch, it was only necessary to repeat a line of the translation, to put an end to it, and draw out of her lips the whole original poem in its entireness. She read much, she read rapidly too, but she never slurred over a diffuculty when she was reading. Dictionaries, lexicons, and encyclopaedias of all kinds were consulted until it was solved, and a note taken afterwards; the consequence was that explanations of hard words and phrases imprinted themselves, as it were, in her brain, and whenever there was a dispute about the signification of any expression or sentence in Sanskrit, or French, or German, in seven or eight cases out of ten, she would prove to be right. Toru was an enthusiastic admirer of France, and had deep sympathy for her misfortunes of 1870. Toru was an earnest Christian, and she thought that the misfortunes that befell France at this time were due to the depravity of the French people. She remained unshaken in her love for the French in spite of their defeat and of her Christian education, which caused her to consider the downfall of France a punishment for irreligion. The family went to Cambridge in 1871. Here Toru, with her sister, sedulously attended the Higher Lectures for Women, with great zeal and application.

RETURN TO INDIA

The four remaining years of Toru's life after her return from Europe were spent partly in the city house at Rambagan and partly in the Garden House at Baugmaree. In July 23, 1874, her only sister, Aru, died of Phthisis at the age of twenty, the seeds of which were sown in her constitution when in England, and Toru, now left alone, engrossed herself in her literary pursuits. Her proûciency in the French language was, as we have seen, acquired in Europe. Her departure from Europe interfered with her studies for a time, but she never lost sight of the object on which she had set her heart. Shortly after her return home, when she was barely eighteen, she published her ûrst essay, on Leconte de Lisle, in the Bengal Magazine, December, 1874, containing some translations from his works into English verse. In the same number of the Bengal Magazine appeared her essay on Henry Vivian Derozio. This was followed by occasional translations from French poetry. Her knowledge of French literature, especially of contemporary French poetry, was very unusual for a girl of her age. "To the end of her days," says Mr. Edmund Gosse, "Toru was a better French than English scholar. She loved France best, she wrote its language with more perfect elegance." She was soon to complete also the translations contained in *The Sheaf gleaned in French Fields*. Toru Dutt commenced the study of Sanskrit in conjunction with her father, who remained to the last her constant companion in all pursuits, literary or otherwise. To her rich store of Western learning there was now added a good acquaintance with Sanskrit literature. Unfortunately, her failing health prevented her from plunging into its depths, and her study of Sanskrit lasted not quite a year. During that period she made several translations. A few months before Toru's death, a book written by the late Mlle Clarisse Bader, a French authoress of repute, *La Femme dansl'Inde Antique*, fell into her hands. Toru was so charmed with it that she asked the writer to allow her to translate it into English for the benefit of Indian readers less informed than herself.

In a family where that dread disease, consumption, had already carried off a sister, it was but natural that the father should watch his remaining

daughter with keenly observant eyes. Shortly after the publication of Toru's first book, his anxiety was quickened by signs of ill-health, though at times there seemed to be marked improvement. This was a characteristic deception of the disease, which, before long, too clearly showed its strong hold upon its second victim. When Toru's own doom was evident to her, with the heroism common to great souls in face of death, she set herself the more determinedly to make her mark in literature. By the end of March she was too ill to write, but she still read, and took an eager interest in all the latest books from Europe, and in the doings of the Paris Societe Asiatique. She attempted a translation of Mademoiselle Bader's book, but her illness increased so seriously that Dr. Thomas Edmonston Charles was obliged to be in constant attendance. Great is our admiration for a man like Robert Louis, Stevenson, whose life was one long, heroic fight with disease. Great should be our tribute to Toru, alert to the end, who died with her books strewn around her.

The end came suddenly in the evening of 30th August, 1877, at her father's house at the age of twenty one and a half. She was buried in the C.M.S. Cemetery in the Upper Circular Road, Calcutta, by the side of her beloved brother and sister, and on her tombstone appears the following inscription: TORU DUTT YOUNGEST DAUGHTER of GOVIN CHUNDER DUTT, BORN 4 MARCH, 1856, DIED 30th AUGUST, 1877. BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN or LIFE. REV. ii. 10

Toru started publishing her works when she was only 18 years old, in the *Bengal Magazine*. Her first novel *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers (The Diary of Mademoiselle D'Arvers)* was (written) in French. She had also started to write another novel, *Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden*, which remains incomplete due to her young and untimely death. Both these novels were based outside India with non-Indian protagonists. About her French novel *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers,* which was published posthumously, one critic said: "This one surpasses all the prodigies. She is a Frenchwoman in this book, and a Frenchwoman like ourselves; she thinks, she writes, like one us." What could have Toru known about the ardours or the agonies of love? Marguerite

the heroine of the novel is torn between Louis and Count Dunois. She loves the latter, who loves the maid Jeanette, and kills his own brother Gaston on account of jealousy, and later kills himself. After a long illness, Marguerite marries the worthy Louis, and she becomes a mother and dies. Upto a point, Marguerite is Toru's self-portrait – a veiled picture of her imaginative life. The Bianca story (*Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden*) in English is no less suggestive. Bianca's elder sister, Inez, is just dead, and Bianca with her father attends the burial; Bianca's own illness follows. Bianca is torn between her dead sister's fiancé and a Lord Moore, both of whom wish to marry her, and the story breaks off suddenly. Immature certainly, but Bianca too is some sort of dream projection of Toru herself. Marguerite, the French maiden and Bianca, the Spanish maiden are but abstractions; Toru their creator is the only reality.

More than prose though, Toru Dutt is known for her poetical works. Her collection, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, was a volume of French poems which she, along with her sister Aru, had translated into English. The first edition of her book was published by the *Saptahik Sambad Press*, Bhowanipore, India in 1876. This collection of poetry was what brought attention to her as a rising poet. Though it was not an immediate hit, due to its lack of a preface, bad quality paper and its undistinguished source of publishing, it gained publicity after it was favourably reviewed in the *Examiner* by Edmund Gosse in 1877.

Toru Dutt, unfortunately, did not live to see her success and died in 1877 at the age of 21. Her work of poetry named *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* was a collection of translations and adaptations from Sanskrit literature. It was published posthumously in the year, 1882. In this book, Edmund Gosse wrote an introductory memoir for it, where he said : "She brought with her from Europe a store of knowledge that would have sufficed to make an English or French girl seem learned, but which in her case was simply miraculous." The more popular of her poems include "Sita," "Lotus," "Lakshman," "Our Casuarina Tree," "Buttoo," etc.

In the early twentieth century, author Harihar Das came across her poem "Buttoo" and was so enraptured by its beauty that he set out to find out more

about her. Not finding much about her anywhere, he decided to write her biography himself. He got in touch with her remaining family and with Mary Martin who provided him with all the correspondences sent by Toru Dutt. These were published finally in the book, *Life And Letters of Toru Dutt* in 1921.In spite of her untimely death, Toru Dutt remains an exemplary poet, and her works are widely acclaimed as being among the best of Indian English writings to date.

7.4 "OUR CASUARINA TREE"

7.4.1 "Our Casuarina Tree" : Introduction

"Our Casuarina Tree" gives a vivid description of a huge and tall tree with flowers hanging from its boughs and birds and bees hovering around it. The poet reminisces about her childhood by linking it with the tree as she used to play with her siblings and friends during her childhood. The sight of the tree brings to her mind the memories of those sweet companions whom she has lost for long. Both the poet as well as the tree seems to lament over the loss of those good old days and the sweet little memories of the past.

7.4.2 "Our Casuarina Tree" : Text

Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose,
When first my casement is wide open thrown

At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter — on its crest
A gray baboon sits statue-like alone
Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near kokilas hail the day;
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.
But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear!
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!
What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land may reach.
Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!
Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away
In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,
When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith
And the waves gently kissed the classic shore
Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,
When earth lay trancèd in a dreamless swoon:
And every time the music rose — before

42 Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,
43 Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime
44 I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.
45 Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay
46 Unto thy honor, Tree, beloved of those
47 Who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose,
48 Dearer than life to me, alas! were they!
49 May'st thou be numbered when my days are done
50 With deathless trees — like those in Borrowdale,
51 Under whose awful branches lingered pale
52 "Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
53 And Time, the shadow;" and though weak the verse
54 That would thy beauty fain, oh fain rehearse,
55 May Love defend thee from Oblivion's curse.

7.4.3 "Our Casuarina Tree" : Glossary

python- a large heavy-bodied non-venomous snake occurring throughout the Old World tropics, killing prey by constriction and asphyxiation.

rugged- (of ground or terrain) having a broken, rocky, and uneven surface.

creeper- any plant that grows along the ground, around another plant, or up a wall by means of extending stems or branches.

gallantly- in a brave or heroic manner

casement-a window or part of a window set on a vertical hinge so that it opens like a door.

baboon-a large Old World ground-dwelling monkey with a long doglike snout and large teeth.

enmassed- Gathered in a mass.

lament-a passionate expression of grief or sorrow.

eerie- strange and frightening.
swoon-faint, especially from extreme emotion.

clime- a region considered with reference to its climate.
consecrate- devote (something) exclusively to a particular purpose.
lay- a short lyric or narrative poem meant to be sung/ a song

7.4.4 "Our Casuarina Tree" : Explanation of the Stanzas

Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,

Birds and insects, almost visibly alive, alive with the buzz of bees and with the chirping of birds. This song sung from the tree soothes its listeners and has a tranquilizing effect on men who relax and rest as the bird sings.

When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter,—on its crest
A gray baboon sits statue-like alone
Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near kokilas hail the day;
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast

By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.

The second stanza is replete with the pictorial and visual imagery of the tree and the gray baboon and his offspring. In winter a gray baboon used to sit on one of the branches of the tree watching the sunrise. On the lower branches, the offspring of the baboon used to leap about and play. Gradually, as the sun rises, the "kokilas" begin to greet the day with their song and a mesmerized Toru Dutt watches "sleepy" cows that have not yet shaken off their lethargy, on their way to the pastures.

But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear.
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!
What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land may reach.

While in the third stanza, Dutt establishes that it is neither the stateliness of the tree nor its external beauty that endears to her. She writes: *"But not because of its magnificence/Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:"* The beauty of the tree is no more than an added gift. Its actual importance lies in the fact that it is a part of the Dutts' existence, a reminder of family ties, of the warmth shared by the three siblings. The Abju-Aru-Toru bonding was indeed strong and in another poem "Sita" Toru mentions, *"Three happy children…"* sitting in a dark room listening to a story and then sighs because she knows that they will never again "by their mother's side/ Gather." Like Keats, she had to suffer a lot. She had seen bitter struggle

for life and death, untold miseries after the death of her beloved brother and sister.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!
Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away
In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,
When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith
And the waves gently kissed the classic shore
Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,
When earth lay trancèd in a dreamless swoon:
And every time the music rose,—before
Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,
Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime
I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

The fourth stanza is highly philosophical. The poet observes "Unknown yet well-known to the eyes of faith." Here the term 'unknown' denotes not simply the native home of the poet but also the world of the departed soul. A man who has the eye of faith can see the unknown as well-known. Yoga also says that when a man has an unwavering faith in the existence of the divinity through the art of meditation and poetry, nothing remains unknown to him in the universe, because he lives on the plain of consciousness, usually felt as vacuum of the transcendental stage of *smadhi*. This is what exactly Toru Dutt feels here. Interestingly Toru's mystical and spiritual approach to poetry is centered to her profound knowledge of great Sanskrit epics and scriptures. The music which Toru refers here is not an ordinary music which we hear in our day to day life; it is music of the soul, which once it is attained, never dies and continues to vibrate with the highest percipience in the mind of the seeker. Toru Dutt is not like the "Skylark" of Shelley, *"the scorner of the ground"* but she is the "Skylark" of Wordsworth *"a pilgrim of the sky"* and does not despise the earth where cares abound.

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay
Unto thy honor, Tree, beloved of those
Who now in blessed sleep for aye repose,—
Dearer than life to me, alas, were they!
Mayst thou be numbered when my days are done
With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,
Under whose awful branches lingered pale
"Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
And Time the shadow;" and though weak the verse
That would thy beauty fain, oh, fain rehearse,
May Love defend thee from Oblivion's curse.

At the end of the poem she absolutely transcends the mortal, materialistic and mundane frame of mind and attains the power of love to overcome the negative forces of life like death and darkness, terror and fear. In this stanza, the words and the phrases like 'trembling hope,' 'love,' 'death,' 'the skeleton,' 'and oblivion' are very suggestive. She means to say that a man of unflinching love and devotion never fears the blows of death. Toru does not express any desire to fade *"far away"* and *"dissolve."* Their Casuarina tree does not make her long for *"easeful"* death. Instead, even though its *"timelessness"* mocks the transience of the human world, the tree is to her a support, a reminder of the joy she once experienced with Abju and Aru. So, in the final stanza, Toru Dutt, aware both of Druidism and the customary tree-worship in India, wishes to "consecrate a lay" in the Casuarina Tree's honour.

7.4.5 "Our Casuarina Tree" : Summary

The major part of "Our Casuarina Tree" is filled with memories of the past and happy childhood days. In the poem, the poet remembers her companions, how much she loved them and was loved in return. The sensitivity of the poet made her pay attention to every detail. The vivid description reveals her sharp power of observation. In the first stanza,

she compares the creeper winding round the trunk of the Casuarina tree to a huge python. Metaphorically the giant creeper is compared with a huge Python and the water-lilies are compared with enmassed snow. She personifies fear, time, death, and hope to intensify her feeling of loss. She also makes an allusion to the yew trees of Borrowdale made famous by William Wordsworth. She wants her Casuarina tree too, to be immortalized by her verse. The poet then describes the lasting impressions that the tree has left on her mind. She describes the baboon sitting like a statue on the top of the tree while its young ones play on the lower branches. She also describes the sleepy cows moving slowly to their pastures. Then she goes on to link up the tree with the memories of her deceased brother, Abju and her deceased sister, Aru. She feels great pain when she remembers the happy time that she had with them. The Casuarina tree connects her past with her present. Thus, the poet heard 'that wail far, far away in distant lands. Towards the end, the poet immortalizes the tree. She would like to dedicate a lay in the honor of the tree because it is 'beloved of those who now in blessed sleep for aye repose.' Though her verse may be weak, her love will confer immortality on the Casuarina tree.

7.4.6 "Our Casuarina Tree" : Critical Analysis

Toru Dutt was one of the famous writers of her time. "Our Casuarina Tree" by Toru Dutt, a romantic lyric, has an intimately personal association. The tree belonged to the big garden house at Rambagan where Toru passed her girlhood and youth. She used to play with her young mates under the boughs of that vast tree which occupied much of her young heart. "Our Casuarina Tree" is an impulsive, frank expression of the poetess' intimate attachment to the big, hoary tree that bore the happy memories of her early days and sweet companions. Though she lived apart from her country home and favourite tree for a pretty long time, when she was in France and Italy, she could not forget that and remained with it even in her quiet mood and happy vision. "Our Casuarina Tree" is a touching recollection in a

pleasant lyric of an object of Nature. “Our Casuarina Tree” is the finest specimen of her poetic craftsmanship. The poem is not merely a poem, but an attempt by the poet to recapture her past and immortalize it. The tree is presented both as a symbol and as an object of nature and in it, the poem projects both time and eternity. The poet has made abundant use of similes, metaphors, personification and allusion.

In “Our Casuarina Tree,” the first line uses zoomorphism, describing the vine in animal terms (as a python). This is used to illustrate movement, making the tree seem more actively alive and also, by implying movement, there is a subtle indication of the progress of time. The image at first seems dark and foreboding, but ultimately emphasizes the great strength of the tree itself. For some readers, while the tree is also a symbol of the ancient and venerable culture of India, the huge encircling vine symbolizes the potentially deadly influence of colonialism. Most immediately, though, the vine itself seems to add a kind of beauty to the tree; the vine, after all, is called a “scarf,”a word with fairly positive connotations. The line “the giant wears the scarf, ” is a personification of the tree. For the speaker, the tree is a link to her past. In a way, she treats the tree like a person that can “tell” (conjure) these memories as if it (the tree) could speak and tell these stories.

The “crimson” flowers that cluster on the boughs of the tree (7) are the red flowers, resembling a kind of mistletoe, produced by Casuarina trees themselves. The flowers are not, in other words, products of the encircling vine. The tree has its own beauty, and the beauty and nourishment provided by the flowers apparently attract birds and bees, so that the tree, though ancient, seems full of life and full of lovely sounds. Even as the sky grows dark, the tree seems brimming with the sounds of the birds and insects (11). Rather than being simply an inert object, and rather than appealing simply to human eyes, the tree seems teeming with vitality and energy. The tree is situated in the midst of a “garden” (9), and indeed, the surroundings are described in terms that sound almost Edenic.

In the second stanza, the tree is associated with even more kinds of life, including baboons (adult and young) that sit or leap or play in its branches, kokila birds that sing in or near it, "sleepy cows" (19) that walk beneath it, and "water-lilies" that flourish in the "broad tank" (meaning a pool, pond, or lake) on which the tree casts its shadows. The tree, in other words, is at the center of a complex, harmonious ecosystem—a natural environment in which humans, too, feel right at home. Again, the similarities to the Biblical Garden of Eden are difficult to ignore. That garden, too, contained a tree associated with a snake (as this one is, at least metaphorically, in the poem's opening line). But the tree in the Garden of Eden eventually came to symbolize human misery through sin and a loss of innocence. The Casuarina tree, in contrast, seems to symbolize man's harmony with the rest of God's creation. This tree seems beautiful and sustaining no matter the time of day or the change in seasons. In the last line of the second stanza, the speaker uses a simile to describe the water-lillies "like snow enmassed."

In the third stanza, the tree is personified again singing its "lament" which might be the wind rustling through the leaves, a "dirge-like murmur" mourning the loss of the past. However, if the first two stanzas emphasize the tree's connections with the rest of nature (including birds, bees, animals, and other plants), stanza 3 emphasizes the tree's connections with persons the speaker especially loved (and loves). Earlier, young baboons were said to play in the tree (17); now the tree is associated with the play of human children (25). The tree, already Edenic in various respects, is here linked to a time of special innocence in the speaker's life. However, no sooner are the joys of childhood mentioned than the pain of loss is also implied (26-29). Earlier, the tree had been associated with sounds of pleasure (9-11); now it seems to give off a "dirge-like murmur" (30), a "lament" (32), and even "an eerie speech" (32).

Personification is used again in the next stanza. Examples are the "eye of faith," "the waves gently kissed," and "the earth lay tranced in a dreamless

swoon." The speaker envisions nature (the tree, waves, the earth) as a living and maybe even a conscious entity recalling (dreaming) links to the past. Yet even as the speaker laments the loss of loved ones, she already imagines consolations for such loss. She alludes to an "unknown land" (33) that is nevertheless "well-known to the eye of faith" (34)—a supernatural realm probably associated in Dutt's own mind with heaven, since she and her family were Christians. The speaker claims to have heard the "wail" of loss (35) even while traveling in "distant lands" (36), such as "France or Italy" (39), but by the end of stanza 4, the tree becomes associated again, in her mind, with her homeland and with her childhood (41-44). Despite the losses she has suffered, especially the losses of loved ones, the tree remains, in her mind, finally a symbol of happiness, innocence, and deep affection. For these reasons, it is, again, the symbolic opposite of the tree associated with sin and death in the Garden of Eden.

Again the speaker personifies the tree, hoping, in the final stanza, that the tree will be remembered like other favoured trees, just as she remembers the people in her life. She mentions Borrowdale and this is a reference to Wordsworth ode "Yew-Trees" another poem praising trees. "Fear, trembling hope, and Death, the skeleton, and Time, the shadow;" is from Wordsworth's poem.

The Casuarina Tree is a symbol of life and memory. Since trees tend to live much longer than humans, they are used in poetry as living connections between generations of people. Ultimately, the poem becomes a celebration less of the tree itself than of the loved ones associated with the tree, loved ones "Who now in blessed sleep for aye repose" (47). In this line, the religious significance of the tree, which had earlier been mainly implied, now becomes explicit. The beautiful garden on earth is merely a foretaste of the beauty of heaven, although death is here associated with metaphorical "sleep" and "repose," phrasing that echoes the reference to real physical sleep in line 11. Presumably, just as the speaker and her beloved playmates awoke from real sleep to play beneath the real tree,

so they will someday awake from the metaphorical sleep of death to enjoy the pleasures of heaven.

In any case, the final emphasis of the poem is not on an afterlife in heaven but rather is on the afterlife of the real, physical tree and, even more significantly, on the afterlife of the present poem that celebrates that tree. The speaker hopes that the memory of this tree will live on in her poem as the memory of trees celebrated by Wordsworth has lived on in that poet's work (49-53). Although the speaker professes humility about her own poetic talents immediately after alluding to Wordsworth (53), the final lines of the poem express her hope that the tree (and, implicitly, her poem itself) will never be forgotten (55). The poem is in every possible sense the opposite of the kind of "curse" mentioned in the poem's very last word.

7.4.7 Memory in "Our Casuarina Tree"

The poem, "Our Casuarina Tree" is a beautiful symbolic poem combining both matter and manner in proper proportion. The tree here is the symbol of the memory of Toru Dutt. It also symbolizes the rich tradition of Indian culture and philosophy which played an important role in shaping the poetical and aesthetical vision of the poets, be it Keats' "Ode to Nightingale", or Shelley's "To a Skylark". In Toru Dutt's "Our Casuarina Tree", the tree connotes the nostalgic feelings and memory of Toru Dutt. This is the tree under which she played with her now dead brother and sister. So whenever she remembers the tree, all of a sudden she is transported to the memory which is strongly attached to the tree. But the beauty of the poem lies in its rich images and symbols, words and phrases which are very suggestive.

One of the most important aspects of the poem is memory. The poem is nothing but a celebration of Toru Dutt's memory of her childhood, where she used to play with her brother and sister. In exploration of that childhood memory, Toru Dutt has used the symbol of the tree.

The tree, therefore, before everything else is a metaphor for Toru Dutt's childhood. The images, symbols, allusions, etc. employed by Toru Dutt in the poem only heighten the impact of memory which is at work throughout the poem.

Many images employed in the poem are suggestive of Toru's own memory of her childhood. For instance, the poem uses the image of the baboon watching its offspring playing on the lower boughs of the Casuarina tree. The imagery of the baboon's offspring suggest Toru's playing with her own brother and sister under the Casuarina tree when they were little kids. The image, therefore, invokes Toru's memory of her own childhood.

In the third stanza, Toru Dutt offers a direct reference to her childhood memory embodied in the Casuarina tree. She herself admits that tree is dear to her not only because of its magnificence, but because the tree reminds her of her childhood memories. The tree reminds her of the time when she used to play with her companions under it. She narrates that the tree shall remain forever dear to her as it invokes her childhood memories of her dear people. For Toru, the tree is blended with the memories of her childhood playmates.

Another image reflects Toru's memory of her childhood as embodied in the Casuarina tree. Toru personifies the tree and argues that she hears the tree's weird speech that reaches even far off lands. Toru wants to depict here that although the distance between the tree and herself is very large, yet she can hear the lamentation of the tree which laments for Toru's childhood, which is now only a memory. This image is further extended and the poet recounts how she hears the wailing of the tree in distant lands, which transcends boundaries.

The poem, therefore, employs many images which highlight the poet's concern with her childhood memory. As someone having gone past the childhood and as a migrant, Toru Dutt reminisces about her happy

childhood spent with her siblings and friends. The poem, therefore, is an exploration of memory, Toru's memory, which gets reflected in the image of the Casuarina Tree.

7.5 "SITA"

7.5.1 "Sita " : Introduction

"Sita" by Toru Dutt narrates the plight of a woman who is alone in a dark room with her three children. Something has happened and the children are crying. The mother would like to comfort them, but this is not the first time they've been through whatever this situation is, and she is crying too. By giving the poem the title "Sita," a character from *The Ramayana,* Toru establishes a link between the woman in the poem to Sita from the same legend. The poem can also be interpreted as an exploration of Toru's memory of her own childhood, where the three children referred to in fact represent Toru and her siblings.

7.5.2 "Sita " : Text

Three happy children in a darkened room!
What do they gaze on with wide-open eyes?
A dense, dense forest, where no sunbeam pries,
And in its centre a cleared spot.—There bloom
Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace
Tall trees: there, in a quiet lucid lake
The while swans glide; there, "whirring from the brake,"
The peacock springs; there, herds of wild deer race;
There, patches gleam with yellow waving grain;
There, blue smoke from strange altars rises light.
There, dwells in peace, the poet-anchorite.
But who is this fair lady? Not in vain

She weeps,—for lo! at every tear she sheds
Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain,
And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads.
It is an old, old story, and the lay
Which has evoked sad Sîta from the past
Is by a mother sung.... 'Tis hushed at last
And melts the picture from their sight away,
Yet shall they dream of it until the day!
When shall those children by their mother's side
Gather, ah me! as erst at eventide?

7.5.3 Text : Glossary

gaze-look steadily and intently, especially in admiration, surprise, or thought.

pries- inquire too closely into a person's private affairs.

gigantic- of very great size or extent; huge or enormous.

lucid- bright or luminous.

whirring- (of something rapidly rotating or moving to and fro) make a low, continuous, regular sound.

hushed- (of a place) very quiet and still.

amain-with all one's might

7.5.4 "Sita " : Explanation of the Stanzas

Three happy children in a darkened room!
What do they gaze on with wide-open eyes?

In the first line we get a picture of three children sitting in a dark room listening to something. There is a question being asked by the poet to the readers – what are the three children gazing at with their eyes wide

open. What are they listening to, that is so interesting that they are involved in it so much.

A dense, dense forest, where no sunbeam pries,
And in its centre a cleared spot.—There bloom
Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace
Tall trees: there, in a quiet lucid lake
The while swans glide; there, "whirring from the brake,"
The peacock springs; there, herds of wild deer race;
There, patches gleam with yellow waving grain;
There, blue smoke from strange altars rises light.
There, dwells in peace, the poet-anchorite.

In the above line we get a picture of a dense forest. We also get a picture of how dense the forest is. Its so dense that there is no space for sunlight, the forest is covered with trees and its branches, even though its morning it looks very dark.

There are big wild flowers on creepers that have grown around the tall trees, there is quiet lake which is crystal clear, in that lake there are swans floating and making sound while they stop at intervals, there is peacock which is leaping in joy and a group of deer racing each other.

There are patches on the land which are shining with yellow grains, all these things are making the forest a pleasant and peaceful place to live and the poet feels that it is like a home for poets, like a religious recluse where they can spend some solitary time in tranquillity.

But who is this fair lady? Not in vain
She weeps,—for lo! at every tear she sheds
Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain,
And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads.

After the beautiful forest is described the story now moves to another part where the storyteller says that there is some beautiful woman sitting

all alone in this peaceful forest who looks unhappy and she is crying and this is making those three children who are involved in this story cry as well. They have bowed their head in sadness.

It is an old, old story, and the lay
Which has evoked sad Sîta from the past

Now we get a picture of who the storyteller is talking about and who the story is about. It is an old story, a story of Sita of *Ramayana* that is being recalled from the past.

Is by a mother sung.... 'Tis hushed at last
And melts the picture from their sight away,
Yet shall they dream of it until the day!
When shall those children by their mother's side
Gather, ah me! as erst at eventide?

Now we know from the above line who the storyteller is. It's the mother of those three children who is telling a tale from *Ramayana* about Sita and her struggles but when her children seem sad and start crying after listening to this story she finishes the story in a hurry as she is unable to see her children sad. But the poet says even though the mother wants those children to forget the story they would still remember it until the end of the day. Finally, in the end after finishing the story, the mother gathers all her children and hugs them to pacify them.

7.5.5 "Sita " : Summary

"Sita," written by Toru Dutt, is a poem that refers to a woman who was abandoned by her husband in a forest. She was pregnant at the time and raised her two boys on her own. Within this poem, Dutt provides many images from the forest that Sita was abandoned in. Readers soon realize the woman who is singing about Sita is a mother putting her three children to bed. The mother begins crying after telling her children about Sita, which makes her children begin to cry as well. Dutt shows

the mother's connection to Sita's unhappy life, her connection to her children, and how the story will continue to live on.

The poem introduces readers to the mother, who seems to have quite a connection to this woman. She begins to "shed" tears just as Sita did; causing her children to begin to cry because of the pain this story has caused their mother. In the lines "at every tear she sheds/ Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain," (12.5-13) we see that the mother and children have a strong connection. Her pain and tears are their pain and tears. The capital T in "Tears" conveys a sense of rebirth. This shows that the story the mother has held on for so long is now passed down to her children. This brings us to the next few lines, "It is an old, old story, and the lay/ Which has evoked sad Sita from the past" (16-17). These lines show us that the old story and the sad past of this woman has now come to life in the children's mind. They are now conscious of this story and it has now been "reborn."

The poem has a steady flow to it until the line "Is by a mother sung. . . 'Tis hushed at last" (18). The long pause in the middle of the line creates a sense of mistreatment. Readers sense that this story is being sung by a mother who is possibly being treated unfairly or "hushed" by her own husband as well. Readers can relate this line to Sita's life being hushed by her husband. They can also read this line as the mother dealing with a husband who has silenced her in the past.

In the last two lines, readers become aware that the image of the story has been melted away from the children's thoughts as they fall asleep. The line "Yet shall they dream of it until the day!" (20), shows that the story made an impact on the children. Dutt created a way to show readers that this story is something that will stick around forever. She sang a song that not only connected her to this woman, but also connected her to her children.

7.5.6 "Sita " : Critical Analysis

"Sita" is one of the better known poems of Toru Dutt which is written in the same vein as her other poems such as "The Legend of Dhruva," "Sindhu," "Prehlad," etc. All these poems are noted to be retellings of classical Indian myths, with the general bent of the class being that even among the sheer 'Indian-ness' of the tales, Dutt manages to insert a very British tone to her handling of them, allowing her 'foreign' audience a reference point to be used to understand her work, if not fully, then more completely.

"Sita" is a poem told from the perspective of the wife of Rama, hero of the Ramayana, during one of the many exiles she is forced to endure. From the presence of her children and the lack of lecherous demon kings, one can assume that this is the second exile, after Rama has been restored to the throne and relieved of any sort of marital devotion. Though it was mentioned briefly, in terms of falling in line with the general sense that Dutt's work had an unmistakably British cast to their handling even as she expects her audience to be familiar with long poems such as the Ramayana.

"Sita" was published in the *Ancient Ballads,* the bulk of which is formed by poems such as "Savitri," "Sindhu," "Prehlad," etc., which are based on Indian mythology. Initially these were conceived in the tradition of genuine translations from the original Sanskrit in the manner of her cousin R. C. Dutt and the Orientalist who preceded him; the first two poems in the series "The Legend of Dhruva" and "The Royal Ascetic and the Hind," were translations from the *Vishnu Paurana,* and first published in the *Bengal Magazine* (October 1876) and *Calcutta Review* (January 1877) respectively. A series of nine poems had apparently been planned, but only seven were found, the gap being filled by reprinting the two translations from the *Vishnu Purana.* The poems, however, ultimately took shape in a style different from that of her Orientalist predecessors.

"Sita" draws upon a childhood memory of three siblings listening to a mother's song. The poem is lent poignancy by the fact that of the three children, Toru's brother Abju and her sister, Aru were no longer alive at the time it was written. The poem is also one of the earliest instances of the effective use of memory in Indian poetry in English.

The poem stands apart in other ways also. It begins as nature description, but presently strikes the pure elegiac note. Valmiki's hermitage stands vivid before our eyes, but even more vivid and haunting is Sita in her sorrows, and the three children – Abju, Aru, Toru herself- weeping because Sita is weeping. This almost perfect poem is a tribute to Toru's mother's genius for story-telling, and the last two lines are a poignant elegy on the early death of Abju and Aru. Never had Toru written more feelingly or evoked a scene or an emotion as unforgettably. Once Toru wrote to her French friend Clarisse Bader- "Can there be a more touching and lovable heroine than Sita? I do not think so. When I hear my mother chant, in the evening, the old lays of our country, I almost always weep. The plaint of Sita, when, banished for the second time, she wanders alone in the vast forest, despair and horror filling her soul, is so pathetic that I believe there is no one who could hear it without shedding tears." More recently, Rajaji too has commented on the Sita of the *Uttara Ramayana:* "The tenderness and purity of the untold sufferings of women took shape as the *Uttara Ramayana.* Like an unflickering lamp, it throws light on the quality of their hearts." Toru's little poem is an "unflickering lamp," and throws light on the quality of her heart.

Moreover, Toru Dutt's desire for identity and her study of Sanskrit prompted her to write poems like "Sita." She recollected the old stories told by her mother and gave poetic expression to them without deviating from the spirit of the original version. The common feature in all these ballads is the use of octosyllabic meter (eight syllables in each line) she borrowed from the English Ballad. She also used blank verse in poems

like “Sita.” These poems show her intense love of her own land and for its traditions. This is “her chief legacy to posterity.” Her poems reveal the soul of India through the medium of English poetry. She had a great gift of story-telling, arousing interest and curiosity in the minds of readers. In descriptive poetry she is superior. According to SrinivasaIyengar: she is a good craftsman in verse, her feeling for words impeccable, and her eye and ear were alike trained for poetic description or dialogue. We find the ideals of Indian womanhood, essentials of Indian philosophy and scenes and sights of Indian landscape in her lyrical poems.

Her Poem “Sita” is one of the best ballads in which she describes the chaste surroundings of Valmiki’s ashram with a delicate pathos in the closing lines; “when shall those children by their mother’s side/ Gather, ah, me! As erst even tide!” In “Savitri,” the longest poem in five parts, she expressed the Hindu philosophy and *Karma Siddhantha* in a dramatic way. Her stories are true to their originals in Sanskrit and objective in treatment. Her lyrical descriptions do not obstruct the flow of the narratives. She gave a modern turn or interpretation to some of the ancient legends. By using dramatic speeches she excelled in portraying women characters like Savitri, Sita, and Uma. Her verse reminds that of Keats in sensitiveness and worship of beauty.

In “Sita” the three children after hearing the tale of Sita from their mother imaginatively view at the hermitage where Sita spent her time after being abandoned by Rama. The chaste surroundings of the hermitage reveal the chaste character of Sita also. “The white swans glide; there, “whirring from the brake/ The peacock springs; there herds of wild deer race; / There patches gleam with yellow waving grain;/ There blue smoke from strange altars rises light/ There dwells in peace, the poet-anchorite.” The grief of Sita evoked grief in the hearts of three children also. The poem ends on a nostalgic note when the poet says “When shall those children by their mother’s side/ Gather, ah me! As erst eventide?”

7.5.7 Cultural Plurality in Toru Dutt's "Sita"

In his introduction to Sarojini Naidu's poetry anthology *The Bird of Time,* the eminent Victorian critic Edmund Gosse narrates his first impression of the poetry of Sarojini Naidu. Gosse confesses that he lay the poems aside in despair for they were imbued with a familiar Western feeling and imagery that echoed the styles of Shelley and Tennyson. In the role of a genuine literary mentor, therefore, Gosse advised the inexperienced Sarojini to discard the Anglo-Saxon sentiment and settings and to concentrate on "some revelation of the heart of India, some sincere penetrating analysis of native passion, of the principles of antique religion and of such mysterious intimations as stirred the soul of the East long before the West had begun to dream that it had a soul." It is following his advice that Sarojini started to represent the culture and spirit of India through her poems and speeches to both Indians and foreigners, which not only made her an acclaimed poet in the long run, but also brought her fame as a speaker. Many years before Sarojini Naidu made her mark thus on the literary world, another Bengali woman from the Orient had composed verses that would reveal Indian life and the Indian ethos to the Western world. She was a scion of the famous Dutt family, and her name was Toru Dutt.

Despite being an Indian, Toru Dutt belonged to a family that was a votary of all things British. So radically was the Dutt family influenced by colonialist and missionary discourse that Toru's family converted to Christianity in 1862 and travelled to Europe in 1869, residing in France and England before the family's return to India in 1873. Toru's westernized father GovinChunderDutt encouraged her to study English and French, a result of which were her essays on Leconde de Lisle and H. L. V. Derozio published in 1874. Greater achievements were the publications of *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* — a collection of poems translated from French into English; the novel *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers* written completely in French; and the unfinished English novel *Bianca, or a Young Spanish Maiden*.

As an Indian in Europe, Toru had done much to imbibe the culture of the countries she was residing in, and represent them in the works of occidental cultures mentioned above. But one would do well to remember that along with her Anglicized father, her traditional-minded mother Kshetramoni also had a profound formative influence on her mind. It is holding her mother's hand that Toru journeyed into the heart of ancient India. Moreover, after the publication of *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, Toru and her father took up the study of Sanskrit because "they had nothing to do." After eight months of serious study, Toru felt confident enough to read the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in the original Sanskrit. At the same time, she was fortunate to read two books by Orientalist authors Frederika Richardson and Clarisse Bader. The former's book contained the translation of a section of the *Ramayana* while the latter's work, Toru claimed in a letter to Mary Martin dated 7th March 1876, would give her "a good insight into the old Hindu legends, which I hope to be able to read in a couple of years in the original Sanskrit." With the knowledge so gained, Toru ambitiously planned a "Sheaf gleaned in Sanskrit fields" to supplement her *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. Her proposed book ultimately saw the light of day as a posthumous publication re-titled as *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*.

In this way, the two strands of Toru's literary output — the European and the Indian — demonstrating a wonderful knowledge and mastery of the literature and culture of both the Orient and the Occident, establish the cultural plurality of Toru Dutt. Biculturalism in Toru Dutt may also be viewed from another angle. While on the one hand we have the views of an Anglicized Christian Indian woman on the poetry of India and Hinduism written in Sanskrit, on the other, we have the presentation of Indian culture to a Western audience in English, the language of the West. Such was the versatility demonstrated on a world-stage by a woman from eastern India who was merely 21 years of age when she died.

Toru Dutt's poems manifest cultural plurality and cultural multiplicity. This is true especially in case of "Sita" taken from *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* which refers to the famous female character from Indian mythology who also features in another poem — "Lakshman"— written by her, and fascinated her with her quintessential wifely devotion, which to her was a marker of Indianness. In this poem, Toru narrates the story of three children who have gathered together to listen to their mother narrate the sad story of Sita's life. The story is sad enough to make the mother weep, and consequently, "tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain" till the children fall asleep. The poem is autobiographical to a large extent, for the three children referred to are none but Toru and her siblings Abju and Aru who were already dead when this poem was written. The poet's nostalgic reminiscences are clear in the way these "three happy children" are presented together. The poem is Indian in its depiction of a wonderful family-bonding symbolized by children surrounding a mother, and also in the depiction of a loving mother lulling her children to sleep singing lays from India's hoary past.

The poem is also Indian in its choice of subject — a woman whose life was one of unhappiness and hence symbolic of the general misery in the lives of women in India, especially during Toru's time. But although the poem is Indian in setting and sentiment, the style in which it is written is Western. Of the 22 lines in the poem, as many as nine contain a depiction of nature, typically found in British Romantic poetry. Critics have often identified the Romantic strain in her poetry and classified her as the Keats of Indo-Anglian literature on account of her sensuous representation, and her nature imagery in "Sita" lends credence to such observations. The reference to blue smoke rising from inside the forest where an anchorite dwells, immediately takes us back to the following lines from Wordsworth's "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" :

... and wreaths of smoke,
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant Dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone. (159)

The reference to creepers embracing tall trees used in another Toru Dutt poem titled "Our Casuarina Tree," is an echo of Milton's serpent image for Satan in *Paradise Lost*. The line "whirring from the brake, the peacock springs" is from Alexander Pope's "Windsor Forest": "See! From the brake the whirring pheasant springs / And mounts exulting on triumphant wings" (21). Thus, in this short poem "Sita" can be found the happy confluence of eastern ethos with western style that had come to symbolize Toru's cultural plurality in both life and literature.

7.6 "THE LOTUS"

7.6.1 "The Lotus" : Introduction

"The Lotus" is a fourteen line poem, i.e., a sonnet composed by Toru Dutt. The sonnet depicts a competition between Rose and Lily. Flora, however, compares both and comes to the conclusion that Lotus is the best of all who has the qualities of both the Rose, that is, passion and Lily, i.e., purity. By emphasising the superiority of Lotus over the other flowers, Toru Dutt establishes the superiority of the Indian culture as Lotus is of significance to India both culturally as well as religiously.

7.6.2 "The Lotus" : Text

Love came to Flora asking for a flower
' That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
' The lily and the rose, long, long had been
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power

Had sung their claims. "The rose can never tower
' Like the pale lily with her Juno mien"—
' "But is the lily lovelier?" Thus between
Flower factions rang the strife in Psyche's bower.
' Give me a flower delicious as the rose
' And stately as the lily in her pride"—
"But of what colour?"—"Rose-red," Love first chose,
' Then prayed,—"No, lily-white,—or, both provide;"
' And Flora gave the lotus, "rose-red" dyed,
And "lily-white,"—the queenliest flower that blows.

7.6.3 "The Lotus" : Glossary

undisputed- not disputed or called in question; accepted.

rival(s)-a person or thing competing with another for the same objective or for superiority in the same field of activity.

bard(s)- a poet, traditionally one reciting epics and associated with a particular oral tradition.

faction(s)-a small organized dissenting group within a larger one, especially in politics.

stately- impressive or grand in size, appearance, or manner.

7.6.4 "The Lotus" : Summary

Toru Dutt was an educated young woman who had travelled to Britain and France during her childhood. British literature and culture influenced her and is demonstrated in various work by Toru, including "The Lotus." In the poem, Toru presents the idea that the lotus is the most beautiful of all the flowers in order to establish superiority of the Hindu religion over other world religions. "The Lotus" begins with a conflict between the rose and the lily flower. The goddess of love,

Aphrodite, approached the flower goddess, Flora to create a flower who would undisputedly be the queenliest of all flowers. Both the lily and the rose, used their "bards of power" in their fight over the queenliest flower title. Bards is associated with Gaelic spiritual power traditions of England, Scotland and Ireland. Toru uses Greek and Roman mythology as support for her Hindu beliefs and to establish her stand. The rose is described as never reaching the level of the lily flower, because the lily has a strong willed demeanour. In line 8 of the poem, we reach the climax where all the flower groups form cliques in a bitter conflict within the soul's essence. The goddess Flora is given a task of creating a flower as "delicious as the rose" and "stately as the lily in her pride" (Dutt, 82). Lines 9-14 of the poem describe the solution to the problem of finding the queenliest flower of all. Toru has Flora create a flower that is both red as a rose and white as a lily. As a result, Flora creates a flower with the characteristics of a rose and a lily combined and creates the beautiful lotus flower. Why did Toru chose the lotus flower as the queenliest of all flowers? The lotus is a national symbol of India and the Hindu faith. The overall theme of the poem is the pride of India's culture and Hindu religion. The idea of the Hindu religion being the ultimate religion of the world is the main focus of "The Lotus." Hinduism is polytheistic in nature and beliefs are practiced through idol worship. The idols can be human, animal or natural, such as the Sun God. Each idol has a form of symbolism, which represents knowledge, wealth, and strength among a few things. Toru wanted to acknowledge her Indian background for others to understand her love for her native country India. Although she had travelled and received her education abroad during her childhood, she still believed India to be her home. Indian tradition explains that the lotus flower springs not from the earth but from the surface of the water and remains pure and unblemished, no matter the impurity of the water. The purity of the lotus expresses

the idea of supernatural birth and the appearance of the first created entity from the ancient waters of chaos, thus the lotus is observed as the medium of the Hindu creator Narayana and his second being God Brahma. Toru uses the idea of Greek and Roman goddesses to create a western understanding of Hinduism and its divine faith of the lotus. Toru had an ability to excel in her writing at a young age and is one of the most famous Indo-Anglican poets of India. She mastered "The Lotus" in a Petrarchan style by separating the poem into two divisions, the Octave and the Sestet. Toru was able to present the problem of searching for the queenliest flower in the octave, which was composed of the first 8 lines and resolved the issue by creating the lotus in the sestet, which consists of the last 6 lines. She uses the rose and the lily in the poem to describe the West and the East. The "lily" is a representation of the white race and the "rose" depicting the reddish skin tone of the eastern race, such as her native India. Thus the poem "The Lotus" indicates a fusion between the West and East. Although Toru herself was raised as a Christian with western ideology, she was able to relate herself back to her Eastern roots of India in the sonnet. The lotus is a representation of Toru and her cultural encounters living in Western Europe. She interlaces her Western experience and education in order to create herself as her beautiful native Indian lotus flower.

7.6.5 "The Lotus" : Critical Analysis

Toru Dutt's poem "The Lotus" shows her imaginative power and deft handling of the sonnet form. It is a sonnet in the Petrarchan type. The rhyme scheme of the poem is *abbaabbacdcdee*. There is no ending couplet though there is an *ee* couplet in the sestet. The poem is divided into two halves- Octave and Sestet. Octave consists of eight lines which outlines a problem or expresses a desire. Sestet comments on the problem or suggests a solution. The present poem bears the features of the debate poem. Each flower has a better claim over the other. Lotus is seen as the most suitable candidate for the position. Although

the poem is titled "The Lotus" the flower is mentioned only towards the end of the poem.

Moreover, Lotus is a flower of significance both to India and the Hindu religion. Dutt wanted to establish the superiority of Hindu religion over the other religions of the world. She turned to classical mythology to establish her stand. Dutt wanted to acknowledge her Indian background for others to understand her love for India. Indian tradition explains that lotus flower springs not from the earth but from the surface of the water and will remain pure and unblemished irrespective of the impurity of the water. The purity of the lotus expresses the idea of supernatural birth and the appearance of the first created entity from the ancient water of Chaos, thus the lotus is observed as the medium of Hindu creator Narayana and his second being God Brahma. The colour of the flower calls to mind the privileged position Europeans gave to people based on skin colour. The word 'power' adds a sense of the dominant position that the English assume in the world over all things – poetry, beauty, people, and land etc. Dutt unsettles and displaces that control. Lotus is a symbol of Hindu faith, Indian culture, and Hindu religion. It also symbolises our nation India. Toru uses the idea of Greek and Roman goddess i.e., Goddess Flora, Roman goddess of flower or spring and God of love Cupid, Roman god of Love, to create a western understanding of Hinduism. The lotus also indicates a fusion between the East and the West. Rose stands for eastern race, the native India because of its reddish skin. Lily indicates western race because of its white colour. The title 'Bards' harkens back to 12th century Britain as the name given to poets. It was still used during Toru's time as a title of respect to great poets. Shakespeare and Milton were both referred to as 'Bards.' Here, Dutt calls attention to the 'traditional' English poets who neglect to remember that there are other flowers or beauties in the world. As in the Petrarchan sonnet which have a turn in the logic of the subject at the line nine (referred to as

volta) this poem also presents a paradoxical twist – a resolution. This twist comes when we are introduced to a new flower called Lotus. Toru's nature love is depicted in this poem. There will be no end to the dispute between Lily and Rose unless a new flower comes into existence, because both the flowers have some positive qualities of their own. If the Rose is romantic and delicious the Lily is very regal and stately in stature. Toru Dutt beautifully uses the so called conflict between those two flowers to comment upon the excellence of the Lotus. So we can conclude that Toru's love for Indian Flower and Hindu Mythology is clearly visible in this simple poem of 14 lines.

7.7 A NOTE ON TORU DUTT'S LANGUAGE

A glance at Toru Dutt's use of language is enough to show the difference between her style and that of her predecessors. The poem her father and uncles wrote, and before them Derozio, Kasiprasad Ghosh, and Michael Madhusudan, all belong to a recognisable school of nineteenth-century poetry. Toru Dutt's poetry transcends that school, evolving a separate identity. The difference lies in the manner in which her language addresses her experience, her vision radiating beyond the boundaries within which most of the nineteenth-century poetry in English was confined. Her awareness of her own 'Indianness' is not restricted to Indian historical themes and the reworking of Indian legends. The mythological content of her poems does not exist extrinsically, but is integrated with her consciousness, her memory. In her poetry we confront for the first time a language that is crafted out of the vicissitudes of an individual life and a sensibility that belongs to modern India.

7.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Toru Dutt was born in the year_____.

   a) 1856

   b) 1858

   c) 1956

   d) 1857

2. Toru Dutt wrote in the language/s_____.

   a) French
   b) English
   c) Both (a) and (b)
   d) None of the above

3. In which language did Toru Dutt write the novel *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers (The Diary of Mademoiselle D'Arvers)* ?____

   a) Spanish
   b) French
   (c) English
   (d) German

4. "Sita" was published in the collection ._____

   a) *Ancient Lyrics*
   b) *Ancient Ballads*
   c) *New Poems*
   d) None of the above

5. Which of the elements is/are central to the poem "Our Casuarina Tree? " _____ .

   a) Memory
   b) Nostalgia
   c) Childhood
   d) All of the above

6. Which of the following flowers is central to the Indian experience in context of the poem "The Lotus? " _____ .

   a) Lotus
   b) Rose
   c) Lily
   d) None of the above

7. The poem “The Lotus” is a/an _____ .

   a) Epic

   b) Lyric

   c) Sonnet

   d) Ode

8. In which of the following poems by Toru Dutt is cultural plurality best exemplified?_____.

   a) Sita

   b) Lakshman

   c) Our Casuarina Tree

   d) The Lotus

9. In which of the following poems does Toru Dutt recall her childhood and siblings?_____.

   a) Our Casuarina Tree

   b) Sita

   c) Both (a) and (b)

   d) None of the above

10. Which of the following elements is best exemplified in the poem “Sita?”_____.

   a) Nostalgia

   b) Satire

   c) Humour

   d) Pathos

11. Which poem by Toru Dutt narrates the plight of a mother and her three children?”_____.

   a) Our Casuarina Tree

   b) The Lotus

c) Sita

d) None of the above

12. The poem "The Lotus" draws on which of the following myths?_____.

a) Greek

b) Roman

c) Both (a) and (b)

d) None of the above

13. What animal image does Toru Dutt use to recollect her childhood in "Our Casuarina Tree ?" _____ .

a) Baboon

b) Snake

c) Monkey

d) None of the above

14. Which of the following poems employs the Indian legend of the *Ramayana?*_____.

a) Our Casuarina Tree

b) The Lotus

c) Sita

d) None of the above

15. When did Toru Dutt die_____?

a) 1876

b) 1877

c) 1899

d) 1890

7.9 LET US SUM UP

Toru Dutt occupies an important place among the Indian writers who chose to express themselves in the English language. Toru Dutt's short life and literary career nevertheless is known for her remarkable literary output. Drawing upon various sources, her poetry exemplifies a diverse range of subject matter. While "Our Casuarina Tree" is remarkable for exploration of childhood memory through the symbol of the tree, "Sita" touches upon the same aspect by incorporating Indian legend of the *Ramayana*. "The Lotus" emphasises the superiority of the Indian culture by comparing it to the flower Lotus.

7.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of Toru Dutt's life and works.
2. Give an assessment of Toru Dutt's place in Indian literature in English.
3. Give a critical appreciation of Toru Dutt's poem "Our Casuarina Tree."
4. How does Toru Dutt explore the concept of memory in "Our Casuarina Tree?"
5. Comment upon the element of nostalgia and pathos in "Our Casuarina Tree."
6. Give the central idea of the poem "Sita" by Toru Dutt.
7. Toru Dutt incorporates an Indian legend in the poem "Sita." How is this specifically important in the context of Toru Dutt's poetry ?
8. Bring out the autobiographical references in Toru Dutt's "Our Casuarina Tree" and "Sita."
9. Toru Dutt's poems manifest cultural plurality and cultural multiplicity. Comment upon the statement with specific reference to Toru Dutt's poem "Sita."
10. Give a critical appreciation of Toru Dutt's poem "The Lotus_____."

11. Comment on the allegory that pervades the entire sonnet "The Lotus _____." What purpose does it serve?

12. Why did Toru Dutt specifically use the symbol of the Lotus to emphasise the superiority of Indian culture.

13. How does "The Lotus" bring an association of the Eastern and Western ethos?

14. What are the different themes delineated in Toru Dutt's poetry ?

15. Comment upon the usage of symbols and images in Toru Dutt's poems.

7.11 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. a) 1856
2. c) Both (a) and (b)
3. b) French
4. a) *Ancient Lyrics*
5. d) All of the above
6. a) Lotus
7. c) Sonnet
8. a) Sita
9. c) Both (a) and (b)
10. d) Pathos
11. c) Sita
12. c) Both (a) and (b)
13. a) Baboon
14. c) Sita
15. b) 1877

7.12 SUGGESTED READING

Indian Writing in English by K. R. SrinivasaIyengar

*Life and Letters of Toru Dutt*by Harihar Das

A Comparative and Contrastive Study of John Keats and Toru Dutt by Maithili Barahate-Paikane

Toru Dutt, by PadminiSen Gupta by PadminiSathianadhanSengupta
Indo-Anglian Poetry by Amar NathDwivedi

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STRUCTURE

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Objectives

8.3 Life and works of Aurobindo

8.4 "A Tree" : Text

8.4.1 "A Tree" : Summary and Analysis

8.5 "Life and Death": Text

8.5.1 "Life and Death" : Summary and Analysis

8.6 "Bride of the Fire" : Text

8.6.1 "Bride of the Fire" : Summary and Analysis

8.7 Glossary

8.8 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

8.9 Let Us Sum Up

8.10 Examination Oriented Questions

8.11 Answer Key to Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

8.12 Suggested Reading

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Aurobindo Ghosh, better known as Sri Aurobindo is known to the entire world as a great scholar, a national leader, spiritual guru, and a writer. Some powerful visions backed by spiritualism encouraged him to move to Pondicherry

where he worked on human evolution through spiritual activities such as 'Integral Yoga'. His writings, too are replete with the element of spirituality.

8.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this lesson are:

i) To acquaint the learner with the life and works of Sri Aurobindo.

ii) To familiarize the learner with some selected poems by Sri Aurobindo.

iii) To help the learner prepare for the semester end exam.

8.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO

There are people who read Sri Aurobindo (or about him) seeking an answer to the seeming riddle of his extraordinary career: there are many who see in him the promise of the Supreme, the propounder of Integral Yoga, the prophet of the Life Divine: there are others who feel attracted to the patriot, the fiery evangelist of Nationalism: there are still others who are drawn to the teacher, the scholar, the interpreter of the Veda, the critic of life and literature: and there are many more to whom he is a man of letters in excelsis, a master of prose art, and a dramatist and poet of great power and versatility.

Without question, Sri Aurobindo is the one uncontestably outstanding figure in Indo-Anglian literature. Tagore, no doubt, holds a comparable position in modern Bengali literature, though Indo-Anglian literature too can claim him as one of its own unique reflected glories. But Sri Aurobindo, in so far as he was a writer, was not merely a writer who happened to write in English but really an English writer—almost as much as, say, a George Moore, a Laurence Binyon or a W.B.Yeats. To acknowledge and salute the poet and the master of the 'other harmony' of prose is not, of course, to deny the teacher or the fighter of the patriot, the Yogi, the philosopher or the poetic engineer of the Life Divine. But they are indeed all of a piece: or, rather, it is the same diamond- the Immortal Diamond- with different facets turned to our gaze at different times. Sri Aurobindo wrote once: "No one can write about my life because it has not been on the surface for men to see"; all the same, some idea of his 'life' should precede any attempt at appraising his work as a writer.

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on 15 August 1872. His father, Krishnadhan Ghosh, was a popular civil surgeon, while his mother, Swarnalata Devi, was a daughter of Rishi Rajnarain Bose, one of the great men of the Indian renaissance in the nineteenth century who embodied the new composite culture of the country that was at once Vedantic, Islamic and European. On the other hand, Krishnadhan had a pronounced partiality for a Western way of life. Having himself had his medical education at Aberdeen, he desired that his children should, if possible, go one better even and be wholly insulated from the contamination of Indian ways. Strange, indeed are the ironies of parental predilections! If Krishnadhan had sent his son, not to the Loretto Convent School at Darjeeling and thence to Manchester, London (St. Paul's) and Cambridge (Kings's), but to 'native' schools and colleges at Calcutta, Sri Aurobindo might have early mastered his mother tongue, Bengali, and become in the fullness of time another Bankim Chandra or Rabindranath, wielding with suppleness, grace and power the most dynamic of modern Indian languages. But his translation to England in 1879 (along with his two elder brothers, Manmohan the future poet and BenoyBhushan) and his stay there for a period of fourteen years made English his mother tongue for all practical purposes, and he came to acquire a complete mastery over that difficult language as if verily born to that heritage. At Manchester, Sri Aurobindo was taught privately by the Rev. William H. Drewett and Mrs.Drewett who grounded him well in English, Latin, French, and History; at St. Paul's, Dr. Walker the High Master himself took a deep interest in Sri Aurobindo's education and pushed him rapidly in his Greek studies. It was a fruitful period, and Sri Aurobindo, besides securing the Butterworth Prize in Literature and the Bedford Prize in History, won a scholarship that enabled him to proceed to King's college at Cambridge he made a notable impression on Oscar Browning, passed the I.C.S. open competitive examination (although he couldn't finally join the Service) and secured a First in classical tripos at the end of his second year. To his proficiency in the Classics and English was now added a growing acquaintance with German and Italian, and also some knowledge of Sanskrit and Bengali. He read widely, spoke often at the Majlis, and wrote

poetry. He left England at last in February 1893, having received an appointment in the service of the Maharaja of Baroda.

Sri Aurobindo passed the next thirteen years at Baroda. He was employed in various departments, but he finally gravitated towards the Baroda College. He taught French for a time, and ultimately became Professor of English and Vice-Principal. During these years Sri Aurobindo fast achieved the feat of re-nationalising himself. His mind had returned from "Sicilian olive-groves" and "Athenian lanes" to the shores of the Ganges, to Saraswati's domains. He gained a deeper insight into Sanskrit and Bengali, and cultivated besides Marathi and Gujarati. He read with avidity, and he wrote copiously. The political scene in India depressed him, and he contributed a series of trenchant articles to the columns of *Indu Prakash* under the telling caption 'New Lamps for Old.' But the time was inopportune yet for political action, and after this first burst of self-expression he withdrew into silence. Yet his pen was not idle; politics may be taboo for the time being, but not literature. And so 'New Lamps for Old' was followed by a series of articles on the art of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Already in these early prose writings we can mark the sinuosity and balance, the imagery and colour, the trenchancy and sarcasm that were to distinguish the mature prose writings of the 'Bandemataram' period.

The Baroda period was the significant seed-time of Sri Aurobindo's life, for he seems to have pursued his varied interests- teaching, poetry, even politics- simultaneously. *Songs to Myrtilla* appeared in 1895, and was followed next year by the narrative poem, *Urvasie.* He completed also *Love and Death,* another long poem, besides the first draft of *Savitri.* Some of his blank verse plays too- notably *Perseus the Deliverer*- belong to this period. Drawn slowly to the centre of revolutionary politics in Bengal, in 1905 Sri Aurobindo wrote *BhavaniMandir,* 'A Handbook for Revolutionaries dedicated to the service of Bhavani,' which caused deep concern to the bureaucracy. In April 1906 he attended the Barisal Political Conference and took the plunge into politics at last. This meant his leaving the Baroda College, but other arduous duties awaited him in Calcutta. In August 1906, he assumed charge

as Editor of the *Bandemataram,* a new English daily started by Bipin Chandra Pal. A year later he was arrested in connection with the publication of certain articles in his paper, but was later honourably acquitted. The infructuous prosecution, however, successfully projected Sri Aurobindo as an all-India leader of infinite potentialities, and when he attended the Surat Congress in December, he was obliged to take a leading part in the deliberations of the Nationalist (Extremist) Party. It was about this time, too, that Sri Aurobindo came under the influence of Yogi Lele, and had his first realization of the Vedantic-Advaitic experience of utter silence of the mind for three whole days. During the first four months of 1908, Sri Aurobindo managed to engage himself in Yoga sustaining his hectic outer activity. On 4 May 1908, he was arrested in connection with the Muzzaferpore bomb outrage that had taken place a few days earlier. The trial was a protracted one, and eminent counsel was engaged on both sides. It was during his detention in the Alipur Jail that Sri Aurobindo had the ineffable mystic experience of 'NarayanaDarshan,' and this effected a profound change in his entire outlook. As he described this experience later (in the celebrated Uttarpara Speech):

> I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned; no it was Vasudeva who surrounded me. I walked under the branches of the tree in front of my cell, but it was not the tree, I knew it was Vasudeva, it was Sri Krishna whom I saw standing there and holding over me his shade. I looked at the bars of my cell, the very grating that did duty for a door, and again I saw Vasudeva. It was Narayana who was guarding and standing sentry over me. Or I lay on the coarse blankets that were given me for a couch and felt the arm of Sri Krishna around me, the arms of my Friend and Lover. This was the first use of the deeper vision He gave me. I looked at the prisoners in jail, the thieves, the murderers, the swindlers,

and as I looked at them, I saw Vasudeva, it was Narayana
whom I found in these darkened souls and misused bodies.

Once again Sri Aurobindo was acquitted without a stain on his character, and he came out in May 1909 and soon afterwards launched a new weekly, the *Karmayogin*. But his heart was not in politics, he felt the strong pull of spiritual life, and hence in February 1910 he left Calcutta and ultimately reached Pondicherry on 4 April 1910, and remained there for the rest of his life.

During his first years at Pondicherry- the years of 'silent Yoga'- he was associated with the Tamil revolutionaries, V.V.S. Aiyar and Subramania Bharati. Disciples slowly gathered round Sri Aurobindo, and so an Ashram came into existence. On 29 March 1914, Madame Mirra Richard (now known as the Mother), who was herself on a spiritual quest, met Sri Aurobindo and made the following note: "It matters not if there are hundreds of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He whom we saw yesterday is on earth: His presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light, when Thy reign shall be indeed established on earth." The Richards and Sri Aurobindo launched on 15 August 1914 the *Arya,* the monthly philosophical journal devoted to the exposition of an integral view of life and existence. As the Richards left for France soon afterwards, on Sri Aurobindo fell the burden of running the journal, as it was his contributions that mainly filled its pages till discontinuance in 1921. Most of these periodical contributions have since been revised and reissued in book form, and works like *The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga, Essays on the Gita, The Secret of the Veda, The Ideal of Human Unity, The Human Cycle, The Future Poetry, The Foundations of Indian Culture, Renaissance in India,* and *Heraclitus* have already taken their place in general and philosophical literature.

With Madame Richard's return to Pondicherry in April 1920, the Ashram began to acquire a clearer definition, and after 24 November 1926

(when it is said Sri Aurobindo experienced 'the descent of Krishna in the physical'), she took full charge of the Ashram and came to be known as the Mother. For a period of about twenty years (1926-1938), Sri Aurobindo was in complete retirement, seeing hardly anybody, but keeping in contact with his disciples through written replies- often detailed replies – to their queries regarding their spiritual problems. There was some relaxation regarding the rules relating to his retirement during the later years, and on certain days in the year – called the '*darshandays*' – his disciples and other visitors to the Ashram were allowed to have *darshan* of the Master. When the Second World War came, Sri Aurobindo declared himself openly on the side of the Allies, and encouraged his disciples to contribute to the war efforts in every possible way. In August 1940, when it seemed as though Hitler's hordes would overwhelm all Europe and all civilization, Sri Aurobindo wrote a remarkable poem, *The Children of Wotan* (1940). Meantime, *The Life Divine* had appeared in book form and compelled discriminating attention, and in 1942 the two volumes of his *Collected Poems and Plays* appeared. He was also engaged on the magnum opus, the philosophical epic, *Savitri,* which started appearing in instalments from 1946 onwards.

Sri Aurobindo's seventy-fifth birthday coincided with the dawn of independence of India. "I take this identification," he said in his message to the nation, "not as a coincidence or fortuitous accident, but as a sanction and seal of the Divine Power which guides my steps on the work with which I began life". Earlier, in 1942, he had accepted the proposals made by Sir Stafford Cripps for the solution of the Indian political impasse, but the purblind Congress leaders rejected the proposals and preferred to launch the 'Quit India' movement. Sri Aurobindo saw the world war, neither as a fight between nations and governments, still less between good peoples and bad peoples, but essentially as a grapple "between two forces, the Divine and the Asuric," and he felt that to side with the Allies would be the right course under the circumstances. When the proposal to cut India into two nations was seriously made in 1947 and was accepted by the Congress leaders, Sri Aurobindo felt

strongly that it was *not* a solution: he warned that the unity and greatness of the country couldn't be achieved through the lunatic process of partition and vivisection. The after-partition massacres were a testing time for the nation and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on his way to prayer came as the culminating shock to a people who were already finding that the taste of the flawed and fissured freedom that had come to them was turning sour and bitter. Less than three years later, however, came the event of Sri Aurobindo's own passing away on the morning of 5 December 1950. For several days more the body reposed "in a grandeur of victorious quiet, with thousands upon thousands having *darshan* of it," being charged as it seemed with a concentration of supernatural light. At last, on 9 December, 1950, the body was buried in the premises of the Ashram.

8.4 "A TREE" : TEXT

A tree beside the sandy river-beach
Holds up its topmost boughs
Like fingers towards the skies they cannot reach,
Earth-bound, heaven-amorous.
This is the soul of man. Body and brain
Hungry for earth our heavenly flight detain.

8.4.1 "A Tree" : Summary and Analysis

The poem "A Tree" by Sri Aurobindo depicts one of the fundamental concerns of life which grapples the human soul, one that oscillates between the earthly, mundane life and the higher, spiritual one. Sri Aurobindo makes elaborate this idea by drawing upon the figure of a tree. Like the tree that remains rooted in the ground, but its branches always give a suggestion of rising upwards, the soul of man also strives for upward movement, but is bound to the earth. The poem opens with a description of a tree which is planted besides a river. The tree's branches are spread in such a way that they give the impression of a man's fingers.

The branches are pointing towards the skies depicting their desire to reach the heavens. However, the fingers or the branches cannot reach the heaven as they are "earth-bound." What Sri Aurobindo implies here is that although the man's soul desires for upwards mobility, or a spiritual ascendance, his desires, his attachments with the worldly things keep him "earth-bound" and he fails to transcend the mundane existence and attain spirituality. Sri Aurobindo likens this tree to the soul of man, "This is the soul of man," where in body and brain which represent earthy desires are hungry for earth, that is, they are attached to the earthy pleasures and this attachment detains the "heavenly flight," that is, the earthly pleasures and earthly bonding creates an impediment for the spiritual quest.

The poem very beautifully, through the symbol of a tree constructs this dichotomy of earth and heaven as the essence of the relationship between the human being and the divine. This idea is best exemplified in the concluding couplet. The critical element is that the tree is rooted in the ground, yet strives for the sky. In this, there is what Aurobindo identifies as the intrinsic condition of what humanity is. On the one hand, the condition of man is one where there is division between his self and the divine. The notion of "heavenly flight" is inhibited by our own humanity. The soul becomes the embodiment of how painful this condition can be, one that Sri Aurobindo identifies as the essential predicament for humanity. The idea of being "hungry for Earth" is one where detachment is impossible because of want and ego, conditions that define what our condition as being "human" is all about. This "hunger" for that which is temporal and contingent is what detains our hope for transcendence, what Sri Aurobindo would identify as "our heavenly flight." In doing that Sri Aurobindo is not identifying this as a wholly painful condition or one that makes humanity agonizing. Rather, in referencing the tree as the subject of his poem, Sri Aurobindo is suggesting that we as human beings identify this as a condition of our

being in the world, embracing that which might be impossible to overcome and simply accept it as fact. In this, there is a tacit understanding that our functions as human beings might never be fully complete and this is understandable for we surrender our own sense of ego and notion of self, indicating submissiveness to something beyond ourselves and not detaining for so long our "heavenly flight." In this poem the tree, therefore, represents the soul's longing for the heavens. For example, boughs represent fingers and the tree represents a human being. The poem conveys a profounder meaning through the imagery of the tree.

8.5 "LIFE AND DEATH" : TEXT

Life, death, - death, life; the words have led for ages
Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed
Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages
Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.
Life only is, or death is life disguised, -
Life a short death until by Life we are surprised.

8.5.1 "Life and Death" : Summary and Analysis

The poem, "Life and Death," by Sri Aurobindo is about perspectives on life and death. Life and Death are two sides of the same coin and just as light is defined by dark, so, too, is life defined by death. Sri Aurobindo opens his poem with the traditional understanding of life and death as one in which human beings fear "death" as the end of "life." Sri Aurobindo is speaking of a belief position that posits death as the end of life, one that is looked on with fear and confusion.One of the primary meanings of the opening lines to Sri Aurobindo's poem would be that our traditional understanding of life and death as binary opposites have to be changed. Sri Aurobindo opens his poem with the traditional understanding of life and death as one in which human beings fear "death" as the end of "life." The invocation of "our thought and

consciousness" along with the idea of "firmly" helps to enhance this. Sri Aurobindo is speaking of a brief position that posits death as the end of life, one that is looked on with fear and confusion. It is rooted in the attachment of life and the clinging to it as one in which individuals see themselves as being alone in the world.

Sri Aurobindo follows the opening lines with "two opposites" that have its "long –hidden pages open." This helps to evoke the idea that life and death are part of a larger process. It is not one in which we are forlorn, causing us to be afraid of death. Rather, Sri Aurobindo is suggesting that we open our minds to fully embracing a reality in which individuals see themselves as part of a larger configuration. This construction is one in which "liberating truths" emerge, shedding the idea that death is to be something in which fear shrouds. For Sri Aurobindo, the opening lines of his poem suggest this mode of thought is something that should be changed and can be if one has the courage to unearth "long-hidden pages." Towards the end, Sri Aurobindo presents an alternating perspective on life and death where he breaks the binary between the two. He mingles the two and according to him, life is disguised as death and life is a kind of short death until ultimately man confronts death and his other worldly or spiritual life starts. Death provides a respite from the death like existence and initiates one into an eternal and spiritual life.

This poem is written in a unique style. The very first line gives that hint of uniqueness of style, "Life, death, - death, life; the words have led for ages." By putting double punctuation after the first "death" the poet creates a kind of stream of consciousness. The poem becomes like a thought. It is internal musings. The dash appears again before the last line. It therefore sandwiches the poem, making the middle lines seem like an aside or a train of thought. The rhyme scheme of the poem is ABABCC, which is iambic pentameter. This gives the poem that "heartbeat" sound, making it seem all the more

rhythmic. In addition to rhyme there is a metaphor, comparing thoughts to pages. The choice of words like "undreamed" is an interesting one. What are "liberating truths undreamed" in this case? It makes the reader think about chances we might have had.

8.6 "BRIDE OF THE FIRE" : TEXT

Bride of the Fire, clasp me now close, -
Bride of the Fire!
I have shed the bloom of the earthly rose,
I have slain desire.
Beauty of the Light, surround my life, -
Beauty of the Light!
I have sacrificed longing and parted from grief,
I can bear thy delight.
Image of Ecstasy, thrill and enlace, -
Image of Bliss!
I would see only thy marvellous face,
Feel only thy kiss.
Voice of Infinity, sound in my heart, -
Call of the One!
Stamp there thy radiance, never to part,
O living sun.

8.6.1 "Bride of the Fire" : Summary and Analysis

In "Bride of the Fire," Sri Aurobindo talks to a devotee who wants the God to bestow him with love and benevolence. He has risen above his base nature and has overcome all negative characteristic. The word 'Bride' indicates that the Supreme Brahman is like an adoring lover, not distant or aloof. The faithful lover or devotee is eager to find solace in his Bride's arms. The glow of divine awareness is much more attractive than the desire of the earth. He has left behind all

happiness. “Bride of the Fire” was composed between 1902 and 1936. It is a powerful poem meant to awaken and inspire us. The poem falls in the line of Vedic aspiration, presiding deity of the Vedas being Agni. The poem is addressed to ‘Bride’ of the fire. “Bride of the Fire” talks about the power of Agni, she is the consort of Agni and her work is to illumine, give us the energy that can uplift us, she is the divine energy, her work is to purify and to transform. Agni is the knower of all births. It is the supramental fire that transforms us. It is hidden in matter as the divine energy which is impelling and propelling the race forward and upward in its ascension. So, she is divine energy within the race. Agni occupies the middle term of our existence and helps in the upliftment and ascension of the human life. Here in the poem, just as in line with Vedic rishis Sri Aurobindo is invoking the power of agni.

In the first stanza, the poet is aspiring for Agni to come closer and closer. When Agni is felt from a distance, there is warmth, sweetness, light which illumines, but as Agni comes closer and closer to us, it becomes difficult to bear its heat, bear its transforming pressure, because it demands complete purity of nature. So when we are feeling cold, and fire is burning at a distance, it gives a very good sensation, but as we draw closer and closer to this fire, the same fire which is so soothing begins to hurt. So, there’s a condition to be fulfilled to draw Agni close to oneself as the poet is doing. So he fulfils the condition which is “I have shed the bloom of the earthly rose, I have slain desire.” So the bloom of the earthly love is the human love, the mortal love, the mortal pleasures, the mortal joys. So the poet says, O Agni I invoke you to come closer and closer, because desire is slain and all earthly attachments, earthly longings, earthly love, all that is gone from within me once and forever.

In the next stanza, the poet invokes the light aspect of Agni. Once again we see that one has to bear this delight and its not easy, the

human system is not meant for it but he is once again drawing beauty of the light, this beauty which is unearthly, which is found only in the shadowless deathless light. The poet is drawing that beauty, invoking this beauty and this light to surrender oneself, but there is a condition and that condition he has fulfilled- we are surrounded by all kinds of things to which we are attached, so they have to go away, so he has sacrificed longing and parted from grief, these things to which we are attached. On one side, they give us happiness but on the other side when they pass away, because they are temporary and transient they give us grief. So essentially here the condition is that we must be free from all attachments which are of a transient nature. Now here it is not about this person or that object but the nature of attachment should change from transience, temporary seeking for temporary joy, temporary satisfaction and temporary pleasure to partaking of the true *rasa* in all things, so to be attached as the divine is attached to the world. The condition for joy, the condition for delight is to renounce so by renouncing the temporary and the transient we get the joy of the eternal. So he has renounced and therefore he is ready to bear the delight of the eternal- "*Beauty of the Light, surround my life, - Beauty of the Light!I have sacrificed longing and parted from grief,I can bear thy delight."*

The third stanza establishes Agni as the form marker, so now we see the image, the *roopam.* There is an invocation to light in the Gayatri mantra also. So when the poet invokes, he invokes the light of sun, he invokes the most auspicious form and it is to reshape the entire nature and not illumination in the mind, not just a freedom in the heart but to create a new form from within. This form which is mortal form, which cannot bear this delight must go and give way to a new form so he is invoking this new form as he says, "*image of ecstacy, thrill and enlace," surround me, intertwine me, penetrate me, "image of bliss- I would see only thy marvellous face, Feel only*

thy kiss." So he is invoking the most auspicious form which is the image of ecstasy, the form of delight, and is invoking so that his being can bear the stamp of this delight, can bear the kiss which transforms and redeems matter and material forms. So he is invoking Agni so that he can feel the touch of the divine delight, the form, the divine form upon his material substance.

The last stanza draws upon the preceding stanza. In the preceding stanza there is the image of ecstasy where sight is involved. So there is a transmutation of the sight where he wants to see the one presence, the one divine everywhere so that material substance can be redeemed by this touch. Through sight he is receiving that form and its touch upon its being through kiss of the divine presence upon material substance, he is seeking its redemption, he is seeking that ecstasy and now we hear the sound. Sri Aurobindo here draws upon the Vedic tradition as Vedic rishis aspired for truth vision and truth hearing. So these are the two faculties for which they aspire because through these two faculties we can remould our existence and actually if we see all forms are built by primarily these two powers. Of course, there are the powers earth comes to stabilize, but sound and sight, they weave the form as it were and they have a major role to play. So once again we see instead of the multitudinous voices that we are hearing all the time we are as well surrounded by all types of vibrations also. So all the vibrations that surround us are of different types, different levels, different denominations, and different domains. The poet in their place wants that one vibration which is the vibration of infinity to surround and sound within, "*Stamped there thy radiance, never to part, O living sun.*" So he's invoking this one vibration, the vibration of the Supreme to completely take hold of the nature. The use of the word stamp assumes significance here. Stamp is something which is very physical and very material. So, once again he is invoking this tremendous, powerful vibration, the Supreme Vibration so that

its records can be stamped on the very cells of the body on each and every atom of existence because once it is stamped on matter, then it will never part. So as long as it is a just a question of some inner experience in some far-off field, then the experience comes and goes but stamp- by that it means it is a concrete realization.

So "Bride of the Fire" is a poem in a sense of transformation where Sri Aurobindo takes the Vedic image and carries it to its furthest extreme possibility of first illumination, purification, and then eventually the transformation of nature, the transformation of sight and hearing and senses till finally the very form is ready to bear the delight and light of the divine existence. The sun here is, of course, a supramental sun. The poem is the invocation of the most auspicious aspect of life, so we can say in a certain sense that this is Sri Aurobindo's *Gayatri* but given a poetic form, so he is invoking the light and heat, the power, the energy of the highest Sun to illumine, to purify, and to eventually transform, and there are conditions for this which he also reveals to us, all egoism, all smallness, all narrowness, all attachments, all earthly longings, all that leads to grief, all that is nothing else but the stimulation of desire must seize, there must be complete stillness and readiness and openness and receptivity and acceptance of this greater power, then only our being can be entirely transformed by its touch.

So, the poem is a sort of a mantra. Sri Aurobindo's point is a mantra, the Agni mantra from the Rig Vedas, we can read it just as a mantra and it has the power to invoke the same power, same energy within our being and not only within some innocent being but also in the very cells, in the very atoms of our existence and this is the magic of this poem as of many other poems in a similar way. The poem uses many exclamation marks which depicts that the speaker is in an ecstatic and excited state. The speaker has strong feelings on the subject he is describing in the poem. The author uses lexical repetitions to emphasize a significant image; of is repeated.The poet also uses

anaphora at the beginnings of some neighboring lines. The same words bride, i, beauty,image are repeated." "Bride of the Fire" breathe a common aspiration towards the eternal Light and its expression in time, the one by a grand movement in which the intense is carried in the immense, the other by a poignant turn which bears the immense in the intense. Sri Aurobindo uses the symbol 'Fire' to denote the Divine Light. The poet having 'shed the bloom of the earthly rose' and 'slain desire' longs for the clasp of the 'Bride of fire.'The poet who has transcended from the physical plane, shedding the worldly passions and desires, expresses his longing to be hugged by the Bride of the Fire to transform his Self into the illuminating effulgence of the Divine light.

8.7 GLOSSARY

boughs- a main branch of a tree.

amorous- showing, feeling, or relating to sexual desire.

clasp-keep (someone) from proceeding by holding them back or making claims on their attention.

consciousness- the state of being aware of and responsive to one's surroundings.

undreamed- not thought to be possible (used to express pleasant surprise at the amount, extent, or level of something).

clasp- grasp (something) tightly with one's hand.

slain- kill (a person or animal) in a violent way.

ecstasy- an overwhelming feeling of great happiness or joyful excitement.

radiance- light or heat as emitted or reflected by something.

8.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. In which year was Sri Aurobindo born_____.

   a) 1890

   b) 1870

c) 1872

d) 1860

2. Which of the following poems is considered Sri Aurobindo's magnum opus?_____.

a) "Bride of the Fire"

b) *Savitri*

c) "Life and Death"

d) "A Tree"

3. Which poem by Sri Aurobindo constructs the dichotomy of earth and heaven as the essence of the relationship between the human being and the divine?_____.

a) "A Tree"

b) "Life and Death"

c) "Bride of the Fire"

d) None of the above

4. Which Vedic deity is invoked in the poem "Bride of the Fire?"_____.

a) Water

b) Fire

c) Air

d) None of the above

5. What is the correct rhyme scheme and form of the poem "Life and Death?"_____.

a) *abbacc,* iambic pentameter

b) *abcabc,* iambic trimeter

c) *ababcd,* iambic pentameter

d) *ababcc*, iambic pentameter

6. Which of the following poems by Sri Aurobindo breaks the binary between life and death ?_____.

a) "Bride of the Fire"

b) "A Tree"

c) "Life and Death"

d) None of the above

7. Which of the following poems by Sri Aurobindo draws upon the Vedic tradition ? _____ .

a) "Bride of the Fire"

b) "A Tree"

c) "Life and Death"

d) None of the above

8. What does the poet compare the "tree" in the poem "A Tree ?"_____.

a) the human mind

b) the human spirit

c) the human soul

d) none of the above

9. Which of the elements is best exemplified in the poem "Bride of the Fire? "_____.

a) Transformation

b) Illumination

c) Both (a) and (b)

d) None of the above

10. When did Sri Aurobindo die ?_____ .

a) 1947

b) 1950

c) 1960

d) 1952

8.9 LET US SUM UP

Sri Aurobindo's place in the Indian literary tradition is instrumental. Not only a national leader of repute, Sri Aurobindo is an equally well-known writer. In his literary works, he is mostly concerned about the question of spirituality and all his major works hover around the issue of spiritual quest. "Bride of the Fire," "Life and Death" and "A Tree" are all written in the same vein, where a quest for spiritual awakening is underway.

8.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of Sri Aurobindo's life and works.
2. Give an assessment of Sri Aurobindo's place in the tradition of Indian literature in English.
3. Discuss the central idea of the poem "A Tree" by Sri Aurobindo.
4. Give a critical appreciation of Sri Aurobindo's poem "A Tree."
5. How does Sri Aurobindo use the symbol of "tree" in the poem "A Tree ?" Is the symbol an apt one considering the theme of the poem?
6. Give a critical appreciation of the poem "Life and Death" by placing it within the spiritual ideals of Sri Aurobindo.
7. How does Sri Aurobindo link the two contraries, life and death in the poem "Life and Death." How is his idea different from the traditional conception of life and death?
8. Critically analyse the poem "Bride of the Fire" by Sri Aurobindo.
9. "Bride of the Fire" dwells upon the Vedic tradition. Elaborate.
10. What are the major themes delineated in Sri Aurobindo's poetry?
11. Comment upon the usage of symbols and images in Sri Aurobindo's poetry.

8.11 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. c) 1872
2. b) *Savitri*
3. a) "A Tree"
4. b) Fire
5. d) *ababcc*, iambic pentameter
6. c) "Life and Death"
7. a) "Bride of the Fire"
8. c) the human soul
9. c) Both (a) and (b)
10. b) 1950

8.12 SUGGESTED READING

Perspectives on Sri Aurobindo's Poetry, Plays, and Criticism by Amrita Paresh Patel and Jaydipnish K. Dodiya

Symbolism in the Poetry of Sri Aurobindo by SyamalaKallury

The Lives and Times of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh by Kaushal Kishore

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NISSIM EZEKIEL : LIFE AND POETRY

STRUCTURE

9.1 Introduction to the author

9.2 Objectives

9.3 Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel

9.4 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

9.5 Let Us Sum Up

9.6 Examination Oriented Questions

9.7 Answer Key (MCQs)

9.8 Suggested Reading

9.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR

Nissim Ezekiel, one of the most notable post-independence Indian English writers of verse, was the first of the 'new poets' to publish his collection of poetry. His mother tongue is English like that of Dom Moraes. He has achieved a rare mastery of language and metre. He was born and brought up as a Maharashtrian Bene-Israeli in Bombay- a fact which seems to have conditioned his sense of belonging to the place of his birth. He was educated at Antonio D 'Souza high school and Wilson College, Bombay, and Birbeck College, London. He lived in Bombay all his life and became a Professor in American Literature at the University of Bombay. In 1964, he was a Visiting

Professor at Leeds University; in 1974, an invitee of the U.S. Government under its International Visitors Programme; and in 1975, a Cultural Award Visitor to Australia. Besides being the first rate poet, Ezekiel had a deep interest in drama and for some time he had been the Director of Theatre Unit, Bombay. Among his famous plays are: *Nalini, Marriage Poem* and The *Sleepwalker.* His poetic works include *A Time to Change* (1952), *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965) *Snakeskin and Other Poems* (1974), a translation from the Marathi of Indira Sant and *Hymns in Darkness* (1976) to name some of them. He got his poems published in *Encounter, The Illustrated Weekly of India, London Magazine* and *The Spectator.* Ezekiel tries to belong to a wider humanity historically while living in the present moment. The actual strength of his poetry arises from the fact that he has his ideas firmly related to contemporary Indian realities.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

This lesson aims to acquaint the learner with an introduction to Nissim Ezekiel and his works, that includes his poetry.

9.3 POETRY OF NISSIM EZEKIEL

Ezekiel's poetry is the outcome of his experiences as a man who strives to come to terms with himself and at the same time it is an instrument which shapes his ideology and attitude of life. His keen and analytical mind probes and explores the commonplace and everyday experiences and even presses into service the trivial to create his poetry which because of his technical skill and virtuosity, earned him a great place as in Prof. Iyenger's words, "the seagreen incorruptible among the 'new poets', almost the equivalent of a poet's poet for them."

The critics have a common consensus about a major fact that Ezekiel's poetry belongs to a Bene-Israel family which had migrated to India long, long ago. In spite of his Jewish background, Ezekiel confesses his total

identification with India and he feels that it is a correct choice for him because it sustains him as a writer and a human-being. He acknowledges that India's background coincides with his own. According to Ezekiel, as he writes in *New Writing In India* (Penguin, London, 1974),

> India is simply my environment. A man can do something for and in his environment by being fully what he is, not by withdrawing from it. I have not withdrawn from India.....

No doubt, Ezekiel has accepted the situation and is fully involved in it, though, at times, he feels it to be "utterly hopeless one," to use the expression of Gieve Patel. Besides, to him Bombay is the metaphor for the urban life in India or India itself. Ezekiel makes a two-fold attempt to accomplish a difficult task of harmonizing the diverse elements of volatile Indian urban culture and project a comprehensive picture of various facets of metropolis life. M.K. Naik makes a very perceptive observation about those influences that shaped his poetic sensibility :

> Ezekiel is acutely aware of this alienation being accentuated by the fact that he has spent most of his life in a highly westernized circles in cosmopolitan Bombay.
>
> With Marathi (on his own admission) as his "lost mother tongue" and English as his "second mother tongue", Ezekiel's quest for integration made for a restless career of quick changes and experiments including "philosophy/poverty and poetry" in London basement room, and attempts at journalism, publishing and advertising–and even a spell of working as a factory manager–before he settled down as a university teacher in his "bitter native city.

These experiences have added three important aspects to his poetry : (i) urban sensibility and city scenes with a note of tough realism which strips his poetry of romantic glamour; (ii) theme of alienation which colours his entire poetic universe and (iii) a search for identity which he terms as his "dim identity." These themes reveal his early fascination for poets like Rilke, Eliot and Auden who influenced him in his poetic craft as well. Ezekiel calls himself "A refugee of the spirit" in search of an identity which in different moods appears to him to be either a "one man lunatic asylum" or "a small deserted holy place."

Ezekiel always felt that this choice of the identification with the land of his adoption was the correct move though he found himself to be an outsider. He says of himself: "I am not a Hindu, and my background makes me a natural outsider: circumstances and decisions relate me to India." This feeling shapes many of his significant themes such as a personal feeling of loss and deprivation. He admits that "Scores of my poems are obviously written for personal, and therapeutic purposes." For instance, consider his poem "Enterprise" or "Background, Casually" where he states his position unambiguously. As Naik points out, Ezekiel experimented with three different solutions to his problem. The easiest way out is a protective assumption of easy superiority which tends to express itself in "surface irony" as in his 'Very Indian' poems 'in Indian English, in which "the obvious linguistic howlers of Indian students are pilloried with metropolitan snobbishness." In a more generous mood, he gives himself the compliment of being "a good native" and tells himself: "I cannot leave this island/ I was born here and belong." It is a pity that this mood does not persist for long and then the despair takes over again and he accepts "My backward place is where I am." In such moods, "Ezekiel's delivery is mild and unemphatic– a matter of cool diction, moderate metaphor, of syntax rather than music" to use the expression of William Walsh from *Times Literary Supplement* dated 3rd Feb. 1978. In other words, Ezekiel does succeed in creating something more than minor verse out of his alienation, as in "The Night of the Scorpion," which is one of the finest poems in recent Indian English literature. Here, Ezekiel tells a tale, which lies in the sting, and evokes superstitious practices we have still

not outgrown through an observer who is neither flippantly ironical nor totally detached. About this poem, R. Parathasarathy observes :

> It enacts an impressive ritual in which the mother's reaction, towards the end, to her own suffering ironically cancels out earlier responses, both primitive and sophisticated. The interrelationship between the domestic tragedy and the surrounding community is unobtrusively established. The poem also demonstrates the effective use of parallelism.

Many of his poems carry such sort of devices and effects. Ezekiel invests them with deep significance by trying to "understand the Indian ethos and view of evil and suffering, though he makes no claim to sharing it," says M.K. Naik.

Nissim Ezekiel has built in his poetry a vivid and effective urban scene but mostly the features that he highlights are its sprawling vastness, sickness and polluted environment. He makes the reader feel that it is not only the city which is sick but the entire modern civilization as well, being barbaric, poverty stricken, noisy and polluted. He says :

> Barbaric city sick with slums,
> Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains,
> Its hawkers, beggars, iron-lunged,
> Processions led by frantic drums,
> A million purgatorial lanes,
> And childlike masses, many-tongued,
> Whose wages are in words and crumbs.

Actually, Ezekiel has a love-hate relationship with his environment. He cares for it but is full of anger and dissatisfaction over it. He criticizes it, but till his criticism has a positive side he believes that exposing the reality may

generate an awareness which may pave the way to improvement. He does not expect anything in return and it does not come in the way of his love for India.

Ezekiel's search for happiness takes him to focus on man-woman relationship, which generally ends in futility. His love poems mostly deal with physical relationship; his descriptions are intimate, frank and uninhibited, even direct as well as suggestive. One not only fails to forge a lasting relationship but also experiences a general feeling of frustration or discontent. In the poem "Quarrel," the protagonist goes in search of an ideal woman to co-relate with her and create an emotional bond but fails :

At night I talk to you,
A troubled dream
Of many words
and not a single kiss.
Let us not quarrel again,
So I may never dream
in argument alone.

As he says in "To a Certain Lady" most of the time it is "daily/companionship with neither love nor hate." It appears that the protagonist over-reacts in many situations, an outcome of a dehumanized atmosphere. Like the human scene, even nature is not untainted or unspoiled. It is rather dry and oppressive :

The river which he claims he loves is dry, and all the winds lie dead.

Leave aside the responses of the grown up individuals who have a lot of distracting experiences in life, even as a growing child sees the objects of nature through the eyes of an urbanite. His worlds of dreams and stark realities stand apart. There is nothing like a sense of mystery, novelty and freshness in the world of nature :

The morning breeze
Released no secrets to his ears.

The more he stared the less he saw
Among the individual trees.

Ezekiel does not lose courage and hope; he wants to stick to reality for which he wishes to remain where he belongs. He says :

Confiscate my passport. Lord,
I don't want to go abroad
Let me find my song
Where I belong.

Ezekiel's poetry grows out of the fact of knowing things as they are; he admits :

All you have
is the sense of reality
unfathomable
as it yields its secrets
slowly
one
by
one.

Another persistent motif is an obsessive sense of failure, leading to self-doubt which leaves the poet "in exile from himself." It has strongly coloured Ezekiel's poetry of love and marriage. Art and the artist is another theme to which he returns time and again. He connects the problems of poetry and existence. There are derivative pieces like "The Truth about the Floods" while the "Poster Poems" is a cross between epigrammatic and experimental verse. "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S." and "The Railway Clerk" are clever as well as cruel. "The Egoist's Prayers" are striking enough, and although the ego declines to be diminished, there are probing inquiries :

The price of wisdom
is too high

but folly is expensive too.

strike a bargain with me, Lord.

I'm not a man of ample means.

Though Ezekiel was constantly concerned with the problems of poetry and existence, he touched the metaphysical themes only occasionally. However, in *Hymns in Darkness,* the 16-piece sequence, he concludes "Belief will not save you/Nor disbelief," but he gives no final formula of "light." Ezekiel occasionally lapses into faded romanticism or indulges in cleverness, for example, he says "Pretence, to pretend, I pretend." When he deliberately adopts the ironic mode, his verse generally maintains a studied neutrality of tone which suits his natural stance of the alienated observer.

Nissim Ezekiel's major poetic talent lies in technical skill of a high order which remains undiminished. Except, in his later works where his choice for an open form sometimes makes for looseness, he has always written verse which is extremely tightly constructed. His mastery of the colloquial idiom is matched by a sure command of rhythm and rhyme. A use of cool understatement and "a lapidary quality" have made him one of the most quotable poets of his generation. Though, hardly a poet with the shattering original image, he employs the extended metaphor effectively in the poems like "Enterprise" in which he says, "Home is where we have to gather grace."

Briefly, to Ezekiel goes the credit of having ushered in a new trend in the post-independence period, which changed the course of Indian poetry in English in theme and technique. He is also responsible for giving an urban turn to it, which was earlier essentially bucolic. These changes have proved so crucial that "he has come to be considered not merely a major poet but a major influence on other practicing poets" as says L.S.R. Krishna Sastry in his article "A Note on Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry" published in *The Indian Journal of English Studies, (*1992-93*).*

9.4 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. In which year was Nissim Ezekiel born ? _____.

   a) 1932
   b) 1920
   c) 1924
   d) 1928

2. What is the name of the first collection of Poetry by Nissim Ezekiel ? _____.

   a) The Unfinished Man
   b) A Time to Change
   c) The Exact Name
   d) Sixty Poems

3. Which is the major aspect of Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry ? _____.

   a) Urban sensibility
   b) Theme of alienation
   c) a search for identity
   d) All of the above

4. Who wrote the poem "Goodbye Party for Miss Puspa T.S.?" _____.

   a) Kamala Das
   b) Nissim Ezekiel
   c) Maya Angelou
   d) Toru Dutt

5. Which Indian English poet uses Bombay as a metaphor for urban life in India? _____.

   a) Agha Shahid Ali

b) Kamala Das

c) Nissim Ezekiel

d) A.K. Ramanujan

9.5 LET US SUM UP

Nissim Ezekiel, one of the most notable post-independence Indian English verse writers, was the first of the 'new poets' to publish his poetry collection. His mother tongue is English like that of Dom Moraes, He has achieved a rare mastery of language and metre. Ezekiel's poetry is the out-come of his experiences as a man who strives to come to terms with himself and at the same time it is an instrument that shapes his ideology and attitude of life. His keen and analytical mind probes and explores the commonplace and everyday experiences and even presses into service the trivial to create his poetry which because of his technical skill and virtuosity, earned him a great place as in Prof. Iyenger's words, "the seagreen incorruptible among the 'new poets,' almost the equivalent of a poet's poet for them."

9.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) Justify Ezekiel's poetry as an out come of his experiences and at the same time as an instrument which shapes his ideology and attitude.

b) Discuss various aspects of Ezekiel's poetry.

9.7 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. c) 1924

2. b) A Time to Change

3. d) All of the Above

4. b) Nissim Ezekiel

5. c) Nissim Ezekiel

9.8 SUGGESTED READING

Nissim Ezekiel : Collected Poems, 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press.

A. Raghu. The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi.

Raghu Nath Sahoo. Tension and Moral Dilemmas in Nissim Ezekiel's poetry. Sarup Book Publishers, New Delhi.

Sanjit Mishra. The Poetic Art of Nissim Ezekiel. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi.

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NISSIM EZEKIEL : MAJOR THEMES IN EZEKIEL'S POETRY

STRUCTURE

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Objectives

10.3 Major Themes

10.4 Theme of Alienation

10.5 Theme of Disillusionment in life

10.6 Multiple Choice Question (MCQs)

10.7 Let Us Sum Up

10.8 Examination Oriented Questions

10.9 Answer Key (MCQs)

10.10 Suggested Reading

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Ezekiel is a poet of many themes. In an interview given to *Gentleman* he states :

> To start with, my own inspiration is and always was 'my inner life.' And writing is, for me, a way of coping with the tension between my inner life and the outer life. Looking back, this from the earliest days, seems to

> be the main source of my writing..... My poems are often introspective and, therefore, express self-criticism and self-doubt. I also write about my relationship with other people, love, sex, the individual in society, etc.

His poetry emanates from life and that is why it describes "the horror, the boredom and the glory of life. In other words, poetry to Ezekiel is a way of life, a continuous flow that is inextricably related to his existence. He has always celebrated the "ordinariness of most events" as poetry grows neither out of "a bourgeois dream" nor "a bohemian practice." He has avoided adroitly both the extremes and remains always himself, within his range. Consequently, his poetry is free from conventions, exaggerations and abstract ideas. What impresses the reader most in his poetry is his persistent sincerity. He has been a poet who gave new lines of communication with his society. If in England, "philosophy, poverty and poetry" ("Background, Casually," *Hymns in Darkness*) shared his basement room; in India he has been quite a man of action with a sense of responsibility to what he loves. In *The Unfinished Man,* the protagonist in the form of a depersonalized third person says that he :

> .... worked at various jobs and then he stopped
> for reasons never clear nor quite approved
> By those who knew, some almost said he shopped.
> Around for dreams and projects later dropped (Though
> this was quite untrue); he never moved Unless he found
> something he might have loved.

This is obviously a reference to a man who changed his jobs, Nissim Ezekiel himself. The lines confirm two things : (a) Whenever Ezekiel loves something he does not hesitate to rely on it. (b) His career has always been multifarious, and indicates the road range of experience behind his poetry and other writings. In other words, his poetry is autographical and carries the experience of his long wandering actually and psychologically as in

"Background, Casually," from *Hymns in Darkness :*

> The Indian Landscape sears my eyes.
> I have become a part of it
> To be observed by foreigners.
> They say that I am singular.
> Their letters overstate the case.
> I have made my commitment now.
> This is one : To stay where I am.
> As others choose to give themselves;
> In some remote and backward place,
> My backward place is where I am.

10.2 OBJECTIVES

This objective of the lesson is to familiarize the learner with the major themes in Nissim Ezekiel poetry.

10.3 MAJOR THEMES

Though Ezekiel's major themes are the Indian contemporary scene, modern urban life and spiritual values but basically his poetry is something that grows out of his life and experience. In a series of commitments, Ezekiel becomes "essentially an Indian poet writing in English" to borrow his own words from an interview with Adil Jussawalla.

Ezekiel is primarily a poet who seeks a balance between an almost existential involvement with life and intellectual quest trying to reach out to future destinations. Ezekiel's groping for identity at times appears to reflect an East-West dichotomy. He says in his article "How a Poem is Written" :

> The poet may imagine that he has at last acquired the wisdom which has always eluded him in the past, because the groupings and stumblings of the past are no longer endurable; it has become necessary to believe that one knows.

He feels that Bombay is a meeting place of East and West but does not glorify the city. He is aware of its stark realities. If his love for India has a clarity of purpose, that to belong to a particular place, he does not allow his skepticism to mar his positive identification with the city. As he puts it : "I love India, I expect nothing in return, because critical, skeptical love does not beget love." For him, India is not only a noisy place but innocent, peace-loving masses also. In "City Song," he looks down at the view from his friend's terrace :

As I sway in the breeze,
The city sways below.
Suddenly I learn
What I always knew :
I don't wish to go any higher.
I want to return
As soon as I can,
To be of this city,
To feel its hot breath.
I have to belong .....

Ezekiel knows that one has to commit oneself to perceive the reality of the world of things and to find the meaning and have a sense of identity with them. Ezekiel's commitment has given rise to a series of poems on the complex, rapid changing India of today with its incongruities and inequalities, its poverty and pretensions. There is no compromise with these dichotomies on its purely mundane terms. It is through the "syncretic vision" that he succeeds in reconciling the opposites. In this metaphoric process "the city," that is Bombay which for him, stands for India develops its own primordial roots from within. And it is here that "the urban artist," Ezekiel finds the primeval law of life, and makes "its spirit sing and dance," as Ezekiel puts it in "Jamini Roy" from *The*

Unfinished Man. Ezekiel appreciated Roy as an artist because he seems to be sharing some artistic principles with the former. He, like Roy believes, that one can communicate to the largest audience when one creates something in a popular idiom. It is possible when the artist visualizes objects in their primitive simplicity :

> He started with a different style.
> He travelled, so he found his roots.
> His rags became a quiet smile
> Prolific in its proper fruits.
> A people painted what it saw
> With eyes of supple innocence.
> An urban artist found the law
> To make its spirit sing and dance.

Like Roy, Ezekiel started with a different style by identifying with the land, that is, India. He broke away the shackles of self and could tread on the path of community. For Ezekiel, the escape is not from the community but "into it." Aware of the cultural dichotomy and 'cultural pitfalls,' he still tries to find roots as a social being; like any other individual who has cultivated a sense of "belonging", he is disturbed by the very idea of being "rootless." He avoids the two extremes of Ramanujan's exaggeration of native culture and Daruwalla's careful indifference. Ezekiel relates himself to modern India and he consciously avoids "the parochialism of the native" as well as the "sophistication of the rootless." He knows that he cannot remain aloof from his environment and cannot accept everything blindly. In him, there is a synthesis of the cultural polarities. As a poet, he shoulders immense responsibility to society and it has made his life and art more meaningful and enduring which should not be mistaken for a total reconciliation with the cultural polarities of India. In his poetry, he contemplates about them in different manner and moods and the result is a poetry which reveals constant variations on the central theme of alienation.

10.4 THEME OF ALIENATION

Ezekiel discussed the phenomenon of alienation at some length and said :

> Actually, I would like to see some alienation among Indo-English writers. However, undesirable from moral, social and other points of view, it has been aesthetically very productive, provided it is genuine. You can't pretend. You can't play the game of alienation. If you are genuinely alienated ..... and feel you are hostile towards others and they are hostile to you, you hate their guts and they hate yours, this can produce great literature.

Though, none among the Indian writers is alienated in this manner but whatever the degree, alienation is a productive state of the mind. For Ezekiel, his own minority religious ethos of Jewish tradition played a serious role, as he confesses in "Background Casually." His brief stint abroad also did not help him. He felt that he "had failed/In everything" at journalism, publishing and advertising even while working as Factory Manager, before he settled down to teaching. This restlessness was, perhaps, only an external manifestation of the emotional turmoil within, caused by many factors. Ezekiel tries to put it to artistic use as in "The Very Indian Poems in Indian English." "The Patriot," "The Professor," and "Good-bye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S." are its capital examples. Superficially viewed, these poems may appear to be casual and ironic exercises exploiting the obvious humour arising out of the common use of English language and ironic exercises obviously arising out of the common misuse of word and phrase, tense and preposition, syntax and idiom, the indulgences in cliche and misquotation, and all typically Indian blind spots betrayed in handling of English. However, the stance taken by Ezekiel is not only of the amused observer but also of one who holds contempt for all "undernourished Hindu lads/Their prepositions always wrong." Ezekiel has guided the poet

in himself to "Polish up alien/techniques of observation," and the result is seen in several poems of social satire.

The objects of the poet's ironic observation are drawn from various strata of society. For example, consider his poems like "Rural Suite," "Guru," "The Truth about the Floods," "How English Lesson Ended," "On Bellasis Road," "In India," "Poverty Poems," or "Jewish Wedding in Bombay." These poems indicate that Ezekiel's stance of an ironic observer is combined with other moods which oscillate between self-assurance and regret, hope and despair as, for instance, in "Island." However, the poet's realization of his dilemma of alienational lack of communication can be roughly treated as threefold : (i) failure to communicate with Truth; (ii) failure to understand one's own essential self; (iii) failure to correlate with the larger world outside. In his early poetry, his sense of failure results in a spirit of utter despair, but later on, the poet found an easy consolation in social satire as a possible antidote realizing that "Our deeds were neither great nor rare," as he put it in "Enterprise." In the poems like "Night of the Scorpion" he shows his subtle and complex response to such situations when he sincerely tries to deal with alienational experience. Ezekiel's poems in *Latter-Day Psalms* show that the poet tries to enjoy the easier option of light-fingered social irony or diverting parody, for instance, among other poems mentioned above, "Irani Restaurant Instructions." Various strategies have been employed by the poet in reacting to the ancient Psalms, which he in the end tells us are "part of my flesh." The collection also offers direct criticism of modern life and civilization when he asks, "What have we done with the do/minion thou has given us." Hence, it is pertinent to conclude that Ezekiel gives us poetry connected with alienational experience though he prefers to dwell on the periphery without reaching its hard central core.

10.5 THEME OF DISILLUSIONMENT IN LIFE

Ezekiel's poetry grows out of a personal quest for identity and commitment to society to find harmony in life through all the "myth and maze," but it also results into poetry which reveals spiritual emptiness and

disillusionment in life. He longs for "perfection of human personality," the traits of which are rather unspecified. To him, poetry being creative, is precisely a path to the discovery of truths. He says :

Whatever the enigma
The passion of the blood
Grant me the metaphor
To make it human good.

He prays but his confidence dwindles and doubts begin to overpower him :

My self examined frightens me
I have heard the endless silent dialogue
Between the self protective self
And the self naked.

Finally, complete disillusionment and inner emptiness possess him and he says that he can arrive anywhere because of the situation he has lived in :

His past like a muddy pool
From which he cannot hope for words

Even the town he inhabits is full of "slaves of incessant race." He is disillusioned and believes that the town has killed the soul of its people and has changed them into featureless masses as in "In India" :

Always, in the sun's eye,
Here among the beggars,
Hawkers, pavement sleepers
Hutment dwellers, slums,
Dead souls of men and gods,
Burnt-out mothers, frightened
Virgins, wasted child
And tortured animal

All in noisy silence
Suffering the place and time
I ride my elephant of thought
A Cezanne slung around my neck.

Ezekiel is painfully aware of flesh, 'its instant urges and its disturbing affiliations with the mind. With bickering over petty matter, needless quarrels over trifles, hatred and hostility the city becomes "barbaric city" and man becomes "one among the men of straw," Ezekiel enters into the mood of self-analysis, introspection and gets frightened. His primary concern is with man and his mind. In the poem, "On Meeting a Pedant' he withholds his own emotional colouring and unfolds the dehumanized traits of man.

10.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Ezekiel became one of the pioneers of a type of Indo-Anglian Poetry, known as _____.

   a) Modern Poetry
   b) New Poetry
   c) Post Modern Poetry
   d) None of these

2. Under the influence of _____, Ezekiel portrayed a galaxy of themes such as aliemation, disllusionment etc.

   a) Post Modernism
   b) Modernism
   c) Existentialism
   d) None of these

3. Who wrote the essay "Naipaul's India and mine?" _____.

   a) Raja Rao
   b) R.K. Narayan

c) Toru Dutt

d) Nissim Ezekiel

4. Name the article in which Walter Tenetto and Enrique Martinez say, "The relevance of his poetry lies in the depiction of the mundane, The physical reality which is inescapable" about Nissim Ezekiel. _____.

a) "Nissim Ezekiel : Modernity"

b) "Naipaul's India and Mine"

c) "Nissim Ezekiel : The Father of Modernity in Indian-English Poetry".

d) "Nissim Ezekiel : Intels to an Indian Sensibility".

5. Which of the following poetic work is not written by Nissim Ezekiel ?

a) Snakeskin and Other Poems

b) Hymns in Darkness

c) Selected Poems

d) Sixty Poems

10.7 LET US SUM UP

These themes in Ezekiel's poetry show that his poetry does not present any philosophical, historical or psychological problems, but it is basically the imaginative reconstruction of life as it is lived including its high and low tensions experienced in the contemporary Indian situation. Linda Hess's essay on post-independence Indian poetry in English, is perhaps, the best summing up of Ezekiel as a poet :

> He is a poet of the city-Bombay; a poet of the body; and an explorer of the labyrinths of the mind, the devious delvings and twistings of the ego, and the ceaseless attempt of man and poet to define himself, to find through all "myth and maze" a way to honesty and love.

It is absolutely justifiable to sum up Ezekiel's poetry in the words of Walter Tonetto and Enrique Martinez from their article, "Nissim Ezekiel: Inlets to an Indian Sensibility" that "The relevance of his poetry lies in the depiction of the mundane, the physical reality which is inescapable." But, that should not be mistaken for a limited vision. Actually, in the range and depth of sensibility, he remains unsurpassed, which makes him a poet of many themes operating at different levels. Ezekiel has a philosophical mind, a distinct sense of direction and a commitment. His poetry can be defined as "a metaphoric journey into the heart of existence" itself.

10.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) Discuss the major themes in Ezekiel's poetry.

b) Comment on the theme of alienation in Ezekiel's poetry.

10.9 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b) New Poetry
2. b) Modernism
3. d) Nissim Ezekiel
4. d) "Nissim Eekiel : Intels to an Indian Sensibility."
5. c) Selected Poems

10.10 SUGGESTED READING

Chetan Karnani. *Nissim Ezekiel*

K.R. Srivasa Iyengar. *Indian Writting in English*

Nissim Ezekiel : Collected Poems, 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press.

Raghunath Sahoo. Tension and Moral Dilemmas in Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry Sarup Book Publishers, New Delhi.

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NISSIM EZEKIEL : POETIC TECHNIQUES AND LANGUAGE

STRUCTURE

11.1 Objectives

11.2 Nissim Ezekiel's Poetic Techniques and Language

11.3 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

11.4 Let Us Sum Up

11.5 Examination Oriented Questions

11.6 Answer Key (MCQs)

11.7 Suggested Reading

11.1 OBJECTIVE

The aim of this lesson is to acquiant the learner with Nissim Ezekiel's use of poetic techniques and language.

11.2 NISSIM EZEKIEL'S POETIC TECHNIQUES AND LANGUAGE

Nissim Ezekiel is perhaps the most widely known name among the Indian poets writing in English because his works reveal a consistent commitment to the craft, authenticity of articulation and sincerity of purpose. He is one of the outstanding Indian poets because of his mastery over a variety of poetic styles and exquisite craftsmanship which is the conscious

human-effort towards making the creative activity meaningful. His use of language is precise, subtle and dynamic; it has rich supple rhythm capable of subtle modulations and wry irony that comes in handy at crucial junctures and makes him a mature and consistently meaningful poet. Ezekiel is rightly considered to be the father and law-giver of post-independence Indian poetry.

Ezekiel said in one of his interviews: "I' ve always done different kinds of writing–criticism, novels, short stories....[but] I stand only by my poetry. He told John Beston: "I feel I have to live twelve lives simultaneously. But my focus has always been on myself as a poet." Ezekiel's total dedication to the art of poetry and essential confession are the two important factors that make one of his critics say :

> Nissim Ezekiel's poetry may be viewed as a metaphoric journey into the heart of existence, into the roots of one's self or being which embodies the mythic as well as existential dimensions of life.

This search, which makes his poetry a kind of "pilgrimage," is intertwined with the search for a suitable poetic idiom that would liberate him from the "crooked restless flight" and add a meaning to his creativity. Ezekiel holds a very high view of the vocation of a poet and in his poem "Creation" he tries to draw a parallelism between the acts of God and those of a poet. In "Uncertain Certainties" he says that the artistic creation flows past the "elusive void within us" or the "true self." The poet's constant obsession is with language, the right idiom, "words as fresh as women's eyes." He says:

Not only a new poem
But new poetry
By a new man-
If this is not a dream, Lord,
The time is ripe,
Give me the Word.

For him, writing poetry is "a progression from the known to the unknown through the medium of words." He feels that "the very act of writing poetry is a religious experience." His only answer to the sense of despair in which the disillusionment caused by urban civilization is to wait and pray even to write poetry as he says in "Prayer and Poetry." According to him a poet cannot force the pace but wait for words. Ezekiel's concept of the act of poetic creation in fact comes very close to the traditional Indian view that the poet has to wait, "wait for the descent of the divine." Consciously or unconsciously, Ezekiel seems to move towards a belief in the surrendering of the human will to the divine.

He believed that "Form is not a dress, manner or style but an organic, integrated form of all the elements that go into its making." Like W.B. Yeats, he believes that poets like women "must labour to be beautiful." As stated in the poem, "Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher." Ezekiel maintains that "the best poets wait for words' like an ornithologist sitting in silence by the flowing river." In "On meeting a Pedant" he expresses his care for words :

> Words, looks, gestures, everything betrays
> The unique mind, the emptiness within.....
> But soar me words as cold as print, insidious
> Words, dresses in evening clothes for drawing
> rooms.

Ezekiel evinces a rare eye for a right expression. He remains unsurpassed in his use of precise words and phrases. In "Transparently" he himself admits. I have always/consciously/loved the words/ and all it stood for." But for a few poems in *The Exact Name,* Ezekiel has retained his restraint and conversational style. The frequent use of a colloquial idiom imparts to his poems a fine combination of clarity of expression and cogency of argument. Poets, he says in one of his sonnets, are not "Counterfeiters" and cannot afford to "cheat with words."

In the "Foreword" to *Sixty Poems* he explains his aesthetics when he says:

> There is in each line or a phrase, an idea or image which helps me to maintain some sort of continuity in my life. If I could transcend the personal importance of these poems, I would not publish them. I am interested in writing poetry not in making a personal verse-record. But poetry is elusive, to write a poem is comparatively easy.

Ezekiel makes several comments on poetry as an artefact and his own creative process along with the inner motivation beneath his poetic process as, for instance, in "For William Carlos Williams." Commenting on the use of English language in India K.S. Ramamurti notes:

> There is always a time–tag, between the living creative idiom of English-speaking peoples and the English used in India. Since most educated Indians have aimed at speaking approved British English there has been no attempt by poets to use local varieties of English, pidgin or Creole in the way Nigerian and West Indian writers of serious literature mix various dialects and pidgins with Standard English. But Ezekiel does this in poems like "Goodby Party For Miss Pushpa T.S., and these are not mere satires or parodies of Gujarati brand of English. Rather they are a satiric self-revelation of the speaker in a particular social context.

Ezekiel's "Very Indian Poems in Indian English" form a very interesting group, which show the poet's keen observation of the speech habits and mannerisms of Indians speaking in English language. For example, take the following lines :

I am standing for peace and non-violence
Why world is fighting fighting
Why all people of world

Are not following Mahatma Gandhi,
I am simply not understanding,
Ancient Indian wisdom is 100% correct.
I should say even 200% correct
But modern generation is neglecting–
Too much going for fashion and foreign thing.

The conversational technique is also used in *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982) and the book brought the Sahitya Akademi Award for Ezekiel. Ezekiel uses India's colloquial speech in poems like "Healers," "Hangover," "The Professor" etc. Take the following example from "The Professor" :

I am retired though my health is good.....
If you are coming again this side by chance,
Visit please my humble residence also,
I am living just on opposite house's backside.

He tries to present the Indian characters that speak English in an un-English manner with a native accent.

The use of colloquial language enables him to convey the message clearly and powerfully. Though Ezekiel's language is simple, he is a dexterous craftsman, always in search of a correct place in which to place the word in its specific context. M.K. Naik rates his technique very highly:

> Ezekiel's poetry reveals technical skill of a high order. Except in his later works his choice of a open form sometimes makes for looseness, he has always written verse which is extremely tightly constructed. His mastery of the colloquial idiom is matched by a sure command of

> rhythm and rhyme. A happy use of cool understatement and a lapidary quality have made him one of the most quotable poets of his generation.

Nissim Ezekiel by the correct use of words and figures of speech manages to conjure up images that tickle the senses for quite some time. For instance, consider his poem "Description" in which he concentrates on a single image of "Hair." Though "hardly a poet with the shatteringly original image, he employs the extended metaphor effectively in poems like "Enterprise" as M.K. Naik puts it.

"There are common errors among Indians when they frame questions in English. Moreover, Ezekiel is fond of using paradoxical language in poetry for greater poetic effect, for instance take the following examples":

The closer you come the further you move. ("Distance")

....

In Ezekiel's poetry, we find a number of Indian words such as "Guru," "Indrabhen," "Rama Rajya," "Ashram," "chapatti," "Pan," "Mantras" and so on. It shows the poet's awareness and response to the linguistic culture of the place. Ayyappa Paniker believes that Indian poets do express Indian sensibility in their verse and writes:

> Indian poetry in English necessarily refers to two parameters; Indian and English. "Indian" may mean, either written by Indian citizens or written about Indian subjects or even expressing Indian sensibility. This implies that there is sensibility that is identified with the land and the people of India. National sensibilities are ultimately based on racial and cultural factors. Whether they are inherited or acquired is another moot question. Nissim Ezekiel, Shiv Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra,

R. Parthasarathy, Kamala Das and some others underline this typical Indian sensibility in their poetry.

It is the quality of his Indian sensibility that makes him a "thinking" poet, "a psychologist" who knows how to present his ideas using appropriate language and technique. His poetry reveals that he has a talent capable of major poetic utterances.

11.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. In which poem Nissim Ezekiel draws parallelism between the acts of God and those of a poet ? _____.

   a) "Distance"

   b) "Creation"

   c) "On meeting a Pedant"

   d) "Enterprise"

2. The line "Words, looks, Gestures , everything betrays / The unique mind, the emptimess within ....." is taken from Nissim Ezekiel's which poem ?_____.

   a) "Enterprise"

   b) "Background, Casually"

   c) "Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher"

   d) "On meeting a Pedant"

3. Nissim Ezekial won Sahitya Akademi Award in _____.

   a) 1983

   b) 1984

   c) 1986

   d) 1980

4. Nissim Ezekiel's poetic style is _____.

a) Sonnet

b) Conversational

c) Philosophical

d) Elegy

5. In which poem(s) Nissim Ezekiel uses India's colloquial speech ? ____.

a) "The Professor"

b) "Hangover"

c) "Good bye Party For Miss Pushpa T.S."

d) Both (a) and (b)

11.4 LET US SUM UP

Nissim Ezekiel is one of the outstanding Indian poets because his works reveal a consistent commitment to the craft, authenticity of articulation, and sincerity of purpose. His use of language is precise, subtle and dynamic. For him, writing poetry is "a progression from the known to the unknown through the medium of words." He feels that "the very act of writing poetry is a religious experience." Ezekiel is rightly considered to be the father and law giver of post-independence Indian poetry. Ezekiel said in one of his interviews: "I've always done different kinds of writing- criticism, novels, short stories... [but] I stand only by my poetry." He told John Beston: "I feel I have to live twelve lives simultaneously. But my focus has always been on myself as a poet."

11.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) Briefly comment on Ezekiel's poetic techniques and language.

b) Write a short note on Ezekiel's use of colloquial language in his poems.

11.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b) "Creation"

2. d) “On meeting a Pedant”

3. a) 1983

4. b) Convresatonal

5. d) Both (a) and (b)

11.7 SUGGESTED READING

Chetan Karnani. *Nissim Ezekiel*

K.R. Srivasa Iyengar. *Indian Writing in English*

Nissim Ezekiel : *Collected Poems,* 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press.

Raghunath Sahoo. *Tension and Moral Dilemmas in Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry.* Sarup Book Publishers, New Delhi.

A. Raghu. *The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi.

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NISSIM EZEKIEL : CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HIS SELECTED POEMS

STRUCTURE

12.1 Objectives

12.2 Critical analysis of the poem "Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher"

12.3 Critical analysis of the poem "Enterprise"

12.4 Critical analysis of the poem "Background, Casually"

12.5 Critical analysis of the poem "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S."

12.6 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

12.7 Let Us Sum Up

12.8 Examination Oriented Questions

12.9 Answer Key (MCQs)

12.10 Suggested Reading

12.1 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this lesson is to familiarize the learner with the poems of Nissim Ezekiel prescribed in the course and to acquaint them with the different critical aspects of these poems.

12.2 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM "POET, LOVER AND BIRDWATCHER"

Few Indian poets have shown the ability to organize experience into English as competently as Ezekiel does in his poem "Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher." He, like W. B. Yeats, believes that a true poem is the product of hard labour and constant efforts, so poets like women "must labour to be beautiful." In this poem, a complex experience of using language in poetry as a creative art is revealed through the physical love between man and woman, which ultimately leads to mystical experience : an ethical and spiritual union. In this excellent poem Ezekiel maintains, "The best poets wait for words" like a patient lover waiting for his beloved till she "no longer waits but risks surrendering."

Another analogy that Ezekiel uses to carry on his idea in the second stanza is that of an ornithologist who needs to have a lot of patience and efforts "to watch the rare birds," for that he has to pass :

> Along deserted lanes and where the rivers flow
> In silence near the source, or by the shore
> Remote and thorny like the heart's dark floor.

If in the first comparison, it was the emotional experience of the physical surrender to love, in the second it is the love for the unfathomable mysteries of nature and soul which render miracles where "The deaf can hear, the blind recover sight." As he repeatedly points out in *Latter–day Psalms* also that "The images are beautiful birds/and colourful fish." The figurative use of rivers and women add evocative powers and a note of lyrical tenderness to his candid experience as if to prove that the world is still a beautiful place, as it combines in it the visible and the invisible without losing its charm as the world of direct "sensuous perception." They are the recurrent images. Here, it is pertinent to note that the image of the woman in Ezekiel is painted as an embodiment of sensuousness and sensuality and even bestiality. The image of the bird stands for the mental and creative self of man.

The poem confirms that the poet's ideas are his own formalized notions. The emotions that he experienced as a poet and young man are synthesized in such a way that they lead to, in the words of Chetan Kernani, "its association of ideas." They play a greater role than its imagistic quality as images in Ezekiel are usually undecorative and functional. However, the poem shows that Ezekiel is definitely successful in producing "the harmonious total impression," "the intended artistic effect on the mind of the reader" with the help of images and associated ideas which have made him a significant poet in the annals of contemporary Indian poetry in English.

12.3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM "ENTERPRISE"

"Enterprise," from his collection *Latter-day Psalms,* is an important poem which uses the metaphor of pilgrimage. As Michael Garman briefed it in his essay "Nissim Ezekiel – Pilgrimage and Myth," "it is a journey from city to primitive hinterland," and the poet is ill at ease here because of his "copious notes" and "too many words." The tedious journey, which made a very promising and encouraging beginning "making all burden light," soon turned to be a difficult event in the scorching sun.

The poem consists of six stanzas of five lines each. The physical and moral courage of the party makes them discover the history and topography of the place. The desert, which they cross during their journey, causes them emotional loss :

> We lost a friend whose stylish prose
> Was quite the best of all our batch.
> A shadow falls on us – and grows.

The journey has left them grief stricken and grim. The insecurities of all kinds and attacks make them feel "lost." The revolt within the group increases the miseries and even the assurances of the leader that "he smelt the sea" grow ineffective being either vague or false. Deprivations at all the levels of life make it a hell. So much so that even arrival at the desired place carries no meaning. They began with "exalting minds" but all they are left with now are

"darkened" faces. They realize that the pilgrimage without is more of a myth than reality. According to Garman : "What one finds in "Enterprise" is actually a fine illustration of this – a reversal of the role of the poet-pilgrim for its creator." The last lines :

Our deeds were neither great nor rare.
Home is where we have to earn our grace.

This line brings to mind the denouement of Eliot's "Four Quartets." When the moment of unpacking the heart arrives, the poet in him guides him that in poetry everything does not have to be told, especially about the vital truth. His poem "Enterprise" taking the metaphor of a pilgrimage developings the journey motif following the classical wisdom of expressing "your gratitude.../ And bear your restlessness with grace." This religious note was set with the image/metaphor of a "pilgrimage" and it finally ends with the word "grace." In-between lies the word "deeds" which being just ordinary even less than desired will not lead to any reward.

It is the integral quality of the poet's perception which enables him to excel his own thinking. It helps him to be transformative; in the metamorphic process the traveller develops his own roots from within and reaches the primal connection with "home." Man's historical passion to explore is not always rewarded despite the best connections with the world of nature or philosophy. Such points of recognition of truth through experience are like milestones which signify "a certain sense of the inevitable" in man's quest for perfection. It appears that Ezekiel has discovered a new reality after his encounter with the conditions of the "desert" in the journey of life. In other words, "Enterprise" expresses human condition on this sorry planet and of the frequent efforts, failures, frustrations to which man is subjected by the very nature of his earthly life. Disillusionment and misery is the ultimate end of human life. According to Prof. Iyengar, "Bickering over petty matters, needless quarrels over trifles, hatred of and hostility to those who hold different opinions is ingrained in human nature and thus man carried the seed of his failure and frustration within his own self."

12.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM "BACKGROUND, CASUALLY"

The poem is an autobiographical piece that sums up his life story in the three sections of the poem that can be aptly called "a journey into self." Born in a Bene-Israel family who migrated to India generations ago, he went to a Roman Catholic School :

> A mugging Jew among the wolves.
> They told me I had killed the Christ,

He also tells us how "A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears." Then he says that "I grew in terror of the strong/But undernourished Hindu lads, / Their prepositions always wrong..." Thus he considers himself to be "a natural outsider." He cannot be a natural part of Indian tradition and even of Zen. At the same time, the poet feels alienated from his own minority religious ethos which guided that the prayer should be offered on "Friday nights." As a result, "The more I searched, the less I found." The circumstances generated inner restlessness beginning with a brief stint abroad where "Philosophy/Poverty and Poetry, three/Companions shared my basement room."

As the time passes he realized, "I knew that I had failed/ In everything..." He associated some weaknesses with some communities. His dislike for "All Hindus" prevailed for their unruly manners and for their lack of activity and sophistication, reflected in the third, eighth and ninth stanzas. He ridicules them for their ways adopted for entertainment. He finds Muslims sincere in their prayers but loose in their morals as they indulge unabashedly in sex and stealing :

> I prepared for the worst. Married,
> Changed jobs, and saw myself a fool.

The gap between himself and his environment causes tension which aggravates his arrogance which serves as a self-defensive weapon, enhances his inner struggles and leads to an alienated life like his ancestors who "among

the castes/ were aliens crushing seed for bread." (Bene Israel tradition has it that their ancestors took to oil pressing soon after arrival in India. Hence, *Shanwar teli,* Saturday oil-presser caste.)

In the last section of the poem, Ezekiel's concern for himself as a man and poet which makes him say "...let the poems come, and lost/That grip on things the worldly prize." He has decided "not to suffer again." He chooses to "have made my commitment now" and reconciles to become a part of "Indian landscape." Despite being different, he has discovered his identity with his roots in India. He says, "My backward place is where I am."

12.5 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM "GOODBYE PARTY FOR MISS PUSHPA T.S."

Ezekiel is known for using very simple language. The words are used for descriptive purposes. The poems like "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S." is an extremely popular poem from *Hymns in Darkness* and is a real portrayal of how people in our country directly translate their thoughts into English. The habit of complaining, repetitive strain, use of present continuous tense, dropping of articles, using superfluous words are some of the characteristics features of Indian English. This poem exhibits these traits quite explicitly. Ezekiel mixes up South Indian dialect and pidgins with Standard English and the poem becomes an achievement in handling the language creatively as to how it is used in India and ceases to be only a satire. Chetan Kernani writes in his book, *Nissim Ezekiel,* "No other poet has so successfully exploited the nuances of Indian English as Ezekiel has done."

Nissim Ezekiel depicts the way Indians think in English that arises humour in the poem . The poem is written in form of a farewell speech for Miss Pushpa who "is departing for foreign." The poem reflects rambling and highly patterned Indian way of speech by the speaker who addresses the meeting. Wit and humour flow spontaneously through such compositions.

Indian tendency to use present continuous tense instead of the simple present is mocked at :

You are all knowing, friends,
What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa.
I do not mean only external sweetness
But internal sweetness.
Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling
Even for no reason
But simply because she is feeling.

An overindulgent attitude of the speaker makes the whole episode so absurd and embarrassing. Ezekiel, the Indian, is constantly conscious of such situations where some error in the use of English language shows how the character uses an "inter-language" in which several rules of some Indian languages have been employed in the words or sentences. Ezekiel manages to present delightful specimen of self-unconscious Indian English.

In his very Indian poems, Ezekiel has tried to give vent to Indian cultural and social ethos. He aims at depicting characteristic Indian attitudes. "Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T. S." takes a crack at Indians who suffer from xenophilia and are ever eager to go to a foreign country "to improve their prospects."

It is pertinent to remember here that Ezekiel was known among his friends for his friendliness and cheerful disposition. He certainly was not interested in reducing people to unkind caricatures. It is Ezekiel's acute hawk-like vision and his experiences as "a natural outsider" that have gone into the making of such poems. They may not be classified in the class of great poetry but they are excellent specimens of comic relief between serious renderings of human experience. They do reveal Ezekiel's ability to mock at himself, to mock at others. In a poem like "Goodbye Party" humour and wit do blend together to illumine some of the darker areas of an average Indian's ordinary existence.

12.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Which of the following is an autobiographical poem written by Nissim Ezekiel ? _____.

a) "Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher"

b) "Enterprise"

c) "Background, Casually"

d) "Goodbye party for Miss Pushpa T.S. "

2. The Poet in the poem "Enterprise" is engaged in _____.

a) journey

b) missionary activity

c) commerce

d) none of these

3. Nissim Ezekiel's poem "The Night of the Scorpion" appears in _____.

a) The Exact Name

b) Hymn in Darkness

c) A Time to Change

d) None of these

4. The line "The best poets wait for words" appears in _____.

a) "Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher"

b) "Enterprise"

c) "Background, Casually"

d) "Night of the Scorpion"

5. Nissim Ezekiel's poem "Background, Casually" reflects _____.

a) feeling of alienation

b) his love for rural life

c) his love for religion

d) None of the above

12.7 LET US SUM UP

Nissim Ezekiel's poetry is characterized by its directness and conversational tone. He often employed irony and satire to expose the

hypocrisies and contradictions of modern life. His poems are marked by a keen observation of the every day, finding meaning in the mundane and exploring themes of identity, alienation, and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world. In his poem, "Port, Lover and Birdwatcher," a complex experience of using language in poetry is revealed through the physical love between man and woman, which ultimately leads to a mystical experience: an ethical and spiritual union. In this poem, Ezekiel states: "The best poets wait for words" like a patient lover waiting for his beloved till she "no longer waits but risks surrendering." The poem, "Enterprise" is an important poem that was uses the metaphor of pilgrimage. The poem consists of six stanzas of five lines each discovering the emotional loss. The poem, "Background,Casually" is an autobiographical poem that sums up his life story in the three sections of poem which can be apthy called "a journey into self." Another poem, "Goodbye Party for Miss Pusha T.S." is a real portrayal of how people in our country directly translate their thoughts into English. The habit of complaining, repetitive strain, use of present continuous tense, dropping of articles, and using superfluous words are some of the characteristic features of Indian English. His poems focus on personal and societal anxieties within a specific cultural context conveyed through accessible language, which set him apart in his time.

12.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) Give a criticial appreciation of the poem "Poet, Lover and Bird Watcher. "

b) Ezekiel's poem "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S." is characteristically Indian in theme, treatment and taste. Discuss.

c) Critically appreciate Ezekiel's poem "Enterprise."

12.9 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. c) "Background, Casually"

2. a) journey

3. a) The Exact Name

4. a) “Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher”

5. c) his love for religion

12.10 SUGGESTED READING

Chetan Karrani *Nissim Ezekiel*

K.R. Srivass Iyengar *Indian Writing in English*

Nissim *Ezekiel : Collected* Poems, 2nd Ed. Oxford University Press.

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KAMALA DAS : LIFE AND WORKS

STRUCTURE

13.1 Objectives

13.2 Life and works of Kamala Das

13.3 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

13.4 Let Us Sum Up

13.5 Examination Oriented Questions

13.6 Answer Key (MCQs)

13.7 Suggested Reading

13.1 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this lesson is to familiarize the learner with the life and works of Kamala Das.

13.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF KAMALA DAS

Recognized as one of India's foremost poets, Kamala Das was born on 31st March, 1934 in South Malabar in Kerala. Her mother, Balamani Amma, was a renowned Malayalam poetess. She started writing at an early age under the influence of her great uncle Nakapat Narayan Menon, a prominent writer. As a child, she remembers him writing from morning till night and thus, leading a blissful life. Das was also influenced by the poetry of her mother, Nalapat Balamani Amma and the sacred writings kept by the

matriarchal community of Nayars. She was privately educated until the age of 15 when she was married to K. Madhava Das. She was sixteen when her first son was born and she herself admits that she "was mature enough to be a mother only when my third child was born." Her husband, K. Madhava Das, played a fatherly role for both Kamala and her sons because of the great age difference between the husband and the wife. He often encouraged her to associate with the people of her own age. She acknowledges that he was "very understanding."

When Kamala Das wished to start writing, her husband supported her decision which was basically meant to augment the family's income. Being preoccupied with a lot of domestic duties she could not keep her schedule as enjoyed by her uncle to "work from morning till night." She would wait until nightfall when her family had gone to sleep and would continue writing until morning. She writes : "There was only the kitchen table where I would sit and cut vegetables, and after all the plates and things were cleared, I would sit there and start typing." This tough routine took its toll upon her health but she viewed her illness optimistically, as it gave her more time to stay at home and thus more time to write. Her career progressed steadily and her husband remained, all the while, her greatest supporter. Kamala Das' poetry, which was charged by an unusual frankness and openness about sex and her unabashed autobiography, invited a lot of controversy but her husband, as she confesses, was very "proud of her." Though he was sick for three years before he died his presence brought her tremendous joy and comfort. She stated, "there shall not be another person so proud of me and my achievements."

Kamala Das' achievements are in diverse fields, which extend well beyond poetry. She has dabbled in painting, fiction and even politics. Though she failed to win a place in the Parliament in 1984 but remained much more successful as a syndicate columnist. She partly moved away from poetry because she claimed that "Poetry does not sell in this country" but fortunately her fortnightly columns do. Das' columns assertively warn about everything from woman's issues and childcare to politics.

True to her words that " I wanted to fill my life with as many experiences as I can manage to garner because I do not believe that one can be born again", in December 1999, Kamala Das got converted to Islam –something which created a furore in the press and Indian society at large. Her name was changed to Kamala Suraya and she announced her plans to register her political party "Lok Seva."

Das, being a bilingual writer has published many novels and short stories in English as well as in Malayalam under the name "Madhavikutty." Some of her works in English include the novel *Alphabet of Lust* (1977), a collection of short stories called *Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992), a few of her stories, originally, written in Malayalam and published in *Modern Indian Short Stories, An Anthology* (1974) and *My Story* (1975) an autobiography. In the Preface, Kamala Das explains why she decided to write her autobiography :

> *My Story* is my autobiography which I began writing during my first serious bout with heart disease. The doctor thought that writing would distract my mind from the fear of sudden death... Between short hours of sleep induced by the drugs given to me by the nurses, I wrote continually, not merely to honour my commitment but because I wanted to empty myself of all the secrets so that I could depart when the time came, with a scrubbed-out consciousness.

Das' autobiography, fragmented and not in chronological order, is typically all about her domestic life. Describing her relation with her parents, her husband and her lover etc., she asserts her subjective power in a traditional patriarchal society and destabilizes the given notions of what is a female or feminine and dislocates some of Indian cultural and social relations. Her life and writing display the anger, rage, and rebellion of a woman struggling in a

society of male prerogatives. The chapters are short, that is, about three to four pages but they assertively offer distinct pictures or themes like the dowry system, bride-burning, male abuse, ban against divorce, woman's isolation, job discrimination, female infanticide, poorly paid or unpaid female labour, high female illiteracy and a series of such social horrors. Besides, Das' autobiography specifies the connection between personal/sexual and social/political struggles for a female protagonist in this traditional male-dominated society. Briefly, it becomes a story of "a colonized childhood, resonant with later theme of oppressed womanhood." Das similarly showed the characteristic alienation of being suspended between indigenous and colonized cultures. In its doubleness of commercial and spiritual intentions she provided a valuable recording of the hybridized, "impure" cultural conditions in which post-colonial English-language writers in India find themselves. Kamala Das stands between two contradictory positions : First, the exceptional woman in conflict with her traditional society struggling for a status specifically endowed through her writing; second, the most exceptional of Indian women, the Krishna devotee, chose to get converted to Islam. Shirley Geok-lin Lim sees Das' autobiography "as a critique of the victimization of women in a patriarchal society" in which "sexuality not only makes her vulnerable physically but also emotionally and spiritually. This autobiography confirms that she "saves her life by telling her life." Lim very rightly asserts that Kamala Das "chooses writing against suicide, self-inscription against self-destruction and so, takes steps of revolt against a symbolic/political system that has oppressed her." *My Story* gives insights, which contribute significantly, in understanding and appreciating the whole of Das' writings including her poetry.

She is an author of over 30 novels in Malayalam and this has given her a permanent place in modern Malayalam literature. Some of her novels in Malayalam include *Palayan* (1990), *Neypayasam* (1991), and *Dayarikkurippukal* (1992).

In addition to six books of poetry, which include *The Sirens* (1964) for which she won Asian Poetry Prize, *Summer in Calcutta* (1965) which got her

Kent Award, *The Descendants* (1967), *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973), *The Anamalai Poems* (1985), and *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing* (1996), a collection of poetry was brought out with Pritish Nandy. Her poetry also becomes an exercise in autobiographical creativity.

As a poet, Kamala Das is known for a frankness and openness unusual in the Indian context and an overpowering urgency vis–a–vis her need for love. R. Parathasarathy says that her poems for instance, "The Old Playhouse," "Looking-glass" and "The Freaks." "literally boil over."

If, on the one hand, controversy swirled around her sexually charged poetry, it was, on the other hand, that her uncanny honesty and despair is equally infectious. One of her most impressive qualities is to remain entirely true to a certain point of view. Despite the fleshy titles of the collections of her poetry they create the impression of a genuine core of pain by which one is moved rather than shocked. Its effect is enhanced by the fact that it is controlled, brief and even delicately humorous.

If one surveys briefly the contents of her poetry, one notices two characteristic features : (a) she is very much herself in her poetry and (b) her tone is distinctly feminine. It is so because she writes incessantly about those issues which are close to her heart. For instance, she writes about the need for love or failure of love, her unhappy personal life or her unsuccessful sexual encounters and relationships. Her reminiscences of childhood at Nalapat House, her family home are tinged with nostalgia as in "My Grandmother's House." However, her fifty poems in *Summer in Calcutta* and the twenty-nine in *The Descendants* are almost without exception about love. While focusing very minutely on her poetic output, one notices that in the former collection there are two poems "The Flag" and "Sepia" which attempt to express social awareness, and the latter contains two poems about her sons. Likewise, *The Old Playhouse,* a volume of thirty-three poems in all contains half the poems from the two earlier books, and some from *Opinion,* a small magazine that used to publish poetry.

Moreover, the poetry of Kamala Das has the confessional quality, which makes one recall in some ways two great American poetesses, Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath, who attempted to work out their trauma in poetry. While the poems of Anne Sexton read like "a bad case of melancholy," the poems of Sylvia Plath are, to use the words of Robert Lowell from the Preface to *Ariel* "the autobiography of a fever." The works of both the poets reveal through their poetry traumas in relation to their parents, especially their fathers, in case of Kamala Das, it is often the husband who is at the core of her disturbed state of mind. For example, take the following lines from "The Old Playhouse."

> You called me wife,
> I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and
> To offer at the right moment the vitamins cowering
> Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and
> Became a dwarf.

Kamala Das' world is full of harsh realities and pain, especially in relation to sex and family–both fundamental and archetypal experiences–that give the readers a point of contact with these intensely subjective poems. She reiterates in her poems the repeated experiences of her roles of unhappy woman, unhappy wife, and mother. Even in her best poems she universalizes the neurosis and says : "I am every/Woman who seeks love ...." in "An Introduction." All her efforts and encounters in her search for love fail and she feels forced back to a life of futile pretence in "Substitute" :

> It will be all right if I join clubs
> And flirt a little over telephone.
> It will be all right, it will be all right
> I am the type that endures.

Kamala Das presents those characters that break down when their defence mechanism for survival collapses; they feel terribly lonely and long for the cessation of conflict. For example, consider "Luminol" which records these

feelings with a quietness and controlled brevity. Whatever may be the situation, there is no escape from conflict over a sense of sterility. The devastating feeling of her own sterility finds the most effective expression in "The Dance of the Eunuchs" where the poet sees the eunuchs writhing "in vacant ecstasy" that matches her own meaningless life. A stylistic device, which reinforces the predominantly emotional quality of these poems, is Kamala Das' frequent repetition of words, lines and even sections of a poem. For instance, take the above quoted lines from "Substitute" in which the repetition of the phrase "It will be all right, it will be all right" suggests exactly the opposite, that is, the futility of her attempts to disguise the emptiness and barrenness of her life. Kamala Das does not always uses this device with skill. She often repeats words which don't bear repeating as in "The Sunshine Cat" "to forget/To forget, oh, to forget" or in "The Flag" "cough, cough their lungs out." The lines would be stronger and more meaningful with the repetition cut out.

In spite of this pointless repetition, Kamala Das' best poems display a strong sense of rhythm. For example, take "An Introduction" which begins with the rhythms of conversational speech and, with the attempt of the poet's family to define a role for her life. "Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or better/Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to/Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games...." She suddenly moves into an urgent driving rhythm which is characteristic of some of her best work :

> It is I who laugh; it is I who make love
> And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying
> With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
> I am saint. I am the beloved and the
> Betrayed. I have no joys, which are not yours, no
> Aches, which are not yours, I too call myself I.

Kamala uses continuously alternating long and short lines to capture the restlessness of the poet and uses the short lines to create the effect of the freshness and spontaneity of childhood. Thus, it becomes explicitly clear that her

best work is not only characterized by the honesty of purpose and emotions but also by control of form and a disciplined expression of painful emotions. As it is always the case with the obsessive and confessional writing, it remains a powerful source, so far as it remains with in control. Once it gets out of control no amount of honesty will save the work from being redundant. According to Eunice De Souza :

> Mrs. Das' main problem is not knowing when to stop. A good number of the poems in each book could have cut out without any sense of loss because they tend to express emotions, already strongly expressed, in a weaker way, with the results that the cumulative impression is of a rather relentless whine;" "Ah, why does love come to me like pain/ again, again and again ?

Even she is aware of this problem but this awareness does not stop her from depicting a totally formless stream of unhappy consciousness. When the poet loses control the work ceases to be poetry and becomes more like automatic writing.

13.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Kamala Das' real name was _____.
   a) Madhavikutty
   b) Janaki Devi
   c) Kamala Suraya
   d) None of Above
2. Kamala Das' autobiography My Story was serialised in _____.
   a) Marg
   b) The Times of India
   c) The Current Weekly
   d) The Hindu

3. The Old Playhouse and Other Poems is written by _____.

   a) Sarojini Naidu

   b) Nissim Eziekiel

   c) Mulk Raj Anand

   d) Kamala Das

4. Kamala Das' Poetry can be best described as _____.

   a) Social

   b) Religious

   c) Confessional

   d) Political

5. Alongwith Indian English writing, Kamala Das holds a permanent place in which literture ? _____.

   a) Malayalam

   b) Hindi

   c) Odia

   d) None of Above

13.4 LET US SUM UP

Kamala Das was born in South Malabar in Kerala. Her mother, Balamani Amma, was a renowned Malayalam poetess. She started writing at an early age under the influence of her great uncle Nakapat Narayan Menon, a prominent writer Kamala Das' achievements are in diverse fields, which extend well beyond poetry. She has dabbled in painting, fiction and even politics. As a poet, Kamala Das is known for a frankness and openness unusual in the Indian context. The poetry of Kamala Das has a confessional quality, which makes her in some ways two great American poetesses, Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath, who attempted to work out their trauma in poetry. Kamala Das' world is full of harsh realities and pain that give the readers a point of contact with these intensely subjective poems. She reiterates in her poems the repeated

experiences of her roles of unhappy woman, unhappy wife, and mother. Even in her best poems she universalizes the heurosis and says: I am every/woman who seeks love..."

13.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) What distinguishes Kamala Das as a poet is her, emotional intensity and honesty of feeling. Discuss.

b) Critically analyse Kamala Das as a poet.

13.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. a) Madhavikutty
2. c) The Current Weekly
3. d) Kamala Das
4. c) Confessional
5. a) Malayalam

13.7 SUGGESTED READING

Iqbal Kour. *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry.*

C.R. Visweswara Rao. *Indian Writing Today.*

Kamala Das. *My Story.*

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KAMALA DAS : WOMEN IN DAS' POETRY

STRUCTURE

14.1 Objectives

14.2 Women in Kamala Das' Poetry

14.3 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

14.4 Let Us Sum Up

14.5 Examination Oriented Questions

14.6 Answer Key (MCQs)

14.7 Suggested Reading

14.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the lesson is to acquaint the learner with the issues of women in Kamala Das' poetry.

14.2 WOMEN IN KAMALA DAS' POETRY

The issues of women and love have been seriously discussed in literatures of the world in English since 1945. Conflicting claims for and against have been articulated from various countries and cultures like Africa, Canada, Australia and the Caribbean Islands. Das occupies an important position among the poets who constitute the modern tradition of Indian poetry in English and her uncanny honesty extends to her exploration of womenhood and love. In her poem "An Introduction" from

Summer in Calcutta (1965), the narrator says : "I am every/Woman who seeks love." Though she is criticized by the critics like Amar Dwivedi for "her self imposed and not natural universality, this feeling of oneness permeates her poetry. In her mind, the womanhood involves certain collective experiences, about which an Indian woman prefers to be silent and indifferent to the social mores. Das just refuses to accept this silence passively. She does not believe that women's longing for love and feeling for her misery is a private affair. They are, according to her, normal and day-to-day experiences which have been felt by women across time in all the countries of the world. Consequently, they should be invited into public and acknowledged." In her poem "The Maggots" from *The Descendant* (1967), Das corroborates just how old the sufferings of women are. By focusing on the pangs of lost love with ancient Hindu myths, especially of Radha and Krishna, she makes them serve as a validation for ordinary women to have similar feelings.

Kamala Das' poetry draws its emotional sustenance from Indian culture as her sensibility and content of her poetry is rooted in and stems from the Indian environment. It reflects its mores often ironically. Her revolt as a woman against the traditional concept of womanhood is matched with her revolt as a poet against the conventional medium of mother tongue for poetry. She has instinctively chosen English as the poetic medium although she is at home with "Malayalam in prose." In "An Introduction" she writes :

> Why not let me speak in
> Any language I like. The language I speak,
> Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness.
> All mine, mine alone.

Then she adds :

> You see ? It voices my longings, my
> Hopes and is useful to me as cawing
> Is to crows or roaring to the lions.....

Kamala Das is extremely candid and convincing in handling the subject matter as well as language. She draws her emotional substance from her own country and its cultural sources.

As a woman poet, she remains entirely true to a certain viewpoint. It is, as Eunice De Souza observes, an "honest writing, not writing designed merely to shock or startle us out of conventionality, and its effectiveness is reinforced by the fact that it is controlled, brief, and even mildly humorous." Das' poetry focuses on themes like the sweet memories of her childhood in the family, her love-hate relationship with her husband, her subsequent frustration with man-woman relationship, the identification with Radha of Radha-Krishna myth, death and decay and life after death, etc. In fact, Kamala Das' poetry about women is committed to humanism. She not only gives voice to Radha's pain but also confirms that even the goddess could be prey to such sufferings and ordinary women too, could share similar feelings. Das corroborates just how old these sufferings are. Her poetry reveals that she is fully alive to the social evils around her. She reacts sharply to social injustices, cruelty of the rich, the inequality and poverty among the poor and the evils of religious fanaticism. This sort of awareness is the source of strength of her poetry. In the poems like "Nani," "A Hot Noon in Malabar" "The House Builders," to name a few, she portrays the oppressed class or group of society. Though she is labelled as a "feminist" poet, yet she is aware of her social role. In one of her interviews she says, "I was fully conscious of my role in society that I have come here to change it a little bit, if possible."

Among other issues like poverty, exploitation, social inequality, social and political conflict, racism and gender distinctions that dominate her sensibility, there are also the 'subaltern's complex problems which are generated by several hierarchies within the community and maintained by combination of custom, functionality and religious beliefs. Patriarchy, which is the major target of Das' attack, is only one form among several hierarchies that oppress Indian women. There is what Indian feminist

critics term a “systematic exploitation.” It is against this unique social background, which compels them to curb freedom, condition themselves to suppress their needs and accept the philosophy of self-denial that Kamala Das, a feminist writer, projects the candid images of subalternity and recommends the ideology of individual/personal freedom. If the poems like “Evening at the Old Nalapat House,” “A Hot Noon in Malabar” portray the vagrant and deprived people, in “Nani” the poet recollects the dark, plump low caste woman employed in the Nalapat House who hanged herself, and writes :

> .... I asked my grandmother
> One day, don’t you remember Nani, the dark
> Plump one who bathed me near the well? Grandmother
> Shifted the reading glasses on her nose
> And stared at me. Nani, she asked, who is she?
> With this question ended Namo.

The response of the grandmother—the symbol of conventional feudal structure and values—reveals the ‘designed deafness’ and their ‘otherness.’ The unmuzzled wrath and righteous indignation at the cruelties that have been heaped upon the depressed class individuals by the feudal society of Nairs, to which Das also belongs, are poignantly presented. The poet exposes their ‘brutal games’ but no law punishes them and she says : “... the only way I know to fool the world [is] my silence.” Though at times, she fails to openly expose the unacceptable, unscientific sense of superiority and inferiority based on caste, race or gender, she nonetheless challenges the dominant system of thoughts as in her poem “Blood” :

> My mother and She and I,
> The oldest blood in the world
> A blood thin and clear and fine
> While in the veins of the always poor
> And in the veins

Of the new-rich ones
Flowed a blood thick as gruel
And muddy as a ditch.

Das ironically refers to the difference in blood (culture) between herself and others that her conventional upbringing had forced her to believe. Her Colombo poems mark the poet's deep concern for caste oppression specific to Indian society and racial oppression outside India. In these poems, she breaks the self-imposed barrier of "brooding over the male inequality and female vulnerability" as Ramchandra Nair writes in his book *The Poetry of Kamala Das* (1993). She is involved with the fate of the people with whom she is racially related or all the human beings that suffer on account of racial prejudice. In other words, the poet covers all forms of oppression : Man vs Woman, State vs individual, Dominant cultures vs Marginal/Sub-cultures, Rich vs Poor and the White/Aryans vs Black/Dravidians. The devastating effects of such violent confrontations, racial and cultural prejudices and gender-biased behaviour are the central concerns of the poet. She wonders why people are "ordered to hate" as she emphasizes in the Colombo poems. Though she portrays the sufferings and grief that follow the destruction, for example, in her poems like "The Sea at Galle Face Green" or "Smoke in Colombo," but nothing diminishes her love for life which runs all through her poetry. Elena J. Kalinnikova makes a very perceptive remark in this connection :

> In a general chorus of voices asserting the fear before death in one way or another, absurdity of human aspirations and emptiness of feelings, the voice of Kamala Das, which is full of life-asserting force, is sharply singled out.

The presence of this perennial life-asserting force adds the note of optimism which fills both the types of poems : poems in which she narrates the misfortunes of women and of other compatriots with bitterness, and the poems which are full of philosophical meditations about happiness and sufferings

and about life and death, for instance, take her poem "Suicide" from her collection *The Descendants.*

Coupled with her exploration of women's needs there is an attention to 'eroticism.' — to lose oneself in the passionate love as in "The Looking Glass." She as a poet of 'feminism' does not believe in futile pretences being a type of woman "that endures" as she states in "Substitute." However, there are moments when this "nymphomaniac persona" breaks down, and admits what it is, a defence mechanism for survival, a cover for her sense of inadequacy : "It is only to save my face, I flaunt, at times, a grand, flamboyant lust" as she says in "The Freak." When her mechanism for survival breaks down, the 'neurotic persona' finds herself utterly alone and longs for the cessation of conflict, however temporary this cessation may be. Das poem "Luminol" records such moments and her feelings with a quietness and controlled brevity which make it one of the most moving poems :

Love-lorn,
It is only
Wise at times, to let sleep
Make hole in memory, even
If it
Be the cold and
Luminous sleep banked in
The heart of pills, for he shall not
Enter,
Your ruthless one,
Being human, clumsy
With noise and movement, the soul's mute
Arena,
That silent sleep inside your sleep.

There is no escape from conflict, from a sense of futility and strange sense of meaninglessness. Therefore, they cannot find fulfillment as women

and the poet sees in their lives "a vacant ecstasy" of the eunuchs—a devastating image of their own sterility—as in "The Dance of Eunuchs." Das adopts some stylistic devices to demonstrate these emotional vacancies like frequent repetition of words, phrases, lines and even sections of a poem. She may not always use them with skill but she manages to convey the futility of her attempts to disguise the emptiness of her life. Despite this weakness for the pointless repetition, there is an urgent driving rhythm, and conversational idiom as in the following lines :

> Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
> Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
> Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games

It is a characteristic feature of her role as a narrator of her poems or as a woman that she defines her identity honestly, clearly and spontaneously.

In the poems of Kamala Das, despite an intensified craving for life, which is the most brilliant feature of her poetry, "the sentimentality is alien to the poems." It is possible to find compassion and sympathy but never melancholy or sentimentality, and thereby her poetic manner resembles a masculine directness. There are many poets writing in English who raise a wall of incommunicability around their poems. It leads to incomprehension and then to loneliness. Kamala Das strives all the time to have an open conversation with the reader, confines to him/her secrets and tells all about herself as in "An Introduction." Here lies her peculiarity as the Third World woman poet and the strength of her poems which deal with every day practices of the subordination and expropriation of the lives of 'subalterns' who remained silent like "a trained circus dog" as she says in "Moon" from the *Collected Poems*. As a woman, she found a desert in her life where "love came to me like pain again."

14.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Kamala Das' poem "Maggots" appears in _____.

a) Summer in Calcutta

b) The Striders

c) The Descendant

d) The Anamalai Poems

2. Das' poetry focusses on the themes of _____.

a) Sweet memories of childhood

b) death and decay

c) man-woman relationship

d) All of the above

3. Which of the following is not a poem written by Kamala Das ? _____.

a) "Summer in Calcutta"

b) "The Dance of the Eunuchs"

c) "Night of the Scorpion"

d) "Krisna"

4. In which poem Kamala Das has the following expression ? "Why not leave/ me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins / Everyone of you ? Why not let me speak in/any language I like ? " _____.

a) "The Maggots"

b) "The Doubt"

c) "An Introduction"

d) "Luninol"

5. Which of the following poem by Kamala Das is in dialogue form ? ___.

a) "The Invitation"

b) "In Love"

c) "Composition"

d) "The Suicide"

14.4 LET US SUM UP

The issues of women and love have been seriously discussed in the literature of the world in English since 1945. Kamala Das occupies an important position among the poets who constitute the modern tradition of Indian poetry in English and her uncanny honesty extends to her exploration of womanhood and love. In her poem "An Introduction" from Summer in Calcutta (1965), the narrator says' "I am every / Woman who seeks love." Kamala Das' poetry draws its emotional sustenance from Indian culture as the sensibility and content of her poetry are rooted in and stem from the Indian environment. Kamala Das' poetry about women is committed to humanism. She not only gives voice to Radha's pain but also confirms that even the goddess could be prey to such suffering and ordinary women, too could share similar feelings.

14.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) Kamala Das' poetry about women is committed to humanism. Discuss.

b) Discuss Kamala Das' as a feminist poet.

c) Kamala Das' poetry is a saga of women's suffering. Illustrate with reference to the poems prescribed in your course.

d) Write a detailed note on Kamala Das' notion of the typical Indian woman and male domination in her poems.

e) Kamala Das' subverts the dominance of patriarchal society. Discuss.

14.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. c) The Descendant
2. d) All of the above
3. c) "Night of the Scorpion"
4. c) "An Introduction"
5. a) "The Invitation"

14.6 SUGGESTED READING

Iqbal Kaur. *Perspectives on Kamala Das's Poetry.*

Eunice de Souza (ed). *Nine Indian women poets : An Anthology*.

Jaydeep Sarangi. *Kamala Das : A Great Trend-setter*.

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KAMALA DAS : LOVE POETRY

STRUCTURE

15.1 Objectives

15.2 Love poetry of Kamala Das

15.3 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

15.4 Let Us Sum Up

15.5 Examination Oriented Questions

15.6 Answer Key (MCQs)

15.7 Suggested Reading

15.1 OBJECTIVES

The aim of the lesson is to familiarize the learner with the love poetry of Kamala Das.

15.2 LOVE POETRY OF KAMALA DAS

Kamala Das knows for certain that "I have a life/To be lived." Therefore, whatever the existence may be under the burden of sickening experiences in this crude world, in which even love is a hollow word, "all of/Me is ablaze with life." Living is possible only through all absorbing love. In his book, *Two Decades of Indian Poetry* (1980), Keki Daruwalla rightly says, "Kamala Das is pre-eminently a poet of love and pain, one stalking the other through a near neurotic world. There is an all-pervasive sense of hurt though love the lazy

animal's hunger of flesh, hurt and humiliation are the wrap and woof of her fabric. She seldom ventures outside this personal world."

Search for love is the principal preoccupation of Kamala Das poetry. She confesses with utmost candour that she began writing "poetry with the ignoble aim of wooing a man." As a result, love becomes a pervasive theme and it is defined by the unconditional honesty and it is through love that she endeavours to discover herself. It was in no way an easy journey to discover the self but a poet like Kamala Das shook all the accepted norms of stable male-oriented society and frankly spoke about her sex life because to her a restrained love is no love at all. The things, which are discarded as dirty, and taboos are the things which are the integral part of the total structure of love and even life. Only a total immersion in love, which includes the "fond details" of the basic urges of man and woman, does justice to this experience. A critic has aptly stated that "like the creator of ancient Tantric art, Das makes no attempt to hide the sensuality of human form; her work seems to celebrate its joyous potential while acknowledging its concurrent dangers." In fact, she goes diving deep into her own self, unravelling mysteries which were never known to Indian women, and more honestly speaking, none had dared to unravel them in the past. Had she lived only half a century ago and written such poems, they would have been burnt down. Bruce King is right when he writes in *Modern Poetry in English* (1987) :

> Das themes go beyond *stereotyped* longings and complaints. Even her feelings of loneliness and disappointments are part of a longer than life personality obsessive in its awareness of itself, yet creating a drama of selfhood.

Consequently, her poems are autobiographical which show that love, sex, marriage and companionship are important themes to her. On her own self-discovery, she expresses the different layers of hypocrisy. She is bitterly criticized for that by the high priests of morality. In this context, Hari

Mohan Prashad and Chandra Prashad state in their edited volume *Indian Poetry in English* :

> Her poetry has often been considered as a gimmick in sex or striptease in words, an over exposer of body or 'snippets trivia.' But the truth is that her poetry is an autobiography, an articulate voice of her ethnic identity, her Dravidian culture..... 'A poet's raw material,' she says, is not stone or clay; it is her personality. I could not escape from my predicament even for a moment.

Kamala Das lends a new dimension to her love poetry by revealing her kinship with the Indian tradition which has its roots in Indian epics and the Western tradition that related her to the confessional poets. As she is concerned with various facets of love, her love poetry can be divided into two phases. In the first phase, her obsessive involvement with physical love is prominent, in the second, her drift towards ideal love can be clearly discerned. By ideal love she means a kind of love that exists between Radha and Krishna, which does not check her impulse to freedom.

In search of love she does not contrive a fictional world of her own. Instead she looks of herself and into herself. Her body is the greatest centre of curiosity, the "curiosity shop." At the same time, it is the most intimate and sensitive instrument to judge and evaluate the world. She collects through the heaps of its responses and experiences and chronicles them in her own non-conformist, unhackneyed way. Sometimes she looks back at those experiences in anger but rarely with a sense of satisfaction :

> The tragedy of life
> Is not death but growth.....
> This love..... Yes,
> It was my desire that made him male
> And beautiful.....

All along the history, these things were projected from male point of view but Kamala Das presents them from the sturdy female vision that presses hard the reader to recognize the present day reality.

In her poetry, the body with its numerous sensitive centres all over records the contents of her daily routines and lived experiences and traps all sensations, all changes, all joys and all sorrows. It responds to all "stabs" that love can offer :

I enter other's
Lives, and
Make of every trap of lust
A temporary home.
Woman, is this happiness, this lying buried
Beneath a man?.....
The world extends a lot beyond his six foot
frame.
When you leave, I drive my blue battered car
Along the bluer sea. I run up the forty
Noisy steps to knock at another door.

Most of the experiences, which we come across in her poems, are of an unkind variety and her search for love and kindness ends up in a barren wasteland, where there is neither life nor hope. She says in one of her poems :

An armful
Of splinters....
Designed to hurt, and
Pregnant with pain.

She feels that she has been 'raped' in life by all—husband, lover, and society and even by "humorous heaven." She finds that love is a hollow word as the male dominated society shows no understanding of a woman's aspirations. Through her writing, she searches for love and finds nothing sustaining and her cry is :

I am wronged, I am wronged,
I am wronged.....

Whatever experiences she records in her poems, these are full of an intimation of isolation and turbulence and not of tranquility. This sense of hopelessness and betrayal prompts her to become a rebel and she looks upon all her relations with contempt and disgust as she says "..... marriage meant nothing more than a show of wealth to families like ours." She had dreams of a loving husband who could provide her the bliss of a paradise. Instead she feels as she conveys in "The Invitation" :

On the bed with him, the boundaries of
Paradise had shrunk to a mere
Six by two and afterwards, when we walked
Out together, they
Widened to hold the unknown city.....
End me, cries the sea. Think of yourself
Lying on a funeral pyre
With a burning head.

Her alienation from her husband, because of the type of experience she had from him, became natural for her to have no softer emotions for this relationship. O.J. Thomas quotes in his article "Kamala Das : A Search for Home, Companionship and Love," published in *The Quest* (Vol. V, June 1991) extensively from her disillusioning experiences in her marriage where she confesses that she remained a virgin for a fortnight after marriage while he was after some other lady. It is, therefore, clear that she feels crazy, unhappy and even hungry in the absence of true love in her life as she puts in her poem "The Freaks" :

Who can
Help us who have lived so long
And have failed in love? The heart,

An empty cistern, waiting
Through long hours, fills itself
With coiling stakes of silence....
I am a freak.

It is not surprising that at times she admits to be a freak and her poems become weak and theatrical as she says in “A Request” :

When I die
Do not throw the meat and bones away
But pile them up
And
Let them tell
By their smell
What life was worth
On this earth
What love was worth
In the end.

Her poems, which frankly depict sex and sexuality, remain a part of the discovery of the self; it is the sterile aspect of it—the absence of love and its deprivation by the society, the relations and by the cultural traditions and customs—which finds a variety of expression. On the one hand, she unknowingly shook the norms of a male dominated society, on the other, Das gave an understanding of the feminine psychology within which resounded the fact that man is just not capable of love or understanding. She managed to create poems with the help of two different sets of diction, which reveal the different worlds of men and women, along with their cultural paraphernalia.

Kamala Das’ poetry has achieved a certain degree of distinction in modern Indian poetry in English by the stunning frankness in every line she writes and in making public a vast fund of agonies and information

regarding woman's psychic experience that lay hidden in the private female world. On this account, she has become a poet who has shocked the reader by her unbridled expression given to those taboos and urges which could never be associated with the so called decent female society as for example, to talk of "the musk of sweat between breasts / The warm shock of menstrual blood." Her obsessive concern with the physical love seems to be her main preoccupation as in the opening lines from "The Looking-Glass" :

> Getting a man to love you is easy
> Only be honest about your wants as
> Woman. Stand nude before the glass with him
> So that he sees himself the stronger one
> And believes it so, and you so much more
> Softer, younger, lovelier..... Admit your
> Admiration.

However, it should not obscure the value of the second kind of love poetry, that is, the poetry of the ideal love. For instance, consider her poem "The Old Playhouse" where her concept of ideal love in embedded :

> .... Love is Narcissus at the water's edge, haunted
> By its own lovely face, and yet it must seek at last
> An end, a pure, total freedom, it must will the mirrors
> To shatter and the kind night to erase the water.

By using the narcissistic image she points out that the lovers remain involved in their own egos which prevent them from becoming one; they continue to be self-indulgent. However, it is not a permanent situation and the lovers transgress the boundaries. In Kamala Das' poetry, the element of devotion or Bhakti is absent. She summarises herself as Radha who goes in search of Krishna, the ideal lover. She confesses in *My Story :*

> I was looking for an ideal lover. I was looking
> for the one who went to Mathura and forgot to
> return to his Radha.

This mode of poetry suits her temperament and intensity of her experiences. It stands in conformity with the confessional and traditional, and her poetry, which is essentially autobiographical, acquires a kind of authenticity.

The agony of not finding a true lover leads to a sense of defeat. She becomes aware of the fact that reliance on body cannot carry her far enough. It is a trap that prevents her from experiencing true love as she says in "The Prisoner" :

> As the convict studies
> His prison's geography
> I study the trappings
> Of your body, dear love,
> For I must some day find
> An escape from its snare.

Away from the world of philanderers and its futile exercises, she turns to the mythical world of Krishna and Vrindavan. It fills her with the promise of seeking the lasting love and gives her the freedom from the rigid social order. In Das' poetry the haunting image of Krishna with "myriad shapes" becomes inseparable from her poetic consciousness. Among her Krishna poems, consider "Ghanshyam" which depicts vividly the transformation that was wrought in her by her relentless search for love. In another poem "Radha" she presents the ecstasy that Radha experiences in Krishna's embrace. She cries :

> Everything in me
> Is melting, even the hardness at core
> O, Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting.
> Nothing remains but
> You.....

Radha does not snap her marital ties in spite of her love for Krishna

as she considers her corporeal form insignificant. Precisely, Krishna has a therapeutic role to play in the poet's life. Like Sarojini Naidu, Das also thinks of Krishna as the central principle of the universe, but unlike the former she offers the Lord her body also. She says, "In many shapes shall I surrender.... I shall be fondled by Him." As Fritz Blackwell rightly observes, is his article "Krishna Motifs in the Poetry of Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Das," published in *Journal of South Asian Literature,* 13, 1-4 (1977-78), that Das' "concern is literary and existential, not religious; she is using a religious concept for a literary motif and metaphor."

Das' love poetry stands apart as it beautifully blends the indigenous traditions with the confessional tradition of the West. Love finds a vigorous manifestation in her poetry and becomes its all-pervasive spirit. A.N. Dwivedi observes in his article : "As a Poet of Love and Sex" that "Mrs. Das offers us a feast of vivid images of love couched in felicitous language. No doubt, love is her 'forte' on poetry."

15.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Kamala Das' poeting exhibits a certain degree of distinction in modern Indian poetry in English because of _____.

   a) stunning frankness in every line she visits.

   b) writing about taboo subjects

   c) writing about woman's agonies and psychic experience

   d) all of the above

2. Whose image with "myriad shapes" becomes inseparable from Kamal Das' poetic conciousness ? _____.

   a) Radha

   b) Vishnu

   c) Krishna

   d) Her husband

3. Kamala Das' poetry is unique as she blends _____.

a) tradition with confessional poetry

b) indigenous traditions with the confessional tradition of west.

c) frankness with indigenous traditions

d) theme of search for love with the mythical world of Krishna

4. Kamala Das' poems are bitterly criticized by the high priests of morality because she expresses_____ in her poetry.

a) theme of search for love.

b) different layers of hypocrisy.

c) theme of love, sex, marriage and companionship

d) none of the above

5. Kamala Das' poetry is characterized by _____.

a) Rhyme and meter

b) Formal structure and vivid imagery

c) Esoteric Symbalism and allegory

d) Free verse and vivid imagery

15.4 LET US SUM UP

Kamala Das lends a new dimension to her love poetry by revealing her kinship with the Indian tradition which has its roots in Indian epics and the Western tradition that related her to the confessional poets. As she is concerned with various facets of love, her love poetry can be divided into two phases. In the first phase, her obsessive involvement with physical love is prominent, in the second, her drift towards ideal love can be discerned. By ideal love, she means a kind of love that exists between Radha and Krishna, which doesnot check her impulse to freedom. In his book, Two Decades of Indian Poetry (1980), Keki Daruwalla rightly says, "Kamala Das" is pre-eminently a poet of love and pain, one stalking the other through a near neurotic world... love the lazy animal's

hunger of flesh, hurt and humiliation are the wrap and woof of her fabric. She seldom ventures outside this personal world."

15.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) Search for true love is the principal preoccupation of Kamala Das' poetry. Discuss.

b) How does Kamala Das lend a new dimension to her love poetry by revealing her kinship with the Indian Tradition.

15.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. d) all of the above
2. b) Vishnu
3. b) indigenous traditions with the confessional tradition of west.
4 b) different layers of hypocrisy.
5. d) Free verse and vivid imagery

15.7 SUGGESTED READING

Iqbal Kour : *Perspectives on Kamala Das' Poetry.*

Blackwell, Fritz. "Krishna Motifs in the poetry of Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Das". Journal of South Asian Literature, 13, 1-4 (1977-78)

D. Murali Manohar. *Kamala Das : Treatment of Love in Her Poetry.*

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KAMALA DAS : OTHER MAJOR THEMES IN KAMALA DAS' POETRY

STRUCTURE

16.1 Objectives

16.2 Major Themes in Kamala Das' Poetry

16.3 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

16.4 Let Us Sum Up

16.5 Examination Oriented Questions

16.6 Answer Key (MCQs)

16.7 Suggested Reading

16.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the lesson is to acquaint the learner with the major themes in Kamala Das' poems with special reference to the texts prescribed in the course.

16.2 MAJOR THEMES IN KAMALA DAS' POETRY

Kamala Das is one of the most aggressively individualistic poets writing in India today. She has poetry in her blood; both her mother and grandfather being established poets in Malayalam. The world of her poems is charged with two characteristics : her Indianness and her feminine sensibility. Writing about *My Story* Iqbal Kaur says :

> Kamala Das did display tremendous courage in revolting against the sexual colonialism and providing hope and confidence to young women that they can refuse and reject the victim positions, that they can frustrate the sexist culture's effort to exploit, passivize and marginalize women.

Her main concern happens to be suffering and humiliation meted out to man and woman, especially her sympathy for the suffering of :

> The field hands
> Returning home with baskets on their
> heads, ... their thin legs crushing
> The heads, the shrubs, their ankles
> Bruised by
> Thorns, their insides bruised by
> memories...

"A Hot Noon in Malabar" also portrays the vagrant, deprived people like "beggars with whinning voices" the Kuravan and Kurathis, the scheduled castes in Kerala who earn their living by reading palms of people, and the bangle sellers moving from door to door :

> ... all covered with the dust of roads
> for all of them whose feet devouring rough
> miles cracks on heels so that when they
> clambered up our porch, the noise was
> grating.

Das' poems like "Nani," "Other," and "Honour" which is a powerful expression of uncontrolled anger and righteous indignation at the cruelties that have been heaped upon the depressed people by the society, are ironic and sarcastic. The poet as in the following lines presents the sufferings and dishonour, to which these people are subjected :

Today they laugh at laws that punished no
rich, only the poor
Were ravished, strangled, drowned buried at
mid-night
Behind snakeshrines
Cheated of their land, their huts and hearts....

The atrocities against the lower class and the poor people, the poet is in a dilemma being herself of the class of the oppressor. In "The House Builder" the poet sympathetically portrays the sufferings of the poor hired labourers from Andhra Pradesh, who have migrated to urban centres like Bombay for employment opportunities. It is an ironic poem, which offers a contrast between "mercy times" and the "miserable life" of "These / Men who crawl up the cogged scaffolding / Building houses for the alien rich." The images like "cicadas in brambled foliage" words like "harsh," "burden" and "withered boughs" emphasize the sufferings of the hired labourers. The poet identifies herself with these dark souls singing in order to hide their misery. She refers to these "Builders in Bombay" in *My Story* also.

To the poet, the plight of the inmates in the lunatic asylum is equally pathetic as in the poem "Lunatic Asylum." In one of her early poems, Das warns the reader not to pity these helpless souls :

No
Do not pity them, they
Were brave enough to escape, to
Step out of the
Brute regimentals of
Sane routine, ignoring the bungles, the wall
Of Wens.....

She wishes to project the dehumanizing effect of social injustices and inequalities. Her *Colombo Poems* mark the widening of the poet's

concern from caste oppression specific to Indian society to racial oppression outside India. These poems present the ethnic violence in Sri Lanka and the situation of pain, suffering, distress prevailing in the island which she visited in 1984. These poems are a testimony to her involvement in the fate of people with whom she is racially related. With these poems the poet covers all forms of oppression, which human beings undergo on account of racial prejudices, cultural and linguistic chauvinism. On these issues, she also saves her position by writing on the edge. Consequently, she does not rise to the level of "conscious raising" as other Third World women writers like Ismat Chughtai and Mahasweta Devi could do.

Kamala Das has never been tired of identifying herself to the cause of women. Her views can be categorized as "a gut response," a reaction that, like her poetry, is unfettered by other's notions of right and wrong. She has ventured into the areas unclaimed by society and provided a point of reference for her fellow citizens. Here, she transcends the role of a poet and simply embraces the role of a very honest woman. In her poems she reacts to the conservative way of life which prefers to suppress what is unpleasant and "unexposable." She appeals to her fellow women in "Advice to Fellow—Swimmers" to break the shell and should no more be passive, they should assert their individual identity putting an end to constant suffering and humiliations in a society known for its patriarchal design. If her poem "My Son's Teachers" is noted for suffering through death on "a grey pavement/Five miles from here," "Middle Age" deals with life of humiliation and suffering for no fault except being on the "wrong side of forties." The lines like :

> They no longer
> Need you except for serving tea and for
> Pressing
> Clothes.

hint at the problem of modern households where the grey haired are mercilessly banished from the families. Das' attempt in this poem is to prepare the dreamy

middle-aged mother to face the ultimate reality, shedding the mental torture that has been in store for her :

> You have lived
> In a dream world all your life, it's time to
> Wake up, Mother,
> You are no longer young you know.

She painfully notices the change that has come over the domestic culture. In "My Grandmother's House" she says :

> I who have lost
> My way and beg now at stranger's doors to
> Receive love, at least in small change?

Kamala Das conceives an image of woman as a victim. In this sense, she has been able to transform her personal, intense experience into a general truth. As a result, she succeeds in communicating to her readers her mental suffering. In "The Sunshine Cat," Das speaks of the injustice meted out to women; she believes that society is hostile and humiliates her in every possible way. She says in the opening lines of the poem :

> They did this to her, the men who knew her, the man
> She loved, who love her not enough, being selfish
> And a coward, the husband who neither loved nor
> Used her, but was a ruthless watcher, and the band
> Of cynics she turned to, clinging to their chests where
> New hair sprouted like great-winged moths, borrowing her
> Face into their smells and their young lusts to forget.
> To forget oh, to forget.....

She seems to lose her sanity when forced to go to the bed against her desire; to escape from suffering and humiliation all she can do is "to build a wall with tears." Actually, Indian women are often puppets in the

hands of dominating men; they are ill-treated and humiliated till the men realize that they are of no use to them any more and then they are discarded as "half-dead" creatures. She has arrived at a conclusion after an uncanny exploration of womanhood and her needs and desires that instead of considering the body as a source of pleasures, it should be considered as "a familiar pest" that is a troublesome and destructive thing. A woman wishes to be treated as a person, a living individual, but the society may not be willing to change its attitude. Das in this context is essentially a poet of the modern Indian woman's ambivalence, giving expression to it more assertively and openly than any other Indian woman poet, especially when writing about the sufferings of women.

Das is concerned even with the lives of eunuchs who lead a life of endless suffering as in her poem "The Dance of the Eunuchs." It is the meaningless dance in which they are engaged in despite having a barren life. Though they sing songs of celebrations even for the unborn children, they fail to produce any admiration and sympathy because of their harsh voices still they keep dancing with vacant ecstasy. According to the poet :

> They
> Were thin in limbs and dry, like half-burnt logs from
> Funeral pyres, a drought and a rottenness
> Were in each of them.

The focus is on the sterility of their body and they survive only to suffer, to be humiliated and ridiculed by a hostile world. Painfully aware of the culturally defined roles of these people she only feels disturbed and discards the rude social responses. Kamala Das writes about the suffering of men, women and other living individuals of the society not only to show her concern for these deprived categories of humans but for raising a protest against their marginalization and exploitation. In this respect, the poetry of Kamala Das attains a real substantiality as a contributor for the strong

reactions and justifications for the most needful awakening of woman as a living entity in the world.

It is appropriately stated that modern Indian English poetry with all its aggressiveness and boldness begins and culminates in Kamala Das. In fact, she makes a poetic revolt by way of introspectively pondering upon a state of existence in which a certain section of society and women conduct themselves. She tries to penetrate with her imaginative potential and sympathetic understanding of the possible average sufferings and grievances of the Indian women, the poor strata of society, the domestic circumstances as well as the working conditions in society.

The thematic concerns in Das' poetry range from the sad plight of woman to the harrowing situations and a pathetic nature of human situation. The inalienable manner in which the politics of sex and other kinds of resentment make the human beings suffer arduously, creates a suffocatively inexpressive stance. The manner in which Das substantiates her argument has a poetic delicacy coupled with stubbornness. If her poems become "outcries," of the painful experiences of being a woman, what stirred her psyche most is the dehumanizing of man and the sad social situation of his or her fate.

In the poetry of Kamala Das the personal beginnings which culminate in a note of failure and disappointment in love, advance to the ultimate realization that the human existence is not greater than that of any other creature on earth. Her major thematic concerns deal with the initial gender distinctions as well as the poignant experiences of a pathetic nature of human imperfection. The whole poetic vision of Kamala Das has immense authenticity and openness though, like the human nature, has its own flaw as Prof. lyengar pointed out : "the endless reiteration of such hurt, such disillusionment, such cynicism, must sooner or later degenerate into mannerism." However, none can deny that human suffering and humiliation is her dominating theme and she airs her views with boldness and hopes that society might change its attitude towards those who are downtrodden.

16.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Kamala Das' poetry is often compared with the poetry of _____.

   a) Anita Desai

   b) Toru Dutt

   c) Virginia Woolf

   d) Sylvia Plath

2. The theme of _____ dominates the poetry of Kamala Das.

   a) Death

   b) Patriotism

   c) Love

   d) Disease

3. Kamala Das was given the Sahitya Akademi Award in _____.

   a) 1985

   b) 1983

   c) 1984

   d) 1987

4. "Courage and honesty are the strength of Kamala Das' character and here poetry." who said these lines _____?

   a) Sarojini Naidu

   b) Devendra Kohli

   c) R.K. Narayan

   d) A.K. Ramanujan

5. "Kamala Das is a fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibitious to articulate the hurts it has received in an insensitive largely man made world" who said these lines ? _____.

a) Srinivasa Iyengar

b) Kamala Das

c) Rabindranath Tagore

d) Mulk Raj Anand

16.4 LET US SUM UP

Kamala Das' is one of the the most aggressively individualistic poets writing in India today. She has poetry in her blood; both her mother and grand father are established poets in Malayalam. The world of her poems is charged with two characteristics; her Indianness and her feminine sensibility. The thematic concerns in Das' poetry range from the sad plight of women to the harrowing situations and the pathetic nature situation." However, one cannot deny that human suffering and humiliation are her dominating themes and she writes with boldness and hopes that society might change its attitude towards those who are downtrodden.

16.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTION

a) How does Kamala Das project the dehumanizing effect of social injustices and inequalities in her poems.

b) Discuss the thematic concerns in Das' Poetry.

16.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. d) Sylnia Plath

2. c) Love

3. a) 1985

4. b) Devendra Kohli

5. a) Srinivasa Iyengar

16.7 SUGGESTED READING

Iqbal Kour. *Perspectives on Kamala Das's poetry.*

Gowda, H.H. Anniah, “Perfected Passions: The Love Poetry of Kamala Das and Judith Wright.” *Literary Half- Yearly 20, No.1 (January 1979) : 116-30.*

Sunita B. Nimavat. *Kamala Das* : *The Voice of Rebel.*

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KAMALA DAS : LANGUAGE AND OTHER POETIC DEVICES IN HER POETRY

STRUCTURE

17.1 Objectives

17.2 Language and other Poetic Devices in the Poetry of Kamala Das

17.3 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

17.4 Let Us Sum Up

17.5 Examination Oriented Questions

17.6 Answer Key (MCQs)

17.7 Suggested Reading

17.1 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this lesson is to familirize the learner with the writing style of Kamala Das.

17.2 LANGUAGE AND OTHER POETIC DEVICES IN THE POETRY OF KAMALA DAS

In her poem "An Introduction" Kamala Das offers an argument about the poetic medium. She asks her 'friends,' 'critics,' and 'visiting cousins' :

> Why not let me speak in
> Any language I like? The language I speak,

Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses,
All mine, mine alone.
It is half English, half
Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is human as I am human, don't
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
Is to crows or roaring to the lions it
Is human speech.'

All this argument about the parameters of language suggests one significant point that no language can comprehend the intensity of her pain and agony. And she would like to be left alone in this matter, that is, in creating her own language. In her article "My Instinct, My Guru," which appeared in *Indian Literature,* (Vol. 31, No. 1 Jan.-Feb. 1988) she says :

> I don't find it easy to write either in English or in Malayalam. Language has been very difficult for me ..... Thoughts were there, but to cover them up, to wrap them up in decent language is very difficult. I am discovering a new language; trying to make a new language, create it, which will suit me. Because I have yet to find a language that can keep pace with my thinking.

In creating her own language, Kamala Das surpasses all the possible linguistic conventions. In effect her "All mine, mine alone" language is a violent formula of expressing the very heat and dust of her humiliation in being a sabotaged and relegated being in this world. In the face of the "designed deafness" of the society, she feels deeply committed to humanism. "Crowing of crows" and "roaring of lions" are involuntary and instantaneous outcries of the occasions. Similarly, the human occasions in the volatile circumstances prompt such involuntary outcries in order to give vent to the

pent-up repressed feelings and emotions. The pleasures and pains of these outcries of the occasions are inseparably involved. To convey this sort of dual experiences she uses the language of paradox and antithesis as in the lines from "An Introduction" (*Summer In Calcutta*) where she says "I do not know politics," and then adds "But I know the names of those in power, and can repeat them like days of week, or names of months." Such statements are meant to convey politics of society as well as that of man-woman relationship, which creates a harrowing unrest in her introspective moments. It is worth mentioning here what C. N. Srinath says about Kamala Das : "There are conspicuous craftsmanship, introspection and self-analysis in her poetry that has given it character." The greatest quality of her craftsmanship lies in handling language and other poetic devices which make her verification unique. Her poems, like all modern poetry are "increasingly concise" and are "moving towards metaphor" to borrow the phrase of R. Parthasarathy. The poems like "The Looking Glass" and "The Sunshine Cat" prove that Das has conveyed herself only through metaphor. In the former poem, it is the metaphor of the looking glass which conveys a twofold meaning : first, it shows the male body's attraction and fascination for the poet even when it is linked with lust and secondly it gives an ironic suggestion to flatter the male ego, which cannot be missed. Das emphasizes almost entirely on the visual as opposed to the aural elements in verse. It is pertinent to note that in her poetry the sensuous absorption of sunlight that is known as a metaphor for her fascination with life is repeatedly referred to as in the following lines :

April Sun, squeezed
Like an orange in
My glass? I sip the
Fire, I drink and drink
Again, I am drunk,
Yes, but, on the gold
Of suns.

In her poem "The Sunshine Cat" we get the picture of a half-dead woman of no use at all to men. The use of the metaphor of the sunshine acquires another dimension when combined with the image of cat as in the following lines :

Her husband shut her
In every morning; locked her in a room of books
With a streak of sunshine lying near the door, like
A yellow cat, to keep her company, but soon,
Winter came and one day while locking her in, he
Noticed that the cat of sunshine was only a
Line, a hair-thin line, and in the evening when
He returned to take her out, she was a cold and
half-dead woman.

In "The Suicide" an unhappy woman makes her appearance; she is a picture of unhappiness but enacts the role of a happy woman :

I must pose
I must pretend
I must act the role
Of happy woman
Happy wife.

Through her poems she reveals her feminine psychology and talks about her needs, anger, anguish and ambitions. In doing so, at times she becomes dramatic and even theatrical. In situations, it is her diction that moves from one register to another as per her thoughts. I.K. Sharma analyses in his article "The Irony of Sex : A Study of Kamala Das's Poetry," "Put Together, her poetry is a dissertation and that too a well documented one." Her language is as she puts in "An Introduction" :

...the speech of the mind
That is here and not there, a mind that sees and hears

and
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or rain or the
Incoherent mutterings of blazing funeral pyre.

Das' preference for free verse may be due to her lack of competence in metrics though she employs occasionally conventional devices; such as assonance, alliteration and rhyme. It makes in the free verse the phrasal syntax the rhythm-deciding factor. Das' poetry breaks free from the rhetorical and romantic traditions as she creates the most diverse idiom realizing that there is no escape from conflicts of experiences, while her male counterparts like Nissim Ezekiel and A.K. Ramanujan are struggling hard to form a dense, pithy and ironic idiom in their poems.

Das adopts the device of repetition of the phrases not only to emphasize the existing meaning but also to convey exactly the opposite, in fact, which, in turn, attempts to disguise the emptiness of her life. In "Substitute" she repeats the phrase "It will be all right, it will be all right" as if to convey that it is working well. "The Sunshine Cat" repeats the phrase "to forget/ To forget, oh, to forget" and "I do not love, I can not love, it is not/In my nature to love." Or "cough, cough their lungs out" is used in "The Flag."

In spite of this weakness of pointless repetition, Kamala Das poems display a strong feeling for rhythm. Depending on the situation depicted in her poems, she uses language as one of her mechanisms for survival that records the intense moments of a searching individual in various roles or even of the neurotic persona who finds herself profoundly alone and longing for the cessation of conflict. Das manages to record her feelings with a quietness and controlled brevity as in "Luminol" which is one of the most moving poems of Kamala Das. Her honest confession to be a freak as in "The Freaks" reveals through a simple question in every day, conversational speech :

Can this man with
Nimble fingertips unleash
Nothing more alive than the
Skin's lazy hungers?

Similarly, her images show the poet's urge to break the fetters of feudal social orders and the brute regimentation. It is not for anything else but the extent of freedom that sea becomes a significant symbol in her poetry. In "Composition" she says that she "could hear at night/The surf breaking on the shore." She shocks the reader with her honesty as in "Nani"—where a pregnant maid hanged herself but is totally forgotten by the grandmother who asks "who is she?" and Das says "Each/truth ends thus with a query." As C.V. Venugopal remarks :

> The poetry of Kamala Das is full of questions that are rarely answered. They are queries about truth. But, truth, in general, is unbearable. And Kamala Das, the seeker after truth feels betrayed."

In an article "Kamala Das's Poems : A quest for Identity" Dr. G. Kumar observes aptly that she could attain her mission of discovering the truth through her diction. Like Ezekiel she "waits for words." :

> Kamala Das's sine qua non, however, is her vocabulary, choice of verbs and some syntactical constructions are part of what has been termed the Indianization of English. This accomplishment is suggestive in the growth and maturity of national literature that the writers free themselves from the linguistic standards of their colonizers and create literature based on local speech.

She writes in "Without a Pause" :

Write without
A pause, don't search for pretty words
Dilute the truth, but write in haste, of
Everything perceived, and known and loved.

Kamala Das has created a place for herself in the world of Indian Writing in English by the use of the personal voice which makes, her expressions strong and against the old images, as in the poems *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*. Her tone at times becomes hysterical but it is, to use Juliet Mitchell's words "the woman's simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the organization of sexuality under patriarchal capitalism." Thus, Kamala Das, a contemporary poets, is quite conscious of her artistic design as well as purpose and holds herself fully responsible towards her vision. She writes with a natural ease about love, sex and marriage—all within her experience and awareness. Her language and "poetic voice imbued with a feminine–cum-feminist sensibility is typically her own." No wonder she asserts in "An Introduction" :

I am a sinner,
I am a saint.
I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys which are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I."

And her poetry is, as Davendra Kohli maintains "in the final analysis an acknowledgement and a celebration of beauty and courage of being a woman."

17.3 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Kamala Das was greatly influenced by the dramatic quality and style of _____.

   a) John Galsworthy

   b) Robert Browning

c) William Shakespeare

d) Bernard Shaw

2. The most obvious feature of Kamala Das' poetry is her unihibited frankness of _____.

a) Love

b) Human relations

c) Womenhood

d) Belief in God

3. The writing of eunuchs in 'vacant ecstasy' in the "Dance of the Eunuch" alludes to their _____.

a) Contentment in life

b) emotional blankness

c) physical agility

d) Zeal and enthusiasm

4. "A Hot Noon in Malabar" is _____.

a) A poem of sex

b) A melancholy poem

c) A nostlalgic poem

d) A philosophical poem

5. Kamala Das in her poem "Dance of the Eunuchs" sets up a contrast between _____.

a) greenery and deluge

b) ecstacy and sterility

c) mirth and glee

d) heat and dust

17.4 LET US SUM UP

Kamala Das has created a place for herself in the world of Indian Writing in English by the use of her voice which makes, her expressions strong and against the old images, as in the poems, "The Old Playhouse and other Poems." Her tone at times becomes hysterical but it is, to use Juliet Mitchel's words, "the woman's simultaneous acceptance and refusal of the organization of sexuality under patriarchal capitalism." Thus, Kamala Das, a contemporary poet, is quite conscious of her artistic design as well as purpose and holds herself fully responsible for her vision. She writes with a natural ease about love, sex and marriage - all within here experience and awareness. Her language and "poetic voice imbued with a feminine- cum feminist sensibility is typically her own."

17.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a) Comment on the use of language and poetic devices in Das' Poetry.

b) Kamala Das' poetry is a fiercely feminine sensibility that without inhibition articulates the hurt it has received in a largely man-made world. Discuss the statement with special reference to Kamla Das' poems you have studied.

17.6 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b) Robert Browning
2. c) Womanhood
3. b) emotional blankness
4. c) A nostalgic poem
5. b) ecstacy and sterility

17.7 SUGGESTED READING

Kamala Das : The Voice of a Rebel by Sunita B. Nimavat

Encountering Kamala by Kamala Suriayaya

Kamala Das : Critical Perspectives by Devindra Kohli.

Kamala Das : The Great Indian Trend-setter by Jaydeep Sarangi.

Kamala Das : Treatment of love in Her Poetry by D. Murali Manohar, Jiwa Publications, Gulbarga.

Nine Indian Women Poets : An Anthology by Eunice de Souza (ed).

Kamala Das : A Postcolonial Genius by Joginder Paul.

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KAMALA DAS : "AN INTRODUCTION"

STRUCTURE

18.1 Introduction to the Poetess

18.2 Objectives

18.3 Text of the Poem "An Introduction"

18.4 Summary of the Poem "An Introduction"

18.5 Critical Analysis of the Poem

18.6 Glossary

18.7 Reference to Context

18.8 Mutiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

18.9 Let Us Sum Up

18.10 Examination Oriented Questions

18.11 Answer Key (MCQs)

18.12 Suggested Reading

18.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE POETESS

As already discused in the preceding lessons, Kamala Das (1934-2009) was one of the most distinctive Indian poetesses writing in English. Although she wrote only three volumes of poems, Kamala Das stood out as

an Indian English poetess by virtue of the sincerity and uninhibited frankness of her poetry. Her poetry reveals her concern for woman's search for genuine love. She looks into woman's consciousness and highlights two aspects through her poetry. First, she focuses on the relationship between man and woman and second, the woman's quest for true love. The poem "An Introduction" gives an introduction to Kamala Das not only as a human being but also as a poetess. This poem is not merely autobiographical but also confessional in tone. She has been called a confessional poetess. The confessional poets deal in their poetry with personal emotional experiences which are generally considered as taboo in the society. There is self-analysis and a tone of utter sincerity in her poems. Confessional poetry is a struggle to relate the private experience with the outer world. Such a struggle is present in the poems of Kamala Das from a very early stage. In a confession a person talks not only about himself/herself but also about his or her deepest and darkest aspects of life. In this context, A.N. Dwivedi remarks, "An Introduction" is "highly revealing of the poetess, of her political knowledge, of her linguistic acquirements, of her physical growth and marriage, of her sad experience in married life, of her belongingness, of her love to another man, and of her eventual frustration and loneliness."

18.2 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this lesson is to acquaint the learner with Kamala Das' poem "An Introduction" to help the learner in analyzing Kamala Das as a confessional poetess through this poem." The learner is given a summary of the poem to explain the theme and substance of the poem. It also acquaints the learner with the format of examination oriented questions.

18.3 TEXT OF THE POEM "AN INTRODUCTION"

I don't know politics but I know the names
Of those in power, and can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months beginning with Nehru.

I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,
I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one.
Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone.
It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don't
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.
When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.
I shrank Pitifully.

Then ... I wore a shirt and my
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.
Don't play at schizophrenia or be a
Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
Jilted in love ... I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants a woman, just as I am every
Woman who seeks love. In him . . . the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me . . . the oceans' tireless
Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone,
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,
Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself I
In this world, he is tightly packed like the
Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely
Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,
It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying
With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

18.4 SUMMARY OF THE POEM "AN INTRODUCTION"

"An Introduction" is the famous poem written by Kamala Das in a self-reflective and confessional tone. This poem first appeared in *Summer in Calcutta* and then in *The Old Playhouse & Other Poems.* The poem is a strong statement on patriarchal society and highlights the miseries, bondage, pain suffered by women in general and Kamala Das in particular. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" points out the ability and inability of the subalterns to speak about their issues in their voices. Kamala Das' poem is also the voice of the subaltern. Here the subalterns are the women, especially Indian women. Kamala Das becomes a spokesperson for this suppressed gender, that is women. This poem is written in a confessional tone. She talks about her personal experience. However, her experience can be regarded as a signifier of the experience of all women.

The poetess says that she is not interested in politics but she knows the names of influential, powerful persons, beginning with Nehru. By saying that she can repeat their name as fluently as days of week, or names of the month, she indirectly states the fact that politics in India is a game of few chosen elite who ironically rule the country. The fact that she remembers them so well depicts that these people have been in power for repetitive cycles.

Next, she describes herself saying that she is an Indian, born in Malabar and brown in colour. According to her, a woman in India should not have a brown complexion which disqualifies her from the prospect of a good marriage since fairness is equated with beauty in our country. Women in India were not supposed to be educated during the poetess' time. However, she speaks in three languages, writes in two and dreams in one: articulating the thought that dreams have their own universal language. Kamala Das echoes that the medium of writing is not as significant as the comfort level that one requires. This choice of English language shows the rebellious voice of women who choose the path contrary to what the society has designed. People criticize her not to write in English since it is not her mother tongue. Moreover, the fact that English was a colonial language and it gathers even more criticism

every time she has an encounter with a critic, friend, or relative. She emphasizes that the language she speaks becomes her own with all its imperfections and queerness. It is half-English, half-Hindi, which seems rather amusing but it is honest. Its imperfections only make it more human; rendering it close to what we call naturality. It is the language of her expression and emotion as it voices her joy, sorrows and hopes. It is as integral to her as cawing is to the crows and roaring to the lions. Though imperfect, it is not a deaf, blind speech like that of trees in storms or the clouds of rain. It possesses a coherence of its own: an emotional coherence.

Next Kamala Das talks about the problem of her early marriage. The women in India are supposed to get married early otherwise they might be considered as either bad women or women with defect. However, the conservative Indian society does not understand marrying at an early age creates a lot of problem for the young lady whose mind is not prepared for the responsibilities of family or sexuality. The forced sexual relations destroy the body and the mind of the woman. She narrates she was married during her childhood but people told her that she had grown up because her body started showing signs of puberty. But she did not understand the interpretation because at heart she was still a child. When she asked for love from her husband not knowing what else to ask, he took her to his bedroom. The expression is a strong criticism of child marriage which pushes children into such a predicament while they are still childish at heart. Her husband did not beat her but left her woman-persona crushed and broken. She shrank pitifully, ashamed of her feminity. The bitter sexual experience of marriage made Kamala Das hate herself and her feminity. She thought if she could change her gender or her appearance she might not be subjected to further humiliations. This is the lowest point of Kamala Das' personality which shows the amount of intense pressure on women. And thereafter when she opts for male clothing to hide her femininity, the guardians enforce typical female attire, with warnings to fit into the socially determined attributes of a woman, to become a wife and a mother and get confined to the domestic routine. The society wants her

to be a proper woman who wears saris and ornaments and quarrels with her servants. This desire for identity on the part of the society comes from the threat that a truant woman poses to the established order of the society. They wanted her "to fit in" or "belong" and not play pretending games or roles. Thereafter, she fell in love with a man who also loved her. They even ask her to hold her tears when rejected in love and that ultimately she drank deep at the well of pessimism and dispiritedness. This is all that she reveals about herself.

18.5 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The diction of Kamala Das' poem "An Introduction" is lyrical and natural. Simplicity and lucidity are its hallmarks. It is hardly ever wrapped up in philosophical broodings or mystical abstractions. Mark her lyricism in the following passage:

It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying
With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the Betrayed.

The last three lines become incantatory and speak in the voice of an enraptured sage of the *Upanishads.* Here language has been put to an excellent use, and it does not fail the emotions of the poetess.

Kamala Das, whose diction is essentially modern and surcharged with emotion, adopts a matching poetic technique to suit her purposes and the demands of our age. The tone of the poem is intimate and convincing; the language is simple yet sweeping. The swift movement of the lines is evident in its use of monosyllabism; for example, as in the following:

Dress in sarees, be girl,
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,

Belong... ... ... don't sit
Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name, a role.

It is very rhythmical, and towards the close becomes incantatory. In it the poetess identifies herself with 'every woman' who seeks love.

The lines of the poem are unrhymed and irregular. The poetess has used very long sentences divided by commas and dots. They are suggestive to the confused and disturbed state of mind which the poetess hesitates to say. The poetess is the narrator and the character of the poem. The poetess has used rhetorical questions beginning with "why" "whom" and "when" to produce an effect rather than to get an answer. Moreover, the poem has used the pronoun first person singular "I" that refers to the poetess herself. The poetess slips into the memories of her bitter past. The phrase "hungry haste" is the example of the alliteration and also the personified metaphor. The line beginning with "of river, in me… the oceans tireless waiting… " is also an example of the metaphor. The poem progresses from the simple to the complex. The poetess has used diverse of the contrast by identifying herself as the sinner and the saint, as the beloved and the betrayed. And these references also refer to the alliteration. The entire poem tells about the condition of woman in modern Indian society which is still male dominated.

18.6 GLOSSARY

Malabar: the birth place of Kamala Das

Distortions: to change the shape or appearance

Queernesses: its odds

Funny: amusing; making you laugh

Roaring: making a continuous loud deep noise

Incoherent: unable to express yourself clearly often because of emotion

Cawing: the loud, unpleasant sound that is made by birds such as crows

Mutterings: complaints that you express privately rather than openly

Blazing: extremely hot

Shrank: to became smaller

Embroider: the person who decorate cloth by using threads of various colours

Schizophrenia: a mental illness in which a person is unable to link thought, emotion and behaviour, leading to withdrawal from reality and personal relations

Nympho: a woman who has, or wants to have, sex very often

Jilted: to end a romantic relationship with someone in a sudden and unkind way

Sheath: a cover over the blade of a knife or other sharp weapon

Rattle: to make a series of short loud sounds when hitting against something hard

Betrayed: to give information about something to an enemy

Aches: to feel a continuous dull pain

18.7 REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

i) *I don't know politics but I know the names*
Of those in power, and can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months beginning with Nehru

Explanation: "An Introduction" is a confessional poem and in these lines the poetess narrates that she is not interested in politics, but claims to know the names of all in power beginning from Nehru. She seems to

state that these are involuntarily ingrained in her mind. By challenging us that she can repeat these as easily as days of the week, or the names of months she echoes that these politicians were caught in a repetitive cycle of time, irrespective of any individuality. They do not define time; rather time defines them. It shows her distaste for politics in a country where politics is considered a domain for men. Her rebellion against patriarchy is to secure an identity for herself in a male-dominated world.

ii) *I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,*

I speak three languages, write in ...

... All mine, mine alone.

... Is aware.

Explanation: She is very proud to exclaim that she is an Indian by nationality and 'very brown' in colour. She goes on to articulate that she speaks in three languages, writes in two and dreams in one; as though dreams require a medium. Kamala Das echoes that the medium is not as significant as the comfort level that one requires. The essence of one's thinking is the prerequisite to writing. Hence, she pleads with all "critics, friends, visiting cousins" to leave her alone. Kamala Das reflects the main theme of Girish Karnad's "Broken Images"—the conflict between writing in one's regional language and utilizing a foreign language. The language that she speaks is essentially hers; the primary ideas are not a reflection but an individual impression. It is the distortions and queerness that makes it individual. And it is these imperfections that render it human. It is the language of her expression and emotion as it voices her joys, sorrows and hopes. It comes to her as cawing comes to the crows and roaring to the lions, and is therefore impulsive and instinctive.

iii) *was child, and later they*

Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs

... The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.

... Be embroiderer, be cook,

... Fit in.

Explanation: From the issue of the politics of language, the poem moves on to the subject of sexual politics. She speaks in the voice of a girl, rebelling against the norms and dictates of a patriarchal society which ask her to 'fit in' and 'belong' against her own wishes. These lines explain that she is as innocent as a child; and she knew that she grew up only because according to others her size had grown. The emotional frame of mind was essentially the same. Married at the early age of sixteen, her husband confined her to a single room. Her sudden marriage and her first sexual encounter all leave her traumatized. She was ashamed of her feminity that came before time, and brought her to this predicament. This explains her claim that she was crushed by the weight of her breast and womb. She tries to overcome it by seeming tomboyish. So she cuts her hair short and adorns boyish clothes. However, people around her criticize this life style of Kamala Das and tell her to 'conform' to the various womanly roles as wife and mother.

iv) *Don't play at schizophrenia or be a*
Nympho. ...
Jilted in love ... I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants a woman, just as I am every

Explanation: These lines explain that people around the poetess accuse her of being schizophrenic and "a nympho." They consider her want of love and attention for insatiable sexual craving. She explains her encounter with a man. She attributes him with not a proper noun, but a common noun—"everyman" to reflect his universality. He defines himself by the "I," the supreme male ego. He is tightly compartmentalized as "the sword in its sheath." It portrays the power politics of the patriarchal society that we thrive in that is all about control. It is this "I" that stays long away without any restrictions, is

free to laugh at his own will, succumbs to a woman only out of lust and later feels ashamed of his own weakness that lets himself lose to a woman.

v) *I am saint. I am the beloved and the*
Betrayed. I have no joys which are not
Your, No Aches which are not yours.
I too call myself I...

Explanation: The painful assertion, "I too call myself I," comes from the predicament of the confessional poet. Her experiences are common and ordinary, in fact too common to give her any special identity. She sees the outer world as hostile to the world of the self. She explains her encounter with a man. She attributes him with not a proper noun, but a common noun "everyman" to the "I" the supreme male ego. Confessional poetry is all autobiographical; it is rooted in the personal experiences of the poetess. She rises to the general and the universal. The poetess has used diverse contrast by identifying herself as the sinner and the saint, as the beloved and the betrayed. The entire poem tells about the condition of woman in modern Indian society which is still male-dominated. Her own predicament and suffering becomes symbolic of human predicament and suffering. Here, in this poem Kamala Das' greatness lies as an artist because she is both intensely personal and universal.

18.8 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Kamala Das was born in_____.

   a) 1930

   b) 1934

   c) 1937

   d) 1940

2. Das' poetry highlights her concern for _____.

   a) the downtrodden

b) the rich class

c the poor class

d women's issues

3. The poem "An Introduction" was first published in _____.

a *The Old Playhouse & Other Poems*

b *Summer in Calcutta*

c *Power, Desire and Interest*

d None of the above

4. Through the poem "An Introduction" Kamala Das underscores the relationship between_____.

a master and slave

b rich and poor

c man and woman

d None of the above

5. The women in India are supposed to get married early due to_____.

a their own desires

b societal pressure

c girls want to get free from their parents

d None of the above

6. Das' poem reveals her rebellion against_____.

a rich class

b poor class

c male oriented universe

d None of the above

7. Through her poetry Kamala Das raised her voice against _____.

a. women's exploitation

b. girls early marriage

c. accepted social norms

d. All of the above

8. Kamala Das changed her religion and became_____.

a. Jew

b. Muslim

c. Christian

d. Buddhist

9. The poem "An Introduction" is written in a _____ tone.

a. pessimistic

b. optimistic

c. confessional

d. None of the above

10. Kamala Das died in_____.

a. 2007

b. 2009

c. 2011

d. 2013

18.9 LET US SUM UP

Kamala Das' "An Introduction" is her masterpiece. In the poem she narrates the biological and psychological needs of a woman in a frank and candid style. She highlights her rebellion against the male oriented universe. Her poem "An Introduction" is an acknowledgement and a celebration of the beauty and courage of being a woman. She holds that women suffer discrimination of their sex, that they have specific needs

which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change in the society.

She was a social rebel and like all rebels against the accepted social norms. She shows her frustration and disillusionment towards the society which consider man as superior and woman as an inferior. Her life violated the systematic and traditional norms and values and she affirms to a form of life which is characterized as unconventional and extremely modern. "An Introduction" highlights her disillusionment both in married life and in love. Kamala Das' ultimate vision of love forms the central core of her poetry. Her persona no doubt is given to carnal hungers and suffers like tragic protagonists the catastrophe inflicted upon them by their own doings. Kamala's own disgust and failures lead her to a frantic search for the mythic Krishna, the ideal lover, in whom she can establish internal bond. This search makes her aware of the need to study all the men: "All at once the plot thickened with a researcher's hunger for knowledge, I studied all men." Since, the quest has, by and large failed in her case. Sex is no more man than a "mindless surrender" or a heartless participation not a "humming fiesta" without emotional involvement. Sex is barren and sterile for her. The charge of lustfulness and obscenity can, therefore, not be maintained. Her quest is spiritual gratification, in which however, she fails. In short, her poem "An Introduction" voices the longing and complaint of a woman who represents all women and she complains against Man who represents every man.

18.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss "An Introduction" as a confessional poem.
2. Critically analyze the poem "An Introduction."
3. Discuss the various themes which Kamala Das has used in the poem "An Introduction."
4. How far it is correct to say that Kamala Das is not only highlighting her

own agonies but she becomes a spokesperson for every woman? Explain from the poem "An Introduction".

18.11 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b) 1934
2. d) women's issues
3. b) *Summer in Calcutta*
4. c) man and woman
5. b) societal pressure
6. c) male oriented universe
7. d) All of the above
8. b) Muslim
9. c) confessional
10. d) 2013

18.12 SUGGESTED READING

Paul, Rajinder. *Summer in Calcutta*. New Delhi: Everest Press, 1965. Print.

Das, Kamala. *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*. Madras: Orient Longman Ltd., 1973. Print.

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KAMALA DAS : ANALYSIS OF THREE POMES

STRUCTURE

19.1 Objectives

19.2 Critical Analysis of the poem, "My Grandmother's House"

19.3 Glossary

19.4 Reference to context

19.5 Critical Analysis of the poem, "The Sunshine Cat"

19.6 Glossary

19.7 Reference to context

19.8 Critical Analysis of the poem, "The Invitation"

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19.10 Reference to context

19.11 Let Us Sum Up

19.12 Multiple Choice Questions

19.13 Answer Key (MCQs)

19.14 Examination Oriented Questions

19.15 Suggested Reading

19.1 OBJECTIVES

The objective of the lessonis to acquaint the learner with the three important poems prescribed in the course.

19.2 CRITICALANAYSIS OFTHE POEM "MY GRANMOTHER'S HOUSE"

"My Grandmother's House" is an autobiographical poem by Indian writer Kamala Das, that tells story of sorrow and nostalgia. The poem first appeared in Kamala Das's first anthology of verse titled Summer in Calcutta (1965). She talks about her early years spent with her grandmother. The poetess is longing for her grandmother's house in Malabar. She is reminded of the familial house where she has received immense love and affection from her grandmother. A note of pessimism runs throughout the action poem. It reveale the poet's painfull unfulfilled desire to visit her grandmother's house to which she is deeply and emotionally attached. The poem brings the poetess back to his early years, where she found security and achieved his sense of self.

Kamala Das's reminiscences of childhood are associated with Nalapat House, her family home in Malabar, grandmother whom she loved dearly. These recollections are always linked with feelings of nostalgia and she writes, " from every city. I have remembered the noons in Malabar with an ache groning inside me, a homesickness." Her family home and its presiding deity - her grandmother, symbolizes for the poetess "love," "Pomocence," "respectability" and "traditional values." In this poem the house is presented with conceren and pathos and and the poetess expreses her pergant her poignant feelings of yearing for his house. She wishes to go back to it.

The poem, sixteen lines long, is a sustained description, and tightly knit. The main features of the house is that the poet is loved there. In addition to love, and the security of being cared for , there is the whole world of books, suggestive of so many possibilities. The house in Malabar, thus not only symbolizes security and integrity but also imagination and youth. Here the

poetes, though some what lovely, is free to dream her own fantasies to fulfill, her desires to be connected to a more interesting world.

The last part of the poem is actually an address to what might be considered the poet's husband. The clue is not just the endearment, "Darling,' but the whole sense of explanation and justification that the poet offers. She says, can you believe that I was proud, and loved..... I who have lost/ My way and bey now at strangers' doors to / Receive love, at least in small change?" The last two lines are terribly poignant. The speaker has been reduced to begging for love in small change at strangers' door. What a contrast from the loved, protected, and proud child is represented in the the first part of the poem.

The words, "windows" and 'air' are qualified by the two prefixes "blind" and "frozen" respectively. There is a rich ambiguity in the phrasing which makes very real the suffering of the poetess. Her heart in itself like is a dark window where the fresh air doesnot blow. Images work on several layers of response, and enrich the poem's texture. One of the favorite images is that of the window where she sits and enjoys the cool breeze of the past. This recurs to the extent an obsessive image. The image emphasizes the languishing of becoming desire of the poeters for a sentiment peep into her past resurrection of her dreams and desires. With the dereliction of the old house, the windoues have become of the blind. Only the heat of the reunion with the house will melt the ice and the window will again be restored to old life.

There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or
Just listen to the frozen air
or in wild despair, pick an armful of

Metaphor and Simile are the main literary devices used in the poem "My Grandmother's House" Metaphor is a figure of speech in an expression is used to refer to something that it dosenot denote to suggest to suggest a similarity. i.e. peer through blind eyes of windows. Simile is a figure of

that expressed a resemblance between things of similar kinds i.e. My blood turned cold like the moon, lie behind my bedroom door like a brooding dog. This poem is about the porters's yearning for her grand-mother's house, where she was and loved She shows her love towards her grandmother. The pocter's life Seems to be meaningless because she has always been deprived from true love. The sense of futility of life has most effectively been conveyed to us by this poem.there are some key phrases in the poem which convey us a sense of some of despair and the feeling of futility:

The house withdrew into silence, Just listen to the frozen air, and And beg now at strangers door.

19.3 GLOSSARY

Despain	:	sad/ without hope
Frozen	:	cold
Brooding	:	toworry about somethings
Peer	:	to look carefully
Armful	:	the quantity that can be contained in the arms
Withdrew	:	to og back itsefl
Strangers	:	a person that you donot know.

19.4 REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

i) There is a house now far away where once I received love ..... that woman died.

Explanations : The poem My Grand Mother's House is a lyric that reveals her nostalgie yearning for here family home in Malabar where she had spent some of the happiest days of her life with her grandmother. The poetess in these lines narrate that now she lived in a city, far away from her grandmother s place. Here she suffered from an acute serve of alienation after having left grandmothers place here marriage. she remembered the days she spent

grandmother's house and the love and affection showed by The Memory her house makes her sad.

ii) The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved
Among books, I was then too young
To read, any my blood turned cold like the moon.

Explanation: Since then the poetess was thinking of going to her grandmother's house again. She had a strong desire to be in there and wanted to look though the windows of the house. The house was the only place where she could receive love from her grandmother. She became emotional and suffered intense agony. After the death of her grand mother, she says that even the House was filled with grief, and she accepted the seclusion with resignation. Only dead Only dead silence haunted the House, feeling of desolation wandering throughout. She described that she was too young to read the books at that time. The books in the house seemed to her as horrible as Snakes and her blood tuned cold like the moon.

iii) How often I think
There,"going"pees through blind eyes of windows or
Just listen to the frozen air.

Explanation : These lines explain that she was reminded of her grandmother's house where she spent here memorable childhood. She had a strong desire to look the windows her house. She called the windows blind because there was no one in the house to look through the windows. She wanted to sit there alone and listened to the blowing of the cold winter wind. Her heart was itself like a darek window where the fresh air did not blow.

iv) ...you, cannot believe, darling,
can you, that I lived in such a house lost
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change?

Explanation: Kamala Das in these lines told here darling that it would be difficult for him to believe that she had lived in such a wonderful house. She loved it so much that she was proud of it. Now the love shown her grandmother was not there for her. So she had been requesting even the strangers to show at least some of their love on her. But her wish remained unfulfilled. The failure of love and the birth of poetry were related to each other in Kamala Das. Here intimacy with her husband was purely physcial Under such circumstances, love degraded into lust and Savage conditio. So she had been begging strangers to Savage show true love to bee like her grandmother who shared her love to her like her grandmother who shared her lovr and affection for and affection for Kamala Das.

19.5 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM "THE SUNSHINE CAT"

"The Sunshine Cat," a poem from the collection *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), delves into the stark contrast between lust and love, offering a compelling exploration of their consequences. This personal yet universally resonant poem portrays the tragic outcomes of a life consumed by lust, devoid of emotional and spiritual fulfillment. The poet, adopting a female perspective, sheds light on the plight of a helpless and frustrated woman in a modern, male-dominated society.

In the poem "The Sunshine Cat," the poetess rants over the disillusionment in her yearning for love. Those who took advantage of her emotional instability are termed 'men' in general; it inevitably includes her husband too. He turned out to be a mere objective observer without emotional attachment. His being selfish, he did not exhibit the slightest display of love. And, his being cowardly, he did not dare to give in sexually to her, for it would mark the relegation of his ego: his perspective of masculinity. He was a relentless onlooker to the extent of being insensitive for he watched her encounters with other men like a carnival affair. This is why Kamala Das employs the word 'band.'

The poem also captures a feminist tone regarding women being caged in the four walls of the house. The husband locked her in a room filled with

books and a sliver of sunlight, but as winter approached, he realized the sunlight was merely an illusion. This also shows how women are treated in society where she is caged inside the house as prisoners with no ray of hope for freedom and liberation. The struggle against freedom and liberation against the patriarchal oppressive system gives a touch of feminist power and navigation in the poem.

She 'clinged' on to this band of 'cynics.' The word "cling" is very significant, as one clings out of desperation and onto dear life. A cynic is a person who believes that only selfishness motivates human actions. Her life revolved around these egocentric people. Nevertheless, she "burrows' herself in the chest of these men. Note the word "burrow" is generally used concerning mongooses or rats that dig holes to hide themselves for security. For the poetess, this was a temporary refuge to make herself secure as long as it lasted. The hair on their chest was like "great-winged moths" that came like parasites between them. The lovers were younger than herself and told her that they could not love her, but could be 'kind' to her. The word 'kind' is utilized to connote condescension: a patronizing attitude on the part of these superior lovers.

In Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala*, Appanna locks Rani in the house, as he leaves for work. In the case of the poetess, the husband jails her in a room full of books. However, Kamala Das does not crave intellectual company, but emotional companionship. She seeks solace in the streak of sunlight beneath the door. This is her ray of hope: her Sunshine Cat: the sunny impulse in her. Nevertheless, as her life approached its winter, her husband noticed that this streak had reduced to a thin line while locking her one day. The evening made him realize that she had mellowed down, partly due to age and partly owing to her despair. The fire in her (evocative of the Sunshine Cat) had died away. Hence, she was of no use to any man, as though the sole purpose of the woman in a man's life is for sex.

Throughout the poem, Das emphasizes on woman's experiences of body and the experiences she faces in the patriarchal homes. The feminist undertone

is represented through a woman's experience and Das, being a feminist is also advocating the need to represent the marginalised voices of a woman. Her writing style is a reflection of ecriture feminine meaning female writing which Cixous advocated for women to snatch back their own bodily experiences from the representation of men. As a feminist, Das adopted ecriture feminine style of writing to express the bodily experiences of a woman physically and mentally, abused by men in their marital homes.

19.6 GLOSSARY

Selfish: one who only thinks of their advantage.

Coward: who is not brave

Clinging: to hold on tightly to somebody

Sprouted: to begin to grow

Cynics: someone who believes that humans are selfish

Burrowing: to dig a hole or to penetrate

Streak: a thin line or mark

Sanity: the ability to think and behave in a normal and rational manner

19.7 REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

i) They did this to her, the men who know her, the man
She loved, who loved her not enough, being selfish
And a coward, the husband who neither loved nor
Used her, but was a ruthless watcher, and the band

Explanation: In the initial lines of "The Sunshine Cat," the poet underscores the destructive outcomes of a lust-driven life, emphasizing that only genuine love can provide emotional and spiritual satisfaction. The poem realistically portrays the distress of a woman who, failing to find authentic love, endures sexual mistreatment and exploitation from those she loves. Despite her affection, particularly towards one individual, she receives nothing in return. The woman's lustful husband, selfish and cowardly, overlooks her emotional

needs, limiting their relationship to mere physical gratification. The poem explores the one-sided nature of lust, neglecting the emotional requirements of the other partner in a sexual relationship. Kamala Das contends that lust is a fleeting, momentary connection, while love constitutes a timeless spiritual bond.

ii) Of cynics she turned to, clinging to their chests where
New hair sprouted like great-winged moths, burrowing her
Face into their smells and their young lusts to forget
To forget, oh, to forget, and, they said, each of
Them, I do not love, I cannot love, it is not

Explanation: The female persona, in the poem, suffered physically as well as mentally at the hands of her husband who neither loved nor used her. She loved him but her love was not reciprocated. She was suspected of having affairs with other men by her selfish and cowardly husband. The men she approached for genuine love turned out to be cynics, having no faith in the goodness of human nature. They were in no way different from her selfish and lustful husband. The men she chose for genuine love were cynical, having no trust in the basic goodness of human nature. She clung to their chests overgrown with new hair like great-winged moths and buried her face into the smells of their skins. She submitted herself to their young greed to forget the longing for real love. But they too proved selfish and cruel like her husband, for they could offer her nothing but lust. She frankly admitted that it was not in her nature to love anybody. Being frigid, she had lost all her relevance as a woman in their eyes. Maximum, they could be kind and helpful to her in case of any emergency.

iii) In my nature to love, but I can be kind to you.
They let her slide from pegs of sanity into
A bed made soft with tears, and she lay there weeping,
For sleep had lost its use. I shall build walls with tears,
She said, walls to shut me in.

Explanation: In these lines, the poet becomes fed up with her marital as well as extra-marital relationships in life. She was shocked to learn that all her lovers had neither love nor lust but only lip sympathy for her. The female persona was disillusioned by her husband as well as her other lovers. None bothered to satisfy her emotional-cum-spiritual needs. After being released from their clutches, she left for room to relax on her soft bed and started shedding copious tears due to the cynical and hostile attitude of her lustful lovers. She feared that she would go mad in this tense state of mind. She had built walls of tears around her and enclosed herself within their boundaries. Being self-lost and dejected, she had consciously alienated herself from the mainstream of life. Frustration in love is always disastrous. It disturbs a dejected lover mentally and creates a vacuum in his/her life. The female personal frustrations in marital and extra-marital relationships have a disastrous impact on her life. She loses all her balance of mind and undergoes intense emotional and intellectual suffering. She opts for a life of isolation and loses all interest in life. It is an autobiographical passage that has a direct bearing on the life of Kamala Das.

iv) Her husband shut her
In, every morning, locked her in a room of books
With a streak of sunshine lying near the door like
A yellow cat to keep her company, but soon
Winter came, and one day while locking her in, he
Noticed that the cat of sunshine was only a
Line, a half-thin line, and in the evening when
He returned to take her out, she was a cold and
Half-dead woman, now of no use at all to men.

Explanation: The poetess' husband was so cruel to her that he used to lock her up in a room containing books; he would unlock the room in the evening when he returned home from work. A ray of sunshine was the only companion she had during the day. That ray of sunshine looked like a yellow-colored

cat. When winter came, the sun's rays lost their brightness because of the cloudy skies; it was reduced to a thin line, as thin as a ray of hair. The poet became so emaciated and thin because of her chronic depression and despondency that she felt half-dead; she was no longer an object that a man could sexually desire. The poet felt suffocated in the life of confinement and lost her balance of mind. It compelled her to snap all her ties with the external world. She was dehumanized and lost her relevance as a woman, unfit for sexual purposes. All types of lustful relationships, marital or extra-marital, share a common tragic fate.

19.8 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE POEM "THE INVITATION"

The poetess here recalls her experience of having sex with one of her lovers. He went away after making love to her but she could not forget the delicious experience and its bitter-sweet memory continued to haunt her. The poetess felt as if a man's fist was alternately tightening and then loosening its muscles. It appeared as if he were forming some firm resolve and then becoming somewhat uncertain. She was tortured by her memory of lovemaking with one of her lovers. She knew that he would not come back, but she was unable to forget the experience of making love to him because it had been enjoyable. Standing on the seashore, the poetess felt that the sea was inviting her to jump into its waters so that she could end her life. The sea seemed to tell her that she would lose nothing except her distress and misery, but it would certainly gain something by swallowing her body and adding to its conquests. The poetess, however, asked the sea to mind its own business and to go its way, leaving her to go her way:

> I have a man's fist in my head today
> lenching, unclenching…
> he sea is garrulous today. Come in,
> ….. losses are my gains.
> Oh sea, let me shrink or grow, slash up
> Slide down, go your way I will go mine.

She recalled how her lover would come to her during his office breaks to make love to her. He used to come to her to refresh himself after his tiring office - work; he felt warm in her embrace but remained silent all the time.

She tried to dismiss his memory from her mind by telling herself that he had gone for good and that it would be foolish on her part to entertain any hope of his return:

> He came to me between
> Long conferences…
> For air, and was warm in my arms
> …. With remembering,
> The man is gone for good. It would indeed
> Be silly to wait for his returning.

Meanwhile, the sea repeated its invitation to the poet to jump into its waters and end her life. But she replied that she wanted to be left alone, and not to be pestered by the sea. Her thoughts again returned to her lover. She realized that she wanted no other lover but the one who had made love to her and left her. In bed with him, she used to feel that she was in paradise and the sixty-by-two-foot bed was heaven for them. It was only after they left the bed and walked together in the open that they exposed themselves to the wide space outside in the city:

> Me alone. As long,
> As I remember, I want no other.
> On the bed with him, the boundaries of
> Paradise had shrunk to a mere
> Six by two and afterwards, when we walked
> Out together, they
> Widened to hold the unknowing city…

The sea spoke to the poetess again, urging her to end her life. If she waited for a natural death, her body would be placed on a funeral pyre and consumed by fire when she was cremated. If she jumped into the waters of the sea, she would meet a cool death; she would then be able to stretch her limbs on the cool sand at its bottom and be able to rest her head on the flowers growing there:

End in me, cries the sea. Think of yourself
Lying on a funeral pyre
With a burning head. Just think. Bathe cool,
Stretch your limbs on cool
Secrets sands, pillow your head on anemones.

Turning away from the sea, the poetess thought again of the blissful experience of lovemaking she had had with her lover. They had been meeting in the afternoons throughout summer to indulge in sex at the end of which their bodies would lie listlessly on the bed and their minds incapable of thinking by the heat of the sun:

All through that summer's afternoon we lay
On beds, our limbs inert, cells expanding
Into throbbing suns. The heat had
Blotted our thoughts… please end this whiplash

The sea urged her again to put an end to the memories of her lovemaking in the past and the heartache she was undergoing. The sea added that it had waited for a long time for the right person, who would also be bright, like her, to come and enter its blue waters. But the poetess replied that she was still young, she still needed her lover to reconstruct her life before thinking of destroying it, she still entertained a vague hope that her lover might come back, even though he might again forsake her. She asked the sea to leave her to herself:

Of memories, cries
The sea. For long I've waited for the right one
To come, the bright one, the right one to live
In the blue. No. I am still young
And I need that man for construction and
Deconstruction. Leave me…

Turning away from the sea again, the poetess said that it could wait yet she was not ready to drown herself in it and end her life. When sea waves

were violently rushing towards the seashore to drown her, the poetess spoke in her imagination to her absent lover. She had been resisting the sea's invitation so far, but she could not go on resisting it forever. Thus, the woman's monologue ends with her intention soon to give a practical shape to her desire to commit suicide:

The sea shall bear some prying and certain
Violations, but I tell you…
…. Beat in childish rage…
Darling, forgive how long can one resist?

19.9 GLOSSARY

Clenching: to hold tightly

Garrulous: talking a lot, especially about unimportant things

Widened: to become larger

Anemones: a small plant with white, red, blue, or purple flower

Throbbing: experiencing pain

Rage: intense anger

Tides: the rise and fall of the sea

19.10 REFRENCE TO CONTEXT

i) I have a man's fist in my head today
Clenching, unclenching...
The sea is garrulous today. Come in,
..... losses are my gains.
Oh sea, let me shrink or grow, slash up
Slide down, go your way I will go mine.

Explanation: The poetess here recalls her experience of having sex with one of her lovers. He went away after making love to her but she could not forget the experience of love and its bitter-sweet memory continued to haunt her. The

poetess felt as if a man's fist was alternately tightening and then loosening its muscles. It appeared as if he were forming some firm resolve and then becoming somewhat uncertain. She was tortured by her memory of lovemaking with one of her lovers. She knew that he would not come back, but she was unable to forget the experience of making love to him because it had been enjoyable. Standing on the seashore, the poetess felt that the sea was inviting her to jump into its waters so that she could end her life. The sea seemed to tell her that she would lose nothing except her distress and misery, but it would certainly gain something by swallowing her body and“adding to its conquests. The poetess, however, asked the sea to mind its own business and to“go its way, leaving her to go her way.

ii) He came to me between
Long conferences...
For air, and was warm in my arms
With remembering,
The man is gone for good. It would indeed
Be silly to wait for his returning.

Explanation: In these lines, she recalled how her lover would come to her during his office breaks to make love to her. He used to come to her to refresh himself after his tiring office work; he felt warm in her embrace but remained silent all the time. She tried to dismiss his memory from her mind by telling herself that he had gone for good and that it would be“foolish on her part to entertain any hope of his return.

iii) Me alone. As long,
As I remember, I want no other.
On the bed with him, the boundaries of
Paradise had shrunk to a mere
Six by two and afterwards, when we walked
Out together, they
Widened to hold the unknowing city...

Explanation: Meanwhile, the sea repeated its invitation to the poetess to jump into its water and end her life. But she replied that she wanted to be left alone, and not to be disturbed by the sea. Her thoughts again returned to her lover. She realized that she wanted no other lover but the one who had made love to her and left her. In bed with him, she used to feel that she"was in paradise and the sixty-by-two-foot bed was heaven for them. It was only after they left the bed and walked together in the open that they exposed themselves to the wide space outside in the city.

iv) End in me, cries the sea. Think of yourself
Lying on a funeral pyre
With a burning head. Just think. Bathe cool,
Stretch your limbs on cool
Secrets sands, pillow your head on anemones.

Explanation: The sea spoke to the poetess again, urging her to end her life. The sea here told"her that if she waited for a natural death, her body would be placed on a funeral pyre and consumed by fire when she was cremated. But if she jumped into the water of the sea, she would meet a cool death; she would then be able to stretch her limbs on the cool sand at its bottom and be able to rest her head on the flowers growing there.

v) All through that summer's afternoon we lay
On beds, our limbs inert, cells expanding
Into throbbing suns. The heat had
Blotted our thoughts... please end this whiplash

Explanation: Turning away from the sea, the poetess thought again of the blissful experience"of lovemaking she had had with her lover. She explained that they had been meeting in the"afternoons throughout summer to indulge in sex at the end of which their bodies would lie"listlessly on the bed and their minds incapable of thinking by the heat of the sun.

vi) of memories, cries
The sea. For long I've waited for the right one

To come, the bright one, the right one to live
In the blue. No. I am still young
And I need that man for construction and
Deconstruction. Leave me...

Explanation: The sea in these lines urged her again to put an end to the memories of her lovemaking in the past and the heartache she was undergoing. The sea added that it had waited for a long time for the right person, who would also be bright, like her, to come and enter its blue water. But the poetess replied that she was still young, she still needed her lover to reconstruct her life before thinking of destroying it, she still entertained a vague hope that"her lover might come back, even though he might again forsake her. She asked the sea to leave her to herself.

vii) The sea shall bear some prying and certain
Violations, but I tell you...
Beat in childish rage...
Darling, forgive how long can one resist?

Explanation: Turning away from the sea again, the poetess said that it could wait yet she was not ready to drown herself in it and end her life. When sea waves violently rushed towards the seashore to drown her, the poetess spoke in her imagination to her absent lover. She had been resisting the sea's invitation so far, but she could not go on resisting it forever. Thus, the woman's monologue ends with her intention soon to give a practical shape to her desire to"commit suicide.

9.11 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. The speaker of "My Grandmother's House" is proud of_____

a) Her parent's house

b) Her grandmother's house

c) Her uncle's house

d) None of these

2. My Grandmother's House is_____

a) A sonnet

b) An ode

c) A ballad

d) A lyric

3. Who is the speaker in the poem "My Grandmother's House" _____

a) Toru Dutt

b) Kamala Das

c) Sarojini Naidu

d) None of these

4. Kamala Das is talking about her_____ who is dead now.

a) Father

b) Mother

c) Grandmother

d) Uncle

5. She noticed a _____ behind the door of the bedroom.

a) Dog

b) Cow

c) Cat

d) Mouse

6. The poem "The Sunshine Cat" was published in_____

a) Summer in Calcutta

b) The Descendant

c) Night of Scorpion

d) None of these

7. Who is the only companion of the poetess in the poem_____ .

a) Her Husband
b) Her Sister
c) A ray of light
d) A Dog

8. In the poem, "The Sunshine Cat" the woman confines herself into___.

a) A prison
b) A room
c) A cave
d) None of these

9. Who has exploited her sexuality in the poem_____ .

a) Her husband
b) Her neighbour
c) All men
d) None of these

10. What happened at the end of the poem_____ .

a) She felt happy
b) She felt half-dead
c) She felt free
d) None of these

11. The poem "The Invitation" was published in_____ .

a) Summer in Calcutta (1965)
b) The Descendants 1967
c) My Story (1973)
d) None of these

12. The poem is a dialogue between_____ .

a) the poetess and sea

b) the lover and the poetess

c) the husband and wife

d) None of these

13. Who in the poem invites the poetess_____ .

a) Husband

b) Sea

c) Nobody

d) The God

14. For what purpose the sea invites the poetess_____ .

a) to enjoy tides

b) to talk

c) to come and join me

d) None of these

15. What does the poet decide to do so_____ .

a) commit suicide

b) leaves the sea shore

c) decides to go home

d) None of these

19.12 LET US SUM UP

Kamala Das is frequently linked to confessional poetry, a literary genre in which the poet shares their feelings and experiences in a close-knit manner. Her poems provide readers with a very intimate and reflective journey by acting as a canvas for her deepest desires, thoughts, and struggles. In her poems such as “An Introduction,” “My Grandmother's House,” “The“Sunshine

Cat," and "The Invitation" Kamala Das fearlessly challenges conventional norms and expectations, showcasing her unabashed identity. Her short stories, poetry, memoirs, and essays brought her both respect and ill repute in equal measures. Kamal Das wrote (mostly poetry), both in English and Malayalam language under the pen name Madhavikutty. The poems by Kamala Das, reveal the position of women in society at large.

"My Grandmother's House" is a poem that talks about her grandmother's house where the poetess once lived when she was a child. She discusses that her grandmother was the only source of happiness and warmth in that house, and when she died, the entire house became silent. She describes how her world of happiness is now completely devoid of love and feelings she once felt when her grandmother was alive. In this poem, she constantly experiences her childhood with the present world of human nature. She says that earlier she lived in a house where she was honored and loved but now, she feels lost. Since she did not receive any feelings of love from the people whom she called her own, she now has to knock "at strangers' door" to beg for her love, at least in a small amount like her grandmother. In the poem, "The Sunshine Cat," Kamala Das talks about how men's cynicism causes them to view women as nothing more than objects of lust. They are not emotionally connected to the woman. Instead, men take advantage of women to fulfill their desire for sex. The poetess is attempting to reveal in this poem how her husband and her so-called lovers exploited her to their lust. She looked for love, care, and emotional support, but they were indifferent to her and cynical until she became a cold and half-dead woman... and of no use at all to men. In the poem "The Invitation" the poetess describes her unhappiness with her marriage which drives her towards suicide. The sea is used here to persuade her to let go of the memories of her previous lovemaking and the sadness she was experiencing. The poetess responded, that she was still young and however, wanted her lover to help her rebuild her life before ending it. She also maintained a vague hope that her lover would return, even though he might abandon her once more. She requested solitude from the sea. Although she had been declining the sea's offer thus far, she could not continue to do so

forever. The concludes with her intention to give a practical shape to her wish to commit suicide. The poetess by using vague images of the sea and death tries an attempt to escape from memories of frustration and disappointment. Through her diverse themes and unique style, Kamala Das has left an indelible mark on the literary landscape, particularly in the realm of Indian poetry. Her work continues to resonate with readers, inspiring discussions on feminism, cultural identity, and the human condition.

9.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Critically analyze the poem "My Grandmother's House."
2. How does the Kamala Das present the house in the foem My Grandmother's House" with concern and pathos ?
3. After the death of poet's grandmother, what happened
4. "The house is silent. No one lives here. Even the air dosen't Seem to be moving." Explain this line.
5. Critically analyze the poem "My Grandmother's House."
6. How does Kamala Das present the house in the poem "My Grandmother's House" with concern and pathos?
7. "The house is silent. No one lives her. Even the air doesn't seem to be moving." Explain this line.
8. Discuss how the poem "The Sunshine Cat" by Kamala Das highlights the struggle of women against the patriarchal oppressive system.
9. What is the symbol of a sunshine cat in Kamala Das's poem?
10. Who is shut inside the room as mentioned in the poem "The Sunshine Cat?"
11. Discuss how the poem "The Invitation" analyzes the treatment of love and sexuality in this poem.
12. Explain the importance of the sea in the poem "The Invitation."

13. Kamala Das is known for her bold and frank expression. Explain this by taking references from the poems discussed in the syllabus.

19.14 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b) Her grandmother's house
2. d) A lyric
3. b) Kamala Das
4. c) Grandmother
5. a) Dog
6. a) Summer in Calcutta
9. c) A ray of light
8. b) A room
9. c) All men
10. b) She felt half-dead
11. b) The Descendants 1967
12. a) the poetess and sea
13. b) Sea
14. c) to come and join me
15. a) commit suicide

19.15 SUGGESTED READING

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INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL : THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

STRUCTURE

20.1 Introduction

20.2 Objectives

20.3 Historical Background

20.3 (a) The Gandhi Decade

20.3 (b) Early Patriots and Social Reformers

20.3 (c) The Moderates : Demand For Home Rule

20.3 (d) The Use of Religion

20.3 (e) The Advent of Gandhi

20.3 (f) Suspension of the Movement

20.3 (g) Gandhi's Stress on Social Reform

20.3 (h) Gandhian Movement : Its Second Phase

20.3 (i) Gandhi-Irwin pact : Psychological victory

20.4 20.4 (a) About the Author

20.4 (b) In America

20.4 (c) Literary Career

20.4 (d) Raja Rao's Fame and Recognition

20.4 (e) Influence As a Novelist

20.4 (f) Rao's Death

20.5 Selected Works

20.6 (a) Self-Assessment Questions

(b) Examination Oriented Questions

20.7 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

20.8 Let Us Sum Up

20.9 Short Answer Questions

20.10 Answer Key to Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

20.11 Suggested Reading

20.1 INTRODUCTION

This lesson has been written with an aim to provide learner the knowledge of certain aspects of the historical background of age in which the Indian novel in English was written. An attempt has been made to identify the major social and political movements of the age. Raja Rao wrote many novels and short stories during his lifetime, and is credited with making a valuable contribution to the development of the Indian Novel in English. This lesson also discusses the life of Raja Rao.

20.2 OBJECTIVES

- That the learner should be aware of the historical background of the period in which Raja Rao wrote his novels.
- That the learner should be familiar with the literary scene in which Raja Rao lived and worked.
- That the learner should be able to identify and explain major political and social issues related to the age.

- That the learner should be able to demonstrate familiarity with the bibliographic tools and resources appropriate for the study of the Indian Novel in English and apply these tools and resources to literary research.
- That the learner should be acquainted with the life and works of the writer, Raja Rao.

20.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

20.3 (a) The Gandhi Decade

Kanthapura is a novel dealing with the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on a remote South Indian village of that name. What happens in *Kanthapura* was happening all over India in those stirring years from 1919 to 1931 of the Gandhian non-violent, non-co-operation movement for the independence of the country. Gandhi does not make a personal appearance in the novel, as he does in Mulk Raj Anand's *The Untouchable,* but he is constantly present in the background, and at every step there are references to important events of the day such as the historic *Dandi March* and the breaking of the *Salt Law.* Hence, for a proper understanding of the novel, it is essential to form a clear idea of the important political and social events connected with the Indian freedom struggle.

20.3 (b) Early Patriots and Social Reformers

India's struggle for independence from the colonial rule of the British goes back to the war of 1857, which the British dismissed as a mere mutiny. The valiant Indian freedom fighters were defeated in their first war of independence but the spirit of India was not crushed. The battle for India's freedom continued to be fought on the social and economic fronts. Such enlightened social workers, reformers and teachers as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra, Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore were only a few of the leading luminaries who brought about the Indian Renaissance

of the late 19th century. They worked ceaselessly for the eradication of such social evils as *child-marriage, Sati, untouchability, Purdha system* and the exploitation and ill-treatment of widows. They waged a constant war against illiteracy, superstition, blind faith and orthodoxy. They highlighted the grinding poverty of the Indian masses who were being rendered poorer as a result of the economic exploitation on the part of their foreign rulers. In this way, these early patriots paved the way for the Gandhian struggle for independence of the early decades of the next century.

20.3 (c) The Moderates: Demand for 'Home Rule'

All these social reformers stressed the greatness and glory of India's past, particularly the uniqueness of her spiritual culture. In this way they contributed to the rise of nationalism and the spirit of patriotism. Though the young men who were educated in the Western manner, copied the ways of the west, but they also yearned to understand Indian aspirations, and helped and supported the cause of Indian independence. As the century drew to a close, the demand for 'home rule' gained ground. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded by an Englishman, A.O. Hume. Indians like Surendra Nath Bannerjee, Feroze Shah Mehta, Dadabhai Naroji and many others voiced the Indian demand for 'Home rule.' These leaders were moderate in their outlook, for they were aware of the good which their contact with the Britishers had done to them in bringing about a political and cultural regeneration in the country. The division in the rank and file of the party was perceptible at the Surat Session of the Congress in 1907. The extremists led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak assailed the moderates and the session broke up in confusion. The Congress remained under the leadership of the moderates from 1907 to 1917, but it was evident from now on that it were the extremists only who really reflected the true sentiments of the people. Mrs. Annie Besant's demand for 'Home Rule' was in itself an improvement on the plans so far formulated.

20.3 (d) The Use of Religion

Indian masses are deeply religious and so religion was freely used by Indian patriots all through the freedom struggle. The religious sentiments of the rural folk were fully exploited by B.G. Tilak by introducing the *Ganapati festival* in Maharashtra and instilling in them courage, patriotism, discipline and unity. Students were also persuaded to take part in these celebrations. The festival was used as a suitable instrument for educating the masses and making them politically conscious. Tilak also started *the Shivaji festival* in 1895 to encourage the Marathas to emulate their beloved leader. A new longing for liberty and a firm resolution for a United National Government were fostered by festivals like these. Athletic performances, patriotic and religious songs, *Kathas* and ballads were recited on a large scale, resulting in a sense of pride in the glorious and worthy past of India. It may be mentioned that religion is used in this very way in the novel. There are recitals of *Kathas* and holding of *Harikathas* and festivals. It is under the guise of a procession of Ganapati that the people of Kanthapura try to make good their escape. Religion played an important part in Indian struggle for independence, and so it does in the novel.

20.3 (e) The Advent of Gandhi: First Civil Disobedience Movement

It was the arrival of Gandhi from South Africa that infused a new life and vitality into the Indian struggle for independence. He had already acquired considerable experience in the use of non-violence, non-co-operation as a political weapon, but it was in India that he perfected his technique and used it with such success. In the beginning, he co-operated with the British and in this way sought to secure for India an honourable place in the British Commonwealth. During the war years (1914-1918), he made a forceful plea for extending all the possible help to the British in the hope that after the war some measure of

autonomy would be granted to the Indian people. His moderate approach incensed the extremists, but he did not care for it. But when the war was over, the thankless British government did not fulfil the promises it had made to the Indian leaders. Instead, there came the notorious *Rowlatt Act, 1919*. The result was that the Mahatma gave the clarion call for Civil Disobedience. There was an upsurge of Indian nationalism and patriotism as had never been witnessed before. Public meetings were organised all over the country and leaders like B.G. Tilak, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, etc., freely voiced the demand for *Swarajya* or independence. In the beginning, it was a demand for home rule under the patronage of the British, but it soon grew into a demand for complete independence. As public enthusiasm mounted, government repression also increased and led to the *Jallianwala Bagh* tragedy (April 13, 1919) which sent a wave of horror throughout the country.

20.3 (f) Suspension of the Movement

As the Gandhian movement continued, there were signs of increasing violence. It all culminated in the unprecedented violence of Chouri-Chaura. Gandhi was shocked. He regarded it as a personal failure and suspended the movement. This withdrawal of the movement, when national enthusiasm was at its height, offended a large number of staunch patriots including Jawaharlal Nehru. There was a temporary decline in Gandhi's popularity and the extremists within the party gained ground. The demand for complete independence instead of dominion status, within the British empire, was voiced by Nehru in his Presidential address in 1929: "We stand for the fullest freedom of India. This Congress has not acknowledged, and will not acknowledge, the right of the British Parliament to dictate to us in any way."

20.3 (g) Gandhi's Stress on Social Reform

Meanwhile, Gandhi continued to prepare the nation for the prolonged struggle which lay ahead before the independence could be gained.

He aimed at the total involvement of all sections of the Indian people, and so launched a comprehensive programme of economic, social and religious upliftment, and emancipation of the Indian people. His programme of action was fourfold *(a)* Spinning of the *charkha;* weaving of one's own cloth and boycott of foreign cloth and other goods. *Swadeshi* and *Khaddar* were necessary for Swaraja *(b)* Eradication of untouchability and other social evils like the *Purdah* system so that women and the so-called lower castes may play their part in the freedom struggle. *(c)* Village upliftment, eradication of poverty, illiteracy, casteism, etc., and (d) Hindu-Muslim unity. In the novel, Moorthy places this very Gandhian programme of action before the people of Kanthapura. Gandhi's stress was on truth and non-violence and this message was carried to the remote parts of the country by devoted Congress workers. Congress Committees were formed in every nook and corner of the country and the Satyagrahies were trained to carry out the programme at the call of the Mahatma.

20.3 (h) Gandhian Movement: Its Second Phase

The second phase of the Gandhian civil disobedience movement began in 1929. This time the movement was more militant, though Gandhi still insisted on non-violence. There were meetings and Satyagrahas all over the country. There were picketings and boycotts. Toddy booths and plantations were picketed and there were huge bonfires of foreign cloth in every part of the country. Farmers refused to pay land revenue. Then Gandhi undertook his historic march to *Dandi* beach to prepare salt there and thus break the unjust and anti-people salt law. He started with a few followers but thousands and thousands joined him on the way. The nation seemed to have gone wild and there was violence at some places. There were frequent lathi charges and firings and thousands including national leaders, like Gandhi and Nehru, were placed behind bars. The people suffered

terribly for the sake of their beloved *Bharat Mata*. Raja Rao has succeeded in capturing the thrills and sensations, as well as the brutality and suffering, of those tumultous days, when the whole nation enthused with patriotism was on the march.

20.3 (i) Gandhi-Irwin Pact: Psychological Victory

The British government was shaken. Gandhi was invited to England for talks. He accepted the invitation and went for the *Round Table Conference* dressed in his usual loincloth, and the result was the well-known *Gandhi-Irwin Pact*. The pact left the Indian people dissatisfied. Even Jawaharlal Nehru regarded it as a failure and the novelist has hinted at this dissatisfaction towards the close of the novel. But the pact was significant in many respects. As Louis Fisher has put it in his book on Mahatma Gandhi, "The leader of the Nation had gone to negotiate on equal terms with the leader of another nation" and it was clear that "England could no longer rule India against or without Gandhi." Gandhi did two things in 1930: "...he made British people aware that they were cruelly subjugating India, and he gave Indians the conviction that they could, by lifting their heads and straightening their spines, lift the yoke from their shoulders. The British beat the Indians with batons and rifle-butts. The Indians neither cringed nor complained nor retreated. That made England powerless and India invincible." It is exactly such a psychological victory which the people of Kanthapura enjoy in the moment of their defeat. It was this very Gandhi-Irwin Pact which paved the way for the establishment of the Indian Federation, and the formation of Congress ministries both at the centre and the states. It was soon clear that the British government was on the way out and independence was round the corner. The Indian people—like the people of Kanthapura—had to pass through an ordeal of fire, but as Gandhi himself taught, "Swarajya obtained without sacrifice never endures."

20.4 (a) ABOUT THE AUTHOR

"I write to you, at the hour of dusk, the auspicious hour, because it is non-dual, and therefore transcendent: the moment when the day and night do not meet, but leave a depth of silence, and so the edge of sound, lingering towards its origins. It's a noble hour because it affirms the unnameable." —Raja Rao, 1988

Raja Rao's Early Life

Raja Rao was born on 8th November, 1908 in Hassan, Karnataka.He grew up in an area of coffee plantations and famous old temples, in the south of India. He was a member of an old and respected Brahmin family. He lost his mother at the age of four which left a lifelong impression on him. This could be the reason for the absence of mother and orphanhood being recurring themes in his work. He received his early education at a Muslim school. He did not study fiction writing, but it came to him naturally : "I wrote as a man of sixteen or seventeen," says Rao, "I wrote in English. I was sent to a very snobbish English school. I learned English from English people in India. I learned Sanskrit much later."

His father was a scholar and professor. But it was from his grandfather, who spoke not a word of English and meditated at length, that Rao got his philosophical bent. "My grandfather started me on the search," he said. "Philosophical inquiry is personal contact. Not merely philosophical thinking. Indian philosophy is thought in the West to be mystical. But it's really logic. Logical and metaphysical."

After having matriculated from Hyderabad, he went over to Aligarh for higher education. There he was lucky enough to come into contact with Prof. Dickinson. He inspired him to study French language and literature. He took his B.A. degree from Nizam College, Hyderabad. He won the Asiatic Scholarship of the government of Hyderabad in 1929 and on this scholarship he went to France to continue his study of French literature there. First, he studied at the University of Montpellier and then

worked for the Doctorate degree at the University of Sorbonne under the supervision of Prof. Cazamian.

He left France in 1939, fifteen days before the outbreak of World War II. "If I'd been there fifteen days more, I'd not be alive today," he said to tell of his opposition to Hitler. "I was just lucky. When I got to India, I went straight to a sage." On his return to India he went to Banaras so that he might have a first-hand knowledge of the spiritual tradition of India. In Banaras, he actively considered for sometime whether he should renounce the world and turn a sanyasi. He was saved from this disastrous course through his meeting with *Swami Atmanand,* the great Vedantic scholar, whom the novelist accepted as his *Guru,* guide and mentor. That is why he attaches such great importance to the role of a 'guru' and the quest for a 'Guru' is an ever- recurring theme in his novels. From Banaras he went to central India and spent some months in 1942 in Gandhiji's *Ashram* there. He also spent some time in deep meditation at Mahakal Temple in Ujjain. His mind was torn with deep spiritual conflicts and through meditation he regained peace and serenity. Then he returned to France (1946) after the end of the world war. "France, to my mind, is still the heart of Western civilization," Rao stated. His first wife was a professor of French and for about thirty years he would live six months in France and six months in India.

Though he studied abroad, Raja Rao was a nationalist at heart. After returning to India, he joined the National struggle for independence. He was the co-editor of *Changing India*, an anthology of modern Indian thought. He also edited 'Tomorrow,' a journal from Bombay. He actively took part in the Quit India Movement of 1942. Apart from being a nationalist he was a social activist also. He was at the forefront of the formation of a cultural organization, *Sri Vidya Samiti*, devoted to reviving the values of ancient India and was associated with *Chetna*, another organization involved in propagation of Indian thoughts and values.

His first novel, *Kanthapura*, about a village in South India affected by the spirit of Gandhi, was published in the United States in 1938. *The Serpent and the Rope* was published in the U.S. in 1960. Other works include a collection of stories written earlier, *The Cow of the Barricades*, but published in 1947; *The Cat and Shakespeare* in 1965; *Comrade Kirillov* in 1976; *The Chessmaster and His Moves* in 1988.

20.4 (b) In America

It was in 1950 that Raja Rao visited the U.S.A. for the first time, and was fascinated by American culture and way of life. "No doubt, Americans are materialistic, but they are energetic and enterprising, and can do much towards transforming life on this planet." He studied avidly the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman. He was a great admirer of these great Americans because like him, they too, were deeply interested in Indian philosophy, particularly Vedantic philosophy. He became a professor at Austin in 1966. He worked as a visiting philosopher, lecturing at various American universities, and expounding Hindu philosophy to American students. He taught Indian philosophy—both Buddhist and Vedantic, at the University of Texas.

"In the '60s and '70s the search for values was very remarkable. I was really thinking America would be the greatest nation..." Rao points out that America had been fascinated by India even earlier: "The 19th century transcendentalists—Thoreau, Whitman, Emerson—were all influenced by India...Most of modern literature is psychological," he said.

20.4 (c) Literary Career

Nationalism is a theme of many of his novels. His novel *Kanthapura* is an account of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. It is the story of national struggle through the view point of a villager in Karnataka. Raja Rao wrote another short story on the theme of Gandhism, 'The Cow of the Barricades.' He also published Mahatma Gandhi's biography:

Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi. He wrote a semi autobiographical novel, *The Serpent and the Rope*. The novel narrates the relationship between the east and the west and his experiences related to the west. In the title, the Serpent refers to the illusion and the Rope to the reality of the life. He emigrated to the United States in 1960s and taught at the University of Texas at Austin. In United States he married Katherine Jones, an American stage actress in 1965, but after a relationship of twenty years this marriage also ended in divorce. In 1986 he married for the third time. He was awarded the famous International Neustadt Prize for literature in 1988. Raja Rao died on 8th July, 2006 at the age of 97 at Austin, Texas. The life and works of Raja Rao can be best summarized in the words of R. Parathasarthy, poet, critic, and Director of Program in Asian Studies at Skidmore College in New York: "Rao is one of the most innovative novelists .... departing boldly from the European tradition of the novel, he has indigenized it in the process of assimilation material from the Indian literary tradition. He has put the novel to uses to which it had not perhaps been put before, by exploring the metaphysical basis of writing itself, of, in fact, the word.... As a writer Rao's concern is with the human condition rather than with a particular nation or ethnic group…. The house of fiction that Rao has built is founded on the metaphysical and linguistic speculations of the Indians. It is to the masters of fiction in our time, such as Proust and Joyce that we must ultimately turn for a writer of a comparable standard."

20.4 (d) Raja Rao's Fame and Recognition

Raja Rao was a great son of mother India and his greatness received national and international recognition. He won the *Sahitya Akademi Award* for *The Serpent and the Rope,* which has been called the best Indo-Anglian novel ever written. For sometime, his name was also actively considered for the award of the *Nobel Prize* for literature. He was also awarded the *Padma Bhushan* by the Government of India.

Santha Rama Rau calls Raja Rao "perhaps the most brilliant—and certainly the most interesting—writer of modern India". He was greatly admired by Andre Malraux and Lawrence Durrell. Durrell comments on *The Serpent and the Rope:* "Hurrah for you! You not only do India great honour, but you have honored English literature by writing it in our language…..truly magnificent….packed with the real magic of poetry, a truly contemporary work, one by which an age can measure itself, its values."Another critic holds: "I know nothing in literature that confronts East and West more tenderly, more rigorously." Raja Rao has earned such valued encomiums from eminent critics of international fame**.**

20.4 (e) Influence as a Novelist

Within India and influential circles in the West, Raja Rao's reputation has been great. The audience for his work comprise general readers around the world who are interested in India and Indian readers. His writing is the voice of an ancient, insightful culture that speaks to the modern world.

20.4 (f) Rao's Death

Atmanatmanam ya evam veda. **(Thus I go to where the "I" is.) – Mandukya Upanishad.**

Sri Raja Rao peacefully passed away at the age of 97 on 8th July, 2006, at 12.45 at Austin, Texas. In 1998 Raja Rao stated: "I am a proud Indian. It is my *karma* that has destined me to live more than half my life outside this *Punyabhumi*. India indeed is the land of the ultimate value. The Truth. Hence we can believe and shout *"Satyameva Jayate."* The life and works of Raja Rao can be best summarized in the words of Letizia Alterno: "India has indeed always been in Raja Rao's heart as a mother is in her child's heart. She - or Gauri as he often called her - is the very meaning enveloping his writing, his *sadhana*, his ultimate quest for Truth. What else otherwise. In all its expressions, as

Sunya, as the primordial sound *Sabda*, as metaphysics, as Siva, as Parvati, as Gauri Mata, India was to Raja Rao the vital essence of his own being. Rao has interpreted the reality surrounding him and the world he was living in through his Vedantic lenses while also assimilating the philosophy and thinking of Western writers like Malraux, Valery, Dostoevsky, Baudelaire, Rolland, Silone, and many others. His most original perspective has captivated hundreds of readers and critics around the world, as before the generation of diasporic writers he had already embodied the factuality of movement with his travelling through Europe and America. His quest was not only a literary *sadhana*, but also the expression of long spans of life spent abroad, mainly in France, Italy, England and Texas. Yet India remained for him the only place to return to."

Many of Rao's works remain unpublished. Raja Rao's wife, Susan, has filled half a room with boxes of his highly creative and insightful manuscripts, the outpouring of a lifetime. This includes four unpublished novels, stacks of short stories, hundreds of articles and essays, interviews, poetry in French, class notes, informal notes, plans for scholarly projects, and correspondence with Indira Gandhi, Octavio Paz, and Andre Malraux.The Raja Rao Publication Project with Dr. Letizia Alterno as its Current Editor-in-Chief is working to make all of Raja Rao's writings, especially those still unpublished, available to readers around the world who are interested in his fiction and thought. The task of the project is to organize, edit, and secure publication for Raja Rao's unpublished novels, short stories, poetry, essays, and correspondence.

20.5 SELECTED WORKS

Novels and Short Story Collections

Kanthapura 1938.

The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories 1947.

The Serpent and the Rope 1960.
The Cat and Shakespeare: A Tale of India 1965.
Comrade Kirillov 1976.
The Policeman and the Rose: Stories 1978.
The Chessmaster and His Moves 1988.
On the Ganga Ghat 1989.

Published Stories

"Javni" 1933.
"Akkayya" 1933.
"A Client" 1934.
"In Khandesh" 1934.
"The True Story of Kanakapala, Protector of Gold" 1935.
"The Little Gram Shop" 1937.
"The Cow of the Barricades" 1938.
"Companions" 1941 or 1942.
"Narsiga" 1944.
"India—A Story" 1953.
"The Cat" 1959.
"Nimka" 1963.
"The Policeman and the Rose" 1963.
"Creatures of Benares I" 1988.
"Creatures of Benares II" 1988.

Conclusion

Raja Rao has received due acclaim for his innovative generic contributions to Indian English writing, for being indeed a founding author of this branch of modern literature and for pioneering a distinctive Indian subgenre of fiction usually referred to as the metaphysical novel. This type of novel, anticipated and conceived in some of Rao's short stories, was of course presented to us in 1960 as *The Serpent and the Rope.* The experimental impulses in Rao's

oeuvre are so rich, diverse, yet (let us be frank) at times obscure and esoteric as to defy ready definition and convenient classification. Still, even initial responses to Rao's work recognize his literary experimentation with language, idiom, symbolism, cross-cultural narratology, autobiography, philosophy, history, romance, *Pilgrim's Progress* archetypes, and representation of character and human relationships, to name some of the main and more obvious areas of his creativity."

— excerpt from S.C. Harrex's essay, "Typology and Modes: Raja Rao's Experiments in Short Story," in *World Literature Today,* Autumn 1988

20.6 (a) SELF -ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

a. Who were the early patriots to pave the way for the Gandhian struggle for independence?

b. When did the Gandhian Movement begin?

c. What were Gandhi's teachings?

d. What social reforms did Mahatma Gandhi bring about ?

e. What elements of Gandhian ideals are presented in *Kanthapura* ?

20.6 (b) EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a. Write a note on the Gandhian Movement.

b. Write a note on the *Gandhi-Irwin Pact*?

20.7 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Raja Rao was born in the year _____ .

   a. 1908

   b. 1946

   c. 1939

   d. 2006

2. Raja Rao was born in _____ .

   a. France
   b. America
   c. Britain
   d. India

3. Raja Rao wrote this novel _____ .

   a. Nectar in a Sieve
   b. Murugan
   c. Untouchable
   d. *Kanthapura*

4. Raja Rao was awarded the famous International Neustadt Prize for literature in romantic _____ .

   a. 2000
   b. 1988
   c. 1898
   d. 1886

5. Raja Rao died in the year _____ .

   a. 2006
   b. 1950
   c. 1972
   d. 2004

6. Raja Rao wrote a semi-autobiographical novel titled _____ .

   a. The Serpent and the Rope
   b. Comrade Kirillov
   c. The Chessmaster and His Moves
   d. On the Ganga Ghat

20.8 LET US SUM UP

India's struggle for independence from the colonial rule of the British goes back to the war of 1857, which the British dismissed as a mere mutiny. The battle for India's freedom continued to be fought on the social and economic front. Social workers, reformers, and teachers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra, Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Rabindra Nath Tagore, were only a few of the leading luminaries who brought about the Indian Renaissance of the late 19th century. Raja Rao was a nationalist at heart. After returning to India, he joined the National Struggle for Independence. His novel, Kanthapura is an account of Mahatma Gandhi's teachings. It is the story of a national struggle through the viewpoint of a villager in Karnataka.His writing is the voice of an ancient, indightful culture that speaks to the modern world.

20.9 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. In which year was Raja Rao awarded the Asiatic scholarship?
2. Write a short note on Rao's education.
3. Name any three novels that Raja Rao wrote.
4. Name the first novel that Raja Rao wrote.
5. Name two American authors Raja Rao admired.

20.10 ANSWER KEY TO MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. a) 1908
2. d) India
3. d) 1886
4. b) 1988
5. a) 2006
6. a) The Serpent and the Rope

20.11 SUGGESTED READING

C.D. Narasimhaiah. *Raja Rao*

M.K. Naik. *Raja Rao* (Twayne World Authors Series)

HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH (FICTION)

STRUCTURE

21.1 Introduction

21.2 Objectives

21.3 Indian Writing in English

21.3 (a) English in India

21.3 (b) The Indian Tradition

21.3 (c) The Indian Novel

21.4 Development of the Indo-English novel

21.5 'Indianizing English'

21.6 Dual Perspectives

21.7 Style and Subject

21.8 Fiction in the vernacular

21.9 Gandhi & Gandhism

21.10 Vernacular fiction after independence

21.11 Trends at the end of the twentieth century

21.12 Women writers, women's lives

21.13 The Diaspora

21.14 A new cosmopolitanism

21.15 Self -Assessment Questions (SAQs)

21.16 Let Us Sum Up

21.17 Short Answer Questions

21.18 Examination Oriented Questions

21.19 Answers to Self -Assessment Questions (SAQs)

21.20 Suggested Reading

21.1 INTRODUCTION

This lesson focuses on the development of the Indian Novel in English.

21.2 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this lesson is :

- That the learner should be familiar with the development of the Indian Novel in English
- That the learner should be able to identify and explain major literary and social issues relevant to the development of the novel till the time of Raja Rao.
- That the learner should be able to recognize, identify, and use accurately literary terms and concepts applicable to a study of the Indian Novel in English and to understand and apply appropriate literary conventions.
- That the learner should be able to demonstrate familiarity with the bibliographic tools and resources appropriate to the study of the Indian Novel in English and in particular the novel *Kanthapura* and to apply these tools and resources to literary research.

21.3 INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

21.3 (a) English in India

Two years before Thomas Babington Macaulay introduced his famous "Minute" on English education in India (1835), Raja Rammohan Roy, one of the several Indian writers who were using the English language successfully even before compulsory English education was officially introduced in India, died in Bristol. It was Macaulay who insisted that all funds appropriated for education in India be set aside for English education alone. Before Macaulay, Christian missionaries had been teaching English in schools and colleges around the country. Indians, for their part, were eager to obtain a Western education and link people in their nation with the changing world. By the early part of the nineteenth century, Indian literary activity in English had already begun. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1807-1831), Kashiprasad Ghosh (1809-1873), Michael Madhusudhan Dutt (1824-1873), and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) were some of the early Indians to use English for their creative and social purposes. By the later half of the nineteenth century, educated Indians were using English for all purposes, from mundane government work to poetry.

Today, English has become a naturalized member of the citizens of Indian languages. Along with Hindi, it is used throughout India, unlike other Indian languages. Jawaharlal Nehru, in dealing with the question of a national language for India, noted that English, like Sanskrit and Persian before it, was the language of invaders but had become totally assimilated into Indian life.

The introduction of English to India brought with it an introduction to English literature. The reading public in India soon discovered the novel form and took it over. While India has a long, indigenous tradition of fiction writing in the form of the oral tale and the short morality story, it was to British forms that nineteenth century Indian writers turned.

Nick Wilkinson, writing about the modern Indian novel, notes that the novel was imported from England and patterned after the popular works of Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens. The genre as it has developed in India is a product of two cultures.

Two major habits that were thus inculcated in Indian authors were the forcing of Indian subject matter into European forms and the imitation of the trendiest of these European forms. In addition, the audience was seen as a European audience hungry for an Asian element in their lives. The exoticism of Indian myth and culture was soon to be exploited even further. As they met with critical acclaim abroad, Indian writers seemed to be writing for the Western critics who were amazed at the patronizing of their achievements, expressing wonder at the ability of Indian writers to write in English, a second language, and at their ability to use the European form of the novel. At the same time, Indian writers themselves manifested an ambiguity towards their Indian roots. This ambiguity was primarily manifested in the overwhelming choice of English as the medium for their creativity. Questions of nationalism or alienation became inextricably linked with both the development of Indian literature and its criticism. Even the "father of the Indian novel," Rabindranath Tagore, felt compelled to translate his work into English and then even to compose in English. This turn to English drew from William Butler Yeats the following disclaimer. In a letter to William Rothenstein in 1935, Yeats lamented:

Damn Tagore, we got three good books and because he thought it more important to see and know English than to be a great poet he brought off sentimental rubbish. No Indian knows English. Nobody can write music and style in a language which is not their own.

This dictum became a significant issue both in the formulation of Indian literature and in its criticism. To this day, critics wrangle over whether English or an Indian vernacular is an appropriate

medium for the development of a literature in India's multilingual, multicultural setting. This is not to imply, however, that any literary development in Indian fiction can be attributed entirely to the influence of English.

21.3 (b) The Indian Tradition

Ancient Indian manuscripts written on *bhurjapatra*, or palm leaves, are for the most part lost, extant only in Chinese and Tibetan translations that testify to their previous existence, excluding well-known works—such as the epic poetry of the *Râmâyana*, *Mahâbhârata*, and *Bhagavad Gîtâ*; and the Sanskrit drama of Kalidasa and the critical work on drama *Nâtya- úâstra*—a whole body of short works of fiction exists. Their origins can be dated to the *Jâtakas* (birth stories), the Buddhist tales, that describe the cultural encounter between the indigenous Dravidians and the Aryans. In the popular Sanskrit literature, drama reigned supreme.

The tales from the epics were dramatized on festival days. This was so until the Muslim invasion of the twelfth century. Under the Moguls, Persian literature was dominant. An Indian critical tradition, however, remained significant in the shaping of the literary tradition. Drawing upon the critical theory in the *Nâtya- sâstra* of the concepts of *rasa* and *dhwani* (undertones or poetic language), Indian literature has always been preoccupied with poetic expression to the detriment of the development of prose and prose fiction. Tracing the growth of Indian literature from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, Nehru noted in his *Discovery of India* (1946) that popular literatures in Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Urdu, Tamil, and Telugu were developing an oral tradition. With the use of the printing press, some of these orally transmitted epics and collections were documented. Nehru notes, however, that these works were in the form of memorizable songs and collections of poems. Hence, it was not until the early Christian missionaries brought English and English education to India that a canon of fiction developed.

21.3 (c) The Indian Novel

By the 1920's, English education in India was all pervasive and by the end of the nineteenth century, English literature held sway over the Indian imagination. Nevertheless, the Indians trained under Rammohan Roy's system of English education in India were not simply to remain baboos and clerks in British government offices. Their newly acquired language found creative expression in a newly learned form. The ancient traditions of the oral epic tales came together with Scott's serialized, romantic *Waverley Or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (1814) to found the annals of a new *Rama Katha* (epic of Rama). The traditional story of the adventures of the Hindu deity Rama, told night after night by the village elder at the local temple, was transformed in the nineteenth century Indian literary tradition into nationalist Indian novels written sometimes in English and sometimes in the vernacular, largely about the oppression of the poor by the middle class and the British. These novels sometimes described situations related to tyrannical customs, sati, arranged marriages, and child marriages; sometimes, however, as in the work of Tagore, they evoked sentimentality for Indian mysticism.

Because Bengal was the first geographic region to come into contact with the British, the first Indian novel was written in Bengali—a distinction customarily granted to Bhudeva Chandra Mukherjee's *Anguriya Binimoy* (1857). Chatterjee's *Raj Mohan's Wife* was serialized in 1864 in the fashion of Scott's novels. Lal Behari Day's *Govinda Samantha* (1874) is a documentary of peasant life in Bengal. The zamindar professed interest in the lives of the peasants. Day described his novel as a "plain and unvarnished tale of a plain peasant living in the plain country of Bengal … told in a plain manner." The story of the peasant Govinda and his exploits with a moneylender, *Govinda Samantha* is the first in a long tradition, culminating in Munshi Prem Chand's *Godân* (1936); *Gift of a Cow*,(1968), to

describe the oppression of peasants by feudal lords. Govinda and his relative Kalamanik attempt to pay off a debt to the zamindar, who responds by levying a new tax against them and falsely charging them with having borrowed money in order to keep them indebted to him. When they refuse to pay him their homes are burned. In the midst of this story of oppression, Day describes the famine of 1873, thus depicting the poverty and the uncertainty that characterize Indian agriculture to this day.

In *fin de siècle* Indian fiction, a need to explore the Indian in relation to the Westerner, including an attempt to educate the West about Indian customs and mores, shaped the themes. Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *The Young Zemindar* (1885) presents the cross-cultural encounter, the weighing of Eastern and Western traditions, and the question of whether East and West can in fact meet is a major theme in the development of the Anglo- Indian or Indo-Anglian literary tradition. Indian traditions are outlined and the effect of the British on these traditions is analyzed. In the novel, *The Young Zemindar,* a *sannyasi* leads the main character, Monohur, to places of religious importance and describes the customs of those places. Legends connected with the major subcontinental rivers—the Ganges, the Indus, and the Brahmaputra—are retold, as are the stories of the *Mahâbhârata* and the *Râmâyana*. Even the Muslim festival of the martyrdom of Mohammed, Moharrum, is pictured. All this is an effort to show that the British government was attempting to interfere with Indian customs.

The vernacular novel continued to be developed under the shadow of Scott, but the themes tended to be nationalist, emphasizing the importance of traditional Indianness or describing the oppression of the people by feudal lords and the British government. In Hindi, Kishorilal Goswami's *Labangalata* (1891) and Devki Nandan Khatri's *Chandrakântâ* (1892) established themes that lasted into the 1920s

and were picked up by the Progressive Writers' Union; such themes were definitely nationalist and, if the term may be used, socialist. Hari Narayan Apte's first novel in Marathi, *Maisorcha Wagh* (1890), is a translation of Meadows Taylor's *Tippoo Sultan* (1840) and refers to him as the Lion of Mysore. *Maisorcha Wagh* brought the celebration of Tippoo Sultan, the great nationalist Indian guerrilla fighter, to the people of his region. In Malayalam, Raman Pillai wrote *Martanda Varma* (1891). At the same time, the retelling and documenting of Indian sacred tales continued: Dwijendranath Neogi published *Sacred Tales of India* (1916), *True Tales of Indian Life* (1925), and *Anecdotes of Indian Life* (1920).

In all of this diverse activity in the writing of fiction, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) stands out. For his prose translations of lyrics composed in Bengali, entitled *Gitânjali* (1910; *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)*, 1912), Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. With the encouragement of Macmillan, his English publisher, Tagore translated several collections of his own poetry and fiction. His best-known work of fiction is *Gora* (1910), the English translation of which was published by Macmillan in 1924. Tagore's next novel, *Ghare bâire* (1916) and *Home and the World*, 1919), reflect the changing politics of Bengali society. Both novels again have nationalist themes. Gora, meaning "white," is a foundling reared as an orthodox Hindu who learns that his mother was Irish. This brings to the forefront questions of caste and religion, leading to an eventual preference for Indianness. Nationalism returns even more aggressively in *Home and the World*. The concept of *Swadeshi*, or Indian, which was to become a key element of the Gandhian movement, is a central concept in this novel about revolutionary Bengal in 1905. Even the conservative Indian wife is drawn by the call of the outside world. Sandip, another character in the novel, would like to move towards Western modernization. Hence the novel portrays the traditional clash between the Western and the Indian.

What constituted the modern, the new, the Western? Was it sociological or technological advancement into the modern era? Was it a recognition of one's roots as reflected through the prism of Westernization? Was it a breaking from the acquiescence that kept Indians under oppressive rulers, whether Muslim or British? These are the questions that were forced to the forefront during the first four decades of the twentieth century, and, whether in English or in one of the vernaculars, these were the questions that were articulated in Indian fiction. With the documentation of a social milieu and with the changing feelings of the moment, the literature of the Indian people seemed to turn towards the novel of social realism.

21.4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDO-ENGLISH NOVEL

The tradition of the Indo-English novel took deep roots during the early twentieth century. K. S. Venkatramani, whose long poem *On the Sand Dunes* (1923) was highly derivative of Tagore's *Gitânjali (Song Offerings)*, was more original as a novelist. His *Murugan, the Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan, the Patriot* (1932) were harbingers of the realism that was to mark Indian literature during what in Indian history is called the Gandhian era (1920-1947). World War I had replaced *fin de siècle* Romanticism and Georgian effusions with a new idiom and new role models that the Indian writers were soon to imitate. The war also brought to India an awareness of socioeconomic problems and of the British exploitation of India's human and economic resources, a feeling that was to be enhanced later in World War II and embodied in Mahatma Gandhi's call for non-cooperation with the Stafford proposal of cooperation with the allies and postponement of the Quit India movement. The impact of Marxism and an accompanying attraction to socialism are also apparent in the Indian novel of this period.

Venkatramani's two novels are notable chiefly as works marking the general trend away from poetry towards the novel. With the appearance of Mulk Raj Anand (born 1905), Indian writing got its first major fiction writer. His first novel, *Untouchable* (1935), established social realism as

a rich vein for the Indian novel. British-educated and a member of the intellectual Bloomsbury group in the early 1920's, Anand began his writing career with a Joycean stream-of-consciousness "tract" about an untouchable. It was not until his conversion to Gandhism that he was able to move past his interest in stylistic imitation to a primary interest in subject matter. *Untouchable* became the first of a trilogy of novels. Various options to the tyrannical caste system are discussed as the plot develops around the incidents of maltreatment of the main character, Bakha, and his sister. As E. M. Forster pointed out in his foreword to the book, it is another story of the difference between tradition and modernity, the Mahatma and the machine, in Indian fiction. The same theme runs through the other two novels of the trilogy, *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937); the poor remain poor, exploited, and Indian.

In "Why I Write?" (in *Indo English Literature*, 1977), Anand describes his first attempt at "Tagorean singsong rubbish." Anand got the same reaction from his Bloomsbury friends when he read them his confessional narrative-turned-novel about Bakha, the untouchable:

> I had borrowed the technique of word coinage from James Joyce's *Ulysses* and made the narrative rather literary, and that the novel was a prose form not an epic poem like [John] Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Only one thing they liked about my fictional narrative: that it faced the poverty, the dirt and squalor of the "lower depths" even more than Gorky had done. And I was confirmed in my hunch that, unlike Virginia Woolf, the novelist must confront the total reality, including its sordidness, if one was to survive in the world of tragic contrasts between the "exalted and noble" vision of the blind bard Milton and the eyes dimmed with tears of the many mute Miltons.

Realism had become Anand's hallmark, and he steadfastly espoused it. In *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), he portrayed the horrors resulting from the independence movement and the subsequent partition. In a succession of works—*The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (1944), *The Big Heart* (1945), *Seven Summers* (1951), *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1963), *The Road* (1962), and *Morning Face* (1968)—he remained steadfast in his depiction of the wronged poor.

In espousing realism, Anand had in fact taken up the cause of the 1920's British intellectuals; to that extent he was imitative. He made no apologies for this formative influence on his writing and was singularly forthright in his admissions. In "The Story of My Experiment with a White Lie" (in *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*, 1972), he acknowledged all the intellectual influences on him:

> I had become conscious, after the suppression of the general strike of the South Wales miners by [Winston] Churchill, of the kind of defiance which, under democratic conditions, the better off untouchables of Europe could indulge in. … I am not sure whether the *Confessions* of Rousseau, which I had just then read, or some of the books of the Russian writers like [Nikolai] Gogol, [Leo] Tolstoy and [Maxim] Gorky … were not then forcing me to acknowledge what most Indian writers of the modern period, like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Ratanath Sarshar and Rabindranath Tagore, had not accepted in their novels that even the so-called lowest dregs of humanity, living in utmost poverty, squalor and degradation, could become the heroes of fiction.

Pursuing the cause of realism and Indianization, Anand moved beyond word coinage by incorporating in his fiction English as spoken in the Indian streets, generously sprinkled with Indian words.

21.5 'INDIANIZING' ENGLISH

At the same time, mindful of the nationalism at home and of the general call to abandon English from their daily lives, most Indian writers, whose only medium of expression in some cases may have been English, responded with efforts to Indianize the English language.

In 1938, Raja Rao's preface to *Kanthapura* expressed the problem of conveying through English the speech and thought patterns of a people whose language was not English. In *Kanthapura*, an oral tale of the coming of Gandhism told by an old crone to her village, Rao attempted to capture the rhythms of Indian speech in English. Told in the lyric, lilting voice of the village crone, *Kanthapura* gave the English language a new meter and a new rhythm, so skillfully developed that it seems to have been a unique achievement both for the writer and for other writers. Rao's other novels, including *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) and *The Cat and Shakespeare: A Tale of India* (1965), resort to conventional English, varied only for dialogue.

G.V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948), written as a deliberate attempt to capture Indian English, is much less successful than *Kanthapura* and appears as mumbo jumbo, almost impossible for most readers to comprehend. In part, the language is meant to fit the character of H. Hatterr, who is of mixed blood and mixed cultural background. Yet, as Anthony Burgess wrote in his introduction to the 1970 Bodley Head edition, "it is the language that makes the book a sort of creative chaos that grumbles at the restraining banks." Burgess compares Desani's language with that of Joyce; indeed, in the language and the rambling stream-of-consciousness technique of the novel, the influence of Joyce is evident and ultimately fails to transcend stylistic imitation. It is no puzzle that the book went underground

and became a "coterie pleasure," as Burgess observed. The language itself is an obstacle for readers both in India and abroad.

While other Indian writers in English were focusing on imitations or language experimentation, R. K. Narayan (born 1906) was creating a style of his own. Various labels have been used to describe him—the Indian Jane Austen or the Indian Anton Chekhov— but Narayan is in a class all his own, combining the skills of those two literary giants and, at the same time, creating his own fictional world. In a career of more than fifty years, he has won for his imaginary South Indian town of Malgudi a permanent place on the literary map, along with William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. From *Swami and Friends* (1935) to *The Painter of Signs* (1976) readers around the world have lived with the characters from Malgudi, felt with them, and seen the history of India evolve from the coming of Gandhism (*Waiting for the Mahatma*, 1955) to the coming of "American ways" (*The Sweet-Vendor*, 1967; also known as *The Vendor of Sweets*). Narayan's best-known work, *The Guide* (1958) was made into both a film and an unsuccessful Broadway production—both versions disliked by Narayan himself. Narayan focuses in a Malrauxian manner on the disparity between humanity's hope and humanity's fate, yet he does not spend time musing on large philosophical questions. There is in his work no Indian religiosity nor is there an attempt to describe exotic India for the Westerners; there is simply the presentation of situations and moments of character revelation and awareness.

Narayan's language is straightforward, traditional English. English, for him, is a tool for the person who can use it. Contrary to other Indian writers, Narayan has always believed that English is a very adaptable language. In his descriptions of South Indian life, Narayan makes a deliberate effort to incorporate the Indianized English heard in the Indian streets and households. It is because of the Indian English that his descriptions and vignettes come through with an effectiveness that would make any effort to convey such an essence through language variations superfluous, for they are simply descriptions of life, of universal moments.

Thus, Narayan's portrayal realistically captures a distinct variety of English as spoken by a sizable body of Indians. His style includes all the features formed in English through a process of hybridization—collocations of English words with Indian words (for example, "marriage pandal" or "lathi charge") or compounding of words ("high caste" or "low caste") or expressions of Indian English speech ("your good self"). Another example comes from *The Dark Room* (1938): "If you can't cook properly do the work yourself, what have you to do better than that?" The last phrase is not a mistake but a nativized idiom. So is this continuous participial construction: "Ramani would keep calling the servant Ranga in order to tell him what he was and where he ought to be, for not polishing his boots properly." In using Indian English quite straightforwardly, Narayan is the Indian writer writing in English who has most successfully avoided the self-consciousness implicit in the situation of being an Indian writer writing in English. He has successfully resisted the attempt to shape his writing according to current literary trends.

21.6 DUAL PERSPECTIVES

Kamala Markandaya's fiction often depicts the difference between the Eastern and Western views of life, as in *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Coffer Dams* (1969), *Two Virgins* (1973), and *Pleasure City* (1982) published in the United States as *Shalimar* (1983), which incorporate descriptions of India through Western eyes, while they remain essentially accurate portrayals of urban and rural poverty. The plight of Rukhmani, the peasant woman in *Nectar in a Sieve*, reflects the poignant and passive acceptance of poverty in India. It also juxtaposes the traditional and the modern as the peasants are displaced by a leather factory and neglected by their modernized sons in the city. *A Handful of Rice* again reflects poverty in the city; here, however, the emphasis is on the rich taking advantage of the poor. Both the conflict between the city and the country and the issue of exploitation are explored in *Shalimar*. However, while the author recognizes that there will be a certain loss of innocence when

a luxury resort, Shalimar, is built in a coastal area up to now inhabited only by simple fishermen, she also knows that there is nothing admirable about being hungry. As a realist, Markandaya will not wax sentimental about poverty, just as she refuses to romanticize the colonial past, as represented in this novel by the beautiful and decaying house called Avalon.

Ironically, Markandaya's very honesty has brought her works under attack. Her sympathy for the poor and her poignant descriptions of their often desperate lives have been perceived by nationalists as evidence of Markandaya's alienation from her native land. If she still had any feeling for India, they argue, she would show it at its best, rather than at its worst. In her early works, she generally kept to standard English. However, she later modified this view, believing that Indian writers can use their own dialect forms or localisms with the same brio that American counterparts use Americanisms.

A writer who uses her double perspective as an arch, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala though born in Germany and reared in England, has been acclaimed by some critics as truly Indian. In a career that began while she was living in India, Jhabvala has explored and described uppermiddle-class Indian life—particularly as she saw it in New Delhi. Her *Esmond in India* (1958) is almost an allegory of contemporary Indian civilization. Gulab, the Indian girl married to the Englishman Esmond, is an embodiment of traditional India. Shakuntala, the young college girl with whom Esmond later develops a relationship, is a personification of the new India— modernized, sprightly, and yearning for achievement— embarrassed by her slower and more traditional counterpart. Despite his knowledge of Indian culture, civilization, and languages, Esmond remains the foreigner, unable to understand the simultaneous existence of the modern and the traditional, attracted only to exoticism and unable to fit in. Jhabvala seems to concede that such is the position of the foreigner in the mixed, pell-mell Indian society.

Jhabvala's later novels are both broader in scope and more complex in structure than her earlier ones, but their themes are the same: the conflict

between East and West, old ways and new, alienation, and the search for meaning. Jhabvala won a Booker Prize for *Heat and Dust* (1975), a brilliant juxtaposition of two stories about young British women in India. Letters written by the narrator's step-grandmother, who deserted her husband for an Indian prince in 1923, mark the way for her descendent a half century later, as she, too, succumbs to India. Jhabvala's Westerners like to believe that either the East or Eastern practices can assuage their pain. If they do not travel to India, they look for a guru to follow, like the Jewish refugee who takes charge of a group of German Jewish immigrants in Jhabvala's *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983). The wealthy innocents in *Three Continents* (1987) turn over their lives and their fortunes to an Indian known as the Rawul. In both novels, the gurus are revealed as self-serving and dangerous people, who deprive their followers of their wills and of whatever good sense they may at one time have had.

From the beginning of her literary career, when Jhabvala wrote what were termed as novelistic comedies of manners, Jhabvala has satirized fools, and she often seems as unsympathetic to the Westerners duped by these gurus as she is sympathetic to some of her Indian characters—like the wise, compassionate patriarch in *Shards of Memory*. It is not Indians, but India itself, that Jhabvala finds so perilous. Her tales of gurus and disciples remind Westerners drawn to India that they will have a difficult choice to make. If they do not renounce their Western identity and become totally Indian, they must live with a sense of alienation. In "Introduction: Myself in India," which prefaces her volume *Out of India: Selected Stories* (1986), Jhabvala comments that Europeans and many modern Indians sometimes find India, "the idea, the sensation of it," so overwhelming, so "intolerable," that they either leave or retreat into themselves, and even those who leave will eventually have to return. Jhabvala has concluded that the primary subject of her fiction is, as she states it, "myself in India." Certainly India, or the "idea" of India, is somehow present in everything she writes.

21.7 STYLE AND SUBJECT

Because of the critical emphasis on theme and subject matter, the question among the new generation of Indian novelists of the 1960's and the 1970's was not "Should we use English?" or "How can we Indianize English?" but rather "How best can we use the English language to reflect our society and culture?" Manohar Malgonkar and Nayantara Sahgal, for example, both experimented in form and structure, but they did not do so at the expense of their subject matter. Malgonkar's novels, *Distant Drum* (1960), *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *The Princes* (1963), and *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), deal with the transition from British colonialism to Indian nationalism. Life in the Indian army, the tea estates, the princely states, and the role of wars in India's recent history are the subjects of his novels. Sahgal's novels, beginning with *A Time to Be Happy* (1958), reflect the changing political history of India that began with the independence movement. The conflict between modernity and tradition is one of the major themes in Sahgal's novels. In his *This Time of Morning* (1965) and *Storm over Chandigarh* (1969) symbols control structure. The dawning of the Indian nation is seen in the functioning of politicians' lives and ethics; it is still morning for a new nation, yet innocence has no place in the political world.

Both of these novels by Sahgal show that a changing order is taking over post-independence India. India is strike-ridden; the non-violent movement of Gandhi's day has given way to stone- throwing, factory-burning mobs. In *Storm over Chandigarh*, the city of Chandigarh, designed and built by Le Corbusier, and commissioned by Nehru to be built with starkly simple lines, is a symbol of Westernization and represents the imposition of the strange, Westernized ways of an alien political order on Indian lives. For men such as Harpal Singh, one of the older politicians in the novel, the starkly simple lines become symbolic of a terrifying, angular coldness in the new order. "It's a revolution in architecture and what's more a revolution in people's thinking … but revolutions are sudden and have peculiar

results." The gray starkness of the architecture, one of the women in the novel reflects, is opposed to the Indian warmth and effusiveness embodied in the traditional Indian woman.

One of the most highly acclaimed Indian novels in English, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), is expressing an alienation from contemporary, political India, concentrates heavily on stylistic innovation. *Midnight's Children*, perhaps more clearly than any other postwar Indian novel, highlights the failure of criticism—a criticism that continuously calls for stylistic imitation and pushes Indian writers in the direction of imitating modern British writers. The clue to the theme of *Midnight's Children* lies in the individual's connection to history and in the individual's power to make history. With the gift of extrasensory perception, Saleem Sinai, the narrator, attempts to reconstruct and remake Indian history. The metaphorical manifestation of his attempts finds him cutting up newspaper headlines and rearranging them to make scandal notes that incite trouble. Rushdie's novel reflects the communal feelings of a Muslim family as it experiences the history of India. The communal fighting and killing that pervaded the independence movement and later the "Widow's Rule" is described as graphically in Rushdie's novel as it is in Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* (1982). *Midnight's Children* actually reflects regret at the departure of the British. The narrator assesses the end of the second five-year plan in 1961: "The number of landless and unemployed masses actually increased, so that it was greater than had ever been under the British Raj … illiteracy survived unscathed; the population continued to mushroom." "Maybe I am wrong. Maybe we are not ready yet," Gandhi had said after the first general strike after which Adam Aziz, the narrator's grandfather, had felt so optimistic about India. Perhaps the lack of readiness, particularly to give up on individual needs and their accommodation, continues to be the root of India's problems; this is the theme of *Midnight's Children*.

21.8 FICTION IN THE VERNACULAR

The development of fiction in the vernacular most clearly demonstrates the imitative tendency among Indian writers. There has been a continual

imitation of European trends from the social realism of the 1930's in Munshi Prem Chand's writing to the self-consciously modernist idiom, not only in English but also in its translated forms in the vernacular and the self-consciously experimental forms of fiction such as that published in *Matrubhumi* (Malayalam), *Dharmayug* (Hindi), and similar literary magazines.

Like Anand, Prem Chand (1880-1936), the best-known and most well-respected Hindi writer, began with the romanticized socialist themes of the previous generation of European writers. His *Gift of a Cow* is a prose epic of the peasants' battle with the moneylender and the Zamindar. Other themes of social concern in his work are early marriage and widowhood in *Nirmalâ* (1928), the dowry system and prostitution in *Sevâ- Sadan* (1918), and the rise of capitalism in *Rangabhümi* (1925). The same themes of social reform mushroomed in the other vernaculars with few variations: in *Palli Samaj* (1916), by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee (Bengali); *Rantitangazhi* (1949; *Two Measures of Rice*, (1967), by Thakazhi Pillai (Malayalam); and works by Rajendra Singh Bedi, Pannalal Patel, and Jaswant Singh "Kaneval." In this period, from the 1930's to independence in 1947, Bengal remained the most prolific source of fiction. Novels written in Bengali include Bibhutibhusan Banerjee's *Pather Panchali* (1929; English translation, 1968), filmed by Styajit Ray as part of his Apu Trilogy, and Manik Bandopadhyaya's well-known *Putul nacher itikath* (1936; dance of the dolls); several anthologies of short stories in Bengali have also appeared. Social realism was quickly developing into a nationalist consciousness, and Indian literature began to reflect the move toward independence.

21.9 GANDHI AND GANDHISM

Ironically, the best and perhaps the only Indian nationalist fiction, appeared in English. Rao celebrated Gandhi in *Kanthapura*, while Narayan dealt with him in the lighthearted, humorous *Waiting for the Mahatma*. Anand's trilogy *The Sword and the Sickle* depicts the turbulence of the Quit India movement, and Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* (1955) documents the immense violence of the partition of India and Pakistan. A well-known

Marathi writer, Prabhakar Machwe, however, notes that Gandhi seems to have failed to provide inspiration for those writing in the vernacular. In his *Four Decades of Indian Literature: A Critical Evaluation* (1976), he recalls, "Gandhi's non-violent and non- cooperation movement found still less place in fiction published in the Indian languages. In the celebrations of Gandhi's centenary in 1969, it was difficult to locate even one literary classic which was a reflection of contemporary events, or which documented the impacts of the movements. …" This fact, however, is not at all surprising. Astute politician that he was, Gandhi recognized the usefulness of English in uniting the country; the great nationalist debates and arguments, even the one for Hindustani as a national language, were made in English. The irony of this situation was heightened when a noted Bengali writer and nationalist critic, Buddhadeva Bose, claimed in the 1963 edition of *The Concise Encyclopedia of English and American Poetry* (edited by Stephen Spender and Donald Hall) that "Indo- Anglican literature" (by which he means literature written in English by Indians) is "a blind alley lined with curio shops."

21.10 VERNACULAR FICTION AFTER INDEPENDENCE

It was after independence and the call to abandon the "imperialist" yoke of English that fiction in the vernaculars began to struggle to make some advancements. In its nationalist impulse, however, it quickly turned to European models. P. Lal, in his review entitled "Contemporary Hindi Fiction" (in *The Concept of an Indian Literature*, 1968), notes the influences of Jean-Paul Sartre, Søren Kierkegaard, and particularly Sigmund Freud. Freudian themes, symbols, and impulses permeate Hindi fiction, particularly of the magazines—Lal recalls the celebration of the sesquicentennial of Kierkegaard's birth by a popular Hindi literary magazine. The impulse toward European modernism rather than towards an experimental idiom that turned to folk and indigenous roots has been demonstrated in the plastic arts. While experimental artists pursue what is new in the West, the more individualistic artists work in their own distinctive style. A similar precedent has not been established in the vernacular fiction.

Among the vernacular novels since independence, there are, however, some landmark achievements. Sivasankara Pillai's *Chemmeen* (1956; English translation, 1962) deals with the superstitions and lives of the tribal fisherfolk who live along the Malabar coast. Karuthamma, the heroine, believes that the dishonesty of her parents will make the sea go dry. In her own dishonesty in taking a lover, she darkens Arundhati, the star that guides fishermen, thus killing her husband Palanni in a storm at sea as he attempts to bait a shark. The novel has something of the fable like quality of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952).

Amrita Pritam's *A Line in Water* (1975) is reminiscent of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) in that it deals with a woman's feelings, often not communicable to a male sensibility. Her characters, too, are caught in the whirlwind of tradition and change, and such concepts as "widowhood without even a wedding," while revolutionary in Indian fiction, underscore the permanent and universal in her work. *Jalavatan* (1969) contains two short novellas, "Jalavatan" (the exile) and "Kala Gulab" (the black rose). The latter is autobiographical, with descriptions of symbolic dreams leaning toward the Freudian tendency in Hindi modernism.

In Punjabi, the work of Kartar Singh Duggal, as well as Rajendra Singh Bedi's *I Take This Woman* (1967), also reflects the changing social scene in India. Bedi's novel was translated into English by Khushwant Singh, himself an Indian novelist in English. Other Indian writers who belonged to the generation of novelists of independence and deserve mention include Ka Naa Subramanyam, who wrote in Tamil; Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, who wrote *Inquilab* (1945; revolution) and who writes both in Urdu and in English; Chaman Nahal, who wrote *Azadi* (1975; independence) in English; K. M. Munshi, who is considered the father of Gujarati fiction; and Aditya Sen, a modern Bengali writer.

U.R. Anantha Murthy, a Kannada writer and scholar, is best known as a theorist who has questioned the turning to Western models: "Why do

we import even our radicalism via [Allen] Ginsberg, [John] Osborne or [Jean-Paul] Sartre?" In several speeches and essays, he urges a "search for identity." He, too, has recognized that while Indian writers cannot return to their roots per se, they must take into consideration the race, moment, and milieu of their own writing—the interaction of the current idiom of the contemporary scene in India with its ancient roots. Bose, also a theorist of Indian literature, has attempted this cultural merger by creating the dramatic novel in Bengali, wherein an Indian consciousness is cast in a dramatic monologue. His novels include *Lal Megh* (1934), *Kalo Haoa* (1942), and *Tithidor* (1949).

Among translations into English recommended by the Authors' Guild of India are Jainendra Kumar's *The Resignation* (1946; originally in Hindi as *Tyaga patra*, 1937); Kalinidi Charan Panigrahi's *A House Undivided* (1973; originally in Oriya as *Matiro Manisha*, 1930), Neela Padmanaban's *The Generations* (1972; originally in Tamil as *Talaimnraikal*, 1968), M. T. Vasudevan Nair's *The Legacy* (1975; originally in Malayalam as *Kalam*, 1969), S. H. Vatsyayan's *To Each His Stranger* (1967; originally in Hindi as *Apane apane ajanabi*, 1961), and Lokenath Bhattacharya's *Virgin Fish from Babughat* (1975; originally in Bengali as *Babughatera kumari macha*, 1972). This list demonstrates that literary activity in vernacular remained healthy as the century progressed. However, few critics can overcome the barriers presented by at least fourteen languages, many in different linguistic families and alphabets. Therefore they remain dependent upon translators and interpreters for an understanding of works written in languages beyond the two, or at most three, with which they are familiar.

21.11 TRENDS AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

At the end of the twentieth century, the fiction of the Indian subcontinent had not yet found a voice and a method of its own. Critics and authors alike seemed uncertain as to how they might rekindle the

techniques and values of India's ancient tradition, how to come to terms with its mixture of cultures and languages without allowing one of them to become dominant, and how to move away from Eurocentric models and criticism while still aiming at high standards and at the communication of universal values. One fact was obvious: The only literary works that could reach an audience throughout the entire subcontinent were those either written in English or translated into English. It was also evident that the English language alone could make possible the worldwide recognition and the impressive sales figures for which South Asian writers hoped. By the end of the century, practical considerations had effectively stifled the nationalists' protests, and to all intents and purposes English had become the literary language of the Indian subcontinent.

As long as India was striving for independence, it was difficult for Indian writers to view the colonial past or the British with any objectivity. One of the first to do so was Kamala Markandaya, who in *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) demonstrated how entrenched traditions and the colonial system prevented decent people—such as the Maharajah, his son, and the British resident—from fully understanding each other, much less the people for whose welfare they were responsible. Gita Mehta's novel *Raj* (1989) reveals the frustration of a capable Maharajah's daughter who is prevented from assuming a position of leadership simply because of her gender. In *Olivia and Jai* (1990) and its sequel *The Veil of Illusion* (1995), both of which are set in the middle of the nineteenth century, the pseudonymous Rebecca Ryman emphasizes how difficult it was to ignore the ethnic distinctions on which the colonial system depended.

In the final decades of the century, the writers also re-examined the tumultuous period immediately after independence when India was torn apart by religious and ethnic differences. Like Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* most of the novels about this terrible era focused less on actual events than on the way the atmosphere of fear and distrust affected individuals. In *Cracking India*, Sidhwa incorporated horrifying details about the riots in

and around Lahore into a comic account of daily life in a prosperous Parsee family seen through the eyes of the young protagonist. Like *Cracking India*, *Funny Boy* (1994), by the Sri Lankan writer Shyam Selvadurai is a story about coming of age, made doubly difficult by the enmity between neighbors and former friends. The protagonist of *Funny Boy* has to come to terms with his own identity as a homosexual and as a member of the Tamil minority in a largely Sinhalese community; he learns first-hand how cruel human beings can be.

21.12 WOMEN WRITERS, WOMEN'S LIVES

Intolerance and injustice based on ethnic and religious differences were not the only targets of post-independence South Asian fiction. There had been hints of a demand for women's rights in Indian literature as early as the 1930's. For example, in his atypical novel *The Dark Room*, R. K. Narayan told the story of a devoted Hindu wife driven into rebellion by her husband's infidelity but helpless to make good her escape. In the second half of the twentieth century the drive for Indian independence, the worldwide feminist movement, and the proliferation of women writers combined to make women's issues one of the dominant subjects in South Asian fiction. It is significant that the protagonists of five of the novels written by Nayantara Sahgal between 1966 and 1985 were women and that in three instances they walked out on their husbands.

Like *Midnight's Children*, Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980) is set in 1947. However, her focus is not on India's success in gaining independence from Great Britain but on the need for India's women to be freed from a stifling, patriarchal society. In novels such as *That Long Silence* (1988), Shashi Deshpande asks questions to which there are no easy answers, including whether an arranged marriage is safer than the one based on love; if there is no prior emotional involvement, one is less likely to be hurt. Deshpande is enough of a realist to understand how difficult it is for Indian women to become assertive when for centuries they have been taught

that submissiveness is a virtue; she also shows how hard it is for modern daughters to feel close to their traditional mothers, who so often feel inadequate and are possessed by despair. Deshpande also decries the obsession with female purity, which can cause rape victims to commit suicide rather than live on in shame. The women in *Listening Now* (1998), by Anjana Appachana, may seem contented, but the purpose of the novel is to show how angry they are at being denied both passion and a sense of self-worth. Appachana shares the conviction of feminists throughout the world that the political upheavals and social changes of the twentieth century did not suddenly cause women to become dissatisfied with their lot but instead brought forth women writers who could voice their feelings and protest against centuries of systematic oppression.

21.13 THE DIASPORA

Twentieth century fiction also reflected the effects of the diaspora from the Indian subcontinent, usually motivated by the hope of a better life but often resulting in a profound sense of alienation. In an early novel, *Wife* (1975), Bharati Mukherjee shows the tragic results when a young Indian woman is married to a stranger and transported to the United States, where she is supposed to act the part of an obedient Indian wife, ignoring the fascinating world around her. It is hardly surprising that she retreats into a fantasy world and eventually explodes into madness. The complexity of the American immigrant experience is also explored in *The Mistress of Spices* (1997) and *Sister of My Heart* (1999) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. In the first of these novels, a shopkeeper in Oakland, California, uses her magical powers for the benefit of confused new immigrants; in the second, it is only the sisterly love two cousins feel for each other that enables them to survive.

In some novels, the immigration experience leads to a rejection of the past. The recently widowed title character in Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* (1989) plans to commit "sati," or ritual immolation, as soon

as she gets to the United States; instead, she kills a rapist, settles down in Iowa with one man, then leaves him for another and heads toward California. Jasmine seems to have become an American. The Pakistani Parsee student in Sidhwa's *An American Brat* (1993) may be appalled by the violence and immorality she sees in the United States, but she decides to remain there rather than returning to Pakistan with its repressive policies toward women.

Sometimes writers explore the differences between East and West by having a South Asian return home. This device is utilized by Indira Ganesan in *The Journey* (1990), Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* (1997), and Vikram Chandra in *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), a brilliant novel in which a returning student's lapse from custom prompts the intervention of the gods and enables the author to recapitulate Indian history. The theme of East versus West also underlies novels in which the major characters are Europeans or Americans in India, perhaps seeking spiritual fulfillment, as in Jhabvala's *Three Continents* and Anita Desai's *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), or perhaps, like the displaced Jew in Anita Desai's poignant *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), wishing for nothing more than a safe place to live.

21.14 A NEW COSMOPOLITANISM

South Asian writers, too, are involved in the diaspora from their subcontinent. For years, promising students have attended universities in Great Britain or the United States, but late in the century more and more writers were either making their homes outside the subcontinent or dividing their time among various countries. Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Anjana Appachana, and Bapsi Sidhwa moved to the United States, while Kamala Markandaya and Salman Rushdie relocated to Great Britain. Gita Mehta and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala were described as living in the United States, England, and India, Anita Desai as moving between the United States and the United Kingdom, and Vikram Seth, author of the monumental work *A Suitable Boy* (1993), as equally at home in Bombay and Washington, D. C.

Admittedly, the diaspora may sometimes lead to a diminished use of South Asian subject matter, as with Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Meira Chand's first four novels were set in Japan, where she lives; not until *House of the Sun* (1989) did she write a story about Indians in India. On the other hand, though Kiran Desai's home is in New York City, her hilarious *Hullaballoo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) is as convincing a story of Indian village life as one finds in the fiction of R. K. Narayan, who spent his life in Madras. If it is true that only by observing other cultures can one arrive at a real understanding of one's own, the diaspora may do far more good than harm. Indeed, the new cosmopolitanism may well account for the technical complexity, thematic density, and amazing variety that had become the salient characteristics of South Asian long fiction by the end of the twentieth century.

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21.15 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Fill in the blanks

a. Meira Chand's first four novels are set in _____ .

b. _____ novels try to represent life as it is.

c. A novel is written in _____ rather than verse.

d. The author of *The Untouchable* is _____

e. _____ wrote *Midnight's Children* .

21.16 LET US SUM UP

The introduction of English to India brought an introduction to English literature. While India has a long, indigenous tradition of fiction writing in the form of the oral tale and the short morality story, it was to British forms that nineteenth-century Indian writers turned. The traditional story of the

adventures of the Hindu deity Rama, told night after night by the village elder at the local temple, was transformed in the nineteenth-century Indian literary tradition into nationalists Indian novels written"sometimes in English and sometimes in vernacular, largely about the oppression of the poor by the middle class and the British. These novels sometimes described situations related to tyrannical customs, sati, arranged marriages, and child marriages sometimes, however, as in the work of Tagore, they evoked sentimentality for Indian mysticism.

21.17 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

a. Identify some of the themes and concerns presented in the Indian Novel in English.

b. Name one Indian Novel in English which is based on events taken from history?

c. "Nobody can write music and style in a language which is not their own." Who said this in connection with whom ?

d. Discuss the presentation of women characters in the Indian Novel in English.

21.18 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a. Write an essay on the development of the Indian Novel in English.

b. Write a note on 'New Cosmopolitanism' in the Indian Novel in English.

c. Give reasons for the rise of the Indian Novel in English.

21.19 ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

a. Japan

b. realistic

c. prose

d. Mulk Raj Anand

e. Salman Rushdie

21.20 SUGGESTED READING

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RAJA RAO : *KANTHAPURA*

STRUCTURE

22.1 Introduction

22.2 Objectives

22.3 Synopsis

22.4 Setting

22.5 Detailed Story

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22.14 Picketing at Boranna's Today Grove

22.15 Satyagraha at the toddy booth

22.16 Government Repression

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22.19 Check Your Progress : Mark True or False (CYP)

22.20 Let Us Sum Up

22.21 Self -Assessment Questions (SAQs)

22.21.1 Short Notes

22.21.2 Examination Oriented Questions

22.22 Answers to Check your progress (CYP)

22.23 Suggested Reading

22.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the discussion of Kanthapura, a novel written by Raja Rao which involves story element, main issues, thematic concerns of the novel and other allied issues. An effort has also been made to provide you an opportunity to check your progress through self-assessment and examination oriented questions. It is important to read the text of the novel before and after going through this study material for a thorough grip of the novel.

The Multiple Choice Questions in this lesson plan will test a learner's recall and understanding of the text. The questions focus on specific chapters within the book. The Short Answer Questions listed in this lesson require a one to two sentence answer. They ask students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the text by describing what they've read, rather than just recalling it .The short answer questions evaluate not only whether students have read the material, but also how well they understand and can apply it. They require more thought than a multiple choice question, but are shorter than the essay questions. Essay type questions responses are typically expected to be one (or more) page(s) and consist of multiple paragraphs, although it is possible to write answers more briefly.

22.2 OBJECTIVES

- Learner should have an in-depth knowledge of the text *Kanthapura*
- Learner should be able to answer questions related to the text of the novel.

- Learner should be able to demonstrate capacity to do a critical analysis of the novel *Kanthapura* in the context of established critical approaches.

22.3 SYNOPSIS

Kanthapura by Raja Rao, rather than being a traditional novel with a neat, linear structure and compact plot, follows the oral tradition of Indian *sthala-purana*, or legendary history. As Raja Rao explains in his original foreword, there is no village in India, however mean, that does not have a rich legendary history of its own and in which some famous figure of myth or history has not made an appearance. In this way, the storyteller, who commemorates the past, keeps a native audience in touch with its lore and thereby allows the past to mingle with the present, the gods and heroes with ordinary mortals.

The story is narrated in flashback by Achakka, a wise woman in the village. She, like her female audience (whom she addresses as "sisters"), has survived the turbulence of social and political change which was induced by Mohandas K. Gandhi's passive resistance against the British government. Achakka provides a detailed picture of the rural setting, establishing both an ambiance and a rhythm for the novel. It is clear that her speech and idiomatic expression are meant to express a distinctively feminine viewpoint which is an extraordinary achievement for a male Indo-English novelist. Achakka quickly creates a faithful image of an Indian way of life, circumscribed by tradition and indebted to its deities, of whom Kenchamma, the great and bounteous goddess, is made the village protectress. She is invoked in every chapter, for the characters never forget that her power resides in her past action. It is she who humanizes the villagers, and their chants and prayers ring out from time to time.

The narrator establishes the parameters of the story within old and new legends. While Kenchamma and Siva are remembered for their marvellous feats and interventions in human affairs, analogies are sometimes drawn with

contemporary figures such as Gandhi who serve to turn fact and history into folklore, and who provide the motive for political struggle. At the beginning, while there are simply rumors of Gandhi's activities, the villagers follow their customary routines. Then, Moorthy, a young, dedicated Brahmin, inspired by Gandhi, returns to Kanthapura to propagandize the cause of the Indian National Congress and Gandhi's satyagraha movement. The colonial masters (nicknamed "Red-men" for their ruddy complexions) are a palpable, tyrannical presence but are sensed only obliquely at the beginning via a mysterious passing policeman who is treated as a spy and who, consequently, seeks refuge on the Skeffington Coffee Estate run by a brutal gang-boss.

Moorthy does not immediately win favor. He is opposed by Bhatta, a reactionary who sneers at "Gandhi vagabondage," and by fellow Brahmins who are increasingly upset by Gandhi's acceptance of Untouchables. The caste system, so much a part of Indian history, is shaking apart under Gandhi's example, and the social pattern of Kanthapura delineated by separate quarters for Brahmin, Pariah, Potter, Weaver, and Sudra is disturbed by the progress being made by the Untouchables.

Even Moorthy's own mother is revulsed by his Gandhian precepts, and Moorthy brings matters to a head by eliciting Patel Range Gowda's help in starting a Congress group and encouraging the villagers to vow to speak only truth, wear no cloth but homespun khadi, and use all forms of passive resistance. This Gandhian non-violence provokes a brutal response from the authorities, and the villagers are attacked by the Police. Moorthy and advocate Rangamma are arrested as Bhatta is uncovered as a traitor and some Brahmins are deployed to stir fear among the villagers. Patel Range Gowda is dismissed from his hereditary office as village executive chief, and the villagers turn to the gods for help.

The radical change in the political nature of India, however, becomes apparent as the women stir into action. Rangamma, who always links Indian scripture to contemporary events, manages to inspire the womenfolk to dire deeds as the men are forced to hide in the jungles around the village.

After Moorthy is released from prison, the political crisis deepens, and the villagers' suffering increases. There is a sense that the issue is now more than mere politics. The world resembles a jungle in battle with itself, and only Gandhi transcends this tumult, for he is like a huge mountain, unvanquished by the confusion and violence. Moorthy suddenly finds himself less in sympathy with Gandhi and more attuned to Jawaharlal Nehru, the emerging modernist.

The villagers, however, remain faithful to Gandhi. Towards the end, when nothing can stop the women (in spite of horrendous casualties) from marching against the soldiers sent by the British, the change in the social and political nature of the country is profound. The women decide to burn down what is left of their village, rather than return to it. Life, they realize, can never be the same without their Moorthy, husbands, sisters, and children who have perished in the struggle. Yet the women also recognize that they are part of history on the march.

The climax of the novel is the great violence of chapter 26, with the men in retreat, the women in the vanguard of resistance, and the soldiers in unrelenting assault, wrecking devastation. The concluding section (chapter 19) brings the tale full circle, fourteen months later, where there is eager anticipation of Swaraj, or independence for India. Of the male heroes, only Patel Range Gowda returns briefly to Kanthapura, yet the villagers feel blessed by the goddess Kenchamma.

22.4 SETTING

The Village Kanthapura is a small village in the district of Kara in Mysore, South India. It is situated on the slopes of the Western Ghats which form a wall along the Malabar coast facing the Arabian sea. It is situated by the river Himavathy, the source of which lies in a mountain close-by. Cardamom, coffee and rice are the chief crops of the region, and there are forests of teak and jack, of sandal and of sal. Roads that lead to Kanthapura are narrow and dusty. At night can be heard the creaking of carts taking the produce to the

sea-shore where it is shipped to the country of the Red-men, the English rulers of India. Sometimes when the traders of the village, Rama Chetty and Subba Chetty, have some merchandise to transport, the carts stop at their doors to pick it up. The coming and the going of the carts has been described vividly and dramatically, so that we see the whole scene with our mind's eye. Kanthapura is a small village of about a hundred houses. It is divided into a number of quarters. First, there is the Brahmin quarter. In this part some houses are quite big like those of Postmaster Suryanarayana and Patwari Nanjundia. There are also the Kannaya-House people and their house is the biggest. Waterfall Venkamma is jealous of her widowed sister-in-law Rangamma who lives there. She has no child, yet lives in such a big house, Moreover, her parents have come to live with her, and during summer her brothers and brother's children also come there. This is intolerable to Waterfall Venkamma and she freely curses her sister. She would like to poison all of them. There are also the Temple House people and Fig tree House people in the Brahmin quarter and Venkamma is also jealous of them, for they are frequently invited to the Kannaya House, while she is not. In this way, a hint is thrown of the jealousies and quarrels which are such a marked feature of village life, as of life everywhere. Other people who live in the Brahmin quarter are Dore, the university graduate, who calls himself a Gandhi man and has taken to dhoti and khadi. There is also Corner-House Moorthy, who has gone through life like a noble cow and who lives with his old mother. He is loved and respected by the people of the village, and he is of the same age as Seemu, the son of the old woman, Achakka, who narrates the story. Moorthy is considered such a desirable young man that even Coffee-planter Ramayya comes to offer him his daughter. "But the horoscopes did not tally, and they were all so glad." Here we get an instance of Raja Rao's use of verbal irony.

Besides the Brahmin quarter, there is also the Pariah quarter, the Potters quarter, the Weavers quarter, and the Sudra quarter. In the Pariah quarter, Beadle Timmayya's house is the most important. Another important person in the Pariah quarter is pock-marked Sidda. He is the richest man of the village,

but he lost much of his money in the treatment of his wife. The Potter's quarter is the smallest one. It has only five houses. Lingayya and Ramayya and Subbayya and Chandrayya own the four big houses, and old Kamalamma has a little broken house at the end of the street where she spends her last days with her only son. Formerly, they say, the Potters' Street was very flourishing, but now, with all the modern Mangalore tiles, they've had to turn to land. But Chandrayya still makes festival-pots, and for Gauri's festival the pots are done by him. He makes images too and sells them at the Manjarpur fair, the rest of the Potters are rather a simple, quiet lot, who till their lands and now and again go out to the neighbouring villages to help people to make bricks. Walking across Temple Square from Potters Street, the first house is that of Patel Range Gowda, one of the richest and most loved elders. He often helps his fellow Sudras when they are in trouble. The little Kanthapurishwari temple is just on the corner between the narrator's own house and Subba Chetty's shop on the Karwar Road. Like other villages of India, Kanthapura, too, has its beliefs. It believes in a number of gods and goddesses. The Goddess Kenchamma, whose abode is on the Kenchamma Hill is the presiding deity of the village. It is she who protects the villagers from famine and disease. It is she who saves them from the cholera or the small-pox. People suffering from these diseases get well only because of the blessings of the goddess. No doubt, some people die, but then such people are either sinners or those who have caught their disease in the city. We get another fine instance of Raja Rao's irony when he writes, "Then there was cholera. We gave a sari and a gold trinket to the goddess, and the goddess never touched those that are to live—as for the old ones, they would have died one way or the other anyway. Of course you will tell me that young Sankamma, Barber Channaya's wife, died of it. But then it was not for nothing her child was born ten months and four days after he was dead. Ten months and four days, I tell you; such whores always die untimely. Ramappa and Subbanna, you see, they got it in town and our goddess could do nothing. She is the Goddess of Kanthapura, not of Talassana. They ought to have stayed in Talassana and gone to Goddess Talassanamma to offer their prayers." The people have full faith in her and

frequently pray to her: *Kenchamma, Kenehamma,/ Goddess benign and bounteous,/ Mother of earth, blood of life,/ Harvest-queen, rain-crowned,/ Kenchamma, Kenehamma, Goddess benign and bounteous.* The people have full faith in the legend that long, long ago the goddess fought with, and killed, a demon which had laid waste the countryside. That is why a part of the hill is still red.

22.5 DETAILED STORY

The village also has a small Kanthapurishwari's temple. It is on the main street promontory. It was constructed only three years ago, and soon became the centre of village life, as well as the cause of all the trouble which forms the substance of the novel. It so happened that one day Moorthy dug out a half-sunk Shiva-linga, and suggested that it should be washed, and consecrated in a temple built in its honour. All in the Brahmin quarter welcomed the suggestion. So in the holidays when the city boys were in the village, they built mud-walls and put a tile roof over it. Thus the temple came into being, and the consecration ceremony was duly performed by Bhatta. Rangamma gave a feast to celebrate the occasion. Then Postmaster Suryanarayana suggested that they should have a Sankara-Jayanthi. He had the text, and he would recite it. The idea was welcomed by all. It was also agreed that daily after the Jayanthi they would have a dinner and somebody would offer it for each day of the month. Rangamma even offered to give dinner on all those days on which none else would be offering it. Thus the Jayanthi and the feasting went on day after day to the great delight of all concerned. When the Sankara-Jayanthi ended, Moorthy suggested that they should have Harikatha. He knew a Harikatha man , much honoured even by the Maharaja. He would gladly come to the village if paid ten-rupees, cart, and railway fare. They had full faith in Moorthy who was, "as honest as an elephant," and so they readily agreed to the suggestion. They were poor, but they gladly contributed one-rupee each towards the expenses. Some, like Rangamma, gave much more. Moorthy went from house to house collecting money. He did not hesitate to visit even the Pariah quarter, and collected

one hundred and forty-seven rupees. He was in fact a follower of Gandhi who did not believe in caste, who believed in inter-caste marriage, and advocated the re-marriage of widows. The Harikatha man whom Moorthy brought from the city was called Jayaramachar. He told strange Harikathas, for along with the gods and goddesses, he would-bring in Gandhi, the Swaraj and the Red-men. These Harikathas provide the finest example of Raja Rao 's use of the mythical technique. The novelist goes to the past to find parallels for the present, and the past is used to glorify the present. Gandhi is thus glorified and raised to the level of Ram and Krishna who fought the Demons, as Gandhi was fighting the Red-men. That is why the novel has been called a Gandhi-epic. In other words, the *Katha* was political propaganda in disguise. The news of it soon reached the government, and Jayaramachar was arrested and Moorthy looked sad for sometime. Then he and other young men of the village threw away their foreign clothes and became Gandhi men. A few days later Policeman Bade Khan came to Kanthapura.

The Policeman Bade Khan is the symbol of Government authority in Kanthapura. He is posted in the village following the arrest of Jayaramachar, the *Harikatha* man, The first problem Bade Khan has to face is that of accommodation. He goes from door to door in search of a house but to no use. He approaches Patwari Nanjundia, who frankly tells him that he is in no position to help him. Then he comes to Patel Range Gowda, the tiger of the village. The Patel receives him coldly, and does not even ask him to sit. When Bade Khan reminds him that he is a representative of the Government and it is his duty to help him, an officer of the Government, the Patel coldly replies that the government pays him to collect the revenue, and not for searching houses for others. It is not a part of his duty, and so he will not do it. Disappointed, Bade Khan leaves him, with threats and curses. But the Patel is not a man to care for such threats. When Bade Khan fails to get a house in Kanthapura, he goes to the Skeffington Coffee Estate close-by and the white owner of the plantation at once provides him with one of the quarters meant for the workers on the estate. There Bade Khan settles down with one

of the women workers as his wife. The people of Kanthapura supposed that he was just a passing policeman who had gone away. But they were mistaken; only a few days later he is seen prowling about the village.

We now get a detailed account of the life and character of Bhatta, the Goverment agent. Bhatta is rich and is much respected in the village, but he began life very humbly. In his youth, he would go about the village in a loincloth with a copper pot in his hand. He would tell the days of the important festivals and the most auspicious days for a marriage for a small fee. He officiated as priest on the occasion of a marriage, and was never late for a funeral dinner. He was always the first Brahmin to arrive on such occasions. He was polite and smooth tongued, and so was liked by the people. He lived frugally and saved every possible pie. The small fee he would get would go down in a chest kept in the house for the purpose. His wife and child were often put to great hardship, but he did not care for it. In this way, he hoarded the large sum of three hundred and fifty rupees. With this amount, he started money-lending in a small way. He was polite and always pretended to help those who came to him, but all the same fleeced them by charging exorbitant rates of interest. The more pressing the need, the greater the exploitation. In this way, his money multiplied fast, and he began to advance larger amounts. Now he would mortgage lands and houses of his debtors, and as the debt could never be repaid, he soon came to own much landed property. By the time the story opens, he is the owner of nearly half of the village. Then as good luck would have it, his poor neglected wife Savithri dies. She had gone to fetch water from the village, her foot slipped, and she fell down and died. Soon Bhatta married a second time. His second wife was a mere child at the time of marriage, but she brought by way of dowry one thousand in cash and five acres of wet land. As she was the daughter of a rich landlord, Bhatta also gained much in prestige and social respect.

Fortune smiled on Bhatta. He grew richer and richer and he could lend more and more money, charge high rates of interest, and cheat the poor and

the needy in the transactions. All the while he would pretend to help them and earn their gratitude. To earn more money, he helped the poor, ignorant people of the village in other ways also. When they had some legal case and needed a lawyer in the city, Bhatta was the man to help them. He would introduce them to advocate Seenappa who would undertake the case for a small fee. Bhatta would earn their gratitude and also be paid a small coin or two for his pains. He would also write petitions for them for a small fee, and thus save them the trouble of going to the city and spending a much larger amount there. Thus he was constantly moving between the village and the city and was constantly involved in legal matters. In this way, his knowledge of law increased, and he took to settling petty disputes himself, always for a fee. He was so clever that those whom 'he exploited were grateful to him for ever afterwards'. Such was Bhatta's position at the time Jayaramachar was arrested, and Moorthy turned a Gandhi man. In the beginning he took a keen interest in Gandhi Bhajans, but suddenly turned hostile to the Gandhi movement. This happened after one of his visits to the city. On his return he went about the Brahmin quarter telling people that the Swami (in the city of Karwar) would excommunicate all of them, if Moorthy did not stop going to the Pariah quarter and mixing with the Pariahs. It is apparent that he had turned a Government agent to work against Moorthy and other Gandhi men of the village. Thus the tension and conflict in the novel results from the clash of these two opposite forces—the Gandhi movement for freedom and government repression of it. The one is represented by Moorthy and his friends, and the other by Bhatta and Bade Khan.

22.6 TENSIONS AND CONFLICTS

Death of Narsamma. It was the arrest of Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, that made Moorthy a Gandhi-man in right earnest. Months earlier while a college student in the city, he had heard Mahatma Gandhi speaking in a public meeting. He was very much moved by his words. They seemed to come from his very heart, and so went deep down into the heart of the audience. After the speech Moorthy went upto Gandhi and offered himself

as a servant and devotee. On his advice he decided to give up his foreign clothes and foreign education, took to wearing khadi kurta and dhoti and became a devoted follower of the Mahatma, but he did not do much to further the cause so dear to the Mahatma. After the arrest of Jayaramachar, he again went to the city, and returned a few days later with the necessary instructions. He was loaded with publicity material, cotton and spinning wheels. Henceforth, he was seen constantly going to Kannayya House and would remain there for hours together. It was soon apparent that the big house had become the office of the village Congress Committee, or the Congress House. Rangamma took a keen interest in the Congress movement. There also lived with her, her niece Ratna, a lady of progressive views. She was a widow, but she did not live like a widow. She was a modern in her dress and in her views. She took keen interest in the work of the Congress, and frequent references are made to the mutual attraction of Ratna and Moorthy. Perhaps, they loved each other though they did not express their love in the course of the novel. Moorthy and the other educated boys of the village went from door to door distributing free charkhas and explaining the advantages of charkha-spinning to the people. Moorthy went to the women in each quarter of the village—the Brahmin quarter, the Pariah quarter, the Sudra quarter, etc. He would lucidly explain the message of Gandhi to the ignorant village-folk: 'Sister, the Congress is giving away free spinning-wheels. Will you spin, sister ? You see, you have nothing to do in the afternoons after the vessels are washed and the water drawn, and if you spin just one hour a day, you can have bodice-cloth of any colour or breadth you like, one bodice-cloth per month, and a sari every six months. And during the first month, the cotton is free.' 'My son, we have weavers in the village. There is Chennayya and Rangayya', the women would answer. 'Yes, sister. But they buy foreign yarn, and foreign yarn is bought with our money, and all this money goes across the sea. Our gold should be in our country. And our cotton should be in our country," Moorthy would explain. Once they understood, most of them took a spinning-wheel from him. Post Master Suryanarayana took two, and Pandit Venkateshia and

Snuff Sastri one each and Rangamma's widowed sister Kamalamma and her daughter Ratna one too. Moorthy visited all the quarters of the village distributing free spinning-wheels. He was sometimes asked, 'But tell me, my son, does the Mahatma spin?'' 'The Mahatma, sister? Why every morning he spins for two hours soon after his prayers. He says spinning is as purifying as praying,' Moorthy would tell them.

The news of what Bhatta had said at the Kannaya House was soon over the village. It reached the ears of Narasamma also, the old, widowed mother of Moorthy. Her daughters were all married, and she lived alone in the house. There was no one else to look after her, and she loved Moorthy. She was a simple, old woman, superstitious and orthodox. The very thought of ex-communication struck terror into her heart. The very idea was shocking to her. Narasamma had been bitterly disappointed when Moorthy had given up his college education and thus shattered her dreams. He had also rejected all the proposals of marriage which came saying that he did not want to marry. The poor old lady had bravely borne all this, but ex-communication was too much for her. She trembled and big tears -rolled down her eyes, when she was told that her son would be ex-communicated by the Swami, and the whole village because of him if he did not give up the Pariah business. She decided that never would she permit her son to dishonour his family.

Moorthy was in the city at the time, and he returned to Kanthapura on a glorious summer day. His return has been graphically and vividly described, and we see the whole scene with our mind's eye. On his return Moorthy tries to touch the feet of his mother, but she pushes him away angrily and says, "Go away, I never want to see your face again." 'But what is all this about, Mother ?' asked Moorthy. 'What ? Don't talk like an innocent. Go and stand on the steps like a Pariah. I don't even want your shadow to fall on me. I have had enough of it.' 'But why, Mother ?' 'Why ? Go and ask the squirrel on the fence I don't know. Go away, and don't show your face to me again. Not until you have been purified by the Swami.' She rushed down to the river, where she banged her clothes

because the other women were still banging theirs. The rhythmic movement calmed and soothed her. She went home ashamed of her anger. She cooked a meal for Moorthy, for surely he must be hungry having been away from home. She longed for him to come so that they could make their peace. But where was he ? Finally there were footsteps at the door but they weren't Moorthy's. It was Bhatta who had come. Moorthy had apparently been very angry with Bhatta for saying that Swami was going to excommunicate him. Moorthy had said, 'Let the Swami do what he likes. I will go and do more and more Pariah work. I will go and eat with them if necessary. Why not ? Are they not men like us ? And the Swami, who is he ? A self-chosen fool. He may be learned in the Vedas and all that. But he has no heart. He has no thinking power.' 'And what shall I say to that, Narasamma ?' asked Bhatta. So Bhatta's soothing only made things much worse for Narasamma . 'From that day on, mother and son did not speak to each other again. He sat and ate his food on the kitchen doorstep, and she in the kitchen. Moorthy visited the Pariah quarter more and more. When Bhatta saw that his threats were of no avail, he went to the city. He returned two days later and told Narasamma that the Swami had excommunicated Moorthy, his whole family and all the generations to come. That very night Narasamma rushed towards the river and fell down unconscious in a field. She was found dead in the morning. She was cremated where she lay, but Bhatta refused to perform the funeral rites. That very night Moorthy left for some unknown destination where the last rites were performed. On his return to the Village, he lived at Kannayya House. They gave him food at the kitchen door as they would to a Pariah, but he persisted with his work. He frequently visited the Pariahs and he and his friends began teaching them Hindi, Arithmetic, etc., Seenu also taught them. Then it was decided that Moorthy would go to the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and there also he would teach the Pariahs.

The scene now shifts to the Skeffington Coffee Estate. It was a huge coffee plantation which stretched all over the hills and valleys round

Kanthapura. It is difficult to give an idea of it vastness. Some said that it covered an area of more than ten thousand acres. Its founder owner was an Englishman who was known as the "Hunter-Sahib" as he moved about with a hunter in hand, now whipping this -worker and now that to make them work faster. By the time of the present story, he was dead and his place had been taken by his young nephew. The Coolies who worked on the Estate were recruited from the plains below the Ghats stretching upto the river Godavari. A foreman or maistri as he was called was sent from time to time to recruit coolies according to need. They were enticed to leave their hearth and home by false promises. They were given one rupee each as advance; and were promised a four-anna bit for a man and a two-anna bit for a woman as daily wages. They were also told that they would get plenty of white rice, and that they would -merely be required to pick coffee leaves. They would not be put to any hard labour. The foreman would speak to them kindly. He would smile on them. The simple, poverty-stricken people were taken in by these promises, and came in large numbers with their belongings, to work on the Estate. Their march to Skeffington Coffee Estate has been described by Raja Rao at length in his usual graphic and picturesque style:

> ... armies of coolies marched past the Kenchamma Temple, half-naked, starving, spitting, weeping, vomiting, coughing, shivering, squeaking, shouting,. moaning coolies—coolies after coolies passed by the Kenchamma Temple, the maistri before them, while the Children clung to their mother's breasts, the old men to their sons' arms, and bundles hung over shoulder and arm and shoulder and head; and they marched on past the Kenchamma Temple and up to the Skeffington Coffee Estate—coolies from below the Ghats, coolies, young men, old men, old women, children, baskets, bundles, pots, coolies passed on—and winding through the twists of the Estate path—by the Buxom-pipal bend, over the

maistri before them.Devil's Ravine Bridge, by the Parvatiwell Corner—they marched up.

It is like the march of an army and the impression created is that of vast multitudes on the move. Raja Rao's habitual use of an array of rhyming words—starving, spitting, weeping vomiting, etc.—is to be noted. Thus were the Coolies brought to the coffee plantation. Once they were there the manners of the Foreman changed and he grew harsh and threatening. They were exploited in many ways. All promises were forgotten. No wages were given. Indeed, the white owner did not even know that they had promised four-anna bit for a man and two-anna bit for a woman. They were given small huts to live which they had to repair or thatch themselves. They were provided with a frugal diet, and were made to work hard from five in the morning till late in the night. If anybody took rest or was slow, he was severely whipped by the maistri who was ever on the watch. No wages were paid, and the old hands knew that one who came to the Estate once, never went out of it again. He must work, suffer and die there. The workers were also exploited sexually. The white Sahib would have this or that woman who tickled his fancy. If a woman refused him, the husband's or father's wages were cut or he was given a whipping. Once when a Brahmin workman refused to send his daughter, the Sahib flew into such a rage that he shot the Brahmin father dead with his pistol. Of course, the Sahib promised to pay about two thousand rupees as damages to the dead man's widow and children. But eventually he paid nothing because the Red-men's Court forgave him. Then the workers were also exposed to dangers and diseases of various kinds. The Estate was infested with snakes, and many died of snake-bites while at work. In a long digression covering about three to four pages, we are told a great deal about the nature of snakes, and about different kinds of snakes which frequented the Estate. There were deadly green snakes, and there were also flying snakes. Such long digressions are common. They in no way further the action and create the impression of formlessness. Indeed, this criticism has often been levelled against the novel. Besides this, there were heavy rains and the workers would have to

work in rains drenched to their very skin. With the rains, there would come Malaria, and take a heavy toll of life. Men, women and children would die in large numbers. No doubt, the Sahib would distribute pills among the coolies, but they were superstitious and many would not take the pills. They also suffered from vomiting and dysentery. Many would have liked to go back to their homes but they had no money and anybody who dared to ask for his wages was mercilessly beaten.

In short, the coolies were a miserable lot, and had to suffer terrible hardships. We have already noted that Bade Khan was staying at the estate, and his arrival had further strengthened and encouraged the Sahib. Now an officer of the law was also with him. The majority of the coolies were Pariahs. But there were also a few Brahmins who could not be suppressed so very easily. Among them were two young Brahmin clerks, Gangadhar and Vasudev of progressive and enlightened views. They took the Pariahs to Kanthapura to take part in the Gandhi-bhajans. They were the ones who invited Moorthy to come to the Estate to teach the ignorant coolies. They said, "the Pariahs must learn to read and to write, and when they can do this they can speak straight to the Sahib and ask for this and that, money and material and many holidays. Why should not Pariah Rachanna and Sampanna learn to read and to write ? They shall. And Bade Khan can wave his beard and twist his moustache. What is a policeman before a Gandhi's man ? Tell me, does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant ?"

Raja Rao's use of graphic similes and metaphors is to be noted. One evening when Moorthy is to come to Skeffington Coffee Estate to teach the Pariahs, they all wait eagerly for him at the gates of the Estate. It is dark, but a light is seen moving up at a distance. Bade Khan is also seen prowling about lathi in hand. A tense atmosphere, thick with suspense and foreboding, is skilfully built up by the novelist, by noticing the movement of the light, and the movements and whisperings of Bade Khan. It is done so skilfully that we can visualize the entire incident. At last Moorthy does come up, but he is stopped at the gates of the Estate by Bade Khan.

He tells Moorthy, "You cannot enter the gates of the Estate." 'I am a free man, Police Sahib," answered Moorthy. 'Free man you may be in your palace. But this is the Skeffington Coffee Estate. And these are Skeffington Coffee Estate coolies. You'd better take care of your legs. I've orders.' 'Coolies are men, Police Sahib. And according to the laws of your own government and that of Mr. Skeffington, no man can own another. I have every right to go in.' You will not cross this gate.' 'I shall." By now Vasudev had come with Gangadhar and others. The foreman and his supporters had also come. There was so much swearing and cursing and hurling of abuses. A fierce fight follows; there is whipping and pulling of hair and beards. The women fall upon the foreman and Bade Khan, and would have torn them to shreds had not Moorthy shouted 'No beatings, sisters. No beatings, in the name of the Mahatma.' Whereupon the foreman got up and started whipping the coolies up the Estate path, while Vasudev led Moorthy down to Kanthapura for the night. The following morning the foreman threw Rachanna and his wife with their two orphaned grandchildren out of the hut at the Skeffington Estate. They were given shelter by Patel Range Gowda. And that was how they came to live in Kanthapura. It was after this that Moorthy began his 'Don't-touch-the-government campaign.'

22.7 MOORTHY'S FAST

Before starting his "Don't touch the government campaign,' Moorthy decides to undertake a fast for self-purification. He decides that he would fast for three days, and would take nothing but salt water thrice a day. He thought such a fast necessary, because he felt that he had not lived upto the teaching of the Mahatma. He himself was not pure, and that was why so much of violence had taken place at the Skeffington Coffee Estate. They should have loved even Bade Khan. They could not do so, for there was hatred in him. His own hatred polluted his followers. The fault lay with him and, therefore, he should purify himself through fasting. Only then would he be able to practise love, truth and *Ahimsa* as taught by the Mahatma. So he began his fast in the temple. At night-fall when there was none else in the

temple, Rangamma tried to offer him a banana, but Moorthy refused it firmly. Ratna, often came to see him, and Moorthy wondered how he had ever thought of her as other than a sister. He had sound sleep, but the next day he felt much weaker. Memories crowded in upon him, and he remembered this incident and that. A number of people came to see him. Waterfall Venkamma also came and hurled abuses at him.

'Ah, the cat has begun to take to asceticism,' says she, 'only to commit more sins. Ah, son when did you begin to lie to your neighbours ? As though it were not enough to have polluted our village with your pariahs. Now you want to pollute us with your gilded purity. Wait, wait when you come out of this counting of beads, I shall give you a fine welcome with my broomstick.'

But Moorthy did not feel annoyed. He resolved he would love even his enemies, as was taught by the great Mahatma. On the third day he felt so weak that he could not go to the river. When he tried to stand, he felt dizzy and had to sit down. But there was peace within his soul. His soul was irradiated with ineffable bliss. A number of villagers came to see him in the evening, and they had bhajans. But Moorthy noted with regret that not many Brahmins had come. The next morning Moorthy broke his fast. He felt lighter in limb and lighter in soul. Then he walked out to preach "Don't touch the government campaign."

22.8 *KANTHAPURA* CONGRESS COMMITTEE

First, Moorthy went to Range Gowda. He was an influential man and if he joined the Congress, the others in the village would also do so. Bhatta had already been to him, and the Patel had sent him away angry and frustrated. It was clear that the Patel did not like Bhatta, and that his sympathies were with Moorthy and the Congress. Gradually, Moorthy came to the point and told the Patel of his plans :

> "This is what is to be done. We shall start a Congress group in Kanthapura, and the Congress group of Kanthapura will join the Congress of All India. You just pay four annas or two thousand yards of yarn per year,

> and that is all you have to do, and then you become a Congress member. And you must vow to speak truth, and wear no cloth but the khadi cloth." 'Oh yes, Moorthappa. If you think there is no danger in it. I see no objection to joining it. Tell me only one thing: Will it bring us into trouble with the Government ?' This Moorthy thinks over and then he says, 'This is how it is, Range 'Gowda.' Today it will bring us into no trouble with the Government. But tomorrow when we shall be against the Red-Men's Government it will bring us into trouble. You see Bade Khan is already there. "And I shall not close my eyes till that dog has eaten filth" says Range Gowda, but Moorthy interrupts him and says such things are not to be said and that hatred should be plucked out of our hearts and that the Mahatma says you must love even your enemies. The Patel did not agree with this, but all the same he consented to be a member of the Congress and to do as Moorthy, "the learned one" would advise him to do.

Then Moorthy went to the weavers quarter and met their Elder, Ramayya, When Ramayya heard that Range Gowda had agreed to join the Congress, he also readily agreed to do so. Then Moorthy went to the Potter's quarter and their Elder Siddayya also was easily persuaded to take up the work of the Congress. However, in the Pariah quarter Moorthy was put to a severe trial. The elder Rachanna was out. His wife invited him in, and offered him a glass of milk. Till now Moorthy had never crossed the threshold of a Pariah. And now he was compelled not only to enter in, but also to accept milk. He refused, but Rachanna's wife insisted that he should take at least one sip. Moorthy could not refuse, and with trembling hands and a fearful heart he just touched the glass with his lips. After all he was a Brahmin, and despite all his principles, Moorthy could not eat or drink in a Pariah's home. It is to

be noted that Raja Rao has humanised the character of Moorthy. He has not been presented as a god or a hero or an uncommon individual with no human weakness. Rather, his faltering, his prayers, his touching of the holy thread, have been carefully noted, and he is presented as a creature of flesh and blood, with common human weaknesses. Soon, he is surrounded by a number of Pariah women and children. They are simple, ignorant people and they do not understand the message of the Mahatma, nor the significance of Charkha-spinning. They frankly tell Moorthy that they would do as their men folk tell them to do. Disappointed Moorthy leaves them, promising to return in the evening when Rachanna would be back home.

Moorthy hurries to Rangamma and tells her of what had happened. He has his bath and changes his clothes, and drinks a little Ganges water, and in this way purifies himself, as a true Brahmin should after he has been polluted by contact with a Pariah. The caste-system is too firmly entrenched in Indian Society and even enlightened men like Moorthy are victims of it. In the evening, Moorthy again takes a round of the village trying to persuade people to join the Congress and follow the Mahatma. Rachanna, Madanna, Lingayya, and others all agree to do as he will ask them to do. So the next day, with the blessings of the Patel Range Gowda, a meeting of the villagers is called to elect the members of the Kanthapura Congress Committee or Panchayat. First there are bhajans and the gods are taken out in a procession. Moorthy is elected President and declared their Mahatma. Range Gowda is elected as the Protector along with twenty-one other members. In this way is formed the Congress Committee of twenty-three members. They all vow to spin every day, to practice *Ahimsa* and to seek truth. The membership fee at the rate of four anna for one member is duly collected and sent to the Provincial Congress Committee. A few days later, when Moorthy's picture is published in the papers, the joy and pride of the members know no bounds. And they all say, "Our Moorthy is a great man, and they speak of him in the city and we shall work for him', and from then onwards all began to spin more and more and Moorthy sent bundles and bundles of yarn and Moorthy said the Mahatma was very pleased."

22.9 MARRIAGE OF VENKAMMA'S DAUGHTER

Bhatta, of course, did not take kindly to the formation of the Congress Committee. He felt he must put an end to the nonsense, otherwise the trouble would spread. Moorthy's fast had its effect, and despite the ex-communication he was still respected and followed by the villagers. He thought and thought over the matter, and by way of revenge, decided to charge much higher rates of interest from those who joined the Congress. He would ruin them by attaching their farms for non-payment of his debt.

In order to break up the movement he needed some powerful supporter in the village. In the city, he had *Swami,* but so far he had none in the village. He thought long and deep, and finally decided that Waterfall Venkamma would serve his purpose best. She had a daughter, Ranga, of marriageable age, and he would earn her gratitude by arranging the marriage of Ranga with Advocate Seenappa who had just lost his wife. No doubt, he had three children and was over thirty years of age. But all this did not matter, for he was rich and Ranga would have all possible comforts in his home.

Waterfall Venkamma was tempted by the offer and the marriage was soon arranged. The womenfolk of the village were delighted, for Venkamma promised that there would be feasting and merry-making for a week, even for ten days. They would wear their best sarees and it would be great fun. But when the marriage procession came they were disappointed, for the bridegroom was a middle-aged man, with fallen teeth and a big twisted moustache. But all this was soon forgotten in the feasting and merry-making that marked the occasion, and the ornaments and sarees that were brought for the bride. Ranga was really lucky to have married so well. It is to be noted that the marriage of Ranga described so vividly and at such length, in no way contributes to the action of the novel. But a whole chapter has been devoted to it.

22.10 MOORTHY'S ARREST

The chapter opens with a long passage describing the month of *Kartik*, the month of lights, the month when gods walk the streets of the village, and

lights are lit so that the people may see the gods passing by. It is one of the finest passages of poetic prose in the novel, and brings out fully Raja Rao's command over the English language:

> *Kartik* has come to Kanthapura, sisters—Kartik has come with the glow of lights and the unpressed footsteps of the wandering gods; white lights from clay-trays and red lights from copper-stands, and diamond lights that glow from the bowers of entrance-leaves; lights that glow from banana-trunks and mango twigs, yellow light behind white leaves, and green lights behind yellow leaves, and white light behind green leaves; and night curls through the shadowed streets, and hissing over bellied boulders and hurrying through dallying drains, night curls through the Brahmin Street and the Pariah Street and the Potters' Street and the Weavers' Street and flapping through the mango grove, hangs clawed for one moment to the giant pipal, and then shooting across the broken fields, dies quietly into the river—and gods walk by lighted streets, blue gods and quiet gods and bright-eyed gods, and even as they walk in transparent flesh the dust gently sinks back to the earth, and many a child in Kanthapura sits late into the night to see the crown of this god and that god, and how many a god has a chariot with steeds white as foam and queens so bright that the eyes shut themselves in fear lest they be blinded.

One night in the month of *Kartik* when it was so late that the Kartik lights had gone out, but when the day had not yet dawned, there was great commotion in Kannayya House. They thought that old Ramakrishnayya must have passed away that Kartik-night. However, it was soon discovered that the police had come to arrest Moorthy. The police inspector, Bade Khan, and a number of policemen were seen standing around Moorthy in Moorthy's

room. Books, papers, charkhas and bundles of cotton were lying about in great disorder, and Moorthy's room was being searched. The Inspector was questioning Moorthy and writing something in a notebook.

Soon there was a large crowd. The Inspector then asked Bade Khan to bind Moorthy, and as they loosened their ropes to bind Moorthy, Rachanna came forward and asked them not to bind their master. When the policemen threatened to beat him, he shouted *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai,* and the cry was taken by the crowd and repeated several times. At this a policeman used his lathi on Rachanna and the other policemen also came forward and used their lathis to disperse the crowd. Rachanna again shouts *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai,* and the Inspector orders that he should also be arrested. Lathis are freely used on the crowd but the slogan-shouting continues. Then Moorthy addresses the crowd and advises them to remain peaceful and praises the Mahatma. As soon as he says, *"the Mahatma has often gone to jail, the Mahatma has often gone to lair,"* the Inspector slaps him on the face. This enrages the crowd and the police is attacked. The result is that orders for a lathi charge are given, and men, women and children are mercilessly beaten. Women are roughly handled and dishonoured. In all, seventeen others besides Moorthy are arrested and taken away to the Santur Police Station. The others are given a sound beating and released the other day, but Moorthy is taken to Karwar. The people are stunned; they pray to God to help Moorthy.

A number of Advocates meet Moorthy in the lock-up and are eager to defend him in the law-court. A defence committee is formed and a sufficiently large amount is collected to meet the expenses. But Moorthy does not like all this. He knew that it is the Redmen's court and justice will not be done to him. Moorthy refuses all help. Truth is on his side and Truth needs no advocate. The Mahatma has taught him that Truth is God, and he wants none to come between him and God. Advocate Sankar, who is the Secretary of the Karwar Congress Committee, alone appreciates Moorthy's stand, and on his suggestion Moorthy agrees to meetings being held for him.

So the Congress volunteers set to work. They go from Bazar to Bazar, telling the people that there would be a public meeting that evening in the Gandhi Maidan. A large meeting is thus organised and the atmosphere echoes with shouts of *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.* A number of speeches are delivered about the noble qualities of Moorthy, about Hindu-Muslim unity and the untouchables. An old man comes and talks against the pollution of religion and the corruption of castes and of the great Hindu tradition. He is soon exposed as an agent of the Swami who himself is an agent of the Red government and had been rewarded for his services with 20 acres of wet land. Advocate Ranganna who is the last to speak tells the people, "Choose between a saint like Mahatma Gandhi who has given up land and lust and honours and comfort and has dedicated his life to the country, and these fattened brahmins who want to frighten us with their ex-communications, once the Government has paid them well." At this the Police Inspector came and put him under arrest.

Immediately afterwards a procession is taken out and there are repeated shouts of *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.* The police is already waiting near the Imperial Bank, and as the procession reaches there it is violently dispersed. The people in Kanthapura come to know of all these happenings from the newspaper of Rangamma.They now realise that Bhatta also, whom they respected so much, was a government agent. That was why he was nowhere to be seen on the night of Moorthy's arrest. He was seen more and more in the company of Bade Khan. And he leaves for Kashi after the harvest.

Week after week passes and the people of Kanthapura eagerly follow all the details of the events taking place in Karwar. Their Moorthy, their master, was there in jail, and they could not rest in peace. Sometimes, young men like Seenu and Vasudev would go to Karwar and tell them all they had heard about Moorthy and his case. Rangamma became very impatient with this waiting. Finally, she and Nanjamma went down to Karwar themselves. Rangamma stayed during the harvest and only returned

for the corn distribution. When she came back, she told us how it was. 'The police says it was Moorthy who arranged the attack. The attack of the Pariahs on the police.' The case was a clear one and nothing at all could be done. They all prayed to Kenchamma to deliver Moorthy to them soon. They promised many offerings if he was freed. But when Range Gowda was dismissed from his Patelship they prayed, 'Oh goddess, destroy this government.'

Rangamma went back to Karwar after the corn distribution. This time she stayed with Advocate Sankar, who was also the Secretary of the Kanvar Congress Committee, so that she may help him in the correspondence and other work of the Congress. In a long digression, running over several pages, we are given an elaborate account of the life, career and character of Sankar, an account which in no way furthers the action of the novel. It serves to build up the character of Sankar as a saintly lawyer who does not undertake false cases, and is, therefore, highly respected in Karwar. He was a fanatic, in asmuch as he would not go to a marriage, if everyone there did not wear khadi. He organised a number of meetings, and in one of them Rangamma also delivered a short speech, about Moorthy. Rangamma returned to the village for the Magli Cattle fair. Two days later they heard that the Red-men's judges had sentenced Moorthy to three months rigorous imprisonment. That day they were all sad, and silent, and they all fasted.

Moorthy's imprisonment was a great tragedy. There was the death of old Rama Krishnayya who slipped and fell and died in the night. His body was cremated the next morning on the banks of the river. Suddenly the river swelled and the ashes were carried away by the water. So, Rangarnma could not carry them to Kashi as she intended.

22.11 THE WOMEN'S VOLUNTEER CORPS

Rama Krishnayya was dead, and now the problem was who would explain to the people the Vedantic Texts and discuss philosophy with them. The problem was solved by Rangamma's offering to discuss and comment

on them. The suggestion was welcomed by all, and they were all surprised to find that Rangamma could discuss philosophy so well. She seemed to have grown quite learned as a result of her stay in the city. Advocate Sankar must have taught her. She seemed also to have grown much stronger. When asked about the secret of her strength, she explained that she had practiced Yoga under the guidance of her Guru Sadhu Narayan, and this has made her spiritually stronger. The women-folk were eager to practice Yoga, and Rangamma began to give them lessons.

It was also under her inspiration that they agreed to form a Women's Volunteer Corps or *Sevika Sangha* as it was called. She inspired them to become Sevikas by telling them stories of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi who fought the British so heroically, of the Rajput ladies who burnt themselves on the pyre rather than surrender to the enemy, and of Annie Beasant, Kamla Devi, and Sarojini Naidu. The result was they started taking regular training in the courtyard of Rangamma's house. Rangamma taught them not to neglect their household duties, and to remain absolutely non-violent if the police were ever to fall on them and beat them. Lathis and blows can affect only the body, but never the soul. She told them, 'Well, we shall fight the police for Kenchamma's sake, and if the rapture of devotion is in you, the lathi will grow as soft as butter and as supple as a silken thread, and you will hymn out the name of the Mahatma.' And we all grow dumb and mutter 'Yes, sister, yes.'

Seenu and Vasudev wanted to organise a similar volunteer corps for men, but the boys refused to come forward. They were feeling weak since Moorthy's arrest. They did not want to disturb the peace and quiet of their lives by becoming volunteers. They were afraid of the police, and that they, too, would be arrested and sent to jail. Therefore, instead of forming the men's volunteer corps, it was decided to begin bhajans in the temple. So the conch was once again sounded and all thronged to the temple. It was once again, as it used to be, when Moorthy was with them.'

22.12 MOORTHY'S RETURN

It was the month of *Vaisakh* when the rains come and people in Kanthapura plough the fields and sow the crops. We get a long poetic description of the coming of rains, the description is a fine piece of poetic prose bearing witness to Raja Rao's command over the resources of the English language:

> The rains have come, the fine, fast- footing rains that skip over the bronze mountains, tiptoe the crags, and leaping into the valleys, go splashing and wind-swung, a winnowed pour, and the coconuts and the betel-nuts and the cardamom plants choke with it and hiss back. And there, there it comes over the Bebbur Hill and the Kanthur Hill and begins to paw upon the tiles, and the cattle come running home, their ears stretched back, and the drover lurches behind some bel-tree or pipal-tree, and people leave their rooms and rush to the courtyard, and turning towards the Kenchamma Temple, send forth a prayer, saying, 'There, there, the rains have come, Kenchamma; may our houses be white as silver,' and the lightning flashes and the thunder stirs the tiles, and children rush to the gutterslabs to sail paper boats down to Kashi.

The people must plough the fields and sow the crop. But they must begin on the auspicious day and time, and the due ceremonies must be performed, and prayers offered to goddess Kenchamma. So the priest Rangappa is consulted and the most auspicious day is determined. They assemble in the temple, coconuts are broken, the goddess is garlanded, the bulls are whitewashed and garlanded and so all is ready for the ploughing of fields. Though Range Gowda is no longer the Patel, to the villagers he was still very much the Patel, and this year, too, he leads the ceremonies as in the past.

The time for Moorthy's release is near, and they want to give a grand welcome on his return to Kanthapura. When the sowing is on they read in Rangamma's blue paper that Moorthy has been released and that he would return on Tuesday evening by bus. There is great joy and enthusiasm. It is decided to set up a yellow arch of banana trunks and green mango leaves on Karwar Road, and welcome Moorthy there. But Waterfall Venkamma did not want that Moorthy should be given a hero's welcome. In order to spoil the welcome, she consults the temple priest, and fixes up the marriage of his daughter Nanja for that very evening. All from the Brahmin quarter are invited to the marriage feast, and it is upto them to choose between the marriage gaiety and the feast: " the feast for a polluted pig." That is why there are so few Brahmins in the pandal to welcome Moorthy. People from the weavers' quarter, the Potters quarter and the Pariah quarter come in large numbers. Rangamma and Ratna and few other Brahmins, both men and women, are also there. They wait and wait for Moorthy. At every hoot and screech, they jump up thinking that it is Moorthy's bus. Time passes, but Moorthy does not come. The atmosphere is tense with suspense and anxiety and the suspense of the waiting people is skilfully conveyed:

> and hearts began to beat, and yet we saw no Moorthy, and yet no Moorthy, and yet no Moorthy and yet not a hair of his head was seen, and we were silent as though in the sanctum at the camphor ceremony. Yet no Moorthy, and no Moorthy, and the bus had surely passed by the river, over the bridge and up the Santur valley, and Rangamma got so anxious that she sent Pariah Lingayya to run and see, and Pariah Lingayya ran and ran, and from the top of the road cried out, 'No no', and we all looked to this side and that and no Moorthy and no Seenu either was to be seen, and our hearts began to beat like drums, and Ratna said, 'I'll see if he's come by the mango grove,' and Ratna ran like a boy, and behind her ran young Chenna, and Chenna was followed by Cowherd Sidda.

The fact was that Moorthy had been brought by another route, and he was already in Rangamma's room. Soon they were informed of his arrival. They rushed to the house and found that the police had formed a cordon round it. All at once they shouted *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and *Vande Mataram,* and the shout is constantly repeated. At last they are advised by the Police Inspector to disperse quietly and not to create trouble. When Rangamma also advises them to do so, they return quietly to their homes. Thus Moorthy returns home. The police left Kanthapura late in the night. But they left behind a young Bade Khan. He also stayed at the Skeffington Coffee Estate to keep company with the older Bade Khan.

22.13 DON'T TOUCH THE GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN

It was Moorthy who told the people of Kanthapura, that soon the call for action would come from the Karwar Congress and they would have to begin their "Don't touch the Government campaign." For the Mahatma was already on a pilgrimage to Dandi beach with a small group of followers. He would prepare salt there, and thus break the salt law. They would fast and pray, pray and fast till the call for action came.

Day after day messengers came from Karwar, and Moorthy kept them informed of the course of events. The Mahatma was moving and at every village he was given a hero's welcome and more and more people were following him. Hundred and seventy Patels had resigned their jobs. Moorthy asks the people of Kanthapura to swear (a) to speak the truth (b) to spin their hundred yards of yarn every-day (c) not to practise untouchability, but to have absolute faith in the oneness of all, and (d) to have love in their hearts for all, and hatred for none. In this way they should prepare themselves for action, for their fight, for their, "Don't Touch the Government Campaign."

Then the news came that the Mahatma had reached Dandi, had prepared a handful of salt and carried it home; thereafter people prepared cartloads of salt and carried it away. The result was that the government was compelled to take action. Gandhi was arrested, and along with him thousands of others were

sent to jail. The news created great excitement and people were eager for action. Moorthy often talked to them, and prepared them to face police lathis and repression in a disciplined non-violent manner. They would have to wait till the call for action came from Karwar. May be he was arrested, then they should follow the man who becomes their leader after his arrest, and the next one after him, and so on. In this way in Kanthapura, as also in every other town and village of India, preparations were made for the great non-violent fight that lay ahead, before India could be free.The entire atmosphere is tense with excitement. The narrative art of Raja Rao is so powerful that the readers see and feel all that happens and as the entire drama of the freedom struggle is re-enacted, the emotional involvement of readers is complete.

22.14 PICKETING AT BORANNA'S TODDY GROVE

At last the call for action comes. The taxes were not to be paid. A parallel Goverment was established, and Range Gowda was appointed as the Patel, the people's Patel. If the Patel appointed by the government came, he was not to be recognised and no taxes were to be paid to him, even if their lands were attached. And then after a few days they must begin "Don't touch the Government Campaign." They must picket Boranna's Toddy Grove, for Toddy is an evil, a means of corrupting and exploiting the people. However, before the campaign begins they must purify themselves of all evil within them. They will not be soldier-at-arms but soldier-saints. Moorthy addressed the people and asked :

> You are all with us ?' and we cry out, "All All" and 'You shall harm no one ? "None None"—`You shall go to the end fearlessly ?'— 'All All'— 'And there shall be neither Brahmin nor pariah ?' and the pariahs shout out, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and an uncontrollable emotion takes hold of us all, and Moorthy says, 'The Panchayat has decided that it shall be on Friday, the seventeenth, that we shall begin the fight,' and Pandit Venkaeshia says, 'Few days could be more auspicious,'

> and we say, 'So only three days more,' and Moorthy says, 'Till then pray, purify yourselves and pray, 'and we all cry out' "Narayan Narayan

In this way the people were prepared psychologically not in Kanthapura alone, but in every nook and corner of India. On the appointed day, i.e., Friday, men, women and children, one hundred and thirty-nine people in all, begin their march to Boranna's Toddy Grove. As they near the Grove, they could see the policemen on all sides. Soon, the Police Inspector came upto them and warned them that they were forbidden to march to the Grove. It was against the law. Moorthy told him that he knew it, but he was following the instructions of the Congress, and he would continue to do so till death. They continue to move on, and as they reach the grove, a large number of carts come up, and the cartmen join them.

Moorthy and Range Gowda open the gates of the grove and suddenly Rachanna slips in shouting 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' climbing a toddy tree. The police rush at him and bang lathis on his legs. Amidst shouts of `Vande Mataram' and 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai,' more and more people enter the grove and climb the trees. The police rain blows after blows but to no avail. Twigs are broken and branches cut. Even women and children bear the blows bravely. The novelist gives a graphic account of those tense moments in his usual inimitable rhythmic prose.

> and we rush and we crawl, and swaying and bending and crouching and rising, we move on and on, and the lathis rain on us, and the cart men have come back again and they feel so angry that they, too, cry out *'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai'* and they, too, rush behind us and we feel a new force in us and we say we shall enter the toddy grove and tear out at least a toddy branch and break at least a toddy-pot. And there are shrieks and shouts and cries and sobs, and the more we are beaten the more we get used to it and we say,

> ‘After all it is not bad after all it is not so bad’, and our bangles break and our saris tear and yet we huddle and move on.

Policemen try to pull down the people who have climbed the trees. They slip down amidst loud laughter, and their discomfiture provides dramatic relief. At last they are arrested, and carried in waiting lorries to the Santur Police Station. Rachanna, Lingayya and Siddayya are sent to the lock up, and others are taken away in three different directions in lorries and left at distant places to walk back on foot to Kanthapura. It is a dark night and their way lies through a dangerous forest. But they continue to march back with hearts palpitating with fear. Then they come across some cartmen who give them a free lift. They reach Kanthapura where Rangamma’s cousin Subbayya gives them a hero’s welcome and entertains them with milk and food. Then they are escorted to Kanthapura like victorious heroes returning from a war:

And they gave us new carts, and beadles walked in front of us, lanterns in their hands, and before them walked Iron-shop Imam Khan, gun in hand and fire in his eyes, and our carts clattered and creaked through the dense, drowning night, by the Gold-mine Hill and Siva’s Gorge and up the Menu Crag and down again to the valleys of the Himavathy, where lies Kanthapura curled like a child on its mother’s lap.

The next morning they plant their trophies before the temple gate. They were five twigs of toddy trees and a toddy-pot.

22.15 SATYAGRAHA AT THE TODDY-BOOTH

Tuesday was the market-day in Kanthapura, and on this day the coolies were brought in large numbers to drink at Boranna’s toddy booth near the gate of the Skeffington Coffee Estate. So, this day was selected for offering Satyagraha in front of the Toddy Booth, the purpose being to prevent the coolies from drinking. Such were the instructions from the Karwar Congress, and Moorthy was to carry them out, so quite early in the

morning the Satyagrahis, seventy-seven in all, finished their work quite early, and assembled in the temple. After the performance of due ceremonies, they began their march to the toddy booth. As they reached the fair, a large crowd followed them, and there were occasional shouts of *Vande Mataram* and *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.* Moorthy was at the head with Ratna and Rangamma at his sides. Soon drops of rain began to fall at them and they said God was showering his blessings on them.

Soon they were outside the Skeffington Estate Gate, and close to the Toddy Booth. The police was already there in large numbers. The coolies were driven out of the Estate towards the booth by the foreman *(maistri).* They came moving in a line with their heads bowed down. Moorthy instructed the satyagrahis to squat before the toddy booth, and in this way to prevent the coolies from entering in. Soon it began to rain in torrents, and with the rain also came the shower of lathis and blows. The policemen were beating the coolies who had refused to walk over the satyagrahis. Then Boranna started shouting from the toddy booth that he would give the Brahmins a toddy offering free of cost and the crowd shouted back calling him a scorpion and a snake. The Police Inspector became furious and drove the crowd back with his cane. We wondered what would happen next because the police were still driving the coolies down towards us till they were pushing themselves over us :

> Rangamma suddenly shouted, *Vande Mataram,* Lie down, brothers and sisters', and we all lay down. The coolies tried to stumble over us but we lay so close to each other that there wasn't an inch of spare ground. They couldn't move, and we held on to their hands and to their feet, and their dhotis and sarees. The rain poured on. The police became nervous and they kicked our oacks and our stomachs. The crowd yelled, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai, Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.* People banged kerosene tins, others rang bells. Some of the crowd ran towards us and lay down beside us. The

> Police Inspector rushed at the coolies and whipped them and pushed them and the other policemen caught hold of our hair and tried to pull us up. When Rangamma was pulled up, the Police Inspector gave her such a kick that she fainted. Moorthy shouted, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and such a blow gagged his mouth that he didn't speak again. There was a lot of noise and at that the Police Inspector gave the order to the crowd to disperse. So the police charged the crowd. We heard screaming and crying and tents crashing down and vessels, bells and benches rolling.While this was going on, we begged the coolies not to drink and some said, 'By Kenchamma's grace, we will not.' When the policemen saw this they became angry, left the market people and came back to us. They got pots and pans, filled them with water from the gutters and poured it on us. They lifted our sarees and poured water on our bodies, and they beat us. With all the beating we fell, one by one, on to the ground.

When the Satyagrahis came to their senses, they found themselves in a lorry. They were now only sixty-seven, for the remaining ten had been arrested and taken to jail. But they did not arrest Moorthy, and he was still with them. The next morning, they found that the Pariah street was full of new huts and new faces. This was so because three and thirty or even more coolies of the Skeffington Coffee Estate had come to live with them. And they all said, "The army of the Mahatma is an increasing garland."

The success of the Satyagraha at Boranna's Toddy Booth encouraged people in the neighbouring villages to offer satyagraha at a number of other toddy booths, which were forced to close down one after another. In this way twenty-six booths were closed in the vicinity of Kanthapura. The fame of Moorthy spread, people came in large numbers to have his darshan and they said Kanthapura was lucky to have such a great man living in it.

The account of the Satyagraha shows Raja Rao at his most inspired. The lathi-charges, the beatings, the slogan shouting, the thrills and sensations, of those stirring days have been fully captured and vividly narrated. And the entire drama of the historic times, when the Mahatma with his charisma brought a dead nation to life is brought to life once again.

22.16 GOVERNMENT REPRESSION

Those who were arrested during the Satyagraha at Boronna's Toddy Booth are released on the expiry of their term. On their return from jail, they are given a hero's welcome. They relate harrowing tales of the beatings and tortures to which they were subjected in the prison. Satharam, for example, narrates how he was yoked like a bull and made to plough the field. He was whipped and made to work for long hours, even though he ran high temperature.

Not only were the freedom-fighters tortured in jails, but government repression was also intensified on the people of Kanthapura. A new Patel was appointed, and people were ordered to pay the revenue to him. Only a few paid their dues to him, the others refused to do so. Moorthy frankly warned them that soon they would come to attach their property, but if they remained firm they were sure to win. They dug the earth and buried their jewellery and other valuables. In this way, they prepared themselves for the coming events.

One heavy morning they discovered that all the roads and lanes leading to Kanthapura had been barricaded. Stone upon stones were piled on them and tree upon tree was laid beside them, and canal-banks were dug and water let through, and thorns were laid—where cactuses grew and earth poured over it all, and one, two, three, four, five, six policemen stood behind them, bayonets and bugles in their hands, and for the chief they had a tall white man. The Government action had begun.

In the afternoon there was much beating of drums. The new beadle announced that if the revenue was not paid according to law, every man

woman and child in Kanthapura would have to pay a punitive tax of one rupee and three paise. The government was determined to rule the country and those who created trouble would be sent to jail. During the night, Moorthy Rangamma and Ratna went from door to door telling the people that the fight had begun and if any policeman entered the house they should ring the temple bell and at once they would come to their help. The entire atmosphere was tense, as the people waited through the night for the birth of events.

The next morning as they were sweeping the street-fronts they saw a long procession. It had an armed soldier at the head and another at the rear. In the middle, with one policeman to every two men, were the coolies who had left the Skeffington Estate to live in Kanthapura. They were being marched back to the Estate because the Sahib wanted them. They found out then that while they were all sound asleep the police had come and taken Moorthy and Rangamma away. Rangamma's house was locked up and guarded and no one could enter it. Many men had been taken away that night and their women tied up and gagged.

The whole village was full of policemen. The Pariah women and their children flowed into streets and stoned the policemen. In reaction , they picked a little boy up by his leg, turned him upside down and beat him so violently that when they threw the child down on the grass only blood and sobs came from his mouth. When the policemen saw the women watching, they chased them, threw stones at them and whipped and kicked them. One policeman got hold of Puttamma and they heard her shout, 'Ayoo, Ayoo.' Before they knew it the policeman was on her. They rushed to find help for her, but none could be found. Where were their men ? Setharam rushed to her neighbour and the house was full of policemen. They caught her too but she shrieked, tore herself free, and rushed to find a hiding-place.

When Ratna was up and washed, she said, 'Now sisters, this is no safe place to hide. Let's go to the temple.' They were just going out through the bathroom when Ratna shouted, 'Fire, fire, Bhatta's house is on fire.

They knew the Pariah women must have set it alight. They could hear the heavy thumps of the elephant moving up the street and the shrieking of the Pariah women and their children. As they ran and then crawled at the back of the temple, they heard a terrific crash as Bhatta's verandah roof smashed to the ground. At last they were in the safety of the temple. There were more crashes from Bhatta's house, and the fire rose higher and higher as the rice granary caught the fire.

One of the women, Vedamma, had high fever and she trembled and moaned. Ratna decided to go out and bring blankets for her. But hardly had she crossed the temple, when a policeman saw her and ran after her. Ratna at once rushed in and closed the temple door and put in the bar, so that it may not be opened. The policemen beat and beat against the door for long but could not break in. Then they decided to seal it up so that none may go out. The result was that by the afternoon they were all hungry and thirsty. They waited eagerly for sounds of people coming to their help, but they could hear only the sound of soldiers' boots, keeping watch outside the door. They 'lighted the sacred fire and recited bhajans so that the people may know that they were prisoners in the temple and come to their rescue, but none came. In order to pass the time as well as to encourage them, Ratna told them stories of the women of Bombay and of other big cities, and how bravely they were fighting the Red-men, shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk. They listened to the stories, dosed and snored, and sang bhajans, and in this way the night passed.

With day break, Rachanna's wife Rachi came and opened the door. She had heard their moaning and groaning through the night, and taking the key from the Patel's house had come to release them. They hurried back to their homes; the streets were deserted and the police had left. They found that Puttamma was ill and wailing. They also discovered that all their men folk had not been taken away by the police. Many of them had hidden themselves in the dense jungle bushes on the outskirts of the village and had watched from there all through the night. That was how Pariah Siddayya could come to the

help of Puttamma when the policemen tried to dishonour her. It was a great comfort to them, and now they could sleep soundly.

22.17 THE MARCH OUT OF KANTHAPURA

Three days passed before any event worth-mentioning took place. During this time they rested, put their houses in order, and took up the old routine.

Then on Saturday, they saw a number of cars coming up the Bebbur Mound, and a number of men in European clothes came out of them. These cars were closed cars. They were followed by open cars, bringing people looking like coolies. They knew that they were the city-coolies, and that their fields were soon to be auctioned. Soon there was beating of drums and the drummer announced that those who did not pay the taxes would be regarded as rebels, and their fields would be auctioned. A number of fields were named. The women were terrified. Satamma even denounced Moorthy and the Mahatma for bringing all that misery upon them. However, they pacified her and took her with them to Ratna to consult her, for she was the chief, their leader, since Moorthy had been arrested and was no longer with them. She lived in Sami's house for Rangamma's house had been sealed by the Government.

They met Ratna in Sami's house. A number of other women were already there. Ratna told them not to worry, for a number of city-boys would soon come to their help. One of the volunteers was already there and he said :

> Sisters, there is nothing to be frightened about. We knew the Government would auction the lands today, and our men are going to come from the city, hundreds and hundreds of men are going to come from the city, for we have decided to hold a Satyanarayana Puja, and it will be held in this house, and our men will escape from all the policemen the Government can send and all the soldiers the Government can send, and yet men will come from the city, and they will come for the Satyanarayana Puja and no land will ever be sold, for the Government is afraid of us", and Nan jamma says, 'No, no'.

But the volunteer goes on, "Yes, sister, yes, the Government is afraid of us, for in Karwar the courts are closed and the banks closed and the Collector never goes out, and there are policemen at his door and at his gate and beneath his bedroom window, and every white man in Karwar has a policeman beside him, and shops are closed and bonfires lit, and khadi is the only thing that is sold, while processions and songs and flag-salutations go through the streets, picketings and prabhat pheris, and police will beat and the soldiers open fire, and millions and millions of our brothers and sisters be thrown into prison, and yet go and ask them, who is our King ?" They will say, "Congres Congress, Congress and the Mahatma," and hand in hand they go, shouting *Victory, victory to the Mahatma* and millions and millions of our brothers and sisters have gone to prison, and when the father comes back, the son is taken, and when the daughter is arrested, the mother comes out of prison; and yet there is but one law our people will obey, it is the law of the Congress. Listen, the Government is afraid of us. There is big city in the north called Peshawar, and there the Government has always thousands and thousands of military men, and our brothers, the Mohammedans, one and all have conquered the city, and no white man will ever come into it. And they have conquered, sisters, without a gun-shot, for they all are Satyagrahis and disciples of the Mahatma. They bared their breasts and marched towards the machine-guns, ten thousand in all, and bullets went through them, and a hundred and twenty- five were shot through and through, and yet they went up and conquered the city. And when our soldiers were sent to shoot them, they would not shoot them. For after all, sisters, these soldiers, too, are

> Indians, and men like us, and they, too, have wives and children and stomachs to fill as we.

It was in this way that the people were inspired and encouraged, and it is in this way that the novelist gives us an idea of the impact of the Gandhian movement during the late twenties. The people were growing fearless, theirs was a non-violent struggle, and the greater was the government repression the stronger was the resistance of the people. The suffering of the people was having its impact on the Indian Sahibs, touching their hearts, and making them disobey the goverment and give up their jobs.

It was decided that there would be *Satyanarayana Puja,* the god would be taken out in a procession, and under the cover of this procession they would go out of Kanthapura. There were policemen and white officers around and for the success of their plan, great secrecy was necessary. So they pulled two carts across the front of Sami's courtyard, so no one could see what they were doing. As they were preparing for the procession people came to tell them that more bus loads of people were arriving for the auction. As dusk fell, big strong gas-lights were lit and carried to the fields. The coolies who had been brought from the city, set to work, cutting the rice growing on the fields. Their rice was being taken and their fields were being occupied by strangers.

All was ready. Ratna blew the conch. They shouted *Satyanarayan Maharaj ki jai.* They lit the camphor, and broke the coconuts and the procession started. As they walked they sang and clapped their hands. From the village gate, lines of policemen, with their lathis raised, started walking towards them. When they saw it was a religious procession, they stopped. Every few hundred steps Ratna stopped and blew the conch three times. The camphors were relit and more coconuts were broken. *Satyanarayan Maharaj ki jai* rose in the night air. The Inspector stopped the procession and asked Ratna, 'Where are you going ? Where the gods will,' she replied and marched on. But now the cry, *Vande Mataram, Mataram Vande* rose in their throats and from the

darkness the reply, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai came* from the dense jungle bushes where their men were hiding. The police were furious. They rushed at them but their men and all the other men who had come to help, the city boys, the volunteers, Mohammedans, peasants, all swarmed around them. It was they who received the lathi blows. Some of them cried, *Inquilab Zindabad ! Inquilab Zindabad.* They moved on towards the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

They kept marching towards the Skeffington Coffee Estate. They saw some shapes moving about on Bebbur Mound, and guessed they must be soldiers. The city boys kept up their spirits by telling them of what was happening in Peshawar and other cities of India, and how the police had refused to carry out the orders of the government.

As they shouted *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and *Inquilab Zindabad,* the police showered lathi blows on them, so that the procession throne and the god and the flowers fell down. Then someone suddenly hoisted the tri-colour flag from the top of a pipal tree, and sang out loudly :

Lift the flag high,
O, Lift the flag high,
Brothers, sisters, friends and mothers, This is the flag of the Revolution,

and the police rushed at him, and he slipped in here and he slipped out there and the boys took the flag, and the flag fluttered and leapt from hand to hand, and with it the song is clapped out:

O lift the flag high,
Lift it high like in 2657 again,
And the Lakshmi ofJhansi,
And the Moghul of Delhi,
Will be ours again.

and there is a long cry, 'Down the hedge, here,' and they rush down the Aloe lane, and the police find they are too few, and they begin to throw

stones at the crowd and the crowd gets angry, but the boys shut them up and sing:

O fire, O soul,
Give us the spark of God-eternal,
That friend to friend and friend to foe,
One shall stand before HIM.

Through a gap in the hedge they see their fields lying below and the city coolies reaping the harvest by gas-light. They run down the lane and the field bunds and reach the canal. With terror in their hearts, they wade through the canal, when suddenly on the opposite bank they see a large number of soldiers with bayonets in their hands. They turn round with shrieks and cry of fear, and jump into the harvest to hide themselves. It is now that the first shot is fired. However, it is fired into the air as a warning and no one is hurt. The terror-striken crowd rushed this way and that way, and an idea of the fear that had gripped their hearts is given by the novelist in his usual picturesque style :

we all groaned and shrieked and sobbed, and we rushed this side to the canal-bund and that side to the coconut-garden, and this side to the sugar-cane field and that side to the Bel-field bund, and we fell and we rose, and we crouched and we rose, and we ducked beneath the rice harvests and we rose, and we fell over stones and we rose again, over field-bunds and canal-bunds and garden-bunds did we rush, and the children held to our saris and some held to our breasts and the night-blind held to our hands; and we could hear the splash of the canal water and the trundling of the gun-carts, and from behind a tree or stone or bund, we could see before us, there, beneath the Bebbur Mound, the white city boys grouped like a plantain grove, and women round them and behind them, and the flag still flying over them.

In this way the novelist conveys to us an idea of the poignancy of those stirring times when the soul of an oppressed nation was fired by the call of the Mahatma, and thousands sacrificed themselves for the sake of the motherland.

The soldiers were enraged by the repeated shouts of *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai,* and they were ordered to disperse, or there would be firing. On their refusing to do so, a shower of bullets is fired. This time also it is false firing and nobody gets hurt. They keep on moving. There is a veritable moving round of them from the Bebbur field to the canal field. They run into the Bhatta's sugar-cane fields, and under cover of sugar-canes continue moving towards the coolies who are still reaping the harvest. The nearer they reach the coolies the louder they shout, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai* and *Inquilab Zindabad.* Suddenly they see crowds of people moving in the Skeffington Coffee Estate, and soon the Congress flag is hoisted, and their shouts are returned by them. They are the coolies of the Skeffington Coffee Estate. They throw down the barricades and loudly shout out, "*Vande Mataram*" etc. The city-coolies look at them and at once stop work. The lights are all put out. The Skeffington coolies continue to march towards them shouting slogans. They are ordered by a white officer on horse back to stop. On their refusal to do so shots after shots are fired and cries, groans and lamentations resound in the air. They run forward, and the police can stop them no more, and they jump over field-bounds and tumble against gas-lights and fall over rocks and sheafs, sickles, and scythes, three thousand men in all, and from the top of the Mound soldiers open fire.

Then there is a long silence, and then yells and moans and groans again. Then the women-folk go up behind the crowd, and the bullets scream through the air, "like flying snakes taken fire." One of them, Vedamma, is hurt in the leg, and there are more cries and lamentations. The Congress ambulance car is already there, and first aid is rendered on the spot, and the wounded are taken away. The courage and determination of the volunteers, the lamentations and groans of the wounded, their repeated shouts of *Vande Mataram,* move even the city-coolies in the fields, and they take up their shout, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.* In order to convey fully the patriotic spirit prevailing in those days of lathicharges and satyagrahas, the novelist describes the scene thus :

Then suddenly, from the Hirnavathy bend there is such a rush of more coolies that the soldiers do not know which way to run, for the city boys are still marching up, and women are behind them, and the crowd behind the women, and there are the coolies across the barricades; and there is such joy that a wild cry of *VandeMataram'* gushes from the valley to the mountain-tops and all the moon-lit sky above us. And the white man shouts a command and all the soldiers open fire and all the soldiers charge—they come rushing towards us, their turbans trembling and their bayonets shining under the bright moon, and our men lie flat on the fields, the city boys and the women, and the soldiers dash upon us and trample over us, and bang their rifle-butts against our heads. There are cries and shrieks and moans and groans, and men fly to the left and to the right, and they howl and they yell and they fall and they rise and we rise, too, to fly, but the soldiers have seen us, and one of them rushes toward us, and we are felled and twisted, we are felled and we are kicked, we are felled and the bayonets waved over our faces—and a long time passes before we wake and we find Satamma fainted beside us, and Radamma and I, who were soaking in a ditch, crawl past her. And then there, is a shot, and a fleeing man nearby is shot in the chest and he falls over us, and the moon splashes on his moustached face, his peasant-blanket soaked in blood, and he slowly lets down his head, crying 'Anima, mother Amm-Amm' and we wipe the saliva from his mouth, and we put out mouths to his ear and say, *Narayan, Narayan,* but he is already dead. There is no more charging now, but a continuous firing comes down from the Bebbur Mound. The moon still shines and, with it the winking lights of the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

The bloody-battle continued in the fields, but they, the women, reached the village-gate. There were gathered a large number of people, even, women and children. They saw line after line of wounded and bleeding people being carried on stretchers. Many of the people they knew, and their women were wailing and crying. Then Rachi, Rachanna's wife, could bear it no longer, and said that she would set fire to the village. She and some other Pariah women took off their saris and bodices, made a bonfire, and lighted one thatch after another. In this way, granaries, byres and houses were burnt. As the flames rise high, there are shots again, and the soldiers rush towards them. They run and run and dodge the soldiers. More and more men, women and children joined them, till there were thirty of them. They trudged towards the Maddur Mountains, and reached there in about an hour. The people of Maddur welcomed them, and gave them food and drink. Having rested a little while they moved on, for the police was after them. They reached the banks of the Cauvery, and soon crossed over to the state of Mysore on the other side. They were given a hero's welcome by the people. They were garlanded and hailed, the pilgrims of the Mahatma. It was the village of Kashipur, and they decided to settle there.

22.18 KASHIPUR

One year and two months pass-by, and the thirty refugees from Kanthapura were comfortably settled in their new houses. Their life was much the same as in Kanthapura. In the afternoon, they all gather in the Verandah, religious books are read and discussed, just as in Kanthapura. But they remember the past, and their hearts are sad, for many of their friends are missing. Some are in jail, and they wait for their release. Ratna had got only one year, and she was the first to come to them. She told them how they had been tortured in jail for refusing to salute the Union Jack. She also told them that the Mahatma had come to terms with the Viceroy, and the freedom struggle had been suspended. There was peace for the time being but things could never be as they were before, for they had suffered terribly, and lost their near and dear ones.

As a result of the pact with the Viceroy, Moorthy was also released from jail. Ratna received a letter from him, in which he told her of Jawaharlal Nehru, and how the youth all over the country followed him. They were sure Jawaharlal would change things, remove poverty, and make them all equals.This way, the novelist has given us an idea how Nehru was rising on the political scene of India, and already attracting the masses of India. He was with Gandhi, he also believed in non-violence, but also he had his individuality, and his own views. He was like Bharatha to the Mahatma.

Then Ratna left for Bombay. Despite some change in Moorthy's views, they were all for the Mahatma. Then they heard that the Mahatma was going to the Red-men's country, and they were sure he would bring Swaraj for them. Raja Rao's mythopoeic imagination is seen at work when he writes, "They say the Mahatma will go to the Red-men's country and he will get us Swaraj. He will bring us Swaraj, the Mahatma. And we shall all be happy. And Rama will come back from exile, and Sita will be with him, for Ravana will be slain and Sita freed, and he will come back with Sita on his right in a chariot of the air, and brother Bharatha will go to meet them with the worshipped sandal of the Master on his head. And as they enter Ayodhya there will be a rain of flowers."

It was only Patel Range Gowda who visited Kanthapura on his release from jail. He went to the village to dig out his jewels which he had buried there. He told them that everything was changed in the village. New houses had been built on the hills around for the city-coolies, but the village itself was in ruins. Even Bhatta had sold his house and gone away. Their own houses were all in ruins. Range Gowda had grown very lean and thin, so that it was even difficult to recognise him. He, too, settled in Kashipur and lived with them.

22.19 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS : MARK TRUE OR FALSE (CYP)

1. Kanthapura is a novel dealing with the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on a remote South Indian village of that name.
2. Gandhiji makes a personal appearance in the novel.
3. The story is narrated in flashback by Moorthy.

4. The colonial masters are nicknamed “Red-men.”

5. The climax of the novel is the great violence of chapter 26.

6. Kanthapura village has a small Kanthapurishwari’s temple.

7. Patel helps Bade Khan to find a house.

22.20 LET US SUM UP

Kanthapura is the first major Indian novel in English which was written by Raja Rao. The novel recounts the rise of the Gandhian nationalist movement in a small south Indian village of same name. This is Raja Rao’s well- known and acclaimed, work and primarily serves as a critique of the traditional Indian caste system. Kanthapura doesnot deal with the life of any individual hero. It is not only the story of Moorthy but of the masses of the village, of the suffering of their exile. It is the story of how Gandhi’s struggle for independence from the British came to the typical village of Kanthapura in South India. Raja Rao is very much influenced by Gandhian thoughts. The theme of the novel is the freedom struggle of India.

22.21 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

22.21.1 Write short notes on the following:

a. Skeffington Coffee Estate.

b. “Don’t touch the Government campaign.”

c. The Women’s Volunteer Corps.

d. Satyagraha at the Toddy-Booth .

e. Rao’s poetic prose .

22.21.2 Examination Oriented Questions

1. The exploitation of the coolies on Skeffington Coffee Estate is relevant to the theme of *Kanthapura*. Illustrate.

2. Discuss the role of the Coffee Estate workers in the Gandhian movement in *Kanthapura*.

3. Comment on Raja Rao's treatment of the freedom movement in *Kanthapura.*

4. "Raja Rao sees woman as *shakti* and the theme of *Shakti- worship* runs through the novel." Explain and elaborate.

5. Write a note on the depiction of women characters in *Kanthapura*.

6. Show that *Kanthapura* is a novel of India's political and social awakening.

7. "The many digressions make the novel formless." Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

22.22 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (SAQs)

1. T

2. F

3. F

4. T

5. T

6. T

7. F

22.23 SUGGESTED READING

Guzman, Richard R. "The Saint and the Sage: The Fiction of Raja Rao," in *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. LVI (Winter, 1980), pp. 32-50.

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MAJOR AND MINOR CHARACTERS IN *KANTHAPURA*

STRUCTURE

23.1 Introduction

23.2 Objectives

23.3 Characterization

- **23.3.1 Achakka**
- **23.3.2 Moorthy**
- **23.3.3 Bhatta**
- **23.3.4 Patel Range Gowda**
- **23.3.5 Belur Narahari Sastri**
- **23.3.6 Bade Khan**
- **23.3.7 Rangamma**
- **23.3.8 Kamalamma**
- **23.3.9 Ratna**
- **23.3.10 Sankar**
- **23.3.11 The white Owner of skeffinglon coffee Estate**
- **23.3.12 The Swami**
- **23.3.13 Waterfall Venkamma**
- **23.3.14 Narsamma**

23.4 Art of Characterization

23.4.1 Multiplicity of Characters

23.4.2 Anti Thetical Groupings

23.4.3 Enlivening Characters

23.4.4 Character Contrast

23.4.5 Women Characters

23.5 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

23.6 Let Us Sum Up

23.7 Short Answer Questions

23.8 Examination Oriented Questions

23.9 Answer Key (SAQs)

23.10 Suggested Reading

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Raja Rao possessed the gift of creating living characters. His characters are not mere symbols, they are creatures of flesh and blood, compounds of weaknesses and virtues. However, in *Kanthapura* the characters are not very sharply and distinctly individualized.

23.2 OBJECTIVES

- That the learner should be able to identify the major and minor characters in the novel.
- That the learner should be able to identify the role of the major and minor characters in the development of the story.
- That the learner should be able to explain how the various characters contribute to the theme of the novel.

23.3 CHARACTERIZATION

The numerous characters in this novel demonstrate the sense of community that unifies the plot and gives substance to the political and social

conflicts. There is a sense of teeming life, and because the larger question is not about an individual's fate but about a group destiny, Raja Rao's mode of characterization is impressionistic. Dialogue is kept to a minimum, and the focus encompasses both the masses in the background and certain salient figures in the foreground.

The female narrator is a medium for storytelling as well as a character in her own right, for she expresses her own radical nature and that of changing India. Though she tells the reader little directly of herself (she admits to owning seven acres of wet land and twelve of dry), it is clear from her mode of speaking that she is willing to accept fundamental social changes. Although she is respectful of Hindu tradition, she is not bound to old ways. She is caught up in all the turmoil, and her at times breathless narration expresses the excitement of the period as well as her own recognition of a movement that is leading to India's autonomy.

The conflict between acquiescence to time-honored tradition and resistance to old tyrannies is dramatically expressed in the two factions: the Gandhians and their foes. Moorthy is the prime representative of the modern Indian struggling with dignity for freedom. He is linked to Hindu traditions from the outset, for he is the youngest son of a pious mother and is called a "holy bull," implying that he is a specially marked character. So thoroughly Gandhian is he in his creed and practice that he scandalizes his own mother by his unconventional fraternization with the Pariahs, and he is willing to suffer rejection and violence in the name of his cause. Like his mentor, he exerts both a political and a spiritual force. Yet he eventually turns from Gandhi to Nehru in an abrupt recognition that saintliness is not necessarily synonymous with political wisdom.

Rao skillfully controls the focus of the novel by bringing forward subsidiary characters at particular moments when they can sharpen the conflicts. They are usually distinguished by a single facet of personality: Bhatta is known by his smiling, false charm; Rangamma by her eloquent disputatiousness; Patel Range Gowda by his ceremonious speech; and Dore by his scoffing manner.

Because the crux of the novel is a struggle for independence, there are the adversaries of Gandhi and hence, independence. Although these figures are not without their melodramatic evil, they are granted their moments of fair combat when they summon up all of their arguments against Moorthy. Such is the case with the old government man who appears at a nationalist gathering and presents his cunning rhetorical attack on the Gandhians.

Finally, then, *Kanthapura* achieves a sense of continuous agitation. Even when the government soldiers lay waste to the village, dispersing the men and slaughtering many of the women, there is no victory for the old political arrangement. The new spirit of India is on the move across the vast land, and the hearts of the survivors in Kanthapura beat like a drum, with the strength of hard-won freedom.

23.3.1 Achakka

Achakka is an open-minded Brahmin female narrator who recounts the rise of Gandhian resistance to British colonial rule. Weaving Kanthapura legends and Hindu myths into her story, she documents the wisdom and daily routines of village life while recalling her own conversion to Mohandas K. (Mahatma) Gandhi's philosophy. Although she is a grandmother who survives by subsistence farming, she seems ageless in her strength and charity. As Achakka becomes increasingly involved in the resistance, she studies Vedic texts and yoga with Rangamma and participates in boycotts of foreign cloth and in picketing against tobacco and liquor shops, during which she is beaten, along with other Gandhians. When her house, with much of Kanthapura, is burned, she goes to live in the nearby village of Kashipura.

23.3.2 Moorthy

Moorthy, a young Brahmin, the principal organizer of Gandhian resistance and the Congress Party in Kanthapura. Noble, quiet, generous, and deferent in manner, the smart and handsome deep-

voiced, the only son, drops out of the university to follow Gandhi and teach reading and writing to "untouchables." After experiencing a holy vision of the Mahatma (great soul), Moorthy distributes spinning wheels as a measure of resistance, as well as engaging in fasts and meditation. Ever admonishing Gandhians against hatred and violence, he is sorrowful but calm, and submissive but steadfast in his leadership of non-violent actions. Although beaten severely and imprisoned frequently, Moorthy remains loyal to Gandhian principles, despite becoming a supporter of the more pragmatic Jawaharlal Nehru in the nationalist movement. Moorthy, the Village Gandhi or Moorthy: A Prince and a Cow at the Same Time. Moorthy or Moorthappa is an educated young man of Kanthapura. It is he who organises the work of the Congress in the village, and hence, he is the central figure in the novel.

But he has nothing heroic about him, nor can he be called the hero of the novel. He is an ordinary young man, with common human weaknesses. He is one of those thousands of young men who were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi to give up their studies, risk the wrath of the government, and become fighters for the cause of their motherland. That he is considerate and respectful is obvious from the affectionate way in which he is referred to by the people of Kanthapura. He is called "corner-house" Moorthy, "our Moorthy," Moorthy who has gone through life "like a noble cow, quiet, generous, deferent, Brahminic, a very prince." He is considered to be honest like an elephant and is spoken of as "the saint of our village." He is the "small mountain," while Gandhi is the "big mountain." Throughout, he is shown as inspiring love and respect and winning the confidence of the village folk. It seems that the impact of Gandhi's personality has transformed him from a common village lad, into a young man capable of leadership, self-sacrifice and devotion which leadership entails. Of course, he has come into personal contact with Gandhi. Moorthy was in college when he felt the full force of Gandhi, and he walked out of it, a

Gandhi-man. However, the manner in which Moorthy walked out of the college is unique: he is said to have had not an actual, first-hand experience of Gandhi by personal contact,but a vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting and he himself pushing his way through the crowd and joining the band of volunteers and receiving inspiration by a touch of Gandhi's hand. And that very evening Moorthy went out alone and came back to college and walked out of it for good.

The novelist has endowed Moorthy with numerous good qualities of head and heart. He has extraordinary capacity for inspiring the people. On his return from the city he at once proceeds to organise the Gandhi work in the village. "The Gandhian struggle for independence had three strands –political, religious and social (including economic)—and all these strands meet in Moorthy." He works on all these three levels. Religion is the most potent force in *Kanthapura*, and so its action begins with religion. Even before there is any mention of Gandhi or Swaraj, there is tremendous religious activity. Starting from an invocation to "Kenchamma, goddess," till the end of the novel, religion seems to sustain the spirits of the people of Kanthapura. The action begins with the unearthing of a half sunken *linga* by Moorhy and its consecration. The boys of the village hold a grand feast to celebrate the occasion. And one thing leads to another. Soon they observed, Sankar Jayanti, Sankar Vijaya etc. When Moorthy throws out a hint that "somebody will offer a dinner for each day of the month," there is a spontaneous response from everyone: "Let the first be mine," said Bhatt, the second mine," said Agent Nanjundiah: "Third must be mine" insisted Pandit Venkateshiah. The *Harikatha* man, is then invited to the village, *Harikathas* are held every evening, and these *Harikathas* serve as a clock for Gandhi propaganda. The *Harikatha* man is arrested and taken away, and so the Gandhi movement comes to the village.

It is Moorthy who organises Gandhi-work in the village, and for a village youth he shows rare insight and devotion. He goes from door to door carrying the message of the Mahatma. It is he who explains the economy of *Khadi* and the importance of the *Charkha* to the ignorant and superstition- laden women of the village, and persuades them to take to spinning despite stiff opposition from all quarters. It is he who forms the Congress Committee village and is unanimously elected as its President. Even Range Gowda, the Patel, 'the Tiger' of the village, is deferential to him and calls him 'learned Master.' He has full confidence in him and permits him to have his way in everything. The women too must be enthused, and so Moorthy sets about organising them. A women volunteer corps is thus formed with Ratna as the head of this organisation of *Swayam Sevikas* or *Sevis*. Like Gandhi, Moorthy, too, undertakes a fast, organises picketing and *satyagrahs*, court arrest and is sent to jail. Throughout, he is shown to be an ideal Gandhite. However, the novelist was aware of the dangers of over-idealisation. Such idealisation tends to make a character incredible, unrealistic and unconvincing. But Moorthy is saved from such idealisation. One of the important planks of the Gandhian movement was the eradication of untouchability. Moorthy implements this programme and goes to the Pariah quarters exhorting the women to take to spinning in their spare time. He is excommunicated by the Swami for this Pariah business, and his aged mother dies of grief and shock at the disgrace. Still he persists in his mission. But after all he is a human being with common human weaknesses, and this Pariah business is too much even for him. He hesitates and falters and thus shows that he is made up of the same common clay. In this connection Narasimhaiah comments :

> It is here that the novelist's integrity as man and artist has asserted itself. It required remarkable courage and honesty to permit this idealized character to react the way he did

in Pariah Rachanna's house. Here is Moorthy, a Gandhi man, who has preached brotherhood and equality and castelessness and abolition of untouchability. He calls Pariah Rachanna, "Brother Rachanna" but being a Brahmin (such the persistence of custom) he will stand on the gutter slab in front of Rachanna's house and will want to talk from outside. With effort he now goes to see him. Rachanna is not at home. Rachanna's wife is pounding rice encouraged apparently by Moorthy's professions and spectacularly liberal demonstrations, asks him in. It is a very trying moment for Moorthy—and for his creator; it is something new and the novelist relates the distress felt by Moorthy with astonishing faithfulness to experience: 'and with one foot to the back and one foot to the fore, he stands trembling and undecided, and suddenly hurries up the steps and crosses the threshold and squats on the earthen floor .

Torn between his own beliefs and those of Gandhi with prayers in his mouth and trembling all over, he accepts the milk offered by Lingamma, he takes a sip and then lays the tumbler aside. To conclude, Moorthy is a creature of flesh and blood with ordinary human weaknesses. He is no hero but an average young man who, like thousands others in those days, were enthused by Gandhi to come out of their shells and do their best for their motherland.

23.3.3 Bhatta

Bhatta is the first Brahmin, or chief priest at ceremonial feasts, and primary landlord of Kanthapura. A clever, overweight opportunist, he exploits the conflict among villagers, siding with the traditionalists who oppose Gandhi's doctrine of equal treatment for untouchables because

his profits are larger as a result of the cheap labor that they provide. He lobbies his cause with phony smiles of religious devotion, wearing holy ashes to enhance his image. Through frequent trips to the city of Kawar, he becomes the official legal agent of the colonial administration and the sole banker of Kanthapura, using his position to raise interest rates on mortgaged lands belonging to Gandhi's supporters. When Kanthapura is nearly destroyed in the police assaults on the resisters, the untouchables burn Bhatta's house. He sells the deeds that he holds to Bombay land speculators and moves to Kashi. Bhatta, the First Brahmin is the opposite of Moorthy. He is the agent of the British government in league with the Swami in the city to frustrate and defeat the Gandhi movement. According to Narasimhaiah, "He is one of the most interesting men in Kanthapura, and the novelist has given us a detailed account of his past, of his crooked nature, and the way in which he sets about doing the work of the red-man and opposing the Gandhi movement." If at all there is any villain in the novel, it is Bhatta. He began life with a loin cloth at his waist, and a copper pot in his hand and went on adding several acres of the peasants' lands to his own domain. With increasing prosperity Bhatta lost interest in his priesthood. It became difficult to get him for an obsequial dinner or a marriage ceremony. The Brahmin who started with ascetic ways which he kept up for show, assiduously laboured to acquire wealth and position and luxury and lived on exploitation of his neighbours, while he should have been promoting their welfare." (Narasimhaiah).

Bhatta is very adept at his art. Bhatta is always the first to reach home of his host on a ceremonial occasion, say a death anniversary. He could make grass rings and leaf-cups. And it was also pleasant to hear him recite the Gita. Then he would begin the ceremony, and such was Bhatta's skill that it would be over in the twinkling of the eye. The novelist gives a graphic account of one such ceremonial occasion. "Then the

real obsequial dinner begins, with fresh honey and solid curds, and Bhatta's beloved Bengal-gram khir. Take it, Bhattare, only one cup more, just one ?"

Bhatta is selfish and an unworthy husband, too. On the days when he dines out, the wife has only dal-soup and rice. When his wife dies , this middle-aged, pot-bellied priest marries a girl twelve and half years old and takes a dowry too - a thousand rupees and five acres of wet land. It is this same Bhatta who negotiates widower Advocate Seenappa's second marriage, a widower like him to a girl hardly thirteen. Bhatta refuses to have anything to do with the Gandhi bhajans. He is also the election agent and gets two thousand for it. It is he who is responsible for the excommunication of Moorthy. It is he who keeps the Swami in the city informed of happenings in the village, incites the people against Moorthy and other Gandhites, and does his best to sabotage the movement. He sides with Bade Khan, sets afloat the rumours regarding Moorthy's ex-communication and so hastens the death of his mother. Ultimately, he goes to Kashi to wash off his sins. Through him the novelist has exposed the greed and gluttony of the Brahmins, as well as the crooked ways of those who worked as stooges of the imperial rulers of the country. "He is a symbol of usury and false orthodoxy and low cunning." However, even Bhatta has been humanised. He is no unredeemed monster. He too has something good in him. He has his moments of magnanimity too. "Hadn't he sent our Fig-tree House Rana' to the city for studies ? Why should he have done that ? He said: If you will bring a name to Kanthapura—that is my only recompense. And if by Kenchamma's grace you get rich and became a Collector, you will think of this poor Bhatta and send him the money—with no interest, of course, my son, for I have given it in the name of God. If not, may the gods keep you safe and fit." The narrator's own comment, coming immediately after Bhatta's helps to place the character in correct perspective: "I tell you, he was not a bad man, was Bhatta."

23.3.4 Patel Range Gowda

Patel Range Gowda, the primary executive officer of Kanthapura, acts as mayor, constable, and minor judge. Sturdy but fat, wealthy but charitable, smart, and aggressive, Gowda resents British intrusion into his authoritative role and sides with the Gandhians for their materialistic stability and nationalist fervor rather than for spiritual reasons. His stand results in his loss of favor with Bhatta, who essentially strips him of power. The Congress Party acknowledges his authority, a hereditary right. For accepting a minor role of leadership, the tall man is imprisoned. He returns to Kanthapura after the social upheaval and political turmoil. Patel Range Gowda, the Tiger of the Village is the Patel of Kanthapura, and as such a government servant. But he, too, is a Gandhi man and a staunch supporter of Moorthy. He throws all his weight and authority in his favour, and is of considerable help to him in organising the Congress work in Kanthapura. He is a man of forceful, commanding personality, and with considerable power and authority in the village. Because of his forceful personality and determination he is known as the 'Tiger' of the villa.' Nobody dares to oppose him or disobey his orders. As the narrator puts: "He was a fat, sturdy fellow, a veritable tiger amongst us, and what with his tongue and his hand and his brain, he had amassed solid gold in his coffers and solid bangles on his arms. His daughters, all three of them, lived with him and his sons-in-law worked with him like slaves, though they owned as much land as he did. But then, you know, the Tiger, his words were law in our village. If the Patel says it, we used to say, even a coconut leaf roof will become a gold roof. He is an honest man, and he has helped many a poor peasant. And heavens what a terror he was to the authorities. If Range Gowda says 'No,' you can eat the bitter neem leaves and lie by the city gates, licked by the curs. That's how it is with our Range Gowda." Nothing can be done in the village without Range Gowda. He is also kindly,

sympathetic and generous, and does his best to help the poor, the needy and the suffering of the village. This powerful man uses all his authority and influence in support of Moorthy and his cause. He realises the worth and integrity of the young Gandhite and is deferential to him. When Moorthy approaches him for help he says, "Do what you like, learned master. You know things better than I do, and I know you are not a man to spit on our confidence in you. If you think I should become a member of the Congress, let me be a member of the Congress. If you want me to be a slave, I shall be your slave. All I know is that what you told me about the Mahatma is very fine, and the Mahatma is a holy man, and if the Mahatma says what you say, let the Mahatma's word be the word of God. And if this buffalo will trample on it, may my limbs get paralysed and my tongue dumb and my progeny for ever destroyed." Range Gowda speaks with the voice of authority and speaks with a forthrightness that no self-respecting man can withhold his co-operation. He says 'If you are the sons of your father, stand up and do what this learned boy says.' And Range Gowda himself proposes Moorthy for the Presidentship of the village Panchayat. When Bade Khan, the policeman, approaches him and requests him to arrange a house for him he treats him with scant respect. Bade Khan tells him, "the government has sent me here, and I need a house to live in," and Range Gowda replies "Hm," and after sometime says , "So you want a house, Police Sahib, I am sorry I have none to offer."

'You are the representative of the Government and I have a right to ask you to offer me a house. 'Representative of the Government,' repeated the Patel, 'Yes, I am. But the government does not pay me to find houses for the Police. I am here to collect revenue.' 'So you are a traitor to your salt-givers.' 'I am not a traitor. I am telling you what is the law.' ' I didn't know you were such a learned lawyer too,' laughed Bade Khan but a final word: "Will you oblige me by procuring

me a house or not ?' 'No, Police Sahib, I tell you humbly I cannot. I am not the owner of the whole village. But if there is anyone who is ready to offer you a house, please take it and turn it into a palace. I can see no objection to that.' 'You don't know who you're speaking to Bade Khan grunted between his teeth as he rose. I know I have the honour of speaking to a policeman,' the Patel answered in a singsong way. Meanwhile his grandson, the little Puttu, came out, and he took the child in his arms and laid him on his lap and tickled him between the armpits to make him laugh. Bade Khan went down one step, two steps, three steps, and standing on the gutter-slab, growled at the Patel, 'the first time I corner you, I shall squash you like a bug.' 'Enough, enough of that,' answered the Patel indifferently. 'You'd better take care not to warm your hands with others' money. For that would take you straight to the pipal-tree...."

The dialogue fully brings out the temper of the formidable Patel. He helps Moorthy in various ways. He explains to the people the significance of spinning and weaving, of non-violence, and of the value and meaning of independence. During Moorthy's period of imprisonment, he boosts the morale of the people, guides and encourages them, and sees to it that none falters and falls away. Without his active help and co-operation, Moorthy would not have been so successful in his mission. He alone of the Kanthapurians ever returns to Kanthapura. It is he who brings to them news from Kanthapura. On his return from his visit he tells them, "All said in a knot,' he concluded, 'theres' neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura, for the men from Bombay have built houses on the Bebbur Mound, houses like in the city, for coolies, and they own this land and that and even Bhatta has sold all his lands, has sold it all to the Bombay men, the Bombay men paid him well, and he's now gone back to Kashi. " In Kashi for every hymn and hiccup you get a ruppe," he said. Waterfall Venkamma, it appears has gone to stay with her new

son-in-law, and Concubine Chinna still remains in Kanthapura to lift her leg to her new customers. I drank three handfuls of Himavathy water, and I said, "Protect us, Mother" to Kenchamma and I said, "protect us, Father" to the Siva of the Promontory, and I spat three times to the west and three times to the south, and I threw a palmful of dust at the sunken wretch, and I turned away. But to tell you the truth, Mother, my heart it beat like a drum." In this way he serves to round up the novel and it is in the fitness of things that it is with his appearance and with his words that the novel comes to an end. His dramatic appearance is like the fall of the curtain after the catastrophe.

23.3.5 Belur Narahari Sastri

Belur Narahari Sastri, a middle-aged poet whose patron is the Maharaja of Mysore. Performing with bells on his ankles and cymbals in his hands, the singer wears a shawl given to him by the Maharaja, for whom he writes an epic about the journey of the gods Rama and Sita. Their love serves as an analogy to the Gandhian struggles to achieve harmony among Hindus and Muslims and among all castes within Hinduism. Sastri's presence suggests that the nationalist movement is comparable in proportion to other legendary fights in Hinduism.

23.3.6 Bade Khan

Bade Khan is a Muslim policeman whose ill- tempered grumbling and growling encourages the villagers to drive him to seek refuge on the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Short and fat, the bearded petty tyrant is particularly vindictive toward the Gandhians and brutal in his repression of those who participate in the picketing. As the violence escalates during protests, he becomes insignificant among the many policemen who are sent to Kanthapura in the attempt to quell the resistance. Bade Khan, with his long beard is a symbol of British Raj. He is the symbol of British presence in Kanthapura. It is his duty to maintain

law and order and put down the Gandhi movement, and it may be said to his credit that he performs his duty loyally and sincerely. The Gandhites may consider him a villain, but judged impartially, he is a loyal government servant performing his duty in very trying circumstances. He may be an instrument of the foreign government, but it would be wrong to dismiss him as a heartless monster of wickedness. On arriving in Kanthapura, the initial difficulty he has to face is that of accommodation. Being a Muslim, he finds it difficult to find a house in the village. He can stay neither in the Potters street, nor in the Sudra Street, and, of course, the Brahmin quarter is out of bounds for him. Patwari Nanjundia is unable to help him. Then he approaches Patel Range Gowda who receives him dryly, insults him, and then bluntly tells him that his business is to collect revenue, and not to go about hunting for houses. Poor, discomfitted Bade Khan then goes away threatening and cursing. He goes to Skeffington Coffee Estate, where a hut is allotted to him in which he settles down with one of the Pariah women. Once settled comfortably, he moves about the village secretively watching the people, collecting information and passing it on to the city authorities. Very soon he is in league with Bhatta, and others who are opposed to the Gandhi movement. When Moorthy goes to meet the workers on the Coffee Estate, it is he who keeps watch and rains lathi blows on him and his supporters as he approaches the gate of the Estate. In short, he is one of those unpatriotic Indians who made it possible for the British to rule India for such a long time.

23.3.7 Rangamma

Rangamma is a wealthy young Brahmin who is converted by Moorthy to Gandhi's views. Widely respected but lonely, she reads frequently and nurtures curiosity about other countries. As the resistance movement grows, she publishes a weekly political pamphlet and sponsors daily discussions on the nationalist movement, turning her home into

Kanthapura's center for Congress Party activities. Bold in a traditionalist context, she refutes Bhatta's self-serving religiosity and inspires many villagers to follow Gandhi's teachings. When Moorthy is imprisoned and her father, a Vedantic teacher, dies, she continues both as organizer for the Gandhians and as Vedic interpreter and yoga teacher. Eventually, she organizes the women of Kanthapura as the Sevis, who lead non-violent resistance marches, a role that results in her being beaten and imprisoned. She is one of the few educated women in the village. She reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and others acquainted with the day to day developments elsewhere. She knows many things of general interest." Of the plants that weep, of the monkeys that were the men we have become, of the worms, thin, as dust, worms that get into your blood and give you dysentry and plague and cholera. She told us, too, about the stars which are so far that some have poured their lights into the blue space long before you were born or your father was born " She is a lady who is "deferent, soft-voiced, gentle-gestured." Waterfall Venkamma is jealous of her, and roars and rails against her day and night. It is from her railings that we learn much about her. She is a childless widow, but she has a very big home, much larger than that of Venkamma herself. Her relatives are in the city, and visit her frequently. She is of great help to Moorthy in organising the Congress work in the village. She is a lady of enlightened views actively involved in the freedom struggle.

23.3.8 Kamalamma

Kamalamma is Rangamma's thirty-year- old traditionalist sister. A strict adherent to the Vedic caste system, she rejects Rangamma's conversion to Gandhi's teachings and her own daughter Ratna's modern behavior and attitude. Kamalamma embodies the larger conflict within the village through her divisive stance within the family, being far more concerned with Ratna's eligibility for remarriage than with her daughter's role in the Swaraj (self-rule) movement.

23.3.9 Ratna

Ratna is the fifteen-year-old widowed daughter of Kamalamma. Thoroughly modern in her behavior of speaking her mind and walking alone in the village, the educated, attractive niece of Rangamma follows her aunt's example by joining the resistance movement. She breaks tradition by assisting Rangamma in the teaching of the Vedic texts as justification for Gandhi's views, suffers beatings in the protest marches, and is nearly raped by a policeman. When Rangamma is imprisoned, Ratna assumes leadership of the Sevis and, eventually, also suffers imprisonment. After being released, she leaves Kanthapura to continue her activism in Bombay. Ratna became a widow when hardly fifteen years of age. She is attractive and charming as is clear from the attention which Moorthy pays to her. There is just a hint of a love-affair between the two. However their love and liking for each other has not been properly developed, and hence *Kanthapura* lacks in that love-interest which is considered essential for a novel. We feel that the novelist has committed a serious error of judgment in not exploiting the love-theme and thus missing an opportunity of adding to the charm and interest of his work. Ratna is a young educated woman of progressive views. Though she is a widow she does not dress and live in the conventional style of a widow. She wears bangles, coloured sarees (and not the white dhoti of a widow) and uses the *Kumkum* mark on her forehead, and parts her hair like a concubine, as Waterfall Venkamma puts it. She is also bold and witty in conversation, and holds her own views even against heavy odds. She is much criticised for her unconventional ways, but she does not care for such criticism. She chooses her own path, and sticks to it with firmness and determination. She takes a keen interest in the Gandhian movement, and is a source of inspiration and help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is arrested she conducts the *Harikathas*. After Rangamma's death, she reads out the newspapers and other publicity material of

the Congress for the benefit of the Kanthapurians. When Moorthy is arrested, she carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organises the women volunteer corps and imparts the *Sevikas* the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of government repression and police action. She is dishonoured, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence. But she suffers everything patiently and unflinchingly. As the narrator of the story tells us, she comes out of jail a changed person, more humble and more courteous to her elders and more mature and determined. When Gandhi goes to England for the Round Table Conference, and makes a settlement with the Red-men's government and the movement is withdrawn, Ratna is disappointed like countless other freedom fighters in India. She goes over to Bombay and through her letters we learn of her great admiration for Nehru, "the equal distributionist." Ratna stands for the educated, progressive womanhood of India whom Gandhi had enthused with his own ideals, and who came out of their homes in thousands to fight shoulder to shoulder with their men folk for the freedom of their motherland. She is the female counterpart of Moorthy.

23.3.10 Sankar

Sankar is the twenty-six-year-old secretary of the Kawar Congress Party. A saintly, ascetic widower with a young daughter, he is a lawyer of renowned integrity who embodies Gandhian ideals. He wears khadi, the homespun, symbolic cloth of resistance; eschews expensive status symbols such as cars and fine Western-style suits that his colleagues acquire; insists on using and teaching Hindi as the nationalists' language; and renounces the use of tobacco and liquor. He contributes heavily to the Congress Party funds, and he teaches Rangamma the organizational skills of activism. When Bhatta attempts to harvest the Gandhians' crops and to auction their lands in retaliation for their refusal to pay taxes to him, Sankar organizes a massive resistance from other villages and Kawar to prevent Bhatta from succeeding

in his punitive seizure of their properties. Advocate Sankar is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He believes in his principles of truth and non-violence and tries to follow in his footsteps. He is a true patriot and does his best for the cause of freedom. He wears Khadi, and does not go to functions where people come wearing dresses made of foreign cloth. When Gandhi is arrested and sent to jail, he keeps fast, for with Gandhi he believes that fasting is a means of self-purification. It gives spiritual strength and illumination. He loves truth, and does not undertake false cases. He withdraws himself as soon as he discovers that the case of his client Rama Chetty is false. He is thus different from other lawyers. Bold and fearless, he is not afraid of the government, and takes up the defence of Moorthy when he is arrested and tried in the city courts. He is noble, generous and kind-hearted. As a husband, he is to be contrasted with Bhatta. When his first wife dies, he does not marry a second time. "Sankar was an ascetic of a man and had refused marriage after marriage, after he had lost his wife." On remembering his dead wife he remarks. "I have had a Lakshmi and I, a sinner, could not even keep her, and she has left me a child and that is enough." He remembers his wife, and regards it as a sin to marry again.

23.3.11 The White Owner of Skeffington Coffee Estate

Skeffington Coffee Estate is a very large coffee plantation at a stone's throw from Kanthapura. It is owned by a white man who is popularly known as the "Hunter Sahib" because he always carries a hunter or whip in his hand and freely uses it on all those workers on his estate who neglect their duty. He is a symbol of the imperialist rulers of India who exploited Indians in various ways. A large number of workers are needed on the estate and they are recruited by his maistri or steward under false promises. They are brought to the estate from distant parts of Mysore. Promises of attractive wages are made. Visions of happy, comfortable life with practically no work to do are held out to them.

The poor, ignorant people, deceived by such promises, march to the estate in large numbers: once they are in, the attitude of the steward changes and he becomes harsher and harsher in his treatment. It is said that one who enters the gates of the coffee plantation never comes out of it.

The coffee workers are exploited in many ways. They are given wretched one-room huts to live in which provide them little protection against the rains which are heavy and frequent. No wages are paid—they are deposited on their behalf with the 'Hunter Sahib,' and they remain with him. Only the meager food is allowed to them. They are made to work from early in the morning till late in the evening until it is dark. If there is any slackness or if they rest a moment, the maistri or the Sahib is always there to whip them. There is a worst kind of economic exploitation. But this is not all. The workers are exploited sexually also. If the Sahib takes a fancy to any of their women, then she is sent to his house at night, or he would even have her then and there in the plantation. Nobody dares raise a voice against this exploitation for dire consequences are sure to follow any frustration of the lustful desires of the Sahib. However, his character has been humanized - he distributes pepperments and toffees among the children of the workers. The climate is damp and the outbreak of malaria is frequent. When the workers are ill, he goes from hut to hut distributing quinine tablets. It is another matter that the ignorant, superstitious workers don't take the medicine, and hence deaths are frequent.

23.3.12 The Swami

The Swami lives in the city. He remains in the background. Like Mahatma Gandhi he never appears on the scene. But he influences the course of action and causes much damage to the freedom movement. He is an orthodox Brahmin, narrow and conservative in his views. He wields considerable influence with the orthodox, upper class people. Moreover,

he is a traitor to the cause of the freedom of India. He is paid by the British government. He has received twelve hundred acres of wet land from the government. So, he is a willing stooge of the Britishers. In league with Bhatta, he does his best to defeat the freedom struggle in Kanthapura. It is he who excommunicates Moorthy for "the Pariah business," and thus is indirectly responsible for the death of his mother who is unable to bear the shock.

23.3.13 Waterfall Venkamma

Raja Rao has a habit of giving tell-tale names to his characters and none of these nick-names is more apt and suggestive than "Waterfall" given to Venkamma. Like a waterfall, she is always shedding tears and roaring. She rails against practically everybody in the novel. She is a woman of a petty, jealous nature. She cannot bear to see others prosperous or successful. The sight of the happiness of others arouses her wrath and she rails and rails against them. There is no end to her spite, jealousy and vindictiveness. She is jealous of Rangamma because she has a much larger house and constantly rails against her. "Why should a widow, and a childless widow too, have a big house like that ? And it is not her father who built it," says she. "It's my husband's ancestors that built it. I've two sons and five daughters and the shaven widow hadn't even the luck of having a bandicoot to call her own." She would like to put lizard poison into her food and thus cause her death. She is also against Moorthy, because he refused to marry her second daughter. She nurses this grudge against him, and does her best to have her revenge upon him. Orthodox, conservative, and narrow in her views, she has no sympathy with the Gandhi-movement. She, therefore, sides with Bhatta and the Swami. It is she who spreads the rumour that Moorthy is to be excommunicated. In this way, she causes his mother much pain which ultimately drives her to death. She also hates Ratna for her progressive views and constantly hurls abuses at her. She rails and rails against everybody and thus justifies the nick-name the novelist has given to her.

Waterfall Venkamma symbolises all the pettiness, the jealousy, the triviality and the orthodoxy of Indian village life.

23.3.14 Narsamma

Narsamma is the old widowed mother of Moorthy. She is orthodox and conservative, unable to understand the implications of the Gandhi-movement and the noble work in which her son is engaged. She gave birth to eleven children, five of whom died, and of the remaining six Moorthy is the only son. She is tall and thin and her big, broad ash marks give her an air of ascetic holiness. She has a great love for her son and she has high hopes of a brilliant career for him. But her hopes and dreams are shattered when he joins the freedom movement. She is literally shocked and her feelings are intensely hurt when Moorthy is excommunicated by the Swami for the "Pariah business." Being the youngest of her sons, Moorthy is deeply loved by her. Instead of becoming a sub-collector, as she hopes he would become, she is told that he has frequent intercourse with the Pariahs. This is a terrible blow to her. Ex-communication is regarded by her as nothing less than a sin. "Oh ! to have a son ex-communicated. Oh ! to have gone to Benaras and Rameshwaram and to Gaya, and to have a son excommunicated. I wish I had closed my eyes with your father instead of living to see you polluted. Go away, you pariah." She weeps, sobs and bewails at the course of events and bursts forth saying: "What, never to go to the temple or to an obsequial dinner ? Never to a marriage party, or a hair-cutting ceremony ?" She is shocked terribly and dies as a result of this shock. She is good and noble, and we love and respect her, despite her orthodoxy and lack of sympathy for the freedom movement. There is no evil within her. She is not wicked and crooked, but only orthodox, credulous and a little dull-headed. She is the most pathetic character in the novel.

23.4 ART OF CHARACTERIZATION

Raja Rao possessed the highest degree, the one essential gift of a novelist, the power to create living, concrete characters. However, the characters in the novel are not sharply and distinctly individualised. For one thing, Raja Rao did not want to over-crowd his canvas. Secondly, his purpose was to depict a mass movement and its impact, and highly individualised characters would have deflected attention from such a depiction. Thirdly, he believed in the oneness of all, of God, man and man, and man and nature, and hence did not consider individual characterisation necessary. But all this does not mean that he lacked the art of successful characterisation; with a single stroke of the pen he brings a character to life, and makes him vivid and real. The canvas of the novel is a crowded one, a host of characters move across his pages. But such is the art of the novelist that even his minor characters have been endowed with life and vitality, and linger long in the memory. Their vitality arises from the novelist's close, firsthand knowledge of the life and character of the rural folk he has portrayed, and this makes *Kanthapura* a veritable picture-gallery, crowded with living, breathing, human beings.

23.4.1 Multiplicity of Characters

In the foreground there are a number of major figures, with a host of minor figures in the background, taking part in the action and throwing the major figures into sharper relief. Moorthy, Ratna, Patel Range Gowda, Bhatta, and Policeman Bade Khan hold the front of the stage, and behind them we have such lesser figures as Rangamma, Narsamma, Venkamma, Dore, Ramayya, Nanjundia, Sommana, and many others with their petty rivalries, jealousies and mundane concerns. These characters are drawn from all sections of village society—the Brahmins, the Sudras, the Potters, the Weavers and the Pariahs. There are also Advocate Sankar, the Harikatha man, Jayaramachar, and the White Sahib of Skeffington Coffee-Estate. The great Mahatma does not appear on the scene, but his influence is all-pervasive and dominant. Similarly, the Swami never visits the village but his pernicious

influence is ever felt. He excommunicates Moorthy and thus indirectly causes the death of Narsamma, his mother.

23.4.2 Anti thetical Groupings

These characters are sharply divided into two groups, The Rulers (and their supporters), on the one hand, and the Satyagrahis (and their sympathisers), on the other. There are various other divisions too: orthodoxy is pitted against reform, exploitation against sufferance, the planter against the coolies, the corrupt official against the self-respecting villager. There is adroit polarization in the plotless grandmother's tale. Advocate Sankar has his opposite in advocate Seenappa, and Rangamma and Ratna are opposed by Venkamma.

23.4.3 Enlivening Characters

The characters, both major and minor, are imparted life and vitality with a single stroke of the brush, so to say. One of the most frequent devices used by the novelist to vivify his characters is the addition of tell-tale nicknames or epithets: *Waterfall* Venkamma, *Nose-scratching* Nanjamma, *Front-house* Akkamma; *Temple* Rangappa, *Coffee-Planter* Ramayya, *Patwari* Nanjundia, *Gold-Bangle* Sommanna, *Cordamom-field* Ramachandra; and there is, of course, *Corner-house* Moorthy who goes through life as, "a noble cow, quiet generous, serene, deferent and brahmanic, a very prince." These epithets describe sometimes the appearance e.g., *pock-marked* Sidda; sometimes the profession e.g., *rice-pounding* Rajamma; sometimes the habit, e.g., *nose- scratching* Nanjamma, and sometimes the location of the house, e.g., *front- house* Akamma and *corner-house* Moorthy. Sometimes a whole character comes to life in one phrase, "Ironshop Imam Khan, gun in hand and fire in his eyes" and a whole social milieu gets summed up in "kitchen queen" for the Indian woman. Even the huge locomotive is seen as a living, kicking giant: "the train sneezed and wheezed and snorted and moved on." At other times telling imagery is used to vivify a character. Thus Moorthy is likened to a cow and to an elephant.

23.4.4 Character Contrast

Character-traits are highlighted and thrown into sharp relief by contrast. The minor characters, for example, serve to highlight the major ones. The character of Sankar is impressive only because he is not like other advocates who had no sense of discrimination and lacked in any sense of patriotism. His love for *Khaddar,* Hindi and truth is exaggerated to the extent of looking ridiculous, but it is this that distinguishes him from the other greedy, snobbish and shallow advocates. This is stressed by contrasts with the meanness and greediness of Advocate Seenappa. Similarly, Waterfall Venkamma condemns the whole world specially the progressive elements of the village. It is against her meanness frivolousness and conservatism that the character of Ratna shines out.

23.4.5 Women Characters

Raja Rao sees woman as *Shakti,* as Mother-Earth and the theme of *Shaktiworship* runs through his novels. Writes Uma Parmeswaran in this connection, "Voluble, with an infinite capacity for love and for passing malice, quick to spark into enthusiasm and into cynicism, the women of *Kanthapura* are more human than those created by Raja Rao elsewhere. They become *Women* at certain times but there is no incongruity between their action and the author's claim. One realizes that the immanent *Shakti* rises in every woman at certain pivotal points of life." Different forms of *Shakti* are manifested through the women of *Kanthapura. Shakti's* indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha (non-violent struggle) against the British government. When the police ill- treat them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move, and act as one, for they are one. Inspired by Gandhi and the very incarnation of *Shakti* the women sing:

There is one Government, sister,
There is one Government, sister,
And that is the Government of the Mahatma.

More distinct and pervasive is the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, *Shakti* kneeling in rapt adoration in front of *Siva,* reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures. The most touching example of their edifying faith is the narrator's musing on the ruins of Kanthapura. She dreams of happy ending to a modern *Ramayana,* "where Rama (Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi) Bharata (Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot."

23.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Multiple Choice Questions : (MCQs)

1. What is Moorthy known as? _____ .

   a) Big Mountain
   b) Small Mountain
   c) Swami
   d) Hunter Sahib

2. The novel's narrator is _____ .

   a) Acchakka
   b) Rangamma
   c) Ratna
   d) Moorthy

3. Moorthy is a _____ .

a) Untouchable

b) Vashaiya

c) Government Officer

d) Brahmin

4. The novel is about _____ .

a) Kashipur

b) Mumbai

c) Delhi

d) Kanthapura

5. The big mountain is _____ .

a) Jawaharlal Nehru

b) Raja Ram Mohan Roy

c) Mahatma Gandhi

d) Waterfall Venkamma

6. Bhatta is not a _____ .

a) Brahmin

b) Money -lender

c) a richman

d) Gandhian

7. Patel Range Gowda is called _____ .

a) Big Mountain

b) Small Mountain

c) Swami

d) the Tiger of the Village.

8. Who is Belur Narahari Sastri? _____ .

a) A Money lender

b) A poet

c) A Priest

d) A Government Officer

9. Bade Khan is _____ .

a) Muslim

b) Hindu

c) Parsi

d) Christian

10. Rangamma is _____ .

a) Educated

b) lliterate.

c) Anti- Gandhi

d) Poor

11. Waterfall Venkamma is jealous of _____ .

a) Rangamma

b) Kamalamma

c) Ratna

d) Moorthy

12. When Rangamma is imprisoned, who assumes leadership of the Sevis? _____ .

a) Narsamma

b) Kamalamma .

c) Venkamma

d) Ratna.

13. Who is the owner of Skeffington Coffee Estate? _____ .

a) Bade Khan

b) Range Gowda

c) Hunter Sahib

d) Moorthy

14. Who excommunicates Moorthy? _____ .

a) Hunter Sahib

b) Bhatt

c) Bade Khan

d) Swami

15. Narsamma is mother of _____ .

a) Bhatt

b) Sankar

c) Moorthy

d) Ratna

23.5 LET US SUM UP

In short, the canvas of *Kanthapura* is a crowded one, for the aim of the novelist was to depict a mass movement and a social *milieu.* Still his characters are not mere symbols or types. They are living, breathing realities, with an individuality of their own. They are simple and static, they do not change and grow, but such is the art of the novelist that even his minor figures are imparted life and individuality through a few masterly strokes of the pen, and so they linger long in the memory.

23.7 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

a. Who are Bhatta and Bade Khan and what role do they play in the novel ?

b. Describe what happens in Chapter 18 of the novel.

c. Where do the characters settle at the end of the novel and why?

d. Who is "the small mountain" and why is he called so?

e. What role does Ratna play in the novel?

f. Do you sympathize with Narsamma ? Why or Why not ?

23.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a. Write a short paragraph for each of the following characters

i. Ratna

ii. Bhatta

iii. Bade Khan

iv. Waterfall Venkamma

v. Patel Range Gowda

b. Who is your favorite character in *Kanthapura* and why? Give reasons for your answer.

c. Write a character sketch of the protagonist Moorthy.

d. Comment on Rao's art of characterization.

23.9 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b) Small Mountain
2. a) Acchakka
3. d) Brahmin
4. d) Kanthapura
5. c) Mahatma Gandhi
6. d) Gandhian
7. d) the Tiger of the Village.
8. b) A poet
9. a) Muslim

10. a) Educated

11. d) Moorthy

12. d) Ratna.

13. c) Hunter Sahib

14. d) Swami

15. c) Moorthy

23.10 SUGGESTED READING

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL *KANTHAPURA*

STRUCTURE

24.1 Introduction

24.2 Objectives

24.3 Critical Analysis

24.3.1 The Characters

24.3.2 The Themes and Meanings

24.3.3 Critical Context

24.4 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

24.5 Let Us Sum Up

24.6 Short Answer Questions

24.7 Examination Oriented Questions

24.8 Answer Key to Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

24.9 Suggested Reading

24.1 INTRODUCTION

The Novel

Rather than being a traditional novel with a neat linear structure and compact plot, *Kanthapura* follows the oral tradition of Indian *sthala*-purana, or legendary history. As Raja Rao explains in his original foreword, there is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich legendary history of its own,

in which some famous figure of myth or history has not made an appearance. In this way, the storyteller, who commemorates the past, keeps a native audience in touch with its lore and thereby allows the past to mingle with the present, the gods and heroes with ordinary mortals.

The story is narrated in flashback by Achakka, a wise woman in the village. She, like her female audience (whom she addresses as "sisters"), has survived the turbulence of social and political change which was induced by Mohandas K. Gandhi's passive resistance against the British government. Achakka provides a detailed picture of the rural setting, establishing both an ambiance and a rhythm for the novel. It is clear that her speech and idiomatic expression are meant to express a distinctively feminine viewpoint which is an extraordinary achievement for a male Indo-English novelist. Achakka quickly creates a faithful image of an Indian way of life, circumscribed by tradition and indebted to its deities, of whom Kenchamma, the great and bounteous goddess, is made the village protectress. She is invoked in every chapter, for the characters never forget that her power resides in her past action. It is she who humanizes the villagers, and their chants and prayers ring out from time to time.

The narrator establishes the parameters of the story within old and new legends. While Kenchamma and Siva are remembered for their marvellous feats and interventions in human affairs, analogies are sometimes drawn with contemporary figures such as Gandhi who serve to turn fact and history into folklore, and who provide the motive for political struggle. At the beginning, while there are simply rumours of Gandhi's activities, the villagers follow their customary routines. Then, Moorthy, a young, dedicated Brahmin, inspired by Gandhi, returns to Kanthapura to propagandize the cause of the Indian National Congress and Gandhi's satyagrah movement. The colonial masters (nicknamed "Red-men" for their ruddy complexions) are a palpable, tyrannical presence but are sensed only obliquely at the beginning via the mysterious passing policeman who is treated as a spy and who, consequently, seeks refuge on the Skeffington Coffee Estate run by a brutal gang-boss.

Moorthy does not immediately win favor. He is opposed by Bhatta, a reactionary who sneers at "Gandhi vagabondage," and by fellow Brahmins who are increasingly upset by Gandhi's acceptance of Untouchables. The caste system, so much a part of Indian history, is shaking apart under Gandhi's example, and the social pattern of Kanthapura delineated by separate quarters for Brahmin, Pariah, Potter, Weaver, and Sudra is disturbed by the progress being made by the Untouchables.

Even Moorthy's own mother is revulsed by his Gandhian precepts, and Moorthy brings matters to a head by eliciting Patel Range Gowda's help in starting a Congress group and encouraging the villagers to vow to speak only truth, wear no cloth but homespun khadi, and use all forms of passive resistance. This Gandhian non-violence provokes a brutal response from the authorities, and the villagers are attacked by the police. Moorthy and advocate Rangamma are arrested as Bhatta is uncovered as a traitor and some Brahmins are deployed to stir fear among the villagers. Patel Range Gowda is dismissed from his hereditary office as village executive chief, and the villagers turn to the gods for help.

The radical change in the political nature of India, however, becomes apparent as the women stir into action. Rangamma, who always links Indian scripture to contemporary events, manages to inspire the womenfolk to dire deeds as the men are forced to hide in the jungles around the village.

After Moorthy is released from prison, the political crisis deepens, and the villagers' suffering increases. There is a sense that the issue is now more than mere politics. The world resembles a jungle in battle with itself, and only Gandhi transcends this tumult, for he is like a huge mountain, unvanquished by the confusion and violence. Moorthy suddenly finds himself less in sympathy with Gandhi and more attuned to Jawaharlal Nehru, the emerging modernist.

The villagers, however, remain faithful to Gandhi. Towards the end, when nothing can stop the women (in spite of horrendous casualties) from marching against the soldiers sent by the British, the change in the social and political

nature of the country is profound. The women decide to burn down what is left of their village, rather than return to it. Life, they realize, can never be the same without their Moorthy, husbands, sisters, and children who have perished in the struggle. Yet the women also recognize that they are part of history on the march.

The climax of the novel is the great violence of chapter 18, with the men in retreat, the women in the vanguard of resistance, and the soldiers in unrelenting assault, wreaking devastation. The concluding section (chapter 19) brings the tale full circle, fourteen months later, where there is eager anticipation of Swaraj, or independence for India. Of the male heroes, only Patel Range Gowda returns briefly to Kanthapura, yet the villagers feel blessed by the goddess Kenchamma.

24.2 OBJECTIVES

- That the learner should be able to analyze the novel from the point of view of the plot.
- That the learner should be able to analyze the novel from the point of view of the theme.
- That the learner should be able to analyze the novel from the point of view of the structure.
- That the learner should be able to analyze the novel from the point of view of the characterization
- That the learner should be able to analyze the novel from the point of view of style.
- That the learner should be able to critically analyze all aspects of the novel.

24.3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

24.3.1 The Characters

The numerous characters in this novel demonstrate the sense of community that unifies the plot and gives substance to the political and social conflicts. There is a sense of teeming life, and because the larger question is not about an individual's fate but about a group destiny, Raja Rao's

mode of characterization is impressionistic. Dialogue is kept to a minimum, and the focus encompasses both the masses in the background and certain salient figures in the foreground.

The female narrator is a medium for storytelling as well as a character in her own right, for she expresses her own radical nature and that of changing India. Though she tells the reader little directly of herself (she admits to owning seven acres of wet land and twelve of dry), it is clear from her mode of speaking that she is willing to accept fundamental social changes. Although she is respectful of Hindu tradition, she is not bound to old ways. She is caught up in all the turmoil, and her, at times, breathless narration expresses the excitement of the period as well as her own recognition of a movement that is leading to India's autonomy.

The conflict between acquiescence to time-honored tradition and resistance to old tyrannies is dramatically expressed in the two factions: the Gandhians and their foes. Moorthy is the prime representative of the modern Indian struggling with dignity for freedom. He is linked to Hindu traditions from the outset, for he is the youngest son of a pious mother and is called a "holy bull," implying that he is a specially marked character. So thoroughly Gandhian is he in his creed and practice that he scandalizes his own mother by his unconventional fraternization with the Pariahs, and he is willing to suffer rejection and violence in the name of his cause. Like his mentor, he exerts both a political and a spiritual force. Yet he eventually turns from Gandhi to Nehru in an abrupt recognition that saintliness is not necessarily synonymous with political wisdom.

Rao skillfully controls the focus of the novel by bringing forward subsidiary characters at particular moments when they can sharpen the conflicts. They are usually distinguished by a single facet of personality: Bhatta is known by his smiling, false charm; Rangamma

by her eloquent disputatiousness; Patel Range Gowda by his ceremonious speech; and Dore by his scoffing manner.

Because the crux of the novel is a struggle for independence, there are the adversaries of Gandhi and, hence, independence. Although these figures are not without their melodramatic evil, they are granted their moments of fair combat when they summon up all of their arguments against Moorthy. Such is the case with the old government man who appears at a nationalist gathering and presents his cunning rhetorical attack on the Gandhians.

Finally, then, *Kanthapura* achieves a sense of continuous agitation. Even when the government soldiers lay waste to the village, dispersing the men and slaughtering many of the women, there is no victory for the old political arrangement. The new spirit of India is on the move across the vast land, and the hearts of the survivors in Kanthapura beat like a drum, with the strength of hard-won freedom.

24.3.2 Themes and Meanings

The story shows the birth of new ideas in old India. The arguments against change which in the Gandhian sense is a change of soul and not simply of caste or social function are made forcefully by reactionaries who point to the disorder, corruption, and arrogance of pre-British rule. As the old government man puts it, the British have come to protect dharma, or duty. Playing upon raw fear in the populace, the anti-nationalists argue that reform will mean the eventual corruption of castes and of the great ancestral traditions.

Although this novel does not have the profound philosophical nature of *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), Rao's most massive novel, its thrust is certainly didactic in that it glorifies the idea of revolt.

24.3.3 Critical Context

Rao's first novel, *Kanthapura*, is the story of how a small, sleepy, South Indian village is caught in the whirlpool of the Indian freedom struggle

and comes to be completely destroyed. In the Foreword, Rao himself indicates that the novel is a kind of *sthala-purana* or legendary history, which every village in India seems to have. These local *sthala-puranas* are modeled on the ancient Indian *Puranas*—those compendia of story, fable, myth, religion, philosophy, and politics—among which are the *Upa Puranas*, which describe holy places and the legends associated with them. Hence, several features of *Kanthapura* are in keeping with the tradition of *sthala-puranas*. The detailed description of the village at the opening of the novel is written in the manner of a *sthala-purana*, wherein the divine origin or association of a place is established. The village is presided over by Goddess Kenchamma, the *Gramadeveta* (village-deity) and the novel provides a legend explaining her presence there, recalling several similar legends found in the *Puranas*. Like the 'Place-Gods' of the *Puranas,* Kenchamma operates within her jurisdiction, where she is responsible for rains, harvests, and the well-being of the villagers. She cannot extend her protection to other villages or to outsiders. Thus, the village-deity symbolizes local concerns such as famine, cholera, cattle-diseases, and poor harvests, which may have little to do with the world outside the village. Like Kenchamma, the river Himavathy, too, has a special significance in the novel and recalls passages describing famous rivers in the *Puranas,* such as the description of the river Narmada in *Matsyapurana* and *Agnipurana*.

Similarly, *Kanthapura* shares certain narrative techniques with the *Puranas*. The story is told rapidly, all in one breath, it would seem, and the style reflects the oral heritage also evident in the Puranas. Like the Puranas, which are digressive and episodic, *Kanthapura* contains digressions such as Pariah Siddiah's exposition on serpent lore. The *Puranas* contain detailed, poetic descriptions of nature; similarly, *Kanthapura* has several descriptive passages which are so evocative and unified as to be prose-poems in themselves. Examples are

the coming of *Kartik (*autumn), daybreak over the Ghats, and the advent of the rains. Finally, the narration of *Kanthapura* has a simplicity and lack of self-consciousness reminiscent of the *Puranas* and quite different from the narrative sophistication of contemporary Western novelists such as Virginia Woolf or James Joyce.

Kanthapura is also imbued with a religious spirit akin to that of the Puranas. The epigraph of the novel, taken from the *Bhaghavad Gîtâ*, is the famous explanation of the Hindu notion of incarnation: "Whensoever there is misery and ignorance, I come." The doctrine of incarnation is central to the *Puranas*, too, most of which are descriptive accounts of the avatars of Vishnu. The avatar in *Kanthapura* is Gandhi, whose shadow looms over the whole book, although he is himself not a character. Incarnation, however, is not restricted to one Great Soul, Gandhi, but extends into Kanthapura itself, where Moorthy, who leads the revolt, is the local manifestation of Gandhi, and by implication, of Truth.

Although the form of *Kanthapura* is closely modelled on that of the *Sthala-Purana*, its style is uniquely experimental. Rao's effort is to capture the flavor and nuance of South Indian rural dialogue in English. He succeeds in this by a variety of stylistic devices. The story is told by Achakka, an old Brahmin widow, a garrulous, gossipy, storyteller. The sentences are long, frequently running into paragraphs. Such long sentences consist of several short sentences joined by conjunctions (usually "and") and commas; the effect is of breathless, rapid talking. The sentence structure is manipulated for syntactic and rhythmic effect, as in the first sentence of the novel: "Our village—I don't think you have ever heard about it—Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara." Repetition is another favorite device used to enhance the colloquial flavor of the narrative. In addition to these techniques, translation from Kannada is repeatedly used. Nicknames such as "Waterfall Venkamma," "Nose- scratching Nanjamma,"

"Cornerhouse Moorthy" are translated; more important, Kannada idioms and expressions are rendered into English: "You are a traitor to your salt- givers," " Don't-touch-the-Government Campaign," "Nobody will believe such a crow and sparrow story," and so on. The total effect is the transmutation into English of the total ethos of another culture. *Kanthapura* with its *Kannadized* English anticipates the lofty *Sanskritized* style of *The Serpent and the Rope*, which, stylistically, is Rao's highest achievement.

Kanthapura is really a novel about a village rather than about a single individual; nevertheless, Moorthy, the Brahmin protagonist of the villagers' struggle against the government, is a prototypal Rao's hero. Moorthy is the leader of a political uprising, but for him, as for Gandhi whom he follows, politics provide a way of life, indistinguishable from a spiritual quest. In fact, for Moorthy, Action is the way to the Absolute. In Gandhi, he finds what is Right Action. Thus, for him, becoming a Gandhi man is a deep spiritual experience which is appropriately characterized by the narrator as a "conversion." At the culmination of this "conversion" is Sankaracharaya's ecstatic chant "*Sivoham*, *Sivoham*. I am Siva. I am Siva. Siva am I," meaning that Moorthy experiences blissful union with the Absolute. Indeed, the chant, which epitomizes the ancient Indian philosophical school of Advaita or unqualified non-dualism, is found in all Rao's novels as a symbol of the spiritual goal of his protagonists. Moorthy, the man of action, thus practices *Karma Yoga* (the Path of Action), one of the ways of reaching the Absolute as enunciated in the *Bhaghavad Gîtâ*. In the novels after *Kanthapura*, Rao's protagonists, like Moorthy, continue to seek the Absolute, although their methods change.

Although dense with expressions of Indian customs, epical history, politics, and religion, *Kanthapura* is unusual as an Indo-English novel because the female characters serve in the forefront of revolutionary struggle. In her concluding summary, Achakka expresses

her belief that what has happened in her village is essentially positive. Things have changed irrevocably.

In form, *Kanthapura* is an extension of the Indian oral tradition, adapted to a Western language and genre. The extensive use of songs and prayers, allusions, and digressions, and the more limited use of proverbs and epic lists, or catalogs, contribute to the folkloric nature of the writing. Sometimes the pace is heightened by a piling-on of compound sentences at a breathless tempo, and the use of tales-within-tales promotes the sense of imprompt fabrication and immediacy.

Kanthapura is one of the earliest examples of the Gandhian novel: fiction that derives its moral force from the figure and precepts of the great political and spiritual leader. It is not simply an exotic tale of a vanished era but also a clever use of a colonial language to serve didactic ends. Like the early novels of Mulk Raj Anand, it is a deliberately moral fiction, but unlike Anand's work, it is not almost exclusively sociological in tenor. By providing detailed notes on Indian terms and allusions, Rao is able to extend the reach of his fiction, compelling Western readers to slow down their pace of reading, examine the network of mythological and historical associations, and note the analogies which he is drawing between secular history and sacred mythology.

24.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

Write True or False

a. *Kanthapura* is one of the earliest examples of the Gandhian novel.

b. The background upon which this narrative is placed is one of unrest.

c. *Kanthapura* is full of mythological and historical associations.

d. The point of view of Kanthapura is not expressed through a third person perspective.

e. Several features of Kanthapura are in keeping with the tradition of *sthala-puranas.*

f. *Kanthapura* shares certain narrative techniques with the *Puranas.*

g. *Kanthapura* is really a novel about a single individual rather than about a single village.

24.5 LET US SUM UP

Raja Rao's novel, Kanthapura is the first major Indian novel in English. It is a fictional but realistic account of how the great majority of people in India lived their lives under British rule and how they responded to the ideas and ideals of Indian nationalism. Kanthapura portrays the participation of a small village in South India in the national struggle called for by Mahatma Gandhi. Imbued with nationalism, the villagers sacrifice all their material possessions in a triumph of the spirit, showing how in the Gandhian movement people shed their narrow prejudices and united in the Common cause of non- violent civil resistance to the British Raj. Rao depicts the regular involvement of the villagers in Sankara- Jayanthi, Kartik Purnima, Ganesh-Jayanthi, Dasara, and the Satyanarayana Puja to convey a sense of the natural unity and cohesion of villaget society.

24.6 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

a. Write a short note on the narrator of *Kanthapura.*

b. Comment on the poetic description of the coming of Kartik (autumn) or daybreak over the Ghats or the advent of the rains.

c. Give examples of the elements of poetry in the novel.

d. Give examples of the elements of fantasy in the novel.

e. Who is Achakka?

f. What Indian elements of storytelling does the author use?

g. Why is the novel titled *Kanthapura*?

h. What happens at the end of the novel?

24.7 EXAMINATON ORIENTED QUESTIONS

a. Write an essay on the Indianness of *Kanthapura.*

b. In *Kanthapura* "the political revolution is transcended and assimilated into the racial heritage as myth and legend." Comment.

c. Characters in the novel are not sharply and distinctly individualized. Do you agree? Elucidate giving reasons.

d. *Kanthapura* is a formless novel. Comment.

e. Comment on the peasant sensibility as represented in *Kanthapura*.

f. Critically analyse Raja Rao's rendering of the Indian sensibility.

g. "The evolving of an Indian-English which is adequate enough to express Indian, even regional flavor, without ceasing to be English, is Raja Rao's most significant contribution." Elaborate giving examples.

h. Choosing two scenes from the novel, analyze them to show the dramatic progress of the novel.

i. Analyze and interpret the protagonist of the novel, Moorthy.

j. Discuss the significance of the title of the novel.

k. Discuss *Kanthapura* as an Indian Novel in English.

l. Discuss the representation of the caste-system in *Kanthapura.*

m. Discuss the narrative style and structure of *Kanthapura.*

n. Comment on the presentation of the Gandhian freedom struggle in the novel.

o. In *Kanthapura,* Gandhi's influence, conveyed through Moorthy, transforms the life of an entire community from the bondage of hidebound orthodoxy to struggle and sacrifice for an ideal. Elucidate.

p. *Kanthapura* is a fictional concretization of the Gandhian impact on India. Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

24.8 ANSWER KEY TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

a. true

b. true

c. true

d. false

e. true

f. true

g. false

24.9 SUGGESTED READING

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ARUNDHATI ROY : *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

STRUCTURE

25.1 Introduction

25.2 Objectives

25.3 A Short Summary

25.4 Characters

25.5 Analysis of Some Important Characters

25.6 Various themes of *The God of Small Things*

25.7 Glossary

25.8 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

25.9 Let Us Sum Up

25.10 Examination Oriented Questions

25.11 Suggested Reading

25.1 INTRODUCTION

Published in 1997, *The God of Small Things* quickly skyrocketed Arundhati Roy to worldwide critical and popular acclaim. Her first (and to date only) novel won the 1997 Booker Prize, one of the most prestigious awards in the English-language literary world. Interestingly, Roy was trained as an architect and she had never before considered herself a novelist. The

novel, which Roy wrote between 1992 and 1996, has sold over six million copies and has been translated into forty languages.

The novel takes place in Ayemenem, a village in the south-western Indian state of Kerala in 1969 and 1993. The narrative shifts back and forth in time in a series of flashbacks, memories, and foreshadowing of what's ahead. The plot centers on Estha and Rahel, fraternal boy and girl twins living with their divorced mother, Ammu and her family. The central events of the novel involve the fateful visit of their half-English cousin, Sophie Mol, and her mother Margaret Kochamma. We learn at the beginning of the novel that Sophie Mol drowns in the river by the family's house. The rest of the novel pieces together the events that lead up to her death and the aftermath that ensued, darting back and forth between Estha and Rahel's childhood and adulthood in the process.

While telling the story of Sophie Mol's death, the novel resonates with larger political and social issues. The society that our characters inhabit is still largely shaped by the caste system which defined social classes in India and dictated the status each person held. The Indian Constitution of 1949 outlawed the caste system and discrimination based on social status, but it's pretty clear throughout the novel that there are certain social rules that persist and that still have to be obeyed – particularly in terms of who is allowed to interact with whom. The novel pays particular attention to what the narrator calls the "Love Laws," which interpret the caste system to explore who is allowed to love whom, how, and how much. The violation of these social rules is central to the unraveling of the seemingly nice, simple life that Estha and Rahel experience as children and has a key role in forming the circumstances that lead up to Sophie Mol's death.

The novel also pays attention to class politics, particularly those based on Marxism and Communism. The rise of the lower classes and the toppling of the upper classes is a concept at the heart of these political ideologies that gives hope to some of the novel's characters and fills others with fear. Roy herself seems to be particularly interested in the politics of class. She

has written many political articles and was even awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004. All in all, there is a lot to untangle in this book, but Roy's gorgeous writing makes the whole journey a pleasure – even at the moments when this book is at its most heart-wrenching.

25.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to-

(a) Appreciate Arundhati Roy's life and works.

(b) Explain the contents of *The God of Small Things* properly.

(c) Explain the plot, setting and story of the novel.

(d) Recognize different characters.

(e) Appreciate the novel properly.

25.3 A SHORT SUMMARY

The God of Small Things tells the story of one family in the town of Ayemenem in Kerala, India. Its epigraph is a quotation from contemporary writer John Berger: "Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one." She uses this idea to establish her non-linear, multi-perspective way of storytelling which gives value to points of view as "Big" as a human being's and as "Small" as a cabbage-green butterfly's. In Roy's world, there is no definitive story, only many different stories that fuse to form a kaleidoscopic impression of events.

The novel opens with Rahel's return to Ayemenem after hearing that her twin brother, Estha, has come home. We switch back to the funeral of Sophie Mol, when the twins are seven years old. Rahel believes that Sophie is awake during her funeral and buried alive. The rest of the family refuses to acknowledge the twins and Ammu. On the train ride back to Ayemenem, Ammu cannot speak except to say "He's dead ... I've killed him." Rahel and Estha have not seen each other since Estha was sent away as a child to live with Babu in Assam. Both twins have traveled somewhat aimlessly until returning to their childhood home. Rahel looks out on the

family's former factory, Paradise Pickles & Preserves, and contemplates how all the strangeness in her family resolves around the incident of Sophie Mol's death.

Next, we find the family traveling to Cochin to greet Sophie Mol and her mother, Margaret Kochamma, upon their arrival from England. On their way, they see their servant, Velutha, marching with a group of Communists. Back in the present, Rahel watches Estha undress in the moonlight, neither of them saying a word.

The narrative returns to Cochin, where the family goes to see *The Sound of Music* in the cinema. Inside the theater Estha cannot stop singing, so he is sent out into the lobby, where the Orangedrink Lemondrink man molests him. After he becomes nauseated, the family leaves the movie early. Rahel senses that the Orangedrink Lemondrink man has wronged Estha and talks back to Ammu when she praises the man. Ammu tells her that she loves Rahel a little less, a statement that haunts Rahel for a long time.

Back in the present, Rahel runs into Comrade Pillai, and he shows her a photograph of the twins and Sophie, taken shortly before Sophie died. In a flashback to Sophie's arrival at the Cochin airport, Rahel cannot handle the nervousness surrounding her cousin's arrival, and she is scolded for hiding in the window curtain. Everyone tries to impress Sophie and Margaret Kochamma with new clothing, English sayings, and forced upbeat attitudes.

The narrative turns to Ammu's death at the age of thirty-one. After being banished from the Ayemenem House, she dies while out of town on a job interview. Estha watches her body being pushed into the cremation oven. No one writes to Estha to inform him of Ammu's death. Roy introduces the refrain, "Things can change in a day."

Back at Sophie Mol's welcome ceremony, a crowd gathers to sing and eat cake. Rahel retreats to play with Velutha. As Ammu watches her daughter and handyman together, she is attracted to Velutha for the first time.

Rahel joins Estha, who is alone in the pickle factory. They plan to visit the History House, where the Paravans live. They push an old, decrepit boat into the river and row to Velutha's side of the river. There, he promises to fix the boat for them. Velutha is trying to suppress his growing love for Ammu despite his constant association with her children. (Ammu dreams of a one-armed man making love to her.)

Back in the present, Rahel watches fondly as Estha bathes in the moonlight. The twins meet by coincidence at a temple, where they watch Kathakali dancers act out a violent story of retribution all night.

We turn to the story of Chacko's and Margaret Kochamma's marriage. It began happily but soon crumbled because of a sense of disconnection. Margaret left Chacko for Joe, who later died in an accident. After that, she took Sophie to Ayemenem as a distraction; she can never forgive herself for leaving Sophie alone in Ayemenem the day she died.

We finally hear the story of Sophie Mol's death and the events surrounding it.Vellya Paapen comes to Mammachi's door and offers to kill Velutha with his bare hands for having an affair with Ammu. Baby Kochamma makes sure that Ammu is locked in her room and that the police think he raped Ammu. Mammachi summons Velutha to her house and fires him, banishing him from the property on pain of death. He goes to Comrade Pillai for help but to no avail. Roy begins to call Velutha "The God of Loss" and "The God of Small Things." The telling of Sophie's actual death is short. She joins the twins as they run away after Ammu insults them terribly. After their boat capsizes in the river, she drowns. The twins fall asleep on the veranda of the History House, unaware that Velutha is sleeping there. The next morning, the police come across the river to arrest Velutha. They beat him nearly to death and take the twins to the station with them. There, Baby Kochamma pressures Estha into saying Velutha is guilty of kidnapping him and Rahel. She tells him that doing so is the only way to save Ammu and avoid a life in jail. Estha complies, thus saving Baby Kochamma from being arrested for filing a false report about Velutha. After that, Baby Kochamma coerces Chacko into

evicting Ammu from the house and forcing Estha to go live with Babu. As Estha leaves on the train, Rahel cries as though a part of her is being ripped out of her body.

Back in the present, Estha and Rahel finally share a fond moment in Ammu's former bedroom. They make love out of "hideous grief" for the deaths of Ammu, Velutha, and Sophie Mol.

The final chapter describes the first night of Ammu's and Velutha's affair. They are both drawn to the riverbank, where they meet and make love for the first time. After that, they continue to meet in secret and share their admiration of "Small Things" such as the creatures of the riverbank. Each night as they part, they say to one another: "Tomorrow? Tomorrow." On the last night they meet before Velutha's death, Ammu is compelled to turn back and repeat one more time: "Tomorrow."

25.4 CHARACTERS

i. Estha

Estha, which is short for Esthappen Yako, is Rahel's twin brother. He is a serious, intelligent, and somewhat nervous child who wears "beige and pointy shoes" and has an "Elvis puff." His experience of the circumstances surrounding Sophie's visit is somewhat more traumatic than Rahel's, beginning when he is sexually abused by a man at a theater. The narrator emphasizes that Estha's "Two Thoughts" in the pickle factory, stemming from this experience—that "Anything can happen to Anyone" and that "It's best to be prepared")—are critical in leading to his cousin's death.

Estha is the twin chosen by Baby Kochamma, because he is more "practical" and "responsible," to go into Velutha's cell at the end of the book and condemn him as his and Rahel's abductor. This trauma, in addition to the trauma of being shipped (or "Returned") to Calcutta to live with his father, contributes to Estha's becoming mute at some point in his childhood. He never goes to college and acquires a number of habits, such as wandering

on very long walks and obsessively cleaning his clothes. He is so close to his sister that the narrator describes them as one person, despite having been separated for most of their lives. He is repeatedly referred to as "Silent."

ii. Rahel

Rahel is the partial narrator of the story, and is Estha's younger sister by 18 minutes. As a girl of seven, her hair sits "on top of her head like a fountain" in a "Love-in-Tokyo" band, and she often wears red-tinted plastic sunglasses with yellow rims. An intelligent and straightforward person who has never felt socially comfortable, she is impulsive and wild, and it is implied that everyone but Velutha treats her as somehow lesser than her brother. In later life, she becomes something of a drifter; several times, the narrator refers to her "Emptiness." After the tragedy that forms the core of the story, she remains with her mother, later training as an architectural draftsman and engaging in a failed relationship with a European, elements of which parallel the author's own life story.

iii. Ammu

Ammu is Rahel's and Estha's mother. She married their father (referred to as Baba) only to get away from her family. He was an alcoholic, and she divorced him when he started to be violent towards her and her children. She went back to Ayemenem, where people avoided her on the days when the radio played "her music" and she got a wild look in her eyes. When the twins are seven, she has an affair with Velutha. This relationship is one of the cataclysmic events in the novel. She is a strict mother, and her children worry about losing her love.

iv. Velutha

Velutha is a Paravan, an Untouchable, who is exceptionally smart and works as a carpenter at the Ipe family's pickle factory. His name means white in Malayalam, because he is so dark. He returns to Ayemenem to help his father, Vellya Paapen, take care of his brother, who was paralyzed in an accident.

He is an active member of the Marxist movement. Velutha is extremely kind to the twins, and has an affair with Ammu for which he is brutally punished.

v. Chacko

Chacko is Estha's and Rahel's maternal uncle. He is four years older than Ammu. He meets Margaret in his final year at Oxford and marries her afterward. They have a daughter, Sophie, whose death in Ayemenem is central to the story.

vi. Baby Kochamma

Baby Kochamma is the twins' maternal grand aunt. She is of petite build as a young woman but becomes enormously overweight, with "a mole on her neck," by the time of Sophie's death. She maintains an attitude of superiority because of her education as a garden designer in the United States and her burning, unrequited love for an Irish Catholic priest, her relationship with whom is the only meaningful event in her life. Her own emptiness and failure spark bitter spite for her sister's children, further driven by her prudish code of conventional values. Her spite ultimately condemns the twins, the lovers, and herself to a lifetime of misery.

25.5 ANALYSIS OF SOME IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

RAHEL

Though Rahel and Estha are both the protagonists of this novel, we get to know Rahel more completely, since we spend significantly more time seeing the world through her eyes. As a child, Rahel, exists in a kind of harmony with Estha, her twin brother who is eighteen minutes her senior. Their personalities seem to balance each other out, like popcorn and M&Ms or peanut butter and jelly. Estha is serious and earnest; Rahel becomes preoccupied with things and can't seem to sit still. Estha seems to be the better behaved of the two; Rahel is the one who hides in the dirty airport curtains when she doesn't want to say hi to Sophie Mol.

Rahel also has an incredibly active imagination – she seems to exist in a version of reality that's all her own. When she feels scared, she feels

Pappachi's moth crawling on her heart with icy legs. At Sophie Mol's funeral, she thinks she sees her turn over in her coffin, which further convinces her that Sophie Mol is being buried alive. She sees the kangaroo-shaped trash receptacles at the airport rummaging through their pouches for cigarettes and cashews.

Rahel's imagination is very different from Estha's – hers is more childlike and wondering, while Estha's is more like a worst-case-scenario handbook. The ways they think about and respond to the world around them reveal a lot about the separate paths their experiences will take. Even though Rahel finds things to worry about that are pretty serious, like whether Ammu has stopped loving her as much as she used to, we know things are actually OK for her; she's safe, and she's loved. Any of us would be insecure about Ammu's love if we were in her shoes, but in comparison with Estha's anxiety about being molested again, it's safe to say Estha has more pressing concerns.

In fact, one of the really interesting ways the narrator shows us the difference between the twins is by looking at the way they understand Velutha's death. After Estha is coerced into telling the inspector that Velutha kidnapped him, he tells Rahel that everything's OK – it wasn't Velutha; it was his long-lost twin. Even though we don't know if Rahel totally buys it or not, we see that she finds a safe space to hide in her imagination, while Estha has to deal with the truth.

We learn that after the family is split up, Rahel is sent away to school. She is expelled for misbehavior though her personal brand of misbehaving is kind of harmless and weird: decorating heaps of dung (poop) with flowers. The last straw at one school comes when she hides behind doors and pops out to collide with unsuspecting senior girls. She gets thrown out of two more schools, one for smoking and one for setting someone's hairpiece on fire. In every case, the narrator tells us, Rahel's teachers note that she is an extremely polite child who has no friends (1.102). When we think of how she's been separated from Estha, her other half, we can see how Rahel would be kind of a lost soul.

Rahel continues to wander until she returns to Ayemenem at the age of thirty-one. She enters an architecture program in Delhi, not because she's particularly interested in architecture, but more because she just falls into it. The same seems to go for her marriage. We find out that she meets Larry McCaslin, who is doing research in Delhi, and goes back to the United States with him. We don't really get the vibe that she's into him – and neither does Larry, really. Whenever they make love, he feels like she's not paying attention. The narrator doesn't give us too many specifics about the end of their marriage, which is fitting when you think about how Rahel spends most of her adult life drifting from one thing to the next. She works various jobs all over the U.S. before returning to Ayemenem.

We learn that Estha is really the only reason she returns for. Even though she hasn't seen him in 23 years, we can sense that he's still the most important person in her life. Whenever they are close, they don't even have to speak to know the other is there. (Not that Estha would speak anyway these days.) They still have an innate sense of being completed by each other. This sort of helps explain why Rahel and Estha have sex at the end of the book, although the idea of incest is really uncomfortable for most readers. Being together makes the two halves a complete whole.

ESTHAPPEN

Estha, short for Esthappen Yako, is the other half of our dynamic twin duo. He was born eighteen minutes before his twin, Rahel, which is sort of fitting since in many ways he seems like he's her older brother. Even as a child, Estha is almost painfully earnest and sincere. He loves his mother and Velutha, and he's protective of Rahel. Because he's such a sweet boy, it can be hard to watch what happens to him throughout the novel.

First, a look at Estha in 1969. He is a seven-year-old who loves Elvis Presley (he wears his hair in a puffed-up style to imitate him) and has a very childlike view of the world. He loves *The Sound of Music*, and one of the book's most heartwarming moments is when he sings so happily from the top of his lungs that he has to leave the movie theater.

Of course, if you've read this part already, you know that things go badly for Estha very quickly. His singing wakes up the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man, who is asleep behind the refreshment counter. The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man gets Estha to come behind the counter and molests him. After this experience, Estha's view of the world completely changes. No longer is it a happy and innocent place for him. We see this especially when Estha goes into the factory and thinks his Two Thoughts: "*Anything can happen to anyone* and *It's best to be prepared*" (10.28-30). All of a sudden, he realizes that the world can be a scary and unpredictable place.

In fact, this realization is one of the major ways the narrator shows us how Estha and Rahel are different. Estha sees the sinister aspects of the world that Rahel is not familiar with yet. Estha tries to protect Rahel, too, which shows us yet another dimension of his character. Just because he had to lose his innocence doesn't mean Rahel should have to.

That one bad event in Estha's life triggers the next, almost like a domino effect of bad experiences. When Estha fears that the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man might come to Ayemenem to repeat what happened at the movie theater, he reacts in what we might consider a pretty rational way: he thinks about it and makes a plan. Unfortunately, this plan – to row across the river and live at the History House – goes awry. Estha brings Rahel and Sophie Mol with him, and in the process the boat capsizes and Sophie Mol dies.

As if losing his cousin weren't a scary enough experience for Estha, the domino effect continues: Baby Kochamma blames Velutha for "abducting" the kids, and when the police come for Velutha, it just so happens that Estha and Rahel are there to see him beaten to a bloody pulp. To make matters worse, Baby Kochamma tricks Estha into thinking that Ammu will die in prison unless he speaks against Velutha. This moment is the straw that breaks the camel's back: "Estha's mouth said Yes. Childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid in like a bolt." The cherry on top for Estha is that he is forced to leave Rahel and Ammu behind to go live with the father he hasn't seen since he was a toddler. Estha's childhood, as portrayed in the novel, is rough and scarring.

Let's fast forward to June 1993. Estha has been re-returned to Ayemenem, and the man we meet is introspective, brooding, and somewhat lost. We learn that Estha has stopped speaking entirely. A shadow of his former self, he spends his days going for long walks and doing the household chores, which mostly involve washing his clothes with crumbling blue soap. When Rahel comes back, however, something changes:

It had been quiet in Estha's head until Rahel came. But with her she had brought the sound of passing trains, and the light and shade and light and shade that falls on you if you have a window seat. The world, locked out for years, suddenly flooded in, and now Estha couldn't hear himself for the noise. (1.92)

Estha's reunion with Rahel brings back a number of painful memories that up until this moment he has kept packed away. Estha and Rahel end up delving through many memories of their childhood, and he notices how much she looks like their mother. At the end of the novel, he and Rahel have sex – though it happens so quickly and quietly that we barely notice it – and grieve together for all that they've lost.

ESTHAPPEN TIMELINE AND SUMMARY

- Estha and the family drive out to see *The Sound of Music*.
- Estha can't stop singing during the movie, so he has to go out into the lobby where he can sing to his heart's content.
- The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man at the movie theater molests him.
- Estha blames himself. He starts worrying and feels nauseous. He realizes that Orangedrink Lemondrink Man knows where he lives and can come find him anytime.
- At the airport, Estha refuses to speak when he is introduced to Sophie Mol and Margaret Kochamma.
- When they get home, Estha leaves his family behind and goes into the

factory, where he thinks Two Thoughts*: "Anything can happen to anyone"* and *"It's best to be prepared."*

- Estha decides that he needs a boat.
- Estha and Rahel find a boat and go to visit Velutha.
- Estha, Rahel, and Sophie Mol take the boat out to run away across the river. The boat capsizes and the twins realize that Sophie has drowned.
- They get to the History House and don't know that Velutha is there. The police come and beat Velutha violently.
- Baby Kochamma tells Estha and Rahel that they are murderers and that Ammu will die in jail if they don't answer "yes" to the inspector's questions.
- Estha goes with the inspector and sees the bloody, battered Velutha. He answers "yes" to the inspector's question.
- Estha is sent back to Calcutta to live with Baba.
- 23 years later, Estha comes back to Ayemenem. He has stopped speaking.
- Estha follows Rahel to the kathakali performance. They walk home together.
- Rahel and Estha lie in bed together. They have sex.

AMMU

We know Ammu as Estha and Rahel's mother, but it's important to look at her early life when we examine her character. Ammu isn't just a mom; she's also Pappachi and Mammachi's daughter and Chacko's younger sister. Through a number of flashbacks in the novel, we get a good sense of how her past helped shape who she is as an adult.

While Chacko, as the son of the family, is proudly sent off to school and eventually to Oxford to study as a Rhodes Scholar, Ammu doesn't get the same kind of treatment. In fact, it seems like she doesn't have all that many options. Life at her parents' house is tough. Pappachi is kind of a drunk jerk, terrorizing Mammachi and Ammu. Feeling like there's nothing left for her in

Ayemenem but to wait around for a husband, Ammu gets permission to go to Calcutta for a summer. She meets and marries Baba, which turns out to be a bad choice.

Ammu divorces Baba and moves back to Ayemenem when the twins are toddlers. Ammu is both a strict and loving mother. What's interesting about her is her resistance to social norms. She doesn't feel like she needs to be ashamed of her divorce. Instead, she feels like she wasted her best years. This quality sets her apart from the other women of the household, who are totally preoccupied with looking better than others in society.

Ammu doesn't think too much of social rank. In fact, she's kind of proud that Velutha was spotted at the communist march, figuring that they both find society's norms oppressive and wrong. This doesn't mean Ammu doesn't care about appearances altogether; she wants her kids to behave well so that everyone can see that a woman on her own can be both independent and a good mother.

Ammu's affair with Velutha is a great escape for her, and we can tell that she has really strong feelings for him, even though she knows their love can never be public. In a way, it's their love that brings about both of their downfalls. Baby Kochamma wouldn't have to make up stories about Velutha to the police if they hadn't had an affair. Ammu's life after Velutha's death is unimaginably bad. She's lost the only man she ever loved, and she's separated from her kids. She dies alone, likely of tuberculosis, in a dirty hotel room. Still, when she is cremated, Rahel doesn't remember her as the disgusting, hacking, slightly loony woman that she ultimately becomes. Ammu is remembered as lovely and, most importantly, loving.

AMMU TIMELINE AND SUMMARY

- Ammu has a rough upbringing.
- Pappachi turns Ammu and Mammachi out of the house from time to time.

- One night, he tears up her rubber boots, her most prized possession.
- Ammu's parents don't think it's necessary to send a woman to college, so she spends her young adulthood living at home and waiting for marriage proposals.
- One summer, Ammu's parents allow her to move to Calcutta. She meets Baba, who proposes to her five days after they meet. She accepts.
- Ammu gives birth to Estha and Rahel in 1962.
- When the twins are two years old, Babu loses his job. He tells Ammu he can keep his job if she agrees to sleep with his boss. He punches her when she says no. After this happens a few times, she takes the kids and moves back to Ayemenem.
- Ammu gets mad at the twins for misbehaving when Sophie Mol comes to visit. She thinks they make a bad first impression.
- Ammu sees Rahel run off to talk to Velutha.
- When Margaret Kochamma makes an ignorant comment about the local culture, Ammu gets angry and storms off.
- Ammu falls asleep and has a dream about a man she calls "The God of Small Things" (actually Velutha).
- That night, Ammu goes out for a walk in the dark. She encounters Velutha, and they make love.
- Ammu and Velutha meet every night for the next thirteen nights.
- After Vellya Paapen rats Velutha and Ammu out, Baby Kochamma locks Ammu in her bedroom.
- Ammu yells through the door at Estha and Rahel that it's their fault she's locked in.
- After Sophie Mol's funeral, Ammu goes to see Inspector Thomas Mathew to clear Velutha's name. He tells Ammu that Velutha is already dead.

- Ammu is forced to leave Ayemenem. She becomes severely ill.
- Ammu dies alone in a hotel room. Chacko and Rahel take her to be cremated.

BABY KOCHAMMA

We don't know about her, but if we had to pick the character we dislike the most in the novel, it would probably be Baby Kochamma. She's selfish, self-centered, snippy, and just downright mean. Still, a novel without an antagonist would be like chocolate chip cookies without the milk, or karaoke without a Kelly Clarkson song: it just doesn't seem to work as well if that key piece is missing. As much as we want to tell Baby Kochamma to get over herself and take a hike, we actually need her. In a novel that covers such a big stretch of time, Baby Kochamma's history is the longest of any other character. So, who is Baby Kochamma?

First, a little back-story: Baby Kochamma is not a baby, and her last name is not really Kochamma. We never find out exactly why she takes on the name Baby, but it's how everyone knows her. Her real name is Navomi Ipe, and Kochamma is just a title of respect and honor for a women.

As a young women, Baby Kochamma fell in love with Father Mulligan, a priest who used to visit her father, Rev. E. John Ipe, on Thursdays. She figured that if she showed him how charitable she was, he would fall in love with her. Baby Kochamma would forcibly bathe a peasant kid in the public well every Thursday so Father Mulligan would see how sweet and wonderful she was. When this didn't work, she entered a convent to become a nun. Though this seemed like a foolproof plan at the time, it didn't actually work, and Baby Kochamma was miserable. For someone who turns out to be a colossal jerk, we've got to at least respect her for her persistence. She eventually dropped out of the convent. Her father, figuring she was totally unmarriageable at this point, sent her to the United States, where she studied ornamental gardening at the University of Rochester.

Fast forward to 1969, when the parts of the novel involving Rahel and Estha as children take place. Baby Kochamma seems to be trying to figure out what her place in the world is. She has never been married, and lives with the rest of the family as an old maid. She looks down on Ammu for not being ashamed of being a divorced mother of two, and she lives to put Estha and Rahel down.

This is especially noticeable when Sophie Mol and Margaret Kochamma arrive. Baby Kochamma takes every opportunity to humiliate the twins. Baby Kochamma's behavior is the kind of thing mothers warned you about in elementary school: when people aren't nice to you, it's because they're insecure. We can see this play out in Baby Kochamma's every move. She's totally preoccupied with how she's perceived by others. When Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol arrive, for example, Rahel notices that Baby Kochamma starts speaking in a "strange new British accent" (6.92) and tries to show off her knowledge of Shakespeare and all things classy and British. We get the vibe, though, that everybody knows that Baby Kochamma is full of it, but nobody except Estha and Rahel really do anything to burst her bubble.

Baby Kochamma's acts of getting Velutha and Ammu in trouble and manipulating Estha and Rahel after Sophie Mol's death are key moments that show us just how insecure she is when it comes to social status. Here's a woman who knows exactly what she's doing: she's a total snake in the grass, even if she acts like she truly cares about everyone else.

When Vellya Paapen comes to the house to confess that he's discovered the relationship between Ammu and Velutha, Mammachi and Baby Kochamma both seriously flip out. All Baby Kochamma can think about is how bad *she's* going to look because of Ammu's actions. She's totally willing to compromise Ammu's happiness and to sell Velutha out – which leads to his death – to maintain "respectable" appearances. She's also willing to terrify the twins – calling them murderers and telling them that they will also be responsible for Ammu's death – in order to make sure that her own false accusations against Velutha seem legit.

The Baby Kochamma of 1993 lives a pretty simple life in comparison. There's not really anyone left to manipulate. Ammu and Mammachi are both dead, and Chacko has moved to Canada. She's totally addicted to satellite TV, and as a result she's let the house fall to pieces around her. She sits around wearing all of Mammachi's old jewelry as though she's playing dress-up. Rahel observes that it's like Baby Kochamma is "living her life backwards" (1.136). All in all, Baby Kochamma is hard to like, but she's a complex and interesting character.

BABY KOCHAMMA TIMELINE AND SUMMARY

- As a young woman of eighteen Baby Kochamma falls in love with Father Mulligan, a young Irish monk. She tries to get his attention by force-bathing a little kid whenever she knows he's going to come by.
- Baby Kochamma converts to Roman Catholicism and decides to become a nun so that Father Mulligan will love her. This doesn't work – surprise, surprise.
- Baby Kochamma splits from the convent. Her dad figures her reputation is shot, so he sends her to the University of Rochester in New York to study ornamental gardening.
- Baby Kochamma came back obese. She spends all her time gardening.
- When Sophie Mol arrives, Baby Kochamma tries like crazy to impress her and Margaret Kochamma. She makes fun of Estha.
- When Baby Kochamma finds out about Ammu's affair with Velutha, she locks her in her bedroom.
- Baby Kochamma tells a made-up story to Inspector Thomas Mathew about how they had to fire Velutha because he'd tried to rape Ammu.
- Inspector Thomas Mathew tells Baby Kochamma that the twins have undermined her story about Velutha.

- Baby Kochamma asks for a few moments alone with the twins. She tells them they are murderers and that Ammu will die in jail if they don't answer "yes" to the inspector's questions.
- When she finds out that Ammu has gone to the police herself, Baby Kochamma realizes she has to get Ammu to leave town. She turns Chacko against Ammu, and that does the trick.
- Baby Kochamma also decides that Estha should be Returned.
- In 1993, Baby Kochamma sits around all day watching TV and wearing Mammachi's jewelry.

SOPHIE MOL

Sophie Mol is a pivotal character in the novel, but we don't really get to know her very well. When you think about it, most of the detail we get about Sophie comes from what people *expect* her to be or from how people remember external qualities about her. In many ways, she's more of a *type* than an actual person.

Our understanding of Sophie Mol mainly comes through the ways in which the other characters – particularly Estha and Rahel – perceive her. We know that she is the half-English, half-Indian daughter of Chacko and Margaret Kochamma. She's always wearing yellow bellbottom pants. She has a go-go bag that she loves to carry around. She misses Joe, her deceased step-father, terribly. She has light-colored eyes and dark hair. She can tell that she's different from Rahel and Estha because they're fully Indian while she is half-white.

Because we learn about Sophie Mol mostly through Estha and Rahel's eyes, it's easy to dismiss her as the spoiled brat you love to hate. The twins don't particularly like her because she makes them feel inferior. Other members of the family, particularly Baby Kochamma, constantly compare them to Sophie in ways that make her seem better. We all have that person in our lives – whether it's a glamorous cousin, an older sibling, or a popular kid in school – who makes us feel like we just don't measure up.

The thing about Sophie Mol, though, is that, as much as we're inclined to dislike her, she isn't actually all that bad. It's easy to see how Rahel and Estha dislike her based on their preconceptions about her rather than who she really is. Unlike them, we get the chance to see what Sophie is like on her own. At the end of Chapter 13, we see that Sophie actually wants to be friends with her cousins, and that she's the one who feels left out. She tries to win them over the best way she knows how: she gathers up presents to give them:

Sophie Mol put the presents into her go-go bag, and went forth into the world. To drive a hard bargain. To negotiate a friendship. (13.185)

There are other ways that Sophie tries to get the twins to like her. She insults Chacko and Baby Kochamma to win their approval, and she begs to tag along with them when they decide to run away. This decision, of course, proves fatal for her. As much as the twins dislike her, and as much as we're initially inclined to follow suit, in the end we see a very human, sensitive, and fundamentally lonely little girl in Sophie Mol.

VELUTHA

Velutha is Vellya Paapen's younger son. He's also Estha and Rahel's best friend, even though he's only three years younger than their mother. We first meet Velutha in 1969 when the family is on its way to the movie theater. Rahel sees him marching in the street with the rest of the communists. We learn then that several years ago, he disappeared and nobody knew where he was, though there were plenty of rumors about him (including that he had been to prison).

When we see him participating in the march, he has been back in Ayemenem for five months and has been working for Mammachi as the factory carpenter. We learn that he's an Untouchable, at the bottom of the social totem pole. A lot of the other factory workers are frustrated that someone who is supposed to be beneath them is earning so much respect.

It's hard to name a part of Velutha's life that isn't shaped by his social status or political beliefs. His relationship with Ammu is perhaps the most important example. As a kid, Velutha used to make little wooden toys for Ammu, though he would have to place them in her outstretched hand so he wouldn't touch her. Eventually she stopped flattening her hand out, and by allowing him to touch her, Ammu broke down the social barriers that divide them.

Even though Ammu comes to realize that she's in love with Velutha, however, she warns Estha and Rahel not to spend too much time with him, because she knows that it can only lead to trouble. She has a hard time telling herself the same thing, though, when she realizes just how, well, hot he is:

She saw the ridges of muscle on Velutha's stomach grow taught and rise under his skin like the divisions on a slab of chocolate. She wondered at how his body had changed – so quietly, from a flat-muscled boy's body into a man's body. Contoured and hard. A swimmer's body. A swimmer-carpenter's body. Polished with a high-wax body polish. He had high cheekbones and a white, sudden smile. (8.80-81)

When, we need a cold shower. But seriously, Velutha's relationship with Ammu shows us the way he chooses to disregard societal rules in favor of love, and how this decision, however much we think it is the right one for him, is ultimately his downfall. Velutha, by our standards, doesn't do anything wrong by loving Ammu, and vice versa. Still, we see how his low social standing allows him to become an easy scapegoat. The police feels little remorse for brutally beating him. The narrator doesn't just show us, but also tells us that Velutha doesn't deserve what he gets. His death is shaped by his social class, just as his life was.

CHACKO

Chacko is Ammu's brother, Mammachi's son, Rahel and Estha's uncle, and Sophie Mol's dad. He's one of those people we want to like but who can be really irritating. As a young man, Chacko got all the family's love and

attention. He went on to be a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, which has made him a little full of himself. We can consider a number of the characters in the novel to be kind of elitist – Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, and Chacko are all people who seem to think they're better or more important than others – but Chacko is the only one with the credentials to back it up.

Chacko also occupies kind of a weird space in society. He's taken over the family's factory, Paradise Pickles and Preserves, so on one hand, we can see him as Mr. Big Boss Man. On the other hand, he calls himself a Marxist, which basically means that he believes that the workers of the world – the laboring class – should unite, rise up against the middle and upper classes, and fight for their rights. If this seems contradictory to you, you're not alone – the narrator tells us outright that Chacko's beliefs conflict with his actions.

When we think about who Chacko is on a personal level, it's important to look at his family life. When Chacko lived in England, he met and married Margaret Kochamma, a waitress at an Oxford café. She ultimately found him too lazy and slovenly and divorced him in favor of Joe, a more dependable biologist. Not only is Chacko heartbroken over Margaret, but he also has to deal with the fact that he will miss most of his daughter Sophie Mol's childhood. (Margaret asked Chacko to leave when Sophie Mol was just a baby.)

Chacko can't be a dad to Sophie Mol, but he can be a stand-in father figure for Estha and Rahel when they all find themselves living in Ayemenem together. Nevertheless, we get the vibe that Chacko feels like he's settling for what he can get, not for what he really wants. He is completely thrilled when Margaret and Sophie come to visit. It really seems like he wants to believe he can have them back in his life for good – which is perhaps one reason he refers to Margaret as his wife instead of refering her as his ex-wife. Chacko is someone we don't necessarily like all the time, but we can really feel for him. It's easy to see why he is the way he is.

MAMMACHI

Mammachi is Chacko and Ammu's mother and Estha and Rahel's grandmother. She's nearly blind and plays a mean violin. She founded Paradise Pickles and Preserves and built it into a successful business before turning it over to Chacko, who transformed it into, a less successful business. Mammachi is sort of a typical cranky old-lady figure – very stubborn and set in her beliefs and habits. Her ideas of how the world works are pretty much set in stone. She is prejudiced against the lower classes, always wants to make herself look important, and hates Margaret Kochamma with a passion.

PAPPACHI (SHRI BENAAN JOHN IPE)

Pappachi is Estha and Rahel's grandfather, Ammu's father. He was once an Imperial Entomologist, which is a frou-frou way of saying that he studied bugs for the government. His biggest failure in life came from his biggest triumph: he discovered a rare breed of moth, but he didn't get credit or even naming rights for his discovery. Pappachi was an angry, jealous man who beat Mammachi regularly. He dies before the action of the novel really kicks off, so he's referred to mostly as a memory.

25.6 VARIOUS THEMES OF *THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS*

FAMILY

The God of Small Things is probably more than anything else a novel about family. It explores the relationship between brother and sister, mother and child, grandparent and grandchild, aunt and niece/nephew, and cousins. It looks at the ways families are forced to stick together and also how they fall apart. Unconditional family love is a major issue on the table here. Sometimes we feel obligated to love our family members. On the other hand, just because you're related to someone doesn't mean you'll love them or that they'll have your back. Just like in real life, family relationships in the novel can be complicated, confusing, and frustrating.

SOCIETY AND CLASS

The characters in *The God of Small Things* are constantly coming up against the forces of society and class. Indian society was structured for centuries according to very rigid social classes and boundaries, through what is known as the caste system. Even though the novel takes place after the caste system stopped being a legal social policy, its characters still find themselves limited by what is and isn't deemed socially acceptable for them. Social rules dictate who can love whom, which occupations people can adopt, and who is considered to be better than whom.

VERSIONS OF REALITY

Throughout *The God of Small Things*, we get to see how things look from different characters' point of view – different versions of the same reality. We see Estha and Rahel at two very different points in their lives, twenty-three years apart. There is a stark difference between their perspectives as seven-year-olds and as 31-year-olds. As kids, we see them learning about the world as they go; as adults, they are trying to make sense of the past.

MEMORY AND THE PAST

Time in *The God of Small Things* doesn't unfold in a linear way; we don't start at Point A and watch the story progress until we get to Point B. Instead, we move back and forth between 1969 and 1993, with a few other episodes thrown in for flavor. The story is told through a series of memories and flashbacks. From the moment the novel begins, we know what's going to happen, we just don't know *how*. We start at the end, and the narrator uses the characters' memories to put the pieces together for us. (Check out "Writing Style" for more on this.)

GUILT AND BLAME

Guilt and blame are a tricky duo in this book, lurking around every corner. Some really horrible things happen here: Estha is molested; Sophie Mol

drowns; a family breaks apart. Even though the narrator sometimes suggests that these things might have been destined to happen, the only way for the characters to make sense of the tragedies they are living through is to find someone to blame. Margaret Kochamma, for instance, finds it easiest to blame Estha for Sophie Mol's death, while Chacko blames Ammu.

Along with blame, guilt is an emotion all too familiar to our characters. Unfortunately, we often see instances of guilt, or shame, where there should be none. For example, Estha feels incredibly guilty after the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man molests him, convinced that he did something wrong.

INNOCENCE

One of the most interesting aspects of *The God of Small Things* is how the narrator helps to see and understand the world from a kid's perspective. This ranges from everyday things (like what certain words mean) to the most shocking and horrific events imaginable (like Sophie Mol's death). Usually when we think about innocence, we think about a world of simplicity. When you're innocent, what you don't know can't hurt you – you can be blissfully naïve. This book puts a different spin on innocence – here, it's not about what Estha and Rahel don't know, but rather the way they make sense of what they *do* know, see, or experience.

Estha and Rahel, both separately and together, lose their innocence throughout the course of the novel. One of the most touching aspects of Estha's loss of innocence – when he is molested, and when he is forced to condemn Velutha – is how he tries to prevent the same thing from happening to Rahel. While both children undergo a loss of innocence through painful experiences, Estha is the more profoundly affected of the two. He watches his world change and tries to prevent his sister from having to share that experience.

LOVE

The God of Small Things is about love. The novel puts it right out there on the table, repeatedly invoking the "Love Laws" that dictate "who

should be loved, and how. And how much" (1.209-210). Love and rules are constantly butting heads in the book. Ammu and Velutha's love is forbidden because of their caste (social status) differences. Rahel and Estha's love is expressed physically at the end of the book, resulting in the taboo of incest. Mammachi's feelings toward her son, Chacko, also blur the lines between familial and romantic love. (See "Family" under "Quotes by Theme.") And Baby Kochamma is in love with Father Mulligan, a priest who can never marry. In *The God of Small Things*, love constantly violates social rules.

FEAR

In a novel in which so many bad things happen, it's not all that surprising that fear comes to the forefront. It's hard to think of even one character who doesn't demonstrate fear at some point. The thing to keep in mind about fear in *The God of Small Things* is that it isn't just a reaction to something scary; it's a powerful motivator that pushes characters to act in particular, often dangerous, ways.

Estha's fear of the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man and Rahel's fear that Ammu doesn't love her anymore provoke the twins to run away across the river. Baby Kochamma and Mammachi's fear of social disgrace push them to lock Ammu away and send the police after Velutha. Fear is a mechanism behind many of the major, life-changing moments of the novel, and the result is often more terrifying than the thing that was originally feared.

IDENTITY

The question of identity ("Who am I?") is important to all the characters in *The God of Small Things*, but especially to Estha and Rahel. On the one level, they have a very good idea of who they are: they are extensions of one another. When they are together, they are a whole being. Nevertheless, the more Estha and Rahel learn about the world around them, the more we see them taking on alternate identities and imagining themselves as someone else.

Ambassador E. Pelvis, Ambassador Stick Insect, and The Airport Fairy are all versions of themselves they identify with in different situations. Part of what makes their reunion in 1993 so important is that for the first time in twenty three years they can consider themselves whole again.

MORTALITY

Mortality, or death, resonates throughout *The God of Small Things*. We find out from the very beginning that Sophie Mol is going to die, and our anticipation of and eventual reaction to her death keeps us on edge from the first to the very last page. But Sophie Mol isn't the only person who comes face to face with death; Velutha dies in an incredibly graphic and violent way, and Ammu's death scene is full of anguish and fear. The novel asks us to consider not just the experience of death, but also that of witnessing it.

25.7 GLOSSARY

Ammu

Ammu is the twins' mother - who suffers from the patriarchal mindset of her father, and later her husband whom she divorces only to be viewed as a Veshya. She drifts through life until she finds momentary happiness with Velutha, before it all ends in despair.

Ayemenem

An actual town in the Southern State of Kerala, spelt "Aymanam." Both the setting for the novel *The God of Small Things* and the place where Arundhati Roy spent her childhood.

Baby Kochamma

The twins Great Aunt whose only passion is her childhood love for an Irish Monk who cannot return her advances. Disillusioned, she converts to Catholicism and enters into a convent. A year later her father goes to fetch her as she expressed unhappiness in her letters, but she refuses to reconvert and remains a Catholic for the rest of her life. As a result of

these events, it can be argued that she lives her life in bitterness and resents the twins, also playing a helping hand in Velutha's eventual death.

Caste System

A social system found in India that grades society based on castes/ classes. In India, this class system is hereditary also stratified according to ritual purity by Hindu standards. In the caste system, Brahmans are the highest caste and the Untouchables are the lowest.

Chacko

Ammu's older brother, the twins' uncle and the father of Sophie Mol. After his divorce to Sophie Mol's mother he remains in India and struggles to keep up the family's pickle business before eventually emigrating to Canada.

Cochin

A major city also found in the Southern State of Kerala, which is home to the region's major airport. It is the setting for the twins' first introduction to Sophie Mol and her mother Margaret Kochamma. Cochin is viewed as a tourist city, thus its history has been put aside in favour of pleasing the foreigners who visit it: historical rooms are replaced with lobbies and dining rooms, and traditional Indian cultural acts such as the Kathakali performances are adapted and solely performed for the entertainment of tourists.

Communist

A member and follower of Communism, exemplified by the philosophy of Karl Marx, and politics of Lenin. Communism is a socio-political movement that aims for a classless and stateless society structured upon common ownership of the means of production; free access to articles of consumption, and the end of wage labour and private property by the means of production and real estate.

Comrade

A fellow member of the Communist Party.

Coolie

An offensive Asian slang word for an unskilled labourer.

Esthappen Yako (Estha)

A sensitive, quiet boy - Rahel's twin brother, and her closest ally. Whilst they're not identical, it is clear from the beginning that the bond between them is sacred and unbreakable.

History House

An abandoned house across the river from the Ayemenem house in which Velutha lives with Vellya Paapen and Kuttappen. The twins become obsessed with the History House and use the area surrounding it as their safe-haven from various troubles in the Ayemenem house.

Kathakali

A traditional art form native to Kerala. It combines opera, dance, and "full-body acting." Usually several hours long, in Cochin the performances are cut short and abridged to please the foreigner's patience and taste.

Paravan

A low, Untouchable caste - most usually of fishermen. Velutha and his family are Paravans.

Rahel Kochamma

A quiet girl with an inner emptiness that she carries with her into adulthood and which eventually causes the end of her only marriage to a man who finds her eyes alarming whilst they make love. She is a keen observer of the world around her and the people within it.

Sophie Mol

Daughter of Margaret Kochamma and Chacko. She visits India and forms a bond with the twins. Of her, Rahel states on page 16: "...Sophie Mol (the seeker of small wisdoms: where do birds go to die? Why don't dead ones fall from the sky? The harbinger of harsh reality: You're both whole wogs and I'm a half one. The guru of gore: I've seen a man in an accident with his eyeball swinging on the end of a nerve. Like a yo-yo.) was always there." Her death changes the courses of the lives around her forever.

The Grotesque

A style/art in which things are distorted and made bizarre. It can incorporate the supernatural, violence, the unmentionable and sexuality.

Untouchables

The lowest caste in the system. They are considered low, most especially by the members of the higher castes. Roy attempts to incorporate the meaning of Untouchable with a sense of "irreproachable," suggesting that which is Untouchable may, in fact, be sacred.

Velutha

The handyman who helps out around the Ayemenem household. As an Untouchable, he is unable to even touch Ammu, and so it becomes clear as to the utter disgust with which the people view his love affair with her. Ironically enough, it is via the touch of this Untouchable that Ammu is finally granted a glimpse of happiness and contentment.

Veshya

Ritualistic Prostitute in India.

25.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. What is the message or moral conveyed by the novel – *The God of Small Things?*

2. What are the mixed feelings of the foreign returnees?

3. What is the funtion of the concept and the reality of "the Untouchable" in *The God of Small Things*?

4. Who-or what-is the God of Small Things and what other names and what divine and earthly attributes are associated with this god?

5. Comment on womanhood and partriarchy in *The God of Small Things*.

25.9 LET US SUM UP

Arundhati Roy, a very famous author from India, won the Booker Prize for her book *The God of Small Things* in 1997. The novel is a semi-autobiographical. Arundhati Roy is also an activist who writes and speaks on issues concerning the environment, non-violence and also on human rights. She has written several non-fiction books like *The Cost of Living, The Shape of the Beast: Conversations with Arundhati Roy, The Greater Common Good, Capitalism: A Ghost Story* and many other titles.

The God of Small Things is the story of a Christian family from Kerala. The book is divided into twenty one different chapters of varying lengths. The chapters are not internally sequential—flashbacks quietly blend into the present and vice versa. The past intermingles with the present, leaving its traces and influencing events that shock and pain.

Exquisite use of the English language, coupled with a haunting storyline, makes this book, an intense read. *The God of Small Things is* a pulchritudinous but tragic representative journey through India's English speaking landscape. This book can stun, like no other, make one feel the anguish and pain of a mother, the sorrow of a child, the sufferings of lovers separated, the forced maturity thrust upon children, the separation of family members. And one will also witness the ploys exhibited by those who envy and the actions of those who cannot forgive.

The story is not sequent, it reveals itself in spurts—what happens now, affects what will happen later, what happened earlier, affects what

happens now. There are parts in the story, which could be completely unacceptable to some readers. However, one wonders what the outcome would have been, had untouchability never been a factor and if only everyone was treated equally.

25.10 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. How do you think Chacko feels about Ammu at the beginning of the book? In the middle? At the end?
2. Rahel seems to think of Chacko as something of a surrogate, or substitute, dad. How do you think Chacko feels about Estha and Rahel? What examples support your view?
3. Why do you think Vellya Paapen is willing to kill Velutha? What does this say about the importance of social rules versus family bonds?
4. We get a glimpse into the perspective of most characters through the novel. Why do you think we learn so little about Baba, Estha and Rahel's father?
5. Why does Ammu seem to dislike Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol, while everyone else fawns over them?
6. Why do you think Chacko tells the twins that liking *The Sound of Music* is an example of their Anglophilia? In what ways do they put themselves down by putting the Von Trapps on a pedestal?
7. Why does Ammu tell Rahel that she doesn't want the twins to spend so much time with Velutha?
8. Why do you think Baby Kochamma tries so hard to impress Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol with her knowledge of Shakespeare?
9. What are some ways in which the twins are frightened by the way they perceive the world?
10. How might it be useful for Rahel to create alternate explanations for Sophie Mol's death?

11. What are some examples of how adults and kids view the same situation differently in the novel?

12. Sometimes the way the twins view the world as kids can seem silly or cute, but in what ways are their observations insightful?

13. How are memories used in the novel to help tell the story?

14. How are memories painful? How are they a source of comfort and strength?

15. What are some of the central objects in the novel that trigger memories, and what kinds of memories do these objects evoke?

16. What do we learn about individual characters through the things they remember?

17. Why do you think Margaret Kochamma suspects that Estha is to blame for Sophie Mol's death?

18. Why do you think it's so easy for Chacko to blame Ammu for what happens to Sophie Mol?

19. For which event do you think Estha feels more guilt: Sophie Mol's or Velutha's death?

20. Which characters tend to feel guilt in this novel, and which tend to blame others?

21. Do you think Estha knows what's happening when the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man molests him, or do you think it only sinks in later?

22. Why do you think Estha tries so hard to protect Rahel from harsh realities like his molestation and Velutha's death?

23. Is Estha's loss of innocence a process, or is there one single event that marks it?

24. In what ways does Rahel's innocence affect the way she looks at the world as a child?

25. In what ways do you think Baby Kochamma would have been different if she had loved someone other than Father Mulligan?

26. Are there any examples of love in this novel that is both successful and socially acceptable?

27. When the narrator discusses Rahel's "list" (6.214), we learn that it shows how she is constantly torn between "love" and "duty" – who she really loves and who she's supposed to love. Who are the people who truly love one another in the book?

28. Name three examples of love that violates the "Love Laws" – i.e., examples of people who love each other but aren't "supposed" to.

29. How does fear motivate Estha?

30. How are relationships between people controlled by fear in this book?

31. In what ways does the narrator show us that the twins are afraid without telling us outright?

32. What are some things that only kids fear in this book? What are some things that only adults fear?

33. How are different nicknames used in the book to identify different aspects of Rahel and Estha's personalities?

34. Why do you think it might be important that Sophie Mol is half-white and half-Indian, rather than being all of one or the other?

35. What are some of the ways in which identity and social class are inseparable?

36. Why does Velutha claim to have a twin brother instead of admitting that it was him that Rahel saw in the march?

37. Why do you think the narrator tells us from the very beginning that Sophie Mol is going to die?

38. How do you think the novel would have ended differently if Ammu hadn't died?

39. Why do you think Rahel believes that Sophie Mol is still alive at her funeral?

40. Do you think Estha would have felt differently about condemning Velutha if he could have done it after his death instead of while he was still hanging on by a thread?

25.11 SUGGESTED READING

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: Critique and Commentary, by R. S. Sharma, Shashi Bala Talwar. Published by Creative Books, 1998. ISBN 81-86318-54-2.

Explorations: Arundhati Roy's the God of Small things, by Indira Bhatt, Indira Nityanandam. Published by Creative Books, 1999. ISBN 81-86318-56-9.

The God of Small Things: A Saga of Lost Dreams, by K. V. Surendran. Published by Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2000. ISBN 81-7156-887-4. Excerpts

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: a reader's guide, by Julie Mullaney. Published by Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002. ISBN 0-8264-5327-9.

Reading Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, by Carole Froude-Durix, Jean-Pierre Durix. Published by Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2002. ISBN 2-905965-80-0,.

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CHAPTER-WISE SUMMARY

STRUCTURE

26.1 Introduction
26.2 Objectives
26.3 Various Episodes
26.4 Summary of Chapter 1
26.5 Summary of Chapter 2
26.6 Summary of Chapter 3
26.7 Summary of Chapter 4
26.8 Summary of Chapter 5
26.9 Summary of Chapter 6
26.10 Glossary
26.11 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)
26.12 Let Us Sum Up
26.13 Examination Oriented Questions
26.14 Suggested Reading

26.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are going to read the summary of chapters 1 to 6.

26.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to-

(a) explain the contents of *The God of Small Things*.

(b) appreciate the plot, setting and story of the novel.

(c) analyse the novel properly.

26.3 VARIOUS EPISODES

- Paradise Pickles and Preserves
- Pappachi's Moth
- Big Man the Laltain, Small Man the Mombatti
- Abhilash Talkies
- God's Own Country
- Cochin Kangaroos

26.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 1

Paradise Pickles and Preserves

- The narrator introduces us to Ayemenem and its seasons.
- Rahel returns to Ayemenem in the rainy season to the "old house on the hill" (1.4).
- We meet Baby Kochamma, Rahel's great-aunt. We learn her real name is Navomi Ipe and that Rahel is not there to see her. Instead, she's there to see her twin brother Estha (short for Esthappen).
- We learn that Rahel and Estha are two-egg ("dizygotic") twins who were born eighteen minutes apart.
- The narrator tells us that Estha and Rahel never really looked alike. Instead, any confusing similarities between the two lie in a "deeper, more secret place" (1.8).
- We get Estha and Rahel's perspective on themselves: as kids they saw themselves as "Me" together, and separately as "We" or "Us." They shared identities and thoughts – Rahel remembers "waking up one night giggling at Estha's funny dream" (1.10).

- Rahel also has memories that she "has no right to have" (1.11): what the Orangedrink, Lemondrink Man did to Estha at the movie theater and the sandwiches that Estha ate on the Madras Mail. (Keep your eye out for the way the narrator keeps telling us hints about what's going to happen before it actually does.)
- Now, as adults, Rahel thinks of Estha and Rahel as "them." She sees borders drawn between their individual lives. We learn that they are now 31, the same age their mother Ammu was when she died.
- We learn that Estha and Rahel were almost born on a bus. Their father Baba had to hold Ammu's stomach to "keep it from wobbling" (1.21). Almost immediately after these details, we find out that Baba and Ammu got divorced, and Ammu moved back to Kerala with the kids.
- As kids, Estha thought that if they had been born on the bus they'd be entitled to free bus rides for life. The fact that this didn't happen has always been a source of disappointment to Estha and Rahel. (They also thought that if one was killed in a Zebra crossing, the government was obligated to pay for your funeral.)
- The mention of funerals jets us back to a memory of the twins' cousin Sophie Mol's funeral. She died when she was almost Nine and Estha and Rahel were seven. We get the idea that she drowned: "her face was pale and as wrinkled as a dhobi's thumb from being in water for too long" (1.27).
- The scene of Sophie Mol's funeral introduces us to the whole family: Margaret Kochamma, Sophie Mol's English mother; Chacko, Rahel's uncle and Sophie Mol's biological father; and Mammachi, Rahel's grandmother.
- For some reason (we don't know why at this point), Ammu, Estha, and Rahel are not allowed to stand with the rest of the family at the funeral, and everyone ignores them.
- Rahel thinks Sophie Mol is awake for her funeral, since she's lying in the coffin with her eyes open. She shows Rahel two things. The first is

that the dome of the church has been painted blue like the sky, which Rahel never noticed before. She imagines someone like Velutha swinging from scaffolding to paint the clouds on the ceiling and then falling and dying, "lying broken on the hot church floor, dark blood spilling from his skull like a secret" (1.38). (We will see this image pop up later – keep an eye out for striking images in this book, because they tend to repeat.)

- The other thing Sophie Mol shows Rahel is a baby bat that climbs up Baby Kochamma's sari.
- Rahel sees Sophie Mol do a cartwheel in her coffin. When Sophie Mol is buried, Rahel knows she's not really dead. "Inside the earth Sophie Mol screamed, and shredded satin with her teeth. But you can't hear screams through earth and stone" (1.48). (Keep an eye out for moments where kids' versions of reality conflict with those of adults.)
- After the funeral Ammu and the twins go to the police station. Ammu tells Inspector Thomas Mathew that there has been a terrible mistake. She wants to make a statement and to see Velutha.
- Inspector Thomas Mathew tells her it's too late. He calls her a*veshya* with illegitimate children. (Rahel and Estha don't know what these words mean.) He tells her to go home and taps her breasts with his police baton, "as though he was choosing mangoes from a basket" (1.56). Ammu cries for the first time that Estha and Rahel have ever seen.
- On the bus, Ammu says, "I've killed him" (1.59).
- Two weeks later, Ammu sends Estha back to live with his father in Calcutta. Throughout the book, this event will be referred to as the time Estha was Returned (always with a capital R). This is the last time Estha and Rahel see each other for years.
- Now we're back in the present, in 1993. Estha has come back to Ayemenem. Baba is moving to Australia and he can't take Estha with him.

- Estha is out walking in the rain. He knows without anyone telling him that Rahel is there.
- We learn more about Estha. He had always been a quiet kid, but at some point he stopped talking entirely. He has acquired the ability to blend into the background – sometimes people don't even notice him.
- When Estha was Returned, he did fine in school but didn't go to college. Instead, he took up the housework in his father's home.
- We learn that Estha had a dog named Khubchand, whom he nursed until he died at an old age. We get more foreshadowing of the events we're about to learn about: "To Estha – steeped in the smell of old roses, blooded on memories of a broken man – the fact that something so fragile, so tender had survived, had been allowed to exist, was a miracle" (1.77).
- After Khubchand dies, Estha starts walking for hours on end. (Think of Forest Gump going on his epic runs because he feels like running.) Now that he's back in Ayemenem, Estha walks all over the place.
- Through Estha's walks, we become more acquainted with the landscape and everyone's place in it. We see the village school that his "great-grandfather built for Untouchable children" (1.83), the church, the kung fu club, and Comrade K.N.M. Pillai's printing press, which was once the office of the Ayemenem Communist Party.
- We meet Comrade Pillai. He has lost his wife, Kalyani, to ovarian cancer, and his son Lenin now lives in Delhi. Comrade Pillai was the first person to hear that Rahel was back in town. He hasn't seen Estha since he was suddenly Returned, but he watched Rahel grow up.
- We meet Kochu Maria, the "vinegar-hearted, short-tempered, midget cook" (1.94) who lives with Baby Kochamma. When Estha came back to Ayemenem, they were the only two people still living in the family home. We learn that Mammachi is dead and Chacko lives in Canada.

- We learn a little more about Rahel's back-story. After Ammu died, she drifted from school to school. She would come back to Ayemenem for the holidays but was ignored by the family. Sophie Mol's death lived on in the house.
- We learn that Rahel often got in trouble at school. She decorated cow dung with flowers. She was expelled for hiding behind doors and deliberately jumping out to collide with senior girls. Then she was expelled twice more: once for smoking and then for setting fire to her housemistress's fake hairpiece.
- Rahel's teachers often remarked that she was really nice but had no friends.
- After school Rahel went to study architecture in Delhi. She wasn't really interested in architecture and she didn't have any talent. Her messy drawings were mistaken for "artistic confidence" (1.109). Rahel went on to spend eight years in college.
- There she met Larry McCaslin, a visiting student. We learn that they got married and moved to Boston. Larry was totally smitten with Rahel, but when they had sex he could see in her eyes that she wasn't thinking about him.
- We learn that Rahel and Larry got divorced and that Rahel moved to New York and then Washington. When Baby Kochamma wrote her to say that Estha had moved back to Ayemenem, Rahel decided to return home.
- We come back to the present. Baby Kochamma, eighty-three, sits at the dining table. She's thrilled that Estha hasn't spoken to Rahel. Baby Kochamma is wearing all of Mammachi's jewelry.
- We get Baby Kochamma's back-story. When she was eighteen she fell in love with Father Mulligan, a young Irish monk who came to Kerala to study Hindu scriptures so he could denounce them properly.

- Every Thursday Father Mulligan would come to visit Baby Kochamma's father, Reverend E. John Ipe, who was well known for being blessed by the Patriarch of Antioch (the head of the Syrian Christian Church). We learn more about what happened when he was blessed.
- Back to eighteen-year-old Baby Kochamma. She thought she could seduce Father Mulligan if he saw her performing acts of charity, so every Thursday when he was supposed to arrive, she would force-bathe a poor village kid in the well. Then she would call out to him and start talking about scriptures.
- After a year of Thursdays, Father Mulligan had to return to Madras. Baby Kochamma needed a new strategy to woo him, so she decided to convert to Roman Catholicism and took vows to become a nun.
- Baby Kochamma realized pretty quickly that this strategy was a mistake. She truly hated the convent. She started sending her father letters about how she was happy there but someone named Koh-i-noor was terribly unhappy. We find out that this was a code because the Mother Superior read everyone's letters.
- Baby Kochamma's dad came to get her out of the convent. He thought her reputation was sort of tarnished and that she wouldn't find a husband after that, so he figured he'd let her have an education. He sent her to the University of Rochester in New York, where she got a degree in Ornamental Gardening.
- When Baby Kochamma returned from college, she was obese. She spent all of her time making the garden at the Ayemenem house beautiful.
- Eventually Baby Kochamma abandoned gardening for a new obsession: satellite TV. She and Kochu Maria now spend all of their time watching TV together.
- We learn more about the house. There are two oil portraits hanging in the front veranda of Reverend E. John Ipe and Aleyooty Ammachi, Rahel and Estha's great-grandparents. They hang with their "backs" to the river, which we suspect is going to be significant later.

- As Rahel gazes out the window, we see Paradise Pickles and Preserves, which used to be Mammachi's pickle factory.
- We get another flashback to the past, when the police found Velutha and handcuffed him.
- We learn that it was Baby Kochamma's idea for Estha to be Returned. We also learn that in the days after Sophie Mol's death and before Estha was Returned, Margaret Kochamma would slap him every time she saw him.
- We get an image of young Estha being Returned, with "terrible pictures" running through his head (1.200).
- The chapter ends by posing two possibilities for how all of these events came to pass. Either everything began when Sophie Mol came to Ayemenem for the first time, or everything that happened to this family is a product of history.

26.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

Pappachi's Moth

- When the chapter begins, we're back in the past – it's a "skyblue day in December sixty-nine (the nineteen silent)" (2.1). A skyblue Plymouth car is speeding on its way to Cochin. The narrator notes that the landscape is similar to that of a small country further east where "enough bombs were being dropped to cover all of it in six inches of steel" (2.2). The war is happening in Vietnam; in India it's peacetime.
- Estha and Rahel are in the car with Ammu, Chacko, and Baby Kochamma on their way to see *The Sound of Music* for the third time. The twins love the movie and know all of the songs. They're going to stay in a hotel, and the next morning they will go to the Cochin Airport to pick up Sophie Mol and Margaret Kochamma.
- We learn that Joe, Margaret Kochamma's second husband, was killed in a car accident several months before. Sophie Mol and Margaret are coming

to Ayemenem for the holidays because Chacko says he couldn't bear to think of them being alone with their sad memories during the holidays.

- Ammu thinks that Chacko never stopped loving Margaret Kochamma. Mammachi doesn't like this idea; she would prefer to imagine that Chacko never loved her at all.
- None of them have ever met Sophie Mol. The entire week before her arrival becomes the "*What Will Sophie Mol Think?"* week (2.6). Baby Kochamma starts giving the twins real grief, making them write a hundred lines of "*I will always speak in English*" every time she catches them speaking Malayalam.
- We learn that Estha and Rahel don't have a last name because Ammu can't decide whether or not to revert to her maiden name.
- The narrator paints a picture of the twins. Estha loves Elvis. He is wearing his "beige and pointy shoes and his Elvis puff. His Special Outing Puff" (2.9). Rahel is wearing her hair on the top of her head like a fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo, which is "two beads on a rubber band, nothing to do with Love or Tokyo" (2.11). Rahel also wears a toy wristwatch with the time painted on it – it's always ten to two (see "Symbols, Imagery, Allegory" for more on this).
- We learn that Chacko is a learned guy with a lot of books. Once upon a time, Chacko was a Rhodes Scholar and studied at Oxford University.
- Ammu is riding next to Chacko, who is her older brother. She is now 27 years old and feels as though life has already been lived. Her big mistake? She married the wrong man.
- We learn Ammu's back story: her father, Pappachi, had decided it was unnecessary to spend money to send a woman to college, so she lived with her parents and waited for a marriage proposal.
- One summer, Pappachi allowed Ammu to go to Calcutta. She met Baba at a wedding reception, and five days later he proposed. She figured this was as good as things were going to get, so she accepted.

- Baba turned out to be an alcoholic and an outrageous liar.
- In October 1962, Ammu was eight months pregnant. War broke out with China and people were being evacuated, but Ammu was too pregnant to travel.
- When the twins were two years old, Baba was drunk most of the time. His English boss, Mr. Hollick, told him his job was in trouble but that they could work something out if Baba went out of town and let Mr. Hollick sleep with Ammu.
- When Ammu didn't like this idea, Baba punched her and then passed out from being tired and drunk. Ammu took the heaviest book she could find (the *Reader's Digest World Atlas)* and beat the smack out of him. This scenario repeated itself a few times, and finally Ammu took the kids and left.
- Pappachi didn't believe Ammu's story because he couldn't believe any true English gentleman would ever behave in such a way.
- We find out that Ammu's relationship with Estha and Rahel is complicated. She is quick to punish them but even quicker to defend them.
- Ammu regards her younger self as foolish and silly. She has a goldsmith melt down her wedding ring into a thin bangle bracelet for Rahel.
- We find out that Ammu lives a secret private life – she goes out by herself, listening to music and carrying "magic secrets in her eyes" (2.50). The narrator calls this side of Ammu her "Unsafe Edge" that "led her to love by night the man her children loved by day. To use by night the boat that her children used by day" (2.51). (Don't worry – the narrator will give us more info on those escapades in future chapters.)
- Now we're back in the car with the family. Baby Kochamma sits between the twins, whom she dislikes. She thinks that they're "doomed, fatherless waifs" and "Half-Hindu Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry" (2.55).

- Baby Kochamma makes it her mission in life to steal away happiness from Estha and Rahel so they know their place in the world.
- We learn that the Plymouth has the Paradise Pickles and Preserves logo on it, which Ammu thinks makes them look ridiculous.
- We get another flashback: the narrator tells us about how Mammachi started making pickles when Pappachi retired from government service. She started making them for a fair, but soon they became all the rage.
- Pappachi wouldn't help Mammachi make the pickles and jams because he thought it was beneath him. He was also super jealous of all the sudden attention and fame that Mammachi was getting. In fact, he beat her every night with a brass flower vase to keep her in her place. One day Chacko came home from Oxford and discovered what was going on. Pappachi never touched or spoke to Mammachi again after that.
- Pappachi would go out of his way to make Mammachi look bad. He would try to make it look like she neglected him, which helped sway everyone's opinion of working wives.
- We learn that under British rule, Pappachi had been appointed Imperial Entomologist. (Entomology is the study of bugs.) When India gained independence he became the Joint Director of Entomology.
- We learn about the greatest setback in Pappachi's life. He discovered what he thought was a new breed of moth, but it turned out to be just a slightly unusual specimen of a known species. Then, twelve years later, some lepidopterists (people who study butterflies and moths) decided it was in fact a unique species. They named it after someone else whom Pappachi had never liked.
- Pappachi's moth becomes responsible for his bad temper for the rest of the life and affects all of his kids and grandkids.
- Pappachi also couldn't put up with the successes of other people. When Mammachi's violin teacher told him Mammachi was an amazing violinist, Pappachi smashed the instrument.

- We hear about Pappachi's death and different people's views and reactions.
- Chacko tells Rahel and Estha that Pappachi was an *Anglophile* and makes them look it up in a dictionary. (An Anglophile is someone who greatly admires the British or Great Britain.) He tells them that everyone in their whole family is Anglophile.
- Chacko makes an analogy in which he compares history to an old house. Rahel and Estha take this literally and think he's talking about Kari Saipu's house. Kari Saipu is an Englishman who has "gone native" (2.92).
- Chacko starts explaining what the history house is. It's a house they can't enter, and when they try to listen to what's happening inside they can't hear more than a whisper because their minds are invaded by war. This war makes them love their conquerors and despise themselves. Ammu makes a crack that they don't just love their conquerors – they marry them. (The narrator gives us the impression that this is meant to be confusing – Rahel and Estha have no idea what he means. Check out the History House under "Symbols, Imagery, Allegory" for clarification.)
- Chacko makes another analogy: if the Earth were a woman, she'd be about forty-six right now. In her lifetime, human civilization only began two hours ago. Chacko says we're all just a blink of her eye.
- It's not the Earth Woman, but the History House that fascinates Estha and Rahel. The narrator gives us some foreshadowing: they don't know that soon they'll be there and history will be revealed to them.
- Chacko tells Estha and Rahel that loving *The Sound of Music* is an example of Anglophilia.
- We hear more about how Chacko studied at Oxford. Ammu says that doesn't necessarily make him clever.
- We get another flashback about how Chacko came back to Ayemenem after Pappachi died and took over the pickle factory. Ammu has no rights to the company.

- The narrative returns to the car ride. They have to stop for a train, and Rahel gets nervous that they're going to miss the beginning of the movie. She reads the stop sign backwards.
- We learn that Estha and Rahel are skilled readers, well-versed in Kipling and Shakespeare. Once, when Miss Mitten bought them a kids' book called *The Adventures of Susie Squirrel*, they were totally offended and read it to her backwards. Miss Mitten then told Baby Kochamma that she saw Satan in their eyes.
- We learn that when they fight, Estha calls Rahel a Refugee Stick Insect and Rahel calls him Elvis the Pelvis. (These names will pop up a lot throughout the book.)
- Estha sees Murlidharan, a lunatic who lost both of his arms in Singapore in 1942 in his first week of fighting in the war.
- All of a sudden, there's a growing hum in the air, and they hear police whistles blowing. A crowd of men appears marching in a column with red flags and banners. Chacko tells everyone to roll up their windows and that everything is going to be OK.
- We learn that Chacko identifies as a Marxist.
- The swarm of thousands of communists overtakes the road. Nobody has a complete explanation for why the Communist Party is so successful in Kerala, but they give us a few potential theories.
- We get a flashback that gives us a crash course on communism in Kerala.
- The Communist Party came to power in 1957. In 1967, they won reelection, but by that time they were divided into two factions: the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist).
- During the CPI's second term in power, the Chinese Communist Party denounced the CPI because they found that the "peaceful transition" was getting in the way of the Revolution.

- The Chinese Communist party started supporting the CPI(M) – also known as the Naxalites. The Naxalites started organizing peasants into factions that terrorized the middle class.
- Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the leader of the CPI, expelled all the Naxalites from the CPI and "went on with the business of harnessing anger for parliamentary purposes" (2.223).
- We learn that the people involved in the march that's taking over the roads are on their way to present a set of demands to Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad. One of these demands is that the Untouchables no longer be referred to by their caste name. (For more on caste, see the theme discussion of "Society and Class.")
- The marchers start hitting the Plymouth with their fist as they pass.
- All of a sudden, Rahel sees Velutha. When she rolls down the window and calls out to him, he freezes in his tracks. She continues trying to get his attention, but he disappears into the crowd. Meanwhile, Ammu slaps Rahel's legs to get her to sit down.
- We flash forward to a day many years later. Rahel is on a train in New York and has a flashback of Ammu's anger at that moment. Larry tries to make a joke and wonders why she doesn't laugh.
- Just as quickly as we flashed forward, we flash back to learn more about Velutha.
- We learn that Velutha's dad, Vellya Paapen, would bring him to the Ayemenem House to deliver coconuts. Pappachi wouldn't let them in the house – nobody would because of their caste. Velutha and Vellya Paapen are Paravans, part of the Untouchable caste (lowest on the totem pole).
- We also find out that when the British came to Malabar, Velutha's grandfather converted to Christianity (Anglicanism, or the English Church) so his family could escape the discrimination they faced under the Hindu caste system.

- This move sort of shot the family in the foot; after Independence, the family wasn't entitled to any benefits from the government.
- We learn that when Velutha was eleven, Mammachi noticed that he was really good with his hands. He would make little toys for Ammu, three years his senior. Mammachi encouraged Vellya Paapen to send Velutha to school, and he was trained in carpentry. When he got back from school, he helped Mammachi with the machinery in the factory.
- Vellya Paapen wasn't too jazzed that Velutha seemed to disregard his place in the social scheme of things. He tried to warn Velutha about his behavior but he realized that he was not exactly sure what to warn him of.
- One day Velutha disappeared and didn't show up again for four years. While he was gone, his mother Chella died of tuberculosis and his brother Kuttapen broke his back and was paralyzed.
- Now (in December 1969, that is) Velutha has been back in Ayemenem for about five months, and Mammachi has put him in charge of maintenance of the factory. The other factory workers aren't thrilled because of his class status – they don't think a Paravan should be a carpenter.
- We find out that at some point Vellya Paapen is going to discover some sort of romantic meetings involving Velutha and is going to run crying to Mammachi about it.
- Ever since Velutha has come back to Ayemenem, Rahel and Estha have thought of him as their best friend.
- The narrator tells us that it *was* Velutha that Rahel saw marching through the streets.
- We snap back to the scene in the car. A man opens the door and taunts Rahel. Then he makes Baby Kochamma hold his red flag and asks her to wave it and repeat the words he tells her to say.

- Chacko asks Rahel if she's sure it was really Velutha. She stalls because she thinks Estha might be warning her not to say anything. She says she's almost sure. Then she says she's almost not sure.
- We briefly flash forward to the days following the scene in the car. Baby Kochamma tries to make life as hard as possible for Velutha because of the humiliation she suffered that day.
- Now we're back in the car. Rahel blows a spit bubble and thinks about how certain types behavior are thought to belong to certain classes of people.
- Ammu yells at Rahel for blowing spit bubbles (they remind her of her ex-husband). Chacko tells her not to dictate what Rahel can do with her own spit. Ammu yells at Chacko for acting like he's the kids' savior.
- The train passes by. Baby Kochamma sings from *The Sound of Music* to lighten the mood. Everyone else is silent and annoyed.

26.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

Big Man the Laltain, Small Man the Mombatti

- We're back in 1993 in the Ayemenem house, which has become filthy and broken down.
- Baby Kochamma and Kochu Maria sit watching TV and eating peanuts. A man is singing "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" on *The Best of Donahue*. This is the man's big dream. The narrator tells us, "there are big dreams and little ones" (3.13).
- The narrator flashes back to one time when an old coolie (a derogatory English term for someone of the working class) who was carrying Estha's luggage on a school excursion said to him, "Big Man the Laltain sahib, Small Man the Mombatti" (3.14). This basically is supposed to highlight the difference between the important "somebodies" in the world and the "nobodies" who have to accommodate them.

- We come back to the present. Estha has been out in the rain and comes back inside the house. Baby Kochamma remarks to Rahel about everything Estha's about to do, like a play-by-play of something that hasn't happened yet.
- Estha goes back to his room to wash his clothes. Baby Kochamma's like "told you so!" Rahel follows Estha.
- We learn about Estha's room (Ammu's old room), which is obsessively clean and tidy.
- Estha undresses. Rahel watches him and wonders if he knows she's there. She thinks of how they're older now.
- The narrator describes Rahel in physical terms – she's starting to resemble Ammu.
- Rahel scans Estha's body to see if she can see signs of herself in him.
- Rahel reaches out and wipes away a raindrop from Estha's ear. He doesn't look back at her. He starts washing his clothes in a bucket.

26.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

Abhilash Talkies

- Back in 1969, Ammu, Baby Kochamma, Estha, and Rahel finally arrive at Abhilash Talkies to see *The Sound of Music*. Chacko has gone to book a hotel room.
- Ammu, Rahel, and Baby Kochamma go to the ladies' room. Estha goes by himself to the men's room.
- Rahel, Baby Kochamma, and Ammu take turns peeing in the same stall. Rahel loves it – to her, it's a scene of friendship and camaraderie. The narrator tells us that Rahel has no idea how special this moment really is, because it's the last time they will all be together.
- Estha pees in a very ceremonial and formal way. He is too short to reach the urinal so he finds two rusty cans to stand on. When he's done

he fixes his puff with Ammu's comb. Then he returns the cans to where he found them. He bows to the cans and all the cleaning supplies.

- Estha meets the ladies in the lobby. Ammu suddenly feels a pang of love for Estha for doing his first "adult assignment" (4.28) – going to the bathroom alone. She ruffles his hair, spoiling his puff.
- The usher tells them they've missed the beginning of the movie. They run up the stairs. Baby Kochamma is slow. Rahel likes the parts of the movie at the beginning the best – the scenes with the nuns. Ammu says that people usually prefer the parts that they most identify with.
- The four find their seats. The nuns are singing their complaints about Maria.
- Members of the audience start turning around and shushing someone. It turns out that Estha is singing along with the nuns. He can't help it.
- Ammu yells at Estha to shut up. Estha stops singing but asks if he can go out in the lobby so he can sing to his heart's content.
- Estha goes out in the lobby and sings his little heart out. His singing wakes up the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man who sits behind the refreshment counters.
- The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man calls Estha over and tells him to stop singing. He tells Estha that he could file a complaint against him for interrupting his nap. When Estha tries to skedaddle, the Orangedrink Lemondrink man tells him the least he can do in return is to stay and have a drink.
- The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man asks Estha where he lives. Estha tells him that his grandmother owns Paradise Pickles and Preserves.
- The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man tells Estha to come behind the counter for his drink because he's not supposed to give them out until the intermission (you can probably see where this is going).

- While the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man gets Estha his drink, he's like "oh hey can you hold this?" And then he hands something to Estha. It's his penis.
- The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man puts his hand over Estha's and starts masturbating. Estha tries to take his mind off of what's happening by trying to think of all of the kinds of products they make at Paradise Pickles and Preserves.
- All of a sudden the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man's face twists and Estha realizes that his hand is full of sticky egg white (except, uh, no eggs were used in the making of this scene, folks).
- The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man cleans Estha's hand with a rag and sends Estha back into the theater.
- Estha thinks about how much he loves the children in the movie and Julie Andrews.
- The narrator asks, hypothetically, if Baron von Trapp could love Estha and Rahel. The hypothetical Baron von Trapp asks the narrator some questions about the kids. Are they clean white children? Do they blow spit bubbles? Do they shiver their legs? Have they ever held the penis of a stranger?
- "Baron von Clapp-Trapp" says there's absolutely no way he could ever love them or be their father.
- All of a sudden, Estha starts heaving. He tells Ammu that he's "feeling vomity" (4.150).
- Ammu takes Estha to the ladies' room to try to get him to throw up. Nothing comes up but bad thoughts.
- On the way back to the movie, Ammu brings Estha to the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man's counter to get him a drink – she thinks it'll make him feel better. Estha says no thank you to the Orangedrink Lemondrink

Man. Then the man offers Estha candy. He says no thank you, but Ammu makes him take them.

- The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man tells Ammu that he knows where their factory is. Estha realizes that the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man can find him and that the ODLDM is trying to give him a warning.
- Ammu tells Estha to stay with the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man while she goes to get Rahel and Baby Kochamma. Estha freaks out. Ammu apologizes to the ODLDM for Estha's behavior. When they go back in the theatre, Rahel gets pouty about having to miss all the major parts of the movie.
- When they leave, the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man offers Rahel some sweets. Estha tells Rahel she can have his candy – he doesn't want her to go near him.
- The Orangedrink Lemondrink Man says bye to Estha and tells him he'll see him in Ayemenem sometime.
- When they're leaving, Ammu says that the Orangedrink Lemondrink man is sweet. Rahel's like "Why don't you marry him then?" (4.106). Everyone freezes. This was totally the wrong thing to say to Ammu.
- Ammu tells Rahel that when you hurt people with careless words, they start loving you less. (This moment is important – it's going to come up again several more times, so keep your eyes peeled.) As she says this, Rahel feels an icy cold moth, Pappachi's moth, land on her heart.
- They take a cab to the hotel, where Chacko is stuffing his face with chicken and ice cream.
- Rahel is going to share a room with Chacko; Estha is taking her place with Ammu because he's sick. Rahel already feels like Ammu loves her a little less.
- Chacko tells Rahel he doesn't want to hear about what she's in trouble for, but you can tell he's really trying to coax it out of her.

- Chacko thinks about Margaret and Sophie Mol. We learn that he hasn't seen Sophie Mol since she was three weeks old. That was when Margaret told him about Joe and asked for a divorce.
- In the dark, Rahel asks Chacko if he loves Sophie Mol. most in the World (4.314) and if parents have to love their children the most. Chacko says people usually do, but that there aren't any fixed rules. Rahel asks Chacko if it's possible that Ammu might love Sophie Mol more than she loves Rahel or Estha, or if it's possible for Chacko to love them more than he loves Sophie Mol. He tells her that anything is possible.
- In the other room, Estha wakes up, throws up, then walks to Rahel's door. Even though he doesn't knock, she knows he's there and lets him in.
- Chacko thinks about Velutha, and we learn more about Comrade K.N.M. Pillai and the Marxist party. Basically, Comrade Pillai has been in a good position to be nominated as a candidate to the Legislative Assembly.
- Comrade Pillai is interested in targeting the workers of Paradise Pickles and Preserves and getting them to unionize – he thinks that by getting their support, he'll be one step closer to a spot in the Legislative Assembly.
- We learn that things haven't been going that well financially at the factory, and that Chacko is doing his best to be open with the workers and to promise them their fair wages once things pick up again.
- We also learn that behind Chacko's back, Comrade Pillai has been gathering the workers at his printing press in the evening to incense them against Chacko and the factory. He's been telling them to demand higher wages, insurance, and the like.
- Comrade Pillai always refers to Chacko as "The Management" when he makes these speeches. We learn that this is partially because Chacko is a client of his – Comrade Pillai prints all the labels for Paradise Pickles and Preserves.

- We also learn that Velutha is putting a snag in Comrade Pillai's plans. Velutha is the only official card-carrying member of the Communist party who works at the factory, and all the other workers resent him to begin with. Comrade Pillai worries that this is going to make it harder to gather support from the other workers.

26.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5

God's Own Country

- We're back in 1993. The narrator describes the river, which doesn't seem as powerful as it used to.
- We learn that a fancy hotel chain has purchased the "Heart of Darkness," and now tourists from all over take speedboats over to the History House, which is part of the hotel chain.
- Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad's house is now the hotel's dining room. The waiters are old Communists.
- At night, for regional "flavor," the hotel stages abridged kathakali performances (a kind of traditional Indian dance-drama) that have been cut down from six hours to twenty minutes.
- In the ground beneath them, Rahel's old toy watch lies buried and unnoticed.
- Rahel passes a group of children. They call her a hippie and one of them throws a stone at her.
- As Rahel turns to walk down the main road, we learn that Ayemenem has grown from a sleepy village to a small town.
- Rahel passes Comrade K.N.M. Pillai, who is talking to his neighbor. Rahel hopes he doesn't notice her, but of course he does.
- Comrade Pillai introduces Rahel to his neighbor. He vaguely remembers the scandal connected with her family but can't exactly remember the particulars. He only knows that sex and death were involved. The man leaves.

- Comrade Pillai asks Rahel if she's still in America and if she's going to have a baby soon. Rahel tells Comrade Pillai that she's divorced, and he remarks to himself that the current generation is making up for the misdeeds of the one before. He wonders if the bourgeoisie is beginning to destroy itself from within.
- Moving right along, Comrade Pillai starts talking about his son, Lenin (who has now changed his name to P. Levin).
- Rahel has a flashback about Lenin. They were both little kids (5 and 3-or-4, respectively), and they were at the pediatrician's office because they both had stuck foreign objects up their noses.
- Kalyani (Lenin's mom) and Ammu switched kids to see if they could help each other with the stuff in their kids' noses. Estha and Rahel were both in a panic – they were terrified of the doctor's office.
- Just as the nurse called Rahel's name, she blew a bead out of her nose. Kids gathered around to admire it.
- We flash back to the present. Comrade shows Rahel one last picture: a black and white photo of Estha, Lenin, Rahel, and Sophie Mol. Only Sophie Mol makes a face for the photo. Rahel remembers that right before the photo was taken, Sophie Mol explained to her and Estha that "there was a pretty good chance that they were bastards, and what bastard really meant" (5.111) and also told them what sex was.
- Rahel remembers that this photo was taken only days before Sophie Mol died. She remembers Sophie Mol as "Hatted, bell-bottomed, and Loved from the Beginning" (5.116).

26.9 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 6

Cochin Kangaroos

- Back to 1969. Rahel and the gang are at the Cochin Airport waiting for Sophie Mol and Margaret Kochamma to arrive: "The rehearsals had

been rehearsed. It was the Day of the Play. The culmination of the *What Will Sophie Mol Think?* week" (6.1).

- Rahel is in her best outfit. When Ammu helps her get dressed, Rahel kisses both of her dimples. Rahel is still worried that her mom loves her a little less.
- Estha and Rahel aren't speaking to each other because he told her that she looked stupid in her dress.
- They go to the Arrivals Lounge in the airport. Rahel sees four cement kangaroos whose pouches are trash bins.
- The Arrivals Lounge is full of families waiting for their loved ones. Baby Kochamma remarks that they are "mostly sweeper class" (6.34). She tells Rahel and Estha to behave themselves because they are acting as "Ambassadors of India" (6.35).
- Rahel thinks she sees one of the cement kangaroos come to life. She urgently tries to get Estha's attention, but he's watching for the plane and worrying about the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man finding him.
- The plane arrives. We see the people coming off the plane as a gaggle of "Foreign Returnees" who seem to be more westernized than their family members in Ayemenem. The narrator gives us a sampling of their perspectives, each observing what a dump they think India is.
- We see Sophie Mol for the first time. She's wearing yellow bell-bottoms. Ammu asks Rahel if she can see Sophie Mol, but Rahel has gone off to check out the cement kangaroos.
- Rahel is "overcome by excitement and resentment" (6.65).
- Chacko brings Margaret and Sophie Mol some roses. He introduces Margaret as his "wife," and she scolds him to say "ex-wife" instead. Then he introduces Sophie Mol. When Ammu says hello to Sophie Mol, Rahel tries to see if she can tell how much Ammu loves Sophie.

- Baby Kochamma tries too hard to impress Margaret and Sophie Mol. Estha tells Rahel this, and Rahel giggles. Baby Kochamma knows that Estha is making fun of her.
- Chacko introduces Estha and Rahel as the VIPs. When he introduces Estha, Baby Kochamma makes fun of him by calling him "Elvis Presley" and talking how back dated they are ? Everyone laughs and Estha feels himself get angry. He refuses to say "how do you do?" to Sophie and Margaret.
- Rahel, in the meantime, has gone to hide in the dirty airport curtains. Ammu is pissed off. Margaret Kochamma goes up to the curtain and says hi in a kind-teacher voice. Rahel feels like she can't come out of the curtain because everything is wrong.
- Rahel and Estha are in deep you-know-what with Ammu for their behavior.
- Ammu warns them that if they ever act this way in public again, she'll send them away somewhere to teach them how to behave. Baby Kochamma is dissatisfied with how Ammu handles things – she's been waiting for the twins to get what she thinks they deserve.
- Ammu chews Rahel out for getting her clothes dirty. Then she sends them over to give a proper hello to Sophie Mol.
- As they walk to the car, Sophie Mol asks Rahel and Estha if their mom ever hits them. Estha says no.
- They walk past a hunger strike organized by the Class III Airport Workers' Union.
- Rahel asks Sophie Mol who she loves Most in the World. Sophie Mol says she loves Joe the most and that she and Margaret have come to India to "Recover from the Shock" (6.205). She says that Joe's her dad – Chacko is just her "real" dad. She asks Estha and Rahel where their dad is. They just say he's not there.

- Rahel recites her "list" to Sophie Mol – her ranking of who she loves most.
- Sophie teaches the twins how to sashay like a model. They sashay across the parking lot.
- The whole family drives back to Ayemenem. At one point they pass an elephant that was electrocuted on a high-tension wire.
- After finding out that it wasn't Kochu Thomban, the temple elephant that they're familiar with, they drive on. Baby Kochamma makes Estha and Rahel sing a car song for everyone. A butterfly flies into their windshield.

26.10 GLOSSARY

Chapter 1

The story begins twenty-three years after the main events which will be covered by the novel, with flashbacks to that earlier period which culminated in the funeral of Sophie Mol. References to the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man and the death of Sophie Mol will be explained later in the novel.

Jackfruits

A very large sweet fruit common in South and East Asia.

PWD

Public Works Department (local utilities department).

the scurry of small lives

The first of many references that echo the theme of the title.

Syrian Orthodox bishops

More than a third of the population of Kerala consists of Christian families, some dating back many centuries. The Syrian Church is one of the older branches of Christianity.

zebra crossing

Striped pedestrian crossing.

Crimplene bell-bottoms

Wrinkle-resistant knit polyester jersey fabric which can be woven and impressed with various textures. The main action of the novel is set in 1969, when bell-bottomed pants were popular.

go-go bag

"Go-go" started as an expression in mangled English used by French speakers to express the idea of "without limit," as in "Whisky à go-go." In English it was associated with the sort of dancing done in "go-go bars," and—by extension—with the clothing worn by the dancers, e.g. "go-go boots," etc. Sophie Mol was hip to the current fads.

Ende Deivomay! EEE sadhanangal!
My God! What creatures!

curly beards

Orthodox Priests, unlike their Roman Catholic counterparts, wear full beards.

What evidence is there that Rahel's startling visions during the funeral service may be imaginary?

veshya
Prostitute.

And now, twenty-three years later
This refers to the reunion of the adult twins in the "present."

After Sophie Mol's funeral, when Estha was Returned

Refers to the earlier period, when he was a child; not to be confused with the time in the present when he was "re-Returned."

Calcutta

In the northeast, about as far as it could be from Ayemenem.

pesticides bought with World Bank loans

Agricultural production in India was greatly boosted during the sixties by the development of new high-yield varieties and the application of large

amounts of fertilizer which had the unfortunate effect of often damaging the environment. The World Bank offered loans to support such intensive agriculture, which has often been blamed for its socially damaging side-effects.

the Ayemenem office of the Communist Party

Communism has been especially successful in Kerala, where Marxists have often dominated a famously effective government. (Other states where Communist governments have been formed are West Bengal and Tripura in the northeastern region of India.) Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India and a low infant mortality rate.

Aertex vest

An inexpensive brand of undershirt.

mundu

A single piece of cloth arranged as a sort of loose pair of trousers, tied at the waist, worn by both men and women (though women add upper garments to it). Longer than the *dhoti.*

The old omelette-and-eggs thing.

Napoleon famously justified his uses of violence by saying "You can't make an omlette without breaking eggs." Violent revolutionaries of all stripes are fond of repeating this slogan.

mangosteen

Garcinia mangosiana L.

A tropical fruit with a thick, dark-red skin.

wogs

Insulting British term for foreigners considered inferior.

What do the stories so far about the twins suggest about them? What kind of children were they?

a mediocre college of architecture in Delhi

Roy herself studied at the Delhi School of Architecture, though she was not strongly drawn to the subject and never practiced as an architect.

a nice athletic run

Roy enjoys running, and has worked as an aerobics instructor.

Then Small God . .

How does this passage explain the title of the novel?

Kohl

Black eye-liner, used to darken the inner rim of the eyelid.

When she was eighteen, Baby Kochamma fell in love

Since she is now eighty-three, this would have been around 1930.

In 1876, when Baby Kochamma's father was seven years old

Just as Baby Kochamma seems to have lived her life backward, in Rahel's view, we are told her history in a sort of reverse fashion, receding more and more into the past.

Since charity had not produced any tangible results, the distraught young Baby Kochamma invested all her hope in faith.

An allusion to First Corinthians 13:13.

Koh-i-noor

An enormous diamond now part of the Crown jewels of England; but it orginally belonged to the Mughals, Muslim rulers of India.

Anthurium andraeanum

A large, waxy flower which originated in Colombia, but which is now common in Hawaii and other tropical locales. The most popular varieties are red ("rubrum").

cannae and phlox

Canna indica originated in tropical America, but has been commonly cultivated in England, under the name "Indian shot." Canna indica. None of these flowers is native to India. Why is Baby Kochamma bent on growing such an "exotic" garden?

gum boots

Rubber boots.

Patcha

The word literally means "green."

Ooty cupboards

Ooty is the popular name of Udhagamandalam, a luxurious "hill station" in the Nilgiri Mountains of Tamil Nadu, just across the border from Kerala in the northeast. Furniture from there would have belonged to wealthy visitors.

willow-pattern dinner service

An imitation Chinese ware manufactured in England and formerly extremely popular.

stuffed, mounted Bison head

The term "bison" is used here to designate a wild Indian water buffalo, displayed here as a hunting trophy.

kunukku earrings

A type of ancient Christian Keralite jewelry, usually gold earrings consisting of a short, thin chain with a small ball hanging from it.

Paradise Pickles & Preserves

The fact that Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has a protagonist who owns a pickle factory has been much commented on. Roy claims not to have been much influenced by Rushdie, and in fact spiced and pickled chutneys and other preserves are so common in India that she need not have taken the idea of featuring a pickle factory in her novel from Rushdie. Her uncle George Isaac (model for Chacko) actually runs a pickle factory (Palat Pickles) in real life.

And banana jam (illegally) after the FPO (Food products Organization) banned it

Indians often complain about their vast bureaucracy which promulgates all manner of restrictive rules.

Note the repeated references to Sophie Mol's funeral which identify the passages in which they occur as being set in the "past."

baba
Father

As ye sow, so shall ye reap.
Galatians 6:7

tiffin carrier
Lunchbox

Hoovering
Vacuuming. Hoover was one of the first manufacturers of vacuum cleaners, and the name of the firm became a verb, fallen into disuse in the U.S. but still common elsewhere.

mango hair
Mangos contain fibers which easily become caught between teeth.

By the end of the first chapter, Roy has given us all manner of dark hints about the events leading up to Sophie Mol's death. What do you make of them?

Before the British took Malabar
Malabar denotes the southwestern coast of India from Goa southward, including most of Kerala. The British conquered it in the late 18th century.

before the Dutch Ascendency
In the 17th century the Dutch had seized the same territory.

before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut
On May 20, 1498, the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama landed in Calicut, India after having sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, and became the first European to reach this region. After many struggles, some of them bloody, the Portuguese established a colony.

before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut

The Zamorin was the hereditary ruler of Calicut when da Gama arrived.

Syrian bishops murdered by the Portuguese

When the Portuguese gained trading concessions in the area, they tried to impose Roman Catholicism on the members of the older Syrian Church which predated them. The Syrians, resenting this attempt at domination of their community, decided to send a couple of their priests to Rome as representatives. Their mangled corpses were found washed up on the shore of Kerala a few weeks later. This incident played an important role in the eventual reassertion of Syriac Christianity in Kerala.

Christianity arrived in a boat

Tradition says that St. Thomas, the disciple of Jesus, brought Christianity to this region in 52 CE. Whatever the truth may be, it is well documented in Persian that there were Christians in Kerala by the late 7th century.

Chapter 2

Epigraph: "however, for practical purposes, in a hopelessly practical world . . .

In the previous paragraph, Roy has been ruminating over when her story can be said to have really begun. This phrase introduces the sentence which continues at the beginning of Chapter 2, so she is saying that, for practical purposes, it all began on "a skyblue day in December sixty-nine."

when something happens to nudge its hidden morality from its resting place and make it bubble to the surface and float for a while. In clear view. For everyone to see.

Figure out what this means at the appropriate point below.

Further east, in a small country . . .

Why do you think Roy alludes to the Vietnam War here?

The Sound of Music

The film had been released in the U.S. in 1965.

Malayalam

The chief language of Kerala.

Elvis puff

This "puff" of hair becomes his symbol; whenever it is mentioned, we know that Estha is being discussed.

Love-in-Tokyo

Love in Tokyo was a 1964 hit movie directed by Pramod Chakravorty featuring a young woman whose ponytail was held by two beads on a rubber band. Like Estha's puff, her "fountain in a Love-in-Tokyo" becomes Rahel's symbol.

Chachen

Father.

Chetan and Cheduthi

Older brother and older brother's wife (Malayalam).

Ammaven

Uncle; mother's brother.

Appoi and Ammai

Mother's brother and mother's brother's wife (Malayalam).

Gatsby turned out all right

From F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

migrated to Calcutta from East Bengal after Partition

In 1947 the Sub-continent was partitioned into a northern Muslim-dominated state called "Pakistan" and southern Hindu-dominated state called "India." Masses of people fled in both directions, encountering bloody violence on all hands. East Bengal fell to Pakistan, and later became Bangladesh. Calcutta is in West Bengal.

They didn't reply.

At this point arranged marriages were still the norm, and for a young woman to agree to marry a man without her parents' advance permission would have been shocking behavior.

spanner

wrench

inter-community love marriage

An inter-religious marriage, in this case between a Christian and a Hindu, entered into by the individuals involved without it being arranged by their parents.

boot

trunk

Koshy Oommen

A typical Syrian Christian name.

kathakali dancer

The classical folk dance of Kerala, performed, unlike Bharata Natyam, exclusively by men playing both male and female parts.

What does Chacko mean by calling his relatives a family of Anglophiles?

After reading *at Oxford you* come down.

Originally "come down" referred to the graduated student traveling south, home to London; but since Chacko is from India, the term simply reinforces his alienness.

His oar (with his teammates' names inscribed in gold)

Announcing to the world that he had been on a rowing team at Oxford.

sleeping partner

A business partner who provides some of the financing, but is not allowed to participate in actually managing the company. Americans say "silent partner."

Kipling's *Jungle Book*

The twins learn about their own land through the eyes of an English Imperialist writer.

Can you see any symbolism in the fact that the twins like to read backwards?

What is symbolized by the bridal party in the ambulance?

Parsis

Zoroastrians, called "Farsis" in Persia (Iran). They have only small communities in India, necessarily somewhat inbred.

bhajan

A devotional song

parippu vadas

Also *vadai:* spicy fried patties made of ground lentils. A common street food.

Onner Runder Moonner One, two, three.

An Oxford avatar of the old zamindar mentality

An English-influenced reincarnation of the traditional landlord.

the Congress Party

The party which governed India beginning with independence, continuing until the late 90s, here representing the establishment.

land reforms

Redistribution of farmland from rich landlords to poor peasants.

accused him of "providing relief to the people and thereby blunting the People's Consciousness and diverting them from the Revolution".

Rigid Marxists often accuse liberal reformers of alleviating the sufferings of the oppressed just enough to make them reluctant to engage in revolution.

Paravan

The first occurrence of this untouchable caste name. Velutha is a paravan.

cheroot

Cigar.

bonnet

Hood.

"Thanks, keto*!" said. "*Valarey *thanks."*

Roughly: "Thanks a lot, OK?"

Ividay!

Over here!

Ammu is angry with Rahel, not because she has called out to a communist, but because she has publicly made it clear that she knows an untouchable.

What is the point of the passage about the old woman on the train outside of New York?

toddy tapper

Toddy is the sweet, fermented sap of various palm trees, tapped to provide a cheap alcoholic drink.

converted to Christianity . . . to escape the scourge of Untouchability

Untouchables have been ready converts to foreign religions like Islam and Christianity which promised to relieve them of the burdens of inequality; but as often as not, informal Muslim and Christian caste systems evolved along the lines of the old Hindu one.

Pariah

Untouchable.

government benefits

The Indian government has engaged in strenuous affirmative action on behalf of untouchables ever since independence, but these measures have not reached all of them.

Bauhaus

A highly influential German style emphasizing sleek modernity, clean lines, simplicity.

What sorts of skills does Velutha possess? What is the nature of his conflicts with his father?

In the "flash-forward" which begins "At least not until the Terror took hold of him," what is it that Vellya Paapen has seen that he feels the need to tell Mammachi about? (This will be spelled out later, but you may be able to guess, just from this passage.)

laterite

A reddish type of stone.

For American readers, the attraction of Velutha to the Ipe children will be reminiscent to many accounts of the attraction of slaves for young white children in stories about the pre-Civil War South.

kites

Vultures.

She was looking down at the floor of the car. Like a coy, frightened bride who had been married off to a stranger.

This is not an unusual image, but the very stereotype of an ideal Indian bride, who would not dare brazenly to stare her fiance in the face until after they were married, though she might glance at him covertly before then.

Inquilab Zindabad!

Long live the Revolution!

scree bed

Scree are pebbles, so this refers to part of her rock garden.

Remember Baby Kochamma's rage against Velutha when the crisis starts later.

Et tu, Brute?—*then fall, Caesar.*

The Latin phrase means roughtly "And you too Brutus?" The English phrase was added to Caesar's last words by Shakespeare in his play *Julius Caesar.*

biscuit crumbs

cookie crumbs

Chapter 3

This chapter begins by once more interrupting the story of the trip to see *The Sound of Music* to tell us more about an encounter between Rahel and Estha which took place in later years, after both had returned to Ayemenem.

Big Man the Lantern. Small Man the Tallow-stick.

Big and small lights. A tallow-stick is a stick daubed with fat which can serve as a sort of torch.

Poda Patti!

Get lost, you dog!

dustbin

Trash can.

A Qantas koala

The Australian airline Qantas featured a kaola as its foreign ads for many years.

Two ballpoint pens with silent streetscapes and red London buses that floated up and down in them.

Souvenir "floaty pens" like these, with images that slide through an oil-filled barrel against a fixed background are sold all over the world, but most are manufactured in Denmark by the Eskesen company.

Drownable in, *as Larry McCaslin had said and discovered to his cost.*

This sentence establishes clearly, even if earlier clues are disregarded, that the twins are adults in this scene.

Chapter 4

Estha alone.

This phrase comes to stand for Estha's vulnerability and withdrawn nature in the rest of the novel.

*Rahel was too short to balance in the air above the pot.*Some people try to use this posture to avoid sitting on an unclean toilet seat.

The Emperor Babur had a wheatish complexion

Babur (1483-1530) was the founder of the Mughal Dynasty which ruled much of India until the British arrived. "Wheatish" means "wheat-colored," a

golden brown. This adjective is commonly used in matrimonial advertisements in India to indicate the person being described is not dark-skinned.

napthalene balls

Deodorant balls commonly placed in men's urinals.

Eda cherukka!

Hey you, boy!

Ominous foreshadowings earlier in the novel have pointed to this encounter with the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man. Many books have been built around such incidents, but in *The God of Small Things,* it is just the first of a series of disasters that destroys the happiness of the family. For Estha, it is the dividing point between his innocent, relatively happy childhood, and the haunted years that will follow.

Elvis the Pelvis

Because of his hip-swivelling performances in the late fifties, Elvis Presley was dubbed "Elvis the Pelvis" by the newspapers. Here the phrase ominously sexualizes little Estha.

soo-soos

Childish euphemism for penises.

What are the main characteristics of the scene of the Estha's molestation? Does any of it strike you as surprising or unusual?

Notice how Roy avoids explicitly describing Estha's feelings. How are you made to realize that Estha has been traumatized by this encounter?

What about the scene with Ammu and the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man makes Estha so frightened?

Ammu's reaction to Rahel's offhand comment about marrying the man starts a self-destructive process in her parallel to Estha's. Thus their twinship is reflected, but their closeness is about to be destroyed.

Up to the scene in which they part in the hotel, only Estha has been called "alone," but his sister is called "Rahel Alone" for the first time.

paratha

Fried flatbread, often stuffed with spiced vegetables, and generally an unsuitable companion to chocolate sauce.

Why is Rahel so chilled by Chacko looking at the photo of his daughter?

Chapter 5

Like well-whipped egg white.

This is a somewhat strained reference back to the Orangedrink Lemondrink man's semen, which had been compared to egg white.

betel

The chewing of betel leaf causes the saliva to turn red.

chakka velaichathu

Jackfruit jam.

ammoomas

Grandmothers.

appoopans

Grandfathers.

sweeper class

Members of an untouchable caste. Note that the Christians depicted here share their Hindu neighbors' prejudices against untouchables.

namaste

Traditional Indian gesture of greeting, palms together and upright, a little like traditional "prayer" posture in the Christian west.

kappa

Cassava root, cooked in various ways.

meen

Fish.

vevichatu

Cooked.

What are the mixed feelings of the Foreign Returnees?

What do you think is the twins reaction to Ammu threatening to send them away?

larfing

Laughing. "Jolly Well" is one example of a common pattern in the twins' thinking in which they convert metaphors into concrete images involving plays on words.

laddoo

A common sort of cookie made of lentil flour, ghee, raisins, nuts, and spices.

Note how all kinds of random events and words trigger Estha's memory of his encounter with the Orangedrink Lemondrink man.

Why do you think Sophie Mol's words, "Recover from the Shock," are capitalized in the way they are?

Note how both adults and children are jockeying for position in this encounter at the airport.

Chapter 6

Note how the image of the river unites the ending of the last chapter with the beginning of this one, though it is set years later.

Severed torsos soaping themselves

All of the images associated with the River here are negative in some way or other, even this description of people standing waist-deep in the water as they bathe.

fresh tandoori pomfret

Fish baked in a traditional clay oven (*tandoori*) is very Indian.

crêpe suzette

Properly *crêpes suzette*, sugared crepes cooked in butter and flamed in an orange liqueur sauce—very European.

transplanted in the Heart of Darkness

Whereas in Conrad's famous novel the heart of darkness was symbolized by its distance from Europe, here it is the European-style intrusion into the Indian landscape that creates darkness.

Note the irony of the former's communist leader's house being used as a luxurious dining room for tourists.

While Kunti revealed her secret to Karna on the riverbank.

That Karna is her eldest son, and thus the older brother of his sworn enemies, the Pandavas (from the *Mahabharata*). Kunti tries in vain to convince him that he should not fight the Pandavas. However, he rejects her advice and eventually becomes the commander of the Kaurava army arrayed against his brothers, the Pandavas. Because she had abandoned Karna in infancy and he was brought up as a commoner in ignorance of his noble heritage, he suffered many indignities which might be compared to those of Velutha in the novel. The full story is told in Chapter 130. Karna is eventually slain by his brother Arjuna.

Poothana suckled young Krishna at her poisoned breast.

Poothana was a demon who tried in vain to kill the infant Krishna. Although his astounding powers allowed him to thrive despite her attempts on his life, her poison turned his skin dark blue or black.

Bhima disemboweled Dushasana and bathed Draupadi's hair in his blood.

In the *Mahabharata,* an apocalyptic world-spanning war is triggered when the five Pandavas foolishly wager their joint wife, Draupadi, in a rigged game of chance against their enemies, the Kauravas. Dushasana, one of the most important Kauravas, is responsible for dragging Draupadi forward just after their side has won her and attempting to strip her naked (though this attempt is foiled by a miracle). Bhima, the second of the Pandava brothers married to Draupadi, and especially noted for his strength (he was the rival of Dushasana in wrestling prowess), swears to take vengeance on Dushasana by drinking his blood. Draupadi, however, says she wants to bathe her hair in Dushasana's blood, and does not fasten up or wash her hair until she can do so. Toward the end of the climactic battle, Bhima exacts the revenge described in this passage, in the process killing a man who, like all the Kauravas, is his cousin. Roy tells her version of this story in Chapter 12.

What characteristics do these myths have in common? How do they relate to the rest of this section?

the History House

This is how the children think of the old, abandoned mansion of Kari Saipu on the abandoned rubber plantation in Akkara, across the river.

kebabs

Spiced, marinated meat, ground or in cubes, usually grilled on a skewer. The children are twenty-five years too late in calling Rahel a hippie because the heyday of the hippies was a quarter-century ago.

bandh

General strike used as a political protest.

Aiyyo

An expression of dismay.

Orkunnilley

Don't you remember?

Oower

Yes.

Aiyyo paavam

What a pity!

a DDA flat

Delhi Development Authority apartment.

gram

Lentil.

Ayurvedic

Traditional Indian medicine.

Orkunnundo?

By the end of the chapter we begin to understand why Sophie Mol had inspired such jealousy in the twins.

25.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Describe the character Baby Kochamma. Why does she act the way she does?
2. Throughout the book "the love laws" are referred to. What are they and how are they broken?
3. How does Chacko suffer throughout the novel?
4. Describe the plot.
5. How is the worship of post colonial powers depicted?
6. How does this text fit into a course about fairy-tale-inspired literature?
7. Explain what Velutha comes to stand for, in terms of a certain approach to living and in terms of fully realized human identity.
8. Explain how other characters see Velutha and what he means to them.

26.12 LET US SUM UP

We have read the summary from chapter 1 to 6. It was introductory and made us familiar with the plot, setting and characters.

26.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. In *The God of Small Things,* various "Big Things" and "Small Things" are constantly at odds. Define "Big Things" and "Small Things" in your own terms, and then determine whether one class of things or the other becomes ascendant by the end. Or are they always equal and opposite sets of things?

2. Roy refers to Velutha as both "The God of Small Things" and "The God of Loss." Using specific examples from the text, explain what about Velutha makes these titles appropriate or inappropriate.

3. Compare Ammu's and Velutha's secret sexual relationship to Rahel's and Estha's incestuous tryst. Is one or the other more forbidden? How do they express the psychology of the various characters involved?

4. Examine Roy's use of "Small Things" and the 'small perspective' throughout the novel. Why does she insist on focusing on what is small?

5. Are things small by nature or by convention? Consider the novel's epigraph in this context.

26.14 SUGGESTED READING

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: Critique and Commentary, by R. S. Sharma, Shashi Bala Talwar. Published by Creative Books, 1998. ISBN 81-86318-54-2.

Explorations: Arundhati Roy's the God of Small Things, by Indira Bhatt, Indira Nityanandam. Published by Creative Books, 1999. ISBN 81-86318-56-9.

The God of Small Things: A Saga of Lost Dreams, by K. V. Surendran.

Published by Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2000. ISBN 81-7156-887-4. Excerpts

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: a reader's guide, by Julie Mullaney. Published by Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002. ISBN 0-8264-5327-9.

Reading Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, by Carole Froude-Durix, Jean-Pierre Durix. Published by Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2002. ISBN 2-905965-80-0,.

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: a critical appraisal, by Amar Nath Prasad. Published by Sarup & Sons, 2004. ISBN 81-7625-522-X.

Derozio To Dattani: Essays in Criticism, by Sanjukta Das. Published by Worldview Publications, 2009. ISBN 81-86423-19-2

The God of Small Things: A Novel of Social Commitment, by Amitabh Roy. Published by Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2005. ISBN 81-269-0409-7. Excerpts

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, by Alex Tickell. Published by Routledge, 2007. ISBN 0-415-35843-4. Excerpts

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CHAPTER - WISE SUMMARY CONTINUED-I

STRUCTURE

27.1 Introduction

27.2 Objectives

27.3 Various Episodes

27.4 Summary of Chapter 7

27.5 Summary of Chapter 8

27.6 Summary of Chapter 9

27.7 Summary of Chapter 10

27.8 Summary of Chapter 11

27.9 Glossary

27.10 Self-Assessment Questions

27.11 Let Us Sum Up

27.12 Examination Oriented Questions

27.13 Suggested Reading

27.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are going to read the summary of chapters 7 to 11.

27.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to-

(a) explain the contents of *The God of Small Things*

(b) appreciate the plot, setting and story of the novel.

(c) analyse the novel properly.

27.3 VARIOUS EPISODES

- Wisdom Exercise Notebooks
- Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol
- Mrs. Pillai, Mrs. Eapen, Mrs. Rajagopalan
- The River in the Boat
- The God of Small Things

27.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 7

Wisdom Exercise Notebooks

- Back to 1993.
- Rahel is looking through a book cupboard in Pappachi's study, which is dusty and falling apart.
- Behind a row of books, Rahel finds what she's been looking for: a couple of seashells, Mammachi's contact lens case and the orange pipette that goes with it, and Baby Kochamma's rosary.
- Rahel turns to Estha, who is standing in the doorway, and says that she stole the rosary after he was Returned.
- Rahel finds something else: four notebooks marked *Wisdom Exercise Notebooks*.
- On one of them, Estha had erased his last name and replaced it with "*Un-Known*" (7.16).
- Rahel reads aloud from Estha's notebook. First she reads a short story based on the *Odyssey*. Then she reads a story about staying safe when walking on the street. Then she reads a story called *Little Ammu*.

- *Little Ammu* is a two-paragraph story. The first paragraph is about how Estha and Rahel bought Ammu a diary for her birthday. The second paragraph is about how Ammu let Estha sleep in her bed that night after giving him a drink of water. Then Rahel, Estha, and Ammu had a midnight feast.
- Below the story, Ammu, who had been correcting Estha's writing, wrote Estha a note telling him that if he interrupts her any more she will punish him severely.
- Rahel has a flashback. She thinks about how Ammu was forced to leave Ayemenem and how when she returned she was seriously ill. Estha never saw her when she was sick.
- We learn about the last time Ammu came back to Ayemenem. Rahel was eleven and had just been expelled from school. Ammu had lost her receptionist job because she'd missed too many days for being sick.
- Ammu bought Rahel a bunch of little presents that were more appropriate for a seven-year-old. The narrator remarks that it was as if Ammu thought that no time had passed.
- Ammu kept insisting that she was going to find a good, steady job and would get their family back together when she had the money.
- Ammu looked awful and was visibly suffering. Mammachi told Ammu to visit Rahel as infrequently as possible. At that moment, Rahel was totally disgusted with Ammu and felt like she hated her.
- We learn that this was the last time Rahel ever saw Ammu, who died soon after their meeting. Right before she died she had a nightmare that the police wanted to chop off her hair (which was a punishment for prostitutes).
- When Ammu, died the church refused to bury her, so Rahel and Chacko had to take her to be cremated. Chacko held Rahel's hand when Ammu's body was burned, but Rahel got out of his grasp.

- Rahel never wrote to Estha to tell him that Ammu was dead. She didn't see how she could do it: "There are things that you can't do, like writing letters to a part of yourself" (7.62).
- Rahel's flashback ends. She looks up and realizes that Estha has walked off.

27.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 8

Welcome Home, Our Sophie Mol

- We're back in 1969. The chapter begins with a description of the Ayemenem house.
- We get a close-up of Mammachi sitting in the heat of the afternoon playing her violin.
- We learn more about Mammachi. For years she would collect her dark hair as it fell out. One day she made it into a bun of black hair, which she pinned to her thin silver hair. At night when she took off the bun, she would let Estha and Rahel braid her hair.
- We learn that Mammachi has scars on her scalp from the many times that Pappachi beat her.
- As Mammachi plays the violin, she thinks about the beginning of her career as a pickle-maker.
- We learn that, even though Mammachi has never met Margaret Kochamma, she's never liked her. She thinks of her as a shopkeeper's daughter. Social class is a very big thing for Mammachi.
- The narrator also tells us, though, that even if Margaret Kochamma had been part of the Royal Family, Mammachi still would have hated her for marrying Chacko. The day that Chacko stopped Pappachi from beating Mammachi, Mammachi diverted all of the love in her heart to Chacko.
- When Chacko moved back to the house, Mammachi had a separate entrance built to Chacko's room so that he could have secret hookups without the rest of the household knowing. She justified this by saying that men have needs.

- Mammachi really hopes that Chacko won't sleep with Margaret Kochamma while she's visiting.
- Kochu Maria bakes a huge cake for Sophie Mol. We learn more about Kochu Maria's appearance. She's, um, not exactly a babe: "She looked like a bottled fetus that had escaped from its jar of formaldehyde in a Biology lab and unshriveled and thickened with age" (8.31).
- We learn that Kochu Maria is super aware of how she wants to be perceived in society. She's also addicted to television.
- Kochu Maria doesn't speak English, so when Estha recites lines from *Julius Caesar* to her, she thinks he's insulting her.
- The car bearing Sophie Mol and the gang pulls up to the house, and everyone in the factory stops working.
- Mammachi comes out to greet Sophie Mol. Nobody greets Rahel.
- Margaret Kochamma says hi to Mammachi, who seems a little cold.
- Mammachi brings Sophie Mol close to her to get a good look. She asks Sophie Mol if she's a pretty little girl. Sophie says she is.
- Not too far away, Velutha watches the scene from behind the rubber trees. Rahel, who sees this whole meet-and-greet as part of a play in which she has only a small part, runs away from the family to go see him "offstage." Ammu sees everything.
- Ammu watches Velutha and Rahel go through an elaborate secret greeting and sees Velutha toss her up in the air. She checks out his awesome bare abs.
- Ammu realizes that she hopes that it was, in fact, Velutha that Rahel saw in the march. We learn that just like Velutha, Ammu hates the "smug, ordered world" (8.83). By watching Rahel and Velutha together, Ammu also realizes that Rahel and Estha have parts of their lives that exist totally outside their relationship with her.

- In the meantime, Velutha looks up too and notices Ammu. She has beautiful dimples and shining shoulders. We can tell that they've got it bad for each other.
- Rahel tells Velutha that she saw him in the march the day before. Velutha tells her it couldn't have been him – it must have been his "Long-lost Twin Brother" Urumban.
- Velutha looks back at the group collected around Sophie Mol, saying he wants to get a look at her. Rahel claps her hands over his eyes and asks him not to look.
- Rahel notices that Estha is not part of the group.
- Kochu Maria agrees that Sophie Mol is very beautiful. She takes Sophie Mol's hands and smells them. Chacko explains that that's her way of kissing Sophie Mol. Margaret Kochamma asks if men and women do that to each other, too, before realizing that she sounds totally ignorant. This comment rubs Ammu the wrong way and she makes a sarcastic comment about reproduction.
- Chacko gets mad at Ammu, who goes off in a huff.
- We learn more about Ammu's upbringing and her attitude toward men.
- When Ammu was a kid, she saw how her dad was charming and kind with other people and a bully with his family.
- The narrator tells us about one night when Ammu was nine. Pappachi had driven Ammu and Mammachi out of the house. Chacko was away at school. Pappachi was tearing the house to shreds. An hour after he turned out the lights, Ammu went back into the house to rescue her new boots, which she loved more than anything.
- Just as Ammu got her boots, Pappachi turned the lights back on. He beat her with a riding crop. He made her bring Mammachi's scissors from her sewing kit. Then he cut her new boots to pieces until they were completely destroyed.

- We snap back to the scene of Sophie Mol's arrival. Velutha and Rahel are still watching everything that's going on and wondering where Estha is. Everyone else has cake.
- Ammu calls Rahel in for her nap. Baby Kochamma yells at Rahel to stop being so friendly with Velutha.
- Mammachi calls for Velutha and asks him about some repairs in the factory.
- Baby Kochamma says that Velutha will be the family's nemesis, but nobody pays attention to her.
- Kochu Maria tells Rahel that one day Sophie Mol will be their Kochamma (a respectful name for a woman). Rahel tells Kochu Maria that she's going to move to Africa and that Kochu Maria is ugly.
- Sophie Mol goes to see what Rahel is up to. Rahel is killing some ants, but then gets up and leaves Sophie Mol behind. The adults think they're playing hide-and-seek sweetly.

27.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 9

Mrs. Pillai, Mrs. Eapen, Mrs. Rajagopalan

- We're back in 1993. Rahel sits in the garden – it's the first night it hasn't rained since she got to Ayemenem. She thinks about her life in Washington.
- Baby Kochamma has been asking Rahel what she plans to do about Estha. Rahel has no plans, though.
- Rahel flashes back to 1969 to a day during Sophie Mol's visit in which the three kids ran around saying "*nictitating membrane*" and wearing saris.
- Back in 1969, things are going better between Sophie Mol and the twins than Rahel had expected. Sophie Mol has talked back to Chacko, telling him that she loves Joe more than him. Rahel thinks this will make Chacko love Estha and herself more than he loves Sophie Mol. Sophie has also refused to braid Mammachi's hair and, most important, has rudely rejected any nice gesture from Baby Kochamma.

- The three kids put on saris and go to see Velutha. They introduce themselves as Mrs. Pillai, Mrs. Eapen, and Mrs. Rajagopalan.
- Velutha plays along with their make-believe game. Rahel will realize later how important it was for him to allow them their imaginary world.
- They paint his nails red with Ammu's old nail polish. We see an image of a policeman laughing at Velutha.
- We're back in 1993.
- Rahel watches Estha through the window. He's sitting on his bed, staring at the dark. The narrator calls them "a pair of actors in a recondite play with no hint of plot or narrative." Rahel thinks about how there was only one victim on "that day" in 1969 – Velutha.
- Hours later, Rahel still sits in the garden. She hears drums in the distance and realizes that a kathakali performance is starting.
- Rahel gets up to check out the performance. On her way, she goes to get a snack and realizes that one of the doors to the factory is broken. She walks in.
- We learn that on the day Sophie Mol arrived, Estha stood in the factory, stirring jam and thinking "Two Thoughts." It was also there that a "Red, tender-mango-shaped secret was pickled, sealed, and put away" (9.48). How's that for suspense?

27.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 10

The River in the Boat

- We're back in 1969 on the day Sophie Mol arrives.
- Estha leaves the hubbub of her arrival and goes into the factory.
- He finds a place to Think (with a capital T) between the wall and a big iron pot of banana jam.
- Estha thinks that the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man could walk into the factory at any moment. He thinks about how Ammu would probably

offer the Orangedrink Lemondrink man tea, and how nobody would be able to help him.

- Estha thinks Two Thoughts (two capital Ts here, folks – this must be important).
- His two thoughts are: a) *Anything can happen to Anyone* and b) *It's best to be prepared* (10.28-30).
- Estha thinks about how Ammu had honored him by letting him copy Mammachi's recipe for banana jam into her new recipe book.
- Estha thinks Thought Number Three: "A boat" (10.60). He thinks about gathering provisions and rowing across the river.
- Rahel comes into the factory looking for Estha. He doesn't answer her, but sings a boat song. She asks him why he's rowing the jam. Estha says, "India's a free country" (10.78).
- Rahel gets up to go. Estha tells her he's going to Akkara to the History House. When Rahel asks why, he recites his Two Thoughts: "'Because Anything can Happen to Anyone,' Estha said. 'It's Best to be Prepared'" (10.97). The narrator comments that you can't really argue with that.
- We learn that Vellya Paapen claims to be the last person to have gone into the History House. He used to tell the twins a story about running into the ghost of Kari Saipu. He claims to have pinned the ghost to the trunk of a rubber tree with his sickle.
- Then the narrator gives us the scoop on the History House from the kids' perspective – everything that Vellya Paapen doesn't or won't know about it, including how it will be Vellya Paapen's actions that "set the Terror rolling" (10.104).
- Rahel asks Estha if they'll have to become Communists if they move to the History House. Estha says they might. They hear someone coming and so they shut their yaps, "sealing the secret" (10.111).

- Later, Rahel meets Estha under the mangosteen tree. They find a boat covered in moss.
- We find out that Ammu will use the boat to go across the river to meet Velutha – but it hasn't happened yet.
- The narrator poses a question: can that little boat make it across the river, or is it too old? Is Akkara too far away?
- We learn more about the river. The first third of the river is a nice, calm part where Chacko taught the twins how to swim and Velutha taught them how to fish. The second third is where the river gets really deep and the current picks up. The final third, on the other bank, is calm and oozy.
- We learn that Estha and Rahel have no problem swimming across the river, but the middle of the river is definitely not a good place to hang around. Taking the boat across, we learn, is going to be a problem.
- But in the meantime, the twins wash the boat and carry it to Velutha's hut.
- Velutha isn't there, but Kuttapen, his paralyzed brother, is. Kuttapen is shouting a jingle at the guava tree.
- We learn that Kuttapen lies on his back all day while Velutha and Vellya Paapen are away, watching his youth pass him by.
- Kuttapen thinks of his dead mother and assumes he will be the next in the family to die. The narrator basically tells us that it's too bad Kuttapen is wrong.
- We also find out that Kuttapen is on the brink of insanity.
- Estha and Rahel walk into the hut. When their eyes get used to the dark, they see Kuttapen. Rahel brings him some water.
- Kuttapen asks about Sophie Mol and the twins show him the boat. He warns them about the river and gives it British characteristics to show how it is secretly evil.
- Velutha comes home to check on Kuttapen. He hears the kids singing before he sees them. He feels a clench of love for them in his chest.

- The twins ask Velutha to fix the boat. He says maybe but that he doesn't want them to play games on the river.
- The kids leave. Kuttapen asks Velutha if the kids have talked about seeing him at the march. Velutha says they haven't said anything, but they know.
- Rahel runs home, remembering that she's supposed to be napping and has to get home before Ammu realizes she's gone.

27.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 11

The God of Small Things

- Ammu has a dream in which a one-armed man with really hot abs holds her close. The two of them are surrounded by people watching them (we get the sense that Mammachi and the kids are among them). They go out to the water and swim.
- As she dreams, Ammu realizes her kids are watching her. Rahel asks if Ammu is dead; Estha says she is having an afternoon-mare.
- While Ammu is still half-asleep, the narrator asks, rhetorically, who the one-armed man is. Is he the God of Loss? The God of Small Things? (Aw, look out! – we've got our title.)
- Rahel says they shouldn't wake Ammu up because she could have a heart attack. The twins roam around her room whispering and clearing their throats to gently wake her up. Ammu, still half-dreaming, aches with love for them.
- Ammu wakes up. Estha tells her she looked sad while she was asleep. Ammu realizes she was really happy.
- Estha asks if it counts if you're happy in a dream.
- They listen to a song on the radio about two lovers who make a suicide pact.
- Ammu notices that Rahel and Estha are covered in dust, and Rahel has a curl of shaved wood in her hair. She knows they've been with Velutha. She tells them not to go there anymore because it will only cause trouble.

- Ammu realizes she knows who "The God of Loss, The God of Small Things" is.
- Estha and Rahel snuggle up to Ammu and play with her stretch marks. Ammu gets tired of them touching her and goes to look at herself in the bathroom mirror.
- As Ammu checks out her naked body in the mirror, she starts to feel like her life has already been lived. She thinks about madness and death and fears for her future. She tries to weep for herself, The God of Small Things, and the kids.
- We find out that Ammu will be locked in the bedroom after Sophie Mol's death and that Chacko will break down the door and throw her out of the house.
- We also learn more about how Estha is returned, and we get a laundry list of everything that Ammu packs for him.

27.9 GLOSSARY

Chapter 7

We are now back in the "present," shortly after Rahel has returned home as an adult. Why is the old school essay by Estha on the *Odyssey* that Rahel reads appropriate at this point?

maharani
Queen.

Little Nehru
Dressed like the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.

Locusts Stand I

A misunderstanding of a Latin phrase [*locus standi*] meaning "no [legal] standing, but it comes to signify something like "homeless" in the novel.

ayah

Nanny.

The church refused to bury Ammu.

The usual reason for refusing burial is suicide; but in this case it is more likely that Ammu refused to repent the "sin" of her affair with Velutha.

Chapter 8

Why does Mammachi despise Margaret Kochamma so much?

chatta Blouse.

Chacko Saar vannu

Mr. Chacko has arrived. "Saar" is a phonetic spelling of an Indian pronunciation of the English word "Sir."

kodam puli tree

A variety of tamarind tree bearing fruit shaped like a *kodam* or round bowl.

his What Happened to Our Man of the Masses? suit

Allusion back to the beginning of Chapter 6, when Ammu noted Chacko's unusually formal clothing.

like the English dairymaid in "The King's Breakfast"

Refers to an illustration to A. A. Milne's 1925 poem by that title.

Aiyyo kashtam

Literally, "Oh, what a pity!" but used here as a reproach: "How could you say that!"

Why doesn't Rahel want Velutha to see Sophie Mol?

Kando . . .

Translated in the text: '"Can you see her?' 'I can see her."'

Sundari kutty

Lovely little girl.

the Scarlet Pimpernel

Allusion to a once-popular 1905 novel by the Baroness de Orczy (recently made into a Broadway musical) featuring a daring aristocrat who works to save nobles in Revolutionary France, and a rhyme that features in the novel.

Kushumbi
Jealous woman.

Explain the relevance of the ant-killing scene to the themes of the novel. What is the difference between things as the adults perceive them and as the children perceive them?

Chapter 9

We are back in the "present" at first, but quickly slip back in Rahel's memories into the past.

What does Rahel mean by her musings on whether there is room for her and Estha in the house?

pallu
The loose end of a sari which is draped over the shoulder.

bindis
Red dots worn on the foreheads of women.

How did Sophie Mol reveal herself to be human, and how did that revelation affect the twins?

chenda
Drum.

Chapter 10

Pectin, Hectin and Abednego
Alluding to the three Jewish heroes who were thrown into the firey furnace by Nebuchadnezzar's servants along with Daniel: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Note the flood imagery which foreshadows much that is to come.

Twins were not allowed.

What is the significance of this thought?

She heard a nun's voice singing the boat song.

Singing like Maria in *The Sound of Music,* who became, like Estha, a refuge from danger.

Amhoo

Moo.

Mandalay.

In central Burma.

vallom

Small boat.

Aiyyo, Mon! Mol!

Aiee! Boy! Girl! (Literally, "Son! Daughter!.)

koojah

Earthenware water jar.

idi appams

Steamed rice noodle cakes.

kanji

Rice soup.

meen

Fish.

How have Velutha's feelings toward the children changed?

For the first time it is confirmed that it was Velutha the children saw in the march.

Chapter 11

What qualities draw Ammu to Velutha in her dream?

What does the title of the chapter seem to refer to here?

a song from a film called Chemmeen

Note the ominous associations of this song from the 1965 film directed by Ramu Karia. The film was made in Malayalam, and its English title was *The Wrath of the Sea*.

burning ghat

Funeral pyre.

Why does not mentioning Velutha's name to the twins make Ammu feel more attached to him?

Describe the children's relationship with their mother in this scene.

Can you guess why Chacko will threaten and drive away Ammu?

The "silent stranger" is, of course, the grown Estha.

27.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Summarize in what sense Velutha is "the god of loss" and "the god of small things" from four different chapters that captures the meaning that Velutha has in this novel.
2. What is the significance of the betrayal of Estha and Rahel by the adult world*?*
3. Write a critical appreciation on chapter 7.
4. Explore the characters of *The God of Small Things* compared to the life of Arundhati Roy.

27.11 LET US SUM UP

We have read the summary from chapter 7 to 11. It was introductory and gave us better ideas about the plot, setting and characters.

27.12 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Explore Paradise Pickles & Preserves as a symbol for the forbidden and hidden in *The God of Small Things*. How does the process of

pickling serve as a metaphor for the way the family handles its 'skeletons in the closet ?'

2. How does Roy use the idea of loyalty in the novel? Which characters are loyal and which are disloyal? Some characters to consider: Comrade Pillai, Baby Kochamma, Velutha, Ammu, Estha.

3. Explain how violence and sex are connected throughout the novel. In Roy's world, can one exist without the other, or are they necessarily connected? What sort of outlook does this create?

4. Examine Roy's use of the grotesque in the story's events as well as the characters' fantasies. Is any of the violence Roy uses gratuitous? If so, how? If not, why is so much violence necessary in the novel?

5. Consider Roy's literary style. How does her use of perspective, time, fantasy, refrain, and any other element you wish to discuss affect the way we perceive the story?

6. Examine Roy's use of setting in the novel. How do her choices serve to highlight a connection or disconnection between the worlds of "Big Things" and "Small Things"? Some locations to consider: The river and riverbank, Ayemenem as a whole, Cochin, the History House, the Ayemenem House, the hotel, the movie theater, Ammu's room, the police station.

27.13 SUGGESTED READING

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: a reader's guide, by Julie Mullaney. Published by Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002. ISBN 0-8264-5327-9.

Reading Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, by Carole Froude-Durix, Jean-Pierre Durix. Published by Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2002. ISBN 2-905965-80-0,.

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: a critical appraisal, by Amar Nath Prasad. Published by Sarup & Sons, 2004. ISBN 81-7625-522-X.

CHAPTER-WISE SUMMARY CONTINUED-II

STRUCTURE

28.1 Introduction

28.2 Objectives

28.3 Various Episodes

28.4 Summary of Chapter 12

28.5 Summary of Chapter 13

28.6 Summary of Chapter 14

28.7 Summary of Chapter 15

28.8 Summary of Chapter 16

28.9 Glossary

28.10 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

28.11 Let Us Sum Up

28.12 Examination Oriented Questions

28.13 Suggested Reading

28.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are going to read the summary of chapters 12 to 16.

28.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to-

(a) explain the contents of *The God of Small Things*.

(b) appreciate the plot, setting and story of the novel.

(c) analyse the novel properly.

28.3 VARIOUS EPISODES

- Kochu Thomban
- The Pessimist and the Optimist
- Work is Struggle
- The Crossing
- A Few Hours Later

28.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 12

Kochu Thomban

- It's 1993 again.
- Rahel approaches the temple compound. She sees Kochu Thomban, the elephant.
- We learn that kathakali performances are more frequent these days in Ayemenem. The dancers perform for the tourists and then ask forgiveness of their gods for cashing in on their religion.
- Rahel sits on the ground and watches.
- The narrator tells us that the characteristic of a great story is that you can enter in at any point. Even though you know what's going to happen, you want to listen anyway.
- We learn more about what it means to be a Kathakali Man, the type of performer who lives out these epic stories. Once, he was the most sacred kind of person. Now his own kids make fun of him. After the elevated life he has lived in the past, there is nothing left for him to do but make money performing for tourists.

- Rahel watches the performance. In it, she sees a scene from the Indian epic the *Mahabharata*. In the performance, Karna meets Kunti, who, as it turns out, is his long-lost mother. She has only shown herself to him for the wellbeing of her five sons, the Pandavas. She makes him promise not to kill them in war. He says he can only promise that she will always have five sons (meaning that he will kill one of them or he will be killed).
- As Rahel watches, she realizes that Estha is there. She doesn't see him, but she feels his presence.
- The performance goes on for a really long time. Estha and Rahel are still watching when the sun rises the next morning.
- The narrator informs us that it was Comrade Pillai who first introduced the twins to kathakali. He used to take them and his son Lenin to watch the performances all night.
- On their way out of the temple gates, Estha and Rahel run into Comrade Pillai, who praises Rahel for still being interested in Indian culture.
- Estha and Rahel say nothing, but walk home together, "He and She. We and Us" (12.57).

28.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 13

The Pessimist and the Optimist

- We're back in 1969. Sophie Mol wakes up on a cot in Chacko's room. She takes in the scene around her. Margaret is still asleep on the bed next to her. Chacko is sleeping in Pappachi's study.
- She looks at Chacko and Margaret's wedding photo. We learn that Margaret Kochamma's father refused to be part of the picture because he didn't want his daughter to marry an Indian.
- We flash back several years to when Margaret and Chacko first met.

- Margaret was working as a waitress. She had moved out of her parents' home as a way of showing them that she was independent. All the same, even when she was finally out on her own, Margaret lived a quiet, responsible life.
- One day, Margaret was working in the café when Chacko came in. He was tousled but well built. He wasn't fat yet.
- Chacko asked Margaret if she'd heard about the man with twin sons. Chacko proceeded to tell her a long, drawn-out joke. The two of them started laughing hysterically. Margaret's boss was not pleased.
- Chacko was on Margaret's mind longer than she expected.
- Chacko started coming to the café more frequently.
- It's pretty clear that Margaret had never met anyone quite like Chacko. Still, the narrator tells us, it seems that she was really confusing acceptance of herself with passion for Chacko.
- Then we get things from Chacko's perspective. It turns out that Margaret was not only Chacko's first lover, but his first female friend.
- We also find out that when Chacko and Margaret got married, her family didn't consent, and his didn't even know.
- They got married. Margaret kept working. Chacko got fat and didn't work. Then he got a short-lived job in London.
- Then Margaret met Joe. She was drawn to the fact that Joe was "everything that Chacko wasn't. Steady. Solvent. Thin" (13.74-75).
- After Sophie Mol was born, Margaret realized she had to leave Chacko, both for her own sake and her daughter's.
- Chacko returned to Ayemenem after Margaret left him. He would behave in uncouth ways in front of guests, and worst of all for Mammachi, he would reminiscence openly about Margaret.

- Margaret and Chacko stayed in touch over the years.
- When Joe died, Margaret made Sophie go on with life as usual. Still, when Chacko invited the two to come to India for the holidays, she thought it was the best thing to do. The narrator tells us that Margaret will be haunted by this decision for the rest of her life.
- The narrative cuts back to 1969. It's the morning of Sophie Mol's death. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma are told that a white child's body was found floating in the river.
- Nobody has really noticed that Rahel and Estha are also missing or how long they've been gone.
- Baby Kochamma has the keys to Ammu's bedroom, where she's locked inside.
- The previous day, the twins had come to the door to ask Ammu why she was locked up. She said it was all their fault and that they were millstones around her neck – a really dramatic way of saying that they are holding her down and keeping her from leading her life the way she wants to.
- We also learn that earlier that afternoon it had started to rain like crazy. Just like in the movies, this makes us feel like something dramatic is about to happen.
- Yesterday, before Ammu yelled at the twins, Vellya Paapen showed up at the door crying. Kochu Maria tried to get him to leave but he wouldn't.
- Vellya Paapen offered Mammachi his fake eye back because he felt like he didn't deserve it (she paid for it once upon a time). And by offered, we mean he put his eye in Mammachi's hand. Mammachi was none too pleased with the eyeball sitting in her hand all warm and slimy.
- Mammachi asked Vellya Paapen if he was drunk as she washed his eye juices off her hands.
- Vellya Paapen started crying really hard. He told Mammachi that he had discovered that Ammu and Velutha were lovers. He knows this is a total violation of class standards.

- Mammachi, always even-tempered and reasonable, pushed Vellya Paapen out the kitchen door into a puddle of mud. Then she started spitting on him and calling him a drunken dog.
- While all this was going on, Kochu Maria told Baby Kochamma everything. Baby Kochamma was practically licking her chops, seeing all kinds of potential in this situation.
- Baby Kochamma made Vellya Paapen tell the whole story over again, this time slowly and in detail, and asking lots of questions.
- Mammachi pictured Velutha and Ammu doing it. She thought of the shame it would bring on her family. She totally lost it.
- Mammachi and Baby Kochamma made a plan for damage control. And by plan, we mean they locked Ammu in her bedroom and tried to get hold of Velutha so they could convince him to skip town.
- Problem was, Sophie Mol's body had already been found.
- We move forward in time a few days.
- Baby Kochamma is at the Kottayam police station. She tells a made-up story to Inspector Thomas Mathew about how they had to fire a certain worker in the factory (Velutha), who tried to force himself on Ammu.
- The narrator tells us that Baby Kochamma lies about Ammu and Velutha's relationship to save her own reputation. She doesn't care how Ammu looks after all this.
- Baby Kochamma continues to tell a bogus story that makes Velutha look like an angry, sex-crazed worker. She makes sure to mention seeing Velutha at the march, but she doesn't notice that Inspector Thomas Mathew looks a little worried to hear that last part.
- Inspector Thomas Mathew tells Baby Kochamma that the police will do everything they can and that Velutha will be captured by the end of the day.
- After letting Baby Kochamma go, Inspector Thomas Mathew sends for

Comrade K.N.M. Pillai. He needs to know if Velutha has any support or if he's "operating alone" (13.158).

- We find out that the night before, Velutha had come to Comrade Pillai's door, and that Comrade Pillai was the last person to see Velutha before he disappeared. Comrade Pillai doesn't say anything about Velutha being a member of the Communist Party. He just says that, as far as he's concerned, Velutha is on his own.
- In the meantime, Baby Kochamma arrives back in Ayemenem. Margaret Kochamma is sick with grief as she looks at Sophie Mol's dead body laid out on the chaise lounge.
- We find out that Margaret is convinced that Estha is responsible for Sophie Mol's death. She even slaps him a few times.
- The only person who Margaret won't remember is Velutha.
- We go back in time to two weeks before Sophie Mol's death.
- Sophie Mol wakes up and looks up at the rubber trees out her window. She gets out of bed and opens the suitcase, finding presents for Estha and Rahel.
- Sophie goes out with a bunch of presents – Toblerone chocolate, multicolored socks, and souvenir pens from London – to "negotiate a friendship" with Estha and Rahel (13.185).

28.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 14

Work is Struggle

- We're still in 1969. It's the afternoon of the day that Sophie Mol and Margaret arrive.
- Chacko goes to see Comrade K.N.M. Pillai at his house. He isn't there, so Chacko sits and waits. Comrade Pillai's home contains a lot of Communist paraphernalia, including a placard that says "*Work is Struggle. Struggle is work*" and a photo of him placing a garland around Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad's neck.

- Lenin walks in. Kalyani tells him to get his sister, Latha. Mrs. Pillai mentions that Chacko went to Oxford and makes Latha recite an English poem to him. (Latha just won first prize for elocution in a contest.)
- Comrade Pillai shows up, and everyone listens to the rest of the poem.
- Comrade Pillai makes small talk about Sophie Mol's visit. Chacko asks what's new with the party.
- Comrade Pillai tries to get Lenin to recite from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* for Chacko's benefit.
- Chacko feels a little weird. It's clear that in his relative poverty, Comrade Pillai is closer to the working classes than Chacko is, and this unsettles Chacko: "He held his poverty like a gun to Chacko's head" (14.64).
- Chacko gives Comrade Pillai (who prints all the labels for Paradise Pickles and Preserves) a new assignment: they have a new product, cooking vinegar, and it needs a label design.
- Chacko asks Comrade Pillai about the previous day's march (when the family was driving to the movies). We find out that this is the real reason for Chacko's visit – he couldn't care less about vinegar labels.
- While they make small talk about the march, Chacko mentions that Rahel had seen Velutha among them. This startles Comrade Pillai, and we find out that he has been meaning to bring up Velutha with Chacko – he just wasn't expecting to have to so soon.
- Chacko finds out from Comrade Pillai that Velutha is a card-carrying member of the Communist party. Chacko starts to sweat nervously.
- Comrade Pillai tells Chacko that Velutha is going to cause problems and that it's in Chacko's best interest to send him away.
- Chacko doesn't know why he should send Velutha off – he's been great so far. Comrade Pillai says that Velutha is making the other workers

mad because he's of a lower caste than they are. Apparently a lot of them have come to Comrade Pillai with complaints.

- Chacko tells Comrade Pillai that he's been thinking of organizing his workers into a union.
- We learn that nobody will ever find out exactly what role Comrade Pillai had in the events surrounding Sophie Mol's death.
- The narrator also tells us that we can't really blame Comrade Pillai for his role in these events – it's not his fault that he "lived in a society where a man's death could be more profitable than his life had ever been" (14.130).
- The narrative breaks, and we are now with Velutha, who is on the bus back from Kottayam to Ayemenem. At the bus stop, Velutha runs into another factory worker who tells him that Mammachi wants to see him.
- By now Vellya Paapen has already confessed to Mammachi. We find out that Vellya Paapen is waiting in the dark for Velutha to come home, holding the axe with which he plans to murder him for his misdeeds.
- But Velutha doesn't go home – he goes straight to the Ayemenem house. Mammachi totally loses it when she sees Velutha. She even threatens to have him castrated if she ever finds him on her property again.
- Velutha responds with "we'll see about that" (14.137). Baby Kochamma will embellish these words later on when she tells Inspector Thomas Mathew that Velutha threatened them with murder.
- Mammachi spits in Velutha's face. He's totally stunned and leaves.
- Velutha keeps thinking about Ammu and wondering if she's been hurt.
- He goes to Comrade Pillai's house and incoherently tries to explain what happened.
- Velutha asks Comrade Pillai something that even Velutha can't

understand. Comrade Pillai's response is that the Party is not designed to look out for its members in their personal lives.

- Velutha sets out again on his own.

28.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 15

The Crossing

- It's after midnight and it's raining.
- A young man sits at the top of a staircase leading to the river.
- He strips down and swims across the river to the middle, where the current is swift.
- He gets to the other side.
- He thinks that things will get worse and then better. Then he walks towards the Heart of Darkness.
- The narrator describes him as "The God of Loss. The God of Small Things. Naked but for his nail varnish" (15.8-10). So we know this man is Velutha.

28.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 16

A Few Hours Later

- Estha and Rahel are on the riverbank. They're dragging the boat out to the water. Sophie Mol has a bunch of provisions with her. It's been two weeks since Sophie Mol's arrival.
- Estha, it turns out, has already equipped their Home away from Home with a bunch of things they'll need because of his fear of the Orangedrink Lemondrink Man. But it was Ammu's anger towards the twins that really prompted them to leave. Estha says they'll go home only if Ammu begs them.
- Sophie Mol goes with the twins after explaining that the adults will only be truly sorry if all of the kids are gone. (If she only knew!)

- They set off in the boat. It's dark.
- They make it past the Really Deep and are almost to the other side when a floating log collides with the boat and capsizes it. Estha and Rahel are used to such things happening, and they swim to shore.
- They call for Sophie Mol, but she doesn't respond. Rahel feels Pappachi's moth on her heart.
- Sophie Mol is already gone, carried away by the current.
- Rahel asks Estha if she's dead. He doesn't answer. He does say that they'll go to jail, however.
- They don't see Velutha asleep in the shadows of the History House.

28.9 GLOSSARY

Chapter 12

kuthambalam

Inner part of the Hindu temple, just outside of the inner sanctum.

rakshasa

Demon.

Karna

The story Kunti tells him is her own. Note that Estha joins Rahel just as the twins are mentioned in the story. What else does this story have to do with Estha and Rahel's story?

It is not unusual for Indian classical performances to last all night.

Why is it mentioned that the Kathakali men went home to beat their wives?

The rose bowl

The pink arch of the dawn sky.

Chapter 13

churidar

Traditional narrow, tight-fitting trousers with folds near the ankles; worn by both men and women in North India.

shervani

"Nehru jacket": long formal jacket with stand-up collar.

Why does Roy tell us the story of how Margaret and Chacko met at this particular point in the novel, do you think?

Why does Margaret love Chacko? Why does he love her?

secretly pawned her jewelry

It is traditional for Indian brides to be given lavish jewelry which is normally only pawned or sold in the direst emergencies.

dhobi

Person who washes clothes for a living.

At this point a section break is indicated by the image of a small fish.

Note how we keep circling around the incident of Sophie Mol's drowning, looking at events which led up to it and events that followed it, slowly tightening the circles to focus in at last on what actually happened. What effect does this technique have on you?

Keep in mind as you watch Baby Kochamma trying to take her revenge those aspects of her own history which have made her the kind of woman she is.

mittam

Yard.

Modalali Mariakutty

Landlord Mariakutty.

They were both men whom childhood had abandoned without a trace. What do you think this sentence means?

What is Comrade Pillai's main motivation in saying what he does and does not about Velutha to Inspector Thomas Mathew?

Why does Margaret Kochamma never think about Velutha?

A second fish occurs at this point.

What is the significance of the various things that Margaret Kochamma has taken with her and Sophie Mol to India?

Chapter 14

Ajantha

The brand name of an audio equipment company in Kerala, named after the famous Buddhist cave site.

kavani

Top part of a two-piece sari, draped diagonally across the upper body.

Modalali

Landlord.

O, young Lonchin varhas scum out of the vest

Here is the original text of the lines Latha mangles:

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
And, save his good broadsword, he weapons had none,
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.

He swam the Eske River where ford there was none,
But, ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late

The poem tells, of course, of another illicit romance, and a dangerous crossing by water.

Friends Romans countrymen lend me your

Antony's funeral oration over the body of the slain Julius Caesar, another ominous tale.

Why does his poverty give Comrade Pillai an advantage over Chacko?

Oru kaaryam parayettey?
Shall I tell you something?

keto
Have you heard?

Allay edi
Isn't that so? (rudely)

As a Communist, Pillai should be in favor of equality, but he shares the same prejudices as others in the village against the untouchables.

He broke the eggs but burned the omelette.

Another fish marks the end of the scene at Comrade Pillai's and a shift back to Velutha.

Chickens would come home to roost.

"The chickens have come home to roost" is an old expression meaning someone has received punishment for what he or she has done. Doom.

Koo-koo kookum theevandi
Kooki paadum theevandi
Rapakal odum theevandi
Thalannu nilkum theevandi

This is a rhyme about a train which was printed in a popular Malayalam reader for children:

The train screams koo-koo-koo
The train sings and screams
The train runs day and night
The train stops, exhausted.

avial

A spicy vegetable stew cooked in coconut milk, a typical Malayali dish.

Enda?

What is it?

Comprador capitalist

A Marxist insult suggesting that Velutha is a sellout, one who collaborates with the exploiters of the working class. But is almost certainly not the fact that Velutha has crossed class lines that so offends Comrade Pillai, but that he has crossed caste lines.

Spring-thunder

"Spring Thunder Over India" is the title of an editorial hailing the Naxalite Communist rebellion in the *People's Daily,* organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China July 5, 1967. It was reproduced in *Liberation,* Vol. I No. 1 (November 1967). Since then the phrase has come to stand for Keralite Communism generally. .

Chapter 15

The action of this chapter follows immediately upon that of the preceding one.

Chapter 16

What pattern have events taken on at the end of this chapter?

28.10 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. What is the message or moral conveyed by the novel – 'The God of Small Things'?
2. Discuss the significance of the role of Baby Kochamma in the story.
3. Justify the title of *The God of Small Things*.
4. What does Roy's novels tell us about the impact of globalization on India?

5. Paying attention to Arundhati Roy's style, show how she presents characters and suggests the wider concerns of the novel.

6. What type of relationships we have in *The God of Small Things*?

28.11 LET US SUM UP

We have read the summary from chapter 12 to 16. It was introductory and told us many things about plot, setting and characters.

27.12 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Does *The God of Small Things* have one definite protagonist? If so, who is it and why? If not, why does the novel need no single protagonist?

2. Contrast one of the following sets of characters, using specific examples from the text: Velutha and Estha, Ammu and Rahel, Sophie and Rahel, Baby Kochamma and Mammachi, Chacko and Comrade Pillai. What makes the comparison worth noting? Do not compare characters unless you can argue why the comparison is worthwhile.

3. Which affects Estha's and Rahel's relationship more, their shared experience, or their instinctive, biological connection from birth? Make sure you can substantiate your claim with regard to episodes such as their incest, the incident with the Orangedrink Lemondrink man, Sophie Mol's death, and the scene at the police station with Baby Kochamma.

27.13 SUGGESTED READING

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: a reader's guide, by Julie Mullaney. Published by Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002. ISBN 0-8264-5327-9.

Reading Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, by Carole Froude-Durix, Jean-Pierre Durix. Published by Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2002. ISBN 2-905965-80-0,.

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CHAPTER-WISE SUMMARY CONTINUED-III

STRUCTURE

29.1 Introduction

29.2 Objectives

29.3 Various Episodes

29.4 Summary of Chapter 17

29.5 Summary of Chapter 18

29.6 Summary of Chapter 19

29.7 Summary of Chapter 20

29.8 Summary of Chapter 21

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29.11 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

29.12 Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

29.13 Let Us Sum Up

29.14 Examination Oriented Questions

29.15 Answer Key (MCQs)

29.16 Suggested Reading

29.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we are going to read the summary of chapters 17 to 21.

29.2 OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, the learner will be able to-

(a) explain contents of *The God of Small Things* properly.

(b) appreciate the plot, setting and story of the novel.

(c) analyse the novel properly.

29.3 VARIOUS EPISODES

- Cochin Harbor Terminus
- The History House
- Saving Ammu
- The Madras Mail
- The Cost of Living

29.4 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 17

Cochin Harbor Terminus

- We're back in 1993 again.
- Estha is sitting on his bed in the dark. It's raining outside.
- Kochu Maria is asleep while a cop show plays on TV. Baby Kochamma is in her room filling out a Listerine customer survey.
- Baby Kochamma picks up her diary and writes, "I love you I love you" in it. We find out that she has a case full of diaries, whose pages all have the same message.
- We find out that Father Mulligan died four years ago, and that he and Baby Kochamma had stayed in touch over the years.
- Baby Kochamma lies in bed and waits for Rahel to leave Estha's room.

She figures maybe she hadn't heard the door open and Rahel's already in bed. Turns out Rahel is still in Estha's room.

- Rahel is lying quietly on Estha's bed. She can't think of anything to say. Estha turns around and looks at her. He thinks she looks lovely.
- He thinks of how Rahel now resembles Ammu. He remembers the last time he ever saw her on the train platform the day he was Returned to his biological father.
- We flash back in time to the day Estha was Returned.
- We get a slew of images of things they saw at the train station.
- Chacko had told Ammu to pack her things and leave. Rahel remembers seeing that Chacko had disappeared, leaving a monster in his place.
- We meet Mr. Kurien Maathen, Baba's friend who comes to take Estha.
- We find out that Sophie Mol's death has been in the newspapers. We also find out that there was a Communist Party siege of Paradise Pickles and Preserves led by Comrade K.N.M. Pillai. Comrade Pillai claimed that Velutha was implicated in the crime just because he was a member of the Communist Party.

29.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 18

The History House

- Back to 1969.
- Six policemen cross the river. The description of them walking toward the History House lasts for a few pages. We don't know about you, but we really feel the dramatic effect of this long, drawn-out build-up.
- We learn more about the History House – it's beautiful but old. The roof is lined with bats.
- The policemen creep toward the house carrying batons but thinking of machine guns.

- They see Estha, Rahel, and Velutha lying asleep in opposite corners of the veranda.
- They wake up Velutha by kicking him. They're wearing heavy boots. You might guess where this is going.
- Estha and Rahel wake up "to the shout of sleep surprised by shattered kneecaps" (18.57). How's that for a gruesome image? They are paralyzed by fear and disbelief, even more so when they realize that the man being beaten is Velutha. They didn't even know he was in the house.
- The police beat Velutha with extreme violence and brutality. The narrator describes his skull cracking and his broken ribs puncturing his lungs.
- The narrator tells us that the twins are too young to understand that the police feel like they have a reason and a right to do this to Velutha. There is nothing accidental about what's happening.
- Estha and Rahel learn that blood smells "sicksweet. Like roses on a breeze" (19.79-80).
- The policemen stop beating Velutha. We learn that his skull is fractured in three places. The bones in his face are smashed, leaving it featureless and mushy. Six teeth are broken. He's bleeding from his mouth because four of his ribs are puncturing his lungs. His spine has been damaged. His intestine is ruptured. Both of his kneecaps are shattered. In other words, he's a goner.
- One of the policemen brings his boot down heavily on Velutha's groin. They handcuff him.
- Rahel tells Estha that she can tell that it isn't Velutha – she says it's Urumban, his "twin" who was at the march. Estha says nothing because he is "unwilling to seek refuge in fiction" (19.99).
- One of the policemen asks the twins if they are OK.
- The six policemen take all of Estha and Rahel's toys for their kids. The

only thing they leave behind is Rahel's watch, which has the fake time painted on it.

- They drag Velutha across the floor.

29.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 19

Saving Ammu

- The twins are at the police station. Inspector Thomas Mathew gets them two Coca-Colas. Rahel giggles. Estha feels fearful.
- Inspector Thomas Mathew sends for Baby Kochamma. She asks if everything is OK. He says nothing is.
- Turns out Estha and Rahel have told the Inspector that they left home on their own. He says there is no case against Velutha.
- Inspector Thomas Mathew tells Baby Kochamma that either Ammu has to say that Velutha tried to rape her, or the kids have to say that Velutha kidnapped them. Otherwise he has to charge Baby Kochamma with filing a false statement.
- Baby Kochamma asks to have five minutes alone with the twins.
- They are scared.
- Baby Kochamma tells Estha and Rahel that they are murderers, responsible for Sophie Mol's death.
- Baby Kochamma tells them they'll have to go to jail – and so will Ammu. They'll be in three different jails. She makes up vivid details about prison life and tells them Ammu probably won't survive, and if she does she'll be sick and old by the time she gets out.
- Baby Kochamma says that Velutha is going to die anyway, so they have to go along with what she says so they can at least save Ammu. When the Inspector asks a question, all they have to do is say "yes."

- Baby Kochamma asks them what they'd rather do – save Ammu or send her to jail? The twins reply "Save Ammu."
- When the Inspector comes back, he says he only needs to hear from one of the twins. Baby Kochamma sends Estha, knowing he's more practical than Rahel.
- Inspector Thomas Mathew takes Estha to see Velutha. Blood is spilling out of his head. The inspector asks his question, Estha says yes, and at that moment "childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid in like a bolt" (19.82-83).
- On their way back home, Estha tells Rahel that she was right – it wasn't Velutha; it was Urumban. She figures Velutha has escaped to Africa.
- We find out that Velutha doesn't live through the night. When Ammu goes to the police station to clear everything up, Velutha's body has already been dumped.
- Baby Kochamma freaks out when she hears that Ammu has gone to the police. She realizes she has to get Ammu out of Ayemenem as quickly as she can. She turns Chacko against Ammu. It's her idea to send Ammu away and to Return Estha.

29.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 20

The Madras Mail

- We're back at the train station on the day Estha is Returned. Estha is sitting on the train. Ammu holds his hand through the window. She's trying not to cry.
- The narrator tells us that it will be years before the twins realize that they're not wholly to blame for Ammu's grief.
- Ammu tells Estha that she'll come for him as soon as she gets a job. Estha cries that, that will never happen.
- Ammu tells Estha and Rahel that one day she'll open a school and they'll get to go there.

- The train starts moving. Estha panics. The narrator tells us that Estha leaves his voice behind, while Rahel can't stop screaming.
- The narrative breaks. We're back in 1993.
- Estha and Rahel are lying in the dark with their arms around one another.
- The narrator comments that there is nothing to say to clarify what happened next, but we know that Estha and Rahel have sex. The narrator tells us, furthermore, that "once again they broke the Love Laws. That lay down who should be loved. And how. And how much" (20.78).
- We flash back to 1969, to the day of Sophie Mol's arrival. Everyone is at the supper table. Sophie Mol shows everyone the chewed-up food in her mouth. When Rahel mimics her, Ammu sends her to bed.
- Ammu kisses Rahel's cheek as she tucks her in, and Rahel can tell that Ammu isn't actually angry.
- Ammu doesn't want to return to the dinner table, where everyone is acting like Sophie Mol and Margaret Kochamma are more important than anyone else and where Chacko is super smug.
- Ammu aches for Velutha.

29.8 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 21

The Cost of Living

- It's nighttime. Ammu goes out onto the veranda and listens to the Rolling Stones on her radio. She is especially affected by the lyrics about realizing your dreams before it's too late.
- Ammu starts walking through the darkness down to the river.
- We learn that earlier that afternoon (the afternoon of Sophie Mol's arrival), Velutha had realized that he loved Ammu.
- Ammu had expected that somehow Velutha would have anticipated her arrival, and she's sad not to see him.

- But Velutha is there, floating on his back in the river. He's totally overcome when he sees her. Ammu is sitting with her head buried in her arms.
- The narrator asks us, would Velutha have done what he did next if he knew it would lead to his own destruction?
- Velutha swims over to Ammu. They look at each other. His heart beats like crazy.
- Ammu puts her arms around Velutha. Then she takes her shirt off.
- She starts kissing him. He starts kissing her back.
- They lie down on the ground and make love.
- Velutha is frightened by what he's done. He knows this isn't a one-time thing.
- Ammu gets up and leaves.
- For the next two weeks they meet. When they talk, they stick to the "Small Things" because they know there's no future for them in the long term.
- Every night they check on a little spider they name Chappu Thamburan: Lord Rubbish. We find out that the spider will outlive Velutha.
- When Ammu leaves Velutha, she says "Naaley," which means "tomorrow" (21.81-82).

29.9 STYLE

STYLE

NON-SEQUENTIAL NARRATIVE

The God of Small Things is not written in a sequential narrative style in which events unfold chronologically. Instead, the novel is a patchwork of flashbacks and lengthy sidetracks that weave together to tell the story of the Ipe family. The main events of the novel are traced back through the complex history of their causes, and memories are revealed as they relate to one

another thematically and as they might appear in Rahel's mind. Although the narrative voice is omniscient, it is loosely grounded in Rahel's perspective, and all of the episodes of the novel progress toward the key moments in Rahel's life.

POINT OF VIEW

The book is narrated in the third person. However, during a great part of the narrative, the reader sees everything through Rahel's eyes. This gives the reader special insight into the happenings and characters. Throughout the book, there are various moments that intersect. In one moment, everything is seen through a child's eyes, with a child's feelings and rationales. Later, the same facts, objects, and people are seen in a completely different light.

SETTING

The story is set in the village of Ayemenem in the Kottayam district of Kerala, India. The main part of the plot takes place in 1969, a time of changes in ideology and influence.

India is a very complex society with various cultural and religious habits and beliefs. Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, and Muslims share the same space. Society is divided not only by the very strict caste system but also by class consciousness. Many languages are spoken in India, but the higher classes make a point of speaking English, sending their sons to study in England and adopting certain English habits. Kerala itself, where the story is set, has a complex social setup, with Hindus, Muslims, and Christians displaying different lifestyles and traditions. It also has the largest Christian population in India, predominantly Saint Thomas Christians or Syrian Christians. In the Kottayam district, Christians are a majority.

Roy has described the book as "an inextricable mix of experience and imagination."

TECHNIQUES

Roy uses various techniques to represent the children's viewpoints and

their innocence. One technique she employs is the capitalization of certain words and phrases to give them significance. The children also restate things that adults say in a phonetic way, separating and recombining words. This echoes the children's way of looking at the world, distinct from the perspective of the grown-ups who surround them. They place significance on words and ideas differently from the adults, thereby creating a new way of viewing the world around them. They pick up on certain feelings and ideas that the adults around them either fail or refuse to recognize, and give new significance to things that the adults ignore for their own purposes. The children use and repeat these phrases throughout the story so that the phrases themselves gain independence and representational meanings.

Roy also employs a disjointed, non-sequential narrative style that echoes the process of memory, especially the resurfacing of a previously suppressed, painful memory.

The uncovering of the story of Sophie's death, concurrently with the forward-moving story of Rahel's return to Ayemenem and reunion with Estha, creates a complex narrative that emphasizes the difficulty of the subject of the story and the complexity of the culture from which the story originates. Time is rendered somewhat static as parts of one narrative line are intertwined through repetition and non-sequential discovery. This is also part of the way Roy uses real-life places and people that she has shifted and altered for use in the story. The story's many elements come together to construct a diverse look at one instance of Indian culture and the effect of the caste system on life and love during a time of post-colonialism. As the children try to form their own identities, naming and renaming themselves in the process, Roy places in parallel the effect of the process by intertwining the past and the present.

This process also echoes the progression of the Indian people, like that of all cultures that try to find ways to maintain their traditions in a time of increasing globalization.

29.10 GLOSSARY

Chapter 17

Back to the "present." His trauma of that night seems to have extended a quarter century into the future.

ashram

Hindu spiritual center.

Diwali

The very popular fall Hindu festival of lights. Also known as "Deepavali." How does this scene affect your perception of her in relation to the Velutha-Ammu love affair?

in saffron

In saffron-yellow robes, traditionally worn by holy men.

sadhus

Hindu ascetics.

swamis

Senior members of a Hindu religious order.

What effect does it have in the novel to have the end of Velutha's story told indirectly, in retrospect, at the end of this chapter?

Chapter 18

We now leave the retrospective narrative to plunge back into that fateful night.

civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness.

Relate these various fears to elements of the novel.

Madiyo?

Is it enough?

Madi aaririkkum

It may be enough.

Chapter 19

F.I.R.

"First Information Report," the initial report of illegal activity at a local police station.

chhi-chhi

Expression of disgust used as a euphemism for excrement.

meeshas

Moustaches.

Childhood tiptoed out.

What does this mean?

How does Baby Kochamma manipulate Chacko into getting Ammu and the twins out of Ayemenem?

Chapter 20

Why is Rahel concerned that there be "proper punishments" in the imaginary school Ammu is imagining?

After another fish, we return to the "present." Why do you think Roy has the twins "break the love laws" at the end of her novel?

Chapter 21

There's no time to lose

One of the verses from "Ruby Tuesday" by the Rolling Stones. The song concerns parting from a loved one, but this particular stanza emphasizes the urgency of acting on love in the present.

Why do you think this pivotal love scene has been postponed to the end of the book?

It is no coincidence that Roy has placed two scenes of lovemaking (between Rahel and Estha and between Ammu and Velutha) in close proximity to each other at the end of the novel. What relationships do you see between these two scenes?

What does it mean that "they stuck to the Small Things"?

Chappu Thamburan

A spider.

Why is the last word of the novel "Tomorrow"?

What messages do you think Roy was trying to convey in writing this novel?

29.11 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1 The characters are torn between love and duty.Who are the people who truly love one another in the book?

2 Why does Roy switch back and forth among time presents and various times past? What effect does she intend this to have on reader?

3 Vellya Pappen is willing to kill his son. What does this say about the importance of social rules versus family bounds?

4 What significant role does Paradise Pickles and Preserves play in the story as a symbol?

5. What are some examples of how adults and kids view the same situation diffently in the novel *The God of Small things* ?

6 Who is the protagonist of the novel?

7 How does Estha break rules in the god of small things?

8 How and why does the twins' attitude towards Sophie Mol seem to change?

9 Disscuss the theme of womanhood in *The God of Small things*.

10 Draw character sketch of Pappachi and Mammachi.

29.12 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Who sexually abuses Estha? _____ .

   a) Velutha
   b) His Uncle Chacko
   c) The Orange drink Lemon drink Man
   d) Comrade Pillai.

2. How does Chacko feel about having a union at the factory? _____ .

   a) He wants to close the factory down.
   b) He wants to hire new workers who will not be unionized.
   c) He wants Velutha to organize the union.
   d) He wants to organize one for them.

3. How has the History House changed since the twins' childhood_____ .

   a) Uncle Chacko lives there now.
   b) Rich expatriates have torn it down to build a mansion.
   c) It has burned down.
   d) It has become part of a tourist hotel complex.

4. What is the most obvious change in Ayemenem House in thepresent? _____ .

   a) It has been completely modernized.
   b) It has been abandoned and no one lives there.
   c) It has become a fancy hotel.
   d) It is very dirty and neglected.

5. What two things does the dead Sophie Mol show Rahel at her funeral? _____.

   a) The townspeople and her past in England.
   b) How she died and the face of her killer.

c) The dome of the church and a baby bat.

d) The polluted river and a dog.

6. Why does Estha want to run away to the History House? _____.

a) He hates Sophie Mol.

b) His mother is dead.

c) He is afraid his abuser is coming to find him.

d) He doesn't love his family anymore.

7. Whom does Rahel marry? _____ .

a) Her professor in England.

b) An American named Larry McCaslin.

c) A Hindu named Comrade Pillai.

d) A salesman from Calcutta.

8. Why does Ammu leave the police station? _____ .

a) Estha is sick.

b) The police won't let her inside.

c) Chacko comes and makes her leave.

d) The police treat her badly and tell her to go.

9. What are the Cochin Kangaroos? _____ .

a) Cement garbage cans at the airport.

b) A dancing troupe.

c) The family pets.

d) Famous zoo animals.

10. What film does the family go see in Cochin? _____ .

a) The Sound of Music.

b) The latest hit from Bollywood.

c) Singing in the Rain.

d) The latest James Bond movie.

11. What is Pappachi's greatest disappointment in life? _____ .

a) His wife doesn't love him.
b) He didn't get credit for discovering a moth.
c) He never got to move to England.
d) His children are unsuccessful.

12. What has happened to Baby Kochamma's love, Father Mulligan? ____ .

a) He has become a follower of Lord Vishnu.
b) He has become a bishop.
c) He has died loving Baby Kochamma.
d) He has returned to Rome.

13. What does Rahel find hidden in Pappachi's study? _____ .

a) A cache of marbles they played with as children.
b) Estha's homeschool notebooks.
c) Pappachi's moth.
d) Pappachi's will.

14. Why do the police hunt down Velutha? _____ .

a) He has killed Comrade Pillai.
b) They think he is a rapist and kidnapper.
c) He has stolen Mammachi's jewels.
d) He is a communist.

15. Why did Baby Kochamma become a Catholic? _____ .

a) She didn't believe in Hinduism anymore.
b) She wanted to fit in better.
c) She was in love with a priest.
d) She wanted to move to America.

16. Why does Ammu divorce her husband? _____ .

a) He had an affair.
b) He was abusive and a liar.

c) She wants to move back home.

d) He abandoned her.

17. Why does Estha lie and accuse Velutha of kidnapping? _____ .

a) Baby Kochamma told him that Ammu and the children would go to jail.

b) Velutha abused him.

c) Ammu told him to.

d) He secretly hates him.

18. What happens to Velutha? _____ .

a) He runs away with Ammu.

b) He drowns in the river.

c) He escapes to Calcutta.

d) He dies in jail.

19. What is Ammu's funeral like? _____ .

a) No one knows because she died in the city.

b) She is cremated and there is no funeral.

c) The family gathers at the church and regrets how they treated her.

d) She is buried at the cemetery and no one is there.

20. Who does the family think they see at the Marxist demonstration ?

_____ .

a) Rahel.

b) Velutha.

c) Baby Kochamma.

d) Comrade Pillai.

21. How did Chacko meet his wife? _____ .

a) She was visiting Ayemenem as a tourist.

b) She was a waitress at a cafe when he was at university.

c) She was in one of his classes.

d) She was his professor.

22. Where do Rahel and Estha go to see the Kathakali dancers? _____.

a) The city.
b) The History House Hotel.
c) The town square.
d) The temple.

23. Where do the police find Velutha? _____ .

a) Hiding under a boat.
b) In Calcutta.
c) Hiding at his hut.
d) At the History House.

24. What is the name of the hotel where Rahel's family stays before going to the airport? _____ .

a) The Circle Princess.
b) Hotel Sea Queen.
c) The Warm Moth.
d) Cochin Inn.

25. What color is Sophie Mol's hair? _____ .

a) Light blond.
b) Dark red.
c) Deep red-brown.
d) Jet black.

26. What causes the children's boat to overturn the night that Sophie Mol drowns? _____ .

a) A log.
b) A big wave.
c) Strong wind.
d) An alligator.

29.13 LET US SUM UP

This lesson acquaint us with the summary of *The God of Small Things* from chapter 17 to 21. This lesson gives a detailed overview of how the story of the novel further progresses.

29.14 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1 If you had to pick one moment from the novel that you think is to blame for Sophie Mol's death, which would it be, and why.

2 Is this a novel about an event (Sophie Mol's death), or is it about Rahel and Estha's relationship as brother and sister?

3 Do you think the events of the novel were inevitable, or did a bunch of bad things just happen to take place at the same time?

4 Which characters change over time? Which ones stay the same?

5. Elaborate Subalternism in *The God of Small Things*

29.15 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. c) The OrangedrinkLemondrink Man
2. d) He wants to organize one for them.
3. d) It has become part of a tourist hotel complex.
4. d) It is very dirty and neglected.
5. c) The dome of the church and a baby bat.
6. c) He is afraid his abuser is coming to find him.
7. b) An American named Larry McCaslin.
8. d) The police treat her badly and tell her to go.
9. a) The Sound of Music.
10. a) Cement garbage cans at the airport.
11. b) He didn't get credit for discovering a moth.
12. a) He has become a follower of Lord Vishnu.

13. b) Estha's homeschool notebooks.

14. b) They think he is a rapist and kidnapper.

15. c) She was in love with a priest.

16. b) He was abusive and a liar.

17. a) Baby Kochamma told him that Ammu and the children would go to jail.

18. d) He dies in jail.

19. b) She is cremated and there is no funeral.

20. b) Velutha.

21. b) She was a waitress at a cafe when he was at university.

22. d) The temple.

23. d) At the History House.

24. b) Hotel Sea Queen.

25. c) Deep red-brown.

26. a) A log.

29.16 SUGGESTED READING

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: Critique and Commentary, by R. S. Sharma, Shashi Bala Talwar. Published by Creative Books, 1998. ISBN 81-86318-54-2.

Explorations: Arundhati Roy's the God of small things, by Indira Bhatt, Indira Nityanandam. Published by Creative Books, 1999. ISBN 81-86318-56-9.

The God of Small Things: A Saga of Lost Dreams, by K. V. Surendran. Published by Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2000. ISBN 81-7156-887-4. Excerpts

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: a reader's guide, by Julie Mullaney. Published by Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002. ISBN 0-8264-5327-9.

Reading Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things, by Carole Froude-Durix, Jean-Pierre Durix. Published by Editions universitaires de Dijon, 2002. ISBN 2-905965-80-0,.

Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: a critical appraisal, by Amar Nath Prasad. Published by Sarup & Sons, 2004. ISBN 81-7625-522-X.

Derozio To Dattani: Essays in Criticism, by Sanjukta Das. Published by Worldview Publications, 2009. ISBN 81-86423-19-2

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VIJAY TENDULKAR : LIFE AND CAREER

STRUCTURE

30.1 Introduction

30.2 Objectives

30.3 Life and Works of Vijay Tendulkar

30.4 More about Vijay Tendulkar

30.5 Complete Career

30.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

30.7 Let Us Sum Up

30.8 Examination Oriented Questions

30.9 Suggested Reading

30.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we will learn about the life and works of Vijay Tendulkar, his career and his place as a playwright in Indian Writings in English.

30.2 OBJECTIVES

Our Objectives in this lesson is to find answers to the following:

1. Who is Vijay Tendulkar and what is his place in Indian English Literature?
2. How can we evaluate Vijay Tendulkar as a playwright?

3. What are the major works of Vijay Tendulkar and what are his favourite themes?

4. Life, works and career of Vijay Tendulkar.

5. Vijay Tendulkar's contribution to Indian cinema.

30.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar was born on January 6, 1928 in a Bhalavalikar Saraswat brahmin family in Kolhapur, Maharashtra [citation needed], where his father held a clerical job and ran a small publishing business. The literary environment at home prompted young Vijay to take up writing. He wrote his first story at age of six.

He grew up watching western plays, and felt inspired to write plays himself. At age eleven, he wrote, directed, and acted in his first play.

At the age of 14, he participated in the 1942 Indian freedom movement, leaving his studies. The latter alienated him from his family and friends. Writing then became his outlet, though most of his early writings were of a personal nature, and not intended for publication. Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar is an Indian playwright and screenwriter who wrote more than 30 full-length Marathi-language plays and numerous one-act plays, short stories, and movie scripts about controversial social themes, including violence, poverty, women's rights, and corruption. Some of Tendulkar's most famous plays include *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* (1967; "Silence! The Court is in Session") and *Sakharam Binder* (1971). *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972; "Ghashiram the Constable") was recognized as one of the longest-running plays in the world, with more than 6,000 performances staged internationally. Tendulkar began his career writing for newspapers and had a daily column in the *Maharashtra Times*. It was the play *Shrimant* (1956; "Affluent"), however, that made him a household name. In addition to his plays, Tendulkar wrote screenplays in both Marathi and Hindi. His script for *Manthan* (1976) won the National Film Award for best screenplay; for his literary accomplishments, Tendulkar received (1984) the

Padma Bhushan award, one of India's highest civilian honours. In 1998 he won the lifetime contribution award from the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship. Tendulkar is the subject of the documentary *Tendulkar and Violence: Today and Yesterday* and a short film, *Ankahin* ("The Untold"), both released in 2007.

Vijay Tendulkar was a leading Indian playwright, movie and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist, and social commentator primarily in Marathi. Many of Tendulkar's plays derived inspiration from real-life incidents or social upheavals, which provides clear light on harsh realities. He provided his guidance to students studying "Playwright writing" in US universities. For over five decades, Tendulkar had been a highly influential dramatist and theater personality in Maharashtra.

Vijay Tendulkar died in Pune on May 19, 2008, after five weeks at the Prayag Hospital battling the effects of myasthenia gravis.

30.4 MORE ABOUT VIJAY TENDULKAR

Vijay Tendulkar, one of India's most influential playwrights was among the handful of playwrights along with Girish Karnad, Habib Tanvir, and Badal Sircar who gave a new content and form to Indian theater, writing about contemporary issues and themes in a novel way.

Tendulkar's prolific writing over a period of five decades includes thirty full-length plays, seven one-acts, six collections of children's plays, four of short stories, two novels, and seventeen film scripts. He was, agiant among these modern Indian playwrights, both in terms of the volume and quality of his dramatic creations — a subtle observer of Indian social reality, a humanist, an innovative playwright who continuously experimented with form and structures. He was known for his insightful "objectification" in the development of multi-layered characters whose existential angst was held up against the social crises of the society.

In an interview, Tendulkar once said, "I have not written about hypothetical pain or created an imaginary world of sorrow. I am from a middle class family

and I have seen the brutal ways of life by keeping my eyes open. My work has come from within me, as an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live. If they want to entertain and make merry, fine go ahead, but I can't do it, I have to speak the truth."

Tendulkar's plays have dealt with themes that unravel the exploitation of power and latent violence in human relationships. As he noted: "the basic urge (to write) has always been to let out my concerns vis à vis my reality: the human condition as I perceive it."

Women play a central role in Tendulkar's plays. His female characters are mainly from the lower and middle classes: housewives, teachers, mistresses, daughters, film extras, slaves, and servants. These women bring not just a variety of social station but also a broad range of emotions into the plays: "from the unbelievably gullible to the clever, from the malleable to the stubborn, from the conservative to the rebellious, from the self-sacrificing to the grasping."

His characters are often composites of contradictory personalities struggling between emotion and intellect; espoused values and conflicting actions; seeking independence yet submissive, struggling between physical desires and conscience. Tendulkar tended to minimize his personal influence on these characters and their personality development. They are in the play "with their own minds, ways and destiny," he said.

In the *New York Times* review of *Sakharam Binder* (*Sakharam, the Bookbinder*, 1972), staged by the Play Company in 2004, drama critic Jonathan Kalb described Tendulkar's characterization, which instead of demonizing the coarse bookbinder leaves the viewer with an understanding of his helplessness in a certain sense. Kalb noted that the Bookbinder's tragedy turned out "to hinge on his budding social consciousness, his arrested enlightenment. He can see — almost — an idea of equality and shared humanity that transcends individual appetite, but nothing in his life (including the women) ever encourages him to follow its logic. Like Brecht's Mother Courage, he exploits a corrupt system for personal advantage, then discovers that the price of playing the

game is everything he hoped to protect. Unlike Brecht, though, Mr. Tendulkar never judges his protagonist but concentrates instead on painting him with unsettling compassion, perceptiveness and thoroughness".

After a month-long New York festival of his plays and films organized by the Indo-American Arts Council in 2004, I congratulated Tendulkar on the success of *Sakharam*. He made the following observation:

I watched *Sakharam* in New York in performance with a predominantly alien audience. I found that the play, without any changes to suit the audience there except the bedroom scenes which were naturally un-Indian in their presentation, appeals to their sensitivity and penetrates deep enough. Its Indianness does not come in the way at all. In fact the producers tell me that normally an American audience does not watch an American play with so much attentiveness and involvement. How will you explain this? What is universality? I am sharing this with you and have not drawn any conclusion.

In my reply, I pointed to two possible reasons for the positive response from an "alien" audience: one, a curiosity to know what's happening on the other side of the fence, a sort of "cultural voyeurism." One gets hooked if the arguments are being made coherently, which is often the case in Tendulkar's plays due to the didactic nature of his writing. And two, once the unusual premise of the play is understood and appreciated, one follows the unraveling of characters and their motivations. The motivations of Sakharam, Laxmi, and Champa, for example, are certainly universal and able to bring about a transcending effect on the viewer. Agreeing with my broad-brush analysis, the author wrote back that universality in motivations and emotions of characters can indeed enable a play to cut across cultural gaps.

Arundhati Banerjee, an observer of Tendulkar's work, notes that none of his creations are ever simplistic — "like his genius, they too have the same prismatic quality of giving forth new meanings as one turns them around in the light of one's understanding." His plays therefore continue to be enigmatic, raising more questions than easy or comfortable answers. Tendulkar's work

is endowed with an unusual subtlety that raises the plays above hackneyed social melodrama.

The inner core of these works is rooted in his deep compassion and respect for human life — for life in the social reality of post-colonial India. Seeing its exploitation and waste, his response was an unrelenting literary output and non-stop social activism. Until his death, he was involved in causes, fiercely seeking justice for the victimized—mainly the poor and those disfranchised by communal riots and structural violence. Unlike the makers of the confrontational theatre of the late 1980s, he did not believe that an evening at the theater would change the society, but he was always hopeful that a good play could raise public awareness.

Tendulkar never shrank from public controversy as it gave him a unique opportunity to engage his opponents in public discourse. There has been hardly a play by him that has not ended up in controversy. Most of the calls for banning his plays did not, surprisingly, come from the government but from particular segments of the public who saw in his dramatizations attacks on their power positions—challenges to caste, gender or class structures. His most visible play, *Ghasiram Kotwal* (*Ghasiram — Chief Inspector*), which had 6000 performances in India and abroad, had problems when it opened in 1972. It was stopped because the right-wing Hindu nationalist RSS found it "anti-Brahmin" and described the negative depiction of the noble character Nana Phadnavis as historically inaccurate.

Tendulkar came to the defense of the play, pointing out that *Ghashiram Kotwal* was not a historical play: "It is a story, in prose, verse, music and dance set in a historical era. Ghashirams are creations of socio-political forces which know no barriers of time and place. Although based on a historical legend, I have no intention of commentary on the morals, or lack of them, of the Peshwas, Nana Phadnavis or Ghashiram. The moral of the story, if there is any, may be looked for elsewhere."

During the remount of the play in 1980 for the Berlin International Theater Festival, similar protests were repeated prior to the troupe's departure

from India. This time, right-wing Shiv Sena activists went to court to get a stay order on the planned international tour. The artists had to resort to police protection. The court issued an order requiring that before each performance a statement approved by the Court had to be read. This statement publicly praised the achievements of Nana Phadanvis, stating that the play was not based on true history. The company followed the court order, and the play had a successful tour of Western Europe with twenty-five performances. It received enthusiastic reviews in *The London Times, The Guardian, Der Speigel*, and *New Theatre Quarterly*.

Tendulkar's large body of work represents an interesting amalgam of content and structure. In his plays, he has experimented with almost every form — from traditional folk techniques in *Ghashiram — Chief Inspector*, with fifty characters dancing on the stage, to the minimalist Beckettian bicyclist journey in *Safar/Cyclewallah* (1993) and *The Masseur* (2003), a full-length one-man play with a bench as the only prop, to his last play, *His Fifth Woman* (2004), in which the two protagonists wait outside a hospital with a woman's body in a hand cart. He always insisted that the structure of his plays were driven by the characters, and it is that uniqueness that brought out their broad thematic impact.

With such a voluminous oeuvre written over fifty years, most of it in the author's mother tongue Marathi, it may be too early for a comprehensive assessment of Tendulkar. Such assessment will be likely limited to his translated work if it occurs in the West. His notable creations are at the beginning and end of his career. *Shanata! Court Chalu Ahe* (1968), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), and *Sakharam Binder* (1972) remain his outstanding plays for their bold societal themes and layered characterizations. At the other end, *Safar* (1993) and *His Fifth Woman* (2004) are the best examples of his lean, minimalistic phase. At his ripe age, he tackled these plays' difficult themes about the meaning of life without straining to be philosophical or profound. Both have an unusual light touch despite their heavy themes. In between is a trio of plays: *Baby* (1975), *Kamala* (1982), and *Kanyadan*

(1983). These are insightful studies of women written as conventional three-act social dramas with his characteristically penetrating dialogue and characterization.

I was fortunate to have worked with Vijay Tendulkar on the last two plays, bringing out the English translation of *Safar (The Cyclist)* and *His Fifth Woman* (his only play in English) with Oxford University Press in 2006. These works, unlike his others, are replete with laughter. *The Cyclist*, about the adventure of life seen through a bicyclist's journey, was first broadcast on BBC World Service in 1998 and later performed by Toronto's Maya Theatre at the Harbourfront Centre in 2004. *His Fifth Woman* was specially written for the New York Tendulkar Festival in October 2004. Directed by Sturgis Warner for the Lark Theater Company, it explored the question of death and afterlife in the context of injustices suffered by women in male-female relationships. It did this in a most unusual way: the play has a chorus of crows (as in the Aristophanes's comedies) who transform the grimness of the theme into hilarity and also expose the hypocrisy of certain Hindu religious rituals performed at death.

Delivering the prestigious Sri Ram Memorial Lectures for Performing Arts in 1997 in New Delhi, Tendulkar summed up his lifelong involvement in theater as follows:

What I like about those years is that they made me grow as a human being. And theater which was my major concern has contributed to this in a big way. It helped to analyze life—my own and lives of others. It led me to make newer and newer discoveries in the vast realm of the human mind that still defies all available theories and logic. It's like an ever-intriguing puzzle or a jungle that you can always enter but has no way out. Not that I am any wiser than the fool I was when I entered the theater. I still act like a fool and think like one; but there is a difference. Now I am aware of what I am doing while I do it. I am my own audience and the critic, if one may use the language of the theater. Now I enjoy my foolishness and laugh at it; and of course the foolishness of others too, at times.

30.5 COMPLETE CAREER

Early life

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar was born on 6 January 1928 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra where his father held a clerical job and ran a small publishing business. The literary environment at home prompted young Vijay to take up writing. He wrote his first story at age six.

He grew up watching western plays and felt inspired to write plays himself. At age eleven, he wrote, directed, and acted in his first play.

At age 14, he participated in the 1942 Indian freedom movement, leaving his studies. The latter alienated him from his family and friends. Writing then became his outlet, though most of his early writings were of a personal nature, and not intended for publication.

Early Career

Tendulkar began his career writing for newspapers. He had already written a play, *Amcyavar Kon Prem Karnar* (Who will Love us?), and he wrote the play, *Grhastha* (The Householder), in his early 20s. The latter did not receive much recognition from the audience, and he vowed never to write again.

Breaking the vow, in 1956 he wrote *Srimant*, which established him as a good writer. *Srimant* jolted the conservative audience of the times with its radical storyline, wherein an unmarried young woman decides to keep her unborn child while her rich father tries to "buy" her a husband in an attempt to save his social prestige.

Tendulkar's early struggle for survival and living for some time in tenements ("chawls") in Mumbai provided him first-hand experience about the life of urban lower middle class. He thus brought new authenticity to their depiction in Marathi theatre. Tendulkar's writings rapidly changed the storyline of modern Marathi theatre in the 1950s and the 60s, with experimental presentations by theatre groups like Rangayan. Actors in these theatre groups

like Shriram Lagoo, Mohan Agashe, and Sulabha Deshpande brought new authenticity and power to Tendulkar's stories while introducing new sensibilities in Marathi theatre.

Tendulkar wrote the play *Gidhade* (The Vultures) in earlier, but it was not produced until 1970. The play was set in a morally collapsed family structure and explored the theme of violence. In his following creations, Tendulkar explored violence in its various forms: domestic, sexual, communal, and political. Thus, *Gidhade* proved to be a turning point in Tendulkar's writings with regard to establishment of his own unique writing style.

Based on a 1956 short story, “Die Panne” ("Traps") by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Tendulkar wrote the play, *Santata! Court Calu Ahe* ("Silence! The Court is in Session"). It was presented on the stage for the first time in 1967 and proved as one of his finest works. Satyadev Dubey presented it in movie form in 1971 with Tendulkar's collaboration as the screenplay writer.

1970s and 1980s

In his 1972 play, *Sakharam Binder* (Sakharam, the Binder), Tendulkar dealt with the topic of domination of the male gender over the female. The main character, Sakharam, is a man devoid of ethics and morality, and professes not to believe in "outdated" social codes and conventional marriage. He accordingly uses the society for his own pleasure. He regularly gives "shelter" to abandoned wives and uses them for his sexual gratification while remaining oblivious to the emotional and moral implications of his exploits. He justifies all his acts through claims of modern, unconventional thinking, and comes up with hollow arguments meant in fact to enslave women.

In 1972, Tendulkar wrote another, even much more acclaimed play, *Ghashiram Kotwal* ("Officer Ghashiram"), which dealt with political violence. The play is a political satire created as a musical drama set in 348th century in Pune. It combined traditional Marathi folk music and drama with contemporary theatre techniques, creating a new paradigm for Marathi theatre. The play demonstrates Tendulkar's deep study of group psychology, and it brought him

a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship (1974–75) for a project titled, "An Enquiry into the Pattern of Growing Violence in Society and Its Relevance to Contemporary Theatre". With over 6,000 performances thus far in its original and translated versions, *Ghashiram Kotwal* remains one of the longest-running plays in the history of Indian theatre.

Tendulkar wrote screenplays for the movies *Nishant* (1974), *Akrosh* (The Cry) (1980), and *Ardh Satya* (The Half-Truth) (1984) which established him as an important "Chronicler of Violence" of the present. He has written eleven movies in Hindi and eight movies in Marathi. The latter include *Samana* ("Confrontation") (1975), *Simhaasan* ("Throne") (1979), and *Umbartha* ("The Threshold") (1981). The last one is a groundbreaking feature film on women's activism in India. It was directed by Jabbar Patel and stars Smita Patil and Girish Karnad.

1990s and beyond

In 1991, Tendulkar wrote a metaphorical play, *Safar*, and in 2001 he wrote the play, *The Masseur*. He next wrote two novels — *Kadambari : Ek* and *Kadambari: Don* — about sexual fantasies of an ageing man. In 2004, he wrote a single-act play, *His Fifth Woman* — his first play in the English language — as a sequel to his earlier exploration of the plight of women in *Sakharam Binder*. This play was first performed at the Vijay Tendulkar Festival in New York in October 2004.

In the 1990s, Tendulkar wrote an acclaimed TV series, *SwayamSiddha*, in which his daughter Priya Tendulkar, noted Television actress of 'Rajani' fame, performed in the lead role. His last screenplay was for *Eashwar Mime Co*. (2005), an adaptation of Dibyendu Palit's story, *Mukhabhinoy*, and directed by theatre director, Shyamanand Jalan and with Ashish Vidyarthi and Pawan Malhotra as leads.

30.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. What are the dates of Vijay Tendulkar?
2. What was his place of birth?

3. What place did he die at and of what?

4. What are the major works of Tendulkar?

5. Discuss the early career of Vijay Tendulkar.

30.6 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson, we have learnt of Vijay Tendulkar's life, his works and his place in Indian Writings in English.

30.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the life and works of Vijay Tendulkar.

2. Evaluate Vijay Tendulkar as a playwright.

3. What are the common major themes of Vijay Tendulkar's works?

4. Discuss Vijay Tendulkar's contribution to Indian cinema.

5. Discuss in detail different stages of Vijay Tendulkar's career.

30.9 SUGGESTED READING

Gaskell, Ronald. *Drama and Reality.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1999.

MacRae, John. *Collected Plays*. Mumbai: Metro Publishers, 2005.

Mee, Erin B. "Mahesh Dattani's Invisible Issues." *Performing Arts Journal* 55 (2000): 12-15.

Drama Contemporary. New Delhi: OUP, 2002.

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VIJAY TENDULKAR : *THE VULTURES*

STRUCTURE

31.1 Introduction

31.2 Objectives

31.3 Analysis of Vijay Tendulkar's *The Vultures*

31.4 Familial Degeneration in *The Vultures*

31.5 Political Views and Legacy

31.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

31.7 Let Us Sum Up

31.8 Examination Oriented Questions

31.9 Suggested Reading

31.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we will learn about Vijay Tendulkar's play *The Vultures*. We would deal with the themes of the play and its analysis. We will also explore the theme about familial degeneration in this play.

We will also know about Vijay Tendulkar's political views and his legacy.

31.2 OBJECTIVES

In the lesson our objective is to find answers to the following:

1. What is the theme of *The Vultures* ?

2. Discuss the legacy of Vijay Tendulkar.
3. What are the political views of Vijay Tendulkar?
4. What is *The Vultures* about?
5. Who are the main characters in *The Vultures*?
6. Critically analyse *The Vultures* by Vijay Tendulkar.
7. How is the theme of familial degeneration established in the play *The Vultures*?
8. Discuss the legacy of Vijay Tendulkar in detail.
9. What are the major themes of *The Vultures*?
10. What are the reasons behind the popularity of *The Vultures*?

31.3 ANALYSIS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *THE VULTURES*

Vijay Tendulkar, is a Marathi writer of repute, who has been reckoned as a major playwright in modern Indian literature. Tendulkar is a traditional artist with extra ordinary talents, and his plays reveal modernist qualities. *Gidhade* is translated by Priya Adarkar, as *Vultures*. It is a two-act play and stands apart from the other plays of Vijay Tendulkar. In fact, it is a play, which displays on the stage, the unmitigated violence arising from drunkenness, greed and immortality. The drama is a social expose of violence, inherent in man, since time immemorial. The play was an instant hit, for nowhere had violence been so ruthlessly studied and portrayed in theatre. Critics pin the success of the play to its shock elements, admitting in the same breath that it somehow dimmed its central theme. *The Vultures* is indeed the most violent of Tendulkar's plays. It reminds one of Webster's plays *The Duchess of Malfi*. It is replete with violent imagery consisting of blood, eeriness and mad raving.

Tendulkar's *The Vultures* is about the inhuman violence due to self -alienation as well as due to selfishness and avarice. Violence finds a good illustration in every play of Tendulkar. In this play he exemplifies both

verbal and non-verbal violence. Recently the government of India has introduced an act known as the Act of domestic violence – prohibiting male violence over female in the house. Here the whole play centers around violence and sex. Hari Pitale cheats Sakharam his own brother in business and prospers. His sons Ramakant and Umakant and his daughter, Manik inherit his culture of inhuman selfishness and greed. They all form a family of Vultures. Ramakant, Umakant and Manik, like their father, are ever ready to cheat one another to get more money and they do not hesitate to kill one another to get a great share of the property.

31.4 FAMILIAL DEGENERATION IN *THE VULTURES*

Vulture is a bird that feeds on corpses and has come to symbolize anyone or anything that benefits from another's sufferings. Vijay Tendulkar has very aptly entitled his play to portray familial degradation and man's savage nature where avarice can lead to tearing one another, breaking even blood ties. *Gidhade* (*The Vultures* 1971) has a singular place among Vijay Tendulkar's (1828-2008) oeuvre of literary output spanning over fifty years.

The play explores how avarice degrades humans to become like vultures in their excessive craving for wealth.

Avarice, derived from Latin *avarus*, is the inordinate love for riches. Its special malice lies in that it makes the getting and keeping of money, possessions, and the like, a purpose in itself to live for. It does not see that these things are valuable only as instruments for the conduct of a rational and harmonious life, due regard being paid of course to the special social condition in which one is placed. It is called a capital vice because it has as its object that for the gaining or holding of which many other sins are committed ("Avarice.").

Tendulkar has portrayed what he has observed in life and has spoken in plain truth about the consequences of excessive avarice. He has said, "I have not written about hypothetical pain or created an imaginary world of sorrow. I am from a middle class family and I have seen the brutal ways of

life by keeping my eyes open. My work has come from within me, as an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live. If they want to entertain and make merry, fine go ahead, but I can't do it, I have to speak the truth" (Sumit. passionforcinema.com).

The dramatist symbolically refers to the house of Pappa to the hollow of a tree, the nestling place of vultures. The events unfold to prove the characters living like vultures prying on each other. The mood is also set with the howling of a fierce wind with the screeching of vultures.

The story surrounds a middle class family where two brothers, Pappa and Sakharam, with dint of hard work, establish a prosperous construction company. In his excessive greed for money, Pappa deceives his brother and takes over the entire property. Pappa divides his wealth between his sons Ramakant and Umakant. The duo in connivance with their sister Manik, plots to squeeze out everything from their father. Meanwhile, Manik has an affair with the Raja of Hondur, who impregnates her. The brothers attempt to blackmail the Raja, but he dies of heart attack. Desperate, they kick out the fotus growing in Manik's womb. Ramakat is unable to have an issue from Rama, after several years of conjugal life, devoid of love. Rama seeks emotional and physical fulfillment from Rajaninath who impregnates her. Knowing of Rama's pregnancy, Manik attempts by superstitious spell to gets the foetus aborted. The play is an epitome of psychological trauma the characters undergo in their undue Machiavellian pursuit of wealth.

The play open in the garage of Pappa's household where his illegitimate son Rajaninath, lives a solitary life, writing poetry. He makes his comment like an omniscient observer, interpreting the misery of Rama who is childless after twenty-two years of marriage in the midst of five ravenous vultures. They live a meaningless life "On the road to hell./ For both, their future/ Is lost, unredeemable,/ And there remains to them/ Only- death" (TV 202). He felt pity for his helpless sister-in-law who came to a home which "was not a home, but a hole in a tree/ Where vultures lived/ In the shape of men" (204).

The central motif of the play is poetically presented by the dramatist in the form of a prologue. Rajaninath felt compassion for her pathetic situation:

> I stood,
> A living corpse, a watchful stone.
> Like a worm, I watched and watched her.
> For twenty-two long years.
> All her hopes, her expectations
> Were scorched, uprooted where they grew.
> But she only knew
> One longing.
> …
> Threw of her chains in her need.
> The need to swell with fruit.
> A soft fulfillment.
> Each womb-bearing woman's right by birth.
> …
> Empty of pain
> And empty of desires.
> And, on the swinging branch
> Of her rotten hopes,
> Five vultures (205-6).

The secret love relationship blooming between Rama and Rajaninath is given due attention by the dramatist to point out the only element of human sensibility in the play otherwise marred by evil machinations. The scene ends with the screeching of vultures, emphasizing the tone of the play.

Scene II begins with the morning rituals of Rama at the altar basil while the others busy themselves with their mundane preoccupations. Rama, like a typical housewife busies herself serving tea. Pappa talks aloud irritated by his sons who long for his death, "If I die, I'll become a ghost. I'll sit on your chest! I won't let you enjoy a rupee of it. I earned it all" (209). Pappa

regretfully tells Ramakant how his wife died leaving such ungrateful wretches. Pappa knows that after he had shared out his property, he has become a burden to them. He recounts the way he had built up the great contracting business with Sakharam, his brother. However, he ditched his brother and took over the entire business. Now, his sons are after him to take possession of everything, driving the old man keep yelling, "go ruin it, go ahead, both of you! Rub it in the dirt, you pimps, and then repent! Airs like emperors!" (214).

The greedy brothers Ramakant and Umakant discuss their sister Manik's affair with the Raja of Hondur. Knowing her pregnancy, they plot to blackmail him to get a huge sum of money. They also plan to stop supplying food and drink to their younger brother Rajaninath, though he never asked a share of the patrimony.

Scene III introduces a late night episode where Pappa, Umakant and Ramakant are with all the paraphernalia of drinks around them. Like the absurd dramatists, Tendulkar introduces the proto-crime Pappa committed fifteen years ago swindling the entire business and pushing his brother Sakharam out. The crime is recalled dramatically introducing the corpse like drunken Sakharam lying on the sofa, and the comments made by the characters.

RAMAKANT: Bosh! (*Tries shaking the body*.) He's had it ! Look at this…abs'lute corpse! (*Laughs*) Uncle Sakharam's corpse. (*Laughs*) To bloody death! Damn bore! Drunk t'death! (*Staggers over Uncle's body and stands by it*.) Long live Uncle!…

…

UMAKANT: How'd Uncle… get here, Ramya? Pappa cut his-er-throat! Pushed him out'f business! Ruined'm! Turned'm out of house, Fifteen years ago (217-18).

The conversation further reveals how Sakharam had planned to take over the business which Pappa found out and swindled in return. Both were equal swindlers and the vulturing continued to be passed on to Pappa's three children.

They are all upset that the uncle has come to stay in the house. Though they plan to kill him, they desist from such cruelty, since he is being their father's brother. They begin to suspect some fishy deal between Pappa and the uncle. As the debate goes on between the three, screeching of vultures can be heard to show the evil designs in the household. They intent to take their father for a ride and extort money by flattery.

In Scene IV Rama stealthily brings early morning tea to Rajaninath in the garage. The dramatist portrays their hidden intimacy and relationship in contrast to the five vultures. Their clandestine relationship is the only human element in the play which is one of brutal familial discord and destruction by avarice.

Scene V shifts to drinking bout where the household has come to rejoice after having driven out Sakharam, their common enemy. As they make Pappa drink more liquor, he expresses his joy almost caressing Ramakant: "It was bloody fun today… Sakharam's gone. Gone for good…Ramya my child… you worked wonders…One needs cleverness. Like yours. Bravo!" (225). Pappa was overjoyed having send away his brother empty- handed.

His children, like vultures, continue to hover around him, expecting their share of the remaining wealth of the old man. As they are all drunk, they huddle around Pappa, who in his drunkenness suspects them trying to murder him. He threatens to become a ghost and haunt them day and night. He refuses to give the little money left to them. They keep harassing him to confess in which bank he has his account. Finally he confesses under duress that he has rupees seven thousand. He begs for his life, but refuses to transfer the account. But they keep forcing him to sign a cheque. He bleeds in the ensuing scuffle and keeps calling Rama to save him, "They're killing me, they're killing me! Bahu!" (231).

As the scene fades out to open Scene VI, Rajaninath makes his comment on the development of the story ending Pappa's life in verse like an omniscient observer :

This is the story of the venerable
Father-vulture's hallowed end.
…
The oldest vulture,
That stubborn ghost
With death in his desires.
Hiding his ugly maw,
Trailing a wing,
Departed from the hollow of a tree
Where he lived
Drawing tracks of hopelessness
Upon the dust,
With the dragging
Of his corpselike,
Hideous,
Dangling limbs (232).

Rajaninath further comments on Pappa's meaningless tears that never dry, unlike human tears. And his vulture-children continue to torment the innocent victim Rama, escalating her sufferings.

Act II brings together the three children further plotting to overthrow each other in the course of their card game. The two brothers plot to blackmail the raja of Hondur for having impregnated Manik. But the sudden death of Raja thwarts their plans. The brothers secure aborting the foetus in her womb by kicking her in the abdomen. The episode climaxes with Manik screaming and crawling down the stairs, one leg in plaster, as Pappa keeps laughing at the turn of events.

In Act II, scene IV, Rama informs her husband about her pregnancy. A delighted Ramakant advises to take all precautions to nurse the foetus growing within her. Ramkant tells her his difficulties in running the business.

However, when Rama suggests him to give it up and take a job instead, he fumes and tells her to keep off from the world of men.

In scene V the two brothers hatch their plot to divide Manik's share between them. But their bargaining leads them to a bitter quarrel. Both want take possession of the house. Umakant strikes discord by revealing the secret love relationship between Rama and their bastard brother. "Call the brat your own, go on! Put him on your head! Lick his piss! Let that smart-arse have fun. You be the bloody father. Bloody fool. Not a paisa's worth of sense. Bloody dupe!… Bringing shame on all of us!" (255). The revelation disrupts the relationship between the couple, and it eats into the psyche of Ramakant, who indulges in more and more drinks.

Meanwhile the story gets a new twist when Pappa visits Rajaninath to cooperate with him to destroy the plans of his other children.

PAPPA: I'm telling you. So you're my true son. You stayed in this garage, rotting away like a beggar…I can't endure this, Rajani. Nor would you. This must be changed…By us… I have made a new will…In this will, I've divided the whole estate between you and Manik. So you file a suit. Say the will's genuine. Say the deed of division of the property was got by threats. I'm there to back you up. I'll say it in the court. Get it all changed! Teach those pimps a lesson…Don't say no… You're my only true son (259-60).

But Rajaninath shows his disgust towards his father and tells him to get out of his sight.

In the meantime, Rama is heard screaming, since Manik has done some superstitious ritual, casting spell to abort her foetus. She is heard muttering, "I've done it… I've done as I planned… I cut the lemon… I rubbed the ash. Seven times, on my loins and stomach! It's going to abort – sister-in-law's baby's going to abort – Ramya's brat's going to abort – it won't live. It won't live!" (260).

Scene VII is a soliloquy of Ramakant in an intoxicated mood cursing his brother determined to take possession of the house. He curses his wife having his step-brother's kiddie. Rifle in hand he threatens to shoot. He moans in anguish: "I'm a useless fellow, brother. Absolutely bloody good-for-nothing. Futile. A bloody bitch. Son of a swine! I – I let my wife … go… go…" (263). He is driven mad and runs around singing and dancing and uttering that he would abort his enemy's bloody son. As he raves in his fury, the rain continues to rage as if in consonance with his wrecked mental condition.

The scene fades out to the screeching of a single vulture as the human vulture in Ramakant has to surrender to his own evil design. The play ends with the final scene with a poetic summing up of the events like an epilogue by Rajaninath: "The tale of the five vultures/ Had this end./ The story of men accursed" (265). He speaks of their lives as utter failures with no hope as they burn in the burning ghat "Where the sinful soul/ Burns off its being" (265). They have no escape from their misery like the growing howling wind.

The Vultures may be compared to Ben Johson's *Volpone* which presents a satire on greed in society, built on Machiavellian principle. It is a disease which is the root cause of all evils. Jonson has given names of animals and birds to his characters like in Animal Fables, to portray certain universal moral truth. Volpone in his greed pretends to be dying to attract birds of prey such as Voltore = vulture, Corbaccio = old crow, Corvino = young raven; Mosca = fly. The play is meant to entertain and instruct on the evil of greed and avarice. Volpone lives for riches as an end in itself:

> …Dear saint,
>
> Riches, the dumb god that giv'st all men tongues;
> That canst do nought and yet mak'st men do all things;
> The price of souls; even hell, with thee to boot,
> Is made worth heaven. Thou art virtue, fame

Honour, and all things else. Who can get thee,
He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise- (*Volpone* I:21-7).

Tendulkar has recourse to realism in the play as he delves into observing facts of life, attempting to describe human behaviour and surroundings as they are. He has also very deftly employed the language of spoken speech in the dialogues on stage, in the footsteps of the masters of realism like Henrik Ibsen. Tendulkar has successfully exposed a menace plaguing contemporary middle class society, bringing about familial degeneration.

31.5 POLITICAL VIEWS AND LEGACY

Political views

Tendulkar had Leftist views, in particular he was against Hindu social groups specially against Brahmin's, most of his dramas show Brahmin's in bad light.

Legacy

In his writing career spanning more than five decades, Tendulkar has written 27 full-length plays and 25 one-act plays. Several of his plays have proven to be Marathi theatre classics.[19] His plays have been translated and performed in many Indian languages.

By providing insight into major social events and political upheavals during his adult life, Tendulkar became one of the strongest radical political voices in Maharashtra in recent times. While contemporary writers were cautiously exploring the limits of social realism, he jumped into the cauldron of political radicalism and courageously exposed political hegemony of the powerful and the hypocrisies in the Indian social mindset. His powerful expression of human angst has resulted in his simultaneously receiving wide public acclaim and high censure from the orthodox and the political bigwigs.

Many of Tendulkar's plays derived inspiration from real-life incidents or social upheavals. Thus, the rise of Shiv Sena in Maharashtra in the 1970s was reflected in Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal*. The true story of a journalist

who purchased of a woman from the rural sex industry to reveal police and political involvement in this trade, only to abandon the woman once he had no further need for her, is detailed in Tendulkar's *Kamala*. The real-life story of an actress whose acting career got ruined after her same-sex affair became public knowledge inspired Tendulkar to write *Mitrachi Goshta*.

Tendulkar has translated nine novels, two biographies, and five plays by other authors into Marathi.

Besides the foregoing, Tendulkar's oeuvre includes a biography; two novels; five anthologies of short stories; 16 plays for children, including *Bale Miltat* (1960) and *Patlachya Poriche Lagin* (1965); and five volumes of literary essays and social criticism, including *Ratrani* (1971), *Kowali Unhe* (1971), and *Phuge Sobanche* (1974). All in all, Tendulkar's writings have contributed to a significant transformation of the modern literary landscape in Marathi and other Indian languages.

In 2005, a documentary titled *Tendulkar Ani Himsa : Kal Ani Aj* ("Tendulkar and Violence: Then and Now") with English subtitles (produced by California Arts Association - CalAA .) directed by Atul Pethe) was released. In 2007, a short film about *Tendulkar, Ankahin*, (director Santosh Ayachit) was released.

31.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. What is the theme of *The Vultures*?
2. Discuss the legacy of Vijay Tendulkar.
3. What are the political views of Vijay Tendulkar?
4. What is *The Vultures* about?
5. Who are the main characters of *The Vultures*?

31.7 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have been acquainted with Vijay Tendulkar’s play

The Vultures. We have become familiar with the themes of the play and its analysis. We have also learnt about familial degeneration in this play.

We also knew about Vijay Tendulkar's political views and his legacy.

31.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Critically analyse *The Vultures* by Vijay Tendulkar.
2. How is the theme of familial degeneration established in the play *The Vultures* ?
3. Discuss the legacy of Vijay Tendulkar in detail.
4. What are the major themes of *The Vultures*?
5. What are the reasons behind the popularity of *The Vultures*?

31.9 SUGGESTED READING

Drama Contemporary. New Delhi: OUP, 2002.

Shivdasani, Arun. *Three Playwrights*. Amarpali. New Delhi: Maya Books, 1998.

Sonalkar, Sudhir. *Vijay Tendulkar and Metaphor of Violence*. The Illustrated Weekly. 20 Nov., 2005.

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VIJAY TENDULKAR : *THE VULTURES*

STRUCTURE

32.1 Introduction

32.2 Objectives

32.3 Indian English Drama after Independence

32.4 Social Concerns in the Plays of Vijay Tendulkar

32.5 Assessment of Vijay Tendulkar as a Playwright

32.6 Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs)

32.7 Let Us Sum Up

32.8 Examination Oriented Questions

32.9 Suggested Reading

32.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson we will learn about Vijay Tendulkar's play *The Vultures*. We will deal with Indian Writings, particularly drama after Independence, social concerns in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar and the assessment of Vijay Tendulkar as a playwright .

32.2 OBJECTIVES

In this lesson our objective is to find the answers of the following:

- Who are the Vultures in the play?

- What social evils have been depicted in the play *The Vultures*
- What do you understand by post-independence drama?
- What is the main theme of *The Vultures*?
- Who are the evil characters in the play *The Vultures*?
- Discuss in detail the development of drama after Independence.
- Evaluate Vijay Tendulkar as a playwright.
- What social concerns have been raised in the plays of Vijay tendulkar, particularly in *The Vultures*?

32.3 INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

In the post-independence era, the patterns of Indian English Drama underwent a drastic change. Theatrical activities were organised and it accumulated a new force with the lively contribution of the dramatists like trio of Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad. Indian English Drama saw the new light of humanism and realism against the philosophical creed of Tagore and Sir Aurobindo. Vijay Tendulkar made his place as a Marathi writer but he had modified the shape of Indian Drama with the power of his pen to represent the issues that are temporal as well as timeless. To his prolific writing over a period of five decades includes thirty full-length plays, seven one-acts, six collections of children's plays, four of short stories, two novels and seventeen film scripts. His plays have been translated into English not by himself but by others which makes him stand apart from Tagore, Badal Sircar, Karnad and Mahesh Dattani who either transcreated their plays into English or composed plays directly in English. However, the contribution of Tendulkar to the growth and development of Indian drama is undeniable for it is the cumulative effort of all regional writers producing plays in their respective languages that has enriched both India and abroad. V. S. Naipaul considers him as India's best playwright. Arundhati Banerjee attributes, "Vijay Tendulkar has been in the vanguard of not just Marathi but Indian theatre

almost forty years." Tendulkar was also a journalist and his journalistic vision moulded his creative talent to produce the plays to expose the naked reality of society. He would often assume different 'roles' while writing so that he could actually experience what he was writing about. Tendulkar's ideas about dramatic-writing: Unlike other Indian English dramatists, Tendulkar had set ideas about dramatic writing. Series of lectures and interviews on structuring a play manifest ingredients of play such as Plot, Characterization, Spectacle (Structure), Dialogue, Paraphernalia and extensive stage direction but the dramatist projected characterization and structure to be the most significant part of a successful play, dialogue coming next. He advised the playwrights to possess at least two qualities-"the skill of characterization" and "the sense of structure." He says that the value of dramatic dialogue is a complementary to characterization. He also says that the structure is felt and not seen. Tendulkar observes that a Women suffers largely as the victim of the institutional body of powers in the Indian society. Often there is a collision between the two i.e., woman and society sparking off violence. In majority of his plays, Tendulkar appears pre-occupational with this syndrome of Power and Violence. His plays divulge the message that woman possesses the strength, the courage and puissance for facing and surviving the onslaughts of institutional power. Critical analysis of Tendulkar's Plays: Tendulkar stated his dramatic career with his well-known play *'Silence! The Court is in Session'* (1967). In this play, the cruelty is exhibited through the system of law court. Leela Benare, the central character of the plot, ignores the social taboos living an independent life according to her own free will. In the mock-trial, the co-actors deftly expose her private life and unintentionally reveal her illicit relationship with Professor Damle, a married man having five children specially the fact that Miss Benare is carrying his child. Absence of Professor Damle during the trial symbolises his shrinking of responsibility. Ironically, the trial begins with charges of infanticide laid on Miss Benare for society is not prepared to accept a child born out of wedlock. Consequently, this pregnancy has to be terminated. Tendulkar alludes to the existing hypocrisy when Damle appears as a mere witness while Leela Benare delivers a long speech in self-defence. Leela

Benare's speech of self-defence is reminiscent of Nora's speech in Isben's play *The Doll's House*. Sukhatme, playing the role of a lawyer highlights Benare's crime by proclaiming the sanctity of motherhood as "Motherhood is a sacred thing……..Motherhood is pure." All accede that girls should be tied in the matrimonial knot at the onset of puberty so that temptations leading to social crimes are prevented. They unanimously agree with the traditional system that women should not be given independence. *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a finely structured play with a compact plot. No wonder, it turned out to be amongst his most staged plays. The issue of power and violence continued to occupy the dramatist's psyche when Tendulkar wrote *Sakharam Binder* (1972). The dramatist sheds ample light on physical lust and violence in a human being. Sakharam born in a Brahmin family appears almost like a ruffian who does not believe in refinement and sophistication of personal relationship. He neglects his parents. He is not a married man but gives shelter to helpless women who are either tortured by their husbands or turned out of their homes or simply deserted by their husbands. It is a contract marriage, the contract ended by mutual consent. When the play opens, he has already kept six women, Laxmi being the seventh one. As a male member of society exercising power over these women, he never failed to remind them that they were weaklings. It shows his straight forwardness. He has his own concept of morality which is against the established social norms. Portrayed as an ideal woman, Laxmi is loyal, docile, hard-working, religious self-effacing and tender-hearted. At the same time, she fights tooth and nail for survival when she finds Champa securing her position in Sakharam's house, tactfully persuading Champa to accommodate her in the same house in spite of Sakharam's opposition to her presence. Being confident of her physical charms, Champa least suspects that Laxmi will snatch Sakharam from her. Later, Sakharam exhibits his power over Champa by killing her when he learns that she has been unfaithful to him. Champa has secret associations with Dawood. This wounds the ego of Sakharam and so he kills Champa. The play is admirable for its realism as Tendulkar exposed the bare realities of backward lower strata of society. The play *The Vultures* was actually written 14 years

before it was produced. It was published in 1971. The play is focused around the unorganised family of Hari Pitale who cheats his own brother in business. His sons Ramakant and Umakant and daughter Manik are greedy, ego-centric, cruel and wayward. They have no morality of family and personal relationship. They even make conspiracy to kill each other. Hari Pitale realizes that his family is no better than the vultures, the scavenger birds of prey. The cruelty and obscenity of human behaviour is at apex when the brothers kick at the belly of their pregnant sister. Among the so called vultures, Rama- Ramakant's wife represents the tender bird; docile, helpless, submissive, gentle and kind-hearted. She has been disgusted with the impotency of her husband. In the claustrophobic and morbid atmosphere of the family, she cultivates an illicit relationship with Rajaininath, the half-brother-in-law. Rama is treated malevolently because of this prop inanity. Finally, Ramakant aborts the foetus of his wife with physical violence. The play exhibits the violence in the family at various levels, sons against father, brothers against sister, brother against brother. Violence which is intentional takes a brutal form in due course of time. *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972) is, again, based on the themes of power and violence. The play is set in Poona of the Peshawas. The crux of the play is the relationship between Power and Corruption. Ghashiram, the protagonist of the play is a Brahmin from Kannoj. He comes to Poona in search of his livelihood. In spite of being a Brahmin, he takes shelter in the house of Gulabi, a courtesan. He accompanies Gulabi in her erotic songs and dance. One day in the dance, Nana is hurt in his ankle. Ghashiram forgetting his Brahmin ancestry takes king's foot into his hands. As a reward of his flattery, Ghashiram wins the favour of the king. However under the suspicion of a theft, he was put into the prison. Ghashiram feels himself humiliated out of wickedness and fun of the people of Poona. The violence, revenge and cruelty grip his consciousness. After the release of Ghashiram from the prison, Nana, the representative of the Peshwa appoints Ghashiram as the Kotwal of the city not on merit but because he lusts after his young and beautiful daughter, Gauri. Ghashiram on his part misuses his position to terrorize the Brahmins of Poona who had humiliated him earlier. Poor Gauri, the victim of Nana's

sensuality became pregnant. Ghashiram blackmails Nana. Nana wants to hide his guilt. So, he kills Gauri. With this revelation Ghashiram becomes infuriated. Like a wounded tiger, Ghashiram persecutes the people cruelly. People of Poona organize a revolt against his atrocities. Nana being no longer in need of Ghashiram, using his royal power, terminates Ghashiram from the position of Kotwal. Now Ghashiram loses both his daughter and his status. Finally Nana orders the death of Ghashiram as well. Here,Vijay Tendulkar pin points the indisputable fact that religiosity and sexuality are misutilized as means of exercising one's power. The story is extracted from an old phase of history. *Encounter in Umbugland* a 'Political Allegory' was produced in 1974. In a dramatic mode Tendulkar presents the political situation of India in late sixties. The play opens with celebrations organised on the 60th anniversary of the coronation of King Vichitravirya. On the occasion the king delivers a speech expressing concern about his successor to the throne. The king prefers to become a hermit after surrendering power as he is old and has been advised rest. The king dies. After the death of the king, there was a political crisis in the state because there was no consensus among the five ministers on the issue of the succession to the crown. Finally they made a resolution to give the responsibility of the state to the Princess Vijaya who was weak, feeble and ignorant. They wanted to make her a puppet queen. Tendulkar has portrayed her well, graphically depicting her development from a head strong, self-opinionated girl to a rather inexperienced and whimsical ruler who uses strange devices to vanquish her foes. Princess Vijaya is very fond of her attendant Prannarayan, an eunuch. She appoints him as her chief advisor. From him, she learns the ways and tricks of politics. Instead of being a puppet in the hands of ministers, she makes a direct interaction with people. This attempt of Vijaya created confusion and discontent among the ministers because it increased her reputation in the public. Cabinet ministers try to arrange a rebellion against her but they have no guts. Eventually, the ministers comprehend that she is "a born dictator," thereby surrounding meekly to her authority. The play ends with the grand reception awaiting the queen due to the royal victory she scores over her cabinet ministers. *Kamala* (1981), a

play in two-acts, depicts the deplorable state of women who are treated as mere objects to be bartered, bought and sold. Here Tendulkar uses 'Media' as an instrument of the mechanization of power. Jaisingh Jadhav, a young and dynamic journalist for wide publicity of his efforts purchases a woman named Kamala for a paltry sum of Rs.250 in the Lohardaga Bazaar in Bihar flesh market. He wants to expose this racket of woman-selling as a slave. Sarita, Jaisingh's wife fails to appreciate and compromise with her husband's act. He fights for the freedom and equality of woman but keeps his wife Sarita as his slave. She performs all household activities as 'lovely bonded labourer'. The tragedy of the life of Sarita becomes conspicuous when Kamala in her innocence considers Sarita as another purchased slave. So, Kamala proposes that both of them must live together like sisters. Jasmine wants to take Kamala to the press conference to prove his point of view. But to his great surprise, Kamala exposes the attitude of Jaisingh on his wife, Sarita. Sarita now musters up the courage to put forward strong resistance against male domination and then to prove her own capability. Tendulkar was fond of portraying reality whether it was about human life or human nature. So he was referred to as the "angry young man of Marathi theatre". In *Kanyadaan* (1983) Tendulkar tackles the theme of social upliftment audaciously highlighting the chaotic consequences of disturbing the existing social equations. In the play, Jyoti is the 20 years old daughter of Nath, a social activist. He encourages Jyoti to marry Arun, a Dalit poet. While the father has no objection, Jyoti's mother Senva and her brother Jaya Prakash are against the alliance. Finally, their marriage gets settled with a mission to present an ideal before the society. However, after the marriage, Arun finds it difficult to compromise with his own inferiority because there exists is remarkable contradiction in his idealism as a poet and his ego as a male. Jyoti takes a job to make the both ends meet and Arun turns to be a boozer and sadist. Being disgusted with the tortures of Arun, Jyoti returns to her parental home. Later Nath offers both Arun and Jyoti to come and live in his house. After sometime Arun comes looking for Jyoti as he is repentant for what he has done and desires to begin life afresh. He

realizes that he is an offender, but while begging for Jyoti to return with him his true colours emerge- he draws out a knife. Then Seva asks him why he used to beat Jyoti. Arun becomes nostalgic and says "What am I but the son of scavengers. We don't know the non-violent ways of Brahmins like you. We drink and beat our wives…..I am a barbarian, a barbarian by birth." Arun also says that Jyoti had the knowledge of everything before she married him. So she should have had the courage to bear the consequences. These words are sufficient to change Jyoti's mind and she decides to go back with Arun. Nath proudly admires his courageous daughter, thanks God and prays for Jyoti's well-being. As the title of the play *Kanyadaan* Nath Devalikar had indeed gifted his daughter to Arun. The portrayal of Arun brings out the idea of 'male domination' in the traditional Indian society. Tradition demands that a 'woman' has to yield meekly to male domination and surrender to his masochistic power. Vijay Tendulkar returns to the centrifugal themes of power and violence in *A Friend's Story* (2001). Mitra is the central character of the play. She is endowed with masculine personality. She is the victim of physical hormonal imbalance. As she grows, she realizes that she is different from others. It brings stubbornness in her personality and she develops a rebellious attitude towards the conventions of society. She develops friendship with Bapu and it brings consolation in her life. Bapu is attracted by her boldness but he fails to stir her feminity. She becomes homosexual and develops infatuation for Nama, another girl. Nama's attraction becomes a passion in her life and in spite of all the warnings of Bapu, she fails to resist herself. Nama was frightened of the power of Mitra exerted over her and surrendered to her overtures easily. Bapu too, was forced to allow them to use his room. Nama tried her best to get out of this intricate affair. When Nama's marriage was arranged with somebody in Calcutta, Mitra's rage was beyond control. She travelled to Calcutta where she failed to meet Nama, she committed suicide. On hearing the death of Mitra, there is a sense of relief as indicated in the words of Dalvi, "Everything ends with Death. She is no more". (p.494) Through the character of Mitra in this Friend's Story, Tendulkar explores the manifestation of physical lust

and violence in human beings just as he does in *Sakharam Binder*, the only difference being that while in one play he portrays a heterosexual relationship, in the other there is a homosexual encounter. Just as Sakharam is cruel, aggressive and violent in his ways so is Mitra. However, Sakharam's overtures are accepted in society but not Mitra's. With the idea of homosexuals to be presented in theatre, Tendulkar explored the possibilities of new dimensions of human relationship. But the world is not prepared to tolerate human life in all its diversity, anomalies and complexity. Tendulkar's *His Fifth Woman* (1972) is the only play by the author that is written originally in English. It is a prequel to Tendulkar's play *Sakharam Binder* that was published in 1972. Tendulkar specially wrote it for the New York festival in October 2004. The man giving shelter to the destitute women is called Sakharam Binder, a man in his forties and these helpless women are projected as the live-in mistresses of Sakharam who is a bachelor. The title leaves sufficient scope of thought: four have preceded her and several may follow. The play portrays two friends Sakharam and Dawood in conversation with each other sitting near the mistress of one of them, fifth woman lying on her death bed, a destitute picked up from the streets. Sakharam provides food and exploits her physically. Dawood, Sakharam's friend has sympathetic attitude towards destitute women and so he wants the proper burial to the mistress of Sakharam. In this play Tendulkar tries to investigate the conditions that 'flourish the life after death.' The dramatist raises some relevant questions on the issue of morality and necessity of compassion through the play. The message conveyed focuses on the fact that those claiming to uphold the laws strictly are in reality the tyrannical hypocrites. Real justice results out of compassion and love and not from hypocrisy, autocracy and selfishness. Sakharam is conscious of his responsibility towards the patient and even towards the society. He becomes philosophical and expresses his faith that all the accounts of human action are to be settled in the other world. The idea of emotional modification and the justification of human existence after death makes this play unique in its own way. Its metaphysical structure echoes the vision of Tagore's play *The King of Dark Chambers*. *The Cyclist* (2002) is supposed

to be the last play of Tendulkar in which he seeks comments on himself and reality surrounding him. It is quite different from the other plays written by Tendulkar so far. The play analyses three journeys: an actual 'global journey' by the Protagonist, a 'historical journey' of the bicycle is about its different phases of Manufacturer and a 'psychic journey' of the Cyclist submerging into his sub-consciousness. The central character, an enthusiastic youth, sets off on an itinerary around the world on his bicycle. Specific names of places and locations are kept hidden, the idea conveyed being that the young man endeavours escaping from his present location, looking forward to visiting distant lands, touring to exotic places enabling him to meet a large number and a different variety of people enroute. Here the 'Cycle' symbolizes progress in spite of the various obstacles encountered on the way. Similarly, *the cyclist* wades through several difficult situations while travelling ahead compulsively probing into human nature, discovering the extreme dehumanization that has set in. Hence the journey is not merely physical but equally metaphysical in nature. The play exhales a breath of existentialism with a positive inference that stoic stubbornness leads to success and that for a determined person, life has no misery. Like Tagore's *Post Office* and *The King of the Dark Chambers,* the human consciousness becomes the battle ground for the counteracting forces in *The Cyclist.*

Thus, Vijay Tendulkar presents the idea of how Power is used as an instrument of the mechanism of oppression or cruelty. Vijay Tendulkar's plays, not only revolutionized the regional theatre but they have also opened fresh vistas for experimentation in Indian English Drama through the translated versions.

32.4 SOCIAL CONCERNS IN THE PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR

Vijay Tendulkar has brought a sea change in the world of theatre as he shocked the sensibility of the conservative audience by projecting the stark realities of life, relationship and existence. Seeking to present the modern society with its real worth, predicament, challenges, difficulties and complexities in true colours, his characters are drawn on the canvas of originality without any attempt to moralizing. Most of his plays are written in naturalistic vein and

reject idealized portrayal of life while attaining complete accuracy in presenting the life realistically. He has discussed and touched upon every aspect of life, not only the happy, gleeful but also on human weaknesses, follies and foibles. His plays are neither moral, nor immoral in tone but may rather be seen amoral. 'In a limited sense, he may be seen as a silent 'social activist' who covertly wishes to bring about a change in people's modes of thinking, feeling, and behaving.' As an optimist he is willing to make people conscious towards life with all their vices and limitations. Vijay Tendulkar's plays are like a mirror that reflects the individual's inner and outer world. While dealing with the social realities, he unveils two major tendencies of Indian society: male dominance and feminine frailty. While projecting the women characters that play important roles, as important as men, Tendulkar shows them exploited, oppressed and humiliated as in *Silence! The Court is in Session, Kamala, Kanyadaan, Friend's Story* and others. Even education doesn't bring any substantial change in their life. It produces sophisticated slaves like Sarita or the social victim Benare. Sarita in *Kamala,* Benare in *Silence! The Court is in Session,* Jyoti in *Kanyadaan* are the characters who are educated, sophisticated and occupy the focus of the play in their revolt against the outdated conventional moral values. The play *Sakharam Binder* deals with the hypocritical attitude in India, where a woman is denigrated and venerated as suits the man's purposes. Tendulkar's plays raise questions rather than providing a guideline or message to the solutions of the problems they deal with. He said in one of his interviews…. 'By not giving a solution, I leave possibilities open, for whatever course the change may take.' As Shailaja B. Wadikar says, 'The playwright seeks to present the modern man with his predicament, his challenges, his difficulties, and his complexities.' In his article, "Vijay Tendulkar and the Metaphor of Violence," Sudhir Sonalkar rightly points out: 'In Tendulkar's plays, …the ethical question remains both untouched and unanswered.' All of Vijay Tendulkar's plays manifest the different aspects of the human character and complexities of human relationship. He thoroughly scrutinizes and explains the blood relationships on various levels in his plays like *Kamala, Kanyadaan, Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Gidhade*. The varying relationships in the play Vultures,

for example, brother-to-brother, brother-to-sister, father-to-children, etc., expose how greed for money makes these family members wild and mad. The play *Kamala* portrays the hollowness of husband and wife relationship and the father in the play Ghashiram Kotwal bargains his own daughter's chastity for the fulfillment of his ambition. Tendulkar has tried to bring great variations and innovations related not only to the plays and themes but to their forms also. One more important aspect about the playwright is as marked by Wadikar, 'The existential tendencies are clearly noticed in almost all the plays.' Ghashiram gets nothing even after the fulfillment of his ambition; Sakharam who doesn't believe in the institution of marriage becomes totally helpless towards the end of the play; the life of all the members of the Pitale's family exhibits that human life starts and ends in nothingness; the efforts of Jaisingh to get name and fame at any cost in the play *Kamala* proves, futile; Nath Devalalikar himself creates a hell for his daughter following his hollow idealism. Exploring Sexual Lust and Evil, The social play *Gidhade* explores violence, sexual lust and evil deeply rooted in human nature, as it reveals the degenerated society, fractured selves and problems of living with compassion and cruelty. Arundhati Banerjee opines, 'conservative sections of Maharashtrian society were stunned by the open display of illicit relations and scenes of violence that constituted the plot'. The complexity of human nature with violence and sexual lust is also presented in *Sakharam Binder*. Sakharam, the chief protagonist, a book binder, is an outcast, having a Brahmin father and a Mahar mother. The bitter experience of life has made him hard and violent. The frustrated household life in his childhood crushes his emotions and feelings and leaves him a rough man like desert cactus that stands the onslaught of stormy weather. Dealing with Modern Society, the play *Kamala* draws a picture of selfish, narrow-minded, self-centered modern society that doesn't hesitate to sacrifice their human values. In this play also once again Tendulkar raises a certain cardinal question regarding the value system of a so called modern success oriented society that is dying to get success at any cost. The play *Kanyadaan* has the background of the twentieth century history of the struggle over the practice of untouchability and the immediate phase of the Dalit movement in Maharashtra and in the nation

as a whole. It is a psychological study of the social tensions caused by casteism in India and the development of Jyoti's character from a highly cultured Brahmin girl into a hardened spouse of her Dalit husband. Tendulkar expresses his view on homosexual love in *A Friend's Story.* Mitra, a lesbian, becomes a victim of the society that gives unsympathetic treatment to a physically deformed person. Through the character of Mitra the playwright attacks the male-dominated society and the pathetic condition of women. The first significant modern indian play *Silence! The Court is in Session* is Tendulkar's first play to become a part of the new Indian Drama phenomenon of the sixties and the first significant modern Indian play in any language to centre on woman as protagonist and victim. The play based on a real incidence, is "a play within a play" or a play in the form of a rehearsal. The play is a social satire with the tragedy of an individual victimized by society. It deals with the problem of unmarried motherhood. The action of the play takes place with Leela Benare, a female protagonist and stands as a rebel against the established values of the basically orthodox society. Tendulkar treats the character of Benare with great compassion and understanding while projecting her against the selfish, hypocritical, and brutally ambitious male - dominated society. She is a school teacher, sincere in her teaching work and an enlightened artist. So, she joins the amateur group of theatre. The other members of the group are Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, Balu Rokde, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik, Prof. Damle and Mr. Rawte, who belong to the urban middleclass of Mumbai. Leela Benare is totally different from them with her zeal and zest for life. She wants to share her happiness with others but hardly succeeds in doing so as her jovial, generous nature is not appreciated by her companions. In this exposure of the private life of Benare, their inferiority complex reflects frustration and repressed desires of their life. They cannot understand, appreciate and share the joy of others.The character of Leela Benare reminds us of Ibsen's character Nora *(In Doll's House)*, a womanly woman who tries to face the bitter realities of actual world that is full of hardships and challenges . In love, Miss Benare is cheated twice; first by her maternal uncle and later by Prof. Damle. Hence, in the first case the

thing subsides with the passage of time but in the other one, she is caught in a trap, through the cruel game cunningly arranged by her companions, for her love affair has been already exposed by her pregnancy. At the very outset of the mock trial, Benare is accused of the charge of infanticide. This rehearsal takes a very serious turn when the co-actors arrange it cunningly to discuss and dissect her private life. Being isolated and victim of society, she offers to marry any of her companions but none comes forth to accept her proposal. On the contrary, she is denied both, the right of living as she is dismissed from her job of teaching and the right that is God given to a woman to become mother is snatched from her as the sentence is passed on her to the effect that the baby in her womb must be destroyed. Damle, who is equally responsible for her so called crime of unmarried motherhood, goes unnoticed and unpunished. Although the character of Benare symbolizes simplicity, innocence, and straightforwardness but the characters of her fellow companions symbolize meanness and cruelty. Her tragedy reveals the fact that, in the male dominated society, women's innocence is punished and man's violence goes scot-free.

Vijay Tendulkar throws light on the evil practices inherent in human nature like crookedness, cruelty and violence. Here the white collar, middle class educated and civilized people become aggressive and violent against their fellow companions and that, too, a female and entertain themselves at the cost of her honour and dignity. Benare suffers for the crime that she has not committed as she says, 'these are mortal remains of some cultured men of the twentieth century. See, their faces, how ferocious they look! Their lips are full of lovely worn out phrases! And their bellies are full of unsatisfied desires.' Benare's tragedy reveals the fact that women are born to suffer even in the most sophisticated, civilized section of the society. The play *The Vultures* is intensely morbid in the portrayal of its characters and action. It is a play that stands apart from the other plays of Vijay Tendulkar, because it ruthlessly dissects the human nature. It depicts the inborn violence, selfishness, sensuality and wickedness in man's life. This play was bitterly criticized by the theatre going

public and the Censor Board, too, felt that it was obscene and suspended its public performance for the time being. About the enactment of the play Girish Karnad says, 'The staging of Gidhade could be compared with the blasting of bomb.' Ramakant, Umakant, and Manik are like their father Hari Pitale, always ready to cheat one another and never hesitate to seek each other's lives to extract money. Each one is suspicious of the other and lacks the peace of mind. All the family members except Rama and Rajaninath are leading a kind of life that is comparable to vultures only. The children follow the footsteps of their father who cheats his brother in business and acquires prosperity and affluence. Thus, they all are following the footsteps of their father and belong to a flock of vultures. The atmosphere is completely charged with disbelief and viciousness. Manik's statement bears evidence to it, 'So, I should leave it open? Should I? So you can come and strangle me, all of you? It's because I take care that I've survived in this house!.' Greed compels Ramakant and Umakant to beat their father when he rejects to give them information about his secret account in bank. When they do not become successful to get money from their sister's lover, the Raja of Hondur, they skillfully abort her child in anguish by beating her inhumanely. Towards the end of the play, Manik successfully tries to abort the baby in the womb of her sister in law to take revenge from her brothers. The actions of these family members i.e., a wrong done by Hari Pitale to his brother, the beating up of father by his own sons, the forced abortions of Manik's and Rama's babies by Ramakant and Umakant and by Manik, respectively, reflect the fundamental hatred that all the family members have for each other. Shailaja B. Wadikar views the play as in Shakespeare's plays; the tragic hero is responsible for his death. In the same vein we feel sympathy and pity for them. Further she adds, 'In *The Vultures*, the characters are essentially bad without having a single good quality.' The woman character Rama, the wife of Ramakant, is described as a sensitive, submissive, helpless, tender little bird among the vultures, who turns towards Rajaninath, his younger half brother in law, and gets pregnant by him in the course of time. Rama, having no alternative, as due to excessive drinking her husband grows impotent, accepts this illicit relationship. This play openly exhibits

the sexual relationships, the scenes of violence, and abusive language that shocks the sensibility of its viewers that was never shown nor depicted before in the Indian Theatre. Throught *Sakharam Binder*, Tendulkar seems to present the angry, frustrated, rebellious youth of contemporary society. The protagonist Sakharam is against the established morals of the society and shocks the sensibility of the conventional readers by rejecting the accepted and established norms, conventions and moral values. The marriage institution remains an insignificant thing for Sakharam. He establishes a rapport with a woman who is deserted by her husband and likes to live with her without getting into wedlock. Shailaja B. Wadikar rightly quotes him, 'a foul-mouthed womanizer' (Wadikar, 2008). He pretends to be a savior of the women but actually he is just an egoistic epicure. He is the master of the house and the woman has to obey his word like a slave. She has to satisfy his excessive physical lust and provide him with domestic comforts ungrudgingly, thus, it's a contractual arrangement based on mutual understanding with a women in all her helplessness. Laxmi is the seventh woman in this series of helpless women. She brings positive change in Sakha's life but that relationship lasts for a short period of time. Though, he becomes religious and family loving man but her rejection to join Daud, his Muslim friend's company in the prayer of lord Ganpati annoys Sakharam and makes him violent. Then, Champa enters his life, all the good changes ends with her arrival, as he grows more violent, aggressive and full of sensual passion. The play depicts the triangular relationship between Sakharam, Laxmi, and Champa as this relationship. is one of the victims and victimizer. Champa pities Laxmi and gives her shelter, whereas Laxmi, once presented as an ideal, religious Indian woman turns out to be wicked and vicious when Champa becomes her rival in love. It is Laxmi, who informs Sakharam about the illicit relationship of Champa's, is responsible for her murder. But this tender and religious lady shows a greater presence of mind than Sakharam after Champa's murder. The pathetic condition of women in utter helplessness is explored in this play. Champa's character exhibits women's torture at different levels as she suffers at the hands of

her mother, her husband, her male companion, and at the end, her female companion also. Both the female characters i.e. Champa and Laxmi, suffer sexually, physically and psychologically at the hands of Sakharam, for he gives them shelter and they just receive it in their utter helplessness. Tendulkar points out that 'marriage is an institution in which sexual relationship for a woman is possible only if the self is forgotten in the stupor of alcohol, pleasure is possible only through inflicting pain on the others and 'self-awareness' is nothing but the mute and moron like acceptance of inhuman subordination or supremacy. There are certain incidents like playing on mridanga, rejection to Champa's touch on the morning of Dashera festival, without taking bath and feelings for Laxmi that she is far different from the previous women in his life show the goodness and sensitivities of Sakharam's heart. It proves Sakharam a victim of bitter circumstances not of his inherent weaknesses, thus the playwright presents life in all its ugliness and crudity. Such a naked reality despite the fact that it is inevitable is still difficult to believe. Again the audience is left to ponder about the removal of such rubbish from the society. The play *Kamala* is also based on a real life incident. Ashwin Sarin, the then correspondent of the Indian Express bought a girl from rural flesh market and presented her at the press conference. By giving a glimpse of this real life incident, the playwright presents the ghastly flesh market, a harsh reality of our society. Vijay Tendulkar attacks on twin issues, i.e. the field of journalism and the institution of marriage. Jaisingh Jadhav, the journalist brings a girl from a rural flesh market and presents her at the press conference. He does not have any motive to reform Kamala's life but only a means by which he can get promotion in his job and win reputation in his professional career. His craze for name and fame has transformed him into a loveless and mindless fellow. This play points out an unbearable fact that newspaper, the so called means of social reform, is transformed into an object of getting pelf and power. Simultaneously, here Vijay Tendulkar has attacked on the marriage institution. Sarita, Jaisingh's wife is an embodiment of the women who are used either as slaves, menial servants, or stepping stones of their male counter parts. Kamala's entry in her house reveals to Sarita her husband, Jaisingh's

egoistic, deceitful nature. Kamala makes Sarita conscious that she is the slave of her husband. Jaisingh treats both Kamala and Sarita not as human beings, but as objects of exhibition. The former brings him promotion in his job and reputation in his professional career and the latter provides him with domestic comfort and sexual pleasure in conjugal life. The play thus, exposes slavery of women in the male-dominated society in India. Kamala makes Sarita conscious that she is the slave of her husband Jaisingh. Kamala's views on the subject how both of them have to adjust with Jaisingh are like a revelation for Sarita. She says, 'Memsahib, if you don't misunderstand, I'll tell you, the master bought you, he bought me, ……. So, Memsahib, both of us must stay here together like sisters. We will keep the master happy… Fifteen days of the month, you will sleep with the master; the other fifteen I'll sleep with him. The women characters in the play depict simplicity, innocence, sincerity, generosity and the spirit of devotion to their male companions. The character of Sarita suggests that even a modern woman is not so free as her male-counterpart in contemporary society, as she has to follow her husband's whims and caprices in and outside the household life. Sarita becomes aware of the fact that her dignity or position in the house is not far away from Kamala's. Instead of rebelling against her husband, she provides him an emotional support, when he is fired. Towards the end of the play *Kamala,* she tells Kakasaheb '…a day will come, Kakasaheb, when I will stop being a slave.' Vijay Tendulkar exhibits selfishness and hypocrisy of the modern young generation, and brings out the oppressive nature of contemporary society. Jaisingh Jadhav is the representative of the modern hypocritical society, where the craze for both money and success renders him loveless and mindless. *Kanyadaan*, perhaps one of the most controversial plays of Vijay Tendulkar, exposes the characters becoming victims of their own shame and hollow idealism, as it reveals how a father's idealism becomes a cause of misery for his own daughter. It is a story of a middle class family, where a daughter takes a decision of an intercaste marriage, as she is very much influenced by the idealism of her father and mother. Nath is an MLA and Seva, his wife, is

a social activist. They cannot spend sufficient time on the upbringing of their children, Jyoti and Jaiprakash. Both father and mother are very sincerely working for the upliftment of Dalits but differ in their views, opinions and approaches. Seva objects Jyoti's decision of married to a Dalit boy and tries her best to warn her about the risk involved. But it is because of the support of her father; that Jyoti married to Arun and later on faces the evil consequences of her decision as feared by her mother. The play draws attention towards Jyoti's decision to get marries Arun Athawale, a young Dalit poet. Since, he believes that society cannot be transformed through words alone. This relation of Jyoti, a Brahmin girl and Arun, a Dalit boy provides an opportunity to follow the old social reformers who not only delivered speeches and wrote articles on the remarriages of widows but also married them. So, the marriage follows, but further what follows is the sequence of violence, misery and disillusionment. Arun always remains conscious of her lower class origin and inflicts cruelties and miseries on Jyoti. He never tries to change his opinion that there cannot be any give and take between the Dalit and the upper class. He comes to the conclusion that the Dalit cannot fit into the Brahmins "unwrinkled Tinopal world." So, 'this matrimonial life is a kind of revenge that he seeks on the Brahmins for having humiliated and exploited his forefathers for centuries.' Jyoti's mother and brother make effort to rescue her from the horrible sufferings by denying this relation as they can see the misery that may fall upon her life after marriage, but her father compels her to go with Arun, as he is not ready to give up his ideals. What he believes is that, 'No man is fundamentally evil; he is good.' However, her idealist father who dreams of a casteless society appreciates her decision. Soon it is realized that all the attempts of Jyoti proves senseless wastage to translate her father's dreams or idealistic values into reality. However, with the passage of time Nath realizes the hollowness of his idealism, he fails to comprehend Arun's split personality. The idealism and teaching of his father 'that it is cowardly to bow to the circumstances,' stops Jyoti to get back. She is reminded of the lines from one of Kusumagraja's poems which her father recites 'I march with utter faith in goal; I grow with rising hopes,

cowards stay ashore, every wave opens a path for me . Towards the end of the play, Nath suggests Jyoti to give up the ideals, but she rejects it for she thinks it cowardly to surrender to circumstances. It is the piteous and helpless state of Jyoti's father that he becomes a pathetic figure for he uses his daughter as a stepping stone to fulfil his utopian dream of a casteless society. This scene of father's helplessness reminds the reader of Shakespeare's famous lines from *King Lear:* 'Pray, do not mock me. I am very foolish fond old man.' Both the plays *Ghashiram Kotwal* and *Kanyadaan* portray fathers, as idealists, who use their daughters as steeping-stones in reaching their respective desired goals. *Kanyadaan* also throws light on the intercaste marriage of a Brahmin girl and a Dalit boy, who with his uncivilized inhuman ways sets his wife's life on torture. Lesbianism Language in India deals with a bold theme of lesbianism. Sumitra Dev, i.e. Mitra is the central character around whom the action of play revolves. The playwright develops the character of Mitra, through the comments of Bapu, another important character, who is like a Sutradhar in Sanskrit plays or that of chorus in Greek plays. The subject matter of the play is different as well as daring. Mitra is portrayed as having physical hormonal imbalance. She is conscious of the fact that she is different from other girls having a stubborn nature like that of a boy. She is reckless in the sense of being quite careless of social norms and moral values. At the very outset we come across Bapu talking to himself. He is in the first year degree class. Sumitra comes from somewhere and joins the college as the second year B.A. student. While introducing her character, Bapu says, 'here was a masculine vigour in Sumitra Dev's stride and speech. She was carefree; her laughter came in loud bursts. She had eyes which met in straight combat'. Bapu comes across with her entire personality that had a natural, aggressive manliness. Mitra has masculine traits right from her childhood as she never feels shy to play games with boys. The elders in the family get worried about her and fix her marriage with a boy. Mitra tries herself best, but she fails to develop man-woman relationship. She does not feel any physical thrill or excitement in the close intimacy of men. It is only Bapu who accepts Mitra as a friend with all her

deficiencies. Throughout this play it is only he who supports her. Very frankly, she confesses to Bapu the fact of being abnormal. He tries to understand her and sympathises with her. Infact, Mitra seems to be the one who caters to her own physical needs irrespective of what others may think of her behaviour. Bapu helps Mitra in her relationship with Nama although he is beaten and threatened. Nama in the beginning enjoys the language in India but very soon gets bored so she finds it difficult to cope with her. Nama lacks the courage to face the ultimate consequences. Mitra becomes miserable due to her physical deformity. When it becomes an open secret, she is left alone to suffer in this apathetic world. Her family members remain indifferent towards her. When Mitra is rusticated from the college, her parents do not provide any emotional support. The situation becomes more pathetic when she is thrown out of her house and lives in women's hostel. Ultimately, Mitra commits suicide. Through the character of Mitra, Tendulkar throws light on the total indifference and apathy shown towards her by the society. The whole discussion above leads one to say what Emile Zola states about naturalism, which stands apt to Tendulkar's plays. According to Emile Zola, 'It is necessary to accept nature as she is, without modifying her. The work becomes an official record, nothing more; its only merit is that of exact observation of life as it is. This is a play where life is presented as it is, with all its drawbacks, vices and weaknesses. The audience is left to find out their own remedies for the problems that remain burning in all the times and climes. The analytical studies of Vijay Tendulkar's plays reveals that the dramatist has a desire to strive for perfection of life like Chekhov, he aims at creating a kind of emotionally refined, integrated and conscious world .

32.5 ASSESSMENT OF VIJAY TENDULKAR AS A PLAYWRIGHT

Vijay Tendulkar is a leading contemporary Indian playwright. He is the author of thirty full length plays, several of which have become classics of modern Indian theatre. Over the last few decades, he has scanned the life, life-world of contemporary Indian in order to identify the sources and nature of the violence that had to pattern it. Even when violence is not ostensibly his theme,

it casts a shadow on his characters. It is unjust to read his entire work as a commentary on violence. Effective handling of themes and successful delineation of characters realized through setting, costumes and light and sound effects render the play's violence vivid, sensational, and impressive. To put it briefly, they breathe realism.

In *The Vultures* Vijay Tendulkar displays on the stage, the unmitigated violence arising from greed and immorality. It portrays the domestic violence caused by greed. The selfishness and greed of human beings are the main issues of the play. The characters in the play are ever ready to cheat one another to get more money. The eternal battle between good and evil features strongly in his plays. Evil is sometimes manifested directly. Evil people in Tendulkar's plays are selfish, self-centered and incapable of love. They are frequently hypocrites. The vulturine nature dominates the relations of middle class family in *The Vultures*. The play is an extremely powerful tale of brutal violence and terrible greed. The play shocked them, as Tendulkar used the language which was not normally used on the stage. In the play Rama and Rajaninath are the characters representing 'good' in the play, while the other characters representing 'evil' do not hesitate to kill one another for money.

The Vultures is intensely morbid in the portrayal of its character and action. It exposes greed, violence, selfishness, sensuality and wickedness inherent in human nature through mutual interactions of the members of the family. All the members of the family except Rama and Rajaninath are leading a kind of life that is comparable to that of vultures only. They inherit the baser qualities from their victimization, aggression and sexism in Vijay Tendulkar's works father who cheats his own brother in business and acquires prosperity and affluence. Thus, the sons and the daughter follow the footsteps of their father. They all belong to a flock of vultures. Ramakant, Umakant and Manik are like their father, always ready to cheat one another and resort to extract more money. They do not hesitate to seek each other's lives to get a larger share of their father's property. Each one is suspicious of the other and loses the real treasure of life that is, peace of mind. Manik's statement bears evidence to it.

For she says to his sister-in-law Rama. “So, I should leave it (the door) open? Should I? So you can come and strangle me, all of you? It’s because I take care that I’ve survived in this house.”

Ramakant and Umakant beat their father when he refuses to give them information about his secret account in a bank. When they could not get money from their sister’s lover, the Raja of Hondur, they manoeuvre to abort her child in anguish by beating her inhumanly. Towards the end of the play, Manik successfully tries to abort the baby in the womb of her sister-in-law to avenge the wrong done to her by brothers. The actions of the character i.e., the beating up of Hari Pitale by his sons, the forced abortion of Manik’s and Rama’s babies by Ramakant and Umakant and by Manik respectively, the hatred that the members of the family have for each other “underline the fundamental evil inherent in human character.” In the tragedies of Shakespeare the hero is responsible for his own ruin, so we feel pity for him. But in Tendulkar’s play *The Vultures* the characters are essentially bad, without having a single good quality. Still, we feel sympathy for them, rather than terror, as all these characters appear to be the victims of their own wickedness or viciousness. In their increasing efforts to inflict miseries on others, they make their lives more miserable. *The Vultures* shocked the conservative people with its naturalistic display of cupidity, sex and violence. It shows how the capitalistic values destroy human love and relations. Hari Pitale cheats his own brother in business and earns great wealth. His children – Ramakant, Umakant and Manik – inherit his egocentric nature. For money, they don’t hesitate to kill one another. Manik expresses her fear of being killed to her sister-in-law while telling her why the door of the room is shut. “So I should leave it open, should I? So you can come and strangle me, all of you? It’s because I take care that I’ve survived in the house!. Think it’s human beings who live here? The door was shut says she!.” She later gives an instance to support her fear, “When I had typhoid last year, far from looking after me, you’d all plotted to put poison in medicine!” (208). Hari Pitale also expresses his disgust for his selfish children. “If I die, it’ll be a release! They’re all waiting for it. But I’m your own father,

after all. If I die I'll sit on your chest! I won't let enjoy a rupee of it. I earned it all. Now, these wolves, these bullies !."

Ramakant, Umakant and Manik torture their own father in the name of a fake fight among themselves. They succeed in getting the bank balance of their father and spend it on liquor and other luxuries. Ramakant and Umakant try to blackmail the lover of their own pregnant sister. They break her leg in order to prevent her from intimating her lover about their blackmailing. When they learn about her lover's death, they kick on her belly hard and abort her foetus. Rajaninath, the natural son of Hari Pitale and Rama, the wife of Ramakant, are the only doves in that house of vultures. Frightened by his own legitimate sons, Hari Pitale requests Rajaninath to help him teach lessons to his sons. Rama feels more than vexed with her husband who becomes impotent with excessive drinking and who takes her to several doctors and saints. So, while pouring out agony, she says to Rajaninath, "It's not the fault of doctors, of learned men, of saints and sages! It's not even my fault! This womb's healthy and sound, I swear it! I was born to become a mother. This soil's rich. It's hungry. But the seed won't take root. If the seeds' soaked in poison, if it's weak, feeble lifeless, devoid of virtue-then why blame the soil?" He makes love to her and she yields to him as if she were under a spell. She, thus becomes pregnant. Her husband is happy about his wife's pregnancy. She feels suffocated in a house of vultures and begs him to consider the change of their residence. But he rejects to see the wisdom of her request owing to his male chauvinism and cupidity. Finally he aborts the foetus of his wife with physical violence when Umakant tells him that his wife committed adultery with Rajaninath. Rajaninath is a poet and comments on the incidents and people. Thus he, like Pran Narayan in Encounter in Umbugland, functions both as a character and chorus. The play shows how the greed for money in the capitalistic society makes people cruel, inhuman and loveless. The play *Silence ! The Court is in Session* earns Vijay Tendulkar a place among the leading Indian playwrights in the late sixties, G.M. Kulkarni, a Marathi critic, observes: Tendulkar succeeds in setting a 'new form' by using the new, modern folk, and

classical elements simultaneously in his plays. This can be particularly noticed in his plays after the successful presentation of *Silence! The Court is in Session* (G.M.Kulkarni, "Natakkar Vijay Tendulkar, E.K.Jinkane, Harne Satyakacha, Dec, 1971, 38, translated by the investigator herself). The play *Silence! The court is in Session* is based on a real incident. The stimulus comes from an amateur group on its way to stage a mock trial in village near Bombay. This play comes as a turning point in Tendulkar's career. It is a "play within a play" or a "play in the form of a rehearsal." In it, Tendulkar has raised several questions about love, sex, and moral values present in the society. To expose the hollowness of the middle class morality and dual standards of society, he makes ample use of irony, satire, pathos and mock element. The success of the play lies in its universality. The questions raised by Benare, the central character of the play, exist in all ages and societies. Benare is projected as a rebel against the established values of the basically orthodox society. So, in a sense, she may be seen as Tendulkar's projection of a "New Woman" in the Indian context.

The action of the play revolves around the character of Leela Benare. She is a lady artist and teacher. She is frank and open. Very often we are aware of the two worlds in the society. The first world is what we see on the surface (appearance), and the second world is the truth that lies underneath (reality). The world of appearance shows that 'seems' to be true, whereas the world of reality shows what actually is true. Learning to distinguish between these two, and not being fooled by outer show, is often what makes the difference between a happy and an unhappy life. Vanity and pride make people look at the world through a distorting lens, seeing it falsely. Benare exposes the hypocrisy of people and laughs at their faults. The other unhappy members expose her personal life in the name of mock trial. In this play, 'good is shown defenseless against evil'. Benare cannot stop her humiliation, despite being good and innocent. The other members in the mock-trial do not find fault with Prof. Damle who is the real culprit and who caused the misery in her life. The inhuman attitude of other characters in the play exposes the human nature. The

audience feels sorry for Benare, who loves life so much, feels utterly helpless. Leela Benare is presented as a female protagonist and her role eclipses the roles of her male counterparts. In love, she is cheated twice; first by her maternal uncle and late by Prof. Damle, her loving-companion. However, in the first event, the guilt passes unnoticed and hence unpolished. But, in the other one, she is caught in a trap, through the cruel game cunningly arranged by her companions, for her love-affair has already been exposed by her pregnancy. Each time Benare is disillusioned by her male-companions for they love first her body and not her mind. Thinking of Prof. Damle as an "intelligent god" (118), she is sexually involved in a love-affair with him. But he too, like her previous lover, is interested in her love just physically. Having fulfilled his sexual love, he turns away, leaving her to suffer her fate in the so-called modern society. Each time, Benare's counterparts successfully manoeuvre to victimize her, since she has no backing and support. She is forced to live a lonely, solitary life. So, it is easy for them to treat her as though she were a use and throw object. The tragedy of her life does not end with this only. Miss Benare becomes an object of ridicule among her companions who pose that they are the upholders of moral values of society. Benare is, therefore, made a scapegoat. She is ill-treated by her colleagues. She suffers at their hands for the offence she has not committed. That is why she does not accept the punishment meted out to her for "infanticide" (actually, foeticide). G.P. Deshpande in his article entitled "Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe," states: The play *Silence! The Court is in Session* is highly symbolic in nature. During the court proceedings of the mock-trial, such animals as dogs, a hen, etc. enter the hall. These animals symbolize a complicated situation of innocent, simple, and straight-forward women like Miss Benare (i.e. the hen) by cruel persons with dual personality (i.e. the dogs). So, the pursuit of the hen by the dogs symbolically represents Miss Benare's inhuman hunt by her fellow companions" (G.P. Deshpande, "Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe: Kahi Vichar," Satyakartha, 1972, 23).Violence that characterizes most of Tendulkar's plays makes its appearance felt in this play also. Through the torture of a helpless woman, Tendulkar throws light on the sadist tendencies of the middle class people. All other

characters except Samant fail to achieve the various aims they have in their respective lives, Mr. and Mrs. Kadhikar remain childless, Ponkshe fails to be a scientist, Sukhatme to be a successful lawyer, Karnik to be an actor, and Rokde to gain an independent existence. The dramatist indicates that the defeatism of the unsuccessful, frustrated men forces them to seek vicious pleasure in inflicting miseries on others, particularly those who are simple and innocent. Benare's rhetorical soliloquy, at the end of the play, suggests that truth always gets suppressed in the proceedings of court, the fountain of justice. That is why Benare's objections seem to have been drowned by the judge's cry of silence and the banging of the gave during the court proceedings. Her tragedy reveals that too much of innocence is unpardonable even in the so-called cultured society. Innocence is punished and cruelty is set free and quite ironically, the play concludes with the words: "The show must go on."

In the play *Sakharam Binder,* Tendulkar once again as in *'Vultures'* explores violence and sexual lust, deep-rooted in human nature, while projecting the complexity of human nature and human character. Each character in the play is the combination of strength and weakness, good and evil. Sakharam, the protagonist of the play appears crude, aggressive, and violent. But, in his association with Laxmi, he displays tendencies of having been a religious and family loving man. As soon as Champa enters his life all the desisted changes enters his life, all the desired changes evaporate and he is shown as transformed into a sensual drunkard with perverted thoughts of sexual enjoyment. Laxmi, once the embodiment of an ideal Indian woman, tender, religious and self-effacing, now turns out to be wicked and vicious when Champa becomes her rival in love. After Champa's murder, she shows greater presence of mind than Sakharam. Champa who is apparently aggressive and violent like Sakharam, has a good deal of sympathy for Laxmi when the latter refuses to give her a shelter. Sakharam, the book-binder is an outcaste, having a Brahmin father and a Mahar mother. Due to the constant, inhuman beating of his father, he leaves his home at the age of eleven. Alienated from his family, he never called his own father, father. He was "like the son of a wretched Mahar, a scavenger to his mother. I grew up like a cactus-out in the

open" (v) he says. There is a streak of vengeance in his character against men in general and women in particular. He is given to treating women as disposable commodities. He picks up women, cast –off wives, brings them home, to slave off with him. The bitter experiences of life harden him and make him violent. The frustrated household life in his childhood crushes his tender feeling and leaves him a rough and tough guy growing like a desert cactus that stands the onslaughts of strong weather. Having no belief in the institution of marriage, Sakharam remains a bachelor. But he makes a contractual arrangement based on mutual convenience with a woman in all her helplessness. Laxmi is the seventh in the series of such helpless women. She brings a miserable change in his life but that relationship lasts for a short period. Sakharam tells Laxmi that the women he procured for himself had their own eccentricities. The women who preceded her used to drink a lot of tea, the one before went in for gods. Another woman used to worship her husband's shirt. She did so for two years. Then she had tuberculosis and died in the hospital "hugging his shirt to herself" (I, i). He exclaims to Laxmi that for all women "The fellow who is out to kill them he's god!. The chap who saves them-he's just a men.! (I, i)." He calls husbands an impotent lot, who can't father a brat; but beat and kick their wives. He says: it is a good thing that he is not a husband. He assures Laxmi that "Once a person crosses this threshold, she belongs here. When she leaves this house, It's all over between us .... But .... I give her a sari, a choli and fifty rupees plus a ticket to where she wants to go" (I,i). As Champa later tells Laxmi, "he really takes his money's worth out of a woman (III,i). Laxmi's objection to join Daud, Sakharam's muslim friend, in the prayer of Lord Ganapati annoys Sakharam and makes him violent. He beats her inhumanely. The result is that she leaves him instantly. Later, Champa enters Sakharam's life. The entire good things end with her arrival, he grows more violent, aggressive, and full of sexual passion. Still the playwright successfully manages to show intermittently goodness and sensitivity that are parts of his nature. His playing mridanga, his rejection of Champa's touch on the morning of Dussehra festival, for she does not have a bath , his feeling that Laxmi is far different from the previous women in life-all these are examples in the case. These

aspects of nature reveal that Sakharam is the victim not of his inherent weaknesses such as his viciousness, wickedness etc. but of bitter experiences in his life. Laxmi was driven out by her husband because they had no children. She is brought home at the outset of the play by Sakharam. Though not born a Brahmin, she has Brahmin ways, unlike Brahmin –born Sakharam who is like a Mahar. Even before she came to Sakharam, she had already been battered and beaten thoroughly into a docile, religious-minded woman. She tells Champa, the eighth woman of Sakharam, later : "I've always been that (religious). Right from the time I was a child. My faith is what gave me strength when life was hard. Another woman would have killed herself. I went on living (III ,i). While she was pressing Sakharam's legs, he asks: 'Your husband's name?", (I, ii) and only silence is her answer. "Have you eaten?" She shakes her head by way of answer. Under threat she exclaims, "It is Chaturti day. And in any case I was not hungry" (I, i). She has been without food for days, and is used to it like a typical Indian wife. Sakharam wastes no time in fetching Champa, a full-blooded rebel like himself; but a woman-rebel at that, who is essentially disadvantaged. Very soon, she gains control of the house and its master. She deserted her husband, a fouzdar who was sacked "because a pistol was stolen from the station." Shortly, Laxmi and her husband who calls himself Fouzdar Shinde are gravitated towards Sakharam's house; the husband of an irrepressible infatuation to Champa and Laxmi thrown out this time from her nephew's house on the charge of stealing has nowhere else to go.

Laxmi is sensitive, loyal, hard working and Champa is violent aggressive and disloyal etc. Laxmi enters Sakharam's life as her husband tortures her for she cannot bear a child from him. But the situation is not far different in her new home. She faces constant humiliation, severe beating and excessive physical bust. Sakharam too refuses to give her a shelter on her return to him later. If she is willing to bear any amount of suffering with Sakharam, the question arises as to why she should not do so with her husband. She lives in Sakharam's house with a firm determination to die on his lap though she is ill-treated and ill-used by Champa. She claims for herself virtue and loyalty but finds nothing wrong about her relationship with an unknown man, Fouzdar Shinde. Laxmi

confronts nothing less than a hell in Sakharam's house. She informs Sakharam of Champa's intimate association with Daud. In a way, she is responsible for Champa's murder. So it is difficult to accept her as generous and tender-hearted woman. Here, the playwright seems to suggest that women themselves are responsible at times, for their plight to a large extent. Vasant Palshikar describes the two women in contrast thus: "Laxmi's conservation with the insects and crows symbolically indicates her dissatisfaction with sexual passion. Her gleeful laughter, while she is speaking with the animals, incites sexual lust. Champa's physical beauty, her lovely appearance, inflame Sakharam's sexual hunger. Laxmi's behavior, gestures, facial movements, and verbal expressions attract Sakharam towards her. Outwardly, she appears submissive, helpless and docile but actually, she is ambitious, determined, possessive and dictatorial" (Vasant Palshikar, *Sakharam Binder*, Pratishthan, May, 1973, 13-14) Champa's violence is not without reasons. Her mother shows utter disregard and carelessness for her. She sells her even before she attains maturity. Later, again, the inhuman treatment she gets from her husband makes her coarse, violent and aggressive. However, she shows sympathy to Laxmi and gives her shelter. Similarly, she refuses to have intercourse with Sakharam at first night. She is touchy and insensitive to some of the issues of life. All these situations throw light on her real nature and hearing. The deterministic overtones of her life, like those of Sakharam's are more perceptible and, hence, cannot be overlooked or brushed aside on the ground of morality. Thus in the play *Sakharam Binder,* Tendulkar presents life in all its ugliness and crudity. Such a naked reality, despite the fact that it is inevitable, is still difficult to believe.

To sum up, the plays of Tendulkar explore effectively the themes of love, sex, sensuality, lust for power, violence, man-woman relationship, matrimonial relationship, human relationship, and exploitation and oppression of women in the society. Let us discuss these in detail in the succeeding chapters.

Most of the plays deal with the theme of love, sex and violence. They reveal anger and frustration of the post-1960 generation in the Indian context. The ideas implicit in the themes are revolutionary. They are opposed to the

conventional norms and established values. The emphasis here is on human nature and its complexities. In projecting the revolt of the plays' protagonists against conventionality, Tendulkar displays his love of humanity and his commitment to human values. The psychological study explores shifts and changes that have taken place in the modes of human thinking, feeling, and behaving with regard to Tendulkar's characters among which we see highly typified as well as individualized men and women.

32.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Who are the vultures in the play?
2. What social evils have been depicted in the play *The Vultures*?
3. What do you understand by post-independence drama?
4. What is the main theme of *The Vultures*?
5. Who are the evil characters in the play *The Vultures*?

32.7 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have learnt about Vijay Tendulkar's play *The Vultures*. We have also become familar with Indian writings, particularly drama after Independence, social concerns in the plays of Vijay Tendulkar and the assessment of Vijay Tendulkar as a playwright .

32.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss in detail the development of drama after Independence.
2. Evaluate Vijay Tendulkar as a playwright.
3. What social concerns have been raised in the plays of Vijay tendulkar, particularly in *The Vultures* ?

32.9 SUGGESTED READING

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VIJAY TENDULKAR : *THE VULTURES*

STRUCTURE

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33.1 INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we will appreciate Vijay Tendulkar as a playwright and we will also have a glimpse of his plays.

33.2 OBJECTIVES

Our objective is to find answers to the following questions in this lesson:

- Why is Vijay Tendulkar famous as a dramatist?
- What are the salient features of Vijay Tendulkar's plays?
- What are the themes Vijay Tendulkar deals with in his plays?
- Vijay Tendulkar as a dramatist.
- Why is Vijay Tendulkar considered to be one of the greatest dramatists of India?

32.3 THE PLAYS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR AT A GLANCE

Vijay Tendulkar, once journalist by profession, is considered a controversial playwright for his plays such as *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Sakharam Binder, Silence! The Court is in Session, The Vultures,* etc., as they have created a storm and an intellectual debate in society. At the same time, he has won the highest award in the field of dramatics on all India level for his play *Silence! The Court is in Session.* Tendulkar's plays deal with agonies, anxieties, and tensions of the urban, white-collar, middle-class people, his provocative socio-political plays which relentlessly and ruthlessly explore the human psyche and society never fail to raise a storm. They focus on the conflict and confrontation between individual and society. The angry and frustrated protagonists of his plays are actually the victims of harsh circumstances in life in the so-called modern, cultured society. The anger and frustration of these young men and women is expressed in their rejection of the conventional or traditional values and norms. So, the cruelty of some protagonists is a kind of perverted humanity and their desire to inflict miseries on others is a kind of revenge sought against society. They offer the world a set of social attitudes that are anti-establishment, anti-cultural, and even anti-humanitarian in the existential sense as opposed to the established, cultural, and humanitarian values. However, the world fails to recognize their struggle for existence, their bravery, and their sense of humanity.

While projecting the wrath of the young generation, Tendulkar explores human mind and its complexities in all depth and variety. He presents man-woman relationship in terms of sensuality and violence rather than love and

affection. An anti-romantic playwright as Tendulkar is, he projects not love but its perversion, not sex but its degradation. While pursuing his study as a part of Nehru fellowship, he has won, Tendulkar was left feeling a psychological curiosity about violence not as something that exists in isolation, but as a part of the human milieu, human behaviour, human mind. It has become an obsession. At a very sensitive level, violence can be described as consciously hurting someone, whether it is physical violence or psychological violence....Violence is something which has to be accepted as fact. It's no use describing it as good or bad. Projection of it can be good or bad. And violence, when turned into something else, can certainly be defined as vitality, which can be very useful, very constructive. So, it depends on how you utilize it or curb it at times.

It is with the presentation of *The Vultures* that Tendulkar's name has become associated with sex, violence, and sensationalism. However, these elements were there in his earlier plays too, but have, now come to be noticed in more glaring light. Tendulkar, who has been witnessed as the angry young dramatist of the Marathi theatre, rebels against the established, conventional ideas and values of the society from the presentation of the play *Silence! The Court is in Session* onwards. The play places him among the leading Indian playwrights and sets him apart from the previous generation of the Marathi playwrights. Thus, he is one who at once belongs to the tradition and establishes himself as an individual talent, a pioneering figure of the Contemporary Marathi Theatre. For *Silence! The Court is in Session,* Tendulkar got inspiration from a real-life incident. He met an amateur group that was on its way to stage a mock trial in Vile-parle, a suburb of Mumbai. While overhearing their conversation, the outline of the play began to take shape in his mind, and the ultimate result of it was the birth and creation of the play. The original Marathi play was written for the Rangayan at the instance of Arvind and Sulabha Deshpande in 1967, and was first performed in its English version in 1971, in Chennai, and was directed by Ammu Mathew. The play is a social satire with the tragedy of an individual victimized by society. The brief outline of the story goes thus: A

group of artists go to a town to perform a play. A rehearsal of the play in which there is a mock-trial is arranged. In this mock-trial, the private life of Leela Benare, the play's protagonist is revealed and publicly discussed. Here, Tendulkar presents a world apparently dominated by male chauvinists. However, the dramatic action revolves around the character of Leela Benare. Tendulkar, though not a self-acknowledged feminist, treats the character of Benare with great compassion and understanding while pitting her against the men who are selfish, hypocritical, and brutally ambitious. Leela Benare, who is rebellious and assertive, is a school teacher. She performs her duty, as a teacher very sincerely and commands love and respect of her pupils. She is also an enlightened artist. So, she accepts the membership of the amateur theatre group. The other members of the group are the Kashikars, Balu Rokde, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik, Prof. Damle, and Rawte who belong to the urban middle class of Mumbai. All the characters except Leela Benare are the representatives of the fundamentally orthodox society. The theatre group is a "miniscule crosssection of middle class society, the members representative of its different sub-strata. Their characters, dialogues, gestures, and even mannerisms reflect their petty, circumscribed existences." Frustrated and angry as they are in their individual lives, they go to the extent of maligning their companion also, for they are malicious and jealous in attitude towards their fellow-beings. Leela Benare, with her zeal and zest for life, is totally different from them. She wants to share her happiness with others but hardly succeeds in doing so. Her companions fail to appreciate her jovial, generous nature. Benare, who is far different from others, is isolated. The co-actors cunningly arrange a cruel game in the form of a mock-trial. Benare becomes a target of their gossip and falls a victim ultimately to character assassination at their instance. During the proceedings of the mock-court, her companions deliberately reveal her illicit love affair with Prof. Damle, a married man. The love-affair ultimately results in her pregnancy. Prof. Damle, however, is significantly absent at the time of trial. His absence denotes his total withdrawal from responsibility, either social or moral. At the time of rehearsal, the remarks in the book read by Samant, which are supposed to be Damle's addressed to Benare, implicitly throw light on the culprit's

escapist tendency: “Where you should go is entirely your problem. I feel great sympathy for you. But I can do nothing. I must protect my reputation.” (92). The play *The Vultures*, published in 1971, stands apart from the other plays of Tendulkar in that it is a play, which displays the unmitigated violence arising from selfishness, greed, and sinfulness. On its first production on the stage, there was a great storm in the society around. The conservative Maharashtrian people were stunned to observe the vulgar reality of their lives presented through the sexual relations and the scenes of violence in the play. It is for this reason that Girish Karnad says: “The staging of *Gidhade* could be compared with the blasting of bomb.”The play was bitterly criticized by the theatre-going public. The censor-board, too, felt that it was obscene and suspended its public performance for the time being. The play is a ruthless dissection of human nature as it depicts violence, avarice, selfishness, sensuality, and sheer wickedness inherent in man’s life. The title of the play *The Vultures* itself indicates the unpleasant subject-matter of the play. The play *Ghashiram Kotwal* makes room for Tendulkar in the galaxy of international playwrights. It proves to be a landmark in the history of the Indian theatre. Using the historical incident in the Peshwa regime, the playwright exposes violence, treachery, sensuality, and immorality latent in contemporary politics and reveals the fact that hypocrisy, greed, and brutality characterize power politics. The two important characters in the play are Ghashiram Savaldas and Nana Phadnavis. It is through their depiction that Tendulkar exhibits the way in which power operates. Towards the end of the play, Ghashiram is killed at the behest of Nana who continues to thrive. The end of the play thus symbolically suggests that, in power politics, one evil-doer meets punishment but the other goes scotfree. The characters here are types rather than individuals. *Ghashiram* is the representative of those people in society who pursue their goal unquestionably. Nana is the representative of those people in politics who use the needy people as their pawns and destroy them when they are no longer useful for them. In the play *Kamala,* Tendulkar attacks the institution of marriage, exposes selfish hypocrisy of the success oriented modern youths, and projects the evils in the field of journalism. The theme is discussed through the triangular

relationship of Sarita-Jaisingh-Kamala. The event depicted is based on a real-life incident. Jaisingh Jadhav, the protagonist of the play, fetches Kamala from a rural flesh market and presents her at the press conference. However, his main objective is not to expose the inhuman flesh market, but to achieve name, fame, and position. For him, Kamala is not a human being, but a marketable commodity that can bring him reputation in his professional career and promotion in his job. Thus, the real-life incident of the flesh market exhibits the violence practised and enjoyed by the present-day generation, particularly the careerist young ones.

Thus, all the plays describe violence, power, repression, and frustration that exist in the contemporary Indian society. Violence is noticed everywhere in Tendulkar's dramatic world— in the cruel, cunning game in the form of a mock-trial in *Silence! The Court is in Session,* in an over-ambitious young journalist's craze for money and fame in *Kamala*, in excessive sexual lust of the protagonist in *Sakharam Binder,* in the rude, brutal interactions of the family members in *The Vultures,* in Ghashiram's revenge on the Brahmins of Poona and vice versa in *Ghashiram Kotwal,* in a young Dalit's brutal treatment of his pregnant wife in *Kanyadaan*, and finally, in Mitra's relationship to Nama in *A Friend's Story*. Therefore, all these plays are, in fact, spectacles of violence, overt or covert.

33.4 VIJAY TENDULKAR: THE MASTER DRAMATIST OF INDIA

His slick, bland looks are always deceptive, because they hide an inner anxiety. Though he seems to lead a homely life, he is never home-bound. He is always on the move, always travelling to be at the centre of events, be it riots, political carnage, or a popular uprising. His thirst for "reality," as a close friend of his said "is like that of drunk gathering glasses when it is five minutes to go before the closing bell in a pub."

His twenty-five plays, all written in his native Marathi, have already been lauded as masterpieces of Indian drama. His admirers compare him with the best in the contemporary world theatre-and not without reason.

Says B. V. Karanth, the bearded stage director and chief of the National School of Drama: "You'll surely see a lot of celebrities among playwrights if you look around. But you've to look up to see Tendulkar."

Vijay Tendulkar: Rooted in Realism

In line with two other stalwarts of comparable stature, Satyajit Ray and Ravi Shankar, he too could have chosen a glamorous retirement, like Ray's in children's films, and Shankar's in California. But Tendulkar is different. He still dares to "Disturb the Universe." In the process, the establishment finds him unsafe. The Marxist heterodoxy keeps away from him for his "Individualism."

The revivalist political groups, such as the Shiv Sena, think he is the right cultural windmill to tilt at. And, as the playwright puts it himself : "To displease none is to die."

Second Career: Vijay Tendulkar is at a personal crossroads now. Like all other successful names in Bombay's performing arts scene, he is headed for a new career in films. What makes the transition significant is its timing. After having injected an incredible range of experience into his plays, and after having reached the high noon of his career in the stage, he is reaching out enthusiastically to another medium.

The switch comes at a time when international acclaim has just been coming in with the triumphal European tour of Jabbar Patel's Theatre Academy with his Ghashiram. The Times of London called the play something vibrantly individual. The Financial Times, in a three-column spread, lauded it as "exhilarating and irresistible."

These plaudits notwithstanding, by next year Tendulkar is definitely going to divert most of his creative energy to cinema. The writing of screenplays for the two highly acclaimed Shyam Benegal films, *Nishani* and *Manthan*, and the recent box-office hit, *Aakrosh*, directed by Govind Nihalani, was only his apprenticeship in film making. So are the two screenplays he has recently written for Amol Palekar, the actor-director, and Biplab Roy Chowdhury, the

promising Bengali film director, whose debut, Shodh, won him a national award this year. He has still more invitations to write screenplays, but "after that, my hands will be full with film.....my own film."

The path that he has already traversed is strewn with some of the best plays of our times. *Shantata: Court Chalu Ahe* (Silence: The Court is in Session), written in 1967, took the audience by storm for its shattering innovation. With the shocking bawdiness and violence of *Sakharam Binder* in 1971, and the volcanic razzle-dazzle of *Ghashiram Kotwal* in 1974, his career rocketted to a peak so far not attained by any Indian playwright.

Great Success: Tendulkar's long upward climb has not been a cakewalk. He had to brush past three other greats who, together with him, are often cited as the founding fathers of modern Indian theatre. They are Badal Sircar of Bengal, Girish Karnad of Karnataka and the late Mohan Rakesh of the Hindi theatre.

Towards the mid-'60s, these four men revolutionised Indian drama by introducing contemporary ideas, making dialogue more authentic and spontaneous, and liberating the theatre from "theatricality," from the oppression of contrived plots, outmoded values and unreal situations.

As this theatre never quite ran in tandem with the professional stage, it is hard to assess the great four in terms of their box-office returns. But Tendulkar comes on the top of the amateur stage even by the "professional" yardstick.

His most successful play, *Sakharam Binder,* has been staged 290 times on the Marathi stage alone, and 350,000 people saw it in Maharashtra. An estimated one million people have seen his plays in the state -not counting the innumerable performances of his plays in 15 Indian languages and four major European languages.

Shantata has been screened on BBC-TV: the screenplays - *Nishani, Manthan or Aakrosh* - have won countless awards.

Today the 100-odd amateur theatre groups in Bombay, particularly the 29 active groups, vie with each other like bidders in a Sunday auction mart for the first right to stage his plays.

Says Arvind Deshpande, the prime mover of the innovative Avishkar group: "I missed the opportunity to stage Tendulkar's latest play as I was late by only a few hours in accepting it. The competition for his plays is often so keen that it creates bad blood between theatre groups."

A scene from *Ghashiram Kotwal:* Acclaim admist controversy

Beginnings: Tendulkar's childhood was marked by poverty and drudgery. It was only slightly enlivened by his father who was also a playwright but, as the son says, "in the old tradition."

His school career was interrupted as the family could not pay his fees. The boy Tendulkar left school, left his hometown of Pune, and came to the big city, Bombay, in search of a career.

He flirted with communism, but still managed to get thrilled by the 1942 uprising although it was anathema to the communists. "I was too young to be a communist then," he reminisces, "but it is during those years that I saw Chittaprosad's paintings of the Bengal famine. From that point, I began looking at the world differently."

In the intervening years, he participated in the activities of *Nabajiban Sanghatana*, a splinter communist group, and got arrested once for attending the party study circle.

"All I liked about the communists was their sense of sacrifice and discipline." he says cryptically. Between Marx Clubs and study circles, he was reading proofs under the glare of naked bulbs in a number of Bombay's ramshackle printing presses, and was, of course, writing: short stories, one-act plays, even poems. "Then I suddenly discovered that I had a flair for writing dialogues."

The first full-length play, *Grihastha* (1956), written a year after his marriage, was a disaster. But the same year he wrote a play called *Maims Nawache Bet* (No Man Is An Island) which brought out the basic refrain of his art-man's search for power and success and the changes that he undergoes in the process of acquiring these.

This theme recurs in his plays like a leitmotif. And so do his other obsessions: violence and sex. Says Rajinder Nath of the prestigious Abhiyan theatre group in New Delhi: "He is the first playwright who made sex and violence respectable on the Indian stage."

Violence: When it comes to portraying violence in the raw on stage, Tendulkar can perhaps take the shine out of a Marquis de Sade. In *Gidhade (The Vultures),* a play written as early as 1959, the five members of a family claw at each other to enact the goriest possible parody of the staple fare of Indian theatre-the "family drama."

There is a sequence in the play where Manik, the sister, is kicked in the belly by her two brothers until she aborts her illegitimate baby. Tendulkar's elaborate stage instructions call for blood marks to smear the back of Manik's sari while she falls prostrate under the spotlight.

With the staging of *Gidhade*, which Satyadev Dubey produced, Tendulkar first ran into problems with the highly arbitrary Maharashtra Stage Performances Scrutiny Board. They objected to the scene, and the ebullient Dubey got round the objection by using a blue dye instead of red. He prefaced the play with a short announcement which exhorted the audience to take blue for red.

Tendulkar's first big hit, however, was *Shantata,* (1967), a play which was later on hailed by critics as marking a watershed in Indian theatre. "After Shantata, my plays were never quite the same again," Tendulkar himself admits.

The play starts off on a seemingly innocuous note, with a few middle class characters staging a mock-trial of President Johnson. Before long they

drop the “case” and instead put in the “dock” Leela Benare- a school teacher, thirtyish- “accusing” her of infanticide.

The make-believe trial suddenly acquires an eerie reality, and, bereft of the mask of middle class conformism, the characters confront one another as menacingly as Roman gladiators.

Raw Sexuality: The raw brutality and lewdness of *Gidhade* make a triumphal return in the post-Shantata phase, particularly in his most discussed play, *Sakharam Binder.*

Tendulkar’s first working-class hero, is a blustering non-conformist, a self-approving drunkard and a pseudo-misogynist whose passion is to bring to his den wives deserted by their husbands.

Then he makes them slave it out at his home, in the kitchen as well as in bed. One such live-in woman, Laxmi, who is pious and meek, is thrown out by him and another woman, Champa, who is full-blooded, wayward and brimming with sexuality, walks in. Champa dominates Sakharam with her animal lust, a share of which she secretly proffers to Dawood, Sakharam’s best friend. An enraged Sakharam kills her. In the final scene, Laxmi, the meekest of the lot, comes back and viciously eggs him on to bury the body in the garden. She hands him a shovel, and says: “…….. she was a sinner. She’ll go to hell. Not you. I’ve been a virtuous woman. My virtuous deeds will see both of us through.”

The play ends with Sakharam’s pride shattered. The bitter critic of marriage as an institution is proved, at the end, to be a puny male chauvinist. The myth of his working class secularism is also exploded as the sexual jealousy in him wells up only when Champa shares her bed with Dawood, a Muslim.

The other myth that crumbles is Laxmi’s meekness. If the meek shall inherit the earth then it is as well that they do so through an unsuspected degree of violence.

Like *Gidhade,* Sakharam too got bogged down in a persistent controversy with the scrutiny board. The matter went up to Bombay High Court where a special performance of the play was held for the judge with a blue bulb which was lighted up to indicate the offending passages.The High Court finally absolved the play with a stricture issued against the scrutiny board.

Transition to films

Historical Drama: Tendulkar's controversial *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1974) is the tale of a poor North Indian Brahmin, Ghashiram, who is favoured by the dissolute chancellor of the Maratha empire. Nana Phadnavis, after working for a dancing girl. He offers his own daughter to Nana and is subsequently appointed sheriff. When his daughter dies in childbirth, he takes revenge by unleashing a reign of terror. The Brahmins turn against him and stone him to death and his end is made into an occasion for rejoicing and celebration by the hypocritical Nana. The play is a tapestry of folk forms and is marked by ingenious use of percussive music and a fluid chorus line.

The play offended the Shiv Sena so much that its prominent members issued ominous threats against Jabbar Patel's troupe going abroad, on the charge that it distorted Maratha history. Important central ministers - Narasimha Rao and Vasant Sathe - supported the Shiv Sena.

A day before its departure last September, the group hid itself in Bombay's Santa Cruz airport. Finally it boarded the aircraft with a tight security cordon thrown around it. Why is Tendulkar so possessed by violence? Is it because of an insecure childhood? Or a feeling of repression at some point in his life? Tendulkar is reticent about his own life.

But he says he felt "unsafe" for long during his years of struggle in Bombay. Moving out of Kolhapur, a small town in south Maharashtra, he took time to adjust to the environmental shock. Bombay made him claustrophobic. As he reminisces: "I was exposed to a lot of people who were really quite dangerous-at least, that's how I felt."

In Tendulkar's plays, sex is often a concomitant of violence. "I wouldn't even call it violence. It is only a spirit of aggression," he says. The sensuality which Champa uses to dominate Sakharam is a mark of her "spirit of aggression."

Sakharam Binder: **Shattered working class myths**

Realism: Apart from the overdose of sex and violence, there is a stark documentary fervour in Tendulkar which makes his plays hit the audience right in their guts. The naturalism is not merely confined to the typically Tendulkaresque clipped sentences and tentative gestures, or the feeling of unrehearsed freshness which made Amol Palekar remark: "Tendulkar made us aware of the possibilities of the spoken word."

The realism stems from his manic zeal to be at the centre of events, to watch things happening at first hand. His job as an assistant editor in Lok Satta, the Marathi newspaper, enabled him to move around and see things at close quarters.

Then came the coveted Nehru Fellowship in 1973 which allowed him to constantly travel for two years. He did not carry a note book and did not write a line. He recorded his travel diary only on films and tape.

He went to Gujarat when the state was rocked by student militancy. He visited Bihar in the thick of the movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan. He visited Musahari when the Naxalite movement was raging in that Bihar district. In his own words, he attempted "to look at violence from all possible angles."

His present job is to film short documentaries on non-governmental rural development schemes on behalf of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. His office at Andheri in suburban Bombay is cluttered with camera equipment, photographic slides and projectors.

The job also allows him ample travel opportunities, taking him to Orissa, where the students have suddenly begun beating up the Marwari traders, or

Bengal, where the Marxists are expanding their bases in the countryside, or Bihar, where the police force behaves like a law unto itself. Then there are his weekly trips to the interior of Maharashtra where "the intricate labyrinth of social relations poses a challenge to every creative individual."

The fruit of his travels during the Nehru Fellowship years is a 90-minute slide-show entitled "The Faces." It is a procession of faces taut with anxiety, wizened with grief, frozen with anger, flushed with pride.

Each of them has a story to tell, which Tendulkar has recorded on tape. The whole thing adds up to a continuous commentary on violence in society. He is now planning to write a complete book on the subject, "maybe in the form of a travelogue."

Gathering Material: Tendulkar's day starts at seven in the morning when he pores over the newspapers with blue pencil and scissors in hand. His daughter, Sushma, who is a film actress, helps him to clip interesting items.

In most cases, the clips form the starting points of his stories. Thus the screenplay for Nishant, the film directed by Shyam Benegal, started with a small newspaper report about a schoolteacher's wife being waylaid and raped in Andhra Pradesh. And so did the screenplay for Aakrosh.

Recently, Tendulkar has completed the script for a film called Bali (The Sacrifice) which is based on reports of a sensational chain of murders in the Manwat hills of Maharashtra.

Tendulkar made repeated trips to the area before he wrote the script, to be filmed shortly by Amol Palekar. "I just can't write in a vacuum. I can't write about characters without ever having shaken hands with them," he says.

Some of the most memorable creations of Tendulkar have actually shaken hands with him. The blueprint of the accursed family of *Gidhade* came from a Bombay house where the Tendulkars used to live.

The inspiration for *Shantata* came from the members of a small theatre group who one evening accosted Tendulkar at Ville Parle railway

station and asked to be escorted to a place where they could stage a mock-trial of President Johnson. The seed for *Ghashiram Kotwal* was sown when chauvinistic groups in Bombay were inciting gullible street urchins to a rampage during a language riot.

Tendulkar's more recent works continue to bear the stamp of his fidelity to the "actual truth." What is more, they form an ideological continuity. Thus, the subject of a group of people transferring their guilt to a scapegoat, as elaborately dealt with in Ghashiram, repeats itself in Bali, where the child-murderers are mere pawns in the hands of the actual killers.

The theme finds its culmination in a new play based on the trial of the Rosenberg couple-Julius and Ethel, arrested for leaking American nuclear secrets to the Soviets in the '50s. He is editing their correspondence in the form of a dialogue-like the play Dear Liar, based on the correspondence between Bernard Shaw and Ellen Terry.

***Shantata* tearing the mask off conformism**

New Directions: Right now, Tendulkar seems to have achieved all that a playwright can dream of. In Jabbar Patel, 34, the physician-cum-director based in Pune, he has found an executor of his theatre ideas with whom he has "complete rapport." Moreover, his new plays are still full of surprises. In *Mitrachi Gosth (A Friend's Story)*, which is his newest and is yet to be staged, the thematic innovation is apparent.

It is the stark tale of a lesbian girl who "uses" a boy to fetch her the woman she wants.

"After coming out of a Tendulkar play," avers a Bombay theatre buff, "the world is not the same again." The main reason why the theatre-goer identifies himself so easily with the Tendulkar world is that it is tense and anxiety-ridden, is full of suspense, full of the message that human life is a constant battle for survival, a blood-smeared chronicle of self-preservation. "Experiencing Tendulkar is like re-living a Darwinian world," said Arvind Deshpande.

33.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (SAQs)

1. Why is Vijay Tendulkar famous as a dramatist?
2. What are the salient features of Vijay Tendulkar's plays?
3. What are the themes Vijay Tendulkar deals with in his plays?

33.6 MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS (MCQs)

1. Tendulkar began his career as writing for._____.
   a) Street theater
   b) Newspapers
   c) Screenplay
   d) Translations
2. Tendulkar wrote his first story at the age of._____.
   a) Six
   b) Seven
   c) Eight
   d) Nine
3. ____ at the age of 14 participated in the 1942 Indian freedom movement leaving his studies.
   a) Girish Karnad
   b) Vijay Tendulkar
   c) Manoj Das
   d) Badal Sircar
4. The period of Vijay Tendulkar was _____.
   a) 1928-2008
   b) 1938-2008
   c) 1948-2008
   d) 1958-2008

5. _____ by Vijay Tendulkar is a naturalistic play inspired by a real life incident.

a) Ice-candy Man

b) Kamala

c) Hayavadana

d) Duel

6. _____speech in the play, Kamala focuses on the evolutionary process of Tendulkar's women.

a) Sarita's

b) Priya's

c) Rama's

d) Kamala's

7. _____ an Adivasi woman in the play *Kamala.*

a) Sarita

b) Priya

c) Rama

d) Kamala

8. _____ calls Kamala's an innocent the poor thing'.

a) Sarita

b) Priya

c) Jaisingh

d) Kakasaheb

9. _____ was written by Vijay Tendulkar.

a) The Seven Sorrows

b) Kamala

c) Lion and the Jewel

d) The Golden Gate

10. _____ created an appropriate “puples’s theatre”, a theatre supported and created by people.

    a) Tendulkar

    b) Badal Sircar

    c) Karnad

    d) Nissim Ezekiel

11. Tendulkar worked as the faculty of the _____ of Social Science.

    a) Tata Institute

    b) Birla Institute

    c) Mittal Institute

    d) Leyland Institute

12. Influenced by Artaud , _____ relates the problem of anguish to the theme of violence in most of his plays.

    a) Derrida

    b) Beckett

    c) Lonesco

    d) Tendulkar

13. The supreme achievement of Indian Drama undoubtedly lies in _____ who is often called Shakespeare of India.

    a) Ben Jonson

    b) John Webster

    c) Christopher Marlowe

    d) Kalidasa

14. The original name of the drama *Silence, The Court is in Session* of Tendulkar is _____ .

    a) Shantata Court Chaule Ahe

    b) Ghashiram Kotwal

c) Sakharam Binder

d) The Post Office

15. The play, _____ by Vijay Tendulkar was published in the year 1984.

a) Kamala

b) Lion and the Jewel

c) Silence ! the court is in session

d) The Seven Sorrows

16. Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar was born at _____.

a) Jaipur

b) Kerala

c) Tamil Nadu

d) Maharashtra

17. Who translated the play Silence ! The Court is in Session into English?_____.

a) Tiruppati

b) Trivedi

c) Priya Adarkar.

d) Vijay Tendulkar

18. In _____, Vijay Tendulkar received the Padma Bhushan award from the Government of India.

a) 1985

b) 1984

c) 1986

d) 1987

19. Vijay Tendulkar has powerfully articulated the _____ situations in his plays.

a) Societal

b) Political

c) Familial

d) Socio-political

20. Vijay Tandulkar is one of the outstanding Indian _____.

a) Novelists

b) Playwrights

c) Critics

d) Short story writers

33.7 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson, we have become familiar with Vijay Tendulkar as a playwright and we also have been acquainted with his plays.

33.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. What are the different themes of Vijay Tendulkar's plays?
2. Appreciate Vijay Tendulkar as a dramatist.
3. Why is Vijay Tendulkar considered to be one of the greatest dramatist of India?

33.9 ANSWER KEY (MCQs)

1. b) Newspapers
2. a) Six
3. b) Vijay Tendulkar
4. a) 1928-2008
5. b) Kamala
6. a) Sarita's
7. d) Kamala
8. a) Sarita

9. b) Kamala

10. a) Tendulkar

11. a) Tata Institute

12. d) Tendulkar

13. d) Kalidasa

14. a) Shantata Court Chaule Ahe

15. a) Kamala

16. d) Maharashtra

17. c) Priya Adarkar.

18. b) 1984

19. d) Socio-political

20. b) Playwrights

33.10 SUGGESTED READING

Bhabha, Homi. *Nation and Narration.* London: Rutledge, 1990.

Brandon, James R. *Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

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Esslin, Martin. *Theatre of the Absurd*. London: Penguin, 2003.

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