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UGEN-104

20th Century Literature

Block

I

Modern Poetry : British & Indian

Unit-1 W.B. Yeats : *'A Prayer for My Daughter', 'The Second Coming'*

'When You are Old',

Unit-2 T.S.Eliot : *'The Journey of the Magi'*

Unit- 3 A.K. Ramanujan: *'Another View of Grace', 'Obituary'*



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20th Century Literature

Block II

Prose

Unit-1 E.V. Lucas: Tight Corners

Unit-2 Richard Wright : Twelve Million Black Voices

Unit- 3 Jawaharlal Nehru: Will and Testament



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20th Century Literature

Block III

Drama-John Galsworthy : Strife

Unit-7 John Galsworthy: Life & Works

Unit-8 Strife: Analysis Act I

Unit- 9 Strife: Analysis Act II & III

Unit- 10 Strife as a Problem Play

Unit- 11 Characters

Unit- 12 Structure & Technique

Unit- 13 Annotations Important Passage



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20th Century Literature

Block IV

Fiction

Raja Rao: Kanthapura

Unit-14 RAJA RAO: LIFE AND WORKS

Unit-15 KANTHAPURA: BACKGROUND

Unit- 16 KANTHAPURA: THEMES

Unit- 17 KANTHAPURA: STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

Unit- 18 KANTHAPURA: CHARACTERS

I. BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Block I of your Course on 20th Century literature . This block deals with poetry. We have three poets in all . W.B. Yeats & T.S. Eliot are British Modern Poet and A.K. Ramanujan is an Indian poet. We shall two poems of each of these poets. This block consists of the following 3 units:

Unit No.	Subject
1.	W.B. Yeats : <i>A Prayer for My daughter, The Second Coming</i>
2.	T.S. Eliot : <i>When You are Old, The Journey of the Magi</i>
3.	A.K. Ramanujan : <i>Another View of Grace , Obituary</i>

In each unit, I' ll try to tell you something about the lives of the poets we are studying . In addition, we shall of course discuss their literary careers, major publications, themes , techniques and so on , before concentrating on the selected poem themselves . When it comes to reading and understanding the poems. I shall not only try to explicate their meanings but also explain to you how I read and relate to these poems. After study the this block you should able to answer all the questions that are given at the end of the units.

II. BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Block II of your Course on 20th Century literature . This block deals with Prose. We have three prose- writers – E.V. Lucas , Richard Wright and Jawahar Lal Nehru . This block consists of the following 3 units:

Unit No.	Subject
4.	E.V. Lucas : <i>Tight Corners</i>
5.	Richard Wright: <i>Twelve Million Black Voices</i>
6.	Jawahar Lal Nehru: <i>Will & Testament</i>

In each unit. I'll try to tell you something about lives of the prose writers, we are studying . We shall discuss their literary career , major, publications, summery of essays and their style and technique.

III. BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Block II of your Course on 20th Century literature . This block deals with Drama. Galsworthy's **Strife** is a play concerning the clash between capital and labour, the waste of force in valued in the caste-feeling of capital petted against the caste-feeling of labour . In this play Galsworthy wanted to highlight the revolutionary passions of the common workers against their ruling class for their rights of early 20th century England. This block contains 6 units on **Strife**:

In unit 7 we discuss the life and works of Galsworthy. Unit 8&9 critically analyse Act I, Act II and Act III of **Strife**. In unit 10 we discuss **Strife** as a problem play. In unit 11&12 we discuss the topics like the characters title structure and technique of the play. In unit 13 we discuss the annotation of the important passages of the play **Strife** .

IV. BLOCK INTRODUCTION

A discussion of Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* is spread over the five units of this block. Unit 14 discusses Raja Rao's life and works. In unit 15 we consider the source of *Kanthapura* its historical and political background, the impact of Gandhian thought on the novel. Unit 16 discusses the major themes of *Kanthapura*. In unit 17 while examining the structure and technique, we discuss the narrative technique, myths and symbolism that Raja Rao employs in the novel. In unit 18 we examine his art of characterization with special emphases on Moorthy, the women characters and some other important figures. After studying the novel and this block you should be able to answer all the questions that are given at the end of the units.

Unit-1 W. B. Yeats: ‘*A Prayer for My Daughter*’, ‘*The Second Coming*’ ‘*When You are Old*’

Structure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Objectives

1.2 Modern literature

1.3 William Butler Yeats: Life and Works

1.4 A Prayer for My Daughter

1.4.1 Poem

1.4.2 Glossary

1.4.3 Discussion

1.4.4 Lets Sum up

1.4.5 Suggested readings

1.4.6 Answer to Exercises

1.5 The Second Coming

1.5.1 Poem

1.5.2 Glossary

1.5.3 Discussion

1.5.4 Lets Sum up

1.5.5 Suggested readings

1.5.6 Answer to Exercises

1.6 When you are Old

1.6.1 Poem

1.6.2 Glossary

1.6.3 Discussion

1.6.4 Lets Sum up

1.6.5 Suggested readings

1.6.6 Answer to Exercises

1.0 Introduction

In this Unit we shall take up two poems by W.B. Yeats. A Prayer for My Daughter and The Second Coming. A Prayer for My Daughter by William Butler Yeats opens with an image of the newborn child sleeping in a cradle. A storm is raging with great fury outside his residence. A great gloom is on Yeats' mind and is consumed with anxiety as to how to protect his child from the tide of hard times ahead. The poet keeps walking and praying for the young child and as he does so he is in a state of reverie. He feels a kind of gloom and worry about the future of his daughter.

Yeats wants his daughter to possess some qualities so that she can face the future years independently and with confidence. Yeats says: Let her be given beauty, but a more important thing is that her beauty should not be of a kind which may either make her proud of her beauty or distract a stranger's mind and eyes. Those whose beauty is capable of making them proud consider beauty an end in itself. The great thing about the poem is that it has a specific as well as general applicability. At the same time the poem makes an indirect reference to Maud Gonne also whom Yeats loved so much and yet could not win her hand.

In the end, the poem is a prayer for order and grace in a battered civilization. Behind the prayer, of course, are Yeats' bitter memories of Maud Gonne who had come to stand for the tragedy of how beauty and grace can be distorted by politics, intellectual hatred and arrogance.

In the second poem The Second Coming, prophesies that some sort of Second Coming (traditionally, this is the return of Christ to Earth, as was promised in the New Testament) is due, and that the anarchy that has arisen all around the world (partly because of the events of the First World War, though the tumultuous events in Yeats's home country of Ireland are also behind the poem) is a sign that this Second Coming cannot be far off.

But what sort of Second Coming will it be? It's almost been 'twenty centuries', or 2,000 years, since Christ came to Earth in human form and was crucified; what 'rough beast' will reveal itself this time? Perhaps it will not be a Christ in human form, but something altogether different. The reference to *Spiritus Mundi*, literally 'spirit of the world', is, like the 'gyre', another allusion to Yeats's beliefs: for Yeats, the *Spiritus Mundi* was a sort of collective soul containing all of mankind's cultural memories – not just Christian memories, but those from other societies. 'A shape with lion body and the head of a man, / A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun' suggests something altogether different from Jesus Christ – it's got more in common with the Sphinx, that giant stone sculpture of a human-cat hybrid found near the Pyramids at Giza (Yeats's word 'gaze' even faintly suggests 'Giza'), which belongs to a different civilisation from the Christian one, and indeed predated it. The effect of this is to

decentre Christianity ('the centre cannot hold', after all) from its apparently secure place in western civilisation, and to question what form a 'Second Coming', if it occurs, might take. Perhaps other civilisations, after all, have been waiting for *their* deities to return.

1.1 Objectives

In this Unit we shall discuss two poems by one of the famous modern poet W.B. Yeats. After reading the Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of W.B. Yeats.
- Analyse the poem 'A Prayer for My Daughter' and 'The Second Coming'
- Explain lines with reference to their context;
- Define poetic technique of W.B. Yeats.

1.3 William Butler Yeats: Life and Works

William Butler Yeats was one of the greatest English-language poets of the 20th century and received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. Born in Ireland in 1865, William Butler Yeats published his first works in the mid-1880s while a student at Dublin's Metropolitan School of Art. His early accomplishments include *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889) and such plays as *The Countess Kathleen* (1892) and *Deirdre* (1907). In 1923, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He went on to pen more influential works, including *The Tower* (1928) and *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (1932). Yeats, who died in 1939, is remembered as one of the leading Western poets of the 20th century.

Early Life

William Butler Yeats was born on June 13, 1865, in Dublin, Ireland, the oldest child of John Butler Yeats and Susan Mary Pollexfen. Although John trained as a lawyer, he abandoned the law for art soon after his first son was born. Yeats spent much of his early years in London, where his father was studying art, but frequently returned to Ireland as well.

In the mid-1880s, Yeats pursued his own interest in art as a student at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin. Following the publication of his poems in the *Dublin University Review* in 1885, he soon abandoned art school for other pursuits.

Career Beginnings

After returning to London in the late 1880s, Yeats met writers like Oscar Wilde, Lionel Johnson and George Bernard Shaw. He also became acquainted with Maud Gonne, a supporter of Irish independence. This revolutionary woman served so many Years as a muse for Yeats. He even proposed marriage to her several times, but she turned him down. He dedicated his 1892 drama *The Countess Kathleen* to her.

Around this time, Yeats founded the Rhymers' Club poetry group with Ernest Rhys. He also joined the Order of the Golden Dawn, an organization that explored topics related to the occult and mysticism. While he was fascinated with otherworldly elements, Yeats's interest in Ireland, especially its folktales, fueled much of his output. The title work of *The Wanderings of Oisín and Other Poems* (1889) draws from the story of a mythic Irish hero.

Acclaimed Poet and Playwright

In addition to his poetry, Yeats devoted significant energy to writing plays. He teamed with Lady Gregory to develop works for the Irish stage, the two collaborating for the 1902 production of *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. Around that time, Yeats helped found the Irish National Theatre Society, serving as its president and co-director, with Lady Gregory and John Millington Synge. More works soon followed, including *On Baile's Strand*, *Deirdre* and *At the Hawk's Well*.

Following his marriage to Georgie Hyde-Lees in 1917, Yeats began a new creative period through experiments with automatic writing. The newlyweds sat together for writing sessions they believed to be guided by forces from the spirit world, through which Yeats formulated intricate theories of human nature and history. They soon had two children, daughter Anne and son William Michael.

The celebrated writer then became a political figure in the new Irish Free State, serving as a senator for six years beginning in 1922. The following year, he received an important accolade for his writing as the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature. According to the official Nobel Prize website, Yeats was selected "for his always inspired poetry, which in a highly artistic form gives expression to the spirit of a whole nation."

Yeats continued to write until his death. Some of his important later works include *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917), *A Vision* (1925), *The Tower* (1928) and *Words for Music Perhaps and Other Poems* (1932). Yeats passed away on January 28, 1939, in Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France. The publication of *Last Poems and Two Plays* shortly after his death further cemented his legacy as a leading poet and playwright.

1.4 A Prayer for My Daughter

A Prayer for My Daughter is an intensely personal poem. Written in 1919, a few weeks after Yeats daughter Anne was born, this poem speaks about the anxiety felt for the well-being of his daughter as also about the anxiety shared by fathers all over the world torn by war and greed. He thinks how his daughter will face the coarse and vulgar world. He imagines the war drums which forecast the struggle for survival. He thinks that the cruelty of man is more dangerous than the murderous innocence of the sea. He believes that she can protect herself by cultivating virtues of nobility and courtesy. He prays that his daughter should have beauty but not vanity. He wants his daughter to have happy and innocent thoughts in her mind. She should scatter her happiness all around. Her soul should flourish like a flourishing tree. He wants his daughter to be free from hatred and to shun strong or stubborn opinion on any subject – political or otherwise. He wants innocence to replace hatred. It will give inner peace to his daughter. He wishes his daughter to get married in a good aristocratic family and lead a happy life.

1.4.1 Poem

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill
Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind,
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
And under the arches of the bridge, and scream
In the elms above the flooded stream;
Imagining in excited reverie
That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty and yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and may be
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool,
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned
By those that are not entirely beautiful;
Yet many, that have played the fool
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise,
And many a poor man that has roved,
Loved and thought himself beloved,
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,
And have no business but dispensing round
Their magnanimities of sound,
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.
O may she live like some green laurel
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,
The sort of beauty that I have approved,
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,
Yet knows that to be choked with hate
May well be of all evil chances chief.
If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,
So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence,
The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;
She can, though every face should scowl
And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;
For arrogance and hatred are the wares
Peddled in the thoroughfares.
How but in custom and in ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

1.4.2 Glossary

Howling: doleful cry or wailing sound

Frenzied: uncontrolled

Intimacy: close familiarity

Magnanimities: generosity

Merriment: gaiety and fun

Appeasing: pacify

Affrighting: frighten

Bellows: a device with an air bag that emits a stream of air

Accustomed: usual

Arrogance: haughtiness

Peddled: sell (an illegal drug or stolen item)

Laurel: an aromatic evergreen shrub related to the bay tree

1.4.3 Discussion

Stanza 1: The weather is a reflection of Yeats' feelings. The post-war period was dangerous. Anne's vulnerability and innocence is symbolised by the "cradle-hood", "coverlid" "And half hid" shows that she is barely protected by the frail "coverlid."

Anne is oblivious to the violent forces around her; she is ignorant (she "sleeps on"; she is not awake to the violence around her), hence she is "under this cradle-hood" which hides her and is unaffected. (The forces may be riots, violence, starvation, or decay of moral values.)

"Under this cradlehood and coverlid / My child sleeps on." Here the poet means to say that her ignorance protects from the uneasy knowledge hence she "sleeps on." "The roof-levelling wind" is strong, representing frightening, turbulent forces. "Where by the haystack-and roof-levelling wind, / Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed." USA was more comfortable compared to Europe. Turbulent forces or "wind" was less significant and more controlled in the USA. Hence it can be "stayed" or controlled. Yeats prays because he is gloomy; "great gloom In my mind."

Literary devices: personification – “the storm is howling” represents threatening external forces e.g. riots, evilness.
 Roof-levelling wind represents turbulent forces.
 Symbols - “Storm” represents outside forces which threaten Anne’s safety.
 “cradlehood” represents Anne’s innocence and infancy.
 “coverlid” represents innocence and ignorance, frail protection.
 “wind” represents turbulent forces.
 “one bare hill” may represent Robert’s death. (Why is the hill bare? Replies are appreciated.)
 The hill is empty, it may represent death – there is no one to occupy it. Or it may be a hill where his tombstone lies. As I have said, I have no idea.
 Rhyme scheme: aabbcdcc

Stanza 2: Yeats is worried about Anne. “I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour.” The weather reflects the threatening forces he fears. “Flooded stream” represents intense forces caused by people as it has strong forces. It is “flooded” because the troublemakers exist in large numbers or the forces are strong. The weather or external forces caused by the war are stormy and destructive. The “*elms*” are tossed due to the destructive forces. People (possibly represented by “*elms*”) are affected.

This is rather desperate and pessimistic but there is a shift of mood. “Imagining ...” When Yeats starts to imagine, he helps his daughter; he decides how she should turn out. This appeases his worries and gives him new ideas and food for thought.. He imagines how her future will be exciting.

“*Imagining...the future years had come/Dancing to a frenzied drum.*” Anne’s life will pass in chaos. “*Dancing to a frenzied drum*” also indicates the passing years in Anne’s life which are represented by drum-beats (which have rhythm and tempo), it also symbolize violence and chaos. It is a violent and chaotic time. The drum is “*frenzied*” because of the danger and chaos around Anne. Furthermore, Yeats is excited (hence frenzied) for her to grow up.

Anne’s innocence is juxtaposed with the contrasting “*sea*” which is “murderous.” The sea represents the world and the crowds around her, and as they are evil, destructive and take advantage of her innocence, they are “murderous.” Moreover, the “*sea*” or the world is termed as “murderous innocence” because as part of the “*sea*”, Anne’s innocence is ‘murderous’ to herself and it enables others to manipulate her.

Literary devices: symbols - “sea wind” , “flooded stream” – turbulent forces

Personification - “future years ... dancing” - the passing years of life

Juxtaposition/oxymoron/paradox – “murderous innocence of the sea”

Sibilance – “sea-wind scream”

Assonance:”sea-wind scream”

Onomatopoeia – “scream”

Stanza 3: Yeats hopes that Anne will be beautiful but not excessively. “*May she be granted beauty and yet not/Beauty to make a stranger’s eye distraught.*” Beauty is distracting and destructive, because it causes an admirer to be “distraught” and unhappy as a result of this unfulfilled desire to possess this beauty. Besides, he may desire her negatively and steal her innocence. It inspires passion which may be hopeless. She should not be vain and conceited of her beauty. “Or hers before a looking-glass.) Yeats fears that beauty will make her think that it is sufficient, for beauty would help her. Beautiful people being more attractive can benefit more, and with this attribute, Anne may think that she needs not perform acts of goodness. Beauty is sufficient to place her in a position of security and acceptance. This causes her to lose “natural kindness”. She does not see or appreciate the values of kindness and virtue. She would think herself superior and strive less without helping others. They do not have to be kind and despise the physically undesirable. Furthermore, their beauty allows them to be fastidious in their choice of partners, having many admirers. Hence, they do not choose the right person as they have no heart or soul. “*Lose ... the heart-revealing intimacy/ That chooses right.*” They cannot love truly and care for veneer and shallow qualities, for they cannot truly feel or know who “*the one*” is, they sought for. The right person would in the end be more drawn to a good woman as shown in stanza 5.

“Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned.”

Beauty obstructs friendship as being beautiful causes one to be condescending, malicious and take things for granted. It causes the loss of human touch for the beautiful may tend to boast and despise their inferiors. They are not true friends. In another perspective, they do not form true friendships because others befriend them for the benefits derived from their appearance and even take advantage of them. The beautiful do not pay attention to those who make true friends as they believe themselves superior in beauty, fashion, etc. Furthermore, excessive

beauty results in jealousy and broken friendships. Another point to make is that beauty that over-entices may decrease Anne's virtue and increase her vulnerability as others wish to use her. This is crucial as in this poem, Yeats emphasizes the need for feminine innocence. In contrast, a plainer person being on a lower hierarchy will appreciate the importance of kindness. In this context, beauty is equated with society's shallowness.

Literary devices: personification - "stranger's eye distraught" - attracts and saddens one who is attracted
 Symbol - the "stranger" is an unhappy admirer.
 Alliteration - "stranger's eye distraught".

Stanza 4 : Yeats speaks of Greek mythology. Helen of Troy, being the most beautiful woman in the world, married Paris, a stupid man. Quote: "Helen being chosen found life flat and dull / And later had much trouble from a fool." As she was greatly admired and revered for her beauty, life was boring with little strife.

"While that great queen, that rose out of the spray, 'being fatherless could have her wasy/ Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man." Venus or Aphrodite, being fatherless, could marry as she pleased with no parental authority. Yet with all her power and advantages "chose a bandy-legged smith for man" (Hephaestus) – someone inferior to her. She had no father to guide her. Yeats intends to guide his daughter in the choice of a suitable spouse. Yeats is scornful: cultured women make mad choices in spouses. "Fine women eat/ A crazy salad with their meat." Meat is substantial; salad is not. Meat represents a fine lady who can be said to be "substantial," having numerous qualities; the "crazy salad" is their dreadful mate, who is devoid of many qualities. They can have more, but choose worse. The Horn of Plenty was a horn given by Zeus to his caretaker. The possessor of this Horn would be granted his wishes. "Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone." This is because Maud Gonne squandered her gifts of intellect, grace and beauty and the benefits she could command by marrying John McBride. She could obtain what she desired with these gifts – similar to the Horn of Plenty – and wasted the aforementioned gifts on McBride. As the Horn of Plenty could bring victuals, John McBride is symbolized as an unsubstantial "salad." Maud Gonne wasted her supposed power; she could have done better for herself, instead she made the wrong choice or desire.

Literary devices: symbol - "Helen", "Queen" – a beautiful cultured woman or Maud Gonne
 "Horn of plenty" - of gifts, advantages.

Metaphor - "crazy salad" - an inferior spouse.

Stanza 5: Yeats wants Anne to be courteous. Love does not come freely and unconditionally. "Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned." Love is not inspired by mere physical beauty; it is earned by good efforts "by those who are not entirely beautiful" who are kind and helpful. Those who have in stupidity made a fool of themselves by hopelessly loving beautiful women and thought it was reciprocated. "Yet many, that have played the fool/ For beauty's very self." One may not be loved by a beautiful woman. "

"Charm" from a good woman has charmed a man eventually as described in "has charm made wise." He becomes "wise" by realizing the goodness of loving a good woman.

Unsuccessful men have loved and are loved by kind women who make them happy, yet are not beautiful. "Loved and thought himself beloved/ From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes." She "cannot take his eyes" or captivate him by sight because she is not physically beautiful. But her kindness makes him glad. This could be a reference to Yeats' wife,, Georgie Hyde Lees who was not beautiful, but they had a happy marriage. Georgie loved him and let him take the credit for her work. The persona praises good unbeautiful women – like Georgie – who are more loved by men compared to harsh beautiful ones – Maud Gonne. Literary devices: personification - "glad kindness cannot take his eyes" "charm made wise." Symbol - "hearts" – love.

Stanza 6: From here onwards, more symbolism and interesting interpretation can be derived. Yeats hopes that his daughter will grow and flourish with virtue and modesty. "*May she become a flourishing hidden tree.*" She must be "hidden" – not too open and opinionated like Maud Gonne. A "tree" is fresh, soothing and natural. He wants her to be calm, good-natured and natural – not over-influenced by opinionated ideas. (Why not a flower – which is a commonly used to symbolize a girl? Possibly a flower is too attractive and open. Refer to Stanza 3.)

Yeats wishes that Anne will have merry, pleasant thoughts. He wants her to talk of good, pleasant things. "That all her thoughts may like the linnet be, / And have no business but dispensing around / Their magnanimities of sound." The linnet is a bird which flies, representing a merry, sweet, girl – not too serious, bombastic and violent like Maud Gonne. Yeats wants Anne to chase and quarrel only in merriment. He wants her to be happy and not too ambitious or opinionated. "*Nor but in merriment begin a chase,/ Nor but in merriment a*

quarrel.” He does not want her to “:chase” ambition ruthlessly. The “quarrel” indicated is mere arguing for fun. Yeats wants Anne to have a solid home and to be stable. “*Rooted in one dear perpetual place.*” The home is happy, hence it is “dear.” This may also indicate loyalty to one man. Maud Gonne had consummated a relationship with Lucien Millevoye – with two illegitimate children – and gone on to marry John McBride. Yeats wants Anne to be constant to one man, unlike Maud Gonne. “O may she live like some green laurel.” Here, Yeats uses mythology. The “green laurel” may refer to the nymph Daphne who was pursued by Apollo. Eager to protect her virtue, Daphne turned into a laurel tree. Similarly, Yeats wants Anne to be virtuous, unlike Maud Gonne. The word “green” in turn may symbolize peace, innocence and youth. We have already mentioned peace – in her home - and innocence. Anne’s youth is not physical but mental. Her father wishes that she will be merry and young at heart. Why green – not red or brown? Russet – reddish-brown – is associated with autumn or middle age and decline. Maud will fade and has declined due to her non-innocence. Her opinions do not denote one who is young at heart. Green denotes being young at heart. It also means inexperience or innocence – something merry, lively and different, a welcome change. For we say inexperienced people are “green”. Yeats does not want his daughter to be dreary and old at soul. Maud is certainly experienced; he wishes for Anne’s mental youth and innocence and vitality also represented by the colour green. For it may indicate ever greenness. Trees that are green are fresh and alive; russet trees are dying and fading. Maud declines because she is experienced and deflowered; her mental youth is gone. Hence Anne is the opposite – green. Anne, being “green” hopefully will retain mental youth with no worse change. Literary devices: symbol - “hidden tree” – Anne, virtue and modesty Symbol - “green laurel” – virtue, modesty, mental youth, ever greenness, innocence, inexperience.

Simile - “that all her thoughts may like the linnet be” – that Anne’s thoughts will be pleasant and merry.

Metaphor – “Rooted” – constancy and stability

Metaphor – “One dear perpetual place” – Anne’s home.

Stanza 7: Yeats states that his mind does not benefit but “*has dried up of late*” or weakened, tired and not stimulated because of the mind of Maud Gonne (whom “I have loved” and whose beauty he admired) barely prospers. He has mentioned her deficiencies. This weakens him. “*My mind, because the minds that I have loved, ‘The sort of beauty that I have approved, / Prosper but little, has dried up of late,*”

However, he states that hatred is the worst attribute and “of all evil chances evil.”
“If there’s no hatred in a mind / Assault and battery of the wind / Can never tear the linnet away from the leaf.” The “wind” signifies the destructive forces around Anne and it “cannot tear” Anne – symbolized by a linnet – away from the “leaf” – a fragile place or condition. “Linnet and “leaf” portray something fragile. Sufferings and destructive forces cannot destroy the fragile who do not hate as their minds are clear, calm and free. Negative thoughts make us suffer.

Literary devices: symbol - “wind” – destructive forces
 Symbol - “linnet” – Anne
 Symbol – “Leaf” – a fragile place or condition.
 Personification – “Assault and battery of the wind” – destruction.

Stanza 8: *“An intellectual hatred is the worst, / So let her think opinions are accursed.”* The hatred of an opinionated intellectual like Maud Gonne is the worst because it is strong, destructive, opinionated and the person knows the reason for this hatred. The intellectual resists opposition and fights for his cause. There are good reasons for this cause and hatred. Trivial hatred is weak, for there is little reason. An intellectual, being determined and clever, will fight for a cause with passion and determination. Yeats does not want Anne to be over-opinionated. “So let her think opinions are accursed.” Yeats states that Maud Gonne had plentiful gifts which she did “barter that horn and every good / For an old bellows full of angry wind.” The horn symbolizes gifts. The “bellows full of angry wind” depict her strong opinions. It can also represent John McBride, who started a riot. Perhaps he could be said to be full of hot air or opinions but little successful effort. “and every good / By quiet natures understood” are her advantages which are understood and appreciated by people with quiet natures (Yeats?). This makes sense especially with McBride’s loudness and abuse of his wife. The “angry wind” is despicable (McBride). Maud did not use her gifts properly, though she had courtesy, grace, ceremony, and aristocracy.

Literary devices: Symbol - “Plenty’s horn,” symbolizing gifts and advantages.
 Metaphor - “an old bellows full of angry wind” – Strong opinions, John McBride (the abusive husband of Maud Gonne).

1.5 Let’s Sum up

The poet expresses deep concern for his infant daughter who sleeps in a cradle. The roof-leveling strong wind is blowing outside. She is well covered and protected from the onslaughts of violent wind. He paces up and down and prays for the well-being of his

daughter. The strong wind makes the poet gloomy. He thinks how his daughter will face the coarse and vulgar world. He imagines the war drums which forecast her struggle for survival. He thinks that the cruelty of man is more dangerous than the murderous innocence of the sea. She must protect herself by a shield. The shield stands for qualities and virtues. So the poet wants his daughter to be virtuous and good. The poet prays that his daughter should have beauty and not vanity. Helen, the most beautiful woman, eloped with Prince Paris of Troy and this resulted in the destruction of Troy. Similarly, Aphrodite (Venus) married Hephaestus, the lame blacksmith of the gods, unwisely and betrayed him later on. Maud Gonne (the poet's beloved) married a worthless man MacBride and remained unhappy. Thus, the poet wants his daughter to inculcate the virtues of courtesy and humility. The hearts of people can be won by courtesy. The poet wants his daughter to have happy and innocent thoughts in her mind. She should scatter her happiness all round. Her soul should flourish like a flourishing tree which gives comforts to all. He considers hatred as the worst of all evils. So he prays that his daughter should be free from this evil. If the person does not entertain hatred, no misfortunes can be possible to ruin his happiness. Then he thinks that intellectual hatred is the worst kind of hatred. It is the worst flaw in a person's character. So he wants his daughter to shun strong or stubborn opinions on any subject – political or otherwise. The poet says that Maud Gonne, an extremely beautiful woman, wasted her aristocratic traditions in political arguments. If hatred is replaced by innocence, it can bring happiness to all. The poet wishes that his daughter gets married in a good aristocratic family which observes traditional manners and courtesies. Hatred and arrogance will have no place in that family. Arrogance and hatred are the traits of masses. Beauty and innocence come from established traditions. His love for traditional aristocratic values is reflected in the poem. He wants his daughter to follow the traditional norms and values

Suggested Reading

Keith Alldritt. W. B. Yeats: The Man and the Milieu. Clarkson Potter. 1997.

Douglas N. Archibald. Yeats. Syracuse University Press. 1983.

Answer to Exercises

Q.1. What does Yeats wish for his daughter?

A.1. The speaker in this poem has a number of wishes for his young daughter. He would like her to be beautiful, but not sufficiently beautiful "to make a stranger's eye distraught," nor to make the girl herself pay too much attention to her appearance. The speaker fears that those who "consider beauty a sufficient end" will become less naturally kind, which in turn may

mean that they have trouble finding intimacy and making friends. He refers to Helen, an allusion to Helen of Troy, as an example of how being too beautiful can be a curse, rather than a blessing. Because he does not want his daughter to be too beautiful, the speaker wishes instead for her to be "chiefly learned" in "courtesy," stating that the hearts of others can be won through "glad kindness." He wishes his daughter to be a "flourishing hidden tree" who might be "rooted in one dear perpetual place," someone without hatred in her mind. The speaker also opines that "an intellectual hatred is the worst," suggesting that he wishes his daughter to grow up not to be "opinionated," as this will allow her to remain innocent and sweet-natured. Those who are too opinionated, he suggests, become quickly angry with others. If his daughter grows up to be sweet-natured, she will be lucky enough, the speaker hopes, to be brought to an "accustomed, ceremonious" house by her bridegroom, free of hatred and full of innocence.

Q.2. What is the background and main theme of the poem "A Prayer for my Daughter" by W. B. Yeats?

A.2. This poem was written two days after the birth of Yeats's daughter Anne, who arrived in the world on February 26, 1919. The Irish were fighting the English for independence, and Yeats was staying at the ancient (fifteenth century) Thoor Ballylee Castle in Ireland, a tower castle that represented to Yeats a more stable period of history.

In the poem, Yeats sees his infant daughter as caught between two possible realities: the first is the storm that had been "howling" in Irish politics (not to mention idea of the "gracious" past being overturned by the recently-ended carnage of World War I). The second is the opposite reality: what he calls "ceremony" and "custom." These virtues are represented to him by the tower in which he is staying. Yeats wishes that his daughter won't be too beautiful or intelligent but, instead, that she be gracious. He writes:

*In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned*

In other words, in today's language, he would like her to have high emotional intelligence and good people skills. He wants her to avoid the "hate" he sees all around.

He wishes for her the safety and security that the ancient tower represents. He wants her to marry into tradition and find a stable way of life:

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house

Where all's accustomed, ceremonious

Yeats seeks safety in the past; his ideas for his daughter seem sexist by today's standards but are meant to represent a dream of stability in an insecure world.

Yeats' poem begins with a description of a storm howling outside while his newborn daughter lies, partially covered by a blanket, in her cradle, ostensibly protected from the outside world. The reader becomes aware that the storm is actually a metaphor for the struggle for Ireland's independence, a political situation that overshadows the joy of his daughter's birth. Thematically, many women have pegged this work by Yeats as being sexist and offensive, as much as he describes his hopes for her future, which, if all goes well, will include a large home and sizable income brought into her life, of course, by a good match with a suitable husband. In other words, these critics believe Yeats was doing nothing more than endorsing the ideals of 19th century womanhood as his daughter's birthright.

1.5 The Second Coming

"**The Second Coming**" is a poem written by Irish poet W. B. Yeats in 1919, first published in *The Dial* in November 1920, and afterwards included in his 1921 collection of verses *Michael Robartes and the Dancer*. The poem uses Christian imagery regarding the Apocalypse and Second Coming allegorically to describe the atmosphere of post-war Europe. It is considered a major work of modernist poetry and has been reprinted in several collections, including *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*. Yeats used the phrase "the second birth" instead of "the Second Coming" in his first drafts.

1.5.1 Poem

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

1.5.2. Glossary

Gyre

A spiral, a vortex, a series of overlapping circles

Falconer

The controller or master of falcons

Anarchy

Chaos, revolt, disorder, an absence of authority

Dimmed

Clouded, darkened

Conviction

Confidence, assuredness

Vast

Large, expansive

Spiritus Mundi

A Latin word meaning "World Spirit"

Pitiless

Without mercy, cruel

Reel

Spin, turn

Indignant

Showing anger or annoyance

Slouches

Moves in a droopy, lazy, slow fashion; often refers to bad posture and slow, shuffling motions

Bethlehem

Biblical city in Israel/Palestine, where Jesus was born

1.5.3 Discussion

Lines 1-2

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;*

- The falcon is described as "turning" in a "widening gyre" until it can no longer "hear the falconer," its human master.
- A gyre is a spiral that expands outward as it goes up. Yeats uses the image of gyres frequently in his poems to describe the motion of history toward chaos and instability.
- In actual falconry, the bird is not supposed to keep flying in circles forever; it is eventually supposed to come back and land on the falconer's glove. (Interesting fact: falconers wear heavy gloves to keep the birds from scratching them with their claws.)

Line 3

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

- The "notion" that "things fall apart" could still apply to the falcon, but it's also vague enough to serve as a transition to the images of more general chaos that follow.
- The second part of the line, a declaration that "the centre cannot hold," is full of political implications (like the collapse of centralized order into radicalism). This is the most famous line of the poem: the poem's "thesis," in a nutshell.

Lines 4-6

*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;*

- These three lines describe a situation of violence and terror through phrases like "anarchy," "blood-dimmed tide," and "innocence [. . .] drowned." (By the way, "mere" doesn't mean "only" in this context; it means "total" or "pure.")
- Overall, pretty scary stuff.
- Also, with words like "tide," "loosed," and "drowned," the poem gives the sensation of water rushing around us. It's like Noah's flood all over again, except there's no orderly line of animals headed two-by-two into a boat.
- What's Yeats referring to here? Is this a future prophecy, the poet's dream, or maybe a metaphor for Europe at war? There's really no way to be sure – Yeats doesn't seem to want us to know too much.

Lines 7-8

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

- Who are "the best" and "the worst"?
- One way of deciphering them is that Yeats is talking about "the good" and "the bad." But he doesn't use those words in the poem, and these lines are a clue as to why not.
- For one thing, if "the best lack all conviction," can they really be that good? Believing in something enough to act on it is kind of what being good is all about.

- On the other hand, "the worst" have all the "intensity" on their side, which is good for them, but definitely not for everyone else.
- Think about that time you dropped your lunch in the cafeteria and all the people you hate laughed really hard, and all your friends were too embarrassed to do anything about it. According to Yeats, Europe after the war is kind of like that. Things are so messed up that you can't tell the good and the bad apart.

Lines 9-10

*Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.*

- Notice how these two lines are almost exactly the same. This is where the speaker tells us what he thinks is going on, but the repetition means that he's maybe not so sure and is slowly trying to figure things out.
- It's a revelation, he says, which is when the true meaning of something is revealed.
- Not only that, but it's a revelation according to the most reputable source for these kinds of things: the Book of Revelation.
- Apparently, all this violence and moral confusion means "the Second Coming is at hand." According to the Bible, that means Christ is going to come back and set everything straight, right?
- We'll see. For now, the poem is about to take another turn.

Lines 11-13

*The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert*

- So maybe we're not saved.
- The words "Second Coming" seem to have made the speaker think of something else, so that he repeats the phrase as an exclamation. It's like, "Eureka!" It makes him think of a "vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*."
- To know what this means, you have to know that Yeats was very interested in the occult and believed that people have a supernatural connection to one another. It's in the same ballpark as telepathy or a psychic connection, but not quite as kooky as those other things. It's more like we're all connected to a big database of communal memories going back all the way through human history, which we can get in contact with when we're feeling truly inspired.
- Literally, *Spiritus Mundi* means "spirit of the world."
- The speaker, through his sudden, revelatory connection to the world, is given access to a vision that takes him "somewhere in the sands of the desert."

Line 14

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

- Here, he is describing the sphinx, a mythical beast "with lion body and the head of a man."
- You might have seen the picture of the ancient sphinx in Egypt: it's pretty famous. But Yeats isn't talking about that sphinx. He's talking about the original, archetypal symbol of the sphinx that first inspired the Egyptians to build that big thing in the desert, and which is now inspiring him.

Lines 15-17

*A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.*

- In these lines he describes the sphinx's expression and what it is doing.
- By calling its gaze "pitiless," he doesn't mean "evil" or "mean-spirited." In fact, the sphinx really seems to have an inhuman expression that is as indifferent as nature itself. It is "blank," statuesque, and incapable of having empathy with other humans.
- This might not tell us much, but now we know that the sphinx doesn't be at all with the way most people think of Christ. In other words, this "Second Coming" doesn't seem to have a lot in common with the descent of Christ from Heaven as described in the Book of Revelation.
- Nor does it seem to be in any big hurry to get here, as it moves "its slow thighs."
- But, strangely, this slowness only seems to add to the suspense and terror, like Michael Myers chasing Jamie Lee Curtis in the movie *Halloween*.
- Even the birds are ticked-off, or "indignant," but it's not clear why. Their circling is similar to the gyres of the falcon from the beginning of the poem, but from what we know about desert birds, like vultures, when they fly in circles it's often because they think something will die soon.

Lines 18-20

*The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,*

- The vision from *Spiritus Mundi* ends as "darkness drops again," like a stage curtain, but it has left the speaker with a strong prophetic impression. He knows something that he didn't before, namely, that this strange sphinx is a symbol that will bear on the future.
- Thinking outside the poem, it's safe to say that he is talking about Europe's future, and perhaps the world's in general.
- What exactly does the speaker claim to "know"? "Twenty centuries" refers to roughly the amount of time that has passed since the "first coming" of Christ. But we have already seen that the Second Coming is not going to be anything like the first.
- Although 2,000 years seems like a long time to us, Yeats compares it to a single night of an infant's sleep, which is suddenly "vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle."
- The cradle reinforces the image that something has recently been "born," and its motion also serves as a metaphor for social upheaval.
- It's interesting that the infant doesn't wake up because of the rocking. It instead begins to have nightmares, much like the recent nightmares afflicting European society, whose long history amounts to no more than the first stages of childhood. It's the terrible two's of an entire continent.

Lines 21-22

*And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

- The object of Yeats's vision, which was formerly symbolized as a pitiless sphinx, is now described as a "rough beast" on its way to Bethlehem – the birthplace of Christ – "to be born."
- The "slouching" of this beast is animalistic and similar to the slow gait of the sphinx in the desert. It sounds more than a little menacing.

- Yeats is using the birth at Bethlehem as a metaphor of the passage of this malevolent beast from the spirit world – *Spiritus Mundi* – to the real, everyday world, where its effects will be visible to everyone.
- By phrasing these lines as a question, Yeats tantalizes us with all the possibilities of what he might be describing. In the time since Yeats wrote the poem, the beast has been interpreted as a prediction of everything bad that the twentieth century has wrought, particularly the horrors of World War II: Hitler, fascism, and the atomic bomb.
- It is the "nightmare" from which society would not be able to awake. Of course, Yeats would not have known about these specific things. However, he did seem to have a sense that things were still getting worse while most people around him thought things were getting better.
- Some readers have thought that the birth at the end was an ironic vision of the Antichrist, an embodiment of evil as powerful as Christ was an embodiment of goodness.
- Others believe that the beast, even though it is described as "rough," might not be evil, but merely a manifestation of the kind of harsh justice that society as a whole deserves. In other words, things have become so violent and decadent that God's only solution is to deploy his all-purpose cleanser.

1.5.4 Lets sum up

The poem begins with the image of a falcon flying out of earshot from its human master. In medieval times, people would use falcons or hawks to track down animals at ground level. In this image, however, the falcon has gotten itself lost by flying too far away, which we can read as a reference to the collapse of traditional social arrangements in Europe at the time Yeats was writing.

In the fourth line, the poem abruptly shifts into a description of "anarchy" and an orgy of violence in which "the ceremony of innocence is drowned." At line 9, the second stanza of the poem begins by setting up a new vision. The speaker takes the violence which has engulfed society as a sign that "the Second Coming is at hand." He imagines a sphinx in the desert, and we are meant to think that this mythical animal, rather than Christ, is what is coming to fulfill the prophecy from the Biblical Book of Revelation. At line 18, the vision ends as "darkness drops again," but the speaker remains troubled.

Finally, at the end of the poem, the speaker asks a rhetorical question which really amounts to a prophecy that the beast is on its way to Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christ, to be born into the world.

1.5.5 Suggested reading

Deane, Seamus. "The Second Coming: Coming Second; Coming in a Second." *Irish University Review*, Vol. 22, No. 1. pp. 92-100. <https://www-jstor->

org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/stable/pdf/25484467.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ad2c99bb9f835d72bf80ec4b518dfb12b

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte. New York: Library of America, 1983.

Weeks, Donald. "Image and Idea in Yeats's "The Second Coming." *PMLA*, Vol. 63, No. 1. 1948. Wheeler, Richard P. "Yeats's Second Coming: What Rough Beast?" *American Imago*, Vol. 31, No. 3. 1974.

1.5.6 Answer to Exercises

Q.1. How does the traditional idea of the Second Coming differ from what the speaker is envisioning?

A.1. The fundamental difference in William Butler Yeats's poem can be found in the penultimate line, where he queries the future birth of the "rough beast." Through the first half, the speaker puts forward an apparently apocalyptic vision, with "anarchy," "the blood-dimmed tide," and "innocence . . . drowned." Civilization is endangered, they indicate, as "the worst" people are the ones "full of passionate intensity."

In the second stanza, the speaker seems to be hopeful of a radical change: "Surely the Second Coming is at hand." This indicates that the speaker is looking for the return of Jesus Christ to solve the world's problems. As they continue speaking, however, the vision seems no more encouraging than the problem just presented. The imagined being "troubles my sight." Rather than any resemblance to Christ, the envisioned figure has a lion's body and a "pitiless," "blank" stare. As it moves among "indignant" birds, it calls to mind the "darkness" that has surrounded the world, in which "stony sleep" has brought a "nightmare." This image leads to the question about the "rough beast"—by no means an advent of salvation.

Q.2. What imagery is present in the poem "The Second Coming" by William Butler Yeats?

Two important images that occur early in William Butler Yeats's poem concern the falcon and the gyre. The bird is in flight but separated from its handler. Later in the poem, another bird is reeling through the skies; the desert bird is "*indignant*," perhaps referring to the sound of its call, which might be described as shrieking. The gyre, a geometric shape of a three-dimensional spiral (familiar to us as a tornado funnel cloud), is literally used for the falcon's

path through the air but figuratively used for the break-up of society: “*mere anarchy.*” The “centre” of the funnel separates into the flimsy air at the top: “*things fall apart.*”

Blood is another central image; both its color and liquid form are emphasized. Yeats’ words give the impression of a scene darkened (“dimmed”) by blood. While this seems an association with the “*anarchy*” of war, it may be ritual, as *the ceremony of innocence* has been ended by drowning. The emphasis on the dark liquid is then contrasted with the bright desert scene that he builds up in the second stanza. He mentions the desert twice, along with the sun.

Yeats also plays the inversion of two images against each other. “*The Second Coming*” of the title clearly references the return of Jesus Christ, including the “twenty centuries” or 2,000 years since his birth, but no physical image of Christ’s return is presented. Instead, at the end, Yeats mentions the “rough beast.” This figure is likely the “vast image” of a sphinx that was just described: “*A shape with lion body and the head of a man, . . . Is moving its slow thighs . . .*” This figure also moves slowly and awkwardly (“slouches”) but paradoxically may be a disembodied spirit because it has not yet been born. The “stony” quality of the silence may also refer to the sphinx.

1.6 When You are Old

"When You Are Old" is a short lyric of twelve lines in three stanzas. The poem is the product of the early period in Yeats's poetic career. It is addressed to Maud Gonne with whom he was in love. It forms a part of the group of poems published in 1893 with the title *The Rose*. It expresses the poet's distress at the disastrous onslaught of Time. In this poem the poet narrates how his beloved Maud Gonne would grow old with the passage of time. Her liveliness and youthful energy would vanish and she would pass the time dozing by the fireside as old people want to do. She would perhaps pick up the volume of the poet's *Collected Poems*, and slowly go through the verses wherein the poet has declared his love for her. He also admired her grace and charms.

1.6.1 Poem

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look

Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

1.6.2 Glossary

Nodding:

to let the head fall slightly forward with a sudden, involuntary movement when sleepy.

Glad: pleased and happy

Pilgrim: A religious devotee who journeys to a shrine or sacred place.

Murmur: An indistinct, whispered,

1.6.3 Discussion

Stanza-1 When you (my beloved) grow old and your hair turn grey, and when you look sometimes near the fire sleepily, then you should pick up this book that I am writing and read this poem. This poem then would remind you how beautiful you once used to be, and how soft and deep your eyes were when you were young.

Explanation of difficult phrases: **Nothing by the fire-** dozing as she sits near the fire in lonely winter nights. **Dream of-** think of the past youthful day is in a dreamy way. **Soft looks your eyes had once-** The poet's beloved now has soft looks. Her eyes have an enchantment about them. They lend to her face a look of charm and sweetness. But they would not always remain so. In her old age, she would only remember these soft looks with regret.

*How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;*

Stanza-2

You will then remember that many men then loved you because of your joyful beauty. They loved you for your beauty , some with a true love, others safely. But then you will also remember that one man loved your soul, and loved you for the sadness of your looks.

Explanation of difficult phrases: Glad grace- During her youth, his beloved has a grace and a beauty that arises out of the joy living. Her youthfulness lends a charm to all her movements. **How many...grace-** This is to be connected with the idea given earlier-the beloved in her old age, remembering her days of youth. The poet tells her how she would then remember her old lovers, who are no more

*And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.*

Stanza-3

Then, as you bend down near the glowing fire in the grate, you will murmur to yourself that love has left you , and has hidden itself far away , in lofty mountains and in starry skies.

Explanation of difficult phrases: A bending down-His beloved in her old age, would bend down. **The glowing bars-** the iron bars in the fire-place are glowing hot because of the fire burning in it. **And bending love fled-** The poet imagines that in her old age his beloved would feel that love has left the world, and lives now in the stars and the mountains. In other words, she will feel the loneliness of old age, when all lovers will forsake her. Paced upon-walked upon. **And paced---overhead-**Love no longer lives on earth, but upon lofty mountain peaks. **And hid---stars-**Love, which visits us, in our youth for a while , rises up to the stars and becomes one with them.

1.6.4 Lets Sum up

Addressing Maud Gonne, the poet says that when she is old, she should take up this book of Yeats' poems and read it slowly. He asks her to compare her old age with the time of her youth. Feeling sleepy and nodding by the fire-side she can compare her grey hair with the softness of look and deep shadows that her eyes had in the prime of her life. In brief the poet wants Maud Gonne to have a feel of the terror that old age produces, 'full of sleep'. Here sleep can be explained as usual time of sleep as well as the natural laziness or lethargy that comes in a human being as he or she grows old.

In the second stanza the poet further asks Maud Gonne to recollect as to how many people loved her when she was young and beautiful, and not all of them had true love for her beauty

even. Quite a few of them just pretended love to her falsely, but there was one man only who loved, not her physical beauty alone but also the purity of her soul behind her beautiful shape. His love was purely spiritual and she must remember that he loved the pains of her growing old. It also means that he loves her even now when she is old and is prepared to share with her the sorrows of her age.

In the third stanza the speaker says to Maud Gonne that when she lies down on the bed, bending a bit toward the fire-side where the iron-rods outside the fire-chimney are glowing red with the heat of fire. She must say to herself in a sort of sad or soliloquy that with the departure of her youth and charms, the false love of her lovers had also vanished away and evaporated in the mist of high mountains and stars. By saying this speaker also intends saying that in comparison to her false lovers, he was the only true lover who had loved her all-through –from youth to old age and he loves her even now.

1.6.5 Suggested reading

Robert Fitzroy Foster. *W. B. Yeats: A Life*. Oxford University Press. 1997.

Donald James Gordon. *W. B. Yeats: Images of a Poet: My Permanent or Impermanent Images*. Barnes and Noble. 1970

Joseph Maunsell Hone. *W. B. Yeats, 1865-1939*. Macmillan.

A. Norman Jeffares. *W. B. Yeats: A New Biography*. New York: Farrar, Straus. 1989.

1.6.6 Answer to exercise

Q.No.1. How is the journey from youth to old age described in the poem?

Ans. The poet describes the period of youth as prised with physical charms, attractive eyes, pleasant feeling of love etc, while as it describes the old age in terms of grey hairs, drowsiness, sorrow, and desolation.

Q.No.2. What does the phrase full of sleep mean?

Ans. The phrase ‘ full of sleep’ has a symbolic meaning which means old age. It indicates the natural drowsiness that comes in human beings as one grows old and approaches death.

Q.No.3. How is the poet’s love different from those who also loved his beloved?

Ans. The poet’s love stands different from those of the other lovers because others one his beloved for her soft looks, charming eyes, and physical beauty. The poet ones his beloved for her pilgrim soul and inner beauty. His love is spiritual, while as others is sensual.

Q.No.4. What is Maud Gonne reminded of in the poem?

Ans. Maud Gonne is reminded of her youthful days when she was charming and energetic. She is also reminded of her only true love who would love her for her pilgrim soul. Others love was short-lived while as the poet's love was persistent.

Q.No.5. 'But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you' Explain.

Ans. The line describes that there was only one lover who loved Maud Gonne truly. He loved her for her inner beauty which did remain intact for the whole life. His love continued even when she becomes old and ugly while as those whose love was false distanced themselves when her physical charms lived its days.

Q.no.6 Write a paragraph on emotions portrayed in the poem?

Ans. The writer possesses the best feelings of affection for his beloved specifically Maud Gonne. But she never reacts his adoration. The poem 'When You Are Old' is an outflow of his serious emotions. It hits our heart with feeling.

The writer reminds his darling her energetic days when she was extremely lovely. She had alluring eyes and attractive hair. Many cherished her at that phase of life. But now she has been displayed as an old woman with grey hair and wrinkles all over. The writer turned into an extremely passionate and communicates her to recollect those occasions when she had an alluring body and was adored by numerous individuals. Some adored her with genuine notion while others cherished her physical body just. But there was one man namely the poet who had otherworldly sort of affection for her. This man cherishes her not in her energetic days but rather at each phase of her life. He adores her even when the distresses of old age mists her face and left their mark there.

The love poem paints the image of vanishing youth, dying excellence, and momentary nature of false love. The feelings depicted in the lyric contacts a portion of our most profound and most serious sentiments. This poem is loaded with feeling and energy. Yeats utilizes the word love in all lines in the second stanza and in the third stanza, a second line he capitalizes this word giving it so much power. That exhibit by, in light of the fact that it fled over the mountains and covers up in a horde of stars. That adoration goes up and high like if it is expanding, inaccessible and unapproachable.

It can also be seen as notwithstanding when he will be dead, his affection will be alive. Here, we see that he needs Gonne to know the size of his adoration for her. The creator exemplifies the affection in the lines "and paced upon the mountains overhead", "and hid his face in the crowd of stars". "Paced" appears to me like moving between various places without being

steady and picking the correct thing or the perfect individual. We can also observe alliteration in the words “hid”,and “his”. He sets up again the critical need that Maud picks him now.

I also observe as though nature assumes an essential job in his approach to express how unadulterated his adoration was for her. The creator will, in general, utilize these components of nature in a considerable lot of his verse like in the ballad ‘The Lake Isle of Innisfree’ (1898).

I decipher the words “glowing bars” as the jail of adoration and figments or the excited obstructions to give and get love in light of the fact that the ideal opportunity for it will be left. This is found in the main line of the third stanza; “And bending down beside the glowing bars”. He’s begging her affection, twisting down and adjacent to each hindrance, which are her adoration and the other men, to let her know he is perseverant and has an unrestricted love for Maud Gonne.

Different pieces of information we found to achieve this end are that in the event that we set up together a few words that rhyme like “sleep” and “deep”, on the first stanza, we can see the picture of a dead individual. In the event that we do the same with words “grace”, “face”, on the second stanza, we envision and feel the magnificence; the same occurs when we set up together the words “true”and “you” on the second stanza as well, we can feel that it is the thing that he truly cherishes; the genuine you, the true self, Gonne’s spirit. Also, at long last, in the event that we set up together the words “fled” and “overhead”, on the third stanza, we have the symbolism, the sentiment of something that has left. This all demonstrates Yeats is giving her the subliminal command inside the unmistakable and direct message to cherish him now, that he is the special case who truly adores her and to not give time a chance to stroll against their satisfaction.

As we can find, Yeats unbelievably utilizes numerous components impeccable and harmoniously associated and concentrated into a short poem, for example, alliteration, immaculate metric, spondees, images and personification of affection to give her the correct message influencing to reach her change of mind and reciprocal love to him.

Q.No.7. What images does the poet use in the poem?

Ans. The poet uses following images in the poem: grey hair, full of sleep, nodding by the fire, deep shadows of eyes, sorrow of changing face, glowing bars etc.

Q.No.8. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?

Ans. The poem is written in iambic pentameter with the rhyme scheme *abba cddc effe* which gives a steady rhythm to the poem.

Unit-2 T.S. Eliot: ‘*The Journey of Magi*’

Structure

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Objectives

2.2 T.S. Eliot: Life and Works

2.3 The Journey of Magi

2.3.1 Poem

2.3.2 Glossary

2.3.3 Discussion

2.3.4 Lets Sum up

2.3.5 Suggested readings

2.3.6 Answer to Exercises

2.0 Introduction

T.S Eliot is considered as one of the most important modernist poets. The content of his poem as well as his poetic style give elements of the modern movement that was famous during his time. In fact, modernism was viewed as “a rejection of traditional 19th-century norms, whereby artists, architects, poets and thinkers either altered or abandoned earlier conventions in an attempt to re-envision a society in flux.” Modernism was also mainly represented by orientation towards fragmentation, free verse, contradictory allusions and multiple points of view different from the Victorian and Romantic writing. These modern features appear greatly in the works of Eliot. Two of the most prominent poems where Eliot shows his modern orientations are “*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*” and “*The Waste Land.*”

2.1 Objectives

In this Unit we shall discuss a poem by one of the famous modern poet T.S.Eliot. After reading the Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of T.S. Eliot.
- Analyse the poem ‘The Journey of Magi’
- and Explain lines with reference to their context;
- Define poetic technique of T.S. Eliot.

2.2 T.S.Eliot: Life and works

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born in St. Louis in 1888 to a family with prominent New England heritage. Eliot largely abandoned his Midwestern roots and chose to ally himself with both New and Old England throughout his life. He attended Harvard as an undergraduate in 1906, was accepted into the literary circles, and had a predilection for 16th- and 17th-century poetry, the Italian Renaissance (particularly Dante), Eastern religion, and philosophy. Perhaps the greatest influences on him, however, were 19th-century French Symbolists such as Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Stephene Mallarme, and especially Jules Laforgue. Eliot took from them a sensual yet precise attention to symbolic images, a feature that would be the hallmark of his brand of Modernism.

Eliot earned his master's degree from Harvard in 1910 before studying in Paris and Germany. He settled in England in 1914 at the outbreak of World War I, studying at Oxford, teaching, and working at a bank. In 1915 he married British writer Vivienne Haigh-Wood (they would

divorce in 1933), a woman prone to poor physical and mental health; in November of 1921, Eliot had a nervous breakdown.

By 1917 Eliot had already achieved great success with his first book of poems, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, which included "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*," a work begun in his days at Harvard. Eliot's reputation was bolstered by the admiration and aid of esteemed contemporary poet Ezra Pound, the other tower of Modernist poetry. During Eliot's recuperation from his breakdown in a Swiss sanitarium, he wrote "*The Waste Land*," arguably the most influential English-language poem ever written.

Eliot founded the quarterly *Criterion* in 1922, editing it until its end in 1939. He was now the voice of Modernism, and in London he expanded the breadth of his writing. In addition to writing poetry and editing it for various publications, he wrote philosophical reviews and a number of critical essays. Many of these, such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent," have become classics, smartly and affectionately dissecting other poets while subliminally informing the reader about Eliot's own work. Eliot declared his preference for poetry that does away with the poet's own personality and uses the "objective correlative" of symbolic, meaningful, and often chaotic concrete imagery.

Eliot joined the Church of England in 1927 and his subsequent work reflects his Anglican attitudes. The six-part poem "*Ash Wednesday*" (1930) and other religious works in the early part of the 1930s, while notable in their own right, retrospectively feel like a warm-up for his epic "*Four Quartets*" (completed and published together in 1943). Eliot used his wit, philosophical preoccupation with time, and vocal range to examine further religious issues.

Eliot wrote his first play, "*Murder in the Cathedral*," in 1935. A verse drama about the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket, the play's religious themes were forerunners of Eliot's four other major plays, "*The Family Reunion*" (1939), "*The Cocktail Party*" (1949), "*The Confidential Clerk*" (1953), and "*The Elder Statesman*" (1959). With these religious verse dramas cloaked in secular conversational comedy, Eliot belied whatever pretensions his detractors may have found in his Anglophilia. He wrote "*Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*" in 1939, a book of verse for children that was eventually adapted into the Broadway musical "*Cats*."

As one might expect from his work, Eliot was unhappy for most of his life, but his second marriage in 1957 proved fruitful. When he died in 1965, he was the recipient of a Nobel Prize (1948), the author of the century's most influential poem, and arguably the century's most important poet. Perhaps due to the large shadow he casts, relatively few poets have tried to ape his style; others simply find him cold. Still, no one can escape the authority of Eliot's Modernism - it is as relevant today as it was in 1922. While Eliot may not have as much

influence on poets today as some of his contemporaries, the magnitude of his impact on poetry is unrivaled.

2.3 The Journey of the Magi

Journey of the Magi is a 43-line poem written in 1927 by T. S. Eliot (1888–1965). It is one of five poems that Eliot contributed for a series of 38 pamphlets by several authors collectively titled Ariel poems and released by British publishing house Faber and Gwyer (later, Faber and Faber). Published in August 1927, "Journey of the Magi" was the eighth in the series.

In the poem, Eliot retells the story of the Magi who travelled to Palestine to visit the newborn Jesus according to the Gospel of Matthew. It is a narrative, told from the point of view of one of the magi, that expresses themes of alienation and a feeling of powerlessness in a world that has changed.

The poem is an account of the journey from the point of view of one of the magi. It picks up Eliot's consistent theme of alienation and a feeling of powerlessness in a world that has changed. The speaker says that a voice was always whispering in their ears as they went that "this was all folly". The magus seems generally unimpressed by the infant, and yet realizes that the Incarnation has changed everything. He asks,

*". . . were we led all that way for
Birth or Death?"*

The birth of Christ was death of the world of magic, astrology, and paganism. The speaker, recalling his journey in old age, says that after that birth his world had died, and he had little left to do but wait for his own end.

2.3.1 Poem

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.

There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.
Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.
All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down

This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

2.3.2 Glossary

Magi

Plural form of Magus

member of a priestly caste of ancient Persia. A sorcerer

The ‘wise men’ from the East who brought gifts to the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:1), said in later tradition to be kings named Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Gall

1. Make (someone) feel annoyed or resentful.
2. Make sore by rubbing.

Refractory

Stubborn or unmanageable.

Temperate

1. Relating to or denoting a region or climate characterized by mild temperatures.
2. Showing moderation or self-restraint.

Lintel

A horizontal support of timber, stone, concrete, or steel across the top of a door or window.

Origin Middle English: from Old French, based on late Latin liminare, from Latin limen ‘threshold’.

Dicing

Play or gamble with dice.

Take risks with; run the risk of.

Dispensation

A political, religious, or social system prevailing at a particular time.

In Christian theology: a divinely ordained system prevailing at a particular period of history.

The Magi

The "wise men," magician kings from the East who brought gifts to the infant Jesus, as described in Matthew 2:1. They are the chorus who speaks in the first two stanzas of the poem. In the last stanza, one of the magus (singular of magi) speaks.

The camels

The animals used to transport the magi across the desert in the snow. They have sore feet and are resentful and unmanageable, so add difficulty to the journey.

The silken girls

Servants of the Magi who brought them sherbet in the summertime at their palaces before the journey. They represent the Magi's formerly lazy, decadent lives.

The camel men:

The servants who tend to the camels on the journey. They are unhappy, and either vocalize that or run away. They also represent desire for comfort in the form of liquor and women.

The cities, towns, and villages:

These are personified to represent the hostility of the townspeople the Magi meet on their journey.

The voices

They sing in the Magi's ears, saying that their journey is "all folly"; they represent disbelief.

An old white horse

He "gallops away" as the Magi approach Bethlehem. This refers to the white horse in the Bible (Zechariah 6:5), whose announces the coming of Jesus.

Six hands...and feet

Synecdoches for men who are gambling for money while drinking. This is a biblical allusion to the bartering for Christ (Matthew 26:14-16), and the parable of the new wine (Matthew 9:17).

Jesus Christ

The birth of Jesus is alluded to in the last stanza. Christians believe that he was the incarnation of God the Son and the awaited Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

2.3.3 Discussion

The title of the poem refers to a "journey." This word means an act of traveling from one place to another, but also, in a metaphorical sense, the long and often difficult process of personal change and development.

"Journey of the Magi" begins with a quotation from a Christmas sermon, which establishes the initial choral voice of the poem: the Persian kings who crossed the desert in winter to honor the birth of the baby Jesus. In the quotation, the magi, speaking in a plural "we," describe how the journey was difficult for them physically, emotionally, and spiritually. This quotation leads into a longer description of the difficulties of the journey.

The second stanza begins with a new dramatic beat: The dark night of the soul has passed, and it is now the dawn of a new day, literally and spiritually. The Magi descend into the fertile Judean valley. This stanza is full of Biblical allusions. The Magi find the manger where Jesus was born.

The third stanza switches to the voice of a singular Magus, who is reminiscing about the journey. (In retrospect, this could mean that the entire poem was written from a first-person perspective, but there was no way to know that before this point). He evaluates the experience, deciding that he "would do it again," but then wonders at the paradox that the birth of Jesus was also a death. This death refers to both the death of Christ and the death of the old religious order, including the magical power of the Magus. He ends the poem wishing for another death, which represents both suicidal despair and an anticipation of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, ushering in a new Christian era.

Analysis

The "journey" of the title describes the literal and mythic journey of the Magi across the desert to bring gifts to Jesus, the Christian messiah. It also describes the Magi's internal journey from pagan to Christian. The Magus acts as a persona for Eliot, who went through his

own conversion from agnostic to Anglican. From his point of view as a faithful Christian, the journey also represents the drastic change that the world undergoes at the birth of Jesus Christ.

The first five lines of the poem are in quotation marks. That's because they are quoting the Nativity Sermon by Lancelot Andrewes, the Bishop of Winchester. He was a prominent clergyman and scholar who oversaw the translation of the King James Bible. The original text was from the Christmas sermon he preached to the Jacobean court in 1622: "A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in solstitio brumali, the very dead of winter." Eliot wrote an essay titled "Lancelot Andrewes" (Selected Essays, 1934), in which he praised Andrewes' leadership in the Church of England and harmonious blend of intellect and emotion.

The voice is a choral "we" of the three Magi who are recalling the journey to Bethlehem they undertook to witness the birth of Jesus. The Magi would have been crossing the desert from Persia to Judea. The Magi could not be quoting Lancelot Andrewes, because they would have made the journey in the first year of the Christian calendar—much before Andrewes lived. With the first "And," the voice of the poem enters into the imaginative persona established by the sermon and builds upon it. So there is a poetic consciousness that is beyond the Magi, an anachronistic voice that is also on a Christian journey.

The journey is a hard one, especially for kings who are used to the luxurious life of "summer palaces" and "silken girls bringing sherbet." They travel a long ways in wintertime through snow on the backs of uncooperative camels, with unhappy handlers. Both the Magi and their servants are going through withdrawals from a sensuous life of earthly comforts. They are cold and homeless and alien to the communities they pass through. In this way their journey parallels that of Mary and Joseph, who are famously denied a room at the inn, so Jesus is born in a manger. Spiritually, they are being tried, and stripped of everything familiar. They go through a dark night of the soul, literally and figuratively, with the voices of doubt discouraging them.

In the second stanza, the men enter a "temperate valley," and a shift occurs. The word "temperate" holds two meanings here: the valley is both mild and restrained. This is in contrast to the worlds described in the first stanza—both the precarious and decadent summer palaces, and the extremely cold winter in the desert. There is a supernatural and symbolic seasonal shift to spring: the valley is a fertile place, represented by water and the smell of vegetation. The running stream and water-mill also give movement to a landscape that was

frozen in the last stanza. This is also a Biblical allusion: In John 4:10-14, Jesus called himself the Living Water. The stream powers a mill “beating the darkness,” alluding to Jesus’ claim in John 8:12 to be the Light of the World. The “three trees low on the sky” have been interpreted variously by scholars to refer to the crucifixion of Christ with the two thieves on crosses to either side of him, or the Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This is an example of both symbolism and foreshadowing. The “white horse” refers to the one in Zechariah 6:5, who announces the coming of Jesus.

The Magi arrive at a tavern with “vine-leaves over the lintel,” a Biblical allusion to both the story of Passover from Exodus 12 and the notion of Christ as the “True Vine” (John 15:1, 5). The word “lintel” is rooted in the Latin word *limen*, which means threshold. They are on the threshold before both the entry to Bethlehem, and the moment before Christ is born, which for the Christian faithful will change the world entirely. The “hands” and “feet” in the next two lines are synecdoches, referring to people who are gambling and kicking wineskins to call for alcohol, by the parts of their bodies that are used in these debased actions. They are also biblical allusions to the bartering for Christ (Matthew 26:14-16) and Jesus’ parable of the new wine (Matthew 9:17). The faith of the Magi continues to be tested, as they receive no information, and “arrive not a moment too soon,” which could mean that they were at the end of their tether, or that they arrive just before or after Christ was born. Then there’s the peculiar phrase “Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.” This could be interpreted as the haughty, snarky view of kings looking down upon the stable in which Christ was born. But some scholars have also seen in it a reference to Article 31 of the Anglican Articles, in which Christ’s sacrifice “satisfies” the debt of all mankind’s sins.

The first line of the final stanza situates it at a later time than the other two stanzas. It frames the text as a story within a story, and makes the speaker’s tale less reliable, as it is a memory of a long-ago event. The speaker has shifted to a singular “I” who is evaluating the journey after it has past. He decides that he “would do it again,” but that’s not his final thought—there’s a comma and a “but,” a qualifier, and then the urgent plea, repeated twice, to “set down this,” which means write this down. The lines “but set down/ This set down/ This” come from speech patterns that Andrewes used in his Nativity sermons of 1616, 1622, and 1623. Then we get to the question that’s critically important to the Magus: “were we led all that way for/Birth or Death?”

He starts to think through the answer to his question with “There was a Birth, certainly, We had evidence and no doubt.” This is a rational critical consciousness, assessing the historical fact of Jesus’ birth. He relates this to his past experience with birth and death, and says that

he “had thought they were different.” Indeed, birth and death are usually figured as opposites. So, we are entering the realm of paradox here, as he relays his emotional experience of Christ’s birth: “this Birth was/Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.” This experience has changed his view of the fundamental meaning of life and death, and made them synonymous. It reflects the painful paradox at the heart of Christianity: *Christ was born to die*.

Notice the capitalizations of Birth and Death in these lines: this is granting a deference to Christ that conveys the Magus’ and the poet’s faith. The second “death” in this line is not capitalized, as it refers to the Magi’s death. This is significant because it sets up a contrast: Christ’s “Death” is more important than the Magi’s “death.” This must refer to a metaphoric death, since the Magus speaks while he is still living. (Indeed, it is a simile). In imagining how the birth and death of Christ relates to the metaphoric death of the Magi, it’s significant to note that the word Magi also meant Sorcerers; the word comes from the same root as magic. So the birth of Christianity is also the death of the old ways of Magicians. The Magi lost their magic, their power, their relevance, and experienced a type of social death.

The Magus then returns to his story, to tell a coda of the return to their kingdoms. Remember, these were the sensual palaces they left behind to make the journey. But he has changed, and is “no longer at ease.” In Christian theology, “dispensation” means a divinely ordained system prevailing at a particular period of history. The phrase “the old dispensation” means that the divine system, the meaning of life, has changed. He then finds his own people to be “alien” as they “clutch” false idols.

The Magus is existentially exhausted and ultimately suicidal, as he ends with “I should be glad of another death”—meaning his own. In this deeply anticlimactic ending, the poem imagines the advent of Christianity as a calamity for the old world. He may also wish for death because he no longer has use for earthly pleasures, and looks forward to the kingdom of heaven. Another possible interpretation of the last line is that has *the Magus is speaking during the time period when Christ has been born, but has not yet died*. The Magus would then be wishing for Christ’s death, and thus for his resurrection and the salvation of mankind. It’s important to notice that these two possible meanings of the last line of “Journey of the Magi” are not mutually exclusive: the context of the poem is the point of view of someone with a new faith that makes his old position and world obsolete. He is waiting for his own death, along with the death and of Christ, who will be born again to redeem the world and usher in a new dispensation, a world in which the Magi themselves have no place.

2.3.4 Lets sum up

‘Journey of the Magi’ by T. S. Eliot (1888-1965) was the first of a series of poems written by the poet for his employer, the publisher Faber and Faber, composed for special booklets or greeting cards which were issued in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Eliot wrote ‘Journey of the Magi’ in 1927, on a single day, one Sunday after church. You can read the poem [here](#). Below we offer some notes towards an analysis of this difficult and elusive poem, with particular focus on its meaning and imagery.

‘Journey of the Magi’ is told from the perspective of one of the Magi (commonly known as the ‘Three Wise Men’, though the Bible makes no mention of their number or gender) visiting the infant Christ. The poem examines the implications that the advent of Christ had for the other religions of the time, chiefly the Zoroastrianism of the Magi themselves. Eliot converted to Christianity in 1927, the same year he wrote ‘Journey of the Magi’, so this is an apt poem for him to have written shortly after his acceptance into the Church of England.

According to Eliot’s second wife, Valerie, he wrote the poem very quickly: ‘I had been thinking about it in church,’ he told her years later, ‘and when I got home I opened a half-bottle of Booth’s Gin, poured myself a drink, and began to write. By lunchtime, the poem, and the half-bottle of gin, were both finished.’ The title of the poem is significant, not least Eliot’s use of the word ‘Magi’: think about its very foreignness and its ambiguity (the term originally denoted Persian Zoroastrian priests, but had come to carry the more general meaning of ‘astrologers’ – or, if you like, magicians). This foreign and alien quality is obviously related to what the poem is about: namely, one group of people becoming alienated by the coming of another group, the people who will, in time, follow the new religion of Christianity which will lead to the death of the religions the Magi, or astrologers, follow. The Magi are like the ‘hollow men’ of Eliot’s poem of that title from two years before: together, they find they are alienated from the rest of the world, in some sort of between-existence or limbo (because the world is in a transition between their old Zoroastrian faith and the new, emerging faith of Christianity which will supersede it).

2.3.5 Suggested reading

Ackroyd, Peter. *T. S. Eliot: A Life* (1984).

Asher, Kenneth *T. S. Eliot and Ideology* (1995).

Bush, Ronald. *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style*(1984).

Gardner, Helen. *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (1949).

The Letters of T. S. Eliot. Ed. Valerie Eliot. Vol. I, 1898–1922. San Diego [etc.], 1988.
Vol. 2, 1923–1925. Edited by Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton, London: Faber, 2009.
ISBN 978-0-571-14081-7

2.3.6 Answers to exercises

Q1. Who are the characters of *Journey of the Magi* by T. S. Eliot?

A.1. The Magi

As one might expect, the characters in T. S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" are the Biblical Magi from the Christmas story presented in Matthew 2. Although tradition assumes only three Magi named *Balthazar*, *Caspar*, and *Melchior*, Eliot does not specify the names of his Magi nor their number. The poem is written in the first person, but for the majority of it, the speaker uses plural pronouns to include his fellow travelers. Only beginning in the final stanza in line 32 does he use the singular pronoun "I" as he reflects upon the meaning of the journey.

People the Magi Encounter

The poem describes the journey of the Magi from their home in the East (traditionally believed to be Iran) to Bethlehem, the birthplace of Christ. On such a long journey, the men certainly would have encountered many people, but Eliot is coy about describing the others. First, he mentions "the silken girls bringing sherbet." These represent the remembered luxuries of home. Next he refers to "the camel men . . . running away." Presumably, these were servants who began the journey but deserted their masters for "liquor and women." Though he goes on to mention "cities hostile," "towns unfriendly,"

and "villages dirty," he gives no other details about specific characters the Magi would have met there.

The Gamblers

In the second stanza, Eliot introduces three characters, but again, we see them only in the abstract. As the Magi come to a tavern, they see three gamblers, but they are described only as "six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver, and feet kicking the empty wine-skins." When they return to their "Kingdoms," they feel uncomfortable among "an alien people clutching their gods."

Jesus Christ

Surprisingly, the most important character of the poem is never mentioned. Eliot only uses "this Birth" to refer to the Christ child. Yet Jesus Christ was the reason for the journey and the reason their lives were never the same. The poem is a remarkable example of understatement. By downplaying the other people in the poem, Eliot allows readers to fully enter into the thoughts of one of the Magi, to journey with him, and perhaps to be changed as he was.

Q 2. What are the themes of Journey of the Magi by T. S. Eliot?

A.2 "*Journey of the Magi*" is based in the Biblical story of the magi, seeking to imagine the perspective on mindset to the three wise men who witnessed the birth of Christ. From this perspective, one of the critical themes of Eliot's poem lies in the way that it reverses the point of view in this story, trying to recreate this experience from the mindset of the wise men.

Hardship

One of the factors which stands out when discussing this poem is its focus on hardship. The magi come out of wealth and luxury, and the entire first section of the poem focuses on giving up those comforts, going into great depth in detailing some of that opulence which their journey has forced them to set aside. The journey is described as difficult, as they travel in a lifestyle far humbler than the lifestyle to which they are accustomed. The magi are depicted second guessing themselves and their decision to embark on this journey. Yet, at the same time, with hindsight, after all is said and done, the speaker in the poem is also resolute in his conviction that the journey was very much worth those

pains and troubles which went into it and that he would redo it if such an opportunity were offered him.

The Significance of the Birth

The last part of the poem looks towards what the magi might have taken away from that experience. Here we see things viewed from the perspective of distant recollection, as the poem details what insight that encounter might have granted to someone who shared in it. And here, the poem's narrator does not seem to fully grasp the full significance of what he witnessed. He is shown grappling with the duality of birth and death and struggling to understand the meaning of why he was brought there to begin with (and in both cases, a clear explanation seems to elude him). Even so, the poem is clear that, in the end, the magi return homeward, fundamentally transformed by that experience.

Q.3 What is the source of the poem *Journey of the Magi* by T. S. Eliot?

The source of the poem "*Journey of the Magi*" by T. S. Eliot is the *Gospel of Mark* from the New Testament. The poem was written by Eliot after his conversion to the Church of England. It describes the journey of the magi bearing gifts to the infant Jesus, guided by a star that pointed the way to the manger in which he was born. The poem is written from the point of view of the magi, and begins with a realistic evocation of the journey:

*"A cold coming we had of it, Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:*

The term "magi" refers to wise men. It is a Greek derivative of a Persian term "magus" referring to a type of Zoroastrian priest who was an expert in astrology and studied the movements and configurations of the stars to investigate the divine realm.

Unit-3 A. K. Ramanujan

Structure

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Objectives

3.2 A. K. Ramanujan: Life and Works

3.3 Obituary

3.3.1 Poem

3.3.2 Glossary

3.3.3 Discussion

3.3.4 Lets Sum up

3.3.5 Suggested readings

3.3.6 Answer to Exercises

3.4 Another View of Grace

3.4.1 Poem

3.4.2 Glossary

3.4.3 Discussion

3.4.4 Lets Sum up

3.4.5 Suggested readings

3.4.6 Answer to Exercises

3.0 Introduction

A. K. Ramanujan is one of the interesting poets in the 20th century Indian English literature. His timeline is between 1929 and 1994. His poetry attained its popularity in 1960s. He is considered as the voice of modern India, though he shows his deep root in Indian tradition and culture. Among his contemporaries A. K. Ramanujan seems grave and sincere due to variety of themes prevailed in his poetry. He is not only a poet but also the greatest translator. He is famous for his translations rather than other creative works. Ramanujan has written numerous poems. They were gathered and put in four volumes under one title *The Collected Poems*.

3.1 Objectives

In this Unit we shall discuss two poems by one of the famous modern poet A.K. Ramanujan. After reading the Unit carefully, you should be able to:

- Describe the life and works of A.K. Ramanujan.
- Analyse the poem ‘*Obituary*’ and ‘*Another View of Grace*’
- Explain lines with reference to their context.
- Define poetic technique of A.K. Ramanujan.

3.2 A.K. Ramanujan: Life and Works

Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan (16 March 1929 – 13 July 1993) also known as A. K. Ramanujan was an Indian poet and scholar of Indian literature who wrote in both English and Kannada. Ramanujan was a poet, scholar, a philologist, folklorist, translator, and playwright. His academic research ranged across five languages: English, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award posthumously in 1999 for his collection of poems, *The Selected Poems*.

Ramanujan was born in Mysore City on 16 March 1929. His father, Attipat Asuri Krishnaswami, an astronomer and professor of mathematics at Mysore University, was known for his interest in English, Kannada and Sanskrit languages. His mother was a homemaker. Ramanujan also had a brother, A.K. Srinivasan who was a writer and a mathematician. Ramanujan was educated at Marimallappa's High School, Mysore, and at the Maharaja College of Mysore. In college, Ramanujan majored in science in his freshman year, but his father, who thought him 'not mathematically minded', persuaded him to change his major from science to English.

Later, Ramanujan became a Fellow of Deccan College, Pune in 1958–59 and a Fulbright Scholar at Indiana University (U.S.A) in 1960–62. He was educated in English at the University of Mysore and received his PhD in Linguistics from Indiana University(U.S.A). He worked as a Lecturer in English literature for some time at the University of Belgaum and Baroda . Later on he worked as the the Professor of Dravidian studies and linguistics at the University of Chicago U.S.A. thus he is a voluntary exile from India he has cut himself off from his immediate native environment , but this has been a gain and not a loss . His essentially Indian sensibility has enabled him to go to India’s past and his sense of Indian History and tradition is unique . the past comes to life in his poetry, and this ‘*presence of the past*’ , might not have been possible had he continued to live in India.

Works:

- The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology, 1967
- Speaking of Siva, Penguin. 1973. ISBN 9780140442700.
- The Literatures of India. Edited with Edwin Gerow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974
- Hymns for the Drowning, 1981
- Poems of Love and War. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985
- Folktales from India, Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages, 1991
- Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? in India Through Hindu Categories, edited by McKim Marriott, 1990
- When God Is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Ksetrayya and Others (with Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman), 1994
- A Flowering Tree and Other Oral Tales from India, 1997
- The Striders. London: Oxford University Press, 1966
- Relations. London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1971
- Selected Poems. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976
- Second Sight. New York: Oxford University Press
- The Collected Poems. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997

3.3 Obituary

The word *Obituary* means a notice of death in a newspaper including a brief biography. The poem is written on the death of his father. The poet explains how his death has affected his family and what he (his father) has achieved in his life.

The poem “Obituary” was written by A.K. Ramanujan. An obituary is usually a tribute to the person who has passed away, featuring the high points of his life. Such is not the case in this poem. Written in first person, the son is the narrator of the poem. Seeming quite

disgruntled with his father, the son points out all of the things his father left undone. His bills were unpaid, and he left unmarried daughters. His grandson, a bed wetter, was named after the grandfather, but improperly. The house in which the narrator grew up leaned against a tree. Apparently, the father had a hot temper which may be part of the son's unhappiness: Being the burning type, he burned properly at the cremation... When the father was cremated, coins were placed on the body's eyes. In keeping with the Hindu custom of swift cremation, bodies are cremated within 24. After the cremation, the sons dug through the ashes to find hot coals to throw in an eastward fashion into the river. The father would have no headstone with the dates of his birth and death. To the son, the dates are parentheses encapsulating the time of the father's life. From his birth to his death, the son feels that his father did many things incorrectly or incompletely: like his caesarean birth in a Brahmin ghetto and his death by heart failure in the fruit market... He hears that his father's obituary took two lines in a local newspaper four weeks after his cremation. The son often bought sugar cane placed in one of these newspapers shaped like a cone. In the beginning, the son says that he looks for the paper for fun, and then he says he would like to have the obituary.

3.3.1 Poem

Obituary

Father, when he passed on,
left dust
on a table of papers,
left debts and daughters,
a bedwetting grandson
named by the toss
of a coin after him,

a house that leaned
slowly through our growing
years on a bent coconut
tree in the yard.
Being the burning type,
he burned properly
at the cremation

as before, easily
and at both ends,
left his eye coins
in the ashes that didn't
look one bit different,
several spinal discs, rough,
some burned to coal, for sons

to pick gingerly
and throw as the priest
said, facing east
where three rivers met
near the railway station;
no longstanding headstone
with his full name and two dates

to holdin their parentheses
everything he didn't quite
manage to do himself,
like his caesarian birth
in a brahmin ghetto
and his death by heart-
failure in the fruit market.

But someone told me
he got two lines
in an inside column
of a Madras newspaper
sold by the kilo
exactly four weeks later
to streethawkers

who sell it in turn
to the small groceries
where I buy salt,
coriander,
and jaggery
in newspaper cones
that I usually read

for fun, and lately
in the hope of finding
these obituary lines.

And he left us
a changed mother
and more than
one annual ritual.

3.3.2 Glossary

Obituary: a notice of a death, especially in a newspaper, typically including a brief biography of the deceased person

Dust: fine, dry powder consisting of tiny particles of earth or waste matter lying on the ground or on surfaces or carried in the air.

Ghetto: part of a city, especially a slum area, occupied by a minority group or groups.

Parentheses: a word or phrase inserted as an explanation or afterthought into a passage which is grammatically complete without it, in writing usually marked off by brackets, dashes, etc.

Groceries: items of food sold in a grocery or supermarket

Jaggery: a coarse dark brown sugar made in India by evaporation of the sap of palm trees.

3.3.3 Discussion

- **Stanza 1**

The poet says that when his father died he left nothing for the family but problems like *dust*

on a table of papers, debts, unmarried daughters & a bedwetting grandson whose name is a little bit similar to his father's name.

The lines show the poet's dissatisfaction with his father. He does not seem to be sorrowful because of the death. The poet is more concerned about the duties (of his family) which he has to perform. He has to pay the debts of his father, he has to marry off his sister and also has to take care of a young child who urinates in the bed.

These lines also show the culture of a typical Indian family which is patriarchal in nature. Neither the mother of the poet nor his sisters are earning. As the poet is now eldest male in the family, all the duties are bestowed on him.

- **Stanza 2**

The poet continues that his father has left *a house that leaned slowly through our growing years on a bent coconut tree in the yard*. The line means that they have inherited a house from his father which is leaning on a coconut tree and thus in bad condition.

The poet calls his father as *the burning type*, indicating that he was a bad-tempered man and would never have behaved properly with him or the other family members.

Being hot-tempered *he burned properly at the cremation*. The phrase gives the message of *tit for tat*.

- **Stanza 3**

The line continues from the previous one (enjambment). He is burnt very easily from *both the sides*. except *his eye coins* (coin either signifies his anger or his greed for money) which *didn't look one bit different* even after burning and also *several spinal discs* though some of them burnt to coal.

- **Stanza 4**

This stanza continues from the previous one. According to the poet, the remains of his father's pyre are left *for sons to pick as the priest said, facing east where three rivers met near the railway station*.

The lines show that the priest forces the sons to perform the Hindu Rituals. The poet is in no way ready to do it. His father has no grave (as his ashes and remains are thrown in the river) *with his full name*.

- **Stanza 5**

In addition, there also no *two dates* (his birth and death dates) to show throw light on his life. The poet calls him incapable as he didn't do anything on his own. His birth was *Caesarian in a brahmin ghetto and his death by heart failure in the fruit market*.

The lines, in my views and as quoted in [this article](#) question the genius of Brahman. In Hinduism, the Brahmins or the Upper Casts are worshipped as Avatars of Gods.

However, the poet shows that his father took birth as a Brahmin yet his birth was ordinary and even his death could not be controlled by him. In spite of being educated, he died in the market of heart failure and he couldn't save himself.

These lines, in other sense, mark that he has achieved nothing in this world. His birth was ordinary, his death was ordinary and what he did in life showed his incapability.

Stanza 6

However, the poet comes to know that *two lines* were written for him *in an inside column of a Madras newspaper* which is *sold by the kilo* (as junk) after *four weeks* of his death *to street hawkers*.

Stanza 7

These street hawkers *sell it in turn to the small groceries*. From these groceries, the poet buys *salt, coriander, and jaggery in newspaper cones* which he reads *for fun*.

Stanza 8

The poet says that he began to buy more of these things *in the hope of finding these obituary lines* which were written for his father.

In the end, he says that his father left with them *with a changed mother* (she remains sorrowful) *and more than one annual ritual*. The poet is showing dislike for the ritual which is celebrated in the memory of his father for his peace.

Thus the poet says that his father achieved nothing in this world except those two lines (obituary) which were written in the newspaper he could never find out. On the other hand, he left an unbearable burden on the poet. The poem is hence a critique of the poet's father and his incapacabilities

3.3.4 Let's sum up

The poem "Obituary" by A.K. Ramanujan is a literary work. The poem is about waxing nostalgic of a father's life and death. It is a vivid, emotional, and intense poem that looks back on the life and times of a dear loved family member. The author relates that the father left behind a legacy that will live on for him:

*left debts and daughters,
a bedwetting grandson
named by the toss
of a coin after him,*

The author reflects that this man was cremated and disappeared all too easily from this physical existence. He alludes to the transience of life and the pain those left behind experience in a patriarch's absence. The author muses about the physical remnants left behind from the father's cremation: *eye coins in the ashes* and *several spinal discs*. This is the only tangible evidence of the man left behind and this is painful to the family.

Essentially the poem deals with our brief time on this planet and what we accomplish and ultimately leave to posterity. The poem also reflects on the dignified way the family is encouraged to honor the deceased family member as they are to throw his remains to the east where there are three rivers that congregate by a railroad station.

The poem is vivid as it reflects on the father's past life in a Brahmin ghetto and his death due to heart failure. The reader learns that the man died suddenly while at a fruit market. The author expresses on how the father's life has been reduced to a two line

snippet in an obituary and how the death of the man changed the mother significantly and how each year they have the ritual of honoring and remembering this beloved man.

3.3.5 Suggested reading

Iyengar, K.R.S. Introduction to Indian Writing in English. Bombay : Asia Publishing House, 1962.

Naik, M.K. Aspects of Indian Writing in English. New Delhi : Macmillan, 1979.

A. K. Ramanujan. The Collected Poems (1995) Oxford University Press. New York.

3.3.6 Answers to exercises

Point out the irony in this poem?

An obituary is usually a tribute to the person who has passed away, featuring the high points of his life. Such is not the case in this poem. Written in first person, the son is the narrator of the poem. However the poet appears to be disgruntled with his father, the son points out all of the things his father left undone. His bills were unpaid, and he left unmarried daughters. His grandson, a bed wetter, was named after the grandfather, but improperly. The house in which the narrator grew up leaned against a tree. Apparently, the father had a hot temper which may be part of the son's unhappiness

How does the poet neutralises the emotions that is caused by his father's death?

The poem is, of an intensely personal emotion that the death of the father is neutralized by the continuing link with the father - the changed mother. Bring out the nature of the poet's father in this poem. The poem is vivid as it reflects on the father's past life in a Brahmin ghetto and his death due to heart failure. The reader learns that the man died suddenly while at a fruit market. The author reflects on how the father's life has been reduced to a two line snippet in an obituary and how the death of the man changed the mother significantly and how each year they have the ritual of honoring and remembering this beloved man. What does the poet tells about the eternal truth of life? The author reflects that his father was cremated and disappeared all too easily from this physical existence. He alludes to the transience of life and the pain those left behind experience in a patriarch's absence. The author muses about the physical remnants left behind from the father's cremation: eye coins in the ashes and

several spinal discs. This is the only tangible evidence of the man left behind and this is painful to the family.

Why does not the poet show any emotions for his father who died?

The poet does not show any strong feelings for the father's death which may be due to the Hindu custom or his irritation with his father.

3.4 Another View of Grace

This poem is an attempt to make comparison between an Indian bride and a western bride. In India, marriage is a religious affair and the bride is given no choice but to submit and give birth to sons. This kind of Hindu marriage is just a tradition without any sense of togetherness. On the other hand, brides in the western world are free to make their choices. All in all, the poem is indicative of the poet's conversion into western world.

3.4.1 Poem

Still another view of Grace

I burned and burned. But one day I turned
and caught that thought
by the screams of her hair and said: "Beware,
Do not follow a gentleman's morals

with that absurd determined air.
Find a priest. Find any beast in the wind
for a husband. He will give a houseful
of legitimate sons. It is too late for sin.
even for treason. And I have no reason to know your kind.
Bred Brahmin among singers of shivering hymns
I shudder to the bone at hungers that roam the street
'beyond the constables beat'. But there she stood
upon that dusty road on a nightlit april mind
and gave me a look. Commandments crumbled
in my father's past. Her tumbled hair suddenly
known as silk in my angry hand. I shook a little
and took her, behind the laws of my land.

3.4.2 Glossary

Screams: shriek

Absurd: ridiculous

Legitimate: legal

Shudder: tremble

3.4.3 Discussion

11.2: Caught that through by the screams of her hair'. 'through' refers to his passion. He gains control over the passion that torments him.

11.4- 5: do not follow... determined air. The speaker appeals to the 'passion' not to follow and tempt the soul within.

11.6- 7: beast in the wind: The suggestion made here is that in the modern world man marries a woman only for the gratification of his animal needs. The speaker asks 'the passion' to spare him and chase a priest or a husband. Note the irony in the statement 'find a priest'.

11.10: shivering hymns: Refers to the mantras and devotional songs which are recited to invoke God.

11-12: 1 shudder... beyond the constable's beat. His Brahminical background makes him shudder at all lustful temptations. The temptations of the sinful acts going on in the dark beyond the purview of the policeman on night duty.

11. 12-15: But there she stood... in my father's past: But when the temptation comes in the shape of a woman he could not resist it and all the restraints and fear of religious and moral laws seem to have broken down.

11. 15-17: Her tumbled hair... the laws of my land: The speaker yielded to the temptation and resorted to an act which broke the age old laws of his spiritual and cultural heritage.

3.4.4 Lets Sum up

This may be considered as a sort of love poem in which the poet articulates his burning desires and tensions in a vivid form. The speaker burns with desire and he

addresses his feelings in eloquent words. He puts forth eloquent arguments against lust and says itself directly but he ultimately yields to the temptation of lust. When the temptation comes in the shape of a woman it overwhelms him. But it is the mind which is really overwhelmed.

3.4.5 Suggested reading

A. K. Ramanujan. *The Collected Poems* (1995) Oxford University Press. New York.

William Walsh. *Indian Literature in English*, Longman. London. 1990.

Saleem Peeradina. (ed.) *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English*, MacMillan, Bombay. 1972.

‘Quest’ : A. K. Ramanujan Special Number. 1972.

3.4.6 Answer to Exercises

Q.1 What is the poem ‘Still Another View of Grace’ deals with?

A.1. The poem, *Still Another View of Grace* by A.K. Ramanujan is a love poem that explores the themes of love and lust in the context of a conservative authoritarian society. The speaker of the poem comments on the “burning” that he feels for his lady love, and asks her to not marry another man. However, the speaker is also a ‘bred brahmin’ who cannot be with the woman. The speaker is bound by strict commandments of the society not to be with the addressed woman, who is probably from a lower caste. However, by the end of the poem we find the speaker succumbing to his desires.

Q.2. What feelings are portrayed by the speaker in the Poem?

A.2. *‘Still Another View of Grace’* is a love poem by A.K. Ramanujan, in which he very vividly conveys his feelings and desires. The burning desire within him is but he is not overcome with it and his passionate feeling is conquered. But his passion overwhelms him when he is tempted by a lovely woman. It is not physical as it is his mind which is overwhelmed. He is tempted with passion but he is in complete control of it, and he asks his soul not to be tempted by it. There is a note of protest in the poem. He speaks against the institution of marriage being a platform for the woman to give birth to sons and against the agonies of urban life where people are hungry and roam the streets for food.

UNIT 4 EDWARD VERRALL LUCAS: TIGHT CORNERS

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Objectives

4.2 Edward Verrall Lucas(June 1868 – June 1938): Life and
Literary works

4.3 Edward Verrall Lucas as an Essayist

4.4 The Prose Style of Edward Verrall Lucas

4.5 Edward Verrall Lucas's Text Tight Corners

4.6 Summary and Analysis of essay 'Tight Corners'

4.6.1 Summary

4.6.1 Analysis

4.7 Let us sum up

4.8 Self- Assessment Questions

4.9 Source

4.10 Answers to Self- Assessment Questions

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Edward Verrall Lucas. He was an English humorist, essayist, playwright, biographer, publisher, poet, novelist, short story writer, and editor. He was commissioned to write a biography of Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet. This led to further commissions, including the editing of the works of Charles Lamb.

Lucas joined the staff of the humorous magazine *Punch* in 1904 and remained there for the rest of his life. From 1908 to 1924 Lucas combined his work as a writer with that of publisher's reader for Methuen and Co. In 1924 he was appointed a chairman of the company.

4.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through his life and literary works, you will be able to:

- Understand E V Lucas was a prolific writer, most celebrated for his short essays, verses, novels, and plays.
- Analyse the essay 'Tight Corners
- Understand Lucas's prose style

4.2 EDWARD VERRALL LUCAS (June 1868 – June 1938) LIFE AND WORKS

Edward Verrall Lucas, essayist and biographer was born at the Villa Stresa in Wellington Road, in Eltham, Kent, the second son of the four sons and three daughters of Alfred Lucas and his wife, Jane *née* Drewett. The Lucases were a Quaker family, and the young Lucas was educated at Friends School in Saffron Walden. His father's financial incompetence prevented Lucas from going to a university, and at the age of sixteen, he was apprenticed to a Brighton bookseller.

In 1889, Lucas joined the staff of the *Sussex Daily News*. The following year he published, anonymously, his first volume of poems, *Sparks from a Flint*. With financial help from an uncle, he moved to London to attend lectures at University College, after which he joined the staff of *The Globe*, one of London's evening papers. His duties there allowed him a great deal of spare time, and he read extensively in the Reading Rooms of the British Museum. In 1897 he married (Florence) Elizabeth Gertrude, daughter of Colonel James Theodore Griffin, of the United States army; there was one child, Audrey, of the marriage. Elizabeth Lucas was a writer, and both husband and wife collaborated on several children's books.

Lucas had a long association with the publishing house Methuen and Co, which published his edition of Lamb. From 1908 to 1924 he was a reader for the firm; in 1924 he was appointed its chairman, a post he occupied with considerable success.

Lucas received honorary degrees from the Universities of St Andrews and Oxford, and was appointed Companion of Honour in 1932. He was appointed a member of the *Royal Commission* on the Historical Monuments of England in 1928, and from 1933 until his death he was a member of the Crown Lands Advisory Committee.

In his later years, Lucas cut his domestic ties and lived alone, spending his evenings in restaurants and clubs, and developing a wide collection of pornography. He was a member of the *Athenaeum*, *Beefsteak*, *Bucks* and *Garrick*.

When he was stricken with his final illness, he steadfastly refused to allow his friends into his sickroom. Lucas died in a nursing home in Marylebone, London, at the age of 70.

Literary Works

- The Face on the Wall

- Sparks from a Flint: Odd Rhymes for Odd Times (1891) As "E. V. L."
- Songs of the Bat (1892)
- Bernard Barton and His Friends: A Record of Quiet Lives (1893)
- A Book of Verse for Children (1897)
- The Flamp, the Ameliorator, and the Schoolboy's Apprentice (1897)
- All Over the World (1898) with Edith Farmiloe Illustrations, Children's Book
- The War of the Wenuses (1898) with C. L. Graves (A Parody of HG Wells's The War of the Worlds)
- Charles Lamb and the Lloyds (1898)
- Willow and Leather (1898), Cricket Essays
- The Open Road (1899), An Anthology
- The Book of Shops (1899)
- Four And Twenty Toilers (1900), Poems
- What Shall We Do Now? (1900) with Elizabeth Lucas, Games Book
- Domesticities: A Little Book of Household Impressions (1900)
- The Visit to London (1902)
- Wisdom While You Wait (1903) with C. L. Graves, Parody Encyclopedia

- England Day by Day (1903) with C. L. Graves
- Works and Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb (1903-05), Editor
- Highways and Byways in Sussex (1904)
- The Life of Charles Lamb (1905), biography (revised editions 1907 and 1921)
- The Friendly Town (1905)
- A Wanderer in Holland (1905)
- A Wanderer in London (1906)
- Fireside and Sunshine (1906)
- Listener's Lure (1906)
- An Oblique Narration (1906)
- Change for a Halfpenny (1906) with C. L. Graves
- Signs of the Times, with C. L. Graves
- The Doll Doctor (1907)
- Character and Comedy (1907)
- A Swan and her Friends (1907), about Anna Seward
- The Hambleton
- Men (1907), Cricket History
- The Gentlest Art (1907), An Anthology of Letters

- Another Book of Verses for Children (1907)
- Anne's Terrible Good Nature (1908)
- Over Bemerton's (1908), Novel
- If: A Nightmare in the Conditional Mood (1908) with C. L. Graves
- Hustled History, Or, As It Might Have Been (1908), with C. L. Graves
- The Slowcoach (1908) Fiction
- Mr. Coggs and Other Songs for Children (1908), with Liza Lehmann

- A Wanderer in Paris (1909)
- One Day and Another (1909)
- Farthest from the Truth (1909)
- Good Company - A Rally of Men (1909)
- Sir Pulteney (1910), as E. D. Ward, Fantasy
- Mr Ingleside (1910), Novel
- The Slowcoach (1910)
- The Second Post (1910), An Anthology of Letters
- Old Lamps for New (1911)
- Harvest Home (1911, Macmillan (1913)
- What a life !(1911), with George Morrow

- William Cowper's Letters (1911), Editor
- A Wanderer in Florence (1912)
- London Lavender (1912)
- A Little of Everything (1912)
- Loiterer's Harvest (1913), Essays
- A Group of Londoners, privately printed (Minneapolis) (1913)
- British Pictures and Their Painters (1913)
- Swollen Headed William (1914), Parody
- A Wanderer in Venice (1914)
- All the Papers (1914), with C. L. Graves
- Landmarks (1914)
- A Picked Company: Being A Selection of Writings (1915), Editor
- Guillaume, privately printed (London) (1915)
- Her Infinite Variety: A Feminine Portrait Gallery (1915), an Anthology
- In Gentlest Germany (1915)
- The Hausfrau Rampant (1916), Novel
- Cloud and Silver (1916)
- The Vermilion Box (1916), Novel
- London Revisited (1916)

- Variety Lane (1916)
- His Fatal Beauty: or, The Moore of Chelsea, privately printed (London) (1917)
- A Boswell of Baghdad (1917), Essays
- Outposts of Mercy: The Record of a Visit to Various Units of the Red Cross in Italy(1917)
- Twixt Eagle and Dove (1918)
- The Phantom Journal and Other Essays and Diversions (1919)
- Quoth the Raven (1919)
- Mixed Vintages (1919)
- Traveller's Joy (1919)
- Adventures and Enthusiasms (1920)
- David Williams: Founder of the Royal Literary Fund (1920)
- Specially Selected (1920)
- Verena in the Midst (1920)
- Roving East and Roving West (1921)
- Urbanities (1921)
- Edwin Austin Abbey, Royal Academician, The Record of His Life and Work (1921), Biography

- Rose and Rose (1922)
- Vermeer of Delft (1922)
- Giving and Receiving (1922)
- You Know What People Are (1922)
- Ginevra's Money (1922)
- Advisory Ben (1923)
- Luck of the Year (1923)
- Michael Angelo (1924)
- Rembrandt (1924)
- A Wanderer Among Pictures (1924)
- As the Twig Is Straightened (1924)
- Encounters and Diversions (1924)
- The Same Star (1924), Play
- Chardin and Vigee-Lebrun (1924)
- Michael Angelo (1924)
- Rembrandt (1924)
- Zigzags in France (1925)
- Playtime and Company (1925)
- John Constable the Painter (1925)
- Introducing London (1925)
- A Wanderer in Rome (1926)
- Wanderings and Diversions (1926)
- Events and Embroideries (1926)
- 365 Days and One More (1926)
- Frans Hals (1926), Biography

- Giorgione (1926)
- Leonardo da Vinci (1926)
- Van Dyck (1926)
- Velasquez (1926)
- Selected Essays, edited by E. A. Woodhouse (1926)
- Twelve Songs From "Playtime & Company" (1926)
- A Cat Book (1927)
- The Joy of Life (1927), anthology of popular Poetry
- A Fronded Isle (1927)
- The More I See of Men: Stray Essays on Dogs (1927)
- A Rover I Would Be (1928)
- Out of a Clear Sky (1928)
- Mr Punch's County Songs (1928)
- The Colvins and Their Friends (1928), Biography
- Introducing Paris (1928)
- Windfall's Eye (1929)
- Turning Things Over (1929), Essays
- If Dogs could write : A Second canine Miscellany (1929), An Anthology
- Vermeer the Magical (1929)
- Down the Sky (1930)
- Lippincott (1930)
- Traveller's Luck (1930), Essays
- The Pekinese National Anthem (1930)
- And Such Small Deer (1931)
- The Barber's Clock: A Conversation Piece (1931)

- French Leaves (1931)
- Visibility Good (1931)
- No-Nose at the Show (1931)
- At the Sign of the Dove (1932)
- The Day of the Dog (1932)
- Lemon Verbena (1932), Essays
- Reading, Writing, and Remembering (1932), Autobiography
- English Leaves (1933)
- Saunterer's Rewards (1933)
- Postbag Diversions (1933)
- At the Shrine of St Charles (1934), for Charles Lamb Anniversary
- Pleasure Trove (1935)
- The Old Contemporaries (1935)
- Only the Other Day (1936)
- London Afresh (1937)
- All of a Piece (1937)
- As the Bee Sucks (1937) illustrated by E. H. Shepard
- Adventures and Misgivings (1938)
- A Hundred Years of Trents Bridge (1938), Editor
- Cricket All His Life (1950), edited by Rupert Hart- Davis, Cricket Writing
- Selected Essays of E. V. Lucas, edited by Herbert Newton Wethered (1954)
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4.3 E. V. LUCAS AS AN ESSAYIST

Among the 20th century essayists, E. V. Lucas is one who is generally regarded as the true inheritor of the manner. He was so proficient in the pure art of the essayist. He is one of the most prolific essayists of 20th Century. He worked long as a journalist and contributed

mostly to the Punch. His most representative and popular collection of essays is entitled *The Character and Comedy* (1907).

Lucas has followed in the footsteps of Lamb. He has Lamb's humanity, his all-embracing sympathy, his humour and whimsicality, and his confidential tone, as well as his pensive yearning for the beauty and charm of the old things and personalities. But he has wisely eschewed the many extravagances of Lamb as well as his many mannerisms of style. He has the virtues of Lamb without his faults.

Lucas has displayed a remarkable accurate power of observation and an equally remarkable capacity for discovering beauty and mystery in the commonplace things and objects of life. Edmund Gosse, in his brief article on "The Essays of Mr. Lucas", has observed; the essay does not achieve success unless it is written in the language spoken today by those who employ it with the maximum of purity and grace. It should be a model of current, cultivated ease of expression and a mirror of the best conversation. Lucas writes pure, chaste, lucid and clear prose, which has effortless ease, spontaneity, conciseness and compactness. He is one of those essayists who have exploited the poetic possibilities of English prose to describe the beauty and glory of the familiar and the common. Lucas was not only courteous and urbane but wrote particularly for urbane readers. He studiously avoided ever being didactic, seriously avoiding ever being didactic, sedulously avoiding any taint of the instinct for teaching. During his lifetime, Lucas enjoyed the respect of many of his most distinguished peers, including Edmund Gosse, who called him the best living essayist.

4.4 THE PROSE STYLE OF E. V. LUCAS

It was for his marked felicity of style as much as for the variety of his subject that he appealed to so extensive a circle of readers. It was a style at once clever and studied which made everything he wrote lucid and, in a sense, precious. Lucas adapted his method with considerable skill.

His versatility in that respect was remarkable. As to the 'sophisticated', that too is allowable; for Lucas was certainly modern in his methods and appreciations, although perhaps he would have found it oppressive to keep up with the latest trends. E.V. adopted this creed for his own use by insisting that in every sentence there is a preordained place for each word; in every sentence there is a place preordained for that part of the sentence, which is one of the most significance of his essays. Lucas's light and impersonal style was less in tune with literary fashions. He had a great appetite for the curious, the human, and the ridiculous. His mind instantly shaped it with wit and form. He read a character with wisdom, and gravely turned it to fun. He versified a fancy, or concentrated in an anecdote or instances, all that a vague mind might stagger for an hour to express. But his was the mind of a critic and a commentator. Lucas's fluency was thought by some to dilute his skill.

4.5 'TIGHT CORNERS'

(TEXT)

The talk was running on the critical situations in which we had found ourselves – those of us whose lives were adventurous enough to comprise any.

One man had been caught by the tide in Brittany and escaped by the skin of his teeth. Another had been on an elephant when a wounded tiger charged at it. A third had been on the top storey of a burning house. A fourth was torpedoed in the War.

"But you all talk," said one of the company," as though tight corners were always physical affairs. Surely, they can be tighter when they are mental. The tightest comer I was ever in was at Christie's."

"Christie's?"

"Yes. I had been lunching rather well at a club in St. James's Street with an old friend from abroad, and passing along King Street afterwards, he persuaded me to look in at the sale-room. The place was full. They were selling Barbizon pictures, and getting tremendous sums for each: two thousand, three thousand, for little bits of things – forest scenes, pools at evening, shepherdesses, the regular subjects. Nothing went for three figures at all. Well, we watched for a little while and then I found myself bidding too just for fun. I had exactly sixty-three pounds in the bank and not enough securities to borrow five hundred on, and here I was nodding away to the auctioneer like a bloatocrat.

'You'll get caught,' my friend said to me.

'No, I shan't, I said. 'I'm not going to run any risks.'

"And for a long time I didn't. And then a picture was put up and a short red-faced man in a new top-hat – some well-known dealer – who had bought quite a number, electrified the room by starting the bidding at a figure a little higher than any that he had yet given or that anything had reached. Although the previous lots had run into four figures, they had all been modestly started at fifty guineas or a hundred guineas, with a gradual

crescendo to which I had often been safely contributing. But no sooner was the new picture displayed than the dealer made his sensational bid, 'Four thousand guineas,' he said. "There was a rustle of excitement, and at the end of it I heard my own voice saying, 'And fifty!' "A terrible silence followed, during which the auctioneer looked inquiringly first at the opener and then at the company generally. To my surprise and horror the red-faced dealer gave no sign of life. I realized now, as I ought to have done at first, that he had shot his bolt.

"Four thousand and fifty guineas offered", said the auctioneer, again searching the room.

"My heart stopped; my blood congealed. There was no sound but a curious smothered noise from my friend.

"Four thousand and fifty guineas. Any advance on four thousand and fifty guineas?" – and the hammer fell.

"That was a nice pickle to be in! Here was I, with sixty-three pounds in the world and not five hundred pounds' worth of securities, the purchaser of a picture, which I didn't want, for four thousand and fifty guineas, the top price of the day. Turning for some kindly support to my friend I found that he had left me; but not, as I feared at the moment, from baseness, but, as I afterwards discovered, in order to find a remote place in which to lean against the wall and laugh.

"Stunned and dazed as I was, I pulled myself together sufficiently to hand my card, nonchalantly (I hope) to the clerk who came for the millionaire collector's name, and then I set to pondering on the problem what to do next. Picture after picture was put up and sold, but I saw none of them. I was running over the names of uncles and other persons from whom it might be possible to borrow, but wasn't; wondering if the moneylenders who talk so glibly about 'note of hand only' really mean it; speculating on the possibility of confessing my poverty to one of Christie's staff and having the picture put up again. That was the best way – and yet how could I do it

after all the other bids I had made? The staff looked so prosperous and unsympathetic, and no one would believe it was a mistake. A genuine mistake of such a kind would have been rectified at once.

"Meanwhile the sale came to an end and I stood on the outskirts of the little knot of buyers round the desk who were writing cheques and giving instructions. Naturally, I preferred to be the last. It was there that I was joined by my friend ; but only for a moment, for at a look at my face he rammed his handkerchief in his mouth and again disappeared. Alone I was to dree this awful weird. I have never felt such a fool or had colder feet in all my life. I believe I should have welcomed a firing party.

"And then the unexpected happened, and I realized that a career of rectitude sometimes has rewards beyond the mere consciousness of virtue. A voice at my ear suddenly said, 'Beg pardon. Sir, but was you the agent that bought the big

Daubigny ?'

"I admitted it.

" Well, the gent who offered four thousand guineas wants to know if you'll take fifty guineas for your bid.'

"If ever a messenger of the high gods wore a green baize apron and spoke in husky Cockney tones this was he. I could have embraced him and wept for joy. Would I take fifty guineas." Why, I would have taken fifty farthings.

"But how near the surface and ready, even in the best of us, is worldly guile! 'Is that the most he would offer?' I had the presence of mind to ask.

"'It's not for me to say,' he replied.'No 'arm in trying for a bit more, is there?'

"'Tell him I'll take a hundred,' I said."And I got it.

"When I found my friend I was laughing too, but he became grave at once on seeing the cheque. "Well, I'm hanged!" he said. 'Of all the luck! Well, I'm hanged!'

"Then he said, 'Don't forget that if it hadn't been for me you wouldn't have come into Christie's at all.'

'I shall never forget it,' I said. 'It is indelibly branded in letters of fire on my heart. My hair hasn't gone white, has it? "

4.6 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE ESSAY 'TIGHT CORNERS'

4.6.1 Summary

In his humorous essay, *Tight Corners* E. V. Lucas points out that tight corners can be both mental as well as physical but mental tight corners is too much to bear.

Once the narrator went with his friend to Christie's, an auction- sale hall, where Barbizon pictures were put up. The narrator knew nothing about the art picture nor had enough money to participate in the bidding. He had only sixty-three pounds and that too in the bank. He had no securities either. The auction started and the narrator, not understanding the seriousness, started raising the bid amount marginally. By that time, a Daubigny picture was put on sale. A rich man bade four thousand guineas for it. As usual, the narrator, just for fun, raised the bid by fifty guineas more.

The Difficult Situation for the Narrator

Lucas thought that someone would raise the bid further. But, nobody else bade after that. The narrator was panic-stricken. No doubt, he unwittingly got into a mental tight corner. He could not find ways as how to raise such a huge amount. His friend had already left the place, as he did not have any solution. Finally, the narrator decided to confess his foolishness to the auctioneer himself and he wanted to get rid of the critical situation.

Turn of Events

Suddenly, the unexpected happened. At that time, the rich bidder's agent came and offered fifty guineas, and requested to pass on the art picture to the first bidder. The narrator was immensely relieved. He was about to weep in joy. Yet, he had the presence of mind to demand a hundred guineas. When he received a cheque for that amount, his joy doubled.

4.6.2 Analysis

The essay, *Tight Corners* by E.V. Lucas has the theme of struggle, risk, self-importance, appearance and good fortune. The reader realizes after

reading the essay that Lucas may be exploring the theme of struggle. The narrator knows that he does not have the money to buy the Daubigny but he hopes that by having a little bit of fun others will out bid him and relieve him of the pressures of having to admit that he does not have the money to purchase anything that is being auctioned.

However, the narrator's own self-importance takes over and he bids on the Daubigny knowing very well that he does not have the money. It is a risk that most people would not take but the narrator feels invincible for some reason. As though he can enjoy a rich man's game while not having the funds to play the game. If anything, the narrator is allowing for his ego to run riot and take control. As to the reason he decides to do so is difficult to say. He has no one to impress (apart from his friend who thinks the matter is hilarious).

It is as though by bidding on the Daubigny the narrator is allowing for him to struggle mentally. A condition that he finds worse than any type of physical struggle an individual might have. However, the narrator is wholly responsible for his actions whereas the physical misfortunes mentioned in the essay are a case of bad luck.

The narrator has brought about his own potential downfall. The reader suspecting that the narrator may be wishing to impress others at his skill when it comes to bidding on items in the auction. It is only through good luck that the narrator's ego has been salvaged and he even has the audacity to look for an extra fifty guineas. Rather than accepting the fifty that were originally offered to him. In reality, the narrator is taking risks he cannot afford to financially take. He is allowing for his pride or ego to write cheque he cannot cash. This is the root of the mental stress that the narrator endures. Rather than being happy with his own bank, balance the narrator decides to make his attendance in Christie's into a game. One in which he again cannot afford.

The *title* of the essay is also interesting as the narrator really does paint himself into a tight corner and one that he only gets out of through good fortune. The narrator also appears to justify his belief that mental tight corners can be just as bad as or worse than physical tight corners. However, there is a difference which the narrator is not prepared to admit and that difference is personal responsibility. The narrator is personally responsible for his actions

The narrator has given the impression that he is a man of means. Something, which couldn't be further from the truth. The narrator knows he is not a wealthy man and that he is trying to impress others in the auction room. Even though they are strangers to him. Again, this may be important as it could play on the theme of self-importance or ego.

There is also a sense of relief at the end of the essay when the narrator asks his friend has his hair turned white. This imagery suggests to the reader just how tight a corner the narrator had put himself in. A corner he would have remained in if the original bidder on the Daubigny had not changed his mind. In reality, the narrator's risk taking may have paid off and he may have profited by one hundred guineas.

However, he has caused himself unnecessary mental stress in order to feed his ego. As for mental stress and physical stress being compatible, Lucas makes a fair point by relaying to the reader the narrator's story. Though it is difficult to sympathize with the narrator as he has brought on the stress by his own egotistical actions which may leave the reader to suggest that the narrator might find himself in another tight corner in the future. In reality, the narrator may not have learnt anything from his experience in Christie's and may continue to take risks that are sure to cause more stress to the narrator.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

E. V. Lucas was as a genial entertainer, witty and capable of unusual insights, but reluctant to offer self-revealing thoughts that might have given his writings deeper significance. He achieved success as a prolific author of light and conversational style. He was best known as a witty and observant essayist whose interests ranged from sports and domestic life to fine art and literature. His notable products in other genres include travel guides, literary anthologies, and an acclaimed series of scholarly works on the writer Charles Lamb.

Lucas's flexibility and high productivity as a writer and editor enabled him to have an unusually varied career, as among other things, a humorist, essayist, novelist, anthologist, literary, biographer, and an art critic.

4.8 SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the prose style of E. V. Lucas

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Q2. Evaluate the summary and analysis of 'Tight Corners'

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Q3. Discuss E. V. Lucas as an Essayist.

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.....

Q4. Discuss E V Lucas's literary works.

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.....

Q5. Explain the following lines with reference to context-

"There was a rustle of excitement, and at the end of it I heard my own voice saying, 'And fifty!' "A terrible silence followed, during which the auctioneer looked inquiringly first at the opener and then at the company generally. To my surprise and horror the red-faced dealer gave no sign of life. I realized now, as I ought to have done at first, that he had shot his bolt..

.....
.....

Q6. Explain the following lines with reference to context-

"And then the unexpected happened. And I realized that a career of rectitude sometimes has rewards beyond the mere consciousness of virtue. A voice at my ear suddenly said, 'Beg pardon. Sir, but was you the gent that bought the big Daubigny?' "I admitted it." Well, the agent who offered four thousand guineas wants to know if you'll take fifty guineas for your bid."

.....
.....

SOURCE**UNIT. 5** RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT : *TWELVE MILION BLACK VOICES*

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Objectives

5.2 Richard Nathaniel Wright (September 1908 – November 1960): Life and Literary works

5.3 Richard Nathaniel Wright's literary style

5.4 Richard Nathaniel Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices*5.5 Summary and Analysis of essay '*Twelve Million Black Voices*'

5.6 Let us sum up

5.7 Self- Assessment Questions

5.8 Source

5.9 Answers to Self- Assessment Questions

- E V,
revised by
Katharine
Chubbuck,
Lucas
,Edward
,Edward
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1938),
Oxford
Dictionary of
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- Lucas,Audrey, *E.V.Lucas: a portrait* (London, 1939)
- Prance, Claude, *E.V. Lucas and his books* (West Cornwall, Conn., 1988)

4.10 ANSWERS TO SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Ans 1. Read Sections 4.4

Ans 2. Read Sub- sections 4.6.1 & 4.6.2

Ans 3. Read Sections 4.3

Ans 4. Read Sections 4.2

Ans 5. Read Sections 4.5 & 4.6

Ans 6. Read Sections 4.5 & 4.6

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Richard Nathaniel Wright was an American author of novels, short stories, poems, and non-fiction. Much of his literature concerns racial themes, especially related to the plight of African Americans during the late 19th to mid-20th centuries, who suffered discrimination and violence in the South and the North.

5.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through his life and literary works, you will be able to:

- understand Richard Nathaniel Wright was a prolific writer, most celebrated for his short stories, verses, and novels.
- analyse the essay *Twelve Million Black Voices*
- understand and describe Wright's prose Style

5.2 RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT: LIFE AND WORKS

Richard Nathaniel Wright was born on September 4, 1908 at Rucker's Plantation, between the train town of Roxie and the larger river city of Natchez, Mississippi. He was the son of Nathan Wright (c. 1880-c. 1940) and Ella (Wilson) (b. 1884 Mississippi - d. Jan 13, 1959 Chicago, Illinois). His parents were born free after the Civil War, both sets of his grandparents had been born slavery and freed as a result of the war.

Richard's father left the family when he was six years old, and he did not see him for 25 years. In 1916, his mother Ella moved with Richard and his younger brother to live with her sister Maggie (Wilson) and her husband Silas Hoskins (born 1882) in Elaine, Arkansas. This was also in the area of the Mississippi Delta and former cotton plantations. The Wrights were forced to flee after Silas Hoskins "disappeared," reportedly killed by a white man who coveted his successful saloon business.

After his mother became incapacitated by a stroke, Richard was separated from his younger brother and lived briefly with another uncle. At the age of 12, he had not yet had a single complete year of schooling. Soon Richard

and his mother moved to the home of his maternal grandmother in the state capital, Jackson, Mississippi, where he lived from early 1920 until late 1925. There he was finally able to attend school regularly. After a year, at the age of 13 he entered the Jim Hill Public School, where he was promoted to sixth grade after only two weeks.

At the age of 15, while in eighth grade, Wright published his first story, "*The Voodoo of Hell's Half-Acre*", in the local Black newspaper *Southern Register*. No copies survive. In Chapter 7 of *Black Boy*, he described the story as about a villain who sought a widow's home.

After excelling in grade school and junior high, in 1923, Wright earned the position of class valediction of Smith Robertson Junior High School. He was assigned to write a paper to be delivered at graduation in a public auditorium. Later, he was called to the principal's office, where the principal gave him a prepared speech to present in place of his own. Richard challenged the principal, saying, "*The people are coming to hear the students, and I won't make a speech that you've written.*" The principal threatened him, suggesting that Richard might not be allowed to graduate if he persisted, despite having passed all the examinations. He also tried to entice Richard with an opportunity to become a teacher. Determined not to be called an Uncle Tom, Richard refused to deliver the principal's address, written to avoid offending the white school district officials. The principal put pressure on one of Richard's uncles to speak to the boy and get him to change his mind, but Richard continued to be adamant about presenting his own speech, and refused to let his uncle edit it. Despite pressure even from his classmates, Richard delivered his speech as he had planned.

In September that year, Wright registered for Mathematics, English, and History courses at the new Lanier High School, constructed for black students in Jackson. He had to stop attending classes after a few weeks of irregular attendance because he needed to earn money for family expenses.

The next year, at the age of 17, Wright moved to Memphis, Tennessee, in November 1925. He studied at the Howe Institute. He planned to have his mother come to live with him when he could support her. In 1926, his mother and younger brother rejoined him. Shortly thereafter, Richard resolved to leave the Jim Crow South and go to Chicago. His family joined the Great Migration, when tens of thousands of blacks left the South to seek opportunities in the more economically prosperous northern and mid-western industrial cities. Wright's childhood in Mississippi, as well as in Memphis, Tennessee, Elaine and Arkansas, shaped his lasting impressions of American racism.

Wright and his family moved to Chicago in 1927. After securing employment as a United States postal clerk, during his time off, he read other writers and studied their styles. When he was fired from the post office during the Great Depression, Wright was forced to go on relief in 1931. In 1932, he began attending meetings of the John Reed Club. The club was dominated by the Communist Party, Wright established a relationship with several party members. Especially interested in the literary contacts made at the meetings, Richard Wright formally joined the Communist Party in late 1933. As a revolutionary poet, he wrote numerous proletarian poems ("We of the Red Leaves of Red Books", for example), for *The New Masses* and other left-wing periodicals. A power struggle within the Chicago chapter of the John Reed Club had led to the dissolution of the club's leadership; Wright was told he had the support of the club's party members if he was willing to join the party.

By 1935, Wright had completed the manuscript of his first novel, *Cesspool*, which was published posthumously as *Lawd Today* (1963). In January 1936 his story, "Big Boy Leaves Home" was accepted for publication in *New Caravan*. In February of that year, he began working with the National Negro Congress.

In April he chaired the South Side Writers Group, whose members included Arna Bontemps and Margaret Walker. Wright submitted some of his critical essays and poetry to the group for criticism and read aloud some of his short stories. Through the club, he edited *Left Front*, a magazine that the Communist Party shut down in 1937, despite Wright's repeated protests. Throughout this period, Wright continued to contribute to *The New Masses* magazine.

In 1937, Wright moved to New York, where he forged new ties with some Communist Party members. He worked on the Federal writers' Project guidebook to the city, *New York Panorama* (1938), and wrote the book's essay on Harlem.

Richard Wright became the Harlem editor of the *Daily Worker*, a Communist newspaper. Through the summer and fall, he wrote more than 200 articles for the *Daily Worker* and helped edit a short-lived literary magazine *New Challenge*. The year was also a landmark for

Wright because he met and developed a friendship with writer Ralph Ellison that would last for years. He was awarded the *Story Magazine* First Prize of \$500 for his short story "*Fire and Cloud*".

After receiving the *Story* prize in early 1938, Wright shelved his manuscript of *Lawd Today* and dismissed his literary agent, John Troustine. He hired Paul Reynolds, the well-known agent of poet *Paul Laurence Dumber*, to represent him. Meanwhile, the *Story Press* offered the publisher

Harper all of Wright's prize-entry stories for a book, and Harper agreed to publish the collection.

Wright gained national attention for the collection of four short stories entitled *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938). He based some stories on *lynching* in the *Deep South*. The publication and favorable reception of *Uncle Tom's Children* improved Wright's status with the Communist party and enabled him to establish a reasonable degree of financial stability. He was appointed to the editorial board of *New Masses*. *Granville Hicks*, a prominent literary critic and Communist sympathizer, introduced him at leftist teas in Boston. By May 6, 1938, excellent sales had provided Wright with enough money to move to Harlem, where he began writing the novel *Native Son*, which he published in 1940.

Based on his collected short stories, Wright was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship, which gave him a stipend allowing him to complete *Native Son*. After publication, *Native Son* was selected by the Book of the Month club as its first book by an African-American author.

Wright was criticized for his concentration on violence in his works. In the case of *Native Son*, people complained that he portrayed a black man in ways that seemed to confirm whites' worst fears. The period following publication of *Native Son* was a busy time for Wright. In July 1940, he went to Chicago to do research for a folk history of blacks to accompany photographs selected by Edwin Rosskam. While in Chicago, he visited the *American Negro Exhibition* with Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps and Claude McKay.

Richard Wright married a Jewish woman named Dhimah Rose Meidman, who was a modern-dance teacher of Russian ancestry. It was a short lived marriage that ended a year later. On March 12, 1941, he married Ellen Poplar *née* Poplowitz, a Communist organizer from Brooklyn. They had two daughters: Julia born in 1942 and Rachel in 1949.

In January 1941 Wright received the prestigious Spingarn Medal of the NAACP for noteworthy achievement. Wright also wrote the text to accompany a volume of photographs chosen by Rosskam, which were almost completely drawn from the files of the *Farm Security Administration*. The *Farm Security Administration* had employed top photographers to travel around the country and capture images of Americans. Their collaboration, *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States*, was published in October 1941 to wide critical acclaim.

Wright's memoir *Black Boy* (1945) described his early life from *Roxie*. It included his clashes with Seventh-day Adventist family, his troubles with white employers, and social isolation. It also describes his intellectual journey through these struggles.

American Hunger, which was published posthumously in 1977. *American Hunger* detailed Wright's participation in the John Reed Clubs and the Communist Party, which he left in 1942. The book implied he left earlier, but he did not announce his withdrawal until 1944. In the book's restored form, Wright used the Diptych structure to compare the certainties and intolerance of organized communism, which condemned "bourgeois" books and certain members, with similar restrictive qualities of fundamentalist organized religion.

Richard Wright died in Paris on November 28, 1960, of a heart attack at the age of 52. He was interred in Le Pere Lachaise Cemetery. Wright's daughter Julia has claimed that her father was murdered. Richard Wright's wife Ellen Wright was the executor of the Richard Wright Estate and, in that capacity; she sued a biographer, the poet and writer *Margaret Walker*, in *Wright v. Warner Books, inc.*

A number of Wright's works have been published posthumously. In addition, some of Wright's more shocking passages dealing with race, sex, and politics were cut or omitted before original publication of works during his lifetime. In 1991, unexpurgated versions of *Native Son*, *Black Boy*, and his other works were published. In addition, in 1994, his novella *Rite of Passage* was published for the first time.

Mississippi, University Press published a collection of Wright's travel writings in 2001. At his death, Wright left an unfinished book, *A Father's Law*, dealing with a black police officer and the son he suspects of murder. His daughter Julia Wright published *A Father's Law* in January 2008. An omnibus edition containing Wright's political works was published under the title *Three Books from Exile: Black Power; The Color Curtain; and White Man, Listen!*

Award and Honours

- The Spingran Medal in 1941 from the NAACP
- Guggenheim Fellowship in 1939
- Story Magazine Award in 1938.
- In April 2009, Wright was featured on a U.S. postage stamp.
- In 2010, Wright was inducted into the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame.

- In 2012, the Historic Districts Council and the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, in collaboration with the Fort Greene Association and writer/musician Carl Hancock Rux erected a cultural medallion at 175 Carlton Avenue Brooklyn.

Literary works

- Richard Wright: *Early Works* (Arnold Rampersad, ed. (Library of America, 1989)
- Richard Wright: *Later Works* (Arnold Rampersad, ed., (Library of America 1991).

Drama

- *Native son, The Biography of a Young American* with Paul Green (New York: Harper, 1941)

Fiction

- *Uncle Tom's Children* (New York: Harper, 1938) (tales)
- *The Man Who Was Almost a Man* (New York: Harper, 1939) (short tale)
- *Native Son* (New York: Harper, 1940) (novel)
- *The Man Who Lived Underground* (1942) (short tale)
- *The Outsider* (New York: Harper, 1953) (novel)
- *Savage Holiday* (New York: Avon, 1954)(novel)
- *The Long Dream* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1958) (novel)
- *Eight Men* (Cleveland and New York: World, 1961) (tales)
- *Law Today* (New York: Walker, 1963) (novel)
- *Rite of Passage* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994) (short tale)
- *A Father's Law* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008) (unfinished novel)

Non-fiction

- *How "Bigger" Was Born; Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Harper, 1940)
- *12 Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* (New York: Viking, 1941)
- *Black Boy* (New York: Harper, 1945)
- *Black Power* (New York: Harper, 1954)
- *The Color Curtain* (Cleveland and New York: World, 1956)
- *Pagan Spain* (New York: Harper, 1957)
- *Letters to Joe C. Brown* (Kent State University Libraries, 1968)
- *American Hunger* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977)
- *Black Power: Three Books from Exile: "Black Power"; "The Color Curtain"; and "White Man, Listen!"* (Harper Perennial, 2008)

Essays

- *The Ethics Of Living Jim Crow: An Autobiographical Sketch* (1937)
- *Introduction to Black Metropolis: A study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945)
- *I Choose Exile* (1951)
- *White Man, Listen!* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1957)
- *Blueprint for Negro Literature* (New York City, New York) (1937)
- *The God that Failed* (contributor) (1949)

Poetry

- *Haiku: This Other World* (eds. Yoshinobu Hakutani and Robert L. Tener; Arcade, 1998,

ISBN0-385-72024-6 re-issue (*paperback*): *Haiku: The Last Poetry of Richard Wright* (Arcade Publishing, 2012

5.3 RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT'S LITERARY STYLE

Richard Wright should be seen as a major voice of African-American. The challenge is to describe "protest" literature as a repudiation of the dominant discourse on race. It is a rejection of the dominant literary style is to become non-literary. He has used the language of symbolism and language of racial discourse.

Wright has in social psychology, which dramatizes in narrative the consciousness of a character at the crossroads of social forces (race, class) and personal impulses and self-creation. Wright is dedicated to study of the production of personality and the arousal of a self-directive being. This, after all, is the substance of African-American history: how oppressed people create a world, a culture, and remake personalities the dominant group seeks to eradicate. His works can be read as elementary sociology.

Richard Wright's literary style can be classed as a naturalistic author displaying the experience of victims. Wright is as an exponent of hate, an unreasonable writer who is not sensitive to the complexities of moral experience. He is concerned racial themes. His work helped redefine discussions of race relations in America in the mid-20th century.

Twelve Million Black Voices juxtaposes a poetic treatise on Black oppression in America against photographs taken by those associated with the Farm Security Administration. There is some strong message portraying throughout the book and the uses of photographic images exposing the racial and class conditions. His non-fiction prose were thought provoking. It was interesting to see the ways in which the narrative and the photos worked together to produce a history that is true and heartbreaking.

Wright's stances are rhetoric. His tantalizing prose produces countless quotable passages with meaning too deep to understand without focused reflection. The message is clear and strong. His non-fiction essay is truly a classic and a nice warm-up for those learning of not just "Black History" but American History.

5.4 RICHARD NATHANIEL WRIGHT'S 'TWELVE MILLION BLACK VOICES'

TEXT



THE WORD "NEGRO," the term by which, orally or in print, we black folk in the United States are usually designated, is not really a name at all nor a description, but a psychological island whose objective form is the most unanimous fiat in all American history; a fiat buttressed by popular and national tradition, and written down in many state and city statutes; a fiat which artificially and arbitrarily defines, regulates, and limits in scope of meaning the vital contours of our lives, and the lives of our children and our children's children.

This island, within whose confines we live, is anchored in the feelings of millions of people, and is situated in the midst of the sea of white faces we meet each day; and, by and large, as three hundred years of time has borne our nation into the twentieth century, its rocky boundaries have remained unyielding to the waves of our hope that dash against it.

The steep cliffs of this island are manifest, on the whole, in the conduct of whites toward us hour by hour, a conduct which tells us that we possess no rights commanding respect, that we have no claim to pursue happiness in our own fashion, that our progress toward civilization constitutes an insult, that our behavior must be kept firmly within an orbit branded as inferior, that we must be compelled to labor at the behest of others, that as a group we are owned by the whites, and that manliness on our part warrants instant reprisal.

Three hundred years are a long time for millions of folk like us to be held in such subjection, so long a time that perhaps scores of years will have to pass before we shall be able to express what this slavery has done to us, for our personalities are still numb from its long shocks; and, as the numbness leaves our souls, we shall yet have to feel and give utterance to the full pain we shall inherit.

More than one-half of us black folk in the United States are tillers of the soil, and three-fourths of those of us who till the soil are sharecroppers and day laborers.



The land we till is beautiful, with red and black and brown clay, with fresh and hungry smells, with pine trees and palm trees, with rolling hills and swampy delta—an unbelievably fertile land, bounded on the north by the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana, on the south by the Gulf of Mexico, on the west by the Mississippi River, and on the east by the Atlantic Ocean.

Our southern springs are filled with quiet noises and scenes of growth. Apple buds laugh into blossom. Honeysuckles creep up the sides of houses. Sunflowers nod in the hot fields. From mossy tree to mossy tree—oak, elm, willow, aspen, sycamore, dogwood, cedar, walnut, ash, and hickory—bright green leaves jut from a million branches to form an awning that tries to shield and shade the earth. Blue and pink kites of small boys sail in the windy air.

In summer the magnolia trees fill the countryside with sweet scent for long miles. Days are slumberous, and the skies are high and thronged with clouds that ride fast. At midday the sun blazes and bleaches the soil. Butterflies flit through the heat; wasps sing their sharp, straight lines; birds fluff and flounce, piping in querulous joy. Nights are covered with canopies sometimes blue and sometimes black, canopies that sag low with ripe and nervous stars. The throaty boast of frogs momentarily drowns out the call and counter-call of crickets.

In autumn the land is afire with color. Red and brown leaves lift and flutter dryly, becoming entangled in the stiff grass and cornstalks. Cotton is picked and ginned; cane is crushed and its juice is simmered down into molasses; yams are grubbed out of the clay; hogs are slaughtered and cured in lingering smoke; corn is husked and ground into meal. At twilight the sky is full of wild geese winging ever southward, and bats jerk through the air. At night the winds blow free.

In winter the forests resound with the bite of steel axes eating into tall trees as men gather wood for the leaden days of cold. The guns of hunters snap and crack. Long days of rain come, and our swollen creeks rush to

join a hundred rivers that wash across the land and make great harbors where they feed the gulf or the sea. Occasionally the rivers leap their banks and leave new thick layers of silt to enrich the earth, and then the look of the land is garish, bleak, suffused with a first-day stillness, strangeness, and awe.



But whether in spring or summer or autumn or winter, time slips past us remorselessly, and it is hard to tell of the iron that lies beneath the surface of our quiet, dull days.

To paint the picture of how we live on the tobacco, cane, rice, and cotton plantations is to compete with mighty artists: the movies, the radio, the newspapers, the magazines, and even the Church. They have painted one picture: charming, idyllic, romantic; but we live another: full of the fear of the Lords of the Land, bowing and grinning when we meet white faces, toiling from sun to sun, living in unpainted wooden shacks that sit casually and insecurely upon the red clay.

In the main we are different from other folk in that, when an impulse moves us, when we are caught in the throes of inspiration, when we are moved to better our lot, we do not ask ourselves: "Can we do it?" but: "Will they let us do it?" Before we black folk can move, we must first look into the white man's mind to see what is there, to see what he is thinking, and the white man's mind is a mind that is always changing.

In general there are three classes of men above us: the Lords of the Land—operators of the plantations; the Bosses of the Buildings—the owners of industry; and the vast numbers of poor white workers—our immediate competitors in the daily struggle for bread. The Lords of the Land hold sway over the plantations and over us; the Bosses of the Buildings lend money and issue orders to the Lords of the Land. The Bosses of the Buildings feed upon the Lords of the Land, and the Lords of the Land feed upon the 5,000,000 landless poor whites and upon us, throwing to the poor whites the scant solace of filching from us 4,000,000 landless blacks what the poor whites themselves are cheated of in this elaborate game.

Back of this tangled process is a long history. When the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, there were some 4,000,000 of us black folk stranded and bewildered upon the land which we had tilled under compulsion for two and a half centuries. Sundered suddenly from the only relationship with Western civilization we had been allowed to form since our captivity, our personalities blighted by two hundred and fifty years of servitude, and eager to hold our wives and husbands and children together in

family units, some of us turned back to the same Lords of the Land who had held us as slaves and begged for work, resorted to their advice; and there began for us a new kind of bondage: sharecropping.

Glad to be free, some of us drifted and gave way to every vagary of impulse that swept through us, being held in the line of life only by the necessity to work and eat. Confined for centuries to the life of the cotton field, many of us possessed no feelings of family, home, community, race, church, or progress. We could scarcely believe that we were free, and our restlessness and incessant mobility were our naïve way of testing that freedom. Just as a kitten stretches and yawns after a long sleep, so thousands of us tramped from place to place for the sheer sake of moving, looking, wondering, landless upon the land. Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Virginia, and West Virginia became the home states of us freed blacks.

In 1890 many white people predicted that we black folk would perish in a competitive world; but in spite of this we left the land and kept afloat, wandering from Natchez to New Orleans, from Mobile to Montgomery, from Macon to Jacksonville, from Birmingham to Chattanooga, from Nashville to Louisville, from Memphis to Little Rock—laboring in the sawmills, in the turpentine camps, on the road jobs; working for men who did not care if we lived or died, but who did not want their business enterprises to suffer for lack of labor. During the first decade of the twentieth century, more than one and three-quarter millions of us abandoned the plantations upon which we had been born; more than a million of us roamed the states of the South and the remainder of us drifted north.

Our women fared easier than we men during the early days of freedom; on the whole their relationship to the world was more stable than ours. Their authority was supreme in most of our families inasmuch as many of them had worked in the "Big Houses" of the Lords of the Land and had learned manners, had been taught to cook, sew, and nurse. During slave

days they did not always belong to us, for the Lords of the Land often took them for their pleasure. When a gang of us was sold from one plantation to another, our wives would sometimes be kept by the Lords of the Land and we men would have to mate with whatever slave girl we chanced upon. Because of their enforced intimacy with the Lords of the Land, many of our women, after they were too old to work, were allowed to remain in the slave cabins to tend generations of black children. They enjoyed a status denied us men, being called "Mammy"; and through the years they became symbols of motherhood, retaining in their withered bodies the burden of our folk wisdom, reigning as arbiters in our domestic affairs until we men were freed and had moved to cities where cash-paying jobs enabled us to become the heads of our own families.



The economic and political power of the South is not held in our hands; we do not own banks, iron and steel mills, railroads, office buildings, ships, wharves, or power plants. There are some few of us who operate small grocery stores, barber shops, rooming houses, burial societies, and undertaking establishments. But none of us owns any of the basic industries that shape the course of the South, such as mining, lumber, textiles, oil, transportation, or electric power. So, in the early spring, when the rains have ceased and the ground is ready for plowing, we present ourselves to the Lords of the Land and ask to make a crop. We sign a contract—usually our contracts are oral—which allows us to keep one-half of the harvest after all debts are paid. If we have worked upon these plantations before, we are legally bound to plant, tend, and harvest another crop. If we should escape to the city to avoid paying our mounting debts, white policemen track us down and ship us back to the plantation.

The Lords of the Land assign us ten or fifteen acres of soil already bled of its fertility through generations of abuse. They advance us one mule, one plow, seed, tools, fertilizer, clothing, and food, the main staples of which are fat hog meat, coarsely ground corn meal, and sorghum molasses. If we have been lucky the year before, maybe we have saved a few dollars to tide us through the fall months, but spring finds us begging an “advance”—credit—from the Lords of the Land.

From now on the laws of Queen Cotton rule our lives. (Contrary to popular assumption, cotton is a *queen*, not a king. Kings are dictatorial; cotton is not only dictatorial but self-destructive, an imperious woman in the throes of constant childbirth, a woman who is driven by her greedy passion to bear endless bales of cotton, though she well knows that she will die if she continues to give birth to her fleecy children!) If we black folk had only to work to feed the Lords of the Land, to supply delicacies for their tables—as did the slaves of old for their masters—our degradation upon the plantations would not have been the harshest form of human servitude the world has ever known. But we had to raise cotton to clothe

the world; cotton meant money, and money meant power and authority and prestige. To plant vegetables for our tables was often forbidden, for raising a garden narrowed the area to be planted in cotton. The world demanded cotton, and the Lords of the Land ordered more acres to be planted—planted right up to our doorsteps!—and the ritual of Queen Cotton became brutal and bloody.



The laws of Queen Cotton rule our lives

5.5 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF 'TWELVE MILLION BLACK VOICES'

Richard Wright's *Twelve Million Black Voices*, first published in 1941, is an impassioned essay.

He encompasses the voices of Twelve Million African-Americans in 1930s, and tells of their sufferings, misery and weariness under rural poverty, their spiritual strength, and their lives, their fears, and their hopes. It also depicted the African-American lives and how the things happening in them had affected them, more specifically their complex feelings.

Twelve Million Black Voices by Richard Wright represents the voice of African-Americans from their point of view of their long journey from Africa to America, and from there through their search for equality, the scars and prints of where they come from, their children born during these struggles, their journeys, their loss, and plight.

The author, himself an African-American, has described the miserable condition of the blacks in U.S.A. The term 'Negro', says the author, itself suggests slavery. A Negro (meaning fiat) is meant to receive commands from a superior authority. Thus, the term has sunk into the minds of the Afro-Americans reducing them to the position of slaves. Even after a hundred years of abolition of slavery, a Negro remains a slave amid whites. Majority of the African-Americans are tillers of land. When freedom for the blacks was proclaimed, they could hardly believe they were free. They moved about aimlessly from place to place just to have a feel of the freedom. The white lords running grocery stores, barbers shops, etc, kept their womenfolk. Many of them went for their work to the lands and were engaged as share croppers. They worked in cotton fields, as cotton was in great demand.

Generation of these Afro-Americans had lived with the feeling that they have no rights, no claims to happiness amidst this sea of white humanity. They have lived under slavery for a long period of 30 years. This slavery left them numb. Scores of years will pass before they are able to tell how this subjugation has affected them.

Miserable lives of the African-American

More than half of the blacks in the USA are tillers of the soil. Third/fourth of these tillers are share croppers and day laborers. The land they till is beautiful but the lives of the blacks tillers is ugly. As the author remarks: *'it is hard to tell of the iron that lies beneath the surface of our quiet dull days'*. Their miserable life is in sharp contrast to the blissful idyllic pictures of the farms portrayed by the artists. The blacks do at times feel the impulse to change their lives and better than lot but they are afraid of the whites. They are just left wondering if the whites would allow them to do so.

A new kind of slavery, sharecropping.

When the emancipation proclamation was signed and slavery abolished, there were about forty lakhs blacks working on the lands. They were puzzled by this sudden freedom and didn't know what to do. They of course wanted to keep their families united so they turned

to their previous masters for work. The masters offered them share cropping which was nothing but a new kind of bondage of slavery. They bound by the terms of the agreement, tilled the soil and got some share of the crops in return.

Life of black women

Other black men left the plantations. They wandered to distant places just to get a feel of their freedom. During those early days of the freedom, women fared better than man did. In fact, even during the slavery periods these women were allowed into the mansions of the white lords. There they learned manners and were told how to cook, sew and nurse. After independence of these women, grown old were retained to act as mammies or mothers to bring up the black children. Such women commanded respect in their families and even acted as arbiters in family disputes.

Black men who wandered off

The black men who wandered off took up petty jobs or they joined petty trades like running grocery stores, barber shops, burial societies, etc. in early spring when weather turned favorable they approached the land owners for tilling the land. They were allowed to do it as share croppers, since cotton was in great demand they were made to grow cotton.

African-Americans tilled the land at the white landlords along with their wives and children. They worked on tobacco, cane, rice, and Cotton plantations. All the year round, they worked on farms day and night. No artist, radio, movies, newspaper or church ever painted their suffering. Nobody ever bothered about their condition. They were considered as sub-human. Above them, there were three classes of men:

- A) Bosses of the building
- B) Lords of the land and
- C) The landless poor whites.

During slavery, African-Americans were suppressed and trampled upon (to get crushed under the feet) so much that they went in a kind of trauma (shock), a kind of numbness.

Richard Wright says, *'It will take many years to come out of it, and still some more years to utter how it hurt'*. After freedom from slavery in 1865, the coloured people did not have anywhere to go and anything to do except working on farms. So they turned to their old masters to beg for the work. The old masters offered them a new deal, which was called Share Cropping.

It was a new bondage in which the coloured people were given some share of the income after cutting out all the money that was invested. When the crop failed, the black tried to run away to avoid the debt. The white police dragged back them and again made to work on the farm. Thus share-cropping was a new kind of bondage, a trick played by whites to keep the blacks in servitude (slavery).

During the first decade of the 20th century, most of the African-Americans left the plantations and roamed the states of the South America, just for the sake of it. It was their try to taste the freedom. They laboured in sawmills, in the tupentine camps, on the road jobs etc. Some travelled to North America to try their luck. The whites predicted (to foretell) that, these blacks would perish (to end) in a competitive world. The condition of black women was better than their male counterparts. Due to working under slavery, the African-American men did possess no feelings of family, home, community, race, church or progress. But the women knew these things better. Because of that, their authority was supreme in the families. They had worked at the houses of the white owners, and so they had seen the ways of living from close. They had learned manners and the works such as cooking, sewing and nursing. They were called as Mammies at the big houses. Even after the end of slavery, most of the women remained with their white masters and lived their life in the cabins tending their children. Thus, African-American women enjoyed some status, which was denied to their male.

The economical and political power of the South America was centered in the hands of whites. They were the executives, industrialists and the politicians. Blacks at the most could set up barber shops, rooming houses, burial societies etc. Most of the African-Americans worked as Share croppers. It was a system in which blacks signed oral contracts with the white landlords to work on their farms. Their lives were harrowed more by the cotton farming. As it was a cash crop, they had to do back-breaking work day and night. They were forbidden (prohibited/ asked not to do something) to plant any vegetable, because that way the land under cotton used to go waste. Here Richard Wright says that, if there had been no cotton farms their lives would not have been so harsh. Cotton ruined (destroyed) their lives.

Richard Wright's essay is a denunciation of American bigotry directed at the national conscience. He discusses each phase of black American social evolution, the horrors of the slave trade, the degradation of plantation life; the lynching, and violence after Reconstruction. The great migration of blacks to Northern cities following World War I, Wright anchors his economic analyses to profiles of individual lives, providing a sense of the obstacles black families faced simply to stay together.

5.6 LET US SUM UP

This essay, Twelve Million Balck Voices is an extraordinary text of the unsung millions who have come up from slavery to another form of slavery, -- share cropping, tenant farming, destitution, migratory work and virtual ghettos in the large cities. This essay has depicted the cultural backgrounds in Africa, through the medium of the slave traffic, the rise and fall of slavery, emancipation without preparation, and victimization at the hands of social and economic system of America.

5.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Explain the following lines with reference to context-

“The steep cliffs of this island are manifest, on the whole, in the conduct of whites towards us hour by hour, a conduct which tells us that we possess no rights commanding respect, that we have no claim to pursue happiness in our own fashion, that our progress towards civilization constitutes an insult, that our behavior must be kept firmly within an orbit branded as inferior, that we must be compelled to labour at the behest of others, that as a group we are owned by the whites and that manliness on our part warrants instant reprisal”.

.....
.....

Q2. Explain the following lines with reference to context-

“But we had to raise cotton to clothe the world; cotton meant money, and money and money meant power and authority and prestige. To plant vegetables for our tables was often forbidden, for raising a garden narrowed the area to be planted in cotton. The world demanded cotton, and the Lords of the Land ordered more acres to be planned- planted right up to our doorstep!- and the ritual of Queen Cotton became brutal and bloody.”

.....
.....

Q3. Summarize and evaluate the essay ‘Twelve Million Black Voices’

.....
.....

Q4. Discuss the literary style of Richard Wright with reference to his essay ‘Twelve Million Black Voices’

.....
.....

5.8 SOURCE

Davis, Charles T. and Michel Fabre, *Richard Wright: A Primary Bibliography*. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982.

Everette, Mildred. "The Death of Richard Wright's American Dream: 'The Man Who Lived Underground.'" *CLA Journal* 17 (1974): 318-26.

Fabre, Michel. "From Tabloid to Myth: 'The Man Who Lived Underground.'" *The World of Richard Wright*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1985. 93-107.

Reilly, John. "Self-Portraits by Richard Wright." *Colorado Quarterly* 20 (Summer 1971): 31-45. On revisions and the author's personal investment in "The Man . . ."

5.9 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Ans 1&2. Read Section 5.5

Ans 3. Read Section 5.5

Ans 4. Read Section 5.2

UNIT 6 JAWAHAR LAL NEHRU: WILL AND TESTAMENT

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Objectives

6.2 Jawaharlal Nehru (14 November 1889-27 May 1964): Life and
Literary works

6.3 Literary Style of Jawaharlal Nehru

6.4 Jawaharlal Nehru's Text 'Will And Testament'

6.5 Summary of Text 'Will And Testament'

6.6 Let us sum up

6.7 Self -Assessment Questions

6.8 Source

6.9 Answers to Self -Assessment Questions

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Pt Jawaharlal Nehru was an Indian Independence activist, writer and subsequently, the first Prime Minister of India. He was a central figure in Indian politics before and after independence. He delved into philosophy and turned the pages of History to illuminate his understanding of the ideas and movements, which stood apart as the catalyst for momentous changes. In 1955, he was awarded 'Bharat Ratna', India's highest civilian honour.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through his life and literary works, you will be able to understand Jawaharlal Nehru was a politician, voracious reader, and prolific writer in English. Describe and analyse his prose style. You will be able to understand his literary style

6.2 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU : LIFE AND WORKS

Jawaharlal Nehru was born in Allahabad U.P to a family of Kashmiri Brahmans, noted for their administrative aptitude and scholarship, who had migrated to Delhi early in the 18th century. He was the son of Motilal Nehru, a renowned lawyer.

Jawaharlal was the eldest of four children. Until the age of 16, Nehru was educated at home by a series of English governesses and tutors. Only one of those—a part-Irish, part-Belgian theosophist, Ferdinand Brooks—appears to have made an impression on him. Jawaharlal also had a venerable Indian tutor who taught him Hindi and Sanskrit. In 1905, he went to Harrow, a leading English school, where he stayed for two years. Nehru's academic career was in no way outstanding. From Harrow, he went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he spent three years and got an honours degree in natural science. On leaving Cambridge, he qualified as a Barrister

after two years at the Inner Temple, London, where in his own words he passed his examinations "with neither glory nor ignominy."

The seven years Nehru spent in England left him in a hazy half-world, at home neither in England nor in India. Some years later he wrote, "*I have become a queer mixture of East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere.*" He went back to India to discover India. The contending pulls and pressures that his experience abroad were to exert on his personality were never completely resolved.

Four years after his return to India, in March 1916, Nehru married Kamala Kaul, who also came from a Kashmiri family that had settled in Delhi. Their only child, Indira Priyadarshini, was born in 1917; she would later (under her married name of Indira Gandhi also serve (1966–77 and 1980–84) as prime minister of India.

Throughout his 17 years in the Prime Minister's office, he held up democratic socialism as the guiding star, emphasizing that India needed to achieve both democracy and socialism. With the help of the overwhelming majority that the Congress Party maintained in the parliament during his term of office, he advanced toward that goal. The four pillars of his domestic policies were democracy, socialism, unity, and secularism. He succeeded to a large extent in maintaining the edifice supported by those four pillars during his lifetime.

He remained popular with the people of India in spite of political troubles in his final years and failure of leadership during the 1962 China- Indian War. He died of a heart attack in New Delhi. In India, his birthday is celebrated as **Bal Diwas (Children's Day)**.

Literary works

Nehru was a prolific writer in English and wrote a number of books.

- His first book, *Soviet Russia* (1928) is a collection of sixteen articles comprising some random sketches and impressions of Russia after his visit there in 1927.
- He had written 30 letters to his daughter Indira Gandhi. The collection of these letters was later published as a book *Letters from a Father to His Daughters*. (1930)
- *The Discovery of India, Glimpses of World History* (1934)
- An Autobiography (1936)
- *The Discovery of India* (1946) was written in 1944 during his last internment at Ahmednagar Fort.
- *On the Future of India, Communalism and Other subjects* (1934)
- *The Unity of India: Collected Writings 1937-1940* (1941)
- *Before and after Independence (Collected speeches: 1922-1950)* (1950)
- *A Bunch of Old Letters (1958) and Independence And after (Collected Speeches : 1946-1964) Vols. 1-V (1949-1965)*

6.3 LITERARY STYLE OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Nehru was a prolific writer in English and wrote a number of books. He writes English with exceptional mastery, grace, and ease. Although he is a lover of words, his style does not suffer from verbosity. It is always limpid, lucid and unaffected. Words are at his command, and he employs them to present his sincere thought and experience in the clearest language. He never aims at artificial glow or forced beauty of words and is as simple and unassuming in writing as he was in life. He did not use jarring jargon in his writing.

Nehru had the heart of a poet although he was eminently a man of action and a political leader. His prose narration achieves lyrical heights. His soft and subtle emotional states are worked up in his mind and expressed with unaffected spontaneity. He is a talented and expressive writer in English. He is widely known through the extensive circulation of his writings in the west.

6.4 JAWAHAR LAL NEHRU'S WILL AND TESTAMENT

(Text)

I have received so much love and affection from the Indian people that nothing that I can do can repay even a small fraction of it, and indeed there can be no repayment of so precious a thing as affection.

Many have been admired, some have been revered, but the affection of all classes of Indian people has come to me in such abundant measure that I have been overwhelmed by it. I can only express hope that in the remaining years I may live, I shall not be unworthy of my people and their affection.

To my innumerable comrades and colleagues, I owe an even deeper debt of gratitude. We have been joint partners in great undertakings and have shared triumphs and sorrows which inevitably accompany them.

I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed for me after my death. I do not believe in any such ceremonies and to submit to them, even as a matter of form, would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others.

When I die, I should like my body to be cremated. If I die in a foreign country, my body should be cremated there and my ashes sent to Allahabad.

A small handful of these ashes should be thrown into the Ganga [Ganges] and the major portion of them disposed of in the manner indicated below. No part of these ashes should be retained or preserved.

Denies Religious Significance

My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad has no religious significance, so far as I am concerned.

I have no religious sentiment in the matter. I have been attached to the Ganga and Januna [Jumna] Rivers in Allahabad ever since my childhood and, as I have grown older, this attachment has also grown. I have watched their varying moods as the seasons changed, and have often

thought of the history and myth and tradition and song and story that have become attached to them through the long ages and become part of their flowing waters. The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved by her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats.

She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever changing, ever flowing, and yet ever the same Ganga. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, which I have loved so much, and of the rich and vast plains below, where my life and work have been cast.

Smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight, and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as evening shadows fall; a narrow, slow and graceful stream in winter, and a vast roaring thing during monsoon, broad-bosomed almost as the sea, and with something of the sea's power to destroy, the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future.

And though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom, and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain and divide her people, and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent free development of body and spirit; though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from the past completely.

I am proud of the great inheritance that has been, and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India.

That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it. And as witness of this desire of mine and as my last homage to India's cultural inheritance, I am making this request that a handful of my ashes be thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad to be carried to the great ocean that washes India's shore.

The major portion of my ashes should, however, be disposed of otherwise. I want these to be carried high up into the air in an airplane and scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India.

6.5 SUMMARY OF 'WILL AND TESTAMENT'

When Jawaharlal Nehru was in Ahmednagar Fort prison and had the leisure to think about the future. It struck him that it would be desirable to make some kind of a Will. The news of the sudden death of his brother-in-law, Ranjit Sitaram Pandit came as a great shock to him and induced him to think again about making a 'Will'. He could not take any formal steps in prison. Though in December 1943, while still in Ahmednagar, he made a draft of a Will and Testament.

Jawahar Lal Nehru was released from prison in the summer of 1945 and since then had little leisure to think about personal matters. So, the draft had remained with him for over ten years. These ten years had seen many changes in his life.

Jawaharlal Nehru wrote "Will and Testament. He does not think it even necessary to make any kind of a 'Will' as he doubted that he would have anything to dispose of in this way. In the normal course, he thinks that his daughter Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi would inherit such property or assets that he might leave, as she was his natural and obvious heir.

He said in his 'Will' that all assets i.e. the house, Anand Bhawan , and all his securities, investments and shares, cash in current and fixed deposit accounts and income from royalties on books, and any other property or assets belonging to him not herein mentioned, will be inherited by, and will belong to my daughter, Indira Priyadarshini after my death. She shall have full authority over them and can deal with them in any manner she chooses.

He wishes that he does not want any religious ceremonies performed for him after his death. He does not believe in any such ceremonies. It would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude others and ourselves.

He said that after death, his body should be cremated. If he dies in a foreign country, his body should be cremated there and his ashes should be sent to Allahabad. A small handful of these ashes should be thrown in the Ganga and the major portion of them disposed of. No part of these ashes should be retained or preserved.

He desires that a handful of his ashes should be thrown in the Ganga at Allahabad. He has no religious sentiments so far as he is concerned. He has been attached to the Ganga and the Jumna rivers in Allahabad ever since his childhood.

He explains that The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, round, which are, intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing and ever the same Ganga. He was conscious that he should be linked with the immemorial past of India. It was his desire to pay his last homage at the shore of the Ganga.

He expressed his wish in his 'Will' that the major portion of his ashes should be carried to high up into the air in an airplane and it should be scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India.

6.6 LET US SUM UP

Jawahar Lal Nehru is not only a great political figure and a champion of liberty, but also a keen observer of a man of manners of Indian and of the world. His literary output has an ample display of the open-minded, deep insight and prolific scholarship. He had a naturally metaphorical cast of mind. He is well known as a writer, a man of letters, a historian, a lover of books, a man of refined aesthetic sensibility even a good prose writer.

6.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the literary style of Jawahar Lal Nehru. Refer to 6.4

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.....

Q2. Explain the following lines with reference to context :

"I am proud of the great inheritance that has been, and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back to the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India.

.....
.....

Q3. Explain the following lines with reference to context :

"My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown into the Ganga at Allahabad has no Religious significance, so far as I am concerned. I have no religious sentiment in the matter. I have been attached to the Ganga and Jamuna [Jumna] Rivers in Allahabad ever since my childhood and as I have grown older, this attachment has also grown."

.....
.....

Q4. Discuss the summary of text 'Will and Testament'

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.....

6.8 SOURCE

- Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1936. *An Autobiography*. London: Lane.
- Wikipedia.org
- *Frank R. Moraes The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica*

6.9 ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Ans1. Read Section 6.2

Ans 2&3. Read Section 6.4 and 6.5

Ans 4 Read Section 6.5

BLOCK 3

UNIT 7 JOHN GALSWORTHY: LIFE & WORKS

7.0 Introduction

7.1 Objectives

7.2 What is Drama?

7.3 The English Drama: A Historical Perspective

7.4 John Galsworthy ((14 August 1867 -31 January 1936): Life

7.5 Literary Works

7.6 Drama : 'Strife'

7.7 Let us sum up

7.8 Self- Assessment Questions

7.9 Source

7.10 Answers to Self- Assessment Questions

7.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to John Galsworthy (alias John Sinjohn), was an English novelist and playwright whose literary career spanned the Victorian, Edwardian and Georgian eras. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932 "for his distinguished art of narration which takes its highest form in The Forsyte Saga." Galsworthy became known for his portrayal of the British upper middle class and for his social satire.

7.1 OBJECTIVES.

After going through his life and literary works, you will be able to know John Galsworthy as a novelist and playwright.

7.2 WHAT IS DRAMA?

Drama is the act of portraying a story in front of the audience. It involves the characters and events of the story being brought to life on a stage by actors and their interactions (verbal and non-verbal) through its events. It represents the basic idea of the text. It can be as direct as the title of the drama to very obscure and needs careful thought and analysis. The action and its plot make the audiences immerse in the drama and try to extract the theme behind it. This drawe is a composite art.

7.3 THE ENGLISH DRAMA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Drama is the specific mode of fiction represented in performance play, opera, mime and Ballet, etc. performed in a theatre, radio or television.

English Drama during the Modernist Period (1845-1945) A.D. falls into three categories:

- 1- The first and the earliest phase of modernism in English Drama is marked by the plays of G.B. Shaw and John Galsworthy, which constitute the category of social drama modeled on the plays of Ibsen .
- 2- The second and the middle phase of Modern English drama comprise the plays of Irish movement contributed by some elites like Yeats. In this phase, the drama contained the spirit of nationalism.

- 3- The third and final phase of the Modernist English Drama comprise plays of T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. This phase saw the composition of poetic dramas inspired by the earlier Elizabethan and Jacobean tradition.

The three categories reflect the three different phases as well as the three different facets of Modern English Drama.

7.4 JOHN GALSWORTHY (14 August 1867 -31 January 1936): LIFE

Galsworthy was born on a family estate in Kingston Hill, Surrey, near London. His mother was a descendant of provincial squires, while his father was of Devonshire yeoman stock. His father was a successful solicitor who had financial interests in mining companies in Canada and Russia, and who later served as the model for Old Jolyon Forsyte in *The Forsyte Saga*.

At the age of nine, Galsworthy was sent to a boarding school and later to the prestigious Harrow School in London, where he excelled in athletics. In 1886, he enrolled at Oxford to study law, graduating with second-degree honours in 1889. For a short while, he worked at his father's legal firm but showed little interest in the law. He left for Canada in 1891 to inspect his family's mining interests and travelled extensively thereafter. In 1893, while aboard the *Torrens*, he befriended the first mate, Joseph Conrad, who was working on his first novel. Conrad would later become an important source of encouragement in Galsworthy's writing career.

When Galsworthy returned to London in 1894, he had his own legal chambers, but heard only one case. Within a short time, he gave up his chambers and spent the next few years reading and writing assiduously. Galsworthy was interested in writing about the plight of the working class, and he spent many hours roaming the impoverished neighborhoods of London. In 1897 he published his first collection of short stories, *From the Four Winds*, under the pseudonym John Sinjohn. Shortly thereafter, he wrote two novels and another book of short stories called *A Man of Devon*. In 1917, Galsworthy was offered a knighthood, which he declined, arguing that it was not fitting for a writer; he later accepted the Order of Merit for his literary achievements. For twelve years, he served as the first president of PEN, the international writers' organization. In December 1932, just a month before his death, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Galsworthy lived for the final seven years of his life at Bury in West Sussex. He died from a brain tumor at his London home, Grove Lodge, Hampstead. In accordance with his "Will", he should be cremated at Woking (large town Northwest Surrey, England), then ashes should be scattered over the South Downs from an airplane.

Legacy

A number of John Galsworthy's letters and papers are held at the University of Birmingham Special Collections. In 2007, Kingston University opened a new building named in recognition of his local birth. Galsworthy Road in Kingston, the location of Kingston Hospital, is also named for him.

In 1921, he was elected as the first president of the PEN International Literary Club and was appointed to the Order of Merit in 1929. Galsworthy was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1932

7.5 LITERARY WORKS

Galsworthy found law uncongenial and took to writing. For his first works, *From the Four Winds* (1897), a collection of short stories, and the novel *Jocelyn* (1898), both published at his own expense, he used the pseudonym John Sinjohn. *The Island Pharisees* (1904) was the first book to appear under his own name, probably owing to the recent death of his father. His first full-length novel, *Jocelyn*, was published in an edition of 750 under the name of John Sinjohn. His works are as follows:

- *From the Four Winds* [as John Sinjohn] 1897
- *A Man of Devon* [as John Sinjohn] 1901
- *A Commentary* (essays and sketches) 1908
- *A Motley* (short stories, sketches, and essays) 1910
- *The Little Man, and Other Satires* (short stories, satires, and sketches) 1915
 - *Five Tales* 1918
 - **Awakening* (short story) 1920
 - *Tatterdemalion* 1920
 - *The Forsyte Saga* (novels and short stories) 1922
 - *Captures* 1923
 - *The Works of John Galsworthy*. 30 vols. (novels, dramas, essays, poetry, and short stories) 1923-36
 - *Caravan: The Assembled Tales of John Galsworthy* 1925
- †*Two Forsyte Interludes: A Silent Wooing; Passers By* 1927
 - *A Modern Comedy* (novels and short stories) 1929
 - *On Forsyte 'Change* 1930
 - ‡ *Forsytes, Pencyces, and Others* 1935

Other Major Works

- *Jocelyn* [as John Sinjohn] (novel) 1898
- *Villa Rubein* [as John Sinjohn] (novel) 1900
 - *The Island Pharisees* (novel) 1904
 - **The Man of Property* (novel) 1906

- *The Silver Box* (drama) 1906
- *The Country house* (novel) 1907
 - *Joy* (drama) 1907
 - *Fraternity* (novel) 1909
 - *Strife* (drama) 1909
 - *Justice* (drama) 1910
- *The Little Dream* (drama) 1911
 - *The Patrician* (novel) 1911
 - *The Eldest Son* (drama) 1912
- *The Inn of Tranquillity: Studies and Essays* (essays) 1912
 - *Moods, Songs & Doggerels* (poetry) 1912
 - *The Pigeon* (drama) 1912
 - *The Dark Flower* (novel) 1913
 - *The Fugitive* (drama) 1913
 - *The Mob* (drama) 1914
 - *The Freelands* (novel) 1915
 - *A Sheaf* (essays) 1916
 - *Beyond* (novel) 1917
- *Addresses in America* (essays) 1919
 - *Another Sheaf* (essays) 1919
 - *The Burning Spear* (essays) 1919
 - *Saint's Progress* (novel) 1919
 - * *In Chancery* (novel) 1920
 - *The Skin Game* (drama) 1920
 - *The Bells of Peace* (poetry) 1921
 - * *To Let* (novel) 1921
 - *Loyalties* (drama) 1922
- *Abracadabra, and Other Satires* (essays) 1924

- *Old English* (drama) 1924

†*The White Monkey* (novel) 1924

- *Escape* (drama) 1926

†*The Silver Spoon* (novel) 1926

- *Verses New and Old* (poetry) 1926

- *Castles in Spain* (essays) 1927

†*Swan Song* (novel) 1928

‡ *Maid in Waiting* (novel) 1931

- *Candelabra: Selected Essays and Addresses* (essays) 1932

‡ *Flowering Wilderness* (novel) 1932

‡ *Over the River* (novel) 1933; also published as *One More River*, 1933

- *The Collected Poems of John Galsworthy* (poetry) 1934

- *End of the Chapter* (novels) 1934

*These works and the short story "Indian Summer of a Forsyte" from *Five Tales*(1918) were published as *The Forsyte Saga* in 1922.

†These works were published as *A Modern Comedy* in 1929.

‡These works were published as *End of the Chapter* in 1934.

Joseph Conrad (letter date 1901)

7.6 DRAMA 'STRIFE'

Strife is a three-act play by the English writer John Galsworthy. In the play, there is a prolonged unofficial strike at a factory; as the trade union and the company directors attempt to resolve the affair, which is causing hardship among the workers' families, there is a confrontation between the company chairman and the leader of the strike.

7.7 LET US SUM UP

Galsworthy was a successful dramatist, his plays, written in a naturalistic style, usually examining some controversial ethical or social problems. He was a distinguished man. He was intensely dedicated to a number of causes in his lifetime including social and penal

reform, censorship, and the protection of wildlife. In 1924, he co-founded the international writer's organization PEN.

7.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss brief Biographical sketch of John Galsworthy.

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Q2. Summarize his major works in your own words.

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.....

Q3. Discuss the English drama in a historical Perspective .

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.....

Q4. Write Summary of the Drama 'Strife'

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.....

Q5. What is Drama?

.....
.....

7.9 SOURCE

- A letter to John Galsworthy in 1901, *The Life and Letters of John Galsworthy*, by H.V. Marrot, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936, pp. 129-30.
- Nicoll, A. (1988). *British Drama* (p.136). Delhi: Doaba House.
- Coats, R. H. (2002). *A History of English Literature*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depott.

7.10 ANSWER TO SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Ans 1. Refer to 7.4

Ans 2. Refer to 7.5

Ans 3. Refer to 7.3

Ans 4. Refer to 7.6

Ans 5. Refer to 7.2

UNIT 8 STRIFE: ANALYSIS ACT I

8.0 Introduction

8.1 Objectives

8.2 Analysis of drama: Strife: Act I

8.3 Let us sum up

8.4 Self -Assessment Questions

8.5 Source

8.6 Answers Self- Assessment Questions

8.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce to you an analysis of drama, *Strife*. It was John Galsworthy's third play. It was produced in 1909 in London at the Duke York's Theatre and in New York's at the New Theatre.

8.1 OBJECTIVES.

After going through Act I, you will be able to know that there is a prolonged unofficial strike at a factory with a trade union and the directors of the company. You will be able to analyse the play *Strife* Act I

8.2 ANALYSIS OF DRAMA 'ACT I'

Act I has a great dramatic significance. It exposes the main situation, which leads to tension and throws light on the main characters. The theme of the play is industrial strife. The workers of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works have been on strike to force the directors of the company to concede their demand for higher wages. Due to strikes, the company is in a loss.

The directors, concerned about the damage to the company, hold a board meeting at the home of the manager of the works. Simon Harness, represents the trade union, has withdrawn support for the strike, tells them he will make the men withdraw their excessive demands, and the directors should agree to the union's demands. David Roberts, leader of the Men's Committee, tells them he wants the strike to continue until their demands are met, although the men are starving. It is a confrontation between the elderly company chairman John Anthony and Roberts, and neither gives way.

After the meeting, Enid Underwood, daughter of John Anthony and wife of the manager, talks to her father. She is aware of the suffering and starvation of workers' families. Roberts' wife Annie used to be her maid. She is also worried about the strain of the affair on her father. Henry Tench, company secretary, tells Anthony that he may be outvoted by the Board.

Its theme is a strike in the Trenartha Tin Plate Works, on the borders of England and Wales. The play largely centers about the two dominant figures: John Anthony, the President of the Company, rigid, autocratic and uncompromising; he is unwilling to make the slightest concession, although the men have been out for six months and are in a condition of semi-

starvation. On the other hand, there is David Roberts, an uncompromising revolutionist, whose devotion to the workers and the cause of freedom is at red white heat. Between them are the strikers, worn and weary with the terrible struggle, driven and tortured by the awful sight of poverty at home. At a directors' meeting, Edgar Anthony, the President's son and a man of kindly feeling, pleads on behalf of the strikers.

Act I introduces the main theme of the play, which is Strife- Strife between Capital and labour, represented by Anthony and Roberts respectively, and Strife between the old generation and the new generation, represented by Anthony and Edgar.

Anthony appears as obstinate and unyielding, Wanklin, Wilder and other directors are unimaginative and inconsiderate to the suffering of the men. They are only worried on account of the loss of the company. Edgar is only kind and sympathetic to workers. Roberts is sturdy and firm. Harness, the union leader, follows the moderate middle path of compromise.

8.3 LET US SUM UP

Act I in Strife is of great dramatic significance. It is centered in the conflict between the Owner and workers over a wage dispute. Strife introduces the main theme of the play.

8.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Q1. What is the dramatic significance of Act I in the drama, 'Strife'?

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.....

Q2 Analyze the story of Act I with reference to the importance of the theme.

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8.5 SOURCE

- John Galsworthy, *Strife*. Notes by John Hampden. gerald Duckworth and Company (cap) 1964. pp79–81
- Galsworthy, J. (1911). *Strife*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. Galsworthy, J. (1995). *Some Platitudes of Drama*. Delhi: Penguin Books Ltd.

8.6 ANSWER TO SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Ans 1. Refer to 8.2

Ans2. Refer to 8.3

UNIT 9 STRIFE ANALYSIS: ACT II & ACT III

9.0 Introduction

9.1 Objectives

9.2 Analysis of Drama, Strife: Act II

9.3 Analysis of Drama, Strife: Act III

9.4 Let us sum up

9.5 Self- Assessment Questions

9.6 Source

9.7 Answers to Self -Assessment Questions

9.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to Drama; *Strife* is a remarkable social realism. John Galsworthy describes the miserable condition of the women and children of workers due to a prolonged unofficial strike in Act II and Act III. There is also a confrontation between the company chairman and the leader of the strike.

9.1 OBJECTIVES.

After going through Act II and Act III, you will be able to know a meeting of the striking workers and uncompromising stands taken by both Anthony and Roberts. They reject all appeals and persuasions for a compromise. On the other hand, due to strike the starvation and suffering among the workers have become unbearable.

9.2 ANALYSIS OF DRAMA, STRIFE: ACT II

In Act II, Scene I, Enid visits the Roberts' cottage and talks to Annie Roberts with reference to her health. Annie was her maid-servant of Enid before her marriage. Now she is the wife of Roberts. When David Roberts comes in, Enid tells him there must be a compromise, and that he should have more pity on his wife. Roberts does not change his position, and he is unmoved by his wife's concern for the families of the strikers.

In Act II, scene II, it is an open space near the factory, a platform has been improvised and Harness, in a speech to the strikers, says they have been ill-advised and they should cut their demands, instead of starving; they should support the Union who will support them. There are short speeches from two men, who have contrasting opinions. Roberts goes to the platform and, in a long speech, says that the fight is against Capital, "*a white-faced, stony-hearted monster*". "*Ye have got it on its knees; are ye to give up at the last minute to save your miserable bodies pain?*"

Into this dismal environment, Enid, the daughter of Anthony, Director of Company visits Annie's home with delicacies and jams for Annie. Like many women of her station, she imagines that a little sympathy will bridge the chasm between the classes, or as her father says, "*You think with your gloved hands you can cure the troubles of the century.*" Enid does not know the life of Annie Roberts' class: that it is all a gamble from *the 'time 'e 's born to the time 'e dies.*"

Enid finds that Annie Roberts is sick with heart trouble and slowly dying for want of warmth and nourishment. When news is brought that Roberts's wife has died, Roberts leaves and the meeting peters out. Harness, the trade union official, speaks in favour of compromise. At the beginning of the strike, the union had withdrawn its support, because the workers had used their own judgment in deciding to strike. David Roberts is the only one who fully understands the situation.

Roberts says working' folk has always lived from hand to mouth. *Sixpence to-day is worth more than a shillin' to-morrow, that's what they say. . . .* He says that *when a working man's baby is born, it's a toss-up from breath to breath whether it ever draws another, and so on all 'is life; an' when he comes to be old, it's the workhouse or the grave. He says that without a man is very near, and pinches and stints 'imself and 'is children to save, there can be neither surplus nor security. That's why he would have no children, not though I wanted them.*

The strikers' meeting is a masterly study of mass psychology, -the men swayed hither and thither by the different speakers and not knowing whether to go. It is the smooth-tongued Harness who first weakens their determination to hold out.

Thomas says *"It iss not London; it iss not the Union--it iss Nature. It iss no disgrace whateffer to a potty to give in to Nature. For this Nature iss a fery pig thing; it is pigger than what a man is. There is more years to my hett than to the hett of anyone here. It is a man's piness to be pure, honest, just, and merciful. That's what Chapel tells you.... We're going the roat to tamnation. An' so I say to all of you. If ye co against Chapel I will not be with you, nor will any other Got-fearing man.*

At last, Roberts makes his plea, Roberts, who has given his all--brain, heart, and blood--aye, sacrificed even his wife to the cause. By sheer force of eloquence and sincerity, he stays his fickle comrades long enough at least to listen to him, though they are too broken to rise to his great dignity and courage.

The directors see the crux of the matter, but not Anthony. Frost, Anthony's servant, makes one of the best comments on behalf of Galsworthy when he says that the strike puts all that strain on him. In the second act of the play, the scene shifts to the kitchen of Roberts' cottage where a meager little fire burns. The ladies present belong to the families of workers. Mrs. Roberts is ill. She is a thin, weak and dark-haired lady, who is about 35 years. The condition of other women is no better. The Strike has also bitterly told upon their health. Mrs. Bulgin is a little pale and pinched up woman.

Madge Thomas is a good looking girl, who is 22. This young girl is in love with George Rous, hence a little unmindful of the effects of worker's strike. As the act opens, Mrs. Yeo talks of the scarcity of money and material. Mrs. Rous talks nostalgically of the year of 1879 when most women around her were not even born or were in their early childhood. She tells them how the company started and her father working on the acid got a poisoned leg. Representing the fatalistic nature of the workers, Mrs. Rous calls the misfortune of her father an act of Providence. She regrets that there were no Compensation Acts then. The

conversation of women in Roberts' kitchen reveals the sufferings of the workers on account of the long strike.

Consistency is the greatest crime of the commercial age. No matter how intense the spirit or how important the man, the moment he will not allow himself to be used or sell his principles, he is thrown on the dust heap. Such is the fate of Anthony, the President of the Company, and of David Roberts. To be sure, they represent opposite poles--poles antagonistic to each other, poles divided by a terrible gap that can never be bridged over. Yet they share a common fate. Anthony is the embodiment of conservatism, of old ideas, of iron methods. Act II is very significant from the point of view of plot, construction, characterization and the exposition of the main theme of the Play.

9.3 ANALYSIS OF DRAMA STRIFE: ACT III

In Act III, the play *Strife* marks the culmination of events. It is the home of the Manager, Enid talks with Edgar Anthony, he is the chairman's son and one of the directors. She is less sympathetic now towards the men, and, concerned about their father' health. She says, "Edgar should support him". However, Edgar's sympathies are with the men. They receive the news that Mrs Roberts (Annie) has died.

The directors' meeting, already bad-tempered, is affected by the bad news of Roberts Annie's death. Edgar says he would rather resign than go on starving women; the other directors react badly to an opinion put so frankly. John Anthony makes a long speech: *"There is only one way of treating 'men' – with the iron hand. This half-and-half business... has brought all this upon us.... Yield one demand and they will make it six...."*

He puts to the board the motion that the dispute should be placed in the hands of Harness. All the directors are in favour; Anthony alone is not in favour, and he resigns. Roberts repeats his resistance, but on being told the outcome, realizes that he and Anthony have both been thrown over. The agreement is what had been proposed before the strike began.

Act III in *Strife* presents the view of both Roberts and Anthony. They reject all appeals and persuasions for a compromise. Anthony and Roberts continue to maintain their uncompromising attitude about the strike. Anthony is further let down by his own son, Edgar. It also reveals the generation gap. The new generation is more considerate to the working class. He sympathizes with the death of Mrs. Roberts (Annie) and decides to resign his directorship. Anthony does not change even at the suggestion of his son. Anthony has to

face opposition from the members of the Board. Addressing Anthony, Roberts says **“Ye may break the body , but ye cannot break the spirit.”** Harness shows Roberts the terms and conditions agreed by both parties. He also shows Anthony a copy duly signed by the board. Thus, the play ends with a note of irony.

9.4 LET US SUM UP

In Act II, the strike is arising out due to the rigid and inflexible attitude of Anthony, the chairperson of the Board of Directors, and Roberts, the leader of the striking workers as the company has been running also in heavy loss. The strike has resulted in unbearable suffering and starvation among the workers. In Act III, Roberts and Anthony stick to their view and they reject all appeals for a compromise. Harness comes with a paper and shows Anthony the terms and conditions of compromise by both parties. All demands except those related to engineers and furnace men have accepted. Therefore, the strike is called off and the workers will resume work from the next day.

9.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Analyze the drama, ‘Strife’ Act II.

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.....

Q2. Analyze the drama, ‘Strife’ Act III.

.....
.....

9.6 SOURCE

- John Galsworthy, *Strife*. Notes by John Hampden. Gerald Duckworth and Company 1964. pp79–81
- Galsworthy, J. (1911). *Strife*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. Galsworthy, J. (1995). *Some Platitudes of Drama*. Delhi: Penguin Books Ltd.

9.7 ANSWER TO SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Ans 1. Refer to 9.2

Ans2. Refer to 9.3

UNIT 10 STRIFE AS A PROBLEM PLAY

10.0 Introduction

10.1 Objectives

10.2 What is a Problem Play?

10.3 Strife as a Problem Play

10.4 Let us sum up

10.5 Self- Assessment Questions

10.6 Source

10.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the dramatist, John Galsworthy established himself as one of the prominent and influential playwrights in the history of English literature. As a pragmatic and social thinker and critic, he wanted to shed new light on the dark aspects and problems of his contemporary society so as to bring about a significant change in the outdated social structure of the day.

10.1 OBJECTIVES.

After going through drama, you will be able to know that Galsworthy wanted to highlight the revolutionary passions and problems of the common workers against their ruling class for their rights of early 20th century England.

10.2 WHAT IS A PROBLEM PLAY?

The problem play is a genre of drama that emerged amid the nineteenth century as a major aspect of the more extensive development of realism in human expressions, particularly taking after the advancements of Henrik Ibsen.

It manages burning social issues through civil arguments between the characters in front of an audience, who regularly speaks to clashing perspectives inside a practical social setting.

10.3 STRIFE AS A PROBLEM PLAY

Galsworthy's *Strife* is a problem play concerning the clash between capital and labour class. The strike at the Trenartha Tin Plate Works had lasted so long without any sign of a settlement that the directors had begun to fear for their dividends. They had all gathered at the Underwood home at the request of the workers, and at first, there was some talk of compromise. Facing them, however, was the stern figure of the chairman of the board, seventy-five-year-old John Anthony, who refused to consider any plan for compromise.

Anthony belonged to the old school of businessmen who refused to move with the times. For him, there could be only one master at the plant, and that was John Anthony himself. He had defeated four strikes in his thirty-two years as chairman of the board, and he was certain that a little more perseverance would defeat the strikers once more.

The other directors were a little uneasy under his stern refusal. In his report Underwood, the plant manager had made no attempt to disguise the terrible suffering of the striking workers and their families. The directors were also aware that if the strike lasted much longer their stockholders would begin to protest strongly.

Although the union had withdrawn support from the strikers because two of their conditions exceeded the prevailing standards, Simon Harness, a Trades Union official, had been sent to attempt mediation between the board and the workers. His interview with the directors accomplished nothing because of Anthony's obstinacy. The meeting between the representatives of the workers and the directors was equally unhappy

Enid Underwood tried to plead with Roberts, asking him, for his wife's sake, to give in and end the strike. But he was fanatic in his certainty that in the end, the workmen could bring their employers to terms.

At a meeting of the men and Harness, the Trades Union official, it became evident that most of the strikers were willing to compromise, to accept the union suggestions. A few were willing to give in completely. When Roberts appeared at the meeting, the men did not wish to hear him speak. But Roberts was a powerful orator, and as he talked to them again about the eventual victory, which they could win if they refused to give in now, they were once more moved and convinced by his oratory. As he was speaking, a young woman approached the platform and told him that his wife had died. With this tragedy as an example of what they must expect if they continued to resist, the men decided to accept the terms of the union compromise.

The news of Mrs. Roberts' death was a blow to the directors. Edgar Anthony, in spite of the respect which he had for his father, now faced his colleagues and accused them of responsibility for the woman's condition and death.

That evening the meeting between the workers, Harness, and the directors was painful in the extreme. Anthony found himself outvoted by his colleagues. Warily, with an acknowledgment of his defeat, he resigned. Roberts, who knew nothing of the action which his men had decided to take after he had left the meeting, arrived at the Underwood home

in time to watch Harness complete the settlement. The terms agreed upon were those, which the union had suggested to both sides before the strike began, but it had needed months of suffering to bring agreement in the dispute. The two leaders stared at each other, both deserted by their supporters, both defeated by the compromise. As they recognized the courageous battle which each had put up, their expression of hate turned to one of grudging admiration and mutual respect.

Galsworthy's aim is to communicate emotions, not to solve the problem. He only poses a problem as it occurs in ordinary, real life. He brings into his dramatic vision of the conflicts and the motives, which lead to conflict. He expresses them and the social waste and violence associated with them. He sheds new light upon the revelation of the real inter-relating spirit of life, character, and idea to enlighten human psychology.

For him, the task lies in the unrolling of the problem, not in the solution. The unrolling of the problem should serve to make us think and reflect to awaken our interest in what is unknown to us in a wrong light. Strife, nevertheless, remains Galsworthy's best problem and a realistic play. It is also considered the best realization of Galsworthy's theory of drama.

Galsworthy is, relentlessly, realistic in his play 'Strife'. He visualized through his temperament. An incorruptible lover of the truth, he attempts to shape his plot and problems with the greatest impartiality, allowing both sides to air their opinions and throwing light on their ideas in possible ways.

10.4 LET US SUM UP

Through this play, Galsworthy wanted to highlight the problem of the common workers against their ruling class for their rights of early 20th century England. He also intends to unveil the mysterious truth of his social reality. Through the careful dramatic opposition of ideas, characters, metaphors, and structural elements, the play focuses on the tragedy of two fanatically iron-willed leaders who battle against each other at great cost to themselves and their followers. It is a beautiful indictment of the present structure of industrial society.

10.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1 What is a problem play?

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.....

Q2. Discuss the Drama, Strife as a Problem Play.

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10.6 SOURCE

- John Galsworthy, *Strife*. Notes by John Hampden. Gerald Duckworth and Company
1964. pp79–81
- Galsworthy, J. (1911). *Strife*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. Galsworthy, J.
(1995). *Some Platitudes of Drama*. Delhi: Penguin Books Ltd.

10.7 ANSWER TO SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Ans 1. Refer to 10.2

Ans.2 Refer to 10.3

UNIT 11 CHARACTERS

11.0 Introduction

11.1 Objectives

11.2 Major and Minor Characters

11.3 Let us sum up

11.4 Self-Assessment Questions

11.5 Source

11.6 Answers to Self-Assessment Questions

11.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the characters of Drama 'Strife'. Galsworthy was always an impartial realist. Aside from its social implications, the play is also notable for several very real and forceful characters like Roberts and old Anthony among them.

11.1 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be able to know the characters of the drama, 'Strife'. You will also understand Galsworthy's art of characterization with reference to his drama 'Strife'.

11.2 CHARACTERS

There are many types of characters that exist in Literature, each with its own development and function. Characters guide readers through their stories, helping them to understand plots and ponder themes. The main function of a character in any story is to extend or prolong the plot, make it readable and interesting. The present drama has following major and minor significant characters:

- JOHN ANTHONY

John Anthony is the central character in the play *Strife*. He is the founder and the chairman of the board of Trenartha Tin Place Works for over thirty years. He says, "*I have fought the men of this company four times, and four times, I have beaten them*".

Anthony represents the ideology of capitalism. He does not show sympathy for the children and wives of the workers. He callously says, "*A fair fight is a fair fight! Let them quarrel*". Anthony's extremism and fanaticism lead him to his defeat. He doesn't complain about his defeat.

He is dramatically a fully realized character and also an example of a popular type that figured in early twentieth century industrial disputes. He fights stubbornly for his principles and is uncompromising in his attitude toward petitions from labour factions. Eventually, board members force his resignation.

- ANNIE ROBERTS

Annie Roberts, David's wife is not an active character in the play. She is an important agent in it. She appears in the first scene of Act II. She plays an important role in the development of the plot, of the play *Strife*. She was maidservant of Enid, the daughter of Anthony.

She stands with her husband in his strike. She is fully dedicated to her husband, Roberts, the labour leader.

Her death comes at a very crucial moment in the drama when Roberts has won the sympathy and support of all workers. Annie's death also proves a turning point for Roberts's defeat. The workers feel a strike continues, their wives and children will also meet the same end. It is her death from the privation caused by the strike that causes the contending forces to think soberly and work out a compromise.

- EDGAR ANTHONY

Edgar Anthony, one of the directors of Trenartha Tin Place Works. He is the son of John Anthony. Edgar Anthony stands in contrast to his father. He is moderate, a humanist and has a liberal outlook from the beginning of the drama. Though he is born in the Aristocrat family, his views are socialistic. He is perturbed by the suffering and starvation of workers, their wives, and children. In Act I, he tells his father, "*There is no necessity for pushing things so far in the face of all this suffering. It's cruel- it's cruel.*" Edgar Anthony tries to persuade his father to accept compromise. He wants to put an end to the strife between the company and the workers as soon as

possible because he knows that in conflict the innocent, and poor suffer the most.

- ENID UNDERWOOD

Enid Underwood's role in the drama 'Strife' is very brief. Enid is, in fact, one of the mouthpieces of Galsworthy's *Strike*. She speaks a bit realistically about the capital. She is the daughter of Anthony. She is married to Francis Underwood, the manager of the Company. She belongs to the Capitalistic class of society, but she has sympathy with workers, their wives and children. She resentfully says to her father, "*I won't stand by and let poor Annie suffer like this! And think of the children, father! I warn You.*" Enid tries her best to persuade both Extremist – her father, John Anthony and Robert, husband of Annie.

She boldly attempts to reconcile the opposing factions, first by attending Roberts' sick wife and then by pleading personally with Roberts to give up the fight.

- FRANCIS

Francis is the plant manager of the company. He is the husband of Enid. He is not as overt in his stand as Enid.

- SIMON HARNESS

Simon harness, the Union Officer, is not a fully developed character. Harness believes in trade unionism but he dislikes strike. He is a calm, balanced and reasonable man. He rightly feels that conflict always results in tremendous tragic waste. Harness requests the chairman and directors to be considerate and merciful to workers. Simon Harness, whose compromise finally is accepted by the contending parties.

- MADGE THOMAS

She is the daughter of Henry Thomas. Madge Thomas is a good looking girl, who is 22. This young girl is in love with George Rous, hence a little unmindful of the effects of worker's strike.

OTHER CHARACTERS

- FREDERIC H. WILDER

He is the director of the Tre Nartha Tin Plate Works.

- WILLIAM SCANTLEBURY

He is also the Director of the same company.

- OLIVER WANKLIN

He is one of the Directors of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works.

- HENRY TENCH

He is the Secretary of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works Company.

- JAMES GREEN

He is a member of the workmen committee.

- JOHN BULGIN

He is also a member of the workmen committee.

- HENRY THOMAS

He is one of the members of the workmen committee.

- **GEORGE ROUS**

He is a member of the workmen committee.

- Henry Rous, Lewis, Jago, Vans, A Blacksmith, Davies, A Red- Handed Youth and

Brown are the workmen at the Trenartha Tin Plate Works

- Frost, valet to John Anthony

- Mrs. Rous is the mother of George and Henry Rous.

- Mrs. Bulgin is the wife of John Bulgin.

- MRS. Yeo is the wife of a workman

- A Parlour Maid to the Underwoods

- Jan, Madge's brother, a boy of ten.

- A Crowd of Men on Strike

11.3 LET US SUM UP

John Galsworthy's play 'Strife' presents a wide range of characters from Company Directors to ordinary labourers. Characters not only live, but they are also so clearly defined in dialogue and action.

11.4 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the character of John Anthony.

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Q2.What is the importance of the Enid in this play ‘Strife’?
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.....

Q3. Discuss the character of David Roberts.
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.....

Q4. Discuss the role of minor characters in the play ‘Strife’. of Drama 9.3 and 9.4
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.....

Q5 Discuss the role of Annie and Enid in the drama, ‘Strife’
.....
.....

11.5 SOURCE

- John Galsworthy, *Strife*. Notes by John Hampden.Gerald Duckworth and Company 1964. pp79–81
- Galsworthy, J. (1911). *Strife*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. Galsworthy, J. (1995). *Some Platitudes of Drama*. Delhi: Penguin Books Ltd.

11.6 ANSWER TO SELF- ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS Refer to Heading under 11.3

Ans 1. Refer to Heading under the Sec. 11.2

Ans 2. Refer to Heading under the Sec. 11.2

Ans3. Refer to Heading under the Sec. 11.2

Ans 4. Refer to Heading under the Sec. 11.2

Ans 5. Refer to Heading under the Sec. 11.2

UNIT 12 STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Objectives

12.3 Structure

12.4 Technique

12.5 Let us sum up

12.6 Self Assessment Questions

12.7 Source

12.8 Terminal and Model Questions

12.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the Structure and Technique of John Galsworthy's drama, *Strife*. It is a three-act play of irreconcilable extremism. He wrote this play at a time when the rights of labourers were only beginning to be asserted.

12.2 OBJECTIVE

After going through his play, you will be able to understand the Structure and Technique of John Galsworthy's drama '*Strife*'.

12.3 STRUCTURE

Galsworthy was a successful dramatist. He has written his play in a naturalistic style, usually examining some controversial ethical or social problems. It is realistic in manner, episodic in structure and often satiric in aim.

12.3.1 PLOT STRUCTURE

The plot structure of Galsworthy's *Strife* divides the play into three Acts plot.

ACT I: The dining-room of the Manager's house.

The five month old strike has made the bitter mood of the Company Directors and the lives of the workers reached at the barge of starving. Hunger has afflicted the workers' wives and children. They are without coals, without cigars, without food, and without funds. The Directors of the Company are also in an unhappy state of affairs. They have lost nearly fifty thousand pounds. February 7, they meet at the house of the Manager, Francis Underwood to discuss the circumstances with Mr. Simon Harness, a Trade Union Official, and the Men's Committee on the spot. Henry Tench, Secretary of the Company, hopes that the meeting will end in a compromise and a settlement will be found for the dispute among the Union, the workers and, the Company Directors. However, when the meeting takes place, the Chairman infuriates the Board of Directors by his firm statement: "No Surrender".

"No Compromise!", Wilder recounts the ill effects of the continuous strike, prices are going up daily, dividend is not paid, the old contracts will have to be worked off at the current price level, the shares are below par, they will drop to a half by the time of the next dividend, the prosperity of the Company will wither away.

Anthony replies: "If the men will come in, we will do something for them. This is no spirit of compromise". Harness tells the Board that the workers do not want pity, they seek justice. Anthony is compelled to adjourn the meeting.

ACT II, SCENE I: The kitchen of Roberts's cottage near the works.

In Act II, Scene I, Enid visits Roberts' cottage and talks to Annie Roberts when David Roberts comes in, Enid tells him to quit the strike for the sake of everybody and for his wife. Roberts does not change his position, and he is unmoved by his wife's concern for the families of the strikers.

ACT II, Scene II A space outside the works.

Act II, Scene II, is an open space near the factory, a platform has been improvised and Harness, in a speech to the strikers, says they have been ill-advised and they should cut their demands, instead of starving; they should support the Union. Roberts goes to the platform and, in a long speech, says that the fight is against Capital, *"a white-faced, stony-hearted monster"*. *"Ye have got it on its knees; are ye to give up at the last minute to save your miserable bodies pain?"* They should remain united. Workers have been influenced by his eloquent speech. Victory seems to be quite clear. At the same time, Madge arrives and informs Roberts in a low voice about the death of his wife. Roberts leaps down from the platform and goes home. Madge takes advantage of this situation and asks the workers not to lose their wives and children. She scolds them supporting Roberts. When news is brought that his wife has died, Roberts leaves and the meeting peers out.

ACT III. The drawing-room of the Manager's house.

Act III opens when it is five O'clock. The scene is Underwood's drawing room. Enid informs Edgar that she has been visited Roberts house to see his ailing wife, Annie. Immediately they receive the news that Mrs. Roberts (Annie) has died.

The directors' meeting, already bad-tempered, is affected by the news. Edgar says to his father that he would rather resign than go on starving women; the other directors react badly to an opinion put so frankly. John Anthony makes a long speech: *"There is only one way of treating 'men' — with the iron hand. This half-and-half business... has brought all this upon us.... Yield one demand, and they will make it six...."*

He puts before the board of the motion that the dispute should be placed in the hands of Harness. All the directors are in favour; Anthony alone is not in favour, and he resigns. The Men's Committee, including Roberts, and Harness come in to receive the result. Roberts repeats his resistance, but on being told the outcome, realizes that he and Anthony have both been thrown over. The agreement is what had been proposed before the strike began.

12.3.2 SETTING

The action takes place on February 7th between the hours of noon and six in the afternoon, close to the Trenartha Tin Plate Works, on the borders of England and Wales, where a strike has been in progress throughout the winter. The five months old strike has also made bitter the mood of the Company Directors and the lives of the workers who have started starving. Hunger has afflicted the workers' wives and children. They are without coals, without cigars, without food and without funds.

The Company Directors are also in an unhappy state of affairs. They have lost nearly fifty thousand pounds. Their customers are looking towards other companies and are signing contracts with them, and all this is only due to the adamant attitude of the Company's Chairman, John Anthony, who believes in, "No Surrender."

12.3.3 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

In *Strife*, Galsworthy makes the invisible social structure. The hero and characters of the play act mere puppets. They have very little independent existence. Even when they are individualized; they are intensely typical. They represent common human lapses and weaknesses. All of them show their weakest spots in a time of struggle. All of them are selfish human beings. They suffer from internal schisms and rivalries. Anthony and Roberts are left alone. Their followers drift away from them and end the strife on their own terms. Hence, it is not the personal hero that governs the events of the play. It is the social structure and that is where the fun comes in the playwright strongly stresses this type of injustice.

12.4 TECHNIQUE

Galsworthy is a master of dramatic technique. In his writing, he speaks of 'naturalistic technique'. He desires to reproduce the natural spectacle on the English stage with detachment. He criticizes society with cold objectivity. He presents the case with equal fairness. He sheds new light upon the revelation of the real inter-relating spirit of life, character and idea to enlighten human psychology.

The drama, *Strife* is not sentimental in approach. It had an excellent sense of dramatic architecture, and although the emphasis was not on individuals, Galsworthy had a power to give the realistic quality to the persons with whom he dealt.. He dealt with social reality like a social reformer.

Galsworthy is, relentlessly, realistic in his play *Strife*. His realism emerges primarily in two ways: theme and characterization. He depicts a real society in all its aspects. He wrote his plays with a definite purpose. His purpose was to expose the shortcomings and evils of the existing social institutions. He possessed a remarkable power of objective detachment in his portrayal of society. Galsworthy's play focuses on modern society and its problems. Ideas, institutions, morality, class interests and social force form its main theme.

His Portrayal of characters is equally realistic. He draws his characters from his real experience of persons or situations around him. His characters are living-human beings. All his characters, even the heroes are ordinary men possessed of common human weaknesses and frailties. Galsworthy's characters don't grow and change. They are flat and static

characters not dynamic. John Anthony and Roberts in *Strife* don't grow or change; they are simply broken.

Galsworthy handles his large cast of characters with a schematic balancing of psychological and social types. He also uses settings, properties and dramatic language appropriate to the theme of *Strife*; in several scenes, he contrasts the excesses of cold and heat, hunger and plenty, luxury and deprivation.

To awaken a sense of injustice against social evils, Galsworthy uses his trick as regards the manipulation of his characters and the weaving of his plot-construction around the central social themes. His sympathy for the sufferers did not mar his art. He was not a prejudiced or partial while presenting life's problem in his play, '*Strife*' because he knows that realistic art is like a steady lamp.

In this play he imposes structural balance on the action to achieve the resonant effect of contrast and parallelism of idea, character and situation. The confrontations of labour and the management in the first and the third acts, balances each other, as do the separate meetings of directors and strikers in the second and the third acts, in which each side rejects its leader's plan for action and decides to accept instead the terms for compromise proposed by the union representative. The plots are well constructed in the play Every incident in the plot is connected and adds to the climax.

Metaphoric language carries the idea that Anthony and Roberts are like gods in their power over men They are also like devils in the way they use power to cause sufferings for the sake of their principles. The play, has a better conclusion, neither celebrates nor condemns the opposing sides in the struggle of labour versus capital; instead, it portrays the need for civility and compromise in human affairs. The plan opposed by the union representative at the beginning of the play is adopted; Anthony and Roberts have a moment of mutual recognition after their followers have rejected the inhumanity of blind, proud adherence to principle.

Galsworthy's style is remarkable for simplicity, easiness, vividness, economy of words and precision. His style is conversational and idiomatic. It contributes both atmosphere and flavour. His dialogues are witty, terse and crisp. Condensed brevity is the conspicuous characteristic of Galsworthy's dialogue. He was aware of the psychological truth that intense emotion cannot be adequately expressed. It can be expressed by silence. Example:

[ENID, hurrying through the double-doors, comes quickly to her father.]

ANTHONY. Both broken men, my friend Roberts!

HARNESS. [Coming down and laying his hands on ROBERTS'S sleeve.] For shame, Roberts! Go home quietly, man; go home!

ROBERTS. [Tearing his arm away.] Home? [Shrinking together—in a whisper.] Home!

ENID. [Quietly to her father.] Come away, dear! Come to your room.

At the end of Act II, Harness says, “A woman dead and the two best men both broken!” Tench ironically remarks that they (Anthony and Roberts) are the same terms they drew up together and put to both sides before the strike began. Here Galsworthy has used irony beautifully.

The theme is, carefully and obviously, portrayed in the play with a balance systematic of scenes, characters and metaphors and in the working out of a metaphoric dialectic of opposed ideas. For Galsworthy, the subject of the play, Strife between capital and labour, was typical of irreconcilable extremism.

12.5 LET US SUM UP

The play, *Strife* is based on the social conflicts of industrial life. Through the careful dramatic opposition of ideas, characters, metaphors, and structural elements, the play focuses on the tragedy of two fanatically iron-willed leaders who battle against each other at great cost to themselves and their followers. It is a beautiful indictment of the present structure of industrial society. It presents the strife between the capital and the labour, and advocates better understanding between these two great forces of our industrial life.

12.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the plot structure of drama, *Strife*. Refer to 12.3

Q2. Explain the setting of drama, ‘*Strife*’. Refer to 12.3.2

12.7 SOURCE

- Galsworthy, J. (1911). *Strife*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd. Galsworthy, J. (1995). *Some Platitudes of Drama*. Delhi: Penguin Books Ltd.
- John Galsworthy, *Strife*. Notes by John Hampden. Gerald Duckworth and Company 1964. pp79–81.

12.8 TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss technique of drama, ‘*Strife*’. Refer to 12.4

Q2. Discuss the style of drama with reference to ‘*Strife*’ Refer to 12.4 See Paragraph (Style)

UNIT 13 ANNOTATIONS: IMPORTANT PASSAGES

13.1 Introduction

13.2 Objectives

13.3 Annotations; Important Passages

13.4 Let us sum up

13.5 Self Assessment Questions

13.6 Source

13.7 Terminal and Model Questions

13.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to some important passages of Galsworthy's *Strife*. Through explanation of the passages, you will know that *Strife* is a play concerning the clash between capital and labour, the nemesis of extremism, the conflict between opposing wills, the lack of cohesion between leaders and the followers, the conflict of intransigent personalities, the inability of peace and prosperity, fanaticism inflexibility in an industrial society.

13.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through some passages, you will get explanations of these passages and it will help you to understand drama more clearly.

13.3 ANNOTATIONS: IMPORTANT PASSAGES

13.3.1 Explain the passage with reference to the context.

"Who wants to surrender? (ANTHONY looks at him) I want to act reasonably. When the men sent Roberts up to the Board in December – then was the time. We ought to have humoured him; instead of that Chairman- (Dropping his eyes before ANTHONY'S)-er –we snapped his head off. We could have got them in then by a little tact."

Reference: This remarkable line has been taken from Galsworthy's drama *Strife*, Act I Scenel.

Context: In the meeting of the Board of Directors, Tench, the secretary points out that the company has suffered a loss of over fifty thousand pounds as a result of the workers' strike. Scantlebury dislikes the idea of continuing the *Strife* with the workers. He believes in some sort of compromise.

Explanation: Here in this line, Anthony warns tench that there would be no compromise from his side. At this Wilder clarifies that one wants to surrender. He only wants to act reasonably and wisely. If he deals tactfully, the situation can be controlled easily to end the

strike. He does not like the firm and inflexible attitude of the Chairman. He prefers a conciliatory approach.

13.3.2 Explain the following line with reference to the context.

“Seriously, Chairman, are you going to let the ship sink under you, for the sake of a principle?”

Reference: This remarkable line has been taken from Galsworthy’s drama *Strife*, Act I Scene 1. **Context:** Wanklin, one of the directors of the company, wants to know from Anthony, the chairman, whether he would change his uncompromising attitude towards the workers.

Explanation: Here in this line, Walkin says that other directors want a conciliatory approach. But Anthony has a tough attitude with the workers. Walkin asks the chairperson whether he is preparing to ruin the Company by his rigid and uncompromising attitude.

13.3.3 Explain the following lines with reference to the context.

“Nobody’s more sorry for the men than I am , but if they (lashing himself choose to be such a pig-healed lot it’s nothing to do with us; we’ve quite enough on our hands to think of ourselves and the shareholders”

Reference: These lines have been taken from Galsworthy’s drama *Strife*, Act I Scene 1.

Context: The members of the Board of Directors of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works have assembled to discuss the ways and means of solving the problem resulting from the workers’ strike. The Chairman, Anthony is not in favour of compromising. Due to a strike, the company is going in heavy loss. The price of shares is going down.

Explanation: Here in the above lines, Wilder observes that he is less concerned about than Edgar. He says that workers themselves picked up the quarrel and directors are not responsible for this doom. They are so obstinate that they do not want to surrender. They have suffered heavy losses. They have to look after their own interests and those of their shareholders. It is clear that he cannot be kind to the workers at the cost of their own interests.

13.3.4 Explain the following passage with reference to the context.

“It is you who don’t know the simple facts of the position. What sort of mercy do you suppose you had get if no one stood between you and the continual demand of labour? This sort of mercy—(He puts his hand up to his throat and squeezes it). First would go your sentiments, my dear , then your culture, and your comforts would be going all the time.”

Reference: These lines have been taken from Galsworthy’s drama *Strife*, Act I Scene 1.

Context: Enid requests her father, Anthony to adopt a conciliatory approach in view of the sufferings and starvation of wives and children of workers. Anthony explains to his

daughters Enid if their demands are granted ignoring the class distinction, in a few years time the men will be more powerful, and rich as they (directors) are today.

Explanation: Here in the above lines, Anthony explains to his daughter that she does not know the real implications of such strikes. If once their demands are accepted, they will ask for more and more. The conflict between Labour and Capital is endless. It is far-reaching consequences, which she cannot understand. The class distinction has to be continued. Once he belongs to high then the class will be ruined and soon workers will become their masters and fine feelings, their comforts, their culture, and their superiority will come to an end.

13.3.5 Explain the following passage with reference to the context.

“Cut your demand to the right pattern and we’ll see you through; refuge, and don’t expect me to waste my time coming down here again. I’m not the sort that speaks at random, as you ought to know by this time. If you are the sound men I take you for –no matter who advises you against it-(he fixes his eyes on Roberts) you ‘ll make your mind to come in, and trust to us to get your terms. Which is it to be ?hands together, and victory-or the starvation you’ve got now”

Reference: These lines have been taken from Galsworthy’s drama *Strife*, Act II, Scene 2.

Context: In the previous passage, the union has not supported the workers strike because some of their demands, especially those of higher wages for the engineers and the furnace men, are excessive and unreasonable. If the union supported their strike, there would be a strike in another factory also.

Explanation: Here in these lines, Harness, the union leader officials pleads for a conciliatory approach. He advises the striking workers to reduce their demands reasonably and, then, the union will be helpful to them. If the workers refuse to accept his suggestion they should not expect him to come down there again to waste his time. He frankly tells them that they should not follow anybody’s ill advice. He is sure that if they will join the union, the union will see that their terms are accepted. They will have to remain united ,or they will continue to starve.

13.3.6 Explain the following passage with reference to the context.

“I don't feel half so sympathetic with them as I did before I went. They just set up class feeling against you. Poor Annie was looking dread fully bad—fire going out, and nothing fit for her to eat. But she would stand up for Roberts. When you see

all this wretchedness going on and feel you can do nothing, you have to shut your eyes to the whole thing”

Reference: These lines have been taken from Galsworthy’s drama *Strife*, Act III , Scene- I

Context: In the Scene 1 of Act II Enid went to Roberts’s cottage to help poor Annie Roberts, who is very ill and weak. Madge insulted her and accused her of spying on the activities of the workers and of ill treating them. Annie Roberts also supported her husband and she also persuades Roberts in the strike.

Explanation: In these lines, Enid tells Annie that she is sympathetic to the workers. Annie Roberts was in a dreadfully miserable condition. The fire was almost dying out and there was in no coal. She had nothing nourishing to eat. But she supported her husband Roberts. Enid tries to convince Annie Roberts and tries to help her but she (Annie) refuses all help by Enid and stands with her husband in his support.

13.4 LET US SUM UP

Galsworthy’s play, *Strife* is based on the social conflicts of industrial life and retard production between John Antony, the Chairman of the Trenartha Tin Plate Works, and David Roberts, the Strike leader of the workers through whom Galsworthy wants to show the adamant attitudes and psychological conflicts of his contemporary people. Through this text, Galsworthy wants to throw a new light on the revolutionary passions of the common workers against their ruling class for their rights as well as privileges of the early 20th century England.

13.5 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Q1. Explain the following lines with reference to the context. Refer to 13.3.5

“Cut your demand to the right pattern and we’ll see you through; refuge, and don’t expect me to waste my time coming down here again. I’m not the sort that speaks at random, as you ought to know by this time. If you are the sound men I take you for –no matter who advises you against it-(he fixes his eyes on Roberts) you ‘ll make your mind to come in, and trust to us to get your terms. Which is it to be ?hands together, and cictory-or the starvation you’ve got now”

Q2. Explain the following passage with reference to the context. Refer to 13.6

“I don't feel half so sympathetic with them as I did before I went. They just set up class feeling against you. Poor Annie was looking dreadfully bad—fire going out, and nothing fit for her to eat. But she would stand up for Roberts. When you see all this wretchedness going on and feel you can do nothing, you have to shut your eyes to the whole thing”

13.6 SOURCE

- Coats, R. H. (2002). *A History of English Literature*. Bareilly: Prakash Book Depott.
- Galsworthy, J. (1911). *Strife*. London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.

13.7 TERMINAL AND MODERN QUESTIONS

Q1.Explain the following passage with reference to the context. Refer to 13.3.4

“It is you who don't know the simple facts of the position. What sort of mercy do you suppose you had get if no one stood between you and the continual demand of labour? This sort of mercy—(He puts his hand up to his throat and squeezes it). First would go your sentiments, my dear , then your culture, and your comforts would be going all the time.”

Q2.Explain the following lines with reference to the context.13.3.3

“Nobody's more sorry for the men than I am , but if they (lashing himself choose to be such a pig-healed lot it's nothing to do with us; we've quite enough on our hands to think of ourselves and the shareholders”

UNIT 14**RAJA RAO: LIFE AND WORKS**

Structure

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 A Short Note on Indian Fiction Writing in English
- 14.3 Raja Rao, His Age, Life, and Education
- 14.4 Rao's Literary Output and His Achievements
 - 14.4.1 As a Novelist
 - 14.4.2 As a Storyteller
- 14.5 Raja Rao's Philosophy of Life
- 14.6 Influences on Raja Rao
- 14.7 Summing Up
- 14.8 Notes and References
- 14.9 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers

14.10 Further Readings

14.0 Introduction

When we discuss about Raja Rao, we are immediately reminded of other two great novelists of India writing in English language. Some critics even prefer Raja Rao to R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand. They consider Raja Rao the greatest novelist of India. He earned international recognition on the basis of his novels he wrote in serious tone and style. In fact it is seriousness of his writings that earned him world-wide name and fame. For postcolonial fiction writers, he is deemed as a model.

After going through the whole Unit, you are expected to write down answers to the questions studying carefully the relevant section as hinted in section 14.9.

14.1 Objectives

In this Unit, it will be our sole motif to introduce learners doing their course through distance mode each and every aspect of Raja Rao's life and career. Raja Rao is basically known world-wide for his fiction writing but it is fact that a few learners know about the versatility

of his genius. In some ways, he is singular among Indian fiction writers. He breathed successfully Indianness in his works in pure Indian style. He is need of present scenario. His works deserve our serious attention. His philosophical leaning and interest can open new vistas to fiction writers. At the end of this Unit, it is hoped that learners will be able to throw light by themselves on the following points such as:

- ✓ Trends in Contemporary Fiction Writing in Indian English
- ✓ Age of Raja Rao
- ✓ Influences that shaped social, cultural, political, philosophical, and literary career of Raja Rao
- ✓ Reception of Raja Rao in the world of academia.

14.2 A Short Note on Indian Fiction Writing in English

At the very outset, it seems logical to make difference between ‘novel’ and ‘fiction’. The former is derived from Italian word *novella* which means a little new thing. The term *novella* is taken from Latin ‘*navella narratio*’ which means a new kind of story. Let me try to define novel, though there is no fix pattern and shape of novel writing. A novel is an extended, argumentative, self-evident, self-contained fictitious prose narrative. The novel as a work of art deals with human action, judgment, and truth. The novelist represents life according to his/her vision and experiences of life with the purpose of providing pleasure and counsel. The novel has its own structure: plot, character, dialogue, setting, and vision.

The term ‘fiction’ is indiscriminately identified with novel these days. It is quite wrong perception. The term ‘fiction’ is more general and broad in its scope and treatment. The works of fiction may be a novel, short story, romance, fable, and many other forms of prose narrative.

Before we move on to the growth and history of Indian novel writing, let us know the difference between two key terms often used- Anglo-Indian literature and Indo-Anglian literature. The former is used to mean writings of Englishmen in English about India, Indian life and setting. These writers tried to interpret India to the west. They portrayed India negatively. They told about India as a land of fakirs, beggars, jugglers, and snake-charmers. Under this category, Paul Scott, George Orwell, Rudyard Kipling, Ruskin Bond can be considered. The term Indo-Anglian literature refers to the attempts made by Indian writers in English language. These writers have projected more favourable and truthful image of the country. Raja Rao is one of these writers. We shall discuss about him in later section of this Unit.

In the early nineteenth century, English education was introduced in India. A few years later English journals and newspapers came into circulation. Raja Rammohan Roy, I think, is the first major scholar who attempted essay writing in English. Slowly but continually Indians mastered English language and began communicating in English. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya is the most probably first Indian novelist writing in English. His first novel **Rajmohan's Wife** was published in a book form in 1930 though it was serialized as **Wife** in a weekly *The Indian Field* in 1864, and republished in 1990. Among reputed names, Toru Dutt better known as a poet wrote **Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden**. It was about own tumultuous life. It was published in 1878 in Calcutta though it was incomplete. Apart from several other men and women novelists whom I am not mentioning here let me take you on to the era of 30s of twentieth century. During 30s Indian freedom movement was gaining momentum rapidly. Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao cumulatively established Indian fiction writing. They are hailed as 'trinity', 'big three', or 'trio' of Indian novelists. Mulk Raj Anand as a committed socialist largely wrote about down-trodden people like sweeper, coolie and separated people etc. He wrote **Untouchable** though it was written some years ago but it came into publication with E. M. Forster's Preface in 1935. It is about Bakha, a sweeper. His other two novels *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) are about labourers. His other works are the trilogy- **The Village** (1939), **Across the Black Waters** (1941), and **The Sword and the Sickle** (1942), **The Big Heart** (1945), **The Road** (1963), **The Death of Hero** (1964). Mulk Raj Anand is better known for his ruthless realistic portrayal of social, cultural, economic life of the country. Next to Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao attracts our attention. I shall discuss it in detail in next sections. R. K. Narayan was exclusively dedicated to fiction writing. He is an ever-green novelist of India. His popularity was accelerated through several cinema adaptations. His **Swami and Friends** (1935), **The Bachelor of Arts** (1937), **Waiting for the Mahatma** (1955), **The Guide** (1958), **The Dark Room** (1938), **The English Teacher** (1946), **The Man-Eater of Malgudi** (1961), **A Tiger for Malgudi** (1983), and **The World of Nagraj** (1990) are some of the most popular works of R. K. Narayan. He is well-known and remembered for his creation of 'malgudi' an imaginary location.

Bhabani Bhattacharya is another social realist. Like Mulk Raj Anand, he believes that every novel should bear some specific social purpose. His most popular novels are **So Many Hungers** (1947), **Music for Mohini** (1952), **He Who Rides a Tiger** (1952), **Shadow from Ladakh** (1966), and **Dream in Hawaii** (1978). His novels have been translated into several other languages. Manohar Malgonkar is better known for his entertaining fictional narratives.

His novel **A Bend in the Ganges** (1964) is about partition. His other works are **Distant Dream** (1960), **Bandicoot Run** (1962), **Combat of Shadows** (1962) etc.

G.V. Desani, Kamala Markandeya, Nayantara Sahgal, Bharati Mukherjee, Rohiton Mistry, Arun Joshi, Khushwant Singh, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy are a few names to mention here.

14.3 Raja Rao, His Age, Life, and Education

Raja Rao was born on the 5th of November, 1908, in the village of Hassana (part of former Mysore State) in a Brahmin family which was consisted of scholars and philosophers. His father was a professor of Canarese at Hyderabad. He was exposed to Hindu religion and philosophy at very tender age in the guidance of his grandfather. He matriculated from Madarsa-e-Aliya, Hyderabad in 1925. After matriculation, he was sent to Aligarh Muslim University for further studies. Here at the university he came into the contact of Prof. Dickinson who developed in him an interest for French language and literature. He got his bachelor degree from Nizam College, Hyderabad in 1929. Same year, the State of Hyderabad conferred on him a scholarship, and he went to France at the age of just twenty to study French literature and language. Here he married Camille Mouly in 1931. She bore him a son. He stayed there from 1929 to 1939. In France, he studied at the University of Montpellier. Then he worked for doctoral award under the supervision of Prof. Cazamian, a noted scholar and literary critic at the University of Sorbonne. It was in France, thousands of miles away from India, that his first novel, **Kanthapura** was written and published in 1938. In 1940 he came back to India and visited *ashramas* of Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai and Narayan Maharaj of Kadegaon to know more about Indian philosophy and religion. He visited Benares and this visit even inspired him to be a *sadhu* renouncing the world. It was Swami Atmanand who convinced him and stopped pursuing this journey. He told him that one can have spiritual enlightenment even being with his family by doing meditation.

In 1950, Raja Rao visited America and got interested in American life and culture immediately. His first marriage ended in 1949 and remarried an American actress Katherine Jones in 1965 and in 1986 again married Susan Vaught. In 1965 he was appointed at the University of Texas where he used to teach Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. Raja Rao died on 8th of July, 2006, at Austin, Texas (USA).

Raja Rao's birth and development into writer, thinker, philosopher, and reformer took place in an era of Gandhiji. Gandhiji was mobilizing people from every section of the society.

During 30's of Indian struggle for political independence; boycott of government schools, institutions, and services, denial to pay government taxes, lobbying of peasants and workers, burning of foreign clothes, registration cards, emphasis on vernacular languages, Hindi as a national language, and picketing of wine shops, registration centres were recurring incidents across Indian territory. Gandhiji promised independence within one year by the force of Satyagraha (truth or soul-force) non-cooperation, and civil disobedience.

Let me first explain what Gandhism is. Gandhian approach is almost amorphous. It is quite difficult to say this or that. However, it is not easy to characterize Gandhism in one or two sentences or phrases. But three concepts broadly can be counted: *Swadeshi* (home-spun), *Swaraj* (home-rule), 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. The concept of 'Satyagraha' evolved over the time. Non-Cooperation, Civil disobedience, 'Swaraj'(home-rule), and 'Swadeshi'(love for home-products, or indigenous) are chief ways to battle with tyranny, exploitation, violence, and inequality via the paths of truth and non-violence. Gandhi's concept of *Satyagraha* is a multi-stranded approach which includes truth, non-violence that is, extraordinary ability to suffer but not to take on war weapons, non-stealing, control and command over senses and palate, no will for the acquisition of property to be used in future, bread labour as Jesus taught in the New Testament - "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread.", fearlessness, tolerance that is, no fanaticism; before a 'satyagrahi' all religions weigh equally, Swadeshi, women emancipation, and the removal of untouchability. All these points of Gandhian era affected him very much.

14.4 Rao's Literary Output and His Achievements

Raja Rao is a leading Indian author popularly known for his a handful novels and collections of short-stories. He keenly examines the metaphysical and spiritual themes by engaging a number of characters belonging to different cultural backgrounds, outlooks, and aspirations. Raja Rao often contrasts Indian philosophy and spirituality with western society's emphasis on rationalism. In this regard Raja Rao is the most genuine and original novelist of India. He not only did successful experiment with the form of creative writing but with its themes also.

14.4.1 As a Novelist

Raja Rao wrote just three novels in English and one more in French language. In a sense, he was not prolific in his writings. Despite his meagre output he carved successfully an important place among Indian writers writing in English. It is opined that he used to write slowly for the achievement of perfection in his writings. Let me focus briefly on his novels.

Kanthapura

Raja Rao's earliest attempt was *Kanthapura*. It was written during his stay in France and published in 1938. It is called Gandhi-Purana. It presents a realistic account of the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on the people of *Kanthapura* in the 30's of twentieth century. *Kanthapura* (1938) is a fictionalized practice of Gandhian theory of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satyagraha* (passive resistance or "soul-force" as Gandhi preferred to translate it), *swadeshi* (indigenous), truth, civil disobedience. Rao imagined the whole nation through his mental voyage. He saw the entire country through the lens of *Kanthapura*. *Kanthapura* as novel is a serious attempt at the reconstruction of India through imagination. The idea of nation projected in fiction is more reliable and true. The way Raja Rao imagined the community inheres his typical approach to the homogenization of the western concept of nation. Actually the concept of nation is in itself a western concept but Rao indigenized radically western conception of nation. Generally nation means to western scholars a space having common culture, tradition, language, religion, and a fix territory. Rao in the novel explains his concept of nation by giving an analogy of temple- 'a thousand-pillared temple,' (*Kanthapura* 169). In its formation all class will help putting aside the idea of holy Brahmin and the pariah. Rao like Gandhi imagines unity in diversity. Moorthy says:

Brothers,... whether Brahmin or bangle-seller, pariah or priest, we are all one, one as the mustard seed in a sack of mustard seeds, equal in shape and hue and all. Brothers, we are yoked to the same plough-head....(*Kanthapura* 170)

The chief strand of *Kanthapura* is the freedom struggle of 30's and 40's in full compliance of Gandhian principles of Non-violence, Truth, and Civil-disobedience in India. *Kanthapura* is a Gandhian novel. The action takes place in a small village named *Kanthapura* located in the province of Kara. The freedom struggle is in the centre of the novel, the issues of caste discrimination, gender discrimination, and even religion based discriminations are ancillary themes. Raja Rao in *Kanthapura* brilliantly showed Gandhism how it reached the village and swept away *Kanthapurians*. In further Units we shall discuss other aspects of the novel in detail. Let us move on to the next novel.

The Serpent and the Rope

This was Raja Rao's second most satisfying and successful novel. It was written some twenty-two years after the publication of his first novel *Kanthapura*. It was published in 1960. It talks about 50's of twentieth century. The action of the novel partly takes place in India, England, and France. It is partly based on his own life experiences of the world. It is perhaps the greatest metaphysical novel written ever in English. It articulated brilliantly the *Advaita* philosophy of Sri Sankara. Raja Rao regarded literature as a spiritual discipline or *sadhana*. The central character of the novel Ramaswamy, known throughout the novel as Rama is in search of self-realization and self-transcendence. He is the narrator of the novel. Rama is an educated young man was born in a rich Brahmin family of South India. His mother dies when he was quite young boy. He learned Hindu philosophy and religion under the caring of his grandfather. He is an M.A. in History and goes to France on a Government scholarship to earn Doctorate degree from the University of Sorbonne. There he met Madeleine, a teacher of history of the same university. She was older by a few years. She had lost both her parents and was looked after by her uncle Charles. They fell in love and soon got married. She bore a son but could not survive. This event turned her towards philosophy and religion. Meanwhile, Rama had to visit India to meet his father who was battling with life. He died leaving his third wife known in the novel as 'Little Mother' and an infant Sridhar. Saroja and Sukumari were two daughters of his second wife. Rama for his father's funeral rites goes to Benares where he found priest greedy. Then he came to Allahabad (now Prayagraj) and stayed there with his father's friend Mr. Venkataraman who was then serving as a professor in the University of Allahabad. Mr. Venkataraman introduced Rama to one of his former students, Pratap Singh who was betrothed to Savithri, the daughter of the Raja of Surajpur. Savithri, a student of Cambridge University did not like to marry him. Pratap even requests to Rama to bring Savithri around him. At first Rama did not like her western ways but soon he himself fell in love with her though she marries Pratap ultimately.

Rama returned to France. Saroja sent a sari for Madeleine and Little Mother toe-rings for her. Madeleine was too much annoyed for conveyance delay and even she called all Indians unmethodical. Rama returns to India again but here he grew lung troubles and fell ill seriously. Meanwhile Madeleine lost her second child. It was too much for her. Rama went back to France but this time he found Madeleine too much change. She has embraced Buddhism. Rama goes to London and there he again fell ill. Savithri was there who frequently visited him. Madeleine took divorce from Rama. Anyhow Rama completed his doctoral thesis. At the end of the novel Rama is seen longing for his home at Travancore where his Guru lived. This novel is called metaphysical.

The Cat and Shakespeare

This is Raja Rao's third novel popularly described as "a philosophical comedy". It is too thin to be developed into a full-length novel. It was published in 1965. It is full of philosophical digressions discussion. The story of the novel is about two friends Govindan Nair and Rama Krishna Pai. Both are clerks in rationing department at Trivendrum. Both live in adjacent houses. Govindan is a poor clerk who earns 45 rupees month and Rama Krishna Pai is a divisional clerk. Once, Pai fell ill. He was well looked after by Govindan and his son Sridhar. Santha, a school teacher also looked after him. Pai fell in love with her and established an immoral relationship with her. Govindan is accused of corrupt and fraudulent practices in the office. He earnestly pleaded that he did never anything against the order of his boss Boothalinga Iyer. The case even reached to the court room. In a dramatic manner, Govindan Nair was found innocent and the case was dismissed. Pai began living with his mistress Santha and his wife Saroja began living in the village with her son Vithal. The novel is from the stand points of plot-construction. It has several absurdities and crudities. It is a mix of fantasy and realism. It has certain short-comings but bore a few strong points also.

Comrade Kirillov

This is the fourth novel of Raja Rao. It was written in French and was published in 1976. The central character Kirillov is a South Indian Brahmin whose real name is Padmanabha Iyer. He was influenced by Russian Communism. The story of the novel is narrated by Rama, a reporter for the Hindu in England. He studies Marxism extensively. He even writes a book on the Marxist interpretation of Gandhi. He calls him Sadhu. Kirillov marries a Russian girl and blessed with a son whom they named Kamal. Kamal comes to India and lives with Kirillov's family. This novel is an example of philosophical tragic-comedy.

14.4.2 As a Storyteller

As a writer of stories, Raja Rao is less known among readers and academicians. Although his short stories have a great variety and range yet failed to attain popularity as much as his novels have. His short stories were written mostly in France when and where Paul Valery and Andre Gide were leading literary icons. His stories are replete with French images, phrases, and words. His short stories can be conveniently divided into two categories, first those which were written in the early 30's and the second, which were written thereafter. The early phase stories were collected in 1947 and published under the title, *The Cow of the Barricades*. These stories were mostly concerned with the social and political conditions of India. This collection has just nine stories. *Javni*, *Akkayya*, *Narasiga*, *The Little Gram Shop*,

The True Story of Kanakapala, Protector of Gold, Nimka are some of the remarkable stories of the first collection. The second collection of stories was brought out in 1978 bearing the title *The Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories*. The *Chessmaster and His Moves* published in 1988, was awarded by Oklahoma University, USA. His work *On the Gangaghat* (1989) presents vivid picture of Indian life. These stories reflect on Raja Rao's metaphysical and religious concerns. It has some remarkable stories like *The Policeman and the Rose, India, a Fable, The Premierre of Shakuntala* etc.

Raja Rao as a writer of novels, essays, and short stories, is well recognized not only in India but in some other postcolonial countries also. He was awarded the *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1964 for his novel *The Serpent and the Rope*. In 1988, he was awarded the *Neustadt International Prize for Literature* for his entire body of creative works. The Government of India conferred on him the *Padma Bhushan* in 1969 and the *Padma Vibhushan* in 2007.

14.5 Raja Rao's Philosophy of Life

Although Raja Rao is dubbed by most critics in India and abroad as a philosophical novelist yet he has articulated about almost all aspects of Indian social, cultural, economic, and political conditions along with all strengths and weaknesses. He, it seems to me, ever wished to see the country emancipated. He wanted to bring about change in attitudes of people. He looks for moral emancipation. In *Kanthapura*, he argued for the removal of untouchability, women emancipation, communal harmony, and indigeneity. In *The Serpent and the Rope*, he articulated *advaita* philosophy of Sri Sankara and in *The Cat and Shakespeare* the philosophy of Ramanuja, that is *Vishistadvaita*. And in other novels he raised fingers against malpractices. Self-enlightenment and man-woman relationship pervade throughout his works. Though most years of his life, he has been outside India, he never left his idea of India in his entire creative works. He was a multi-dimensional personality. He is man of ideas. His cosmopolitan outlook has ever drawn people's attention. He has deep regard for all religious faiths like Jainism, Buddhism, and Christianity etc. "Sacredness and piety, nobility and kindness, truth, and non-violence often come up for discussion and projection. Work after work he affirms the presence of God" said by J. P. Tripathi . Apart from all these features, we see in his works East and West meeting in all of his works.

14.6 Influences on Raja Rao

Like D. H. Lawrence, he projects himself in his fictional works. He was grounded very well in Indian philosophy especially in *Advaita* and *Vishitadvaita*. After these two religious schools, he was very much influenced by Gandhiji. His art of story-telling bears the stamp of the *Vedas*, the *Upanishadas*, the *Gita*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Kathasaritsagar*,

the *Panchatantra*, and *Jatak* tales. The autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi and the philosophy of Ananda Coomaraswamy also have imprints on him. Among the Western influences he was deeply influenced by Paul Valery, Maria Rainer Rilke, Andre Gide, the Bible, Plato, Shakespeare, W. B. Yeats, John Ruskin, Tolstoy, Karl Marx, Dostoevsky, Gorky, Malraux, Kafka, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Ralph Waldo Emerson etc.

14.7 Summing Up

Raja Rao was deeply rooted in Indian philosophy and culture. At the same time, he always welcomed new foreign ideas and ideologies. In the light of his meagre creative output, if he is regarded as one of the greatest Indo-Anglian fiction writers, it is in itself a great achievement. He brilliantly Indianized Western form of novel writing. He is the most loved and interesting writer of India. For 'postcolonial' thinkers and critics around the world, Raja Rao's experiment with form and content is path-breaking. He appears more serious than Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan.

14.8 Notes and References

Vedanta: Literally it means end of the Vedas

Advaita: This school of philosophy believes in non-duality that is, Atman and Brahman are the same. It was considered by Sri Sankara of the 8th century.

Vishistadvaita: This school of extreme-monism was considered by Ramanuja. According to this path of thinking, Brahman is one but is known and characterized variously.

Replete with: FullPath-breaking: Original and innovative

East-West meeting: A point where cultures of East and West meet and negotiate.

14.9 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers

Q. 1. Discuss Raja Rao as the most original creative writer.

Ans. Read carefully all the sections of this Unit.

Q.2. Discuss influences that shaped Raja Rao's creativity.

Ans. Read carefully Section 14.3, 14.4, 14.5, and 14.6.

Q. 3. Evaluate Raja Rao's contribution to Indian fiction writing.

Ans. Study carefully Section 14.4.

Q.4 Differentiate between Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian.

Ans. Look into section no. 14.2

14.10 Further Readings

Iyengar, K.R.S. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1985.

Sharma, K.K. *Perspective on Raja Rao*. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1980.

Tripathi, J.P. *Raja Rao: The Fictionalist*. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 2003.

UNIT 15 KANTHAPURA: BACKGROUND

Structure

15.0 Introduction

15.1 Objectives

15.2 A Background to the Study of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*

15.2.1 Historical

15.2.2 Political

15.3 Mahatma Gandhi: A Living Force

15.4 Role of Religion

- 15.5 Summing Up
- 15.6 Notes and References
- 15.7 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers
- 15.8 Further Readings

15.0 Introduction

At the very outset of every critical study, learners desperately feel the need of subject material about various perspectives that helped implicitly and explicitly in the emergence of the text. For the fulfillment of this requirement, I think, this Unit is significant. Since a text whether it is a piece of novel, essay, poem or play, does not say anything itself, it gets very much important to gather social, cultural, political, religious, and economic references spread over. Raja Rao interweaved almost all the perspectives into its texture. Perhaps it was that quality which made this novel most readable and likeable.

After going through the whole Unit, you are expected to write down answers to the questions studying carefully the relevant section as hinted in section 15.7.

15.1 Objectives

In this Unit, we shall try to our level best to make learners fully familiar with the background of the novel *Kanthapura*. Indeed, sufficient information regarding the background helps learning things quickly and easily. At the end of this Unit, it is hoped that learners will be able to discuss the following points:

- ✓ About the sources of the novel
- ✓ About the historical and political background
- ✓ The presence of Gandhi in the village
- ✓ Role of religious orientation

15.2 A Background to the Study of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*

Kanthapura as a work of art is in many ways of typical sort. There are multiple issues that have been addressed in the novel. Without keeping sufficient information regarding the historical, social, political, religious, cultural, and economic perspectives of the village *Kanthapura*, it would be a little bit difficult and tiresome to go through the text. For the convenience of learners, we have decided to focus firstly on 'historical' perspective. Let us see-

15.2.1 Historical

The narrative of the novel is set in a village called **Kanthapura** located somewhere in South India. It concerns itself with the non-violent, non-cooperative insurrections of 1919-1922 and 1930-31. That is, it covers the history of the whole decade of 1920's and ends with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of 1931. During these years, movements like Jalliahnwalla Bagh Massacre, Hindu-Muslim Joint Conference, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience, Home-Rule, Chawri-Chawra event, call for economic self-dependency, and Dandi March were major episodes in the history of Indian Freedom Struggle. In the centre of all these developments Gandhiji was catalytic. These events had far-reaching potential. They had an impact on entire country. *Kanthapura* village was no exception.

Gandhiji's second round Civil Disobedience Movement began in 1929. This time it was more aggressive in its approach. The boycotts of foreign items and demonstrations were carried out by satyagrahis all over the country. Toddy booths and plantations were picketed, foreign clothes & burned openly, and farmers refused to pay land revenue. The agreement between Gandhiji and Lord Irwin attempted in 1931 was unsatisfactory. Jawahar Lal Nehru took it as a

failure. The failure this pact in fact paved the path for the establishment of federalism India. The formation of congress ministries at the centre and the states was made possible consequently.

15.2.2 Political

Whether *Kanthapura* is a political novel or something more than that is worth consideration. C. D. Narsimhaiah writes pertly:

“... *Kanthapura* is no political novel any more than is Gandhi’s movement a mere political movement. It pictures vividly, truthfully and touchingly the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhi’s leadership; its religious character, its economic and social concerns, its political ideals precisely in the way Gandhi tried to spiritualize politics, the capacity for sacrifice of a people in response to the call of one like Gandhi- not the spectacular sacrifice of the few chosen ones who later became India’s rulers, but the officially unchronicled, little, nameless, unremembered acts of courage and sacrifice of peasants and farm hands, students and lawyers, women and old men, thanks to whom Gandhi’s unique experiment gathered momentum and grew into a national movement. For, *Kanthapura* India is microcosm: what happened there is what happened in many places during India’s fight for freedom”
(*Kanthapura* ix-x).

If we concentrate on political elements as hinted or referred in the narrative, we can say it a political novel. It narrates in a grand manner but realistically the Gandhian freedom movement against the British tyranny. Gandhian magic like wild fire swept across the country. He did this magic through the weapons of Truth, Non-violence, and Non-cooperation. *Kanthapura* portrays in miniature the political struggle along with several other non-political issues and concerns. To know Gandhism, it is necessary to three key terms: Swadeshi (home-spun), Swaraj (home-rule), 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. The concept of ‘satyagraha’ evolved over the time. Non-cooperation, Civil Disobedience, ‘Swaraj’(home-rule), and ‘Swadeshi’(love for home-products, or indigenous) are chief ways to battle with tyranny, exploitation, violence, and inequality via the paths of truth and non-violence. The formation

of Congress and their regular meetings for planning future course and direction of the freedom movement are reflected in the novel graphically.

15.3 Mahatma Gandhi: A Living Force

During the freedom struggle, Mahatma Gandhi was towering personality whose living presence was felt in every part of the country. In fact he was the soul of the country. In the novel, though Mahatma Gandhi is not seen participating in the action being taken up by the villagers of Kanthapura. Moorthy the central character was taken for Gandhi granted. He is portrayed in the novel doing every action in full compliance with Gandhi's ideals and principles. During the said period in fact every village had its Gandhi. Kanthapura as a novel is epical in its scope and substance. The presence of Gandhi is felt in the background throughout the novel. Like thousands of young students all over the country, Moorthy also gave up his studies and joined freedom struggle. He burnt his foreign clothes and started wearing Khadi clothes. He went from door to door to tell villagers about Gandhi and his principles. He like Gandhi distributed Charkhas free of cost for home-spun clothing. He forms Congress Committee of Kanthapura. The villagers think Mahatma Gandhi the "big mountain" and Moorthy the "small mountain". He like Gandhi worked for the eradication of untouchability, child marriage, illiteracy, and widowhood. During the nation-wide campaign of 'Don't-touch the Government campaign', under the leadership of Moorthy Kanthapurians picketed toddy booth and Boranna's toddy grove. Other characters like Advocate Sankar, Rangamma, and Ratna etc. are the followers of Gandhi.

At the very outset of the novel, Raja Rao looks into the rifts based on caste and religion. Moorthy, the hero of the novel firstly attempts to remove these barriers for unity. The storyteller Achakka, a Brahmin widow tells that Moorthy visits door to door of all quarters telling "there is neither caste nor clan nor family...one should not marry early, one should allow widows to take husbands and a Brahmin might marry a pariah and a pariah to a Brahmin"(*Kanthapura* 13). Moorthy in the village Kanthapura attempts social, religious, economic, and psychological reformation at one stroke. He argues for the removal of dependency syndrome. He explains to the villagers that 'swaraj' is a three dimensional enterprise: "Self-purification, Hindu-Moslem Unity, and Khaddar" (*Kanthapura* 14). Moorthy like Gandhi tries to prepare an army for killing the serpent of foreign rule. For economic improvement, Moorthy took the charge for the distribution of Charakha among women folks who mostly stay at their homes. He extols spinning equating with praying. He tells them that the Congress is distributing Charakha free of cost along with one month's cotton for encouragement. He argues:

Spin and weave every day, for our Mother is in tattered weeds and a poor mother needs clothes to cover her sores. If you spin...the money that goes to the Red-man will stay within your country and the mother can feed the foodless and the milkless and the clothless (*Kanthapura* 17).

After Moorthy's strong argument in favour of home-spun cloths, many youngsters for example; Puttu, Kittu, Chandru, Seenu, Ramu and many others threw their foreign clothes into bonfire. After this incident Bade Khan an Indian policeman serving colonial government is plied to the village to have a look on the villagers. Later on, Moorthy again turns up in the central veranda of Rachanna, a pariah. Other members of the quarter came to see him. Moorthy asks Madanna's wife, and Satanna's wife whether they are going to begin spinning. They told him this and that. Moorthy feeling desperate turns to Rachanna's wife Lingamma to know her opinion. She answers ambiguously. She says, "If my husband says "Spin," I shall spin, learned one." (*Kanthapura* 104) Lingamma's this vague answer hints upon the hold of patriarchy over women.

Moorthy meanwhile, is arrested by the Police Inspector; women cried but they were treated immorally by policemen. Pariahs Rachanna, Madanna, Lingayya all oppose Moorthy's arrest. Even they get furious. Rachanna chants, *Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!* The Policeman gets violent and beats Rachanna cruelly. Women and children weep, sob, and groan out of agony. Notwithstanding, Moorthy asks them to maintain the spirit of Satyagrah. Having been helpless at the hands of Bade Khan and the Police Inspector, Rachanna's wife, Madanna's wife and Sampanna's wife cry out, 'Oh, give us back our men and our master'. In return the police Inspector orders: 'Give them a shoe-shower'. The policemen 'kicks them in the back and on the head and in the stomach, and while Rachanna's wife is crying, Madanna's wife is squashed against a wall and her breasts squeezed' (*Kanthapura* 121). Range Gowda could not resist himself and took stick and gives one bang on the head of a policeman. Then policemen turned to Brahmin quarters where Ramanna and Dore declared that we too are men of Gandhi and beat us as much as you wish. The policemen beat them to near-death. The policemen arrested total seventeen men belonging to all quarters, and then-

And the policemen twisted their arms and beat them on their knuckles, and spat into their mouths, and when they had slapped and banged and kicked, they let them out one by one, one by one they let them out, and they all marched back to Kanthapura, all but Moorthy (*Kanthapura* 122-23).

After Moorthy, Rangamma is towering woman. She is intellectual and 'no village kid'. She gives the example of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi. She firstly prepares a group of women for drill so that they can fight colonial men. At this Nose-scratching Nanjamma blurts out: 'Why, I am not a man to fight, sister!'...you need not be a man to fight.' (*Kanthapura* 148) This is enough to infer the supremacy of males in the society. Rangamma even focuses on the terror and horror of fighting with policemen. The women feel unease and get reluctant to join the movement. Ratna emboldens them- 'Be strong, sister. When your husband beats you, you do not hit back, do you? You only grumble and weep. The policeman's beatings are the like!' and we say, 'So they are.'(*Kanthapura*175) Thus, women underwent double-bind colonization. Ratna identifies patriarchy with colonialism. Rangamma teaches them observe non-violence and truth howsoever the situation is wild. At last Rangamma led group named Sevika Sangh and the members would call themselves Sevis.

Finally, Rangamma and Ratna could arrange a march of seventy five women before toddy booths so that they could stop Estate coolies buying toddies from their hard earned money with all observances of Gandhian etiquette:

...and somebody began to clap hands and push forward, and we all clapped hands too and began to sing, and the Police began to push this way and that, when Pariah Rachanna was torn down from the toddy tree, our hearts began to beat so fast that we cried out 'Hoye-Hoye!' and we pushed forward with the men. And the Police Inspector this time shouted out 'Attack!', and they lifted the lathis and bang-bang they brought them down on us, and the lathis caught our hair and rebounded from our backs, and pariah Ningamma beat her mouth and wailed, 'Oh, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone'...'Now, sisters, forward!' and we all cry out, 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai! Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai!' and we deafen ourselves before the onslaught... (*Kanthapura* 184-85).

Ratna in the novel is portrayed as a defiant lady. She challenges baseless patriarchal ideals. Her role in the narrative is double-fold to challenge women-oppressive conservative patriarchal ideals, and participation in anti-colonial struggle. Her opinions on widowhood are similar to that of Gandhiji:

Bhatta rose up to go, for he could never utter a kind word to that young widow, who not only went about the streets alone like a boy, but even wore her hair to the left like a concubine, and she still kept her bangles and her nose rings and earrings, and when

she was asked why she behaved as though she hadn't lost her husband, she said that that was nobody's business, and that if these sniffing old country hens thought that seeing a man for a day, and this when she was ten years of age, could be called a marriage, they had better eat mud and drown themselves in the river (*Kanthapura* 44).

After Moorthy's arrest, Rangamma and Range Gowda unexpectedly disappear due to increased policemen's brutality. Sevis as Rachanna's wife, Madamma, Vedamma, and Seethamma approached Ratna for guidance. Ratna faces Satamma's charge that she will take us all to the brothels and we are not interested in the violation of their daughters at all costs. She getting helpless before them assures that Mahatma's boys as Moorthy had told will come for our protection:

The city boys would come to our relief. And we all said 'Well, there are all these city people to help us,' and we felt our hearts beat lighter, and when we heard the drummer beat the drum we felt nothing sinister could happen to us, now these boys were there, and they would win us back our harvests (*Kanthapura* 226).

Ratna takes over the lead immediately and organizes a *Satyanarayana Puja* and a procession to bamboozle the police. Soon the leaders came out of their hidings and joined the procession and shouted 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai!' Thus we see Mahatma Gandhi as a living force.

15.5 Role of Religion

Religion has strong hold on the people of India since immemorial times. Perhaps it the reason Mahatma Gandhi took the recourse of religion and got surprising success in mobilizing of the mass. Various religious leaders, reformers, poets, and thinkers invoked religion to form emotional basis for nationalism. The Goddess Kenchamma is at the centre of the village. By dint of her presence Kanthapurians believe that everything in the village is made possible and meaningful. The Kanthapurians sing of her:

Kenchamma, Kenchamma,

Goddess benign and bounteous,

Mother of Earth, blood of life,

Harvest queen, rain crowned,

Kenchamma, Kenchamma,

Goddess benign and bounteous.

For the procurement of desired end Kanthapurians too invented and breathed fresh energy through mythic interpretation of the freedom struggle. Let us see.

The Rama-Ravana myth is the central motif, Raja Rao employed to illustrate the fight between Gandhi-men and the British. The British is demon to be subdued and sent back through non-violence. The narrator tells, “He’s (Moorthy) the age my Seenu is, and he and Seenu were as, one would say, our Rama and brother Lakshmana. They only needed a Sita to make it complete” (*Kanthapura* 7). Thus Moorthy and Seenu are the Rama and Lakshmana of Kanthapura and Sita is to be got back. The country is visualized as Sita and Parvati. The British is Ravana. Rama and his company-men have to slay Ravana so that the safe relieving of Sita from Lanka may be ensured. Range Gowda (Sardar Balabhbhai Patel of Kanthapura) is fire-tailed Hanuman as Mahatma asked Moorthy to serve him as Hanuman did to Rama. Moorthy is Rama, Hanuman, Krishna, Prahalada, and Mahatma Gandhi of Kanthapura. Rao took recourse of the Krishna myth. Krishna slew Kali snake when He was just of four years. Raja Rao imagined Gandhiji an incarnation of Lord Krishna whom Brahma offered in hospitality. Like Krishna, the flute-player Gandhiji used to walk village to village turning villagers into his followers. The Siva-Parvati myth is another motif. By this myth, we know that Parvati did brilliant penance to get Siva as her spouse. Here, Parvati in penance becomes country. Jayaramachar a famous Harikatha-man says that ‘Siva is the three-eyed...and Swaraj too is three-eyed: Self-purification, Hindu-Moslem unity, Khaddar.’ “And then he talks of Damayanthi and Sakunthala and Yasodh ? and everywhere there is something about our country and something about Swaraj” (*Kanthapura* 14). Jayaramachar is brilliant in mythicization. He seamlessly blends national issue with Siva-Parvati narrative. According to his story, the great sage Valmiki once visited Brahma to urge for his daughter’s liberation:

Far down on the Earth you chose as your chief daughter Bharatha, the goddess of wisdom and well-being. You gave her the sage-loved Himalayas on the north and the seven surging seas to the south, and you gave her the Ganges to meditate on, the Godavery to live by, and the pure Cauvery to drink in. You gave her the riches of gold and of diamonds, and you gave her kings such as the world has never seen!
(*Kanthapura* 15)

Valmiki expressed his surprise how Brahma had forgotten us and allowed “men from across the seas and the oceans to trample on our wisdom and to spit on virtue itself. They have come

to bind us and to whip us, to make our women die milkless and our men die ignorant.” (Kanthapura 15-16) Brahma said to Valmiki, “Siva himself will forthwith go and incarnate on the Earth and free my beloved daughter from her enforced slavery” (*Kanthapura* 16).

The Harishchandra myth and the Prahalad myth are two minor myths in the sense less elaborated. Rao employed the Harishchandra myth in regard to Mahatma Gandhi. During sleep, Harishchandra once saw that he had offered his all estate to some saint. Next day, the angel turned up and asked Harishchandra about his estate. He sold off his son Rohitans and wife Tara and himself to an owner of crematorium in Varanasi in the honour of truth, honesty, and integrity. A mythical snake bit Rohit when he was playing. Tara wept bitterly. She went to the crematorium site for Rohit’s funeral rites where Harishchandra was employed. Tara was utterly helpless. She requested Harishchandra for Rohit’s funeral free of tax but Harishchandra denied. It being helpless, Tara tore the lower border of her sari and offered him. At this, God emerged and returned all his estate and revived Rohit. So Kanthapurians hold that the British might leave our country before Gandhiji go to talk with the British monarch.

Rao employs devotee Prahalada myth in regard to Moorthy. Once, Moorthy was lulled to brooding while his mother was washing clothes on slab near a pond. He came to know that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omni-present. The Prahalada myth tells that once he was enjoying the lap of his father Hiranyakashipu who had two wives Suniti and Surichi. Prahalada was the son of Suniti the senior wife. Surichi got fired to see Prahalada in the king’s lap instead of her son Uttam Kumar. She took Prahalada away and wished that he might have taken birth out of her womb. Devotee Prahalada told this entire mother Suniti. Suniti assured him that he should not bother about the King’s lap instead of the God’s lap. For God’s lap, devotee Prahalada did penance for five thousand years when he stared he was barely five years old. This mythical story teaches that prayer and patience provides eternal pleasure. His indication is towards Moorthy who will get the success due his efforts made for freedom.

15.6 Summing Up

Raja Rao was deeply rooted in Indian philosophy and culture documented successfully Indian sensibility in the novel. Thus we saw the historical, political, and socio-cultural aspirations served in the background. He brilliantly Indianized Western form of novel writing. He is most loved and interesting writer of India. For ‘postcolonial’ thinkers and critics around the world, Raja Rao’s experiment with form and content is path-breaking.

15.7 Notes and References

Apparatus: The structure by which things are made to happen in an organization

Toddy: A kind of country liquor in South India

Picketed: An attempt to stop customers from buying

Ghat: Stairway leading down to a landing on the water in India

Procurement: The act of getting possession

Etiquette: Socially acceptable rules and behaviours

Pariah: Someone untouchable

Hegemonization: The act of getting dominance over

Path-breaking: Original and innovative

15.8 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers

Q. 1. Discuss about the sources of the novel.

Ans. Read carefully all the sections 15.2 and 15.3 of this Unit.

Q.2. Discuss Gandhi's living presence in the novel.

Ans. Read carefully Section 15.3

Q. 3. Focus on the role of religion in the freedom struggle of Kanthapurians

Ans. Study carefully Section 15.4

Q.4 What is your opinion about the title of the novel

Ans. Read section 15.5 but moreover you are expected to share your own views

15.9 Further Readings

Iyengar, K.R.S. Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sterling, 1985.

Rao, Raja. Kanthapura. New Delhi: OUP, 2011.

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UNIT XVI KANTHAPURA: THEMES

Structure

16.0 Introduction

16.1 Objectives

16.2 Kanthapura: The Village

- 16.2.1 The Freedom Struggle
- 16.2.2 The Caste System
- 16.2.3 Skeffington Coffee Estate
- 16.2.4 Colonial Violence
- 16.2.5 The Plight of Women
- 16.2.6 Hindu-Muslim Rift
- 16.3 Relevance of the Title
- 16.4 Summing Up
- 16.5 Notes and References
- 16.6 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers
- 16.7 Further Readings

16.0 Introduction

The texture of *Kanthapura* is made up of multiple threads which were then contemporary, burning, and relevant. Nothing of course happens in vacuum. Raja Rao took up all those issues which were in need of immediate remedy. The novelist successfully helps readers enter into the narrative. In the beginning of the novel, Raja Rao tells about the geographic setting of the village and then, about almost all important characters with their identifiable marks and

roles. Then, the novelist proceeds to tell about Kanthapurians involvement into freedom struggle on the line of Gandhism.

After going through the whole Unit, you are expected to write down answers to the questions studying carefully the relevant section as hinted in section 16.6.

16.1 Objectives

In this Unit, our objective is to introduce you with a few critical themes of the novel. It has been already mentioned in previous Units that the novel *Kanthapura* is a serious piece of literature. It does not concentrate on any one aspect of life. It focuses on several other issues which are either directly communicated or simply suggested in the narrative. At the end of this Unit, it is hoped that learners will be able to discuss the following points:

- ✓ The Gandhian Movement of Freedom Struggle
- ✓ The Caste System
- ✓ About the deplorable conditions of coolies at coffee estate
- ✓ The condition of women under colonial rule and patriarchy
- ✓ Violence
- ✓ About the suitability of the title

16.2 *Kanthapura*: The Village

The novel begins with the description of the village. Raja Rao writes about it:

Our village---I don't think you have ever heard about it---Kanthapura is its name, and it is in the province of Kara. High on the ghats is it, high up the steep mountains that face the cool Arabian Seas, up the Malabar coast is it, up Mangalore and Puttur and many a center of cardomom and coffee, rice and sugarcane. Roads, narrow, dusty, rut-covered roads, wind through the forest of teak and of jack, of sandal and of sal, and hanging over bellowing gorges and leaping over elephant-haunted valleys, they turn now to the left and now to the right and bring you through the Alambe and Champa and Mena and Kola passes into the great granaries of trade. There, on the blue waters, they say, our carted cardamoms and coffee get into the ships the Red-men bring, and, so they say, they go across the seven oceans into the countries where our rulers live (*Kanthapura* 1).

Thus we come to know that Kanthapura village is connected with sea-coast. Throughout the day bullock carts are seen to and fro carrying land produce. The two villagers Rama Chetty and Subba Chetty are also seen whenever they had some merchandise. The Main Street, the Potter's Lane, Chennayya's Pond, Kenchamma temple and Kanthapurishwari temple are some of the landmarks of the village. It has total twenty four houses. The village has the Brahmin quarter, a Pariah quarter, a Potters' quarter, a Weavers' quarter, a Sudra quarter, and several other huts. Most of the inhabitants of the village are uneducated and superstitious. It is a cast-ridden society. The villagers had a calm and placid life. It was disturbed when Moorthy appeared with the message of Gandhi.

16.2.1 The Freedom Struggle

The main theme of *Kanthapura* is the freedom struggle of 20's and 30's in full compliance of Gandhian principles of Non-violence, truth, and civil-disobedience in India. Kanthapura is a Gandhian novel. The freedom struggle is in the centre of the novel. Kanthapura is a fictionalized practice of Gandhian theory of *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satyagraha* (passive resistance or "soul-force" as Gandhi preferred to translate it), *swadeshi* (indigenous), truth, civil disobedience. Here it seems valid to write a few paragraphs on colonial campaign of exploitation.

Colonial history is largely characterized by violence, and exploitation of non-white, non-Western others, and hierarchical discrimination between centre and periphery, metropolis and colonies, signified and signifier. Colonizers to ensure security and safety, and for the continuation of their hegemony over natives employed both 'ideological' and 'state' apparatuses. However colonial exploitative strategies differ country to country. Language is one of the 'ideological apparatuses'. In colonial hands, language played crucial roles, and purposefully wreaked havoc on natives. In numberless colonial texts, papers, articles, and some other documents it was attempted hard to project and picture negative images of non-whites and non-Western others. Language like nation and class exists in hierarchy and involves power relations. The indigenous art, culture, language, and tradition have no values and therefore, unworthy to be preserved, this was the so called 'civilizing mission' of the West. Of course, perhaps it was aimed to prepare natives as defective (psychologically) robots. T. B. Macaulay wrote in his famous 'Minute on Indian Education' (1835): English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect'. These people would constitute a class who would in fact protect British interests and help them rule a vast and potentially unruly land. (Macaulay 249) Colonialism set out its campaign denying any kind of signification to indigenous art, culture, identity, natural or bio-resources. Accordingly, they need drastic improvement and sometimes even transmogrification. The result was mass exploitation and

fracture of anything that is indigenous. Colonialism was in fact a kind of volcanic eruption which dissipated, destroyed, and endangered everything. It disintegrated colonized space by prevailing the politics of difference and the ideology that indigenous things have no value at all.

In order to counter the colonial hegemonization, social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen, Swami Vivekanand, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, and Rabindra Nath Tagore tried their level best to inculcate in Indian mind the feeling that they were no way inferior to western civilians. These reformist worked by tooth and nail for the eradication of social evils like child-marriage, sati, untouchability, purdah system, illiteracy, superstition, and ill-treatment towards widows.

In the novel Raja Rao realistically depicts the impact of the Gandhi Movement on Kanthapurians. They suffered brutalities and atrocities at the hands of the Britishers. The phase of Indian freedom struggle depicted in the novel ends with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Many *satyagrahis* including Moorthy felt that the Britishers are cheating Gandhi. As a result, some of the *satyagrahis* were drawn towards Nehru and his ideas.

16.2.2 The Caste System

Kanthapura is a caste-ridden village. It is divided into the Brahmin quarter, a Pariah quarter, a Potters' quarter, a Weavers' quarter, a Sudra quarter, and several other huts. The narrator Achakka is a Brahmin. Being a Brahmin, she firstly narrates about Brahmin quarter in some detail. She herself confesses that she does not have much knowledge about other quarters and hut-dwellers. In fact it was either her caste politics or her unfamiliarity with others. The rood study of the novel suggests that it may be her caste politics.

In the novel, there are Swami and Bhatta who are least concerned with 'Gandhi business'. Moorthy's mother Narasamma died because she could not bear the probable excommunication order from Swami. Bhatta did his best to thwart 'Gandhi affair'. Bhatta has great passion for money; hence he used to earn high interest on debts given to poor peoples of Kanthapura. Swami in the novel is informed as the man of colonial government yet he is taken lightly. Waterfall Venkamma is another bloody opponent of 'Gandhi affair'. Rangamma who is no village kid also approves implicitly Bhatta. Swami, Venkamma, Satamma and others' fear that 'there will be the confusion of castes and the pollution of progeny' (*Kanthapura* 39) under the impact of 'Gandhi business'. Rangamma opines:

He (Gandhiji) always says let the castes exist, let the separate-eating exist, let not one community marry with the other- no, no, Bhattare, the mahatma is not for all this pollution (*Kanthapura* 39).

Casteism is so deep seated among the Kanthapurians that Moorthy like progressive young man felt throbbing of heart fast when he was on the visit to Rachanna's hut. We shall study in detail about Moorthy in next Units.

16.2.3 The Skeffington Coffee Estate

The Skeffington Coffee Estate symbolizes colonial empire in India. Here, East and West encounter occurs. The racial cultural conflict is truthfully depicted in the novel. The West always discriminated the East to prove its superiority. Let us see what had happened at the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

Kanthapura focuses on the barbarism of colonials in dealing with the non-violent agitation of the freedom fighters. In this regard Skeffington Coffee Estate episode is pertinent for the explanation of colonial conceptions of supremacy. About the Estate and its area spread over and the incoming of coolies to the Estate the narrator says:

Nobody knows how large it is or when it was founded; but they all say it is at least ten thousand acres wide, and some people in Kanthapura can still remember having heard of the Hunter Sahib who used his hunter and his hand to reap the first fruits of his plantation; and then it began to grow from the Bear's Hill to Kantur Hill, and more and more coolies came from beneath the Ghats, and from the Bear's Hill and Kantur it touched the Snow Mountains, and more and more coolies came; and then it became bigger and bigger, till it touched all the hills around our village, and still more and more coolies came – coolies from below Ghats that talked Tamil or Telugu and who brought with them their old men and their children and their widowed women – armies of coolies marched past the Kenchamma Temple, half-naked, starving, spitting, weeping, vomiting, coughing, shivering, squeaking, shouting, moaning... (*Kanthapura* 64-65).

Their maistri (the head of coolies) talked to the owner of the Estate and it was decided to pay four-anna bit for a man and two-anna bit for a woman worker. These coolies were mostly from poor and low section of the society. The owner asked them finally to build up first their cottages. And about the duty hours, it is told them to work from the rising of sun to the beginning of night. This all was agreed in. But soon the narrator lapses into the narration of

snakes and unsuitable atmospheric conditions on the estate, then she, the narrator tells that the old Sahib died to hand the Estate to his nephew. About this new Sahib, the narrator says:

He is not a bad man, the new Sahib. He does not beat like his old uncle, nor does he refuse to advance money; but he will have this woman and that woman, this daughter and that wife, and every day a new one and never the same two within a week. Sometimes ... he wanders into the plantation with his cane and pipe and puppy, and when he sees this wench of seventeen or that chit of nineteen, he goes to her, smiles at her, and pats her on her back and pats her on her breasts (*Kanthapura* 80).

At the Sahib's lewd approach, the other women workers get and go away soon. The Sahib took the desired lady to his bungalow and after deflowering session gives her five-rupee note or a basketful mangoes or plantains plus two days rest. If the desired lady denies following his order, he calls up the head of coolies and enquires about her father asks to send her girl. If he fails to send her, the Sahib orders to cut the salary of a week or more plus whipping as per requirement. The head also entices the lady by this way or that. Out of frustration the Sahib shot Seetharam, a Brahmin clerk dead with his revolver when he came to the door. Seetharam had denied sending her daughter Mira to meet the Sahib's sexual appetite. And moreover, the Sahib approached the District Superintendent of Police and told that he would 'pay one thousand five hundred rupees, two thousand rupees as damages to the widow and children. But he paid neither one thousand five hundred nor two thousand'. The Red-Men's Court forgave the Sahib. Such was the colonial justice machinery. It was not objective. It used to judge the case on the basis of race. It was a racial court. After this event, the Sahib engaged Bade Khan, another colonial master's agent to have a look on the coolies. The novel characterizes the moral superiority of the colonized over the colonizers.

The Sahib also eggs on the coolies of the coffee estate to drink toddy and makes them virtually bonded labourers. These coolies know that they waste their hard-earned money on toddies. The government's response to the non-violent movement of the villagers is the use of brutal force targeting even women, old men and children. Moorthy, the little Gandhi of Kanthapura takes on the white owner of Skeffington Coffee Estate. The Kanthapurians suffered too much brutalities and atrocities and finally they left for Kashipura.

16.2.4 Colonial Violence

Moorthy the hero of Kanthapura mobilized women from all quarters astoundingly and made them to stand against British colonial machinery. In the narrative we see too much colonial violence. Pariahs Rachanna, Madanna, Lingayya all oppose Moorthy's arrest by tooth and

nail. In return, they are beaten badly by Bade Khan and the Police Inspector. Women and children weep, sob, and groan out of agony.

After Moorthy's arrest, Rangamma took the charge. She firstly prepares a group of women for drill so that they can fight colonial men. At last Rangamma formed the group and christened it Sevika Sangh whose members call them Sevis. Ratna emboldens them:

'Be strong , sister. When your husband beats you, you do not hit back, do you? You only grumble and weep. The policemen's beatings are the like!' and we say, 'So they are' (*Kanthapura* 175).

Finally, Rangamma and Ratna could arrange a march of seventy five women before toddy booths so that they could stop Estate coolies buying toddies from their hard earned money with all observances of Gandhian etiquette:

...and somebody began to clap hands and push forward, and we all clapped hands too and began to sing, and the Police began to push this way and that, when Pariah Rachanna was torn down from the toddy tree, our hearts began to beat so fast that we cried out 'Hoye-Hoye!' and we pushed forward with the men. And the Police Inspector this time shouted out 'Attack!', and they lifted the lathis and bang-bang they brought them down on us, and the lathis caught our hair and rebounded from our backs, and pariah Ningamma beat her mouth and wailed, 'Oh, he's gone, he's gone, he's gone'...'Now, sisters, forward!' and we all cry out, 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai! Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!' and we deafen ourselves before the onslaught... (*Kanthapura* 184-85).

The rain coincided with the picketing. To see the picketing of toddy booths, Skeffington men lost their control and began beating, thrashing Satyagrahis. The Police Inspector rushed at coolies till they started finding ways here and there. The Police Inspector kicked Rangamma and she fell down and Ratna cried out, 'Oh, you dogs', and the Police Inspector spat in her face and gave her a slap that brought blood out her mouth' (*Kanthapura* 199). All the limits breached when the police Inspector ordered to throw water on them and then-

...the Police go to the toddy booth and come out with pots and pots in their hands, and they dip the pots in the side gutters and potfuls and potfuls of water are thrown at us, and they open our mouths and they pour it in and they lift up our saris and throw it at

unnameable places, and the water trickles down our limbs and drips down to the earth, and with more beating and more beating and more beating we fall back one by one against the earth, one by one we all by the coolies of the Godaverri, and the rain still pours on (*Kanthapura* 200).

Next time, women from the Pariah Street, the Potter's Street, and the Weaver's Street collectively planned to stop shops selling toddy workers at Skeffington Estate. But the British soldiers "rushed this side and that and caught this girl and that." (*Kanthapura* 211) These women lost their control when they saw Rachanna's grandson held leg up and head down and being beaten black and blue. They shouted out, "Butchers, butchers, dung-eating curs!" (*Kanthapura* 212) At this, the policemen whipped and kicked them immorally. At the Post-Office-House, Ratna met the heinous brutality of colonial machinery- 'Ratna fallen on the floor, her legs tied ankle to ankle and her bodice torn, and the policeman when he sees us, [Radhamma and Timmamma] slips away over the wall' (*Kanthapura* 216-217).

16.2.5 The Plight of Women

The form and nature of Satyagraha Movement was inevitably feminine but the end masculine. It nowhere sought to destabilize the rulings of patriarchy. But it seems a little haste to claim that Gandhi whatsoever did; it was only for nation and patriarchy. It must be admitted expediently that Gandhi was man of his time. His experiments were altogether based on his limited experiences. He astoundingly mobilized women of all classes and made them realize their potential in full glory. Women no doubt suffered unexpectedly which cannot be undermined by the roles and achievements of men. The entire village is patriarchal. All the male characters except Moorthy do not like women involvement into the Gandhi freedom struggle. They were more or less concerned over.

Ratna in the novel is portrayed as a defiant lady. She challenges baseless patriarchal ideals. Her role in the narrative is double-fold to challenge women-oppressive conservative patriarchal ideals, and participation in anti-colonial struggle. Her opinions on widowhood are similar to that of Gandhiji:

Bhatta rose up to go, for he could never utter a kind word to that young widow, who not only went about the streets alone like a boy, but even wore her hair to the left like a concubine, and she still kept her bangles and her nose rings and earrings, and when she was asked why she behaved as though she hadn't lost her husband, she said that that was nobody's business, and that if these sniffing old country hens thought that

seeing a man for a day, and this when she was ten years of age, could be called a marriage, they had better eat mud and drown themselves in the river (*Kanthapura* 44).

Now we can say that during the freedom struggle, the society of the country was patriarchal, poor girl education, child marriage, and ill treatment towards widows were seen across the country.

16.2.6 Hindu-Muslim Rift

Hindu-Muslim unity and brotherhood was the dream and ambition of Gandhi's life. To materialize his aspirations, Gandhiji did unparalleled attempts though he could not get success in this task till the end of his life. He never took Muslims less than Hindus. By his Satyagraha movement, Gandhiji attempted Hindu-Muslim unity by bringing them against British imperialism.

Gandhiji's support for Muslim leaders against the British abolition of Turkish Caliphate in 1919 could not promote and better Hindu-Muslim relations. Gandhiji had already sensed the growing unrest among Hindus and Muslims. Instead it emboldened Muslim leaders. It encouraged pan-Islamism and simultaneously provoked Hindus' suspicions about Muslim's loyalty. The rifts between Hindu and Muslim were deepening. To solve this problem, Gandhiji went on twenty-one-days fast in 1924 but proved least satisfactory. Then Gandhiji on his own responsibility took on Dandi March alongside 78 followers on 12th March, 1930, and after 24 days long tour, Gandhiji on 5th April at Dandi took a pinch of salt and symbolically broke English Salt Law. Gandhi chose salt as an issue because it affected all Indians, and might improve Hindu and Muslim relations. By this initiative, Gandhiji could prove that the poor people are the worst victims; and the rules of the British authority inhuman. Notwithstanding, communal feelings gathered wind in Indian national politics, culminating in the partition of India.

If Kanthapura, the village is taken for granted as the microcosm of the whole nation, there is no place for Muslims and their interests for kind consideration. In this regard, Kanthapura, the village is communal in character. It is a Hindu village. Religion has strong hold on the villagers. The villagers are prepared to stand against the British tyranny by the narration of religious stories being identified with freedom struggle events. All the initiatives in the village are taken up by Hindus. It is exclusively a Hindu village. Jayaramachar, the famous Harikhatha-man whom Moorthy called to Kanthapura tells religious stories identifying with freedom struggle.

The lone active Muslim character Bade Khan who comes to the village from outside to have a look on Kanthapurians in wake of foreign cloths boycott, even could not avail accommodation in the village:

To tell you the truth, Bade Khan did not stay in Kanthapura. Being a Mohomedan he could stay neither in the Potters' Street nor in the Sudra Street, and you don't of course expect him to live in the Brahmin Street. So he went to Patwari Nanjundia and growled at him, and the Patwari trembled and lisped and said he could do nothing (*Kanthapura* 19).

Patwari Nanjundia asked Bade Khan to consult Patel Range Gowda. Patel took his case very lightly and even irritated him. He neither asked him to sit nor answered immediately. After long waiting, Patel Range Gowda answered that he had none to offer you. Having been frustrated and ill-treated by Range Gowda and other Kanthapurians, Bade Khan went barking, growling, groaning to the Skeffington Coffee Estate and begged for a house to live in.

Moti Khan is another policeman who is introduced when one hundred and thirty nine protesters in the leadership of Moorthy, Rangamma, Rachanna, Range Gowda, Ratna were picketing Boranna toddy grove. Moti Khan is introduced only to be laughed away. In this way we saw the communal nature of the village.

16.3 Relevance of the Title

Kanthapura portrays realistic, graphic, and telling customs and traditions, habits and manners of the people of the village. The novel is a portrait gallery. No aspect of the village is left unfocussed. All the positive as well as negative aspects are put up faithfully. The title of the name is after the name of the village. It is not after its hero. It is very apt and suggestive. The novel concerns itself with not one character's action instead all characters are given due treatment.

And moreover, Raja Rao truthfully depicted the actual condition of the village. It is divided into several quarters on the basis of caste. Most of the villagers are illiterate and superstitious. These villagers have great disliking towards Muslims. They hate Bade Khan. The village is patriarchal in its orientation and action. They even don't like involvement of women into freedom struggle. Ratna a widow is just 15 years old. She has seen her husband just for a day but Kanthapurians expect her to live like a widow. She is a progressive lady. She does not follow suit. As a result bears foul words from people. Every character in the narrative is introduced but there is no full detailing about them. Most characters are flat characters. In this

way we can say that Kanthapura and Kanthapurians are the central concerns of the narrative and hence the title is apt and meaningful.

16.4 Summing Up

To the conclusion, it can be said that the novel touches upon almost the positive and negative aspects of the society. The novel is steeped in Indianness. It is Indian both in theme and treatment. The novelist depicted objectively and impartially the Gandhi Movement of freedom struggle.

16.5 Notes and References

Vacuum: an empty situation

Merchandise: goods bought and sold

Rift: Breach, Estrangement

Communal: relating to one group

Patriarchy: a social system in which father rules

Lewd: offensive way

Atrocity: terrible act of action

Hegemonization: an act of having control over

Apparatus: a system used for operating something

16.6 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers

Q. 1. Justify the title of the novel.

Ans. Read carefully sections 16.2 and 16.3.

Q. 2. Write an essay on communal and caste ill-will as hinted in the novel *Kanthapura*.

Ans. Study sections 16.2.2 and 16.2.6.

Q. 3. Write an essay on women's suffering during the freedom struggle.

Ans. Read section 16.2.4 and 16.2.5.

Q. 4. Appreciate East-West encounter at the Skeffington Coffee Estate.

Ans. Study section 16.2.3.

Q. 5. Discuss colonialism with reference to Kanthapura.

Ans. Read section 16.2.1.

16.7 Further Readings

Iyengar, K.R.S. Indian Writing in English. New Delhi: Sterling, 1985.

Rao, Raja. Kanthapura. New Delhi: OUP, 2011.

Sharma, K.K. Perspective on Raja Rao. Ghaziabad: Vimal Prakashan, 1980.

UNIT 17**KANTHAPURA: STRUCTURE AND TECHNIQUE**

Structure

17.0 Introduction

- 17.1 Objectives
- 17.2 *Kanthapura*: A Very Short Introduction
 - 17.2.1 Plot and Structure
 - 17.2.2 Narrative Technique
 - 17.2.3 Folklore and Myth
 - 17.2.4 Imagery
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17.0 Introduction

It has already been alluded in the previous Units that the novel *Kanthapura* is knitted up of multiple threads which were then contemporary, burning, and relevant. It gets challenging to

a creative writer especially when he/she aspires to address multiple issues in a particular whole with proper organic symmetry. 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 novel *Kanthapura*, in many ways, is the best and fulfilling work of fiction.

In this Unit we have an opportunity to prepare a substantial ground for making the evaluation of Raja Rao'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 17.5.

17.1 Objectives

The objective of this Unit is to Provide an idea about structural and stylistic aspects of the novel. Though it seems a little difficult, our step-wise study will help readers substantially. 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 need of a well-knit plot.
- ✓ The technique used for the narration of events.
- ✓ The significance of myths and images.
- ✓ The linguistic aspect of the novel.

17.2 *Kanthapura*: A Very Short Introduction

Raja Rao in his "Foreword" to the novel pays tribute to bona fide Indian mentality. He writes, "There is no village in India, however mean, that has not a rich *sthala-purana*, or legendary history, of its own" (*Kanthapura* v). He saw breadths and lengths of the country via the lens of *Kanthapura*, the village. It was his belief what happened here in 30s of twentieth century, might have happened in other parts of the country as well. To him, *Kanthapura* is microcosm of macrocosm. The novel is a glowing tribute to Indian age-long oral traditions of story-telling. Let us examine plot and structure of the novel.

17.2.1 Plot and Structure

Aristotle in his the Poetics placed 'plot' or 'mythos' first to be analyzed in a dramatic work of art. It is be-all and end-all. Plot means the structuring of events into an organized whole. To convey content and meaning, a creative writer is required to erect a design made up of constitutive parts. For the achievement of organic unison, the author orders intellectually all the events that make up the story convincing. In discussing novels, critics use the term

‘structure’ to mean ‘plot’. Haphazard or random placing of events destroy rather weaken the structure of the novel. 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). In a narrative work, interrelation of events helps convey the message or theme and engage reader’s attention. Conflict helps ‘plot’ grow substantially. It plays a key role in ‘plot’. ‘Plot’ does not grow in the absence of conflict. It sets the ‘plot’ rolling. A well-knit ‘plot’ has proper beginning, middle, and climax. They bear organic unity.

Raja Rao, educated in India and abroad, cleverly reinstates the ancient, common, oral tradition of story-telling. In fact it was his cultural resistance against the European hegemony. By the parameters of western fiction writing, *Kanthapura* should not be approached. It is in fact novel of novels. Raja Rao took up and addressed all the major, minor issues making them the integral part of the novel. And hence, it is dramatic, lyrical, subjective, objective, futuristic, epical, innovative work of fiction. Raja Rao like Gandhiji looks for all-round development of country. He perhaps wanted country politically, socially, culturally, economically, spiritually emancipated, refined, and reformed all around. Most probably it was the reason the novel *Kanthapura* appears to some scholars ‘formless’, unsystematic, and limited in scope. If we go by the overall impression the text creates upon the reader, we get a well-organized, coherent, and well-knit structure. It is not loose. It is well-designed and well-directed work. R. K. Srivastava writes of the structure of the novel:

In *Kanthapura*, the structure is neither linear and open, nor episodic as it appears on surface, but circular or enclosed, like that of a wheel- a circular rim connected by spokes to a hub, designed to turn around an axle. Or to use another image, the structure of the novel is radial with the action and its meaning and significance radiating, like rays or radii, from a common centre. These rays or spokes of a wheel join both the centre of a circle or the hub of the wheel, on one side, the several points on its circumference, on the other (K. K. Sharma 143).

The ‘plot’ of the novel is simple. It has no complexity and suspense. It has one main plot and one sub-plot. The main plot accounts for the impact of the Gandhi movement on the people of *Kanthapura*. The sub-plot deals with the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Here at the estate the owner baited coolies first and then they were exploited morally and physically. Raja Rao in this way critiqued and exposed the black magic of imperialism. The deplorable plight of collies at the estate is testimony to exploitative workmanship of colonialism.

About the freedom movement, and the Skeffington Coffee Estate we have discussed in Unit 16. Raja Rao artistically and strategically pitted the Gandhi freedom fighters against the Skeffington Coffee Estate signifying the colonial force.

The novel has a proper beginning, middle, and the ending. After giving a full detail about the village and brief analysis of characters though Ratna, Sankar, and Boranna are introduced at the later stage of the novel. The middle action begins with the arrival of Moorthy from the city with the message of *satyagraha*. Moorthy organizes them first by holding religious ceremonies. The freedom movement rises to its climax. Under the leadership of Moorthy, some seventy seven freedom fighters went for picketing toddy booths. In this fighting ten fighters were arrested, women were molested and raped. For much brutalities and atrocities, the villagers shifted to another village Kashipura with hope that their mission would be successful one day.

On the surface, the narrative of the novel is restricted to the village. And perhaps for this reason, some scholar claim that it is of limited scope. But we should not forget that the novelist has visualized *Kanthapura* as the whole country. Just as Gandhism is not one dimensional so is the novel *Kanthapura*.

17.2.2 Narrative Technique

The novelist has used the first-person narrative technique in the novel *Kanthapura*. Achakka is the narrator of the story. She is an old illiterate Brahmin woman. She lives in Kashipura. She originally belongs to *Kanthapura*. She narrates events from her stand point to another woman long after these events actually took place. She narrates in the *puranic* manner. Perhaps for this reason, sometimes we see digressions and unnecessary details. Actually she had too much content to tell her fellow, she either compressed certain events or mixed them. She even sometimes indulges in superfluous and unnecessary details and digressions. But it was all natural to her temperament and training. Thus Raja Rao selected Achakka as the narrator tactfully. He wrote in the “Foreword”:

One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I used the word ‘alien’, yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up - like Sanskrit or Persian was before-but not our emotional makeup. We are all ‘instinctively’ bilingual. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have to look

at the large world as part of us.... The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression. We, in India, think quickly, we talk quickly, and when we move we move quickly. There must be something in the sun of India. And our paths are paths interminable (*Kanthapura* v-vi).

About the narrative technique used in the novel, K. R. S. Iyengar remarks:

What happens in *Kanthapura* is by no means a unique exception, but the telling of the story gives the whole affair an itihasic- at least a puranic-dignity. The narrative is hardly very straightforward: there are involutions and digressions, there are meaningful backward glances, there are rhythmic chains of proper names (Rachanna and Chandranna and Madanna; Sampanna and Vaidyanna; Satamma and Rangamma and Puttamma and Seethamma), there are hypnotic repetitions and refrains, and there also sheer poetic iridescences. A village, a picturesque region, an epoch of social and political change, a whole complex of character and motive, reason and superstition, idealism and cold calculation, all spring up before our eyes demanding recognition and acceptance: it is almost a tour de force.

Although Raja Rao has put the story into the mouth of a 'grandmother',- although the feminine touches and mannerisms, the seemingly effortless rotation of the tongue, the meandering sentences and massive paragraphs are characteristic of the narrator,- there is nevertheless consummate 'art' in all this riot of artlessness, there is careful 'selection' behind the apparent abundance of detail, and there is an adroit polarization in the plotless grandmother's tale (Iyengar392).

17.2.3 Folklore and Myth

Let me first take up the term folklore. M. H. Abrams is to say that since mid-nineteenth century, the term folklore is being applied to mean some sayings, verbal compositions, social rituals handed down mainly by oral medium. "Folklore includes legends, superstitions, songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, spells, and nursery rhymes; pseudo-scientific lore about the weather, plants, and animals; customary activities at births, marriages, and deaths; and traditional dances and forms of drama which are performed on holidays or at communal gatherings" (Abrams 100). The term folklore was first coined by William J. Thomas in 1846 to replace phrases such as "popular antiquities", "the lore of the people", and "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs etc, of the olden times". In this way, the term

folklore is a wider term and terms such as myth, legend, and folktale are ancillary parts. J. P. Tripathi remarks on the use and relevance of 'folklore':-

The narrative device is supplemented by the device of folklore and folkmind. Women and children in the villages are superstitious and credulous and think anything can occur including miracles and direct intervention of gods to help the men who pray. The village-folk through chatter, gossip, and rumour spread everything and women meeting at nights are the prime agents of folklore. Thus, Venkamma talks of the marriage of her daughter to a rich man and the feast of 'Laddu and Pheni' to be offered and soon enough it spreads in the whole village. By similar device news and rumours about Gandhi, Moorthy, freedom of Peshawar from Redmen, Dandi March and city boys coming to Kanthapurians' help are presented (Tripathi 51).

Myths have been part of every culture since immemorial times. In a sense, folklores, myths, and legends are some sort of exposures of social, cultural, religious, and historical patterns. Myths since antiquity bear shared beliefs, and argue for moral uplift of humanity. Myths have been ever vital to human civilization. They are not simply free-wheeling tales but a hard-worked active force and bear specific objectives and orientation.

Mythical approach does not claim any revelation as science does instead, it prepares a ground for human beings to peep into human insights. Generally poets, playwrights, and novelists invoke myths for exercising extra emphasis, comparison, contrast, and elucidation. They resuscitated antique myths and folktales which bore strong and relevant contemporaneity and foreshadowed modern man's predicament in myths and folktales. Every creative soul attempts hard to cause some change in the society. T.S.Eliot recognized the potential of myth and evolved his mythical approach to juxtapose contemporaneity and antiquity and declared that the use of myth was a step towards squeezing the modern world into art form. In twentieth century, poets, playwrights, and even novelists took myths seriously and applied them to link past with present. S. P. Swain writes:

Myth is expressive of the total vision of the human situation, human destiny, human inspiration and apprehensions. It is an aesthetic channel to ventilate, explore and re-create the experience of the self in relation to the past, a mode of expression of the labyrinthine interaction of the self and the society (Bhatnagar 65).

In *Kanthapura* the past and present are projected in time future. Characters from epics like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Gita*, and the *Puranas* are mentioned and linked to

contemporary characters. By the use of this technique, Gandhi is projected as a god and Moorthy an incarnation.

J. P. Tripathi writes of the mythical background to the novel:-

“The mythical background gives cultural and spiritual depth to the novel and is an important part of the technique. The myth of goddess Kenchamma envelopes the whole structure of the novel and she is constantly evoked in weal or woe. The freedom story bears a mythical aspect and is the tale of Siva and Parvati; Parvati is the country in penance. Shiva is three-eyed like Swaraj emphasizing self-purification, Hindu-Muslim unity and Khaddar. Jayaramachar’s Harikatha presents sage Valmiki begging to Brahma to send some divine power to cure the ills of India and Shiva is incarnated as Gandhi...Moorthy being inspired by a vision of Gandhi rather than a real meeting enhances the mythical form of the novel. Moorthy’s vision of a light arising from the sanctum and his own similarity with Prahlad supplement the mythical structure. The sight of goddess Kenchamma’s eagle at the time of worship for the telling ceremony is another mythical device. Gandhiji is associated with Sahyadri Mountain and Moorthy with a small mountain in the same spirit. The historical evocation of the Mutiny of 1857 and Lakshmi Bai add to the same” (Tripathi 51-52).

“Kanthapura is a veritable Grammar of the Gandhian Myth- the myth that is but a poetic translation of the reality. It will always have a central place in Gandhi literature” (Iyengar 396). The use of myths and folklores enriched the texture and helped considerably evolve the story of the novel.

By the use of symbols, in the hands of creative writer, characters, situations or events achieve symbolic signification. Use of symbols is another device of Raja Rao’s narrative technique. Etymologically symbol means putting together. It makes the comparison evocative and perceptive. In the novel *Kanthapura*, Moorthy is the symbol of Gandhi or satyagraha; Bade Khan symbolizes colonial oppression; Bhatta is the symbol of orthodoxy; Venkamma is the symbol of superstition; Range Gowda is the symbol of firmness and strong determination.

17.2.4 Imagery

Imagery (word-pictures) is one of the creative devices used to provide the reader with vividness and immediacy. It is central element in all imaginative literature. Raja Rao extensively used images to characterize characters, rural life, freedom movement, and

religious life in Kanthapura deriving from various sources and centres. He used images creatively to evoke Indianness. His images are sprung from Indian scenes, situations, manners, habits, gestures etc. B. D. Sharma did an excellent study in an article titled “Imagery in Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*”. He writes, “The images employed in Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* have been derived from such sources as Hindu religion, mythology and folklore, social relations, animal husbandry, horticulture, forestry, wildlife, domestic animals, reptiles and insects, human anatomy, garments, buildings, household activities and articles, geology, musical instruments, and social celebrations, and such objects of nature as birds, water and mountains” (Sharma 111). For practical purposes I am quoting a few glowing and memorable examples. To individualize half a dozen characters of the novel, Raja Rao like Ted Hughes used animal imagery. For example, Moorthy is described as a noble cow and his honesty is like that of an elephant and as a holy bull. Bade Khan is described as a goat for his beard. Venkamma is described as a waterfall and a buffalo, Rangamma as a cow. Range Gowda is described as a tiger for his fearlessness and impressive personality. Bhatta is likened to a jackal. Raja Rao purposively used different images for the same person and event. Mahatma Gandhi who is not actively present in the narrative but he is present in every development of action taken up in the village. He is described as Rama who killed Ravana, as Krishna who killed Kansa. According to J. P. Tripathi, “the most haunting image in the novel is that of Rama-Raj, the ideal rule, to come to the Congress after British imperialism; the image is evoked again and again and is the compass needle of the freedom-struggle itself” (Tripathi 194). In fact, the whole novel is saturated in imagery organically. He used imagery which was familiar to Indians and was typically Indian.

17.2.5 Language

As far as the use of English language is concerned, Raja Rao thought that it could not convey Indian sentiments. And therefore Raja Rao did experiment with English language and used it the way Indians speak and talk. T. B. Macaulay wrote in his famous ‘Minute on Indian Education’ (1935): English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect’. These people would constitute a class who would in fact protect British interests and help them rule a vast and potentially unruly land (Macaulay 249). To falsify and run water on Macaulay’s dream, Raja Rao applied his Indianized English in the narrative account of the novel.

Raja Rao indigenized English by incorporating and impregnating Kannada rhythms, and words from other languages like Sanskrit, Hindi, and French. The way he narrated, it is Indian altogether. Indian thought pattern and cultural twists are hallmarks of his prose. The words are English but their organization is Indian. Many Indian expressions in the narrative

are literally translated into English. The English language is in fact enriched by getting saturated with new Indian idioms and images. Sometimes there is breaking up of the English syntax to convey emotional agitations. Some words like *dhoti*, *ahimsa*, *mandap* etc. Raja Rao used with great flow. Thus, the language used in *Kanthapura* is saturated with Indian idioms. Sometimes we see Kannada rhythm. “English is ritually de-anglicized” (Parthasarathy 13).

17.3 Summing Up

To the conclusion, we can say that Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* is the most successful work of fiction. He used all the ways and means to catch Indian sensibility. He skillfully used phrases, proverbs, idioms, words, images, symbols, myths, folktales, fables, legends, themes, situations, thinking, speaking, and writing pattern typical to Indian minds and creativity. He boldly has introduced certain changes and modifications in the structure of the language. The novel *Knathapura* is Indian in both theme and treatment. Myth and reality are interfused successfully. The use of first-person narrative technique reminds of T. S. Eliot and Charles Lamb. His narrative technique employs flashback, reflection, dream, and episodes. He blended religion, society, and politics inextricably. For all these subtleties and nuances, the novel *Kanthapura* is read and appreciated across the world.

17.4 Notes and References

- Antiquity: objects from ancient times
- Microcosm: something that is seen as a small version of something larger
- Macrocosm: opposite of microcosm
- Organic: integral
- Polarization: something to separate into opposing groups
- Pseudo-scientific: a system or assumption erroneously regarded scientific
- Digression: an act of leaving main topic
- Resuscitate: to bring into an active state again
- Symmetry: coherence
- Syntax: the way words are put together to form phrases, clauses, and sentences
- Horticulture: the science of growing fruits and flowers
- Animal husbandry: a kind of farming in which animals are raised
- Geology: a science that studies rocks, cliffs, mountains etc.
- Ted Hughes: an English poet (1930-1998)

Texture: the way or pattern parts are fit together

Tour de force: a French word used for something very skillful and successful

17.5 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers

Q. 1. Discuss salient features of the narrative technique as used in the novel.

Ans. Read carefully section 17.2.

Q. 2. Evaluate the art of Achakka's story-telling.

Ans. Study section 17.2.

Q. 3. Raja Rao extensively used images and symbols in the novel. Discuss.

Ans. Read carefully sub-section 17.2.3 and 17.2.4.

Q. 4. Discuss Raja Rao's use of myths in the novel *Kanthapura*.

Ans. Read sub-section 17.2.3.

Q. 5 How did Raja Rao de-anglicized English?

Ans. Read sub-section 17.2.5

17.6 Further Readings

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UNIT 18 KANTHAPURA: CHARACTERS

Structure

18.0 Introduction

- 18.1 Objectives
- 18.2 Character and Characterization
- 18.3 Male Characters
- 18.4 Female Characters
- 18.5 Summing Up
- 18.6 Notes and References
- 18.7 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers
- 18.8 Further Readings

18.0 Introduction

Though the central focus of the novelist in the narrative is not upon the creation of a few striking characters yet his creation of characters like Moorthy or Ratna are memorable.

Actually the novelist was more interested in the depiction of the impact of the freedom movement on the people of Kanthapura village. Before any creative imagination, the creation of characters and assigning them specific roles seems quite challenging. Hence character creation and characterization are very crucial aspects of a narrative.

After going through the whole Unit, you are expected to write down answers to the questions studying carefully the relevant section as hinted in section 18.7.

18.1 Objectives

This Unit intends to provide you a detailed analysis of Raja Rao's craft of characterization, men and women character-sketches and their types. As you know that the novel *Kanthapura* has 'God's plenty'. But the matter worth consideration is how far did he individualize them? At the end of the Unit we have suggested a few selected books that will be useful for the enrichment of your knowledge.

18.2 Character and Characterization

In a dramatic or narrative literary 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.

Raja Rao’s range of characters is very wide. Most characters living in Kanthapura village are simple and primitive with belief in religion and superstitions. He in a typical way individualises every character either by identifying with the locality or certain habits. The novel is peopled with sons of the soil product of illiterate society. Mostly they are single dimensional. Since the author was seven seas away from the village to be depicted in the novel, he depended upon his first hand knowledge of the inhabitants belonging to various quarters: Brahmin, Weaver, Potter, and some characters engaged in the British bureaucracy.

18.3 Male Characters

Roughly there are forty or fifty major and minor characters in the novel *Kanthapura*. Out of these twenty two characters are male and remainders are female. They belong to various sections of society, different castes, and beliefs. There are Hindus and Muslims, poor and rich, educated and illiterate, good and bad. No character in the novel is given special attention by the eyes of novelist. And therefore the novel has no hero and no heroine in strictest sense. The habits, customs, rituals, and beliefs of the village in fact decide the course of action hence the village Kanthapura is itself hero of the novel. Since the Gandhi Freedom Movement is at the heart of the novel and Moorthy or Moorthappa is the harbinger of this movement into the village, he is key player of the entire action in the novel. Out of male characters, let me draw the character-sketch of Moorthy-

Moorthy:-

Moorthy or Moorthappa is the very alter-ego of the novelist. In this novel, he records his deep interests in India’s freedom struggle and its future though staying far away from India in France. Moorthy is mini-Mahatma Gandhi of Kanthapurians. Though Moorthy had never met Gandhi in person, he had seen a vision of “the Mahatma mighty and God-beaming” (*Kanthapura* 47) which turned him into an ardent advocate of Mahatma. Under the transforming influence of Gandhi, like thousands of students, Moorthy too gave up his education and dedicated himself for the cause of the nation on the lines of Gandhi. Achakka, the narrator of the story calls him “Corner-House Moorthy, who had gone through life like a noble cow, quiet, generous, serene, deferent and brahmanic, a very prince” (*Kanthapura* 6). The narrator individualises by connecting him with ‘corner-house’ in the village. Range Gowda hails calling him “our Mahatma”.

Moorthy to the people of the village is “a nice brahminic boy” who “neither smoked nor grew city-hair, nor put on suits and hats and boots” (*Kanthapura* 43). Even Bhatta thinks him “a good fellow”. Moorthy like Gandhi works for the uplift of ‘pariahs’. He does not believe in untouchability. Despite the fear of excommunication, Moorthy adamantly continues involving himself into the community of untouchables. His mother was too much afraid of the probable excommunication. Finally his adversaries got him excommunicated. His mother Narsamma could not bear it and passed away.

Moorthy is a religious man. One day he came upon “a half-sunk linga”, he with the help of a few other boys who had come to the village from cities, unearthed, washed, and consecrated the linga. They even “built up a little mud wall and a tile roof to protect the god”. He in this way got a chance to unite all the villagers to celebrate Sankara-jayanthi. Moorthy collects a few rupees for such programmes in the village. He calls Jayaramachar, the *Harikatha*-man to do “Harikatha”. Ganesh-jayanthi, Krishna-jayanthi festivals are celebrated in the village with great élan. They collectively hold feast. The villagers regard him “fine and brilliant”, “as honest as an elephant” (*Kanthapura* 12-13).

Moorthy in the novel is portrayed as a sacrificing figure. Despite Bhatta’s advice, he didn’t mind twenty-seven acres of wet land and fifty-four acres of dry land, a cardamom garden, a mango-grove, and a small coffee plantation. He distributes charakha among the villagers free of cost. He motivates women to take part in the freedom movement. The Congress Committee of the village elects him the president. The villagers fondly call him “our Gandhi”. They call Mahatma Gandhi “Big Mountain” and Moorthy the “Small Mountain”. He is the saint of the village. On one occasion Advocate Sankar asked Rangamma to say a few words about Moorthy “she had stood up and spoken of Moorthy the good, Moorthy the religious, and Moorthy the noble” (*Kanthapura* 143).

Ramkrishnayya, the father of Rangamma is next to Moorthy in regard to esteem and respect. He is minor character. He has surprising ability at making recitation and interpretation of holy books. He even makes the villagers emotional. He has a “bell-metal voice”.

Range Gowda is also a minor character. He is the Patel of the village. He is the ‘tiger’ of the village. He is fat and sturdy and frightening in appearance. He is known in the village for his “nine-beamed” house and fearlessness. His voice is the law of the village. He is the staunch supporter of Moorthy, the Gandhi-man. Like Bade Khan, he was also a government employee. In the formation of Kanthapura Congress Committee, Range Gowda played key role. He is a practical man of action. Several times he was jailed. He even was dismissed from the Patelship of the village but did not stop supporting Moorthy. He was man of risks.

He was the only among the people of Kanthapura who went back to the village after they had started living in Kashipur. He went there to collect jewels buried under the earth. There he saw no original resident of Kanthapura.

Next well-individualised minor character is **Advocate Sanker**, the Secretary of Karwar Congress. He is a lawyer and supporter of Moorthy. In fact he follows Gandhi, the barrister. He never took a false case. If he took any such false case through some cheats, he dropped in the middle when he discovered that he was misled. He even in some cases paid court fees himself on behalf of the client. He is a widower. He lost his wife just at the age of 26 but decided not to marry again. He lives a life of ascetic. He is the strong supporter of Hindi. He speaks Hindi in his house with his mother. It was his belief that Hindi will be national language some day. He is another mini-Gandhi. He attends those parties where people wear *khadi* only. He like Gandhiji spins charakha and prepares every morning three hundred yards of yarn. To Rangamma, he appears “a veritable Dharmaraja” (*Kanthapura* 143).

Bhatta is another minor sweet tongued character in the novel. He is antagonistic to Moorthy. He is a greedy Brahmin priest of the village. He takes very small fees if he tells auspicious days for festive activities. He has accumulated money by lending money to poor and helpless people at high rates. He never misses any festive dinner. He does not mind about his wife what she eats at the dinner. He marries for the second time a girl Chinnamma of just twelve and a half years old after the death first wife Savithamma. He got a sum of thousand rupees and five acres of wet land as dowry. Bhatta was against the freedom movement and pariah uplift. He colluded with the Swami to get Moorthy excommunicated.

After the arrest of Jayaramachar, Bade Khan, the policeman comes to live in Kanthapura village to keep watching any plan or development against the government. He is uneducated, vulgar, and crude in manners and speech. His duty was to inform the government about the freedom activities of Kanthapurians. In the village he asked for a room but nobody offered. Getting angry he went to the boss of Skeffington Estate. It was he who stopped Moorthy entering the Skeffington Coffee-Estate. In fact he stands for all those Indians who sided with the British during the freedom struggle.

The Swami is against the freedom movement. He is an orthodox Brahmin. He has tremendous influence on the people of Kanthapura. When it was heard in the village that the Swami will excommunicate who mixes with pariahs. He asks Bhatta to stop Moorthy's campaign of pariah uplift. Bhatta did his best but could not stop Moorthy. The Swami is the supporter of the British government. For his anti-Indian involvements, the British government gave him twelve hundred acres of wet land. When Moorthy's mother

Narasamma came to know that Moorthy and his family got excommunicated, she could not bore this news and succumbed to death.

Apart from all these characters there are Seenu, Puttu, Chandru, Srinivasa, Kittu, Seenappa, Rangappa, Subbe Gowda, Dore, Ramanna, Rachanna, Madanna, Siddayya, Advocate Rangamma, Seetharamu, Venkatnarayan, and Nanjudia etc. some other male characters in the novel.

18.4 Female Characters

Among all female characters, **Rangamma** is towering character. She is the daughter of Ramakrishnayya. She is liked and respected by all. She is an issueless rich widow of Kanthapura. She supports Moorthy. About her personality, the narrator says, “She was nearing forty, but she looked hardly thirty-three, and there was not a grey hair on her head. And she could work, too, then, she could talk and write and hold classes and sometimes she even went ... to meetings with Sankar” (*Kanthapura* 143). She has quality of leadership. After the arrest of Moorthy, she takes the charge of Satyagraha. She is intellectual and ‘no village kid’. She even writes for newspapers. She knows about Communism. The narrator Achakka mentions her ‘deferent, soft-voiced, and gentle-gestured woman’. She forms “Sevika Sangh” parallel to the Congress Committee of Kanthapura. She took the charge of Presidentship. She gives the example of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi. She firstly prepares a group of women for drill so that they can fight against colonial men. She by her strong arguments emboldens Sevis:

‘Be strong , sister. When your husband beats you, you do not hit back, do you? You only grumble and weep. The policemen’s beatings are the like!’ and we say, ‘So they are’ (*Kanthapura* 175).

Finally, Rangamma and Ratna could arrange a march of seventy five women before toddy booths so that they could stop Estate coolies buying toddies. After the consecration of Lingam, Rangamma was first asked to hold dinner. She is quite liberal and is in favour of giving opportunity to all pariahs to involve in prayers at temple premise. She promises to offer a Kanchi sari to Goddess Kenchamma for Moorthy’s safe release from jail. All the Congress activities take place at her house. She forwards every latest update about Congress to every inhabitants of Kanthapura. Unlike Moorthy and others, she remains till the end a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Venkamma, her sister-in-law is jealous of her.

Ratna is next significant female character in the novel. She is the daughter of Rangamma's widowed sister Kamamma. She was married at the age of ten and became widow at the age fifteen. Being a progressive lady, she does not subscribe to patriarchal expectations of a widow life. She is bold enough. She wanders on the streets of the village like young boys. She parts her hair to the left. Like courtesan, she wears bangles, nose-rings, ear-rings, colourful sarees, and pastes kumkum check on her brow. The people of Kanthapura do not like her modern ways of life and oomphy image.

Ratna in the novel is portrayed as a defiant lady. She challenges baseless patriarchal ideals. Her role in the narrative is double-fold to challenge women-oppressive conservative patriarchal ideals, and participation in anti-colonial struggle. Her opinions on widowhood are similar to that of Gandhiji:

Bhatta rose up to go, for he could never utter a kind word to that young widow, who not only went about the streets alone like a boy, but even wore her hair to the left like a concubine, and she still kept her bangles and her nose rings and earrings, and when she was asked why she behaved as though she hadn't lost her husband, she said that that was nobody's business, and that if these sniffing old country hens thought that seeing a man for a day, and this when she was ten years of age, could be called a marriage, they had better eat mud and drown themselves in the river (*Kanthapura* 44).

J. P. Tripathi evaluates her character in the following words:

Ratna is psychologically justified in her rebellion to the orthodox concept of child widows and perhaps in this she is the mouth-piece of Raja Rao himself. She was tactful enough to lie on her belly when the policeman tied her legs and wanted to rape her. She gives consolation and guidance to women in satyagraha during action" (Tripathi 111).

Next important female minor character in the novel is **Narasamma**. She is an old orthodox, good natured, mild widowed Brahmin. She is the mother of Moorthy. She had high expectations from her son. She wanted him become highly educated and well-placed. She fondly loves him. She had eleven children but only six of them could survive. Out of six survivors, five are daughters and were all married. Moorthy is her only son. She is not involved in the freedom movement. She wanted Moorthy to get married but he refused to marry. When Bhatta told her about the probable excommunication of Moorthy along with the whole family, she was stunned. She asks her son not to continue pariah business but Moorthy

continues. Finally the Swami excommunicated him and his family. She took this shocking news to her heart. She almost got mad. She kept walking on the streets and fields night after night. She caught cold. Her health deteriorated fast and died.

Venkamma is next character of my analysis. She is individualized by linking her with 'waterfall'. She is Rangamma's widowed sister-in-law. In the narrative she is known as Waterfall Venkamma because she is always seen crying and shouting at people. She has complaints against everything. She is envious of Moorthy because he has refused to marry her second daughter. She is petty minded. She is envious of Rangamma because she has a big house. She thinks that the house was built by her husband's ancestors not by the husband of Rangamma. She has five daughters and two sons whereas Rangamma is an issueless widow. Rangamma lives alone in the house. Venkamma does not approve of lone life in such a big house. In fact she could not bear to see others happy. She feels that the house should have belonged to her instead of Rangamma. She even imagines killing her. She is also against Gandhi movement. She associates herself with Bhatta. She spreads rumours about Rangamma's relationship with Advocate Sankar. She talks ill of Rangamma. She is envious of Ratna too. She speaks foul of Ratna's modern ways. She is of course whole of hatred, anger, envy. She is female villain.

Achakka, the narrator of the story, is uneducated but she is possessed of good sense. She is widow. She is the mother of Seenu. She has seven acres of wet land and twelve acres of dry land. In the beginning she was also against pariah business of Moorthy but she changed herself later on. She is fond of Moorthy. Her story-telling ability at Kashipura is appreciating.

Among the other female characters there are Kamamma, Savithamma, Chinnamma, Nanja, Rachi, and Nanjamma etc.

18.5 Summing Up

Say truly, in the novel Kanthapura, Raja Rao put emphasis on themes and ideas not on individual characters. Even then he successfully created so many living and memorable characters which is testimony to his craft of characterization. By the aid of nicknames, a few phrases, and epithets, he made his characters ample vivid and real. The characters of the novel are partly flat and partly round. They are mix of both qualities. The positive characters are contrasted with negative characters only to establish and highlight the former.

18.6 Notes and References

Communism: a theory advocating elimination of private property
Epithet: a word or phrase used to describe a person or thing
Oomphy: sexually appealing
Courtesan: prostitute
Drill: to engage in an exercise
Excommunication: to not allow someone to continue being member of a society
Tremendous: excellent
Petty: insignificant, not very important
Antagonistic: opponent
Festive: cheerful
Uplift: to improve someone's condition
Élan: with great energy and enthusiasm
Primitive: old
Entity: something that exists
Defiant: refusing to obey someone

18.7 Self-Assessment Questions and their Answers

Q. 1. Evaluate Raja Rao's art of characterisation.

Ans. Read attentively section 18.2

Q. 2. Discuss the novel Kanthapura has no hero and no heroine.

Ans. Study carefully sections 18.3 and 18.4.

Q. 3. Rangamma is 'no village kid'. Do you agree?

Ans. Please go through relevant paragraph of section 18.4

Q.4 Ratna is a defiant and brave girl. Justify this statement.

Ans. Read the relevant section of 18.4.

Q. 5. Range Gowda is the tiger of Kanthapura. Discuss.

Ans. Read section 18.3.

Q. 6. Most of readers regard Moorthy, the central character of the novel. Do you agree?

Ans. Read section 18.3.

Q. 7 What picture do you draw about the lives of women in Kanthapura village?

Ans. Attentively go through section no. 18.4.

Q. 8. What is your opinion about Venkamma?

Ans. Read section 18.4.

18.8 Further Readings

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