



Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon  
Open University

Bachelor of Arts  
**DCEN-103 (N)**

## Indian Writing in English

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## **Block Introduction I**

Dear learners! as we know Indian poetry is an important part of Indian English Literature. This block mainly concerns poetry written in English by Indian poets. Historically, Indian English literature has generally been seen as beginning with the establishment of the British colony in India. This block intended to develop the power of exploration of unknown things through the origin and developments of Indian English poetry. This block is divided into five units. The first unit focuses on Toru Dutta and her poem *Our Casuarina Tree*. The second unit aimed to discuss R. N. Tagore. In this unit, we will learn the Gitanjali(Sections: 1,2 and 103). The third unit focuses on Nissim Ezekiel: "*Night of the Scorpion* and *Background Casually*. Here we will learn about the life, works, and art of Ezekiel through these two poems. The fourth unit of the block deals with Kamla Das and his major poems *My Grand Mother's House*. In unit five, we will learn about A.K. Ramanujan and his well-known poem *Love Poem for A Wife*'. This block is very fruitful for new scholars of Indian English poetry.

**Structure**

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Indian English Poetry: An Overview
- 1.3 Toru Dutt, Her Life and Age
- 1.4 Toru Dutt's Literary Output and Achievements
- 1.5 **Our Casuarina Tree** (Text)
  - 1.5.1 Background to the Poem
  - 1.5.2 Notes
  - 1.5.3 A Detailed Analysis of the Poem
  - 1.5.4 Poetic Devices
- 1.6 Summing Up
- 1.7 Self-Assessment Questions and Answers
- 1.8 Further Readings

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**1.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this Unit, we propose to introduce learners doing their course in distance learning mode to the history of Indian English poetry in brief, the place and position of Toru Dutt in it, her art and craftsmanship. And moreover we shall analyse her most anthologized poem *Our Casuarina Tree* in the light of the above proposition. Our attempts shall be here to look at the following key points:

- ✓ Growth and development in Indian English poetry;
- ✓ Timeline of Toru Dutt;
- ✓ Social, cultural, and economic circumstances;
- ✓ Literary achievements of the poetess;
- ✓ The poetic devices and techniques applied in the formation of the poem.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this Unit, I shall explain one of the most celebrated poems of Toru Dutt *Our Casuarina Tree*. She is fondly remembered and studied by academicians and students at different levels. She as one of the earliest creative writers set the fashion of writing poems with great confidence. It would not be hyperbolic to point out that Toru Dutt is an Indian version of Wordsworth with native sensibility. Our posterity will keep remembering her ever.

We would like you to read the poem at least two or three times and try to interpret lines of the poem with the help of notes given in section 1.5.2 and literary devices explained in the section 1.5.4. After having read and understood the poem, write down answers to the questions reading carefully the relevant section as hinted in the section 1.7.

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## 1.2 INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY: AN OVERVIEW

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With the enforcement of Macaulay's Minute in 1835, English became the medium of education during the British hegemony. However Raja Ram Mohan Roy was writing in English a decade before English educational policy implemented. He is the first recognized Indian who used English for creative expression. His works like *The Precepts of Jesus*, *The Guide to Peace and Happiness* are works of prose. The first recognized Indian poet was Henry Vivian Louis Derozio who was born on 18<sup>th</sup> April, 1809 at Entally-Padmapukur in Calcutta (now Kolkata). His first collection of poems was published in 1827 simply titled *Poems* and his another ambitious work, *The Fakir of Jungheera: A Metrical tale and other Poems* in 1828. After Derozio, Kashi Prasad Ghosh published his volume of poetry titled *The Shair and the Other Poems* in 1830. These two poets were largely imitative of English writers.

After Derozio and Kashi Prasad Ghosh, Toru Dutt (1856-1877) immediately comes into our mind. Like Derozio she also died very young when her poetic talent had just begun acquiring maturity. She was born brilliant. She attained recognition among Indian poets as one of the pioneer poets. She was proficient in Bengali, English, French, German, and Sanskrit. On the basis of her works like *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1883) and *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) one is obliged to pass a few remarks in appreciation of her poetic sense and genius. She brilliantly transcribed Indian legends, myths, and folklores. By her education

and upbringing, she was Anglican but she preserved Indian ethical values in her writings to the extent of her understanding of it. It was her unique talent.

Next to her Michael Madhusudan Dutt who was very talented poet. He wrote two volumes of poetry *Vision of the Past* (1848) and *The Captive Ladies* (1848). His sole purpose was to establish himself as the writer of English verse. He was very much influenced by the writings of Byron, Homer, and Dante. He was the first Indian versifier who knowingly attempted the use of Indian images to express Indian sentiments.

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) famous as 'the Nightingale of India' was a born poetess. She was a multi-faceted personality. She has combined in herself the features of a poetess, a patriot and a politician. She was educated at the University of Madras, King's College London and Girton College Cambridge. She was proficient in Urdu, Telugu, English, Bengali, and Persian. At the age just 12, she had topped the matriculation examination. Despite most of her education in abroad she selected the subject matter for poetic treatment which are commonly seen in Indian atmosphere. She carefully made Indian life, images, themes, symbols, songs, and legends the subject of her poetic creations. And moreover, she brilliantly handled the tempo and rhythm of her poems in very Indian style. Her collections *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1912) had attracted tremendous readership both in India and abroad.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) next in rank was a versatile personality. He has combined in himself a poet, a dramatist, a story writer, an essayist, a philosopher, and a nationalist edging internationalism. He is the first Indian who bagged the Noble Prize for literature in 1913 for his work the *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings). He was the spirit of his time. He addressed almost every problem of his time and hinted upon a few efficacious solutions. For his humanist approach, he claims international readership. Nothing is missing therein. His every work has a specific purpose. His works are the carriers of spiritual messages for the whole humanity. He always sought to bring about change in the society by his works. For his progressive approach and orientation he will ever be remembered, read, and appreciated.

The fame and identity of Aurobindo Ghosh mainly rests upon his mystic poetry *Savitri*. He was a versatile genius. *Savitri* is his magnum opus. It is the greatest epic of Indian English poetry. The mystical force of the *Savitri* always attracts readers and makes them feel transformed. Even

it would not be hyperbolic to point out that every serious reader dreams to go through it to get enlightened. His other poems like *Urvashi* and *Love and Death* address Hindu sentiments.

After independence, Indian poetry speedily grew and so many creative writers came up their poetry. They did experiments with the form as well as the content. They firmly established Indian poetry as an independent category. Dom Moreas, Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Kamla Das, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, K. N. Daruwalla, Jayant Mahapatra paved the path of Indian poetry solidly. At present there are so many creative writers who are expressing Indian sentiments and images in their poems. The future of Indian poetry is very bright. And, it's heredity made by former poets is quite safe in the hands of later poets.

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### 1.3 TORU DUTT, HER LIFE AND AGE

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(Toru Dutt 1856-1877)

Toru Dutt (in Bengali Tarulata Dutta) was born on March 4, 1856 in a Hindu Kayastha family of Rambagan, 12 Manicktollah Street, Calcutta whose almost all the members were famous for their literary and cultural activities in the whole of Bengal. Her father Govin Chunder Dutt was a good poet and a linguist who had brought out *The Dutt Family Album* (1870), *The Loyal Hours* (1876), and *Cherry Stones* (1881). *The Dutt Family Album* consists of some 200 poems contributed by Govin Chunder, Greece Chunder, and Hur Chunder. They were sons of Rasamoy Dutt, the Secretary of the Hindu College Committee. Her mother Kshetramoni was proficient in English and Bengali. She translated *The Blood of Christ* from English to Bengali. She was well grounded in the Hindu myths and legends. Toru Dutt was the youngest of the three children of her parents. Her sister Aru was senior by two years and the only brother Abju was senior by five years. In 1862 Govin with the family converted to Christianity when Toru was just 6, Aru 8, and Abju 11. In 1865 she lost her brother Abju at the age of 14. This calamity shocked the whole family badly. In order to overcome distress caused by the death of Abju, Toru and Aru



repeatedly went through Milton's *Paradise Lost* and kept themselves busy in literary pursuits. In 1869, Govin with his wife and daughters left for France where Aru and Toru attended a French school at Nice where they learnt French language and a year later, they shifted to London. Toru learnt the fundamental lessons of music in London. The French life and culture they found very much promising. In 1871, Govin Chunder moved to Cambridge where Aru and Toru attended the *Higher Lectures for Women* at the University of Cambridge. In this way both sisters acquired surprising command over French and English. Toru here met and did friendship with Miss Mary Martin the daughter of Reverend John Martin of Sidney Sussex College. Miss Martin not only helped her in publishing some of her works but also she was the recipient of most of her letters. Actually Miss Martin was her representative for the western world.

After four years stay in England, Govin Chunder along with his wife and both daughters came back to Calcutta. After the return, Aru and Toru both undertook imaginative writing seriously. But unfortunately Aru could not bear literary strain and at last succumbed to consumption on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1874 at the age of twenty. Aru's death shocked the family very badly. Toru began feeling isolation, frustration, and loneliness. In order to overcome feelings of dejection and isolation, the family began to travel back and forth from the city house at Rambagan to the garden house at Baugmaree. Even Govin wished to go back to England again aftermath the fatal death of Aru.

In the year 1875, Toru began learning Sanskrit under the supervision of her father. It was her desire to read the great Indian epics- the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. Within a year's time she picked up Sanskrit language. She studied the *Ramayan*, the *Mahabharat*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Vishnupuran*, and the *Abhigyanshakuntalam* of Kalidas.

In 1877, Toru's health began deteriorating and she was obliged to remain indoors. At last she also died of consumption at her father's house at Maniktollah Street, Calcutta on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1877. She lived for 21 years, 6 months, and 26 days. She was buried near her loved brother and sister at C. M. S. Cemetery in Calcutta.

It was British hegemony in India when Toru Dutt was born. By an act in 1835 English education was introduced in India. In beginning English was very much foreign to Indians. Actually English was introduced in India to prepare Indians to attend English officers. Toru Dutt had seen her father and grandfather welcoming English officers and many other English people associated

with missionaries. In a sense Toru Dutt's family was anglophile. Her father, uncle, and cousin were drawn towards European culture and life. British colonialism actually was looking for how to convince Indians that the colonials are working for natives. Very soon natives came to know the hidden motives. In 1857 when Toru was just a year old, first Indian freedom struggle took place against British colonial government. Toru Dutt had seen Indian people being exploited and harassed by English officers. Perhaps she is the first Indian lady who denounced the British rule in India. Though she was born in an anglicized atmosphere but she brilliantly retained her native sensibility. She in fact brought the beauty of India to the western world in English language.

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#### 1.4 TORU DUTT'S LITERARY OUTPUT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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The Bengal Magazine for the first time in December 1874 brought out a few essays of Toru Dutt in print. One of her essays was on Derozio. In November 1875, Toru wrote to her British friend Miss Martin that I had just finished a book of poetry translated from French into English. This work was *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. In beginning publishing houses were reluctant to publish it. For the reason it could be published finally a little late in March 1876 by the *Saptahiki Sambad Press*, Bhawanipore. It consists of 165 pieces of translation. Of which eight were of Aru and remaining pieces were done by Toru herself. These translated pieces were from about 75 Parnasian poets including Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Baudlaire, Leconte de Lisle, and many others. Very soon demand rose for its second edition. The second enlarged edition came out in 1878 by the same press. This time it had 30 fresh pieces taking the total number almost to 200 and a memoir written by her heart-broken father. Its third edition was brought out by Messrs Kegan Paul & Co., London in 1880.

Toru wrote a complete novel in French titled *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d' Arvers* which was discovered by her father after her death among papers. Her father wrote "Prefatory Memoir" and got it published in 1879 by a Paris based firm, Didier under the supervision of another the French authoress Mile Clarisse Bader. Toru Dutt had written a novel titled *Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden* in English. But unfortunately it remained unfinished due to her sudden death. Toru's father asked the *Bengal Magazine* to bring out it. The magazine brought out it serially between January and April 1878.

Toru Dutt's greatest achievement is her *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. It was published by Messrs Kegan Paul & Co., London in 1882. It is her chief legacy to posterity. It has

an “Introductory Memoir” by Edmund Gosse. It consists of some well-known nine legends and ballads. These are “Jogadhya Uma” (about Goddess Uma), “Sita” and “Savitri” (on Indian womanhood), “Dhruv”, “Buttoo”, “Sindhu”, and “Prahlad” (about the experiences of youngsters), “Lakshman”, “The Royal Ascetic and the Hind”. Besides these there is a section of “Miscellaneous Poems” which are mostly subjective in nature.

In 1921, Harihar Das brought out a collection of Toru Dutt’s letters written to Miss Martin (total 53 in number) and Mile Clarisse Bader titled *Life and Letters*. Her letters reflect upon Toru’s feminine sensibility and childlike experiences. In this biographical section she is an invaluable resource for information on a pioneering figure in India.

Toru Dutt though lived for very short time left behind excellent works which would be ever be appreciated and read by generation after generation. Her lyrical, narrative, and linguistic proficiency will ever be remembered. She is actually the earliest spokesperson of India who interpreted the spirit of India to the west with great command and comfort. Though she was born and brought up in a semi-anglicized family and atmosphere but she brilliantly assimilated into herself best of the culture she encountered. She was great admirer of French culture and life. “She loved France best, she knew its literature best, she wrote its language with more perfect elegance.” (Gosse) She denounced colonial exploitative strategies. She did not anglicize her ideas and understanding of ethical values. Any well-read person either from India or from any other part of the world would astonish at her command over a language which was acquired a little late. Would that she had lived for some more years the English poetry in India would have more better position. In her we are immediately reminded of the romantic poetry. She is parallel to any first grade author of the west. “When the history of the literature of our country comes to be written, there is sure to be a page in it dedicated to this fragile exotic blossom of song.” (Edmund W. Gosse)

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1.5

**OUR CASUARINA TREE (Text)**

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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 tranced 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.

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.

### 1.5.1 BACKGROUND OF THE POEM

“Our Casuarina Tree” is an autobiographical poem published in the first edition of **Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan** (1882) under the section *Miscellaneous Poems*. It was written when she was away from her native place staying somewhere in France. The Casuarina tree which was grown in her garden in front of the house is very closely associated with her childhood memories. This tree usually grows near ponds and lakes. It has canopy foliage shape. Toru Dutt by her poetic genius transformed this actual tree into a symbolic tree. The way she objectified the tree is superb. In fact she identified herself with the tree. By this poem the tree achieved immortality. The tree is the point where her past and present experiences of life meet.

By giving the tree a personal touch and making it responsive to human emotions, Toru Dutt made the poem intensely human. In the poem the poetess expresses her sincere love for nature. The Casuarina tree in many ways renders its service to humans and non-human creatures. Sweet memories of the past are associated with the tree share with the sense of grief for the loss of her dear ones. This poem is a true mirror of her own life and her background.

### 1.5.2 NOTES

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Baboon:           | a kind of large monkey with short tail |
| Puny:             | small and feeble                       |
| Blent:            | mixed                                  |
| Boughs:           | branches                               |
| Casement:         | window                                 |
| Crimson clusters: | bunches of rich deep red flowers       |
| Crest:            | top                                    |
| Wend:             | travel or move                         |
| Dirge:            | a song sung at the time burial         |
| Roll:             | pass by                                |
| Darkling:         | in the dark                            |
| Eerie:            | strange, uncanny                       |
| Enmassed:         | all together in a mass or crowd        |
| Gallantly:        | bravely                                |
| Haply:            | by chance, luckily                     |
| By:               | beside                                 |
| Hoary:            | old, aged                              |
| Rugged trunk:     | rough stem of the tree                 |
| Indented:         | made tooth-like notches in             |
| Magnificence:     | grandeur                               |

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Tranced:          | enraptured   |
| Offsprings:       | young ones   |
| Python:           | a huge non-poisonous snake   |
| Winding:          | coiling about or twisting  |
| Embrace:          | enclaspment  |
| Repose:           | take rest (at night)   |
| Scars:            | marks of wound   |
| Summit:           | top  |
| Sheltered:        | secluded or lonely   |
| Shingle:          | pebbles in a mass  |
| Wend:             | wander   |
| Swoon:            | fade or fainted  |
| Wraith:           | ghost  |
| Fain:             | gladly   |
| Lay:              | song   |
| Consecrate:       | dedicate   |
| Aye:              | ever, always   |
| Deathless:        | immortal   |
| Skeleton:         | structure of bones   |
| They:             | here is the reference to Aru and Abju                                  |
| Rehearse:         | happen again   |
| Borrowdale:       | a fertile valley of England where trees are supposed to be<br>immortal |
| Native clime:     | a climate or region one is born  |
| Oblivion's curse: | the tree will save her memories from the forgetfulness                 |

### 1.5.3 A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

“Our Casuarina Tree” is the most remarkable piece of poetry. It may be either Shelley’s “To a Skylark” or Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale”. It has all the beauty of a perfect composition. Its lyrical and rhythmic –phrasal grace mesmerise readers immediately. The poem is definitely based upon subjective feelings but it bears multiple layers of signification for objective representation of the matter. The tree to the end of the poem could not remain a physical body. It became a symbol. The tree may either stand for the country and its rich ancient cultural heritage or the life of the poet herself doing hard struggles with it. It was written when she was far away from her loved native place. She fondly reminisces the past days. Memory and nostalgia both work simultaneously. The tree is almost like a badge to link past and present. It is truly “the chief legacy to posterity” (Gosse). In theme this poem dives deep into the unfathomable ocean of the Vedanata and the Upnishad of body and soul, life and death.

In the first stanza Toru Dutt like a typical nature poet beautifully depicts the Casuarina tree and its shape and how it plays its roll there in the garden. The poet says that a creeper like a big python has risen to the very top of the tree coiling about its rough but quite sturdy trunk. It has crushed the stem of the tree creating thereon deep scratches like marks of deep wounds. The poet strongly believes that no other tree can survive in such a crushing embracement. So she calls it gallant. The creeper has fully covered the tree from bottom to top. The tree bravely like a giant bears the load of foliage and flowers of the creeper. The creeper has given birth to flowers in profuse. No branch of Casuarina is left without flowers of creeper. It has graced every branch of the tree with bunches of rich deep red flowers which attract birds and bees all day long to enjoy pollen ceaselessly. The poet informs further that the garden gets over-buzzed with the sweet songs of these birds and bees which appears as having no end at all especially at night when the humanity living nearby enjoys sleep.

In the second stanza Toru Dutt recalls with nostalgia about the time morning especially in the days of winter. In the early hours of the day when the poet opens the panels of window of her living room she firstly happens to have a look on the tree and that makes her feel elated. She feels very happy especially in the winter season when she sees a large monkey sitting statue-like on the very top of the Casuarina waiting all in alone the first rays of the sun and his young mates and issues seen busy doing games in lower branches of it. This lively picture attracts her most. The other thing that impresses the poetess most is that everywhere nightingales (kokilas) are



singing sweet songs to welcome the sunrise, cows still do not look fresh even after having whole night sleep and comfort but they move towards the meadows nearby. These cattle while travelling to some field of grass to graze upon move by the pond and their moving shadows appear on the water of the pond as if these were the bunch of water-flowers. The place thus appears like a snow covered island. The Casuarina is stood by the pond. Cattle enjoy sleep under the tree at night. At the morning they go to graze. In this way we see that the tree is serving many ways. So far it has been the shelter of birds, bees, cows, and monkeys. The whole ecosystem is here developed.

In the third stanza, the poetess comes to her own life to show how the tree is important to her. Its grandeur and many other roles that it plays are not the real cause to be close to her soul. The matter of fact is that she had played with her brother Abju and sister Aru whom she loved fondly under its shade. Memories of those days are still as fresh as ever to her though many years have been passed. The tree will ever be remembered whenever they are recalled. They will move in her eyes as if they were alive. They will continue till her eyes get blind due to tears in profuse. Since the poet is remembering those days staying outside her native land she wishes to convey her sincerest soulful message through sea-waves. Like a typical classical Victorian poet, she recollects the gentle swaying of tree in the wind. The sound created by the breaking of sea-waves against pebbles put in by the beach reminds her sound generated by the tree when it swayed in the wind. Here she likens the sound of the tree to the sound of the sea-waves. She hears mourning of the tree in it. Definitely, the tree is expressing in a strange language but it is gotten very clearly by the poetess which has reached to her luckily.

In the fourth stanza she says that by the eyes of faith it can be ascertained that the tree is lamenting not seeing them for a long time. It can be clearly listened even being at a long distance though it cannot be understood through the available medium of communication. Wherever she stayed and spent a couple of month's time either in France or Italy and happened to listen sound created by sea-waves, it has immediately reminded her of the image of tree. Actually tree and remembrances associated with it have entered into her consciousness which constantly arises in her mind. Whenever and wherever she visits a place especially sea-shores, the grand appearance of tree and other events linked to it comes into her mind spontaneously. In order to drive forcefully an idea that she remembers the tree all time whether she is awake or asleep, Toru Dutt draws a picture of sea-shore looking fade or fainted in the white moonlight when usually the

earth that is the beach gets commotion free or say the humanity returns to their shelters. Finally she says that tree is very close to her soul because she had spent her childhood days enjoying its shade in her most loved country. Actually memory and nostalgia being together played very crucial role in shaping the poetic imagination of the poetess. Each and every event she fondly recalls. The tree is to her a token of happy days her life.

In the last and concluding stanza Toru Dutt wishes to immortalize the Casuarina. She wants to compose songs in its honour gladly and soulfully. The tree had been very close to her sister and brother who were no more unfortunately. They had been dearer than her life. She wished that they had been alive. She further points out that the tree may be counted one among the immortal tress of Borrowdale of England after she died. Toru Dutt towards the end of the poem is quite conscious that with the passage of time and hope, the tree will also fall down. It may lose due significance. She ardently wishes to keep the tree protected from the curse of forgetfulness and many more memories and remembrances linked with it. She wants the tree and memories linked to it will remain as fresh as ever in future. She realizes the limitations of her poetic talent yet interested to register imaginatively the grace and beauty of the tree in the form of verse. Nevertheless she hopes that readers of forthcoming generation will enjoy the grace and grandeur of it whenever they visit the verse. In their readings the beauty of the tree will gladly arise in their consciousness.

#### **1.5.4 POETIC DEVICES**

The poem is consisted of five stanzas of eleven lines in each. Each stanza has a beautiful rhyme-pattern- *a b b a, c d d c, e e e*. The poetess did experiment with rhyme-scheme maintaining the rhythm and tempo of the poem. In each stanza she beautifully brings forth a picture of the place. The picturesqueness is another quality of the poetess's poetic talent. In the poem she uses some memorable phrases which are testimony to her poetic maturity. A few of them are "near the stars", "loved with love intense", "eyes of faith", and "Oblivion's curse". In the poem the poetess has amply used simile and metaphor. The tree itself is a symbol. Just a reference to the tree puts forth a good amount of information. The Casuarina in her hand achieved symbolic value. The lyrical quality of the poem is superb. She beautifully uses images to make the expression eloquent enough. The poetess in the poem successfully blended thought and feeling and this is what T. S. Eliot termed "Unification of Sensibility". She was educated abroad. She learnt foreign communication but not at the expense of her native Indian sensibility. She found her country

more loved than any other country in the world. The tree is the token of Indian culture and civilization. To every Indian relation deserves more value than any other thing.

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## **1.6 SUMMING UP**

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At the end of the Unit, it can be said that what Toru Dutt did and learnt and left for the posterity is thing of distant for any even mature author. In fact she was a born poet. The race, rhythm, tempo, and organization of idea are superb. She is pioneering creative writer of the country. In her poem “Our Casuarina Tree”, she has achieved perfection. Every good quality of a good creative genius can be explored in her works. “Our Casuarina Tree” is the most mature poem of a quite immature poetess. The world academia will ever remember her with love and respect.

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## **1.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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Q. 1 Briefly focus on the growth of Indian English Poetry.

Ans. Read section no. 1.2.

Q. 2 What impression does the unhappy life of Toru leave upon you?

Ans. Read section no. 1.3 and 1.4.

Q. 3 How was the family atmosphere of Toru Dutt?

Ans. Read section no. 1.3.

Q. 4 Discuss the picturesque quality of the poem “Our Casuarina Tree”.

Ans. Read section no. 1.5 and 1.5.3.

Q. 5 Do you agree that “Our Casuarina Tree” is superb piece of poem?

Ans. Read section no. 1.5.4.

Q.6 Discuss autobiographical elements found in the poem.

Ans. Go through the section no. 1.5.3.

Q. 7 Write an essay on the tone, theme, and structure of the poem “Our Casuarina Tree”.

Ans. Read section no. 1.5.4.

Q. 8 “Our Casuarina Tree” is a perfect blend of subjective and objective elements. Justify.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 1.5.3.

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## **1.8 FURTHER READINGS**

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Dwivedi, A. N. Toru Dutt: A Literary Profile. New Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1998.

Dutt, Toru. Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan. Ed. A. N. Dwivedi. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot. 1994.

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## UNIT 2 RABINDRANATH TAGORE: GITANJALI ( Songs-1,2 and 103)

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### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Rabindranath Tagore, His Life and Age
- 2.3 Tagore's Literary Output and Achievements
- 2.4 **Songs 1, 2 and 103** (Text)
  - 2.4.1 Background
  - 2.4.2 Notes
  - 2.4.3 Detailed Analysis
  - 2.4.4 Poetic Devices
- 2.5 Summing Up
- 2.6 Self-Assessment Questions and Answers
- 2.7 Further Readings

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit is basically designed to meet the following key-concerns:

- ✓ Tagore's life and upbringing.
- ✓ Evaluation of his creativity and achievements.
- ✓ Salient characteristics his works usually reflect upon.
- ✓ Analysis of prescribed songs with critical notes.

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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At the very outset of the Unit on Rabindranath Tagore, it is very tough to evaluate him in a sentence or a phrase. Likewise it is equally difficult to write anything for his introduction. Actually whichever field of knowledge he took up, he mastered it first and then perfected whether it was art, literature, culture, painting, philosophy, politics, music, or history. He was a versatile genius. In terms of range, quality, and quantity, he is better than any best poet of the world. He is often welcomed as 'world poet'. Whichever services he rendered were exclusively

for the well-being of whole humanity. He was a great humanist, philanthropist, reformist, nature-loving, and visionary in his liking and orientation. Being a nationalist, he was earliest advocate of cosmopolitanism. He was against all kinds of exploitation and oppression. His rhythmic prose immediately catches the attention of readers. He was not narrow-minded in his views and activities. He has rightly been called India's poet laureate, the sun of India and sentinel of the East.

We would like you to read these songs at least two or three times and try to interpret lines of each song with the help of notes given in section 2.4.2 and literary devices explained in the section 2.4.4. After having read and understood the poem, write down answers to the questions reading carefully the relevant section as hinted in the section 2.6.

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## 2.2 RABINDRANATH TAGORE, HIS LIFE AND AGE

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(Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1941)

(Courtesy- Wikipedia)

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1861. He was the fourteenth child of his parents Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi. Among all 13 surviving children Rabindranath Tagore was youngest. He was born into a huge rambling mansion at Jorasanko in the heart of Calcutta. This house of Tagores was noted in those days for many social, religious, and intellectual activities. Debendranath was well known for his honesty and uprightness so he was hailed as *Maharshi* by people. He was associated and worked for Brahma Samaj. Rabindranath could not get attention and care of his mother as she was too much busy with too many household responsibilities. So he was looked after by servants. Even sometimes these servants fail to give him his share of milk. Most of the time, he used to sit by a window. The outside

world gradually became mysterious to him. He used to listen to his elder brother talk about schools. When he was 12 years old his father took him to a meditation centre Santiniketan founded in 1863. There he got instructions from his father on Sanskrit, astronomy, and English. But at the age of 14 he gave up formal schooling. A few tutors helped him learning at his home. Mostly he learned on his own efforts.

In 1878, his father sent Rabindranath to London to prepare either for Civil Services or Judicial Services. There he stayed for some 18 months and returned to India without completing his education. Returning to India he began writing poems on his own efforts. His all other brothers and sisters were poet, novelist, musician, playwright, and civil servant. In this way we see a highly academic atmosphere of the family.

At the age 22, Rabindranath Tagore married Bhabatarani when she was barely ten years old in 1883. She was the daughter of an official working at his estate. After their marriage, Bhabatarani was renamed as Mrinalini. The Tagore family arranged tutors and other educational facilities so that she could learn civilities and manners of the household. She even attended Loreto School to attain proficiency in English. She bore five children with Rabindranath. These children were named as Bela, Rathi, Rani, Mira, and Sami. Suddenly she died in 1902. Her death made him distraught. After her death, he never married again and remained faithful to the memory of his wife. Mrinalini had donated sizable part of her jewellery to meet the expenses incurred on building Santiniketan. In 1903, Rabindranath lost his second daughter Rani when she was 12 years old. In 1905, his father passed away. In 1907, he lost his six years old son Sami. In 1918, he lost his eldest daughter Bela. On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1921, Rabindranath dedicated his Viswa-Bharati earlier known as *Brahmacharya Ashram* to the people of country. Rabindranath breathed his last on 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1941 at the age of 80. His death really created vacuum in the literary horizon.

During Tagore's upbringing, there were happening so many social, cultural, economic, and political activities to bring about all round reformation in India. He had been part of all these programmes. National freedom struggle was going on. Actually India was passing through the phase of change. He modernized Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic structures. His novels, stories, songs, dance dramas and essays spoke to topics like political and personal.

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### 2.3 TAGORE'S LITERARY OUTPUT AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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Since Rabindranath Tagore was a multi-dimensional personality, he expressed in almost all kinds of literary genres like poetry, essay, fiction, short-story, and play. Rabindranath though began scribbling poems at the very tender age of eight or nine but at the age of sixteen he published a collection of poems in 1877 under the pen-name of Bhanu Singh (Lion of the Sun) and it marks the regular beginning of his literary career. However many pieces of prose and poetry were also published before it. Actually many of his writings had been in scattered form so in later years they had been published mostly in fragments. His earliest play *Rudrachandra* was published in 1881. In fact in terms of range and output, it is very tough to present over here chronologically because many of his works which were published in India already republished in England and America without same content so let me take liberty to present some of his most famous works.

**Poetry:** Gitanjali (Song Offerings, 1912), The Gardener (1913); The Crescent Moon (1913), Fruit-Gathering (1916); Starry-Birds (1916); The Fugitive (1921); The Golden Boat(1894); One Hundred Poems of Kabir (1914); Lover's Gift and Crossing (1918); The Child (1931).

**Drama:** Chitra(1913); The King of the Dark Chamber (1914); The Post-Office (1914); The Sacrifice and other plays (1917); The Cycle of Spring (1917); Red Oleanders(1922); The Dancer's Prayer (1927); Chandaliika (1938)

**Novel:** The Home and the World (1921); The Wreck (1921); Gora (1910), Crosscurrents (1929).

**Short Story:** The Hungry Stones And Other Stories (1916); Mashi and Other Stories (1918); Broken Ties and Other Stories; The Runaway and Other Stories; The Housewarming and Other Selected Writings.

**Essay:** Sadhana: The Realisation of Life (1913), Nationalism (1917), Personality (1917) and The Religion of Man (1931).

In 1911, Tagore composed *Jan Gan Man Adhinayak* for the Shantiniketan Mahotsava which became later on the national anthem of Independent India. In protest of Bengal Division (1905) Tagore wrote *Amar Sonar Bangla* which became the National Anthem of Independent Bangladesh.

In May 1912, Rabindranath visited England with his prose translations of Gitanjali for medical treatment second time. This time he was introduced literary stalwarts of the time like G. B. Shaw, H. G. Wells, John Galsworthy, Robert Bridges, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and many other renowned people. Here he was being looked after by an artist Sir William Rothenstein who



showed some of poems of Tagore to Yeats. These poems mesmerized Yeats and impacted him very much. Yeats in “Introduction” to *Gitanjali* frankly acknowledged that the prose translation of Tagore had stirred his blood as nothing had ever on him over the years. Yeats says, “I read Rabindranath every day, to read one line of his is to forget all the troubles of the world.” He asserts, “No poet seems to me as famous in Europe as he is among us.” Tagore was equally competent in music and poetry. Edward Thompson had the similar experience. He surprised to realize Tagore’s mastery in a language which was alien in 50s. He even quotes Joseph Conrad to say that Conrad learned English in early age but Tagore mastered English with all its grace and subtleties in his 50s. Yeats admits that one can forget well chosen words of Tagore but cannot forget the idea put forth. Yeats further writes:

I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me.

In November 1912, Tagore visited America and there lectured at many places. These lectures were published under the title *Sadhana*. By these lectures Tagore brought spirituality of the East to the West. Just a year after in November 1913 Tagore was awarded the prestigious Noble Prize for literature for his English translations of *Gitanjali*. Same year Calcutta University conferred honorary doctorate upon him. In 1915 the British government gives the title of Knighthood to him which he renounced in wake of Jallianwallah Massacre in 1919. In years to come many literary icons translated his works in their mother tongues. The most famous was among them the translation of *The Post Office* and *Gitanjali* in French by Noble laureate Andre Guide. Ezra Pound compared Tagore with Dante. Anna Akhmatova a Russian Nobel laureate translated Tagore’s works in Russian and called him ‘great poet’.

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## 2.4

## GITANJALI (SONGS 1, 2 and 103)

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(Text)

(Song 1)

**Thou** hast made me endless, such is thy  
pleasure. This frail vessel thou emptiest again  
and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.  
This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over  
hills and dales, and hast breathed through it  
melodies eternally new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

**(Song 2)**

**When** thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes. All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony – and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord.

**(Song 103)**

**In** one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its

burden of unshed showers let all my mind  
bend down at thy door in one salutation to  
thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse  
strains into a single current and flow to a sea  
of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night  
and day back to their mountain nests let all  
my life take its voyage to its eternal home in  
one salutation to thee.

#### **2.4.1 BACKGROUND**

Rabindranath Tagore always believed in unity and reconciliation. He believed in all-round development. He never appeared narrow-minded in his attitude, outlook, and belief. In order to understand him and his vision properly one should understand first his mysticism, romanticism, humanism, nature, women, nationalism, cosmopolitanism etc. In songs of Gitanjali, we see mysticism, romanticism, humanism, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and nature are interlinked. Henceforth better is to know these terms properly.

*Mysticism* means a belief that special kind of knowledge only can be acquired through extrasensory means rather than through five senses. Such kind of unique knowledge is also not possible through rationality, logic or intellect. It is acquired through intuition and meditation. Mysticism has spiritual or religious smell. Tagore has inherent tendency to see undivided, inseparable life in all lives despite being separate. He searches life-force working behind the seen-things of nature as well as human life.

*Humanism* pervades into Tagore's vision though born in an aristocratic family was the great champion of humanity. He never missed them. He always saw in them the presence of God. To him they deserve equal regard and respect. He detests all kind of rituals and religious ceremonies that promote gap between man and man. He always argued for the rights and empowerment of down-trodden, depressed and dejected people. To Tagore, man is the image of god. There is no question of touchable or untouchable. Humanism is the fountainhead of spiritual enlightenment.

For this reason he always backed all those- men or women who under certain conditions made the victim of oppression and exploitation.

*Romanticism* is closely associated with mysticism and humanism. His romanticism finds expression in his feelings of wonder at the creation of God, nature, childhood etc. Like Keats, Wordsworth, Blake, and Shelley, he gives expression to his intense feelings and emotions.

*Nature* played great role in his thinking. His attitude towards nature is romantic. Actually nature to him bears special meaning. To attain oneness with master soul Tagore prefers to go either through nature or human fair. To him nature is the manifestation of God. God is in nature and the whole nature in God.

Since Tagore always believed in humanism so he devoutly championed for the emancipation of women rising above caste, class, and creed. To him women have been always honourable and worth sincere respect.

Unlike modern theorists on the concept of nation-state, Tagore opines that the western model of nationalism is based upon political experiences whereas Indian nationalism is based upon spiritual experiences. To him the British colonialism was essentially racial in its colonial strategies. Indian nationalism is essentially cosmopolitan as it believes in welfare of other countries also.

Apart from all these elements Tagore's poetry is well marked by his typical use of images and rhythmic sweet sounding mostly monosyllabic words. These elements naturally endow lyrical grace to the composition.

#### **2.4.2 NOTES**

|               |                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Endless:      | immortal                           |
| Frail vessel: | a weak container like earthly body |
| Fillest:      | fills                              |
| Reed:         | a pliable plant                    |
| Dales:        | valleys                            |

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Utterance ineffable: | indescribable expression                             |
| Commandest:          | orders or asks                                       |
| Break with:          | puffed up with                                       |
| Harsh and dissonant: | rough and inharmonious elements                      |
| Sweet harmony:       | melodious song                                       |
| The sea:             | the world is here likened to some unfathomable ocean |
| Far-spreading:       | ever-widening  |
| Salutation:          | greeting, respect, homage                            |
| Touch:               | extend   |
| Unshed:              | un-fallen, pure, chaste, innocent                    |
| Diverse Strains:     | different musical notes                              |
| Eternal home:        | divine abode   |
| Voyage:              | journey of human soul                                |
| Cranes:              | large long-necked bird of marshes                    |

### 2.4.3 DETAILED ANALYSIS

In the *Song I* the poet with all humility acknowledges indebtedness to God for making human soul immortal. It was His desire and grace to make it so. The poet compares earthly body to a poor and weak container which is destroyed even by slightest blow. The soul vacates earthly body again and again and is obliged to adopt a body which is fresh and new. This process goes on indefinitely. It is all due to the magical grace of God. In this way in the first three lines the poet who has the firm faith in the divine-scheme sang of immortality of soul. In next three lines the poet compares himself to a little flute made of reed a very pliable plant usually growing nearby water ponds. The poet says that he is no more than a poor weak flute. Whatever song in the honour of Him he composes it is not he rather it is God who sings. Actually the singer is God not poet. So the poet believes. Wherever he went to either hills or valleys sweet songs developed

spontaneously into his mind with new freshness and sweetness due to the grace of God upon him. According to his belief the actual singer is not he rather He. The poet is fortunate enough to have God as player of flute who readily sings an evergreen melodious song through him. The poet further expresses his humbleness towards God that the moment he realizes the touch of divinity, his heart gets swollen up to such an extent that it might break. He feels so due to the realization of ecstatic pleasure. In such a mood of ecstasy, the poet finds himself utterly incapable to turn those feelings into words. Actually divine pleasures cannot be expressed through verbal media which are totally human inventions. In the last three lines the poet again expresses his humbleness towards God. The poet here compares hands of God to a full-grown man and the hands of the poet to the hands of a small baby. The grace and charity of God is bounteous and inexhaustible. He keeps on showering gifts upon him but he is unable to hold them all by his small hands. His treasure-house is never going to be finished. The suggestive implication of the first song is that God is ever merciful upon human beings and shows his generosity in the form of innumerable gifts but unfortunately those who receive and enjoy all these gifts could not realize that His gifts are only for just and judicious use. The other implication is that human beings should ever be grateful to Him present in different shapes and sizes at different places and times. Thus human beings are required wisdom to enjoy divine opulent riches.

In *Song 2* the poet talks of a very special experience. He says when he feels inspired to sing in the honour of God, his heart begins pounding very fast as if it were going to break up. He finds his heart bloated with the sense of pride and level elevated to have such a divine order or desire. The poet gets flummoxed and stares at Him fixed and more than that tears arise in his eyes spontaneously. It is his delight. In such a moment, all negative and harmful energies subside immediately and turn into positive and health-giving energies. Being blessed with divine energies, wings of my creativity in His honour naturally and delightfully begin developing and aspiring to transcend the world of illusion or *maya*. It is actually *Bhakti* through which one can enter into the world of God. Rabindranath subscribes to the *Bhakti Marg*. According to him *Gyan Marg* is not easy to achieve divine goal. The *Bhakti Marg* believes in the total surrender or submission of self. Like Surdas a renowned Hindi poet sees God as his friend and believes that his friend also takes interest in his songs and enjoys them fully. The poet further affirms that only it is *Bhakti Marg* that can help human being reach safely in the world of God and have fortunate look upon him. The poet again with all humility says that his skill at composing divine prayers

could only help him touch the very end of His feet if they could otherwise it was never possible and even not to be aspired. To have the joy of doing prayers the poet frankly admits that he forgets naturally the greatness of God and addresses Him friend who is his master and sap-duct of his life. The second song reflects upon his firm faith in God and His scheme.

In the *Song 103* (the last song of *Gitanjali*) the poet wishes ardently to extend all his devotion at His feet as a greeting. Actually he wants to submit all his skill, caliber and intellect to God. In order to make more clearly the condition of a religiously devoted and inclined mind, the poet evokes a picture of cloud loaded with vapours and showers especially in the month of July in India. In the month of July clouds appear very close to the earth because of the burden of pure or unsoiled rain-drops. They hover here and there as if they want to kiss the earth. Likewise the poet wants to surrender his self completely through devotion so that he can have fortunate look upon Him. Actually the poet wants all his capacity directed in one direction to make one powerful song (made up of each good quality of different songs) to sail into heaven. Thus the poet longs to put all his songs together to make one powerful stream to flow through the vast divine ocean of divine silence. Thus he desires to end into eternity. In this form the poet wants to offer his greetings to God. The poet likens his journey to God to a group of migrant cranes who anxiously fly day and night to return to their mountain-nests. Similarly the poet ardently wishes to reunite with the Divine Soul. The reunion with God will be the last tribute to God. This song shows the poet's absolute surrender along with his feelings and talents before God. This is the most appropriate tribute to God at the conclusion of *Gitanjali*.

#### **2.4.4 POETIC DEVICES**

Rabindranath Tagore had mastery in the selection of words, images, and figures. He always preferred simplicity to artificiality. He uses figures like simile and metaphor frequently. He uses words which are very much common and easy to get. He selects images from the world of common people. In the first song the poet uses simple words but their arrangement is superb. These words get sweet and musical. Tagore like Wordsworth expresses his mystic ideas about human body, soul, and God. To convey his ideas eloquently the poet uses imagery. In it the poet compares human body to a 'frail vessel' and a 'little flute of reed'. In the last three lines, the poet compares human hands to the hands of a baby which is too small to receive the gifts being offered by the big hands of God, a constant source of offers. Similarly in the second song the poet uses beautiful image of bird. Here human soul is likened to the wings of a bird outspread

flying across the sea of eternity to unite with divine. This image is in it suggestive. In the last song the poet compares his absolute submission to deep black clouds of rainy season laden with vapours and rain drops. Another image is about his return to permanent house of God. He compares his final return to migrant birds like cranes who feel home-sickness due to long stay away from their homes on hills that fly day and night to reach their nest as earliest possible. Same idea is also conveyed through the image of a powerful, swift current of water. It is kinesthetic image. The poet wants to return to the permanent home swiftly as a swift, powerful current of water.

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## **2.5 SUMMING UP**

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At the conclusion of this Unit, one can say that Tagore's ideas and thoughts are most pertinent and appropriate. In the present scenario he is the need of our planet. He is excellent in his art and artistry as well. Tagore's poetry is vast, variegated, and voluminous that defies easy categorization. Whatever is the best in Indian tradition and culture is summed up in Tagore's poetry. His simplicity is the simplicity of an enlightened soul. The careful selection of words and their dignified arrangement endow lyrical charm to Tagore's poems naturally. Simplicity, spontaneity, and brevity make his poems mantra. Everything in him is quiet and poised. Nowhere is imbalance whether it is content or form.

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## **2.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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Q. 1 Discuss mystical elements in Rabindranath Tagore's poetry.

Ans. Read the whole unit and find out.

Q. 2 Discuss Tagore as a world poet.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 2.3.

Q. 3 Comment on Tagore's use of diction and imagery.

Ans. Read section no. 2.4.4.

Q. 4 In Tagore mysticism, romanticism, and humanism are interlinked. Do you agree?

Ans. Read section no. 2.4.1.



Q. 5 Critically produce an appreciation of *Song 103*

Ans. Read carefully section no. 2.4.3.

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## 2.7 FURTHER READINGS

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Chaudhuri, Sukanta, ed. *Selected Poems : Rabindranath Tagore*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

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Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gitanjali*. Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd. 2001.

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**UNIT 3 NISSIM EZEKIEL: NIGHT OF THE SCORPION AND BACKGROUND  
CASUALLY**

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**Structure**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Nissim Ezekiel, His Life and Age
- 3.3 Nissim Ezekiel's Literary Output and Achievements
- 3.4 **Night of the Scorpion** (Text)
  - 3.4.1 Background to the Poem
  - 3.4.2 Notes
  - 3.4.3 A Detailed Analysis of the Poem
  - 3.4.4 Poetic Devices
- 3.5 **Background, Casually** (Text)
  - 3.5.1 Background to the Poem
  - 3.5.2 Notes
  - 3.5.3 A Detailed Analysis of the Poem
- 3.6 On His Poetic Craftsmanship
- 3.7 Summing Up
- 3.8 Self-Assessment Questions and Answers
- 3.9 Further Readings

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**3.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this and forthcoming *Units* we shall be looking at Post-Independence Indian English poetry. Post-Independence poetry served multi-purposes for the benefit of mankind. Ezekiel never romanticizes aspects of life. He depicted life as he had savored it. Nissim Ezekiel is often hailed as the trend-setter of Post-Independence poetry. In this *Unit*, we propose to examine the following key points:

- ✓ The time-line of the poet.

- ✓ His literary achievements.
- ✓ An in-depth analysis of the poem “Night of the Scorpion” and “Background, Casually”.
- ✓ Finally poetic devices applied into the texture of the poem.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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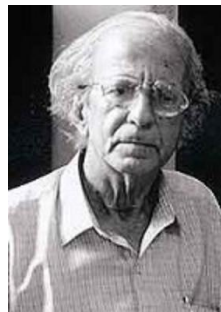
Ezekiel the founding figure of Indian English Writing was shot into fame since his early days of poetic journey. In India and abroad he is better known as a craftsman. In his verse saga he has been tour de force. In fact he continuously evolved and modified his poetic vision and creation.

We would like you to read the poem at least two or three times and try to interpret lines of the poem with the help of notes given in section 3.4.2 and 3.5.2 and literary devices explained in the section 3.4.4, and 3.6. After having read and understood the poem properly, write down answers to the questions reading carefully the relevant section as hinted in the section 3.8.

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### 3.2 NISSIM EZEKIEL, HIS LIFE AND AGE

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(Nissim Ezekiel 1924-2004) (Courtesy- Wikipedia)

Nissim Ezekiel was born on 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1924 in an orthodox Bene-Israel Jewish family near the Byculla Bridge, Bombay. His father Moses Ezekiel Talkar was a lecturer of Biology at Wilson College and his mother Diana was working in a school she had founded herself. Nissim Ezekiel was second baby among five brothers and sisters. In the making of Nissim Ezekiel as a poet, his parents played very crucial role. His mother passed away in 1944 and father in 1969.

Nissim Ezekiel got his early schooling from the Convent of Jesus and Mary. It was in those days run by a Christian Missionary. Thereafter he took admission in Antonio D’Souza High School, Bombay and there he remained until 1941. In 1945 he graduated from Presbyterian Wilson College in English literature in first division. Ezekiel took admission in the University of

Bombay for post graduation in English and he topped the examination in 1947. For this achievement he won the prestigious R. K. Lagu award.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1952, Nissim Ezekiel married Daisy Jacob at the Magen David Synagogue. The health of the poet began deteriorating in 1998. It was the serious concern of his admirers and followers. Sometime in August 1998, he was attending a meeting, he collapsed. He was admitted in the Shushruta Nursing Home at Dadar. He was diagnosed and found as the sufferer of Alzheimer's disease. In October 1998, he was again hospitalized in A. J. Dias Nursing Home at Turner Road Bandra, Mumbai where he breathed his last after long battle on 9<sup>th</sup> of January, 2004 and is survived by a son and two daughters.

Since Ezekiel's parents were well educated and dedicated fully to art, culture, and education. His early education in English prevented him from learning local language Marathi. They exerted greater impact on his sensibility. He was also influenced by the philosophy of M. N. Roy so he joined the radical Democratic Party. Actually he was fully involved in social, cultural, and economic activities except political matters. He was in public matters very down to earth.

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### **3.3 NISSIM EZEKIEL'S LITERARY OUTPUT AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

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Nissim Ezekiel was a dynamic personality. He was more varied and variegated than his parents. He began writing poems when he was doing graduation from the Wilson College. His first piece of poetry was brought out by *Social Welfare* in 1942. Later on it was reprinted in the college magazine *The Wilsonian*. His earliest surviving poem is "Exhortation" dated 13<sup>th</sup> December 1943 included in the edited work of R. Raj Rao titled *Nissim Ezekiel: The Authorized Biography* (2000). After post graduation he for a year took the job of teaching at Khalsa College Bombay then he sailed for London under the caring of his elderly friend Ebrahim Alkazi, a famous theatre man of London city. Philosophy and Literature have been his hobby-horse. Ezekiel studied there Plato, Aristotle, and some existentialists under the supervision of well-famed philosopher C.E.M. Joad at Birbeck College, affiliated to London University during the year 1950 to 1951. Unfortunately, he could not complete the course. He may truly be called the barometer of modern India's atmosphere. He criticized mediocrity and narcissistic attitudes in poetry. He admires controlled flaw and reasonableness in poetry. The major themes of Ezekiel's poetry are: love, sex and man- woman relationship, loneliness, lust, political pomposity, humour, foibles, and the kindred clamor of urban dissonance.

Under the influence of existentialist philosophy, Ezekiel's first collection of verse published in 1952 titled *A Time to Change* by the Fortune Press London. Thereafter, Ezekiel came back to India and joined The Illustrated Weekly of India as an assistant editor. From 1952 to 1962 he served for All India Radio as a broadcaster on art and literature. His second collection of poems titled *Sixty Poems* was published by the Strand Bookshop, Bombay in 1953. His third book of verse simply titled *The Third* was published by the same publisher in 1958. His next major contribution titled *The Unfinished Man* was published by Writers Workshop in 1960. In 1961, he joined the English department of Mithibai College of Arts, Vile Parle Bombay as head and served for eleven years. His next volume of verse *The Exact Name* was brought out by the Writers Workshop in 1965. In 1956, Ezekiel visited America first time and second time went there in 1967 and stayed there with Ramanujan of Indian origin at Chicago University. In 1969, the Writers Workshop brought out a collection of *Three Plays* (Nalini, Marriage Poem, and The Sleepwalkers). In 1972 he took the Readership for the American Studies at the University of Bombay and promoted to Professorship in 1978. He took retirement from the job in 1985. In 1976, his famous collection of verse *Hymns in Darkness* was published by oxford University Press. Ezekiel's last volume of verse *Latter-Day Psalms* was published by Oxford University Press in 1982. It earned him the prestigious *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1983. In 1988, *Padma Shri Award* conferred on him for his outstanding contribution to English Literature. His last published work is a play *Don't Call it Suicide* published in 1994. His last article "Poetry in the Time of Tempests" was published in *The Sunday Times* on 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1997.

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3.4

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**NIGHT OF THE SCORPIAN**

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(Text)

I remember the night my mother  
was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours  
of steady rain had driven him  
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.  
Parting with his poison- flash  
of diabolic tail in the dark room-  
he risked the rain again.  
The peasants came like swarms of flies

and buzzed the Name of God a hundred times  
to paralyse the Evil One.

With candles and with lanterns  
throwing giant scorpion shadows  
on the sun-baked walls  
they searched for him: he was not found.

They clicked their tongues.

With every movement that the scorpion made  
his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.

May he sit still, they said.

May the sins of your previous birth  
be burned away tonight, they said.

May the sum of evil  
balanced in this unreal world  
against the sum of good  
become diminished by your pain.

May the poison purify your flesh  
of desire, and your spirit of ambition,  
they said, and they sat around  
on the floor with my mother in the centre,  
the peace of understanding on each face.

More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,  
more insects, and the endless rain.

My mother twisted through and through  
groaning on a mat.

My father, sceptic, rationalist,  
trying every curse and blessing,  
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.

He even poured a little paraffin  
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.  
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.  
I watched the holy man perform his rites  
to tame the poison with incantation.  
After twenty hours  
it lost its sting.

My mother only said:  
Thanks God the scorpion picked on me  
and spared my children.

(Adopted from the *Collected Poems* pp 130-31)

### 3.4.1 BACKGROUND TO THE POEM

“Night of the Scorpion” is a typical Indian poem. It is widely anthologized written sometime in mid-January 1964 when the poet was staying at the University of Leeds, England as a guest speaker. It was published in the volume *The Exact Name* in 1965. It is a narrative poem. It is set against the Indian rural background. It evokes the sense of ‘nativism’ that is, a tendency to celebrate indigenous themes and thoughts by indigenous inhabitants. The poem celebrates ordinary reality of Indian life. The poet narrates a story of scorpion’s biting of his mother’s toe on a dark and rainy night. It graphically presents mother’s groaning, wreathing, peasants’ buzzing of *mantras* etc. The poem is very Indian in its context and content. Nissim Ezekiel composed this poem almost in the fashion of Robert Frost and Robert Browning what is termed ‘situational poem’.

### 3.4.2 NOTES

|              |                                       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| Bene-Israel: | literally means children of Israel    |
| Steady:      | continuous, constant                  |
| Crawl:       | move upon as creatures and insects do |

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Part with:             | discharge, dispense with, give up                         |
| Diabolic:              | evil or devilish  |
| Swarms of flies:       | a moving crowd of people (here flies signifies relatives) |
| Buzzed:                | make a sound with vibration                               |
| Paralyze:              | make powerless  |
| Sun-baked:             | dried out by heat of sunlight                             |
| Clicked their tongues: | talked about something repeatedly                         |
| Diminished:            | impaired or reduced                                       |
| Groaning:              | feeling severe pain                                       |
| Sceptic:               | one who habitually casts doubt about an accepted belief   |
| Rationalist:           | one who thinks that knowledge is acquired through reason  |
| Paraffin:              | it is obtained from crude petroleum used for candles      |
| Rites:                 | a performance prescribed by religion                      |
| Incantation:           | recitation of mantras                                     |
| Sting:                 | bite  |
| Spared:                | left or refrain from harming                              |

### 3.4.3 A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The poem “Night of the Scorpion” reveals a fact that a scorpion has bitten the toe of the poet’s mother on a dark and rainy night. Ten hours incessant downpour led the scorpion to come out of his hiding ‘sack of rice’ to discharge poison. After discharging, it ‘risked the rain again’. Then, peasants in multitude came and chanted the name of God hundred times to paralyze the effect of the poison. They think scorpion as an evil entity. They even searched for the scorpion to kill it but they could not succeed. They believe that the poison will run into the victim’s blood in sync with the scorpion’s movement. Out of the frustration, ‘they clicked their tongues’.

One among them said that the scorpion might have kept hidden and protected somewhere. Some among them pointed out that the sin of previous birth would get dissolved tonight and thus the suffering of the victim will help her to counter misfortunes which might happen in the next birth.



Some of them also said that in this way the sum of good and evil deeds would be equipoise. They also said that the suffering may purify the victim's flesh of desire and ambition and may ward off the forthcoming misfortunes. In this way the protagonist tells about the views and point of views of near and dear one who turned up with good intention. These people were sat around the mother in the centre on the floor. They all had the belief that there would not happen anything bad. The whole idea of suffering is to them purification. They believed that suffering purges soul and body both.

The rain is still unabated. Many more people, neighbours continue to come with their lanterns and candles attracting more insects. But mother is writhing and groaning with agony in the centre. The rational and sceptic father tries 'powder, mixture, herb and hybrid'. He even burns her toe with paraffin. The son (poet) watches all this proving worthless. The protagonist further tells that there happened a ritual performed by a holy man to lessen the intensity of the poison. But all this was sheer failure. It is common knowledge that scorpion poison lasts 'after twenty hours' on its own whether treated or not. After twenty hours the mother got well.

The last three lines of the poem are opposite to the rest. The peasants were busy in moaning and trying every solution to provide comfort but her main concern was not for herself rather it was for her baby. The last three lines are true tribute to the self-sacrificing Indian mother. Actually the poem is a good tale of suffering and expiation.

It is a good example of narrative poem. The protagonist speaks in the first person so he might be the poet himself or an imaginary person. The protagonist graphically narrated about an event that had taken place on a night. In this poem the poet juxtaposes superstitions, irrationalities, and blind faiths represented by simple peasants with rationalism and skepticism represented by the protagonist's father. Irony of situation is that both approaches were there equally worthless and futile. But here one thing which is noticeable is the harmonious interrelationship of both groups- rationalists and non-rationalists. Both are equally concerned about the health of mother. This on average in every society of India happens. The poet in the poem artfully juxtaposes light and darkness. Darkness and night stand for evil forces and light for life. In the poem scorpion is also suggestive of evil power.

### 3.4.4 POETIC DEVICES

“Night of the Scorpion” is a well-crafted narrative poem. It is composed in first-person. The poem consists of two free-verse paragraphs. The first contains 45 lines and the last three lines compose the second verse-paragraph. The poet in the poem observes complete detachment and objectivity. The poet uses simple and colloquial language. The poet in the body of the poem uses four times the expression “they said” to strike choric refrain. In the objective observation of that very night scorpion-biting event took place evokes a picture of it. In the poem the poet did an experiment with the form. To get this end, the poet frequently leaves sentences incomplete or loose. Deliberately he leaves capital letter at the start of some lines. The poem is rich in imagery and figures. The phrases like “swarm of flies” or “sun-baked walls” are memorable.

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### 3.5 BACKGROUND, CASUALLY

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(Text)

I

A poet-rascal-clown was born,  
The frightened child who would not eat  
Or sleep, a boy of meager bone.  
He never learnt to fly a kite,  
His borrowed top refused to spin.

I went to Roman Catholic school,  
A mugging Jew among the wolves.  
They told me I had killed the Christ,  
That year I won the scripture prize.  
A Muslim sportsman boxed my ears.

I grew in terror of the strong  
But undernourished Hindu lads.

Their prepositions always wrong,  
Repelled me by passivity.  
One noisy day I used a knife.

At home on Friday nights the prayers  
Were said. My morals had declined.  
I heard of Yoga and of Zen.  
Could I, perhaps, be rabbi-saint?  
The more I searched, the less I found.

Twenty-two: time to go abroad.  
First, the decision, then a friend  
To pay the fare. Philosophy,  
Poverty and Poetry, three  
Companions shared my basement room.

## II

The London seasons passed me by.  
I lay in bed two years alone.  
And then a Woman came to tell  
My willing ears I was the Son  
Of Man. I knew that I had failed

In everything, a bitter thought.  
So, in an English cargo-ship  
Taking French guns and mortar shells  
To Indo-China, scrubbed the decks,  
And learned to laugh again at home.

How to feel it home, was the point.  
Some reading had been done, but what  
Had I observed, except my own  
Exasperation? All Hindus are  
Like that, my father used to say,

When someone talked too loudly, or  
Knocked at the door like the Devil.  
They hawked and spat. They sprawled around.  
I prepared for the worst. Married,  
Changed jobs, and saw myself a fool.

The song of my experience sung,  
I knew that all was yet to sing.  
My ancestors, among the castes,  
Were aliens crushing seed for bread  
(The hooded bullock made his rounds).

### III

One among them fought and taught,  
A Major bearing British arms.  
He told my father sad stories  
Of the Boer War. I dreamed that  
Fierce men had bound my feet and hands.

The later dreams were all of words.  
I did not know that words betray  
But let the poems come, and lost  
That grip on things the worldly prize.

I would not suffer that again.

I look about me now, and try  
To formulate a plainer view:  
The wise survive and serve- to play  
The fool, to cash in on  
The inner and the outer storms.

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 commitments 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.

(Adopted from the *Collected Poems* pp 179-81)

### **3.5.1 BACKGROUND TO THE POEM**

“Background, Casually” was published in the anthology *Hymns in Darkness* by Oxford University Press in 1976. It is autobiographical piece of poem. It is one of his poems composed for personal therapeutic purposes. It is a poem about his struggle for identity in a country where his community is considered to be alien. In this poem Ezekiel frankly acknowledges his roots lay deep in India. He expresses his commitment and love for India. He regards himself essentially an Indian and wishes to be counted among Indian English poets. He has strong sense of belonging to India. Often he talks about urban setting. Bombay is in his making. He is an urban poet.

### 3.5.2 NOTES

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Rascal       | : deceitful person.  |
| Meagre       | : lean, thin.  |
| Mugging      | : attack with intent to rob.   |
| Zen          | : School of Mahayana Buddhism. Its followers believe that enlightenment can come through meditation and intuition.                       |
| Rabbi-saint  | : Jewish spiritual leader or scholar.  |
| Exasperation | : feeling of annoyance or irritation.  |
| Hawked       | : hunted.  |
| Spat         | : spoke with anger.  |
| Sprawled     | : to sit with limbs spread out.  |
| Boer War     | : either of two wars, first against Zulus (1800-81) and second when Orange Free State and Transvaal declared war on British (1899-1902). |
| Sear         | : burn or excite.  |
| Jew          | : Israelite, Hebrew.   |

### 3.5.3 A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

The poet as a third person calls himself scoundrel or ridiculous person. Idea behind calling himself so is to tell that he is born low because his community is discriminated and deemed to be low in prestige. For discriminatory attitudes towards Jewish people, the poet says that he could not eat or sleep properly. Consequently he could not gain due health. He even could not learn how to fly a kite or spin a top. It was all due to fearful atmosphere towards Jews. When the poet grew up, he took admission in Roman Catholic school. At the school he was something to be criticized, ridiculed, and assaulted by students of other communities as young ones of goat or sheep among wolves. He found Hindu, Muslim, and fellows equally unkind to him. They all looked down upon him. This shows religious communal disharmony in India. Hindu students always did mistakes in the use preposition. They were abusive to him. They frighten him. A Muslim sportsman once hit his ears with the fist. The poet says that his non-mingling attitude

these fellows hated. Once on a busy day he had to use a knife to defend himself. On Friday nights there were performed prayers at home, he was told about his wickedness. He heard about Hindu saints and Jewish priests but could not create impression in him. So he was not fit for being a man of religious learning. When the poet got twenty two, he was sent to London with the help of a friend who paid the fare. In London he lived like a destitute. He was obliged to live in a basement room. He studied philosophy, poverty, and poetry. These were three companions of the poet in London.

In second section the poet talks about his adult experiences in London. Two years he passed there being all in alone. One day a gentle lady came and motivated the poet that he should not feel disheartened. The poet was very well aware of his failures in life. Since he was undergoing extreme poverty, he worked menial works on an English cargo ship which was used to carry French guns and mortar shells to Indo-China. He scrubbed the floor of the ship and learned again to laugh. In order to feel comfortable on return to India, he studied philosophy a little but it was of no help in real life. His study of philosophy simply aggravated his state of mind. He was feeling simply confusion how to make adjustment with the current situation. He accuses Hindus for all his plights. In spite of all difficulties, he remained attached to India. He married which was the worst mistake of his life. He changed many jobs and felt himself fool. The poet says that he told of his life experience yet there were much to be narrated. He further says that his relatives were too undergoing same experiences of life.

In third section, the poet affirms his identification with India. He recalls a Major in British army who told his father terrible stories of Boer War in Africa. His narration frightened the young Ezekiel. Even he imagined himself as he was chained by feet and hands by one of the Boer War fighters. Such were dreams of his childhood days. As he grew up, he only looked for words which would not cheat him. It was his belief. He kept on composing poems till he lost hold on worldly reality and lost worldly prizes as well. Actually, he did not want to feel and experience the taste of failure. So he made up his mind to look about his profession that is poetry writing being unmindful about what people's commentary and criticism. The poet realizes that the wise men reap maximum benefit out of adverse conditions and reply to those people who were critical about them. Such wise men survive. So the poet determined that he would continue composing poems upon his own feelings of inner and outer tensions and frustrations, failures and difficulties. Thus Ezekiel is committed to the profession of writing poems. The Indian

environment appeals to poet immediately. The poet says that he has identified himself with India and its surroundings though he is noticed by people as someone from foreign origin. Such people repeatedly highlight about my status as an outsider. Such attitudes of people pain him. In last stanza the poet affirms boldly that he has made commitment to stay where he is living. There is no thought about escaping from this country as other think it a backward and remote place. He finally declares that his backward place is where he is. In this way the poet identifies himself with the country, its people, and environment.

The poem “Background, Casually” is consisted of three sections each consisting of five stanzas of five lines each. It reflects on Ezekiel’s commitment to India. He unlike V. S. Naipaul seeks his identity in the country. It is autobiographical poem. This idea offers him solace and consolation. He feels a sort of relief from tension and frustration.

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### **3.6 ON HIS POETIC CRAFTSMANSHIP**

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Due balance in art and artistry was Ezekiel’s sole criterion. To attain it he drew on several creative writers to sharpen his poetic sensibility. In a letter to Anisur Rahman, he wrote:

In the early stages, there were Eliot, Yeats and Pound, like modern American poetry from Whitman to William Carlos Williams, the poetry of the 30’s in England, including specially Auden, Spender, Mac Neice and Day Lewis. The later poetry is not under particular influence, because I had begun to resist them. All the poems in *The Unfinished Man* are obviously in the spirit of the movement poets in England but from *The Exact Name* onwards, I am on my own again. (Rahman 79)

W.B. Yeats perhaps is the greatest influence on Ezekiel’s poetic credo. Ezekiel drew heavily images and symbols from Yeats. Like Yeats Ezekiel believes that a poet should labour like a woman to look personable.

Ezekiel set only those rules which were proper to his creative faculty. He was in fact a trend-setter. He used to pass his comments after cool and sustained deliberation in lucid, comprehensive, and terse manner. In this context he is akin to John Keats. The latter believes that anything should not be written until it has been ‘felt along the heart’ and proved upon his impulses. According to Ezekiel, a poet should be candid, honest and frank in his stand. It is self-



introspective criticism. Ezekiel finds Aurobindo's masterpiece Savitri 'embarrassingly bad: dated in language, emotionally inflated to the point of grotesqueness and confused of idea.... This technique in fact hides the very real sense. He takes obscurity to be avoided assiduously. The poet should aim at simple, unaffected poetic emotions.

To Ezekiel poetry is not 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. He believes in the revision of poetic works frequently. He firstly writes at some length and then revises it drastically till it can be put to humanity's disposal. The poet draws inspiration from tradition. Poetry is a social discourse. It takes its substance from tradition which is moulded by the poet's individuality. However mere inspiration is not enough for the creation of poetry. It requires continuous effort of mind to avail suitable and effective phrase or words for communication. Nissim Ezekiel never condenses meanings at the cost of lucidity. Simplicity in language and choice of words are the chief traits of his poetry. He never entertained outdated, inflated or bombastic artistry. He always aspired for brevity at the cost of superficiality.

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### **3.7 SUMMING UP**

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The place of Nissim Ezekiel in Indo-Anglian Poetry is firm and secure. He confidently modernized Indian poetry by developing themes and techniques in accordance with the spirit of the age. He skillfully handled form and content. His poems often begin with delight and end in wisdom. Bijay Kumar Das writes about his contribution to Indian English Poetry, "The greatest contribution of Ezekiel as a poet lies in giving a kind of confidence, courage and conviction to his fellow Indian English poets to write poetry in their own way free of Anglo-American influence." (Das 10) Ezekiel as a barrister taught how to handle form and content successfully. In the poem "Night of the Scorpion" the poet did experiment with the form but not at the cost of message. It begins delightfully but ends with an idea or message which typical to Indian sensibility. He successfully identified with India, Indian culture, values, and life. . He makes ample use of Indian images, symbols and folklores. His poems actively respond the warmth of Indian ethos, culture and people. This is what constitutes his Indian sensibility. Nissim Ezekiel does not make any substantial attempt in his poetry to acclimatize indigenous tradition to English language. Instead, Indian typical beliefs and contemporary reality of society attracted him most. Out of these raw-materials, he creates new poetry in Indian English idiom.

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### 3.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Q. 1 Critically evaluate the contribution of Ezekiel as a poet.

Ans. Go through sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.6, and 3.7.

Q. 2 Throw light upon Indianness of Ezekiel with reference to the poem “Night of the Scorpion”.

Ans. Read section no. 3.4.3.

Q. 3 Reproduce your impressions having read the poem “Night of the Scorpion”.

Ans. Read the text and the section 3.4.3.

Q. 4 Discuss about the setting of the poem “Night of the Scorpion”.

Ans. Read carefully the section 3.4.3.

Q. 5 Trace the personal account in the poem “Background, Casually”.

Ans. Read section no. 3.5.3.

Q. 6 Discuss how Ezekiel expresses his commitment to India and its environment.

Ans. Read section no. 3.5.3.

Q. 7 “Background, Casually” is one of the therapeutic poems. Justify.

Ans. Go through seriously the section no. 3.5.3.

Q. 8 Focus on the craftsmanship of Nissim Ezekiel.

Ans. Read carefully section 3.6.

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### 3.9 FURTHER READINGS

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## UNIT 4 KAMALA DAS: *MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE*

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### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Kamala Das, Her Life and Age
- 4.3 Kamala Das's Literary Output and Achievements
- 4.4 **My Grandmother's House** (Text)
  - 4.4.1 Background to the Poem
  - 4.4.2 Notes
  - 4.4.3 Detailed Analysis
  - 4.4.4 Poetic Devices
- 4.5 Summing Up
- 4.6 Self-Assessment Questions and Answers
- 4.7 Further Readings

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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Kamala Das as a creative writer had different taste, thinking, and aspiration. Unlike Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, she preferred her own life experiences to public experiences for creativity. She customarily did bold and frank exposure of ultra-personal subject materials in her works. In fact she became the spokesperson of all those women folk who had similar kind of experience. She was one of the most prominent feminist voices in the post-colonial era. Her open and honest treatment of female sexuality free from any sense of guilt, infused her writing with power but also marked her as an iconoclast in her generation. In fact she set the trend of writing confessional cum autobiographical poetry. In 60s of twentieth century this kind of writing was quite new. In this *Unit*, we shall be studying on Kamala Das with special focus on the following core-issues:

- ✓ Timeline of Kamala Das;
- ✓ Socio-cultural and economic circumstances;
- ✓ Achievements of the poetess;

- ✓ To appreciate her feminine sensibility and diverse moods;
- ✓ Poetic devices and techniques applied in the poem “My Grandmother’s House”

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## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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Kamala Das was enfant terrible of 60’s of twentieth century. She set the fashion of writing about the personal anguish and agony in patriarchal set-ups. In her poetry usually we see themes of sex, love, despair, frustration, and disillusionment. In the treatment of such mostly un-attempted themes before her, she emerges as the poet of protest. Her bold assertions about sexual life without feeling an iota of guilt brought in a new phase of writing in Indian Writing in English. She was an iconoclast. By temperament she was revolutionary.

We would like you to read the poem at least two or three times and try to interpret lines of the poem with the help of notes given in section 5.4.2 and literary devices explained in the section 5.4.3. After having read and understood the poem properly, you are advised to write down answers to the questions reading carefully the relevant sections as hinted in the section 5.6.

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## 4.2 KAMALA DAS, HER LIFE AND AGE

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(Kamala Das 1934-2009)

(Courtesy- Wikipedia)

Kamala Das was born in Punnayurkulam (the coastal region of Southern Malabar), district Thrissur, in the state of Kerala on March 31, 1934. Her mother Balamani Amma was a renowned poetess of Malayalam language. Her father V. M. Nayar was an ex-managing editor of widely-circulated daily *Mathrubhumi*. Her parents were well-cultivated and educated but they were conservative and orthodox. Her pen-name is Madhavikutty. She got education mainly at her

home and was unfortunately denied regular university/college education. At the age just fifteen she got married with Madhava Das, an employee of Reserve Bank of India in 1949 when he was 30 years old. Her marriage proved utterly failure. Failure in marriage engendered in her feelings of agony, pain, frustration, and disillusionment. She failed to find emotional fulfillment in her marriage. It was the desire that she ever was on look out. She bore three sons with Madhava- M. D. Nalapat, Chinnen Das, and Jayasurya Das.

In 1984 Kamala Das launched a national party *Lok Sewa Party* and contested in the election for the Member of Parliament. The aim of entering into politics was to promote secularism, and to support poor orphaned folks. However her entry into politics was an unsuccessful attempt. She was votary of vegetarianism. She even participated in *Bodhiyatra Movement* for environment protection.

Kamala Das took a very surprising decision of converting into Islam. In 1999 after her husband's death, Kamala Das embraced Islam on being asked by her lover Sadiq Ali, an Islamic scholar and an MP of Muslim League and assumed surname Suraiyya. Thus she became Kamala Suraiyya. About her affair with him she writes:

Life has changed for me since Nov. 14 when a young man named Sadiq Ali walked in to meet me. He is 38 and has a beautiful smile. Afterwards he began to woo me on the phone from Abu Dhabi and Dubai, reciting Urdu couplets and telling me of what he would do to me after our marriage. I took my nurse Mini and went to his place in my car. I stayed with him for three days. There was a sunlit river, some trees, and a lot of laughter. He asked me to become a Muslim which I did on my return home.

Later on she realizes that it is not good decision to forsake one's religion and assume other's. Kamala Das died on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2009 at the age of 75 at Jahangir Hospital Pune where she was admitted for the cure of diabetes and pneumonia. Her dead body was brought to her home state Kerala and with full state honour was buried at Palayam Juma Masjid, Thiruvananthapuram.

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### **4.3 KAMALA DAS'S LITERARY OUTPUT AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

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Since her childhood days, Kamala Das had seen her parents and grandparents writing stories and poems, she had in fact inherited creative impulse from them naturally. She was adept in Malayalam as well as English. Soon after her marriage, she began writing to earn something at

the advice of her husband. In beginning of her career, she earned recognition as columnist. She once pointed out that poetry in India was not something to be sold easily. Her columns cover especially women issues. Her bold and eloquent columns immediately earned her huge success. She used to write short stories in Malayalam under the pen name Madhavikutty. She published her first collection of poems in English titled *The Sirens* in 1964. It earned her *Asian Poetry Prize* in 1998. Her next well known collection *Summer in Calcutta* published in 1965 bagged *Kent Award* for English Writing from Asian countries in 1999. She got Asian World Prize in 2000 and the *Sahitya Akademy Award* was conferred upon her in 2003 for her *Collected Poems* (1985). She also got the Kerala Sahitya Akademy award in 2005 for her collection of short stories in Malayalam *Thanuppu* (meaning cold).

*Summer in Calcutta* published in 1965 consists of just fifty poems. The best pieces which appear in various university syllabi are *The Dance of the Eunuchs*, *The Freaks*, *Summer in Calcutta*, *Forest Fire*, *An Introduction*, and *Death Brings No Loss*. Most of the poems of this collection deal with love, lust, marital frustration, extra-marital relationship, and sterility towards women in patriarchal societies.

*The Descendants* published in 1967 has just 29 poems. Some gems are *Composition*, *The Looking Glass*, *Luminol*, *Jaisurya*, *Substitute*, *The White Flowers*, *The Suicide*, *Palam*, and *Neutral Tones*. Except *Jaisurya* and *The White Flowers* all other poems deal with the theme of love.

*The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* published in 1973 consist of 33 poems. Out of them 14 were taken from *Summer in Calcutta*, and six from *The Descendants*. Some new poems of them are *The Inheritance*, *Blood*, *Nani*, *Gino*, *Glass*, *Vrindavan*, *Radha-Krishna*, *Lines Addressed to a Devadas*, *The Prisoner*, *The Stone Age*, *The Old Playhouse*, *After the Illness*, *The Motif in the Mirror*, *The Millionaires at Marine Drive*, and *Narcissus at the Water's edge*.

In 1976 Kamala Das wrote her autobiography *My Story* when she was 42 years old. It achieved huge success and recognition. As a result it got translated into 14 languages. It was written originally in Malayalam then she translated herself into English. She later on confessed that her autobiography had some elements of fiction too.

Same year, Kamala Das wrote a novel *Alphabet of Lust*. It was dedicated to her third son Jaisurya. The female protagonist and heroine Manasi is mouthpiece of Das. She is not with her

husband Amol Mitra so she turns to a politician Vijay Raje. For some time she even becomes concubine to Prime Minister. Actually she wants name and fame by hook or crook. At the end of the novel she realizes that one should not evade one's domestic responsibilities. In later years a few more collections of stories were published such as *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* (1977) *Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories* (1992). Apart from these Kamala Das published *The Anamalai Poems* in 1985, *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing* in 1996, *My Mother at Sixty-six* in 1999, and *Yaa Allah* in 2001. These were anthologies of poems. Kamala Das has been associated with many magazines and dailies. Some of them are *Opinion*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Poetry East and West*, *Debonair*, *Eve's Weekly*, *Femina*, *Imprint*, *Weekly Round Table*, and *Love and Friendship*. Thus, Kamala Das is pre-eminently a poet of love, lust, sex, pain, sickness, loneliness, courage, nervousness, melancholy and frustration. She is confessional and autobiographical poet who writes candidly about her own experiences of frustration of love and drudgery in married life. Her poetry creates an impression of bold, ruthless honest by exposing passionately the hollowness of conventional attitudes towards women by revealing the real within.

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#### 4.4 MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

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(Text)

There is a house now far away where once  
I received love.... That woman died,  
The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved  
Among books, I was then too young  
To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon  
How often I think of going  
There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or  
Just listen to the frozen air,  
Or in wild despair, pick an armful of  
Darkness to bring it to here lie



Behind my bedroom door like a brooding  
Dog... you cannot believe, darling,  
Can you, that I lived in such a house and  
Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost  
My way and beg not at strangers' door to  
Receive love, at least in small change?

#### 4.4.1 BACKGROUND TO THE POEM

The poem “My Grandmother’s House” was published in the anthology *Summer in Calcutta* in 1965. In it she passionately recalls happiest days of her life she had spent at the old Nalapat House at Punnayurkulam in the company of her grandmother Nalapat Kochukuttiamma. She was very loving and caring to her. She nostalgically recalls her grandmother’s tenderness and warmth of love. Actually she was her ideal model. She symbolizes ideal love. She contrasts her past happiest moments of life with that of the present life which has become love-lorn and sterile. Since she failed to feel love and care of her grandmother from her husband, she often gets nostalgic and yearns to get again reunited with her. The poetess in the poem transforms beautifully personal experiences into general experiences of mankind as Toru Dutt did in her poem “Our Casuarina Tree”. In the poem Kamala Das identifies her grandmother with the ancestral house. They mean to her love, care, security, free from sexual fears and frustration, and tender guardianship. Many poems and short-stories of Kamala Das are based upon her relationship with grandmother.

#### 4.4.2 NOTES

|                        |                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Withdrew into silence: | grieved or mourned         |
| Turned cold:           | utterly disappointed       |
| Peer through:          | to look through            |
| Frozen:                | cold or dreary             |
| Wild despair:          | gladly (ironic expression) |
| Armful:                | handful as a specimen      |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Brooding:        | lost in thoughts   |
| Darling:         | here it is referred to her husband   |
| Strangers' door: | members of her husband's family who are unmindful to her wishes and expectations |
| Small change:    | a little amount  |

#### 4.4.3 DETAILED ANALYSIS

“My Grandmother’s House” is a very short poem. It is composed of just 16 lines. It has at least three parts. In the poem the poetess has brought person and place together. In the first part she (poet-speaker) tells about the death of her grandmother at far-off Old Nalapat House. Actually she living in distant metropolitan cities like Bombay and New Delhi stresses on the idea of remoteness and its clinical effect on her especially when she is in distress. In the second part she ardently wishes to relive childhood experiences of those days she had enjoyed under the caring of grandmother. In the last part she recalls her blessed status of being loved and proud which is unbelievable to her in the present condition of life.

The poet-speaker in the poem stresses on remoteness of her life in different cities far-off the old Nalapat House where she has passed her girlhood. She sadly remembers the family house and the grandmother who used to shower upon her love and care unconditionally. The dots in the second line represent her impressible longings. She remembers her grandmother the day she passed away. With her death even the house also lost its charm. The house grieved at her death. It appeared as if it had come alive with its individuality. The house ‘withdrew into silence’ and ‘snakes moved among books’. That is to say, the possibility of receiving love finally shattered with her death in the love-less and cruel world. In the Nalapat House there was a huge stock of books. The poet-speaker says that she was quite young and was unable to read them so they appeared to her ghastly then. With her death all the possibilities to have a fresh look upon them ended. She felt complete disappointment. There stayed no possibility of receiving love and care of her grandmother out of her present life as she ever longed. Thus she lost all hopes and desires of love and care with her grandmother’s death.

Many a time the poet-speaker wistfully yearned to visit the great ancestral house and look afresh through its windows which have become blind for being long unattended and uncared for a long time. The house has become entirely lonely and deserted so no one would like to look through its

windows. But she longs to go there and sit by herself to listen to the dreary music of blowing cold winter to reminiscence her dead grandmother. She wishes to articulate her intense grief once again. The window image is suggestive. It links past and present. Ironically she wishes to bring a handful darkness of the house to her present residence so that it could keep reminding her old blessed days spent at the Nalapat House. Even the darkness of the old house may be comforting to her.

The poet-speaker concludes that it would be quite hard to her husband to believe that she had once enjoyed proud, privileged, and loved days at her ancestral home wherein she was loved by every member of the family. Then her life was filled with love and care. It was to her unforgettable. In search of this kind of unconditional love and care she came to a house whose all members were to her unfamiliar. That is, at her marital home, she again wished love and care in same intensity as she had received at her ancestral home which was unexpected at her present situation. Love and care which was once unsought is now requested earnestly by the poet-speaker at least in a small amount if not in substantial from this loveless cruel world.

Actually it has been her dream to enjoy love of spiritual kind through physical love which is almost impossible in the world of imperfections. She throughout her personal life as well as literary career desperately attempted this way or that way to feel the intensity of true love. Either she didn't know the nature of this imperfect world or it was her adamancy to seek true love out of it which she could not find ultimately. It seems that ideal love was her symbolic quest to prove that all men are not capable enough to shower love honestly. In order to show patriarchal dominance and its callousness towards women interests she personally took up several steps which were terrible and sometimes seem unbelievable. Simply to her everything having a connection with the ancestral home under the headship of grandmother is idyllic and ideal.

#### **4.4.4 POETIC DIVICES**

“My Grandmother’s House” is a very short poem but it is pregnant with lots of meanings. It has just sixteen lines. It is an excellent piece of poem. Actually poetry to her was ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’. Poetry arose in her quite naturally. Since she always believed in the conveying of feelings and emotions, she never bothered about words. To her content is more important than the form. She had in-born talent to select suitable words. They always happened naturally. Like Nissim Ezekiel, she never waited for suitable words. Actually she wrote poems at the spur of powerful emotions so at such occasions that is the occasion of generality words,

images, figures felt having been bathed in emotions and feelings. No extra pain was needed to her. Anyway she was quite efficient in both languages-Malayalam and English. She has selected images and symbols from her familiar surroundings. Words are simple usually used in common life. She avoids using philosophical and mystical thoughts. She believed in brevity which is one of the characteristics of her poetry. She in her poem “Composition” wrote, “Tragedy of life / is not death but growth.”

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#### **4.5 SUMMING UP**

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Kamala Das in India is considered to be the mother of feminine poetry. She began the trend of writing about female experiences, their position in hetero-patriarchal societies, their aspirations, and their treatment in the conservative families. Artistry was in her blood but art was her development. She very beautifully compared her past life and experiences she had at her ancestral home with that of present life which is completely drained of emotional touches. It seems to me very difficult to say about the theme of her poetry. Her baseline is sex and love. In treatment of it she exposes male orientation blatantly. She shamelessly put forth her personal account of female world. Her honesty to impulses is often glorified by academicians and critics but where lay its guarantee. One must know that through carnal ways, spiritual appetite cannot be satisfied. Her creative service to female world is valuable. Her account on female world helped the general humanity to understand feminine expectations and aspirations. After all she has been the spokesperson of all those females who unfortunately suffered humiliation, frustration, emotional break-down due to mismatch of respective hopes and desires. Her works did a lot to sensitize male world towards women. Many of her poems are therapeutic.

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#### **4.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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Q. 1 Kamala Das is hailed as the singer of feminine sensibility. Justify.

Ans. Read carefully the section no. 4.3

Q. 2 Show your acquaintance with life and upbringing of Kamala Das.

Ans. Go through section no. 4.2.

Q. 3 Evaluate the contribution of Kamala Das as a creative writer.

Ans. Read the entire unit and form your own idea about her

Q. 4 How does Kamala Das contrast her past life with that of present life in the poem “My

Grandmother's House?

Ans. Read the section no. 4.4.3.

Q. 5 Write briefly on Kamala Das's poetic style.

Ans. Read section no. 4.4.4 and 4.5.

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## **5.7 FURTHER READINGS**

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Manohar, D. Murali. Kamala Das: Treatment of Love in Her Poetry. Gulbarga: JIWE, 1999.

Nabar, Vrinda. Endless Female Hungers: A Study of Kamala Das. New Delhi: Sterling, 1993.

Radha K. Kamala Das. Madras: Macmillan India, 1987.

Rahaman, Anisur. Expressive Form in the Poetry of Kamala Das. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1981.

**Structure**

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 A. K. Ramanujan, His Life and Age
- 5.3 A. K. Ramanujan's Literary Output and Achievements
- 5.4 **Love Poem for a Wife 1** (Text)
  - 5.4.1 Background to the Poem
  - 5.4.2 Notes
  - 5.4.3 A Detailed Analysis of the Poem
  - 5.4.4 Poetic Devices
- 5.5 Summing Up
- 5.6 Self-Assessment Questions and Answers
- 5.7 Further Readings

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**5.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this Unit on A. K. Ramanujan, we shall be looking at the following key-points which would make very much clear and would make sure how he has become the most gifted poet of Indian origin:

- ✓ The time-line of the poet.
- ✓ His literary achievements.
- ✓ His place among Indian English poets.
- ✓ An in-depth analysis of the poem "Love Poem for a Wife- 1".
- ✓ Finally poetic devices applied into the texture of the poem.

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**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

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A. K. Ramanujan is one of the leading expatriate Indian poets who identified himself successfully with India and its culture, myth, folklore, religion, and tradition. Although he left India when he was just thirty years old, he could not forget his Indian heritage and sensibility

which at last resulted in desire for home. His attempt to celebrate family, family relations, rituals, religion made critics and scholars to include him among Indian leading poets. In fact he ultimately found his roots through the medium of poems. His academic research ranged across five languages- Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Sanskrit and English.

We would like you to read the poem at least two or three times and try to interpret lines of the poem with the help of notes given in section 5.4.2 and literary devices explained in the section 5.4.4. After having read and understood the poem properly, write down answers to the questions reading carefully the relevant section as hinted in the section 5.6.

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## 5.2 A. K. RAMANUJAN, HIS LIFE AND AGE

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(A. K. Ramanujan 1929-1993)

(Courtesy- Wikipedia)

Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan famous as A. K. Ramanujan was born in an Iyengar Brahmin family on 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1929 in Mysore (Mysuru), Karnataka. His friends fondly used to call him Raman. He was raised in a tri-lingual atmosphere- Tamil, Kannada, and English. He has good exposure of five languages- English, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit. He usually used to write in Kannada and English. His father Attipat Asuri Krishnaswami was the professor of mathematics at the University of Mysore. He was a good academician and astronomer. Due credit goes to him for creating academic ambience around his sons. He had groomed Ramanujan into a man of varied interests to acquire open-mindedness. He died in 1950 when Ramanujan was just twenty years old. His mother was a simple housewife but she was widely read in Tamil and Kannada literature. His brother A. K. Srinivasan was also a noted mathematician and writer.

Ramanujan got his early education from Marimallappa High School, whence he went to Maharaja College, Mysore. In college he majored in science first year. But his father didn't want him to be a man of mathematics and compelled him to change it from science to English. In

1949, Ramanujan passed B.A. with honours from the University of Mysore in English literature. He post graduated in English literature from the same university. Thereafter he took a job of teaching somewhere in Kerala. Then he entered into another teaching position in Dharwar, Karnataka. In fact his reputation as a lecturer had reached far and wide as students used to attend his classes from several miles. He studied linguistics at Deccan College, Poona during 1958-59. Thereafter he earned the Fulbright grant to continue his study at Indiana University, America. The Indiana University conferred Ph. D. upon him for his dissertation on generative grammar of Kannada in 1963. In 1962, he married a Malayalee Christian lady Molly Daniel. Molly was from Tiruvalla in central Kerala. She also had earned Fulbright Fellowship in 1961. Nine years later they took divorce in 1974 but soon they again decided to live together. In 1988, they were again separated. She bore him one son Krishna Ramanujan and a daughter Krittika Ramanujan. Before joining the University of Chicago in 1962 he had served for some eight years as lecturer at Quilon (Kerala), Belgaum (Karnataka), and M. S. University, Baroda (Gujarat). At the University of Chicago he served in different capacities. Finally he got the Professorship. He taught there Linguistics and Dravidian Literature. He had been visiting professor of several universities of America like Harvard University, University of Michigan, University of California, etc.

Ramanujan was born in a well-educated progressive family. India was fighting against the British authority during his formative period but he was least affected by Indian Freedom Movement. As per his father's plan everything was well arranged and Ramanujan did in his career what was expected from him by his father. He mastered Indian History and Culture to shape his native sensibility. Ramanujan died in Chicago at the age of 64 on 13<sup>th</sup> of July 1993 due to the adverse reaction of the dose of anaesthesia just before he was being prepared for surgery.

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### **5.3 A. K. RAMANUJAN'S LITERARY OUTPUT AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

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His poetry is mainly marked by his deep interest in Indian myth, religion, folklore, culture, tradition, and Hindu view of life. His interest in India and Indian pattern was not acquired rather it was inherent. No doubt, Ramanujan living in Chicago celebrated India and did a lot to restore the spoiled glory of it. But he was not blind admirer of India. Irony frequently he applied to drive truth home. Indian and American both experiences are made captive in his soul. His inclination



towards love for India not only helped him get over the problem of his own identity but largely redressed India also. Ramanujan in many of his poems recounts and reworks Hindu myth, legend, religion, culture etc. with no fear. Some of them are: “Towards Simplicity”, “The Hindoo: he doesn’t hurt a fly or a spider either”, “One, Two, May be Three, Arguments against Suicide”, “The Hindoo: he reads his Gita and is calm at all events”, “Compensations”, “Prayers to Lord Murugan”, “Death and the Good Citizen”, “Mythologies I”, “Mythologies II”, “No Fifth Man”, “A Hindu to His Body” etc. Ramanujan’s American citizenship and living could not take over his Tamil sensibility. In him, a poet, a story-teller, an essay writer, a folklorist, a translator, and linguist were rolled properly. His Indian experiences always dominated his intellectuality. His Indianness is noted in terms of his insight into Indian myths, tales, legends, climate, and topography with which he always identifies himself. According to him, past never erases itself whether it is individual, historical or cultural. Indian past life and American present life both grew in him shaping his sensibility.

Ramanujan begins at the personal level but soon indulges in a host of other things like Indian ethical, moral values, legends, myths, belief in *Punchbhut* and cycle of rebirth which are founding concepts of Indian culture. Most of his poems begin in recollection of past experiences especially family. Family plays very crucial role in his poems. It is central focus of his poetic sensibility. He duly respected cultural patterns of both east and west in his works. Being an expatriate writer he had to satisfy the aspirations of both- people of home country and people of host country. Once he pointed out on this point very beautifully:

English and my disciplines (linguistics and anthropology) give me my ‘outer’ forms- linguistic, metrical, logical and other such ways of shaping experience, and my first thirty years in India, my frequent visits and field-trips, my personal and professional pre occupations with Kannada, Tamil, the classics and folklore give me my substance, my ‘Inner’ forms, images and symbols. They are continuous with each other, and I no longer can tell what comes from where. (R. Parthasarathy)

In the making of Ramanujan’s poetic imagination, the Hindu mythologies had played very significant role. These are the treasure-houses of “ethics and morality, religion and culture, that a poet grounded in native customs and rituals willingly accepts it and creatively utilises it. This adds authenticity and originality to his creative work. Being a very perceptive poet well-grounded in indigenous myths and legends and folktales, Ramanujan reconstructs Hindu

mythology in his poetry in an intelligent way.” (A. N. Dwivedi) The matter of fact is that India and America coexist in his soul and consciousness peacefully and that is the very foundation of his creativity and thinking-pattern.

There are four volumes of poetry to his credit- *The Striders*, *Relations*, *Second Sight*, and *The Black Hen*. The first volume *The Striders* was brought out by Oxford University Press, London in 1966. “Snakes”, “A River”, “The Striders”, and “Breaded Fish” are some of the important poems of the volume. This volume glimpse with the nature of human body and it’s relation to the world at large. The second volume *Relations* was also brought out by the same publishing house in 1971. Poems like *Compensations*, *Conventions of Despair*, and *Prayers to Lord Murugan* are some of the best pieces of the volume. This volume covers his memories of his parents, grandparents, cousins and other relatives. Out of these two volumes of poetry in 1976 a new anthology simply titled *Selected Poems* was published by the Oxford University Press, New Delhi. The third collection alludes to Indian Philosophy, Hindu myths and legends, God and Goddesses along with the complexities of Indian life. The second volume *Second Sight* was also published by the same publishing house in 1986. In 1995 Oxford University Press brought out the *Collected Poems* including *The Black Hen*. The collection transcends the cultural plan of his native land and reaches alien worlds like Chicago, Yukon, Japan and China.

Apart from that there is a list of his works in translation: *The Interior Landscape* (1967), *Speaking of Siva* (1973), *Samskara* by U.R. Anantha Murthy (1976), *Hymns for the Drowning* (1981), *Poems of Love and War* (1985), and *When God Is a Customer*, was published posthumously in 1994. He also published several pieces in Kannada. The *Collected Essays of A. K. Ramanujan* was edited by Vinay Dharwadkar and published in 1999. It has several essays which had attracted lots of controversy among the academic world.

In 1976, the Government of India conferred the *Padma Shri* on him for his constant involvement in Indian history and culture. In 1999, his *Collected Poems* bagged the *Sahitya Akademi Award* posthumously. William Wales evaluated him as the most gifted poet.

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### 5.3 LOVE POEM FOR A WIFE I

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(Text)

Really what keeps us apart

At the end of years is unshared

Childhood. You cannot, for instance,  
meet my father. He is some years  
dead. Neither can I meet yours:  
he has lately lost his temper  
and mellowed.

In the transverse midnight gossip  
Of cousins' reunions among  
Brandy fumes, cashews and the Absences  
of grandparents, you suddenly grow  
nostalgic for my past and I  
envy you your village dog-ride  
and the mythology

of the seven crazy aunts.  
You begin to recognize me  
As I pass from ghost to real  
And back again in the albums  
Of family rumours, in brothers'  
anecdotes of how noisily  
father bathed,

slapping soap on his back;  
find sources for a familiar  
sheep-mouth look in a sepia wedding  
picture of father in a turban,  
mother standing on her bare  
splayed feet, silver rings  
on her second toes;

and reduce the entire career  
of my recent unique self  
to the compulsion of some high  
sentence in His Smilesian diary.

And your father, gone irrevocable  
in age, after changing every day  
your youth's evenings,

he will acknowledge the wickedness  
of no reminiscence: no, not  
the burning end of the cigarette  
in the balcony, pacing  
to and fro as you came to the gate,  
late, after what you thought  
was an innocent

date with a nice Muslim friend  
who only hinted at touches.  
Only two weeks ago, in Chicago,  
you and brother James started  
one of your old drag-out fights  
about where the bathroom was  
in the backyard,

north or south of the well  
next to the jackfruit tree  
in your father's father's house  
in Alleppey. Sister-in-law  
and I were blank cut-outs  
fitted to our respective  
slots in a room

really nowhere as the two of you  
got down to the floor to draw  
blueprints of a house from memory  
of everything, from newspapers

to the backs of envelopes

and road-maps of the United States  
that happened

to flap in the other room  
in a midnight wind: you wagered heirlooms  
and husband's earnings on what  
the Uncle in Kuwait  
would say about the Bathroom  
and the Well, and the dying,  
by now dead,

tree next to it. Probably  
only the Egyptians had it right:  
their kings had sisters for queens  
to continue the incests  
of childhood into marriage.  
Or we should do as well-meaning  
Hindus did,

Betroth us before birth,  
forestalling separate horoscopes  
and mother's first periods,  
and wed us in the oral cradle  
and carry marriage back into  
the namelessness of childhoods.

(Adopted from the *Collected Poems*, 65-68)

#### **5.4.1 BACKGROUND TO THE POEM**

The poem "Love Poem for a Wife 1" appeared in the second volume *Relations* (1971) when he was established in America. The poet in it recalls his relatives and family members with some traces of nostalgia. By recalling them he looks to overcome the feeling of estrangement. This was the way he often felt emotional satisfaction. The tone of the poem is dramatic. The poem is rendered in 'You' and 'I'. Since we know that Ramanujan and his wife Molly both were

equally competent and may be for that there happened often conflict of ideas between them. And moreover for frequent discordance, they took divorce two times. He yearns for healthy family relationship and tries to find out the root cause of disagreement in the family life especially between husband and wife.

#### 5.4.2 NOTES

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Temper:           | calmness of mind or disposition  |
| Mellowed:         | mature   |
| Transverse:       | extended   |
| Gossip:           | light informal conversation  |
| Fume:             | suspension of particles in a gas often irritating  |
| Nostalgic:        | feeling unhappy for being away and longing for familiar ones   |
| Mythology:        | the body of stories associated with a culture  |
| Crazy:            | impractical and often excited  |
| Slap:             | hit with something flat  |
| Anecdote:         | a brief especially biographical narrative  |
| Sepia:            | a shade of brown with a tinge of red   |
| Splayed:          | spread open or apart   |
| Smilesian:        | the adjective 'smilesian' refers to the Scottish writer Samuel Smiles who was famous for his book Self-Help and other motivational works |
| Irrevocable:      | incapable of being revoked or retracted  |
| Reminiscence:     | recounting of things happened in past  |
| To and fro:       | moving backward and forward  |
| Drag-out:         | extended   |
| Cut-out:          | intended to be apart or separate   |
| Blueprint:        | outline or something intended as a guide   |
| Wagered heirloom: | an inseparable property risked on a gamble   |
| Egyptian:         | relating to Egypt  |
| Incest:           | immoral relationship   |
| Betroth:          | offer in marriage  |
| Forestall:        | deal with ahead of the time  |

Oral cradle: a reference to the practice of child marriage set even before birth

Periods: cycle of menstruation

### 5.4.3 A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE POEM

“Love Poem for a Wife I” is based on the poet’s relationship with his wife. The first seven lines bring out the poet’s sense of estrangement from his wife. The reason for this, according to him is ‘unshared childhood’. As a result the couple cannot know each other’s likes and dislikes and temperament. Also they cannot know about their parents. The second seven lines inform that the wife and husband both recall their past a little nostalgically and look upon each other’s indulgences enviously. The recognition of each other comes slowly as the third stanza tells:

of the seven crazy aunts

You begin to recognize me

as I pass from ghost to real

and back again in the albums

of family rumours, in brother,

anecdotes of how noisily

father bathed,

*(Collected Poems, 65)*

She can form some idea of his parents by looking at the family albums or by listening to his brother’s anecdotes. She looks strangely at a ‘sepia wedding/ picture of father in a turban’ and at ‘mother standing on her bare feet’, wearing ‘silver rings on her second toes’. She cherishes peculiar ideas about his entire career without realizing its unique charms or successes. Her father has now grown aged and lost his temper and memory. He is now so weak and careless that he doesn’t even bother about her visiting, about meeting ‘nice Muslim friend’ at odd hours. Then is mentioned her fight with brother James about the location of the bathroom. While they quarrel over, the poet sits along with his sister-in-law in the adjoining room without making any movement. She goes on quarrelling with her brother; they drew sketches of the bathroom from memory, from newspapers to the backs of envelopes. This is all about the ninth stanza. She suddenly becomes more assertive and wagers the family belongings and the husband’s earnings over the question of what uncle in Kuwait will say about the disputed bathroom and the well and tree standing nearby.

In the eleventh stanza the poet starts speculating about the rightness of the Egyptians in marrying their own sisters to ‘continue the incests/of childhood’. For instance Queen Cleopatra of Egypt had married her brother. It was common practice in ancient Egypt. The poet wants to drive home the point that his wife would have found a fitter life-partner in her brother, for both of them are of the same temperament and are prone to fight for petty things. In the next stanza the poet suggests another possibility. He and his wife should have lived more happily had they been betrothed before their birth. The marriage before birth, as the well-meaning Hindus did long ago, could have cemented their relationship and would have saved the labour of horoscopists.

“Love Poem for a Wife I” is an evocation of the poet’s family life. His sense of frustration caused by the marriage of an ultra-modern lady is quite evident here. He actually desires to overcome his alienation from his wife, but emotional and cultural gaps come before him. “Love Poem for a Wife 1” is autobiographical and confessional.

#### **5.4.4 POETIC DEVICES**

Ramanujan usually prefers to use monosyllabic words for the generation of effect as well as concentration. He assiduously avoids verbosity for the sake of terseness in his poems. He is essentially a poet of rhythm and tempo. For the sake of rhythm he uses internal rhyming, assonance and consonance. He beautifully makes use of irony to keep his compositions lively and active. His command over tone and accent is superb. By the tone he conveys much more. A. N. Dwivedi sums up beautifully:

There is a remarkable awareness and dexterity in the handling of metre and rhythm, and most of Ramanujan’s poems are accent-based and melodious. He intermingles short and long lines in a verse-paragraph, and does not spare speech rhythms, slangs, and clichés. Although he does not arrange lines in a stanza or paragraph in any uniform pattern, they tend to reinforce cadenced movements and variations in tone, doing away with aridity and monotony. (Dwivedi 43)

These are the ways Ramanujan in most of his poems makes his emotional expression. “Love Poem for a Wife 1” is no exception. Irony is there, images, figures, rhyme, rhythm and tempo are all used with dexterity. He sometimes turns noun into adjective and sometimes uses compound nouns also for tightness of poetic structure.



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## 5.5 SUMMING UP

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Ramanujan as in the words of A. N. Dwivedi “a royal ambassador of Indian literature and culture” has been ever preoccupied with those feelings and thought which are typical to India and Indian people. Family metaphor occupies central space in his poetry with which he thinks, so writes a noted Indo-Anglian poet R. Parthasarathy. (Parthasarathy 95) As far as the use of language is concerned, Ramanujan unhesitatingly like Nissim Ezekiel and other Indian poets uses words from Hindi language. Irony has been his favorite tool to expose sham and hollowness of the society. He chose free verse to express his attitudes uninterruptedly.

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## 5.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Q. 1 How does Ramanujan identify himself with India and Indian ethos?

Ans. Read section no. 5.2 and 5.3.

Q. 2 Why does Ramanujan in most of his poems discuss family matters?

Ans. Go through the whole unit carefully.

Q. 3 Reproduce the summary of the poem “Love Poem for a Wife 1”.

Ans. Read section no. 5.4.3.

Q. 4 Discuss Ramanujan as a poet of memory and nostalgia.

Ans. Read 5.4.3 and 5.4.4.

Q. 5 Discuss Nissim Ezekiel and Ramanujan as modern poets.

Ans. Read Unit 3 and Unit 5 to develop idea.

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## 5.7 FURTHER READINGS

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Bhatnagar, M.K. Ed. The Poetry of A.K.Ramanujan. Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2007.

Dwivedi, A. N. The Poetic Art of A. K. Ramanujan. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 1994

Ramanujan, A.K. Collected Poems. New Delhi: OUP, 2009.



Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon  
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Bachelor of Arts  
**DCEN-103 (N)**

## **Indian Writing in English**

### **CONTENTS**

#### **Block II : Prose**

Unit 6: Indian Prose : A Survey

Unit 7: Mahatma Gandhi : *My Story*

Unit 8: J.L. Nehru : *An Autobiography* ( Chapter L: A Visit to Gandhi Ji )

## **Block Introduction II**

This block aims to highlight the history, development, and growth of Indian English prose. It also attempts to give a brief outline of the different phases of its journey and, a brief introduction of the eminent authors, their works, and their contribution to the growth and the development of Indian English. This block is divided into four units from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>. The sixth unit aimed to discuss the Indian English Prose. The unit also deals with his major historical survey of prose. The seventh unit focuses on Mahatma Gandhi and his famous autobiography *My Story*. It also deals with the biographical sketch and art of his writing. The eighth and last unit of the block focuses on Jawahar Lal Nehru and his famous prose work *An Autobiography*. After studying this block, you will be able to understand the philosophical and realist way of thinking about life and develop the conceptual analytical power to read and enjoy the soul of Indian English prose.

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## **UNIT 6     INDIAN PROSE: A SURVEY**

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- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Indian English Prose: Genesis and Growth
  - 6.2.1 Pre-independence Indian English Prose
  - 6.2.2 Post-independence Indian English Prose
- 6.3 Summing Up
- 6.4 Self- Assessment Questions and Answers
- 6.5 Further Reading

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### **6.0     OBJECTIVES**

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In this Unit, we shall be looking at Indian English Prose writing, its genesis and growth. Under this category we shall not talk about Indian novels though is also a prose narrative. Under the rubric Indian English prose, we shall include memoir, biography, autobiography, travelogue, essays, lectures, letters, and speeches that is, non-fictional writings. Our attempt shall be looking at the following key points:

- ✓ Genesis of non-fictional prose writing;
- ✓ Development in prose during pre and post independence era and,
- ✓ A critical evaluation of prose writing.

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### **6.1     INTRODUCTION**

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Prose is no way a kind of inferior writing to poetry. Both are similar in the use of words but they differ in terms of position, selection, and function of them. In the beginning it was a stiff challenge for every Indian to get mastery in alien's language but a few of Indians learnt English with surprising confidence. These were mostly of elite class. They visited England studied there and came back. Some of them made English as the medium of communication as well as expression. With the colonial expansion across the sub-continent of India, need for learning English language accelerated almost it became the need of the whole country.

Having gone through this Unit, we hope that learners of distance education will be able to understand the minutiae of Indian non-fictional prose writing. Along with it is also expected

from them that they will prepare their own answers of the questions asked in section 6.4 in the light of given hints and suggestions. And it is also hoped that they will make sure the study of a few more books suggested in the section 6.5.

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## 6.2 INDIAN ENGLISH PROSE: GENESIS AND GROWTH

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Indian English writing began taking shape under the impact of colonial masters in India. Most probably the Charter Act of 1813 accelerated the need to learn English in India. Indians began learning English language to accomplish trade and commerce in the beginning. Later on, English learning became primary condition to get a job in British India. The hidden motif of the Act was proselytization, marriage, and friendship apart from employment. In this way Indian English Prose made a glorious beginning during the era of Indian Renaissance. It was an epoch of nationalistic resurgence, of reason, good sense, and literary efflorescence. It is a typical product of the East-West synthesis.

### 6.2.1 PRE-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH PROSE

By the studies of Alamgir Hashmi and Michael H. Fisher, Sheikh Dean Mahomet (1759-1851) is the first Indian author who wrote *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* in 1794. He was born in Patna to a Bengali Muslim family. Patna was then under Bengal Presidency. Dean Mahomet after his father's death joined East India Company army as a trainee surgeon under the wing of Anglo-Irish Protestant Officer Captain Godfrey Evan Baker. Along with him Dean travelled extensively from Dhaka to Delhi. Later on Dean became subaltern officer just second to the rank of Captain. In 1784 Dean went to Ireland with Evan Baker. There he studied in a school to improve his English language skills. Meanwhile he met an Irish girl Jane Daly and got married with her anyhow. Later on he converted to Christianity. His notable memoir *The Travels of Dean Mahomet, a Native of Patna in Bengal, Through Several Parts of India, While in the Service of the Honourable the East India Company* records his life with the East India Company. It was published with public subscription in 1794. This memoir has 38 letters. It is written in epistolary form. It is the first non-fictional work published by any Indian. A *memoir* differs from *autobiography*. In the former, there is a record of events and people the author had met or witnessed and in the latter the author documents his or her own life.

Cavelli Venkata Boriah (1776-1803), a multi-lingual Tamil Vaishnav Brahmin published an article "Account of the Jains" in a journal *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 9, London, 1809 though it was

written as early in 1803. It spread into just 28 pages. Actually it was translated work. This article is considered sometimes to be the first published work by any Indian in prose. He got well recognition for his collection *Mackenzie Manuscripts*. Boriah was an assistant to Colonel Colin Mackenzie. Mr. Mackenzie was a collector of oriental antiquities.

Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833) the next noted person in the name of job training was allowed to acquire proficiency in English language so that European cultural values and practices could be absorbed into indigenous culture and tradition. Dean Mahomet, C. V. Boriah, and Raja Rammohun Roy were the earliest Indians who acquired proficiency in English. Rammohun Roy wrote an essay "A Defence of Hindu Theism" in 1817 which is considered to be the first original work in the history of Indian English literature. Rammohun Roy was the son of a Bengal Brahmin landlord. He had studied Arabic and Persian in Patna and Hindu theology in Benares. Actually he knew as many as twelve oriental and occidental languages. He was polymath. He was the morning star of Indian renaissance. Rabindranath Tagore hailed him as the inaugurator of modern age in India. He founded *Brahmo Samaj* in 1828. He was the first socialist who did struggle for women rights and opposed by tooth and nail *sati pratha*. His political essays and orations are testimony to his extraordinary command over English language. His essay "Letter on English Education" dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 1823 is a fine example of his prose style. He wrote two famous essays in 1820 on religion "The Precepts of Jesus" and "The Guide to Peace and Happiness". He is considered to be the begetter of Indian English prose. His prose is marked by clear and logical argument, comprehensiveness, and moderation. In other words his prose has clarity, lucidity, and flexibility. Bal Shastri Jambhekar (1812-1846), Ram Gopal Ghose (1815-1868), Bhau Daji (1822-1874), and Rajendra Lal Mitra (1824-1891) were other noted writers of non-fictional English prose. These writers mostly wrote with utilitarian purposes.

Lord Macaulay's famous 'Minute' (1835) decided that the medium of education would be English to make India a cultural colony of England. The purpose of the 'Minute' was actually to produce an army of English knowing clerks. It was also decided that all the funds would be utilized for the promotion of western art and science. With the enforcement of this policy, English education became compulsory in India. After 1857 Mutiny a trio of three great writers Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Rabindranath Tagore wrote extensively in English and spread the message of Indian spirituality and intellectuality across the world.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was born in a Kayashtha family, Calcutta. He was schooled in the westernized fashion. He took English education first at the Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Metropolitan Institution, then at the Presidency College and thereafter the Scottish Church College. His childhood name was Narendranath Datta. He was equally good at every subject of knowledge. He had inborn brilliance to embrace subtle knowledge of science, philosophy, mathematics, medical science, astronomy, and many Indian and foreign languages. He had extensively read western philosophers like Descartes, Hume, Immanuel Kant, Fichte, Spinoza, Hegel, Auguste Comte, Schopenhauer, Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Shakespeare, Milton, and Charles Darwin. Besides, he had thoroughly studied Indian sacred scriptures like the Vedas, the Upanishadas, the Bhagavadgita, the Ramayan, the Mahabharat and etc., At the age 18, Vivekananda became disciple of noted mystic Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa (1836-1886). After his guru's death, Vivekananda founded the order of Monks in 1886 to spread the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna across the world. He travelled all over the country during 1888-1892 and noticed rampant misery across the country. He made his mission to wake up Indian people from sloth and ennui by his 'tongue of flame' (Romain Rolland). Actually his mission was to bring home to the west the message of the east as Buddha has for the east. He wanted the west know the true nature of Hinduism. He was "the most effective interpreter of Indian thought to the world, Vivekananda is a prophet with an imperishable message to his own countrymen." (Naik 84) He ever wanted the uplift of the country.

In May 1896, Swami Vivekananda sailed for America and there he attended the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. On Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> September 1893 Vivekananda delivered his historic speech after repeated request of dignitaries. Vivekananda went there as an unofficial delegate but Prof. J. H. Wright, the professor of Greek at Harvard University who was very much familiar with him assured that he will be greeted surely. Prof. Wright once pointed out about him that 'Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together'. Vivekananda was such a dashing personality of his time that the universities of Harvard and Columbia offered professorship to him who had neither Ph. D. nor publication list.

The works of Swami Vivekananda consists of mostly speeches delivered at various places. These speeches were mostly extempore. His *Complete Works* contains nine volumes (1907-1951) each having 450 pages. His widely circulated anthology *Selections from Swami Vivekananda* was published in 1944 and republished in 1975. His *Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga*, and

*Raja Yoga* are his most popular spiritual treatises. His works have been welcomed in the world as ‘hurricane’, ‘storm’, ‘thunder’, ‘cyclone’, ‘lightening’, and so on so forth. Actually Swami Vivekananda picked up the noblest fruits of knowledge from Indian scriptures like the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the *Upanishadas* to run like fire all over the world. By his ‘stirred spirit’, Swami Vivekananda arrived at the conclusion that there was no conflict among various creeds and religions at the level of essence. There is an essential unity in all regions. And for that reason he always rejected sectarianism and fanaticism wherever he went and lectured. In him science and religion both found peaceful existence. To him there is no conflict between science and religion. “Every thought was passion, every word was faith.”(Narsimhaiah) He never favoured any ‘ism’ like ‘romanticism’, ‘transcendentalism’, or ‘naturalism’. He was against all kinds of oppression meted out to women in Indian societies. They should have due rights. He believed in the tradition of religious preachers. He was the propagator of *Advaita Vedanta*. According to him, it is most scientific system of thought. “Through this philosophy of Vedanta, the Advaita Vedanta, Vivekananda works out his dream of the unity of humanity, unity of all life, the unity of the impersonal God with the personal God, the unity of the individual with the universal, of theory and practice, and rises into an ecstasy of love and selfless service which is possible only with the realization of the ultimate unity.” (Naik 42) To know about man is the ultimate end of all knowledge. Actually Vivekananda was a surprising treasure-house of ideas culled from his study of the whole world epistemology especially ‘Hindu religious and philosophical tradition’. He absorbed all noble knowledge available in the world texts. “He is essentially a great cultural historian, a unifier of cultures, a binder of human races and ideas. His power comes from his knowledge of Christianity and Hinduism and other religions.” (Naik 47) Vivekananda did not believe in the view that man was a born-sinner, crest-fallen, and slave to karma. He rather believed in the divine status of human soul.

Since Vivekananda followed the tradition of religious preachers, he had expressed transcendental thoughts not to be found either in world dictionary or in the published works. He was not academic philosopher. Instead he was a spiritual philosopher. He was superb in his selection of words throughout works. “His language is studded with striking similes and metaphors. He is constantly allusive and, through his parables and anecdotes and allusions, he achieves manifold effects. His sense of humour and unflinching irony always keep his expression free from the possible danger of dull gravity. The one direct reward of this is simplicity.” (Naik 47) Actually beneath his simple expressions, the deep, complex and subtle ideas were conveyed. He uses



simple and short sentences. Such expressions naturally attain lyrical sonority. “Without the simplicity, the music would have been cacophonous; without the music the simplicity would have been stark.” (Naik 46) Vivekananda’s prose “has no metaphysical or aesthetic pretences. It is just the spontaneous utterance of a stirred spirit that cannot hold its tongue of fire.” (Naik 48) Vivekananda was well rooted in Indian ethos.

Just as the work of Vivekananda consists of mostly spoken words, the work of Sri Aurobindo consists of exclusively written words on “varied mass of prose writings on religious, metaphysical, occult, social, political, cultural and literary subjects.” (Naik 84-85) Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) has tremendous capacity to learn things. No Indian prose writer comes nearer to him. His prose writings spread over some sixty years. At Centenary Library there are twenty five massive volumes of his prose writing which contain total 15000 pages. Sri Aurobindo wrote in every genre of writing “formal and informal, fiction and drama, metaphysical and expository, estimative and exegetic, epistolary and exhortatory, poetic and prophetic, aphoristic and epigrammatic...” (Naik 102) In fact his achievements cannot be assessed summarily by any set of parameter.

Sri Aurobindo’s father was a great admirer and follower of western English life. He assiduously kept his sons away from native life and language. He did not like his son’s to absorb native twists and turns of native tongues in their speaking manner. To make sure, Aurobindo was looked after by an English nurse Miss Pagett. He first took admission in Loretto Convent at Darjeeling where all students were from English families. At the age of eight, Aurobindo’s father sent Aurobindo and his two elder brothers to England and entrusted them to an English family, the Drewetts at Manchester with strict instruction that his children should not be allowed to make any kind of contact with Indians living there. Aurobindo studied at St. Paul’s School at London where he was well exposed to languages like Latin, French, and English. Here he studied Shakespeare, Keats, and Shelley in masterly manner. Hereafter he moved to King’s College, Cambridge. During his stay in England Aurobindo besides English had gained mastery in languages like French, German, Italian, Greek, and Latin. Like T. S. Eliot Aurobindo was polyphonic. After his return to India, Aurobindo learnt Sanskrit, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, and Hindi. After his return to India in 1893, Aurobindo began teaching at Maharaja’s College Baroda. He left the job in 1905 in the protest of the Bengal split. In 1908 he was arrested and sent to Alipore jail. During his stay in jail he realized mystic feelings and gave up politics all the

way and settled in Pondicherry along with a French lady Mirra Richard (popular as the Mother). There he continued his spiritual pursuits. His socio-cultural and political essays were used to come up in a monthly magazine serially. It was the *Arya* founded by himself in 1914. These essays were later on collected in a book form as *The Renaissance in India* (1920), *The Foundations of Indian Culture* (1953), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1919 revised in 1962). His essays on literary criticism which were earlier published in *Arya* collected in *The Future poetry* (1953). His religious works are his crown achievements for instance *The Life Divine* (1939-40), *Essays on the Gita* (1928), *Heraclitus* (1941), and *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1948). In all these writings Aurobindo used global prose. He was of a master of blank verse. His *Life Divine* is a sympathy having rich strains. He was now governed by Divine Force. He also edited the English weekly 'Karma Yogin' and the Bengali Weekly 'Dharma'. English daily 'Vade Matram' was also edited by him.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was primarily a poet but he also produced good amount of prose. His prose writings are in the form of lectures and letters prepared for various occasions addressing Indian life and culture. Even in his prose writings one can easily pick up lyrical notes. He has also extensively written in prose. His lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1912-13 are collected in *Sadhana* (1913). His Hibbert Lectures given at Manchester College, Oxford, in 1930 were published under the title *The Religion of Man* in 1931. His essays in *Nationalism* (1917) deal with various facets of nationalism. Tagore's *My Boyhood Days* is based upon his memories regarding his earliest foreign tours. Rabindranath Tagore usually expressed his deep thoughts in easy and simple language. His influence on Indian Culture and thought is second only to that of Mahatma Gandhi. He is acclaimed as India's greatest man of letters, the soul of Bengal, great scholar and educator and ambassador of friendship between East and West.

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) another distinguished Indo-Sinhalese scholar was born to a Sri Lankan Tamil father and an English mother. He amalgamated the best of eastern and western thoughts for the well off of entire humanity. He has every reason to be included among Indian prose writers. In some ways he is one among Indian renaissance. He was multi-talented personality. His essays cover areas like art, religion, language, philosophy, culture, and metaphysics. Some of his famous works are *Medieval Sinhalese Art* (1908), *Essays in National Idealism* (1909), *The Dance of Shiva* (1918), *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927), and *Figures of Thought* (1946). M. K. Naik writes about him, "Nevertheless, his importance as an

ambassador of Indian and oriental art, thought and tradition cannot be over-estimated; and his stature as a thinker and a sage is perhaps yet to be fully measured. His trenchant criticism of modern life and civilization and his passionate concern for the abiding values make him a prophet whose words are of urgent relevance to the human condition today.” (History 93)

Among nationalist political leaders Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Mahadev Govind Ranade were noted orators during freedom struggle. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri (1869-1946) a follower of Gokhale produced a number of biographies. Noted among them are *Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta* (1945) and *My Master Gokhale* (1946), and *Thumb-nail Sketches* (1946). Chakravorti Rajagopalachari (1879-1972) popular as Rajaji, was an eloquent speaker. His earlier works include *Chats Behind Bars* (1931) and *Jail Diary* (1941). His prose retelling of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* earned him wide recognition.

During pre-independence era, there were two great prose writers- Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) since his childhood days was very much enamoured with Indian legends and stories like Harishchandra (known for his honesty and truth), Shraavan (well-nown for his filial devotion), and Rama. He was influenced by the *New Testament*, the *Gita*, *Unto This Lost* by John Ruskin, David Thoreau’s essay ‘Civil Disobedience’, Edward Carpenter, and Leo Tolstoy. In beginning it was not the dream of Gandhi to become a writer. It happened just by an accident. Gandhi is well-known across the world. He is read and studied in most of the countries of the world. His *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927-28) and *Hind Swaraj* (1910) are most popular works. His journals *Young India* (1919-32) and *Harijan* (1933-48) are well known to Indian people. His letters written in simple, clear, and chaste style are significant contribution to the art of letter writing.

Mahatma Gandhi by his simple, sometimes lyrical, and aphoristic prose style easily earned publicity for him. His use of short sentences and frequent uses of figures like simile and metaphor catch the attention of public right away.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was one among prominent figures of Indian freedom movement. He was a noted public speaker and writer. Having taken education from Harrow, Cambridge, and the Inner Temple, Nehru returned home with no decision what to do next. In 1916 he met first time Gandhiji and determined to work with him. Nehru was the political heir of Gandhi. His recognition as a writer despite a politician rests upon three major works. These are *Glimpses of*

*World History* (1939), *An Autobiography* (1936), and *The Discovery of India* (1946). These works Nehru accomplished during stay in various jails of India. Nehru was of scientific temper. He was against fundamentalism, exploitation, corruption, bigotry, and obscurantism. He wished to see the country a secular, democratic, and socialist. His writing is marked by sobriety and balance. In his selection of words, he seems with great confidence and comfort. His works are strongly recommended to students and English learners to read to improve their command over the language. Nehru shows his creative vision and artistic insight which are revealed in his letters to Edward Thomson and G.B. Shaw.

## **6.2.2 POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH PROSE**

After Independence a number of religious, philosophical, critical, biographical, and autobiographical works have been written. Sarvepally Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) made his mark in the field of religious and philosophical prose writing. He taught philosophy at the University of Oxford and Chicago. He was the first Vice-President and second President of India. On his birthday, the whole country celebrates 'Teacher's Day'. He in fact like Vivekananda interpreted Indian philosophy to the Western World. His major works include *The Hindu View of Life* (1926), *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* (1939), *Religion and Society* (1947), *The Principal Upanishads* (1953), and *Religion in a Changing World* (1967).

Biographical, autobiographical, historical, social, religious writings continued and all these different forms of prose writings were beautifully handled by Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri (1897-1999). He is perhaps most influential prose writer of post-independence India. He was born at Mymensingh Eastern Bengal now Bangladesh. His major works include *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1951), *A Passage to England* (1959), *The Continent of Circe: An Essay on The Peoples of India* (1966), *The Intellectual in India* (1967), *To Live or Not to Live* (1972), *Culture in the Vanity Bag* (1976), and *Hinduism* (1979). His first ever attempt at the genre of biography was *Scholar Extraordinary: The Life of Friedrich Max Muller* (1974) bagged him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1975. Nirad Chaudhuri was a born rebel. He was of defiant temperament and highly individualistic attitude and fierce intellectual calibre. His long sentences, unpopular words and analogies make reader uncomfortable.

Like Nirad Chaudhuri, Ved Prakash Mehta (1934-2021) has also dedicated himself to non-fictional prose writing in post independence era. He was born in Lahore and became blind at the age of four. His schooling began from a school in Bombay especially for blinds. Thereafter he

went to America. He took his B.A. degree from Oxford and M.A. from Harvard. His first book is his autobiography *Face to Face* (1957). His other non-fictional writings include *Walking the Indian Streets* (1961), *The Fly and the Fly-Bottle* (1963), *The New Theologian* (1966), and *John is Easy to Please* (1971). His autobiographical series titled *Continents of Exile* was published in 12 installments from 1972 to 2004. He wrote some 24 books. Most of them deal with his blindness.

In the field of biography and autobiography, tremendous growth took place during post-independence era. R. K. Narayan published his autobiography *My Days* in 1975. His brother R. K. Laxman, a well-known cartoonist published his autobiography of *The Tunnel Time* in 1998. Ruskin Bond's autobiographical works *Scenes from a Writer's Life: A Memoir* was published in 1997 and *The Lamp is Lit: Leaves from a Journal* was published in 1998. C. D. Narasimhaiah wrote his autobiography and titled it *N for Nobody: Autobiography of an English Teacher* (1991). Manohar Malgonkar wrote biographies of noted personalities of Indian history such as *Kanhoji Angrey: Maratha Admiral* (1959) and *Chhatrapatis of Kolhapur* (1971). Rajmohan Gandhi wrote the biography of his maternal grandfather C. Rajagopalachari in two volumes. First was published in 1978 and second in 1982. He also wrote the biography of his paternal grandfather Mahatma Gandhi *The Good Boatman: A Portrait of Mahatma Gandhi* (1995). There are so many writers who wrote their autobiographies but they are omitted for practical purposes here.

Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam (1931-2015), a noted scientist, humanist, and the 11<sup>th</sup> President of the country wrote some good prose works like *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography* (1999), *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power Within India* (2002), *India 2020: A Vision for the New Millennium* (1998).

Amartya Sen (1933-), a noble prize winner for Economics wrote a book titled *The Argumentative Indian* (2005). It is a collection of essays. It focuses on Indian history, identity, and the tradition of doing debates among people, and intellectual plurality.

In the field of literary criticism, K. R. Srinivas Iyengar, C.D. Narasimhaiah, M. K. Naik, Krishna Rayan, and Meenakshi Mukherjee are well-known among academicians. R. K. Narayan, Salmon Rushdie, Vikram Seth, and Amitav Ghosh have written many travelogues.

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### **6.3 SUMMING UP**

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At the end of this Unit, it can be said that in the field of non-fictional prose writing in India, writers have contributed hugely. It was in fact their first choice for expression. Having learnt the delicacies of English language, writers attempted all kinds of genre. Indians have managed this language very well for both kinds of expression- lyrical and non-lyrical. As far as the prose works are concerned, they are available in huge amount written by all well recognized geniuses of the country.

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### **6.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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Q. 1 How did English come into India?

Ans. Read section no. 6.2

Q. 2 Evaluate the contributions of Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, and Sri Aurobindo to Indian Prose writing.

Ans. Go through the section no. 6.2.1.

Q. 3 During post-independence, Indian prose writing gained tremendous momentum. Discuss.

Ans. Read the section no. 6.2.1 and 6.2.2.

Q. 4 Discuss a few kinds of non-fictional writings with suitable examples.

Ans. Read carefully sections 6.2.2 and 6.2.1.

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### **6.5 FURTHER READINGS**

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Kumar, Satish. A Survey of Indian English Prose. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1993, revised edition 2020.

Naik, M. K. Perspectives on Indian Prose in English. New delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1982.

Narasimhaiah, C. D. The Swan & the Eagle: Essays on Indian English Literature. Varanasi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1

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## UNIT 7 MAHATMA GANDHI: MY STORY

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- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Mahatma Gandhi: His Life and Age
- 7.3 Gandhi's Literary Career and Achievements
- 7.4 My Story: *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Part-wise Analysis)
- 7.5 On His Prose Style
- 7.6 Summing Up
- 7.7 Self- Assessment Questions and Answers
- 7.8 Further Readings

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### 7.0 OBJECTIVES

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Mahatma Gandhi has been ever the most influential personality in the history of world. He had single-handedly changed the course of history. He is even today considered to be one of the most adorable and inimitable personalities of the world. In this Unit, we shall be looking at the following key points:

- ✓ The time-line of his life and action;
- ✓ His literary career;
- ✓ Critical evaluation of his *Autobiography*; and
- ✓ His prose style.

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### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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This *Unit* is especially designed to acquaint learners with life, works, and work-pattern of Mahatma Gandhi. Just as Gandhiji was multi-faceted so was his approach. His approach is almost vague and amorphous. He is among a few world leaders who attempted to bring about change simultaneously in social, cultural, economic, and political life. It is quite difficult to say this or that. However it is not easy to characterize Gandhism in one or two sentences or phrases, three concepts broadly can be counted: *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Swaraj* (home-rule), and *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all). To meet these ends Gandhiji called for *Swadeshi* (home-spun or indigenous), *Satyagraha* (insistence on truth), women emancipation, eradication of

untouchability, and Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhiji always argued for *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* (equal respect to all religions). As per Gandhian ideology, these dreams are to be materialized only through the force of truth, and non-violence. Gandhiji wielded and developed his *Satyagraha* for the mobilization of mass against social, cultural, religious, economic, and political injustices.

Having gone through this *Unit*, we hope that learners of distance education will be able to understand Mahatma Gandhi and his workmanship. Along with it is also expected from them that they will prepare their own answers of the questions asked in section 7.7 in the light of given hints and suggestions. And it is also hoped that they will make sure the study of a few more books suggested in the section 7.8.

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## 7.2 MAHATMA GANDHI: HIS LIFE AND AGE

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(M. K. Gandhi 1869-1948)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948) was born in a *vaisya* family of traders turned administrators at Sudamapuri or Porbandar, Gujarat on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1869. Then, Porbandar was among a score of tiny princely states in Kathiawar region of British India. His father and forefathers had been administrators of these states. His father Karamchand Gandhi was least worldly as he had bequeathed very little property to the family. Uttamchand Gandhi was his grandfather. His mother Putlibai was the fourth wife of his father. She was from the community of Hindu Pranami Vaishnava. She was very religious lady. She had never taken her food before doing prayer. She always detested and denounced the consumption of liquor and tobacco. Mahatma Gandhi imbibed religious and devotional qualities of his mother.



Mahatma Gandhi got his up to High School education from Gujarat. He passed his matriculation from Samaldas College, Bhavnagar. In May 1883, he (a thirteen year old boy) married Kasturbai Makan (then she was 14 year old), the daughter of a rich merchant Gokuldas Makan. On 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1888 Gandhi went to England for the study of law at the University College, London. There he stayed for three years and in 1891 he qualified for bar services. He came back to India and attempted to make his career over here but he found himself unsuccessful. In 1893 he went to South Africa in search of his career. But there he found racial discrimination at its acme. This kind of atmosphere in South Africa changed his vision and attitude drastically. In 1888 when Gandhi was just 15 year old was blessed with first child but the child survived just for a few days. He was very much influenced by London Vegetarian Society regarding diet or meal. He was also influenced by the tales of Prahalad, Harishchandra and Shraavan Kumar. Kasturabai had been always with Gandhi on all walks of life. The mental make-up of Gandhiji was prepared by the readings of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *New Testament*, John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, Thomas Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*, and David Thoreau's essay on *Civil Disobedience*. He was also influenced by the teachings of Buddha, Edward Carpenter and Leo Tolstoy.

In 1915 Gandhiji returned to India and became undisputed leader of the Indian National Congress. Joining the congress, Gandhi worked hard to build mass movement against the colonial tyranny. He simply put on a white loin-cloth, white shawl, and sandals to achieve the support and sympathy of the general mass of the country. For his unique life style and action Tagore hailed him Mahatma and Subhash Chandra Bose addressed him as 'the Father of the Nation'. Lord Mountbatten called him 'one man army'. Gandhiji was unfortunately shot dead on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1948.

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### **7.3 GANDHI'S LITERARY CAREER AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

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M. K. Naik very systematically divided Gandhi's English writings into three phases:

The London Period (1888-1891)

The South African Period (1893-1915)

The Indian Period (1915-1948)

The first period lived up just for three years. During his stay in London, Gandhiji wrote the *London Diary* wherein he recorded his journey in London. He contributed some ten short essays to *The Vegetarian* and *The Vegetarian Messenger* on foods and festivals of India. On his return to India, Gandhiji wrote a 55 pages essay titled *Guide to London* written during 1893-94.

The second period covers twenty years of Gandhiji in South Africa. In 1895 he published pamphlets like ‘An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa’ and ‘The Indian Franchise’. In 1896 he published a pamphlet ‘Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa’. In these pamphlets he strongly argued for the amelioration in the lives of Indians living in South Africa. He began a journal in 1903 the *Indian Opinion* in English and Gujarati. It had continued its publication till 1914. The major publication of this journal is *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* which was written in Gujarati in 1909 and brought out serially in the journal. It is divided into twenty chapters on the issues regarding Indian Independence. Gandhi translated it into English and published in 1921 at the request of his South African associate Mr. Kallenbach. It was written in dialogue form between an editor and a reader. It was his major achievement. John Middleton Murry took it for ‘one of the spiritual classics of the world’.

The third period covers thirty three years of Gandhi’s life in India. During this period, Gandhiji launched two journals *Young India* which remained in circulation from 1919 to 1932 and *Harijan* which remained in operation from 1933 to 1948. The major work of this period is his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Its first volume was published in 1927 and the second in 1929. It was originally written in Gujarati at the instance of Swami Anand and other co-workers of Gandhi, later on it was translated into English by Mahadev Desai. It was published in Gujarati by Navajivan Trust, Ahmedabad.

Some other important works of Mahatma Gandhi are *Satyagraha in South Africa*, *Sarvodaya*, and his commentary on *Gita* in Gujarati.

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#### **7.4 My Story: THE STORY OF MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH (Part-wise Analysis)**

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*An Autobiography* or *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* is a very popular and influential book of Gandhi. It covers Gandhi’s life from early childhood through to the period 1920. It is the autobiography of Gandhiji. It registers stories of making Gandhi from Mohandas to Mahatma. It was initiated at the request of Swami Anand and other co-workers of him in Gujarati. Gandhi

published it weekly in his journal *Navjivan* from 1925 to 1929. Its English version was brought out parallel in the journal *Young India*. It was translated by his manager Mahadev Desai. M. K. Gandhi wrote in his “Introduction” about it: “But it is not my purpose to attempt a real autobiography. I simply want to tell the story of my numerous experiments with truth, and as my life consists of nothing but those experiments, it is true that the story will take the shape of an autobiography.” (Gandhi xi-xii)

Gandhiji wrote it not strictly in western style. He wrote about his practical experiments with truth, non-violence, celibacy, fasting and numerous other related issues. These experiments were carried out in his laboratory of life not in scientific laboratory. These experiments had tremendous effects on Gandhiji.

The *Autobiography* is divided into five parts. The first part is consisted of twenty five chapters; the second part twenty nine; the third part twenty three; the fourth part forty seven, and the fifth part includes forty three chapters.

M. K. Gandhi begins Autobiography writing about his grand-parents and parents. His grandfather Uttamchand Gandhi alias Ota Gandhi was a man of principles. Ota Gandhi was married twice and had six sons. The fifth son was Gandhi’s father Karamchand alias Kaba Gandhi. He “was a lover of his clan, truthful, brave and generous, but short tempered.” He did not have much school education but had good understanding about human affairs. He was very famous for resolving disputes. M. K. Gandhi’s mother Putlibai was very religious and of common sense. Her religiosity impacted Gandhi too much. Gandhiji was very shy and introvert since his childhood days. He got his early education from Rajkot. At school he always avoided mingling with other fellows because he was afraid of being laughed at by other students. He was not very sharp student in the class. His books and copies were his real companions. The important point about him is that he never did cheating to prove himself right. He had been always very respectful to elders. Since his childhood days he had pinned his faith in truth. The plays on *Harishchandra* and stories about *Shravan Kumar* always inspired him. Gandhiji was married at the tender age of thirteen to Kasturba. To him, marriage was just an occasion of celebration and expense of a lot of money. Kasturba was illiterate but by temperament she was simple, persevering and independent girl. He continued his studies after marriage. He was very passionate about learning various languages but was very reluctant towards games. However later on he insisted upon handwriting and physical education under the influence of Dorabji

Edulji Gimi the headmaster. Kasturba never deterred him from his studies. He had been very possessive towards her. Gandhiji regrets that he could not teach her illiterate wife. It was actually due to his possessiveness towards her. He even imposed many restrictions on her just for jealousy. Hereafter Gandhiji talks about a few casualties happened in his life as the death of his father and other close ones to him.

Once in his childhood Gandhiji with a relative took to smoking. It was for them just a kind of pleasure to emit clouds of smoke. To buy cigarettes he stole from a servant's copper. When he grew up, he realized his mistake he wrote a confession note to his father and therein he asked for due punishment. He was expecting punishment from him but he instead wept to read the note. Gandhiji wrote about the impact those drops of his tears on him: "Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. Only he who has experienced such love can know what it is." This was to him a lesson on the power of Ahimsa. "When such Ahimsa becomes all-embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power." (Gandhi 25-26) This lesson changed Gandhiji entirely and strengthened his faith in non-violence. Since his ideal was Shraavan Kumar, he punctually attended his father and rendered his services to him. He here points out about his carnal nature. He mentions that while messaging his father's feet he used to be beside his wife mentally even when she was in advance stage of pregnancy. M. K. Gandhi advises people to be away from their beloved wives especially when is in her advance stage of pregnancy. The baby Kasturba bore lived just for four days. These were to him the point of double shame.

Till the age of 16, Gandhiji was never exposed to religion at school by his teachers. It was his family nurse Rambha who taught him to repeat the *slokas* of *Ramayana* whenever he felt fear in the mind. Later on, he acquainted himself with many different religions. He has firm faith in *Ram Raksha*. He extensively read religious texts as the English rendering of the *Gita*, the *Bible*, Edwin Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, and Madame Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy*.

After passing matriculation, Gandhiji shifted to England for further study. But he was very nervous about making adjustment with the British life style because he was neither non-vegetarian nor alcoholic. Frequently he got disturbed to see people speaking false and following wrong practices knowingly. This troubled him. He often felt helpless as he found himself torn with doubts and anxieties. In London he starved for many days for non-availability of vegetarian

foods. He never wished to live like English gentlemen. So he always avoided the company of the English women. Even his decision about to go to London was disliked by his relatives.

In *the second part* Gandhi begins writing about his return to India. Here he met Dr. Mehta who introduced him to Shri. Revashankar Jagjivan. Meanwhile his mother passed away. It shattered Gandhi much. Later, Jagjivan introduced him to Raychandbhai the poet. Gandhi here talks about the three personalities who influenced him very much. They are Raychandbhai by his living contact, Leo Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*; and John Ruskin by his *Unto This Last*. After Gandhi's return to India, he found that some people wished to accept him again in the community but some of them were unwilling to accept him again for his stay in foreign countries. His elder brother any how resolved the issue. Later on, Gandhi decided to go to Bombay to study law but he found himself incapable. It was difficult to survive so Gandhi returned back to Rajkot. His elder brother introduced Gandhi to Sheth Abdul Karim Jhaveri (who was unlettered but a man of good experience), a partner of Dada Abdulla & Co. and thereby he got opportunity to serve as barrister in South Africa.

Gandhi sailed for South Africa in 1893. Here, for the first time Gandhi realized racial hatred prevailed. He was disgusted at his own weakness of not saying 'no' to Captain when he was called to meet in a room full of women. Gandhi remained adamant to his ideals. Here Gandhi heard people using the term 'coolie barrister' in place of 'Indian barrister'. The dangerous train journey to Standerton, Johannesburg set the example of the condition and attitude of colonials to the colonizers. Gandhiji got Islamic idea of brotherhood from Abdulla Sheth and later got introduced to Christianity through Mr. Baker. Gandhiji intimately examined the hard life conditions of Indians in South Africa. They were deprived of all civil, political, and social rights. Gandhiji to fight against discriminatory attitudes towards Indians settled in Natal and formed Natal Indian Congress. Gandhi stayed in South Africa for twenty years.

After three years stay in South Africa, Gandhiji decided to come back to Bombay on six months leave. After twenty four days sea journey, Gandhiji reached Calcutta and then caught a train for Bombay. Meanwhile he prepared 'green pamphlet' on the plight of Indians in South Africa. Its ten thousand copies were distributed in every part of India. THE PIONEER published from Allahabad, a daily newspaper, prepared an editorial about. Gandhiji had great esteem for British tradition and equal respect to their national anthem. Gandhiji did meetings in Poona and Madras

to discuss the issues. Thereafter with Dada Abdulla's support, Gandhiji went back to South Africa along with his family.

The *third part* mentions about Gandhi's return to South Africa with family. In 1896 Gandhi sailed back to South Africa with his wife and children. At the time of arrival at Natal Port, he faced difficulty but any how he was escorted to a safe place. The family was taken to Mr. Rustomji's place whereas Gandhi stayed on the shore. Mrs. Alexander, the wife of police superintendent, anyhow helped Gandhi to keep safe from the outraged mob. Thereafter Gandhi successfully removed the misunderstanding arose in the crowd. As he got down the ship with the permission of Captain he went with Mr. Laughton. And thereafter what happened Gandhiji writes about this event:

As soon as we landed, some youngsters recognized me and shouted 'Gandhi, Gandhi.' About half a dozen men rushed to the spot and joined in the shouting. Mr. Laughton feared that the crowd might swell and hailed a rickshaw. I had never liked the idea of being in a rickshaw. This was to be my first experience. But the youngsters would not let me get into it. They frightened the rickshaw boy out of his life, and he took to his heels. As we went ahead, the crowd continued to swell, until it became impossible to proceed further. They first caught hold of Mr. Laughton and separated us. Then they pelted me with stones, brickbats and rotten eggs. Someone snatched away my turban, whilst others began to batter and kick me. I fainted and caught hold of the front railings of a house and stood there to get my breath. But it was impossible. They came upon me boxing and battering. The wife of the Police Superintendent, who knew me, happened to be passing by. The brave lady came up, opened her parasol though there was no sun then, and stood between the crowd and me. This checked the fury of the mob, as it was difficult for them to deliver blows on me without harming Mrs. Alexander. (Gandhi 177)

Gandhiji had introduced bills in Natal Legislative Assembly to safeguard the Indian Community. Gandhiji, even had started a temporary school for the children of *Satyagrahis* in South Africa. Between 1901 and 1906 Gandhiji did thorough study about the idea of *Brahmacharya* and of *Moksha*.

Racial discrimination was in full swing in South Africa. The white barbers even were not ready to touch the hair of Indian and African people. He even had intimated in written form to Joseph

Chamberlain the Secretary of Home for colonies against the discriminatory policies formulated to target Indians. In return the secretary rebuffed him. Gandhiji had developed a kind of passion about self-help and austerity in life. Meanwhile, the Boer War broke out. Gandhiji had personal sympathy for Boers, but he worked in the defense of British Empire. After the Boers War, Gandhiji came back to India handing over all the expensive gifts he had got at the time of farewell to the organizing trust because it was Gandhi's belief that "a public worker should accept no costly gifts".

In India, Gandhiji stayed with Gopal Krishna Gokhale and did acquaintance with many foremost Bengali families. During his stay in India Gandhiji met Sister Nivedita and later went to Benares. Gokhale wanted him to practice law in Bombay but Gandhiji preferred to start work at Rajkot. Soon Gandhiji again decided to return to South Africa to resolve many important disputed issues related to Indian cause with Joseph Chamberlain.

The *fourth part* begins narrating about colour politics being played by the English colonials in South Africa. The colonial governmental policies and laws were invoked to work against Indian interests. Gandhiji mentioned about his struggle for the rights of Indian settlers' in Transvaal. Officers working in the Asiatic Departments were not ready to safeguard interests of Indians, Chinese and many others.

When *World War I* broke out, Gandhiji was in England. For health issues he had to return to India. Gandhiji took *Ahimsa* as the path to truth. Even during serious illness, Gandhiji and his family had never given up vegetarianism. Gandhiji mentioned here about a few Europeans such as Miss Dick, Miss Schlesin etc. Gokhale took Miss Schlesin for the combination of sacrifice, purity, and the fearfulness. His journals *Indian Opinion*, *Young India*, and *Navjivan* were part of his life in those days.

Meanwhile, the *Black Plague* spread in Johannesburg Gold Mine. Gandhiji along with Sjt. Madanjit and Dr. William Godfrey looked after the victims. After the evacuation of people living nearby the site was put to flames to avoid further spread of the disease.

Gandhiji translated John Ruskin's noted work *Unto This Last* into Gujarati language and gave it the title *Sarvodaya*. His family was brought back to South Africa. Mr. Polak a friend of him was like a blood brother with whom he shared his point of views regarding different burning topics. The settlement of Phoenix was another important political step in 1904. *Zulu Rebellion* was

another notable event that happened meanwhile. He still continued practicing *Brahmacharya* and vegetarianism.

At *Tolstoy Farm* where Gandhi, Mr. Kallenbach and a few other *Satyagrahi* families were staying followed every religious norm and practice. There had been developed a natural environment of self discipline and restraint. At the farm, literary training and character building were emphasized. On the request of Gokhale, Gandhiji came back to India in January 1915 to accelerate his *Satyagraha* mission. The First *Satyagraha* Movement under the leadership of Gandhiji took place in Transvaal, South Africa in 1906 against a law to frustrate Indians demand for civil rights. This was the occasion when the idea of *Satyagraha* took material shape.

The *fifth part* begins with the arrival of Gandhi to India. Coming back to India, Gandhi ji established *Sabarmati Ashram*, a centre of simplicity and sacrifice wherein he reflected on God, Ahimsa, and Truth. At this *Ashram* untouchables were also accommodated. It was a break away from the tradition. It proved consistency between theory and practice. The labour strike against low wage at Ahmadabad on the principle of the *Satyagraha* added a new dimension. *Kheda Campaign* launched in 1917 to oppose coercive land revenue imposed on farmers during famine. *Satyagraha* now has become an act of self purification. For constant engagements with *Satyagraha* agitations, the health condition of Bapu ji got deteriorated but somehow got well. Whole India on March 30<sup>th</sup> 1919 held demonstration in protest of the *Rowlatt Act*. In this agitation many people lost their lives. It was a huge success.

Gandhi ji kept putting his effort on spreading awareness about the force of satyagraha through his journals *Navjivan* and *Young India*. His participation in congress conference at Amritsar marked Gandhi ji's entry into Congress politics. During this period 'Khadi' became the symbol of being a true Indian.

In the last chapter titled *Farewell*, Gandhi ji affirmed, "My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth." (Gandhi 463) To him, Truth was all-pervading spirit. Gandhi ji writes bidding farewell to reader, "I ask him to join with me in prayer to the god of truth that He may grant the boon of Ahimsa in mind, word and deed." (Gandhi 464) Thus it was a moderate effort to talk about Mahatma Gandhi how he became from an ordinary man to 'Mahatma'.

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## 7.5 ON HIS PROSE STYLE

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The prose writings of Mahatma Gandhi are pure and simple in style. Simplicity and clarity are two chief qualities of his English prose. He always looked for effective communication. Artificial or ornamental use of words and syntax are assiduously avoided. About Gandhi's prose style G. S. Balaram Gupta writes that the English prose of Gandhi "is guilty neither of rambling digressions nor high-flown rhetoric. It is lucid but not pedestrian; logical but not dry; effective but not declamatory; assertive but not dogmatic." (Naik 52) He has learnt from his teachers how to use short, simple, efficacious sentences. He was very careful about the choice of words and their arrangement. He never allowed entry of any word which in any way could hamper the efficacy of communication. Besides, he was trained as a lawyer. So he knew very well how to make sure the presentation of content conclusively. Judicious and appropriate selection of words makes sure his mastery over the language.

Gandhi's English prose "is full of statements memorable for their aphoristic brevity, clarity, and pointedness". Often we come across passages which are made up of short sentences and sometimes these sentences are arranged antithetically for making the particular idea forceful. He often uses analogies to bring about clarity of thought. He occasionally uses figures such as Simile and Metaphor for the sake of illustration and elucidation. He always used the language of heart. For these reasons his prose achieves lyrical touches. He dislikes unnecessary use of words always preferred appropriate ones.

"Style is the man himself". It was said by Buffon. This statement is fully applicable to the writings of Mahatma Gandhi. "Simplicity, economy, unpretentiousness, frankness, and rectitude were the virtues that Gandhi practiced all along his life; and we find an amalgamation of all these qualities permeating the style of his writing also. The idiom of Gandhi's writing is an exact reflection of the idiom of his life itself. Unadorned simplicity, rigorous restraint, stringent economy, transparent honesty, and saintly austerity- these are the factors which governed Gandhi's life, and these precisely are the virtues which strengthen his writing and make for its perennial appeal." (Naik 57)

Mahatma Gandhi was the great communicator. For the purpose of effective communication he preferred colloquial language to ornamental and sophisticated. There is no conscious use of ornamental language. His style is plain and direct. He uses minimum words for maximum content. In this sense he was minimalist.

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## 7.6 SUMMING UP

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To the conclusion, it can be said that Gandhi ji not only did experiment with truth but also with the genre of ‘autobiography’. His *Autobiography* is unlike ‘autobiographies’ written in the western countries. Gandhi ji beautifully interweaved the history and personal life experiences in his *Autobiography*. The systematic recounting of events which took place before him and whose he was part of is very interesting.

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## 7.7 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Q. 1 Explain “Autobiography” as a genre of writing.

Ans. Go through the whole unit and define thereafter ‘Autobiography’.

Q. 2 After having gone through the *Autobiography* of Gandhiji, what impression does it have on you?

Ans. Read carefully section no. 7.4 and develop your own idea.

Q. 3 Write an essay on Mahatma Gandhi’s prose style.

Ans. Read section no. 7.5.

Q. 4 Write an essay on Gandhism.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 7.1.

Q. 5 Write a note on Gandhi as a prose writer.

Ans. Read the section no. 7.3.

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## 7.8 FURTHER READINGS

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Gandhi, M. K. *An Autobiography or The Story of my experiments with truth*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1927, reprint 2008.

Kumar, Satish. *A Survey of Indian English Prose*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1993, revised edition 2020.

Naik, M. K. *Perspectives on Indian Prose in English*. New delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1982.

Narasimhaiah, C. D. *The Swan & the Eagle: Essays on Indian English Literature*. Varanasi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1987.

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## **UNIT 8 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY(CHAPTER L: A VISIT TO GANDHI JI)**

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- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Jawaharlal Nehru: His Life and Age
- 8.3 Nehru’s Literary Career and Achievements
- 8.4 An Autobiography (Chapter L :A Visit to Gandhi )
- 8.5 His Prose Style
- 8.6 Summing Up
- 8.7 Self- Assessment Questions and Answers
- 8.8 Further Readings

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### **8.0 OBJECTIVES**

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Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) was one among prominent icons of Indian freedom struggle. He was a noted public speaker and writer. He took education from Harrow, Cambridge, and the Inner Temple, England. In this *Unit* we shall be discussing about the non-fictional prose writings of Jawaharlal Nehru in brief and the Chapter no. 50 from his *Autobiography*, “A Visit to Gandhi” in particular along with following points:

- ✓ About Nehru’s life and upbringing;
- ✓ His political and literary career and achievements;
- ✓ Literary analysis and evaluation of “A Visit to Gandhi”; and
- ✓ Nehru’s prose style.

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### **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

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This *Unit* is prepared to acquaint learners with the prose-works of Nehru. About his command over the language it is popular that whoever is interested in learning English must go through the works of Jawaharlal Nehru. In his prose writings we find natural ease and grace of expression. He was very prolific and dynamic. His insight into social, political, cultural, economic, and other allied issues was tremendous. Nehru was of scientific temper. He was against fundamentalism,

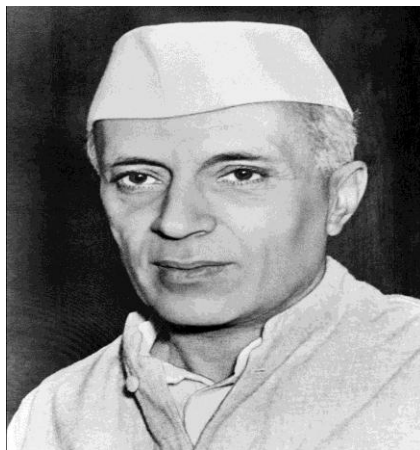
exploitation, corruption, bigotry, and obscurantism. He wished to see the country a secular, democratic, and socialist.

Having read carefully this *Unit*, we hope that learners will be familiarized very well with works and workmanship of Nehru. It is also suggested to go through the text. Along with it is also expected from them that they will prepare their own answers of the questions asked in section 8.7 in the light of given hints and suggestions. And it is also hoped that they will make sure the study of a few more books suggested in the section 8.8.

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## 8.2 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: HIS LIFE AND AGE

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(Jawaharlal Nehru 1889-1964)

Courtesy – Wikipedia

Jawaharlal Nehru was born on 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1889 to the famous lawyer of Allahabad High Court Motilal Nehru and Swarup Rani at Allahabad (now Prayagraj). His father was anglophile but his mother was well steeped in Indian value system. They got Jawaharlal as a son after 11 years of their marriage. He was brought up in opulence. His mother lavished her love upon Jawaharlal unconditionally. Vijaylaxmi and Krishna were his two younger sisters. Motilal had a plan to give his children expensive education. He had engaged private tutors and governesses to look after their education. Among them Ferdinand T. Brooks was well known who whetted Jawaharlal's desire for reading. Brooks was theosophist. He was recommended by Annie Besant. Until the age of 15, Nehru got his education at his home Anand Bhawan. This was the time when Motilal Nehru felt home education insufficient for Jawaharlal so he shifted his family to England

in 1905. Motilal Nehru got him admitted into Harrow School where he studied Latin. After two years brief stay at Harrow he took admission with permission of his father in Trinity College, Cambridge. He did his *Tripas* (final honors degree examination at Cambridge University) in Geology, Chemistry, and Botany. Thereafter he became the votary of science. Besides science subjects he had great interest in economics, history, and literature. He had read novels of Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, and H. G. Wells. Romances of Mark Twain and stories of Sherlock Homes interested him very much. Apart from these areas he had keen eyes over happenings in the field of politics in India. He used to discuss with relatives about Indian freedom struggle. He completed his Barrister-at-Law from Inner Temple. Before returning to India Jawaharlal Nehru had joined London School of Economics for a very brief period. Though he was Cambridge University scholar but he had no dream to join civil services like other scholars of the university.

Jawaharlal Nehru came back to India in the summer of 1912 with no confirm decision about his career. At the time of his return Indian freedom struggle was divided into two camps- moderates and extremists. Having returned to India, Jawaharlal began working under his father as a junior at the Allahabad High Court. But soon he found the profession uncongenial and began taking participation in activities arguing Indian interests. In 1916 Nehru for the first time met Gandhiji in Lucknow and made up his mind to work with the mission of congress. However he had seen him in Bombay session of Indian National Conference in 1915. Thereafter he became active participant of congress affairs. He used to be very much busy in national freedom politics. Meanwhile, Motilal Nehru arranged his marriage with a seventeen years young girl Kamla Kaul of Kashmiri Brahmin descent on February 8, 1916.

Jawaharlal Nehru had been part of every agitation took place for the cause of Indian Independence. He joined Home Rule League started by Balgangadhar Tilak and Annie Besant. He went to Bihar to support agrarian agitation at the behest of Gandhiji. He opposed draconian Rowlatt Act. In opposition of Rowlatt Bills, mass agitation and demonstration (*Satyagraha*) happened at the call of Gandhiji. Jalianwalah Bagh massacre in 1919 very much agitated him. This event brought about drastic change in his life style and finally renounced comforts of his life and adopted the life style of mass. He became the lieutenant of Gandhiji. In 1922 Chauri-Chaura movement took place in Gorakhpur but it led to Gandhiji for calling off civil

disobedience for a few years. Meanwhile his wife Kamla fell ill and he took her eight year old daughter Indira and wife to Switzerland where Kamla was diagnosed the victim of tuberculosis.

Jawaharlal Nehru with his family came back to India after European tour in December 1927. He was elected the President of All India Youth Congress to mobilize common people especially youths. Thereafter he became the General Secretary of Congress at Calcutta Congress in 1928. In 1929 he became the President of Congress unanimously. His European exposure helped him shaping his international perspective and outlook. For his constant involvement in Indian national freedom struggle, Nehru had to go jails seven times and spent four years therein between 1930 and 1935.

Jawaharlal Nehru lost his father on 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1931. It created void in his life because his father had been almost like a companion to him. Another huge loss to him was the demise of his wife Kamla same year in Switzerland. In 1942 he played very significant role in the Quit India Movement. Finally India got freedom from the British slavery on 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru has been the First Prime Minister of India for seventeen years that is from 1947 to 1964. He died on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1964.

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### **8.3 NEHRU'S LITERARY CAREER AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

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Jawaharlal Nehru was encyclopedic in his choice and orientation. He was prolific writer, good orator, and voracious reader. During his jail period he utilized time of leisure doing creative works. Main works of this period are *Glimpses of World History* (1934), *An Autobiography* (1936), and *The Discovery of India* (1946). His first creative work *Soviet Russia* was published in 1928. It is the collection of sixteen essays based on his tour to Russia in 1927. His *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* was published in 1930. It is consisted of thirty one essays addressed to his 10 year old daughter Indira written during 1928. He wrote *Glimpses of World History* during his stay in jail 1930-33. It is very wide in scope. It surveys the world history from the very beginning of human civilization to 1930s. It was published in 2 volumes. It bore subtitle "Further letters to his daughter, written in prison, and containing a rambling account of history for young people". It earned popularity for "Better history" and "Better English".

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote *The Discovery of India* during his stay in Ahmednagar jail for five months. It was written in 1944 and published in 1946. In this book he attempted to know about real India. He drew a full length picture of Indian culture and thought.

Jawaharlal Nehru as a creative writer occupies very important place among Indian writers. He is among a few writers who could write and speak in English with ease and confidence.

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#### **8.4 An Autobiography (Chapter L: A Visit to Gandhi )**

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*An Autobiography* is the crowning achievement of Nehru as a prose writer. He took some nine months time to write it. He began writing in June 1934 when he was in Dehra Dun prison and completed it in Almora jail in February 1935. It was first published in 1936. It has total Sixty Eight Chapters. For this work Nehru had suggested the title *In and Out of Prison* with subtitle *An Autobiographical Narrative with Musings on Recent Events in India*. But the publisher John Lane The Bodley Head of London published it keeping the title simply *An Autobiography*. Nehru dedicated this work to his wife Kamla who died just a few weeks ago to the publication. Hereafter it went to 12 editions and translated into 30 languages.

*A Visit to Gandhi* is the 50<sup>th</sup> chapter of *An Autobiography*. In it there are at least twelve chapters about Nehru's imprisonment in various jails like Alipore Jail, Dehra Dun Jail, Almora Jail, and Naini Jail. In the XLIX chapter "The End of Long Term" Nehru wrote that his imprisonment tenure of two years was relaxed for his good behaviors by three and a half months. He had realized that most of the prisoners were dying from poor health causes which had agitated and distressed him very much. In this chapter he also pointed out that he had been like other Kashmiri Brahmins meat eater but 1920s Non-cooperation Movement turned him vegetarian and remained for some six years. Gandhiji kept on going on fast for Harijan causes which deteriorated his health. Meanwhile Nehruji was transferred from Dehra Dun Jail to Naini Jail. On 30<sup>th</sup> August 1933 Nehru was released from the jail on the ground that his mother was seriously ill and was hospitalized in Lucknow thirteen days before due date.

After having released from Naini prison Nehru firstly set for Lucknow to meet his mother Swaruprani and there stayed for some days. After release, Nehru was feeling a little uncomfortable with the new environment. He saw, "Children and boys and girls growing up, marriages, births, deaths; love and hate, work and play, tragedy and comedy. New interests in life, new subjects for conversation, always there was a little element of surprise in what I saw and heard." (399) He felt that he would be soon imprisoned so need not to adapt the environment.

During 30s of Twentieth Century, Nehru writes India had become a police controlled country. The government had become very coercive and oppressive. Every political activities supporting the cause of freedom was suppressed by the British officials. Everywhere they had been deployed to sneak into any probable political agitation or demonstration. Any Indian working under Congress and had been to prison for once cannot be recruited for any post in municipalities and corporations. It was the instruction of the government. If they recruited the government will stop their grant. This kind of coercion happened at Calcutta Corporation. The government had enacted a rule forbidding the employment of persons by the Corporation who had been charged for involvement in political activities.

The British Government justifies its stand giving example of Nazi in Germany. Nazis had been very coercive and oppressive. The British officials attempted to convince Indians that they had sincere sympathy for them. Hereafter Nehru sought to explain a little getting philosophic the idea about how people in general get brutal or wildish forgetting civic norms of behavior. According to him, a man whether he is German or English or Indian usually misbehaves when his passion is aroused. At such occasions people forget their good breeding and social etiquettes and create chaos. In such situations people belonging to ruling side or ruled degrade though their degradation affected them differently. Nehru while staying at jails had listened high British officials and had realized that they seemed like masters behaving towards subordinates. He gives example of the Commissioner of Midnapur Division in Bengal who hinted that non-European officers would get more stringent in their actions. Public hangings of freedom fighters were carried out and people were called and given facilities for having an open watch. Many people were hanged in Sindh.

After his release from the jail, Nehru took a stock of political and economic situation in India. At that time many of his comrades were still in jail and even fresh arrests were also taking place. Restrictions were secretly imposed upon censor and press. Correspondences were being delayed for no reasons. Meantime Nehru realized conflict in his mind. On one side he was not interested to go back to jail again and on the other reluctant to bow down before the British. However there had been every possibility of imprisonment. So he first of all met his mother who was gaining health but very slowly. Second, he was eager to meet Gandhiji who was also getting well after the latest fast in Poona for Harijan welfare. Nehru was keen enough to have a discussion about political situations with provincial colleagues. The national activities engaged him too much so



he largely ignored household affairs. He had cut down all expenditure to live out in minimum. Meanwhile a lot of letters reached to him asking for money from the down south of the country under erroneous impression.

Meantime, Nehru's younger sister Krishna got married after a year's time in jail. To see his mother's health conditions improving, Nehru immediately went to Poona to see Gandhiji who was recovering fast. He talked with him a lot however both differed in their outlook on life, politics and economics. But Nehru appreciates Gandhiji's patience to listen his point of view. Nehru agreed upon Gandhiji's declaration of de-vesting programme of vested interests only through conversation not compulsion. Gandhiji had great impression upon Indian peasantry. It was very good experience for Nehru to work with Gandhiji. However Nehru was ready to differ if the occasion happened. Civil Disobedience Programme was put to temporary halt. The British Government had not recognized Congress as a lawful organization because it was trying to crush it. Nehru wanted to popularize his socialistic ideas among the people. Gandhiji was adamant to work for Harijan privileges. Nehru did not want Gandhiji to go on fast again for Harijan causes. It was very complex situation about how to avert Gandhiji from going on fast. Many restrictions were imposed upon Gandhiji yet he kept giving advising Congress workers when necessity took place.

Nehru was afraid of discontinuation of civil disobedience permanently. If it happened it was possible that the enthusiastic congress workers would jump into fire. So it was decided to keep civil disobedience going at very low pace. For staying many years in jail, Nehru had not any opportunity to visit any cinema house or theatre. The existing culture houses of the country were only working keeping in mind city cultured people. It was another aspect of colonial policy looking for the demise of Indian art and culture. Meanwhile the Tagore family took initiative to restore Indian Art and Culture. However it was quite challenging to develop an art in an atmosphere of fear.

Meantime, many workers working with Congress who recently had been released from the jail disagreed upon and severely criticized Gandhiji's metaphysical outlook to politics and his patronizing attitude to Harijans. Time had come to refresh National Movement and the government was also getting ready to suppress and demoralize activists. Senior leaders of Congress were criticizing Gandhiji. Especially he was being criticized by those who say something and do something else. But Nehru lavishes praise upon Gandhiji for making the

problem of Indian mass the problem of world. Gandhiji's method of Non-Violent Non-cooperation or Civil Resistance is great achievement. At this point of time Nehru puts up scholarly opinion about the idea of criticism. What kind of criticism one should encourage and follow and what are benefits of honest criticism.

According to Nehru, honest criticism should be promoted and encouraged because out of positive discussions much valuable points arise naturally. Gandhiji was by that time in such a domineering position that it was quite impossible to argue with him. It is not good for the benefit in general. People had a tendency to follow him blindly. Every activity or decision was left upon him. As he asked, people began doing so. Nehru didn't believe in blind obedience. It was his belief that nobody however great he may be but not be above criticism. If the criticism safeguards and promotes inaction, it should not be entertained. Nehru justifies:

Life is anyhow a complex affair, and the conflicts and contradictions of life sometimes make one despair a little. It is not surprising that people should differ, or even that comrades with a common approach to problems should draw different conclusions. But a person who tries to hide his own weakness in high-sounding phrases and noble principles is apt to be suspect. A person who tries to save himself from prison by giving undertakings and assurances to the Government, or by other dubious conduct, and then has the temerity to criticize others, is likely to injure the cause he espouses. (407)

In this way Nehru in this chapter put his experiences of life aftermath release from jails. In this chapter Nehruji on two or three occasions talked about general issues for the establishment of true democracy. He wrote about occasions of violence, life, and criticism which are of general interest but are worth keeping in mind. His thoughts about Englishmen are different from those of other average Indians. He seems here and there admiring Englishmen. According to him English people as a whole cannot be held responsible for Indians plight and misery. They were also the victims of same circumstances. It was situational problem.

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## **8.5 HIS PROSE STYLE**

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Jawaharlal Nehru was one among well-read personalities of India. He got modern English education from foreign universities and colleges. To him making expression in English was not the matter of labour and pain. It was to him quite natural process. He was very much comfortable at English expressions. M. K. Naik evaluates his prose style summarily:

“Nehru’s prose is a just reflection of the man- sincere and idealistic, urbane and cultured, vigorous yet graceful- a man endowed with a clear and sharp (though perhaps not an original) mind, strong emotions, a feeling for beauty and a keen comic sense. His style is totally free from the periodic ponderousness of many of the nineteenth century Indians. His prose steers clear of their heavy Latinized diction, their deliberately balanced and complex sentence-structure, and their magniloquence. His diction is, by and large, simple, but he has a sure feeling for the apt word and the incisive phrase which gives his writing a remarkable trenchancy of expression: e.g. his description of Independence as a ‘tryst with destiny’ and of Gandhi as ‘often the unknown stared at us through his eyes.’ Among Indian masters of English, Nehru is undoubtedly one of the most outstanding.” (Naik 130-31) Style is the man. Nehru’s aesthetic sense and his imaginative and emotional nature are reflected in his writings. His political and social thoughts are bound together with his belief in science. He was the chief architect of the Congress demanding complete freedom in 1930.

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## **8.6 SUMMING UP**

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Nehru was widely read and had absorbed a lot of learning which time to time appeared in the form of references and quotations. His style was polished and urbane. He was very talented and dynamic personality. He at a time played several roles with equal competency. It was his dream to bring about well-being of Indians through scientific methods and means. Actually he believed in mass development. He was partly moderate and partly aggressive by temperament and outlook.

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## **8.7 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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Q. 1 Throw light upon Jawaharlal Nehru’s education and upbringing.

Ans. Read section no. 8.2.

Q. 2 Discuss Nehru as a writer of prose.

Ans. Read section no. 8.3.

Q. 3 Summarize the theme of chapter “A Visit to Gandhi” in your words.

Ans. Go through the section no. 8.4

Q. 4 Evaluate Nehru’s prose style.

Ans. Read section no. 8.5

Q. 5 Throw light on Nehru's mental condition just after his release from the jail.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 8.4.

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## **8.8 FURTHER READINGS**

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Naik, M. K. Perspectives on Indian Prose in English. New delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1982.

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Bachelor of Arts  
**DCEN-103 (N)**

## **Indian Writing in English**

### **CONTENTS**

#### **Block III : Fiction**

Unit 9: Indian English Novel : Historical Perspective

Unit 10: Life and Works of R.K. Narayan

Unit 11: *The Guide* : Title , Theme, Plot and Characterization

Unit 12 : Structure and Technique

## **Block Introduction III**

Dear learners! This block is aimed at making you aware of Indian English fiction with a special reference to R.K. Narayan. This block is divided into four units from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>. Unit ninth focuses on the introduction to Indian English Fiction. In this unit, we will learn about the growth and development of Indian English Fiction from a historical perspective. The tenth unit aimed to discuss the Life and works of R.K. Narayan. R.K. Narayan was an Indian writer known for his contribution to Indian literature in English. Born on October 10, 1906, in Madras (now Chennai), India, he grew up in the town of Mysore in the state of Karnataka. His upbringing in a traditional South Indian Brahmin family greatly influenced his writing, as he often drew upon his own experiences and observations of everyday life in his fictional works. The 11<sup>th</sup> unit focuses on the title, theme, plot, and characterization of R.K. Narayan's novel *The Guide*. The theme of a novel titled "Guide" by R.K. Narayan encompasses various facets, as Narayan's works often delve into complex human experiences within the context of Indian society. The 12<sup>th</sup> and last unit of the block focuses on R.K. Narayan's structure and narrative technique used in *The Guide*. In short, after studying this block, you will be able to understand the philosophical and realist way of thinking about the life of R.K. Narayan and develop the analytical power to understand the narrative technique used in his novels.

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## UNIT 9 INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Indian English Fiction: Genesis and Growth
  - 9.2.1 Pre-Independence Indian English Fiction
  - 9.2.2 Post-Independence Indian English Fiction
- 9.3 Summing Up
- 9.4 Self- assessment Questions and Answers
- 9.5 Further Readings

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### 9.0 OBJECTIVES

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The aim of this *Block* is to make learners familiar with Indian fiction writing in general and R. K. Narayan's novel *The Guide* in particular. *Unit 9* will be looking at the historical perspective on Indian fiction writing. Story-telling has been ever in Indian tradition but 'novel' as a form of writing was quite new to Indians. In this *Unit* we shall be looking at the following key-concerns:

- ✓ Origin of Indian novel writing;
- ✓ Growth during Pre-Independence era;
- ✓ Growth during Post-Independence period; and
- ✓ It's place in world literature.

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### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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With the introduction of English and English as a medium of instruction in India, Indian creative writers first mastered the form and thereafter they began giving expression in the form of novel. Actually novel writing is not of Indian origin. In beginning language learning was primary concern. By the Wood Dispatch in 1854 universities at Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta in India were established and in wake of their establishment, English studies became available to students in large numbers. As they got opportunity to study English novels, they mastered their technical aspects and started working on it in Indian context.

Having studied this *Unit*, we hope that learners will be able to understand the minutiae of Indian fictional prose writing. Along with it is also expected from them that they will prepare their own answers of the questions asked in section 9.4 in the light of given hints and suggestions. And it is also hoped that they will make sure the study of a few more books suggested in the section 9.5.

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## 9.2 INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION: GENESIS AND GROWTH

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With the establishment of universities in India, Indian students became acquainted with English poets and novelists. They exerted tremendous influence upon them. They studied novels of Walter Scott, Charles Dickens, Honor de Balzac, Victor Hugo etc. and learnt the art of fiction writing. In beginning, English was considered to be the matter of great respect and privilege. It was thought that English had potential to produce learned clerks and creative writers. However in Sanskrit tradition prose fiction like *Dasakumarcharita* of Dandin and *Kadambari* of Bana Bhatta were already written and popular in India. In India fiction writing began a little late to poetry. On western pattern the first fictional work is *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, published in 1864. It was about a middle class patriarchal family where the wife is oppressed by her husband. Bankim Chandra produced some other noted works like *Anandmath* (1882), *Kapalkundala* (1885), *Durgeshnandini* (1890) and etc. He is sometimes considered to be the literary dictator of Bengal literary *renaissance*.

### 9.2.1 PRE-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION

After brilliant start up from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Raj Lakshmi Devi published her novel in 1876 titled *The Hindu Wife*. She was followed by Toru Dutt who wrote *Bianca, or The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) in English. But unfortunately it remained unfinished due to her sudden death. Toru's father asked the *Bengal Magazine* to bring out it. The magazine brought out it serially between January and April 1878. She wrote a complete novel in French titled *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d' Arvers* which was discovered by her father after her death among papers. Her father wrote "Prefatory Memoir" and got it published in 1879 by a Paris based firm, Didier under the supervision of another the French authoress Mile Clarisse Bader.

At the outset of twentieth century, a gradual growth in fiction writing was seen through hands of Romesh Chunder Dutt, Sir Joginder Singh, Bal Krishna, S. K. Ghosh, T. Ramkrishna Pillai etc. Romesh Chunder Dutt wrote six novels in Bengali heavily drawing on the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. Out of six two novels *Sansar* and *Madhvi Kankan*, he translated into English under



the respective title *The Lake of Palms* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909). Joginder Singh produced four noted novels in the first half of the century. These are *Nur Jahan* (1909), *Nasrin* (1915), *Kamla* (1925), and *Kamini* (1931). Bal Krishna continued the tradition of Romesh and wrote *The Love of Kusuma* in 1910. S. K. Ghosh is deemed to be one of the most talented novelists of the period. He wrote *1001 Indian Nights* or *The Trials of Narayan Lal* (1905) and *The Prince of Destiny* (1909). These two works are noted for their literary merit. T. Ramkrishna Pillai wrote two romances. These are *Padmini* (1903) and *The Dive for Death* (1912). These were early sparks of Indian fiction writing. However they could not achieve much attention.

In the second decade of twentieth century, the emergence of Rabindranath Tagore as the star of Bengal *Renaissance* gave momentum in fiction writing. He was prolific writer of his time. His novels exerted greater influence upon would-be writers. He wrote novels in Bengali originally. Three of them *The Wreck* (1921), *Gora* (1923), *The Home and the World* (1921), and *Crosscurrents* (1929) are translated works in English. These were written earlier in Bengali.

During Gandhian era big changes took place in the field of politics as well as creative writing. First of all I would like to take up Kaveripatanam Sidhanath Venkataramani (1891-1951). He is the earliest novelist of the Gandhian period. He seriously followed the Gandhian ideology. His works are imbued with socialistic and nationalist zeal. His first novel *Murugan, The Tiller* was published in 1927. Its hero Ramu is contrasted by Kedari, a materialist. The latter finally doomed for his own chicanery whereas the latter emerges spectacular for his public service. His second novel is *Kandan, the Patriot: A Novel of New India in the Making*. It was published in 1932. It is set upon the background of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930s. His works inspired the coming writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandeya and many others.

After Venkataramani, Krishnaswamy Nagarajan and A.S.P. Ayyar took the lead. Nagarajan wrote two famous novels- *Athavar House* (1937) and *Chronicles of Kedaram* (1961). Ayyar wrote *Three Men of Destiny* (1939). Later on, he divided it into two parts published them with separate titles. These are *The Legions Thunder Past* (1947) and *Chanakya and Chandragupta* (1951). Let us move on to 'the Big Three' (William Walsh) novelists of Indian fiction writing.

Mulk Raj Anand the oldest of 'big three' was born in a Kshatriya family of Peshawar on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1905. He died on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2004 at his Khandala residence. Social concerns

attracted him immediately. He was like Charles Dickens and H. G. Wells. In his novels we meet problems of urban labourers, untouchables, orphans, caste-ism, hunger, poverty, and class superiority. Growing economic gap among people always made him feel uneasy. He was socio-Marxist and humanist in his choice and interest. He faced great difficulties in getting his first novel *Untouchable* published. It was published in 1935 only after when it got 'preface' from E. M. Forster. It earned him immense popularity. Thereafter, he published a number of novels- *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1941), *The Sword and Sickle* (1942), and *The Big Heart* in 1945. He was awarded *Padma Bhushan* in 1967 for his journal *Marga* and *Sahitya Akademy Award* in 1972 for his biographical fiction *Morning Face*. *The Village*, *Across the Black Waters*, and *The Sword and the Sickle* are famous as *Lalu* trilogy.

Rashipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan was born in a Tamil Brahmin family on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1906 in Madras. He died on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2001 when he was 94. His mentor and friend Graham Greene played very important role in shaping him as a fiction writer. His all novels are set in a region famous as 'Malgudi'. For it he is also known as regional novelist as Thomas Hardy in England and William Faulkner in America. Unlike Anand, he focused on the problems of middle-class people living in towns. He was not one among bright students but had creative spark in his blood. The initial 'R' in his name stands for 'Rasipuram' the name of his village to which his family belong. 'K' stands for the name of his father. 'Krishnaswami Iyer' and 'Narayan' stands for Narayan-swami though the novelist has never used it. He calls him simply 'Narayan'. He wrote a number of novels like *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1936), *The English Teacher* (1945), *The Dark Room* (1938), *Mr. Sampath* (1952), *The Financial Expert* (1955), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962), *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), *The Vender of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1977), and *Talkative Man* (1986). Narayan won the first *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1960 for his novel *The Guide*. This novel was also adopted for film and for Broadway.

Next most influential man is Raja Rao who was born in an orthodox Brahmin family of Hassana village of Mysore on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1908 and passed away on 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2006 in Austin, Texas (USA). In terms of quantity his output is definitely meager but in terms of quality and influence he is superior to his preceding stalwarts Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. His creative works include *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Cow of Barricades* (1947), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960),

*The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965), *Comrade Kirillov* (1976), and *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978). For his creative innovations he was awarded *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1964, *Padma Bhushan* in 1969, and *Padma Vibhushan* in 2007. Thus, Raja Rao is a dedicated and distinguished Indian English novelist. For him literature is 'Sadhna' a spiritual experience not a profession but a vocation. He believes that spiritual and metaphysical knowledge is needed to become a successful writer. He explicitly states about this in an interview-"I take writing as a 'sadhana' a spiritual sadhana."

Govindas Vishnoodas Desani popular as G. V. Desani was born in Nairobi, Kenya on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 1909 and died on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2000 at Fort Worth, Texas, USA. His father was a rich timber merchant. He was brought up in Sindh, India now the part of Pakistan. At the age of 13 he was expelled from the school as unfit to be taught. At the age of seventeen he third time ran away from his home and did friendship with middle-class Englishmen. There he remained for next twenty five years. When he was 25, he began working as the correspondent for *The Times of India*, *Reuters*, and the *Associated Press*. He had been very good public speaker. He had lectured at New College, Oxford, Rhodes House, Trinity College, and Cambridge. He had also worked for BBC as commentator. In 1952 he returned to India and lived here for several years in isolation practicing yoga and learning Buddhism. In 1968 he began serving an American University as a professor of Philosophy. He wrote one novel, one collection of poems, and one collection of short stories. His poetry *Hali* was published in 1952 and his *Hali and Collected Stories* came out in 1991. His famous novel *All About H. Hatterr* was published in 1948 and thereafter it was revised in 1972. This is very complex novel in both form and content. This novel is about a number of variables like East-West encounter, search for identity in an atmosphere of restlessness, exploration of reality in schools, westernized Indian sensibility, tragedy, comedy, humour, pathos, irony, fantasy, realism etc.

Bhabani Bhattacharya was born in a Bengali Brahmin family on 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1906 in Bhagalpur, Bihar. He died on 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1988 at the age of 81. His father was a judge. He took his B.A. Honours in English from Patna College. The University of London conferred D. Phil. in History upon him in 1934. He worked as a teacher in Hawaii and Seattle. He began writing fictions in his 30s. His novels deal with socio-historical and realistic contexts. He was strongly influenced by Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Social realism with a social purpose marks Bhattacharya's work, showing its affinity with the work of Mulk Raj Anand. He

wrote six novels. These are *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadow from Ladakh* (1967), and *A Dream in Hawaii* (1975). He was awarded *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1967 for his novel *Shadow from Ladakh*.

Attia Hossain like Markandaya after marriage settled in England in 1947. She was born in Lucknow in 1913. She died in 1998. She graduated from Lucknow University. She was inspired by Sarojini Naidu. Novelists like Anita Desai, Vikram Seth, and Kamila Shamsie have acknowledged influences upon them of her. She immortalized her by her work *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961). It is semi-autobiographical.

Manohar Malgonkar was born in Belgaum district of Karnataka on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1913 and died on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010. He got his early education from Belgaum and Dharwad. Thereafter he took admission in Mumbai University. Before stepping in the world of writing he had been an army officer, a professional game hunter, and a conservationist of wild life. During Second World War, he served Indian Army and got promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. At the age of 39 he took retirement from government services. His novels mostly move around his service experiences. His protagonists are masculinist. The socio- historical milieu of Pre- Independence times form the background of his novels. His first work as a novelist is *Distant Drum* (1960). Besides he wrote a number of novels like *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *The Princess* (1963), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), *Spy in Amber* (1971), *The Devil's Wind* (1972), and *Shalimar* (1978).

Khushwant Singh born as Khushal Singh, was a noted journalist, lawyer, diplomat, writer, and politician of India. He was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1915 in Hadali, Punjab (now the part of Pakistan). He died on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014 in New Delhi at the age of 99. He was educated at Government College Lahore, King's College London, and Inner Temple. Khushwant Singh is sometimes considered among minor novelists by critics. He has been terribly realistic. He even does not hesitate in talking about obscene situations and contexts. His obsession with crude reality of life obliged some critics to call him 'a novelist without vision and purpose'. In his career he kept on writing on a number of issues incessantly. He wrote many novels as *Train to Pakistan* (1956 in American edition it was titled *Mano Majra*), *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), *Delhi: A Novel* (1990), *The Company of Women* (1999), and *The Sunset Club* (2010). He

was awarded *Padma Bhushan* in 1974 which he returned in protest against the *Operation Blue Star* in 1984. In 2007, he got *Padma Vibhushan*, the second highest civilian award.

Rama Mehta is an Indian fiction writer. She was born in 1923 in Nainital. She died a little early in 1978. In her novels she depicted sufferings of upper and middle class women making adjustment between tradition and modernity. She is remembered for her novel *Inside the Haveli* (1977). The *Sahitya Akademi Award* was conferred upon her in 1979 for this novel.

Kamala Markandaya, one of the most significant novelists after 'Big Three' was born in a Madhva Brahmin family on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1924 in Mysore. She died on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2004. She did her graduation from Madras University. Soon after her graduation, she began writing short stories. Thereafter she moved to London and continued writing to support herself in a solicitor's office. She married an Englishman Mr. Taylor. After marriage she became Purnaiah Kamala Taylor but she continued writing in her maiden name Kamala Markandaya. After her marriage she permanently lived in England. She was a prolific writer. In her novels a variety of variables pertaining to setting, character, and theme are found. East-West encounter is one among them. In her novels, she mostly writes about her life experiences in India. She deals with a wide variety of themes which a university of appeal and an inherent purpose. She treats the themes of tragic waste, the despair of unfulfilled love, the agony of artistic ambition, the quest for self-realization and truth by the youth. She was a novelist of social and national concerns. Her characters are all ordinary people who are awail of the passage of times, they struggle, love or move to another country in search of happiness. She achieved international fame with her first novel *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954). Her other novels include *Some Inner Fury* (1956), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession: A Novel* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Cofferd Dams* (1969), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), *Pleasure City* (1982; it was published in USA under the title *Shalimar*), and *Bombay Tiger* (posthumously in 2008).

Chaman Nahal is one among noted fiction writers of India. He was born in Sialkot (now the part of Pakistan) in 1927. He postgraduated in English from the University of Delhi and completed his Doctorate from the University of Nottingham in the same subject. He died on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2013 in New Delhi. He wrote a number of novels. Some of them are *My True Faces* (1973), *Azadi* (1975), *The English Queen* (1979), *The Crown and the Loincloth* (1981), *The Gandhi Quartet* (1993), and *The Triumph of the Tricolour* (1993). He was awarded *Sahitya Akademy Award* in 1977 for his novel *Azadi*.

Nayantara Sahgal, the niece of Jawaharlal Nehru and daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit was born on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1927 in Allahabad (Prayagraj). She was raised in political ambience. Besides political issues she treated issues like human existence, man-woman relationship, and human values in her novels honestly. She has so far written a number of novels- *A Time To be Happy* (1958), *The Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power* (1982), *Rich Like Us* (1985), and *A Situation in New Delhi* (1989). She got *Sahitya Akademi Award* for her novel *Rich Like Us* in 1986 which she returned in protest in 2015.

Ruth P. Jhabvala is an outsider-insider novelist and short story and screenplay writer. She was born on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1927 in Cologne, Germany. She married an Indian Cyrus Jhabvala and moved to India in 1951. In her novels she wrote about Indian life and East-West encounter. Her major novels include *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1958), *The Householder* (1960), *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), *A Backward Place* (1965), *Heat and Dust* (1975). She was awarded *Man Booker Prize* in 1975.

Ruskin Bond was born to an English couple Edith Clarke and Aubrey Alexander Bond on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1934 in Kasauli, Punjab. He brilliantly identified himself with India and its culture, tradition and modes of behavior and value system. In India he is better known for his stories. In his stories he always makes sure his own presence. He always loved flora and fauna of India. He extensively has written about India. He always projected the image of India in very positive light. Bond has written a number of novels. Some important of them are *The Room on the Roof*, *Delhi is Not Far*, *The Blue Umbrella*, *When the Tiger was King*, *Leopard on the Mountain*, and *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*. He won *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1992 for *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra*.

Anita Desai, a well established woman novelist of India was born on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1937 in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand. Her maiden name is Anita Majumdar. She graduated from Miranda House of the University of Delhi. She in her novels explores existential complexities chiefly. In her novels, female characters are seen suffering pangs of isolation and alienation and domestic violence. Besides, ecological concerns and women issues also treated in her novels well. She is one of those few novelists in English who have tried to understand closely the predicament of their female characters. She herself contributes psychic novels, which she narrates as purely subjective. Her major novels include *Cry*, *The Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-*

*bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *The Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaka* (1995), and *Feasting, Fasting* (1999). She won *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1978 for his novel *Fire on the Mountain* and *Padma Bhushan* in 2014.

Shashi Deshpande, a well known Indian woman novelist was born in 1938 in Dharwad, Karnataka. She graduated from Bombay University. She took her education from Dharwad, Mumbai, and Bangalore. She is widely read India and abroad for her concerns about middle class women. In her novels she looks for how to get emancipation of women India without disturbing the ongoing order. Besides being her central concerns with women lives, she does not like to be dubbed along with feminists. She is novelist of balance. She looks for healthy man-woman relationship. Her major novels include *The dark Holds No Terrors* (1980), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1989), *A Matter of Time* (1996), *Small Remedies* (2000), *The Binding Vine* (2002), *Moving On* (2004), *In the Country of Deceit* (2008), and *Strangers to Ourselves* (2015). She won *Sahitya Akademi Award* for her novel *That Long Silence* in 1990.

Arun Joshi was born in 1939 in an enlightened family. His father A. C. Joshi was the Vice-chancellor of Punjab University and Banaras Hindu University. Arun Joshi was raised in Varanasi. He obtained an engineering degree from Kansas and a degree in Industrial Management from M.I.T. Cambridge. Arun Joshi as a novelist was “seriously interested in existential dilemmas and equally acutely aware of both the problems of post-Independence Indian society and the implications of the East-West encounter.” (Naik 231) He wrote five novels- *The Foreigner* (1971), *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971), *The Apprentice* (1974), *The Last Labyrinth* (1981), and *The City and the River* (1990). G.S. Amur makes an observation, “His novels take us to the heart of darkness- one of his most favourite metaphors is the labyrinth- but he is not a prophet of despair. All his novels hold out promise of regeneration and redemption.” (Das 75) He won *Sahitya Akademi Award* for his novel *The Last Labyrinth* for the year 1982. Arun Joshi died in 1993.

Kiran Nagarkar was one of the important writers of India. He was famous novelist, playwright, and film critic. He was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1942 in Mumbai. He died on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2019 of brain haemorrhage. His some important novels are *Seven Sixes are Forty Three* (1974 translated in 1995), *Ravan and Eddie* (1994), *Cuckold* (1997), *God's Little Soldier* (2006), *Rest in Peace*

(2015), *Jasoda: A Novel* (2017), and *The Arsonist* (2019). He won *Sahitya Akademi Award* for his novel *Cuckold* in 2000.

### 9.2.2 POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH FICTION

In this section, only those writers have been selected who have been born after Independence of the country. Vikram Seth belongs to the young generation of Indian writers. He was born on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1952 in Kolkata. He took his early education Xavier's High School Patna and Doon College Dehradun. Thereafter he moved to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He began his Ph. D. work in Economics from Stanford University but could not complete. He stayed in India just for one and a half year of his first 17 years of his life. He stayed in China for two years for his doctoral work. Since 1975 he has been living in California, USA. There are three novels and eight volumes of poetry to his credit. His novels are *The Golden Gate* (1986), *A Suitable Boy* (1993), and *An Equal Music* (1999). He won *Sahitya Akademi Award* for his novel *The Golden Gate*. In 2007 the Government of India conferred *Padma Shri* on him for his contribution to literature and education.

Shashi Tharoor is one of the major novelists of India. He is a noted politician, diplomat, and writer. He was born on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1956 in London and raised in India. He graduated from St. Stephen's College, Delhi in 1975. He is doctorate from Tufts University (U.K.). He wrote three novels- *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Show Business* (1992), and *Riot* (2001). All these novels have been bestsellers. His first novel went 43 times reprints. He got *Sahitya Akademi Award* for his non-fictional work *An Era of Darkness: The British Empire in India* (2017).

Amitav Ghosh, a promising and talented novelist of India was born on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1956 in Kolkata. He did his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Delhi and doctorate from University of Oxford. He keeps good knowledge about situations in India, Bangladesh, England, and Southeast Asia which helps him very much to develop narratives. He continued the tradition of Salmon Rushdie. He also like him uses the technique of 'magic realism' that is realism plus fantasy. As far as he makes an exposure of reality he is close to Shashi Tharoor. He wrote a number of novels. Some important of them are *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and *Sea of Poppies* (2008). Amitav Ghosh won *Sahitya Akademi Award* for his novel *The Shadow Lines* in 1989.



Amit Chaudhuri is a multi-talented personality of India. He is novelist, poet, essayist, literary critic, and music composer. He was born 15<sup>th</sup> May 1962 in Kolkata and raised in Mumbai. He is presently working Ashoka University as a professor of creative writing. He took his education from University College, London and Balliol College, Oxford. His major novels include *A Strange and Sublime Address* (1991), *Afternoon Raag* (1993), *Freedom Song* (2000), *A New World* (2001), *Real Time* (2002), and *Friend My Youth* (2017). He bagged *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 2002 for his novel *A New World*.

Anees Salim, an Indian author was born in 1970 in a small town Varkala of Kerala. Recently his works have caught the attention of readers. His major works include *Vanity Bagh* (2013), *The Blind Lady's Descendants* (2014), and *The Small-Town Sea* (2017). He is awarded *Sahitya Akademi Award* for his novel *The Blind Lady's Descendants* in 2018.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy popularly known as Arundhati Raoy was born on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya. Her debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) today requires no immediate mention of its authorship. It achieved tremendous readership especially in South-Asian countries with the finalization and conferring *Booker Prize* on her in 1997. *The Booker Prize Citation* quotes that it “keeps all the promises that it makes”. Without stint doubt, it is a surprising achievement to a fledgling writer. It definitely engages serious issues like ecology, power politics, gender, corruption, dalit trouble, poverty etc. The novel engages multiple timely and spatial concerns seen widely across India. She published her latest novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). It failed to catch attention of readers.

Mamang Dai an Indian woman poet, novelist, and journalist was born on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1957 in Pasighat, Arunanchal Pradesh. She graduated from Gauhati University, Assam. She writes about tribes, environment, and women. Her major novels include *The Legends of Pensam* (2006), *Stupid Cupid* (2008), and *The Black Hill* (2014). The Government of India conferred *Padma Shri* on her in 2011 and her novel *The Black Hill* won *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 2017.

Among other Indian novelists Gita Hariharan, Bama, Kancha Ilaiah, Manju Kapoor, Shobha De, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Gita Mehta, Sunetra Gupta, Anita Nair, and K. R. Meera are a few more names to mention.

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### **9.3 SUMMING UP**

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In this way, we saw tremendous growth in Indian fiction writing. Women writers have been seen more active in writing about female experiences. More and more women are looking for their career in fiction writing. Indian fiction writing in English has internationally footed itself in market. Scholars around the world read and write on Indian fiction writers. Undoubtedly the future of fiction writing in India is bright and full of possibilities.

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### **9.4 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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Q. 1 How did novel as a form of writing travel to India?

Ans. Read the section no. 9.2.

Q. 2 Evaluate contributions of male writers to fiction writing in India.

Ans. Read carefully sections 9.2.1 and 9.2.2.

Q. 3 How do you evaluate contribution of women novelists?

Ans. Read carefully sections 9.2.1 and 9.2.2.

Q. 4 How do you see Indian fiction writing in English in comparison to the fiction writing of other countries?

Ans. Go through the whole unit develop your own idea.

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### **9.5 FURTHER READINGS**

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Dwivedi, A. N. *Studies in Contemporary Indian Fiction in English*. Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1987.

Das, Bijay Kumar. *Postmodern Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2003.

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Naik, M. K. *Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985.

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**UNIT 10****LIFE AND WORKS OF R. K. NARAYAN**

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**Structure**

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 R. K. Narayan, His Life, Age and Education
- 10.3 R. K. Narayan's Literary Output and Achievements
  - 10.3.1 As a Novelist
  - 10.3.2 As a Storyteller
- 10.4 Influences on Narayan
- 10.5 Characters in Narayan
- 10.6 Narayan's Philosophy of Life
- 10.7 Summing Up
- 10.8 Self- Assessment Questions and Answers
- 10.9 Further Readings

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**10.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this *Unit*, our attempt shall be at making an exhaustive study of socio-historical and literary aspects of Narayan. The bottom-line of this *Unit* is to provide sufficient knowledge about Narayan to learners so that they could learn effectively and fast without feeling the absence of physical presence of teacher before them. This *Unit* is being prepared keeping in mind the following important points:

- ✓ Life and literary career;
- ✓ Influences which shaped him into a fiction writer;

- ✓ His vision;
- ✓ His selection of characters;
- ✓ And achievements and place among Indian English novelists.

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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R. K. Narayan is one of the 'Big Three' of Indian fiction writings in English. He was shot into fame soon after the publication of his trilogy, semi-autobiographical novels- *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts* and *The English Teacher*. He is well known across the disciplines for his fictional world 'Malgudi'. Narayan's Malgudi is like Hardy's Wessex or William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha. He is among few writers of India who took their craft seriously and constantly worked to bring about improvement.

Having studied this Unit, it is hoped that learners will find themselves enriched with the knowledge about Narayan's art and artistry. In addition to it, learners are supposed to discuss by themselves about him and would be able to answer questions asked in the section no. 10.8 in the light of hints given there.

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## 10.2 R. K. NARAYAN, HIS LIFE AND AGE AND EDUCATION

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(R. K. Narayan 1906-2001)

(Courtesy- Wikipedia)

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami was born in a Brahmin family on 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1906 in Madras and died on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2001 at the mature age of 94 in Chennai. On the suggestion of Graham Greene, he shortened his name to R. K. Narayan. His father Krishnaswami Iyer moved to Mysore from his village Rashipuram in search of job. His mother Gananamhal accompanied her husband with all sons and daughters except Narayan. He was left with his maternal grandmother whom he called Ammani. She looked after him and his education with

passion. He was second among six brothers and two sisters. His education began from Madras but he never could reconcile with the existing pattern of education. He outlawed both education and examination. To him both hamper free thinking and creativity. He failed in Arithmetic in intermediate several times. He could complete his graduation in 1930 when he was twenty four years old. Thereafter he did a number of jobs but failed to make adjustment with. Finally he turned to fiction writing. Narayan has been very close to his family. He used to spend hours of time talking with family members. He got married with Rajam in 1935 when she was 18 and he 28 in a very unconventional manner. It was very interesting and dramatic marriage. In 1933 he met a pretty, tall, and slim girl whom he fell in love. He wrote about it in his autobiography:

After the false starts, the real thing occurred in July, 1933, I had gone to Coimbatore, escorting my elder sister, and then stayed on in her house. One day, I saw a girl drawing water from the street tap and immediately fell in love with her. I could not talk to her. I learned later that she had not even noticed me passing and re-passing in front of her while she waited to fill the brass vessels. I could not really stand and stare; whatever impression I had of her would be through a side-glance while passing the tap. (My Days 106)

It was very difficult situation for Narayan to get married with Rajam. Anyhow he could bring Rajam's father around. He agreed to the marriage proposal. Their horoscopes were brought before a pundit. As per pundit's calculation their horoscopes didn't match. He also foretold that by the horoscope of Narayan, he would either be polygamist or widower. Yet he kept persuading her. He met another astrologer who was very greedy convinced Rajam's parents and finally he got Rajam. She was very nice. She always helped him in his creative works. But their marriage could survive only for five years. She quite unfortunately died in 1939 of typhoid. She bore him a daughter named Hema whom he like an ideal father loved very much. Rajam's death badly affected him. Narayan was less westernized than Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. He did not travel abroad until the second half of his life. In 1956 he went to Unites States on Rockefeller Fellowship. Thereafter he visited several American universities including University of California, Berkeley and University of Texas at Austin. Once he had been the visiting professor at the University of Missouri, Kansas City in 1969.

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### **10.3 R. K. NARAYAN'S LITERARY OUTPUT AND ACHIEVEMENTS**

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R. K. Narayan's creative corpus is more copious than that of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. He had witnessed Gandhian struggle against the British tyranny. He has always impressed him.

Gandhi's presence in his novels is prevalent. His fictional setting gained him enormous popularity throughout world. He selected middle class society and its problems for fictional treatment. He achieved a number of awards- *National Prize by Indian Literary Academy* in 1958, *Sahitya Academy Award* in 1960 for his novel *The Guide*, *Padma Bhushan* in 1964, *Litt. D.* in 1967 from the University of Leeds, and *D. Litt.* In 1973 from Delhi University.

### 10.3.1 AS A NOVELIST

Before his death in 2001, Narayan could write fifteen novels and more than two hundred short stories. R. K. Narayan began his career as a novelist in 1935 with *Swami and Friends*. It is semi-autobiographical novel. Its child hero Swaminathan does not like English schools and English pattern of teaching. He believes in Gandhian pattern of resistance. He observes at Malgudi what was asked and instructed by Gandhi. Swaminathan a student of Albert Mission School of just ten years age found all the teachers more or less adjustable except scripture teacher Mr. Ebenezar. Mr. Ebenezar was fanatic. He has a habit of downplaying Hinduism in the class. He was abusive of Hindu gods and deities. Through Swaminathan R. K. Narayan paid his great respect to M. K. Gandhi.

Chandran is the hero of Narayan's second novel *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937). Unlike Swami he is youthful character. He is more adjusting in nature than Swami. He is caught in conflict between tradition and modernity. Chandran on the one side does not like to pulverize age-old tradition and wants to incorporate modernity on the other side. Having been fed up with social taboos and ills, he gets into a Sanyasi. After leading ten months time as a sanyasi, he noticed visible change in attitude of people towards him. Soon he realized that it is better to bear the responsibilities of life than to escape from them. Finally he marries Susila a beautiful girl instead of Malathi who was his choice formerly. At the end of the novel Chandran fully accepted the reality of life.

Narayan's third novel *The Dark Room* (1938) is about family discordance. In it women are portrayed as victims and men as victimizers. Its hero Ramani is an executive insurance officer. He is haughty and arrogant. He keeps his wife Savitri, children, and servants in terror. Savitri occupies her place in kitchen whereas Ramani spends nights in the company of Shanta Bai, a butterfly type woman of the town. This is the first Indian English Novel where a female submissive character.

The fourth novel *The English Teacher* (1945) is about fully mature man Krishna. Like Chandran, he is ready to bear and face the challenges of life. He is lecturer of English at Albert Mission School. His wife Susila and daughter Leela come to live with him. Swami, Chandran, and Krishna represent three phases of life- childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

*Mr. Sampath* (1948) the fifth novel carries a variety of themes. It is full of characters representing various phases of life. Mr. Sampath is the owner of The Truth Printing Works. Mr. Sampath is a little queer in his behavior. He is unscrupulous rogue. He undergoes a series of adventures. But his way of handling all the issues pertaining to business, society and other allied matters impresses Srinivas very much. Srinivas is impractical kind of man. He edits *The Banner* which is exclusively about mental conflict- inner and outer.

*The Financial Expert* (1952) along with *The Guide* (1958) was a grand success. Margayya (way-shower) is the financial agent. *The Financial Expert* concentrates upon the chequered career of Margayya as the finance councilor. He is passionate about hoarding money. But his fortune gets destroyed by his spoiled son Balu.

Narayan published his seventh novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* in 1955. It is a typical Gandhian novel. This novel moves around the action of Sriram. Gandhian impact is immediately realized as one begins reading. In it Sriram and Bharti relationship adds one dimension to the story. This novel also pays tribute to women *shakti*.

*The Guide* (1958) is Narayan's eighth novel and it is his biggest success as a fiction writer. It concentrates upon the career of Raju as a guide, as a lover, and as an impresario. There are several issues in this novel but Narayan as a perfectionist weaved all of them into one organic whole. Raju is the most dynamic character. Marco is a static character whereas Rosie alias Nalini is an amalgam of tradition and modernity. Rosie is character who wishes to keep all womanly virtues and duties safe as well as looks for the eradication of unnecessary social and cultural taboos.

*The Man-Eater of Malgudi* (1961) is Narayan's another novel. Its protagonist H. Vasu under the impression of Gandhi's programme of Civil Disobedience when he was quite young rises against the English tyranny. He breaks rule, participates in demonstration and finally goes to jail. Vasu is a taxidermist. He is self-spoiled man. He is destroyer of himself. He believes in his own superiority. He is Bhasmasur of the novel.

*The Vender of Sweets* (1967) is about Jagan, the biggest seller of sweets in the town. He has great obsession for his only son Mali who finally disappoints him by his rebellious, unconventional, and immoral behavior. Mali is motherless so Jagan concentrates upon him indulgently. Jagan also later on follows the path of renunciation. He is self-styled Gandhite. He leads ultra simple life only to save money and to show off public as a follower of Gandhi. He is a paradoxical character. He preaches something and goes by something else.

*The Painter of Signs* (1977) is Narayan's eleventh novel in serial. This novel is about the influx of the spirit of liberation. The spirit of change and the effect of modernity have reached to the town Malgudi. Daisy is in focus light of the novel. She dominates over her husband Raman, the painter of signs. She boldly tells Raman that she does not like domestic drudgery. She even does not like to rear children. She prefers public work to traditional wifely duties. Raman is sensual type character. This novel is the best example to present the first bold and rebellious female character like Daisy in Indian English Novel.

*A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983) is next interesting novel. It is written from the point of view of a tiger named in the narrative Raja. In it Raja, the tiger is represented more sensitive and humane than the human beings. Raja claims that he can think, analyze, evaluate, and judge anything as human beings do sensibly. The monopoly of human characters either as a hero or aides got dislocated. The novel begins with Raja, now aged, lost in thoughts about past days beginning from cubhood and early days roaming wild in Memphi forests to life in a cage. Captain, the owner of Grand Malgudi Circus made Raja captive. Raja here found great difference between the silence of forest life and noisy nature of human world-affairs. Raja abhors the human life pattern. Anyhow he brought himself round.

*Talkative Man* (1986) is Narayan's thirtieth novel. It is about a rich journalist. He talks about public issues at tea shops with people. People call him TM for his too much talkativeness. This novel is not as good as other previous novels. It is novella type. In Dr. Rann who is also talkative poses himself as someone on mission. Later on a lady claiming to his wife visits Malgudi from Delhi and makes an exposure about this man that he only plays with emotions of women. It is rumoured that he is planning to elope with a student Girija.

*The World of Nagaraj* (1990) is about an aspiring writer Nagaraj who is planning to write about the life of great sage Narad. Nagaraj lives with wife Sita and mother in a spacious house. His life



of comforts is disturbed when he came to know that his brother Gopu's son Tim is coming to live with them.

Narayan's last novel, rather say novella is *Grandmother's Tale*. It was published in 1992. The story of it is based on his great grandmother. It was told to him by his grandmother when he was child. In the story, it is informed that the great grandmother travelled abroad in search of her husband who had left her soon after marriage.

In this way we saw that in the novels of Narayan a panorama of society. Almost all kinds of stories pertaining to life and time are well put forth. These stories in his hands achieve grace and brilliance spontaneously.

### **10.3.2 AS A STORYTELLER**

R. K. Narayan as a story writer is not lesser important than as a novelist. He was equally competent in storytelling. His stories are very interesting as well as inspiring. His stories are compact in structure. Irony is used in most of his stories. His sense of humour brought in world-wide recognition to him. Suspense is another quality of his stories. His competency at narration deserves reader's appreciation unreservedly. As a story writer there are many volumes of stories to his credit. These are: *Cyclone and Other Stories* (1943), *Dadu and Other Stories* (1943), *Malgudi Days* (1943), *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road and Other Stories* (1956), *Gods, Demons and Others* (1964), *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970), *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories* (1985), and *The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories* (1994). About his art of story writing once R. K. Narayan told-

At the end of every novel I have avowed never to write another one- a propitious moment to attempt a short or two. I enjoy writing a short story. Unlike the novel, which emerges from relevant, minutely worked-out detail, the short story can be brought into existence through a mere suggestion of detail, the focus being kept on a central idea of climax.

The material available to a story writer in India is limitless. Within a broad climate of inherited culture there are endless variations: every individual differs from every other individual, not only economically, but in outlook, habits and day-to-day philosophy. It is stimulating to live in a society that is not standardized or mechanized, and is free from

monotony. Under such conditions the writer has only to look out of the window to pick up a character (and thereby a story). (B. K. Das 100)

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#### **10.4 INFLUENCES ON NARAYAN**

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Family situations, customs, traditions, and his upbringing to a larger extent played decisive roles in shaping Narayan as creative writer. He was deeply rooted in Hindu religion and family. He was very much impressed by his maternal grandmother. She was disciplinarian by temperament. After the graduation, he thought to become a teacher so he tried to apply for postgraduation. But what happened over here is very interesting. When he was going upstairs to submit his form, he met a friend half way who told him that his interest in literary pursuits would be destroyed if he went for postgraduation. Finally he decided not to do postgraduation. Fortunately he had facility of using his father's library which was crammed up with books of Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Byron, Browning, Walter Pater, John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle and a few magazines like the *Cornhill Magazine* and *A Monthly Review*. He used to read them sincerely. R. K. Narayan once said, "After Scott I picked up a whole row of Dickens and loved his London and the queer personalities therein. Rider Haggard, Marie Corelli, Moliere and Pope and Marlowe, Tolstoy, Thomas Hardy – an indiscriminate jumble; I read everything with the utmost enjoyment."

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#### **10.5 CHARACTERS IN NARAYAN**

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R. K. Narayn in his novels engages characters ranging from "children, men, women, parents; aunts, grannies; peons, officers, clerks; writers, printers, journalists, lawyers, politicians, nationalists; tenants, houseowners, moneylenders, landlords; profiteers, businessmen; painters, dancers; illiterates, literates, students, teachers; family-planners, doctors, patients; circus-people, film-stars, film-directors, producers; beggars, fakes, swamis; prostitutes, taxi-dermists, financial-experts, man-eaters; Tamilians, Indians, Americans; T. V. photographers, et.al." (Dwivedi 148-49) In general they are either ordinary people or eccentric folks. For their characterization R. K. Narayan utilized a number of techniques like flashback, montage, close-up, stream of consciousness, fade-in, fade-out, slow-motion, broken eloquence, dots and etcetera. All of his characters are at their spirit's level hilarious.

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#### **10.6 NARAYAN'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE**

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According to R. K. Narayan, a novelist should be well grounded in his/her surroundings. He once told Ved Mehta about his own vision as a fiction writer:

To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots- both in religion and in family.... I have these things. I am rooted to the right triangle of Madras, Mysore and Coimbatore none of them more than a couple of hundred miles distant from the others.

R. K. Narayan was a great humanist. He had great sympathy for poor and oppressed people. He does not like to mock at the society. It is not always reflected in his novels. His soul motif was to entertain readers. He successfully detaches himself from the world of narrative. It is 'negative capability' of Keats he had developed. It was his great achievement.

Narayan's vision of life is essentially comic to be accomplished through irony and paradox. His sole purpose in his novels was to strike delight or amusement among readers. Narayan had good understanding of human nature which helped him a lot to show off ironic nature of human life. Though his ironic expressions are free from the spirit of condemnation and censure, they affect readers to the core. In this regard he is close to Chaucer, Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Jonathan Swift or William Thackeray. J. K. Biswal writes:

Narayan's comic hero embodies a paradox. He has been reared by the religious rituals and beliefs of an age old tradition, and on the other hand, he has been moulded by the drives of his elemental self. As a result of this paradox the harmony of form in Narayan's novels emerges from an orchestration of two levels of reality- the social and the individual. The details of nature, of environment, of customs, of superstitions and costumes are juxtaposed against the details of the various states of mind- in varying moods of uncertainty, nostalgia, indignation and self-satisfaction. The individual reality and social reality interact to form the comic pattern. Dream and fact are set against each other with no intention to proclaim the supremacy of either, but to present a whole picture of life where the validity of each is recognized. The orchestration of realities which forms the comic pattern is embedded in the very process of living. The people in Narayan's world represent varieties of life in all its manners and proportion, facts and fantasies. (S. Kumar 131-32)

Now it has become very much clear that R. K. Narayan always attempted to strike through evils extant in his neighbourhood but without jolting it badly. He firstly convinces social beings amusingly and thereafter creates an atmosphere wherein the reader gets immediately to feel the intended meaning and target. It is the grace and brilliance of his art and artistry. R. K. Narayan's

philosophy of life was not wide enough to embrace the entire universe. He restricted it within his surroundings. Narayan “lives in the moment and thinks for the moment. His jokes and witty remarks tickle the reader, create a momentary ripple and are forgotten. So are the episodes and incidents in his novels. These are selected not with a view to a preconceived effect of a work in mind as Poe would have liked, but on the spur of the moment from what comes within the range of his myopic vision.” (Atma Ram 209)

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## **10.7 SUMMING UP**

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R. K. Narayan as a creative writer in his range, style, and vision was most successful. His place among Indian creative writers is fully safe and secure and the posterity will never forget him and will keep honoring him for good. He will keep inspiring even those who are aspiring to get storyteller. He was perfectionist in terms of form and content. His writing skill is superb. His novels outwardly appear plot-less but as one goes through pages; its plot begins taking shape and finally ends logically. English language was not to him a foreign language. It was to him one of the local languages. He was master of language. Greene considered Narayan to be more similar to Chekhov than any Indian writer. Anthony West of The New Yorker considered Narayan’s writings to be of the realism variety of Nikolai Gogol. The setting of his novels and stories is generally the imaginary town of ‘Malgudi’.

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## **10.8 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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Q. 1 Discuss R. K. Narayan as a Malgudi novelist.

Ans. Go through the section no. 10.3

Q. 2 Write about Narayan’s vision.

Ans. Examine section no. 10.6

Q. 3 Write on influences which shaped Narayan into a fiction writer.

Ans. Go through section no. 10.4

Q. 4 Discuss Narayan as storyteller.

Ans. Study section no. 10.3

Q. 5 Write briefly on Narayan’s characters.

Ans. Read section no. 10.5.

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## 10.9 FURTHER READINGS

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**Structure**

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 **The Guide:** (Chapter-wise Summary)
- 11.3 Relevance of Title
- 11.4 List of Major and Minor Characters
- 11.5 Summing Up
- 11.6 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers
- 11.7 Further Readings

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**11.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this *Unit* I propose to begin you to read the most celebrated novel of R. K. Narayan *The Guide* published in 1958 in UK by Methuen and in USA by Viking Press. This *Unit* is being designed chiefly for the purpose of making learners acquainted with major themes, appropriateness of the title of novel, and major characters with their portrayals and roles.

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**11.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Narayan after getting his daughter Hema Narayan married with Chandran in 1956, he became global trotter. On the *Rockefeller Travel Grant*, Narayan set for USA in October 1956. It was his first foreign tour which he did at the age fifty. He stayed abroad for some nine months. During his three-month stay at Berkeley, California (USA) R. K. Narayan wrote *The Guide*. It earned huge commercial success to him. In 1964 cinema star Dev Anand brought out his film of the same title.

After going through this Unit, learners are expected to develop their own perception about the novel. All the same it is also advised them to go through the text of the novel for enhancing their aesthetic sense. At the end you are directed to write down answers to the questions given in the section no. 11.6 in the light of hints and suggestions.

The story of novel begins with Raju sitting cross-legged on a granite slab beside a lonely deserted old shrine on the bank of river Sarayu in the village Mangal. Raju just has been released from the jail after two years imprisonment. He had taken shelter over here for the fear of social ignominy. He had no idea where to go and what to do after acquittal from the jail. He had had his last shave just two days before. Still he is looking gentleman as the talkative barber had called him 'maharaja'. While talking with the barber, Raju said that the jail is not a bad place. People in jail were friendly but he didn't like to be awakened at 5 O' clock. There is no trace of apostolic look over his face. Meanwhile a villager named Velan chances upon him who was on his way home after visiting his daughter. Velan mistook him for a sage, saint or sanyasi. Henceforth the last phase of Raju's career begins. Earlier he had played roles as a tourist guide, as a lover, as an impresario, and as a prisoner.

In order to overcome the loneliness of the place Raju anyhow brought Velan around and the latter who was too much polite began talking with him. Velan like a faithful disciple looks at him which irritates Raju. Raju even told him that he was there because he had nowhere else to go and wanted to be away from people's eye. Raju further tried to make sure Velan that he was not so great as he imagined. He was just a simple man like thousand other normal persons with no worries in life. Raju at this point of time was just looking for further clarification Velan blurted out that he had a problem to be solved. "It was in his nature to get involved in other people's interests and activities." (9) Hereafter Raju reflects upon his own past life.

Raju tells Velan that a twist took place in his life with the arrival of Rosie. "She did not come from a foreign land. She was just an Indian, who should have done well with Devi, Meena, Lalitha, or any one of the thousand names we have in our country. She chose to call herself Rosie. Don't imagine on hearing her name that she wore a short skirt or cropped her hair. She looked just the orthodox dancer that she was. She wore saris of bright hues and gold lace, had curly hair which she braided and beflowered, wore diamond ear-rings and a heavy gold necklace. I told her at the first opportunity what a great dancer she was and how she fostered our cultural traditions, and it pleased her." (9) Raju admires her art very much. Rosie unfortunately married a grotesque man Marco. "He dressed like a man about to undertake an expedition, with his thick coloured glasses, thick jacket, and a thick helmet over which was perpetually stretched a green, shiny, waterproof cover, giving him the appearance of a space-traveller." (10) On the very day

Marco arrived at Malgudi station, Raju took him for a lifelong customer. Hereafter, Raju told how he became a tourist guide. Raju since his childhood days had been very close to Malgudi railway station. His father had built up a house long before the arrival of arrival. When Malgudi station came into existence, his father erected a hut-shop where he used to sell fruit, peppermint, tobacco, betel leaf, parched gram and many other items as per the demand on the Trunk Road by wayfarers. He also recalls his father, mother and his frequent trips to the town.

Meantime Velan speaks up that he has a problem. At this Raju like Lord Buddha answers rhetorically that no house or no family is free from problems. Velan further sheds light upon his family. He tells Raju that his father married three times in his life. He is the first son of his first wife. The youngest daughter of his third wife is with us. Velan says that he gave her all necessary comforts a girl needs but she shows no sense of gratitude. Actually Velan had planned to get her married off with his cousin's son. On the day of wedding she ran away. Velan searched her for three days and night finally he got success in tracing her in a festival of a distant village. In the crowd he nabbed her when she was watching a puppet show. Velan thinks that she might have possessed. To see Velan's restlessness, Raju asked him grandly to bring her over. Out of respect, as Velan bowed down and tried to touch Raju's feet Raju pulled back his feet and said that only God is entitled to such a prostration. Velan went back home. For the night Raju ruminated over all about. Finally he fell asleep on the granite slab under the open sky. Next day it was 8 O'clock when sun was shining over his face and Velan had come up, Raju was not woken up. As he opened his eyes he saw Velan standing on lower steps with his 14-year old sister. After some time, Raju came back to assume the charge of world affairs. Velan had come with a basket of bananas, cucumbers, pieces of sugar-cane, fried-nuts, and a copper vessel brimming with milk. Raju firstly said pointing at the basket that these were not necessary. Nevertheless he accepted the gift and first offered to gods and thereafter he would eat. He even narrated a story about Devaka who was a beggar at the gate of temple. He used to put before God the collection of the day. He felt that there were already so many problems of his own life and another problem Velan was thrusting upon him. Firstly Raju denied taking up the problem of Velan. Velan asked why he was not going to take up. Raju replied that there would come opportune time for it then he would discuss. Raju said whatever is destined will happen definitely. No power can change the course of time as nobody can change the course of river.



In **Chapter II** Raju recalls those days when a group of men used to arrive from the town every morning and work all day long. Actually these men were employed to build railway track. They used to come at his father's shop for some light refreshment. Trucks after trucks were freighting red mud. In fact they had prepared a mound of red mud. From the top of it one can see far-off Memphi Hills easily. As he grew up enough his father got him admitted into a Pyol school of Kabir Lane in place of famous Albert Mission School. His father was hostile to this school because he had come to know that they used to abuse Hindu gods and deities. Teachers of the Pyol School were paid just a rupee and a few gifts obtained from guardians. Thereafter Raju was sent to Board High School. Thus his early schooling began.

Velan coming close to Raju unpacks the news of miracle that his sister finally agreed to follow as she is instructed by her elders. It was unbelievable to him at first but before the assembly of the family members she confessed that she had been cause of concern for the family. She would marry her cousin. Forgive her for creating trouble in the family. Velan was taking every measure to get her married off for the fear she might not change her mood again.

Velan again turned up before Raju requesting him to attend the marriage ceremony of his sister. But Raju didn't like to attend the party because he did not like be seen and being surrounded by the crowd how he had brought change in her attitude. Soon after the marriage ceremony Velan "brought the girl and her husband and a huge concourse of relatives to the temple. The girl herself seemed to have spoken of Raju as her savior." (30) Raju as saint was gaining popularity in breadth and width. It was said of him that he didn't speak to anyone but his simple glance brings about change surprisingly. People in large number began gathering in evening at the temple to listen him. In fact it was becoming imperative for Raju to play the role Velan had assigned him. He was very much disturbed whether he should go to the place of birth or somewhere else. Here acting out roles assigned to him by Velan provides him with food unasked. He was also afraid of getting reproached by villagers and approached by the man he had mortgaged his house. In this way Raju decided to play the role of a saint as he found himself left with no alternative.

In **Chapter III** Raju informs that finally Malgudi Station got ready to receive trains. Officials came and inaugurated the station after performing necessary rituals. Raju's father got the opportunity to run the shop. He became a good businessman. As per suggestion of railways

officials Raju's father filled his shop with fruits, fried stuffs, breads, buns, cigarettes, and sweets. In absence of Raju's father Raju had the responsibility to run the shop. Later on he left school.

**Chapter IV** details about how Raju as a saint got enormous popularity among populace. The banana he had given to Velan's nephew worked marvel. He went to nearby houses and told them that the saint is back again to his post. Men, women, and children in huge number thronged having one wish to be looked upon by Raju. It was magic in Raju's eyes. He talked to children especially who were not attending any school. He makes them out the importance of education. One day their teacher came to him seeking his guidance. Raju tells him that self-help is the best formula for learning. He even advises further if a teacher discharges his duties sincerely it will be great service to humanity. He should not bother about the number of students. Raju as a bookseller had good experience of social-affairs. He used to read papers and books containing stuffs on noble thought and philosophy. At the request of teacher Raju talked to his students and lectured them on life, eternity, godliness, and cleanliness. He even spoke on the characters of great epics like the *Ramayana* and on many more necessary issues. Meanwhile Raju informs that his father died and his mother adjusted with the status of a widow. Raju with his mother's consent closed down hut-shop and set up a new one on the railway platform and stacked it with old school books, magazines, and papers. Raju sings some devotional song to the villagers and asks them to repeat. Raju in fact found the whole situation compelling for being fitted into roles Velan had assigned to him. "His influence was unlimited. He not only chanted holy verses and discoursed on philosophy, he even came to the stage of prescribing medicine; children who would not sleep peacefully at night were brought to him by their mothers; he pressed their bellies and prescribed a herb, adding, 'if he will still gets no relief, bring him again to me.' It was believed that when he stroked the head of a child, the child improved in various ways." (54) Even people used to bring disputes and quarrels regarding the division of their ancestral property. Too much engagement there was for him. Hardly could he spare time for his personal activities.

**Chapter V** is about the change in career of Raju from a shopkeeper to a tourist guide. "Perfect strangers, having heard of my name, began to ask for me when their train arrived at the Malgudi railway station." (55) Travelers used to come up asking for him. They buy soda or cigarettes and go through book stack. They often asked him about historical places of Malgudi. Often he handed over his shop to porter's son to look after on the pretext that he is going to help travelers

getting them taxi. Gafur the taxi-driver happens to be his fellow. As per travelers' profile Raju deals with the situation. Many a time Raju went along with travelers in Gafur's taxi on the trust of porter's son. Soon he became full-blown tourist guide. People from Madras, Bombay, Lucknow and many other places came to him asking his assistance as a tourist guide. At one evening Raju tells his mother that this profession is better than that of his father. She even asks him either to pay porter's son properly or run the shop himself. While talking with Raju, his mother mentions her brother's daughter Lalitha. She wants Raju to get married with her.

Within a few months time, Raju emerged as a seasoned guide. He became a part-time shopkeeper and full-time tourist guide. Even he didn't mind to go to his shop on leisure days. He had many kinds of visitors. According to their taste and temperament he deals them and takes to various places. Malgudi and its surroundings are his special show. He asks his visitors to pay him in cash not through cheque on the pretext that banking system is worst in the town. He claims that he can smell every prospective tourist.

One day a strange kind of tourist named Marco came from Madras to Malgudi with his wife Rosie. Raju met them and arranges all provisions for them at Anand Bhwan Hotel. Marco told him that they would stay for at least three days. Marco had come for archeological survey. Rosie is a good looking lady. As she came into the contact of Raju, she asked him to show her king cobra that could dance to the music of flute. Marco gets irritated at her petty desires. He keeps taunting her. Raju dislikes his behavior towards her. Marco is busy investigating episodes of the Ramayan carved on the stone wall of Ishwara Temple in North Extension. Meantime Raju took Rosie in Gaffur's taxi to watch cobra dance at Nallappa's grove on the other side of river. There she danced to the music of snake-charmer like cobra. Her dance made Raju to pass his comment on her art that she would be one day the greatest dancer of the century. On that day they got late. It was 7 o' clock when they reached to hotel. Marco was already there waiting her in porch. From now onwards, there grew suspicion in Marco about Rosie. Raju told his mother about Rosie that she was a good girl. Raju hates Marco for his sulky attitude.

Next day at 10 o'clock Raju went upstairs to Room 28 on the second floor of the hotel. Marco tells him that he wants to study friezes for a short while and Rosie is not interested to go along to see caves. Raju feels Marco as an absent-minded man who will go on gazing walls all his life and letting his wife languish in the hotel. Raju again goes to Rosie to convince her that she should accompany them. Rosie responds him to wait for a minute. Within a few minutes she

turned up in a disheveled look, her eyes were red with recent tears. She had put on a faded cotton sari with no pampering. But what does matter to rainbow? She got into the car and took her seat as Marco had made space for her. Marco's attitude towards her reflects upon their inharmonious relationship. Finally Raju, Rosie, and Marco in Gaffur's taxi reached to the Peak House situated at the topmost cliff of Mempi Hills at 4 o' clock. The caretaker Joseph was a converted Christian. The caves were a mile away from here. The house has glass-walled veranda wherefrom one can see tigers and lions and other animals prowling about. But you are advised not to screech. They stayed there for the night.

Next day Raju and Marco went to the valley to explore caves leaving Rosie at the guest house. While Marco was busy with his ruin-collecting and wall-gazing activities, Raju hurriedly came back to the guest house where Rosie was all alone. She looked very much sad and serious. She tells him that her husband usually quarrels with her. She also informs him how she got married with him and about her upbringing and education. This day again Gaffur could not come back so getting obliged stayed there for another night. Next day when Gaffur came, Marco asked Raju to bring his black trunk from the hotel because he would not be able to return to hotel that day. Rosie sought her husband's permission to go back to the hotel. Raju and Rosie came back and went to cinema at night. They returned to hotel at midnight as they stepped into Room 28 the door was locked to the world. About his nearness to Rosie his mother and Gaffur warned him but Raju convinced his mother that she was to him as a sister.

**Chapter VI** is about the present situation wherein Raju is placed. The novelist conjures up an atmosphere of chaos, fear, pain, and panic in the village Mangal. Several months or years time elapsed. People began calling Raju Swami in honour. Raju was leading the life comfortably. He even failed to count the time. It was known to him by the gifts brought to him by the villagers as per seasons, festivals, and other occasions. During the first half of the year there rained well but the second half got no rains. Consequently millet crop, banana crop and other crops destroyed completely. Drought was to them a big worry. Cattle were reported from various villages dead for the scarcity of water and food. Women were compelled to carry pitchers over their heads to bring water from distant places. Rain had become the part of every conversation or discussion everywhere. Raju to his level best tried to console them but they were seen least satisfied. Raju who used to receive lots of gifts stopped receiving in same volume and size. The earth was drying up fast. It was reported that in the adjoining village there broke out cholera and had

claimed thousands of lives. The shopkeepers began selling goods and items at high prices. So there took place feuds among them. People became revengeful. Velan's 21 year semi-moron brother told Swami that Velan and others had sustained head injuries and burns. Raju told him to report Velan and others that he would not eat until they get well. Velan's brother reported wrongly and spread the news that Swami was not going to eat anymore. The villagers came to meet Swami to know the reason and to pay their respects to him.

Raju was waiting for usual gifts and food. He had asked them to bring wheat flour, rice flour, spices, green chili, coriander leaf, potato, and onion. Actually he was trying to prepare 'bonda' to change the taste of food. The surging crowd heading towards him welcomed calling him Mahatma. They compared him with Mahatma Gandhi. Velan was there to look after him. Actually Velan was expecting him to chant mantras getting into knee-deep water. It was actually villagers' belief that if a saintly man does this ritual there will rain surely. "Once upon a time a man fasted for twenty-one days and brought down the deluge." (102-3) The entire village was astir. Meanwhile it was reported that a crocodile had been found dead. Everything seemed inconsequential. Actually all villagers were mounting up pressure upon Raju to settle the crisis and bring rain. Velan even innocently asked Raju when there would rain. Raju replied that nobody knew it. It is all up to God. Raju for the second time tried to convince Velan that he was not a saint and he was an ordinary man like thousands of others. But Velan stood still unaffected. Raju even thought to leave the village to escape the ordeal. Raju hereafter tells Velan his life story.

**Chapter VII** is the most important section of the novel. The story reaches to climax to take a new turn. This chapter focuses on Raju, Rosie, and Marco relation triangle. Marco accepted Raju as a member of the family. Marco is a total impractical sort of man. To him matters like finding food, shelter or buying railway tickets were monumental job. He married Rosie thinking that she would look after his practical life. Rosie herself was a dreamer. She had also cherished so many desires and aspirations. At Peak House Marco stayed for over a month. Raju was in charge of all of his affairs. Raju gave up all his routine jobs to render exclusively his services to them. Marco regularly paid Raju his due. Joseph the caretaker of the house looked after Marco so well that there was no need of anyone else. Gaffur's car was permanently engaged in Marco's service. Raju gradually is coming under the spell of Rosie. Her beauty began haunting him. Gaffur even satirically remarks, "Just as an old, uneducated wife is better than the new type of girl. Oh,

modern girls are very bold. I wouldn't let my wife live in a hotel room all by herself if I had to remain on duty on a hilltop." (115). In order to impress Rosie, Raju bought new clothes, face-lotions, and perfumes. Thus his expenses got increased. Actually Raju was looking out to keep Rosie within his reach anyway. It has become his dream and mission. Rosie on the one side allows Raju to come closer to her and wants to remain dutiful ideal wife to her husband on the other side.

Rosie suddenly is reminded of her relationship with Marco to see Raju's amoral advances and indulgences with her. She cries. She feels sorry for her amoral involvement and says that her husband after all has been very nice to her, gave her all life comforts and freedom. It is her responsibility to look after her husband and be partner of every joy and sorrow with her husband. "A good wife ought to be interested in all her husband's activities." (121)

Just as Marco was passionate about his studies so was Rosie about dancing. Mere the reference about dance Rosie gets suddenly excited. Raju admires her dance art. She even asks Raju whether he would not hate to see her dance. Raju says that he would like to see her dance all through his life. Rosie brightens up having listened him. Her eyes lit up with a new zeal and fervor. But to her it was almost impossible to retain both her husband and her dance art. She has to exclude either one.

Rosie as a dreamer had many plans. To have mastery in her dance she had planned to have a separate hall furnished with heavy carpet rolled out, a bronze figure of Nataraja at one corner, burning incense sticks, and a private trainer wherein she would practice at 5 o' clock in the morning for three hours. To meet too many engagements she would have a private car. Besides she would study *Natya Shastra* of Bharatamuni for one or two hours. After lunch at 3 o' clock she would like to go out for shopping or watch a movie in evening. Raju keep emphasizing about her passion of dance. This gave a fresh intimacy to them. Rosie even accepts that he is giving her a new lease of life. Raju wants her get clear up with Marco. So he would take her to hill and drop her there for at least two days bearing all the possible loneliness and irritation.

A few days later Marco gets ready to clear all the bills and accounts. Rosie was with him. But they were there at logger's head. Marco wants to go somewhere else leaving his wife. At this there happens a hot talk between Raju and Marco. Raju even says that he cannot leave his wife here at. Marco told Raju that he was about to go to Mexico to study similar subjects. He further

said that he would express his indebtedness to him (Raju) for his assistance when it would be published. Out of irritation and terrible suspicion, Marco pointed out that he was not a ruffian. He abuses Rosie that she is not his wife. She is a woman who can go to bed with anyone who flatters her antics. One day Marco packs up his luggage and left for his home in Madras alone to leave Rosie at Malgudi station. Being helpless she came to Raju's house. Rosie like a dutiful daughter-in-law helps his mother in discharging household chores. Raju comforts her and says that she is in the right place. She began her practice session regularly. Due to too much involvement in Rosie's interests and dreams, Raju became too much casual towards his shop. Ultimately, the station officials cancelled his shop license and gave it another contractor.

In **Chapter VIII** when Raju was watching Rosie at her practice, Sait, a wholesale merchant in Market Road and the creditor of Raju turns up and knocks at the door. Sait happens to be good friend. He told Raju the figure of dues nearly eight thousand rupees. There happens hot talk between Raju and Sait. Sait warns him to pay within a week's time otherwise he would initiate criminal case against him. Sait filed the case against him. With the help of Gaffur, Raju anyhow got stay order. Actually Raju was thinking about to begin a new phase of life and business with the help of Rosie. For this he needed some 500 rupees. To him Rosie was a new hope. Rosie was the star of Bharat Natyam. He asked Gaffur for help but Gaffur had no money. Gaffur prayed God to save Raju. He even advised him to send Rosie away and begin a simple life again. Raju's mother took Raju for a loafer. Raju's mother wanted Raju to get married with her elder brother's daughter. One day Raju's maternal uncle turned up unexpectedly and asked Rosie to go away by the next train. Raju's mother calls Rosie a serpent and viper. In anger she announces that she is going to leave the house. Raju and Rosie both plead her not to leave the house yet she goes away with her brother.

Rosie is all set to begin her new phase of life under the new name Nalini. It was only Raju who knows her by the name Rosie. Raju became a man with mission. He became impresario. He is no longer railway Raju. When the Secretary and the Treasurer came to watch Rosie's dance performance, she greeted them gracefully. Finally they determined to give her chance in their function.

In **Chapter IX** the Union Function is organized in which Nalini has to give her performance. Here she put up her marvelous performance. She got huge success and her name became public name. Raju became professional impresario. The public have been everywhere eager to have a

glimpse of her. Rosie was very grateful to Raju for her success. Raju even in his heart began thinking her as his property. Rosie hired a new well furnished house at New Extension. Raju appointed a choreographer, the man from Koppal, a car driver, two gardeners, a Gurkha sentry, and two cooks to maintain status. Raju also appointed a young graduate from a local college as his assistant. There were too many engagements. Musicians and other artists wish to work with Nalini. Many visitors from distant places come to meet her. Raju didn't permit most of them saying that she was busy. In Raju's company there were judges, politicians, mill-owners, bankers and editor of a weekly magazine. Raju's entire focus was on money. He even began drinking having permit from authorities on medical ground.

One day Raju receives a packet of book written by Marco. Its title was The Cultural History of South India. In it Marco frankly admitted his indebtedness to Sri Raju of Malgudi Station for the assistance he received from him. Raju here did a serious mistake. He didn't think it proper to show this book to Rosie. Three days later, The Illustrated Weekly from Bombay carried a review article along with his photograph. In the article the book was mentioned as 'An epoch-making discovery in Indian cultural history'. Rosie wanted to see Marco's photograph. She called on Raju's secretary Mani and asked Raju to show her the book. At night Rosie told Raju that after all Marco was her husband. But all this had no effect upon Raju. The only mission was to make her great classical dancer. Meanwhile a letter from the lawyer of Marco in Madras arrives seeking Rosie's signature for the release of the box of jewellery kept in bank's locker. Here again Raju didn't mind. He took no pain to tell Rosie all about. He did another mistake and put in duplicate signature on the paper and returned.

At Kalipet, a small town some sixty mile away, their programme was going on. Two hours passed and Rosie was performing her fifth item snake dance which lasted for forty five minutes. During her performance District Superintendent of Police came asking for Raju with non-bailable arrest warrant in the charge of forgery. Even Rosie requested him but he denied acquitting Raju. Rosie blamed Raju for his 'karma' and added that he was no longer her friend but a terrible friend.

In **Chapter X** Raju is under police lock-up. He spends there a couple of days. In jail Raju served as a model prisoner. Mani came to meet him. He tells Mani that the Central Jail is not a bad place. Mani further tells him that before departure Nalini cleared all the bills and dues. She sold



off all pieces of furniture and other possessions to an auctioneer. He also tells him that she gave me a thousand rupees as a gift. Mani also tells him that his mother is doing well in the village.

Nalini did her best to avoid Raju's imprisonment. She hired top class lawyer from Madras. She paid him by selling her some jewellery. The star lawyer did a brilliant advocacy on behalf of Raju. He told the judge about Marco as an enemy to the civilized society. About Raju's contribution to the development of Rosie alias Nalini as a star performer of Bharat Natyam, the star lawyer appreciated. Without his contribution, she might not have risen tower above in the world of arts. After the brilliant advocacy, Raju got two years' imprisonment otherwise would have got seven years. Before the judge could declare the punishment, Rosie left the court and went for Madras with the book of Marco to live a life of her own. Raju too feels delighted to know that she went to Madras to settle by herself instead of returning to Marco, an insensitive creature.

**Chapter XI** is the concluding part of the novel. "Raju's narration concluded with the crwing of the clock. Velan had listened without moving a muscle, supporting his back against the ancient, stone railing along the steps.... The village had not yet wakened to life.... Raju had mentioned without a single omission every detail from his birth to his emergence from the gates of the prison." (232) Velan told Raju that he could not understand why he narrated all these details. But after all he will keep all these details about you secret as ever. Meanwhile, a wandering newspaper correspondent comes to village to take the stock drought. Next day the newspaper carried the headline 'Holy man's penance to end the drought' and 'Fifth day of fast'. These headlines roused public emotion terribly. At the end of the first day of fast, Raju came to the inner sanctum of temple and ate away the remaining food hastily. Raju realized that Velan was responsible for his plight. Meanwhile news spread in the village that the villagers killed crocodile and got ten thousand rupees worth jewellery. Raju in this way lost all hopes for food. The Government employed doctors to check the health condition of the villagers to avoid the cholera, malaria etc. breaking out in the village. A pressman James J. Malone from California America came to interview Swami. Raju replied him intelligently. A large crowd always was there to see Swami with awe in their eyes. On eleventh day of fast doctors told about the deteriorating health condition of Raju. The health of Raju was in the top priority of the Government. At five thirty in the morning Raju asked Velan to help him raise his feet. It was difficult to hold Raju on his feet. He went down the steps of the river and stepped into the river,

shut eyes, and muttered some prayer. At last “Raju opened his eyes, looked about, and said, ‘Velan, it’s raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs-’He sagged down.” (247) Thus Raju was compelled by situations to end his life.

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### 11.3 RELEVANCE OF TITLE

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It is easier to point out that the title of the novel is appropriate and relevant. But how is it? What are the features of a good title? A title should be short in length (not more than in twelve words), suggestive, attention-grabbing, interesting, meaningful, and must contain a few important keywords. Besides, the content of the work must surface the title vice-versa. An appropriate title sets the tone of writing.

The title of the novel *The Guide* is quite appropriate. It is a symbolic title. The novel is an odyssey of Raju. Raju is the central character in it. The entire narrative moves around the life and career of Raju. Raju in the narrative plays at least four roles- tourist-guide, art-guide, kitchen-garden guide, and spiritual-guide. In all these roles Raju is superb.

Raju as a tourist guide renders his services honestly whoever arrives at the Malgudi railway station. His popularity has reached far and wide. All the tourists appreciate his services. Raju helps every tourist according to their temperament and requirement in getting hotel, taxi etc. Tourists call him Railway Raju. One day a typical tourist named Marco with his wife Rosie alighted Malgudi. Marco has come to study ancient carvings on stone walls, caves, and ruins. Marco acknowledges Raju’s help as a tourist guide in his book.

Raju as the cultural and entertainment guide forms the central thread of the novel. Raju has become the family member of Marco. Gradually there grew intimacy between Marco’s wife Rosie and Raju the tourist guide. This intimacy transformed Raju the tourist guide into art-guide. Rosie is passionate about dance. She has great obsession for it. Even mere the reference of it brightens her up. Rosie had cherished a dream to become a star dancer. Her intimacy with Raju engenders doubt in Marco which ultimately led to break down of her relationship with Marco. Marco left her at Malgudi and returned to Madras. Rosie came to Raju’s home. Raju did all for Rosie what was required to materialize her dream. Rosie alias Nalini became the star dancer of *Bharata Natyam*. Rosie acknowledges her indebtedness to Raju for making her star dancer.

When Raju was sentenced two-year imprisonment in the case of forgery, he again adjusted with the situation of jail. Raju here grew a kitchen garden. He grew brinjals and cabbages. He has been very serviceable to jail officials. When his jail tenure came to end, he felt sad. To him jail was not a bad place.

The last role as spiritual guide is very significant. Actually Raju throughout his life has been the victim of situations. After release from jail, Raju was in dilemma. He was not able to take a decision about future course of life. He took shelter in a deserted old shrine in Mangala village. Incidentally a villager who was on his way home later known as Velan turns up and had talk with him. Velan took him for some saint or sadhu for no specific reasons. He began regular visiting to him. Gradually Raju became famous as a sadhu or savior. Men, women, children in large number began coming to him with their problems. Raju successfully guided, suggested, and prescribed all of them. He became the savior of the villagers. Meanwhile there happened drought in the village. The people of Mangala were expecting from Raju that he would do some marvel to bring rain in the village. Actually Raju was obliged to play out the role he was given by Velan. For the sake of humanity he did what the villagers had expected from him. He initiated fast. He went on fast for eleven days. On the last day in the morning, Raju was unable to stand up. He asked Velan to help him stand up. They all took him like a baby to the basin of Sarayu. He was almost unconscious. Finally he fell down and died.

In this way title of the novel is unquestionable. It is fully relevant. It is apt and appropriate.

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#### **11.4 LIST OF MAJOR AND MINOR CHARACTERS**

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**Raju:** He is the main character of the novel. He is the guide of the novel.

**Rosie:** She is the wife of Marco, a classical dancer, and the beloved of Raju.

**Marco:** He is an enthusiast about ancient things.

**Gaffur:** He happens to be good friend of Raju. He is a taxi-driver. He has good expertise in rigging up old automobiles.

**Velan:** He is a dweller of Mangal village. He is the person to whom Raju narrated his entire life story without mincing the matter.

**Mani:** He is the Secretary of Raju. He is the only person who visits Raju in jail.

Velan's Sister: She is a minor character.

Raju's mother.

Raju's father.

Raju's maternal uncle.

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## 11.5 SUMMING UP

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At the end of the discussion, it can be summed up that R. K. Narayan's novel *The Guide* is a huge success. Thematically, it is quite rich work. No page in the novel seems uninteresting. All the events, situations, and characters are depicted very well. No part is redundant. It has much more to convey to readers than its superficial content.

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## 11.6 SELF – ASSESSMENT QUESTION AND ANSWERS

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Q. 1 Justify the title of the novel.

Ans. Read carefully section no. 11.3.

Q. 2 *The Guide* is the odyssey of Raju. Discuss.

Ans. Go through section no. 11.2.

Q. 3 Discuss major themes of the novel.

Ans. After reading section 11.2 pickup major themes of the novel.

Q. 4 Discuss Raju as the victim of situations.

Ans. Read the section no. 11.2

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## 11.7 FURTHER READINGS

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Kumar, Satish. *A Survey of Indian English Novel*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depot, 1996.

Naik, M. K. *Perspectives on Indian Fiction in English*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1985.

Raizada, H. C. R. K. Narayan: *A Critical Study of his Works*. New Delhi: Young Asia Publishing House, 1969.

Ram, Atma. *Perspectives on R. K. Narayan*. Delhi: Vimal Prakashan, 1981.

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## UNIT 12 STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

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### Structure

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 **The Guide:** A Very Short Introduction

12.2.1 Plot and Structure

12.2.2 Narrative Technique

12.2.3 Setting

12.2.4 Characterization

12.2.5 Language and Style

12.2.6 Use of Satire

12.3 Summing Up

12.4 Self-Assessment Questions and Answers

12.5 Further Readings

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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This *Unit* is being prepared to make learners acquainted with the stylistic aspect of the novel *The Guide* (1958). Mere content is not enough. Its presentation through proper language and manner is also very much important. At the end of this *Unit*, it is hoped that the learners will be able to analyze the following aspects of the novel:

- ✓ The significance and features of a well-knit plot.
- ✓ The technique used in the narration of events.
- ✓ The art of characterization.
- ✓ The linguistic aspect of the novel.

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### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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The success of any work of art is determined by the judicious amalgamation of structural and contextual aspects of it into one organic whole. It is a creative job of an artist. In fact, success of any narrative depends on the organization of events and their systematic, creative, and telling

presentation. *The Guide* is such a good work of fiction which fulfils all requirements of fictional writing. It is very important to know about the technique used in the making of the novel.

In this *Unit* we have an opportunity to prepare a substantial ground for doing the evaluation of R. K. Narayan's art and artistry possible. After going through the whole *Unit* sincerely, you are expected to write down answers to the questions given studying carefully the relevant section as hinted in section 12.4.

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## **12.2 THE GUIDE: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION**

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*The Guide* (1958) is R. K. Narayan's finest novel. It bagged the *Sahitya Akademi Award* to him in 1960. Narayan sheds light on the genesis of the novel in his *My Days*. He had heard about the acute shortage of water somewhere in Mysore. It is also reported that a few Brahmins to stand in knee-deep water of Kaveri fasted, prayed, and chanted mantras continuously for eleven days. Thereafter on twelfth day it rained and brought relief to the people. Actually the central idea of the novel is the suffering of enforced sainthood. Raju is the victim of this kind of circumstance. Raju after the acquittal from the jail takes shelter in an old deserted temple of Mangala village. The villagers mistook him for a saint. So he was expected from the drought hit villagers to perform ritual and bring relief to the people. Raju assumed sainthood by force. Finally he paid the price by losing his life. Let's examine stylistic aspects:

### **12.2.1 PLOT AND STRUCTURE**

Plot means the structuring of events into an organized whole. To convey content and meaning, a creative writer is supposed to design a shape made up of constitutive parts. For the achievement of organic unison, the author orders intellectually all the events to make the story natural. While discussing novels, critics usually use the term 'structure' and 'plot' interchangeably. M. H. Abrams writes of 'plot' that 'in a dramatic or narrative work' plot 'is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects' (Abrams 224). 'Plot' does not grow in the absence of conflict. It sets the 'plot' rolling. A well-knit 'plot' has proper beginning, middle, and climax. A well-knit plot always looks natural and organic.

The plot of the novel is closely knitted. The way R. K. Narayan interweaved multiple events and episodes into the fabric of the novel achieves dramatic quality. The novelist kept the canvas of the novel as much as small it was possible so that all the events could be remembered easily by

the reader. The novel is well packed up with numerous events of the past as well as of the present. The novelist allowed nowhere looseness. In sequencing of all the events, the text didn't lose cogency. No event in the novel appears either unrelated or later addition. The whole narrative passes in realistic manner. The novel has proper beginning, middle, and ending. The story of the novel is put forth in eleven chapters. In the seventh chapter, the story reaches to climax from where there happens a turn in the life of Raju. He becomes from tourist guide to art guide which ultimately lands him in jail. After the release, Raju again becomes the victim of time and situation which obliged him to serve the villagers as spiritual guide. The career of Raju is the main thread of the story. Marco, Rosie, and Gaffur are very important characters whose careers are interlinked with the career of Raju. All the characters and anachronistic events have been knitted together into the body of the text to create holistic effect. The novel begins with Raju in making spiritual guide and ends with it also. The middle part of the novel is packed with stories related to Raju and Rosie and their embarking upon social journey of life.

### **12.2.2 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE**

R. K. Narayan is a story-teller par excellence. *The Guide* is subtler in terms of technique than most of his other novels. He has mastery in the selection of fact or event, developing dramatic situation, and recruitment of romantic set of characters. Brevity is another strong point of his writing. In his novels there usually happens the blend of serious and philosophic elements with comic vision of his life. Entertainment was his first choice and concern. In order to keep up the curiosity and interest of readers, Narayan injects elements of suspense into the narration. To achieve this end, Narayan adopted the narrative technique of *Hari Katha* tradition. Raju, the jail released person narrates his life story to Velan a simple villager.

To narrate the entire story of the novel *The Guide*, Narayan adopted two points of views- the first-person narration and third-person narration. It has multiple narrators. Actually he adopted mix kind of narrative mode to navigate easily from the present to the past. It is present-past method of narration. The novel begins in the present and quickly switches over to the past. The story of the novel is a kind of autobiography of Raju which forms the bulk of the story. The novel begins with first-person narration. Raju is the first-person primary narrator. The story-teller Narayan is third-person omniscient narrator. The novelist employs the technique of flashback. In flashback of Raju, third-person narrator the novelist passes his comments upon the first-person. Through a series of flashbacks the novelist beautifully handles both points of views and

interweaves the past and present actions of the protagonist. Both narrative voices Narayan skillfully blends to allow action move from present to past and vice-versa. The narrative achieves variety and helps the novelist safeguard his identity. Theme and narrative technique shape and control each other in the novel.

Narayan employs antithetical themes and characters in the novel to strike each and every character and fact distinctive. Velan's naivety and gullibility is juxtaposed with Raju's deceptive maneuver. Tradition is contrasted with modernity. Illusion is with reality.

### **12.2.3 SETTING**

*The Guide* is like all of his novels and short stories set in Malgudi, an imaginative, fictional town of South India. R. K. Narayan immortalized Malgudi in his writings. Malgudi is like 'Border countries' of Walter Scott, 'Lake district' of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Robert Southey, 'Wessex' of Thomas Hardy, 'The Five Pottery Towns' of Arnold Bennett, and 'Yoknapatawpha' of William Faulkner. Malgudi is more real than any real region on the atlas of the subcontinent. Malgudi does not exist on the map of country. It is a creative origin of Narayan's mind round which the complex living-patters of characters are projected. The novelist takes readers to Malgudi to laugh, sympathize, and share joys and sorrows with dwellers of it. His fictional canvas of Malgudi is more than a mere setting. Narayan once told Ved Mehta about the genesis of Malgudi:

Malgudi was an earth shaking discovery for me, because I had no mind for facts and things like that, which would be necessary in writing about Lalgudi or any real place. I first pictured not my town but just the railway station which was a small platform with a banyan tree, a station master, and two trains a day, one coming and one going. On Vijaidasami, I sat down and wrote the first sentence about my town: "The train had just arrived at Malgudi station." The sentence about the train got revised. [Since that Vijaidasami, the town boundaries had expanded to take in streets, people, industries.] Many academicians are hard at work trying to find where, exactly, Malgudi might be situated.... My books are full of contradictory leads. Once a researcher wrote to ask me how long it took to go from Malgudi to Madras by train. I wrote back that the train journey from Mysore to Madras was fourteen hours but that it took Margayya more than twice as long to get from Malgudi to Madras. I never heard from that gentleman again. (Kumar 109-10)



In South India, there is Lalgudi in the district of Trichirapoly very close to river Caveri. It may have inspired Narayan to develop an idea about the genesis of Malgudi. It is a town of moderate size. It is neither city nor village. The nature and surroundings of it are of universal type. The major land marks of Malgudi are the Central Co-operative Land Mortgage Bank, Kabir Street, Lawley Extension, the Trunk Road the Anand Bhavan, the regal Hair-cutting Saloon, The Sarayu River, Nallappa's Grove, Mempi Hills, hotels, cinema houses, and colleges within its periphery. One can board a train for Madras at Malgudi station. Malgudi in the novel *The Guide* is the urbanized and modernized town with the facility of permit card and game of cards.

#### **12.2.4 CHARACTERIZATION**

In a dramatic or fictional work, a character may be human, animal or non-human entity. The character is endowed with certain intellectual, emotional, philosophical or moral qualities. When the author selects non-human, non-living entity as a character he/she is required to portray such character by endowing human attributes. A character may be of stable orientation or of quick and hasty disposition in outlook. E. M. Forster in his book *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) identified two types of characters broadly found in dramatic and narrative works- *Flat character* and *Round character*. He argues that the 'flat' characters are types or caricatures defined by a single idea or quality, whereas 'round' characters have the three-dimensional complexity of real people. (Murfin & Ray)

Characters may also be divided into 'static' and 'dynamic'. The former does not change over the course of action whereas the latter changes significantly in response to situation and experience. The term 'characterization' refers to various techniques by which the author creates and develops characters in a work of art. The art of 'characterization' is inextricably intertwined with the plot. The author is expected to create living, convincing, and memorable characters. J. P. Tripathi writes, "Characterisation is the art of presentation of the lives and deeds, philosophies, desires, aspirations and joys and sorrows of men and women inhabiting a landscape". The art of characterization may be divided into- direct and indirect. In this regard Ross Murfin and M. Supriya Ray write, "The author may employ direct characterization, explicitly presenting or commenting on the characters, or indirect characterization, setting forth characters through representations of their actions, statements, thoughts, and feelings. In the first case, the author is *telling* the reader about the character; in the second case, the author is *showing* the reader what

the character is like” (italics original). His creation of living characters in fact shaped him into a great creative artist.

Narayan’s characters are true sons of the soil of Malgudi. He faithfully with great detachment from his personality portrays all his characters in the light of the place they are from. The art of characterization in the novel *The Guide* is superb. Each character is endowed with distinctive qualities. All characters are individuals not types. Characters in the novel represent two facets of society. Raju’s parents and his friend Gaffur represent conservative side of society who resist any kind of change in social system and value pattern. Raju, Rosie, and Marco represent modernist ideology. “The characters like Velan, Gaffur, the adjournment lawyer, the star lawyers of Madras, Mani, James J. Malone, the postmaster, and the barber outside the prison house are all living and breathing figures. Narayan’s unerring sense of realism and eye for detail bring out the men and manners of his comic world pulsatingly alive.” (Kumar 126-27) Most of the characters in the novel are single-dimensional. Rosie is two-dimensional or flat character. Narayan does not indulge in psychological aspects of characters. Raju is enigmatic and Rosie is romantic dreamer. All the characters in the novel are like us. In the novel Raju, Rosie, and Marco are portrayed as mature characters.

Narayan’s characterization in the novel is simple type as opposed to complex. His characterization is realistic. He mentions traits, dress, background, and life style of his characters. Though being realistic characterization yet it is same time objective because Narayan always attempted to keep his characters away from autobiographical touches. There is no villain in the novel. The protagonist Raju himself indulges in villainy. Narayan always stressed on the character. If the personality comes to life, the delineation of story becomes to a large extent easier. Narayan is master delineator of characters.

#### **12.2.5 LANGUAGE AND STYLE**

R. K. Narayan is considered among world’s best storytellers. He is placed beside Anton Chekhov of Russia, Guy de Maupassant of France, O’ Henry and William Faulkner of America. Storytelling was to him quite natural. He is objective in treatment of subject matter. He never felt English language different or foreign language. Narayan’s language is simple, easy, graceful, direct, and straightforward. To Narayan English was such a language for which he did little effort to gain confidence and expertise. He once wrote about English language that it “is the only language I am really familiar with. It is the only language which is transparent and takes on hues

of the country or region where the story is set. However, I find after writing for more than half a century that the reach of English is far less than the reach of Hindi.” Narayan eulogizes the adoptability and flexibility of English language:

English has proved that if a language has flexibility, any experience can be communicated through it, even if it has to be paraphrased sometimes rather than conveyed, and even if the factual detail is partially understood. All that I am able to confirm after nearly thirty years of writing, is that it has served my purpose admirably, of conveying unambiguously the thoughts and acts of a set of personalities, who flourish in a small town located in a corner of South India. (Kumar 135)

William Walsh writes about Narayan’s use of English language:

Narayan uses a pure and limpid English, easy and natural in its run and tone but always an evolved and conscious medium without the existing, physical energy- sometimes adventitiously injected that marks the writing of the west Indians. Narayan's language is beautifully adapted to communicate a different, an Indian sensibility....

The language of the novel *The Guide* is “correspondingly temperate, mild in metaphor and simple in syntax; and its easy action and unemphatic delivery are exactly suited to express the special quality of the feeling, an observant and unrelaxed gentleness, which Narayan displays towards his characters.” Narayan uses Tamil and Sanskrit words unhesitatingly to endow Indianness to the narrative. Words like ‘bonda’ (sweetmeat), ‘dhoti’, ‘jibba’ (tunic), ‘jutka’ (two-wheeled vehicle drawn by horse), ‘pyol’ (raised platform), sadhu, Samadhi, sanyasi, satyagraha, shastra, etc. Narayan describes the whole picture of Malgudi as some educated person can do. He uses the language of average Malgudians. His language sometimes gets lyrical especially when he details about sensuous charm like of Rosie. His prose is simple and clear. It is unostentatious. After all his precision and compression in expression is one of the significant features of Narayan’s prose.

#### **12.2.6 USE OF SATIRE**

Since R. K. Narayan is essentially a comic writer, “He has no purpose but to delight, but to help the over worked and the tired to while away a few moments with a wise delight. He does not get involved with the characters nor is he interested in any deep psychological analysis, especially of

the troubled or the miserable heart, He looks at life with a detachment, ignores its darker aspects and seems to enjoy every moment of its apparently lighter side.” (Prof. Venugopal)

On every page of the novel *The Guide*, Narayan manages the laughter of readers. He satirizes open-heartedly weaknesses of common human beings- foibles and follies. His satire aims at the exposure of evils prevailed into the society. The teacher of Pyol School is comic enough. He gathers a number of little ones at every morning on the raised platform. Instead of teaching them as per their age and caliber, he reclines in a corner on cushion flourishes cane and abuses them. The result was that these children thought better to be without education. Marco is another quite funny man. By his get up he is ludicrous. He has put on coloured glasses, thick-jacket, water-proof helmet looking as if he was about to go to space. Another funny aspect of his is that he cannot give a single paisa in cash. One can write off his entire property on a voucher if it is duly filled and submitted to him. He has terrible passion about pre-historic things but is altogether forgetful about his wife and her talent in dance.

Narayan also targets fake sadhus and their gullible disciples. Raju’s arrival in the village Mangal in shaven beard and head is mistaken by Velan for some learned saint for no specific reason. He just took him for a Sadhu and began visiting to him regularly. Gradually he became most honored person for the villagers.

Narayan satirizes the judicial system. When Sait the lender initiated the case against Raju, Raju employed ‘adjournment lawyer’ to get stay order. The star lawyer finalizes the case and gets Raju awarded two years imprisonment. This lawyer when argues, no other can get any chance during his argument. Important point is that the same lawyer happens to be adjournment lawyer also. When Raju is given two years jail tenure, the lawyer takes credit himself for reducing the period otherwise he would have been given seven years.

When Mangal was reeling under the acute shortage of water and villagers were anxiously looking for rain drops, there happened fighting between two groups. Velan also was in the quarrel and had sustained injuries. Velan’s brother who was semi-moron went to Raju and told him about the dispute. Raju told him to tell villagers that he would not touch food till they all got well. Velan’s brother returned to the village and told people that Swami would not touch food until it rained. Raju was expecting necessary provisions to make ‘bonda’ from people but what happened that they came empty handed. It was ironical situation. Raju in order to evade the

situation narrated the entire story of his past life without omission but ironically Velan took all his narration as a token of humility. The result was that he finally lost his life only to live up to the aspirations of gullible villagers. Raju was unwilling all through to be a Guru.

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#### **12.4 SUMMING UP**

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At the end of this Unit, it can be boldly pointed out that the novel *The Guide* bears all qualities of a good narrative. Thematically as well as stylistically it is spotless work of fiction. The whole narrative is handled beautifully by the technique of multiple narrators through a series of flashbacks. He throughout the narrative used simple language which is entirely comprehensible to ordinary reader. Wherever he used dialogue, it was just to make the tone clear enough. Narayan is among the world's best and all-season good storytellers.

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#### **12.5 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

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Q. 1 Focus on Narayan's use of language and style.

Ans. Read the section no. 12.2.5.

Q. 2 Write on the technique of Narayan used in the novel *The Guide*.

Ans. Read carefully the section no. 12.2 along with its sub-sections.

Q. 3 Write on the use of satire and irony in the novel *The Guide*.

Ans. Examine the section no. 12.2.6.

Q. 4 Focus on the setting of the novel.

Ans. Look at the section no. 12.2.3.

Q. 5 Briefly write about Narayan's art of characterization.

Ans. Read the section no. 12.2.4.

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#### **12.6 FURTHER READINGS**

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Uttar Pradesh Rajarshi Tandon  
Open University

Bachelor of Arts  
**DCEN-103 (N)**

## **Indian Writing in English**

### **CONTENTS**

#### **Block IV : Drama**

Unit 13: A Short History of Indian English Drama

Unit 14: Vijay Tendulkar : Life and Works

Unit 15: *Silence! The Court is in Session* : Title, Theme, Plot and Characters

Unit 16: Structure and Technique

## **Block Introduction IV**

Dear learners! This block is aimed at making you aware of modern drama and its major trends. This block is also divided into four units from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup>. Unit 13<sup>th</sup> focuses on a short history of Indian English Drama and Indian dramatists. The 14<sup>th</sup> unit aimed to discuss the Vijay Tendulkar as a Dramatist. It also discusses the life and works of Vijay Tendulkar. His modernist works reflect on modernity, social alienation, vitality, and psycho-analytical instinct. The 15<sup>th</sup> Unit deals with plot construction and characterization of the play *Silence! The Court is in Session* by Vijay Tendulkar. "Silence! The Court is in Session" (original title: "Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe") is a powerful play written by Vijay Tendulkar, a prominent Indian playwright, journalist, and social commentator. First performed in 1967, the play is a scathing critique of societal norms, patriarchy, and the justice system in India. The 16<sup>th</sup> and last unit of the block focuses on the structure and technique of Vijay Tendulkar. This play questions the role of a society that treats the children of the same womb in two different ways. It is a ripping play about a boy and a girl who are joined together at the hip and have to be separated surgically, which means the death of either of the two. It is a play of gender discrimination. In this play, injustice is perpetuated by the victims' mother whose preference for the male child shows that it is a woman who continues the chain of injustice. In short, after studying this block, you will be able to understand the philosophical, psychological, and realist way of thinking about human life and religious and ethical beliefs in India.

## **UNIT 13 INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA**

### **Structure**

13.0 Objectives

13.1 Introduction

13.2 History of Indian English Drama

13.2.1 Pre -Independence Period

13.2.2 Post -Independence Period

13.3 Summing up

13.4 Self –Assessment Questions and Answers

13.5 Further Readings

### **13.0 OBJECTIVES**

In this unit, the learners will be familiarized the fundamental knowledge about the concept of drama and historical background of Indian English drama. After studying this unit, they will be using knowledge gained for critically evaluating the Pre-Independence and Post-independence Indian English Drama.

### **13.1 INTRODUCTION**

Drama is one of the most dynamic literary forms in English Literature. The word drama comes from the Greek meaning ‘to act, do or perform’ that drama can be said to have begun. As a literary form, it is designed for the theatre because characters are assigned role and they act out their roles as the action is acted on stage. It is an audio-visual medium of expression. So, it is very effective and powerful genre in world literature. It is called a composite art.

A play in order to communicate fully and become a living dramatic experience, thus needs to real theatre and a live audience” (180-181, Naik). M.K. Naik in this article “The Achievement of Indian Drama in English” observes “Drama is composite art in which the written word of the playwrights attains complete artistic realization only when it becomes the spoken word if the actor on the stage and though that medium reacts on the mind of the audience”.



Drama is a mimetic representation of life with combination of real, fictional, art and reality and presenting the events and characters within dimension of space and time. In Bharat Muni's *Natyashastra*, drama is hailed as the 'Fifth Veda'. Drama in India has had a rich and glorious tradition. The journey of Indian English drama begins with Sanskrit plays. The origin of Indian drama can be traced back to the Vedic periods. The dramatic performances of the Ancient Hindus were fully developed even before the Greek drama came to their knowledge.

## **13.2 HISTORY OF INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA**

Indian English Drama has a very glorious and rich tradition which started from Bharat Muni's *Natyasastra* to Anand Vardhan and Abhinav Gupta for its critical appraisal, standards and elements. Indian critical drama was more comprehensive and vibrant than Western classical criticism. The Indian theory of drama preserved in *Natyasastra*, the oldest text on the theory of drama. It says that the drama is divine origin and it is connected to the sacred Vedas. Thus, the starting of Indian drama is found in Vedic Period. Modern Indian English drama can be divided into two phases – Pre-independence and Post-Independence drama. Pre-Independence Indian English Drama is located in the colonial era. The arrival of the East India Company and the colonization of India by the British Empire led to the evolution of a new and radical literature genre, widely known as Indian English Literature. Indian English Drama is important form of this literature. In 1789, Sir William Jones translated Kalidasa's play *Shakuntala* into English. Indian English drama saw the light of the day when Krishna Mohan Banerjee wrote "The Persecuted" in 1831. But the real journey of Indian English Drama began with Michael Madhusudan Dutt's "Is this Called Civilization".

Pre-Independence Plays are more of an attempt to create an India with a national identity by involving history, epics and religion. On the other hand, the Post- Independence plays are more focused and individualistic in themes. They deal with specific issues communities, classes and conflicts.

### **13.2.1 PRE-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD**

Indian drama is written in both in English and translated into English from regional Language. In the Pre-Independence Period, the most renowned figures like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, T.P. Kailasam, Harindranath, etc. are contributed to the development of the Indian English Drama.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), the winner of Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913 and epitome of the Indian spiritual heritage wrote primarily in Bengali and translated almost his plays into English. R.N. Tagore was first major playwright who invested Indian drama in English with lyrical excellence, symbolic overtones and allegorical significance. His best-known plays are *Chitra* (1913), *The Post Office*

(1914), *The King of Dark Chamber* (1914), *The Cycle of the Spring* (1919), *Muktadhara* (1922). These plays are deeply rooted in the Indian ethos and display a unique blend of simplicity and complexity as also rationality and modernity.

Tagore's English plays have a compact and neat structure, though they are originals in Bengali often followed the loose Elizabethan model. This is so because in his translation, Tagore subjected texts to rigorous condensation, as a result of which the English possesses an economy of words which the originals mostly lack, though the experts have noted that much complexity and richness may have been lost in the process.

Sri Aurobindo was a prominent figure of Pre-Independence Indian figure. His plays deal with different cultures and countries. Variety of characters, moods and sentiments enhance the beauty of his plays. His dramatic genius amply revealed in his five complete plays- *Persus*, *Vaavadutta*, *Rodagune*, *The Viziers of Bassara* and *Epic*- which were written originally in English.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya was another playwright who has made significant contribution to the growth of Indian English Drama. He has written his plays on the theme of social and hagiological. *The Window*, *The Parrot*, *The Coffin*, *Evening Lamos* and *The Santry's Lantern* are his social plays. These plays are abounding in seeds of social protest and thought of revolution.

Bharati Sarabhai is the first maiden woman dramatist during the colonial era of Indian English Drama. The Gandhian touch is found in her plays. She wrote two plays *The Well of the People* (1949) and *Two Women* (1952). Her first play *The Well of the People* is symbolic, poetic, and it is a significant contribution to the Gandhian Doctrine "*Daridra Narayan*". It is based on a real story published in Gandhi's *Harijan*.

T. P. Kailasam is a renowned Kannad Playwright, who has important place in colonial era of Indian Drama in English. His English plays are inspired by Puranic themes taken from *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*. Kailasam's English plays are *The Verden* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Kechakka* (1949), *The Course or Karma* (1946), *Fulfillment* (1933).

A.S.P. Ayyar is another playwright of the genre of Pre-Independence Indian English Drama. His plays are didactic, plot and characterization are of secondary importance. His first play is *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* this which has contemporary flavour. J.M. Lobo Prabhu is regarded as the last great dramatist of this era. He has written about a dozen plays, only two were published before

Independence. These are *Mother of New India: A Play of the Indian Village in Three Acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945).

Of course there are many other playwrights who wrote plays before Independence. They are Surindranath Ghosh, R. K. Narayan, K.R.S. Iyengar, Balwant Gargi and Mrinalini Sarabhai. You can read more about other dramatists in books suggested at the end of the unit.

### 13.2.2 POST-INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

Indian English Drama did not grow as the British Drama did even after the Post-Independence. Most of the plays during the post-independence are written in prose-style. Most of the Post-Independence playwrights have followed the tradition of Shakespeare's writings and Elizabethan drama. Some Indian Dramatists tried to highlight Indian tradition, folklore, rituals, customs, and rites amidst the innovativeness of English drama. Some Indian dramatists have followed the poetic style of Tagore and Aurobindo. M.K. Naik writes "...the Tagore-Aurobindo tradition of poetic drama continues, but with a difference in the hands of Manjeri Isvarna, G.V. Desani and Pritish Nandy". Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, Nissim Ezekeil, Gurucharan Das, Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani and Vijay Tendulkar are Indian dramatists in the Post-Independence era.

Asif Currimbhoy is the most prolific dramatist of the Post-Independence era. His plays deal with contemporary historical and political events, social issues, religion, art and Metaphysics. K.R.S. Iyengar appreciates the creative style of Currimbhoy, "Farce, comedy, melodrama, tragedy, history, fantasy, Currimbhoy handles them all with commendable ease." *The Doldrums* (1960), the play depicts issue of human relationships intertwined with themes like purposelessness of life. *The Dumb Dancer* (1961) is a psychological play based on the story of a Kathakali dancer Bhima's emotional plight in the competitive world. *Goa* (1964) is a play about invasion or liberation of Goa by India. *The Captives* (1963) is a social play depicts the relation between Indian Muslim and Pakistan Muslim. The play also deals with the Indo-Chinese invasion. *Inquilab* (1970), *The Refugee* (1971) and *Sonar Bangla* (1972) form a group which could be called the Bengal trilogy. *Inquilab* deals with Naxalite revolt. The *Refugee* is about influx of Bangladeshi refugees into India during 1971 and *Sonar Bangla* presents the traits of preceding the emergence of Independent Bangladesh. *The Dissident MLA* (1974) is a play based on the contemporary student agitation in Gujrat. *The Miracle Seed*, *The Tourist Mecca*, *The Hungary Ones*, *The Clock* are other works written by Currimbhoy.

Pratap Sharma an awardee of 'Sahitya Akademy Award' is distinguished playwright after Independence in Indian Drama in English. He wrote two prose plays: *A Touch of Brightness* (1968), *The Professor has a Warcry* (1970). His plays reflect the contemporary reality in the society. Prostitutes,

premarital sex, poverty, myth, etc. are the theme of his plays. A Touch of Brightness that deals with the theme of prostitution as profession and reflect the dark side of life in Bombay's red light area where prostitution as profession thrives. The professor has a war cry in the story of an illegitimate child whose mother is deserted by her lover and sexually assaulted by two men in past.

G. V. Desani is the prominent figure of Indian English Drama after Independence. Dasani's famous play *Hali* (1950) was successfully staged in India and also Watergail theatre in London in 1950. Love and passion is the theme of this play.

Lakhan Deb and Gurucharan Das are another dramatist of this period. Lakhan Deb wrote three plays- *Tiger's Claw* (1967), *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976) and *Vivekananda* (1972). These plays are written in words and based on historical events. *Tiger's claw* is based on the story of the murder of Bijapur General Afzal Khan at the hands of Shiva ji. *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* deals with assassination of Gandhiji. Gurucharan Das' plays includes *Larin Sahib* (1970), a historical play dealing with Henry Lawrence of Punjab. *Mira* (1971) based on Mira's immaculate God love for Lord Krishna. His other plays are *Jokhoo Villa* and *Karna*.

Nissim Ezekeil, the well-known poet, has a rare dramatic sensibility. His plays reveal and portray his observations of the oddities in human life and behaviour, providing glimpses of the cross-section of contemporary society. His plays are *Nalini- a comedy*, *The Sleep Walkers* and *Indian American farce*.

Vijay Tendulkar is the most influential dramatist in Indian Drama in English after Independence. He is also known as screen and television writer, essayist, journalist and social commentator. Vijay Tendulkar is an icon of India's vernacular Marathi theatre and doyen of Avant-garde Indian theatrical movement of modern era. Tendulkar's plays focus on gender discrimination, man-woman relationship, sexual degeneration, class conflict, power and morality. *The Court is in Session* (1967) was his first play originally written in Marathi as *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe*. In this play the dramatist deals the deep-seated feigned moral values and hypocrisy of middle class society more specifically man's attitude towards women. *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1972) focuses on the power games that man engaged in and the corruption, violence and sensuality in which they indulge in the process. *Sakharam Binder* explores the complication of human nature and manifestation of physical lust and violence in human being. *Vulture* is based on sex, violence and devil. *Kanyadan* (1983) focuses on the issue of class conflict. *Kamala* (1981), a gynocentric play is focusing on stereo typical confined life of an Indian woman.

The tradition of Indian English Drama has been enriched further in Post-Independence era. Gradually, it begins to develop as powerful form for the creative expression. Post-Independence Indian English Drama differed from pre-independence Indian English drama. It is in the depth of individual voices and focused on contemporary concerns or issues in spoken language. Indian English drama can

flourish and prosper only when Indian English playwrights try to imbibe the spirit of rich Indian theatrical tradition and look at different issues with a sense of contemporaneity.

### **13.3 SUMMING UP**

In this unit, we have discussed an idea of the concepts of Indian English Drama in Bharatmuni's *Natyasastra*, and ancient Sanskrit text that takes into account all aspects of drama from costume to make up and performance. The history of Indian English Drama demonstrates the features of Pre-independence and Post-Independence Indian English Drama. Indian English Drama is quite different from British drama. Most of the themes of Indian English Drama are related to social issues, historical events, myths, folklore, class conflict, identity crisis etc.

### **13.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. What is Drama?

Ans. Read section no. 13.1.

2. Write a note on the history of Indian English Drama.

Ans. Read carefully section no.13.2 along with sub-section.

3. Write a note on the major playwrights of Pre-Independence period.

Ans. Read sub-section no. 13.2.1.

4. Write a note on the major playwrights of Post -Independence period

Ans. Read sub-section no. 13.2.2.

### **13.5 FURTHER READINGS**

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# **UNIT 14 VIJAY TENDULKAR : LIFE AND WORKS**

## **Structure**

14.0 Objectives

14.1 Introduction

14.2 Marathi Theatre

14.3 About the Writer

14.3.1 Life

14.3.2 Works of Vijay Tendulkar

14.3 Vijay Tendulkar as an Indian English Dramatist

14.4 Summing Up

14.5 Self-Assessment Question and Answers

14.6 Further Readings

## **14.0 OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this unit is to introduce Vijay Tendulkar as a writer of drama whose contribution to Indian Writing in English is much valued. A brief life-sketch gives you the necessary background knowledge of Vijay Tendulkar and his writings.

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the life and literary works
- appreciate the contribution of Vijay Tendulkar in Indian English Drama

## **14.1 INTRODUCTION**

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the earliest playwrights of Indian language who has transformed the regional theatre into national theatre. He gave new dimension to the Marathi Theatre in India through his creative writings. Many of Tendulkar's plays derived from real-life incident or

social upheaval, which provided clear light on harsh realities. He deals with gender inequality, social inequality, self -alienation, sex and violence etc, in all his plays. His characters are drawn on the canvas of originality without any attempt to moralize them. His plays are written in naturalistic manner and reject the idealistic portrayal of life in presenting the life realistically. His writing style at surface level seems to be very simple but contains deep meaning.

Tendulkar's plays alongwith Girish Karnad's have changed the face of Indian theatre by demolishing the three act play and creating exciting new moulds. For developing this flexible as well as carefully crafted form, he took up folk forms, modes of recitation and story-telling specific to his region.

## **14.2 MARATHI THEATRE**

Marathi theatre has a rich and vibrant history, dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It emerged as a powerful cultural force, blending traditional arts forms with modern influence. Theatre historians agree that the origin of Marathi drama, as recognized today, took place in 1843 during the performance of Vishnudas Amrit Bhave's *Sita Swayamvar* (1842). Prior to this notable occurrence, there were no theatrical presentations that fully aligned with the characteristics of a play. Nevertheless, diverse folk forms like *Tamasha*, *Lalit*, *Gondhal*, and *Dashavtar* were prevalent, serving the purpose of fulfilling the need for dramatic expression. *Tamasha*, in particular, gained significant prominence, especially with the support of 'Bajirao II'.

The development of Marathi theatre has a rich history that spans many centuries. Here is an overview of its key stages and milestones:

**Bhakti Movement (13th-17th Century):** The Bhakti Movement played a significant role in the cultural and artistic development of the Marathi-speaking region. Bhakti saints like Sant Eknath and Sant Tukaram expressed their devotion through 'Abhangas' (devotional songs), which later influenced the performing arts.

**Tamasha Tradition (18th century):** The Tamasha folk tradition emerged as a popular form of entertainment, combining music, dance, and drama. Tamasha performances often had social and moral themes, making it a form of both entertainment and social commentary.

**Sangeet Natak (19th century):** The 19th century saw the emergence of Sangeet Natak, a form of musical drama that incorporated elements of classical music and dance. Vishnu Das Bhave is

considered the pioneer of Marathi theatre for his play "Sita Swayamvar" in 1843, marking the formal beginning of modern Marathi theatre.

Natya Sangeet (Early 20th century): The early 20th century witnessed the fusion of traditional Marathi theatre with Western theatrical elements. The introduction of Natya Sangeet (musical drama) became popular, with notable contributions from luminaries like Bal Gandharva, Master Krishnarao, and Nanasahab Phatak.

Prabhat Theatre (1930s-1940s): The 1930s and 1940s marked the golden era of Marathi theatre with the establishment of Prabhat Theatre by renowned filmmaker V. Shantaram. Prabhat Theatre produced critically acclaimed plays like "Sant Tukaram" and "Gopal Krishna," combining artistic excellence with social relevance.

Experimental Theatre (1950s-1960s): The Post-Independence period saw the rise of experimental theatre in Marathi, led by the efforts of Vijay Tendulkar, P. L. Deshpande, and Vijaya Mehta. Their works, such as Tendulkar's "*Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*" (*Silence! The Court Is In Session*), challenged societal norms and paved the way for more socially relevant and thought-provoking plays.

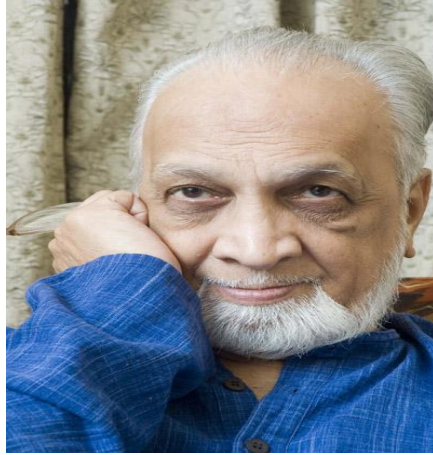
Modern Theatre (Late 20th Century - Present): Marathi theatre continued to evolve with the works of playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, P. L. Deshpande, and others. The late 20th century and the 21st century have seen a diverse range of themes and styles, exploring contemporary issues, historical narratives, and experimental forms.

Noteworthy Contributors: Several individuals have significantly contributed to Marathi theatre, including actors like Sulochana, Dr. Shriram Lagoo, and Mohan Agashe, as well as directors like Vijaya Mehta and Jabbar Patel.

Marathi theatre has maintained its vibrancy, adapting to changing times while preserving its cultural roots. It continues to be a potent medium for storytelling, cultural expression, and social commentary.



## 14.3 ABOUT THE WRITER



( Vijay Tendulkar 1928- 2008)      Courtesy - Wikipedia

### 14.3.1 LIFE

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar was born on 6, 1928 in Kolhapur , Maharashtra. He was one of the renowned playwright of the Marathi Theatre in India. He had his education in Kolhapur, Pune and Bombay. The real life experiences and observations enriched his personality and vision of life. He poured these experiences and observations into his writings. Most of his plays are based on real incidents which throw light upon various aspects of society. His plays are translated and performed into many Indian and non- Indian languages.

Tendulkar's father Dhondopant was an enthusiastic writer, director and actor of amateur plays. He used to take young Tendulkar to the rehearsals of his plays. The young Tendulkar was greatly amazed to see the actor's performance especially the women's role being played by the male actor. During his childhood, he found himself in the lap of books as his father used to work as a head clerk in a publication house. His father motivated him to read, and he efficaciously wrote a story at the tender age of six.

When he was 13 years old, his family established to Pune during the time of Quit India Movement. His interest in politics is manifested in his literary works as well. He has also been an active member of communist party for some time. He started his first job in a press in 1944. He worked as sub editor in Marathi Newspaper *Navbharat* in 1948. He also wrote for *Marathi Times*

and *Manus*. While working for Maratha a Marathi Language Newspaper, Tendulkar came in contact with Pralhad Kesh Atre was also known as Acharya Atre. Atre was a multifaceted personality who had left great impact on Tendulkar. In this way both his career as a journalist and the atmosphere at home contributed a great deal in understanding human society and helped him develop passion for writing. He was the chairman of the General of the Council, Sahitya Akadami, New Delhi from 1978 to 1982 and of Sangeet Natak Akademi from 1977 to 1981. In 1979 he was made the Vice-President, National School of Drama.

He has felicitated with many awards and honours including the Maharashtra State Government Awards(1969 and 1972), Sangeet Natak Akademy Award(1971), The Filmfare Awards(1980 and 1983), Padambhushan (1984), Kamladevi Chattopadhyay Prize(1970), Saraswati Samman(1993), The Kalidas Samman(1999),The Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar(1999), The Jansthan Awards. The latest recognition for lifetime literary achievement was the Katha Chaudamani Award in 2001.

### **14.3.2 WORKS OF VIJAY TENDULKAR**

Tendulkar's writing career spanning more than five decades. He was a prolific writer who has penned 30 full length plays and 23 one act plays, children's drama, four short stories, two novels and so on. His plays have been written in Marathi language and translated in many Indian languages. Vijay Tendulkar's works reflect his searching exploration of human act. He has also written children's drama, four short stories, two novels and so on. His plays have been written in Marathi language. His translated plays in English are as powerful as the originals. And very successfully the complexity of issues and themes explored in them. The following are some of his most notable plays *The Vulture*, *Silence! The Court Is In Session*, *Ghasiram Kotwal* , *Sakharam Binder*, *Kanyadan* and so on.

Tendulkar's play *The Vulture* was originally written in Marathi the title *Gidhahe* (1961) and produced in 1970. In this play the playwright has introduced various types of violence emerging out of drunkenness, greed, immortality, sexual, communal, and political forms anticipating a complete collapse of values system sanctity of family and familial responsibility. Girish Karnad has said, "The staging of *Giddhe* could be compared to the blasting of a bomb in an otherwise complacent market place."

*Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* is written in 1963 and performed in 1967. The play considered to be written with real life incidents of the dramatist Vijay Tendulkar. The story of the play revolves around the theme of gender discrimination and the courtier system of India. The play represents a woman's fight against the humiliation of womanhood struggling against the well organized oppressive mechanism of patriarchal domination where women hardly possess avoid of her own. The structure of this play helps the writer to maintain ambiguity. The reader is left to wonder whether Benare abort the child or give birth to it. It is based on the feminist belief that society does not exclude men and the upliftment of woman could be possible only with the change in the attitude of men.

*Ghasiram Kotwal* was originally written in Marathi and translated in English by Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliot. The play deals with power politics. It is dramatic exposure of the latent savagery of human being e.g. treachery, violence, and sexuality. The play deals with the political violence and is notable for the use of Tamasha form in Marathi folk theatre. Singing and dancing are used here to create good effect. The play is political satire.

*Sakharam Binder* is Tendulkar's very naturalistic play. It exposes the hypocrisy, jealousy, masochism and the lust of the middle class male. The theme of this play revolves around Sakharam a lower middle class Book Binder was womanizer who uses women and then discards them. He does not believe in the institutions of marriage. For him man-woman relationship is absolutely commercial. In order to satisfy the sexual hunger giving shelter to helpless women on the own terms of men. The play is also based on victimization of women. Thus the play explores the complication of human nature and the manifestation of physical lust and violence in a human being. Tendulkar has shown the boldness of using obscene words and filthy language when the situation demands so.

Tendulkar's *Kanyadan* which published in 1983, a most controversial play about cultural and emotional upheavals and the man woman relationship of a family. It deals the texture of modernity and social change in India through marriage between two people of different castes and backgrounds. Jyoti, a young Brahmin daughter of Nath Devlalikar, MLA marriage young dalit poet Arun Athavale with the approval and encouragement of her father. After her marriage a sequence of violence misery and disillusionment is followed. He beats her mercilessly even during pregnancy and hurls the worst kind of abuses on her. Exhausted, Jyoti decides to leave him but her father tries to save the marriage because it covers his hollow idealism. *Kanyadan* is a

noble play with which the writer has to enter the trouble area of public critical response to his play.

*Encounter in Umbugland* is a political satire. It returns the power game out in terms of caste ascendancy in politics.

Tendulkar makes a tremendous impact with his technical innovations. His plays along with Girish Karnad's have changed the face of Indian theatre by demolishing the three act plays. Tendulkar Avant Garde playwright like Girish Karnad has started and enthralled his audience with novel devices. (Anabarasi in Srinath,2007:38). His writing style at surface level seems to be very simple and contains deep meaning. The effective use of facial expression, mime song, dance, symbolic use of stage, technique and supernatural elements earn him immortal place in Indian English Drama.

#### **14.4 VIJAY TENDULKAR AS AN INDIAN DRAMATIST**

Vijay Tendulkar gave a new direction to Marathi Indian theatre as well as Indian Theatre. Almost four decades he was the dominant Marathi theatre personality. He is a master craftsman in Marathi drama and his plays have been translated in various National International languages. Vijay Tendulkar, a great Marathi playwright penned 28 three act plays, 24 one act plays, and 11 children dramas. He is one of the earliest playwrights of Indian language who has transformed the Regional Theatre into National Theatre. Like Girish Karnad in Kannad, Badal Sarkar in Bengali, Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi language transformed the traditional Marathi Theatre into Modern Naturalistic Theatre. His *Silence! The Court is in Session* earned him a place among leading Indian playwrights in late sixties while his *Ghasiram Kotwal* won him international fame in the Mid Seventies. *Silence! The Court Is In Session*, *Kamla*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghasiram Kotwal*, *Kanyadan* and *The Vulture* are his globally staged plays. In all these plays the playwright touched socio-cultural and political reality as they comprise real life situations events and incidents. He has craved the themes of torture, exploitation and inequality of women very skillfully. Further, we can observe that his plays always focus on the ills and issues of the middle class and also the lower class. He concentrates on different aspects of human characters. All of them underscore the complexity of human characters. Tendulkar's plays reveal his dramatic stature is very high. He never used hyperbolic tone in his plays which are upbringing in the literary environment that made him great heights in the world of drama. As an experiment dramatist Tendulkar has given the Post-Independent Marathi Drama a new trend. He said a new trend in Marathi Theatre and presented new themes as well as new techniques. He has experimented with theme, characterization, storyline, language and style. Tendulkar tries technical experiment in *Ashi Pakhare Yeti* (1970). The play based on 'Rain

Maker of Romance’, the protagonist carries on a continuous dialogue with audience commenting on action and character. It is something new to Marathi stage. Similarly, Tendulkar uses Shakespearean techniques ‘play with in play’ or mock trial in Silence.

Tendulkar’s art of characterization is unique because the characters play a significant role in his plays. His characters are drawn from our day- to- day life and they look like. He has taken characters from different classes, professions, age groups, and socio-culture background. Tendulkar’s women characters are among the most convincing in Indian Theatre. He portrays his women characters with understanding and compassion. The most prominent female characters of Tendulkar's plays are Miss Leela Benare and Mrs.Kashikar in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Kamla in *Kamla*, Lakshmi and Champa in *Sakharam Binder*. On the other hand he presents his male characters as embodiments of hypocrisy, selfishness, patriarchy and unkind etc. Among them are like Kashikar, Jai Singh Yadav ,Sakharam, Karnik, Nana Phadnavis etc. which words and deeds expose their inherent malice and hypocrisy.

The story and plot of Tendulkar's plays are artistic. The story of his plays are based on real life incidents and situations of social upheavals. Hate story line unfurls extremely simple and appropriate word play. He makes use of irony, satire and humour in his plays. His plays are the tools in the development of the Marathi Drama that were so far polluted by propaganda for political awakening and social reforms.

## **14.5 SUMMING UP**

In this unit we have discussed and outline of the development of Marathi Theatre since its inception about 150 years ago. We have given you an introduction to life and works of Vijay Tendulkar after this we have discussed the contribution of Tendulkar in Indian English Drama. Vijay Tendulkar’s legacy in Indian English Drama is characterized by his commitment to social realism, versatility across different mediums, and his bold exploration of social issues. His impact on Indian Theatre is enduring, reflecting a deep understanding of human nature and the complexities of the world around him.

## **14.6 SELF -ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS ANSWERS**

1. What do you know about Marathi theatre?

Ans. Read the section no.14.2.

2. Write a note on the biographical sketch of Vijay Tendulkar.

Ans. Read carefully the section 14.3 along with its sub-sections.

3. Discuss Vijay Tendulkar as a great Indian Dramatist.

Ans. Read the section 14.4.

4. Write a note on the art of characterization of Vijay Tendulkar.

Ans. Examine the section no. 14.4.

### **14.7 FURTHER READINGS**

Tendulkar, Vijay: *Silence! The Court Is In Session*. Oxford University Press

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# **Unit 15: SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION: TITLE, THEME, PLOT AND CHARACTERS**

## **Structure**

15.0 objectives

15.1 Introduction

15.2 Background of the play

15.3 Summary of the play

15.4 Title of the play

15.5 Major Themes

15.6 Characters

15.6.1 Miss Leela Benare

15.6.2 Mr. Kashikar

15.6.3 Raghu Samant

15.6.4 Sukhatme

15.6.5 Mrs. Kashikar

15.6.6 Prof. Damle

15.6.7 Ponkshe

15.6.8Karnik

15.6.9 Rokde

15.7 Summing Up

15.8 Self- Assessment Questions and Answers

15.9 Further Readings

## 15.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Understand the background of the play
- Outline the summary of the play
- Discuss the appropriate the title and plot of the play
- Describe the themes of the play
- Outline the relevance of the characters in the play

## 15.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the third unit of this Block. So far, you have read a brief introduction to the history of Indian Drama in English and Marathi Theatre. You have also read about life and works of Vijay Tendulkar. Tendulkar's plays as you know, have made a major contribution to the development of contemporary Marathi Theatre. *Silence! The Court Is In Session*, presenting the picture of Indian society. The play exposes the social hypocrisy and its dubious double stands. The play was originally written in Marathi and has been translated into several Indian languages. The English translation which is prescribed for you is done by Priya Adarkar. It has been published by Oxford Press in 1978.

In this unit, we shall briefly discuss the background of the play and its summary. Then, we shall give you appropriateness of the title, themes and plot of the play. We shall also discuss about the characters in the play. While reading the text, you must have made some notes regarding title, themes and characters. Along with it is also expected from you that you will prepare your own answer of the questions asked at the end of this unit.

## 15.2 BACKGROUND OF THE PLAY

The play *Silence! The court Is In Session* is an English translation of *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*, written in Marathi (1967) by Vijay Tendulkar. Originally, the title of this play in Marathi *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe*, was written for a theatre group called Rangayan. It was first performed in 1968. The play is based on a short story "Die Panne"(1956) by Friedrich Durrenment, a Swiss author and playwright, it is available in English translation entitled "Trapes". It is said that the dramatist overheard a conversation during one of his train journey and then wrote the play.



Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court Is In Session* is a genre of drama. His play *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* was translated into various Indian and foreign languages. In 1971, a movie was made on this play by Staya Dev Dubey and it was presented in English players at the Museum Theatre Madras, directed by Ammu Mathew.

We have now looked at two significant aspects of the play. First, we know that Vijay Tendulkar was inspired by a short story written in German by a Swiss writer which was translated into English. We also know that the play was originally written in Marathi. Another significant dimension of the play that is located in an Indian Context. The play draws upon an older Indian tradition of drama and at the same time, it is located in India of the 1950s and does to some extent document the lives more perspective of people in this period.

The play represents a woman's fight against the humiliation of womanhood, struggling against the well organized oppressive mechanism of patriarchal domination where women hardly possess a voice of their own.

### **15.3 SUMMARY OF THE PLAY**

*Silence! The Court Is In Session* is a play in Three Acts dealing with lives of ordinary people in small town. The stimulus (idea) to write this play came from a real life incident for the writer where Tendulkar met an amateur group which was on its way to stage a mock-trial in Ville-Parle, a suburb of Bombay. They are member of 'The Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association, a socially committed group whose prime objective is to facilitate awareness around important issues affecting the community or society.

In this play, this group has come to a village to perform a mock-trial of President Johnson for providing atomic weapons. Tendulkar adopted the idea of mock-trial in his play from this trial. The cause of action charged and before the said trial- it is Leela Benare, who is charged and put under trial for crime which she has not committed.

The play, *Silence! The Court Is In Session*, starts with a conversation between a boy Samant and Leela Benere, the heroine of the play. Benare has got her finger caught in the latch of the door. She is bothered about it. A mock-trial is going to take place. They both are waiting for the other members of their group to arrive. Leela Benare is a member of an amateur group of actors who perform plays periodically. The final performance is scheduled to take place later in

the night. Leela Benare is in complete control of the situation. She is vivacious, full of spirits and more intelligent than others. She is a school teacher by profession. She has no worries and cares in life. She has left everyone behind. She feels wonderful. Samant says: "You do set a very lively pace, very lively." She straightway and frankly tells Samant, she likes him very much: "Let's leave everyone behind and go somewhere far away. "She even makes an excuse when she gets closer to him.

Benare is a mature woman of thirty-four. She is unmarried for her personal reasons; she is eagerly looking for a man to be her husband. Many persons have already rejected her proposals for marriage. She is quite proud of her abilities. She always boasts, "My class is scared still of me". But ironically she doesn't know that she is to be put in the dock room and reprimanded severely again and again. She says about her students that the children are better than adults because "they don't scratch you till you bleed and then run away like cowards. "It seems to be a kind of premonition because this is exactly what is going to happen to Benare, a lady who is bold, spirited and defiant.

In the beginning of the play Leela Benare says, "My life is my own. My will is my own, My wishes are my own. No one can kill those: no one! I will do what I like with myself and my life!" But as the Act I ends the reality is dawned on her. She discovers that her life, her wishes and her will are not hers at all. People can go the extent of interfering with the personal matters and affairs of someone. Benare's life and private affairs are exposed by her own fellow actors. It is one of the actors in the amateur group who comes out and exposed the secret.

Sukhatme with the idea that they should have a mock-trial to pass actual show begins and in the process, Samant will learn how a court as works. It's while Benare has gone inside to wash her face. They decide to put Leela Benare in the dock after offering themselves perfunctorily prospective accused for the trial. As soon as she comes out, they pounce upon her and under the Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code, charge her with the commission of the crime of infanticide. Another charge against her is that she has tried to marry her mother's brother. And the most serious crime she has committed is her pregnancy by Prof. Damle. She requests Damle to marry her but he refuses in the name of his reputation. She threatens to commit suicide by which her own life and that of her unborn child will be destroyed. But professor Damle was not moved by her words.

The attitude of the judge, the advocate and her fellow actors, made her furious and she cries, "I will smash up all this! I will smash it all to bits..... You've all deliberately ganged up against me. You've plotted against me." She weeps bitterly and runs away into the other room. What is painful to Benare is "enjoyable" to Kashikar, the judge. The judge Kashikar plans to punish her for her illicit relationship with Damle. Later on, when Benare comes back and tries to run away, the bolt of the door has slipped and shut from outside. The proceedings of the court go on without having least care and concern for her trouble and tension. Witnesses come one by one and throw charges and accusations at her. Seeing their attacking mood, she keeps mum at all questions and queries put to her. Lastly, even the judge himself, going against all norms and traditions, comes to the witness box and declares that Nana Saheb Shinde, the Chairman of the Education Society, has informed him that Miss. Benare is going to be dismissed immediately from the job because of her immoral conduct. Benare is extremely shocked and tries to take poison from the bottle of Tik-20, but is stopped by others in time. No one of them have any sympathy for the accused, Sukhatme, the counsel for the prosecution, concludes: "The woman who is an accused has made heinous blot on the sacred brow of motherhood: which is purer than heaven itself. For that, any punishment, however great, that the law may give her, will be too mild. The character of the accused is appalling. It is bankrupt of morality. Not only that her conduct has also blackened all social and moral values. The accused is public enemy number one. If such socially destructive tendencies are encouraged to flourish, this country and its culture will be totally destroyed. Therefore, I say "the court must take a very stern, inexorable view of the prisoner's crime without being trapped in any sentiment. With her crime of infanticide and unmarried motherhood she had posed a great danger to our religion and our traditions. The accused has plotted to dynamite the very root of our tradition, our pride in ourselves, our culture and our religion." He closes his argument with the suggestion that the court should show no mercy to the accused, but give her greatest and severest punishment for her terrible crime.

Benare admits the charges framed against her. But she says, "My private life is my own business. I'll decide what to do with myself, everyone should be able to!... Everyone has a bent, a manner, an aim in life. What's anyone else to do with these?" She refers to her love affair with

her maternal uncle and Prof. Damel. She boldly, admits her affairs with both these persons without any hesitation.

Kashikar's judgement shows his social concern and responsibility. He gives his verdict thus "The cup of her crime is now full..... The crimes you have committed are most terrible. There is no forgiveness for them. Your sin must be expiated. Irresponsibility must be chained down. Social customs, after all, are of supreme importance. Marriage is the very foundation of our society's stability. Motherhood must be sacred and pure..... This court has not an iota of doubt about it. Hence not only today's but tomorrow's society would have been endangered by your misconduct ... Neither you nor anyone else should ever do anything like this again. No moments of your sin should remain for future generations. Therefore this court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed".

The judgement is read, Benare cries, "No! No! No! I won't let you do it- I won't let happen-I won't let it happen!" And crying thus, she collapses with her head on the table, motionless. Thus comes to an end the mock-trial that has proved very serious to the central character Miss Leela Benare. It was a mere game. The real play is yet to be staged.

## **15.4 TITLE OF THE PLAY**

*Silence! The Court Is In Session* is the first authentic play of Vijay Tendulkar produced in 1967. It has become a part of New Indian English Drama 'to break the Silence' of woman protagonist against oppression and injustice. The original title of the play is *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*. In the title of the play, the term 'Silence' has unique significance. In general terms, the word used in the title indicates absolute authority of Judge in the court where the Judge uses such word to maintain the decorum of court or discipline of the people.

In the present play, Tendulkar satirises on the Indian Justice system and how truth is silenced in the court. We find how Benare become the victim of humiliation of the fellow male characters. The audience is made to witness a mere enactment of what is a rehearsal of mock-trial to be staged later in the day. When Miss Leela Benare wants to protest she is ordered to be silent the court is in session. Again she breaks the silence she is ordered to keep the silence in the name of law and threatened with contempt of court. She is driving to despair and attempt suicide in such a green scenario. Every word of the title *Silence! The Court Is In Session* assumes symbolic significance. The word *Silence* symbolises the patriarchal hypocrisy to silence the

voice of women in the name of social justice and ideology. N S Dharan points out that, “it is the imposed silence of Benare that gives the title its uniqueness and tells about the mockery in the title. In this way the title of the play is very appropriate.” Thus, in the play Tendulkar questions the imposition of patriarchal values on women and its restrictive norms. Leela Benare , a member of a theatre group which comes to perform at a village is involved in a mock trial cunningly planned by her co-actors. The title is very much meaningful and appropriate.

## **15.5 THEMES OF THE PLAY**

The play *Silence! The Court Is In Session* deals the multiple themes and concepts of human relationships. It deals with the women’s status in the society, judiciary system, social evils, and role of man and woman. The play centres the concept of women discrimination based on gender bias. The important themes and philosophy that is embedded are given bel:

### **15.5.1 THE POWER OF PATRIARCHY**

The play presents the real picture of male dominant society where males are in the centre and females are on the border of human development. The opening scene of the play Miss Leela Benare a protagonist is put on trial for being an unmarried pregnant lady. She is blamed with a criminal violation of sanctity, a heavenly gift of God to the women. It is assumed that Benare is gentle because she is unmarried pregnant woman. She is accused and charged against her is infanticide. Whereas, the man who fathered the illegitimate child being put away from the trial and escape to face the judiciary trial. In short, Leela Benare is accused of law. She has done no offence in the eye of law but she has violated the social tabbo. This concept of justice represents the power of patriarchy in the core theme of the play. In this way Benare’s plight reminds one of Draupadi in the court of Kauravas. All Duryodhan staved around and laught at her. However, no Lord Krishna comes to her rescue.

### **15.5.2 THE MOCKERY OF JUDICIARY SYSTEM**

From the beginning of the play to the curtain fall, the play developed with the judicial trial. In the beginning of the play the mocking of unfair Indian court is satirized. A judge named Kashikar takes only one witness stand in the court and a single lawyer representing the both prosecution and defence. The final decision of the judge is also a mockery of justice for a woman and her ideal society. The plead of both sides of the trial nothing but mock trial that covers the

truth of the offence. Kashikar urge the charge of infanticide is important from the social point of view and that in choosing it he was considering societies best interest.

## **15.6 CHARACTERS**

Tendulkar is a great master in the art of characterization. In the plays of Tendulkar characters are important than plot and action. So it is called Tendulkar's plays are character. Characters of his plays are drawn from our day to day life. From all stroke of society that is upper-middle to lower class of society. There are few major characters in the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*. Following points are to discuss in detail:

### **15.6.1 Miss Leela benare**

Leela Benare, the central female character of the play is a school teacher, a single woman of 35 years old. She maintains her distinctive physical and mental vitality. She is bold, honest, frank, and out spoken lady representing the modern women who is capable of protecting herself. She is dedicated to her profession and she exhibits her autonomy in action and choice. She is active member of the Amateur Theatre Group known as *The Sonar Moti Tenement Progressive Association*. In the first act Benare appears as an extra bold woman full of zest and zeal for life. She speaks confidently in class and court. During the mock trial she speaks confidently *'My private life is my own business. I'll decide what to do with myself everyone should be able to do and that can't be anyone else business, understand. Everyone has a bent, a manner, an aim of life. What's anyone else to do with these?'*

Tendulkar represents Benare "a New Woman" in the Indian society who raises her voice against injustice of law although, frequently her sound has been suppressed by the word '*Silence*'. She was charged with infanticide, literally and by her resistance to injustice. She shows new dimension of defending and fighting the individual rights of woman. She will be praised for strong will power and determination with which she sails through the prosecution of the society.

### **15.6.2 Mr.Kashikar**

Mr.Kashikar is the chairman of The Sonar Moti Tenenant Progressive Association. He plays the role of judge in trial. He is a social worker and his prime objective is the upliftment of the down trodden. Benare introduced him in the play as My Prime Objective. Is a man of good social and legal understanding. He is quite good at Sanskrit and quotes justifying his lofty sentiments

befitting his dignity as judge. He presents himself as intelligent and superior Judge of mock trial, he combines free quality with seriousness in right proportion and provides excellent fare to audience.

### **15.6.3 Raghu Samant**

Raghu Samant who is going to enact the role of fourth witness of mock trial. He is local uneducated person from the village. It is for him the mock trial is stage as he is unaware of the court proceedings. He is a kind hearted sympathy honest helpful and compassionate young man. He remains on the stage from the very first episode to the last one. He appears on the stage holding a lock and key toy parrot and a book. His dialogues are meaningful and impressive.

### **15.6.4 Sukhatme**

Sukhatme is the important character of the play as well as a vital member of the amateur group. He plays the role of a lawyer for both the sides, lawyer for the prosecutions as well as lawyer for the accused. Contrary to the picture presented by Benare about him, he waxes eloquence before the judge and examination the witnesses for the prosecution one by one and establishes the case for the prosecution that Benare is a victim of infanticide and unwed motherhood. He exploits on the virtual of motherhood and how Miss Benare has belighted it by her illegal motherhood. He is very ugly to differentiate the rules of prosecutor and the defence council by his totally different posture, gesture and mannerism. He makes us understand that he is a man of social concern and moral values.

### **15.6.5 Mrs.Kashikar**

Mrs. Kashikar is another major character of the play. She is completely different from Miss Benare. She represents the traditional Indian housewife existing under the pleasure of her husband. Miss Benare introduces her as Mrs hand that rocks the cradle. She has no issue. Although Mrs. Kashikar is uneducated but she is worldly wise and experienced in all matters. She gives expert opinion and remarks on legal proceedings.

### **15.6.6 Prof. Damle**

Professor Damle, a married man having five children, is the father of Miss Benare's unborn child but back away from his responsibilities. He never appears visibly in the play but he plays a significant role in giving final shape to the chain of events.

### **15.6.7 Ponshe**

Ponshe is an intermediate failed science student who thinks himself scientist. He works as a clerk in the central telegraph office. as He is presented as a witness in the court. He is bold and straight forward character.

### **15.6.8 Karnik**

Karnik is one of the witness in Benare's case. He is an experimental theatre artist. He the great actor is feud and intelligent fellow in the nature group that has long experience dramas on the stage.

### **15.6.9 Balu Rokde**

Balu Rokde is adopted son of Mr. And Mrs. Kashikar. He plays the role of witness in mock trial. He opens secrets of Miss Benare. He is honest and sincere.

## **15.7 SUMMING UP**

In this unit we have discussed:

- Summary of the play
- Appropriateness of the title of the play
- Major themes and characters of the play.

*Silence! The Court Is In Session* deals with the hypocrisy of patriarchal society and legal system of India. The court in the play is entirely different from the real court. As it presents a mock trial, the court itself has become an object of mockery. The play focused on the vulnerability of woman in our society. In the mock trial, Benare becomes a victim struggling against the collective voice of judge, the lawyer and professor who represents the authority of male dominated society.

## **15.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. Write a note on the significance of the title of the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.



Ans. Read the section no. 15.4.

2. Discuss the major themes of the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.

Ans. Read carefully the section no. 15.5 along with sub-sections.

3. Write a note on the background of the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.

Ans. Read carefully the section no. 15.2.

4. Discuss Tendulkar's art of characterization with special reference to *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.

Ans. Examine the section no. 15.6

5. Comment upon women characters in *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.

Ans. Read carefully the sub-sections 15.6.1 and 15.6.5

6. Give an introduction of the central figure of the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.

Ans. Read the section no. 15.6.1

## 15.9 FURTHER READINGS

Tendulkar, Vijay: *Silence! The Court Is In Session*. Oxford University Press

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## UNIT 16 STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

### Structure

16. Objectives

16.1 Introduction

16.2 Language and Style

16.3 Dramatic Technique

16.4 Irony in the play

16.5 Symbolism in the play

16.6 Significance of Song in the play

16.7 Summing Up

16.8 Self- Assessment Questions and Answers

16.9 Further Readings

### 16.0 OBJECTIVES

After Completing this unit carefully, you will be able to:

- Know Tendulkar's use of language and style
- Discuss different dramatic technique used by Tendulkar in the play
- Analyse the use of humour, irony and satire in the play

### 16.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the last unit in this block. *Silence! The Court Is In Session* is a three act play. It has elaborate stage directions to make the play lively. The language of the play is easy and style is impressive. It functions almost like play within play. Atmosphere is tense throughout the play with occasional instances of 'comic relief'. Satire and irony find ample space in the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*. So far, we have given you a brief introduction to history of Indian Drama and Marathi Theatre in previous units. We also read about the life and works of

Tendulkar. Then we discussed the background of the play, significance of the title and central theme of gender discrimination, hypocrisy of patriarchal society. In this unit we shall take up questions relating to form i.e. techniques by which the playwright effectively communicates his vision.

## **16.2 LANGUAGE AND Style**

The play is originally written in Marathi, was later translated into English by Priya Adarkar. The language and style of the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session* are characterised by a combination of realism, dark humour and social commentary. The dialogues are often intense and reflective of the complexities of human relationship and social norms. Tendulkar skilfully use the language to highlight the hypocrisy and prejudice prevalent in society, making the play a powerful commentary on the judicial system and the position of women in Indian society.

The style of the play is characterised by a blend of naturalistic dialogue and dramatic elements. Tendulkar uses dramatic modelled on the language, rhythms and association of ordinary speech. The language used in the play is colloquial and controversial, reflecting the natural patterns of the characters.

## **16.3 DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE**

*Silence! The Court Is In Session* is known for its innovative and effective narrative techniques as called meta-theatricality. The play blurs the lines between reality and performance, creating a thought-provoking commentary on societal norms and prejudices. The play unfolds as a 'play-within-play' with the first act using the device of mock-trial by a group of amateurs. Vijay Tendulkar used the dramatic technique as 'Mock-Trial' and 'Play-within-Play.'

The mock trial marks a deft stroke of artistic mastery of Tendulkar in the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*. As the real performance is supposed to have been mock-law court. It is mock-trial that causes the terminal reversal in the play. Benare who has earlier been sprightly ends up being the game ruthlessly baited by her male-counterparts. The element of 'reversal' gives the play its unique dramatic significance. The mock-trial also helps the playwright to expose to his audience the un veiled truths, challenge biases and question of the judicial system. It symbolizes the reflection of social attitudes towards woman and manipulation of justice. Through this play critiques the moral hypocrisy prevalent in our society and challenge the audience to confront

their own bias. Benare is horror struck at the naked display of their innate cruelty towards her. The eagerness and enthusiasm with which Kashikar, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik and Rokde heap evidence after evidence against her- terrified her and eventually she sits frozen like a motionless statue on floor in the end. Before the mock trial Benare is active in a sense. She makes comments on the behaviour of her fellow characters as well as sings. But silence discards on her when mock-trial begins with Kashikar's sudden interrogative statement. Prisoner Miss Benare under Section 302 of Indian Penal Code you are accused of the crime of infanticide. Benare is found dumb as the trial precedes her attempt to protest are casually drowned in Kashikar, the Mock Judge's imposition: Silence! In such as hostile situation Benare has no other choice but to remain silent. In short, the mock trial becomes a powerful metaphor for larger issues addressed in the play highlighting the complexities of justice, morality and the role of women in Indian society.

*Silence! The Court Is In Session* is also rich with imagery. Vivid descriptions, carefully chosen words and many symbolic, incidental parallels give the play a compact fabric of dramatist's design. The problems of identity, middle class sentimentalism, male domination or patriarchal society, in the matter of discussion, reveal an acute observation of Tendulkar which are never pointless, hypocrite, scrupulous or double dealing. Through the theatrical elements, cluster of theatrical personalities and above all, Benare, Tendulkar has attempted the self justification of feminine identity and highlights the inferiority of contemporary society.

#### **16.4 IRONY AND SATIRE IN THE PLAY**

In *Silence! The Court Is In Session* irony is employed to highlight the dissonance between appearance and reality. The title of the play itself is highly ironical for there is no silence or discipline in the court, which is going to be seated in judgement against Miss Leela Benare for her crime of infanticide and unwed motherhood. Prof. Damle, the father of her illegitimate child, ironically despite being absent in entire proceedings, manages to escape punishment. The double standards of society freed him who is co-conspirator in the alleged crime that Benare is accused of. The description of mother and motherhood by Sukhatme and Kashikar is again ironic who only utters the words mythology and books but really they do not know the meaning of these sacred words. So, irony is a powerful tool in Tendulkar's play shedding light on the contradictions and injustices with the legal and social system.

The play is a satire on social as well as on legal justice. Miss Leela Benare is held guilty on the basis of witness only. So, the play obliquely suggests that the present day justice is just a mockery. Throughout the rehearsal of a mock -trial, Benare's co-actors try to console her by telling that they are only joking with her. She suffers in mental agony is no way less severe than the legal punishment. She is punished harshly, even disproportionately and Prof. Damle, the real culprit goes scot-free. The contemporary Indian society is still male-dominated where women are to suffer. The injustice projected in the play will go on repeating itself in actual life until this male-centred world becomes a human centred world.

## **16.5 SYMBOLISM IN THE PLAY**

Symbolism is the use of words or images to symbolize specific concepts, people, objects, or events. It is a literary device writers use to make their work more vivid and unique. In a way, symbolism (like personification and imagery) illustrates a piece of writing that creates pictures in the reader's mind. In fact, some other literary devices, like metaphor and allegory, are often considered to be types of symbolism. Literary devices are the techniques writers use to communicate ideas and themes beyond what they can express literally.

In the play *Silence! The Court is in Session*, Leela Benare, the protagonist, is an unmarried school teacher in her early thirties and a member of troupe. She is accused of love affair with her maternal uncle in her early age. Now, Benare has been in a relationship with Professor Damle. She has been deserted by him after impregnating her. When the fact of Benare's pregnancy is known to her school, she is fired from her job. The school authorities view unmarried motherhood as sinful and immoral. They are worried she would somehow pass on her immorality to her students. Being pregnant and without a job, Benare tries to figure out how to make life easy for herself and her unborn child. The play starts with a mock-trial scene to shift from fictional to the real, Benare grows increasingly anxious. She urgently tries to flee but discovers to her horror that the only exit is a door that has been locked from the outside. This door becomes symbolic of Leela's inability to escape the torture of her co-actors, the so called moralists of the society. She is also symbol of new modern Indian woman and a woman emancipated from the grasp of the past. Another character Mrs. Kashikar symbolises traditional woman and a submissve wife to a dominating husband representing the strength of a patriarchy that has identified the roles and place of woman in society.

In the title of play *Silence! The Court is in Session*, the word 'silence' is also a symbolical word. It is a word of command to remain silent and pervasive. It is an instrument used by the judge to caution Benare to be silent when she interrupts testimony. He wields the same power of 'silence' his wife when she begins to voice her opinions. The ending of the play has Benare lying lifeless on the floor in silence. The symbolism of all this quieting of the only female characters in the play should be obvious!

Another symbol is used with "Sparrow and Parrot Story" in the play. The sparrow symbolises vigilance, joy, creativity and wisdom. Sparrows are small in size but extremely protective especially a clan. She is constantly busy building nests, foraging for food and protecting it's young and it serve as a reminder and promotes a happy and full life. Parrot is truth telling bird, powerful reflection of self.

In short, Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* is an effective play with a very impressive language, style and symbolical devices. It is just another play presenting the picture of Indian society. The play exposes the social hypocrisy and its dubious double standards. The play is well constructed that presents the realistic picture of current situation of India's modern society.

## **16.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SONG IN THE PLAY**

In the play *Silence! The court is in Session*, though the conversation of the characters is set in simple prosaic terms, four songs and a poem is used in order to add lyrical taste and to present the current condition of a female in this patriarchal society. Tendulkar has these songs sung by Benare, the protagonist of the play, to express the mental turmoil of a helplessness of her society of male chauvinism.

Through the poems and songs, Tendulker reflects the inner psyche of main protagonist Leela Benare. Every poem has related to personal and professional life of Leela. Her struggle carves out a niche for herself in this patriarchal society. Her songs about a parrot and sparrow signify her predicament, helpless condition where she only weep over her ruined nest.

Structurally, the songs Tendulkar assigns to Berare are of great dramatic significance, for instance, the song she sings in the opening scene:

Oh I've got a sweetheart

Who Carries all my book

He plays in my doll house,

And says he likes my looks

He wants to marry me

But mummy says, I am too little

To have such thought are these

Another composition which she recites in the opening scene is more important regarding her tough journey to get a mark in society.

Our feet tread up unknown society.

And dangerous pathways ever more.

And the wound that's born to bleed

Bleeds on for ever, faithfully

A big part of a song was sung by Benare at the end of Act I, but it was completed at the end of the play. At that time, she did not project the cruel role of the crow. The last lullaby seems to be taking in Benare's dream. On being backed by Samant, Benare seems to have a dream of becoming a mother. In dream, she tells the living parrot, which seems to symbolize her son, about the destructive role of the crow. It is the crow that has destroyed her nest, yet it pretends to be innocent about it. Even it denies having to do with the troubles of the sparrow's life. **Helen Cixous** opines, "The voice in each woman, moreover, is not only her own, but springs from the deepest layers of her psyche, her own speech becomes the echo of the primeval song once she heard..." Tendulkar suggests the presence of impurity in the sacrosanct structure of Indian polity through the inclusion of the crow in it. Undoubtedly, the song in the play pays a significant role in the development of the inner thought of the theme.

## 16.7 SUMMING UP

In this unit we have discussed the language, style and technique of the play, keeping in mind the fact that it has been translated from Marathi into English. The technique of mock-trial in the play marks a deft-stroke on the part of Tendulkar. It functions almost like a play-within-play. Apart from this we have also discussed irony and satire in the play which have a very crucial role in the play. They serve as powerful tools to critique social norms, question authority, and highlight the hypocrisy prevalent in the judicial system and male chauvinism. The next important thing is Symbolism in the play which adds depth narrative conveying underlying themes and social critiques. At last we have seen that through the poems and songs, Tendulkar reflects the inner psyche of main protagonist Leela Benare. Every poem has related to personal and professional life of Leela.

## 16.8 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Write a note on the narrative technique in the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.

Ans. Read carefully the section no. 16.3.

2. Discuss use of irony and satire of the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.

Ans. Examine the section no. 16.4.

3. What is the significance of song in the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*?

Ans. Read carefully the section no. 16.6.

4. Write a note on symbolism in the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session*.

Ans. Read the section no. 16.5.

5. Comment on the language and style in the play *Silence! The Court Is In Session* by Tendulkar.

Ans. Read the section no. 16.2.

## 16.9 FURTHER READINGS

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