



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

Indian Writing in English

Postgraduate Programme in English Language & Literature



SELF LEARNING MATERIAL

COURSE CODE: M21EG04DC

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Indian Writing in English

Course Code: M21EG04DC

Semester-I

Master of Arts English Language and Literature Self Learning Material

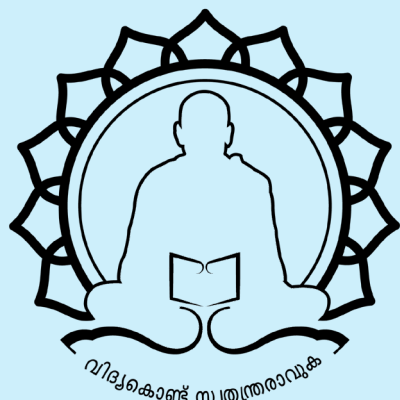


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Documentation



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Message from Vice Chancellor

Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centres around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual Modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities. The PG programme in English Language and Literature is benchmarked with similar programmes of other state universities in Kerala. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

The University is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The Self Learning Materials have been drawn up with a very clear prescription. It recognizes the autonomy of an adult learner and a journey through the treasures of the curriculum structured with provisions for interactive learning, interrogative reflections on the content and didactic discussion through illustrative scenarios. The University takes a strong position that the learner is to be engaged in a dialogue with the content and the materials are shaped to elicit reflections in the form of questions. The questions of the learner are considered to be the vital milestones in the pedagogy of the system of the University as well as the trajectory of the learner's progression. I would like to request you to bestow your personal attention in generating questions after having an intense dialogue with the content, as it has connection with the internal assessment.

Feel free to write to us about anything that seems relevant regarding the academic programme.

Wish you the best.



Regards,

Dr. P.M. Mubarak Pasha

21.11.2022

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Socio-Political and Literary Background

BLOCK-01

Block Content

- Unit 1 - A Historical Overview
- Unit 2 - Poetry
- Unit 3 - Drama
- Unit 4 - Prose and Fiction



Unit 1

A Historical Overview

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ critically contextualise the introduction of the English language in India.
- ▶ explore the dynamic relationship between language and cultural colonialism.
- ▶ understand various historical aspects in the development of the genre.
- ▶ examine some of the relevant theoretical frames for critically reading the genre.

Background

Every Indian writer in English has had to face the question of why they chose to write in English, a language that is seen as “alien” to the ground realities of the nation. This query is derived from the popular belief that using a colonial language like English to write about the nation is “unpatriotic”. There is also an implied idea that English would not be able to do justice to the complex landscape of India. Yet, the dominance of English on the global stage and the achievements of Indian English writers have also been acknowledged and celebrated to a certain extent. As a result, Indian writing in English has always occupied a paradoxical position in Indian literary history.

There is, however, no doubt that Indian writing in English constitutes an integral part of the literature produced from the country. Just as the other regional literatures of the country construct national/regional identities and representations, so does Indian English literature. Within this genre, it is possible to read literary versions of ‘India’, accessible to English-literate readers in the nation and abroad. By closely studying these texts, we can see how the history of Indian writing in English is tied to the social, cultural, and political trajectory of India itself.

In a broader sense, Indian English writing has also opened out questions about colonialism, and the role played by language and literature in strengthening it. As early as 1833, Thomas Babington Macaulay had noted



that while the British political empire might fail in the future, the “empire” of Western arts, morals, literature, and laws would remain “imperishable”. In other words, the introduction of the English language into Indian soil also ensured the cultural dominance of the British colonial empire. It displaced Sanskrit and Arabic, as well as other regional and common tongues, slowly emerging as the primary medium of diffusing western knowledge; particularly, literary, and scientific knowledge from other parts of the world. European literature became increasingly available in the country, catering to the resident British population as well as to the newly English-literate circles. It presented a literary sensibility and aesthetics that was different from that of Indian literatures, and which influenced the production of literature in the country.

However, the relationship between English and the cultural spaces of India has always been an evolving one. Even as access to English continues to signify social status and power, the language has been transformed and assimilated to suit Indian contexts. Indian English writers challenge and critique western ideas about literature and art, using the language to introduce those ground realities and histories that are often absent in western imaginations of India. In a sense, they are writing back to the imperial empire, both drawing from its canons and resisting its influences in many ways. This dual relationship is characteristic of the development of English language and literature in India. To place Indian writing in English into context, we must also explore the various historical facets related to its evolution.

Keywords

Colonialism, Language, Literature, Renaissance, Theories

Discussion

When the British arrived in India 200 years ago, there was little indication that these traders would go on to rule India and dominate the region for so long. India's plethora of culture, history, rich past, and beautiful art and architecture has always been a unique aspect of the nation. This, along with vast, untapped resources, made the country a prized territory for colonial powers. The era of colonialism in India began with the discovery of maritime routes for trade by Europeans, such as the Portuguese,



► Trade and imperialism

Dutch, French, and British towards the middle of the 15th century. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in India and the last to leave. In 1498 CE, Vasco da Gama of Portugal discovered a new sea route from Europe to India. He sailed around Africa via the Cape of Good Hope and reached Calicut. The East India Company (E.I.C), which was founded between 1599 and 1600, was the private company through which the British government made their initial foray into the Indian subcontinent. They would go onto take control of most of the trading routes, establishing a virtual monopoly in Indian trade.

► Misrule

From 1858 to 1947, until India gained its independence and Pakistan was born, the Indian subcontinent was under the British Crown or British Raj. The picture of Britain's exploitation of India can be proven by examining a few facts. From the first century until the start of British colonial rule in India in 1857, India's G.D.P fluctuated between 25 and 35 percent of the global G.D.P, and it fell to 2 percent after independence. This points to the level of exploitation and drain of wealth that characterised British colonial rule.

► Increasing influence

The British merchants initially travelled thousands of miles from the second smallest continent in the world, Europe, and made the local monarchs and princes their allies. In 1613, Captain William Hawkins was issued a *farman* or royal decree by the Mughal emperor Jahangir, permitting the E.I.C to set up a factory in Surat. In time, successive emperors allowed the company many concessions, such as being allowed the right to duty-free trade. With the Battle of Plassey in 1757, the E.I.C installed itself as a military and political force in the territory. However, there was little interest in anything other than extending its trade monopoly, as it had no ambition to establish an empire in the beginning. By 1765, the company was given permission to collect taxes on behalf of the emperor from the eastern provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This private mercantile company had, in effect, ingratiated themselves into political and economic power in the Indian subcontinent.

Back in Britain, the government was becoming more and more concerned with corruption in the E.I.C. The government held a hegemonic position over the company as it was officially placed under periodical government charters. In order to further control it, they passed the

► Governmental control

Regulating Act or Charter Act of 1883 through which the Indian subcontinent came to be recognised as a British colony. The Charter Act transformed the company into an administrative body for managing Indian colonial possessions. The post of Governor-general was created to uniformly govern the territory. New policies that strengthened the authority of the British government, both over the E.I.C as well as the Indian subcontinent, came into effect. With the First War of Indian Independence in 1857, and its subsequent failure, the British Crown took over the reign from the company.

► Process

The British Raj in India had all the hallmarks of colonialism, which is defined as one country taking control of another country or region, establishing a settlement, or permanent part of the colony, to control the area and gain wealth. It is the process of a country taking full or partial political control of a dependent country, territory, or people. The colonists settled in the Indian subcontinent for the purpose of exploiting its people and natural resources. There was a marked attempt to impose their own languages and cultures on the indigenous peoples of the colonised countries and to manipulate their understanding of the colony's culture and values. British imperialist agenda was carried out through the use of force and coercive influence, leading to economic, political, and cultural dominance within the colonised regions of the country.

► Traditional ways

Many company officials recognised the richness of the ancient cultural wonders of India. For instance, Warren Hastings established the Calcutta Madrasah in 1781 and Sir William Jones founded the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784. They professed an admiration for Indian culture and vehemently opposed any attempt to introduce Western civilisation or Christianity into India. This earned them the label “the Brahmanized Britons.” Jonathan Duncan founded the Sanskrit College in Varanasi in 1791 to teach Hindu philosophy and law. They acknowledged traditional Indian educational systems and cultural knowledges as valuable resources in themselves.

During the period of transitional governance in British India, there was an ideological dispute between the Occidentals (supporters of western knowledge systems) and the Orientals (supporters of eastern knowledge systems) known as the Oriental-Occidental Controversy.



► Medium of instruction

The conflict related to the organisation of education in the Indian subcontinent. The Indian languages of Arabic, Sanskrit, Urdu, and Persian were preferred by the Orientals as a medium of instruction. They also proposed the concept of including eastern literature into the curriculum. But the Occidentals favoured using English as the medium of instruction and including English literature in the curriculum.

► Neglect of traditional education

Serious contributions to subjects such as mathematics, medicine, literature, astronomy, philosophy, arts, and sciences had come from Indian scholars such as Aryabhatta, Shankaracharya, Chanakya, Charaka, Bhaskara, Kalidasa, Kapila, and Gautama Buddha, to name but a few. A comprehensive educational system was in place, though social and cultural barriers considerably limited access to women and subaltern communities. There was evidence of a renowned educational past, as made apparent by the archaeological remains of the monastic-scholastic compounds of Nalanda University (5 C.E. to 13 C.E.). These traditional educational and intellectual systems of the Indian subcontinent were often disregarded by supporters of Western education and colonialists in favour of English education, which was viewed as a pathway for modern instruction and scientific knowledge.

► Practical ends

Through the Charter Act of 1813, the British Government introduced a new educational system. This generated the fear that Indian cultures and traditions would be detrimentally affected by the new western educational system. There may have been a more practical angle to the introduction of English education as proven by an associated change in policy. The very same Charter Act also permitted English missionaries to evangelise within the colonies of the Indian subcontinent. Earlier, the E.I.C had declined to do so under the fear that it would cause cultural offence and thus affect trade relations. However, the British administrative offices of the period were understaffed as a result of the Peninsular War (1808–1814) and the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815). Both English education and missionary work would create a class of people who could be the loyal servants of the British government – educated in the English language and cultural values. Thus, the need for a workforce to serve in the British administrative system influenced the political and educational policies of the colonial government.



► Ideological education

The birth of modern western education in India, also referred to as the Indian State system of Education, was thus at the behest of a colonial power. In official discourses, the introduction of English education was associated with the resurrection of knowledge and the growth of science and technical education in the country. However, the primary goal was ideological as stated by Thomas Babington Macaulay: to build “a class of individuals, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.” Lord Macaulay had travelled to India as a member of the Governor General’s Executive Council in 1834 before being chosen as the General Committee of Public Instruction (G.C.P.I.). He prohibited the use of the funds delegated for eastern education, deciding rather to promote western education solely. He suggested the closure of all academic institutions that offered eastern philosophy and topics. Macaulay advised the British administration to focus on training a small number of Indians who would then instruct the rest of the populace. These few individuals were primarily from the higher socio-economic classes. This approach of schooling is referred to as a “downward filtration” policy. He had visions of assembling a group of Indians who would serve the British with loyalty.

► Supremacy of the west

The report Macaulay gave the governor general is commonly referred to as *Macaulay’s Minutes* of 1835. He made some contentious recommendations in his report, including the adoption of “downward filtration theory” for mass education and making English as the medium of instructions at all educational levels. He also recommended teaching European literature in schools and colleges, and ending the grant-in-aid programme for Indian indigenous educational institutions. With regard to the then existing Indian educational system, he made the following contentious statement: “A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded, and general principles are investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable.” Following this model, English became the official language for administration, and in courts by 1835.

The majority of the population continued to be excluded from the benefits of education. Only a small percentage of the people, particularly those from upper social classes



► Framework

and castes, could acquire a proper and graduated education. This partly explains the predominance of affluent social categories in the leadership of reform and national movements. The changes to the existing education system created a lot of unrest, and in response, the British Government appointed Charles Wood who later submitted his historic report called 'Wood's Despatch' (1854). In it, Wood disproved the idea of "downward filtration". He promoted a different model of education which included a larger range of topics, including the development of regional languages in early childhood education. According to the Despatch, each district must open schools that would offer elementary education. In large cities like Bombay (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai), and Calcutta (Kolkata), universities modelled after the west were established. Female education was supported and given consideration. All levels of teachers were to receive training. More secular education was offered, and private businesses received endorsements by providing grants. As a result, Wood's Despatch is regarded as the "Magna-Carta" of English education in India.

► Categorisation

During the 'Anglicising Period' from 1835, the early proponent of English language and literature were British. M.K. Naik suggests that the works of this period should be categorised as "Anglo-Indian Literature" since they were mostly written by authors of British descent. This included writers such as George Orwell, Rudyard Kipling and Jim Corbett who provided the "preliminary push". Similarly, Naik classifies Indian English literature as "literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality". In this sense, Rabindranath Tagore, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Rishi Aurobindo Ghosh, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sarojini Naidu are the founders of Indian English Literature.

During the 20 years between 1835 and 1855, the number of those accessing English education witnessed a rapid increase. It is understood that even during 1834-35, 32,000 English books were sold in India, as against 13,000 in native Indian languages. The introduction of communication systems further cemented this trend. The first railway and telegraph lines were built in India in 1853 and 1854, respectively. A sophisticated postal system fuelled the rise of Indian English readers and authors at a rapid pace. One

- Increased access

of the many “materializations and expressions of the new creative impetus in India” or the “literary Renaissance in India” was driven by the adoption of English as medium for writing.

1.1.1 Indian Renaissance

While the material and ideological effects of the introduction of English education cannot be fully quantified, certain socio-cultural changes could be tied to the phenomenon. As newer western notions of reason, equality, and liberty began to reach people, a period of social and cultural awakening was fostered in the Indian subcontinent around the nineteenth century. This came to be known as the Indian Renaissance. During this period, more people came to be exposed to scientific concepts, discoveries and technological knowledge. Ancient scholarly texts such as the Vedas, Upanishads, Sutras, epics, and other scriptures were revived and translated. Progressive ideas began to circulate in communities during this period, and there was increased participation in radical and progressive groups. This laid the grounds for later nationalist organization and movements. The era also saw social reform movements such as those initiated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. There was a drive towards improving conditions of life and reforming socio-religious practices. This was influenced to a great extent by western education, philosophy, and historical texts. It also opened out vistas for music, dance, and other performing arts.

- Socio-cultural rebirth

The Indian Renaissance can be divided into 3 phases:

First Phase

The expanding middle class, who were educated under British Liberalism, dominated the socio-religious organisations during this time. The movement’s defining quality was the comparison and evaluation of the past with the challenges of the present using rational thought and a western perspective. Reformers like Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar supported widow remarriage and opposed the practice of *Sati*, and Sree Narayana Guru promoted universalism. All these reformers desired to rescue India from the “period of darkness”, focusing more on socio-religious issues rather than political ones.

- Early period



Second Phase

The goal of the second stage was primarily to bring together anti-colonial politics and the social quest for modernity. The national movements that were arising in the nation promoted the intellectual principles of the renaissance in every part of the country. Even though the thrust on social issues was maintained separately from the politics of the time, there was an anti-colonial undercurrent to the movement. The leaders of the second phase of the renaissance approached various issues as creatively as possible.

► Social concerns

Third Phase

The third phase witnessed the fusion of Marxism with renaissance values. The emphasis during this period was against class, caste, and gender discrimination by invoking the concept of equality. Leftist ideology sought to bring about a more secular and egalitarian society that would 'transform' the existing cultural practices rather than "reforming" them.

► Fusion of ideologies

The reform movements of the period can be classified into (a) Reformist movements and (b) Revivalist movements. In varying degrees, they relied on reason and conscience to 'reform' and 'transform' existing religions and their practices. One of the earliest of these movements was the '*Brahmo Samaj* Movement'. The Brahmo Sabha was established in 1828 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and eventually changed its name to *Brahmo Samaj*. It favoured the adoration of an enduring god but was opposed to priesthood, ritual and sacrifice. The movement put strong emphasis on scripture reading, meditation and prayer. It held that all religions were interconnected. It was the country's first intellectual reform movement. In India, it sparked the development of rationalism and enlightenment. The *Brahmo Samaj* of India, led by Keshub Chandra Sen, and the *Adi Brahmo Samaj*, led by Debendranath Tagore, turned away from the movement in 1866.

► *Brahmo Samaj*

Another instance of a group working for religious reform was *Prarthana Samaj*, founded in 1876 by Dr. Atma Ram Pandurang with the goals of rational worship and social reform. R.C. Bhandarkar and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade were two other notable leaders. The *Prarthana Samaj* had a four-point social agenda that included



► *Prarthana Samaj*

opposing the caste system, educating women, prohibiting widow remarriage, and raising the age of marriage for both sexes.

► *Satyashodhak Samaj*

The *Satyashodhak Samaj* (Truth Seekers' Society) was established in 1873 by Jyotiba Phule. The movement's main targets were upper caste dominance and brahminical supremacy. Its principal objectives were to promote social service and education among women and lower caste individuals. He sought to eradicate socio-economic inequality and the caste system entirely.

► *Arya Samaj Movement*

The *Arya Samaj* was officially founded in 1875 by Dayananda Saraswati. In terms of form, but not in content, it was revivalist. One of the founding beliefs of the *Arya Samaj* was that all true knowledge was primarily derived from the *Vedas* and from God. They believed that all activities should be guided by the *Dharma* and that everyone should be treated justly. They prioritised society over the autonomy of the individual.

► Mohan Roy's traditional upbringing

The Renaissance period in India also saw the emergence of various social reformers, who worked to “change and improve a society, government, etc.,” and to serve the cause of humanity in unparalleled ways. One of the first names to arise in this context was that of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's. Because he was born in Radhanagar in the Hugli district of West Bengal, into a wealthy ‘traditional brahmin’ family, he received education at Patna and Varanasi. He also worked in the East India Company. Before attaining the age of ten, he was married thrice. Even though Roy was influenced by western progressive thoughts, he was well versed in the teachings of various religions. He supported the monotheism of Islam, mysticism of Sufi philosophy, ethics and morals of Christianity, and the *Vedanta* philosophy of the *Upanishids*.

► Mohan Roy's causes

Roy campaigned for the rights of women, including the right for widows to remarry, and the right for women to hold property. His efforts led to the abolition of *Sati* in 1829 by Lord William Bentinck, the then Governor-General of India. He opposed the practice of polygamy. Roy campaigned against the caste system and religious superstitions. He stressed rationalism and the modern scientific approach. Further, he condemned the oppressive practices of Bengali *zamindars*, demanding the fixation of minimum rents and the abolition of taxes on tax-free lands.



► Vivekananda's spiritual realm

Swami Vivekananda, born Narendranath Dutt in 1863, belonged to an upper-middle-class family of the *Kayastha* (scribes) caste in Bengal. Due to his privileged upbringing, he was exposed to western education, philosophy, Christianity and science. He attempted to combine Indian spirituality with Western material progress, maintaining that the two supplemented and complemented each other. In 1887, he renounced all ties with the world and lived a life of a monk, later emerging as Vivekananda meaning “the bliss of discerning wisdom.”

► Vivekananda's contributions

Vivekananda joined the *Brahmo Samaj* (Society of Brahma), determined to eliminate child marriage and illiteracy. He was a proponent of spreading education among women and subaltern groups. Through his founding of the Ramakrishna Mission, he undertook various forms of social service across the country. His contributions to the idea of Indian spirituality bolstered the nationalist movement and anti-colonial ideologies.

► Dayanand Saraswati's Hindu revivalism

Swami Dayananda Saraswathi, born as Moolshankar in Gujarat, was a controversial figure in the ‘*shuddhi* movement’ which allowed converts to return to Hinduism. He advocated a *Vedic* revival with the slogan: ‘return to the *Vedas*’. He criticised religious texts such as the *Puranas* for perpetuating idol worship and other superstitions. He tried to revive Hindu philosophy and belief, and argued against all wrong practices being propagated in the name of Hinduism. He supported and advocated women’s right to education and equal social status. He aggressively attacked social evils like the caste system. Dayananda started campaigns against untouchability and child marriage. He supported inter-caste marriages and widow remarriages. He established ‘*Arya Samaj*’ in the year 1875 to propagate his ideas. Its objective was to revive and reform the Hindu religion.

Jyotirao Govindrao Phule was born in 1827 to a family of vegetable vendors in Satara, Maharashtra. He managed to get education with the support of some benevolent people who discovered his intellectual potential. The harsh truths of society were revealed to him when he was insulted by one of his *Brahmin* friends and thus realised the caste divide and discrimination that prevailed in society. Jyotiba opened a school for girls which is the first girls’ school in the country. Jyotiba was also against child-marriage



► Phule's reforms

and was a great supporter of widow remarriage. He was sympathetic to the cause of distressed women and opened a home for such poor and exploited women where they could be taken care of. Jyotiba was also actively involved in the emancipation of the subaltern castes and especially the untouchables. He formed the *Satyashodhak Samaj* (the Society of Truth Seekers), which also opposed religious dogmas and superstitions, such as idolatry, need for priests and irrational rituals.

► Ambedkar's education

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar has famously said: "If I find the Constitution being misused, I shall be the first to burn it." One of the most influential voices in the making of the Indian constitution, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born to the *Mahar* caste who were treated as 'untouchable.' He completed his postgraduation and Ph.D. in the United States, and further studied at the London School of Economics. Ambedkar was highly meritorious in studies which gave him the opportunity to do his higher studies in premium institutions.

► Movements

Ambedkar was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian constitution. His major contribution was in attacking social evils and fighting for the rights of the 'untouchables' and subaltern communities. He advocated separate electorates for subaltern communities at the time of preparation of the Government of India Act, 1919. Ambedkar started several publications such as *Mook Nayak* (a weekly) and *Bahiskrit Bharat* (a periodical), to create awareness and to fight for the rights of the socially deprived. He launched public movements against caste discrimination, such as opening up public water resources for 'untouchables', and the burning of *Manusmriti*, an ancient Hindu text which gives sanction to the caste system. He also fought for the rights of subaltern people to enter into Hindu temples. The Constitution of India in 1950 gave benefits of reservation to Schedule Castes and Scheduled Tribes who were earlier referred to as 'Depressed Classes'. He forcefully advocated the rights of women and subaltern groups.

The Indian National Movement rose to prominence in the backdrop of various social reform movements and anti-colonial sentiments. Nationalism itself was a modern idea. It is defined as the "identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or



► Nationalism

detriment of the interests of other nations.” It also constitutes the “idea and movement that holds that the nation and the state should be congruent.” In order to form a nation state, acquiring and maintaining sovereignty over one’s native country is a key component, which tends to advance the interests of a particular nation. A country is the natural and ideal foundation for a polity, and it is the only legitimate source of political power, according to nationalism, which also asserts that each nation should govern itself without outside interference (self-determination). The impact of British colonialism had taken away both sovereignty and self-determination from the territories of the Indian subcontinent.

► Growth of national consciousness

In India, national consciousness began to grow in the second part of the 19th century. Indian nationalism has historically been characterised as the “Indian response to the stimulation produced by the British Raj through establishment of new institutions, new opportunities, etc.” Indian nationalism emerged as a criticism of British colonial policies. The first organised national response against the British came from the Indian National Congress, which was founded in 1885 with 72 political activists. People’s realisation of how the British limited India’s development led to widespread protests across the country. First, the development of the railway, telegraph, and unified postal systems increased communication among the populace, particularly among the leaders. Second, the nineteenth century saw the growth of modern or western thought. Nationalist leaders from various linguistic regions were able to communicate with one another, regardless of regional linguistic barriers.

Third, with the rediscovery of India’s past by European historians like Max Mueller, Monier Williams, Roth, and Sassoon, as well as by Indian scholars like R.G. Bhandarkar, R.L. Mitra, and subsequently Swami Vivekananda, a brand-new vision of India’s former power and glory was constructed. When European researchers proposed the idea that Indo-Aryans belonged to the same ethnic category of humanity as the nations of Europe, the theory of western superiority came under contestation. These revelations led to the development of a renewed sense of nationalism and patriotism among the learned Indians. Fourth, there was an unparalleled proliferation of Indian-owned English and Vernacular newspapers with the advent

► Ideological transformation

of the contemporary press. They had a significant impact in organising political movements, influencing public opinion, and advancing nationalism.

► Nationalism through reformation

Last, the reform movements that swept across the country during the renaissance were against socio-religious and political oppressions in the society. By restoring the idea of the splendour of ancient India, fostering faith in religion, and promoting Indian cultural values, they disseminated the idea of 'love' for the motherland. On the philosophical and spiritual side of nationalism, individuals like Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, and Aurobindo Ghosh came out publicly. Bankim Chandra's hymn to the motherland, "*Vande Matram*," became a rallying cry for fervent nationalists.

The literature during the period of nationalism flourished at a great pace. The novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, K. S. Venkatramani, K. A. Abbas, etc., portrayed Gandhi's ideals and the influence of Gandhi on Indian villages and towns. R. K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* reflects Gandhian ideology and influence on the people of the country. R.K.'s hero, *Jagan*, a sweets seller, sees himself as a stubborn *Satyagrahi*, regularly spinning the *Charka* and equating himself with achieving Buddha-like *nirvana* according to Gandhist principles. Mulk Raj Anand's *Baka* is introduced to Gandhi as a means of recovery from the social evils of casteism and untouchability in his work *Untouchable*. Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* echoes Gandhiji's Swadeshi and anti-colonial protests. K. A. Abbas' novel *Tomorrow is Ours: A Novel of the India of Today* (1943) describes the issues of nationalism and untouchability through a female protagonist. Tagore believed that every Hindu should sacrifice his life for the attainment of freedom, as per the portrayal of day-to-day life in *Gora* (1909). Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya's novel *Anandmath* exerted great influence on people by preaching the need of attaining our goals through sacrifice. This work was banned by the British regime.

► Literary rebellion

While the reformist and nationalist movements expressed a religious and spiritual dimension, another ideological basis for the formation of the Indian nation-state lay in the framework of Nehruvian socialism. Since liberty, equality, fraternity, and the dignity of the individual were seen as the fundamentals of national unity,



► A new model of Socialism

Nehruvian socialism offered a way of building the same through a mixture of Marxism, Fabianism, and Socialism from the U.S.S.R. It included every section of society, and was “more democratic and not just based on class.” His socialism included rational planning to overcome anarchic individualism, valued local democracy, local management of utilities, and mobilised local initiatives in every way. He saw “it as providing a direction, a momentum, and a value system rather than a final goal”. Nehru encouraged mixed economy rather than State Monopoly because he did not try to abandon private enterprise or abrogate private ownership. The aim was only to regulate the same towards a just and equitable distribution of land, income, or wealth. In his Mixed Economy, government also has considerable importance. Additionally, this included elements of democracy, economic growth, increased opportunity, equality, social justice, and liberty for the people, which are fundamental elements of Nehru's socialist philosophy.

► In practice

An important distinction between Nehru and the other socialists is that he preferred the gradual implementation of socialist principles using non-violent methods rather than using violent means to create a socialist society. Nehru held the view that everyone who had contributed to India's history and culture have a special responsibility to uphold the rights and to advance the welfare of the minority community. Socialism had an impact on the debate in the Constituent Assembly, and Nehru was one of the prominent members who backed the concept. Although Patel, Prasad, and Azad were the only members committed to effective government, Nehru was more focused on the social development and problems in India. He was particularly attached to his conception of socialism, which caused the constituent assembly to adopt a more pro-socialistic stance. There were other constituent assembly members who shared Nehru's socialist views, such as K. T. Shah, but they did not have the same clout as Nehru, who belonged to the legislature's oligarchy.

The need for secular thought was highly touted throughout the formation of the Indian constitution. This was particularly important given the religious conflicts that had frequently broken out in the Indian subcontinent. Indian secularism took on a different mode from the secularism which is widely accepted all over the world. The State is not separated from religion, but the atheistic and



► Secular strand

theistic principles are not accepted into the constitution. The state provides its acceptance and support to whatever faith the citizen chooses to believe and follow. According to Articles 25 - 28, the Indian constitution provides right to religious freedom. The proliferation of secularist ideas such as abstraction, spirituality, liberty, and individuality gives rise to “plurality.” Thus, these two strands of nation building, spiritual and secular, have been interrelated in the context of the Indian landscape.

1.1.2 Crisis in Indian Democracy

► Crisis

Many personalities subscribe to the sentiment voiced by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in his famous speech on August 14, 1947, wherein he said that even though the words “secular”, “equality” and “socialist” are included in the constitution, these words would be irrelevant as long as the larger sections of our society are not free. Dr B. R. Ambedkar defined democracy as a means to bring about a significant change in the living conditions of the depressed classes without resorting to bloodshed. However, the issues that defined a crisis within Indian democracy in the earlier phase are ongoing even today. Despite their best efforts to end caste-based discrimination, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar and Gandhi were only partially successful. The vulnerable and marginalised sections of the society continued to be left behind to an extent. There are people living now whose past or present generations have not got either elementary or higher education. There are families which never had a land or house of their own and none of their family members past or present received government jobs. These deprivileges are due to caste discrimination, class categorization, poverty and government corruption.

A harrowing example of the negation of democracy is the declaration of Emergency (1975-1977) during the reign of Indira Gandhi. Despite the slogan of democracy being “for the people, by the people, and of the people”, democratic freedoms were curtailed, and citizens became defenceless. There had been two national emergencies declared in 1962, during the Sino-Indian War, and in 1971, during the Indo-Pakistan War. Unlike these two instances, Indira Gandhi’s government declared a state emergency without warning, on the midnight of 25 June 1975, in India. Mrs Gandhi wielded almost autocratic control over the cabinet. The emergency is often dubbed the



► Emergency period and democracy

‘darkest hour’ of free India, because civil liberties were severely restrained. The freedom of the press was strictly restricted and anything published had to pass through the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. Indira Gandhi’s son, Sanjay Gandhi, wielded extra-constitutional powers. He conducted forceful mass sterilisation of people in a bid to control the population of the country. Non-Congress state governments were sacked. Many slums in Delhi were destroyed. There were many instances of human rights violations in India. Curfews were imposed and the police detained people without trial. Officially, the emergency was lifted on 21 March 1977 with the defeat of Indira Gandhi in the elections which followed the emergency. Life in this period is portrayed in works like *Midnight’s Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie, *Rich Like Us* (1985) by Nayantara Sahgal, *Emergency Retold* (1977) by Kuldip Nayar, and *Indira Gandhi, the ‘Emergency’ and Indian Democracy* (2000) by P. N. Dhar.

1.1.3 Postcolonialism

► Effects of colonial rule

Post Indian Independence, it became important to theorize about the effects of colonialism on India’s complex culture and social systems. According to Griffiths and Ashcroft, the term ‘postcolonialism’ can be used to discuss the same: “As originally used by historians after the Second World War in terms such as the post-colonial state, ‘post-colonial’ had a clearly chronological meaning, designating the post-independence period. However, from the late 1970s the term has been used by literary critics to discuss the various cultural effects of colonization.” Postcolonialism analyses the ethical, political and metaphysical concerns of power, gender, race, language, ethnicity, subjectivity, cultural identity and nationality.

► Struggle

Colonization turned India into a barren land with limited resources. The struggle was to overcome and restore that which had been exploited politically, economically and environmentally. During the partition, millions died, and many lost their national identity within their land. The communal riots that followed had a grave impact in both India and Pakistan. The economy was fragile with a rise in famines, and unemployment was widespread. This led to a search for new identities, a purpose of existence, and identifying roots, cultures and languages.



► Feminist movement

Another aspect of the Indian landscape that needed to be understood in depth was the emergence and evolution of feminist thought in India. Feminism in India was different from feminism in the West. The early indications of the women's movement in India can be traced back to the nineteenth-century social change. It can be divided into three phases. The first phase (mid-19th century) began when reformists spoke in favour of women's rights by making reforms in education and customs. The second phase is from 1915 till independence during the Quit India Movement of Gandhiji, who exhorted women and women's organisations to get involved. The third phase can be placed under the post-independence period, and focused on fair treatment of women after marriage, in the work force, and in the political space.

► First phase

A prominent women-led movement that marks the first phase began independently in Maharashtra led by pioneering advocates such as Savitribai Phule, who, along with Jothiba Phule, founded India's first girls' school. Savitribai is considered the first female teacher in India. She wrote poetry reflecting her struggles and ideals, which were published as the compilations titled *Kavya Phule* and *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar*. Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati in her book *High Caste Hindu Woman* (1887), exposed all manners of gender oppression disguised as tradition and customs. Though the early 19th century saw men on the forefront, later it was carried on by their spouses, sisters, daughters and protégées. Generally, women had to face structural hierarchies and injustices.

Later in the 20th century, a new narrative about "women's activism" emerged. Feminists in India sought gender equality like their feminist counterparts across the world: the right to work for equal wages, the right to equal access to health and education, and equal political rights. Women-only organisations like All India Women's Conference (A.I.W.C.) and the National Federation of Indian Women (N.F.I.W.) emerged where A.I.W.C. was closely affiliated to the Indian National Congress. These organisations were under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and it worked within the nationalist and anti-colonialist freedom movements. After independence, feminist agendas and movements became less active because the focus was more on nation building. The second wave writers explored the boundaries, including sexualities, bodies, genders, land,



► Second phase

identities etc. They placed their identity and individualism above nationhood and conventions. Their works defied illogically conservative thoughts and practices of society, and were progressive enough to inevitably draw criticism.

The third phase followed the same protests and demands as of the earlier phases. They fought against discrimination on the basis of gender, caste and sexuality, and fought for equal wages. The period after the 70s had a comparatively stronger voice against all sorts of oppression that vulnerable sections of the society were facing, especially women. They also raised their protest against growing fundamentalism. The works after Independence include Amrit Pritam's *Pinjar* (1950), Krishna Sobti's *Mitro Marjani* (1966), Kamala Das's autobiography *My Life* (1973), Mahasweta Devi's *Breast Stories* (translated from Bengali by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 1997), and Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1955). The publishers Urvashi Butalia and Ritu Menon initiated a start-up in 1984 considered as the first Indian publishing house dedicated to women known as *Kali for Women*. Feminist literature by women writing about caste and gender has among its recent champions *Joothan* (1997) by Omprakash Valmiki, *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) by BR Ambedkar, Bama's *Karukku* (1992), sociologist Sharmila Rege's *Writing Caste, Writing Gender* (2006) and, most recently, Sujatha Gidla's *Ants Among Elephants* (2017). Yet, women's primary obligation was seen to be within the family, considered to be the basic unit of society and the nation.

► Third Phase

According to Karl Marx, every society is divided into social classes, whose members have more in common with one another than with members of other social classes. In the same way, Indian society divides people based on a specific caste structure in India, which functioned on the basis of the *Varna* system. There was a much darker era for Dalits in India. The details of the discrimination they suffered are horrific. Dalit women were neither supposed to cover their upper body, nor were they allowed to wear gold ornaments. Dalit men were not allowed to wear dress below their knees. There were, and even now in rural India except a few places, bans for Dalits to use public facilities, and in pursuing jobs which were not prescribed in the invisible caste rules followed by the Indian society.

► Discrimination

By now, you would be aware of the atrocities that Dalits/

► Dalit literary expression

untouchables faced. We saw, during the independence, there were many reformers who sternly stood against the brutal practise of the caste system. Dr B. R. Ambedkar who himself had gone through a lot of humiliating experiences, together with the founding fathers, produced the Indian constitution which ensured fundamental rights and opportunities to socially and economically weaker sections. When people received basic education and financial support, they started talking more about their lives through their literatures. These literatures gave expression to the injustices they had gone through many centuries and raised their voices of revolt against Brahminical hegemony, past and present. Dalit literature is a testimony of the suffering instituted by the caste system and the voices of protest of Dalits. Some of the works related to the experience of being a Dalit and the bad treatment meted out to them are *The Annihilation of Caste* (1936) by BR Ambedkar, *Shadow from Ladakh* (1988) by Bhabani Bhattacharaya, *Children of God* (1976) by Shanta Rameshwar Rao, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, *Baba's Tribe* (1989) by Suresh Chandra, *A Black Paddy* by Rangin Banerji, *Joothan: An Untouchable's Life* by Omprakash Valmiki, and Bama's *Karukku* (1992).

► Subalterns

Another way of approaching Dalit experiences and narratives is through the theoretical framework of Subaltern Studies. Antonio Gramsci coined the term 'subaltern' to identify the cultural hegemony that excludes and displaces specific people and social groups from the socio-economic institutions of society, in order to deny their agency and voices in colonial politics. In order to be heard and to be known, the subaltern was forced to adopt Western ways of language, thought and reasoning. Because of this Westernization, the subaltern can never express their native knowledge. This can reroute meanings or 'de-familiarize' concepts. Sometimes the reality of the subaltern may not be the reality of the coloniser's world. Some of the works that studies subaltern experiences are *Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995* (1997) by Ranajit Guha, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (2002) by Dipesh Chakrabarty.

Perhaps, one of the most significant terms associated with Indian writing in English, particularly in the contemporary sense, is Globalisation. The word refers to the "emergence of an international network of economic systems" which is



► Process of globalisation

the result of liberalisation, better trade relations, sharing culture, views, ideas, marketing products and connecting the world. Globalization is the factor through which national development is accelerated. The definition of globalisation serves through currency exchange, raw material trade, manufacture, and supply in accordance with the requirements of recipient countries. Let me provide an example, have you eaten pizza? Have you heard any songs of BTS? Do you celebrate Valentine's Day or Father's day? Or, to put it simple, do you have a Facebook or Instagram or a Twitter account through which you met a first non-native Indian friend? How often do you watch YouTube and how many of your comments received replies from people of different countries? Well if any of this happened, you are a part of globalisation or a part of you is being globalized.

► Effects of globalisation

India's diversity in culture, language, tradition, land, climate, nature, religion, etc., allows the nation to hold a special significance with respect to its distinctiveness, which acts as a soft power across nations. The English language has a main role in making anything possible because if one needs to know each other, communication is necessary. The effects of globalisation is reflected in the literature mainly after the 20th century, with the number of books being published every year also having increased. On the one hand, many scholars observe and probe literary works in an effort to spot echoes of various globalisation topics within the texts and contexts as well as to support the realities of globalisation through literary form. On the other hand, literature and literary studies have evolved into a platform for defending, evoking, and interpreting various social, literary, cultural, and political themes in the context of globalisation. While the majority of Indians live in the "India of Darkness", marred by poverty, desolation, and privation, the wealthy are a small minority who represent the "India of Light" as narrated by Aravind Adiga in his novel *The White Tiger*.

The Indian diasporic writers who migrated to various parts of the world also have a prominent association with Indian writing in English. The term 'Diaspora' has Greek origins (loosely it means – scattering of seeds) and is used to refer to the mass movement of Jews away from the homeland. In contemporary times, 'Diaspora' refers to the people living away from their homeland due to various reasons. Hence Indian Diaspora refers to the group of

► Diasporic population

people who are currently living outside India (temporary or permanent) and those who can trace their origin to India. India was one of the first countries to acknowledge the significance of its diaspora and to set up an institutional structure for long-term, mutually beneficial involvement.

The Indian Diaspora is a transnational community that represents a variety of sorts, forms, geographies, and historical periods. It is also diverse, heterogeneous, and eclectic. In order to engage them and establish a connection with India, several and unique strategies are needed. The concept of India and its inherent values runs through all of them, connecting them to the country. People of Indian origin and non-resident Indians, who span all continents, are referred to as Overseas Indians. They have significantly contributed to knowledge, invention, and progress around the world. According to the report by United Nations published in *The Economic Times*, "India has the largest diaspora population in the world with 18 million people from the country living outside their homeland in 2020...[T]he U.A.E., U.S., and Saudi Arabia host the largest number of migrants from India." Famous examples of Indian Diaspora are, the late astronaut Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams, Vinod Khosla, Sundar Pichai, Indra Nooyi, Satya Nadella, Rajat Gupta, Deepak Chopra, the banker Anshu Jain, business executive Nikesh Arora, businessman Yusuff Ali, etc.

► Significant population

It is in the backdrop of these elements that Indian Popular literature must be understood. Literature that appeals to wider audiences and is written to satisfy the need for pleasure of general public is referred to as popular literature. Since its primary goal is to amuse, it can be distinguished from literary works with artistic intent. Unlike high literature, popular literature typically does not aim for a high level of formal beauty or subtlety, and is not meant to last. Advanced technologies in printing have made it easier for popular literature to thrive, which has coincided with the increase of literacy through schooling. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, vast segments and even majorities of a society gained access to works of literature that had previously been produced for consumption by a small, and well-educated elite.

► Democratisation of literature

In India, the romance genre has always been the most significant in popular literature, having existed from the



► General consumption

Middle Ages to the present. The most popular kind of romance describes the challenges two individuals (often young) involved in a restricted/forbidden love. Fantasy or science fiction is another popular subgenre. Western novels, which are books set in the 19th century on the American frontier, are also quite popular. The detective narrative or murder mystery is a popular genre of literature that is extensively read. Comic books and cartoon strips are also considered to be forms of popular literature. With over 9000 publishers, India comes in the second place behind the U.S. in English-language publishing. Some instances of significant popular literature in India are *The Guide* (1958), *Malgudi Days* (1943) (a collection of short stories) by R. K. Narayan, *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953), a novel, and *Untouchable* (1935) by Mulk Raj Anand, *Train to Pakistan* (1956), recounting the Partition of India in August 1947 by Khushwant Singh, *Godaan* (1936), a Hindi novel by Munshi Premchand, and translated into English as *The Gift of a Cow* (1957), *The Room on the Roof* (1965) by Ruskin Bond, *The White Tiger* (2008) by Aravind Adiga, *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) by Shashi Tharoor, *Fastening, Feasting* (1999) by Anita Desai, *Narcopolis* (2012) by Jeet Thayil, *Sea of Poppies* (2008) and *Hungry Tide* (2004) by Amitav Ghosh, and *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth (1992).

Summarised Overview

This unit explores the entry of English language and literature into India through the backdrop of the evolving socio-cultural and political history of the country. It highlights the important colonial policies and attitudes, as well as its reception among the colonised, in tracing the growth of the language. The role played by various social reform movements and reformers in paving the way for the Indian Renaissance, bolstered by the impact of Western education, is further explored herein. The eventual growth of a national consciousness and patriotic fervour can also be traced, to an extent, to the Renaissance period in the Indian subcontinent. The major theoretical lenses that must be used to contextualise the literature and writings over the centuries – postcolonialism, feminism, subaltern studies, and globalisation – are also examined. From Macaulay's minutes to the advent of popular Indian English literature, the social, cultural, and political trajectory of the nation remains interlinked with the development of Indian writing in English.

Assignments

1. Trace the entry of the English language into the Indian landscape during the colonial period.
2. How did the Indian Renaissance transform the socio-cultural space of the Indian subcontinent? Answer with special reference to the various social movements and reformers of the period.
3. Examine Nehruvian Socialism and Secularism in the Indian context.
4. Write a short note on the crisis in Indian democracy.
5. Write an essay examining the rise of feminist thought in India.
6. How does Subaltern Studies become a critical framework for examining the socio-cultural history of the nation?
7. How is globalisation connected with the spread of the English language?
8. Explain the term 'Popular Literature' with reference to the Indian context.
9. Present a detailed historical overview of Indian writing in English.

Suggested Readings

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2. Raveendran, P. P. "Nationalism, Colonialism And Indian English Literature." *Indian Literature*, vol. 39, no. 5 (175), 1996, pp. 153–59. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24159211>.
3. CHATTERJEE, KALYAN K. "The Indian Renaissance: European Text and Indian Context." *Indian Literature*, vol. 35, no. 4 (150), 1992, pp. 51–60. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23337230>.



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2. Naikar, Basavaraj (ed.). *Indian English Literature*, Vol.I – VI, New Delhi, Atlantic Pub., 2007.
3. Prasad, G.J.V., *Writing India, Writing English: Literature, Language, Location*. Routledge, 2011.
4. Sahu, Nandini. *The Post-Colonial Space : Writing the Self and the Nation*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2007

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



Unit 2

Poetry

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ comprehend the origin and evolution of Indian English Poetry.
- ▶ analyse and differentiate the thematic development of Indian English poetry over the periods.
- ▶ delineate the different types of poetry and the characteristics of lyric poetry.
- ▶ distinguish the major features of modern Indian English poetry.

Background

Indian poetry has a long and rich history. The rich poetry tradition of India extends back more than 5,000 years in ancient languages like Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Pali, with renowned epics like the *Bhagavad Gita* written in verse form. Sanskrit poetry and its popular forms were at their pinnacle from the middle of the second millennium B.C. until 1,000 A.D. After this period, over a thousand years, most Indian poetry was written in Indo-Aryan and Indo-Dravidian languages.

The introduction of English by the colonisers was just a new form of expression for the native people. The expansion of Indian poetry in English was directly influenced by the British rule in India. Early Indian poetry written in English was an imitation of the western model. Everything, from the syntax to the sentiments, was so similar that it resembled a “perfect alien bride.” It leaned to England for advice as well as inspiration. Over the last 150 years, Indian poetry written in English has gone through three stages: imitation, assimilation and experimentation (or “individualisation”).

The period from 1850 to 1900 is the imitative phase, during which the Indian poets tried to imitate British romantic poets such as Wordsworth, Scott, Shelley, Keats and Byron. The initial phase (Imitation) can be referred as the period of the Renaissance in Indian English poetry. *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems* (1828) were the two volumes of poetry written by Henry Derozio. His poems exhibit an evident authenticity of patriotic utterance, which marks Derozio as an Indian English poet. The critic M. K. Naik considers Derozio the pioneer in the use



of Indian myth and legend, imagery, and diction, though he also employs allusions to Western classical myths with equal competence: e.g., “Highest Himalay” (“Poetry”), “Gunga’s roil” (“Song of the Indian Girl”), “Chandra’s beams” (“The Eclipse”), etc.

The first collection of poetry by an author of “pure Indian blood” appeared three years after Derozio, in Kasiprasad Ghose’s *The Shair and Other Poems* (1830), which precisely announced the emergence of Indian English poetry. Michael Madhusudan Dutt’s *The Captive Lady* and Manmohan Ghose’s *Love Songs and Elegies* were creative heaves caused by the romantic spirit and literary renaissance. Toru Dutt is the first and only poet in this phase who incorporated India and her heritage by putting a large number of Indian legends into verse. She is also known as the first Indian woman writer in English.

Indian romantic poets tried to conceptualise the Indian Renaissance between 1900 and 1947, known as the period of assimilation (Indianisation). These poets contrasted Indian nationalism with themes from early 19th-century British poets in their poetry. The major poets of this phase were Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. Their works were filled with nationalism, philosophy, spirituality, and mysticism, which was unlike English romanticism. These poets’ earlier works were infused with themes such as “search for the divine,” “beauty,” and “love.” Later in the colonial period, the socio-political situation became rough, and subsequently, themes such as nationalism and philosophy began to appear in their poetic works.

In the third phase (Individualisation), the era of questioning and ironic exposure was replaced by the era of hope and aspiration. The national identity, gained after independence, gave Indian writers a new confidence, that they could be critics of themselves. The major post-independence Indian English poets are Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, P. Lal, Adil Jussawalla, A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, Gieve Patel, Arvind Mehrotra, Pritish Nandy, Kamala Das, K. N. Daruwalla, Shiv Kumar, Jayanta Mahapatra, Dilip Chitre, Saleem Peeradina, Santan Rodrigues, Eunice De Souza, Silgado, Meena Alexander, Agha Shahid Ali, Vikram Seth, Manohar Shetty, etc.

Contemporary Indian English writing is an expression of various sections of society, such as representations of urban or rural livelihood, middle-class life, and marginalised sections of society. There are a lot of experimentations in modern Indian English poetry with a view to achieving modernity. Sometimes even the structure, rhyme, and stanzaic forms were replaced by ‘free verse.’

This unit examines the advent of romanticism, the evolution of epics, sonnets, and the consequences of nationalism.



Keywords

Romanticism, Nationalism, Modernism, Epic, Sonnet, Lyric

Discussion

1.2.1 Influence of Romanticism

► Origin of Romanticism

Romanticism began in Europe in the late 18th century and lasted until the mid 19th century. In Europe, it was an artistic and intellectual movement that emphasised the importance of emotional sensitivity and individual subjectivity. For the Romantics, imagination, rather than reason, was the most important creative faculty.

► Indian Romanticism

In India, Romanticism was a “cultural movement which sought to develop a particular form of nationalist sentiment.” The Indian romantics also criticised the glorification of reasoning and science. They rather focused on emotions, intuition, and mystic experiences. Indian romanticism was based on nationalistic feelings, cultural pasts, and heritage. It was more about discovering indigenous arts such as folk songs, folk poetry, folk culture, and folk dances and popularising these art forms. They focused more on reviving the vernacular languages to recover the national spirit.

► Major poets of Indian Romanticism

Like any movement, Indian romanticism was also led by legendary figures, which led to a new phase of modern Indian literature. The poetry of this period is characterised by intense patriotism and political awakening. Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, H. N. Chattopadhyay, and a host of others were the distinguished poets of this period. Sri Aurobindo's (1872–1951) search for the ‘divine’, Tagore's quest for ‘beauty’, and Mahatma Gandhi's experiments with ‘truth and non-violence’ influenced the later works of writers. Sri Aurobindo, who mostly wrote in English through his poetry and philosophical treatises, such as *The Life Divine*, presents the prospect of the ultimate revelation of divinity in everything. Tagore's poems are a spiritual quest for the ‘beauty’, of nature and humanity.

1.2.2 Emergence of the Epics

An epic is a long narrative poem that usually deals with



► Indian epics

important subjects like events of cultural significance and heroic actions. Though technically a poem, they alternate between scenes and include dialogue, making them unlike any other form of poetry in the literary world. The two oldest epics of India are the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, most likely composed not earlier than 300–400 BC. Epic poetry in India mainly deals with the portrayal of the concept of a ‘mythical India’ in Sanskrit epics, namely the ‘*Mahabharata*’ and the ‘*Ramayana*’, as well as ‘*Puranic*’ literature (the *Itihasa*). The historical contexts of the Sanskrit epics comprise the late Vedic ‘*Mahajanapadas*’ (from approximately 1500 B.C.) and the consequent formation of the legendary Mauryan Empire, the beginning of the “golden age” of classical Sanskrit literature.

► Origin and practice of epics

The first traces of the Indian epic are probably found in Vedic Sanskrit literature. Reading the narrative poetry was a fundamental part of religious ceremonies at festivals. It was customary to tell stories of gods and heroes. The narrators, authors, and preservers of this ancient poetry were the bards, who resided at the courts of the kings and sang or recited these song cycles at feasts. The Indian “songs in praise of men” (*gatha narasamsi*), which recount the heroic accomplishments of kings and their armies, are the forerunners of the heroic epic poetry. These songs of adulation for men eventually accumulated allusions, grew in depth and variety, and eventually gave rise to cycles of epic songs with a single protagonist or a significant event. It is understood that Indian epic poetry originated in the circle of such bards. It is very important to understand that what is currently considered the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata* is not just a single poem. They are, in fact, a collection of numerous poems that have undergone many changes, insertions, and additions over the centuries. In particular, the *Mahabharata* is considered a network of animal fables, mythological narratives and didactic tales.

Some of the Indian epics are as follows:

The *Mahabharata*: Mahabharata is considered the longest epic in the world. It is a Sanskrit epic and is believed to have been written by Sage Ved Vyas. There are over 100,000 ‘*Slokas*’ in the 18 (*Parvas*) sections. The great work depicts a power struggle between two cousin groups, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The epic *Mahabharata* was originally translated entirely into English by Kisari Mohan Gangulu (1883-1896).



The Ramayana: It was composed in the sixth century BC and written by Valmiki. It is the tale of Lord Rama, who was Lord Vishnu's incarnation in the human form. Rama underwent numerous tribulations and sorrows because he was the "*Maryada Purushottam*" (the most moral man in the world), so he had to endure many trials and tribulations. The two missionaries who tried to translate the epic the *Ramayana* into English were William Carey and Joshua. The first complete translation of the *Ramayana* into English was authored by Ralph T. H. Griffith.

The Silapadikaram: The Tamil epic *Silapadikaram* was penned by Ilango Adigal. It discusses the tales surrounding Kannagi, a regular housewife who became a goddess. This epic gives a vivid depiction of the three ancient Tamil kingdoms and the civilisation of the period.

The Manimekalai: It is an Indian epic written in Tamil by the Buddhist poet Seethalai Saathanar. Manimekalai was the daughter of Kovalan, the hero of *Cilappatikaram*. The epic describes her conversion to Buddhism.

Shri Ramcharitmanas: The *Ramayana*, or the tale of Lord Rama, is retold in the poem *Ramcharitmanas* by the poet Tulsi Das with a great deal of devotion. It was written in Awadhi, an initial form of Hindi, in the 5th century AD.

The Raghuvamsa: It is a Kalidasa-penned Sanskrit epic. It discusses the mythological tales of the sun-king that are described in the early Indian chronicles. It contains 19 cantos.

Other major works having the epic characteristics:

Savitri: Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri* is an ambitious epic of 23, 813 lines in twelve books and forty-nine cantos. The poet worked for fifty years and more, though a part of the poem remained incomplete at the time of his death. It began as straightforward legendary poetry in two sections and eight volumes, but it evolved into an epic of humanity and divine power, death and the spirituality.

Meghnad Badh Kavya: A poem by Michael Madhusudan Dutt, which is based on a section of the *Ramayana*, is considered epic in nature. However, the term "epic" has been applied to it because of the scope and breadth of its vision, as well as the countless asides and references it includes.



1.2.3 Lyric

► Lyric poetry and its various types

The word “lyric” comes from the Latin word “*lyricus*,” meaning of/for the lyre. These short poems were originally accompanied by music. In lyric poetry, the mood is melodic and emotional. The writer uses words that express his or her state of mind, perceptions, and feelings rather than tell a story. Though earlier musical instruments accompanied the lyric song, now a lyric comes under a broad category of non-narrative poetry, including elegies, odes and sonnets. The lyric’s common themes are existence, love, death, or other life experiences. John Donne’s “Canonization” and William Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” lines are examples of highly subjective lyric poetry.

1.2.3.1 Characteristics of Lyrics Poetry

- In lyric poetry, there used to be only one speaker who articulates his or her state of mind thought process or emotions.
- In the past, poetry was sung with the accompaniment of a Lyre. Today, Lyric poetry is characterised by its intense emotional content.
- It is also known as an ‘untainted’ form of poetry.
- Lyric usually means a personal expression. That is, the poet uses it to express his/her own feelings.

When it comes to Indian English literature, the three renowned poets who come under the category of Lyric poetry are Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Their works were written in the pre-independence period. The lyrical quality of Sarojini Naidu is simple, direct and sensuous. The contents of her poetry are very elemental and possess a unique charm and grace, as her poetry is not overloaded with philosophical notions and messages. Most of the poems that Sarojini Naidu wrote are short lyrics. “Palanquin Bearers,” “Guerdon,” and “The Festival of Memory” are among her best-known poems.

► Sarojini Naidu

Rabindranath Tagore’s lyric poetry possesses a humanistic essence combined with spirituality, love of nature, and the expression of the beauty and splendour of the earth. His spiritual message does not creep into his lyric poems, which contain the joys and sorrows of life.



► Tagore

Tagore “exhales a lyric as a flower exhales fragrance.” W. B. Yeats appreciated Tagore’s lyrical genius for the subtlety of rhythm, the untranslatable delicacies of colour and the physical expression of thought. Tagore’s lyrics can be divided into devotional lyrics, nature lyrics, love lyrics and patriotic lyrics. His humanistic approach, the portrayal of women in his lyrics, the glorification of his childhood, and the supremacy of beauty in nature all have an essence of Indianness. His lyric poems are filled with simplicity, sublimity, spontaneity, and intensity and are melodious. His most famous work, which is a collection of lyrics, is *Gitanjali* (1910), for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913.

► Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo was a philosopher, poet, and *yogi* from India. He is thought to have wanted his short poems published in two collections, one of sonnets and the other of mostly lyric poetry. His lyric poems are brief and reveal the writer’s personal sentiments and views. However, unlike most other instances of the genre, his poetry is spiritual and psychic in nature.

1.2.4 Sonnets

► Henry Louis
Vivian Derozio

Most of you have probably heard of sonnets and have read a few of William Shakespeare’s sonnets. In the Indian subcontinent, sonnets were written in many languages. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio is regarded as the father of the Indo-Anglican sonnet. His sonnets, “The Harp of India” and “To India- My native Land”, are regarded as fine examples of India’s earliest nationalistic poetry. He also authored a long narrative poem called *The Fakir of Jangheera*.

► Sonnets of In-
dian English
literature

Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is an important figure when it comes to the sonnets of Indian English literature. His sonnets are 88 in number, arranged in two parts. The first part of seventy-four sonnets was written in the 1930s and 40s, and the second part consists of 14 sonnets that were written between 1898 and 1909. The sonnets of the first part deal with a mystical theme. The second part sonnets are less complex, easier to interpret, and show a degree of distress not found in the latter poems (the latter in chronological order but in the first half of the volume). The sonnets differ in their styles. They are all in 14-line pentameter, but the



rhyme schemes vary.

1.2.5 Impacts of Nationalism on Indian English Poetry

► Nationalism

We know that nationalism evolved in India only after the arrival of the British. Nationalism has a real-world meaning in addition to being an ideology. It may be characterised as the whole of people's desires on the social, political, and national levels. It is a mental state that is brought on by a lifelong associational habit and is characterised by a strong sense of personal identification with others around oneself and an awareness of sharing a similar destiny. It can also be described as the innate desire for "liberty and progress."

► Architects of the Indian Renaissance

Poetry expressed the ethos of national spirit over a period of time, from the Renaissance to Independence. The architects of the Indian Renaissance were not just reformers but also poets, and their writings influenced the masses. Henry Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the pioneers of Indian English poetry, asserted the spirit of nationalism as part of the national awakening. Derozio's collection of poems, titled as *Poems* and published in 1827, depicts his fervent nationalist feelings and love for India. In "The Harp of India", the poet identifies himself with India's great poetic tradition. His patriotic zeal and the love of freedom get bold expression in "To India- My Native Land", "The Golden Vase", "Freedom to Slave", "Greece" "Address to the Greeks" and "The Greeks at Marathon." A similar patriotic urge was noticed in the poems of Krishnaprasad Ghose and Michael Madhusudhan Dutt.

The poetry of Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Sri Aurobindo, and Rabindranath Tagore is, more or less, the manifestation of Hindu nationalism. Toru Dutt expressed her great reverence for the ancient Hindu past in her work, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882). B.M. Malbari's *The Indian Muse in English Garb* (1876) also showed characteristics of nationalism. Aurobindo and Tagore come next on the list, but Tagore was good at not letting spirituality creep into his poems like Aurobindo did; rather, his poems were a fusion of poetry and mystic feelings. Sarojini Naidu's *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *The Broken Wing* (1917) could provide a



► Nationalism
in poetry

comprehensible image of India. In the context of Naidu's poetry, nationalism refers to the celebration of Indian folk life and culture, Indian festivals, Hindu legends and Indian landscape. National figures like Gokhale, Gandhi, Tilak, and Jinnah appear in her poems because they shaped her political life. They are featured in poems like "In Gokhale's Garden", "Memorial Verses", "Lotus" and "Lokmanya Tilak."

► Modern poetry

By 1950s, new poems had already appeared. However, serious modern poetry in English was written after the 1960s, after independence. The important poets of the later decades are Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthy, P. Lai, Shiv K. Kumar, Gieve Patel, Adil Jussawalla, Jayanta Mahapatra, A. K. Mehrotra, Dilip Chitre and Arun Kolatkar. The 1960s and 1970s were highly sensitive periods in the life of the nation. The nation-building process was accelerated at many levels. Poetry in the 1960s focused on reality and was concerned with certain situations, especially the urban environment. The poets wrote about everyday Indian life in a fairly colloquial voice. Self examination and the examination of social life in India were two major concerns of the poets.

► The essence of
nationalism

The poets participated in building their cultural identity by recognising their unique roots. The sense of belonging to Indian life and the commitment to rebuilding the nation underscore the spirit of nationalism in their poetry. One of India's early nationalists, Bankimchandra Chattarjee, promoted patriotism and nationalism as an aspect of Dharma in religion. The *Bhagwat Gita* had a major influence in Lokmanya Tilak's political thought. Sri Aurobindo saw nationalism as a type of *Avatar*, or divine manifestation. Spiritual nationalism was promoted by Rabindranath Tagore.

1.2.6 Modernism and After

Modernism in Indian English literature is as difficult to define as the period of modernism in India. It can be traced with the change in thoughts and ideologies through the works of poets and authors of the period. In a way, modernism arrived with complexities and confusions regarding diverse vernaculars, languages, traditions, socio-politico-economic realities, and literary cultures in post-colonial India. In the 1930s, Marxist literary efforts, as

► Modernism

well as Marxism and individualism, influenced modernist ideologies, causing literary writings to focus on social problems and individual identities.

1.2.6.1 Features of Modern English Poetry

- The traditional custom of employing mythological stories is rejected by modern Indian English writers. They do not exaggeratedly extol Indian culture.
- Poetry became more secular and realistic in nature. Poets talked about real life situations around them rather than romanticising ideals and living in a utopian world.
- Indian poets also depicted the numerous social ills that afflicted Indian society. They paid less attention to nature, ancient myths and legends.
- The poets appeared more open, lively, and straightforward, and their thoughts were clearer. They could openly discuss sexuality, religion, and the human body, things pre-independence poets regarded obscene.
- Irony became the poets' sharpest weapon. They used sarcasm and sarcastic ideas to mock objectional practices or tendencies in the society.
- Most of the poems deal with alienation, belongingness, identity crisis (during partition), patriarchy, liberation from conventions, and so on.

► Modern Indian English poets

Poets who can be demarcated as distinct from the nationalistic era are Nissim Ezekiel, Gieve Patel, A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarathy, Keki. N. Daruwalla, Shiv. K. Kumar, Adil Jussawala, Eunice De Souza, Kamala Das, Vikram Seth, Meena Alexander, Tabish Khair, Arun Kolatkar, Vijay Sheshadri, Mamang Dai, Jeet Thayil and a few others.

Nissim Ezekiel

Nissim Ezekiel is a fundamental figure in the literary history of postcolonial India, especially with respect to Indian poetry in English. His poetry consistently evokes a very specific sense of Indian identity, whether he is discussing social problems or deeply personal encounters. His major themes are love, personal integration, and the contemporary India.

► Ezekiel's Indian identity



A. K. Ramanujan

- India in Ramanujan's poetry

A. K. Ramanujan's poems were based on observations on certain issues and were either set in unique events or scenes or avoided making generalisations about India. Ramanujan's tactics, which frequently appeared to be a modern recreation of the spirit and procedures of Tamil and Kannada verses, were a reflection of the sophistication with which he recreated and treated south Indian culture.

Jayantha Mahapatra

- Mahapatra's poetic themes

Jayantha Mahapatra's poetry is notable for its depth of feeling and authentic poetic imagination that embraces various themes, such as India's cultural and religious past, Orissa's landscape, existential crisis, or rootlessness, and emptiness in modern existence including love, sex, and relationships.

R Parthasarathy

- Parthasarathy's discrete images

R. Parthasarathy's strength in poetry lies almost entirely in the combination of visual and dramatic imagery. He fosters a deliberately prosaic style, implied by the rhythm itself. As a result, his poems become memorable with discrete images.

Gieve Patel

- Patel's poetic structure

Patel's characters are often set in a city background, and as they move to carry out their duties, there is close observation of their attitudes, clothing and posture. His poems tend to be longer and more loosely structured, with space for interaction between pictures and characters. The rhythm and fluidity are more akin to conversation or a voice overheard, and the syntax and idiom are less clenched and tense.

Keki Daruwalla

- Daruwalla's presentation style

Keki Daruwalla's poems retain a number of strongly distinguishing characteristics: an ironic stance, expressive contradiction of the realities of Indian life, preoccupation with a variety of cultures and mythical and historic landscapes, brief, powerful, and tensile style, flexible imagism, consistent narration, the ability to switch between metrical patterns and free verse, and the ability to combine the epic setting in great details. He stands out for his humorous tone and poetic presentation.



Shiv K. Kumar

- Kumar's spatial descriptions

Shiv K. Kumar's poetry is vividly about everyday life, felt on the tips of his senses, but it is tempered by a sarcastic and occasionally scathing sense of humour. He is equally skilled at capturing the mood of a location, city, and historical sites through cross-cultural associations.

Eunice de Souza

- Womanhood in de Souza's poetry

Eunice de Souza strongly challenges patriarchal social institutions. Her poems often explore the loss, alienation, and isolation that accompany womanhood. Her concern for many Indian women in different social contexts, including: housekeepers, day labourers and isolated "housewives," is portrayed in her poems.

Adil Jussawalla

- Jussawalla's unreal notions

As an urban poet, Adil Jussawalla frequently deals with alienation and the absurdity of the metropolis. The unreality of the notions of identity and experience sometimes overlaps with these concerns in his poems.

Kamala Das

- The love poet

Kamala Das is a poet of love. Her poems are primarily an expression of her frustration with love. She always talks about unrequited love and expresses the need for love. She sought to establish her feminine identity through her poetry.

Arun Kolatkar

- Kolatkar and modern poetry

Arun Kolatkar's lyrical style is objective. It resists the influences of the past, whether cultural or linguistic, and is in fact distinguished by an interesting "alfresco individualism." Modern poetry is exemplified by Kolatkar's deft use of the montage technique in the poem "Jejuri" to create the impression of a symbolist aestheticism.

Vikram Seth

- Beauty in Seth's and conflict in Alexander's poetry

Vikram Seth has been called a neo-formalist and is hailed as the author of beautiful poems. He uses rhyme and metre, as well as older verse forms, such as the sonnet, at a time when free verse was the dominant style.



Meena Alexander

Meena Alexander's own poetry exhibits conflicting historical, mythological, and linguistic traditions. Alexander's best early poetry reveals the tense relationship between personal memory, societal history, and the poet's effort to reinvent himself or herself through writing.

- Allegories in Khair's poetry

Tabish Khair

Tabish Khair represents the liberal, secular, and modernising branch of Islam that embraces the principles of social justice. The poems frequently function as brief narrative allegories of life as perceived through a materialist lens. It is possible to interpret Khair's picture as sarcastic or to infer a revolutionary future.

- Seshadri's imagined world

Vijay Seshadri

Vijay Seshadri is a writer of sensitive, versatile, and unshakable insight. His poems are set in an imagined universe where alder and fir trees grow with refugees, reggae bands, commercial structures, and fast-moving traffic at the crossroads of history and the wilderness.

- Nature in Dai's poetry

Mamang Dai

Mamang Dai's poetic world comprises rivers and mountains, and simple and lyrical details of the terrain of his homeland. The nature here is mysterious, green with legends, and dense with sacred memories.

- Thayil and Emotional poetry

Jeet Thayil

Jeet Thayil introduced new areas of feeling and emotion into Indian literature and was often concerned with the pleasures and pains of drugs and alcohol, sex, and death symbols of Keats and Baudelaire.

Summarised Overview

The unit delves into the history and growth of Indian English poetry. It explores and traces the Indian poetry tradition, the birth of the epic, and the regional languages in which it was produced. The unit then examines the impact of colonial English on the Indian subcontinent and its consequences on Indian literary culture. It then looks into the many stages of Indian English poetry's growth, as well as the key poets and their lyrical works. Following that, the section focuses on the rise of romanticism and its impact on Indian poets. The section then discusses the beginnings of epics in Indian poetry,



as well as prominent epics including the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Silapadikaram*, etc. Following that, the unit analyses lyric poetry and its features before delving into the Indian sonnet tradition. The unit then takes a look at the influence of nationalism on Indian English poetry, followed by a study of modernism, its elements in Indian English poetry, and the period's important writers.

Assignments

1. Examine in detail the three phases of Indian English poetry.
2. Explore the influence of Western romanticism among the Indian English poets.
3. Analyse the impact of nationalism in Indian English poetry.
4. Compare and contrast the themes of female poets who wrote during the nationalist era with those after independence.
5. Explore the features of modern Indian English poetry in detail.

Suggested Readings

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2. King, Bruce, *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, revised edition, OUP Delhi, 2001, pp. 231-243.
3. Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna, *A History of Indian Literature in English*, Columbia UP, 2003.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Unit 3

Drama

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ acquire a wider knowledge of drama like its origin and practice in the context of India.
- ▶ get an insight into the historical and social evolution of drama in India.
- ▶ detail on the influence of drama and its evolution to the modern form.

Background

The origin of Indian drama dates back to the period of *The Rigveda*, which consisted of acts, dialogues, and literary devices such as animal fables and riddles along with scenes. The use of musical instruments, such as lyre and flute, was in vogue. They used masks to represent the characters. The theatres flourished from the first century B.C. until the tenth century AD. Village theatres were later created from the 15th to the 19th century in an effort to uplift and educate people on the value of theatre. Under the British colonial authority, modern Indian theatre flourished. Theatres began to spring up all throughout the country as a form of entertainment in the years that followed Indian Independence. This unit will unravel the impact of Greek and Western theatre on the development of contemporary Indian drama and theatre, as well as significant dramatists, theories of play, and dramatic techniques.

Keywords

Drama, Characters, Plot, Theme, Theatre, *Natya Shastra*, *Rigveda*



Discussion

- Drama is developed through dialogues

A drama in literature is the performance of fictional or non-fictional events developed through dialogues (either prose or poetry). Dramas can be presented on a stage, or through radio or in the form of films. Play is a general term for drama, and playwrights or dramatists are the people who write them. Drama has been practised since the time of Aristotle (c. 335 B.C.E.), and its name derives from Greek. It is considered one of the major forms of literature, and serves as a vehicle for the dramatist to share a message with society.

- Representation of actions of living people

A drama is three-dimensional; it is a literature that walks and talks before our eyes. All definitions of drama stress the theatricality and the primacy of action. James G. Watson observes: "Drama is the representation of carefully selected actions by living people on a stage in front of an audience." The structure of drama varies based on the region and time period. There are two major influences on Indian drama: one is the Greek theatre and another is the Western theatre.

- Classical drama

Indian classical drama refers to the dramatic and performing traditions of ancient India. Drama as an art appears to have been extensively developed in India from the beginning of Indian history, at least more than 2000 years ago. Sanskrit archives in India are where the history of Indian drama is preserved. Since the earlier time, Indian drama has been able to reach extraordinary heights of impact and perfection.

- *Rigveda*

The roots of Indian drama can be traced back to *The Rigveda* (1200-1500 BC). *The Rigveda* contains not only many hymns in the form of dialogues and scenes, but also hymns using animal fables. Indian classical drama is considered the greatest achievement of Sanskrit literature. Asvaghosa, the author of *Buddhacharita* along with Bhasa are the first Sanskrit playwrights. Bhasa is the author of *Uru-Bhanga* and *Karna-bharam*, the two surviving tragedies in Sanskrit drama.

1.3.1 Indian Classical Theatre

Indian theatre has a history that dates back to 5000 years. India produced the first dramaturgy text in the entire world



► *Natyashastra*

through Bharat Muni's *Natya Shastra* (2000 B.C), the “holy book” of theatre. If we analyse the historical accounts and references of the two major epics *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, we might find that there had been an Indian theatre much earlier than the production of the books like *Natya Shastra* to exist.

► Theatre began as a storytelling genre

In India, theatre began as a storytelling genre, with recitation, singing, and dancing, developing into essential components of the performance. India is a place where the oldest references to dramatic representations are found. The structure of the Indian theatre was also quite different from that of the Western models. These classical Indian theatres, which were funded by the royal courts, were exceptionally designed for an audience of no more than 500 aristocrats. They were not like the enormous public theatres of ancient Greece and Rome.

► Categorisation of drama

The plays mostly fell into two categories: the *Nataka* plays, which featured kings and celestial creatures, and the *Prakarana* plays, which featured people from the middle class. The distinction between tragedy and comedy in classical Greek drama is decided by this division, but there are few additional similarities.

► Sanskrit theatre

Sanskrit, the court language, was used by the rulers and supernatural beings in these performances, hence the name ‘Sanskrit theatre.’ There are about 300 Sanskrit plays, most of which date from the second and third centuries. Classic Sanskrit plays use both Sanskrit and Prakrit, giving them a bilingual character. The Sanskrit drama used stock characters such as the protagonist (nayaka), heroine (nayika) and clown (vidusaka). Actors may specialise in specific types. A dramatic work called *Natasutra*, written by two Indian playwrights named Shilalin and Krishashva, is mentioned by Panini in the fifth century BC. Additionally, Patanjali lists the titles of lost plays like *Kamsavadha* and *Balibandha*. The earliest records of theatre building in India can be found in the Sitabenga and Khandagiri caves, which date back to the third and second centuries B.C., respectively.

Pali Suttas, dating back to the 5th to 3rd centuries BC, refers to the existence of a group of actors led by the leading actor who performed plays on stage. These dramas include dance, but were played as a unique performance alongside dance, songs and story readings. A terracotta



► 'Pratishirsha'

mask believed to be used in theatre was unearthed in Chirand, Bihar. It is likely that Indian theatres seemed to be quite developed at this time. The mask was wide enough to fit comfortably on the nose and it was easy to see through a perforated nose. Bharatamuni mentions 'Pratishirsha' in his *Natyashastra*, and these masks were probably full-head masks with headpiece (a crown model) and appropriate hairstyles were added. Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* contains the first reference to what may have been the bud of a classic Sanskrit drama.

► Interaction of the Indian and Western theatres

By the arrival of the British colonial powers in India, the Indian and Western theatres directly interacted for the first time. During the Imperial reign, theatre was introduced as a source of entertainment for Indians. The writing and practice of theatre are now wholly oriented toward a realistic or naturalistic portrayal for the first time in India. It is not as though naturalism or realism never existed in the tradition. But, the same sources were always used for the stories. In the modern theatre, the stories also took new roots which were mostly from the lives of the common people.

1.3.2 Bharatamuni

Bharatamuni is an ancient sage traditionally credited as the author of the musical treatise *Natya Shastra*. His work includes histrionics and ancient Indian dramaturgy, especially the Sanskrit Theatre. Bharata is considered the father of Indian theatre and Indian theatrical art forms. The four main modalities identified by Bharata Muni for the success of a theatre presentation are speech and poetry, dance and music, actions and emotions. *Natya Shastra* is notable as an ancient encyclopaedia of art that influenced Indian dance, music and literary traditions. It elaborated on the aesthetic "Rasa" theory, which claims that entertainment is a desirable effect of performance art, and not the prime goal, but the main goal is to move the individuals in the audience to another parallel reality. Here one experiences the essence of his/her own consciousness and it stimulates the individual's spiritual and moral awareness.

► Father of Indian theatre

1.3.3 Natya Shastra

Natya Shastra is the earliest treatise on music and theatre, written around 500 B.C. by Bharatamuni. The composition comprising 6000 couplets in Sanskrit is divided into 36



- The earliest treatise on theatre

chapters. *Natya Shastra* focused on dance and theatre with the help of music. The title is a combination of two Sanskrit words 'Natya' and 'Shastra'. 'Natya' refers to the technique of dance and drama, and 'Shastra' refers to science. It is the *magnum opus* that describes the relation among director, audience, structure of a play, acting techniques, costumes and make-up, music, musical instruments, the dimensions of the stage and its decorations with lighting, and the size of the hall and seating of the audience.

- Parallel to modern Western concepts

In central Asian theatre, the *Natya Sastra* is as influential as Aristotle's *Poetics* in Europe, but it covers a wider range of topics, including acting, costume, staging and theatre-design. The description of a performance space in the *Natya Sastra* is far more parallel to modern Western concepts than it is with those of classical Greece or Rome.

- *Natyashastra*

Natyashastra classifies instruments as (1) "tata" – stringed, (2) "avanadha" – covered percussion, (3) "sushira" – hollow (flute), and (4) "ghana" – rhythm supports like cymbals. "Bharata Muni expounded the relationship between performers and audience through *rasa-bhava anubhava*. He elucidated eight types of "rasas" and their corresponding "bhavas" that are emotions. A "rasa" is an emotional state. Very simply put, it means "juice" or sap. A "rasa" is usually the dominant emotional theme through a work of art. It is the delight and pleasure experienced directly from art. "Bhava" means to become. It is a state of mind whose outcome is a 'rasa.'" The *Rasa* theory described in the text has had a great influence on Indian films as well as dramatic writings.

1.3.4 Patanjali

- Wrote on grammar and medicine

Patanjali, also called Gonardiya, or Gonikaputra, was a sage in ancient India. He is also known as the "Father of Yoga" who authored the book *The Yoga Sutras* which dates back to 200 B.C.- 200 C.E., and many other Sanskrit works. He also wrote *Mahabhashya*, a commentary on an authoritative Sanskrit grammar text written by the Indian grammarian, Panini. 'Patanjali' is listed as the name of one of the 26 mythical divine serpents in many Hindu Puranas. He is also the author of a medical text called *Patanjalatantra*. The text is quoted in many medieval texts on health sciences, and Patanjali is cited as a medical authority in many Sanskrit texts such as *Yogaratanakara*, *Yogaratanasamuccaya* and *Padarthavijnana*.



1.3.5 Bhasa

Bhasa is regarded as the father of Sanskrit drama and is one of the earliest classical playwrights in the canon of Sanskrit literature. He lived in the AD 3rd or 4th centuries. He was a celebrated poet and playwright who was praised by Abhinavagupta, Rajashekhara, Banabhatta, Kalidasa and other writers. The plays written by Bhasa were known to historians only through references made by later writers, as the manuscripts were lost. The 13 manuscripts of the plays he wrote were discovered in 1913 by the scholar Ganapati Sastri in the ancient library of Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum). The authorship of the 14th work discovered later, even though credited to Bhasa, is still a matter of dispute. He is believed to have been a Vishnu follower, and lived before Kalidasa. Despite references to a Monarch Rajasimha in some of his plays, there is no authentic evidence on who actually his patron king was. Whether “Bhasa” was his real name or a pen name is still unknown.

► Father of Sanskrit drama

Bhasa's most famous plays are *Svapnavasavadattam* (“Vasavadatta's dream”), *Pancharātra*, and *Pratijna Yaugandharayana* (“The vows of Yaugandharayana”). Some other plays attributed to Bhasa are *Pratimanātaka*, *Abhishekanātaka*, *Bālacharita*, *Dūtavākya*, *Karnabhāra*, *Dūtaghatotkacha*, *Chārudatta*, *Madhyamavyāyoga* and *Ūrubhaṅga*. *Karnabharam* is a highly acclaimed play and has been the subject of many experiments by contemporary Indian theatre companies.

► Famous plays of Bhasa

1.3.6 Kalidasa

Kalidasa was a Classical Sanskrit poet and playwright of the Gupta age, perhaps the greatest Indian writer of all time. His writings were mostly based on the *Puranas*, a prehistoric Hindu book. The six works identified as genuinely written by him are *Abhijnanashakuntala* (*The Recognition of Shakuntala*), *Vikramorvasheevam* (*Urvashi Won by Valour*), *Malavikagnimitra* (*Malavika and Agnimitra*), the epics *Raghuvamsha* (*Dynasty of Raghu*), *Kumarasambhava* (*Birth of the War God*) and “*Meghaduta*” (*Cloud Messenger*).

► Playwright of the Gupta age

Kalidasa was one among the *Navarathnas* (nine gems) in the court of Chandragupta II, also known as Vikramaditya. Kalidasa's *Abhijnanashakuntala* is the most famous and is usually considered the best Indian literary effort of any period. Taken from an epic legend, the work tells of the



► Shakuntala and Dushyanta

seduction of the nymph Shakuntala by King Dushyanta, his rejection of the girl and the child born to him by Sakuntala, and their subsequent reunion in heaven. The epic story is important because of the child, for he is Bharata, the eponymous ancestor of the Indian nation, Bharatavarsha meant as Subcontinent of Bharata.

► Remakes the story into a love idyll

Kalidasa remakes the story into a love idyll whose characters represent a pristine aristocratic ideal: the woman who is selfless, sentimental, curious to simple but the elegant form of nature, and the king, first servant of the dharma (religious and social law and duties), resolute hero, and protector of the social order, yet tender by suffering agonies over his lost love. The plot and characters are made believable by a modification Kalidasa has wrought in the story: Dushyanta is not responsible for the lovers' separation; he acts only under a delusion caused by a sage's curse. Like all works of Kalidasa, the beauty of nature is portrayed in the work with the precise elegance of metaphors rarely found in dramatic literature.

► Reconcile the Brahminist traditions

"Megadut" is a lyric poem, dotted with a message to his absent lover, and an extraordinary series of outstanding knowledgeable vignettes depicting the mountains, rivers and forests of north India. The people reflected in Kalidasa's work is a society of court aristocrats who are proud of their dignity and power. Perhaps more than any other writer, Kalidasa did much to reconcile the old Brahminist traditions, especially the ritualistic involvement with Sanskrit, with the need for a new and brilliant secular Hinduism. However, the fusion that represented the Gupta Renaissance did not persist in its fragile social infrastructure. With the collapse of the Gupta dynasty, Kalidasa remained the icon of perfection that neither a Sanskrit writer nor any other writer could achieve.

1.3.7 Bhavabhuti

Bhavabhuti born on 700 CE, was an Indian dramatist and poet, whose dramas are also written in Sanskrit. He is known for the suspense in the plot and vivid characterisation, which were as good as those of the outstanding plays of the renowned playwright Kalidasa. Bhavabhuti, a brahmin of Vidarbha spent his literary life primarily in the court of Yashovarman in Kannauj. Bhavabhuti is best known as the author of the following three plays: *Mahaviracharita*



► Suspense in the plot

("Exploits of the Great Hero"), which recounts in seven acts the major events of the *Ramayana* up to Ravana's defeat and Rama's coronation; *Malatimadhava* ("Malati and Madhava"), a complicated love intrigue which consists sorcery, human sacrifice, and Tantric practice narrated in ten acts, and *Uttararamacharita* ("The Later Deeds of Rama") in which Rama is portrayed from the time of his coronation, Sita being exiled and their final reunion. It contains far less action than the previous two plays, but it shows that Bhavabhuti is at the height of his characterization, showing suspense and climax. Bhavabhuti is considered a master of elaborate idioms, especially the *Kavya* style, a style dominated by metaphors and similes.

1.3.8 Loknatya in the Seventeenth Century

The beginnings of *Loknatya*, "Lok" means 'people' and "Natya" means 'theatre' (People's theatre), are seen in every state of India from the 17th century onwards. Several states innovated fresh and new styles of drama; *Yatrakirtaniya*, *Paal*, *Gaan* in Bengal, *Mach* in Madhya Pradesh; *Bhandya Thar* in Kashmir, and *Bhavai*, *Ramlila* in Gujarat. In northern India, there existed the *Nautanki*, and *Bhavai*, *Ramlila* and *Raslila*; *Tamasha* in Maharashtra; *Raas* and *Jhoomer* in Rajasthan; *Bhangra* and *Songe* in Punjab; *Ahiyanat* and *Ankinaat* in Assam; *Videshiya* in Bihar, *Yakshagana* in Karnataka, *Veedinatakamu* in Andhra, and *Teerukoothu* in Tamilnadu. In different parts of India, the theatre grew according to their culture and colours.

► Loknatya

1.3.9 Modern Indian Drama

The 18th century saw emergence of modern Indian drama, as the British Empire expanded its influence in India. As Krishna Kriplani notes, the impact of Western civilisation on Indian society led to a new revival in Indian arts, especially among the theatres. Furthermore, English education gave an impetus and a momentum to the critical study of not only Western drama but also Classical Indian drama. Rakesh H. Solomon traces three distinct phases of modern theatre: the Orientalist phase, which began in the late 18th century with the emergence of Indology; the high nationalist phase at the turn of the 20th century; and the postcolonial phase, which began in 1947 and continues today.

► Three phases of modern Indian theatre

Theatre was introduced to India by the British as a source of entertainment for their people who were stationed



- A source of entertainment

in India. The first theatres to be built in India were The Playhouse (1753), Calcutta Theatre (1775), and Bombay Theatre (1776), which gave the Indian stage novelties like the proscenium arch and the drop curtain. The wealthy middle class of India rapidly gained access to this exclusive type of entertainment once enjoyed only by the British.

- Humanise the indigenous people

This was also part of the British plan to teach people about “better” cultures in order to “humanise” the indigenous people. Theatres evolved, and became a vehicle for anti-colonial sentiment and a potent tool for mobilisation, following the battle of independence in 1857 and the Indigo revolution in 1859–1860. The accessibility of printed copies attracted people to the theatre. The release of the English translation of Dinabandhu Mitra’s 1860 drama *Nil Darpan*, which narrates the colonial repression of Bengali indigo farmers, signalled a turning point in India’s history of anti-colonial theatre.

- Anti-colonial plays

A whole legacy of rebellious and anti-colonial writing was born out of the open criticism of repressive British policies. Playwrights like Manmohan Bose, Girish Chandra Ghosh, and Sisir Ghose created plays that vehemently criticised British policies. The anticolonial plays *Gaekwar Durpan* and *Chakar Darpan*, written by Dakshina Charan Chattopadhyay and based on the working circumstances of tea plantation workers, came after *Nil Darpan*. The Great National Theatre was built as a result of the efforts and began touring northern India in 1875. The Dramatic Performances Censorship Act, which allowed the government to “prohibit dramatic performances which are scandalous, defamatory, seditious, obscene or otherwise prejudicial to the public interest,” (Aparna, *A Poetics*) was passed in 1876 in response to the concerns and anxieties of the colonial authorities as well as their desire to limit the impact of theatre.

Indian English drama dates from 1831, when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta*. M. K. Naik comments on Banerji’s work as a “crude presentation of the conflict in the mind of a sensitive Bengali youth between orthodoxy and the new ideas ushered in by Western education [which] remained a solitary dramatic effort, not only in Bengal but also anywhere in India for more than a generation.” Michael



► Adaptation of Shakuntala

Madhusudan Dutt translated three of his own Bengali plays—*Ratnavali* (1858), a translation of the well-known Sanskrit play by Harsha, *Sermista* (1839), and *Is This Called Civilisation?* (1871)—into English. *Nation Builders*, his other play, was released in 1922 after his demise. *Manipur a Tragedy* by Ramkinoo Dutt, published in Bengal in 1893, wraps up the all-too-short history of Indian English play of the nineteenth century. Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote a play about Sharmistha in Bangla in 1856, but less than a quarter of a century later, Kirloskar wrote in Marathi the story of Subhadra again from *Mahabharata*. There was an adaptation of *Shakuntala* to Malayalam, in 1880. Vishnuda's Bhave turned to *Yakshagana*, *Akhyana* and other folk and traditional forms to create a modern proscenium theatre.

► Theatre in the past as culture specific

There is no reason to doubt that theatre in the past was culture-specific. Researches seem to indicate that theatre will always remain culture-bounded. Tagore and Khadilkar wrote their first plays in Bangla and Marathi in a gap of 10 years. The first modern play was staged in Calcutta towards the end of the eighteenth century. The play was in English directed by a European. Interestingly, this production and Sir William Jones' translation of *Shakuntala* occurred around the same time. While the former celebrated a modern European play, the latter celebrated an ancient Indian play.

► Closet drama

The plays of Jayashankar Prasad and Rabindranath Tagore plays were therefore considered closet drama, which was created primarily for reading. The mentality to accept the traditional plays and stop celebrating western plays paved the way to 'modernity'. As Deshpande puts it, it seemed to be more Indian and ethnic.

After independence, the National Drama School was established, but only a few plays were performed in a year and the performances were rarely repeated. UNESCO-related theatres, such as the People's Theatre of India and the National Theatre of India, focus less on English drama and, instead, it became a venue for performing local dramas. Theatres were established in three major cities—Calcutta, Madras and Bombay—during the British Rule. The formation of Progressive Writers Association in 1936 was soon followed by the formation of the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) in 1942 which carried forward the promotion of folk theatres in India. In the following section, the different forms of the modern Indian theatre



- A medium for performing local dramas

- Loyal to traditional notions of caste and religion

- Social drama challenges the social code

are briefly analysed.

The Parsi theatre remained loyal to traditional notions of caste and religion while on the other hand it promoted secularism and egalitarian ideas. While trying to look deeper into Indian English Drama, it is clear that the poor state of Indian English drama made the playwrights rely on western models and techniques. "The playwrights like Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore, allowed themselves to be influenced by the Elizabethan drama and did not make use of the traditional Sanskrit theatre and folk-stage of the country." Other major playwrights like Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Bharati Sarabhai were less influenced by Elizabethan drama, when compared to Sri Aurobindo and Kailasam. A whole new theatrical perception is developed by the modern Indian English Playwrights like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Habib Tanvir and Badal Sircar.

1.3.9.1 Social Drama

Victor Tuner defines social drama as "a sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive, or agonistic type." Turner's assessment of a social drama envisages four stages: breach, crisis, redressive action and reintegration. Social drama is the process of challenging a social code by creating a conflict that a character must overcome. It is not like a real play or movement, nor has it like the style or movement normally associated with outright realism. Social drama focuses on social issues which curb the peace of society, such as mob-lynching due to inter-caste marriage, environmental concerns, such as climate change, global warming and deforestation. Such dramas are meant for evoking awareness among the members of the society. Social theatres are formed in schools and clubs for social dramas to be enacted.

1.3.9. 2 Historical Drama

Historical drama or costume drama is a work set in an old era. Historical works can be set in eras such as the Middle Ages, or in specific eras such as the roaring 1920's or the recent past. The perfect example of a historical drama is Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Indian playwrights have also embraced this genre and created excellent literary works. The most notable figures in this field are Girish



► Historical sources

Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, and Jayashankar Prasad, who have researched and used historical sources to portray their worldviews and familiarise the world with Indian history. However, several of their works have resulted in heated debates. According to critics, they overstepped the bounds of historical records and conflated fact with fantasy. Although historical drama is fiction, the work may contain references to real people or events of the relevant era, or it may contain a *de facto* accurate depiction of that era like stories related to war, historic events, persons, etc.

1.3.9.3 Amateur Theatre

► Social and aesthetic emphasis

In an Amateur theatre, performances are practised by amateur actors and singers. Amateur theatre groups may perform plays, musics, light operas, pantomimes, or variety shows for both social activity and aesthetic value. Production may take place outdoors, in community centres, from schools to independent or large professional theatres. Amateur theatres, unlike professional and community theatres, are usually not paid. Amateur actors are generally not members of the actors' union. The nation's cultural life is significantly influenced by amateur theatre which also benefits spectators' physical and mental health in addition to that of artists and participants.

► Centre of cultural activity

In many smaller towns, amateur theatre frequently serves as the centre of cultural activity and as a means of community building. The majority of the theatres that amateur organizations hire are professional theatres, and hence it necessitates the engagement of freelance choreographers, directors, musical directors, make-up artists, and so on, in addition to technical staff. Opinions disagree on how to define "amateur" in relation to the theatre. Technically, an "amateur" is someone who does not receive payment for services. One interpretation of this is "a person who lacks professional skills, like art." The other interpretation is "people who engage in art, science, research, or sports as entertainment rather than as profession."

1.3.9.4 Amateur Kannada Theatre

Amateur Kannada theatre was created as an effort to free the stage from commercialism. This also aided in raising public understanding of theatre's fundamental purpose, which is to interpret, expose, critique, and also

- Free the stage from commercialism

- Amateur Kannada theatre

- Karnataka Hindi Amateurs

steer society. Contrary to the earlier professional theatre, the Amateur Kannada Theatre had the necessary strength to coexist alongside films. This type of theatre places focus on taking a logical and realistic approach to the issues. The plays were mostly texts; and they lacked the professional drama's use of colour, costumes, locations and music. Many educated actors were recruited by the theatre. It was cerebral, frequently symbolic, and maintained a reasonable length because its target audiences were urbane.

Growth of Amateur Theatre

The maturation of Kannada literature has a significant influence on the growth of amateur Kannada theatre. This type of theatre nearly abandoned the once-dominant mythical and even historical topics, apart from the occasional interpretation or parody. Social issues were now given more prominence. The Opera, Dream plays, Mime, Fantasy, Shadow plays, and radio plays are only a few examples of the new theatrical forms that have emerged. Thus, amateur theatre became an important component of the town's cultural life and assisted in replacing, enhancing, and bolstering a decrepit professional stage.

In 1919, the Literary and Dramatic Association of Mysore was founded. The Amateur theatrical movement entered a new age with the Chaya Artists of Bengaluru. The group grew out of the theatrical traditions promoted by the Malleswaram Dramatic Association and the Old Boys Association of the National School of Bengaluru. The two wings merged in 1937 to become Karnataka Hindi Amateurs, and they worked hard to promote Hindi theatre as well as to give a small group of friends and families an enjoyable theatrical entertainment.

1.3.9.5 Street Theatre

A Street Theatre is a form of theatre and presentation in a public space that caters to any audience. These areas can be located anywhere, including shopping malls, parking lots, recreation areas, university campuses, and street corners. It stands out especially in outdoor areas where there are many people. Actors who play street theatres range from street musicians to organised theatre groups. Street theatres should be distinguished from other more formal open-air theatre performances such as a park or garden with a separate space (or closed) and an



► Street theatre

audience who purchase the ticket. In some cases, street theatre performers may need to obtain a license or special permission from the local or state government to perform.

► Progressive theatres of the 1940s

The progressive political theatre of the 1940s in Kolkata and the anti-fascist political ideology of leftists served as the foundation of street theatre in India. It developed as a tool to liberate the working class and support the revolution against the existing order. Street plays focusing on human-interest tales and concerns like poverty, famine, poetry, intergroup conflict, and feudal and colonial exploitation had an impact on the heavily stratified society.

► Post-independence street theatre

After Independence, Indian Street theatre developed as a way to express the concerns of the common man. This theatre style immediately connected with the general public. In a street theatre setting, spectators may not have much time and may not have come prepared to watch a play. The parameters of the plays are established by these restrictions. They are not long, and also a close, direct, and intimate communication is used, along with loud, over-the-top actions to increase effectiveness. The plays are funny to entice audiences from all walks of life. To increase the appeal, songs based on well-known catchy tunes are included.

► Militant political theatre of protest

The movement of Indian street theatre was pioneered by Safdar Hashmi's *Jana Natya Manch* (also known as *Janam*), founded in 1973. According to Hashmi, Street theatre is "a militant political theatre of protest whose function is to agitate the people and to mobilize them behind fighting organizations." Safdar was murdered in an unrest during the street performance. His birthday, April 12, is currently recognised as National Street Theatre Day in India. Street plays, also known as "*Nukkad Natak*," were utilised in the 1980s to combat social inequality in addition to serving as political awareness tools. The infamous Mathura rape case in 1980 sparked numerous shows on the necessity to toughen up rape laws.

1.3.9.6 Indian People's Theatre

The Indian People's Theatre Association was formed during the Quit India Movement in 1942. Upon its formal inauguration in 1943-44, IPTA took upon itself the challenge of bringing theatre to the people with the objective of creating awareness about social responsibility and national integration. IPTA soon became a movement



- Creating awareness about social responsibility

- Strengthen progressive tendencies

- Oldest performing art groups

- New playwrights

along the length and breadth of India with its socialistic and nationalistic fervour.

IPTA brought about a sea change in the prevalent concepts about Indian Theatre. It was formed to coordinate and to strengthen all progressive tendencies that had so far manifested themselves in the form of drama, songs and dances. Its roots lay in the cultural awakening of the masses of India, seeking to revive the cultural heritage of the country. Its initial impact was so powerful that a new form of expression took shape. It was to leave a lasting impression, making the arts an expression of the people's yearning for freedom, economic and social justice and a democratic culture.

IPTA is one of the oldest performing art groups in the country. Indian cinema, performing arts like music and theatre and now even television have drawn their many personalities from IPTA. It was founded by stalwarts like K. A. Abbas, Dr. Bhabha, Anil de Silva, Ali Sardar Jafri and Dada Sharmalkar. Over the last six decades many prominent artists, writers, musicians, directors, dancers and singers have been a part of IPTA.

While having an overview of the key figures whose contributions caused the status of Indian English drama to be placed in new heights, the works of the following playwrights cannot be disregarded. They are Bharatendu Harishchandra, Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Aurobindo Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Harindranath Chattopadhyay, T. P. Kailasam, B.V. Karanth, J. M. Lobo Prabhu, Asif Currimbhoy, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar- Safdar Hashmi, Pritish Nandi, Alyque Padamsee, Mahesh Dattani, Shanta Gokhale, Manjula Padmanabhan and Mahashweta Devi.



Summarised Overview

The ancient Vedic period is where Indian drama originally appeared. Then it moved to the classical theatre traditions, having an impact on modern theatre as well as the Hindi, Marathi, and Bengali theatres in particular. Bharata Muni is considered the father of Indian dramaturgy who referred to the Indian play as The Fifth Veda. Indian theatrical activity almost came to an end after the 15th century as a result of foreign invasions into India. Indian plays entered a radical phase during the colonial era. *Shakuntala* by Kalidasa, which was translated into English by Sir William Jones in 1789, was the most well-known drama among the British. The modern theatrical activity of Bengal, Karnataka and Kerala in the 1850s significantly enriched the history of Indian drama. There was a significant development to theatre by Indian Independence in 1947, opening the history of modern Indian Drama.

Assignments

1. Discuss the use of *Rasa* theory in Indian Classical Dance.
2. Comment on the type of *Loknatya* performed across the country.
3. Trace the connection between Sanskrit and Indian Drama tradition
4. Analyse the key features of Street Theatre.
5. What is the relevance of *Shakuntala*'s translation in Indian theatre?
6. Comment on social drama.
7. Discuss the features of Modern Indian drama.
8. What are the important features of *Natya Shastra*?

Suggested Readings

1. Deshpande, G. P. *Modern Indian Drama: An Anthology*. Sahitya Akademi, 2010.
2. Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 1982.
3. Richmond, Farley P., Darius L. Swann, and Phillip B. Zarrilli, eds. *Indian Theatre: Traditions of Performance*. U of Hawaii P, 1993.



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1. Banham, Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.
2. Baumer, Rachel Van M., and James R. Brandon, eds. *Sanskrit Theatre in Performance*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1993.
3. Raghavan, V. "The Aesthetics of Ancient Indian Drama." *Indian Literature*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1958, pp. 67–74. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23329292>.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.

Unit 4

Prose and Fiction

1. Prose

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the section, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ trace the development of prose from the period of Renaissance to the present.
- ▶ become familiar with the socio political background of Indian English non-fictional prose.
- ▶ understand the process in which the Indian English prose writing developed.
- ▶ document important prose writers of the pre-independence as well as the contemporary era.

Background

The earliest literary prose in English dates from the late 9th century. Over a period of centuries, the demand for poetry and prose fluctuated. Later in the fifteenth century, the status of literature produced in English was comparatively low. There was hardly any good poetry written during this time. However, the prose of this period showed significant advancement. The Elizabethan age nourished prose with the arrival of printing. English prose became the popular medium for works aiming both at amusement and instruction. The seventeenth century prose writers used a grand style which Bacon and Hooker never anticipated. It was loose in structure, over coloured, elaborate and wayward. It was also an era of personal essays, history, biographies, and autobiographies. The language of this time was strongly theological, religious, or philosophical. Without a question, the 18th century produced some excellent prose. The age produced only one great poet, Alexander Pope, and it also gave rise to some extremely talented prose writers, including Addison, Steele, Swift, Defoe and Johnson.

In quite a similar way, one can observe the establishment of English prose in India, which started with translating works in Indian languages to English. The following section will give a clear idea regarding the subjects of Indian English prose, by analysing its social and political backgrounds and the authors of the works.



Keywords

Prose, *Sathyagrah*, Memoirs, Nationalism, Hinduism, Feminism, Capitalism

Discussion

- Prose is anything that is not verse

Prose is a spoken or written expression that mimics the unrestricted or natural flow of speech without metrical structure. The most typical style of writing, it can be found in both fiction and non-fiction. Prose, which means “straightforward,” is derived from the Latin *prosa oratio*. Prose is anything that is not a verse. Although prose does not have a set of metrical structure, it can have rhythm. *Chandrakanta* is regarded as the first Hindi prose to have been written in India.

- Boriah’s essay as the earliest prose

In Unit 1, we have discussed the advent of the British and with them, their language and culture. The arrival of Macaulay in 1934 and the release of *Macaulay’s Minutes* in 1935 lays basis for the history of English education in India. But even before his arrival to India, there were Indians who were educated in English. Some of them wrote and published their works in English. According to M. K. Naik, “Cavelly Venkata Boriah’s “Account of the Jains” published in *Asiatic Researches or Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal for Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Art, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, Vol. IX (London, 1809, written in c. 1803) is perhaps the first published composition in English of some length by an Indian.” Col. Boriah served as Mackenzie’s assistant. Mackenzie was an expert in many languages, including Telugu, Sanskrit, Persian, Hindustani and English. Despite being the earliest English essay by an Indian, having 28 pages, C. Boriah’s translation of “*Account of the Jains*” has not been well received because it was unfinished.

Indo-Anglian literature evolved and developed different characteristics between the years 1800 and 1857. Journalism and pamphleteering were the main contributions of the literary renaissance that started during this time. Therefore, rather than being referred to them as ‘Literature of Power,’ the works can be considered ‘Literature of Knowledge.’ The endeavour on the part of the writers to unite the two civilisations, East and West, is



► “Literature of Knowledge”

what distinguishes the Indian English literature produced during this period. The socio-religious and political changes brought by the great reformers obviously led to a modern outlook for society by inviting the voices of the unheard. The first significant original publication in the history of Indian English literature can be considered Raja Rammohun Roy’s 1817 essay, “A Defence of Hindu Theism.” Roy is referred by Tagore as “the pioneer of India’s modern period.” Raja Ram Mohan Roy was mentioned as a key character in the Indian Renaissance, earning him the name “Father of Indian Renaissance.” He was a pioneer in the fields of political, social, religious, and educational reform. Let us know more about the contributions and their influence in society through their works.

1.4.1.1 Impact of Modernity in the Nineteenth Century

► Sake Dean Mahomet - the first Indian prose writer

The first Indian author to write in English is Sake Dean Mahomet who published his memoir, *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* in 1794. This non-fictional prose was in the form of thirty-eight letters. The book provides information regarding the fading power of the Mughals and the dominance of the British in India. Later came the work of Boriah, “Account of the Jains” in 1809. Raja Mohun Roy’s essay, “A Defence of Hindu Theism” (1817) is the first original publication in expository prose in the history of Indian writing in English.

Any discussion of Indian Modernity has to begin with Raja Ram Mohan Roy. The early works were in the form of translations which were mainly on religion. As M. K. Naik mentions, they include “the translated works *An Abridgement of the Vedant* (1816) and *Renderings of the Kena and Isa Upanishads* (1816). Sankara Sastri prompted Ram Mohan Roy to write his first original essay in English: “A Defence of Hindu Theism” (1817)—a masterly vindication of monotheism. He learned the languages Hebrew, Greek and Latin and wrote on Christian theology, *Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness, Extracted from the Books of the New Testament Ascribed to the Four Evangelists with Translations into Sungscrit [r/c] and Bengalee* (1820). His broadsides against widow-burning include *A Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of, the Practice of Burning Widows Alive* (1818); *A Second Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of, the Practice*



- Importance of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's works

of *Burning Widows Alive* (1820); *Abstract of the Arguments Regarding the Burning of Widows Considered as a Religious Rite* (1830), *Address to Lord William Bentinck* (1830); and *Anti-Suttee Petition to the House of Commons* (1832).” In his *Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females According to the Hindu Law of Inheritance* (1822), Roy attacks polygamy and shows how ancient Hindu laws have been misinterpreted to deny equal rights to women's inheritance. The most significant writing of Ram Mohan Roy's is the *Petitions against the Press Regulations* (1823). Ram Mohan Roy's *Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India* (1832), which embodies his views on administrative reforms, is remarkable for its spirited protest against the economic drain in India under the East India Company rule and the exploitation of the peasantry by the rich landlords. Ram Mohan Roy's writings obviously belong to the category of 'Literature of Knowledge', rather than 'Literature of Power.'

- The father of Bengali prose writing is also the first 'begetter' of Indian prose in English.

Naik also mentions Roy as, "The father of Bengali prose writing is also the first 'begetter' of Indian prose in English". His legacy was carried through the progressive thoughts and works of later authors. Krishna Mohan Banerji's *Hindu Philosophy* (1861) is a handbook for missionaries and his *Aryan Witness* (1875) seeks to prove that the *Prajapati* of the *Vedas* is Jesus Christ. Ram Gopal Ghose (1815-68) wrote the pamphlet, "Remarks on the Black Acts" (1851) in defence of the so-called 'Black Acts' of 1849. One of the first Indian antiquarians, Indologists, and historians was Rajendra Lal Mitra (1824-91), Assistant Secretary and Librarian at the Bengal Asiatic Society, whom Tagore referred to as *Sabyasachi* (i.e., ambidextrous). A medical doctor by training, Bhau Daji (1822-74), published an essay on infanticide in 1847. The most recent edition of his *Writings and Speeches* (1974) was edited by T.G. Mainkar."

Some of the other works on national issues are *The Grand Old Man of India*, *Poverty of India* (Parts I & II, 1873) and *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India* (1901) by Dadabhai Naoroji. His numerous speeches have been collected in *Essays, Speeches, Addresses and Writings* (1887) and *Speeches and Writings* (1916). Govind Ranade's *Rise of the Maratha Power* (1900) is, like Bhandarkar's histories, a pioneering effort which laid the foundations of historical research in Maharashtra. Bal Gangadhar Tilak composed



- Dadabhai Naoroji, Ram Gopal Ghose and others

English Speeches, Collected in Writings and Speeches (1922) and *Towards Independence*. Bipin Chandra Pal wrote *Nationality and Empire* (1916), *Indian Nationalism: Its Principles and Personalities* (1919) and *Introduction to the Study of Hinduism* (1908).

- The trio

The later period consisted of the trio of Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. Tagore came late into the field of English prose writing but his Bengali prose was translated into English by himself. Later Tagore wrote *My Boyhood Days and Reminiscences* but was more comfortable in speeches in *Creative Unity* (1922), *The Religion of Man* (1930), *Crisis in Civilisation* (1941). We will be discussing Swami Vivekananda, later in this unit.

- *Karmayogin* - the weekly started by Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo started *Karmayogin*, a weekly review of national literature, religion, science, philosophy, etc. Some of the prominent essays by him are “A System of National Education”, and “The National Value of Art”, “Essays on the Gita” (1928), “The Life Divine” (1939-40), “Heraclitus” (1941) and “The Synthesis of Yoga” (1948). Naik says, ““The Life Divine” is easily the crown of Sri Aurobindo’s writings in prose. This massive treatise of more than a thousand pages has for its central theme the affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence.” It argues that man’s highest aim is the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realization of God within and without. “The Life Divine” is an ambitious metaphysical statement. Yet, in its vastness of conception, the sweep of its intricate thought-structure, its penetrating vision, its bold insights and the uniform dignity and elevation of its style, it has no equal in the history of Indian English prose.

- Other prominent writers like Sri Aurobindo

The personalities who could be compared to Sri Aurobindo’s excellence in prose were Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, and Lala Lajpat Rai. Lala Lajpat Rai wrote several books including *Young India: An Interpretation and a History of the Nationalist Movement from Within* (1917) and *The Political Future of India* (1918). Syed Ahmed Khan’s *Causes of the Indian Revolt* (1858) was translated into English by Colvin and Graham in 1873. Ameer Ali (1849-1928) authored *The Spirit of Islam* (1891) and *A Short History of the Saracens* (1916).



1.4.1.2 Impact of Nationalism in the Twentieth Century

The other works which were influenced from nationalism are Vallabhbhai Patel's (1875-1950) *For A United India: Speeches* (1948) and *On Indian Problems* (1949); Pattabhi Sita Ramayya's (1880-1959) *Gandhism and Socialism* (1936) and *History of the Indian National Congress Vols. I and II* (1935, 1946); Rajendra Prasad's (1884-1963) *India Divided* (1946); K. M. Munshi's (1887-1971) *I Follow the Mahatma* (1940); J. B. Kripalani's (1888-1982) *The Gandhian Way* (1945); A.K. Azad's *India Wins Freedom India Wins Freedom* (1952), and *Gandhian Economic Thought* (1951); G. Ramachandran's *A Sheaf of Gandhi Anecdotes* (1942); *The Man Gandhi* (1943) and *Gandhigram: Thoughts and Talks of G. Ramachandran* (1964), and U.R. Dhebar's *Lectures on Gandhian Philosophy* (1962). All these works reflect how Gandhian philosophy and Nehruvian philosophy influenced people.

► Works on Gandhi

The critics of 'Gandhism' were Subhash Chandra Bose, M. N. Roy, V.D. Savarkar and B. R. Ambedkar; and socialists like Jaya Prakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia and Ashok Mehta. Subhash Chandra Bose's first volume *Complete Works* appeared in 1980. His autobiography *Indian Pilgrim* (1948) was translated from the Bengali by S. K. Bose. Manavendra Nath Roy's *Radical Humanism, Expounded in New Humanism: A Manifesto* (1947) was an attempt to blend Marxism with humanist ethics. A.R. Ambedkar's *What Congress and Gandhi have Done to the Untouchables* (1945) dealt with political, economic and religious subjects. Shyam Prasad Mookerjee (1901- 1953) authored *Awake, Hindustan* (1944), and Bipin Chandra Pal wrote *Nationality and Empire* (1916) and *Indian Nationalism: Its Principles and Personalities* (1919).

► Gandhi's critics

Summarised Overview

Sake Dean Mahomet wrote his memoirs, *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*, in 1794, making him the first Indian author to write in English. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who had a burning desire to free India from the grip of culture and religion, was a leading proponent of modernity. Great speakers and writers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Swami Vivekananda inspired the government to outlaw the cruel practices followed by many religions, particularly Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda has all the qualities of superb prose in plenty. In addition to subtle effects like euphony and cacophony, assonance, and consonance, it skilfully employs figures like



similes, metaphors, epigrams and paradoxes. It is rhythmic, symmetrical, and easy to understand. He starts by making a point, then develops it subtly using logical arguments or insightful analogies. A good style, in his opinion, should be uncomplicated, relaxed and expressive. The unit also discussed the prose works by Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Swami Vivekananda. Gandhi's associates and their prose works, along with the critical works of about him, have also been discussed.

Assignments

1. Discuss any English prose writer described in the unit and the matter of concern in his/her works.
2. How is Gandhi's subject of issues different from Ram Mohan Roy's?
3. How did modernity influence the themes of prose?
4. What were the issues discussed in the works of authors during the 1900s?
5. What is the role of nationalism in the prose works seen during the early 1900s?
6. How did M. K. Naik divide the literary periods of Mahatma Gandhi?

Suggested Readings

1. "Background to the Indian English Prose." Pdfcoffee.com, PDFCOFFEE.COM, <https://pdfcoffee.com/background-to-the-indian-english-prose-pdf-free.html>.
2. Gopal, S. *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*. Oxford UP, 1979.
3. Mahomet, Dean. *The Travels of Dean Mahomet An Eighteenth-Century Journey through India*, University of California Press, 1997.

References

1. Iyengar, K.R.S. *Indian Writing in English*. Asia Publishing, 1973.
2. Mohan, Ramesh. Ed. *Indian Writing in English*. Orient, 1978.
3. Sinha, Krishna Nandan. Ed. *Indian Writing in English*. Heritage, 1979.



2. Fiction

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the section, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ trace the beginnings of Indian English fiction.
- ▶ document important fiction writers of the pre-independence era as well as of the contemporary period.
- ▶ get a comprehensive view of the period in which Indian English Fiction developed.
- ▶ relate present life with the past lives of many Indians across the country through the characters.

Background

Novel as an artistic medium began to develop in India after the European conquest. It is true that the early English educated Indian novelists were deeply influenced by the English novels. But Indian literature was not wholly an imitation of the Western novel. Under British rule, India underwent many socio-political circumstances which shaped the growth and development of the novel as a major literary genre. The influx of bourgeois principles raised awareness like individualism, equality and brotherhood. The general framework of the novel reflected the post-Renaissance values which held the “individual” over a group.

Keywords

Partition, Body, Untouchable, Diaspora, Patriarchy, Individualism, Feminism, Nationalism, Existentialism

Discussion

- Fictional work entails the establishment of a made-up universe

Fiction is a narrative and creative work which consists of individuals, places and events, in an imaginary world or inside one's imagination. In a narrow sense, fiction refers to "written narratives in prose – often limited to novels, novellas, and short stories." The creation of a fictional work entails the establishment of a made-up universe. Instead of providing factually accurate portrayals of real people, "the audience typically accepts the work's fiction status and anticipates certain deviations from reality in the work." Since it is commonly accepted that fiction does not entirely reflect reality, it is difficult to determine whether or how a work's themes and context relate to real-world problems or events. Some fictional works may even contain characters and events that take place in a context that is wholly distinct from the known material world: a stand-alone fictitious universe.

- Non fiction works deliver factual accounts

Non-fiction authors, in contrast to fiction writers, are held accountable for delivering just the historical and factual accounts. Despite the traditional separation between fiction and non-fiction, some contemporary works blur this line, especially those that belong to certain experimental storytelling genres, such as some postmodern fiction, auto-fiction, or creative non-fiction, like non-fiction novels and docudramas, as well as the intentional literary experiment of misrepresenting fiction as non-fiction.

The advent of English education brought European fictional books to India. The following session will introduce you to the history, and works of Indian English authors.

1.4.2.1 Pre-Independence Fiction and Partition Fiction

The European colonisation of India caused novels as a form of artistic expression, both in English and in regional languages. It is true that the English-educated Indians first started reading novels to a significant degree, which helped for the birth of the early novels and novelists. However, Indian fiction cannot be viewed as a mere parody of the Western novel. Under British control, India had similar socio-political situations which created novels as a literary genre. The influx of bourgeois principles into Indian society raised awareness of ideas like individualism, equality and



- Influence of colonisation

brotherhood. The post-Renaissance values that prioritised the individual over the community are present in the novel's overall structure. The single voice narratives that started to appear in several Indian languages during the end of the 19th century, as well as in English, became expressions of a new period that challenged conventional ideals and narrative structures.

- The first Indian novel

Rajmohan's Wife, India's first novel, was first published in 1864 and then republished in 1935. By using a lot of Indian terminology and making an effort to depict an authentically Indian story, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee tried to Indianise the narrative form. Some of the pioneering works in this area include *Saguna* (1893) by Krupabai Sathianadhan, *Thillai Govindan* (1908) by Madhaviah, and *Murugan the Tiller* (1927) by K. S. Venkataramani.

- Society was portrayed by the trio

The Indian social and family lives were portrayed in the early fictional writings. High caste Hindu interpersonal relationships, ideals, and attitudes could be considered more essential societal documents than any indigenous art forms, traditions or livelihood. With the release of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936), R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935), and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), Indian literature in English may be said to have come of age.

- Anand's novels highlighted the socio-economic issues

The works of these three authors established Indian Fiction in English in a respectable position, from which it grew and in recent years gained recognition on a global scale. Writing was a social activity for Mulk Raj Anand. Anand, a dedicated author, produced novels that highlighted the socio-economic issues of the working classes and the impoverished. *The Big Heart* (1945) explores the lives of an industrial worker, and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) discusses the hardships of tea estate workers.

- Narayan's dynamic theatre
- Rao combined traditional values with modern ones

The setting for R.K. Narayan's works are about the fictitious South Indian town of Malgudi. He views life as a dynamic theatre called "leela." Narayan used a clear narrative style distinguished by the use of humour, sarcasm, and myth. Among Narayan's notable works are *The Guide* (1958) and *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1961). Rao developed a discourse on the spiritual search that combined traditional principles such as pluralism, hierarchy, and holism with modern



values such as secularism, socialism, and individualism in an effort to address the issue of East-West balance. Two of Raja Rao's significant novels are *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) and *The Chessmaster and his Moves* (1988).

- ▶ The First Phase
- ▶ The trio was an inspiration for many writers

The “Big Three of Indian Fiction in English” are three authors who made significant contributions to the growth of Indian fiction in English. The writings of R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao were mostly produced during this humanist era. This vision was shared by the majority of writers from this era. While K. A. Abbas wrote on the political unrest of independent India, Bhabani Bhattacharya authored books about casteism, patriarchal tyranny, etc.

- ▶ The Second Phase
- ▶ Kamala Markandeya, Kushwant Singh, Nayantara Sahgal

In her renowned work *A Handful of Rice* (1966), Kamala Markandeya focused on the urban poor. Manohar Malgonkar wrote about the demise of princely states, while Kushwant Singh addressed the partition of India in his book *Train to Pakistan* (1956). *The Princess* (1963) and *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), two books by Malgonkar, made him well-known. Nayantara Sahgal is renowned as a political author who used her fiction to attempt to retrace the political development of independent India. The freedom of women is another significant concern for Sahgal. Some of her well-known books are *Mistaken Identity* (1988) and *Rich like Us* (1983).

- ▶ Anita Desai - East-West encounter

The East-West Encounter, existentialist angst, alienation, postcolonial situation, and feminist issues were the writers' primary concerns in the second phase. Anita Desai is among the most well-known writers of this era. Her books can be seen as a celebration of womanhood in general. *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975), *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), and *Clear Light of Day* (1980) all depict the female self's search for identity.

The third phase, which saw the birth of writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, etc., is characterised by a distinct shift in style and method. Many of the writers that belong to this phase have a propensity to reimagine the history of India. *Midnight's Children* by Salman Rushdie, published in 1981, presented post-independence national history in an allegorical manner. Shashi Tharoor used parody to recount modern Indian history in his 1989 book *The Great Indian Novel*. Bombay Hindi and English are



- The Third Phase

combined to create Rushdie's language, also referred to as "chutnified English." Many other authors, such as Arundhati Roy, effectively adapted similar tactics to localise and indigenize the English language.

1.4.2.2 Fiction of the Diaspora

- Strange experiences of the diaspora writers

The focus on the experience of the diaspora at this time is another crucial factor. As a result of widespread migration and settlement outside of the native country, cultures became hybridised, and strange experiences of the diaspora population started to show up in fiction. From places outside of India, authors like Bharathi Mukherjee, Vikram Seth, and Rohinton Mistry published their works. The tale of Rohinton Mistry combines Persian, South Asian, and European storytelling techniques.

1.4.2.3 Women Writers

- Anguish of women
- Fight against male rule

In the post-colonial era, Indian women writers wrote about their experiences and anguish for two main reasons. First, it is possible to recognize that both imperialism and patriarchy exercise various forms of dominance over people who are beneath them. Because of this, it was crucial to highlight the experiences of women who were subjected to patriarchal influences and reveal the excessive violence that males inflicted on them. The women had to fight against this male rule. We see that the boundaries of the community, class, and race are defined by women in their writings.

- Present women as powerful

Second, through their works, they attempted to convey their pain and displeasure with the attitude of men in power. They have addressed and interpreted the complicated colonial and postcolonial contexts with their intellectual observations, conceptual, theoretical, and literary explorations. The Indian women writers, on the other hand, did their utmost to assert their authority in a world dominated by men.

The women had to overcome years of male supremacy, taboos, and beliefs that had profoundly permeated society, so they are fully aware that it is a very difficult task. Furthermore, detractors contended that colonialism functioned quite differently for men and women. The reason for this is that women experience both general prejudice as colonial subjects' toys and specialised discrimination as people who are being subjected to "double colonisation."

1.4.2.4 Contemporary Writers

India has produced an incredible amount of literature during the past two decades. There has never been a time in the whole history of the Indian English Novel like this “new fiction” category. Numerous accolades and distinctions received on a global scale provide legitimacy to it. Never before had India been given such a prominent position on the global literary map.

The biggest part in helping these authors achieve a global readership is played by the international publishing companies. The list of foreign publishers that publish Indian English books is extensive and includes Faber and Faber, Andre Deutsch, Heinemann, Alfred Knopf, Random House, Picador, and others. A comprehensive list of these would actually resemble a directory of British and American publishers.

► Global readership

Summarised Overview

Fiction is the term for written narratives in prose, which are typically used for novels, novellas, and short stories. A made-up universe must be created in order to create a fictitious work. The audience often acknowledges the work's position as fiction and expects certain deviations from reality in the work, as opposed to just giving factual accurate descriptions of characters who are real people. Indian culture became more aware of concepts like individualism, equality, and fraternity by modernism. The overall design of the novels that were published at the time reflects the post-Renaissance beliefs that gave individuals precedence over communities. Three writers are known as the “Big Three of Indian Fiction in English,” R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao significantly influenced the development of this genre. The writers' main concerns in the second phase were the East-West Encounter, Existentialist angst, Alienation, Postcolonial predicament, and feminist themes. One of the most well-known authors from this time period is Anita Desai. A noticeable change in style and approach characterises the third phase, which gave rise to writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, etc. There is a general tendency among writers from this phase to reinterpret Indian history. *Train to Pakistan*, a terrifying account of events that took place along the borders of the newly partitioned countries of India and Pakistan in the summer of 1947, is the only best work that Khushwant Singh is known as a fiction writer. The Partition is painted as a phenomenon that the regular peasants, who have peacefully coexisted despite their religious differences, cannot understand. R.K. Narayan's writing is characterised by a blend of serene truth, fantasy, and



subtle irony. Malgudi, a fictional location of Narayan's novels, is significant as a microcosm of India. A metaphysically-inclined Indian-American author of English-language novels and short tales. Raja Rao became one of the best prose writers in India thanks to *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), a semi-autobiographical book about a spiritual truth-seeking journey through Europe and India that won him the *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 1964.

Cultures became hybridised as a result of significant migration and settlement outside of the ancestral country, and odd experiences of the diaspora population began to appear in fiction. Desani's works were lauded by Edmund Blunden, who said that he "promises to be an amazing representative between East and West, not necessarily in the political sense, but that of broad interpretation." The rich upper class of India makes up the majority of Nayantara Sahgal's characters. The use of "simple" English in Jhumpa Lahiri's writing sets it apart, as do her protagonists, who are typically immigrants from India to America who must navigate the cultural barriers between their home country and their adopted one. Chitra Divakaruni's writings, which are largely situated in India and the US, typically stress the struggles of South Asian immigrants. The Parsi diaspora in India is the main focus of Rohinton Mistry's writings, which he presents as both an independent enclave group and an important part of the nation-state. Bombay is, in Salman Rushdie's opinion, the "most cosmopolitan, most hybrid, most hotchpotch of cities," and it is, in large part, India that serves as the main setting for *Midnight's Children*, his novel about the birth of India. Throughout his career, the well-known commentator on India and everything Indian, whose name has been deracinated or made more cosmopolitan by being abbreviated, V.S. Naipaul, has worked to address issues of identity and cultural tradition as well as the evolution of social and religious systems under the influence of European imperialism. In other words, he is a post-colonial author, a West Indian writer, and a black British writer. The shifting socio-economic landscape serves as Kamala Markandaya's canvas, and as a result, her works are a magnificent kaleidoscope. She selects her characters and situations with skill. Godden also lauded Jhabvala for having an original voice, adding that her works include numerous novels, screenplays, and short stories "ardonic humour, and beauty." The hardships and lives of women are primarily the subject of Shashi Deshpande novels, particularly as they relate to India. Anita Desai bases most of her tales on her own personal experiences. Bharati Mukherjee's writing undercurrents violence in addition to cultural disputes. Anita Nair has worked hard to become the voice of true feminism in contemporary Indian English literature. Her book *The Better Man* brings back traditions from the rural world that are all but lost in contemporary Indian English fiction. *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy has the power to astound like none other, causing the reader to experience the agony and heartache of a mother, the sorrow of a child, the suffering of lovers who were torn apart, the forced maturity that was imposed upon children, and the division



of families. As a proponent of postmodernism, Amitav Ghosh concentrates solely on the oppressed, typically non-white, victims of colonialism in his works. Novelists like Shashi Tharoor have been much more willing to rewrite the genres of Indian literary tradition than to simply put contemporary material in traditional forms, which would run the risk of reproducing the type of orientalism that has always defined India in terms of the glories of an unchanging past. Vikram Seth accurately depicts the social and political climate of post- Independence India. The majority of Chetan Bhagat's opinions are centred on youth and concerns related to national development, which play the most significant roles in society.

Assignments

1. Explain the three phases of Indian English fiction.
2. What do you understand about "Double Colonisation"? How would you compare it with double subjugation?
3. How are the themes in fiction of women writers different from their male counterparts?
4. What are the important themes seen in a diasporic writing? Explain.
5. Write a note on the origins of Indian fiction.

Suggested Readings

1. Ayyappa Paniker, K. *Indian English Literature since Independence*. Indian Association for English Studies, 1991
2. Jha, Rekha. *The Novels of Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Jhabvala: A Study in East-West Encounter*. Prestige, 1990.
3. Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 1982.

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1. Kumar, Satish. *A Survey of Indian English Novels*. Prakash, 1996.
2. Neill, Diana. *A Short History of the English Novel*. Kalyani, 1979.
3. K. S. Ramamurti. *Rise of the Indian Novel in English*. Sterling, 1987
4. Reddy, K. Venkata and P. Bayappa Reddy, ed. *The Indian Novel with a Social Purpose*, Atlantic, 1999.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

Poetry & Drama

BLOCK-02

Block Content

Unit 1 Poetry (Detailed)

Unit 2 Drama (Detailed)

Unit 3 Poetry (Non-Detailed)

Unit 4 Drama (Non-Detailed)



Unit 1

Poetry

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ contextualise the general backdrop of Indian poetry in English.
- ▶ possess an understanding of the literary contributions of the selected poets.
- ▶ critically analyse the predominant themes and styles used in the selected poems.
- ▶ explore the general trajectory of the English language in Indian literary history.

Background

The arrival and evolution of the English language in India have deep ties to the nation's colonial history. The British introduced it as they began to establish trade relations, eventually using it as an administrative language during their imperialistic rule. Prominent social reformers of the time, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, encouraged the teaching of English as a way of incorporating knowledge about Western science and technology in Indian education. Gradually, English came to be incorporated into the Indian socio-cultural fabric in various ways.

A changing point in the history of the English language in India can be traced back to the presentation of Lord Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education' in 1835. In it, he argued that the imparting of English education on Indian soil would help to develop English opinions and morals amongst Indians. In the same year, the Council of India, under Lord William Bentick, passed the English Education Act which encouraged western learning through the medium of English in the Indian educational establishments of the time.

Yet, as early as the late eighteenth century, Dean Mahomed had brought out the first English work to be published by an Indian – *The Travels of Dean Mahomet* (1794). This points to the fact that the long tradition of Indian



writings in English, thus, comes out of a history of coloniality, resistance, and assimilation. It was equally the language of the British Raj and the elite sections of Indian society, just as much as it contained the possibilities of contesting the hegemony of imperial rule.

Over the centuries, Indian writers have used English as a medium of literary expression. They produced a vast literature that covered various genres such as poetry, fiction, essay, prose, and drama. In effect, Indian writing in English witnesses the creative usage of a 'foreign' tongue to convey realities and sensibilities that are uniquely 'Indian'. In other words, it offers something that English poetry and Indian regional literatures alone cannot – a commingling of poetic experience and expression from both literary cultures.

In this broad history, Indian English poetry emerged over several distinct stages to assume an identity of its own. The influence of British poetry loomed large over the works of the first generation Indian poets writing in English. This may be seen in the works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Toru Dutt, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, and Sarojini Naidu, wherein the style and thematic focus of the English romantic poets can be traced. However, their poetry also incorporated elements that were culturally unique, using Indian imagery, myths, and concepts in their works.

The current unit explores the works of some of the most prominent Indian English poets of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, contextualising their contributions to the genre. While the poets included herewith are part of this long tryst with English, they are also literary figures who have developed their own unique styles and craftsmanship. A close understanding of the creative and social contexts of their artistry is vital in critically reading their poems.

Keywords

English poetry in India - History - Context - Style - Theme



Discussion

2.1.1 The Coromandel Fishers

The poetic output of Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), a first generation Indian English poet and freedom fighter, often centralises the question of language and literary culture. It is said that upon reading her first attempts in poetry, Sir Edmund Gosse requested her to use the artform to introduce readers to “the vivid populations of her own voluptuous and un-familiar province”. In short, her poetry could offer a unique window into the Indian landscape, from the perspective of one who is Indian in thought, feeling, emotion and experience, but also familiar with the use of English for literary expression.

► New perspective

Her personal relationship with the English language had its own tensions. According to some accounts, she was forced to learn the colonial tongue by her father. Though she was a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and a dedicated member of the Indian nationalist movement, she first gained public attention as a poet in English. Throughout her writing career, she had to find ways to balance the imperialistic context of English with her own anti-colonial politics. By presenting the nation in a new light, she was able to break away from the colonial depictions of India and Indians.

► Anti-colonial impulse

Sarojini was introduced to English at a very early age, though it is said that she refused to learn it. Her father, Aghorenath Chattopadhyay, punished his daughter by locking her up in her room for a whole day. She later wrote: “I came out of it [the room/the experience] a full-blown linguist...I have never spoken any other language to him or to my mother who always speaks to me in Hindustani.”

Sarojini Naidu has several collections of poetry to her credit including *Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time*, *The Broken Wing*, *Feast of Youth*, *The Magic Tree*, *The Wizard Mask* and *A Treasury of Poems*. Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru, along with many political and literary personalities of her times were admirers of her writing. Even though her poetry was essentially in English, they drew on Indianness for their beauty and effectiveness.

► Significance



► Focus

The range covered by her poetry extends from works intended for children to those that engage critical themes such as tragedy, romance, patriotism, civil rights, women's emancipation, and more. In a sense, her social activism as well as her cultural and political contributions are tied to her poetry. It is interesting to note that, despite following the tradition of British Romanticism, she imbued Indian sensibilities to her poetry. This allowed her to compose English works that aligned closely with nationalist and anti-colonial sentiments.

► Expressing political discontent and rebellion

Using symbolism to convey deeper meanings and poetic truth, her writings often expressed the desire to rise up against oppression and a discontent with imperialism. She would weave the burning political issues of her times within her poetry as seen in the acclaimed work "In the Bazaars of Hyderabad", for example. Written during the Swadeshi Movement, the poem advocates the boycotting of European merchandise for homemade Indian products. In particular, it presents Indian craftsmanship by elaborating on the different wares on display in Indian bazaars: "What do you sell O ye merchants? / Richly your wares are displayed."

► Gender

Further, she responded to social and cultural issues of her times, such as caste barriers and gender inequality. In her own way, she laid the early foundations of a feminist discourse in Indian literature. One aspect of this is her presence in the public sphere as a literary figure and a political activist. At a point of time when womanhood was defined through private roles, she appeared in the public eye as an English poet, freedom fighter, and social reformer. In many of her poems, she focused on the condition of women in an orthodox, patriarchal society.

► Across social and cultural divisions

It is equally significant that Sarojini Naidu's poetry features women from different classes, castes, historical moments, and social situations. Rather than conceiving of the 'Indian woman' as a singular identity, she made visible the vastly different conditions in which women lived across the country. While in "Village Song", the figure of a bride in a marriage veil is depicted, in "Vasant Panchami", it is the figure of a widow, lamenting her unfair situation, that is portrayed. In works such as "Pardah Nashin", "Suttee", "In Praise of Gulmohar Blossoms", and "Nasturtiums", she explores various facets of Indian



womanhood from across social realities and myths.

In the current unit, we will discuss “The Coromandel Fishers”, a work that brings together different dimensions of Sarojini Naidu’s poetic craft. The poem is divided into three stanzas, each consisting of four run-on lines. On a literal level, it addresses the coromandel fishers and asks them to “rise” to begin their day. In the background of the nationalist movement, this can be read as an exhortation to the nation as a whole. It appears to call for the common man to organise and work against British colonialism.

► Multiple meanings

The poem opens with the line: “Rise, brothers, rise”, followed by powerful descriptions of daybreak. The skies are portrayed as praying to the morning light and the wind as asleep in the arms of the dawn, like a sleeping child (quietened down after the night). These instances of personification evoke the sense of a calm, meaningful beginning to the day. Through these images, the scene is set for the fishermen to venture out to sea.

► Opening

The next two lines of the first stanza depict the fishermen in their daily routine, “gathering nets” and freeing their catamarans to “capture the leaping wealth of the tide”. This image transforms the everyday life of the fishing community into an adventurous act, identifying them as kings of the sea. Herein, the parallels with the Indian freedom struggle become evident. Just as the fishermen are readying to take command of the sea and its wealth, the poem seems to suggest that the colonised people also wake up and set out to fight. Their ownership of the nation is implied through the use of the term ‘kings’.

► Parallels

The second stanza once again establishes a sense of familiarity with the sea, representing it as a mother-figure. The cloud and waves are portrayed as “brothers” and “comrades” respectively. As opposed to the personification in the first stanza, where the fishermen’s setting out into the external world was given an exploratory quality, here, a sense of kinship or familial unity is created. This extends to a metaphor for the nation where such a feeling of oneness is essential.

► Familial unity

Yet, the world into which the fishermen set out is full of dangers. The third line of the second stanza raises the possibility of death in the stormy seas: “What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand / of the sea-god

► Divine Intervention

drives?” The fates of the fishermen lie in the hand of the sea-god, with unpredictable weather often leading to perilous conditions. But the tone of the question suggests that this aspect does not limit the fishermen. Rather, they go out believing that he who controls the storm (the sea-god) will hide their lives in his breast.

► Destiny

The contrasting of the familial feeling with that of the stormy, unpredictable world provides a sense of the impact of colonialism on the land and its people. Just as the fishermen must risk their lives to head out to sea and reap the wealth of the ocean, the colonised people must rise up and challenge their oppressors. This act of rebellion carries serious consequences with it. However, the poem frames it as fate, where the freedom fighters’ lives are under divine protection. Thus, the second stanza further establishes parallels with the Indian struggle for freedom.

► The sea as true joy

The final stanza contrasts the joys of the land with the liberating pleasures of the sea. While the shade offered by the coconut trees, the scent of mango groves, and the voice of loved ones are intensely delightful, the sea is filled with deeper joys. The “kiss of the spray” and the “dance of the foam” are characterised as sweeter than anything else. The fishermen, once again addressed as “brothers”, are exhorted to row to the horizon. In reaching the “verge, where the low sky mates with the sea”, they seem to symbolically reach infinity.

► Symbolism

Herein, the poem alludes to a desire for freedom, represented by the movement towards the horizon. As opposed to the complacent joys offered by the land, it is the act of rowing across the spray and foam that provides sweeter pleasure. This is symbolic of the struggle towards achieving independence – the masses must work towards the goal of freeing India from imperial occupation. The “verge”, a destination in the distance, seems to epitomise precisely this goal. In the poem, the ‘verge’ seems to symbolize a point where freedom begins, a goal towards which the fishermen, and indeed the nation, are striving.

2.1.2 Freaks

In the tradition of Indian women’s writings in English, Kamala Das (1934-2009) is as prominent a name as Sarojini Naidu. She is known in Malayalam as Madhavikutti, and



► Prominence

later on in life, as Kamala Surayya. Writing in the post-independence period, she established her reputation as a feminist voice in Indian English poetry. Often, her writings attracted critical and popular attention for their frankness and bold content. Over the course of her career, her artistic design and poetic craft evolved, as did her artistic vision.

► Gendered voice

Kamala Das's poetry presents, undoubtedly, "the hopes and the oppressions, the concerns and tensions", of womankind. Her works quite often contain the conflict of feminist longing and feminist self-expression. The female psyche is well-documented through her poetry, using autobiographical elements. Some of her most successful poems such as "Summer in Calcutta", "An Introduction", "The Old Playhouse", "Ode to Lynx", and "Conflagration" are composed in this style.

► Themes

Her themes revolved around the personal, openly discussing love, sex, emotional unavailability, marital failures, frustrations, disillusionment, and extra-marital affairs. Her unsentimental depiction of the reality of relationships, particularly within the 'sacred' institution of marriage, made her writings unique. She wrote about the need for love, intimacy, and sex, as well as about the lack of these, in a new perspective.

► Confessional poetry

Since her poetry is typically a record of her personal experiences, many critics consider it to fall into the category of confessional poetry. As E. V. Ramakrishnan notes "...she has always dealt with private humiliations and sufferings which are the stock themes of confessional poetry." In her poems, personal moments are narrated in a conversational voice. This means that, unlike the works of traditional poets, Das's poetry uses domestic scenarios and private thoughts as subject matters. This provokes the readers to reflect on women's lives in a patriarchal society. By "confessing" her trauma, sadness, and the need for love, Das gives us a humanistic and realistic portrayal of a woman, as opposed to just stereotypes.

Confessional Poetry is a poetic genre that originated in the mid-twentieth century in American and British poetry. It marked a revolution in poetic style, subject matter, and theme by removing the “mask” that poets wore when writing about their lives. Confessional poets wrote in direct, often colloquial, language about their own private and psychological experiences, often drawing them from childhood, intense life events, and traumatic episodes. The speaker of the poem in confessional poetry becomes visible, not as an abstract poetic voice, but as a particular person located in a particular time and space. Do you see the characteristics of confessional poetry in Kamala Das’s “Freaks” or in any other poems in this unit?

► Feminine sensibility

A strong point of Kamala Das's poetry is her fierce “feminine sensibility” (Iyengar 680). She presents the point of view of women, engaging women protagonists and voices in her works. The effect is that she captures certain shared experiences of womanhood which are often left unexplored. Specifically, she discusses her desire for love and her frustration towards relationships that end in bodily lust.

► Marital relationship

The poem taken up for discussion in this unit, “The Freaks”, emphasises many of the qualities of Kamala Das's writing. A brief introspective lyric, it is written in the first person. It relates an intimate encounter between a woman and her spouse as they lie in bed, anticipating sexual closeness. The speaker in the poem (the woman) expresses her sentiments about the same in the poem.

► Lack of desire

As the poem opens, the female partner appears to be a bit repulsed and scared at the possibility of physical union with her husband. The speaker details the unpleasant aspects of his appearance – “sun-stained cheek”, a “dark cavern” of a mouth, “uneven teeth”. His gestures, intended to signify his lust, do not seem passionate to her. In fact, the poem depicts these intimate actions in a tone of emotional detachment. Their minds are meant to “race” passionately towards love, and instead, they trip idly over “puddles of desire.”

Through the perspective of the female lover, the male-



► Failure of love

partner is presented in a dark light. Great attention is paid to depicting the features of the male, highlighting her lack of physical attraction to the lover. His attempts to initiate interest from his partner only raise the question: “Can this man with Nimble finger-tips unleash / Nothing more alive than the / Skin’s lazy hungers?”. In other words, the personal, sexual relationship between the speaker and her partner does not seem to fulfil her need for passion and intellectual stimulation.

► Lack of acknowledgement

As the poem continues, the speaker appears to ponder about the unsuccessful nature of her relationship. She characterises the two of them as having lived very long but “failed in love”. In other words, their union cannot function within the routines of everyday life in a marital relationship that seem to be normalised to a great extent in society. The heart is compared to a “lonely cistern” that after long hours of futile waiting, fills itself with silence. The speaker’s individual needs, which are emotional intimacy and passion, seem to go unrecognised in the relationship.

► Desire for normalcy

She calls herself a “freak”, confessing that it is only to save face that she pretends to have a grand, flamboyant lust. In short, the speaker has no conviction in the relationship itself. It is only to create the illusion of conventionality that she performs desire. The word “freak” is often used derogatorily to refer to someone outside the accepted boundaries of society and culture. She feels excluded from the idealised imagination of a relationship and therefore struggles to consider herself a ‘normal’ person. In other words, in her attempt to appear a ‘normal’ individual to society at large, she struggles to reconcile with her own self and desires.

► Reflection

Written in the confessional mode, the poem takes up an instance from the speaker’s personal life and lays bare her mind. The reader becomes aware of the specificity of the experience, and the emotions associated with it. As with traditional confessional poetry, the subject under discussion is tabooed and shocking – frank conversations about sex are rarely encouraged in the Indian cultural and literary landscape. This provokes the readers to engage with the deeper concerns raised in the work, rather than just its aesthetic nature.

2.1.3 Background Casually

Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004) is a prominent Indian writer, whose poems in English have drastically influenced the literary scene in India. Many scholars consider the publication of his first collection of poetry, “A Time to Change”, as a seminal moment of modernism in postcolonial Indian literature. As with many proponents of Indian writing in English, Ezekiel centralised the complicated question of his cultural identity. Born into a Jewish family in Maharashtra, and expressing himself in English, his life experiences and literary language marginalised him in more than one sense.

► Identity as focus

By the 1950's, Ezekiel was a pivotal force in the Indian literary arena. He worked as an assistant editor for *Illustrated Weekly* in 1953, eventually founding the monthly literary magazine *Imprint* in 1961. Teaching English at Bombay University, he notably served as an art critic, mentor for the next generation of poets, including Dom Moraes, Adil Jussawalla and Gieve Patel. In 1983, Ezekiel received the Sahitya Akademi cultural award, and the Padma Shri, India's highest honour for civilians, in 1988.

► Literary career

Ezekiel's poetry, though written in English, employs themes and experiences drawn from daily life in India. Increasingly, his poems became situated in the Indian context, expanding the very scope of Indian writing in English. Often, his hybrid background and urban outlook were scrutinised in terms of ‘Indianness’ or the capacity to authentically depict India. Ezekiel himself wrote about this in the 1976 essay “Naipaul's India and Mine,”: “While I am not a Hindu and my background makes me a natural outsider,...circumstances and decisions relate me to India. In other countries I am a foreigner. In India I am an Indian.” Many critics consider Ezekiel's self-identity to be an influential factor in his contributions to Indian literature, particularly in their ability to transform the existing tradition of Indian writing in English.

► Question of authenticity



One of Nissim Ezekiel's poems, "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.", uses Indianized English to great comic effect. It is in the form of a farewell speech made by a colleague for Miss Pushpa T.S. The lines of the poem parody the way Indian speakers translate regional expressions into English, resulting in double-meaning and odd sentences. Here is a short excerpt from the poem: "You are all knowing, friends / What sweetness is in Miss Pushpa. / I don't mean only external sweetness / but internal sweetness. / Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling / even for no reason but simply because / she is feeling."

► Shift in tone

Of special interest in this regard is *Hymns in Darkness*, Ezekiel's vastest collection of poetry. It contains diverse themes, though the central focus is on the everyday routines. The poems in this collection tend to offer commentary and criticism on Indian social life, shifting more towards the darker, problematic aspects of everyday life. The questions of how to define homeland and identity find expression within these experiences.

► Formation of self-identity

The poem "Background Casually", published in *Hymns in Darkness*, encompasses various experiences of his life lived in Bombay. The perceived confusion about his Indian roots has always set him in a marginalised position in society. It appears to have created a sense of alienation and a hostile social environment in his youth. Centralising the resulting identity crisis, the poem reveals the trajectory of his selfhood.

► Cultural isolation

Introducing himself in the opening lines of the poem, the speaker refers to himself as 'a poet-rascal-clown.' He employs a sense of terror and frailty in describing his upbringing. The sense of isolation is made clear in the idea that the young boy does not seem able to engage in routine childhood activities such as kite-flying or spinning a top. Apart from such differences, his religion sets him apart in the Roman Catholic School that he attends: "A mugging Jew among the wolves."

The spiritual and religious conflicts are evident in the way his fellow classmates react to him, using derogatory Jewish stereotypes. Yet, he was the one to win the scripture

► Identity crisis

prize at school that year, implying his own openness to the other cultures and religions around him. The speaker appears to have had physical confrontations with a Muslim sportsman and some Hindu lads, whose passivity was repulsive to him. Surrounded by a mix of traditions, as suggested by Yoga and Zen, his identity has complicated roots. This hybridity is seen in his question: "Could one, perhaps, be rabbi saint?" The section, dedicated to the speaker's boyhood, ends in a philosophical oxymoron: "The more I searched, the less I found."

► The search for 'home'

The next phase of the speaker's life is introduced through the announcement of his age: "Twenty two". This phase is defined by his decision to go abroad, and facilitated by a friend who pays the fare. Philosophy, poverty, and poetry were his companions during life in London. After a while, he found love with a woman. However, the relationship seemingly did not last. Before long, he finds employment on an English cargo ship, scrubbing the decks and learning to laugh again at home. Throughout his journeys, there has been a quest for "feeling at home".

► Growth

The speaker's father used to stereotype Hindus as talking too loudly or knocking with too much force, as hawking and spitting on the streets. This helped the speaker to prepare for the worst. He got married, and changed jobs, and saw himself become a fool. The song of his experience was sung, or in other words, he had learnt much from his life experiences. But, as the poet suggests, "all was yet to sing" – there was much more to experience and learn.

► Obligations and choices

The poem, then, turns towards the speaker's family history. While most of his ancestors crushed seed for bread, one among them bore British arms. He passed down war stories from the Boer conflict to the speaker's father. The influence of this ancestry is keenly felt by the speaker, who dreams that his feet and hands are bound by "fierce men". But the speaker, himself, chooses neither path. As he goes on to make clear, his dreams were all of words. This choice of a literary career is a clear deviation from his ancestors. However, this future is not without obstacles. He states that he did not know that words "betray". Further, he no longer has his sights on the "worldly prize", in terms of conventional success or wealth.



► Life choices

At this point, the speaker attempts to construct a view of the world. He declares that the wise survive and serve, whereas to play the fool is to “cash in on / The inner and the outer storms”. The wise ones seem to act practically while those that play the fool seem to be able to use their inner turmoil. This could be a comment on the nature of the poet’s task, as opposed to those engaged in more conventional endeavours.

► Establishing identity through writing

As the poem closes, the speaker states that the Indian landscape “sears” his eyes. He is, of course, referring to the manner in which the Indian context is established in his thoughts, emotions, and writings. He feels as though he has become a part of the landscape, to be observed by ‘others’ and foreigners. This points to the fact that his works are now being seen as a contribution to the Indian English literary canon, and are now being critiqued by foreign scholars. The critics proclaimed that his poetry was ‘singular’ or unique, often emphasising this aspect in the letters they wrote.

► Acceptance

However, the speaker has made his commitment: he has chosen to stay where he is. In short, he has made the metaphorical decision to stay in India. He seems to have reconciled with the identity crisis that defined much of his life. But his decision is almost akin to ‘missionary’ or charity work: “As others choose to give themselves / In some remote and backward place”. The reference to a “remote” and “backward” place might be drawn from how outsiders perceive the land that he is from. He owns this cultural location: “My backward place is where I am.”

► Self-writing

The poem “Background Casually” is autobiographical to the extent that it traces the way in which the speaker begins to experience, understand, and accept his own complicated identity within the Indian scenario. His alienation from the dominant cultural and religious traditions around him was compounded by the discrimination he had to confront. He longs to feel ‘at home’, but finds that his identity is a marginal one in the land of his birth. The poem charts out this crisis over the course of several experiences and philosophical transformations, spanning his life from boyhood to adulthood.

Beginning with his time at the “Roman Catholic School” as “a mugging Jew among the wolves”, the

► Trajectory

poem depicts how the speaker came to understand the nature of his religious and cultural beliefs. By 22, as a student in London, he entered an intellectual phase where “Philosophy, / Poverty, and Poetry” became his companions. Once he reaches adulthood, he married and changed professions, finding himself making sense of the world around him. It is after this point that he began to resolve the crisis of his identity – he became a part of the Indian landscape.

► Opposing ideas

The poem seeks to explore the question of identity and Indianness by juxtaposing opposing concepts of ‘home’ and ‘foreign’. The speaker, through his hybrid experiences and background, seems to exist across both concepts. He is at once marginalised from and a part of the society, and critical of the land of his birth but committed to it. His perspectives are, thus, those of someone who identifies himself with the Indian context but is able to view it with a critical distance. This poem thus characterises his personal history and literary career over a long period.

2.1.4 Hunger

► Structure

A critically acclaimed Indian poet writing in English, Jayanta Mahapatra, born in 1928, is often considered to be an aesthetic benchmark in the tradition of Indian English poetry. He is a poet and occasional prose-writer whose writings centralise the landscape of Orissa. Mahapatra has written about his own poetic process: “Perhaps I begin with an image or a cluster of images; or an image leads to another, or perhaps the images belonging to a sort of ‘group’... The image starts the movement of the poem... but I do not know where I am proceeding in the poem or how the poem is going to end. I don’t know myself how the poem is going to be.” In other words, he uses interconnected images to create poetic meaning.

His works are characterised by a mythic consciousness and an exploration of tradition; local details such as shrines, temples, women in prayer, rickshaws, prostitutes, and cattle appear throughout his poetry. These regional aspects are worked into a poetic form that is capable of reaching a wider audience. His poetry contains a depth of feeling and imagination which embraces geography, cultural past, modern existence, love and sex. They infuse grim realities with the beauty that the world around him



► Style of writing

has to offer. His most prominent collections of poetry include *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten, Swayamvara and Other Poems, A Father's Hours. A Rain of Rites, Waiting, The False Start and Relationship*.

► Reflection

The poem 'Hunger' is a touching work with autobiographical elements, focusing on a family heirloom to discuss the larger history of religious conversion. The poem begins by describing the pages of the diary of the speaker's grandfather: "The yellowed diary's notes whisper in vernacular." In effect, the diary speaks in a language that is not dominant or popularly understood. However, the "forgotten posture" or "cramped cry" contained in these notes forces the speaker to turn his attention to the past.

► Question of survival

The stanzas that follow portray a famine that disrupted "the laughter" of the grandfather's flesh – there was no rain, the atmosphere dusty, and the earth was cracked. The conditions of the drought appear to have caused a crisis of survival. In a weakened state with no food or means to survive, the grandfather is faced with "the hardest question of all." All around him are dead, empty trees, and a slowed river. He thought of how jackals move, scavenging for food, and the thought inspired him to move.

► Rethinking a past choice

The extreme conditions appear to have worn him down. The speaker wonders whether the grandfather heard the rustle of tamarind leaves in his belly, or if he foresaw his own death. He ponders whether the fear of dying led him to break into "unnatural laughter." With the hunger plaguing him, the grandfather turned 'coward' and ran, as any real animal would. He left his family and history behind, renouncing the faith he grew up in. However, in the light of the terrible famine that turned his "broken body" inside out, no faith or "Hindu world" seemed to matter. The speaker says that the grandfather dreamt towards the centre of his web, thinking only of a means of staying alive. The choice to convert might have spared his life, while his old ways might still "weep" in his heart.

The stanza shifts midway to the present when the speaker and his son still talk about that particular famine. There is a gap of years and different consciences between them. As young as the son is, the speaker can

► Faith and the material world

see that he does not believe in the “glories” of the past. Perhaps, he thinks of the past as a loss that they live in the present. All they can do is look back at what they do not know. However, there is a dawn or a realisation awaiting them, even so far away from the grandfather’s decision.

► Consequences

The speaker characterises the grandfather as an “invisible piece on a board” whose move to convert to another faith allowed their family line to survive. Even as their own voice falls silent, the coming generations will carry them forward. The speaker wishes that he knew the grandfather more and understood what it was to be faced with the prospect of dying. He wishes to appreciate the dignity that has to be earned ‘dangerously’. The grandfather took on the conversion as a terrifying and unfair ‘last chance’. Yet, that choice has helped them to survive, waking up in the middle of a social order – ensuring a safe middle-class existence for them.

► Memoirs and history

The poem presents hunger, a material feeling, as the basis for the complex religious transformation that the speaker’s grandfather went through. In the eyes of the speaker, it was the promise of food and security that led the grandfather to embrace another faith, leaving him guilty and self-reproachful for abandoning his own tradition. Speaking in the vernacular tongue, the diary thus makes public a crucial element of history through the private experiences of an individual and his family down the years.

► Inevitability of the decision

Further, the poem discusses the politics of the world that seem not to care for the internal conflicts or psychological agonies of a person. The grandfather is conflicted about his decision but neither nature nor those in power provide him with any other choices. The poem establishes this in the series of questions posed by the speaker: “...Did you hear the young tamarind leaves rustle / in the cold mean nights of your belly? / Did you see your own death?...How old were you?” Faced with these life-threatening experiences, he had no choice but to grasp at the chance that opened up before him.

The delicate politics surrounding religion is also highlighted in the poem. There is a sense that the grandfather is leaving behind an ancient world and traditions. But the poem drives home the question: what

- Fallibility of religion

does religion or faith matter when one is unable to sustain life? The ways of faith appear to symbolise the futile worship of a higher power when people are starving and falling on the wayside. On the one hand, it seems to be outside the scope of humanity but on the other hand, it is the essential will of humans to survive that forces the grandfather to convert.

- Historical tool

The poem 'Grandfather' certainly takes on a difficult moral terrain, centred on the grandfather's conversion to Christianity to escape death by starvation. It has a historical context in the 1866 famine which, according to historical sources, killed a third of the population in the Orissa region. It was further compounded by the lack of monsoons and the inefficiency of the administration of the time. In this context, the grandfather's diary becomes a crucial tool for understanding this period of time.

- Juxtaposition of images

The poem imaginatively revisits the yellowed pages of the grandfather's diary, written in vernacular Oriya. The historical and cultural past signified in its pages is referred to in the phrases "forgotten posture" and "cramped cry". The first stanza of the poem foregrounds images of the famine and the drought, as well as the "weakened body" that suffers through it. Indeed, the spectre of death is highlighted here in the body ravaged by hunger. The presence of this body in the parched land allows the poem to develop a fear of death as well as a desperation for survival. Indeed, the choice that the grandfather makes is subtly compared to the movement of the jackals, who scavenge for food wherever it is available. In this sense, the grandfather's desperation to live is established as he addresses "the hardest question of all..."

Indeed, the animal nature of the decision to flee alone and seek sustenance is also highlighted. In being plagued by hunger and certain death, the speaker suggests that "the real animal" in the grandfather came "plunging through your bone". Thus, the conversion itself was an act driven by the desperation of starvation. Further, by contrasting moral questions with the flight for survival, the poem forces its readers to think about the situations and consequences of such a decision. While the conversion signals a lack of responsibility towards his immediate family, severance of old ties, as well as a

► Conflict

negation of his ways of worship, it also ensured that the family line survived. The speaker acknowledges that it is only as a result of this drastic decision that he and his son are able to discuss the past and wake up with smiles.

► Limitations

Yet, the fact remains that the speaker and his son are analysing the grandfather's 'imperishable' instinct for survival, a long time later. They are safe in a "night of sleep and taunting rain", a stark contrast to the harsh imagery at the beginning of the poem. At a different point in time and experiencing different circumstances, the speaker and his son wish to understand the drive for survival that led the grandfather to make such a difficult decision. Thus, they come to recognise human limitations, both in the grandfather's desperate choice and in their inability to fully understand the extraordinary crisis that shaped that choice.

► Influences

2.1.5 This Summer – The Cicada's Song

Mamang Dai (1957-), a poet and novelist from Arunachal Pradesh, is best known for presenting the pristine, natural beauty of her home state through her writings. Indeed, her focus on 'the natural' may be tied to a deep-seated childhood fascination with botany. This interest was fostered through travels that gave her a chance to explore various possibilities around her. A Padma Shri winner in 2011, she takes inspiration from the works and literary styles of Italo Calvino, Peter Matthiessen, Barry Lopez, Jorge Borges, and Rumi. Despite being productive in both prose and poetry, Dai considers poetry to be "the real lifeline."

► Careers

Dai's journey as a writer is defined by her forays into various occupations. She was a member of the Indian Administrative Service, a post that she left to become a writer. She has also worked as a journalist with *The Telegraph*, *Hindustan Times* and *The Sentinel*. Her career has also seen her work in radio as an anchor and interviewer in *TV-AIR* and *DDK*, Itanagar. The time that she spent working as a programme officer with the World Wide Fund for Nature was crucial in intensifying her love for nature. It had a huge impact on her creative writing, as the natural landscape sustains her artistic process.



► Usage of language

Mamang Dai's writing seamlessly combines a sense of familiarity with the richness of imagination. Her diction (choice of words) is conversational while the ideas presented within them are complex. A poignant example of the same can be seen in her poem "The Voice of the Mountain", where she writes: "We live in territories forever ancient and new, and as we speak in changing languages". Her prose works, such as *Arunachal Pradesh: The Hidden Land*, presents the rich and ancient traditions of her land in a language that is highly accessible.

► Role as a writer

The role of the writer, in terms of recording the endurance of the people, their customs, traditions, and modes of survival, is emphasised throughout Mamang Dai's literary output. In her opinion, writers are "witnesses" who keep written records. They present the world in various perspectives, shaping the viewpoints of their readers and introducing them to different opinions. In particular, as a member of the marginalised Adi tribe, she values her own role as a literary figure in being a voice for her people; she uses art to illuminate humanity for her readers.

Mamang Dai's writings also possess strong feminist roots, with independent, self-reliant women as main characters. Even as they are brave, they are not separated from their sensitive and tolerant sides. In other words, her characters are well-rounded and dynamic explorations of gender in a patriarchal society.

► Structure

The poem "This Summer - The Cicada's Song" is a fine illustration of the way Mamang Dai uses nature imagery to comment on the culture and traditions of her homeland. The work follows the tradition of the 'dramatic monologue', with the speaker conversing with an implied audience. It is suggested that the first-person voice in the poem is that of the Cicada's, thereby validating the title. In four irregular stanzas, without rhyme, the reader follows the perspective of the small insect.

The poem uses the auditory image of the cicada's chirp as a dominant metaphor, comparing it to a song that conveys multiple stories. In the opening lines, the

► Images

speaker declares: “I can sing / the songs of the caged warrior / singing to the rough anonymity of trees...” The idea of a caged or restrained warrior has cultural implications, specifically when one considers the larger history of insurgency in the Eastern states. The “anonymity” of trees suggests both the idea of guerrilla warfare and the hiddenness of the state’s cultural past. The shells of the cicadas, left behind on the leaves, are contrasted with the shells of “forgotten words”. The forgotten history and narratives of the land are referred to, herein.

► Songs and history

The second stanza begins with the question: “Time – what is it?”. The speaker states that it is a symbol of a “man who loved cloud and mist / distributing songs”. The stanza moves on to a second question regarding the relevance of time: “what does it matter?”. Yet again, the speaker answers: “We made flowers and sunlight / and bracelets of train / distributing songs”. Thus time, an abstract concept, becomes associated with the evolution of the landscape, seen in the images of cloud, mist, flowers, sunlight, and trains. The juxtaposition of the human-made train with other natural things creates the impression that both civilisation and nature are intertwined. However, it is the ‘distribution of songs’ or the spreading of narratives that takes centre-stage in the process.

► Conflict with nature

The third stanza brings the destructive aspects of human progress to the forefront. Now, the speaker of the poem sings “bright, crackling words” in the “memory of songs”. This implies that the songs have either been forgotten or neglected as time advanced. The words themselves are meant to beg the forgiveness of butterflies and the natural beauty that has been destroyed in the “hunt for life” or for development. Even as the songs valorise the cultural history of the land, it is clear that the destruction of nature has been a wide-spread part of its past and present.

The poem ends by referring, once again, to the season – “summer”. Time is said to be “slanting” across the land. Here, we might read ‘time’ as ‘history’. The speaker insists that it will allow us to understand “what it means/loving from a distance”. There are multiple interpretations possible for these lines – primarily, it invites attention to



► Interlinked interpretations

human interference in nature, suggesting that it might be better to 'love' the natural from a distance. Given that the beauty of the land is now a slowly being eroded, these lines might convey that the very things that must be loved are in the distant past. It might also refer to the role of the writer, presenting the familiar landscape of the homeland to the reader and educating them on loving a land that is culturally and physically distant from them.

2.1.6 Life Sentence

► Literary career

Born in Kerala, Jeet Thayil (1959-) rose to fame as a performance poet, novelist, and journalist in the national arena. His work is noted for its innovative lyrical qualities as well as the use of influences from a range of domains. Thayil's use of language and his structuring of poems point to his deep knowledge about poetic and cultural history, alongside a depth and richness of imagination and style. His published works include *Collected Poems* (2015), *These Errors are Correct* (2008), *English* (2004), *Apocalypso* (1997), and *Gemini II: Selected Poems* (1994). He is also renowned as a fiction writer, with acclaimed novels such as *Narcopolis* (2012), *Low* (2020) and *The Book of Chocolate Saints* (2017).

► Poetry of the emotional landscape

His poetic idiom is vastly different from the existing traditions of Indian poetry in English. He introduced new subjects into the literary landscape, often frankly exploring experiences with drugs, alcohol, and sex. His poetry also revolved around themes of death and chaos, imbuing new perspectives on these topics. Dom Moraes, a doyen of Indian English poetry, has noted that Thayil does not concern himself with established poetic concerns such as Indianness. Rather, the thematic and structural elements of his poems are drawn from the personal sphere; his feelings and moods are illuminated subtly, without explicit statements about the same.

In an interview with Swati Rai, Jeet Thayil states: "I hate to take my reader for granted or talking down to a reader. I hate it myself when authors that I read, do so. I am not a believer in oversimplification, of either language or thought. I would like to think that they too are involved in the process as much I am invested in writing it."

► Structure

The poem "Life Sentence" is a short, conversational work in 16 lines. It draws strongly on the confessional genre of poetry where the innermost feelings and emotions of the speaker are expressed. Typically in such poems, the speaker introduces topics that are generally considered to be taboo in polite conversation. Here too, the poem revolves around the speaker's feelings of guilt and loss, discussing them through the metaphorical figure of the ghost.

► Sense of mystery

The poem opens in a rhetorical statement: "Let's say you're not opposed to the ghost." This sets up a scenario where the reader is already immersed in the backstory, yet is not given the right context to fully understand it. It creates a tense atmosphere in which the poem unfolds. Writing in the second person further alienates the speaker of the poem from the subject under discussion as well as the rather strong emotions conveyed. In principle, even the ghost's "neediness" is understood by the speaker, pointing to a bond between the two. It is evident from the first two lines that the ghost, as a poetic figure, is being used to explore a past event that 'haunts' the speaker.

► Memories

In the next lines, the 'ghost' is referred to as 'she'. The speaker states that she is busy and distracted, looking for a way back in. However, this is difficult as the "shore" appears distant and impossible to attain; the reference here might perhaps be to the 'shore' that metaphorically separates the dead from the living. It is characterised as a 'far-off' place where her former friends do not speak her name any longer. In fact, the name itself has been lost. The poem explores the way in which the memory of the dead is slowly erased from the everyday routines of the living, even if they were once very close. In return, nothing the ghost hears is audible through the "static and the clatter" of life.



- Different levels of existence

In the progression of life, with its material needs and comforts, the speaker appears to forget to “speak her name”. His talk is of “meat and money”, as opposed to the repeating of her lovely name”. In other words, the ghost exists in a realm untouched by the concerns of the living such as money. In a sense, by continuing to exist and transact among the living, the speaker is detached from the ghost. It is not that the speaker is crazy or bitter. His actions are led by the fear of guilt. He does not want to be confronted by the ghost’s question: “Why, why didn’t you look after me?”.

- Guilt and memory

Herein, the title of the poem – “Life Sentence” – becomes validated. The speaker is emotionally and psychologically haunted by the memory of the ghost. However, it is not the loss alone that seems to be creating mental anguish. It is the guilt of not having done enough for the ghost during her lifetime. Thus, the life sentence (being imprisoned for life) referred to in the title is the punishment of living with this guilt forever. Thus, the very memory of the ghost becomes a reference to the life sentence that the speaker undergoes.

2.1.7 The Road

- Significance as poet

Eunice de Souza (1940-2017), an English language poet, enriched the trajectory of Indian English poetry with her sharp, intense, and ironic verses. If Kamala Das introduced female sexuality and desire into Indian verse, de Souza ushered in “female fury” in her poems: ‘I look striking in red and black / and a necklace of skulls.’ She has published four volumes of poetry and two novellas, and served as editor for several anthologies and collections. Her work has been translated into other languages that range from Portuguese and Finnish to Italian and Swedish.

- Unique style

In her first collection of poems, *Fix* (1979), she has epitomised the memorable lines: “Best to meet in poems”. In fact, many of her verses carry aphoristic power as well as the impact of dark comedy. In her poem, “Advice to Women”, she wrote: “Keep cats / if you want to learn to cope with / the otherness of lovers.” Her diction or choice of words within a poem is differentiated from other writers through its verbal economy. The style is neither flowery nor verbose, using precise, measured words to achieve great emotional and aesthetic effect.

► Introspective verses

Further, de Souza's poetry reveals a capacity for reflecting on and critiquing the self as well as the art. While her earlier poems emerged from explorations into her own community – Goan Catholics – her later poems concede flaws and inadequacies in herself. She has said that, despite being a poet of great irony and satirical wit, her aim has always been to compose “lyrical poems with soft, sensuous and passionate lines”. Yet, her works are populated with caricaturised figures such as “Father X D'Souza”, who is a pillar of the church, or the “Wise Woman” who is described as “smiling endlessly, vacuously, like a plastic flower”. So, it must be noted that she juxtaposes the self with the external world, creating a poetic understanding of both.

► Gender

A truly significant element in de Souza's writing is her presentation of women from different social contexts – her poetry includes a maid, a daily wage labourer, and an isolated homemaker, to name a few of the feminine figures in her works. She is able to bring forth the loss, alienation, and isolation that define womanhood in a patriarchal setting. Thus, even as her poems position her own experience of womanhood, they also explore and contextualise the broader condition of women across society.

► Experience

True to Eunice de Souza's unique style, the poem “The Road” uses a series of interlinked images to convey profound human experiences. Its opening lines picturise the Christian ritual of the ‘first communion’. A row of young girls, having undergone the rite, are filing out of the church. In the first person voice, the speaker claims that the gravity of the occasion demanded “lofty” or noble and high thoughts from her. The speaker clearly remembers her grandmother smiling at her. The imagery in the first two stanzas is of a personal nature, speaking particularly to a childhood rite of passage and religious initiation.

The third stanza indicates a sudden shift from the familiar, benevolent world depicted earlier. The focus of the poem shifts to the voices of others, incorporated into the work as ‘they’. The speaker reports their words thus: “They said / now she wears lipstick / now she is a Bombay girl.” The idea of a woman wearing lipstick and living in Bombay appears to raise disapproval amongst



► Social opinions

her conservative community; the description highlights the moral judgement and condemnation faced by women who lived outside the social norms of the time.

The speaker goes on to add “they said, your mother is lonely.” At this point, the woman is identified as the speaker’s mother, whose loneliness is brought up almost as an accusation. While none of the statements is explicit, they imply that the speaker’s mother has transgressed or broken social expectations. The final line of the third stanza is a short declarative statement: “Nobody said, even the young must live.” Here, the tone is plain and melancholic, specifically calling for the empathy and consideration that appears to have been denied to the mother. In other words, from the speaker’s perspective, it is obvious that no one saw things from her mother’s point of view.

► Isolation

In the fourth and final stanza, the scene shifts yet again. In school, the speaker clutches Sister Flora for comfort and cries for her mother, who teaches at an institution across the road. The ‘road’ then separates the young speaker from her mother, and renders her helpless. Time has elapsed, and a few things have changed. Sister Flora has passed away, but the school is still standing. The speaker ends the poem by saying that she is still learning to cross the road. In effect, the passage of time has not eased the anguish that she felt in being unable to reach her mother.

► The effects of time

The different interconnected scenes that make up the poem come a full circle in the final lines– “And I am still learning/to cross the road.” The first stanza introduces us to a young girl who is being initiated into her faith, under the benevolent eyes of her grandmother, whereas by the third stanza, she is being initiated into the moralistic ways of her society. In the school, as a young girl, she has Sister Flora to hold on to for consolation. However, it is evident by the final stanza, that she has yet to learn how to navigate the cruel, judgemental ways of society. The metaphor of learning to cross the road also suggests a sense of distance from her mother, and perhaps even a lack of emotional understanding that the speaker is still attempting to bridge.

► Metaphor

Summarised Overview

The body of writings that constitutes Indian English poetry from the mid-twentieth century to the early twenty-first is wide-ranging and diverse. Though emerging from a colonial tradition, the poets of this genre have consistently challenged and enriched the English language and the artistic medium of poetry. Questions of identity and assimilation, while fore-fronted in the works of many of the selected writers, have been dealt with uniquely by each individual poet. Ranging from Sarojini Naidu, a poet who straddles the colonial and postcolonial eras, to Eunice de Souza, a poet whose innovative use of the language has garnered acclaim, the landscape of English verse in India is truly pluralistic. Through their poetry, they construct interwoven national terrains, cultural locations, and identities.

Assignments

1. Analyse the poem “The Coromandel Fishers” as a metaphorical address to the nationalist movement in India.
2. How does “The Freaks” employ the confessional style of poetry?
3. Examine the question of identity in Nissim Ezekiel’s “Background, Casually”.
4. Discuss the poem “Grandfather” as an exploration of human nature.
5. Critically explore the presentation of nature in the poem “This Summer – The Cicada’s Song”.
6. How does the poem “Life Sentence” validate its title?
7. Write a critical appreciation of the poem “The Road”, with special reference to its use of imagery.

Suggested Readings

1. Iyengar, Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2012.
2. Prasad, G.J.V., *Writing India, Writing English: Literature, Language, Location*. Routledge, 2011.



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1. Iyengar, Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2012.
2. K.K. Singh. *Indian English Poetry After Independence*. Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2006.
3. M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai, G.S. Amur (eds.), *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English*. Delhi: Macmillan India, 1972.
4. Prasad, G.J.V., *Writing India, Writing English: Literature, Language, Location*. Routledge, 2011.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

1.



Unit 2

Drama

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ possess a general understanding of the history of Indian English Drama.
- ▶ acquire familiarity with the contributions of Mahesh Dattani to Indian English Drama.
- ▶ contextualise some of the predominant themes in the selected text.
- ▶ critically analyse the representation of gender politics in the selected text.

Background

When we use the term ‘Indian theatre’, we speak of a diverse dramatic tradition which is the product of a rich and varied culture, where 22 languages and close to 800 dialects are recognised. As a result, the literary context in which Indian theatre exists is complex and difficult to contain in a singular term. It has historical roots in a performance arts (such as Kathakali), rituals (such as Theyyam or Ramlila), and folk traditions (such as Therukuttu), with elements such as oral narratives, dance, instrumentation, and stage presentation intermingling in different ways.

From the emergence of Sanskrit dramas, conceptualised in the *Natyasastra*, to the development of folk and rural dramatic forms, there is a wide-range of genres, languages, and styles that constitutes Indian theatre. While the trajectory of Indian classical drama is largely dominated by Sanskrit plays with stock characters, based on mythological and royal stories, folk performances such as *yatra* / *jatra*, *koodiyattam*, *bhagat*, and *rasleela* were also popular. These earlier types played a crucial role in the eventual evolution of modern Indian theatre in regional languages and English.

Modern Indian theatre had a marked urban origin, with its rise being in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras in the eighteenth century, under the



British. As the intelligentsia and members of the upper class began to be introduced to Western education, and consequently to English literature, Indian dramas modelled along 'Western lines' began to be produced. Since this coincided with the rise of nationalistic sentiments, the Indian English theatre also offered a powerful tool for challenging the political and social order. One of the earliest English plays to be written by an Indian, Krishna Mohan Bannerjee's *The Persecuted* (1813), presents the conflict between the East and the West. This was later followed by Michael Madhusudhan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilisation?* in 1871. These works could be considered precursors of later works by prominent literary figures such as Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Most of Tagore's plays were originally written in Bengali, and translated into English by the playwright himself; these include *Chitra*, *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *Red Oleanders*, *Chandalika*, *Muktadhara*, and *The Mothers's Prayer*. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, composed plays in five acts such as *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, and *The Viziers of Bassora* and *Eric*.

Early Indian drama in English also took up social issues, as exemplified in the contributions of playwrights such as Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, who like Mulk Raj Anand, expressed sympathy for those without privilege. His social plays include *The Windows*, *The Parrots*, *The Santry Lantern*, *The Coffin* and *The Evening Lamps*. A variety of dramatists attempted to explore social barriers. D.M. Borgaonkar wrote a problem play titled *Image-Breakers* (1938) which condemned evils such as the caste system, horoscope, and dowry. S. Fyzee's Rahamin's *Daughter of Ind* (1940) explores the conflict between love and social barriers, presenting the love story of a low-caste girl and an Englishman. This era saw dramatists such as T.P. Kailasam, Bharati Sarabhai, and J.M. Lobo Prabhu, whose plays found a considerable amount of success.

Post-independence Indian drama in English saw the theatre struggling to survive against the popularity of cinema. To adapt to the changing scenario, as well as to reflect the changing world, Indian theatre evolved as an artform. Professional and amateur theatre groups engaged in different professional and social commitments. New experimental forms of theatre emerged, changing long-standing theatrical conventions. The most significant names in post-independence Indian English drama include Nissim Ezekiel, Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Gurucharan Das, and Badal Sircar. These playwrights introduced modernist styles, experimental stagecraft, and controversial themes. While Karnad borrowed his plots from history, mythology, and old legends, Tendulkar focused on the problems, agonies, and issues of middle class society. Many of the plays of Das and Sircar explored social, political, and existential issues.



Mahesh Dattani, who was the first Indian playwright writing in English to receive the *Sahitya Akademi* award, is a vital part of this literary history. As with the other acclaimed names in the modern tradition, he too deals with a wide range of serious and sensitive issues such as communalism, homosexuality, female infanticide, domestic abuse, child sexual abuse, and the condition of eunuchs in Indian society. An actor and director with his own stage group, his theatrical innovations and relevant themes were important in establishing an audience for Indian English plays.

At a point of time when issues of gender discrimination are being widely discussed all over the world, Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* offers a compelling perspective about gender identity, family dynamics, and social pressure. The play, through moments of dramatic intensity and dark humour, provokes its readers to reflect on the fate of the individual in a deeply patriarchal and moralistic socio-cultural setting. We will explore the play in much more detail in the following discussion.

Keywords

Modern Indian drama, Gender, Patriarchy, Social roles, Oppression

Discussion

Born in Bangalore in 1958 to parents who had migrated from Gujarat, Mahesh Dattani was introduced at a tender age to the world of the theatre. His family attended Gujarati plays staged in their new city as a way of keeping in touch with their roots and language. Throughout his teens and early college life, he continued to be fascinated with the stage. It was only in the early 1980's, however, that he started to participate in theatre workshops, acting in and directing plays; he joined the *Bangalore Little Theatre* around this period in his life. During the period leading up to the 1990's, Dattani also trained in Ballet and Bharatanatyam. In other words, the exposure to theatre and arts in his youth eventually led him to a career in drama.

► Early life

In 1984, Mahesh Dattani would establish his own theatrical company called 'Playpen'. Unlike other acting groups of the time, Playpen sought to put up productions of Indian plays in English – drama that stemmed from the ground realities of the country. For Dattani, English did not represent an alien language. Rather, it is seen as a hybrid tongue that is part and parcel of Indian life. His characters, who are Indian in essence, speak English “normally and unobtrusively, in an uninhibited way...”. Thus, he uses English as a medium for strong social and political commentary on the complicated landscape of India. This is epitomized in many of Dattani's significant plays such as *Where There's a Will*, *Tara*, *Dance Like a Man*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Do the Needful*, *Final Solutions*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai*, and *Thirty Days in September*.

► Choice of language

His style has left a keen impression on contemporary Indian theatre. He is renowned for carrying universal appeal in his themes whilst effectively adapting them to complex Indian contexts. As noted by Asha Chaudhuri, his dialogues are stimulating and lucid, and essential to driving the plot forward. The social issues addressed in his plays are vital to the times. His plays project them in a way that brings deep-rooted sources of discrimination and injustice in society to light. They are structured in a 'naturalistic' mode, allowing them to present harsh realities using familiar, everyday settings. Even though Dattani's plays are essentially realist dramas, his stagecraft and theatre techniques add complexity to the overall expression of the ideas.

► Thematic and technical complexity

Since 1993, Mahesh Dattani has written the screenplay for and directed several films. Being a dramatist and stage director, he has enriched his understanding of the cinematic medium. Some of his most famous films include Mango Souffle, Morning Raaga, Dance Like a Man, and Ek Alag Mausam. Of these, the first three are in English while the last one uses Hindi as its language.

Dance Like a Man illustrates Mahesh Dattani's brilliance as a playwright and director. It was first performed in 1989 in Bangalore as part of the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival. Set in two acts, the play revolves around questions of gender identity, social roles, and the



► Contesting norms

patriarchal family. The plot emphasizes the struggles faced by the protagonists, whose desire to live 'freely' as individuals is challenged in a world of gender stereotypes, conservative morals, and oppressive social authority. It closely examines the pressures and sacrifices forced upon the characters in the name of family honour and ideal social conduct.

Dance Like a Man presents the events of two interconnected timelines: the past and the present lives of the protagonists, the Parekh family. It shows how the events of an earlier time in the lives of these individuals have shaped their present situations. The main characters in the past are the spouses, Young Jairaj and Young Ratna, along with Amritlal, Jairaj's father (and Ratna's father-in-law). In the present timeline, the protagonists are Old Jairaj and Old Ratna, their young daughter, Lata, and her fiancé, Viswas. Here, Dattani uses an interesting stage technique to bring attention to the parallels and interconnections between the different characters. Young Jairaj and Viswas are played by the same actor, while Young Ratna and Lata are played by the same actress. Similarly, the actor who plays Amritlal in the past timeline plays Old Jairaj in the present setting. These two different timelines are interwoven throughout the play.

► Contesting norms

2.2.1 Act-wise Summary

Act I

The opening scene is set in the opulent, but old-fashioned Parekh household. Lata, a young Bharatanatyam dancer, is waiting in the living room. Present with her is her lover, Viswas who is the son of a Gujarati businessman and a mithaiwalla. They are eagerly waiting for Lata's parents, Jairaj and Ratna, to arrive and formally discuss their relationship. Viswas wishes to ask for Lata's hand in marriage, and is apprehensive of whether her parents would approve of him as a suitor. The parents were supposed to arrive a while ago, but are held up due to a medical emergency. Their mridangam player, who was supposed to accompany Lata on her next dance performance, had broken his hand. They are with him at the hospital.

► Waiting for parents

► Life decisions

While Lata and Viswas wait impatiently for their eventual arrival, they exchange witty banter and plan their life together. Lata is serious in her desire to pursue her dance career, and wishes to continue practicing in her own home after marriage. She also suggests that they postpone having children for a while. The young lovers consider various possibilities, with Lata eventually going to the kitchen to make tea for Viswas. Left alone, Viswas goes around, examining various things in the house.

► Questions of manliness

Jairaj and Ratna return at this point, but are preoccupied with the crisis of not having an accomplished mridangam player for their daughter's dance performance. They fear that without the proper musical accompaniment, Lata's career might not take off. The tension results in a fight between Ratna and Jairaj, where Ratna calls him a "boy" who could not even leave his father's house for 48 hours. This ends in Ratna storming off and Jairaj retorting: "Will finding a musician make me a man?"

► Bonding

Jairaj and Lata continue to speak with Viswas, who is embarrassed upon witnessing the fight. Lata reluctantly goes to sleep with her mother, with Jairaj wanting to sleep in Lata's room for the night. As the two men are then alone, Jairaj offers Viswas a glass of whiskey. They speak about their fathers, eventually realising that both of them were once in the real estate business. Jairaj discusses the combative relationship that he had with his father, Amritlal. After a brief conversation and Jairaj's approval of the relationship, Viswas leaves for the night.

Ratna comes in to the room once Viswas has left; she has calmed down and joins Jairaj for a drink. They briefly talk about an incident from the past; Jairaj and Ratna had left this very house after a fight with Amritlal. They stayed with Ratna's uncle who unfortunately made sexual advancements, and therefore, were forced to return. This humiliation has stayed with both of them. Ratna tries to change the subject by bringing up the possibilities of Lata's upcoming dance performance and how it would make her a national figure. However, Jairaj realises that Ratna has always thought of him as someone who couldn't support his own family. He sees the fact that he was forced to return to his father, having no other means of income, as a personal defeat. Ratna goes back to



► Planning Lata's career

discussing Lata's performance. She has already spoken to various art critics and offered them different favours in exchange for positive reviews. Ratna also approves of the match between Lata and Viswas since he is well off and he has agreed to let Lata pursue dance even after marriage.

► Opposition

The scene shifts to the past; it is now the 1940's. The same actor who plays Old Jairaj in the earlier scene is now Amritlal Parekh. He wears a shawl and walks into a room where the Young Jairaj (the actor who plays Viswas) and the Young Ratna (the actor who plays Lata) are practicing dance with the accompaniment of Guruji, a dance trainer, and musicians. Amritlal shouts for the dance and music to stop. He demands that all the musicians leave as he is soon expecting guests. He feels that dancing is not a suitable profession for men. Further, he finds it disreputable that Ratna is learning dance from an ageing sex worker (named Chenni Amma) and not focusing on maintaining the home as ideal women should.

► Moral anxiety

Amritlal is considered a freedom fighter and noted progressive thinker of his times. However, as Jairaj asks him: "Where is the spirit of revolution? You didn't fight to gain independence, You fought for power in your hands. Why, you are just as conservative and prudish as the people who were ruling over us!" Jairaj declares that his father's liberalism and progressive thinking are superficial. Amritlal also fears that Guruji is gay and would influence his son's sexuality. He refuses to permit Jairaj to grow his hair long for the same reason.

► Authority

Amritlal also confronts Ratna about her visits to the local brothel to meet the sex worker who is teaching her to dance. He is angry that Patel, an acquaintance of his, has seen her go. Ratna argues that Chenni Amma is the one of the last exponents of a dying school of dance. So, she visits the brothel every Monday to learn old dance compositions from her, instead of going to the temple. He arbitrarily refuses to give her permission to visit the brothel or for the old sex worker to come to their house.

Ratna, on the other hand, takes her revenge by revealing that Jairaj is going to start learning Kuchipudi. In the scene, men take on female roles and dress up as

► Patriarchal control

women. She says this, knowing that would cause anguish within Amritlal. However, this causes Amritlal to ban Jairaj from ever pursuing dance again. It is at this point that a fed-up Jairaj decides to leave the house along with Ratna. As soon as they leave, the scene once again shifts back to the present-day. Act I then concludes with Ratna discussing Lata's dance performance with a drunk Jairaj.

Act II

► Conditions

Act II opens in the 1940's, in the same house. The humiliated Jairaj and Ratna have returned from the uncle's house and is now back under Amritlal's care. The young couple are standing while Amritlal scolds them for their impulsive decision. He is happy that they are back even though it is only because they have no other choices before them. He says that he is happy to allow them to dance, but hopes that they can make a livelihood from it. However, he refuses to let Jairaj grow his hair and will not allow Ratna to continue her training with Chennai Amma.

► Imposed social rules

Jairaj leaves, but Ratna remains behind. Amritlal suggests that a man's happiness lies in "being a man", referring to his views on Jairaj's identity. Ratna counters this by saying that this is not where Jairaj finds his happiness. Amritlal then makes an arrangement with Ratna; he realises that the only reason that she married Jairaj is that he supports her desire to dance. Amritlal is willing to allow Ratna to dance since he considers art to be a woman's profession. However, the idea of a man taking it up as a career disgusts him. Amritlal implies that if Ratna can make Jairaj leave the profession of dancing behind, then he (Amritlal) would wholeheartedly support her career as a dancer. She has the brilliance to make it as a dancer of repute. She asks: "And once he stops dancing—what will you do with him then?" Amritlal replies: "Make him worthy of you." The scene ends, and the plot shifts back to the present day.

In the present timeline, Ratna receives a call from a high-standing minister. She relives the glorious moment from Lata's dance performance when the President of India gave her a standing ovation. She is aware that the minister is organising an arts festival in Canada, and secretly hopes that Lata would be included there. Ratna ensures that her rivals could not interfere in the



► Strategy

possibility of such a selection. She has already made arrangements for all prominent newspapers and dance critics to put out rave reviews of Lata's performance. Jairaj, who is listening to the conversation, subtly mocks Ratna. She dismisses his satirical mood and goes to the kitchen to prepare breakfast.

► Negotiating with Viswas

An excited Viswas enters the room, holding the glowing reviews published in *The Times* and *The Herald*. Together, Viswas and Jairaj read them. Lata joins them and is happy to hear of the commendation showered on her. However, the artificial nature of the reviews is obvious since Lata herself reveals that she forgot some of the steps and merely held poses to save herself. Viswas reveals that he did not like the erotic nature of one of the dances, titled *Ashtapadi*. Jairaj says that Ratna herself danced this piece thirty years ago. He himself had dressed in her costume and danced the *Ashtapadi* for the army. It is clear that Viswas is uncomfortable with the overtly sexual implications, but is forced to accept it anyway. He takes consolation in Lata's promise that they would have a child immediately upon marriage, and another one sometime after. With this, he leaves to help his father on a business errand. Before going, he goes to the kitchen to bid goodbye to Ratna.

Depressed mood

Jairaj says that he finds Viswas to be a bit strange, but generally finds him acceptable. Viswas enters once again after he finds Ratna crying in the kitchen. He wonders if this could be because Ratna had been cutting onions. But Jairaj corrects him, saying that she must indeed be crying. Viswas finds all this a bit strange as well and leaves to help his father. Lata comes into the room with Ratna who looks out of sorts; Lata goes back to the kitchen to finish cooking breakfast.

► Relationship

Jairaj, now alone with Ratna, wonders what could lead to her tears. He brings up the topic of Shankar, their deceased son. Ratna, who is averse to ever discussing the loss of her child, finally says: "Go on! Say it. Do your worst. I'm too tired to fight it." Jairaj decides to change the subject once more. He says that he does not want Ratna to paste the reviews in their old album, pretending that Lata's reviews are her own. He ends by cruelly saying that at least she has a daughter to be jealous of. This makes Ratna break down in tears.

► Frustrated Jairaj

The scene shifts once again to the past. The young Ratna and Jairaj are entering the garden, which is flooded with moonlight. Ratna is wearing a magnificent *Bharatanatyam* outfit while Jairaj is dressed rather casually. He is very drunk and makes many scathing remarks. Ratna goes to their son Shankar's room to check if he is asleep. She does not let Jairaj go with her as he might accidentally wake the child up. Jairaj drunkenly says that he wants to make the baby dance the Shiva *tandava* on Amritlal's head once he is all grown up. He is evidently displeased with the attention and affection that the old man is giving to Shankar. Ratna comes down and says that the baby did not make a single sound.

► Professional failure

Ratna wonders where the new ayah is, and says that she should have been with the baby. Jairaj confronts Ratna with the demand that she should be the one with her son. He asks her if she dances so that other men can enjoy her beauty. Ratna decides to go to bed but Jairaj wants her to have the decency to talk to him since he is lonely. It is revealed that he no longer dances, and that he blames her for this. He contends that Ratna took away his self-esteem by making him dance his weakest items and arranging stage settings so that he is always sidelined. Further, he says that she continued to insult him in front of others by calling him names. Ratna opposes this by saying that people only want to see her dance, and not him.

► Accidental death

Ratna finally confesses that Amritlal allowed them to dance on the condition that she would manipulate him (Jairaj) away from the art. She argues that Jairaj himself realised, after some time, that he was in fact a mediocre dancer. Jairaj attacks her, on the other hand, for not being present for their young son as a mother and nurturer. He reveals that on the nights that she performs, the ayah gives opium so that the child sleeps peacefully. Ratna is terror-stricken, she reveals that she too has given Shankar a dose of opium to keep him sleeping. The scene ends in a long, grieving scream.

In the next scene, both timelines are intermeshed. The Old Jairaj and Ratna appear onstage, discussing the demolition of their house. They are moving to a new flat. The spotlight then picks up the Young Jairaj and Ratna in the dance hall, preparing for a performance.



► Human fallibility

They seem happy and are helping each other to get ready. The Older Jairaj continues to speak, narrating an epilogue. He says: "Today my liver ceased to function. And I followed suit. You [Ratna] died too. Out of boredom, I suspect." The flat is now occupied by Lata, Viswas, and their baby. As the younger couple embrace and salute the audience, the Older Jairaj says: "We dance perfectly. In unison. Not missing a step or a beat. We talk and laugh at all the mistakes we made in our previous dances... We were only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God." The play ends.

2.2.2 Critical Overview

► Established gender roles

A two-act stage play, *Dance Like a Man* follows the story of three generations, exploring their personal ambitions, sacrifices, and compromises over the years. In focus are the lives of Jairaj and Ratna, spouses who are both *Bharatnatyam* dancers. The play charts the struggles they encounter in their life, relationship, and careers. Jairaj's father, Amritlal Parekh opposes their dancing and becomes the face of patriarchal authority in the play. Self-identity, gender, and dance emerge as the major contention between the father, son, and daughter-in-law. Both Jairaj and Ratna face discrimination for their career choices. As a man who chooses the 'feminine' passion of dancing, Jairaj's gender identity is questioned. Ratna is censured as an "over-ambitious" woman who fails in her domestic role as a 'nurturer'.

► Control

For the protagonists, dance is their passion; it is their life and soul. They wish to build careers as Bharatnatyam dancers. Despite strong obstacles to the pursuit of dance by a man, Jairaj strives to achieve mastery in the field. Herein, the audience is made aware that patriarchy does not work solely against women. Men, like Jairaj, can also be a victim of gender oppression in society. Since the couple have to live under the control of the patriarch Amritlal, they are forced to submit to his authority in many ways. Since he considers dancing as a profession of prostitutes, he cannot accept his daughter-in-law's passion for the same. Further, it is unimaginable for him that his own son should follow a dancing career. He fears that his social reputation would be damaged if Jairaj and Ratna were to do so.

► Moral Anxiety

Amritlal cannot tolerate the sound of dancing bells in his home, since they signify that Jairaj and Ratna are pursuing a passion which he has forbidden. He particularly hates the teachers that both of the couples have chosen. The guru who trains Jairaj has long hair, a physical trait that Jairaj himself adopts. This is read as effeminacy in the eyes of the patriarch. Further, he bars Ratna from visiting a devadasi in a brothel, who teaches her the old forms and techniques of the artform. He even argues that temples are turning into brothels since they practice dance within them.

► Between Amritlal and Ratna

When the couple leaves Amritlal's home after a fight, he proceeds to disown them without any financial support. Jairaj leaves with Ratna, and they stay at her uncle's house. However, the uncle attempts to take advantage of Ratna and the couple are forced to return, defeatedly, to Amritlal's house once more. Amritlal strikes an arrangement with Ratna that he will allow her career to take off if she can discourage Jairaj from pursuing dance; he seeks to convert his son into a more 'manly' man. It is here that we see a self-centred aspect to Ratna's character. She agrees to her father-in-law's conditions and considers that there will be one less person to compete with. Despite being Jairaj's partner, she manipulates him emotionally. Eventually, he gives up his passions and dreams of dancing.

► Parallels

As the years go by, Ratna trains their daughter, Lata, as a successful *Bharatnatyam* dancer. She uses her daughter to gain fame and wealth, using her contacts to bolster her career with appreciative reviews. In many ways, she is living out her dreams vicariously through the young Lata. Later, as the play draws to a close, a broken Jairaj blames Ratna for the death of their young son, Shankar. She had left him alone with a nanny who accidentally gave him a large dose of opium, trying to put him to sleep. Unfortunately, as Ratna too had given him some opium earlier, this leads to his death. This is ultimately the reason for her leaving behind her dancing profession. Jairaj also considers her as the reason for his unsuccessful career.

In a traditional society such as India, where gender norms are rigid, male and female identities are seen are



► Identity and society

fundamentally different. This difference is expected to be observed in terms of cultural roles, social activities, and choices of work. This idea is voiced by Amritlal, whose attitude enforces social biases: “A woman in a man’s world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in a woman’s world, pathetic”. Thus, the weight of patriarchal authority, repressed desire, and traditional ideals are used to define gender identity.

Anything that seems to set Jairaj apart from his “acceptable” masculine identity is opposed by Amritlal. Jairaj’s long hair is seen to be a symbol of ‘feminine’ beauty and is wholly unacceptable to his father. For Jairaj, it is a way of enhancing his dancing skills and *abhinaya*. Later, he tells Viswas (his future son-in-law) that he has performed the same erotic dance that Lata has: “I danced the same item. For the army... Your mother was too scared and they only wanted a woman. So I wore your mother’s costume...and danced. They loved it. They loved it even more when they found out I was a man...” Just as much as this is a power play between patriarchal gender ideals and fluid gender identities, it is a struggle between the social and the individual. Jairaj, as an individual, is here attempting to bypass the structures imposed by society and collective social values upon his identity and body.

► Conflict

The contest between tradition and modernity, a chief theme in many post-independence Indian English dramas, must also be emphasized here. There are two generations of masculinities, represented by Amritlal and Jairaj, who possess conflicting ideologies about what it means to be a man and an individual. While Amritlal prides himself on social status and his “reformist” tag, he cannot push the envelope of gender under social expectations. Jairaj, on the other hand, exists outside such binaries and wishes to transcend gender roles.

► Binaries

Another significant aspect is the relationship between financial status and power. For Amritlal, as with anyone in a middle-class setting, the ability to earn money is equivalent to power. Jairaj, as an impoverished dancer, does not possess the capability to lead a respectable family life in a heterosexual, patriarchal society. This is deeply tied to the celebration of men as ‘breadwinners’, with women taking on roles within domesticity. So, Jairaj’s profession, being not well-paying, hampers his ability

► Myth of masculinity

to sustain his family in the eyes of his father. Indeed, Amritlal demands of Ratna: “Help me make him [Jairaj] an adult. Help me help him grow up.”

► Social Pressure

Thus, on the one hand, Amritlal strives to make Jairaj an acceptable, conventional ‘man’ in the eyes of society. He enlists the help of Ratna, someone who is herself struggling to fit within the social order, to change Jairaj’s mind. Her sense of ambition and practicality lead her to help Amritlal. Even as Jairaj stops the pursuit of his passion, thus achieving some of the features of conventional masculinity, he does not become ‘successful’. Instead, he falls prey to alcoholism and ruin.

► Women’s role

However, the undertones of gender also extend to Ratna. Her ‘womanliness’ is always under question, with her choice to engage in a career and passion seen as a negation of her domestic role. Secondly, the nature of her chosen artform is seen as unsuitable for a ‘respectable’ middle-class family. The associations with prostitution and public entertainment makes *Bharatnatyam* a threat to Ratna’s performance of femininity. Equally, the arrangement she reaches with her father-in-law could be seen as manipulative, and contrasting with her role as a ‘faithful’ wife. Later on, Jairaj himself condemns Ratna as a mother since her ambition indirectly led to the death of their son. Thus, Ratna is as much a victim of patriarchy as Jairaj is.

► Public reception of art

The fascinating history of *Bharatanatyam* as a dance form tied to social oppression and renaissance is invoked herein. The play seeks to examine our attitudes to this ancient art form which is ritualistically associated with *Devadasis*. Female *Bharatanatyam* performers have often been discriminated against in terms of sexual morality and social acceptance. Further, their role in public entertainment has often been used to challenge their ‘feminine identities’. Thus, Ratna’s choice to pursue this dance form as a career contests her claim to being an ideal wife, mother, and daughter-in-law in the eyes of society.

Another crucial dimension of gender discrimination that Dattani highlights is the ‘family’. *Dance Like a Man* depicts the family as central to establishing gender politics, with men being considered dominant ‘breadwinners’ and women submissive ‘homemakers’



► Family and gender politics

in the Indian context. It is from within the family that Jairaj and Ratna face opposition to their choice to pursue dance. Amritlal considers their challenging of gender roles as an issue that must be handled within the family unit. Frequently, he brings up the fear of losing family honour and reputation. In fact, the expectations for masculine and feminine social roles are built within the family.

The pressure of social and familial expectations and their influence upon individuals are significantly explored in the play. Jairaj initially faces the weight of the judgement of his father and society with determination. However, over time, he is worn down; Ratna eventually condemns him for being unable to support them on his own: “You stopped being a man for me the day you came back to this house”. Gradually, his sense of self and ambitions are shattered, leaving him to pursue alcoholism. Ratna, on the other hand, adopts the tools of patriarchy for her own self-interest. She works with her father-in-law to force Jairaj to act ‘manly’, but advances her own career through the deal they struck. In short, she binds her husband to patriarchal gender ideals so that she may be allowed the freedom to follow her own aspirations. In this way, the different ways in which these characters attempt to cope with social norms become evident.

► Strategies

The play moves beyond stereotypical representations of men and women to discuss their emotional world and inner conflicts. The pressure to fit certain social ideals results in the destruction of humaneness and human relations. The main characters, Jairaj and Ratna, are caught between the ‘world of art’ and the mainstream society; the values of either spaces are in conflict with each other.

► Conflict of values

The ‘world of art’ allows Jairaj and Ratna to reshape their gendered identities, define their masculinity and femininity, respectively, in accordance with their artform. Often, in performing *Bharatnatyam*, Jairaj takes on different roles including that of female characters. The interchanging of male and female personas / costumes is viewed as a breaking of social and moral norms, one that breaks with patriarchal code. In some senses, it evokes the fear of homosexuality with a deviation in the “normal” behaviour expected of men. This fear is

► Choice

shadowed in Amritlal's anxiety that dancing will make his son less manly. So, as mainstream society comes into contact with the world of art, the characters are left trapped between these differing values.

► Difference of degree

Interestingly, in the conflict between these worlds, Ratna's pursuit of dance is seen in a different light when compared to Jairaj's. Even though it is forbidden in a patriarchal space, it is seen as a lesser transgression compared to a man entering a woman's domain. So, Jairaj's decision to practice *Bharatnatyam* carries a greater cultural weight than Ratna's passion for the artform. This is why Amritlal chooses between the two, and allows Ratna to chase her dreams at the cost of Jairaj's career.

► Enforcing patriarchy

Indeed, as we contrast the characters of Jairaj and Ratna, it is possible to see the interplay of conflicting positions. While both of them contest social norms, they clearly have different attitudes towards authority and success. Jairaj resists all attempts to mould him as an ideal man. His passion for dance appears to define him as a person, and giving that up, leaves him completely shattered. Ratna, though equally passionate about the dance form, shapes partly into the person that any patriarchal society demands. She uses normative ideas about masculinity to help her father-in-law in putting an end to Jairaj's career and dreams. Thus, where Jairaj's resistance against patriarchal ideals and social pressures lead to a lifetime of unfulfilled dreams, Ratna's chasing of her dreams leads her to be an agent of patriarchy and social norms in a certain way.

► Symbolic connections

As noted by some critics, the underlying story of *Dance Like a Man* has certain biblical overtones. The trio of Amritlal, Jairaj, and Ratna may be seen to roughly correspond to God, Adam, and Eve. Amritlal's laying down of rules and expectations can be read as an effort to create a harmonious environment within the family (much like the Garden of Eden). Jairaj and Ratna, chasing their dreams of careers in *Bharatnatyam*, disrupt Amritlal's conception of an ideal family. In fact, it is Ratna's collusion with the opposition that leads to Jairaj's downfall. She falls to the temptation of her own ambitions, choosing to salvage her career over Jairaj's own dreams for a career. Thus, human weaknesses and their impact on relationships are also foregrounded in the play.



► Historical reception of issues

The stagecraft used by Dattani allows the audience to experience the dynamics of gender relationships and social norms across three generations of the family. Characters are used minimally, readily drawing out connections across time. For instance, Amritraj and the old Jairaj are played by the same actor, as are Lata and the young Ratna. Vishwas and the young Jairaj, too, are played by the same actor. In this way, the play allows its audience to reflect on how the issues raised in the play exist across time and space. They acquire newer meanings with different generations.

► Influences

The effect of this artistic choice is that the audience is able to view, as the acts change, Amritlal, the bitter patriarch transform into a frustrated and alcoholic Jairaj in his older years. The generational influence of Amritlal, the play suggests, has shaped Jairaj into his likeness over the years. Likewise, the young Ratna becomes Lata, suggesting that Ratna is living out her thwarted dreams and unfulfilled ambitions through her daughter. This juxtaposition strongly adds to the themes of the narrative.

► Core conflict

The final lines of the play call our attention to the struggle of being human: “We were only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God”. Jairaj and Ratna would, perhaps, have wished to inhabit the world of art without being intruded upon by the normative society around them. However, being human, they cannot escape the trappings of power and ambition. This is the tragedy at the centre of the play – that the pursuit of dreams come at a great personal cost for both Jairaj and Ratna.

Summarised Overview

Dance Like a Man, a play in two acts, exemplifies the significance of Mahesh Dattani's contributions to Indian theatre and Indian writing in English. The drama highlights the role of patriarchal power and familial trauma in shaping self-identity and relationships. It does this by exploring the lives of three generations of the Parekh family, all of whom are caught between social pressure and personal ambition. The tragedy at the centre of the play is the way in which cultural stereotypes and patriarchal demands force Jairaj and Ratna to compromise their love for each other and for the art form of *Bharatanatyam*. By using the same actors for various characters across the two timelines in the play, the plot drives home the interrelation between different events. Much of Amritlal's patriarchal conditions are paralleled by the Old Jairaj's treatment of Ratna in the present-day, whereas the Young Ratna's ambitions in the past timeline are reflected in Lata's career. Similarly, the Young Jairaj and Viswas are moulded by the same forces. Using compelling dialogue, a complex plot, and powerful stagecraft, *Dance Like a Man* revisits the politics of gender and the plight of the individual in a patriarchal scenario.

Assignments

1. Examine the contrasting social ideals that drive the conflict between Amritlal and Jairaj in *Dance Like a Man*.
2. Write a short note on the characterisation of Ratna in *Dance Like a Man*.
3. How does Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* implicate the politics of gender in the lives of individuals?
4. How does Mahesh Dattani use stagecraft to depict the themes of *Dance Like a Man*.
5. Briefly explore the dynamics of the relationship between Lata and Viswas.
6. How does the title *Dance Like a Man* validate and enrich the core themes of the play?



Suggested Readings

1. Chaudhuri, Asha Kuthari. *Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2005.
2. Das, Sangeeta. "The sensational issues in the plays of Mahesh Dattani" in K. Venkata Reddy and R.K. Dhawan. *Flowering of Indian Drama : Growth and Development*. New Delhi: Prestige, 2004.
3. Prasad, Amar Nath. "The plays of Mahesh Dattani: a fine fusion of feeling and form" in Amar Nath Prasad. *British and Indian English Literature : A Critical Study*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2007.

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1. Chaudhuri, Asha Kuthari. *Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2005.
2. Kumar, Nand. *Indian English Drama: A Study in Myths*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2003.
3. Reddy, K. Venkata and R.K. Dhawan. (eds). *Flowering of Indian Drama : Growth and Development*. New Delhi: Prestige, 2004.
4. Tandon, Neeru. (ed.). *Perspectives and Challenges in Indian-English Drama*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2006.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



1.



Unit 3

Poetry

(Non-Detailed)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ acquire an insight into the various phases of the evolution of Indian Writing in English.
- ▶ be familiarised with the various facets of Indian English literature.
- ▶ analyse and interpret the various symbolic meanings in the given texts.
- ▶ analyse important cultural and societal issues highlighted in Indian English literature.

Background

Indian writing in English pre dates the advent of British colonial control in India and has outlasted the Empire's demise. The English education offered by Christian missionaries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is primarily responsible for the persistence of Indian literature in English. Indian literature in English was able to evolve by blending Indian feeling, emotion, and experience with the discipline imposed by English.

In 1833, Macaulay's Minute Upon Indian Education called for the use of English as a medium of teaching. The historic choice to utilise English for official communication and as a language of instruction for higher education rather than Sanskrit or Persian led to the production of a significant body of literature in English on a variety of subjects. Journalism also had an important part in popularising English and utilising it to communicate numerous contentious issues, such as political turmoil and the attainment of independence, religious and social reformation *etc.*

Early nineteenth-century poetry is reflective of the English Romantic and Victorian writers such as Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, and Swinburne. The approaches and methods of Byron and Scott were followed by great pioneers like as Derozio and M. M. Dutt. The Indian literary Renaissance marked the first phase of Indian poetry. Derozio's poetry,



Kasiprasad Ghose's *The Shair and Other Poems*, Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *The Captive Ladie*, and Manmohan Ghose's *Love Songs and Elegies* all bear witness to the creative explosion sparked by romantic spirit of the literary renaissance. Toru Dutt, one of the first romantic poets, emphasised India and her ancestry by bringing many Indian stories into rhyme.

Sarojini Naidu, Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose, and Harindranth Chattopadhyaya were poets of the second phase who were still romantic in spirit. These poets produced a lot of poetry. These Indian poets' Romanticism was tinged with nationalism, spirituality, and mysticism, making it distinct from English Romanticism. The poet's viewpoint was broadened by Indian ethos. While Aurobindo sought the divine in man, Tagore sought the beautiful in man and environment. They were both philosopher-poets. Sarojini Naidu's romantic muse emphasised the enchantment and splendour of traditional Indian life and culture.

The post-independence age of optimism and aspiration gave way to an era of skepticism and irony. The achievement of national identity after independence gave Indian authors a new confidence to be critics of the contemporary life, the earlier times, and themselves.

This unit will discuss some of the most prominent Indian English authors and their major works.

Keywords

Style, Themes, Irony, Confessional poetry, Renaissance, Symbolism

Discussion

2.3.1 Our Casuarina Tree - Toru Dutt

Toru Dutt, born Tarulatha Dutt, was a Bengali poet who was born in 1856 into an affluent family rich with literary traditions. Toru Dutt is widely regarded as the first Indian poetess to compose in French and English. She is considered one of the harbingers of Indo-Anglian literature. Dutt's works were significantly influenced by the cultural renaissance that occurred in mid-nineteenth-century Bengal. The Dutt family soon converted to



► Toru Dutt

Christianity in 1862. Following the death of Toru's younger brother, Abju, the Dutt family moved to France. The poem "Our Casuarina Tree" lauds the grandeur of the Casuarina Tree that she used to see through her window at her home in Bengal. Through the poem, Dutt recalls her pleasant childhood days spent under the tree and brings back memories of her loving siblings.

► Multiple symbolisms of Casuarina tree

In the first stanza the poet reminisces about and exalts the grandeur of the casuarina tree. Dutt provides a vivid image of the casuarina tree encircled by a creeper. This image can be attributed to India under colonial rule. The creeper which is portrayed as a huge python that entwines the casuarina tree can be compared to the encroachment of colonial powers into the social and cultural milieu of pre-independence India. In the next line the poet glorifies the casuarina tree by stating that no other tree could have survived such strong embrace that had left several scars on its trunk. This image also alludes to the survival of the native land even after the plundering by the colonial powers. In the following stanza the tree is further described as a source which provides shelter for a variety of birds, insects and animals, again signifying the polyphony of different types of castes and creeds the nation encompasses. While some critics are of the opinion that the creeper attempting to sap the strength of the tree implies the tuberculosis infection suffered by the three young Dutt (Toru, Aru and Abju).

► Casuarina tree as a carrier of memories

In the following stanzas the poem takes a more subjective tone. Dutt further clarifies that the tree is dearer to her because it holds beautiful memories of her past. It has become a part of the poet's life, a remembrance of family bonds and the affection shared by the three siblings. As she reflects on the past, the poet mourns for people who have passed on. Her heart's grieving is mirrored in the tree's mourning, which she believes may reach the land of the dead, and is heard by her loved ones.

The poem now takes a more philosophical tone by stating that the wailing of the tree will reach the unknown realms, but well-known to those who have faith, and which will take one to a sublime level where one can visualise the casuarina tree. The poet knows that the tree will outlive her, and she does not want it to be forgotten.

Dutt composed this poem to commemorate the casuarina tree, immortalising her affection for her loved ones. She aspires for her casuarina tree to be like the deathless trees of Borrowdale immortalised through poetry by William Wordsworth. She eventually wishes that her lines of poetry, though weak, would suffice to preserve the casuarina tree from extinction. As a result, the casuarina tree will serve as an enduring monument to her love for her lost loved ones.

The poem begins with a sense of calm and beauty, of springtime and new life, a feature of the romantic poetry. At the same time, by portraying a clear picture of the casuarina tree and the creeper encircling it, the poem portrays the softness and power the tree upholds. The lines encompass the symbolic representation of the impact of colonialism as well as the untimely death of Dutt's brother and sister. The poem uses hyperbole in exaggerating the majesty of the casuarina tree. The poet employs similes in comparing the creeper to a huge python, gray baboon to a statue, water lilies spring to enmassed snow, murmur to a dirge. Alliteration can be seen in the use of "round and round", "bird and bee", and "sweet song". Personification is used in tree-lament, creeper-embrace, earth-lay tranced and so on. Allusion to William Wordsworth's "Yew-Trees" is used by the poet to position the casuarina tree with the immortal trees of Borrowdale. Metaphor is used in the line, "the giant wears the scarf."

- Forms and elements in the Casuarina Tree

2.3.2 Songs 1,6,50 and 103 - Rabindranath Tagore

Gitanjali or 'Song Offerings' is a collection of poems by poet, philosopher, and social reformer Rabindranath Tagore. It comprises 103 poems written in Bengali and translated into English by Tagore himself and published in 1912. The work *Gitanjali* garnered him international acclamation as a poet. The poems express the poet's zeal and zest for the unfathomable burning quest for the Supreme Being. According to T. S. Eliot, these poems "express in perfect language permanent human impulses." What makes the poems intriguing is that their intensity is articulated in a simple, optimistic, and spiritual way. Other features of the poems include complexity and diversity of the elements, humanisation of the divine, use of domestic themes, symbols and legends.

- Gitanjali



2.3.2.1 Song 1 - Thou Hast Made Me Endless

- The human soul and body

It is the first poem in the anthology. The poem is about the poet's unflinching devotion and humbleness towards God. According to the poet, the human soul is eternal and the human body is like a vessel that can be emptied and filled up again and again with the soul. This idea points at the Hindu belief of the life-death-rebirth cycle, where a soul reincarnates again and again until it becomes perfect and reunites with its source.

- The divine guidance

The poet then compares himself to a flute and God to a superb musician. What the poet means is that he can only sing and make poetry when he is motivated by God, and it is only under divine guidance that he can compose and sing new and fresh melodies. According to the poet, God's gifts to humanity are so varied and limitless that a single life will not be enough to absorb all of His blessings. As a result, the soul will journey through generations to achieve divine blessings / moksha to fulfil its destiny.

2.3.2.2 Song 6- Pluck This Little Flower

- Devotion and humility

In this poem, the author compares himself to a little flower with no fragrance or vivid colour. A flower has a brief life span. With this fact in mind, the poet begs God to take him into His favour as quickly as possible. The poet is concerned that if God does not accept him soon, he will become old and will turn into dust. The poet wants to meet God while he is young and healthy. The poet is well aware of his inadequacies, but he asks God to take him into His service. Even though it may be painful to be plucked, the poet considers it an honour to be plucked by God's hands. Here, the poet's inference is that enduring the anguish of death to serve God will be the ultimate salvation.

2.3.2.3 Song 50 I Had Gone a-Begging From

The poem teaches us about the importance of kindness, love, and sacrifice. In this poem, the poet takes on the persona of a beggar. He was begging from door to door on the village way one day. He chances to observe a golden chariot approaching him. The poet-beggar pondered who "this King of all kings" was, and he anxiously waited for better presents. But, to his amazement, the King



- The beggar and the king

alighted from the carriage and requested for charity. After a brief moment of confusion, he came to his senses and handed him “the least little grain of corn” he had in his bag. But as soon as he reached home and emptied his bag to find out what he had gotten, he was mesmerised to find “a least little gram of gold among the poor heap.” He realised that God had given him the gold grain and regretted not offering God everything he had.

- The insignificance of material possessions

The poem emphasises the concept that one obtains in proportion to what one sacrifices. People should not constantly anticipate favours from others or God, but should instead do whatever they can to aid the destitute and unhappy. According to the poet, the only road to God is to give up all material possessions. This is the unavoidable reality. In this poem, the poet-beggar squandered a golden opportunity to surrender himself to God. If the poet-beggar had given himself to God, he might have been lifted from a lower material position to a higher spiritual one.

- Salutation to God

2.3.2.4 Song 103 In One Salutation to Thee

Song number 103 is the final poem of *Gitanjali*. In this poem, the poet bows in salutation to God and humbly offers all his senses and everything he possesses at God’s feet. He longs to submit all his pleasures and sufferings, melodies, goals, and pursuits to Him. Through vibrant and beautiful similes, the poet expresses his last and complete surrender to Him.

- The complete submission to God almighty

The poet aspires to bow down his mind, and submit his entire knowledge and wisdom to God, like a July rain-cloud bending down with its weight of water that is waiting to come in the shape of showers. The poet also aspires to devote all of his songs to God, much like a stream that runs into and unites with the sea. Finally, the poet seeks to give himself to God, just like the homesick cranes that fly night and day to their mountain nests for serenity and repose. In this final song, the poet expresses his longing for eternal unity with the supreme creator.

Tagore’s *Gitanjali* has a broad appeal because of the ease and simplicity with which he has conveyed his feelings. The choice of words he has used in his poems is simple but profoundly evocative. He uses an appropriate and simple vocabulary to convey deep spiritual emotions through his poems. The use of archaic



- The style of the poem

words such as ‘thou’, ‘hast’, ‘thy’ etc. in these poems lends an antique feel as well as a rhythmic effect to the poems. Tagore’s poetry contains neither rhyme or meter. They are in “verse libre,” or poetry devoid of meter.

2.3.3 As a Man Approaches Thirty He May - R. Parthasarathy

Rajagopal Parthasarathy is a well known Indian English poet who hails from Tamil Nadu. Parthasarathy is bilingual who wrote poems both in Tamil and English. His poems are often based on themes such as conflicts between his recollections of the past and current social reality, alienation and search for identity, Tamil culture and its ancestries. The poem “As a Man Approaches Thirty He May” is an excerpt from the section “Exile” of the book *Rough Passage*. It is divided into three portions, each with three separate poems: “Exile,” “Trial,” and “Home Coming.” In “Exile,” the poet discusses his life and experiences in England, where he felt alone and estranged from his culture and civilisation. The poet expresses his concern about the English language and his mother tongue, Tamil in this poem.

- Major themes used by R Parthasarathy

The poem begins with a search for one’s roots and identity. The poet tells us about a mature person who is approaching thirty and has accomplished much. The poet’s experiences during his time in England have driven him to distinguish between what he has left behind and what he owns in the present. Life in England for the poet has been a constant struggle and battle between English principles and Indian or Tamil values. He’s been seeking something that isn’t his and can’t be his. According to the poet, time’s impact on an individual is natural, and no one can deny it. The narrator is more mature now and understands the distinction between the past and the present. His ties to India and its culture make him feel alone in England. The awareness of his Indian ancestry upsets him at every level, making him restless and uneasy.

- A search for one’s roots and identity

In the lines that follow, the narrator tells us about his association with the English language and British culture. He has mastered English from childhood and has absorbed practically everything as if it were the greatest in the world. He is now dissatisfied and disillusioned. He recognises the distinction between something of his own

► The question of identity

and that of others. The poet here compares the English language to a woman whom he adored. His love for the English language was temporary, and in pursuing the woman / English language, the poet lost his identity. The poet felt isolated in the foreign land. Finally, the poet resolves to conceal his newly gained knowledge within the city's noise.

The central theme of this poem is a cultural conundrum. During his sojourn in England, the poet's experience of the British way of life vs Indian values captivated him. The contrast of the two civilisations created a conundrum that occupied him for a long time until he decided between the two. The poet realises that his love of the English language was only a fascination. The protagonist embraces both Indian and British cultures, but his encounters with both drove him to compare and contrast them. The poet describes his loneliness, alienation, and loss of identity in this portion of the poem. With this realisation, the poet progresses from the first section of *Rough Passage*, 'Exile', to the second section 'Trial'. The poet strives to reconnect with his native roots in the third section, 'Homecoming.' The tension in this poem stems from his cultural dilemma, which is brought about by his expectations, disappointments, and knowledge of his loss of identity with his own language, culture, and civilisation.

► The Realisation

2.3.4 An Old Woman- Arun Kolatkar

Arun Balakrishna Kolatkar wrote in both Marathi and English. Kolatkar was a post-independence poet who was able to integrate native Marathi diction with modernist language with ease and effectiveness. Surrealism and expressionism are common elements in his poems. He was a poet who effectively combined eastern and western traditions, resulting in a new literary sensibility. His poems often begin with a sequence of everyday, mundane pictures before progressing to surprising and dramatic images. "An Old Woman" is from his collection of poetry, *Jejuri*. The poem focuses on how our preconceptions affect the way we see others and how we are frequently inclined to evaluate individuals based on our prejudiced assumptions rather than their merits.

► Arun Kolatkar

The author in this poem employs second-person pronoun 'you' to engage the reader in the poem's events. The poem unfolds through the depiction of an encounter



- The pilgrim / tourist and the old woman

a tourist / pilgrim has had with an old woman during his visit to a shrine. The old woman seizes his shirt sleeve and implores him to give her a fifty paise coin as service fee, so that she can take him to horseshoe shrine. He instantly refuses her request as he knows the place well. But the old woman clings on to his shirt insisting to guide him. Here the poet portrays real life, mundane situation which one has to face while visiting such places. The poet uses very dull and casual language to describe the encounter and portray the condition of hapless old age people in the Indian society who are left alone to survive.

- The realisation and transformation

The tourist/pilgrim then turns to the old woman to put an end to her pleas. But then, upon hearing the old woman, “what else can an old woman do on hills as wretched as these?” the tourist/pilgrim becomes stunned. It was the moment of realisation and transformation for the tourist/pilgrim. Even in such miserable condition, the old woman is not begging for money, instead she is asking the wages of fifty paise for offering her assistance in guiding the tourist/pilgrim, to the shrine. He does not have an answer for the old woman’s question.

- Desperate but shatterproof

When he looked closely, he noticed that the old woman’s eyes had gone deep into their sockets, resembling bullet holes. The image highlights the deplorable condition of the old woman. He then finds that the cracks that started from her eyes have spread all over her body and beyond the hills, the temple, and the sky. Here, the poet invites the reader to a surrealistic experience that the tourist/pilgrim experiences while he gazes at the old woman. He finds everything cracking and crumbling around the old woman, and she alone stands without any change. The tourist/pilgrim feels that he is being reduced to the small change that the old woman holds in her hand when compared to the strength and determination of the old woman.

2.3.5 On Killing a Tree - Gieve Patel

Gieve Patel is an important presence in the history of modern Indian poetry in English. He is a poet, playwright and painter, as well as a physician. He is a member of a group of authors who have joined the Green Movement, which is working to safeguard the environment. His poetry frequently expresses significant worries about the environment and highlights humanity’s harshness



towards it. Another major theme in his poetry is the blatant social inequities of caste and class that continue to plague post-independence India, as well as the plight of the lower classes. Besides this, the human body, its weakness, absurdity, and transience are recurring themes in his poems because of which he is also known as the 'poet of the body.' The poem "On Killing a Tree" is a sarcastic one which describes man's brutality and violence toward nature.

► Poet of the body

The poem begins by giving instructions on how to destroy a tree completely. The poet goes on to describe in minute detail how a tree should be killed. As the tree has grown strong by slowly absorbing the dirt, a rapid, hard blow with the knife will have little effect on it. According to the poet, cutting the tree forcefully by hitting strong blows and chopping will have again no effect on the massive tree since it has absorbed years of nutrients, water, and sunlight. It will feel no discomfort, and its bleeding bark will recover quickly. If we cut from the bottom, or close to the ground, the coiled green twigs will begin to develop, with small branches sprouting. So, the roots must be extracted from the anchoring/holding soil, which is its mother. The tree should thereafter be burnt, choked, brown, hard, twisted, and withered. Then the tree will be completely destroyed.

► How to torture and kill a tree

The poet here uses irony by detailing the process of killing a tree. Through this poem, the author sarcastically sends a significant message to the readers about the need for tree/nature conservation. It is also a social critique on another level. It not only casts a poor light on deforestation, but also reveals the extent of human violence. What begins as a painful knife jab quickly progresses to brutal hacking and chopping with an axe. After that, it is pulled out using a rope, and to complete the killing, it is left open in the sunlight to scorch and then twisted to wither it. Thus, by picturising the violence of humans, the poet clearly and obviously sympathises with the tree as a victim of man's brutality and portrays man as a stone-cold killer who murders trees in an unending and pointless manner for his own selfish greed and profit.

► The irony



2.3.6 After Eight Years of Marriage - Mamta Kalia

Mamta Kalia is an Indian poet, fiction writer, and activist. Her writings are largely about the difficulties that a regular middle-class woman faces in her life. Her writings are mostly in simple language describing real-life challenges affecting women. Most of her writings deal with women's identity crises. The poem "After Eight Years of Marriage" is taken from an anthology, *Confronting Love: Poems* edited by Jerry Pinto and Arundhati Subramaniam. The poem depicts the inner turmoil of a married Indian woman living in a joint family.

► Mamta Kalia

The poem takes a confessional tone in depicting the conflicts of the woman. Confessional poetry is a form of poetry that emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. It is the poetry of the personal or "I," and these poems are written in the first-person perspective. The confessional poems often focus on the darkest and most intimate experiences of a poet's life on subject matters such as lost love, insanity, or feelings of depression, drug abuse, infidelity, alcoholism, and suicide, which are considered taboo subjects especially for a woman writer.

► Confessional poetry

The poem vividly details the discontented state of a married Indian woman. The poem opens by mentioning that this is her first visit to her parents after eight years of marriage. The author discusses how marriage affects a woman's relationships and independence. The woman in the poem represents a broad spectrum of Indian women who must take care of her husband's family and their interests. When she heard her parents ask her, "are you happy, tell us?" she instantly thought it was an absurd question. She couldn't hold back her tears. Her feelings were hurt so badly that she couldn't control her emotional outburst. She was never free to communicate her true sentiments to anybody. Despite her tears, she nodded yes.

► Marriage and Indian woman

The next lines of the poem depict the tension and anxiety looming around her. She wanted to disclose everything to her parents but she could not. The poet says,

“That I was happy on Tuesday
I was unhappy on Wednesday.
I was happy one day at 8 o'clock
I was most unhappy by 8.15.”

► The anxiety

The lines portray the fluctuating moods of the Indian married woman in a middle-class family. She is very happy at one point of time and at the next instant she is very unhappy and at times she even goes to the extent of hurting herself. According to the poet, a married woman in an Indian joint family is supposed to adapt herself to the difference of opinions and cultural disparity in a joint family. Her opinions are most often undermined.

► Predicament of an Indian married woman

After seeing her parents' joy for their grandchildren, the woman finally decided against disclosing her anguish to her parents and held her feelings and emotions to herself and smiled with great content even though she wasn't. The poem depicts the grief and joy that a middle class Indian married woman has to experience at her husband's home. Through the poem the poet hints that whether it's a joint or nuclear family, a woman has to adjust and undergo a plethora of emotions - anxiety, pain, happiness, and gratification for the stability of the marital relationship. She criticises the unspoken rules that girls have been subjected to from infancy.

Summarised Overview

The unit delves into the evolution of Indian literature in English, with a special emphasis on Indian English poetry. The unit attributes the expansion and popularisation of the English language to many sources such as English education provided by Christian missionaries, Macaulay's Minute, journalism, and so on. In addition, the lesson will offer a brief overview of some of the important poets of the Indian literary renaissance. Following that, the unit discusses some of the most prominent Indian English authors and their major works.



Assignments

1. Examine the themes and concepts of the poems from *Gitanjali*.
2. Elucidate how the poet immortalises the casuarina tree.
3. Give a detailed account of the symbolisms in “Our Casuarina Tree.”
4. Analyse the predicament of the speaker in the poem “As a Man Approaches Thirty He May.”
5. In the poem “The Old Woman,” the speaker’s perspective of the old woman shifts from ‘burr’ to ‘shatterproof crone’. Elaborate.
6. Explain the irony in the poem “On Killing a Tree.”
7. What is Confessional poetry? Explain the confessionalism in the poem “After Eight Years of Marriage.”

Suggested Readings

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References

1. Das, Bijay Kumar. *Perspectives on the Poetry of R. Parthasarathy.*, Prakash, 1983.
2. Sree, S Prasanna. *Silent Suffering & Unheard Agony In The Regional Writings On Women*. Sarup, 2008.
3. Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gitanjali*. Niyogi Books, 2012.
4. Kurian, Anna. *Texts And Their Worlds - I Literature Of India An Introduction*. Cambridge UP, 2006.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



Unit 4

Drama

(Non-Detailed)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ get an insight into the evolution of Indian drama.
- ▶ familiarise themselves with some of the Indian English playwrights.
- ▶ analyse and interpret the various symbolic meanings in the given texts.
- ▶ examine important cultural and social issues highlighted in the given texts.

Background

The arrival of secular drama in India is associated with British colonialism in the early decades of the nineteenth century. English residents, having settled in the country for trade and employment, would organise amateur plays, particularly in cities such as Bombay and Calcutta. By the mid-1850s, as universities were established in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, students were introduced to two streams of drama — Shakespearean and Sanskrit.

Translations of Shakespeare and dramatic works emulating the author began to appear in regional languages. At the same time, classical Sanskrit drama was being translated into languages such as Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Kannada, Telugu, and several others. Plays in Indian languages gained popularity during this period, with Bengali playwrights such as Jogendrachandra Gupta producing dramas which were inspired by the Shakespearean tragedies. Most professional and amateur theatre groups enacted plays in Indian languages, though university productions of drama were mostly in English.

In this way, the tradition of Indian drama in English contained different strands. One, connected with the universities and British circles, distanced itself from 'native' culture. The emerging Indian theatre of the time, on the other hand, was influenced by both classical Sanskrit drama and British



drama. This points to the way in which colonial politics impacted the development of Indian literature and culture.

Indian English dramatists, over the years, have had to contest the colonial heritage of the language as well as the marginalisation that they sometimes face within their own soil. Starting from the earliest dramatists in the genre, such as Krishna Mohan Banerjee, T. P. Kailasam, Sri Aurobindo, and Harindranath Chatopadhyay, this conflict illuminates their themes, style, and stagecraft. The English language was enriched with Indian idioms and words, typically used to convey experiences unique to the Indian context.

The choice to present a play in English, as opposed to an Indian language, also marks the audience who will witness the drama. It further chooses the literature to which the play will belong. Both the plays that are part of the current unit, *The Fire and the Rain*, and *Silence! The Court is in Session*, were originally written in Indian languages (Kannada and Marathi respectively) and translated into English. The politics of language works differently in each of them, with each possessing their own audiences. A close discussion of their themes, writing styles, and motifs will allow us to understand how these plays mediate linguistic, socio-cultural, and ideological tensions.

Keywords

Metatheatre, Patriarchy, Caste, Greed, Deception, Sacrifice

Discussion

2.4.1 Silence! The Court is in Session - Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar was a prominent and well-known dramatist in India throughout the twentieth century. He was a well-known Marathi dramatist, film and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist, and social critic. Over the course of five decades, he has written thirty full-length plays, seven one-act plays, six collections of children's plays, four short stories, two novels, and seventeen film scripts.

► Vijay Tendulkar



► Vijay Tendulkar's style

He was a humanist and a writer who was always experimenting with form and organisation in his plays. He was well-known for his adept "objectification" in the creation of multi-layered characters whose existential suffering was placed against the social catastrophe of the time. Tendulkar, a renowned realistic theatre writer, frequently electrifies the conservative audience with harsh topics and honest dialogue. In truth, his plays have explored topics such as power exploitation and latent violence in human interactions. He is also known as a writer of problem plays since the recurring themes in his plays highlight social, individual, and ethical issues.

► Characteristics of his plays

The tension between truth and illusion, or life and art, lies at the heart of his dramas. In a nutshell, these are conflicts between individuals and societies in which circumstances and surroundings play significant roles without being emotional or sympathetic. His characters are realistic. His plays have prominent female characters.

► *Silence! The Court is in Session*

One of Vijay Tendulkar's greatest plays is *Silence! The Court is in Session*, written in 1963. The drama is based on Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt's novel *Die Panne (A Dangerous Game)*. The play was translated from its original Marathi into English version by Priya Adarkar in 1979. The original Marathi title of the play is *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe*. The play, which achieved enormous acclaim and recognition, is a flawless work entwined with complex dramaturgical features. The drama interweaves a stage within a stage, the relevance of an absentee character, the challenge of identity, feminine assertion, and, lyrical language. It is a quest for truth and feminine identity.

► Theme of the play

The drama is primarily concerned with the role of women in a patriarchal society. Tendulkar's play depicts the plight of a young lady who is a victim of masculine supremacy in society. He criticises the absurdities that exist in society. Furthermore, the drama captures all the vitality of modern life. The dramatist brilliantly shows the clash between Benare and the middle-class patriarchal society by employing the technique of a play within a play.

2.4.1.1 Summary

► Sonar Moti Tenement Progressive Association

Members of the Sonar Moti Tenement Progressive Association arrived at a village near Bombay to present an awareness-raising play on American President Lyndon B. Johnson's trial on the charge of creating atomic weapons. Miss Leela Benare the protagonist, a schoolteacher, is a member of this theatre company. Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, Balu Rockde, Sukhatme, Ponkshe, Karnik, and Professor Damle are the other members of the theatre.

► The mock court

Leela Benare and a villager named Samant are the first to arrive at the village hall, where the actors will hold a mock law court. Meanwhile, Leela Benare discusses her teaching profession with Samant. She then makes caustic remarks to Samant about other members of the group. Soon after, all of the other members gather in the village hall. The play is supposed to be performed at night. The members of the theatrical company decide to organise a fresh fake trial, separate from the one that would be presented at night, to pass the sleepy day and also to demonstrate Samant the procedural subtleties of the court because he was to replace the fourth witness.

► The conspiracy

Benare's co-actors purposefully cast her as the accused in the fictitious trial. Benare is charged with infanticide, a serious socio-moral accusation in the fake trial. Her trial would be conducted in accordance with Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code. She is accused of attempting to marry off every male member of the gang. She is also accused of having an unlawful connection with Professor Damle and having a child as a result of this relationship.

► The trial

The improvised mock trial begins with zeal but soon takes a dark tone. In their direct allusions to the accused Benare, the witnesses get blatantly personal. They disregard her privacy and continue to assault her. Mr. Kashikar, the judge, enters the witness box to provide testimony against Banare, breaking court rules.

Sukhatma serves as counsel for both the prosecution and the accused. The entire thing devolves into a farce. All the members band together to silence Benare's complaint. Mr. Kashikar, the judge, uses pompous Sanskrit terms to explain the meaning of mother and motherland and stigmatises Benare for conceiving an illicit child. Mrs. Kashikar joins forces with the male members of the group to attack Benare. She viciously assaults Benare in



► The attack

the capacity as a witness. Furthermore, the organisation alleges that Benare was sacked by the chairman of the institution where she taught without performing an inquiry into her unlawful connection.

► Benare's response and downfall

Benare is allowed 10 seconds to plead her case before the final decision is pronounced. At this point, Benare stands up straight and adds, "Yes, I have a lot to say." Then comes a lengthy monologue in which Benare shows her enthusiasm for life and describes how she is denied her desires. Benare is compared with criminals and sinners in the final decision, and the court orders that she survive but the child in her womb be killed. Benare, who is in pain, first vigorously denies the charges levelled against her. She is eventually exhausted with her fighting energy and collapses on the ground unconscious.

2.4.1.2 Characterisation

► The protagonist Leela

Leela Benare: A schoolteacher with eight years of experience. She comes across as a vibrant and quirky woman. She looks to have her own thinking and is quite lively. She often ridicules the foibles and eccentricities of the various members of the group. She is the protagonist of the play.

► Lawyer in real and fictional world

Sukhatme : A lawyer, and member of the theatre group. He acts as the lawyer for the defence. Although his practice as a lawyer is not successful in the real world, he enjoys having power in the fictional mock court room play, which he does not have in life.

► Kashikar's social views

Mr.Kashikar: He plays the role of Judge in mock court room play. In real life, Kashikar is a social worker who takes tremendous pride in his job and the prestige it grants him. He and his wife have no children, but they have adopted Rokde as a ward and unpaid servant. Kashikar is harshly critical of both Rokde and his wife, Mrs. Kashikar, insulting her almost every time she speaks. He is also critical of his colleagues and very suspicious of India's women's freedom movement, using Benare's trial to criticise working women in general and, in his opinion, the disintegration of society as a result of women who refuse to marry and indulge in immoral behaviour.

Mrs.Kashikar: Mr. Kashikar's wife and a supporter of the mock court room play. Mrs. Kashikar, who, like her

► Abused wife

husband, is critical, is subjected to near-constant verbal abuse from Kashikar, who publicly mocks and chastises her for nearly everything she does or says.

► Kashikars and Balu

Balu Rokde: He was provided shelter as a young kid by the Kashikars, who fed, dressed, and schooled him as he ran errands and did miscellaneous work for them. He follows them and receives their directions.

► Karnik's character

Karnik: A member of the mock courtroom play and a professional actor. Although he joins Sukhatme, Mr. Kashikar, and Punkshe in torturing Benare, he appears to have less of a personal, emotional interest in the trial's result, maybe because he is less conservative ideologically than Kashikar or Sukhatme, who perceive the trial as a referendum on autonomous women.

► Demeaning attitude

Punkshe: A failed academic who works as a clerk and is a member of the mock court room play. Punkshe is self-conscious about his professional level and attempts to promote himself by demeaning and belittling others around him.

► Damle's extra-marital affair

Professor Damle: He works as an academic and in his leisure time, he participates in theatre work. Damle had a wife and five children, but he began an affair with Benare, resulting in her pregnancy. Benare subsequently claims that, despite being an intellectual, Damle was always more interested in her body than her thoughts.

► Pleasant character

Raghu Samant: A young guy who makes "enough to keep body and soul together," as he puts it. He is single, lives with his brother and sister-in-law, and adores his nephew. He is a pleasant and nice young man. He manages the group's tasks and is requested to serve as the fourth witness in the mock courtroom play.

2.4.1.3 Analysis

Vijay Tendulkar revolutionised Indian theatre after independence. He outraged the conservative audience's sensibilities by portraying the harsh facts of life, relationships, and existence. Tendulkar portrays modern society in its true colours in the drama, highlighting its problems, challenges, difficulties, and complexity. Tendulkar has ventured into a new territory in the theatre, and his characterisation is unique and bold without any attempt at moralising. He has talked about and touched every facet of life, not just the cheerful and joyous, but



- The deconstruction of modern society

- The open ended-ness

- Metatheatre

- Girish Raghunath Karnad

human flaws, follies, and foibles as well. The tone of his plays is rather neutral without taking sides on moral issues.

The drama illustrates the contradictory moral standards of a middle-class, male-dominated culture obsessed with a ridiculous moral code. Tendulkar may be viewed as a quiet social activist seeking to influence people's ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. As an optimist, he is prepared to make others aware of life's vices and limits. He does not promote any one philosophy of life since his plays are open to several readings and cannot be reduced to a single notion.

The play belongs to the genre of metatheatre. When there is a play within a play, it inexplicably qualifies to the genre of metatheatre. Aspects of a play that attract attention to its character as drama or theatre, such as an actor directly addressing the audience, showing knowledge of an audience, or admitting that the individuals presenting the show are actors, and sometimes a play inside a play, are major features of metatheatre. In this drama, the core play is presented as a narrative being staged in the guise of a mock trial in a make-believe court.

2.4.2 The Fire and the Rain -

Girish Karnad

Girish Raghunath Karnad was a Kannada writer, dramatist, screenwriter, actor, and film director. In the 1960s, his rise to fame as a writer heralded the entrance of modern Indian playwriting in Kannada. Karnad has been writing plays for four decades, frequently employing history and mythology to address contemporary issues. He has had his main plays translated into English and has gained critical acclaim throughout India and abroad.

The drama was composed in Kannada in 1995 and afterwards translated into English by the author himself in 1998. It illustrates the unbridled violence that results from selfishness, greed, and wickedness. Anger, violence, bloodshed, jealousy, pride, false knowledge, the deep emotion of enmity, hatred, greed, deceit, and retribution are all depicted in the play. Karnad believes that the tale is very relevant to modern culture. The drama conveys the

► The themes

concept that the misuse of knowledge eventually leads to the downfall of the world. It powerfully depicts the tension between the Brahmin conventional community and the beneficent tribal group.

► The style

The stageable quality of Karnad's plays is exceptional. He devised a theatrical method that adapts to the demands of his tales. His stories are short and gripping. His characters are vibrant and well-developed. Karnad's theatrical speech is concise, direct, and to the point. The tale of Yavakri, which appears in Chapters 135-138 of the Mahabharata's Forest Canto (Vana Parva), is the inspiration for the play *The Fire and the Rain*.

2.4.2.1 Summary

► The ritual

The drama takes place many years ago in a small region of India that has been without rain for 10 years. A seven-year-long fire sacrifice (yajna) is organised by the king to bring rain to the land after years of starvation and drought. Because he is young, the king appoints Parvasu as chief priest. Raibhya is envious of his son's position. Yavakri, Parvasu's cousin, travels to the forest to seek enlightenment from Indra and is gifted with Brahmagnyan after 10 years. Yavakri returns to avenge his father's death caused by grief due to the appointment of Parvasu as chief priest, using his previous love, Vishakha, now the wife of Parvasu, as bait.

► The revenge

Vishakha is sexually abused by her father-in-law (Raibhya) in the absence of Parvasu and she also readily succumbs to Yavakri's seduction. Knowing this, Raibhya creates the Brahma-Rakhshasha, Kritya, to slay Yavakri. Vishakha discovers Yavakri's deception and pours out the enchanted water that may have rescued Yavakri. Yavakri is assassinated by Kritya. Parvasu returns home from the fire sacrifice and murders Raibhya. He intends to blame everything on his younger brother Arvasu, who is naïve, daring, and unconventional, and who is madly in love with a tribal girl named Nittilai, who is as vibrant and energetic as Arvasu.

Arvasu is cleverly blamed for Raibhya's death, and the crowd severely abuses him. Nittilai, who is married to a man from her own caste, abandons her spouse to care for Arvasu. A local theatre manager invites Arvasu to participate in his production. Arvasu has always desired to act, but Parvasu and the society have discouraged



► Naïve Arvasu

him since a Brahmin is not meant to appear in a play. But Arvasu has already been condemned and rejects all societal strictures. In the legend of Indra, Vishwarup, and Vritra, he plays the role of Vritra. The king of the skies, Indra, is envious of his brother Vishwarup and intends to assassinate him.

► Arvasu's sacrifice

Vritra attempts to defend Vishwarup, but Indra chases him away and kills him. Paravasu responds to seeing the play within the play. The ravenous crowd raids the fire sacrifice. Her husband murders Nittilai. When the voice of Indra is heard, Arvasu resolves to accompany him into the flames. Arvasu receives a blessing from Indra. Arvasu chooses to ask Nittilai for his life. Kritiya arrives and begs to be released from his dilemma. Arvasu learns to be unselfish and requests Indra to free Kritiya's soul. Rain finally happens at the end, as a result of the exchange and realisation of sacrifice, and the land becomes fertile again.

2.4.2.2 Characterisation

► Yavakari's enraged character

Yavakari: He is wise but spiteful. He believes that his father, a wise sage, is being humiliated by his brother Raibhya and his son Paravasu. He is enraged with a vengeance. He wants expertise to exact his wrath. So, he goes to the jungle for ten years of penance and austerities. One night, Indra bestows enlightenment on him. He abuses it to get revenge on Raibhya and Paravasu. He fornicates with Vishakha, provoking Raibhya's rage. He enlists the assistance of Brahma Rakshasa, a demon soul, and murders him.

► Raibhya's negative role

Raibhya: Yavakari's uncle and Paravasu's father is Raibhya. He's cruel, malicious, ambitious, deceptive, jealous, and lusty. He, too, abuses his expertise. He is a saint, yet he bears the stigma of sin. In the absence of her husband, Paravasu, he molests his daughter-in-law, Vishakha. He is envious of his son, who has been named Chief Priest of the fire sacrifice by the king.

Paravasu: Raibhya's eldest son is Paravasu. In the fire sacrifice, he serves as the Chief Priest. He is well-versed in the Vedas and is knowledgeable about them. He is cruel and vicious, and he utilises his expertise to further his selfish goals. His marriage to Vishakha is lifeless and devoid of joy. He murders his own father, Raibhya, and accuses his younger brother, Arvasu, of patricide,



► Parvasu's crimes

compelling him to undertake penance and atonement for the death of his father. He taunts and humiliates Arvasu during the fire ritual, forcing the royal guards to throw him out of the hallowed sanctuary and fatally beat him. Parvasu is finally devoured by fire for the crime he has committed.

► Arvasu's selfless act

Arvasu: Arvasu is Raibhya's younger son and Parvasu's sibling. He isn't as well-versed as his father and sibling. He falls in love with Nittilai, a tribal girl, and abandons his caste for her sake. He joins the acting ensemble because he enjoys singing and dancing. He bears guilt for patricide, a heinous act perpetrated by his brother. His role is significant in the destruction of the sacrifice precincts and the death of Parvasu. He gives up his bliss with Nittilai for Brahma Rakshasa's salvation. Arvasu's selfless gesture eventually resulted in rain, which the people had been denied.

► Exploited Vishakha

Vishakha: Vishakha is Raibhya's daughter-in-law and Parvasu's wife. She is represented as a social outcast. Vishakha is shown as a person who lacks individuality. Parvasu uses her for his sexual fancies. During his extended absence, her father-in-law, Raibhya, takes advantage of her and tortures her both emotionally and physically. Yavakari, her former lover, also betrays her and fornicates with her.

► Nittilai's serving of Arvasu

Nittilai: Nittilai is described as a fearless, brave, resolute, and virtuous tribal girl. Nittilai develops feelings for Arvasu. However, the tribal elders do not approve of her marriage to Arvasu. Nittilai adores Arvasu wholeheartedly. When she realises Arvasu's life is in jeopardy, she abandons her husband and family and gives up everything to care for him. But Nittilai refuses to marry Arvasu because she respects her husband and does not want to embarrass him. Instead, she invites Arvasu to be her brother and encourages him to marry another lady. Her devotion to Arvasu is spiritual. At the end of the play, however, Nittilai's husband slashes her neck and murders her.

2.4.2.3 Analysis

The drama depicts violence caused by selfishness, greed, immorality, and abuse of authority. Karnad reconstructs an episode from Mahabharata and tells a narrative of passion, loss, and sacrifice set within the



► The themes of the play

setting of Vedic ritual. The drama illustrates a person's bad instincts, such as rage, slaughter, envy, pride, and false knowledge. The play's deep sentiments of animosity, anger, betrayal, revenge, and adultery convey that the abuse of knowledge eventually leads to the downfall of the entire universe.

The play depicts the clash between the conventional Brahmin community and the tribal group in vivid detail. The former is strict and ceremonial (represented by "fire"), whereas the latter is community-oriented (represented by "rain"). The title of the work is both appropriate and intriguing. The tribal culture is equated to rain, which nourishes and supports life, whereas the Brahminic civilisation is equated to fire, which destroys everything. The drama illustrates sacrifice for one's beloved, the search for god, power, greed, and familial treachery through the characters. Karnad's drama depicts Indian primitive culture and society perfectly. The play illustrates primordial human behaviour, ideas, and values. On a political level, the drama exposes the hypocrisy and cruelty of Brahmin priests, as well as the religion's failure. On a more intimate level, it demonstrates how envy can ruin a family or even the entire universe.

► Fire and the Rain

Summarised Overview

The unit gives you an overview of how Indian theatre evolved. It goes into the origins of secular play in India as well as the flowering of drama in India's regional languages. The unit will then give insight into the growth of the language employed in Indian theatre, including its traditions, struggles, and politics. Following that, the unit discusses two major contemporary plays: *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *The Fire and the Rain* by two great dramatists, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad, respectively. The units offer a quick overview of these dramatists' approaches and themes used. Following that, it provides you a quick description as well as the primary characterisations in these dramas. Following this, the unit provides a brief examination of both of these dramas.

Assignments

1. Analyse critically the characterisation of Ms. Leela Benare and Mrs. Kashiker.
2. Examine the play *Silence! The Court is in Session* as a social satire.
3. Comment on the justification of the title *Silence! The Court is in Session*.
4. Examine the symbolic significance of 'fire' and 'rain' in the drama.
5. Comment on the portrayal of gender in the play *The Fire and the Rain*.
6. Analyse the significance of the 'play' within the play *The Fire and the Rain*.

Suggested Readings

1. Ramanathan, Indumathi Manivelu. *Myth in Girish Karnad's Plays: Hayavadana and The Fire and The Rain*. Lap Lambert, 2012.
2. Mukherjee, Tutun. *Girish Karnad's Plays: Performance and Critical Perspectives*. Pencraft, 2006.
3. Chatterjee, Shukla, and Vijay Tendulkar. "Shukla Chatterjee in Conversation with Vijay Tendulkar." *Indian Literature*, vol. 52, no. 3 (245), 2008, pp. 15–22. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23340482>.

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1. Tendulkar, Vijay. *Silence! The Court is in Session*. Oxford UP, 1978.
2. Mahida, Beena a. *A Critical Analysis of Vijay Tendulkar's Silence ! The Court is in Session*. Canadian Academic Publishing, 2014.
3. Karnad, Girish. *The Fire and the Rain*. OUP, 1998.
4. Karnad, Girish, and Girish Raghunath Karnad. *Collected Plays Volume 2: Tale-Danda, The Fire and the Rain, The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, Two Monologues: Flowers, Broken Images*. OUP, 2005.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

Prose and Fiction

BLOCK-03

Block Content

Unit 1 - Prose

“Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? : An Informal Essay”
- A. K. Ramanujan

Unit 2 - Fiction

The Guide- R. K. Narayan
Shame - Salman Rushdie
Sea of Poppies - Amitav Ghosh

Unit 3 Fiction (Non-detailed study)

Jasmine - Bharati Mukherjee
Mistress - Anita Nair

Unit 4 Short story (Non-detailed study)

“The Kite Maker” - Ruskin Bond
“Promotion”- Arjun Dangle
“A Temporary Matter” - Jhumpa Lahiri



Unit 1

Prose

Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? : An Informal Essay - A. K. Ramanujan

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the features of Indian English prose.
- ▶ acquaint themselves with Indian perspectives and traditions in the areas of thoughts and philosophy.
- ▶ know the key contributions and literary career of A. K. Ramanujan's writing.
- ▶ get familiarised with A. K. Ramanujan's style of prose writing.

Background

A.K. Ramanujan was an Indian poet, playwright, linguist, folklorist and translator. He worked as a Professor of Linguistics at the University of Chicago. Ramanujan was a polyglot and wrote in both English and Kannada. The predominant themes of his poetry include hybridity and transculturation. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award posthumously in 1999 for *The Collected Poems*. In his essay, "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" published in 1990, Ramanujan elucidates cultural ideologies and their behavioural manifestations in terms of Indian perspective and psychology, which he calls "context-sensitive" thinking. In the essay, the author poses some questions and tries to answer them by stressing the specific inquiry of whether an Indian way of thinking exists.

Keywords

Context-free, context-sensitive, *Bhakti*, *Moksha*, *Rasa*, *Vibhava*, *Akam*, *Puram*, *Tinai* poetics



Discussion

3.1.1 Summary

“Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?: An Informal Essay” by A.K. Ramanujan refers to India’s diversity and the plurality of perspectives. The essay is divided into six parts. The first part of the essay delineates the Stanislavskian exercise which helps to understand a question from multiple perspectives. In the second part of the essay, A.K. Ramanujan talks about his father as a representative of India’s diverse traditions and inconsistencies. In the third part, the author talks about India’s inconsistency, hypocrisy, subjectivity and tendency not to distinguish between inside and outside, and how India gives importance to particulars. This section throws light upon the contradictions of the Tinai poetics: *Akam* and *Puram*. The fourth section of the essay describes the context-free west and its modernity, then it is juxtaposed with context-sensitive India. The fifth part of the essay substantiates the impossibility of context-free being entirely free of context. Both approaches, context-free and context-sensitive, have remained in cultures. The last part of the essay portrays modernisation as a move to be free of context and the multiple realities associated with it. The essay concludes by stating that it is never possible to be completely free of the context.

- The essay in six parts

3.1.2 Analysis

“Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay” written by A. K. Ramanujan begins with the Stanislavskian exercise of asking a question in different ways. Ramanujan poses the question of whether there is an Indian way of thinking. The question attains different meanings based on where the stress is placed. Ramanujan poses the question in four ways:

- Mode of questions in the essay

Is there an Indian way of thinking?

Is there an Indian way of thinking?

Is there an Indian way of thinking?

Is there an Indian way of thinking?



The essay begins by offering two perspectives in which he says there is no particular Indian way of thinking and on the contrary, India never changes under the influence of the modern. Ramanujan glorifies tradition and states that it has attained a stage of permanency. The second question whether there is a particular Indian way of thinking is answered by its negation. Ramanujan addresses the diversity of the country and the multiplicity of traditions found in it. He says that there is nothing uniquely Indian, but everything that enters India becomes Indian. The central concern of the essay is to find out whether there is an Indian way of thinking and if there is one, how it is different from the Western one. Ramanujan states that Indian thinking is characterised by contradiction, hypocrisy, inconsistency and context-sensitivity. However, Ramanujan holds the view that above all the apparent diversities existing within the country, there is a stream of unity flowing through the heart of the country. The essay argues that both Western and Indian styles of thinking have their own advantages

- Indianness in thinking

The essay has an epigraph about Walter Benjamin's dream of hiding behind a phalanx of quotations, which would ambush the reader and rob him of his convictions. In the same manner, Ramanujan puts forward different perspectives through quotations and he does not take sides with any single perspective. Rather, he acts like the compiler of the phalanx that eventually disturbs the reader's certainties.

- Phalanx of quotations

To the third question, addressed by Ramanujan, of whether there is an *Indian* way of thinking, the answer is that there is no specifically categorised Indian way of thinking. India had been in the hands of Aryans, Mughals and the British and in the end, when some British people remained in India, they became Anglo-Indians. Henceforth, he says that there is nothing uniquely Indian; rather, everything that enters India becomes Indian.

- There is nothing uniquely Indian.

The fourth question seeks out whether Indians really think. Ramanujan talks about the western or orientalist's claims that there is no positive stream of sciences or scientific temper in India. The orientalist believe that India owns no philosophy, and only religion and its

► Western view of India

views are rooted in its consciousness. They opine that, in India, viewpoints are subordinated by spirituality and rational thoughts are attached to feeling and intuition. Ramanujan highlights that India is synonymous with cultural magnanimity as it is a land of cultural inclusion and accommodation. In the country, we do not ignore the minority for protecting the ethos of the majority. The reader, through the essay, reaches towards an understanding of how the orientalist consider India as an exotic other.

The quote by Walter Benjamin, given as the epigraph of the essay, talks about putting forward many quotations so that the reader is robbed of certainties. Ramanujan uses a phalanx of quotations and examples - a technique that he defines as an 'anthology' indicated in his titles and subtitles, such as "Toward an Anthology of Reflections," "Towards an Anthology of City Images", etc. This technique is applied to a simple structure of thought centred on the theme under the discussion to have multiple resonances. Ramanujan starts by exploring four possible interpretations of a central question using the Stanislavskian exercise which involves asking the question differently each time by emphasising each different keyword including "is", "an", "Indian" and "thinking." Each time, he observes, we get a number of answers which expose the apparent contradiction and inconsistencies in the Indian way of thinking. The diversity of approaches that characterises Indian thinking reflects the diversity inherent in India, including its regions, people and culture. But beneath this diversity that characterises the people and their diverse thoughts runs a parallel line of unity that gives the country a unique identity.

► Unity amid diversity

► Poet's father and the poem "Astronomer"

The second part of the essay is a dedication to the author's father, whose life was full of contradictions. Ramanujan asserts that such contradictions are the very nature of the Indian way of thinking along with the latter being both inclusive and exclusive. Ramanujan quotes from his poem "Astronomer" which brings together science, religion, mythology and everyday life in a single spectrum of thought and lines. This exemplifies the multiplicity of perspectives adopted by Indian thinking.



► Indian and Western perspectives

The third part of the essay talks about India and tries to seek the answer to the question “what is India?” Ramanujan begins by referring to the inconsistencies in defining India. Englishmen believe that Indians have a trait of hypocrisy, but Max Muller talks about the truthful character of Hindus in his lectures. Ramanujan states that even the basic concepts have diverse meanings in India and these meanings are fluid and plural. Ramanujan also talks about Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in which the author addresses European stereotypes regarding the third world. Henry Kissinger believes that India looks inward whereas Westerners look outward. Ramanujan also brings forward many other orientalist perspectives of Westerners. Indians understand the outside reality as a continuum of one’s self whereas Westerners consider it a part of their identity. Robert Zimmer is of the opinion that Indians do not have a differentiation or binary opposition of self and non-self, interior and exterior and they do not have pseudo objectivity.

► Shortfalls of Indian views and approaches

VS Naipaul states that Indians are very different from westerners in their worldview. According to him, Indians are self-absorbed, less objective, more instinctive and emotional and all these make them ill adaptive to the modern world. Another Indian trait of character that dismays both Englishmen and “modern” Indians, according to Ramanujan, is hypocrisy. All seem to agree that Indians do not have one truth but many truths. Indians do not mean what they say, and say different things at different times. Even with regard to something fundamental to Indian thought as the concept of Karma, says Ramanujan, there is no consistency in definition or application. What observers have noted is that this inconsistency is not the result of a lack of education or logical rigour. So, Western commentators like Henry Kissinger conclude that Indians are at an “earlier stage of cultural evolution” and have no understanding of objective data. On the other hand, Robert Zimmer praises Indians for this lack of objectivity.

This particular section also addresses the Indian tendency of not differentiating between the interior and exterior. This can be elaborated based on *Tinai* poetics in which there is *Akam* and *Puram*, literally meaning interior and exterior respectively. In *Sangam* literature

► The approach of *Akam* and *Puram*

there is a contradiction between *Akam* and *Puram*. *Akam* is about the interior, which includes heart, mind, earth, love poetry, etc. *Puram*, on the other hand, talks about the exterior, such as body, surfaces, other people, non-kin, ocean, war and kings. Ramanujan tries to draw the attention of the readers towards the inherent tradition of India. The lack of differentiation between interior and exterior is termed as a defect of vision by V. S. Naipaul.

► Lack of universalisation among Indians

Another trait that Ramanujan points out along with inconsistency and hypocrisy is the lack of universality. He proves this by comparing Manu, the Indian philosopher, with the enlightenment philosopher, Emmanuel Kant. Manu does not formulate universal generalisations like “man must not kill”, according to Ramanujan. On the other hand, he would say for example, what punishment would befall *Kshatriya* or a *Vaisya* or a *Shudra* if they commit a murder. Universalisation is the golden rule of the New Testament, of all Judeo-Christian ethics, but not of *Manusmriti*. “To be moral for Manu is to particularise, to ask who did what to whom and when,” says Ramanujan. Indians do not have a synoptic system like Hegel’s or Kant’s, and anything goes into their bricolage.

► Grammar as context-free and context-sensitive

The Indian system of justice is based on the particular, not the universal. The essay also talks about ethical laws of India. They talk about *Ashramadharma* - the conduct that is right for one’s stage of life, *Svadharma* - the conduct that is right for one’s station - *jati*, and also talk about *Apardharma* - the conduct that is necessary in times of distress or emergency. It also addresses *Sadharandharma* which refers to common conduct. The essay also talks about the differences between traditional religion and rational religion. Rational religion focuses on the universal whereas traditional religion focuses on the particular. Indians believe in particularism.

The fourth section of the essay talks about grammar. It talks about the two kinds of grammatical rules that are context-free and context-sensitive. All Indian languages are context-sensitive whereas the West is context-free. Ramanujan highlights the fact that a text gets its meaning in relation to the reader, and it cannot be understood in isolation. A text gets its meaning from the context-sensitive designs it contains. Ramanujan proves the



importance of context with the help of a poem in which a concubine talks about a man when she hears that the man's wife talked disparaging things about the former. In order to understand the meaning of the poem, the context is necessary.

In order to resolve contradictions, Ramanujan from his position as a linguist proposes to explain cultural tendencies in terms of context-free and context-sensitive thinking. Quoting Manu and Baudhayana, he illustrates how Indian culture adopts a context-sensitive approach to law enforcement and even its interpretation of *Dharma*, a key concept in the culture. Baudhayana has shown how the practices of Brahmins are different in the North and the South, and how at the same time, both sections deviate from the Sruti or Smriti they are supposed to be following. They have adopted the traditions of the context in which they live. Ramanujan also asserts that Indian literature up to the 19th century was context-sensitive. "No Indian text comes without a context, a frame till the 19th century," he says. Even historically dateless texts like the *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* make their context clear through meta stories and frame stories.

- Context-sensitive approaches in Indian tradition

A story within a story gains significance from the context in which it is told, and the outer story becomes more meaningful in reference to the inner one, as it is shown in the stories of *Mahabharata*, for example. In Indian literature and culture, Ramanujan says, it is not the Aristotelian unity, but coherence that seems to be the ultimate objective. Ramanujan also mentions the concept of dramatic pentad by Kenneth Burke, which talks about the relationship between scene and agent. The essay also talks about the Levis Straussian opposition between nature and culture.

- Focus on coherence, not unity, in Indian literature

Ramanujan says that even space and time, which are viewed in the universal and uniform contexts in almost all cultures, are particularised in India. He describes an old belief about soil. Soil, it is assumed, affects the character of the people who work on it; houses are not just dwelling places. Rather, they embody mood and character, and even change the mood and character of the dwellers. In the same manner, time also is not neutral and universal; there are auspicious times and inauspicious

- Spatial and temporal aspects in Indian perspectives

times and their effects vary depending on the time-phase of life and people. Certain units of time like the '*Kaliyuga*' breed certain kinds of maladies. Ramanujan says that even in music, *ragas* are context-sensitive; certain *ragas* are appropriate for certain times of the day, and certain seasons of the year. Ramanujan also talks about how indigenous medical practices are also context-sensitive. He concludes that these kinds of thoughts and actions are the basis of the alleged inconsistencies and seeming hypocrisies that Western thinkers have attributed to Indian thoughts, and not a lack of education or incapacity for abstract thought.

- Traditional context-sensitivity bonds

The essay also talks about the significance of Panini when it comes to the Indian system of grammar and Euclid who is relevant for the Europeans. In traditional cultures, there were context-sensitivity rules and bonds; today the objective is to be free of context. Ramanujan also talks about *Rasa*, *Moksha*, *Sanyasa*, *Sporta*, *Bhakti*, *Kama*, *Artha*, *Dharma*, *Brahmacharya*, *Grihsthashrama*, *Vanaprastha*, *Sanyasa*, etc. He also talks about *Bhavas*, *Vibhavas* and *Anubhavas*. In each of these, the pattern is the same: a necessary sequence in time with strict rules of phase and context ending in a free state.

- Indian approach to context-free movements

Ramanujan acknowledges that most cultures, especially the Western culture, emphasize the universal more than the particular and are largely context-free rather than context-sensitive. Protestant Christianity, post-Renaissance sciences, and technology, all favour a quest for universal laws. However, he says, even in predominantly context-free cultures there is a counter movement towards being context-sensitive ("one law for the lion and the ox is oppression," said Blake), whereas, as in the case of context-sensitive India, "the dream is to be free of context." Ramanujan cites the example of context-free concepts like *moksha*, *rasa*, *sanyasa*, *sporta* and *bhakti* as evidence for this. However, he declares that neither the universal nor the unique are central concerns of Indian arts and sciences. He also states that no one can be completely free of context. In the earlier period, *bhakti* was context bound, but at the time when this essay was written, it became politicised.

Ramanujan concludes by making a few pertinent



► The exchange between Indian and Western

comments on “modernisation” in India. Modernisation, he says, is a movement from context-sensitive to context-free in all realms. Print media, constitutions, caste and gender, for instance, display a movement away from the particular to a more egalitarian and universal ethos. *Ragas* can be heard at all times of the day by all without exception. Cultural borrowings from India by the West (like Eliot’s use of Vedic *Da Da Da* in *The Waste Land*) have changed the highly contextualised Hindu systems into a “Hindu way of life” for all. On the other hand, when India borrows from the Western languages like English or from technology, it is realigned to fit into India’s context-sensitive needs. Humorously, the author cites the example of *Ayudhapooja* conducted for computers in India. He acknowledges that there is a significant bias towards the context-free even in India. He concludes the essay by narrating a parable told by Buddha which points out certain situations in which Indians are context-free and at the same time indicates how difficult it is to be entirely context-free, especially in a complex culture like India.

Summarised Overview

The essay “Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?: An Informal Essay” authored by A.K. Ramanujan enquires in six parts whether a particular Indian style of thinking exists. The author discovers that there is nothing uniquely Indian in the ways of thinking. He compares the Indian and Western ways of thinking and explores the orientalist views of the latter upon the former. The writer explains the shortcomings of Indian views, including the *Tinai* poetics approach of *Akam* and *Puram*. He blames India’s lack of a universal approach which the West follows. Considering grammar as context-free and context-sensitive is discussed, in which the traditional context-sensitivity bonds of India have been seen as restricting the country from liberating its thoughts and actions. He advocates an exchange of Indian and Western thoughts and ideas for the smooth run of the world.

Assignments

1. Discuss the prevailing question “Is there an Indian way of thinking?” by explaining the characteristics of the Indian way of thinking.
2. Explain context-free and context-sensitive approaches in the way of thinking by quoting examples.
3. What is meant by the approach of *Akam* and *Puram* based on *Tinai* poetics?
4. Ramanujan advocated the exchange between Indian and Western ways of thinking. Elaborate.

Suggested Readings

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3. Ramanujan, A. K. “Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay,” *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol.23, No. 1, 1989, pp. 41-58.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.

Unit 2

Fiction

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the thematic and stylistic features of Indian English novels.
- ▶ get familiarised with the narrative styles of R. K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh.
- ▶ understand post-Independent and Post-partition Indian English novels.

1. *The Guide*- R. K. Narayan

Background

The prominent name among the writers of the early Indian English novels are of the trinity- Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao. The three of them began writing in the 1930s and have lived till the turn of the century. They have immensely contributed to the popularity of the Indian English novel and created a niche for the Indian English novel in the array of Indian literature.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayanswami (R. K. Narayan) was born in Madras in 1906. He completed his education in 1930 and was working as a teacher before he started his career in literature. He published around 40 novels out of which *Swami and Friends* published in 1935 gained huge attention. Most of Narayan's novels were set in the fictitious Indian town called 'Malgudi.' Narayan is known as the Indian Jane Austen because both the authors portrayed the life of the middle class in their fiction. In his introduction to *The Financial Expert*, he states that Graham Greene is his mentor. Most of Narayan's novels centre on a single character and narrates the story through his perspective. Autobiographical elements can be found in his novel *The Bachelor of Arts*. Narayan focused mainly on



mundane life and the anxieties of the middle-class individual. His novels have been translated into various languages. His novels are rich in Indianness. His characters are both individualistic and universal. Narayan's characters have a lasting impact on the reader. The last work published by Narayan was *The Grandmother's Tale* in 1993. Narayan dealt with the themes of the ironies of daily life in India, modernity and tradition, exile and return, education, myths and ancient Indian past, appearance and reality etc. He also published abridged prose versions of two great Indian epics, namely *The Ramayana* (1972) and *The Mahabharata* (1978). *Lawley Road*, *A Horse and Two Goats* and *Other Stories* are examples of his short story collections.

Keywords

Fictional town, Malgudi, Postcolonialism, Reverence, Western ideology

Discussion

3.2.1.1 Summary

The Guide (1958) narrates the life story of a person called Raju. Raju is the son of a shopkeeper in the fictional town of Malgudi. Raju grows up into a person who is capable of changing and adapting according to the needs of the people around him. The construction of railways in Malgudi changed the fortune of Raju's family forever. Raju's father starts a second shop next to the railway station and the family eventually prospers. However, after the death of Raju's father, Raju is forced to take over the shop and continue his father's business. While being engaged as a shopkeeper, Raju also begins to show the visitors arriving at the railway station around the sites at Malgudi. In order to impress his visitors Raju pretends to be a tourist guide, fabricates tales and exaggerates facts. Raju's reputation as a guide grows and he comes to be known as 'Railway Raju.'

- Establishment of railway changes the fortune of Malgudi

Tourists and visitors from distant places start asking for him and it is while being engaged as a tourist guide that he meets Marco Polo. Marco Polo is a student of ancient

► Raju as a tourist guide

civilisation and he comes to Malgudi in order to research cave paintings and temples in Malgudi town. He employs Raju as his guide to explore the sites he needs for carrying out his research. Raju dislikes the dominating attitude of Marco and his hatred gets aggravated when he meets Marco's young wife Rosie. Rosie arrives at Malgudi two weeks after Marcos' arrival. Though Rosie has a foreign name, she is actually an Indian woman trained in Indian classical dance. Raju realises that she is the best dancer that he has ever seen when he takes her to visit a snake charmer. In order to get closer to Rosie, he devotes all his time to taking care of Marco and Rosie's needs. Raju realises that Marco and Rosie do not have a happy marriage. Raju understands that Marco doesn't approve of Rosie pursuing her passion for dance and Raju utilises this opportunity to seduce Rosie.

Raju compliments and flatters her and praises her dancing skills and Rosie ends up having an affair with Raju. In an argument on Rosie taking up classical dance as a career, she blurts out that she has an affair with Raju. She describes Raju as a man who understands and appreciates her talent, unlike her husband. This leads to a crisis between the husband and wife. When Raju comes to Rosie, she asks him to leave her alone and later Raju returns to Malgudi. Raju tries to get himself engaged with his old life as a shopkeeper and tourist guide. A few weeks later, Rosie appears at his house along with her luggage and informs him that Marco has left her. Raju's mother is a traditional Indian woman who gets shocked at the idea of a young woman coming to live in the house with her son and herself. However, she accepts Rosie for the time being. Thrilled by Rosie's presence, Raju encourages her to dance again and she begins practising daily. Raju's mother realises that Rosie is a married woman and she belongs to a lower caste. Meanwhile, Raju faces financial troubles and his negligence of the railway shop further exacerbates the losses incurred. Raju's uncle comes to his house, insults Raju and Rosie and demands that Rosie leave. When Raju sides with Rosie, Raju's mother becomes angry and leaves with her brother. Finally, Rosie becomes ready for her debut public performance and chooses the name 'Nalini' for her stage performance. Rosie becomes a successful dancer from her debut and Raju takes up the role of her



► Rosie's affair with Raju

manager. People start asking for Nalini and the role of managing Rosie's career makes Raju wealthier. Raju and Rosie move into a more luxurious house so that they can host all the important personalities who visit Nalini like bankers, politicians and rich merchants. Eventually Raju becomes jealous of Rosie who keeps enjoying life with her artist friends. Rosie understands Raju's jealousy and starts feeling uneasy. Marco's book reaches Raju's house but he hides it from Rosie because of his jealousy. Rosie gets to know that Marco's book has been published; she shows excitement to read it. Rosie quarrels with Raju on knowing that he hid Marco's book from her. Raju also hides the letter from Marco's lawyers to Rosie.

► Raju is imprisoned for forgery

Out of his greed for money, Raju tries to forge Rosie's signature but ends up being caught and he is put behind bars for this act of forgery. Rosie is shattered on discovering that Raju's reckless spending has resulted in a shortage of money and they do not have enough money to meet the expenses of Raju's case at the court. Rosie resumes dancing and hires an expensive lawyer who fails to get Raju acquitted of the case and eventually Raju gets sentenced to two years of imprisonment. Raju spends his time in jail by reading about the news of Rosie's stardom and blooming career and he gathers the courage to meet her again. After he is released from jail, he decides not to go back to Malgudi because he knows that he will be socially alienated and will have to face a lot of gossip. He sits by the bank of a river near a small village not knowing where to go. A stranger named Velan who passes by the village stares at Raju and mistakes him for a holy person. He confesses to Raju and expresses his sadness about his half-sister refusing to accept a marriage proposal arranged for her. Though Raju feels disturbed because of the reverence and unwanted respect, he decides to help Velan. Velan's sister agrees to the marriage and his family gives all the credit to Raju for changing her mind. Soon the elders of the village begin to believe that Raju is a holy man with mystic powers.

Raju decides to continue his role as a holy man as the food offered by the villagers fulfilled his basic needs in life. He grows a long beard and starts living in the temple next to the river in order to make his role more convincing. He also begins to deliver lectures on a daily

- Raju is considered as a holy man with mystic powers

basis to a congregation of villagers. Raju continues the drama although he feels guilty to deceive the villagers. Things take a turn when the village is affected by drought and villagers draw Raju into a situation where he goes fasting for two weeks to bring in rain. Finally, Raju reveals his entire story to Velan as he is afraid of the villagers' expectations of him. However, instead of realizing that Raju is a fraud, Velan's views remain unaffected and he looks up to Raju with the same reverence and respect he had earlier. Raju is awestruck and moved by the amount of respect bestowed on him. He decides to continue the fast in order to pay back his faith and respect. People and journalists from different parts of the world start coming to meet Raju, the Holy man. On the last day of his fast, Raju becomes so weak that he cannot even descend to the river by himself. Velan helps him to reach the depleted river. At the verge of falling down unconscious, Raju looks ahead into the horizon and tells Velan that he can sense that it is raining in the hills. With this Raju drops down and the novel ends.

3.2.1.2 Analysis

The Guide narrates the story of Raju who works as a tourist guide in the fictional place of Malgudi and his eventual transformation to a spiritual man. The novel addresses the themes of spiritual transformation and self-realisation. It is a story of a common man's path to a spiritual journey portrayed in a comic way which is simultaneously didactic in nature. The novel also satirizes certain aspects of Hinduism. A postcolonial reading of the novel discloses that the construction of the railway in Malgudi may be considered a symbol of the intrusion of colonial values and Western ideology into the traditional and nondescript village of Malgudi. Raju's lack of self-confidence could be interpreted as an outcome of the dependency that the colonial power had forced upon its subjects.

- Spiritual transformation

Let us now look into the central character of the novel Raju. Raju's entire life is blended with deception, self-deception and hypocrisy. He is a man who takes up multiple careers according to the demands of expediency. He can be considered an example of a counterfeit guru who is good at weaving false tales. He seems to be born with an innate tendency towards deceit and disguise,



- Innate tendency towards deceit and disguise

he pays attention to the minutest detail regarding his appearance and costumes with respect to the role he takes up. Raju keeps on recreating himself according to the needs of his situation as well as to the needs of others. *The Guide* puts forward the story of Raju who is corrupt and who eventually turns into a saint at the end of the story. Though he wears a mask, he is genuine to the concerns of others.

As a tour guide and lover, he displays thoughtlessness and self-indulgence. On the other hand, as a spiritual guide, he is more careful, thoughtful and self-disciplined. He turns from sinner to saint, but he is never truly either of them. At the same time, in his interactions with Rosie, one can understand that he is also an open, broad-minded person with modern thoughts and attitudes towards many issues including women, caste, career etc. His lust for money is the tragic flaw that brings him down. Even then, he picks himself up swiftly after each fall. Marco, on the other hand, is described as impractical and helpless. He is way too nerdy to comprehend Rosie's passionate and dreamy nature. Rosie is portrayed as an instinctive, educated, romantic dreamer who belongs to a lower caste. She is a born dancer who grew up dancing in temples right from her childhood onwards. Her irresistible urge to dance is suppressed by her husband Marco. The vacuum he creates in her life by not appreciating or understanding her passion for dance is filled by Raju's appreciation of it. Even her description of her marriage with Marco shows that it was not a marriage born out of love, but rather a totally uninvolved or disinterested set-up. Her relationship with Raju is not an ordinary extramarital affair born out of love or lust; both Rosie and Raju have their own reasons for it. While Raju has monetary benefits in mind, Rosie yearns for appreciation, validation, and all that is missing in Marco. She is a woman struggling to find fulfilment. Initially, she believes Raju; later she is disappointed as Raju is exposed to be lacking in various ways. But despite Raju's imprisonment, her fame and career continue rising and they appear not to have been impacted by Raju's detention and his squandering of their wealth. This shows that like Raju, she also rises and stays strong despite the harsh realities she had to face due to Raju's deception.

- Rosie's irresistible urge to dance



- People are capable of change

Towards the end of the novel, however, Narayan conveys the fact that there is still hope and one's past need not define one's life. The novel highlights the view that people are capable of change and although destiny or fate can play a huge role in determining one's life, our individual character and our attitude towards life can make a difference. In short, there is hope for mankind and Raju's journey is proof of this hope.

Summarised Overview

Raju's growth and life are the central themes of the novel. Raju was the son of a sweet-store owner who is a native person of Malgudi. After his father passes away, Raju learns how to operate the shop and carries on the family business. Raju is an extremely adaptive person who can adapt to fulfil the requirements of his and others. Despite having little to no formal training, he soon gains a position as a tour guide at the Malgudi railway station due to his familiarity with the area's monuments and buildings.

Assignments

1. Discuss the portrayal of independent Indian women by R. K. Narayan.
2. Analyse the humour in R. K. Narayan's novels.
3. Comment on Malgudi as a setting in the novel.

Suggested Readings

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2. *Shame* - Salman Rushdie

Background

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie was born on 19th June 1947 in Bombay as the son of a wealthy Muslim businessperson. He did his schooling in India and in England. He graduated from the University of Cambridge. After graduation, he moved to Pakistan in 1964 and later returned to England. His first novel was titled *Grimus* and it was published in 1975. *Midnight's Children* was his second novel and it was published in 1981. He won the Booker Prize for *Midnight's Children* in 1981. He faced accusations of blasphemy against Islam with the publication of his novel *Satanic Verses* in 1988. As a result of this, a fatwa, a sentence of death, was issued against him by the Iranian government in 1989 and he had to go into hiding under the protection of the British government and police. Though his movement was restricted, he continued to write and publish novels, short stories and essays. The fatwa was withdrawn in 1998 and he recalls his experience of his life under the fatwa in a memoir titled *Joseph Anton*, which was published in 2012. The novel *Midnight's Children* was adapted into a movie in 2012 and Rushdie himself drafted the screenplay.

Keywords

Nepotism, Gender, Corruption, Magic realism, Partition, Gender discrimination

Discussion

3.2.2.1 Summary

- Magic realism and political allegory

Shame is a novel by Salman Rushdie, published in 1983. It is difficult to categorize the novel; Shame is a work rich in magic realism and simultaneously a political allegory: it takes place in a fictionalized version of the city of Quetta in Pakistan and some of its characters resemble Pakistani politicians. Rushdie's famous novel *Midnight's Children* also talked about the case of post-independence India and the after-effects of partition and the formation of Pakistan.

- Never feel shame`

The setting of Shame is a mansion located at Nishapur, which is believed to be the former home of the famous poet Omar Khayyam. The story revolves around three sisters named Chunnee, Munnee, and Bunny; they have a son named Omar, who is named after the previous owner of the house. The name of Omar's mother remains hidden from the reader throughout the course of the novel. The three sisters raise Omar in isolation from the rest of the world and he grows up feeling his difference from the world without understanding it. He is sent into the world outside the boundaries of Nishapur on the condition that he shall never feel shame. Omar makes this promise and goes on to live an immoral life but he receives great acclaim as an immunologist.

Iskandar Harrapa is Omar's friend and they get into many playboy adventures together. Later, Iskandar marries Rani Humayun and has a daughter named Arjumand, who has the nickname 'Virgin Ironpants' for her obstinate determination to overcome any obstacles confronted by her in the name of gender. Iskandar steps into politics on his fortieth birthday and his rival in the field is Raza Hyder. Raza is married to Bilquis and has two daughters, Sufiya and Naveed. They are nicknamed 'Shame' and 'Good News' respectively. Sufiya is mentally retarded and has only attained the mental age of nine, which was the result of a fever she had in her childhood but her mother believes that this is God's punishment for her infidelity. There is a beast growing inside Sufiya whose eyes flash through hers from time to time that contains the world's unfelt shame. With the passage of



- Nicknamed 'Shame' and 'Good News'

time, the beast grows as a separate entity from Sufiya and gains power over her body in order to wreak havoc. Once Sufiya bit off the heads of two hundred turkeys while the beast possessed her. She fell ill after the incident because of her shame. Omar tries to treat Sufiya for the illness of shame and eventually falls in love with her.

- Sufiya beheads four boys

The beast in her makes another appearance, during Naveed's wedding Sufiya bites the groom. In spite of Sufiya's instability, Omar marries her in a small ceremony. He is forbidden to have a physical relationship with Sufiya; instead, he satisfies himself with Sufiya's ayah-Shahbanou. Sufiya finds it hard to understand what her marriage is lacking but she is sane enough to understand the significance of having children in marital life. She deciphers the sounds coming from her husband's bedroom; she understands that Shahbanou has grabbed her position. This awareness brings back the beast to life again but in a more violent manner. She runs out into the night in anger and beheads four boys after brutally harming them. She recovers from her illness- the beast shame is no longer a problem to her; she has surrendered to it.

- Transforms into a mythological creature

When Omar and Raza get to know what Sufiya has done, they drug her and lock her up in the attic. In order to prolong her state of unconsciousness, Omar has to inject her twice a day. Somehow Sufiya escapes from the attic and transforms into a mythological creature called the white panther, which has a hairless body and a black head. She terrorizes the whole country.

- Shameless and shame itself perish in a fire

In the political scenario of the country, Raza Hyder dethrones Prime Minister Iskandar, resulting in his execution and imposition of Islamic Law. Later, Raza is also overthrown and he tries to escape with his wife and Omar to Nishapur, Omar's childhood home. The mothers of Omar have nursed a grudge against Raza who was responsible for the death of their second son. The three sisters kill Raza. Eventually, Sufiya finds out Omar and beheads him. In the end, both the shameless and shame itself- perish in a fire. Like other works of Rushdie, Shame also combines mythology, allegory, vivid narrative and several layers of social and political underpinnings blended into a single storyline.

3.3.2.2 Analysis

The novel deals with the theme of shame. The theme can be studied through the character of Sufiya, a mentally challenged girl whose entire existence is blended with shame because of her parents' negativity and judgement. She is a character who turns violent because of the hate, anger and bitterness that reside within her soul. She behaves in quite unusual ways. The novel describes the instance of Sufiya killing turkeys and falling ill. She also murders boys who sleep with her behind her husband's back. In the end, she kills her own husband and explodes in a ball of fire. When we look deep into this character, we can understand the thematic journey from unfortunate circumstances towards evil and the ultimate evil that results in the disappearance of someone into the smoke. In this novel, it is shame that guides Sufiya's journey towards hatred, violence and vendetta.

► Theme of *shame*

The novel also talks about the theme of nepotism and corruption in government. The character Harappa exemplifies how people fall for temptations in order to seize unrestrained power over their community. It is this greed for power that finally leads him to doom. The story also talks about the shame of gender. The story puts forward the life of women in the Harappa and Hyder families. Women are underprivileged and are in need of support especially when we look at the female characters portrayed in the novel. There are traits of misogyny in the men presented in the novel. When Harappa and Hyder gain control, there are high chances for women to be marginalized because deep down these women are unhappy and mistreated in these families.

► Theme of nepotism and corruption

It is important to look at the novel from an analytical perspective. In order to understand the political half of the novel it is important to look at the narrative of Sufiya. The name Sufiya means 'wisdom' in Arabic but in the novel Shame Sufiya is the opposite of being wise. Shame is a quality that is typically associated with bad conduct, like an ethical or moral failure, but in Sufiya's case, the shame was bestowed upon her by her parents. Because of her mental retardation, she is left to assume that she is evil or unlovable and it is that belief that ultimately gives way to something more dangerous.

► Mental retardation



- Killing human beings

When Sufiya is found covered in blood in a field of dead turkeys, everyone is shocked. She had beheaded all the turkeys. This behaviour seems extraordinary, especially when we are aware of Sufiya's problems with her intelligence. Her parents get her medical help because she was sick after the incident but other than that, they ignore the signs. Then she starts killing human beings and interestingly, all her victims are males and there are traces of their own semen on them. This indicates that Sufiya's criminal and spiteful behaviour comes from her unsatisfied need for love and acceptance.

- Fictional town of Quetta, Pakistan

Sufiya is on a journey to become a villain. Her journey ends with the murder of her husband at his childhood home. This culmination of evil causes Sufiya to explode into a ball of fire, which is a kind of anti-enlightenment. Certain religions talk about Holy men disappearing from the Earth without having to die; Sufiya also disappears from the face of the earth. She is so corrupted by evil that the universe eliminated her, which is a possibility. The same downfall is repeated in the story of the Hyder and Harappa regimes and their rise to power. Sufiya's character experiences downfall from being an innocent victim to a full-blown demon whereas these young men become corrupted because of their desire for political and social power and when they attain it, one of them kills the other for imposing a dictatorship and the government is completely left trembling. Since the stories take place in the fictional town of Quetta, Pakistan, there is probably an implied connection between the novel's moral and political themes and Pakistan's history.

- Symbol of poor parenting

The novel *Shame* contains many symbols that represent the different issues discussed in the novel. Sufiya's parents are the symbol of poor parenting. Since Sufiya was born out of wedlock, her parents despised her and did not give her enough attention and care that she deserved. Sufiya's mental retardation can be read as an indication of her underdeveloped emotional quietness that informs her brutal violence in the later stages of the soul. In that case, all her aberrations can be attributed to the denial of love she suffered during her formative years.

The character Harappa symbolises the corruption

- Harappa misuses his power

of the government and its partiality. After becoming the Prime Minister, Harappa established systems and mechanisms that favoured his people. Harappa often misuses his power to accumulate wealth for himself. He appoints his people to important government positions, which is another instance of bad governance. After Harappa forms an oligarchy, the people overthrow him because they are unable to tolerate his partiality and corruption. The overthrow of Harappa signifies that power is temporary and people in authority should serve the citizens with honesty and fairness or else they will have to face the brunt of people's wrath.

- Symbols of disenfranchisement

The women presented in the novel become symbols of disenfranchisement. Women are treated inferior to men. The girl child is of a lower value when compared to the boy child of a family. Harappa and Hyder families degrade women and they do not give any significance to the well-being of women. Women are often victimised by the men in the novel, which could be an indication of the plight of women in Pakistan.

- Similes to describe certain situations effectively

Rushdie employs many similes to convey to the reader the true essence of certain situations. Mr. Shakil on his deathbed stares out, focusing on the dome of a large Palladian hotel. He might have been hallucinating or it was the effect of his looming death, he imagines the dome rising as if it were an illusion or a fantasy. Rushdie employs a simile in comparing the point of view of Mr. Shakil on his deathbed of the rising dome to a mirage: "Through one of the building's few outward-facing windows Mr. Shakil on his death-bed was able to stare out at the dome of a large Palladian hotel, which rose out of the intolerable Cantonment streets like a mirage." The simile helps the reader to understand how Mr. Shakil perceived his death and the anxiety he faced on his deathbed.

Another instance of simile is about Omar and Sufiya. Omar and his wife Sufiya both suffer from insomnia. While Omar's sleeplessness comes because of his will, on the other hand, Sufiya's insomnia is beyond her control, she tries desperately to fall asleep. She often lies in bed and closes her eyelids by pressing them between her thumb and forefinger. Sufiya's tendency to force her eyes shut is as if it would "extrude consciousness through



- Omar and Sufiya suffer from insomnia

- Omar's altered speech

- Omar is vulnerable at school

- Omar is like a mongoose hypnotized by a cobra

- Use of irony

her eyelashes, like motes of dust, or tears." By using this simile, Rushdie is able to bring out how difficult it was for her to fall asleep, which is unlike removing a mote of dust from the eyes.

A simile is employed to enhance the imagery of Omar's altered speech "which swings out of control between croaks and squeaks while an ugly lump bobs in his throat like a cork." The use of the simile enhances the imagery of Omar's voice.

Munnee explains to Omar that leaving the house would not be a bed of roses because at school there are chances of Omar getting hurt. Omar is completely vulnerable at school. The imagery of being wounded by sharp names is enhanced using a simile in which the writer compares the sharp names that would be thrown at Omar to sharp knives. In this way, the hurtful nature of the 'names' is perceived: "...because when you leave this house you will be wounded by many sharp names, which people will throw at you, like knives, in the street."

Another simile is employed to explain the mental state of Omar to the reader. The writer uses a simile in which the standing Omar is compared to a mongoose hypnotized by a cobra: "...They were all closing in, Ibadalla and Maulana and three vengeful vigilantes, while Omar stood like a cobra-hypnotized mongoose."

The novel *Shame* has many instances that involve irony. It is said that parents are not supposed to discriminate between children based on gender but in the novel, while Sufiya's mother is pregnant her father expects a boy child. When it turns out to be a girl the father is not happy and it is ironic that Sufiya is not the biological child of her father. Another example is that of Harappa who uses his prime minister position for his own games, which is ironic. A prime minister is supposed to work for the welfare of his country but in the novel, the person holding the office of the prime minister is corrupt.

Through the novel, we can understand that ancient society undermined women and viewed them as properties of men. It can be illustrated using the example of Mr Shakil's three daughters who were hidden inside the mansion and were denied access to the outside world. Sarcastically, the women did not even

- Women were viewed as properties of men

know what a naked man looked like. The girls did not have enough awareness about human reproduction and misunderstood that it took place through the breasts. The reader may find it sarcastic but at the same time, he/she realises how ancient society neglected girls' education.

- No one desires death

Yet another instance is Hashmat who is Mr. Shakil's maid. The reader may find it sarcastic when she yells and calls Mr. Shakil's daughters to witness how he is taking himself to the devil. The author writes, "Come quickly, your fatherji is sending himself to the devil." The reader might find Hashmat's words insulting because she knows that the dying man is not taking himself to the devil. After all, no one desires death.

- Rich with imagery

The novel is also rich with imagery. The novel opens with a vivid description of a town. The author writes, "In the remote town of Q., which when seen from the air resembles nothing so much as an ill-proportioned dumbbell, there once lived three lovely, and loving, sisters." The description of Mr. Shakil's house that aids the reader in visualizing the surroundings is another example of imagery used in the novel. Engagement is one of the strategies used by the author to ensure that readers are aroused to read the next page. The author writes, "The house was positioned beside an open maidan, and it was equidistant from the bazaar and the Cantt. Through one of the building's few outward-facing windows, Mr. Shakil on his death bed was able to stare out at the dome of large Palladian hotel..."

- Girls do not have access to the outside world

The author describes the condition of the three girls (Mr. Shakil's daughters) to depict the sense of sight to the readers. The girls do not have access to the outside world and they are denied education because the culture prevalent during the times dictates that the purpose of women is to serve men. The author writes, "The three girls had been kept inside that labyrinthine mansion until his dying day; virtually uneducated, they were imprisoned in the zenana wing where they amused each other by inventing private languages and fantasizing about what a man looks when undressed..." The imagery reveals the imprisonment of girls and the backwardness of the ancient culture that mistreated women by labelling them as men's property.

The novel is a great piece of art that informs the



- Connection between ordinary lives and the politics of a nation

reader about the connection between ordinary lives and the politics of a nation. The novel was considered for the Booker Prize for its magnificence. Rushdie highlights the idea that violence is tragic and all his characters have their own struggles with the ideas of shame and shamelessness, which are connected with themes of knowledge and unawareness.

Summarised Overview

Shame occurs in a town called Q, which is based on Quetta, Pakistan. In the novel, three sisters —Chunni, Munnee, and Bunny Shakil—pretend to be pregnant at the same time, but after nine months, only one son, Omar Khayyám, is born. He does not, however, learn who his original father is or who his birth mother is because he is raised by all of the sisters. Throughout the plot of this book, Rushdie emphasises the notion that violence originates from shame, and each character in the novel appears fighting with the concepts of shame and shamelessness.

Assignments

1. Analyse the character of Sufiya in the novel.
2. Analyse the thirst for power in the novel.
3. Explain the use of Magic Realism in *Shame*.
4. What are the features of magic realism in Fiction?
5. Elaborate on Commonwealth Literature.

Suggested Readings

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3. *Sea of Poppies* - Amitav Ghosh

Background

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1956. He graduated from the University of Delhi and received a Ph. D. in social anthropology from the University of Oxford. His first novel, *The Circle of Reason* was published in 1986 and it employs magical realism to depict the life of a boy called Alu who lived in India but had to flee to the Middle East due to certain circumstances. The notable works of the author are *The Shadow Lines* (1988) where Ghosh focuses on the encounter between an Indian family and an English family, and *The Glass Palace* (2001), a story about three generations of a family that depicts themes of displacement and quest for identity. His works mainly revolve around the diaspora influence in his own life. Diaspora here refers to two different cultures and two different countries embedded side by side in a migrant's mind. For Indian diasporic writers, it is usually memories of India that become material for most of their literary works. Some of the other writers who focus on diasporic subjects are Jhumpa Lahiri, Rohinton Mistry, Kiran Desai, Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy. Ghosh is one of the trinities along with Salman Rushdie and V. S. Naipaul to popularize Diaspora in Indian writing in English. In 2007, he was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian Government for his contribution to literature. The very next year, Ghosh's novel, *The Sea of Poppies* was shortlisted and received the Man Booker Prize (2008).

Keywords

Opium, Colonialism, Opium Cultivation, subjugation



Discussion

3.2.3.1 Summary

Sea of Poppies opens with a vision of Deeti, an Indian poppy farmer, who sees a ship although she has never seen the sea. The plot centres on the journey of Deeti and several other characters to reach Ibis, which is a migrant transporter that takes people across the ocean to Mauritius, a penal and plantation colony of the British Empire. A British-owned company, The Burnham Bros., purchased the Ibis hoping to refurbish her for the opium trade. The novel unfolds with the threat of war with China over opium in the backdrop and amid the changing relationship Indians have with their land because of poppy farming. The novel follows the personal journey of a multi-racial, multi-ethnic cast of characters, showing how all of their lives are affected by the humble poppy.

► Opium trade

Through the course of the novel, Deeti's life in India falls apart and she embarks on a journey across the ocean to Mauritius as an indentured worker. Her husband, an opium addict, dies and since Deeti has no male children to inherit her land she must either marry her brother-in-law or lose her land. She contemplates suicide, but Kalua, a lower-caste ox cart driver, rescues her and they escape, eventually boarding the Ibis together. A second narrative stream follows Zachary Reid, a half-black American sailor who sails on the Ibis from Baltimore and then disguises himself as a gentleman after most of the crew dies or deserts and he hires lascars to replace them. Zachary has a budding romantic interest in Paulette, an orphaned French girl. Nearly forced into an arranged marriage with an older English judge, Paulette escapes Calcutta by disguising herself as an old Indian woman and boards the Ibis as a migrant worker. Still another narrative stream follows Raja Neel Halder, a high-caste Indian, who lives in luxury until he's found guilty of forgery and sent to Alipore Prison.

► Deeti's life

In prison, he meets Ah Fatt, a Chinese convict and opium addict, and the two board the Ibis together headed for the English penal colony at Mauritius. Baboo Nob Kissin, an Indian agent who handles indentured workers, transforms into a spiritual leader and boards the Ibis

- The journey transforms characters

hoping to build a shrine. Near the end of the novel, when all of the characters and their fates have converged on the Ibis, Kalua accidentally knocks a guard overboard while others are trying to rape Deeti, his wife. Then the guards aboard the ship tie Kalua to the mast and begin whipping him. In the novel's climactic scene, Kalua bites through his fetters while he is being lashed and then grabs the whip, killing the man who was whipping him. The journey on the Ibis transforms characters, helping them leave behind their former identities, and it unifies them. *Sea of Poppies* is the first book in a three-book series and it ends on a cliffhanger, with several characters escaping the Ibis in a longboat.

3.2.3.2 Analysis

Sea of Poppies is a novel that talks about the struggle of farmers who were forced to grow opium though it did not yield them any profit. The situation can be explained using the status of Deeti's hut, which shows the extreme poverty in which the farmers lived. "She stopped to glance in the direction of their hut, which was just visible in the distance: it looked like a tiny raft, floating upon a river of poppies. The hut's roof was urgently in need of repairs, but in this age of flowers, thatch could not be made, in the old days, the fields would be heavy with wheat in the winter, and after the spring harvest, the straw would be used to repair the damage of the year before. But now, with the sahibs forcing everyone to grow poppy, no one had thatch to spare." The poppies need a lot of resources and time to be cultivated, unlike wheat which can be used in thatching the roofs. The disadvantage of opium is that it can be used neither as food nor in hut repairs. The Sahibs made a lot of profit from opium whereas the farmers were disadvantaged.

- Struggle of farmers

The novel also narrates the agony of women who are subjugated and treated as mere objects by men. Deeti who is married to Hukam Singh is driven to intoxication by her own mother-in-law. She is raped and made pregnant by someone other than her husband. She tries to find out the truth by drugging her mother-in-law through the food served to her. It is also a tale of revenge as Deeti uses the same method of intoxication to seek the truth and take vengeance for the betrayal meted out to her. These lines from the novel sum up the entire act: "Next



► Agony of women

morning Deeti mixed a little trace of opium into her mother-in-law's sweetened milk. The old woman drank it thirstily and spent the rest of the morning lazing in the shade of a mango tree. Her contentment was enough to dispel whatever misgivings Deeti may have had: from that day on she began to slip traces of the drug into everything she served her mother-in-law; she sprinkled it on her acharas, kneaded it into her dal puris, fried it into her pakoras and dissolved it in her dal. In a very short time, the old woman grew quieter and more tranquil, her voice lost its harshness and her eyes became softer; she no longer took much interest in Deeti's pregnancy and spent more and more time lying in bed." (40)

► Women work and men reap its benefits

There are women who are considered 'cash cow' by men. Women work hard and often men reap the benefits of it. The character of Jodu's father is the best example to illustrate the above statement. "From that time on, Jodu and his mother saw him but rarely, usually at the beginning of the month, around the time when she was paid; with the money he took from her, he married again and sired a great number of children." (66)

► White supremacy

Ghosh, through the novel, explores the ubiquity of white supremacy. This is put forward to the reader by Paulette who arrives at Bethel: "Paulette had discovered that at Bethel, the servants, no less than the masters, held strong views on what was appropriate for Europeans, especially memsahibs. The bearers and khidmutgars sneered when her clothing was not quite pukka, and they would often ignore her if she spoke to them in Bengali - or anything other than the kitchen-Hindusthani that was the language of command in the house." (117). Indian servants have also internalised racism and they do not have any affection towards their country. Their ignorance of Bengali also throws light upon how they think about the language. The servants willingly turn a blind eye towards their inferiority and behave in a way that they are whites thereby suppressing their own inferiority within their hearts.

The novel also throws light upon the working of the caste system in India. The abuse experienced by the lower caste is depicted through the character of Kalua. He is beaten up by the men of the upper caste for his failure in a wrestling match sponsored by upper-class

- Caste system in India

men. The lower caste people stay in the outskirts of the village and they are marginalised in all possible ways. The entire episode is described in the following lines; “by pulling on his halter, the men forced Kalua to his feet and pushed him stumbling towards the mare’s swishing tail. One of them stuck his whip into the fold of Kalua’s cotton langot and whisked it off with a flick of his wrist. Then, while one of them held the horse steady, the others whipped Kalua’s naked back until his groin was pressed hard against the animal’s rear. Kalua uttered a cry that was almost indistinguishable in tone from the whinnying of the horse. This amused the landlords: . . . See, the b’henchod even sounds like a horse Tetua dabá dé . . . wring his balls . . . Suddenly, with a swish of its tail, the mare defecated, unloosing a surge of dung over Kalua’s belly and thighs. This elicited yet more laughter from the three men. One of them dug his whip into Kalua’s buttocks: Arre Kalua! Why don’t you do the same?”

- Ox-cart is the symbol of sustenance

The novel is also rich with many symbols, allegories and motifs. At the time of Deeti’s marriage, her father pays for the new thatch of the house as part of her dowry. The thatch is representative of the commodification of matrimony because it is paid to thank Singh for agreeing to marry Deeti. The novel also brings in the symbol of the stars to depict the awaiting agony of Deeti. Deeti understands that her stars were exact when she leads an unhappy life with an opium addict. The Ox-cart is the symbol of sustenance of the lower caste people who try hard to make both ends meet. The constant sneezing of the Ox, Deeti, Kabutri and Kalua indicates the uncontrollable allergies attributed to opium.

The novel employs metaphors which help the reader acquire a better grasp of the author’s perception. Ghosh writes, “It was said that on taking Kalua to Benares, the three young landlords, being seized by the licentious atmosphere of the city, had decided that it would be an excellent sport to couple Kalua with a woman. They had invited some friends and taken bets: could a woman be found who would bed this giant of a man, this two-legged beast?” (56). The twin metaphors of “Giant of a Man, and Two-Legged Beast” are used to describe the huge body of Kalua. The landlords are trying to establish their dislike and disgust for Kalua’s appearance. The description in a way mocks bodies that do not conform



► Twin metaphors

to mainstream standards. “She put out a hand to touch his chest, but only to snatch it back: to think touching a naked man was bad enough – and when that man was at Kalua’s station, wasn’t it almost a plea for retribution? She cast a furtive glance around her, and then, in defiance of the world’s unseen presence, she put out a finger and allowed it to fall on Kalua’s chest” (58). The allegorical plea could be Deeti’s conscious attempt to topple the established norms and conventions. People of the upper caste are forbidden from touching the lower caste as it is labelled as unhygienic.

► Manliness

“Jodu, too, was a boatman’s son, and he was, by his own reckoning, no longer a boy, his chin having become suddenly so fecund in its crop of hair as to require a weekly visit to the barber. But the changes in his physique were so recent and so volcanic that he had yet to grow accustomed to them: it was as if his body were a smoking crater that had just risen from the ocean and was still waiting to be explored” (61). The description of volcanicity could be a reference to Jodu’s manliness and astonishing character. The scene in a way advocates manliness, which is a mainstream ideal of beauty and development.

The author employs numerous instances of irony in the novel which helps the reader to decipher the underlying meanings and multidimensionality of the novel. A few examples will illustrate the same: “Kalua, the driver of the ox-cart, was a giant of a man, but he made no move to help his passenger and was careful to keep his face hidden from him: he was of the leather-workers’ caste and Hukam Singh, as a high-caste Rajput, believed that the sight of his face would bode ill for the day ahead. Now, on climbing into the back of the cart, the former sepoy sat facing the rear, with his bundle balanced on his lap, to prevent it from coming into direct contact with any of the driver’s belongings. Thus they would sit, driver and passenger, as the cart creaked along the road to Ghazipur – conversing amicably enough, but never exchanging glances” (09). It is ironic that Hukam Singh believed that face-to-face interaction with Kalua would bring him misfortune. There is no point in Hukam Singh clearing the belongings of the driver because he is sitting in the cart that belongs to Kalua. It is also important that Hukam Singh cannot evade the

► Use of irony

perception of Kalua as they are in the same cart. The ironic scenario emphasizes the uncertainty of the caste structure, which hampers people from carrying out conventional, inoffensive human exchanges.

► Deeti's vision of a ship

The novel begins with Deeti's vision of a ship. "Deeti's vision: her eyes suddenly conjured up a picture of an immense ship with two tall masts. Suspended from the masts were great sails of a dazzling shade of white. The prow of the ship tapered into a figurehead with a long bill, like a stork or a heron. There was a man in the background, standing near the bow, and although she could not see him clearly, she had a sense of a distinctive and unfamiliar presence. Deeti knew that the vision was not materially present in front of her... She had never seen the sea, never left the district, never spoken any language but her native Bhojpuri, yet not for a moment did she doubt that the ship existed somewhere and was heading in her direction. The knowledge of this terrified her, for she had never set eyes on anything that remotely resembled this apparition, and had no idea what it might portend" (12). Deeti has never seen such a ship in her real life. The writer is trying to portray the mysticism and figurative import of the ship through this elaborate description.

► Epitome of oppression

In the novel, there is a reference to Draupadi, labelling the epic character to be a virtuous woman. Draupadi who had to be in a polyandrous relationship with five brothers is the epitome of oppression. She was not conscious when she underwent coercive sex. She reminds of sex slavery and her oppression should not be considered to label her virtuous. This episode in the novel is very ironic: "It was a decoction of datura that wrung the truth from the old woman, by sending her into a trance from which she never recovered. In her last days, when her mind was wandering, she often referred to Deeti as 'Draupadi'; when asked why, she would murmur drowsily: Because the earth has never seen a more virtuous woman than Draupadi, of the Mahabharata, wife to five brothers. It's a fortunate woman, a saubhāgyawati, who bears the children of brothers for each other . . ." (40).

Gosh illustrates: "The room was dark, with soot-blackened walls, and it smelled strongly of oil and



► Religious ambience

incense. There was a small altar inside, with statues of Shivji and Bhagwan Ganesh, and framed prints of Ma Durga and Shri Krishna. But the room was a shrine not just to the gods but also to Deeti's personal pantheon, and it contained many tokens of her family and forebears – among them such relics as her dead father's wooden clogs, a necklace of rudraksha beads left to her by her mother, and faded imprints of her grandparents' feet, taken on their funeral pyres. The walls around the altar were devoted to pictures that Deeti had drawn herself, in outline, on papery poppy-petal discs: such were the charcoal portraits of two brothers and a sister, all of whom had died as children. A few living relatives were represented too, but only by diagrammatic images drawn on mango leaves." (13). The shrine depicts a religious ambience that would be ideal for Deeti to conduct religious activities. Deeti venerates the gods and her kin (both existing and departed) in the room which incorporates sufficient and pertinent religious pictograms. The shrine is an example of the intersection between Deeti's conviction and existence.

► Intersection between colonization and religion

The English church was nearby and the passage of the day was marked by the ringing of its bell. On Sundays, worshippers were called to service by the firing of a cannon. The gun crew was paid not by the Carcanna, but by the subscription of the congregation: the opium factory being an institution steeped in Anglican piety, none of the residents begrudged the expense" (87). The nearness of the English church to the opium factory represents the intersection between colonization and religion. The church contributes to the quietness of the natives and they do not have the power to oppose the working of the opium factory. Basically, religious institutions do not endorse opium farming because of the ill effects and addiction caused by opium. The nearness of the church and factory could also be an indication of the link between religion and opium.

Gosh continues: "Although the Sudder Opium Factory was indisputably large and well-guarded, there was nothing about its exterior to suggest to an onlooker that it was among the most precious jewels in Queen Victoria's crown. On the contrary, a miasma of lethargy seemed to always hang over the factory's surroundings... when they (monkeys) came down from the trees it was to lap



► Destruction of the environment

at the open sewers that drained the factory's effluents." (87) Here, Ghosh employs the imagery of the sewers to prove that the factory creates pollution. Reference to the crown emphasizes that the factory is designed to hugely exploit the resource of fertility (by promoting opium farming) whose key aftermath is the destruction of the environment.

► Magic realism and political allegory

The book is an exemplary piece of art that ends with huge scope for continuation. The novel brings forth multiple themes that leave a lot of food for thought. Amitav Ghosh's writing deals with numerous themes like travel and diaspora, history and memory, political struggle and communal violence, love and loss, and often his writing transgresses the generic boundaries between anthropology and artwork. Numerous themes *Midnight's Children* also talked about the case of post-independence India and the after-effects of partition and the formation of Pakistan.

Summarised Overview

The *Sea of Poppies* is a novel of incredible talent and scope that tells an epic story of the opium trade in 1838 and its far-reaching ramifications. The book offers a series of picaresque narratives that shed light on the effects of the opium trade on people and on India by following the fortunes of a wildly diverse array of characters, from an American freedman passing as white to an Indian widow who escaped from her husband's funeral pyre. The stories intersect as each character makes their way to the opium ship *Ibis* since the desire to escape the poppy trade leads to defiance and mutiny.

Climate fiction is a genre of literature that deals with the social and environmental impacts of climate change. This can include stories set in the future where the effects of climate change are more pronounced, as well as stories set in the present that explore the ways in which people are already being affected by climate change. The genre has gained popularity in recent years as the issue of climate change has become more pressing.

"*Sea of Poppies*" is set in the late 1820s and early 1830s in the context of the opium trade in India and the Indian Ocean. While it is not considered climate fiction, the novel does explore the economic and social impacts of the opium trade and the ways in which it affected people's lives. The novel is the first of the *Ibis Trilogy*, the following two books do have climate fiction elements where they explore how global warming and rising sea levels are affecting human lives in the same region.



Assignments

1. Analyse the character of Deeti in the novel.
2. Analyse the use of references from the epics in the novel.
3. Explain colonialism with reference to the novel.
4. Discuss on the portrayal of the Indian Diaspora in novels.

Suggested Readings

1. Chandar, K. M. "Journey to the Antique Land of Poppies: Voyage as Discovery in Amitav Ghosh's 'Sea of Poppies.'" *Indian Literature*, vol. 54, no. 4 (258), 2010, pp. 181–92. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23346723>.
2. Gangopadhyay, Rudrani. "Finding Oneself On Board the 'Ibis' in Amitav Ghosh's 'Sea of Poppies.'" *Women's Studies Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 1/2, 2017, pp. 55–64. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44474104>.

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1. Mishra, Vijay. *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora: Theorizing the Diasporic Imaginary*. London: Routledge, 2007.
2. Stasi, Paul. "Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* and the Question of Postcolonial Modernism." *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, vol. 48, no. 3, 2015, pp. 323–43. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43830062>.
3. Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. Penguin, 2009.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

1.



Unit 3

Fiction

(Non-Detailed Study)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ get familiarised with the thematic and structural contributions of Anita Nair to Indian English fiction.
- ▶ detail the representation of diasporic experiences in Indian English fiction.
- ▶ understand the anxieties of the Indian Diaspora and their crisis of identity.

1. *Jasmine* - Bharati Mukherjee

Background

Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, the story of a widowed Punjabi peasant woman reinventing herself in America, entered the literary landscape in 1989, the same year as Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*. Rushdie, also an Indian writer, received international attention for his novel when a fatwa (or a threat by fanatical elements) was issued against him. The fatwa essentially proclaimed it a righteous act for any Muslim to murder Rushdie. Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, Jill Ker Conway's *The Road to Coorain*, Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Condition*, Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* were all published around this time. Each of these writers is considered to be a contributor to the genre of postcolonial literature. Although there is considerable debate over the term "postcolonial," in a very general sense, it refers to a time following the establishment of independence in a (former) colony, such as India. The sheer extent and duration of the European empire and its disintegration after the Second World War have led to widespread interest in postcolonial literature. Partly because of the abundance of such postcolonial works, some critics suggested that *Jasmine* was part of a fad. The New York Times Book Review, however, named it one of the year's best works.

Mukherjee's time as a student at the University of Iowa's acclaimed Masters of Fine Arts program, the Writer's Workshop, almost certainly informed the setting of *Jasmine*. She began her studies there in 1961 and



took her MFA in 1963. She stayed on to earn a PhD in English and Comparative Literature in 1969. Though Iowa City is a small college town, the state is 95 percent farmland. In the 1980s, when *Jasmine* is set, many family farmers on the outskirts of Iowa City faced the same dilemma as Darrel Lutz, a character in *Jasmine*. The hard life of farming coupled with tough times economically persuaded many farmers to sell out to large corporate farms or to non-agricultural corporations. Other farmers struggled on, determined to save the farms their fathers and grandfathers had built up, as well as to preserve this unique way of life.

Keywords

Immigrant, Patriarchy, Diaspora, Identity, Postcolonial, Indian Diaspora, Identity Crisis

Discussion

3.3.1.1 Summary

Jasmine, the central character and the narrator of Bharathi Mukherjee's novel, was born in 1965 in a rural village called Hasnapur. The novel is narrated when *Jasmine* is a twenty-four-year-old pregnant widow, living in Iowa with her crippled lover, Bud Ripple Meyer. The events presented to the reader happen within a duration of two months at Iowa. In the course of the novel, *Jasmine* tries to cover the entire happenings of her life from her Punjabi birth to her American adult life. These past biographical events inform the action set in Iowa. Her journey comprises five distinct settings, two murders, at least one rape, an injury, a suicide and three love affairs. In the course of the novel the character's identity and name keep on changing, she adopts different names, from Jyoti to *Jasmine*, Jazzy, Jase to Jane etc. The trajectory of her journey in chronological order begins from Hasnapur, Punjab, to Fowlers Key, Florida (near Tampa), to Flushing, New York, to Manhattan, to Baden, Iowa, and finally she is off to California when the novel ends.

- Journey comprises five distinct settings

The novel's opening phrase, "Lifetimes ago..." sets in motion the major idea or theme, the recreation of one's self. When the story begins to unravel, *Jasmine* is seven years old. Under a banyan tree in Hasnapur, an astrologer



- Recreation of one's self

predicts her eventual widowhood and exile. The Hindus give credit to such predictions and hence this becomes a grave moment in the life of the young girl. It foreshadows her first husband's death and her movement to the isolated Iowa farm town of Baden.

- Bud became wheelchair-bound

Towards the end of the first chapter, the reader is informed about the immediate present. This gives the reader clues about the narrative strategy of the novel. Jasmine who is twenty-four, lives in Baden, Iowa. The ensuing chapters detail her current situation. It is late May during a dry season, which is important because the farm community depends on good harvests. She is pregnant. Bud, her partner, became wheelchair-bound sometime after the onset of their relationship. Bud wants Jasmine to marry him. Meanwhile, Darrel Lutz, the neighbour boy is struggling to run his family's farm, which he inherited after his father's sudden death the year before. Darrel wants to sell the farm to golf course developers, but Bud, the town's banker and thus a powerful figure among the independent farmers, prohibits it. Bud has strained ties with all the farmers. Bud constantly resists technological, social and sexual changes, which are all inevitable in human life. Du, who is the adopted Vietnamese teenage son of Jasmine and Bud, is the epitome of this change. He comes from an entirely different culture from that of his classmates who hail from farming families.

- Reversal of sexual power

Jasmine talks about her relationship with Bud, his mother Ripplemeyer and his ex-wife Karin. She also hints at her sexual tension with Du and Darrel. Jasmine's lovemaking with the wheelchair-bound Bud illustrates the reversal of sexual power in her new life. The novel deals with desire and control throughout its length. Du's glimpse of the lovemaking adds another dimension to sexual politics: there are people with control, people who are helpless and those bystanders waiting to be part of the action. This reverberates with ideas brought up about Indian notions of love and marriage in the novel.

In the course of the narrative Jasmine reminisces about many distant events. These events throw light upon the important people and events of her life; her childhood friend Vimala, her Manhattan employers Taylor and Wylie, their child and her charge Duff. These references begin to contribute towards an understanding of the disparate episodes in the novel. Thus, the initial

- Reminisces about many events

opaqueness the reader experiences is gradually filled with enough light for the reader to see those episodes from a clearer perspective.

3.3.1.2 Analysis

Bharati Mukherjee *Jasmine* is a quest for identity in an alien land. The novel addresses the themes of exile, the agony of separation and disorientation. The protagonist of the novel undergoes multiple transformations during her journey of life in America. She adopts various names like Jyoti, Jasmine and Jane and often experiences a deep sense of distancing resulting in a fluid state of identity. The journey becomes a tale of moral courage, a search for self-awareness and self-assertion. Relocated from her native land India, Jyoti does her best to integrate herself into the new and alien society as an immigrant; the journey culminates in Jasmine's pregnancy with the child of a white man - Bud.

- Quest for identity

- Shuttling between several identities

Jasmine changes herself constantly, shuttling between several identities in different spaces at different times. Jasmine encounters Americanization and its apparent uncertainty, but she survives to make a new start in the host country.

- Sense of instability

There is a constant shift in the places mentioned in the novel. The story begins in India and takes off from Europe to America, where it bounces back and forth from Florida through New York to proceed to Iowa, then finally lands in California. The novelist consciously transports the readers in time and space repeatedly in order to bring a sense of instability into the experience of the novel. Jyoti is born in Hasnapur in India, she has the peculiarity of being the most beautiful and clever in the family. She is placed in the milieu of the rigid and patriarchal Indian society in which her life is controlled and dominated by her father and brothers who look at the female as insignificant: "village girls are cattle; whichever way you lead them, that is the way they will go" (46).

Jyoti wanted a modern and educated husband who kept no faith in dowry and traditions and eventually finds a U. S. based modern-thinking man, Prakash. Prakash encourages Jyoti to study English, and symbolically gives Jyoti a new name, Jasmine, and a new life. Jasmine says: "He wanted to break down the Jyoti as I'd been in



► Modern and educated husband

Hasnapur and make me a new kind of city woman. To break off the past, he gave me a new name; Jasmine.... Jyoti, Jasmine: I shuttled between identities" (77).

Jyoti's transformation begins from a village girl under the shelter of a father and brothers to the wife of an American who gave her all the freedom to live her life. Jasmine's happiness did not last long. She lost her husband and returned to India. The only choice left to her was either to perform sati or to continue her life as Jasmine in America. Jyoti oscillated between the past and the present, trying to come to terms with two worlds: one of 'nativity' and the other that of an 'immigrant'. Jyoti hailed from a conservative and rural family in India, she left for America to live a liberated life offered by her husband, Prakash. Jasmine ventures into an agonising trip as an illegal immigrant to Florida and thus begins her symbolic trip of transformation, displacement and quest for identity.

► Returning to India

Jasmine undergoes her next transformation from a dutiful traditional Indian wife Jasmine to Jase when she meets the intellectual Taylor and then moves on to become Bud's Jane. It seems likely that as Jasmine leaves for California with Taylor and Duff, her identity continues to transform. The author depicts this transformation and transition as a positive and optimistic journey. Jasmine creates a new world consisting of new ideas and values, constantly rejecting her past to establish a new cultural identity by incorporating new desires, skills, and habits. This transition is defined not only through the changes in her attitude, but more significantly, in her relationship with men.

► A new cultural identity

In New York, Jasmine clearly identifies her capability to adapt: "I wanted to become a person they thought they saw: humorous, intelligent, refined, and affectionate. Not illegal, not murderer not widowed, raped, destitute, fearful." (171). The ability to adapt to the necessities of a varying environment and to cut the past loose is Jasmine's survival skill. They make her capable of dealing with the ethics and culture of two dissimilar worlds and her shifting with different identities of Jyoti and Jasmine, where Jasmine feels hanging between the traditional and modern world, controlled and independent at the same time, by the love offered by her husband, Prakash.

► Capability to adapt

► Assimilation into American culture

Jasmine then meets Lillian Gordon who initiates her assimilation into American culture. Lillian bestows upon her the nickname 'Jazzy', a symbol of her entrance into and acceptance of American culture, which she welcomes gladly. After that, she moves in with a traditional Indian family in Hushing, New York. Jasmine soon finds herself stifled by the inertia of this home for it was completely isolated from everything American. Considering it to be a stillness in her progression towards a new life, she tries to separate herself from all that is Indian and tries to forget her past completely.

► Create a more dominant identity

Jasmine continues with her migratory pattern and moves to New York City. She creates another identity upon a new perception of herself in the house of Mr Taylor, his wife Wylie and their daughter Duff. Though Jasmine creates new identities for every new situation, her previous identities are never completely erased. At specific moments she recollects her previous identities and it increases the tension, thereby causing Jasmine to create a more dominant identity which is very different from her previous identities. It is while in New York that Jasmine begins to master the English language, which in a way empowers her to further appropriate the American culture. Taylor calls her 'Jase' which indicates that she does not have the agency to create her new self since Taylor made it for her. It is in the Hayes household that Jasmine becomes aware of racial identity because Taylor and his friends understood that she was from South Asia and often tried to associate her with that community.

► Personal transformation

Jasmine also gets romantically involved with Taylor and he accepts her different ethnicity. "Taylor didn't want to change me sanitize the foreignness. My being different from Wylie or Kate didn't scare him"(185), she says. Jasmine undergoes a personal transformation for which she badly yearned. Jasmine also gets comfortable with her sexuality, which she often tried to suppress earlier because of her traumatic past. The relationship between Taylor and Jasmine ends very abruptly because a piece of her past comes before her in the form of Sukhwinder, the murderer of her husband in the disguise of a vendor.

The inevitability of memory and the limitless nature of time and space are stressed once again and Jasmine finds her life distorted by the different consciousness through which she now experiences the world. She



► Inevitability of memory

loses even her sense of self-expression. Unable to live with this plethora of conflicting identities she decides to leave New York for the sake of Taylor and Duff and move towards Baden County, Iowa to give her life a new beginning. Taylor, the man of New York commented on Jase's decision: "Iowa? You can't go to Iowa- Iowa's flat." (189).

► Jasmine meets Bud Wipplemeyer

In Baden, Jasmine meets Bud Wipplemeyer, an American banker who falls in love with her instantly. Jasmine starts to live with Bud and this is another sign of her evolution. Jasmine gains the liberty to change her roles from caregiver to temptress whenever she feels the desire to and Bud viewed her sexuality through the lenses of his own oriental fantasy. Jasmine began to experience sexual confidence and she thrived on it. Her difference in racial identity was recognised but was never degraded. The community treated her as familiar and never as alien. Jasmine also felt assimilated and in fact became a typical American, which she always aspired to be.

► Dislocation from motherland

Jain and Bud adopted Du, a seventeen-year-old Vietnamese boy when he was fourteen. He represents dislocation and isolation from his motherland because he comes from an entirely different culture when compared to his classmates who are the offspring of farmers. The first question Du asked Jane was whether the family had a television and this is representative of the kind of life Du always wanted.

► Escapism

Escapism from problems, negative situations and contradictions are depicted by the character of Jane who does not receive or send any email because she wants to disconnect herself from her past, which carries the burden of history.

Mukherjee has explored the subtle nuances of an immigrant's life through the novel. The novel also throws light upon the floating elements and experiences of American society. The novel also shows the struggle of an immigrant who is trying to establish herself. It is not easy to overcome the aloofness of expatriation or to distance yourself from the roots and traditions of the culture that one comes from. Jyoti or Jasmine stands as an example of assimilation. Jasmine struggles between two different cultures of the East and the West, past and

► Nuances of an immigrant's life

present, old and new etc. Jasmine constantly is in search of a concrete identity. The author ends the book on a novel note and highlights the complex and wavering nature of the identity of a woman in exile: "then there is nothing I can do. Time will tell if I am a tornado, a rubble-maker, arising from nowhere and disappearing into a cloud. I am out the door and in the potholed and rutted driveway, scrambling ahead of Taylor, greedy with wants and reckless from hope" (241).

► Uncertain future

Jasmine moves to California with Taylor and this symbolically represents the uncertainty of what the future will bring, but she is confident in her decision to leave. This sense of movement further emphasizes the notion that her identity is forever evolving, she cannot remain in a stable life because disruption and change are the means of her survival. The surrounding environments influence her formation of identities and as she navigates between temporal and spatial locations, her perception of herself changes, thereby resulting in a multiplicity of consciousness. These create tension within her and she feels the need to reconcile with these conflicting perceptions so that they do not wage a psychological war inside her. Thus, we see her reinvent her identity completely. The novel exemplifies the struggles of women who are torn between life and the tantrums it offers. The novel is also a revelation about the life of immigrants who struggle to eke out a peaceful life.

Summarised Overview

The story of a young Indian woman's journey and personal growth as she tries to adapt to American culture is told in Bharati Mukherjee's non-linear, first-person novel, *Jasmine*. Jasmine, the title character, takes on a variety of roles during her young life, all of which are influenced by Mukherjee's experiences. The struggle to determine one's identity and the courage to reinvent oneself for each distinct life experience is at the centre of the novel. Jasmine is given new names at each station along her journey; some of these names are liberating, and others are oppressive. These themes of assimilation and identification are essential to Jasmine's development. Jasmine's different kinds of love for two different men and the choice she should make between a sense of devotion and the desire to freely follow her heart also reflect the topics of duty and love.



Assignments

1. Explain Jasmine's transformation.
2. Explain the relationship between Jasmine and Prakash.
3. Explain the non-linear narrative of *Jasmine*.
4. Analyse *Jasmine* as a post-colonial novel.
5. Explain the rebirth of Jasmine.

Suggested Readings

1. Nadkarni, Asha. "Reproducing Feminism in 'Jasmine' and 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" *Feminist Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2012, pp. 218–44. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23269178>.
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2. *Mistress* - Anita Nair

Background

Anita Nair is an Indian novelist who is famous for her works like *A Better Man*, *Mistress* and *Lessons in Forgetting*. She won the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award for her contribution to literature and culture in 2012. The novel *Mistress* deals with art and artists and it addresses the relationships which are part of their life. *Sringaram* – Love, *Haasyam* – Contempt, *Karunam* – Sorrow, *Raudram* – Fury, *Veeram* – Valour, *Bhayaanakam* – Fear, *Beebhalsam* – Disgust, *Adbhutam* – Wonder and *Shaantam* – Freedom (Detachment), these are the *navarasas*, the fascias of life and the main facial expressions of *Kathakali*. These become the background in which Anita Nair rests her entire novel *Mistress*. It is a tribute, praise and an ode to *Kathakali*.

Keywords

Kathakali, Artist, Relationship, extramarital, freedom

Discussion

3.3.2.1 Summary

Christopher Stewart arrives at Shoranur at a resort called Near the Nila. The objective of his visit is to meet the famous Kathakali artist Koman. The resort is run by Koman's niece Radha and her husband Shyam and they agree to provide cheap accommodation to Chris hoping that his visit will add to the resort's publicity. Radha who is leading an unpleasant marital life is attracted to the handsome foreigner. Prior to her marriage Radha had an illicit relationship with an old man, which finally led to an abortion. She was hurriedly married off to Shyam in order to protect the family's reputation. On the other hand, Shyam had a different story. Shyam belonged to a poor family and was living under the mercy of Radha's father, and he had a miserable childhood. He was a hard worker and was planning to go to Dubai when Radha's father came with the marriage proposal. Shyam married Radha, knowing her past, and believed that one day she would realise his love and love him back. Koman, the



► Famous Kathakali artist Koman

Kathakali artist, notices the affair between Chris and Radha but restrains himself from warning them. Koman narrates his life story to Chris. He narrates the story of his parents, Saadiya and Sethu.

► Run away from home

His father Sethu had run away from home as a boy to Sri Lanka. In an act of rage, he stabbed his best friend and managed to escape from the place. He worked under a Christian doctor named Samuel in Tamil Nadu and in one of his trips met Saadiya, a Muslim girl in Arabipattanam. When people discover the affair between Sethu and Saadiya, she is banished from her hometown and she enters a new life with Sethu. In due course, Koman is born and Saadiya wants to bring him up as a Muslim. Conflict arises between Sethu and Saadiya. Saadiya commits suicide and Sethu leaves Koman with Dr Samuel and heads back to Kerala. Years later, Koman gets reunited with his rich father, who has a new family. The family accepts Koman without any bitterness and Koman finds his true passion for *Kathakali*.

► Loveless marriage

Shyam is badly hurt by the affair between Radha and Chris. He ends up in a marital rape because of his rage. Radha breaks with Chris by realising that their relationship is nothing but lust. She does not reveal to Chris that she is pregnant. She also decides to leave Shyam as she finds the marriage to be loveless. In the end, it is revealed that Chris' real motive behind meeting Koman was to find out whether he was his biological father as Koman had a relationship with his mother, Angela. Koman swears that he is not his father and Chris leaves Kerala disillusioned. The story ends with Shyam deciding to continue his life with Radha by accepting Chris' child as his own. Meanwhile, Radha finds a new meaning in life with the child growing in her womb.

3.3.2.2 Analysis

Mistress is a novel that talks about art, artists, and the difficulties of an artist's life and the depth of their relationships. *Mistress* is divided into three parts, the first part talks about the saga of breaking conventions, the second part examines the repercussions of that step and the ways in which one can become both lost and found in the process, and the third part traces the slow unravelling and recalibration of various lives. Anita Nair puts forward

- Difficulties of an artist's life

a question through this novel: 'who decides whether an artist is successful, the artist himself or the world?' This question and many more questions about married life and the hard situations described in the novel make the reader think and attempt to comprehend not just the plot of the novel, but life and the intricacies associated with its meaning, purpose and outcomes. Anita Nair leaves the novel with many questions and persuades the reader to find answers themselves.

- Plots run parallel in the novel

The novel is set in Kerala, which is also the birthplace of the art form of *Kathakali*. We can consider both Koman, the artist, and *Kathakali* as the protagonists of the novel. Two plots run parallel in the novel; one is of Radha's marital life, her relationship with Chris, and her dilemmas and breakaways from the relationships. The second one is that of Koman, which he narrates to Chris and Radha, beginning with his father Sethu's youthful days.

- Commits a murder in Ceylon

Sethumadavan runs away from his home, later commits a murder in Ceylon, and eventually reaches Tamil Nadu. He works under Dr Samuel and meets Saadiya in Arabipattanam. Koman's childhood is spent with Dr Samuel and he finds refuge in *Kathakali*. He loves to put on colours and masks and loves to take up the personae of Gods, demons and many others.

- An artist's life

He craves appreciation at a certain point in life in which his ego ruled his senses. Later, he rectifies his mistake, starts retracing his path, makes his art his first priority, and places himself next to his art. Today he aspires to nothing and seeks nothing. At times, Koman seems to be the mouthpiece of the author in expressing her views and asking questions that provoke the reader to think about what is important in an artist's life. Anita Nair also puts forward a question as to how the success of an artist can be measured.

Chris is a travel writer who comes to Kerala to meet Koman and wants to write a book on *Kathakali* and the artist Koman. The motive behind Chris' arrival is to find out his biological father and his relationship with Radha creates disappointment for Shyam. Chris returns with dissatisfaction, as he is not able to find his father. A relationship develops between Radha and Chris in which Radha becomes pregnant. Towards the end, Radha



- To write a book on *Kathakali*

realises that their relationship is based on lust and she breaks the relationship. Radha is pregnant and she hides this fact from Chris. Shyam goes through a tough period because of the relationship between Chris and Radha. He feels disgusted and depressed not knowing what to do and what his mistakes are.

- Clash between genders

Arabipattanam is a place in the novel where people crave an identity of their own. We get to witness a clash between genders and efforts taken by men to keep women in their place by denying their freedom. A vast sea nearby is a distant place for them to think and the sky which is the symbol of infinity is nothing but a small blue patch for them. Their attempt to seek freedom ends with a burnt patch on one's body, the same was the case of Saadiya the Haji's daughter. Haji finds himself responsible for his daughter's actions, he brutally punishes his daughter for thinking about her freedom, and he blames himself for giving her freedom. The novel also puts forward women like Zuleikha and Ummama who are facilitators of the male ideology and they constantly try to suppress the emotions of Saadiya and attempt to suppress the desire for freedom.

- Changing mindset of women

Nadira is another character put forward by Anita Nair in the novel who is reluctant to come out of the confines of the protected land. Saadiya becomes the herald of the changing mindset of women; she stands as a representative of all freedom seekers. Meeting with Sethu for six continuous days on either side of the wall and asking him to come over on the seventh day resembles the day-by-day narration of the biblical creation story and the creation of a new woman in Saadiya.

Rani oppol who is the sister of Shyam finds it her mission to torment Radha. Rani is dissatisfied with anything that Radha does. She constantly attempts to degrade Radha in the eyes of Shyam who madly loves her. The author tries to point out how women turn enemies into women who turn out to be perpetrators of injustice to other women. Shyam tries to keep Radha under control because of his fear of losing her. Shyam is afraid that his hold on his wife will be lost. In that respect, he is a representative of the patriarchal society that tries to control and suppress women. "... women like to be made to feel like women, dominated and put in their place ..." (164). In due course,

► Perpetrators of injustice

Radha herself feels and understands that “... he does not want an equal in his life” (53). Shyam feels that his wife is his possession and he finds it hard to accept Radha’s freedom. Shyam tries to subjugate Radha to establish his identity at home and to gain self-satisfaction. Shyam as a person always thinks about making money or winning people over. His mean intuitions can be deciphered in his desire to acquire the wealth of Koman after his death. “... when he dies, it will be Radha’s. I don’t want anything jeopardizing her inheritance” (124).

► Inconsistent attitude to the stark realities of life

Shyam is deeply disturbed by the relationship between Chris and Radha and cries his heart out inside a room thinking about parting with Radha, and when he comes out of the room he behaves as if nothing wrong has happened with him. “I look around and feel a swell of pride again. All this is mine, I think” (403). Shyam is characterised by his inconsistent attitude to the stark realities of his life. At one moment, he is terribly distressed, but in the flip of a second, he looks ahead and pushes his life forward. It is at one such moment that he decides to buy an elephant in order to enhance the beauty and appeal of the resort. “It is an omen, I tell myself. When I have Padmanabhan, my life will be mine again”. (403) He makes quick decisions and is desperate to attain Radha’s love.

► Afterthought in every deed of the characters

Anita Nair brings up a strong undercurrent and there is an afterthought in every word and every deed of the characters. The characters make a mess of their lives and relationships and this is clearly portrayed in the novel. In addition, Maitali Saran comments, “For every twist and turn in the novel it loses a little humanness and tangles itself in abnormality and nauseating illegal relationships” (33). The movement of the novel becomes distressing at times but it has a purpose. Maitali Saran feels that: “There is much angst about identity, whether biological, professional, or socio-cultural, much fretting about who one is and whom one therefore loves” (33). All the characters play their roles along somewhat similar lines.

Anita Nair received wide praise for this novel and for the dedication she showed in researching the art form, *Kathakali*. She is of the opinion that nobody can judge what artists make of their art, but she vehemently

- Research art form
Kathakali

criticises the commercialisation of art. In an interview given to *The Hindu*, the author talked about her meeting with a *Kathakali* artist who was selling the art and it is this incident that inspired her to pen the novel. She describes her venture in the following words: “What you do may mean nothing to the world, but what matters is that it means everything to you”. The task was undertaken as an ode to the art form, *Kathakali*, which is unique and rich with the cultural elements of Kerala.

Summarised Overview

The novel illustrates the shifting roles of husband and wife in society. Her idea of a liberated woman goes beyond social or economic boundaries but relates to her mental and emotional attitudes and welfare. The book explores a number of themes, including art and adultery, excitement of new love, abuse, shattered hopes, dark family secrets, the boredom of traditional relationships, the squalor and ugliness of love and the like. It is a book that discusses attraction and obsession across the barriers of religion, matrimony, legitimacy, and social mores. Similarly, premarital and post-marital sex are addressed in detail. Like the river Nila, which rarely has enough water and represents the shallowness of the lives of the major characters in *Mistress*, most affairs that grow have a strong odour of disastrous endings.

Assignments

1. Explain the use of the *navarasas* in the novel.
2. Explain the marital relationships and failures in the novel.
3. Sketch the character of Shyam.
4. Delineate the features of Indian English Fiction.

Suggested Readings

1. Nadkarni, Asha. “Reproducing Feminism in ‘Jasmine’ and ‘The Yellow Wallpaper.’” *Feminist Studies*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2012, pp. 218–44. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23269178>. Desai, Anita. “Indian Fiction Today.” *Daedalus*, vol. 118, no. 4, 1989, pp. 206–31. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025270>.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



1.

Unit 4

Short Story

(Non-Detailed Study)

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the characteristics of Indian English short stories.
- ▶ know the common themes and structures of Indian English short stories.
- ▶ comprehend specifically the writing style and approaches of Ruskin Bond, Arjun Dangle and Jhumpa Lahiri.
- ▶ compare and contrast the English short stories from India and other regions of the world.

1. The Kite Maker - Ruskin Bond

Background

Ruskin Bond is a famous writer of poetry, fiction and non-fictional essays and has around 70 books to his credit. Born in 1939, he spent a long period of his childhood with his grandparents in Mussoorie and imbibed a love for nature and animals from his grandfather. His novel *The Room on the Roof* won him the prestigious John Llewellyn Rhys Prize at the age of eighteen. His collection of short stories titled *Trees Still Grow in Dehradun* won him the Sahitya Akademi Award. His works mainly portray children growing up and maturing through hardship and experience. The scenes of Dehradun and Mussoorie almost invariably form the settings of his works and reflect his belief in the healing powers of nature.

Keywords

Partition, Nawab, adaptability, Mimosa, old age, bond



Discussion

3.4.1.1 Summary

“The Kite Maker” narrates the tale of an old man in rural India who thinks about how the world has changed while his grandson flies a kite nearby. Bond employs nature as a symbol; an old banyan tree represents the old man and a young spry Mimosa tree represents the vitality of the child. Ali Hussain, a young Indian boy, is playing with a kite made by his grandfather. Mehmood, the grandfather, rests under an old banyan tree, which is the only tree in the street. Ali’s kite gets stuck in the tree’s branch and he asks his grandfather for help. Mehmood is unable to take the kite from the tree because he is too old and makes another kite for Ali.

► Ali Hussain and Mehmood

Ali promises not to lose the kite again and goes off to fly it. Mehmood sits under the banyan tree and reminisces about his former profession of being a kite maker. He thinks about his good old days when grown-up men used to fly kites happily. There were more open spaces and there was less hustle and bustle in the town. Men would compete with each other and bet on the game. Even the Nawab, the local village chieftain, would be a witness to the kite-flying competition. Mehmood remembers how he had built a spectacular kite for the Nawab, one that looked like a dragon in the air. The kite was very difficult to fly even for Mahmood; so, he made another prettier and lighter kite for the Nawab.

► Mahmood's good old days

Mehmood thinks about how things have changed since then. The Nawab is dead and his descendants are like ordinary people. He does not have a goal in life now and none of his neighbours knows him. The pace of life has changed and those living in the village are busy. One of Mehmood’s sons works in a local garage. The other is staying in Pakistan and he is unable to come to India because of the partition. Mehmood feels bad that his son is stuck in Pakistan and he is unable to meet him. He is grateful that he has at least Ali near him and that he is able to see him growing up. He enjoys watching Ali play with the kites and he thinks that his son is like a mimosa sapling, which grows at the edge of the courtyard. They are young and will grow up tall and strong. He compares

- Comparison to mimosa sapling and banyan tree

- Mehmood's last moments

- Change of time and evolution of space

himself to a banyan tree which is old. Both Mehmood and the banyan tree are old and stooped and have twisted branches.

Mehmood feels himself growing tired and wonders whether he will be able to make his dream kite in the shape of a white bird for his grandson. He hears Ali calling out to him, but the boy's voice felt faint and distant. Ali returns to the banyan tree and sees his grandfather whose eyes are closed. There is a little white butterfly resting on his beard. Ali tries to wake Mehmood, but he does not respond. Ali, frightened, runs away calling for help from his mother. The butterfly flies from Mehmood's beard to the mimosa tree and Ali's kite suddenly takes flight and disappears into the sky.

3.4.1.2 Analysis

In the short story "The Kitemaker," the author deals with numerous themes like loneliness, mortality, tradition, happiness, kindness, independence, pride and change. The story is narrated in the third person point of view using an unnamed narrator. In the end, it would be revealed that tradition is the theme of the story. Mehmood who lived by selling kites talks about how the demand for kites declined and how the times have changed. Nowadays, Mehmood makes kites only for his grandson and he is still proud of his craft. The interesting aspect of the story is that human bonds, thoughts and actions are reflected in the landscape. Symbolically, through the character of the kite maker and the decline of the kite-flying tradition, the author tries to convey the huge growth of the city, the changing landscape and the decline of a way of life. Mehmood does not know the people of this new generation and there are no people who come in search of him for getting kites. During his younger days, he had many visitors, but now, he is all alone. It is like no one else other than his family knows him in the city.

Through Mehmood's story, Bond conveys that people are affected by loneliness in old age. Mehmood was popular during his days and was even known to the Nawab. Those days had gone and now, Mehmood spends his time either taking rest or making kites for his grandson,



- Decline of traditional arts and ways of life

Ali. Mehmood's relationship with his grandson is also interesting as he gives him a lot of attention and care. People might scorn Ali for flying his kite into the banyan tree but Mehmood does not. Instead, Mehmood prepares for him another kite to play with, as his ultimate goal is to make Ali happy. We can also understand that Mahmood is very proud of his kite-making skills. The story also talks about some peculiar kites created by Mehmood which are difficult to fly. In those days, the skill of the artist and the charm of the creation were appreciated by society. But the present situation is different but it has not stopped Mehmood from making kites. Mehmood still makes kites, though just for his grandson. The author throws light on the decline of a great art form and a way of life.

- Cycle of life

Further, Mehmood has faced numerous temporal changes, such as being unable to meet his son in Pakistan due to the partition of India into two nations. Though Mehmood is old, he is relatively independent as he does not rely on anyone in his life. The reader also observes Mehmood enjoying his retirement and the latter seems to be a self-made man. Mehmood does accept the terms of life and the changes associated with it and that is evident when he makes a comparison between the banyan tree and the mimosa plant. Mehmood compares himself to the old banyan tree while at the same time realising that his grandchild Ali is growing like a mimosa plant. Mehmood is well aware of the cycle of life and is aware of the fact that his cycle is going to end soon.

- Concern over Mehmood's death and Ali's future

The end of the story is also interesting as Mehmood passes away very peacefully. He does not become a burden on anyone. He has led a full life and has witnessed the city changing and evolving. This change could be an indication of the prosperity and development India was achieving at the time when the story was written. The country was on the path of development and change which is alluded to in the plot of the story. There is also an indication of the loss of tradition with the advancement of prosperity. There is nobody left in the town who can make kites after Mehmood's death. Therefore, Ali can never fly kites as he used to do before. The story ends with the question of whether it is possible to forget the past or if Mehmood will be ever remembered.

Summarised Overview

Employing some key symbols and metaphors in the story, Ruskin Bond's "The Kite-Maker" narrates the story of an elderly man contemplating how the world has changed while his grandson flies a kite nearby in a rural place in India. The characters Mehmood and Ali represent the traditional and changing ways of life of the people in the country, as mimosa saplings and banyan trees are brought into the scene as symbols of the growing youth and old age respectively. The change of time and the evolution of space in the story alludes to the decline of traditional arts and ways of life. The best part about reading Ruskin Bond is his straightforward yet effective style of expressing the intricacies of the surroundings that we typically miss out on.

Assignments

1. Analyse the story "The Kite Maker" in the background of the current changes in the country by replacing the tradition with new ways of life.
2. How does the partition reflect the themes of Indian fiction? Discuss by analysing the story "The Kite Maker."
3. Write on the narrative qualities of Ruskin Bond after reading his story "The Kite Runner."
4. Bring out the symbolical elements discussed in the story The Kite Maker."

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2. Bond, Ruskin. *The Kitemaker Stories*, Penguin, 2011
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2. Promotion- Arjun Dangle

Background

In terms of subjects and storytelling approaches, the short stories written by Dalit authors are definitely fascinating. Dalit short stories have made an effort to establish social standards and reveal certain obscure elements. A completely other universe takes shape as a result of how the Dalit community expresses its traditions, way of life, dreams and goals. Despite this, Dalit short stories masterfully and subtly depict the rage and rebellion against oppression. Marathi and Gujarati Dalit short stories have enjoyed success over the past three decades. The poignant narrative of men struggling with caste is portrayed in Arjun Dangle's short story "Promotion."

Keywords

Discrimination, dalit, standard, identity, caste

Discussion

3.4.2.1 Summary

The story begins with a conversation between Godbole and Waghmare. We witness Waghmare asking Godbole to complete a task and Godbole very harshly refuses to do it. The scene appears to be a clash between two colleagues but has deeper shades of meaning to it. We find Waghmare really upset after the conversation. Waghmare does not dare to complain about his colleague because the latter belongs to an upper stratum that encompasses his superiors also. Waghmare calls his peon and asks him to bring some *paan* and sends a request message to Awale Saheb to join him for tea. Waghmare is confused about choosing someone for entrusting with the task of the proposal. Awale Saheb comes into the cabin of Waghmare and starts talking with him about the issue in the office. He asks Waghmare why he is reluctant to file a complaint against Godbole. It is through this conversation that the reader becomes aware that, Waghmare holds the position of Assistant Purchase Officer and he is actually junior to Godbole in service. The conversation also addresses the 33% of reservations granted to people of the reserved category by the Constitution of India. It is in this conversation that the reader understands that he belongs to the reserved category.

► Issues faced by Waghmare

Awale Saheb asks Waghmare to rise up to the situation and refers to the practice of hanging a pot around one's neck. Awale Sahab asks Waghmare to help him with the printing of a few receipt books for the Backward Class Workers Association as part of Ambedkar Jayanti. Waghmare declined to help him and Awale Saheb enquires about Waghmare's absence from the meetings of the Backward Class Workers Association. The conversation ends when Waghmare tells him that he wishes to work on the proposal.

► Waghmare's attitude

Waghmare consoles himself by thinking that he is an officer now and lives with a certain standard. Later, Miss Godambe comes to his room and requests leave for a few days. She reveals that she is going to Shirdi and on hearing this, Waghmare requests her to do an *abhishek*



► Waghmare's destiny

on his behalf. He pays her the money and Miss Godambe leaves happily. He feels happy after the conversation with Miss Godambe. He receives an official phone call and it reminds him of his duties as an Assistant Purchase Manager. He boards a local train and reaches home. At home, he watches television with his wife and children. A shabbily dressed woman and two unkempt children enter his house. The woman is his wife's aunt. Waghmare scolds Kusum, his wife, for letting the people from the railway slum into his house. He asks Kusum to live up to certain standards, as she is an officer's wife now. Kusum feels bad but slowly forgets it when engaged in her responsibility of serving dinner. Later, Waghmare enquires why there are no fruits for dinner and Kusum reveals that she could not buy fruits as they were very expensive. In the end, Waghmare notices the bruised knee of his son and he enquires about it. Pappu, his son, reveals that he was beaten by Pramod's Grandma for drinking water from Pramod's water pot. Waghmare is once again reminded of Godbole and he, becoming a helpless mortal, sinks into an abyss of thoughts again.

3.4.2.2 Analysis

Religion and caste are two important issues widely discussed in India. The Dalit community faces a lot of discrimination because of their caste. The Dalit movement in India was led by Dr B.R. Ambedkar in the pre-independence and post-independence eras and it shaped the monolithic and pan-Indian identity of Dalits. The movement brought together Dalits all across India and urged them to fight for their identity and equality. Arjun Dangle's translated story "Promotion" (1992) talks about how the Dalit bourgeoisie was caught in a net of hallucination and how they forgot their past and failed to face the social realities surrounding them. Dangle also talks about how these bourgeois developed an inferiority complex. The Dalit bourgeois developed false identities and they failed to revolt against inhuman inequalities. Arjun Dangle, a distinguished writer and political activist, puts forward a new dimension to Dalit writers and writings. He upholds a new and real identity in the modern Dalit writings. He criticises the white-collar attitude among Dalits and speaks against the attitude of Dalit officers who live with the idea that they have

► From Dalit to Dalit-Brahmin

attained the status of Dalit Brahmins. Dangle believes that the identity of people today is hugely determined by religion and caste.

Pandurang Satwa Waghmare is the protagonist of the story and he is an educated officer from the Dalit community. He was promoted from the position of Clerk to Assistant Purchase Officer. He lives in the railway quarters and travels in the first class train coaches. Pandurang tries to maintain certain standards by becoming an officer and turns a blind eye towards his past life. He feels proud when someone addresses him as 'Saheb.' At least for a moment, he forgets his Dalit roots. But the conscious/unconscious burden of the Dalit identity he carries restricts him from taking action against those who are guilty in his office. It is his Dalit consciousness that restricts him from taking action against Godbole who refuses to do a task in the office. Waghmare is mocked by his colleagues as they refer to him as 'reserved', 'bigheaded' and 'son-in-law of the government.' Though he faces a lot of humiliation, he never dares to complain and react like a real Dalit man. He controls himself saying, "relations get spoilt."

► From Dalit to Dalit-Brahmin

He prepares himself to carry out Hindu rituals as practised by dominant-class Hindus. He requests his colleague Miss Godambe to offer an *abhishek* on his behalf at Shirdi. He believes that he can gain blessings after the *abhishek*. He calls on his colleague Awale Sahib, who is bold and courageous, for help. Awale Sahib urges him to register a complaint against Godbole but he does not dare to do that. Waghmare is often afraid to react against high-class people. He does not even think about how the privileged section of society has reaped the government benefits for centuries. Awale Sahib always helps him when he is in trouble but Waghmare even refuses to print receipt books needed for the Backward Class Workers Association. Waghmare does not even care about the services of Dr B. R. Ambedkar when Awale Sahib talks about Backward Class Workers Association. Through the story, the author tries to expose how Dalits forget their true identity and try to be like the upper-caste Hindus who have marginalised them over the centuries. Once they manage to acquire a respectable social position; they look down upon the less fortunate members of the community with contempt and disgust.

► Waghmare's original and changed identities



The bourgeois Dalits are often confined to a false identity of a Saheb or an officer. Some Dalits even consciously avoid greetings like 'Jai Bheem' in order to hide their Dalit identity. Once bourgeois Dalits acquire the benefits of an officer's life, they often forget about the inequalities meted out to their own community and often turn a blind eye towards their own poor relatives. They are lured by money and the high standards they have acquired. For example, Waghmare is upset by the entry of Kusum's aunt who is shabbily dressed and brings in two unkempt children. He warns his wife to maintain a life of a certain standard, as she is an officer's wife. Waghmare is insensitive to the emotions and feelings of his poor relatives. The irony is that co-workers who belong to the dominant class do not really accept Dalits as their superiors or Sahebs. For the workers of the dominant class, Dalits are just untouchables. Towards the end of the story, Waghmare finds his son injured. His son Pappu reveals that he was beaten by Pramod's grandmother for drinking from his friend Pramod's water pot.. This particular instance throws light on how Dalits are never able to hide their identity and are always subject to injustices in a caste-ridden Indian society.

- Wearing the false identity

The story, thus, underscores the caste prejudices that still prevail in the minds of upper-caste Hindus and delineates the double standards practised by bourgeois Dalit officers. The story uses a simple style of narration, and it is intended to be an eye-opener for the white-collar Dalit officers in India.

- Story on bourgeois Dalit officers

Summarised Overview

In the short story "Promotion," the Dalit protagonist Waghmare, who works as an Assistant Purchase Officer for Indian Railway, struggles with his identity. He just got a promotion for this position. However, his less senior workers, like Mr. Godbole, do not submit to him and work with him. Because of his caste, they even do not accept him. Waghmare, at the same time, is a shy officer who even makes an effort to hide his caste. He fears showing up at the Backward Class Association meetings. He strives to uphold a certain standard because he is acutely aware of his position as an officer. However, Waghmare's son Pappu mentions that Pramod's grandma thrashed him for drinking from his friend's water pot. This specific incident highlights how Dalits cannot conceal their identities and are consistently the victims of injustice in a caste-based Indian society.

Assignments

1. Discuss the plight of Dalits with reference to the story "Promotion" by Arjun Dangle.
2. Arjun Dangle's short story "Promotion" offers an insightful look at the ambivalent crisis of identity in the Dalit middle class. Discuss.
3. Dalit narratives are already a predominant area in the vast realm of Indian English Literature. Discuss.

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3. A Temporary Matter - Jhumpa Lahiri

Background

Jhumpa Lahiri is an American author of Indian origin known for her short stories, novels and essays in English. Her debut collection of short stories titled *Interpreter of Maladies* published in 1999 won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the Hemingway Award in 2000. Her first novel titled *The Namesake* was published in 2003. Another major work of the author is *Unaccustomed Earth*, which draws upon themes of assimilation and love. Her works generally address the issue of how people try to grapple with their identity. “A Temporary Matter” is included in the collection *Interpreter of Maladies*. The book was a critical and commercial success. Jhumpa Lahiri primarily discusses how immigrants experience their lives as being divided between cultures, as well as the difficulties and joys of assimilation. She deals with both the Indian and the Indo-American experiences through the perspectives of multiple characters who deliberate on various themes like identity, ethnicity, love and culture.

Keywords

communication, spousal, marriage, darkness, secrets, revelation

Discussion

3.4.3.1 Summary

“A Temporary Matter” narrates the tale of Sukumar and Shobha. Shobha reads out a notice to Sukumar stating that electricity will be turned off at 8:00 pm for five consecutive evenings in order to fix a power line. Sukumar notices the tiredness on Shobha’s face and he reminisces about her beauty during the mornings after a party in their happier times. Shobha comments that electricity maintenance should happen during the day but Sukumar disagrees with the idea because he has been working at home on his dissertation since January. Six months ago, Shobha went into a premature delivery when Sukumar was attending a conference out of town. Sukumar remembers the cab that took him to the airport.

► The family life of Sukumar and Shobha

He imagines parenthood and how he and Shobha would spend time with their children in their own station wagon. Sukumar was alerted about the complications regarding the delivery but by the time he arrived at the Boston hospital, Shobha had given birth to a still child.

After the incident, Shobha started spending more time at work; she leaves before Sukumar wakes up and comes home late. Sukumar has been working on his dissertation but he has found himself unable to focus on his work. Sukumar and his wife have turned into strangers and have started avoiding each other. Sukumar was cooking before the light went off and Shobha took her shower before the power went off. Sukumar recalled how Shobha was prepared in advance, for what might happen in their day-to-day life. Shobha was in the habit of purchasing groceries in bulk, she made Indian chutneys and marinades and was capable of making a feast within a short span of time. Now, Sukumar cooks for both of them and they eat separately. Sukumar was busy with his dissertation while Shobha used to sit in front of the TV spreading her assignments and getting herself engaged with her work. They have not eaten together for months and this day would be the first time they eat together after a long time.

► Strife in married life

Sukumar finds a half-empty box of birthday candles which was the leftover from a surprise party that Shobha had hosted for her husband the last spring. They had many friends for the party but Sukumar and Shobha now tend to avoid them after the death of the child. The only visitor they had since their baby died was Shobha's mother who blames Sukumar for the child's death. He sets the table ready and brings glasses of wine. Just as the food is ready, the house goes dark. Shobha tells Sukumar that, in India when the power goes off, her relatives would share jokes or poems in the darkness among themselves. Shobha suggests that they tell each other secrets in the dark. Shobha begins by confessing that during the time when Shobha and Sukumar were dating, Shobha checked Sukumar's phone in order to find out her name in his phone book. Sukumar shares that he forgot to tip the waiter on their first date because he was distracted by the thought that he might marry her.

► Blames and confessions

The next night Shobha comes home early so that they



► Mutual understanding and becoming intimate

can eat together before the light goes out. As soon as the power goes off, they decide to sit outside on the warm winter night. Sukumar is anxious about what Shobha is going to tell him as he feels that they know very well about each other. Shobha confesses that when Sukumar's mother came for a visit, she lied about working late and went out for a martini with her friend Gillian. Sukumar recalls his mother's visit and her desperation and sadness of losing her husband 12 years ago. Sukumar also recalled how awkward he felt not knowing how to handle his mother in the absence of Shobha. Sukumar confesses that 15 years ago he cheated in an exam. He could not prepare for the exam because his father had passed away a few months earlier. Shobha takes his hand and sits outside until the lights come and they walk back together to the home holding their hands. Their walking together in the dark night becomes an opportunity for both of them to confess their disappointments to each other. On the third night, Sukumar tells Shobha that he had sold the sweater Shobha had gifted him on their third anniversary and he exchanged it for cash in order to get drunk in the middle of the day. Shobha confesses that she let him speak to the chairman of their department with food on his chin. On the fourth night, he revealed that he had kept a picture of a woman torn out of a magazine in his wallet while Shobha was pregnant. The desire for the unknown woman was the closest incident of infidelity in his life. Shobha tells him that she never liked the only poem he had ever published. They make love on the fourth night and become intimate.

The next day they receive a notice that the power issue has been resolved ahead of schedule. Shobha suggests that they still light candles and eat by their glow. After dinner, Shobha blows out the candles and opens the second bottle of wine. She turns the light back telling Sukumar that she wants to see his face when she tells him her biggest secret. She reveals that before coming home that evening she had signed a lease agreement on her new apartment. She has been preparing for a life without him and the game was just an opportunity for her to open up to Sukumar. Sukumar finally decides to tell Shobha about something he hid from her until then. Sukumar tells Shobha that he had reached the hospital and he received the dead child with his own hands and it



► Revelations of secrets

was a boy. Shobha had never known whether it was a boy or a girl and it was this fact that helped her to survive all this while. Sukumar reveals that the doctor suggested that he see the child before the cremation process. Sukumar found it hard but later agreed to what the doctor said. He tells Shobha that he held their son and the child's fingers curled just as Shobha's fingers would curl in the night. Sukumar takes their plate to the sink leaving Shobha alone in the living room, he watches their neighbours walking holding their hands together and suddenly the lights go out. He finds Shobha near the light switch. They sit together and weep for their new revelations.

3.4.3.2 Analysis

“A Temporary Matter” is a story about grief and the secrets people keep from one another, especially in a relationship or marriage. The story narrates the tale of Shobha and Sukumar who loses their child during pregnancy. It throws light upon the inner play of emotions of Shobha and Sukumar who are slowly drifting away from each other after the death of their child. The story also discusses the significance of communication within a marriage. It is the lack of communication between Sukumar and Shobha that eventually destroys their relationship and inner peace. The power cut for five consecutive days brings together Shobha and Sukumar again. They share secrets with one another in the darkness and on the final day, they share the most painful secret of their life. Shobha reveals her decision to move out whereas Sukumar reveals how he held their child in his own arms.

► Communication in a relationship

“A Temporary Matter” is described from the third-person perspective of Sukumar. Though the narrator is omniscient, we understand the events in the story through his experience. The story unfolds in the format of memories of the past juxtaposed with the present. The instance of Sukumar thinking about the party in the past in which Shobha shined when he takes the candles for the dinner explains this juxtaposition. The point of view of Shobha is open to the reader through her confessions. Environment plays a major role in the story. The darkness can be read as a metaphor for the relationship between Sukumar and Shobha and also a safe space for the couple to bond. Both of them have been searching in the dark for a sense of normalcy ever since the death of their child.

► Structure and technique of the story



► Role of darkness

The power disruption bestows upon them an opportunity to be intimate, which has not taken place since the child's death. The darkness brings them together. By the end of the week, their bitterness begins to melt. The situation represents the kind of freedom both of them feel from their grief. They somewhat manage to get out of their pain which almost took them towards calling off their relationship.

► Food, love and communication

Food, which is an important part of Indian culture, plays a significant role in this story. Shobha's interest in cooking delicacies, her zeal for preparing meals, etc., highlight the kind of happy times the couple shared together in the story. Their home has always been filled with love and guests. The sudden transition of the mood can be deciphered when Sukumar starts cooking for both of them. The change in the scenario also depicts the unpredictability of life. The story ends in a situation where both the characters have revealed all their secrets and are in a state of catharsis. The story is presented with a simple and lucid style, which adds to its beauty. It puts forward the ultimate need for communication in spousal relationships.

Summarised Overview

Jhumpa Lahiri's story "A Temporary Matter" examines the grief, remorse, and bitterness experienced by a newlywed couple as they deal with the death of their child. It examines issues like relational communication, bereavement, estrangement, and trauma. The narrative centres on an Indo-American married couple Shoba and Sukumar, who are in their thirties, as they spend an hour each night catching up while there is a scheduled power outage. The importance of communication in marriage is a focus covered in the tale. The lack of communication between the couple ultimately damages their connection and sense of inner serenity.

Assignments

1. Discuss the view that communication plays a key role in fixing the bond in a relationship by referring to "A Temporary Matter" by Jhumpa Lahiri.
2. Analyse with your viewpoint the tragedy that occurred in the life of Shobha and Sukumar.
3. Explain the Diaspora literature by relating it to the Indian context.

Suggested Readings

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4. Lahiri, Jhumpa. *Interpreter of Maladies: Stories*. Houghton Mifflin, 1999.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



1.

Critical Responses

BLOCK-04

Block Content

Unit 1 - Indian English Poetry

Unit 2 - Indian English Drama

Unit 3 - Indian English Novels



Unit 1

Indian English Poetry

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ develop a critical understanding of Indian English poetry.
- ▶ know the traits of key poetic figures in Indian English poetry.
- ▶ trace the transition of Indian English Poetry from its earlier period to the contemporary phase.
- ▶ differentiate the unique features of Indian English poetry from the English poetry produced by other nations.

Background

Indian English poetry has advanced significantly. By now, it is unquestionably no longer isolated poetry composed in a specialised language by a select few “privileged” authors. It is also not an example of poetry writing that is important just for study as part of the university curricula. Indian English poetry has attained the required level of perfection to earn a valid place both inside and outside the canon. Additionally, Indian writers of poetry have had to fight for recognition in comparison to their English-language fiction. That Indian writing in English makes up a sizeable portion of twentieth-century English literature and significantly contributes to the genre’s rising appeal have now become unavoidable facts. Indian poetry in English is still in its development; it is a flowering plant that requires ongoing care and fostering on the part of literary artists; a plant the root of which must go deep into the fertile ground of the rich tradition of heritage and civilisation, rituals and practices.

Keywords

Poetry, Indian, English, features, pre-independence, post-colonial, identity.



Discussion

- The “Indian” and “poetry” in I. E. P.

Is I. E. P. (Indian English Poetry) only sometimes “Indian” in nature and occasionally “poetry”? Before it qualifies as poetry, should Indian poetry in English be “Indian”? What precisely characterises Indian poetry as truly “Indian?” These questions will be encountered in this unit while moving through a short critical reading of the Indian English poets and poems discussed in block 2 of this material.

- Some not essentially poetry

The response to the second portion of the question, “Is Indian English poetry only occasionally “poetry?” is simple. Not all Indian poetry written in English over the past 150 years, from Henry Derozio to the present, is unquestionably considered to be authentic poetry. Vinayaka Krishna Gokak, an Indian historian and anthologist, says: “publication in the field of Indo-Anglian poetry has been ample and indiscriminate...For every reckonable book of Indo-Anglian poems I have read, I have probably read ten that need not have been read at all. They may be Indo-Anglian, but they are not poetry.” Indian verse in English is very occasionally poetry, as a critical student will agree, mostly because it is very much a poetry of situations. However, taken individually, there are many gems in the vast but limited pool of Indian English poetry which has contributed, is doing even now, some of the valid and rare themes, structure and perspectives which no other poetry in the English language could offer. Through a careful examination of the thematic and textual issues, the unique voice of each poet can be distinguished.

- Original and translated verses

Though not officially declared, there are two versions of Indian Poetry in English: one section contains poems written directly in English, such as the verses of Kamala Das and Rajagopal Parthasarathy, and the other section includes poems initially written in various Indian languages and then translated into English by either the poets themselves or other translators or scholars. However, this unit will only deal with poets who directly write in English.

To begin with Sarojini Naidu, one of the famous poetesses of Indo- Anglian poetry, she successfully produced the sensuality and wonder of poetry of Keats’ style on Indian soil and with Indian themes. Her songs follow the rich heritage of Indian devotional literature, which masterfully



- Heritage and traditional tones in Naidu's poetry

and exquisitely explores the philosophical ideas of love, truth, peace, God, the immortality of the Supreme soul, religious faith, self-realisation etc. exemplified in the Upanishads and the Vedas. But her lyrical wealth, her spontaneous outpouring of emotions rooted in Indian ethos and culture, the vividness of her imagery, her simplicity of expression, her passionate desire for beauty, music, and melody, and above all, the thrilling, imagistic- and rhythmic language are what make her poetry endearing and lively. H. M. Prasad rightly observes: "Sarojini Naidu writes instant poetry where images and metaphors come rolling ready on the hotplates of imagination. Her poetry is intensely emotional, at times passionate to the point of eroticism and always has a spring-like lyricism."

- Colonial versus post-colonial poets

But the majority of the post-colonial Indian English poets were fiercely critical of and disregarded their forebears, including Sarojini Naidu and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. K.N. Daruwalla, a contemporary Indian English poet, said: "I have read only one poem each by Toru Dutt and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, and have no intention of reading any more." However, the poets like Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore are still considered the pioneers of colonial Indian English poetry.

- Sea water as a frenemy

A notable element of Sarojini Naidu's poem "The Coromandel Fishers" is the role of water as an enemy. She uses this as the central idea of her poem to further inspire the fishermen. She begins by emphasising the power, wildness and strength of the water as their enemy. The fishermen must be prepared for the wildness because it is the sea's most unsettling element. Many fishermen have yet to get into the sea, which is their primary source of survival. The poet simply does not stop there; instead, she seeks to plant seeds of inspiration in the hearts of each fisherman she refers to as a brother. She gives them a sense of power by referring to them as the Kings of the sea. She also makes an effort to pay more attention on the benefits of the water as their friend. The water is always prepared to shower the fisherman with her affection and gifts both as a friend and a mother. Sarojini Naidu also claims that the 'Water God' is with them on their adventure into the sea, to help and lead them, thus further highlighting the positive side of the sea. Sarojini Naidu used the poem as a means of inspiration and to address the river as a frenemy (friend + enemy).

- Tagore's devoted mind in *Gitanjali*

The sensuousness and highly aesthetic poetry of Keats's style were successfully produced on Indian soil and on its themes by Sarojini Naidu. Similarly, the bagging of the Nobel Prize for literature by Rabindranath Tagore, for his exclusive masterpiece *Gitanjali* proved to the world that finally the Indians have mastered and assimilated the very essence of the language of their coloniser. *Gitanjali* is a continuous source of delight and inspiration for God-lovers. The prevailing *rasa* that flows forth from the heart of any *Gitanjali* reader is heavenly love for God. The volume is infused with Tagore's fervent attachment to God, which could drive a *rasika* like W.B. Yeats to tears, who observed in his "Introduction" to *Gitanjali*, "I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me."

- Diction and aesthetics of *Gitanjali*

The diction in *Gitanjali* is concise, appropriate, provocative, and rich with emotional implications. Tagore utilises archaic phrases like Thee, Thou, etc., for God to give the poem a sense of sublimity, which is a very deceptively simple and intriguing characteristic of *Gitanjali*. Nonetheless, Tagore never capitalises the initial letter of pronouns referring to God. This modest deliberate break from standard practice may have resulted from the poet's affection for God, who is not distant and awe-inspiring to him. Thus, the words employed in the poems provide them with both simplicity and sublimity. Tagore capriciously weaves noble sentiments, high concepts, nectarean moods, and gorgeous imagery into the delicate network of rhythmic prose poems through seemingly simple but powerful words with astonishing ease. He inspires feelings of affection in the readers through these 'anubhavas'. The heavenly passion for the 'Bhakti to the Lord' is the prevailing 'rasa' experienced by the reader of *Gitanjali*.

- Arrival of post-colonial poetry

However, the underlying circumstances underwent a significant upheaval after independence. There were new demands placed on the nation's social, political, economic, and even intellectual spheres as a result of the overall upheaval of the sociopolitical environment. It became imperative to address national life and its challenges in a more humanistic, practical, and contemporary manner. In order to satisfy the aforementioned requirements, the "Postcolonial" type of Indian English poetry emerged.

Even if it is largely a protest against its past, postcolonial Indian English poetry is nevertheless a continuance. The following features make it simple to spot modernist aspects



in post-colonial Indian English poetry:

i. A past-focused perspective, or a type of cultural pessimism, that is linked to a feeling of loss and hopelessness.

ii. A vision for the future that is linked to a desire to change the world.

iii. An attitude that is focused on the here and now and is ahistorical, unprincipled, ambivalent, stern, sarcastic, ambiguous, and nihilistic.

The poetry written in Indian English in the 1960s and afterwards is incredibly distinctive and genuine. It has a strong sense of sincerity because it is the result of honest, profound feelings and a message to the entire community. It includes everything that is a part of India's rich culture and traditions. As a result, myth, culture, religion, rituals, superstitions, folk beliefs, and common matters of an average Indian family, all have a place in it and add to its allure. In addition to this, extremely topical issues that are specific to India or the modern globe are also used as themes for contemporary poetry.

► Richness of Indian English Poetry

Like T. S. Eliot, Nissim Ezekiel can be considered the creator or pioneer of the modernist movement in Indian English poetry. His writing style and subject selection provided modern Indian English poetry with a "local habitation and a name." He shares a deep affinity with his home country's landscapes, culture, tradition, philosophy, and even its current conditions, just like the perfect postcolonial poet would. He has no roots in Indian culture or traditions because he is originally from the Bene-Israel Jewish group, which sought shelter in India many years ago. However, he has adopted this nation, its culture, and philosophy as his own, and the strong Indianness he has ingrained in himself is quite evident in his poetry. The natural beauty of India, the wisdom of its ancient texts, the living conditions in its big cities like Bombay, and the various problems like degrading morality and so on that have been faced nowadays, are all frequently mentioned in his poetry, despite the fact that his perspective and style are highly rational, modern, cosmopolitan, and revolutionary in nature. In contrast to the colonial poets, whose works were largely romantic or mystical in nature, he established a contrary trend.

► Ezekiel's poetic themes



- Between Indianness and foreignness

Ezekiel uses the “Indian idiom” a lot because of his love for his homeland. His poem “Background, Casually,” which uses both terms from Indian languages and English words or phrases that represent the natural Indian sensibility, enriches the Indian idiom. His perspective on this country is created by the numerous kinds of experiences he had throughout the different stages of his life. He is a refugee, therefore in a sense, he is a foreigner in this country. The poem “Background, Casually,” which is a compilation of all of those events from the time of his infancy till he realised his passion for India and particularly Bombay, captures all of those above-mentioned. The existentialist melancholy that permeates the first stanza seems to follow the poet throughout his life. The very name “Poet-rascal-clown” suggests how pointless the poet believes his existence to be.

- Living among religious atrocities

In the poem, when the poet first enrolls in the Roman Catholic school, he encounters not only the typical Christian anti-Jewish prejudice but also physical assault from Muslim students and racial prejudice from Hindu boys. In addition to facing prejudice, Jews who lived among Hindus had highly guarded attitudes about them. They did not like some of the Hindu customs, including chatting too loudly or pounding on doors too forcefully. When all customs and traditions were irrelevant, the poet threw away this mutual and completely incorrect outlook.

“Background, Casually,” which includes the following words, demonstrates Ezekiel’s love for the city and his resolve to stay here: *I have made my commitments now/ This is one: to stay where I am.* Also, his broad adoration of everything that is admirable about India amply demonstrates his passion for the country. Thus, he writes the following in the poem:

... The Indian landscape sears my eyes.

I have become a part of it

To be observed by foreigners,

They say that I am singular,

Their letters overstate the case,

- Loves to be Indian

My backward place is where I am, he writes at the conclusion of the poem, indicating that he has decided to remain in India.



► **Rebellious
Kamala Das**

Although Kamala Das is sometimes referred to as a poet who writes about sex, sensuality, and female interests, the majority of her poetry is actually about the subjugation, oppression, and enslavement of Indian women as well as other marginalised or backward groups in Indian culture. She is aware that, scientifically speaking, men and women are just two sides of the same coin and do not exist separately. She wants women to be empowered and self-sufficient on the socioeconomic and political levels. R. K. Mishra states: “In the realms of post-modern literature, Kamala Das occupies a very significant position as a rebel against the tradition of marginalization of women in Indian society. She is widely acclaimed as a revolutionary poet for having raised in poetry her voice rebelliously against the patriarchal dominance which is the causal factor for the subordination of women to men in Indian society”.

► **Fighter
against sexual
colonialism**

In the realm of postcolonial Indian English poetry, her most distinctive contribution has been to incite a rebellion against “sexual colonisation.” As the critic K.V. Surendran explains, she did exhibit extraordinary bravery in rebelling against sexual colonialism and giving young women hope and confidence that they may reject victim roles and thwart attempts by sexist cultures to abuse, passivise, and alienate women. In her autobiography *My Story*, Das writes: “Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself to be rid of my loneliness which is not unique in any way but is natural to all” (227). Das stands out above all for being a truly feminist poet. Taking note of the wide variety of feminine representations in her poem, M. K. Naik, says: “Several faces of Eve are exhibited here- women as sweetheart, flirt, wife, woman of the world, mother, middle-aged matron- and above all as an untiring seeker of the psychological processes behind both femininity and masculinity.”

In her poem “Freaks,” Das exposed the dishonesty and falseness in men’s emotional expressions. She depicts the hardships that Indian women still experience in real life with their very grim and gory details. The poem makes the implication that patriarchy or the male-dominated social order has kept Indian women as its property or puppet. Her rights to education, independent marriage, or a claim to a piece of the patrimonial estate were never addressed. She rebels because of this feeling of powerlessness and estrangement, and she treats all of her relations with hate and contempt. She says, “marriage meant, nothing more

► Suppressed state of the poet

than a show of wealth to families like ours.” With the kind of relationship she had with her spouse just after their marriage, she had completely alienated herself from him. She states that her husband hurt her repeatedly.

She also claims that her husband’s extramarital connection with another woman, which left her alone in her home as a virgin after their marriage, was another highly intriguing event that turned her off from him. It is only natural that she turned off all of her softer feelings towards her spouse. She never stopped looking for the affection and understanding she could not even find in small coins. She claims that her heart remained unfulfilled, and she writes,

“...Who can
Help us who have lived so long,
And have failed in love? The heart,
An empty cistern waiting
Through long hours, fills itself
With coiling stakes of silence...
I am a freak.”

► Lack of love in lust

Here, she acknowledges that she is a freak. It may be ironic or sarcastically spoken but it is true since her husband was unable to provide her with any form of companionship.

► Mahapatra’s versatile themes in poetry

The second well-known poet from India for using modern English is Jayanta Mahapatra. His poetry, and perhaps just his existence, seems to be composed entirely of native materials. He is unaffected by nothing, including the beautiful past, the natural beauty, the traditions, and even the current vices of the modern age. His collection of poetry, *Life Signs*, was released at the final phase of his poetic career. His poem had exceptional maturity at this poetic stage in terms of style, vision, theme, technique and imagery. He enters the huge realm of post-modernism during this time, leaving the sphere of disillusioning Romanticism. From this point on, his poems began to incorporate all post-modern themes, such as existential sorrow, a rationalist outlook on life, and an unrestrained representation of the grotesque or dismal aspects of



current society. The collection *Life Signs* is a record of the poet's sad experiences, both personal and impersonal.

One of the most well-known poems in *Life Signs* is "Grandfather," which recounts the horrific circumstances surrounding the great famine in Odisha that led to the conversion of his grandfather, Chintamani Mahapatra, to Christianity. In the end, hunger alone was the cause of the poet's rootlessness, sociocultural estrangement and religious conundrum. His great-grandfather had converted to Christianity during the great famine in Odisha as a result of malnutrition. He and his progeny had been permanently cut off from the socioreligious establishment in Odisha as a result of this. In the poem "Grandfather," the author describes the trauma that followed his conversion and followed him always:

► Hunger, conversion and social estrangement

The separate life let you survive, while perhaps
the one you left wept in the blur of your heart.

Even a significant portion of his poetry appears to have been greatly impacted by the Rasa theory, which is an essential and unavoidable component of Classical Sanskrit Poetics. This is also evidence of his inner need to rediscover the culture and heritage from which he has been estranged as a result of his grandfather's conversion. His deep internal affinity and sincere sympathy for the Indian soil and environment are demonstrated by all of his care, observation, and analysis of the issues and conditions existing in both Odisha and India. This ultimately results in his solid and secure integration into the sociocultural context of the Indian situation.

► Mahapatra's affinity to both Odisha and India

The writers from Arunachal Pradesh have successfully overcome linguistic limitations to produce creative literature. Because they are a part of both the Arunachal literary legacy and the literature and languages of the audiences they have chosen to address, their works can legitimately be described as "double-parented" and, in Meenakshi Mukherjee's words, "double-born" in the genuine sense of the word. Nature is not a shelter in North East poetry; rather, it serves as a reservoir for histories and fictional universes that are realised with a Blakean zeal and without the use of opaque imagery. The poems of Arunachal Pradesh-born poet Mamang Dai have actually expressed this viewpoint. A poet, novelist, journalist and



► Mamang Dai and Arunachal literature

non-fiction writer, Mamang Dai is the first woman to be selected for the I. A. S. from her state which she later gave up to become a journalist. Her Adi tribe details and the natural settings of Arunachal Pradesh lay the settings for most of her poetry.

Her poetry, such as “This Summer- The Cicada’s Song,” aims to discuss herself and her views, and also address the issues facing the current generation. The poet describes how the commencement of development uprooted the tranquility and beauty of the region, and the past is reproduced in the song. She expresses regret for the harm caused by people, of which the poet is one. In the song, time plays a specific role. Time has changed landscapes and cultures, adding another dimension that is now a part of the physical world. The poet recalls the nature and culture of her happier earlier years, which create a nostalgic tone in the song.

► Past, changes and nostalgia

Jeet Thayil, a brilliant poet, novelist, librettist, and musician who was born in Kerala, rose to prominence as a global figure of Indian writing in English by consistently emphasising the importance of living in the present in order to rescue oneself (*‘He found himself drowned’*). Thayil crafts poetry that is passionate, intimate, and intense, using a stunning variety of traditional and original forms, including rhymed syllabics, terzarima, ghazals, sonnets, the sestina, the canzone, and stealth rhymes. In *Collected Poems*, which represents more than three decades of Thayil’s poems, he is insightful, magnificent, and dramatic in his own way. His language, phrases, and cadences are beautiful, but the themes are loss, pain, discontentment, and dangerous compulsions. There are repeated declarations of the craving for love and purpose, accompanied by frustration, self-mockery, and the willingness to lose oneself, particularly to drugs, an addiction that, according to him, has affected his liver and is probably to reduce his life.

► Thayil’s depth and frustrations in his poems

The volume gives the feeling of a person who is ageing quickly and anticipating death. He was tormented by the death of his young and bright wife Shakti Bhatt, and some of his outstanding confessional poems, especially the poem “Life Sentence,” are marked by remorse that he was not home at the moment she passed away. She filled and gave meaning to what he believed had been a dull, meaningless



- “Life Sentence” as a lament on Shakti’s death

existence until that point, consisting of friendship, theatre, and the bliss of drug use. The book appeared to combine the trauma of Shakti’s passing with a longing for drugs and their allures.

- Eunice de Souza’s voice for women

Eunice de Souza, a formidable female poet, is of Portuguese-Goan descent. One of the distinctive characteristics of Eunice de Souza’s portrayal of woman’s subjectivity is her anger and animosity toward the Goan-Catholic community. Her anger and irritation at perceiving Indian women in a binary manner are evident in many of her poems, which are frequently anti-centric and anti-traditional. She is undoubtedly an Indian voice for feminism that is decentered and spread, especially in the Indian context, rather than being overly personal and localised. In all of her writings, she expresses concern for the suffering of innumerable Indian women who are employed as maids, daily wage workers, or lonely housewives in various socioeconomic contexts. Her poetry frequently focuses on the loneliness, despair, and estrangement that come with being a woman.

- Helpless young women

In de Souza’s poem “The Road,” she is concerned with her mother’s death which leaves her to despair and loneliness. The courage and confidence a woman has to attain to move on in life despite all the tragedies and uneasiness have been showcased in the poem by employing the method of time switching back and forth. The sketch of the cold-hearted view of society upon her, even after being left alone, opens the scope for exploring the social and mental tortures that the younger women meet. Young girls are an integral part of society, but their voices and needs are the least heard.

In this way, a long line of famous poets, from Toru Dutt to Nissim Ezekiel, have attempted and been largely successful in “Indianizing” the English language. The poet Arun Kolatkar addresses the anxiety of contemporary life or the ongoing dehumanisation of sensitive people in all of his poetry. Gieve Patel’s literary works have contributed to enhancing and elevating the huge body of Indian English poetry. Among the group of post-independence women poets who created new poetics for themselves and made a fresh start both in theme and style in the 1960s, Mamta Kalia has earned a significant position. Even though the female poet Toru Dutt introduced India to the world of

► Other significant contributors

English poetry, it was not until the twentieth century that it began to symbolise the Indian feminine ethos. The well-known critic and contemporary Indian-English poet R. Parthasarathy, however, is of the opinion that the English poets' contribution to India's entire literary history is still, and always will be, minimal.

► Parthasarathy's poetic views

One must keep in mind the elements that R. Parthasarathy highlighted as being some of the defining characteristics of the genre before moving on to the nationalist phase of Indian English poetry. Since the birth and development of the genre are, in his opinion, unrelated to the entry and departure of the English colonisers from and to India, he refuses to recognise the "postcoloniality" of Indian English poetry. Parthasarathy actually has a sarcastic attitude toward the genre, saying that it is "Indian in sensibility and content and English in language." According to his theory, an Indian English poet initially experiences a sense of alienation when expressing their native feelings in the language of the colonisers. Second, and maybe more significantly, English speakers and Indians employ quite different phrases and idioms, and an Indian who uses English always keeps her/his Indianness in mind.

Summarised Overview

This section has mainly concentrated on the "Indianness" and feeling of "poetry" of Indian English poetry. In her poem "The Coromandel Fishers," Sarojini Naidu uses history and traditional tones, and she portrays seawater as a frenemy. Other significant characteristics of Indian English poetry have also been subjected to critical analysis, including Tagore's devoted mind in Gitanjali, the arrival of post-colonial poetry, Nissim Ezekiel's poetic themes, Kamala Das' defiant poetry, Jayant Mahapatra's versatile themes in poetry, Mamang Dai ' experiment with poetry, Jeet Thayil's depth and frustrations in his poems, and Eunice de Souza's voice for women.

Assignments

1. Write a critical essay on the developments and main events in Indian English poetry.
2. How do you understand the writing career of key poetic figures in Indian English poetry?



3. What were the key differences between the poetry of the pre-independence and post-colonial periods?
4. Are there elements of Indianness in Indian English poetry? Explain.

Suggested Readings

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2. Sarkar, Jaydip and Shirsendu Monda. *Contemporary Indian Poetry in English*, Authorspress, 2015.
3. King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*, OUP, 2001.
4. Samal, Subrat Kumar. *Postcoloniality and Indian English Poetry; A Study of the Poems of Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra and A.K. Ramanujan*, Partridge, 2015.
5. Roy, Vijay Kumar. *The Social, Cultural and Spiritual Dimensions of Modern Indian Poetry in English*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.
6. Reddy, Sheshalatha. *Mapping the Nation: An Anthology of Indian Poetry in English, 1870–1920*, Anthem Press, 2013.



Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



Unit 2

Indian English Drama

Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ become accustomed to the writing style of some of the major modern Indian English playwrights.
- ▶ demonstrate understanding of the social circumstances that have shaped the Indian theatre.
- ▶ analyse and interpret texts and performances.
- ▶ draw informed connections between the theatre and other fields of inquiry.

Background

The modern Indian theatre arose in the 18th century, as the British Empire expanded its dominance in India. With the impact of Western civilisation on Indian life, Indian arts, particularly theatre, experienced a fresh revival. For the first time in the history of modern Indian theatre, two comedies, *Disguise* and *Love is the Best Doctor*, were translated from English into Bengali and performed in Calcutta by Lebedoff and Goloknath Das. However, the true voyage of Indian English Drama began in 1871 with Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilisation*. For the next two decades after Dutt's play, no sustained creative endeavours in drama were made.

In truth, there were numerous obstacles to the growth of Indian English Drama. However, some talented Indian English dramatists have overcome the challenge to a significant extent by carefully selecting situations and language that transcend time and place, as well as credible and convincing characters. By the close of the nineteenth century, literary legends like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, T.P. Kailasam, Lobo Prabhu, Bharati Sarabhai, and others had attempted to overcome these obstacles and open up new vistas in the genre. This pre-independence generation of dramatists did not place enough emphasis on the acceptability and stage-worthiness of their works. Drama in English



on Indian soil could not grow as a major current of artistic expression throughout the colonial era. Although pre-independence Indian English theatre is noteworthy for its poetic beauty, thematic variety, technical virtuosity, symbolic significance, and devotion to human and moral ideals, it was not designed for theatrical production in general.

The increased interest of foreign countries in Indian English literature in general, and Indian English play in particular, aided post-independence Indian English drama. A number of plays by Indian playwrights have been presented successfully in Europe and the United States of America. Despite the rise of poetic play in the early post-independence period, Indian English drama achieved substantial strides. Dramatists such as Manjeri Isvaran, Nissim Ezekiel, Lakhan Dev, Gurcharan Das, G. V. Dasani, Pratap Sharma, Asif Currimbhoy, Gieve Patel, and Pritish Nandy helped to elevate Indian English drama. These dramatists approached the bigger audience with their creative ideas. They conducted fruitful experimentation with thematic issues and technical prowess. They exploited stories, folklore, myths, and history to great effect. They broke through the barrier of regional works and created a large number of excellent plays. Their works portrayed the universal aspects of Indian life.

Keywords

Plays, Societal norms, Relationships, Legends

Discussion

Mahesh Dattani's play script focuses primarily on urban space, notably on the intricacies of household space. In his plays, environmental sustainability of cities such as Bangalore or Mumbai are symbolic tropes and modes of economic power that can be categorised as the material element for discussing the issue of citizenship that "raises questions around notions of equality and rights, issues of individual, group, and community rights, active and passive citizenship, and the relationship between, and relative primacy of, rights and duties". There is a proper fusion of Western intellectual consciousness and Indian theatrical practices in his plays.

- Rights and duties

Dance Like a Man, a two-act stage play, is one of Mahesh



- Two-act play
- Three generations

Dattani's most brilliant dramatic compositions. It covers the tale of three generations, their personal objectives, sacrifices, struggles, compromises, internal tensions, and how they cope with life, with a focus on a dance couple. The pathos of the human condition is explored in the most sensitive way. Through its characters, it embodies a wonderful study of human interactions as well as human faults. The drama illustrates the collision of themes such as marriage, work, and a woman's place in a patriarchal societal structure. It is concerned with the lives of people who are fatigued and dissatisfied as a result of unfriendly environments and unfavourable conditions. The plot unfolds in both the past and the present.

Dattani's plays address sociopolitical, domestic, and personal topics. Dattani focuses on the friction and clash between three generations, their struggles, and individual struggle in the drama *Dance Like a Man*.

In this play, Dattani poses a few odd concerns concerning the sexual construct that a man is or the very ingredients of a man's identity—in terms of sexuality, as the head of the family, and as an artist. The play deals with the self and the significance of the other through the frameworks of gender and gender roles—the prostitute as a dancer and an artist; the man as a dancer; the guru with long hair and an unmanly walk are types that the elderly, fed on its perceived notion of the self, cannot accept. Dattani used classical dance as a tool for creating tension in the minds of the other characters in the play. Dance takes centre stage as the play progresses and the events start happening, driving the characters outside. In the play, traditional dance is not only a form or a tool that allows the writer to communicate his story, but it also produces its own psyche that directs or intentionally misleads the performers on stage.

- Man's identity

Dance is an important part of this play, because it represents various things to various characters. Jairaj and Ratna aspire to pursue a career as dancers, and for them, dance is not simply a form of art; it is their life and spirit. It is not just their passion, but also an instrument that will assist them in achieving their goals. Gender stereotypes are pitted against the idea of the artist seeking originality within the confines of the world he is obliged to inhabit. Jairaj's fascination with dancing deconstructs these preconceptions. This is the playwright's perspective

► Importance of dance

on the preconceptions connected with 'gender' issues, which see only women as victims of the oppressive power systems of patriarchy. The drama dispels this assumption and investigates the nature of the tyranny that even men may face under such organisations. Jairaj and Ratna live within such a structure: the dominion of Jairaj's father, the patriarch Amritlal.

► Amritlal's indifference

Dance is a prostitute's job for him, inappropriate for his daughter-in-law, and completely unacceptable for his son. He explicitly prohibits Ratna from going to visit the old devadasi who wants to teach her the finer details of bharatanatyam; he cannot endure the noises of the dancing bells; he is absolutely shocked by the long-haired guru with an unmanly walk; and, most of all, he cannot tolerate the idea of his son - a man - being a dancer. The underlying tension is undoubtedly that dance will render him effeminate, and so the possibility of homosexuality remains, but it is never acknowledged. As a result, Amritlal must fight Jairaj's love of dance. This conflict results in the play of wealth and property in determining and controlling the development of conforming identities, but the outcome is sad. He strikes a deal with Ratna. He will allow her to pursue a dancer's profession only if she assists him in breaking Jairaj's passion and making him a man. The couple can then enjoy his riches.

► Dance for Jairaj and Amritlal

As a reader, you may see that the drama raises certain delicate issues, one of which is unquestionably concerned with masculinity. Dance, for Jairaj, is a way of expressing feelings and serves as an instrument of resistance, revolt, and repudiation of a particular approach to life determined by his father, Amritlal. He begins dancing for pleasure or rather just a whim that his father expected to go away with time, but this is not the case. Despite his father's resistance, Jairaj continues to perform traditional dance and openly promotes himself as a rebel. He gains confidence as a result of the encouragement of his wife, Ratna, who really is likewise passionate about traditional dance. The rationale behind Amritlal's objection shows that his mind was not prepared to acknowledge his son as a classical dancer. This is more apparent in Amritlal's perspective on dance.

Despite being labelled as progressive, Amritlal refuses to embrace dance as a form of art for men. His ideas, while designed to be liberating, lacked innovative ideals. His notions of freedom and independence were those of the



nation, whereas Jairaj's ideas of progress and independence were vastly different from Amritlal's. Their disagreement on progress and freedom demonstrates their ideological differences.

► Notions about men

Everyone in the community expects the male to earn so much so that the house may operate smoothly, but Amritlal knew that dancing would not enable Jairaj earn enough money, making him unfit in the eyes of his wife Ratna. Dance was good for Amritlal as a hobby, but it was not appropriate to pursue as a vocation, not to mention that traditional dance, particularly for men, was not regarded as a dignified vocation in India in the past.

► Maleness for Jairaj

Maleness of Jairaj was a question of intellect more than body in the play. Maleness, may have been indicated by one's capacity for independent decision making, doing the work one enjoyed, living on one's own terms, standing on one's own feet without any help, and other things that Jairaj lacked. Interestingly, Jairaj was attempting to prove to Ratna that he was a capable male.

► Character of Ratna

Ratna's character is driven by her unending enthusiasm for dance throughout the events of the play. Dance was the driving force behind all of her actions in the drama. Her character has a negative tone, which distinguishes her from others. She enters into a relationship with Jairaj, which is clearly a selfish decision on her part. There was no affection or attachment to Jairaj at the start of the relationship. Her overconfidence and faith in her own talent were so strong that she did not hesitate even once before destroying Jairaj's career as a dancer by teaming up with her father-in-law, Amritlal. She blindly pursues her emotions, ignoring her mind, and seeks to become renowned through dance. Traditional dance is something that will help her get fame, money, and respect in the world of dancers.

Dance was a way for Ratna to attain reputation and status, and she married Jairaj, who would never stop her from dancing. Ratna's greedy inner desire was so strong that she coldly manipulates Jairaj's emotions by repeatedly misguiding him. She deceives her husband and attempts to limit his potential as a dancer by posing as a true life companion. In order to achieve her selfish goals, she compromises Jairaj's ability. Ratna not only ruins Jairaj's life, but she also attempts to shape her daughter Lata's life



- Manipulates
Jairaj's intentions

by making her a traditional dancer. Despite the fact that he is a male part of the family, Jairaj never asserts his authority over Ratna and instead purposefully toys with his emotions.

- Their daughter
Lata

Her daughter, Lata, was utilised to fulfil her mother's suppressed inner ambitions for fame and money on a national and international scale. Unknowingly, Lata gets into Ratna's maelstrom and becomes merely an object. Ratna's ventures appear to be ambitious and manipulative. She was ready to put her daughter's career on the correct track from the start, and she plans, manipulates, and uses all of her relationships and links to do so. Ratna clearly saw herself in her daughter Lata and acted forcefully to provide a sturdy, substantial foundation for her. This trait distinguishes her from others. Traditional dance was essential to her, but it was never a crazy obsession.

- Lata has
well-balanced
thinking

She regards dance as a pure art form that is not associated with any gender. She desired to pursue dance, but her desire was not accompanied by any passion or energy. Marriage to Vishwas was equally important to her, and she would not give up her love for the dance. Her well-balanced thinking distinguishes her from her parents. Actually, she has escaped from the terrible loop in which her parents were ensnared. She dances and will continue to do so since it is a pastime for her rather than a means of achieving success. There is no animosity, overachievement, or misguided desire in her that keeps her interested in dancing. Considering these factors, the reader can conclude that Lata stands out from the other characters.

- Subversion
of accepted
standards

In most of his plays, what begins as a portrayal of rigid patriarchy opens up new realms of inquiry, where Dattani subverts standards to give alternative viewpoints. As a result, a new concept of masculinity arises, not simply as an antonym of femininity, but as a means for males to break their standards set upon them and do what they want.

- Satire on In-
dian judiciary

Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a satire of post-independence Indian judiciary. Tendulkar appears to have created it out of a desire to oppose corruption in the judiciary in post-colonial India. He has investigated how the judiciary has completely disempowered an unmarried expecting woman and reduced her to the status of an object.



► Two aspects of life

The play features two frameworks that represent two aspects of life: public and private. Tendulkar serves two purposes by introducing such a form. He stages his anti-imperialist protest through a play based on President Johnson's mock trial for nuclear proliferation. In this area of life, all middle-class people, regardless of gender or sex, assume a progressive face with the common goal of spreading knowledge in resistance to imperialism. The play that is woven in the name of passing the time and rooting Samant in the judicial processes before the scheduled play appears to symbolise the private sphere of life.

► Plot together against Benare

During the game, the oneness of the amateur players becomes split and cracked. All are compared to one another. Benare mocks them and turns them against her. Kashikar is mocked as Mr Prime-Objective, Mrs Kashikar is mocked as the Hand-that-Rocks-the-Cradle, Balu Rokde is mocked as Balu, and Ponkshe is mocked as Hmm! Interrupted Scientist. Sukhatme also mocks Ponkshe for failing the Inter-Science Examination twice. Ponkshe mocks Rokde's reliance on the Kashikars. Karnik brings the harmony of the Kashikar couple's conjugal life into doubt. However, they quickly band together against Benare in order to expose her transgression against society and nation in the mock-trial.

► Portrayal of the judge

Parody is satire's most effective weapon. Tendulkar employs it to create a hideous realism of an Indian criminal court. The strange components are the odd behaviour of the middle-class persons in the courtroom. Our attention is drawn to their collusion with the dignity and etiquette of the court of justice. The judge is found to have an earpick in his ear all the time, the counsel chews pan, and the witness smokes. Furthermore, everyone joins and quits the stage on their own accord. Tendulkar focuses on the violation of the court's propriety and sanctity through their acts of endless pan-chewing and the occasional spitting of pan-juice, the judge's behaviour of ear-picking and tooth-picking and his eager transformation into a witness, and the prosecutor's switchover into the role of defence counsel and back into that of prosecutor. In the course of the violation of court decorum, Benare's middle-class colleagues band together to silence the latter's dissenting voice through the logic of law.

- Humiliation faced by Benare

They stand in the witness box one by one, torturing Benare by presenting incriminating evidence against her. They reveal themselves as sadists in the act of testifying. Mrs. Kashikar is against Benare's singing, dancing, laughing, and running after men. As a result of being trapped by the metropolitan middle-class, Samant unknowingly tortures Benare by providing evidence against her. He fabricates his evidence simply by reading a paragraph from a novel that is similar to Benare's romance with Prof Damle. Ponshe overpowers Benare by exposing her pregnancy and publicising the secret marriage proposal she made to him within a restaurant's family room. Balu retaliates by revealing her relationship with Prof Damle and the marriage proposal she made to him. Karnik humiliates Benare by revealing her previous relationship with her maternal uncle, as well as her attempt at suicide when the love did not result in marriage.

- Forced to attempt suicide again

The judge forces Benare to try suicide again by providing information about her discharge from her employment at the school. In court, a lady like Benare who demonstrates courage to live her life by exercising her individual liberty and financial independence is labelled as irresponsible for her unwed pregnancy. The court also criticises her attempt to marry any other man in order to shield the illegitimate kid after becoming pregnant. On this basis, the court finds her guilty of attempting to dynamite the hallowed systems of marriage and motherhood, and sentences her to life in prison while the child in her womb is to be destroyed. Benare refuses to be guided by such a court ruling. Her vehement resistance turns to crying, and eventually to quiet. Her crying and silence are not an acceptance of patriarchal judgement. These are to be interpreted as various forms of resistance against patriarchal judgement, which is myopic towards Prof. Damle, who is equally culpable in the act. None of the witnesses dared to speak up against Prof Damle's sexual misconduct or the prejudiced judicial precedent.

- Compares the invincibility and fortitude of the human spirit with the partiality and savagery of Indian criminal courts

The court may not have permitted dissenting voices, but the dramatist does not remain silent about the court's bias. Perhaps this is the reason for his permitting Samant to demonstrate unity with Benare by putting the green fabric parrot in front of her and having the latter refer to her oppressors as crows. The play contrasts the invincibility and fortitude of the human spirit with the partiality and savagery



of Indian criminal courts in the post-independence period. Tendulkar therefore mocks the court's deviation from the desired legal and polite standards.

Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* is based on the scenes from *The Mahabharata*. The play was originally written in Kannada as "Agni Mattu Male," which translates as "Fire and Rain" in English. Girish Karnad is a master at incorporating ancient folklore into his plays. He deftly determines classic fantasy and, with little alterations, incorporates it into his plays to give them a contemporary character. Karnad's play is based on the legend of 'Yavakri', 'Yajana' and 'Indra' in the *Mahabharata*. Karnad himself clarifies the source of the play in the accompanying words in the preface to *The Fire and the Rain*.

- Based on Mahabharata

The drama is notable for its main and subplots. In *The Fire and the Rain*, Karnad employs the play within the play approach. The drama is about killing, jealousy, power, and politics, and Karnad aims to examine human instinct by introducing certain characters.

- Plots and subplots

The drama tells the story of Aravasu, a Brahman by birth, who becomes a performing on-screen figure and is misunderstood by the audience. Aravasu gradually begins to look all starry-eyed at Nittilai, a young girl. She adores Aravasu as well, but seeks permission from his family and tribal leaders before marrying him. In the play, Aravasu's elder brother is Paravasu. He conducts rituals and supplication functions in order to appease the God Indra and provide rain to the village. Raibhya is Aravasu's father, and Paravasu despises his children. He suspects that Paravasu's better half is having an unlawful relationship with Yavakri.

- The story of Aravasu

Yavakri goes to forest to do *tapas* in order to gain benefits from the God Indra, thus he had to end his relationship with Vishaka. When he returns, he finds Vishakha married to Paravasu, who lives happily with her. Vishaka fornicates with Yavakri after his return from his *tapas*, and enraged by this, Raibhya sends Brahma Rakshas, a wicked spirit, to murder Yavakri. In some ways, the tale revolves on each of these characters, and Karnad creates a situation of fantasy.

- Ending relationship with Vishaka

The drama also revolves around the man-woman relationship. It introduces two important female characters, Vishakha and Nittilai. It demonstrates how women have



► Man-woman relationship

been assaulted in public and continue to be utilised as a tool. Vishakha had no desire to marry Paravasu, but she couldn't resist the pressure of society. The persona of Nittilai also draws the reader's attention. She possesses various excellent qualities and a captivating personality. She has a place in the family network and the Indian convention. She rejects the common mindset and has no qualms about coming clean about her wishes. Karnad intelligently addresses the concerns associated with traditional Indian ladies and their experiences in society.

► The actual face of the society

As a result, Karnad addresses a number of issues in his play *The Fire and the Rain*. Karnad depicts society's actual face and brings reality to the forefront in the play. He describes the genuine meaning of sacrifice as well as ceremonies. The play also addresses sociological issues, such as indigenous groups and the role of women.

► Accepting reality

The sense of fulfilment in *The Fire and the Rain* appears to be complemented by the sense of realisation of the gilding. The reality has been accepted by the last character, who has no desire to reform. And it looks like Karnad's perspective on human relationships has softened and widened to accept reality as truth.

Summarised Overview

The modern Indian theatre originated in the 18th century. Mahesh Dattani, Vijay Tendulkar, and Girish Karnad are some of the major modern Indian playwrights. Dattani's play, *Dance Like a Man*, is the story of three generations, their personal goals, sacrifices, challenges, compromises, internal conflicts, and how they deal with life, with an emphasis on a dance couple. Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a satire of post-independence Indian judiciary. Girish Karnad's *The Fire and the Rain* is based on Mahabharata episodes. Karnad adopts a play inside a play strategy. Karnad's drama is about death, envy, power, and politics, and by introducing specific characters, he hopes to analyse human instinct.



Assignments

1. Critically examine Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance Like a Man* from a traditional point of view.
2. How does Vijay Tendulkar's play, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, portray the deficiencies of the Indian judiciary? Explain.
3. How does Girish Karnad present the true face of Indian society through his play, *The Fire and the Rain*?

Suggested Readings

1. Amur, G.S. "Kailasam's Quest for Greatness", *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* Macmillan, 1977.
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1. Dhawan, R. K. *Flowering of Indian Drama*. Prestige. 2004.
2. Dharwadker, Aparna Bhargava. *Collected Plays: Girish Karnad*. Vol.2. Oxford UP, 2005.
3. Iyengar, K.R.S. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling, 1985.
4. Supriya, Shukla. *Indian English Drama: An Introduction, Perspectives and Challenges in Indian English Drama*, ed. Neeru Tandon. Atlantic, 2006.



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Unit 3

Indian English Novels

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

- ▶ understand the rise and development of Indian English novels.
- ▶ do a critical appreciation of Indian English Novels.
- ▶ comprehend pre-independence and post-independence novels.
- ▶ acquaint with the thematic and stylistic experimentations of novels in 1980s.

Background

The novel is one of the most traditional and widely read literary genres in India. The two epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, are renowned for influencing Indian writers, influencing their thought processes and establishing the Indian literary legacy. The representation of Indian cultures and experiences has undergone a drastic change by the introduction of English as a medium of communication. English language and literature have a long history in India dating back to the arrival of the East India Company. As the East India Company established its power on the southern peninsula, the English language started to gain more impact.

Due to this impact, English literary genres like novels have had a huge influence on Indian English writing. Early English-language writers from India were prone to describing events that were essentially Indian mimicking British English. As Indian English novels developed, disregarding the English literary heritage and the style of English, Indian novelists experimented with distinctive Indian English and experiences. The voices of contemporary Indian novels have changed in an attempt to reform the traditional paradigm.

Keywords

Early novels, Post-independence novels, Diasporic experience



Discussion

► Three pioneering figures of Indian novels

The publication of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohna's Wife* (1864) marked the beginning of English-language novel writing in India. However, Indian writers in English began writing novels with well-structured plots in the early nineteenth century. When three literary giants—Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao—entered the literary scene, there was a shift from imitation to originality and a significant addition of a political motif to a socio-historical narrative. In fact, they opened the way for modernity in Indian English literature and freed it from the previous imitative style to adopt a more contemporary uniqueness. The form reached its pinnacle of dominance due to Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935), and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938). These novels were more realistic than the earlier ones because they switched the contents from historical events to current issues.

► Post-independence fiction

The style and theme of the Indian English novel underwent a significant transformation again soon after independence. Most Indian novelists of the time shifted their focus from public issues to personal ones. They were so struck by the loss of mental harmony and peace among people as a result of the devastation caused by World War II that they dug deeper into human psychology to bring the suffering and sorrow to the surface. Arun Joshi and Anita Desai are some of the novelists who represent the new class of novelists, with their deeper psychological character analysis. There were novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar and Khuswant Singh who adhered to the old tradition, following the footsteps of Mulk Raj Anand.

► Narayan's portrayal of Indian life

R. K. Narayan is one of the pioneering figures in Indian English fiction, and his novels showcase Indian culture and life. Narayan's novels represent cultural occurrences, patterns, and traditional values of India. Narayan is exceptional in his honest portrayal of modern Indian society without criticism, and satire. As a result, through his writing, readers are exposed to the virtues and vices of modern Indian culture. With impartial objectivity and detached observation, social norms and reality are vividly represented. In his writing, Narayan covers a wide spectrum



of Indian society. His characters come from a wide range of circumstances. They are neither wealthy nor poor, as they emerge from middle-class circumstances.

The main theme of R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* is the transformation of Raju from his position as a tour guide to that of a spiritual guide. The novel, which is divided into two sections, describes Raju's early life, romantic relationship, and imprisonment in the first part and his development as a spiritual guide in the second. Though the two parts of the story progress together, the first part takes place in Malgudi and the second half is set in Mangla. Both these parts deal with the past and the present respectively. There is also a difference in the narrative pattern in the novel as the narration of the first section is done by Raju who chronicles his past life at Malgudi and the narration of the second part is made by the author who provides the present of Raju in Mangla.

► Narrative pattern

R.K. Narayan writes novels about ordinary people in ordinary circumstances. His storyline for *The Guide* is constructed from events and resources that are neither extraordinary nor heroic. *The Guide* chronicles the story of Raju's love life, financial ambition, sin, and repentance. Raju is without a doubt an immoral, unpleasant, and self-interested person, despite not being aggressive or "evil." He is a hypocrite, a liar, a fraud, and a materialistic, greedy individual. He makes money and feels good about himself by using other people. In order to get what he wants, he disregards his responsibilities, his family, and his community. Narayan, however, does not allow Raju to carry on in this manner indefinitely. Raju is shown to have lost Rosie, his money, and his power as a result of his greed, and he also ends up in jail. Later, he represents Raju as a holy man leading to a genuine act of redemption and regeneration.

► Ordinary characters

The Guide illustrates the confluence of the past and present in many different ways. The advent of the train and the railway station are the first significant developments, changing employment, communication, transportation, and more. As a second case, Rosie is a classically trained dancer, yet impacts of modernity have allowed her to grow as required.

► Confluence of the past and present

In the 1980s, Indian novelists began their experimentation with style and content. By the publication of his

► Experiments in style

Midnight's Children, Salman Rushdie set the trend for new experimental novels which opened the door for many aspiring novelists to experiment. Some of the writers who adopted this new literary style and content include Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Shashi Deshpande, Arundhati Roy, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Vikram Chandra, Rohinton Mistry, and Manju Kapur.

► A different approach to history

Historical novels of Rushdie include *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), *Shame* (1983), and *Midnight's Children* (1981). *Shame* covers Pakistan's political history from a point of view that shatters historical realism. Rushdie accomplishes this by blending memory and time in a way that presents reality as an eruption of fiction. In his novel *Shame*, Rushdie recreates Pakistan's political past by outlining the severe socio-economic and political disparities. Rushdie has also disregarded historical time, forcing his characters to rely on their memories, dreams, and imaginations as sources of time. He probed deeply into the hearts of the ordinary people who were victims of the partition, and exposed their inner senses of shame, shamelessness, hope, despair, ambition, and sorrow. Rushdie's *Shame* subverts Eurocentric history writing by combining historical information with metafictional self-reflexivity.

► Political allegory

Shame is a difficult novel to classify, but it might be categorised as a text of magical realism due to its implicit acceptance of wholly supernatural events inside a world that is otherwise grounded in an identifiable reality. It could also be seen as a political allegory since it is set in a fictitious Pakistani city of Quetta and comprises several characters who appear to be prominent figures from that country. This novel is consistent with the theme of his previous novel, the well-known *Midnight's Children*, which concentrates on the India following its independence from Britain and subsequent partition into the independent nations of India and Pakistan.

► Problematising the Western perspective

Shame was published between *The Satanic Verses* and *Midnight's Children*. According to David W. Hart, because of the political significance of the other two novels, *Shame* is comparatively underappreciated and understudied. We may better understand how Rushdie wants his Western audience to observe both the oddities of life in Pakistan and the absurdities of the Western ideas of Pakistan by applying a postcolonial approach to his narrative.



► Theme of shame

This novel takes up the theme of shame which mainly centres around the character of Sufiya. Her parents' hostility and criticism make the existence of mentally disturbed Sufiya an extended experience of shame. She grows to despise herself, which causes her to get furious, bitter and violent. She begins acting in strange ways. Her parents find out one day that she killed 218 live turkeys by biting off their heads, then shredding the carcasses like an animal. She eventually begins killing the boys she sleeps with.

► Beauty into Beast

With a contrastive examination of Sufiya Zinobia's character and that of the other characters in the novel, Hart critically evaluates the novel and discusses concepts of shame and shamelessness. Sufiya's aggression is a response to her sentiments of shame and guilt, in contrast to the majority of the characters who are recognised for their lack of emotion. Sufiya changes from a representation of beauty into a beast when she is overcome by emotion, in contrast to characters like Raza, Iskander, and Omar who never express any emotion.

► Diasporic writing

Diasporic writings or immigrant literatures deal with complex issues related to nation and culture. The search for identity, familial and marital connections, as well as erasing or embedding the multicultural surroundings, are among the most crucial aspects of diaspora writing. Indian English novelists like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Amitav Ghosh, Anjana Appachana, and Sunetra Gupta, Anita Nair, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni achieved prominence as authors of diaspora writing.

► Self discovery

Bharati Mukherjee is a prominent member of the Indian Diaspora in North America and an acclaimed author of feminist novels. Bharati Mukherjee, herself an immigrant, struggled to adapt to the traditions, society, and culture of a foreign land, introduces two central characters, Jasmine and Dimple Dasgupta, in her novels *Jasmine* and *Wife* respectively, in order to represent her own diasporic experiences. In her *Jasmine*, she adopts a non-linear, first-person narrative, which captures the journey and self-development of a young Indian woman Jasmine, the title character, as she tries to assimilate into American culture.

As a recurrent theme in diasporic literatures, the postmodern self, due to the conflict between the opposing

► Postmodern self

forces of multiculturalism and globalization, appears decentered and fragmented. Jasmine wonders about how many additional selves she possesses. As she integrates into American society, she believes she can free herself from the past. She tries to forget her past as she switches between a variety of American names and personas, including Jazzy, Jase and Jane.

► Breaking ties with her nation and past

Jasmine is a willing immigrant; therefore it is important to recognise that her transformations are not forced. The protagonist breaks her ties with her past and nation because there is nothing left for her. Mukherjee has faced criticism for her characters' rejection of their past and cutting ties with their country in order to enjoy life in America on various occasions. Jasmine is successful because she is prepared for change, and America transforms her into a brave and independent woman. As she proceeds on her path, she reasserts her status as a successful immigrant.

► Sensibilities undergo a drastic change

It soon becomes clear from Jasmine's existence that not only her names are changed but also her sensibilities undergo drastic alterations. There is a remarkable transformation from Jyoti, the quiet rural girl, to the outspoken Jasmine, to Jane, the storyteller. Jasmine lives a survivor's existence in the village of Hasnapur as Jyoti. Jasmine survives after being born the fifth daughter in a family where females are considered as curses.

► Combines two tales

The protagonist of *Jasmine* embarks on a metaphoric journey as Jyoti, unwilling to assume the role that her country's patriarchal establishment had planned for her. Family considers it disappointing that a baby girl is born, as is the case with the majority of Indian women, and her father and brothers have complete control over her entire life. Mukherjee makes a contrast between the identities used by her heroine in Indian and America as Jyoti and Jasmine. As a result, the novel combines two tales that are set in two distinct nations and cultures.

► Ibis trilogy

Coming under the genre of historical fiction, *Sea of Poppies* (2008) is first in the Ibis trilogy of novels by Amitav Ghosh, which also includes *River of Smoke* (2011) and *Flood of Fire* (2015). *Sea of Poppies* covered more than a century of colonial history in the trade in opium as well as current issues of sexual harassment and the exploitation of Dalits by persons from upper- and lower-castes as well as various South East Asian cultures. Ghosh constantly uses



history as a background for his novels.

► Sections of the novel

The novel is organised into three sections: 'Land', 'River' and 'Sea'. In the first part, 'Land', the characters who were somehow associated with the ship are introduced together with the ship. The focus of the second section 'River' is the actions of the owner of the Ibis in Calcutta and a few of his acquaintances. In the third section, 'Sea', the passengers of the ship are the focus of attention who sail from Calcutta and travel to their destination.

► Cultivation of opium

The author discusses the detrimental consequences that British colonisation had on native populations. The protagonist, Deeti, is identified as an indigenous Indian woman who lives in Ghazipur. The Bhojpuri woman Deeti, the wife of an employee in Ghazipur's Opium Factory, is a poor, illiterate woman. When the East India Company invaded India to cultivate opium there, many people were in debt, unable to feed, and even had to sell their land to pay off massive amounts of debts. As an opium farmer, Deeti encountered the negative repercussions of this colonial exploitation.

► Colonial exploitation

People's lives were affected negatively by the ongoing colonial rule since the colonies not only exploited the land but also forced their labourers to work long hours for a meagre pay. Ghosh reveals the dishonest colonial policy of making money and propagating religion by illegal and immoral means as he introduces the discourse of the British and American characters about their illicit business.

► Oppressed farmers

Indian small farmers and agricultural labourers during the colonial period, who were forced by circumstance to become coolies and were deported to Mauritius and other locations, are shown in *Sea of Poppies*. A classic illustration of such oppressed farmers is the portrait of the Bhojpuri woman Deeti who experienced the vision of the Ibis at the very beginning of the novel. Deeti is set to die in her husband's pyre after losing her husband, who worked in the opium factory and whose land had been forcibly converted into an opium plantation. However, she is saved by a lower caste or class man named Kalua, who secretly marries her and then transports her to the ship.

In *Sea of Poppies*, thus, the colonial history is critically examined and reinterpreted. The opium trade and its consequences are covered in the novel from 1838 to the

- Critical approach to colonial history

end of the war with China. As part of its comprehensive view, the narrative also covers the Anglo-Chinese War. In the novel, Britain, China, and India are turned into battlegrounds in the opium war.

- Anita Nair's works

Anita Nair, a contemporary Indian-English novelist, exposes the challenges faced by Indian women. In her portrayal, women are represented struggling between their traditional and modern lives. Some of her acclaimed novels are *A Better Man*, *Mistress*, and *Lessons in Forgetting*.

- Kathakali an art form in Kerala

Her *Mistress* is a visually appealing, vibrant, and captivating story, with a background of the Kathakali dance form and a setting in the lovely state of Kerala. The main characters are a Kathakali actor Koman and his niece Radha. Chris comes there at the beginning of the novel with the aim of writing a book on Koman. Later, he engages in an extramarital relationship with Radha, who is already married to Shyam. The novel examines the causes behind the alienation of Radha and Shyam and how it ultimately affects their lives. Likewise, the truth about Chris's relationship with Koman and Koman's prior life are revealed.

- 'Navrasas' and the plot of the novel

The chapters in *Mistress* are divided up into various sections, and each section is taken from the viewpoint of a different character. All these sections represent the 'navrasas'. These diverse emotions of human existence are known as Shringaaram, Haasyam, Karunam, Raudram, Veeram, Bhayanakam, Beebhalsam, Adbhutam, and Shaantam. The five female characters who narrate the story are Radha, Saadiya, Angela, Devyani, and Maya. Each chapter in the novel opens with a prologue that is attributed to a specific rasa. The opening of the first chapter on 'Shringaaram' is narrated by Radha. Chris shows up to see Kathakali artist Koman, and that is where it all begins. Radha tells the story of his arrival and his contacts with the different people. The many moods of "shringara rasa" are expressed in various occasions throughout this narration.

- Ecofeminist reading of the novel

Male ideology about nature, and women is prominent in *Mistress*. The male characters in Anita Nair's novel, such as Shyam, Stewart, Sethu, and Vapa, stand in for the masculine ideology that views women as identical to nature and thus deserving of exploitation. As a result, many studies have been conducted on the novel from an ecofeminist perspective. As a movement, Ecofeminism is a social



project that challenges the idea that women and nature are interchangeable objects of exploitation.

In the context of the novel *Mistress*, the river “Nila” serves as a metaphor for human nature because it has been extensively polluted, much like the greedy and insecure minds of those who live nearby. River is a dual metaphor for freedom and femininity. Radha, the main character of the novel, exhibits a strong desire for freedom and emancipation. Just as the inhabitants of the area around the river ‘Nila’ were mesmerised by it, so were her father at first and her husband later in life. As a result, she has suffered significantly, much like the river ‘Nila’ has done.

► Radha and Nila

Summarised Overview

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, Indian writers of English literature produced novels with carefully structured plots. It was by the contributions of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao that Indian English novels received wider acceptance. Soon after independence, the content and style of the Indian English novel underwent a considerable change once more. The majority of Indian novelists of the era turned their attention from public to private matters.

In the 1980s, Indian novelists began experimenting with style and subject matter. Salman Rushdie was one of the major novelists who started the trend for new experimental novels with the publication of his *Midnight's Children*. In addition to this, a large number of novels were written delineating immigrant and diasporic experiences which addressed complex multicultural global identities.

Assignments

1. Discuss the contribution of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao, the three tiers of Indian English fiction.
2. Elaborate on the features of post-independence Indian English fictions.
3. Comment on the literary experimentations in the Indian English novels in the 1980s.
4. Detail on immigrant experiences in Indian novels.



Suggested Readings

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1.

Appendix-1

Poets of Indian English Literature

Michael Madhusudan Dutt



Michael Madhusudan Dutt, a breakthrough writer in Bengali, began his career as an Indian English poet. In addition to some sonnets and shorter poems, he wrote two long poems in English. Dutt was a dynamic and volatile poet. He was educated at the Hindu University of Calcutta, the cultural home of the western-educated middle class of Bengal. He took the name Michael upon his conversion to Christianity and wrote a hymn to be recited on his baptism. In 1843, he became a Christian. Dutt began writing English poetry at the age of seventeen. He studied English, Bengali, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit. The five plays which he wrote are *Sermista* (1859), *Padmavati* (1859), *Ekei Ki Boley Sabyata* (1860), *Krishna Kumari* (1860) and *Buro Shaliker Ghare*

Ron (1860).

In 1858, Dutt wrote his play *Sermista* in a Western style based on the story of Devyani and Yayati in *Mahabharata*. This was the first original play in Bengali, and Madhusudan became the first playwright in Bengali. Madhusudan used to collect themes for his poetry from the ancient Hindu epics, the Sanskrit Puranas and also from French and English literatures. He is considered the Father of Bengali Sonnet. Published in 1849, Dutt's long poem "The Captive Ladie" is based on India's historical past and thus correctly arouses feelings of nationalism. This poem was the result of the Renaissance spirit in India, which eventually led to the birth of nationalism. His early compositions were in English but unsuccessful, so he reluctantly turned to Bengali. His principal works are written chiefly between 1858 and 1862 and include prose, drama, long narrative poems and lyrics. His first play, *Sarmistha* (1858), based on an episode of the ancient Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*, was well received. His poetical works are "Tilottamasambhab" (1860), a narrative poem on the story of Sunda and Upasunda; "Meghnadbadh" (1861), his most important composition and epic poem as its theme is taken from *Ramayana*; "Brajangana Kabya" (1861), a cycle of lyrics on the Radha-Krishna theme; and "Birangana Kabya" (1862), a set of 21 epistolary poems



on the model of Ovid's *Heroides*. Dutt experimented endlessly with language and poetic structures; he is the initiator of 'amitraksar', the Bengali sonnet form in both Petrarchan and Shakespearean forms and a type of blank poetry with run-on lines and irregular caesuras, and numerous original lyric stanzas.

Dutt's profound love for India and its freedom is reflected in his portrayal of King Porus' battle against the foreign invader. A volume of sonnets in Bangla was published in 1866 by him. His last play, *Maya Kannan*, was written in 1872. His incomplete prose version of the *Iliad* is known as *The Slaying of Hector*.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose



Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) was a yogi, philosopher, poet, Maharishi and Indian nationalist. He spent his life working for India's freedom and life's progress on earth. His education began at the Christian Monastic School in Darjeeling. He then enrolled at the University of Cambridge and learned two classical and a few modern European languages. After returning to India in 1892, he turned to his native culture and seriously studied yoga and Indian

languages, including classical Sanskrit.

From 1902 to 1910, Aurobindo participated in the struggle for freedom. He was imprisoned in 1908 for his political activities. While in prison, he had a mysterious and spiritual experience. Two years later, he fled from British India and took refuge in the French colony of Pondicherry in southeast India. He devoted the rest of his life for developing "integrated" yoga, which features a holistic approach and fulfilling goals. The main theme of his vision was to evolve human life into the divine world. In 1926, with the help of Mirra Alfassa, known as the "mother," and his spiritual companion, Aurobindo Ashram was founded. The Ashram attracted many seekers from all over the world, and many settled there.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the function of poetry is neither to teach the truth nor to acquire knowledge but to embody beauty and live a remarkable life to bring joy. Therefore, poetry should be directed to the realisation of the human self and the universe. It should be for enjoyment and realising a "sacred life." Aurobindo considered poetry as a 'real mantra' and regarded it as a "rose of God." In Aurobindo's view, great poetry is a lively, stimulating and rhythmic language that springs from the seer's mind when inspired infinitely. It is or should be a real mantra. Poetry as a mantra is only possible when the three highest intensities of the poetic language meet and mysteriously become one. These three elements are:

- ▶ the highest intensity of rhythmic movement.
- ▶ the highest intensity of style

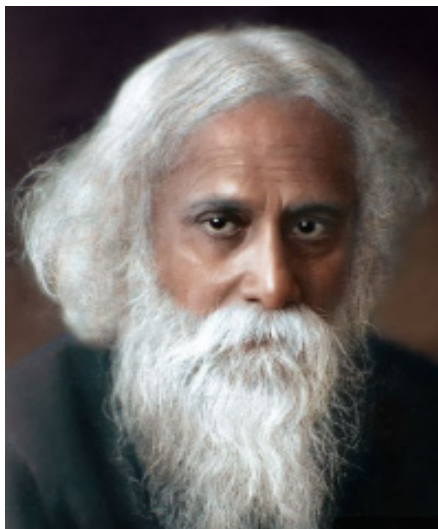


achieved by the integration of verbal form and thought substance.

- the highest intensity of the Soul's Vision of Truth.

Life Divine (1919) is one of Aurobindo's most notable masterpieces, and it talks about liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. His poem "Savitri" is an 'inner epic' of the soul and the oversoul. His other major works include *Essays on the Vedas* (1922), *Collected Poetry and Drama* (1942), *Yoga Integration* (1948), *Human Cycle* (1949), *Human Unity Ideals* (1949), *Savitri: Legends and Symbols* (1950) and *Vedas* (1956).

Rabindranath Tagore



The first Indian who received the Nobel Prize in Literature (1913), and the composer of the National Anthem of India. Rabindranath Tagore was a multi-talented personality in every sense. He was a Bengali playwright, poet, *Brahmo Samaj* philosopher, novelist, visual artist, painter and composer. He was also a cultural reformer who modified Bengali art by rejecting the restrictions

that limited it to the territory of classical Indian form. Although he was a polymath, his literary works alone are sufficient to put him on the list of greatest writers of all time.

Even today, Tagore is often remembered for his poetic songs, which are spiritual. He was one of the great abiding personalities whose encounter with Albert Einstein is regarded as an amalgamation of science and spirituality. Tagore was enthusiastic about spreading his ideology all over the world. People from different countries praised his works, and eventually, he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize. In addition to *Jana Gana Mana* (Indian national anthem), his composition *Amar Sonar Bangla* was adopted as the national anthem of Bangladesh, and the national anthem of Sri Lanka.

Tagore wrote several poems, novels and short stories in his life span. He started writing at an early age, but after the death of his wife and children, his desire to produce more literary works became strong. Here are some of his literary works, which include short stories: "Bhikharini," "Kabuliwala," "Kshudita Pashan," "Atottju," "Haimanti" and "Musalmanir Golpo," novels which include *Shesher Kobita*, *Noukadubi*, *Gora*, *Chaturanga*, *Ghare Baire* and *Jogajog*, and poems which include "Baraka," "Provi," "Sonatri" and *Gitanjali*.

Tagore was inspired by ancient poets like Kabir and Ramprasad Sen, so his poems are often compared to the works of classical poets of the 15th and 16th centuries. His works drew attention due to their unique styles. When Tagore was



eight years old, he composed his first verse. He cemented his position as one of the most eminent poets of his time by publishing “Sandhya Sangit” (Evening Songs) in 1882 and “Prabhat Sangit” (Morning Songs) in 1883. In the poem titled “Chhabi O Gan” (Pictures and Songs), he portrays the life of ordinary people in their ordinary circumstances.

Toru Dutt



Torulata, the third and youngest child of Govin Chunder Dutt, was baptised in 1862 along with the rest of his family despite being born a Hindu. Toru Dutt, the first Indian woman poet, knew Sanskrit, English and French. She is often considered the first Indian poet to write French and English verses. Dutt’s *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* was published in 1876 without a preface or introduction. It consisted of 165 poems which were translated from French to English by Dutt and her sister. She belonged to a liberal family where education, art and linguistics were encouraged. The Dutt family shifted from Calcutta to England and then to France. Her friendship with Mary Martin at Cambridge awoke the poet in the young Toru. The letters she shared with Mary Martin reveal her intellectual maturity and childlike joys.

Toru Dutt’s poetry illuminates her place as a transitional or hybrid person who not only amalgamates various cultures and traditions but also embodies a pivotal role in India’s literary history. Dutt believes that a single landscape or story can serve as a foundation for a detailed discussion on the basic nature of human life. The poems “Sita,” “Buttoo,” and “Lakshman” recount old Indian folktales. For instance, “Buttoo” complicates the Ekalavya story by including a theme of rejection, class conflict, and clear moral at the end of the story. It does this by retelling the Ekalavya story from the Sanskrit epic *Mahabharata*. Such modifications help the stories of Dutt to have a greater feeling of truth or verisimilitude. This also helps the English-speaking listeners of her poems to understand them. Poems such as “Our Casuarina Tree,” “The Tree of Life,” and “Baugmaree,” which are included in her *Ancient Ballads*, attempt to grapple with Dutt’s life experiences as they are contextualised by her interactions with various religions and cultures in Colonial India, such as Indian and European, Christian and Hindu, by transfusing the experiences she attained.

Dutt’s sonnet “Lotus” marked the beginning of cultural fusion without sacrificing indigenous identity. She was able to transcend the hegemonic culture of the coloniser instinctively. The occidental red rose and white lily are harmoniously assimilated to create a cultural fusion, which unleashes the lotus, the national flower of India. To emphasise the superiority of the national emblem, Toru skilfully combines and integrates Western mythic power icons. This makes

it possible to classify the “Lotus” as fundamentally political poetry.

Dutt’s ballads are her poetic attempts to show a return to her nation, and they are mostly Indian in genre and attitude. They codify what she had learned about her nation via books and her people. She did not anglicise her views; instead, she stuck close to the moral principles of the original tales. Her knowledge of contemporary culture and commitment to her art has helped her to make more timely contributions to future generations. Dutt published literary translations of French poetry in a Bengal Magazine between 1874 and 1877.

Toru Dutt was respected in London’s literary world, and her ‘exotic’ femininity was the subject of scrutiny. In 1875, two years before her death when she was 21 years old, she began studying Sanskrit. She found that Sanskrit was very difficult, but she learned enough to translate parts of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Vishnu Purana*. Most of her works were published posthumously. *Bianca, or the Young Spanish Maiden* was published in *The Bengal Magazine* of 1878. Dutt’s first publication *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) consisting of translations of seventy French poets brought her to the attention of Edmund Gosse, the poet and critic.

Sarojini Naidu

Sarojini Naidu was born on February 13, 1879 in Hyderabad. She was a political activist, feminist, poet, chairman of the Indian National Congress, and the first Indian woman to be appointed Governor of India. She entered the University of Madras at her age of 12,

receiving the highest rank in the college with a scholarship. She was given the opportunity to study at Kings College in London and then at Girton College, Cambridge. As a female activist,



she participated in many campaigns in the United Kingdom. She was impressed by the Indian National Congress and desired to be a part of it. She joined the Congress and became a follower of Mahatma Gandhi and his idea of *Swaraj*. She fought primarily for India’s independence, women’s rights and education. In 1917, she took her part in establishing the Women’s Indian Society with Annie Besant and other prominent leaders. As a freedom fighter, she was on par with all other male leaders. When Gandhi was arrested at Dandi after the Salt march in 1930, she led Dharasana Satyagraha along with other leaders. She was imprisoned many times. On March 2, 1949, she died of cardiac arrest at the Government House in Lucknow.

Sarojini Naidu was endearingly called ‘Indian Nightingale’ or ‘Bharat Kokila’ by Mahatma Gandhi, due to



the image and lyrical quality of her poetry. She is appreciated as a great lyricist. Naidu started writing at the age of 12, and her play *Maher Muneer*, written in Persian, impressed Nizam of the Kingdom of Hyderabad. She wrote poems for children as well as poems that dealt with serious subjects such as tragedy, patriotism and romance. Her lyrical form of poetry was borrowed from the British Romantic tradition. Unsurpassable sweetness and beauty can be found in her lyrics. Her poems are written in English yet had an Indian essence, and her poetic sense flourished gradually. She was also renowned for the active use of her rich sensory images and portrayals of India in her writing. Sarojini Naidu's poems were in English, but with an Indian soul. When Tagore and other poets used metaphors similar to western usages, Naidu used local images of India. The localization of metaphors and images, such as in *The Bangle Sellers* (1912), bends her poems to an Indian quality that was often lacking in other poets at that time. The poetry of Naidu is melodic and lyrical, and she used a variety of metres and rhymes in this instance. Poetic cries of excitement, ardour, delight and sadness may be heard throughout Naidu's songs, and they carry a powerful emotional presence. Sarojini Naidu has a wonderful command of the English language and prosody, and also, her poetry displays prosodic accuracy and regularity.

Naidu's few other works are *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912), *Muhammad Jinnah: An Ambassador of Unity* (1916), *The Broken Wing* (1917), *The Sceptred Flute* (1928) and *The Feather of the Dawn* (1961).

Nissim Ezekiel



Nissim Ezekiel was a Jewish Indian poet, actor, playwright, editor and art critic. Often considered by many critics to be the father of modern Indian English poetry, he is a seminal figure in the literary history of postcolonial India, especially with respect to Indian poetry in English. Born on December 16, 1924, in Mumbai to a Jewish family, he graduated with a bachelor's degree in Literature from Wilson College Mumbai in 1947 and studied philosophy at Birkbeck College, London. *Illustrated Weekly of India* published many of his poems and appointed him as its Assistant Editor in 1953. He also worked in All India Radio for 10 years doing programmes on arts and literature. He was also a professor of English and a reader of American literature at the University of Mumbai in the 1990s. Ezekiel was influenced by T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound.

Indian themes, imagery, and metropolitan settings are used in Ezekiel's poetry. The majority of the topics are especially related to Bombay, Ezekiel's hometown in India. He addresses these topics with detached irony, scepticism, humour, and mockery—sometimes

even self-mockery. The narrator's tone and voice frequently contain derogatory comments. His hardheartedness, bogus spirituality, middle-class arrogance, social and political dogma, religious intolerance, and conventional wisdom that has not been subjected to contemporary scrutiny are particularly aroused by any instances of dishonesty. His topics include the value of the individual, the delights and challenges of living in India, and the importance of artistic expression. His writing is precise, succinct and straightforward. Although the tone is often informal and relaxed, it does not lack style and structure.

Ezekiel has been effective in forging and cultivating a unique identity through his literature. His love poems avoid overt romanticism and effectively depict the gamut of feelings connected to falling in love. His religious poetry is sceptical and uncertain; it does not criticise or despise the belief but instead seeks out reliable and credible grounds for it. Ezekiel's social poem is distinguished by a keen observation of hypocrisy, corruption, and all kinds of pretentious drivel. The poetry is also filled with empathy and a strong sense of injustice and suffering. Ezekiel has produced both regular and free verse.

As Ezekiel was instrumental in bringing Modernism to India, his poetry underwent significant modifications during the transition period and ended up becoming a discursive style that is distinctly Indian. As a result, his poetry defies easy categorization within the Modernist writings. His poetry frequently delves into the grotesque and revolting aspects of Bombay life. In "A Morning Walk," Bombay is characterised as a

"barbaric city infected with slums," and in "Island," Ezekiel depicts the city that "blossoms into slums and skyscrapers," further demonstrating that he has internalised the city. Bombay is the only location where, despite his love of other cities, he actually feels at home. He sees it as a place where he can experience all of his feelings.

The modernist emphasis on stark realities probably attracted Ezekiel because he was more accustomed to living in Indian realities than as a cosmopolitan individual ambling about the streets of Paris or London. Ezekiel has a broad outlook, yet his sense of globalism is firmly rooted in Bombay's streets; he inhabits a world of bus stops, slums and Iranian restaurants. The language of his poems is based on colloquialism, conventional rhythm and tone, such as expressed in the poems like "Healers", "Hangover", "The Professor", "and Irani Restaurant Instruction." Ezekiel lost his battle with Alzheimer's disease and passed away in 2004.

A K Ramanujan



A K Ramanujan is an influential poet of the 20th century. He was a folklorist



and philologist who could also translate classical Tamil and Kannada poetry. He wrote poems in English, Kannada and Tamil. He completed his graduation and post-graduation from the University of Mysore. He also acquired a graduate diploma in Linguistics from The Deccan University in Pune in 1958 and a PhD in the same discipline in 1963.

When he was 17 years old, Ramanujan encountered English poetry. At first, he was drawn to the works of PB Shelley and W. B. Yeats, but subsequently, he became interested in Wallace Stevens and William Carol Williams. Williams was a well-known imagist, while Stevens was a poet of ideas and an imagist. The contrast between 'Akham and Puram,' or the inner and outward worlds, seen in Tamil Sangam culture was a major Indian influence. India's plethora of subaltern oral storytelling traditions and folk cultures, such *Yakshagaana* and *Harikatha*, captivated Ramanujan.

The most frequently used metaphor in Ramanujan's poems is 'family.' In his poem "Extended Family," he brings the members of his family. He connects his existence rooted in his family members, and the poem ends with the narration about the 'self' of the poet which has no independent identity. Another set of themes in his poetry includes history, society, nations, cities, the human body, nature and culture. His use of irony is seen even in the title of the poem "The Last of the Princes."

Ramanujan's poetry was based on observations of certain issues and was either set in some particular events or scenes by avoiding creating generalisations about India. Additionally, none of his poems had a predetermined

perspective or stance that they were intended to convey; rather, they changed course and appeared unpredictable as they progressed, with the values conveyed at the beginning of the poem frequently differing by its ending. Ramanujan's tactics, which frequently appeared to be a modern recreation of the spirit and procedures of Tamil and Kannada verses, were a reflection of the sophistication with which he recreated and treated South Indian culture.

Similarities between the poems and his translations can be seen in wordplay, puns, inner rhymes, rhetorical devices, ironies, distant neutrality of tones, understatement, compression and elliptical progression. This is not to say that Ramanujan was not influenced by his study of Yeats and other contemporary authors, but he was a highly skilled writer who was well-versed in the conventions, strategies and structures of Indian poems, which he applied to and altered in his English poetry.

The poetry of Ramanujan is very contemporary in its intricacy, unpredictability, and irony as well as in the manner it offered. However, Ramanujan's translation of mediaeval Kannada and Tamil poems reveals through its multiple prefaces, introductions, and afterwards that what initially appears to be creative and modern is partially based on ancient Indian poetic forms. The Tamil classics he had translated displayed simplicity and impartiality, standing apart from the descriptions. The use of the self as the main point in the poems full of ironies resisted conclusion and departed with the mediaeval saint's poetry tradition by abruptly changing directions and attitudes.



Jayanta Mahapatra



Jayant Mahapatra's poetry is renowned for its intensity of feeling and genuine poetic imagination, which includes a range of themes including existential crises or rootlessness, the present-day landscape of Orissa, and India's historical cultural and religious traditions. It exposes the emptiness of sincerity in contemporary life, relationships, love, and sex. He occupies an exceptional and unrivalled position as an Indian-born British poet, and owns a typical Indian sensibility.

Jayanta Mahapatra's writing frequently incorporates metaphysical poetry. According to him in "The Inaudible Resonance in English Poetry in India," the poetry from India makes oblique references to fears, regrets, and memories that linger in the "inner world of his own making—a world spaced by his own life, of secret allusions, of desire and agony, of a constantly changing alignment between dream and reality" (*Literary Criterion* 1980). Mahapatra is a postmodernist who constructs his own

world of solitude, silence, memory and desire. He is tormented by the myths and rituals of his native country, yet he feels shut away from them because of his Christian background, scepticism and scientific temper. From poem to poem and volume to volume, the inner world that he constructs grows in depth and richness.

Mahapatra illustrates the incongruities in India's religious environment in "Dawn at Puri" with a hint of subtly ironic melancholy. *Dawn at Puri* is a dramatic and accurate portrayal of the temple city of Puri complete with perpetual crow tweeting, a skull on the holy sand, and widowed women waiting to enter the enormous temple. A scathing sarcastic commentary on the emptiness of contemporary life can be found in "An Old Country" and "The Tattooed Taste." It reveals the widening economic gap and the politicians' total disregard for the general welfare. "Hunger" by Mahapatra depicts how economic inequality has driven people into prostitution and sexual exploitation. The complexities of human relationships, especially lovers, are explored by logic with a strong tenderness. His definition of love is connected with sexual fulfilment or gratification.

Mahapatra developed a recognisable style later in his career with a variety of meanings. Disconnected and frequently baffling syntax and disruption of grammar are held together in his lines more by intricate patterns of imagery and melody than by any consistency in argument or tale. For Mahapatra, "a poem is knit together by an inconceivable silence. Silence which is an intangible



substance, of which words are but manifestations, words which can build the poem from a silence and to which the poem must eventually return.”

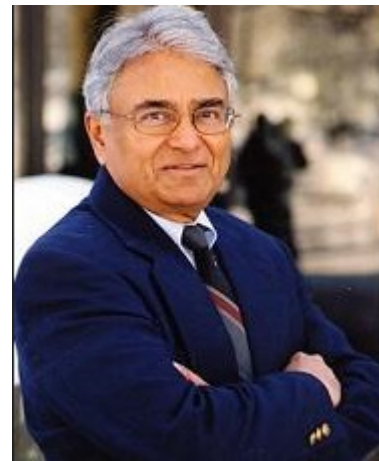
Jayanta Mahapatra is the first poet from India to get a Sahitya Akademi award for English poetry. He was also given a Padma Shri in 2009, which he returned in 2015 as a protest against the country’s growing intolerance. Along with A. K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy, Mahapatra was a member of the trio of poets who established Indian English Poetry. *Shadow Space*, *Bare Face*, and *Random Descent* are some of his most recent poetry collections. He has experimented with prose writing in addition to poetry. His only prose book to date is a collection of short stories called *The Green Gardener*.

R Parthasarathy

One of the finest English-language poets is Rajagopal Parthasarathy, a poet, translator, critic and editor. He is regarded as one of the select few gifted Indian poets who have attempted to write in English. The combination of dramatic and visual imagery makes up the major strength of his poetry.

His verses are not melodic, and he cultivates a purposefully prosaic approach and creates distinct and enduring imagery. His longest and most ambitious poem, “An Unfinished Biography,” which is a five-part reflection on his past and travels abroad, is an underrated but brilliant work.

“Rough Passage” is made up of thirty-seven parts, which are categorised into the “Exile,” “Tamil,” and “Home Coming” sections. Parthasarathy’s poetry is



motivated by the need to relieve the mental stress brought on by the clash of Indian and European civilisations. He expresses regret for his lack of rootedness through his education in English and his poems in English, which put a barrier between himself and his own cultural heritage. It now serves as a metaphor for the poet’s challenging move from India to England and his subsequent “hard come back,” during which he had to deal with challenges related to cultural re-entry and re-adjustment. He feels that this has caused him to drift away from traditional Indian culture and lose contact with his roots. The author expresses that after his return to India, the feelings of sadness and exile lingered because India seems to be no different from the west and he feels exiled within his own country. The poet’s intention to capture the humiliating experience, racial intolerance, and continued consciousness of living in exile in one’s own country is clear from the poem.

In “Rough Passages,” Parthasarathy discusses the isolation and disappointment that define the position of modern man. The modern guy may appear to have a variety of friends

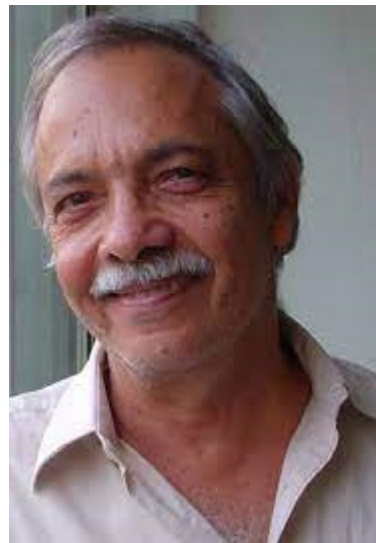
around him, yet his heart is still parched and hungry. “Homecoming” persists by attaching itself to anything he deems appropriate in Tamil culture. Exile explores the influence of the West on India in terms of the poet’s inner growth and the foreign context.

A House Divided: Poems of Love and War is a lengthy poetry collection that draws inspiration from Tamil and Sanskrit literary traditions and attempts to capture their resonances in English verse. In doing so, it strikes a genuinely epic note while exploring the mystery of India after the Raj and demonstrating how Indian civilisation has survived despite the ups and downs of conquerors. The entire book is a narrative of a troubled land, bringing together personal and societal histories. The novel *A House Divided* attests to the unpredictable nature of politics in the times we live in. It draws a comparison between those uncertainties and a person’s desire for a sense of belonging.

His works also include *Rough Passage* (1977) and *Poetry from Leeds* (1968). The fifth-century Tamil epic “Cilappatikaram of Ilanko Atikal” (The Tale of the Anklet: An Epic of South India), which he translated into contemporary English verse, earned him a number of honours, including the Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize in 1995 and the A.K. Ramanujan Book Prize for Translation in 1996.

Gieve Patel

Gieve Patel is an Indian poet, playwright, painter and doctor living in Mumbai. He holds an important place in the history of modern Indian poetry in English. He is a self-taught poet, artist



and playwright. His first performance was held in Mumbai in 1966, and he has since held several major exhibitions in India and abroad. He belongs to the cutting-edge group of artists based in Mumbai and Baroda.

Patel says: “My first book of poems, *How Do You Withstand* (1966), deals with a young person’s confrontation with death and disease in hospital, on the streets; moral and emotional issues about living in an economically constrained country; and the attempt to stand firmly on one’s feet, without despair. The second book, *Body* (1976), goes a step further into these concerns. The human body is viewed as a target of violence; the violence emanates from the state and the psyche of each individual. Hence, there are political and psychological resonances to these poems. Marginally, if I may say so, the concern is also metaphysical. Ultimately, the attempt is to see how the body survives the violence perpetrated against it. The third book, *Mirrored Mirroring* (1991), addresses God with irony and some passion. Imagery from nature is more pronounced here than in earlier books. Patel says: “I write in free



verse, the rhythm controlled strictly and varied to serve the thematic needs of the poem. I favour a lucid line of writing, not denying the occasional need for ambiguity and on rare occasions even obscurity.”

The fact that Patel works as a doctor is evident from his clinical attention to detail and the precise type of clinical attributes he deals with in his poetry, which he does comfortably and without showing any sign of squeamishness. After all, the only route to reach the metaphysical is through the material world. His poetic works include “How Do You Withstand”, “Body” and “Mirrored Mirroring”. His plays include *Princes*, *Savaksa* and *Mr Behram*.

In the opening lines of Patel’s poem “The Ambiguous Fate”, the poet moans, “To be no part of this hate is deprivation,” based on riots in his community. Gieve Patel, an Indian Parsi, who is neither Hindu nor Muslim, laments the isolation the Parsi community faces. In his poetry, ordinary people are typically set in metropolitan settings, with individuals moving around to complete daily duties.

Patel has always preferred writing in free verse. His later poems are typically longer and less tightly structured, allowing for character and image interaction, including some noteworthy animals and repulsive humans. The grammar and idiom are less gripped and tense, and the rhythm and flow are more like a dialogue or a voice overheard.

Keki N. Daruwalla

Today, Keki Daruwalla is regarded as a key figure in Indian English poetry. He won the Asia-specific Commonwealth

Poetry Prize in 1987 and the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984. Daruwalla is a Chandigarh-based graduate of Punjab University who was born in Lahore. In 1958, he became a member of the Indian Police Service, and it caused him to develop a recurring theme of violence in his poetry while living in Delhi after retiring from the civil service.



The release of Daruwalla’s debut book *Under Orion* in 1970 cemented his reputation as a leading figure in Indian poetry. Daruwalla’s poetry has evolved significantly in form and content with his nine collections over three decades.

The ironic stance, expressive contradictions of Indian life, preoccupation with various cultures, mythical and historical landscapes, straightforward, powerful and tensile style, flexible imagism, consistent narration, the ability to switch between metrical patterns and free verse, and the ability to combine the epic setting in minute details are all the features that his poems retain. His poetic landscapes range from the ancient kingdom of Kalinga during the rule of Ashoka to the roiling tensions of the contemporary

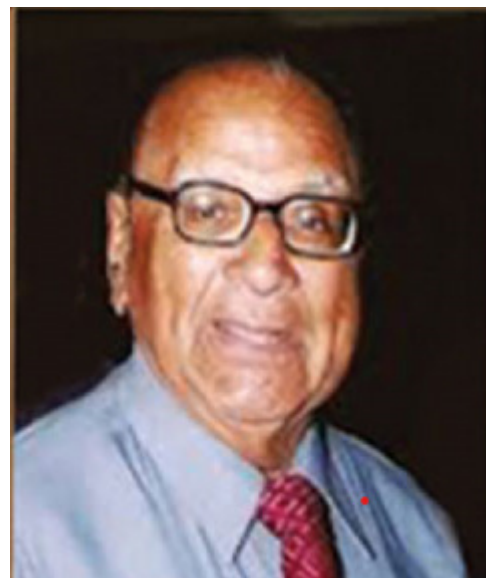
metropolis of Bombay. He is distinctive for his hilarious delivery and literary style. He is enraged and contemptuous of the dull, passive Indian way of life, general incompetence, romantic ideas, and other matters. He would, however, claim to be a poet of the landscape. According to him, the landscape acts as the centre of his writings. The terrain serves as more than just a backdrop; it is also a source of illumination.

A strong sense of ethics and morality can be seen in Daruwalla's wrath against corruption, which frequently takes the form of caustic outbursts. His harsh language deviates a little from the norm of Indian poetry. Another vital component in his poetry is how he evokes depressed feelings while writing about desire, memory, and the fleeting nature of sensations. He thinks India is a country of darkness and misery because of its fatalism, passivity, and useless rituals. But he tries to depict this genuine India by striking a balance between the external reality and his inner understanding of it. Daruwalla believes there cannot be a true tragedy in the present because we are unsuitable subjects for tragedy and our meagre lives are hardly topics worthy of tragedy. He feels that today's tragedies would symbolise outrage and other negative emotions. It shows the social issues of our day, how these harmful deeds add to emotional life, and how one must search within to uncover the power of "conscience." The reality of dying should also be taken into account and prepared for it.

A remarkable collection of theatrical monologues is featured in one of his most recent books, *The Map Maker* (2002), by characters as varied as a Buddhist

disciple and a former Majorcan mapper, "suggesting the ardent curiosity in other cultural and historical milieux is alive and strong." The pieces also exhibit a heightened preoccupation with philosophical notions of time, space and the inner world. Some of his works are *Under Orion* (1970), *Apparitions in April* (1971), *Crossing of Rivers* (1976), *Winter Poems* (1980), *The Keeper of the Dead* (1982), *Landscapes* (1987), *A Summer of Tigers* (1995), *Night River* (2000), and *The Map-maker* (2002).

Shiv K. Kumar



One of the most prominent poets of Indian English literature, Shiv K. Kumar, is an example of the next generation of poets. A late bloomer, the poet's work was influenced by the traumatic experience of divorce from his spouse. It took him four years to get over the divorce and start talking about new things. His poems then provided him with a new identity, which he used to search for possibilities in the years that followed. His eight poetry collections are what distinguish him as the greatest postmodern and



postcolonial poet of Indian English poetry, namely *Articulate Silences* (1970), *Cobwebs in the Sun* (1974), *Subterfuges* (1976), *Woodpeckers* (1979), *Trapfalls in the Sky* (1986), *Woolgathering* (1998), *Thus Spake the Buddha* (2001) and *Lost My Way* (2001).

Kumar's poetry captures the vividness of everyday life as it is experienced on the tips of his senses, but it also has a sardonic and often biting sense of humour. The confessional, the natural and urban surroundings, and social satires are all combined in Kumar's frequent expression of the life principle through his concept of "gutsy" sexuality. The poetry can be interpreted metaphorically as a creative explosion in the peripheries of the oppressive Indian cultural conventions and rituals constantly crowding in on him when he is at his best. The religious themes in "Revelation" and "Buddha at a Night Club" are subverted to highlight the essential features of adolescent romance. For instance, the poem "Sounds of Hunger" spends fourteen lines metaphorically describing the sounds of physical hunger before bringing up "the other hunger" that "forages for silken thighs / swishing by/beyond accessibility" in the final four lines.

He chose a range of topics and concerns throughout his poetry career, giving the impression to readers that different poets wrote each. His volumes reflect the surrounding Indian scenery, the reality, his method of reasoning, his theological perspective, his philosophical mind, and his development as a poet. His views and experiences are expressed in a direct and declarative manner. He shapes his experiences and

communicates them uniquely to relate to the events he observes around him. He is reluctant to flee or depart from this world. However, he approaches situations with much bravado because he has complete control over his sober mind and appears to achieve maturity, growth, and sublimation at the appropriate moment.

However, Kumar is equally adept at using cross-cultural associations to convey the ambience of a place, city, or historical landmark. The best work he does is turning an everyday item, setting, or experience into poetry. To emphasise the cosmic connection between the ordinary world and their peripatetic variation, Kumar humanises the clouds in the poem "Clouds."

Eunice de Souza



Eunice de Souza is widely acknowledged as one of the best Indian poets in English. She was a poet, literary critic, and novelist, the only Indian woman to be included in the *Oxford India Anthology of Twelve*

Modern Indian Poets (1992). De Souza is concerned with the plight of Indian women in different social contexts: housekeepers, day labourers or isolated “housewives”. Her poems often explore the loss, alienation, and isolation that accompany womanhood. Into the texture of poems like “Autobiographical”, “One Man’s Poetry”, and “Forgive Me, Mother”, de Souza spun in details from her own life and that of her family. She strongly critiques the patriarchal social institutions, particularly in her poem “Marriages are Made.”

De Souza says, “The first poems I wrote were about what it was like to grow up in Poona, in a conservative Goan Roman Catholic milieu. Most of these poems are in the form of dramatic monologues. I generally like to use the speaking voice when I write, and many poems are in the form of conversations about relationships, about critics who tell me how to write, and so forth. I like poems to be spare and economical. There are several poets whose work I feel close to, particularly the mediaeval saint poets in India and Emily Dickinson”.

In her first collection, *Fix*, Eunice de Souza established herself as a writer of short poems. The poems usually contained traumatic and violent themes concealed beneath a controlled irony. The title is instructive because it both hinted at a problem and the required fix. In her satire of Roman Catholic, middle-class hypocrisy in Goa, where she was born and raised, de Souza favours a conversational style that is urbane and seems matter-of-fact with very English cadences. This style initially covers and subsequently discloses an often immense sorrow. Under a smooth and

observant statement, there is a rising up of feelings of fury, perplexity and suffering.

Despite the typically calmer attitudes of the poem “Women in Dutch Painting”, they still serve as a record of mixed feelings. Although “Another Way to Die” ends on a cheery note, its depiction of dissolution carries on fear, and “The Road” can calmly consider a Catholic upbringing while simultaneously acknowledging continued uncertainty.

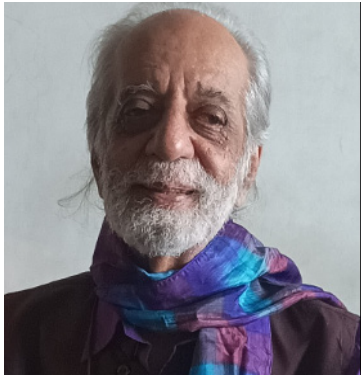
“Songs of Innocence” breaks through the fortifying walls of a timid youth only to highlight the gap between the past and present. In the fourth section, the author narrates a trip to Goa during which he is “looking for roots” but finds a collapsed site of origin that can no longer support the sense of self.

However, de Souza discovers fresh ways to communicate with the home community in “Return.” The poem cynically concludes with the lines “*I know something / of how you feel*” by alluding to a newspaper item about Bombay prostitutes attempting to get their past and improve their prospects in life. Additionally, it seems that de Souza can place her incredibly original work in a lineage that may sustain itself by pulling influence from ballads in the poem “Notations.” She recognises themes in ballad writing that her poems address, such as “No cut to abstractions / It happened: that is all they say / It happened.” The poet Ranjit Hoskote said about her poetic style: “She had a distinctive voice, wry and sardonic, and there was a kind of cruel wisdom in her poetry. Her work became more minimalist over time, and the poems



in her last collection have a crystalline clarity.”

Adil Jussawala



Adil Jehangir Jussawalla was born in Mumbai and spent most of the years from 1957 to 1970 in England, where he studied to be an architect. He wrote plays, read English at Oxford and taught English at a language school. Returning to Mumbai, Jussawalla taught English at St Xavier's College from 1972 to 1975. He became an Honorary Member of the International Writing Program in Iowa in 1977.

Jussawallah's critically acclaimed first book, *Land's End*, written almost entirely in England and Europe, was published when he was twenty-two. It was hailed as a book that captures the “artificiality and vulgarity of the age, the contradictory nature of our emotions and desires, the uncontrollable gap between ‘you’ and ‘me’, between dream and reality, beauty and ugliness of love.” He wrote his second book *Missing Person* (1976), after his return to India. The work was written with a biased view towards Marxism. Jussawallah says, “If one tried literally to represent the different elements of the world culture of which one's mind is made, one would write a language no

one would understand. I have tried to suggest this chaos in *Missing Person*”.

Adil Jussawalla is an urban poet, like many other Indian English poets. His works are frequently dealt with the alienation and absurdity of the metropolis. Jussawalla is not a prolific poet, as he only released two collections of poetry, *Land's End* and *Missing Person*, between 1962 and 1976. But his is an important voice that has absorbed the influence of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound—“Webbed in English ironies, I cough.”

“Sea Breeze Bombay” is a beautiful urban poem in response to the historic zoning partition in 1947. According to the poet, Bombay was a “surrogate city”. It was home to many refugees and events after the split, including many riots in India. Thousands of people died, and many lost their homes. The City of Bombay acts as an alternative or surrogate mother for all refugees.

Kamala Das

Kamala Das, alias Madhavikutty, is a famous bilingual poet in English and Malayalam. Her poems are confessional and autobiographical, and a type of introspection and self-analysis where we can find the best expression of female sensibility. Her poem expresses the need for love with staggering candidness. Kamala Das is a confessional poet in the same vein as Ramanujan, Ezekiel, R. Lowell, Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath and J. Wright. As a true confessional poet, she makes her readers confident in her personal life. She astonishingly reveals the misdeed, injustice and humiliations she has suffered in a male-dominated world. She openly described her intimate relationships and her traumatic





experience during sexual acts. Her poems such as “The sunshine Cat,” “The invitation,” and “The Looking Glass” were confessional in tone which was therapeutic to her.

Kamala Das is a poet of love. Her poems are primarily an expression of her frustration with love. She always talks about unrequited love and expresses the need for love. In “The Sunshine Cat”, she abuses her husband because he has never loved or treated her properly. She calls him a selfish and timid man who recklessly watches over her sexual activity with other men. Her exasperation with her love relationship is reflected in the poems like “The Invitation” and “The Looking Glass.”

Kamala Das’s poems are blatant and frank, wherein she confesses her sex life. Sexual humiliation is a central theme of her poetry. She goes to the extreme with her open treatment of sex, adding a new dimension to the poems about love and sex. Her entire account of the physical union is fragmented and never suggestive. Her straightforward use of taboo terminology for women mirrors her conception of biological reproduction, which is geared towards

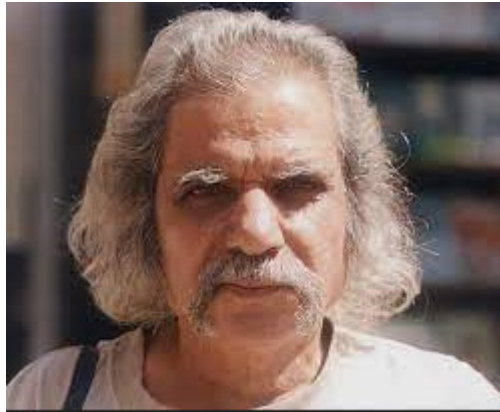
sensory stimulation. She is not obsessive; instead, she exploits the sensual bodily nuances to emphasise how repulsive she finds sex, which is seen as a way to strip a woman of her independence and rights. It strengthens the idea that a man owns his female partner. One hardly ever finds sympathy in her descriptions of the marriage act; instead, what one finds is sensuality that pierces like a cold wind blowing directly in one’s face, a stark reality in the male-dominated Indian society. Her open admission and the courageous treatment of her private life make her a great confession poet.

She raises her voice against the exploitation of women. She expresses her rage at the domination of men in society. She sought to establish her feminine identity through her poetry. At the same time, she tried to convey her identity to Indian women. Therefore, her poetry shows the emergence of a new phenomenon in Indian poetry. She accuses her husband of being unfaithful while narrating about sexuality and changing partners.

Kamala Das’ English proficiency is noteworthy. She maintained her style, which was characterised by simplicity and clarity. Her poems reveal phrase acquisition and the control of rhythm. Das pays special attention to her choice of language. Her words reach her audience effortlessly and become one with her emotions. She is a poet in confession mode, and her poetry is rich in images, thought-provoking and functional. She provides images when dealing with favourite topics such as love and sex. These features do not make her poetry boring and monotonous.



Arun Kolatkar



Arun Kolatkar (1932 – 2004) was an advertising agent, bilingual poet, visual artist, experimentalist, 'flaneur,' travelling hippie and rebel of the tradition. He has a radical internationalist approach which he proclaims as a tradition ranging from Western imagism, Chinese ideogram, Indian Bhakti tradition and Japanese Hiku.

Kolatkar's poems, such as "The Bus", "Crabs", etc., put him belong to the category of modernist poetry. Kolatkar is the only Indian poet besides Kabir to be featured on the World Classics titles of *New York Review of Books*. He also won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1977 for his first collection of English poetry, *Jejuri*. The same year, a collection of his Marathi poems also appeared. Kolatkar has been much admired by fellow poets, who made efforts to make his work published. He was born in Kolhapur in 1932, studied art in several locations in Maharashtra, and worked as a graphic artist in Bombay. He adapts or translates his Marathi poetry into English, and vice versa occasionally, and his interest in art is reflected in both languages. *Jejuri* follows a loose narrative sequence enacting a trip to the pilgrimage shrine of Khandoba, situated in a rugged and

barren region near Poona.

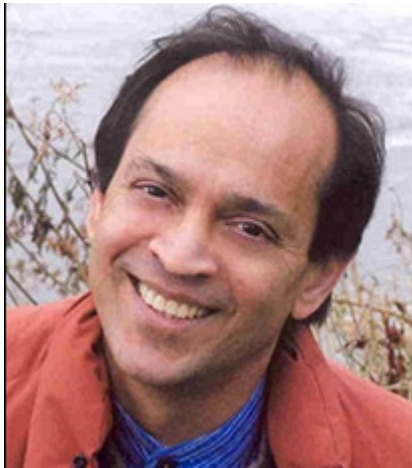
Kolatkar's verses evoke a series of images to highlight the ambiguities of modern life. Despite being in a religious context, they are not religious. In 1978, an interviewer asked him if he believed in God, and Kolatkar replied, "I leave the question alone. I don't think I have to take a position about God one way or the other".

A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy exhibit solipsistic discomfort while employing a foreign language, whereas Kolatkar does not. His lyrical style is objective, resists past cultural or linguistic influences, and is distinguished by the reflection of interesting "alfresco individualism." Modern poetry is exemplified by Kolatkar's deft use of the montage technique in *Jejuri* to create the impression of a symbolist aestheticism. His principal works are *An Old Woman*, *The Indicator*, *Makarand*, *Scratch*, *A Game Of Tigers And Sheep*, *Chaitanya*, *Heart Of Ruin*, *The Butterfly*, *A Low Temple*, etc.

Vikram Seth

Vikram Seth, a contemporary writer and poet, who spent his early days in India and then in London, graduated from Oxford's prestigious Corpus Christi College. He continued his studies at Stanford University, earning his master's degree in economics in 1978 and graduating from Nanjing University in China. After Nanjing, he made a long trip back to New Delhi, hitchhiking all the time and driving to Tibet. He took notes about his journey, resulting in an exciting travel book entitled *From Heaven Lake* (1983). This was his first successful attempt at writing for the publication.





The distinguishing feature of Seth's poetry is its artistry. He has been called a neoformalist and is hailed as the author of beautiful poems. He uses rhyme, meter, and older verse forms, such as the sonnet, when the free verse is the dominant style. Seth's stubborn confidence and cheerfulness in verse are reflected in his continued use of rhymes and meters in his poetry. When most poets turn to free poetry for its lack of restriction and seriousness, he uses archaic literary forms like 14-line sonnets and steadfastly adheres to rhyme and metre. In a cheerful way that combines traditional form with a new voice, Seth's poetry incorporates everyday objects like cups of coffee and cookies—things that no one would have traditionally believed to be the material of poetry. He can remain light-hearted despite being serious in content.

Seth's poetry uses a contemporary idiom along with these "traditional" old poetic forms. The combination of these leads to unusually aesthetic styles. "Another departure from the norm is that the modern voice of his poems is not particularly interested in itself: the self is firmly effaced from his poems". Seth writes about ordinary and mundane

things with great ease. There is a sense of lightness even as he ponders on more serious matters, which makes his poetry refreshing.

After spending several years abroad for academic purposes, *Mappings* was the work that captured Seth's thoughts of longing for India as well as his enduring fascination with the "sounds of other birds, / the nightingale, the wren." Many of the poems dealt with the restlessness of youth and conflicted emotions toward family. They also express a rational hedonism that is anti-romantic and says that life should be enjoyed before it lasts and that a trip or a night of sex sounds equally enjoyable. The humorous rhymes, self-aware superficialities, pastiche, and parody deflate the gravity of mocking high culture and combine to create a different perspective.

"The Humble Administrator's Garden" uses literary genres, including the sonnet, quatrain, and epigrammatic couplet, to report on surfaces and life's minutiae. Even though some of his poems are free verse, Seth typically uses a stressed line. Seth is a poet of our day, one of the eclecticists and self-conscious artists, defined by a refusal to go deep, celebrating simple sensations and survival. Poems about India, where he was born and reared, poems about China, where he spent two years studying, and California, where he later resided; all these experiences gave birth to his creation of *The Humble Administrator's Garden*. India is a location of memories and lost relationships, and China is a place to find global brotherhood despite cultural differences. But America, despite its comforts and pleasures, is lonely and



dangerous. The poems about California discuss longing for a distant Western past, probably Seth's time as an Oxford student, and feelings of loneliness and old lovers.

Seth's books of poetry include *From Heaven Lake* (1983), which discusses a hitchhiking trip through Nepal into India that Seth took while studying in China, *Mappings* (1980), "All You Who Sleep Tonight" (1990), *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985), *Beastly Tales* (1991), *The Frog and the Nightingale* (1994) and *Three Chinese Poets* (1992).

Meena Alexander



Meena Alexander was born in Allahabad, India, and grew up in Kerala and Sudan. She earned a BA from the University of Khartoum and a PhD from the University of Nottingham. Described by *The Statesman* as "undoubtedly one of the finest poets of contemporary times", she is the author of numerous works of poetry, including *Atmospheric Embroidery* (2018), *Birthplace with Buried Stones* (2013) and received PEN Open Book Prize winner for *Illiterate Heart* (2002).

Alexander's first poem was published in India by Calcutta Writers Workshop. In the United States, her first poetry collection, *House of Thousand Doors*, was released in 1988, followed by *River and Bridge*, *The Shock of Arrival: Reflections of Postcolonial Experience*, an anthology of essays, and lyric poetry collections *Illiterate Heart*, *Raw Silk*, *Rapidly Changing Rivers*, *Birthplace of Buried Stones* and the latest *Atmospheric Embroidery* collection (2018). Alexander has also published two novels - *Nampally Road* in 1992 and *Manhattan Music* in 2000. Among her prose works is the memoir *Fault Lines*, published by City University Feminist Press, New York, first in 1993 and then as a modified form in 2003.

Alexander's scholarly works include *The Poetic Self: Towards a Phenomenon of Romanticism* (1979) and *Women in Romanticism: Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Dorothy Woodsworth* (1989). The English Romantic poets she studied in her childhood influenced her profoundly, but she struggled to combine their aesthetic styles into her vocal development. In some of her poems, she returns to the burdens imposed by colonial language and pedagogy in portraying her experiences as a postcolonial poet. She documents this alienation between the intellectual legacy of British modernism and her living realities in her poem "The Illiterate Heart."

Alexander's poetry exhibits conflicting historical, mythological and linguistic traditions. Alexander's academic knowledge of English romantic poetry is evident from the frequent reverberations in her creative

work. Her writing is intensely imagistic and seeks to make sense and carve a space in different realms where the poet finds herself living. The reader trained in a European tradition would recognise images, syntax, and structures reminiscent of Coleridge, Eliot, Rilke and Neruda. Additionally, some of Alexander's best early poetry reveal the tense relationship between personal memory, societal history, and the poet's effort to reinvent herself through writing. For instance, Alexander's regular use of blood, flowers, salt, birds, animals, and other images finds an effective and potent juxtaposition with the impacts of British control in India in the lengthy poem "The Bird's Bright Ring."

Later in her poems, a strong influence of politics on her poetry seems evident. The poems "Hotel Alexandria," "Broadway Poem," "My first 'American' poem," and "Waiting for Rain," according to Alexander, are efforts to overcome internal and cultural exile that would result in identity disintegration. While they concurrently speak of "the gulf of not-knowing, a pit, a placelessness," it has a compounded existing alienation of being a postcolonial Indian English poet.

As the poem progresses, she documents her rejection of the script in her mother tongue, Malayalam, choosing to write in English while still being influenced by her mother tongue's lyrical cadences:

Uproar of sense, harsh tutelage: aana (elephant), amma (tortoise) ambjuan (lotus)

A child mouthing words to flee family

I will never enter that house, I swore I'll never be locked in a cage of script

— "Illiterate Heart"

Tabish Khair



Tabish Khair, born in 1966, is a poet, essayist and novelist. His important poetry collections include *Where Parallel Lines Meet* (2000) and *Man of Glass* (2010). Born and educated in Bihar, he worked in Gaya and New Delhi as a reporter for the *Times of India*, then moved to Copenhagen, where he did a PhD on "Babu Fictions: Alienation in the Indian English Novels". He has received the All India Poetry Prize for some of his poems and an honorary fellowship in creative writing from the Baptist University of Hong Kong. His scholarly articles, reviews and essays have been published in various leading newspapers and journals. He currently lives in Aarhus, Denmark.

Tabish Khair is one of the Muslim-born Indian poets who reside and teach overseas. The poet represents the liberal, secular, and modernising branch of Islam that embraces social justice principles. He claims in *The Streets of*



My Poems, “In all my poems I simply walk the streets of my town once again; unable to leave behind men and women pitching tar, on the hot roads, muscles straining in the sun; unable to forget that old beggar sleeping in the shade.” The poems’ ugliness is a reflection of the speaker’s unhappiness with his culture. Images from the morning appear in his head, making him feel dejected “*similar to the sputtering, dry tap outside.*” His dissatisfactions are expressed through his lines, such as “*Old Mr. Rao comes out into his patched and peeling porch / With a brush between toothless gums / And stands lost in memories of lost passion,*” “*An aged former sailor has been drinking all night/and still lies huddled in the ordure.*”

Khair’s poetry is noted for its asymmetrical tone and style, as if he were aiming more for nuanced regional or class features than the conventional means of portraying Indian English. The poems frequently function as brief narrative allegories of life perceived through a materialist lens. It is possible to interpret Khair’s picture as sarcastic or to infer a revolutionary future. The repeating note in these poems is nostalgia and longing, elegy and yearning.

Vijay Seshadri

Vijay Seshadri was born in Bangalore, India, in 1954. He left for America with his parents at the age of five. He grew up in Columbus, Ohio, where his father was a chemistry professor at Ohio State University. Vijay won the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for poetry for his work *3 Sections*, a “compelling collection of poems that examine human consciousness, from birth to dementia, in a voice that is by turns witty and grave companionate and



remorseless.” His poems include birth to dementia, in a voice that is by turns witty and grave companionate and remorseless.” His poems include “Road Trip” (2016), “Enlightenment” (2018), “Goya’s Mired Men Fighting with Cudgels” (2019), “Survivor” (2004), “The Descent of Man” (2010), “Trailing Clouds of Glory” (2016), “Memoir” (2016) and “The Long Meadow” (2016).

The Disappearances by Seshadri explores the puzzling nature of loss and a “cataclysm” in American history. Following the September 11 attacks in 2001, the New Yorker printed it on the back cover, which helped it gain notoriety. Later, it was also cited in The Best American Poetry 2003.

Mamang Dai

Mamang Dai is a poet and novelist. She was born in Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh, in 1957. Her poetry collection, *Midsummer-Survival Lyrics*, was published in 2014. A former member of the Indian Administrative Service, Dai left the job to pursue a career in journalism and writing. She was a reporter for various newspapers, including *The Telegraph*, *Hindustan Times* and *The Sentinel*, and also writes for television and radio. In addition to two novels, she wrote prose





and stories for younger readers. Her non-fiction work, *Arunachal Pradesh: A Hidden Land*, received the State Verrier Elwin Award in 2003. She is currently the General Secretary of the Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society, a member of the North East Writers' Forum and a General Council member of the Sahitya and Sangeet Natak Academy.

Dai's poetic world is about rivers and mountains, a simple and lyrical reflection of the terrain of her homeland. Nature here is mysterious, green with legends, and dense with sacred memories. Dai's poetry does not arrive at easy conclusions, and the simplicity of Dai's verse is not without technical depth.

Jeet Thayil

Jeet Thayil is an Indian musician, poet, novelist and librettist. He is best known as a poet and author of four poetry collections: *These Errors Are Correct* (2008), *Apocalypso* (1997), *English* (2004), and *Gemini* (1992). His first novel, *Narcopolis* (2012), which won the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, was also shortlisted for the 2012 Man Booker Prize and the Hindu Literary Prize.



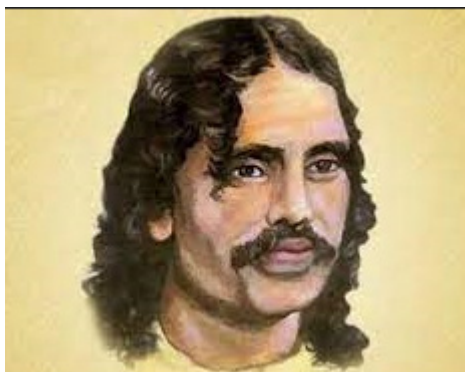
In prose and poetry, he introduced new areas of feeling and emotion into Indian literature and was often concerned with the pleasures and pain of drugs and alcohol, sex and death- symbols of Keats and Baudelaire. He is said to have more in common with figures such as William S. Burroughs and Roberto Bolano than with writers traditionally associated with Indian literature. Some of his other poems are "Spiritus Mundi", "Cut To Bits By The Sickle Moon", "The Haunts", "Letter From A Mughal Emperor" and "The Heroin Sestina."



Appendix- 2

Playwrights in Indian English Literature

Bhartendu Harishchandra



Bhartendu Harishchandra was born on September 9, 1850, in Banaras. His father, Gopal Chandra, wrote a poem under the pseudonym Guru Hardas. He lost his parents at an early age, but before that, at fifteen, he had the opportunity to visit the Jagannath Temple in Puri with his parents.

Bhartendu Harishchandra was strongly influenced by the Bengal Renaissance, which led him to write novels and plays reflecting their worldview. He also practised other forms of prose. His reputation as a journalist was also noteworthy, as was evident from his editing of magazines such as *Kavi*, *Vachan Sudha*, *Harishchandra Patrika* and *Bal Bodhini*. He composed a series of love poems in Hindi, which have lasting value. He also wrote plays, which earned him a playwright's reputation even after his death. His famous plays include *Bharat Dhurdasa*, *Satya Harish*, *Neel Devi* and *Andher Nagri*.

Bhartendu Harishchandra soon became a director, manager and

playwright. He used the theatre as a means of shaping public opinion. His major works are *Vaidika Himsa Himsa Na Bhavati* (1873), *Satya Harishchandra* (1876), *Bharat Dhurdasa* (1875), *Neel Devi* (1881), and *Andher Nagri* (City of Darkness) (1881), which is a popular drama of political satire in Hindi. Most of his plays scathingly satirised prevailing hypocritical attitudes, the ignorance and lethargy of Indians, and the corruption and mismanagement of rulers, laced with colourful idiomatic vocabulary and a sharp sense of humour. He translated his works into many languages. Most of his plays were produced by prominent Indian directors, such as B V Karanth, Prasanna, Arvind Gaur and Sanjay Upadhyaya.

Krishna Mohan Banerjee

Banerjee Rev. Krishna Mohan (1813-1885), a social reformer, scholar, linguist, and Christian missionary, was born on May 24, 1813, in Calcutta. His father was poor and unable to provide him with a good education. Still, Krishna Mohan was fortunate to receive the love and patronage of the then-famous intellectual and philanthropist David Hare. With his generous help, he received his school education at Pataldanga School. Moreover, it won him a scholarship to continue his education at Hindu University, where he graduated in 1829.

After completing his studies in 1829, Banerjee enrolled in Pataldanga School



as a teacher. In 1832, under the influence of Alexander Duff, he converted to Christianity. As a result of his conversion, he lost his job at David Hare's school, and his wife, Bindhyobashini Banerjee, was forced to return to her father's home, though she rejoined with him later. Banerjee became the principal of the Church Mission School. When the Mission Society began philanthropic activities in Calcutta, Banerjee became the first Bengali priest of the Church of Christ, preaching in Bengali. He converted his wife, his younger brother Kali Mohan, and Ganendra Mohan Tagore, the son of Plazanna Coomer Tagore, to Christianity. Later, Ganendra Mohan married Banerjee's daughter, Kamalmani, and became the first Indian to qualify as a barrister. He was also involved in the conversion of Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

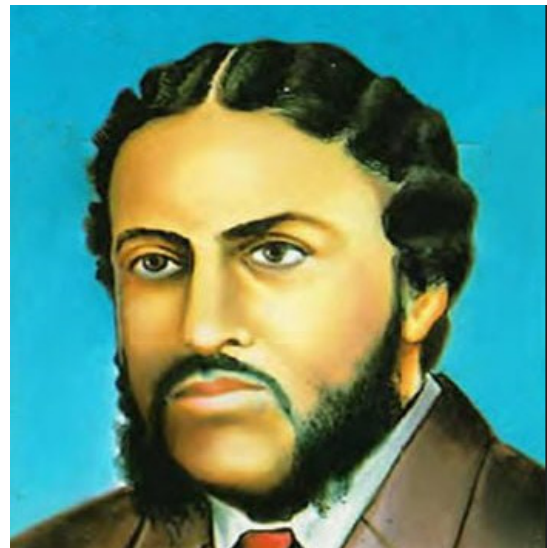
In 1831, Banerjee, a religious reformer and the man of letters, began publishing *Inquirer*. That same year, his play *The Persecution or A Dramatic Scene Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta* was produced, which was monotonously a critical work of certain common social practices.

Banerjee edited and published the thirteenth volume of the Bengal adaptation of the Encyclopaedia Britannica in English, *Vidyakalpadrum*, or *Encyclopedia of Bengal* (1846–51). His other works include *Arian Witnese* (1875), *Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy* (1861) and *The Relationship Between Christianity and Hinduism* (1881).

Michael Madhusudan Dutt

Michael Madhusudan Dutt is undoubtedly one of Bengal's greatest

poets and the first playwright.



He was a prominent precursor of Rabindranath Tagore and set the standards for future Bengali literary figures. Dutt challenged the traditional literary system and moved from foreign cultures and styles to Bengali literature with multilingual knowledge of several Indian and European languages, including Tamil, Sanskrit, Greek and Latin.

Dutt became aware of the severe lack of quality plays in Bengali while translating *Ratnavali*, a play by Ramnarayan Tarkaratna, into English. Soon after, he joined Kolkata's Belgachhiya Theatre and wrote *Sharmishtha* (1858), the first original Bengali play based on the characters Devayani and Yayati from the *Mahabharata*. He had never attempted a blank verse before.

Ekei Ki Bale Shabhyata and *Buda Saliker Ghade* are the other two plays. He took inspiration from a Greek story to write *Padmavati* in blank verse in 1860. This freed Bengali literature from the strict constraints of rhymed verses. After this achievement, he produced



Tilottamasambhav, another work in blank verse. He translated Dinabandhu Mitra's famous play, *Nildarpan*, into English.

Aurobindo Ghosh

Aurobindo Ghosh was an Indian philosopher, yoga guru, Maharishi, poet and Indian nationalist. He was also a journalist and editor of newspapers, such as *Vande Mataram*. He joined the Indian independence movement and was active in it until 1910 when he became a spiritual reformer and presented his vision for human progress and spiritual evolution. He was one of our influential leaders.

Sri Aurobindo is regarded as one of the most notable Indo-Anglian playwrights due to his persistent interest in religion, humanitarian approach, spiritual orientation and dramatic vision. He was inspired to write poetic plays due to his connection with Bengali and Sanskrit literature. His most well-known blank verse plays are *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, *Eric*, *Rodogane* and *The Viziers of Bassara*. The plays by Sri Aurobindo are about life, love, struggle and change.



Perseus the Deliverer, a long verse play

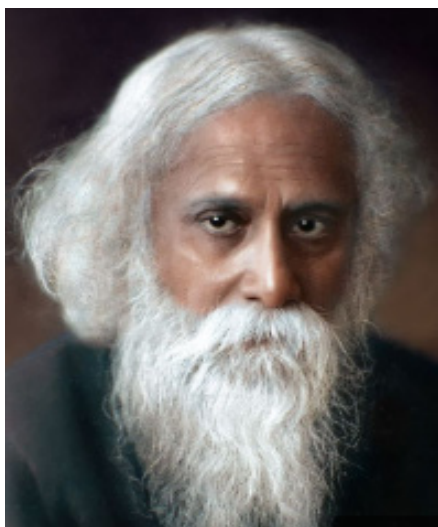
by Sri Aurobindo, is written in blank verse. In the language of contemporary philosophy, the drama revolves around a Greek myth. The main character of this drama is *Perseus*. Aurobindo displays remarkable lyrical skill in portraying conservative, transitional, revolutionary, sceptical, human and amusing characters.

Vasavadutta is a dramatic romance that illustrates the great wisdom of turning every bump in the road and setback into a source of delight by letting go of egotistical desire. The love tale of Prince Udayan and Princess Vasavadutta is the central theme of this play. The love of the prince and princess brings the two families together. The politics of empire and romantic love, as well as how love ultimately triumphs, are shown in the drama.

Aurobindo's extensive literary works include philosophical hypotheses, treatises on yoga and other writings. Besides *The Life Divine*, his main works include *Essays on the Gita* (1922), *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942), *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1948), *The Human Cycle* (1949), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1949), *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (1950) and *On the Vedas* (1956).

Rabindranath Tagore

In the Bengali theatrical and drama world, Rabindranath Tagore is referred to as "sui generis". During his 60 years as a playwright, he wrote more than 50 works in the dramatic genre. He tried his hands in so many different styles. His plays and theatrical concepts evolved in ways that were different from the overall



trajectory of Bengali drama and theatre. Tagore himself used the following terms: *natak* or *natya* (drama), *natyakavya* (dramatic poetry), *prahasan* (chaban), *gitinatya* (music drama), *nritya-natya* (dance-drama). His traditional *natya* can be further divided into two categories: the early stage in blank verse, such as the work *The King and Queen* and *Sacrifice*, and the later phase, which produced twenty works, all written in prose and published after 1907.

His first public performance as an actor was in his own *Valmiki Pratibha*, an episodic musical play. It was presented in front of an invited audience of several notable people, including Sir Gurudas Banerjee, Haraprasad Sastri and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Written in 1881, *Valmiki Pratibha* was his debut play. Numerous songs were used to tell the story. There are some dramatic confrontations, but the music and songs vastly overshadow them. He wrote a cycle of plays like *Rituranga*, *Basanta*, *Phalguni*, and *Sesh Barshan*, honouring the seasons with a collection of songs only tenuously connected by the thinnest

of dramatic threads much later after he had settled down at Santiniketan. In the 1930s, when Tagore was over seventy, he wrote several of his most significant dance dramas, including *Chandalika*, *Tasher Desh*, *Chitrangada* and *Shyama*. Although they contained considerable elements needed for a drama, he developed a technique to elaborate the dramatic themes that combine dances, mime, music and choreography.

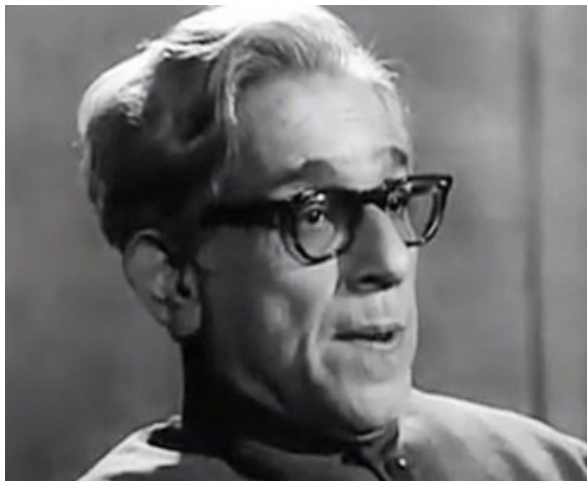
Although they have a unique attraction, they have had little impact on Bengali theatre, much like musicals and operas, and have been the domain of singing and dancing troupes. The public's opinion of Tagore as a playwright is varied. *Raja O Rani* (1889), a five-act verse play with many theatrical events, external conflict, and love and passion, was his first full-fledged drama. In Kolkata's commercial theatres, it was well-admired. Another lengthy verse-play, *Visarjan*, came after *Raja O Rani*. After *Visarjan*, Tagore wrote no significant plays for 20 years; during this time, his poetry underwent a substantial change. When *Raja*, one of his plays, was featured in 1910, it marked a departure from the plays he had previously produced. The two plays he composed before *Raja* are *Sarodotsab* and *Prayaschitta*. Philosophical "internality" and reflective "inaction" took the place of both "externality" and "activity." *Raja* was primarily responsible for the beginning of a cycle of plays. It influenced the abandonment of some dramatic writing norms, like the rounded plot, narrative content, stereotypical characters, etc.

The other two crucial plays by Tagore were *Achalayatan* and *Dakghar*, in which the first one was quite philosophical

and also portrayed conflict dramatically. Tagore's second play, *Dakghar*, is his most well-known work outside Bengal. *Gitanjali* earned for him the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature. *Dakghar* possesses the strength and poignancy of symbolist drama at its finest despite being simplistic in its structure and diction.

Tagore developed his dramatic oeuvres and attempted to show how a proper Indian theatre might emerge influenced by Indian ideas of synthesis rather than conflict, on internality rather than external action, and drew traditional sources to express universal truths.

Harindranath Chattopadhyay



Harindranath Chattopadhyay (1898–1990) was an Indian English poet, dramatist, actor, musician and the first member of the Lok Sabha from the Vijayawada Constituency. He was the younger brother of the second woman president of the Indian national congress, Sarojini Naidu, and the international communist revolutionary, Virendranath Chattopadhyay. The Government of India awarded him the civil honour of Padma Bhushan in 1973.

The themes of his plays range from Siddhartha's enlightenment and the present crisis caused by the nuclear race. At the same time, *The Well of the People* and *Two Women* bear the ability to give realistic touches to some age-old customs and beliefs and thereby elevate them to a higher plane. S. Krishna Bhatta says, "Poverty in general and the sufferings of workers, in particular, provide themes for several playwrights. Chattopadhyaya deals with the problem in his own way, and, as already seen, he shows all sympathy for the poor. His play *The Window* gives a realistic picture of a poor worker's family and strikes an optimistic note in the end, while *The Sentry's Lantern* presents the pragmatism of a worker confronted by the world of misery."

T P Kailasam



Thyagaraja Kailasam (1885-1946) was a multifaceted genius who wrote plays in both Kannada and English. Modern English world drama influenced him, and he watched plays by William Archer, Ibsen, Bernard Shaw, Forbes Robertson and Ellen Terry Jr. on stage. After

returning to Bangalore, he became an active member of the Amateur Dramatic Association and began writing and directing plays. He wrote about 20 plays in Kannada, including *Tollugatti*, *Home Rule*, *Paatu Tavaru Mane*, *Bahishkara*, *Poli Kitti*, *Ammavara Ganda* and more. His English plays included *Burden*, *Purpose*, *Achievement*, *Karna's Curse*, *Keechaka*, and so on. In his Kannada drama, *Kailasam*, he satirically explains modern society and its values and languages. While all Kannada plays were comedies that reflected the everyday lives of ordinary men and women, *Kailasam* adopted the themes and characters of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in his English plays. An avid supporter of liberal and humanistic values, he laid the foundation for a sophisticated amateur theatre.

During his lifetime, *Kailasam* and his work did not receive the proper recognition from scholars, but he was the people's favourite. *Kailasam*, called "*Karnataka Prahasana Pitamaha*," was famous for his spontaneous and improvised wit reflected in his speeches and plays. He called himself the "Black Spot of the White House" and made fun of himself (his house in Chamarajpet, Bangalore, was known as the White House). He is said to have introduced Gandhi to the famous violinist T. Chowdia in the following words: "Bapu, you are a great Non-Violentist, meet our great Violinist Chowdiah."

B V Karanth

Babukodi Venkataramana Karanth may be unfamiliar to most millennials but would be known to those in South India as a rebel who revolutionised Indian theatres. B V Karanth was a

musician, actor, writer, National Award-winner, former director of the National School of Drama, etc



Karanth was born in Manchi, Karnataka, on 19 September 1929 and got involved in theatre early in life. At the age of eight, he appeared in a play called *Nanna Gopala*, directed by P K Narayana. He joined the Gubbi Theatre Company, founded by the famous actor Gubbi Veeranna, who was responsible for disseminating the Kannada Theatre. With the support of Veeranna, he earned a master's degree in art and was also trained in Hindustani music in Benaras.

In 1974, Karanth founded the theatre group Benaka. This group is now considered one of the pillars of South Indian performing arts. Karanth's most famous plays were performed by Benaka, including *Sattavara Neralu*, *Jokuma Raswami*, *Kattale Berak*, and Shakespeare's plays like *Hamlet*. In his lifetime, Karanth built a versatile and prolific portfolio — he directed about 150 plays in Kannada, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Malayalam and Urdu. He passed away on 1 September 2002.

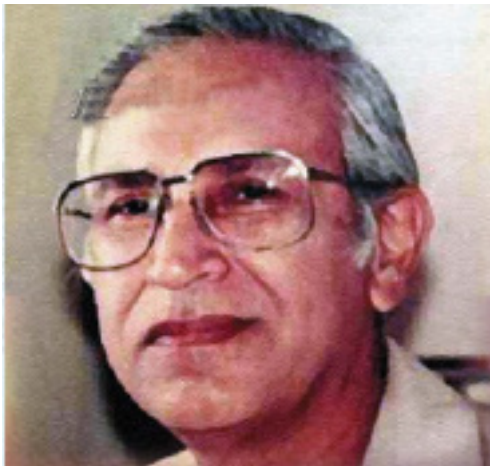


J M Lobo Prabhu



J.M. Lobo Prabhu is the last in the list of legends in pre-Independence Indian English drama. Although he has produced over a dozen plays, only *Mother of New India: A Play of India Village in Three Acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) were released before India's Independence. He published *Collected Plays* in 1956. Despite Lobo Prabhu's outstanding predicament abilities and lucid writing, the audience had difficulty accepting his characters since they do not appear as convincingly believable, soothing, or pleasant.

Asif Currimbhoy



Asif Currimbhoy is an Indian playwright. He is one of the most prolific playwrights of the post-independence era. He is considered India's first authentic voice in the theatre. His

love for Shakespeare influenced his writing. He has produced over 30 plays, including farce, comedy, tragedy, soap opera, history and fantasy. He writes about various subjects. His plays are categorised socially, politically and religiously. He carefully selects the socio-political and religious themes related to India and neighbouring countries. He was repulsed by the violence in the country in the 1960s.

Diversity is the hallmark of Asif's plays as they include *The Clock*, *The Refugee*, *Goa*, *Doldrummers*, *Inquilab*, *Sonar Bangla*, *Thorns on a Canvas*, *Hungry Ones*, *Miracle Seed*, *Dumb Dancer*, *Dissident M.L.A.*, *Monsoon* and *The Valley of Assassins*. "In these plays, Currimbhoy deals with different aspects and problems of life. He does not worship beauty and does not present idealism. He presents life with its reality. He has taken unusual themes from contemporary Indian society and skillfully used them in his plays. Currimbhoy was shocked to observe the arrogance of power, cruelty, violence and sex, which was too terrifying, repulsive and almost barbaric" (Peter Nazareth).

Girish Karnad

Girish Karnad, along with Badal Sircar and Vijay Tendulkar, can be said to have established the modern Indian theatre of the post-independence era. Karnad was born in Matheran in 1938 and studied at Karnatak University, Dharwad and Oxford. Karnad spent his childhood at Sirsi, where he had first-hand experience with indigenous folk theatre. "He was adequately exposed to two forms of theatre; plays staged by troupes of professional actors called



Natak companies and the more traditional costume drama of *Yakshagana* performances acted out in the open air”. He was influenced by western dramatists such as Brecht, Anouilh, Sartre and Beckett. This influence with Sanskrit drama, along with the Greek influence of Western theatre, gave birth to Karnad’s theatre, hailed as “a theatre of in-betweenness”.

In Karnad’s theatre, the drama depends not on the plot but on the theatrical experience. For example, in *Hayavadana*, the principles of alienation of Brechtian epic theatre are beautifully infused with various folk motifs. He believed that the visual aspect of the theatre was far more important than any other aspect and used folktale customs to create his own world. Indeed, Karnad owes much to the Indian folk art ritual theatre, which has many aspects of the meta-theatre. The list of his works includes *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1964), *Hittina Hunja* (1970), *Hayavadana* (1971) and *Nagamandala* (1988). Other notable contributions include *Anjumallige* (1985), *Tale-Danda* (1990), *Agni Muttu*

Male (1995), *Tippuvina Kanasugalu* (2000) and *Bali, The Sacrifice* (2002).

Hayavadana and *Nagamandala* are often considered to share common features, due to which they are regarded as twins. “In *Hayavadana*, Karnad dramatises an archetypal riddle of identity posed by the story of the ‘Transposed Heads’ in the Sanskrit work, *Vetala Panchavimsati* which forms a part of Kshemendra’s *Brihatkathamajari* and Somadeva’s *Kathasaritsagara*. In this play, Karnad operates within a complex framework of myths and legends, effecting a perfect synthesis of eastern and western modes of dramaturgy”.

Nagamandala deals with a woman’s quest for an ideal husband. The play emphasises a modern woman’s craving for love and recognition. *Agni Muttu* (*The Fire and The Rain*) treats the intriguing amorality problem in contemporary life. *The Fire and the Rain*, however, seems to echo *The Waste Land* concerning the interpretation of “Da”. The plays *Driven Snow* and *Bali: The Sacrifice* “foreground the complex issue of social conflict, subliminal pressure and violence which provoke not so much physical as emotional and psychological repercussions”.

In this way, Karnad redefines the modern experience by using the complex archetype of literature and gaining meaning through myths, legends and folklore. His dramaturgy is characterised by outstanding dramatic style and excellent technique. He deals with existential issues, identity, recognition, and problems of isolation and frustrations. For Karnad, drama is not just a literary form but a direct



descendant of the stage of life.

Vijay Tendulkar



Vijay Tendulkar is a subtle observer of Indian social reality. He brought a virtual revolution in Indian theatre in terms of content and style. "He is known for his insightful "objectification" in the development of multilayered characters whose existential angst was held up against the social traumas of the society".

Tendulkar's plays always focused on the problems and conditions of the middle and lower classes. They have dealt with themes that unwind the exploitation of power and latent violence in human relationships. He was the one who led the avant-garde Marathi Theatre. His works deal with the theme of isolation of the individual and his confrontation with hostile surroundings.

Tendulkar wrote a play at 11 and he himself directed and acted in it. He began working in a printing press, later as a journalist, and then as a freelance writer. At 14, he went on to join the 1942 Indian Freedom movement. He has written 30 full-length plays, such as *Grihasiha* (1955), *Shrimant* (1955), *Manus Navache Bet* (1956), *Madhalya Bhinti* (1958), *Chimniche Ghar Menache*

(1960), *Mijinklo Mi Haralo* (1963), *Kavlyanchi Shala* (1963), *Sari Ga Sari* (1964), *Ek Hotti Mulagi* (1967), *Shantata! Court ChaluAhe* (1968), *Ashi Pakhare Yeti* (1970), *Gidhade* (1971), *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Gharte Amuche Chhan* (1973), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1973), *Dwamdipacha Mukabala* (1973-74), *Bhalyakaka* (1974), *BhauMurarrao* (1975), *Bebi* (1975), *Pahije Jatiche* (1977), *Kamala* (1982), *Mitrachi Goshta* (1982), *Kanyadan* (1983), *Vithala* (1985), *Chiranjeev Saubhagya Kanshini, Safer* (1991), *Niyatiehya Bailala Ho* (1992) and *Kutre* (2003).

He has been felicitated with many awards and honours, including the Maharashtra State Government Award (1956, 1969 and 1972), Sangeet Natak Akademy Award (1971), The Filmfare Award (1980 and 1983), Padmabhushan (1984), Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay Prize (1970), National Award for the best Hindi film *Manthan* (1977), Saraswati Samman (1993), The Kalidas Samman (1999), The Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1999) and The Jansthan Award (1999). The latest recognition for lifetime literary achievement was the Katha Chaudamani Award in 2001.

Badal Sircar

Badal Sircar, the great Bangali playwright, uses the contemporary scenario to uncover the social problems of modern man. 'Utter meaninglessness of human existence' is the prevalent theme of his plays. His significant contribution lies in his 'Third Theatre', also called Street Theatre. It has revolutionised the concept of dramatic performance. Through this theatre, Sircar addresses not only socio-political but also ecological issues. His theatre also



addresses the growing unemployment among educated youth. Street theatre is comparatively interpretive and can quickly achieve the goal of propagating an egalitarian message among people of all stations of life. The theatre thus holds a social equality of sorts.



Nivedita Tandon says, “Various issues of social and ecological concerns are voiced through this medium of theatre. They seek to enlighten the masses on a plethora of social, political, religious, economic, communalism, caste, disparities, terrorism, nuclear disasters, corruption, and AIDS awareness find a place in the repertory of street plays.”

Safdar Hashmi

The Print describes Safdar Hashmi as “the firebrand Communist playwright who redefined the art of resistance in India”. Hashmi was a theatre actor and activist. He was born and grew up as a Marxist, which he followed during his undergraduate period at Delhi University. He was also a member of the Indian People’s Theatre Association (IPTA) and worked on several plays as a student. He, along with other amateur theatre practitioners, founded Jana Natya Manch- ‘JANAM.’



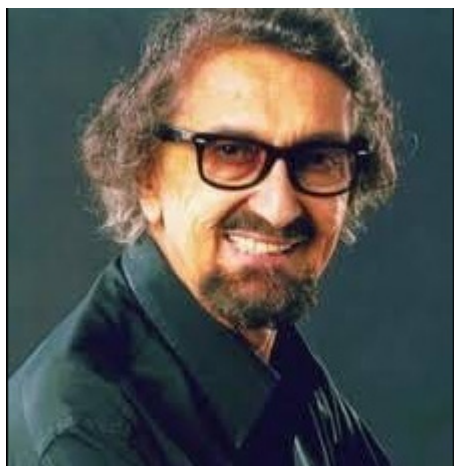
“When Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was accused of rigging the elections, he produced a street play, *Kursi, Kursi, Kursi* (Chair, Chair, Chair), as a reaction to the controversy.” The play was performed every day for a week at the Boat Club Lawns in New Delhi, the then hub of political activity.

After Hashmi was assassinated during a performance in 1989, the street theatre underwent a significant change. As part of its effort to promote the CPI (M) in the local election campaign, JANAM was presenting their play *HallaBol* (“Raise Your Voice”) to a group of workers at Jhandapur, Sahibabad, outside of Delhi, in the early afternoon of that winter day. Safdar Hashmi was killed during the agitation as a result of a candidate from the opposing party ordering JANAM to stop performing and being supported by a group of about one hundred attackers with weapons and wooden bars. In India, April 12th is currently recognised as National Street Theatre Day in honour of his birthday.

Alaque Padamsee

Once the CEO of Lintas, later known as the “father of Modern Indian Advertising”, Alaque Padamsee built





over 100 brands. Padamsee was born in 1928 during the Bombay presidency of British India. He was an actor, a theatre personality and a filmmaker.

In the movie *Gandhi* (1982), the role of Muhammad Ali Jinnah was played by Padamsee. He was the only Indian to be voted into the Oscars of World Advertising, International Clio Hall of Fame. He was Chairman of the London Institute of Corporate Training. Padamsee created the advertisements Lalitaji for Surf, Cherry Charlie for Cherry Blossom Shoe Polish, the MRF Muscle Man, the Liril girl in the waterfall, the Kamasutra couple, Hamara Bajaj, the TV detective Karamchand, the Fair & Handsome brand, etc.

“His [dramatic] works include *Noor*, a sympathetic, gendered lens on Noor Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal; *A Quiet Desire*, the story of Rabindranath Tagore and of his brother and sister-in-law Kadambari; the adaptation of Kipling’s *The Jungle Book* into a coming-of-age story, retitled *Yeh Bhi Jungle, Woh Bhi Jungle*, in which the character Mowgli epitomises every important transition of adolescence in his search for identity.” Padamsee received Padmashri award in 2000. He

also received Sangeet Natak Akademi Tagore Ratna in 2012. He died at the age of ninety in 2018.

Mahesh Dattani



Mahesh Dattani is not only a dramatist but also a director. He is known to have exploited both Indian and Western traditions for theatrical practice. He makes a delicate balance among theme, language and stagecraft in his plays, making them acceptable at home and abroad. The themes of his play include family relationships, in which the father-son relationship is most predominantly discussed.

As discussed above, “Dattani’s entire composition and work might be observed as a ruthless attack on Indian male-controlled society. He attained his initial attention by centralising female characters in his maiden play, *Where There’s a Will* (1988). Gender issues also occupy central motifs in plays like *Tara* and *Bravely Fought the Queen*. The play revolves around the women characters and their brave attempt to live their lives in a patriarchal society... *Seven Steps Around the Fire* represents the hijra girl and her secret marriage with a politician’s son... *Final solutions* (1993) addresses the Hindu-Muslim split-up. *The Tale of a Mother Feeding Her Child* is a radio play which speaks

about how a love affair could change a person beyond her religion, colour and nationality.”

Shanta Gokhale



Shanta Gokhale is a novelist, translator, theatre critic and journalist best known for her work *Rita Welinkar* and *Tya Varshi*. Gokhale initially published stories in English and Marathi in various publications and eventually began publishing novels in the 1970s. She published her first book, *Rita Welinkar*, in Marathi, which she later published in English in 1995. She has written screenplays for documentaries and several films.

Gokhale later met Satyadev Dubey and Girish Karnad, which led her to understand the nuances of writing for the theatre. Later, she started writing plays like *Avinash* in 1988 (directed by Dubey), *Dip and Dop* and *Rosemary for Remembrance*. In 2000, she published a critical study titled *Marathi Theatre, Playwright at the Centre: Marathi Drama from 1843 to the Present*. She edited the book *The Scenes We Made: An Oral History of Experimental Theatre in Mumbai*.

Manjula Padmanabhan



Manjula Padmanabhan is an Indian playwright, journalist, comic strip artist, and writer of children's books. Her best-known play is *Lights Out!* (1984), and her *Hidden Fires* is a series of monologues. *The Artist's Model* (1995) and *Sextet* (1996) are her other works. Manjula Padmanabhan's plays deal with various themes such as violence towards women, marginalisation and alienation, colonisation and communal riots, grim and tragic predicament and dehumanisation of the city people.

Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* is a daily mystery of a woman who screams with evident pain, breaking down the structure of a divided family in response to the suffering of a middle-class couple. Other themes she portrays are alienation and marginalisation, powerlessness, fate, luck, meaninglessness, normlessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, and self-estrangement. She has also authored a collection of short stories called *Kleptomania*. Her most recent book *Escape* was published in 2008.



Mahashweta Devi



Mahashweta Devi has dominated the Indian regional literature through her works that fight a constant battle against the perpetrators of exploitation against the tribal communities of West Bengal, women and Dalits. As an activist, she proved to be an exemplary embodiment through her struggle for the rights of the marginalised people of the tribes of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Mahashweta Devi adopted education and journalism as her profession early in life, but her indomitable spirit and political views prevented her from settling down at any work. Her first novel *Nati* was published in 1957. At the core of Mahashweta Devi's philosophy and worldview is the profound rays of blissful humanism infused with love for the poor and those who suffer and care for the weaker sections of society.

Mahashweta Devi's writings depict the harsh lives of the Adivasis, especially the Santhal, Shabars, Lodhas, and Munda, who are the semi-colonial and semi-feudal structures of society,

and represent their simple joys and sorrows. Sometimes, her works act as a canvas that paints their lives, suffering, exploitation, and the terrible poverty they face. *Bioscoper Baksho*, *Aranyer Adhikar*, *Hajar Churashir Ma*, and *Chatti Munda O Tar Tir* are her masterpieces.

Some of her other notable works are *Hajar Churashir Ma* (No. 1084's Mother, 1975), *Aranyer Adhikar* (The Right to the Forest, 1977), *Agnigarbha* (Womb of Fire, 1978), *Choti Munda Evam Tar Tir* (Choti Munda and His Arrow, 1980), *Imaginary Maps*, 1995 (translated by Gayatri Spivak), *Breast Giver* (1998), *Our Non-Veg Cow* (1998) *Rudali*, *Bashai Tudu* (1993), *The Book of the Hunter* (2002), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987) and *Dust on the Road* (1997).

Mahashweta Devi was primarily a writer of fiction. In the 1970s, she dramatised her major novel *Mother of 1084*. It was followed by her dramatisation of four of her finest stories. She believed that the dramatic form had a greater reach to a layer of audience. Her plays deal with socio-economic issues ranging from the urban bourgeoisie to the urban underworld, untouchables and Adivasi communities.

Devi has been honoured with Padma Vibhushan, Magsaysay and Padmasree awards for her activist work. She also received India's highest literary award, the coveted Jnanpith Award in 1996, and Yashwant Rao Chavan National Award in 2010 for her contribution to national integration, democratic values and the socio-economic development of India.



Appendix- 3

Indian English Prose and Fiction Writers

Swami Vivekananda



Narendranath Datta, born on 12 January 1864 and popularly known as Swami Vivekananda, was a Hindu monk and disciple of the famous Indian mystic Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He was not just a spiritual thinker but a prolific writer, eloquent speaker, ardent nationalist, philosopher, and author. Vivekananda had a significant role in familiarising Vedanta, yoga, and other Indian traditions with the West. He devoted all his efforts to serve the underprivileged and the needy while working relentlessly to improve society. His expertise and teaching abilities inspired many, especially young people for whom his words served as a roadmap to success, due to which his birthday is celebrated as National Youth Day.

He is best known in the United States

for his ground-breaking speech at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions. He introduced it in the speech Hinduism to America and called for religious tolerance and an end to fanaticism. A newspaper account described him as "an orator by divine right and undoubtedly the greatest figure at the Parliament." He conducted hundreds of public and private lectures and classes, disseminating tenets of Hindu philosophy in the United States, England and Europe. After returning to India, he found the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta. Self-perfection and service were his ideals which were mainly developed in the mission. Vivekananda travelled extensively in India for five years, visiting learning centres and acquiring knowledge of diverse religious traditions and social patterns. He developed sympathy for the suffering, pitied the people's poverty, and resolved to uplift the nation. Living primarily on *bhiksha* (alms), he travelled on foot and by railway. During his travels, he met and stayed with Indians from all religions and walks of life: scholars, dewans, rajas, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, low-caste workers and government officials.

"Vivekananda was a man with a two-fold mission. He wished to bring the true nature of Hinduism to the West ('I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East,' he said), and he aspired to work for uplifting India. His *Complete Works* (Vols. I to VIII, 1907-1951) mostly consist of the spoken word. *Selections from Swami*



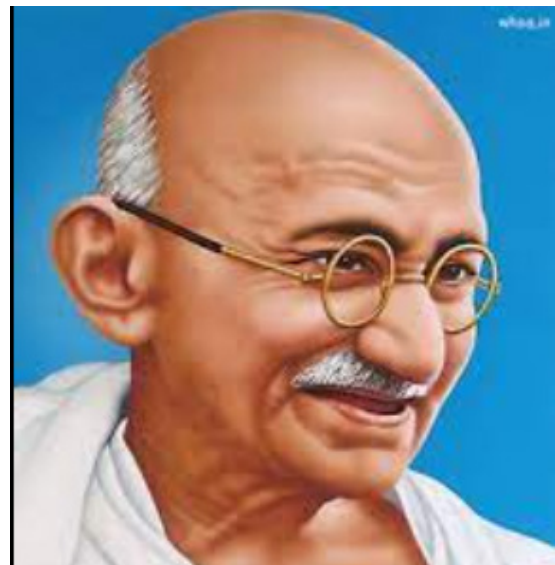
Vivekananda (1944) is a representative anthology. In his lectures abroad, Vivekananda stresses the essential unity of all religions and the need to eschew sectarianism and fanaticism, and looks forward to a day when great men shall arise and cast off these kindergartens of religion and make vivid and powerful the true religion, the worship of the Spirit by the Spirit”.

Vivekananda’s prose has not garnered any literary attention. A detailed examination of his writings reveals that they had every characteristic of excellent prose. It uses figures like similes, metaphors, epigrams, and paradoxes skillfully, as well as subtle effects like euphony and cacophony, assonance and consonance. His prose style is simple, rhythmic and harmonious. He makes a point initially, then seamlessly develops it with persuasive reasoning or valuable analogies. He believed a good style should be straightforward, informal and expressive.

Regarding categorisation, the writing style of Vivekananda can be categorised as expository rather than descriptive, argumentative, or persuasive. Expository writing typically provokes thought or provides information. The success of such writing primarily hinges on its clarity and lucidity, both of which Vivekananda’s writing possesses in sufficient amounts. However, it occasionally shifts towards a convincing mode while maintaining its distinctive essence. Its primary rhythmic pattern is associative, occasionally switching to prose rhythm and sometimes to the rhythm of poetry. Fusing all the fundamental components of style into a natural whole makes his style unique.

Mahatma Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, born on October 2, 1869, and known as the “father of the Indian Nation”, was a lawyer, politician, social activist, and writer who became the leader of the nationalist movement against the British rule of India. He introduced the idea of non-violent resistance called *Satyagrah*. Gandhi was trained in the law at the Inner Temple, London.



Gandhiji was a prolific writer whose signature style was simple, precise, clear and devoid of artificialities. He firmly believed in reality than imagination, and his writings were bold and very direct. Some English Viceroy's even admitted that Gandhi expressed himself in excellent English with a fine appreciation of the value of the words he used. Gandhi claimed that a thoughtless word never escaped his lips or pen. His knack for picking up apt words for translating an idea into another language was remarkable. He edited several newspapers, including *Harijan* in Gujarati, Hindi and English.

The beauty of his thoughts and language made a deep impression on some of the great men of our age.

M. K. Naik divided the literary phase of Gandhi into three periods: the London period (1888-91), the South African period (1893-1915) and the Indian period (1915- 48). Works during the London period were written at the age of 19. His ten short essays on the subjects of Indian vegetarians, Indian food and Indian festivals were published in *The Vegetarian Messenger*. *Guide to London* is a 55-pages essay, probably written between 1893 and 1894, and a colourless document based on Gandhi's experiences in London.

Gandhi's South African period reveals his development as a debater, journalist and author. Gandhi fervently fights for the improvement of the situation of the South African Indians in the publications *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa* (1895), *The Indian Franchise* (1895) and *Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa* (1896).

The Indian Opinion (1903 – 1914) was the first journal launched in Gujarati and English. Gandhi's first significant publication was *Hind Swaraj*, which appeared in 1909. It was first written in Gujarati and then translated into English by the author himself in 1910. Gandhi served as editor of *Young India* (1919 – 1922) and *Harijan* during the third phase, referred to as the Indian period (1915 – 48). Naik says that "his autobiography among his writings is spiritual *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Vol. I, 1927; Vol. II, 1928; translated by Mahadev Desai); and is easily the most outstanding. Essentially

a spiritual manual as its title indicates, it is also an absorbing human document, agonizingly frank and unflinchingly honest in its self-portraiture."

Gandhi wrote his autobiography in Gujarati. He introduced a simple, forceful style that turned the Gujarati language into people's language. His other prose works included *Satyagraha in South Africa*, narrating his struggle there, *Hind Swaraj* or *Indian Home Rule*, a political pamphlet, and a paraphrase in Gujarati of John Ruskin's *Unto This Last* which was an early critique of political economy. The Government of India published his complete works titled *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* in 100 volumes. On 30 January 1948, Gandhi was shot dead.

Jawaharlal Nehru



India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was an anti-colonial nationalist, secular humanist, social democrat and author. He was educated in England at Harrow School and Trinity College, Cambridge, and trained in the law at the Inner Temple. Nehru holds a prestigious place in Indian English literature by contributing to the growth of English



prose in a distinctive writing style. His compositions were transparent, unstructured, inferential and poetically rich. They combined elements of science, history and literature. His choice of words and phrases was aligned with care and effectiveness.

In addition to numerous works, Nehru spoke in public sporadically. His first book *Soviet Russia* (1928) is a compilation of 16 articles that include some random drawings and impressions of Russia after his vacation there in 1927. He wrote thirty-one letters from prison to his daughter, who was then ten years old, which are compiled in *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1930). More expansive in scope is his *Glimpses of World History* (1934). Contrary to most European historians, whose accounts of world history usually emphasise Europe, "Nehru takes a larger view and builds his narrative round the theme of the development of human civilisation on earth." "History teaches us", he says, "of growth and progress and of the possibility of an infinite advance for man." The book provides evidence of Nehru's secularism, scientific temper and socialist sympathies. *An Autobiography* (1936) is easily the crowning achievement of Nehru as a writer. Written at the age of forty-five, it is a literary expression of a man at the height of his power. In his preface, Nehru describes the book as a sketchy, personal and incomplete account of the past. However, the autobiography presents a vivid picture of both the man and his milieu. Many facets of Nehru's complex personality are revealed here, such as his scientific outlook, aversion to organised religion, admiration for Marxism and fervent nationalism, always

balanced by a sharp awareness of the larger forces in world history and their effect on India.

Numerous collections of Nehru's speeches, essays, press statements, letters, etc., have been published from time to time. These include *Recent Essays and Writings: On the Future of India* (1934), *Communalism and Other Subjects* (1934), *India and the World* (1936), *Eighteen Months in India* (1936), *The Unity of India: Collected Writings 1937-1940* (1941), *Before and After Independence- Collected Speeches 1922- 1950* (1950), *A Bunch of Old Letters* (1958), *Independence and After (Collected Speeches: 1946-1964) Vols. I-V* (1949- 1965), and *Eleven Volumes of the Selected Works* (1970) edited by S. Gopal.

S. Radhakrishnan



Dr S. Radhakrishnan was born on September 5, 1888. One of the most distinguished twentieth-century scholars of comparative religion and philosophy, he is the most recognised

and influential Indian thinker in academic circles. He also served as a professor at Oxford and became the Vice-Chancellor of both Delhi University and Banaras Hindu University due to his successful academic career.

His writings were primarily concerned with Indian culture and creating a caste-free society. He thinks the author should make his point very apparent to the readers in the fewest words possible, expressing his idea simply and directly. When dealing with philosophy, most complicated works were simplified through his language style. He holds a secure place among the 'makers of Indian literature' since, in addition to being the greatest philosopher-statesman of our time, he was also a potent English writer. His command of the English language made it easier for him to become a world figure.

Radhakrishnan's written works include *The Philosophy of the Upanishads* (1924), *Indian Philosophy*, 2 vol. (1923–27), *An Idealist View of Life* (1932), *East and West: Some Reflections* (1955) and *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (1939). In his lectures and books, he tried to interpret Indian thought for Westerners.

Nirad. C. Chaudhuri

A famous English and Bengali journalist, author and scholar, Nirad C. Chaudhuri was born on November 23, 1897. Chaudhuri had a definite writing style that was all his own. He believed "the essence of a piece of writing cannot be isolated from its style." According to him, "style is the subject itself." Nevertheless, he is still the most

contentious novelist in India. In 1942, he shifted to New Delhi to work as a broadcaster and political commentator at All India Radio.



The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, published in 1951, is Chaudhuri's best-known work. Throughout his literary career, he received numerous accolades for his writing. Chaudhuri became the first and only Indian to get the Duff Cooper Memorial Award in 1966 for *The Continent of Circe*. For his biography of Max Müller, titled *Scholar Extraordinary* and published in 1974, Chaudhuri received the Sahitya Akademi Award from India's National Academy of Letters.

Chaudhuri was first educated at Kishorganj and Kolkata and then at Ripon College. Later, he attended the University of Calcutta and Ripon College, where he was placed first on the merit list. Despite enrolling in Calcutta University's MA programme, he could not finish it and instead obtained a



clerical position with the Indian Army's Accounting Department. Since then, he has written frequently, contributing to periodicals with essays. Later he started a new career as a journalist and editor. His first published article was "Bharat Chandra." During the 1930s, Chaudhuri battled poverty, which he later documented as the sequel to his autobiography *Thy Hand, Great Anarch*. He also wrote several other books, including *A Passage to England* (1959), *Scholar Extraordinary* (1974), *The Life of Max Muller* (1974), *The Continent of Circe* (1965), and *To Live or Not to Live* (1971). *Three Horsemen of the New Apocalypse* was his latest novel, released in 1997. At 73, Chaudhuri left India and moved to Oxford, England, where he lived until he died in 1999. During his years living abroad, he thought and wrote a lot about his native country.

C.S. Lakshmi



Born in 1944 in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, C. S. Lakshmi is an Indian writer who wrote in Tamil and conducted independent women's studies. She wrote under the pen name Ambai. She received her PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Her dissertation

examined American policies toward refugees who fled Hungary after the unsuccessful 1956 revolution. After completing her degree, she worked as a college professor and school teacher in Tamil Nadu. She now resides in Mumbai with her husband, the filmmaker Vishnu Mathur.

When Lakshmi was a teenager, she wrote *Nandimalai Charalilae* (At Nandi Hills) in 1962. The 1966 release of the Tamil novel *Andhi Maalai* ("Twilight") marked her debut as a serious author, and it won the Kalaimagal Narayanaswamy Aiyar Prize. She was admired for the short story "Siragukal Muriyum" (Wings Will Be Broken), published in the literary journal *Kanaiyazhi* in 1967. A short story collection with the same name that included this piece was later published in book form in 1976. The same year, she received a two-year fellowship to research Tamil women writers. The project was released in 1984 with the title *The Face Behind the Mask*. Her second collection of short stories in Tamil, *Veetin Mulaiyil Oru Camaiyalarai* (A Kitchen at the Corner of the House), was published in 1988, establishing her status as a significant short story writer. Her feminist approach, attention to detail, and ironic sensibility define her works. *A Purple Sea* (1992) and *In a Forest, A Deer* (2006) are two of her stories that Lakshmi Holmström translated into English. She shared the 2006 Vodafone Crossword Book Award for *In a Forest, A Deer* with Lakshmi Holmström. The Canadian Tamil Literary Garden gave her the 2008 Iyal Virudhu Lifetime Achievement Award for her contributions to Tamil literature.

For more than 30 years, Lakshmi

worked independently as a researcher in women's studies. While she writes Tamil fiction under the pen name Ambai, her real name, Dr S. Lakshmi, is used in journals like *Economic and Political Weekly* and newspapers like *The Hindu* and *The Times of India*. She was a visiting fellow at the Institute for Culture and Consciousness at the University of Chicago in 1992. By convincing the university to purchase Roja Muthaiah Chettiar's library of books and other published materials, she played a crucial role in creating the Roja Muthiah Research Library (RMRL).

In addition to lecturing at colleges in New Delhi, she has worked as a research officer for the Indian Council of Historical Research. She participated in two research projects in the 1990s: *An Idiom of Silence: An Oral History and Pictorial Study*, funded by the Homi J. Bhabha fellowship, and *Illustrated Social History of Women in Tamil Nadu*, sponsored by the Ford Foundation. Two volumes of the Seven Seas & Seven Mountains series contain her ensuing research findings. In the first volume, *The Singer and the Song* (2000), the collection of interviews with female musicians are included. In the second volume, *Mirrors and Gestures* (2003), interviews with female dancers are collected. Lakshmi established the non-governmental organisation SPARROW (Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women) in 1988 to preserve and conserve the works of female authors and artists. Many writings by SPARROW were published about female authors and artists. She has remained the organisation's director and a trustee for long years. "A feminist who has lived without compromise" is

how she describes herself.

Kancha Ilaiah

Kancha Ilaiah is an eminent Indian political theorist, Dalit campaigner and writer. He was born in 1952 in Warangal District in Telangana. As a member of the community that was considered lower caste, Ilaiah had to experience discrimination while growing up. He has always been vocal about caste and Dalit politics. His mother, Kancha Kattamma, who was killed during a protest against police brutality, served as an inspiration for him.



Ilaiah received his MPhil degree from Osmania University for his study of land reform in Andhra Pradesh. He was awarded a PhD for his work *Political Thought of Gautama Buddha*, later published as a book titled *God as Political Philosopher: Buddha's Challenge to Brahmanism*. His widely read book *Why I am Not a Hindu: A Shudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy* (1996) is a thought-provoking take on caste, class, culture and religion from the perspective of oppressed classes. His other works

include *From A Shepherd Boy to an Intellectual: My memoirs, Post-Hindu India, Buffalo Nationalism: A Critique of Spiritual Fascism* and *The Shudras: Vision for a New Path*, which he wrote along with Karthik Raja Karuppusamy.

Arundhati Roy

Suzanna Arundhati Roy, also known as Arundhati Roy, is an Indian author, actor, and political activist born in Shillong, Meghalaya, on November 24, 1961. Her debut novel, *The God of Small Things*, which has sold over six million copies worldwide, won the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1997.



The novel became an instant bestseller and was concurrently published in 16 languages and 19 countries. However, it sparked outrage in India since it depicted a romance between a Syrian Christian and a Hindu “untouchable.” It is the tale of two identical twins and is set in the rural district of Ayemenem in Kerala, southern India. It tells the tale of Estha and Rahel, two identical twins, who meet after 23 years after separation and exchange memories of

the circumstances surrounding their English cousin Sophie Mol’s tragic accident in 1969. Most of Roy’s later creative output was political essays, much of it addressing the issues that her country was experiencing in the age of global capitalism. *Power Politics* (2001), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002), *War Talk* (2003), *Public Power in the Age of Empire* (2004), *Field Notes on Democracy: Listening to Grasshoppers* (2009), *Broken Republic: Three Essays* (2011) and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014) are a few of her works. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, Roy’s second novel after 20 years, was released in 2017. The piece combines an ensemble of people, from a transgender lady to a resistance fighter in Kashmir, portraying contemporary India while fusing personal experiences with current themes. It was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in the US and was on the longlist for the Man Booker Prize. In 2003, Roy received the Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom.

Roy was involved in several environmental and human rights movements, frequently coming into conflict with Indian law authorities and the middle-class establishment of the nation. She received criticism for backing Maoist-backed Naxalite insurgent organisations, which she encapsulated in the book *Walking with the Comrades* (2011). In 2010, she narrowly escaped being charged with sedition after making comments in favour of Kashmiri independence. She received a notice of contempt of court in December 2015 for an article in which she defended a detained professor on suspicion of having Maoist ties. A stay was given by the Supreme Court two years later, temporarily halting the

proceedings. Roy stayed active in many causes throughout this time. She was one of several people who signed an open letter in 2019 urging Afghan women to participate in negotiations between the United States and the Taliban. Roy received the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004, the Sahitya Akademi Award from the Indian Academy of Letters in 2006, and the Lannan Cultural Freedom Award in 2002 for her vocal support of human rights.



Ramachandra Guha

Ramachandra Guha, an Indian historian, environmentalist, author, and public intellectual, was born on April 29, 1958. His areas of research interest are society, politics, modernity, environment, cricket and economic history. He is considered an expert on the history of contemporary India. He earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics from St. Stephen's College, a master's degree from the Delhi School of Economics (MA), and his PhD in Sociology from the Indian Institute of Management at Kolkata, where he wrote a doctoral thesis on the history and prehistory of the Chipko movement. Now a full-time writer, he has previously taught at the universities of Yale and Stanford and held the Arné Naess Chair at the University of Oslo. In addition to his academic work, Guha frequently writes about social and political topics for the general public. He penned a bi-weekly column for *The Hindu*, India's national newspaper, between 1997 and 2009. He now contributes a fortnightly article to *The Telegraph*, which is translated into various Indian newspapers.

His works include *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* (Oxford University Press, 1989), *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribes, and India* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), a biography of the anthropologist-activist Verrier Elwin, praised as the "best biography by an Indian for many years" by the *Times Literary Supplement*, and the prize-winning social history of cricket, *Corner of a Foreign Field: The Indian History of a British Sport* (2016). Gandhi's time in South Africa is highlighted in his most recent book *Gandhi Before India* (2013).

Fiction writers

Khushwant Singh

Khushwant Singh (1915-2014) is the author of some works like *Ranjit Singh: Maharajah of the Punjab* (1962) and *A History of the Sikhs* (in two volumes, 1963–1966). He has translated works from Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu, as well as the Sikh scriptures for a 1960 UNESCO compilation called *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*. Born in Hadali, now in



Pakistan, he studied in Delhi and Lahore and briefly attended St. Stephen's College in Delhi. He then went to King's College London to study law and practise at the Lahore High Court from 1939 to 1947. His tenure as editor of *The Illustrated Weekly of India* (1969–1978),



during which he increased the weekly's circulation from 65,000 to 400,000, was unquestionably his best professional work as a journalist and a man of letters.

In *Train to Pakistan* (1956), Khushwant Singh portrays the partition as an occurrence in ordinary peasants' life who have coexisted in peace despite their religious differences. When outsiders try to incite the locals to attack Muslims travelling by train to Pakistan, problems start to occur. A kind and impetuous Sikh peasant named Jugga saves the day at the price of his own life. Iqbal, a devoted communist, and corrupt law enforcement authorities proved ineffective in this case. Politics and policy are referred to throughout the book as a form of bad faith compared to the villagers' down-to-earth simplicity. In this regard, the novel suggests an

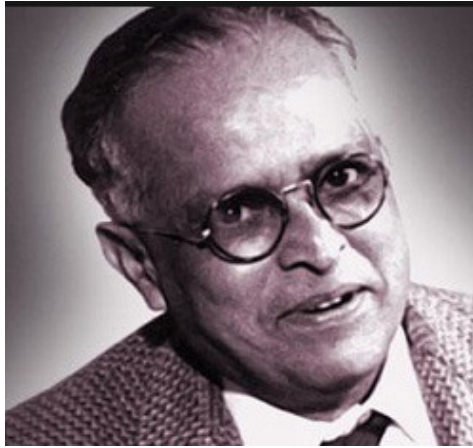
absolute confidence in the people and a gruff romantic nationalism that looks wary of the metropolis and the state, even though it directly recounts the horrible events of the partition.

Similar to his second, less popular novel, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), which tells the story of a Sikh joint family in the 1940s, Singh's belief that Indian culture should express itself more openly about sex is reflected in *Train to Pakistan. Delhi: A Novel* (1989), which uses a large historical canvas, narrated in a chatty and digressive narrative style, irreverent tone and substance, mixes this viewpoint with his journalistic style. An ageing writer loosely based on Singh's public persona serves as the book's primary narrator. His interactions with the eccentric Bhagmati provide a glimpse into the rich history of the nation's capital from 1265 till the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

R.K. Narayan

A combination of peaceful reality, fantasy, and soft irony characterise R.K. Narayan's writings. His approach is entirely different from Anand's radical humanism. Most of Narayan's life was spent in Mysore as a Tamil Brahmin. Malgudi is a fictional little village in South India that appears in many of his works. His debut book, *Swami and His Friends* (1935), describes the adventures of a kid named Swaminathan and his friends, complete with the customary rounds of pranks and punishments. Although the book's events are cliché, Narayan's humorous writing and comprehension of the boy's motivations make them unforgettable. The story of Chandran, a sensitive young man engaged in a

struggle between the Western and Eastern ways of life, is told in *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937). Even becoming a sanyasi crosses Chandran's mind.



When he finally gets home, he discovers that the customary arranged marriage is not a burden. Though we might laugh at Chandran's attitude, we feel sorry for him. His other book, published in 1938 and titled *Dark Room*, shows the character Savitri's silent suffering. Savitri leaves her spouse and children after learning that her husband has a crush on a working lady. Savitri eventually goes back to her unrepentant husband.

The English Teacher (1946) is centred on Krishnan, a young college instructor, and his modest middle-class home. The minor issues of day-to-day life are described in the first part. His young wife, Suseela, goes away after the first section. Krishnan is connected with his deceased wife's soul and spends the rest of his life working at a children's school. The 1949 film *Mr Sampath* is about the production of a legendary movie. Strange things happen outside the planned scenario while the climax scene is being filmed. The young artist Ravi tries to abduct the actress Shanti

after falling in love with her. Ravi ends up in police custody. Sampath, who embarks on numerous adventures and accepts failure with calmness, retires to rest at home with Shanti.

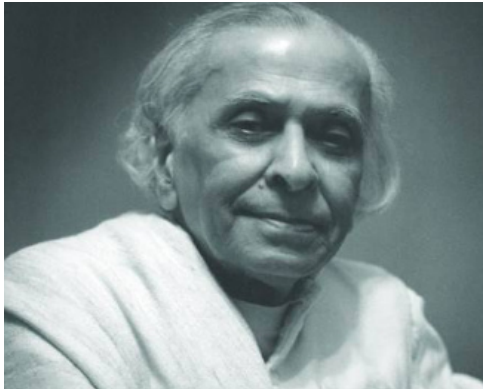
The Guide, published in 1958, is regarded as Narayan's best novel. Raju's journey from a railway guide to a guru is accomplished through a skilful pattern of comedic complexities. But the irony prompts us to consider issues like fantasy and reality, the man and the mask, aims and methods, and several unsettling concerns about human motivations and acts. The use of the storytelling style in *The Guide* is likewise subtle. The story "swings back and forward" between the past and present. The author deals with the past and present through dual narrators. The story has a beautiful circular structure because it begins with Raju at the abandoned rural temple and finishes with his forced death there.

The central theme of Narayan's works is irony. He uses various techniques such as sarcasm to produce humour. The irony is interwoven in Narayan's writing in sporadic instances of narrative and is incorporated into the plot, character and style. The writer proves that irony is the most common source of humour. He looks at the mistakes of residents of Malgudi with humanitarian sympathy.

The books by Narayan exhibit a strong sense of place. Malgudi, the setting for all his novels, faces evolution as they are written more time. In his early writings, Malgudi is described as a small town rather than a hamlet or city. River Sarayu runs alongside it. Other Malgudi monuments include the Albert Mission Hospital, Mempi Forest,

Malgudi Railway Station and Nallappa's Mango Grove. The Nationalist movement for freedom and other sociopolitical changes impacted Malgudi. There, the traditional and the modern coexist, just as they do in different regions of the country. As a result, Malgudi could be considered a microcosm of all of India.

Raja Rao



As a novelist, Raja Rao is distinct from both R. K. Narayan and Anand. His spiritual vision is what defines his outlook on life. Raja Rao, who hailed from Karnataka, was greatly influenced by his spiritually astute grandpa. Later, he was greatly affected by saints like Sri Atmananda Guru of Trivandrum and Pandit Taranath of Tungabhadra Ashram. Raja Rao's protracted exile from India in 1929, when he went to France to research the Mysticism of the West, increased his intense commitment to the Indian ethos.

A political novel that explores the impact of Gandhi's quest for freedom in Indian communities is *Kanthapura* (1938). A little Indian village named Kanthapura has seen a complete transformation due to the freedom struggle. The Gandhian leader of the hamlet, Moorthy, unifies people from all social classes and castes in support of independence. In the orthodox community of the village, he

spreads the message of freedom using the Harikatha and mythical tales. They labour together with the coffee plantation employees before being arrested by the court. Police officers terrorise the entire town, causing the people to flee to adjacent locations. Kanthapura was wholly transformed when Moorthy and his allies returned from prison. People from Bombay purchased most of the land and began constructing new homes there. The text of *Kanthapura* is presented as a *sthalapurana*. The Kanthapuriswari temple served as the focal point of village life.

Kanthapura is generally viewed as a political novel, perhaps the only political novel written by Raja Rao. The story indeed concentrates on the political theme of how the message of freedom transforms the innocent people of a village. To a certain extent, *Kanthapura* presents a realistic portrayal of the filtering of Gandhian struggle into Indian villages and how it unites people divided into caste lines. The fictitious world is filled with political happenings thanks to allusions to the Indian freedom fight and the local agitations led by Moorthy. The novel's political undertones extend beyond its subject matter. The novel's format also demonstrates political orientation because it uses a distinctive narrative style in the voice of an older woman.

The 1976 novel *Comrade Kirillov* was originally written in English but was initially released in French and later transformed into the English version. *Comrade Kirillov*, who is an Indian by the name of Padmanabha Iyer, appears to be the author's Marxist alter ego. The novel's epigraph clarifies that



Rao's obsession with Dostoevsky is the primary inspiration for portraying Kirillov. Dostoevsky's Kirillov served as the model for Rao's Kirillov. He resembles Shatov and Kirillov from Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* in many ways. The story takes place in London between the 1930s and 1940s. It includes Kirillov's viewpoints on communism, the British, the war, the struggle for Indian independence, etc. He weds Irene, a Czech woman who holds the same beliefs. After her demise, he relocates to Moscow. Despite being a self-declared Communist, Kirillov is depicted as having Indian blood. The novels by Raja Rao are different from those by R.K. Narayan or Anand. His stories lack the social dedication and awareness that the other two authors share because Rao is too preoccupied with philosophical and metaphysical musings.

The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories, published in 1947, is the first in the two collections of short stories. *The Policeman and the Rose* is the second collection, published 30 years later, containing as many as seven stories from the first collection. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1964, Padma Bhushan in 1969, Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1988 and Padma Vibhushan in 2007.

Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand's voice predominates in the Indian English fiction of the 1930s and 1940s. Anand's life and work exemplify the intriguing interaction between nationalism and cosmopolitanism, modernism and Marxism, and Gandhism and Nehruvian socialism. Anand was born in 1905 to a Hindu coppersmith family in Peshawar, now in Pakistan.



Untouchable, Anand's debut novel, was born because of his abrupt move from Bloomsbury to Sabarmati in 1935. As we have seen, Anand abandoned the project, returned home to study historical structures and resided with Gandhi at Sabarmati Ashram after being persuaded by the latter's portrait of the unnamed sweeper Uka in the pages of *Young India*. During this time of shared living, Gandhi is reported to have edited Anand's defective manuscript and told him to "tear down a hundred or more pages" since his untouchable hero was becoming too much of "a Bloomsbury intellectual."

A day in the life of Bakha, a contemplative young sweeper residing in the outcasted colony in a tiny cantonment town in northern India, is depicted in *Untouchable*. After a string of degrading encounters, Bakha is left looking for an unidentified way to escape his life's humiliation. The novel ends on a faint note of hope with the proposal of introducing flush toilets in place of the scavenger class cleaning the toilets manually.

Anand continues his study of the oppressed in his two subsequent



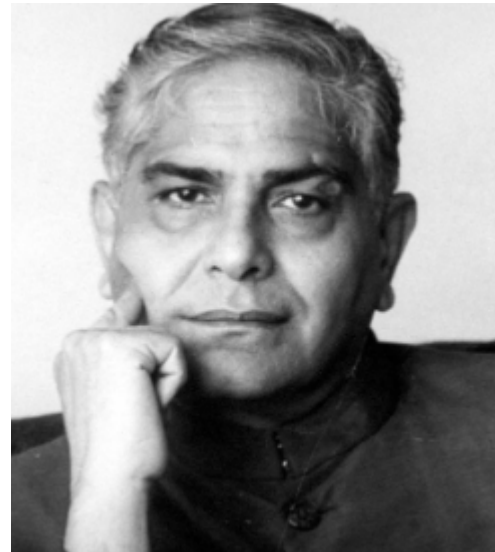
chronicles of 'coolies'- *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937). In both these novels, his concern shifts from questions of caste to those of class. *Coolie* is a Dickensian saga about the misfortunes which beset the young Munoo- an orphan from Kangra- upon his travels from the pastoral idyll of the hills to the big smog of Bombay. In his many incarnations as a domestic enslaved person, factory worker, pickle maker, coolie, and rickshaw puller, Munoo gains solace in the generosity and familial kindness of poor people like himself. However, these encounters do little to mitigate many oppressions he suffers at the hands of exploitative employers before dying of consumption.

Anand's works are important in the evolution of the Indian novel in English, despite its many flaws. The complicated alliances, misalliances, transformations, and failures of the Indian national movement are captured in his literature due to their experiments with social realism and commensurate attention to the surface of life in India before independence. Also, these books are groundbreaking in their attempt to translate the vibrant dialects of northern India into English. Anand's explanation of pidgin English, albeit problematic, paves the path for the later linguistic and cultural translations of Indian-English writers.

G.V. Desani

Govindas Vishnoodas Desani was a British-Indian novelist, poet, and social commentator who lived from 1909 till 2000. He was born in Kenya, raised in India, and reached adulthood in the UK. Desani, knowledgeable of ancient

Eastern spiritual traditions, is best known for his satirical farce *All About H. Hatterr* (1948),



which lampooned Indian and Anglo cultures and spiritual practices. Of the 23 short works in this anthology, *Hali* is the most well-known. Desani's obsessive mysticism embraces this prose poetry, which he had regularly updated since 1950 when he initially released it. News reporting, humour, and commentary were his other types of writings. Desani later taught eastern philosophy to Americans.

Edmund Blunden praised Desani for his performances, saying he "promises to be an extraordinary representative between East and West, not necessarily in the political sense, but that of broad interpretation. Desani's personality, as I know it, is incredibly alive and intriguing." Following Tagore's literary tradition, Desani wrote *Hali* (1950), a lengthy prose-poem-play while working as a BBC announcer. *Hali*, an intricate, verbose, and symbolic work about love, deception, and illusion, received high appreciation from numerous

critics, including E.M. Forster, who praised it mainly for its passionate and individualised tone.

Desani travelled back to India after the Second World War, where he studied Raja and Mantra yoga for the next fourteen years under the tutelage of numerous instructors. He also travelled to Japan because of his interest in mysticism and the occult, where he focused on Buddhist philosophy and practice. He regularly contributed to the *Illustrated Weekly of India* from 1960 to 1968. Desani eventually journeyed to the United States to teach philosophy and religion. After retiring, he was appointed Professor Emeritus at the University of Texas at Austin.

Desani's novella of profound self-awareness is a precursor to more current works like *The Trotter-Nama* (1988) by Allan Sealy and *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie. His innovation in language and irreverent treatment of the Great Books of the European canon may be more revolutionary. Desani's slightly pretentious and haughty demeanour is unique and helpful in the history of the developing Indian novel in English.

Nayantara Sehgal

Given that she spent a significant portion of her youth at Anand Bhavan in Allahabad, the Nehrus' ancestral home, Nayantara Sahgal is one female novelist whose writing has lessened the gap between the personal and the political. Sahgal, born in 1927, is the second of Vijayalakshmi Pandit and R.S. Pandit's three daughters. She obtained a BA in history from Wellesley College in Massachusetts after attending

missionary institutions in India.



Her debut book, *A Time to Be Happy* (1958), depicts the beginning of Indian freedom. Later, when the initial exhilaration subsided, and everything no longer appeared to be going well, *This Time of Morning* was published. When the state was getting over the tragedy of the 1947 partition, *Storm in Chandigarh* was published and dealt with Punjab's linguistic division. She resided with Nehru in Delhi for a while after returning to India in 1947, and her novels reflect a strong relationship with the political figure. *Relationship* (1994), a collection of her letters, sheds some light on the difficulties faced by a couple defying the middle-class norms of the time.

Most of Nayantara Sahgal's characters are members of India's wealthy upper class. Sahgal portrays religiously adhered characters and does not attempt to write about the caste-ridden middle class or the impoverished Indian villagers only to fit the stereotype of



India. She does not have to struggle to convey English in the Indian context, a challenge that bedevils many other Indian novelists who write in English, as most of her characters are the types of individuals who would talk and think in English in real life. Her variety of characters simplifies her style.

In addition to depicting the duplicity and superficial values of the wealthiest segments of Indian society, Sahgal also addresses the importance of Indian heritage to educated Indians. After publishing two autobiographical works, she published her debut novel *A Time to be Happy* in 1958. Sanad, the main character and narrator, describes the identity crisis facing the elite of English-educated society in terms that resembles to those in Nehru's *Autobiography* (1936) as the latter writes: "I don't totally belong to India. I can't. I am an unIndian because of my education, upbringing, and sense of morals... There can be no doubt that I am a citizen of more than one nation."

Diasporic Writers

Jhumpa Lahiri



Nilanjana Sudeshna Jhumpa Lahiri, an Indian American writer born on

July 11, 1967, is well-known for her English-language short stories, novels, and essays, as well as her more recent works in Italian. Her first collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, was published in 1999 and received the PEN/Hemingway Award and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Her first book, *The Namesake*, was published in 2003 and was made into a movie of the same name.

For years, publishers turned down Lahiri's early short pieces. In 1999, *Interpreter of Maladies*, her first collection of short stories, was finally published. The tales tackle delicate issues that confront Indians or Indian immigrants, including topics like marital strife, grieving over a stillborn child, and the separation between first and second-generation immigrants to the United States. Although Indian critics gave the collection a mixed reception, many condemned it and lamented that Lahiri "had not paint[ed] Indians in a more positive light." Six hundred thousand copies of *Interpreter of Maladies* were sold, and the book won her the 2000 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, as it was only the seventh time a story collection had won the award.

Lahiri released her debut novel, *The Namesake*, in 2003. A family story she heard as a child had some bearing on the narrative's subject and plot. When her father's cousin was involved in a railway accident, he was only saved when the onlookers noticed a light beam reflecting off his watch. Similarly, the main character's father in *The Namesake* was saved when his fellow students learned that he was a fan of

Russian novelist Nikolai Gogol. As young adults, the father and his wife migrated to America. He gave his son Gogol and his daughter Sonali names due to this transformative migration experience.

Lahiri's writing is distinguished by her use of simple English and her protagonists, mostly the immigrants from India to America who must negotiate the cultural differences between their native country and their new country. Lahiri frequently draws on her personal experiences and those of her parents, friends, acquaintances, and other members of the Bengali communities she is familiar with which she narrates in her autobiographical work, drawing readers' attention to real life events. To chronicle the subtleties and particularities of immigrant psychology and behaviour, Lahiri investigates the challenges, worries, and prejudices of her characters. Her works also include *The Lowland* (2013), *Dove mi trovo* (2018) in Italian, and its English version, *Whereabouts* (2021).

Kiran Desai



Kiran Desai, daughter of Anita Desai, was born on 3 September 1971. Her book *The Inheritance of Loss* won the National Book Critics Circle Fiction

Award and the Man Booker Prize in 2006. She was named on *The Economic Times'* list of the 20 "most influential" Indian women worldwide in January 2015. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, Desai's debut novel, was praised by people like Salman Rushdie when it was released in 1998. The Society of Authors' Betty Trask Award, granted to the best new novels by Commonwealth of Nations nationals under the age of 35, was given to it.

Desai says in a Penguin Random House interview that "the character Sampath stemmed from an article she read in the London Times about a man who was a very famous hermit in India who really did climb up a tree. The man lived in the tree for many, many years until he died."

The Inheritance of Loss, her second novel, was favourably appreciated by critics in Asia, Europe and the United States. The 2006 National Book Critics Circle Fiction Award and the 2006 Man Booker Prize went to her. At 35, Desai became the youngest woman to win the Booker Prize (Eleanor Catton later broke this in 2013). Suchitra Behal writes about Desai and her novel in her article for *The Hindu*, "on one level, this seems like a wonderful tale in a world gone astray. But at another, Desai has captured the essence of Indian society at large through her imagination and appropriate language". Desai was awarded a 2013 Berlin Prize Fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin.

Chitra Divakaruni

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, an Indian-American author, poet, and Betty and Gene McDavid Professor of Writing at the University of Houston Creative





Writing Program, was born on July 29, 1956. She won the American Book Award for her *Arranged Marriage*, a collection of short stories, in 1996. Two of her novels, *The Mistress of Spices* and *Sister of My Heart*, and the short tale "The Word Love," have all been made into movies. Discussions have been made on *Sister of My Heart*, *Oleander Girl*, *Palace of Illusions*, and *One Amazing Thing* which are to be adapted into motion pictures or television series.

The experiences of South Asian immigrants are frequently highlighted throughout Divakaruni's writings, primarily set in India and the United States. She publishes books in various genres, including realistic fiction, historical fiction, magical realism, myth and fantasy. *The Palace of Illusions* by Divakaruni, a retelling of the Indian epic *The Mahabharata* from Draupadi's viewpoint, was a national best-seller in India for more than a year.

Her major novels include *Palace of Illusions*, *The Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My Heart*, *Queen of Dreams*, *Oleander Girl*, *Before We Visit the Goddess* and *One Amazing Thing*.

Rohinton Mistry



Rohinton Mistry, born in 1952, belongs to the Parsi community. In 1975, Mistry himself moved from Bombay to Toronto. He went to the University of Toronto to earn his degree, and from there, he worked in the banking sector until 1985. As a full-time author at present, Mistry is the author of three books: the novels *Such a Long Journey* (1991) and *A Fine Balance* (1992), as well as the short story collection *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987).

He primarily concentrates on the shifting fortunes of the Parsi diaspora in India, which he portrays as an independent enclave community and a crucial component of the nation-state. Mistry is primarily interested in liminal encounters between the Parsi microcosm and its suppressed mirror-self or the macrocosms of India and the West in settings that can be repressive, escapist, freeing, discriminatory, hyphenating, violent or self-defining.

Tales from Firozsha Baag tries to mimic V.S. Naipaul's *Miguel Street*. It

is a collection of tales given from the viewpoint of the residents of an enclave community, just like the latter book. In the early stories, Mistry explored the progressively breaking world of the older generation of Parsis. In the later stories, he focuses on the already fracturing world of the newer generation of Parsis, who are occasionally thrice hyphenated as Parsi-Indian-Canadian in their itinerancy. Mistry conveys the weakening life of the Parsi group that left India and the murky and conflicted lives of the Parsi people who left for America and Canada.

Mistry's *A Fine Balance* is a complex, powerful, and hurting story delivered in the best style of nineteenth-century realism. In his work, Mistry captures the overwhelming forces of history and caste, politics and patriarchy, and coincidence and destiny that work together to break the human spirit in its pursuit of value, betterment, and nobility in his writing about the defeat of Ishvar and Omprakash, the chamar tanners turned caste-violating tailors; of Dina Dayal, the Parsi widow in search of economic autonomy; and of Maneck Kohlah, the student from the hills.

Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie was born in Bombay to a wealthy Muslim family on June 19, 1947, "just two months" (as Rushdie likes to say) before "the British left" India. Rushdie developed a sense of his importance as the oldest and most adored only son (he has three sisters). Rushdie refers to Bombay as the "most cosmopolitan, most hybrid, most hotchpotch of cities," which is, in large part, India for Rushdie. It serves as the



primary setting for *Midnight's Children*, his novel about the birth of India, and, more recently, as a symbol and embodiment of the dismantling of the myth of a secular, multilingual, and multicultural India in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995).

Grimus (1975), Rushdie's first published novel, was submitted for a science fiction competition; it did not win, but it was nonetheless published. Critics panned the novel, and Rushdie initially took the rejection very hard. But, he quickly bounced back and decided to "create something much closer to [his] experience of the world," an epic novel about India and its potential past, present and future. Rushdie and his first wife, Clarissa Luard, travelled extensively across India in advance of this project.

Rushdie describes how *Midnight's Children* "was actually born" at that point in "The Indian Writer in England." When he returned to his home in Bombay, he was "gripped by the idea that I, too, had a city and a history to recapture." Rushdie set out to meticulously "recall



as much of the Bombay of the 1950s and 1960s [he] could" to provide material and inspiration for *Midnight's Children*. Rushdie boasts of having practically a perfect memory. The novel was published in 1981 and immediately became a smash hit, winning the Booker Prize in 1993. It was named The Booker of Bookers, the finest of the 26 novels to receive the award since it was established in 1969, turning him into a global media sensation.

In Anita Desai's opinion, Rushdie has shown how "post-colonial" English-language novels may appear. A whole generation of Indian novelists perceives Rushdie's influence as enhancing or inhibiting their abilities. Rushdie showed Indians how the English language might be taken and stretched in any way to generate dramatic consequences, separate from what he proved through his style, vivid descriptions, and eccentric characters. In the wake of his stabbing in 2022, Rushdie stated that he is suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

V.S. Naipaul

The Nobel Prize winner for literature in 2001 and well-known "Indian" writer about India, Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul was born to Hindu parents in Trinidad on August 17, 1932. He was born and raised there before moving to Britain as an adult in 1950 to attend Oxford, where he began a career as a broadcaster and prolific writer. He has authored numerous travelogues and novels over the past forty years while continuing to reside in Britain. He is one of the most important English writers of his time. These do not make him

Indian, and, as many critics have argued, there are compelling philosophical and cultural grounds to send him back to the Caribbean. Three of his main travelogues are set in India, and he has a consistent, even obsessive interest in South Asian events, so if we choose to conceive of India as more than just the setting for parts of his writing and as a vital element of his imagination, it is because of these factors.



A celebrated commentator on India and all things Indian, whose name has been deracinated or made more cosmopolitan by being abbreviated V.S. Naipaul, he has worked throughout his career to address issues of identity and cultural tradition, as well as the development of social and religious systems under the influence of European imperialism. In other words, Naipaul is an Indian writer, a West Indian writer, and a black British writer since he is a post-colonial writer.

Naipaul strenuously disavowed the 'West Indian' label, and it seems unlikely that he would see himself as 'black British'. But a writer's corpus goes beyond what they acknowledge, and different phases of Naipaul's writing are best understood

regarding his complex West Indianness, Indianness and Britishness. The names of nations might seem like unwieldy frames of reference for the work of a polymath like Naipaul, but his writing has always stayed on such references. Indeed, one of the things that makes Naipaul's writing so contentious is how easily he uses the country, the culture, or the specific "civilisation" that he writes about as a necessary, and often even sufficient, explanation of all the social tensions and flaws that he so deftly lists. In his travel writing and novels, Naipaul frequently diagnoses national cultures, analyses sub-national and supra-national affiliations, and plays with national, ethnic, and personal identities. When writing about such interactions, he is at his most insightful and nuanced capacity; however, his propensity to equate individual aberrations with cultural or national traits makes his writing thin, culturally insensitive, and susceptible to the accusation that it is the result of a colonised sensibility or anglocentric bias about the world.

The work of Naipaul is now even more seriously studied by academics. Even if Salman Rushdie is credited with starting the boom in subcontinental writing in English, we must remember that V.S. Naipaul was the first to show that a life of writing was possible, even to those of us who were angry in response to his depictions of India. It is appropriate that a British-born Caribbean writer of Indian descent serves as a prime example of the benefits and drawbacks of cultural fusion in a post-colonial world; after all, it is authors like him who teach us to be less optimistic about and to take another look at this peculiar place we call "home."

Women writers

Kamala Markandaya



Kamala Markandaya was a writer who tried, though not always successfully, to go beyond the elitist. She was a journalist before she started writing on full-time mode. From Rukmini, a poor peasant lady in *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), to the urban poor of *A Handful of Rice* (1966), to the upper echelons of princely life in *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), her eleven novels depict a remarkable spectrum of people. East and West's struggle between tradition and modernity characterises her work. *The Coffer Dams* (1969) and *Pleasure City* (1982) are two modern analyses of what "progress" means.

The shifting socio-economic landscape serves as Kamala Markandaya's canvas, and as a result, her works are a magnificent kaleidoscope. She selects her characters and situations with skill. Peasants, queens, concubines, rural and urban natives, English officials in India, and Indian emigrants in England



are just a few of the diverse characters she portrays. In Markandaya's diverse cast of female characters, the misery of the Indian woman is constrained by her sex, society, and economic situation. Her characters also range from the harried and victimised peasant women to the princesses of havelis.

It is necessary to "discover, feel, and comprehend Indian womanhood in all of its vagaries, multiplicities, contradictions and complexities." From the womb to the tomb, an Indian lady goes through many stages while performing familial duties. But she still eludes herself. She is constrained by misfortune, loss, and social stigmas, but they are powerless to crush her soul. The ladies of Markandaya never totally surrender despite being victims of both nature and culture.

According to the writer, Indian society is traditionally patriarchal, restricting women to the stigmatised route. The first female protagonist by Markandaya, Rukmani of *Nectar in a Sieve*, represents the vast number of poor rural women whose backs are bowed by unpaid labour. In *A Handful of Rice*, Rukmani is more liberated than Nalini. Once the fun-loving, bright-eyed girl marries Ravi, she must deal with life's challenges and truths. Srinivas, an uprooted Indian Brahmin living in England, is the novels' main character. Vasantha, his devoted Indian wife, emerges through the various psychological, spiritual, and physical tests she faces. Vasantha suffers a British assault, much like she met in her own country. Her existence has all the makings of a tragedy in her native country and on foreign soil. She undergoes a terrible transformation when a young British officer lifts her

skirt while searching their house for her terrorist brother.

The Golden Honeycomb is hailed as Markandeya's magnum opus. The main character, Rabi, grows into an independent being due to his interactions with many women. These ladies, who come from all backgrounds, shape his conscience. *Rani Manjula*, his grandmother, is a fascinating person, an enthusiastic companion to her husband and is modelled after the great Indian heroines. Although she is under British rule, her soul is still free, and she uses this to teach her grandson about national myths. One cannot help but appreciate the grace with which Rani puts an end to her husband's suffering, who is now bedridden due to an accident. She can bravely take on the role of a widow because of her incredible willpower. She instils patriotic values into Rabi's education as a person in charge of it.

In her account of the Indian woman, Markandaya portrays Rani as the social pillar which upholds, sustains, and supports everyone around her. She is the creator, preserver, and provider of the human species. She is also the protector of culture and a supporter of acceptance and tolerance. These ladies, who bend but never break and have discovered their anchor within, are something that Markandaya cannot help but adore.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala

Novelist and short story writer. Her Polish-Jewish parents gave birth to her in Germany in 1927, and in 1939, she fled to England. She travelled to Delhi after receiving her MA from Queen Mary College, London University, and stayed there till 1975.





Ruth Praver Jhabvala is a screenwriter, nShe wrote many books, the first of which, *To Whom She Will*, was released in 1955. Other books include *The Householder* (1960), a domestic comedy, and *Heat and Dust*, a love story set between the 1920s and 1970s that won the 1975 Booker Prize for Fiction. *Poet and Dancer* (1993) and *Shards of Memory* (1995) are two of her most recent books.

Jhabvala has lived a somewhat unusual existence. She and her family fled to England in 1939 after narrowly escaping Nazi persecution as Jews. The Holocaust claimed the lives of all of her father's kin. Ten years after the family fled into exile, she met Cyrus S. H. Jhabvala, an architect who later became her husband. The couple left Europe after getting married to live in a newly independent India.

According to the journalist Vittachi, Jhabvala, like her character Judy in *A Backward Place*, “promptly fell in love with India’s sensuousness after the greyness of wartime England.” But, eventually, it became too painful for her to constantly stare into the “terrible abyss of poverty and chaos,” according to Jhabvala’s words. While avoiding

the well-known Indian setting, some of Jhabvala’s more mature work explores her typical themes, such as the pursuit of spiritual satisfaction. For instance, the novel *Three Continents* tell the tale of wealthy 19-year-old twins, Michael and Harriet Wishwell, who are captivated by the claims made by a group of purported spiritual philosophers. Her short story collections include *My Nine Lives: Chapters of a Possible Past* (2001), *East into Upper East: Plain Tales from New York and New Delhi* (1998), and *Out of India: Selected Stories* (1987). She has also collaborated with Merchant Ivory on numerous scripts for film and television. These include the BAFTA-winning adaptation of her book, *Heat and Dust*, her Oscar-winning adaptations of E. M. Forster’s novels *Howards End* and *A Room with a View*, and Kasuo Ishiguro’s *Remains of the Day*.

Shashi Deshpande



A well-known name in Indian literature, Shashi Deshpande was born in 1938 in Dharwad, Karnataka, as the daughter of Sriranga, a celebrated Kannada playwright and eminent Sanskrit scholar. She completed her



education in Bangalore and Dharwad. She and her pathologist husband are currently residents of Bangalore.

It was in the 1970s that Shashi Deshpande first appeared on the Indian literary scene. She has nevertheless distinguished herself among the English-language novelists who are Indian women. She excels at presenting a realistic image of the educated woman from the middle class who, despite being financially independent, struggles to find a balance between idealism and pragmatism. She portrays Indian middle-class women with their turmoil, convulsions, frustrations and endurance. Her novels mainly focus on the struggles and lives of women, particularly in the backdrop of India. She has been branded a “feminist” as a result. She investigated the truths underneath women’s silence, and in her publications, she raised her voice against the treatment of women and increased public awareness of the issue.

With eight novels, four children’s books, more than eighty short stories, and a screenplay to her name, Shashi Deshpande is a prominent female writer in the Indian Literary Horizon. She received the coveted Padma Shri Award in 2009 after winning the Sahitya Academy Award in 1989 for her fifth book, *That Long Silence*. Deshpande is a strong writer who examines the unique and universal feminine psychology in the current Indian socio-political context. The book *That Long Silence* conveys, in first-person point, how women protest against the male-dominated society. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, she visually represents Saru’s inner psyche by utilising dual storylines. Her debut

novel, *Roots and Shadows*, describes the misery and suffocation the main character, Indu, goes through in a culture that is dominated by men and bound by tradition. Her second novel, *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, is about the male ego and how he refuses to take a backseat in marriage.

The main characters in Deshpande’s books are on a journey of self-discovery. They are usually propelled in this pursuit by a domestic problem. The estrangement of humans and the vagaries of time are prominent topics of reflection in Shashi Deshpande’s novels. The novels frequently veer off into Indian myths, fables, and folktales that highlight the influence of tradition and society’s resistance to change because the past is intertwined with the present. However, her novels have rich inclusivity that in and of itself raises the possibility of hope. Shashi Deshpande’s admirably realistic portrayal of the issue facing modern-day Indian women and the practical remedy she offers give her novels an indelible significance for their affirming, eloquent message for women and all humanity.

Anita Desai

Anita Desai is regarded as the founder of the genre of Indian psychological novels. She has earned a prestigious position in the pantheon of Indian writers’ thorough representations of contemporary Indian life. Desai, a Sahitya Academy Award winner, has written up to sixteen works of fiction. She was shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times and has received numerous honours and recognition for her work. Anita has been actively engaged in





teaching in addition to writing. She still serves as an example for many aspiring young authors today.

The majority of her stories centre on her life experiences. She never made light of any subject or message. She does a beautiful job of sensitively capturing the underlying thoughts of her female characters. In many of her works, Desai explores family conflicts and middle-class women's estrangements. Anita has been able to address a variety of subjects in her writings, including anti-Semitism, western conceptions of India, and the decline of Indian traditions and customs. The recent Indian experience, East-West cultural tensions, generational disparities, and practical and emotional exile are all topics covered in Desai's works.

The author's experiences in Calcutta are detailed in *Voices in the City*. Desai effectively conveys the difficulty of the immigrant in *Bye-Bye, Blackbird*. The main elements in this situation are nostalgia and alienation, rejection and acceptance. The East-West conflict has been depicted appropriately. *Where Do We Go This Summer* explores the

predicament of the Indian middle-class wife in a modern urban context. Her poetry collection *Fire on the Mountain* is lauded for its use of sounds and poetic symbolism.

A highlight of her work, *Clear Light of Day*, is its vivid portrayal of two sisters caught up in the lassitude of Indian existence. In addition to images, its personalities are revealed through gestures, speech and introspection. It is a fictionalised historical study of Delhi that focuses on the lives of a Hindu middle-class family. In the background of a tumultuous contemporary India, *Baumgartner's Bombay* examines the German and Jewish identities.

Bharati Mukherjee



Bharati Mukherjee wrote more than fifteen volumes, including memoirs, short stories, novels and essays. For her collection *The Middleman and Other Stories*, she received the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1988. In Mukherjee's writing, there are undercurrents of violence and cultural



disputes. In *The Tiger's Daughter*, her debut novel, an Indian woman raised in a sheltered environment is stunned by her immersion in American culture and by the altered Calcutta upon her return to India. Many of the stories in Mukherjee's debut collection of short stories, *Darkness* (1985), including the acclaimed "The World According to Hsü," are incisive analysis of the edgy inner lives of her characters as well as scathing critiques of Canadian racism and conventional Indian attitudes towards women. *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988) focuses on immigrants from developing nations who come to the United States; other collections *Jasmine* (1989) and *The Holder of the World* (1990) also deal with the same topic.

Wanting America: Selected Stories (1995) and *Leave It to Me* (1997) are two of Mukherjee's later works that follow the journey of an American woman who was abandoned as a kid in India and her return to her home country. For its detailed depictions of Indian caste dynamics and the immigrant experience of balancing several worldviews, *Desirable Daughters* (2002) received a great deal of praise. In *The Tree Bride* (2004), Mukherjee explored the ancestry of the characters from that book in greater detail, raising questions about the long-lasting effects of colonialism. *Miss New India*, her most recent book, was released in 2011.

Anita Nair

Anita Nair is an Indian novelist, distinguished for her defying of the accepted norms of Indian English literature. She developed her writing style uniquely, and, as a result, she gained the opinions and high acclaim of



Indian critics, along with them being sold in high quantity. Anita's novels have unique concepts, themes, and plots compared to other contemporary fictional narratives. She makes an effort to discuss everything in detail.

Her novel *The Better Man* brings back traditions from the rural world that are lost in contemporary Indian English fiction. The novel is filled with ambition, wrath and jealousy. *Ladies Coupe*, arguably her best fictional work, illustrates how women are treated in a society that men ostensibly dominate. It has a distinct plot, and the author tells her tale interestingly. She wrote *The Better Man*, released in 2000, chronicling the story of an ordinary person and his issues. Additionally, it transports readers to rural areas of the nation instead of keeping them confined to Chetan Bhagat's call centres and urban layers. *Mistress*, another outstanding novel by Anita Nair, was published in 2005 and attempts to analyse and possibly synthesise many viewpoints on the connection between men and women.

The subject of her most recent novel,

Eating Wasps, is a writer with conflicting goals. The author writes it with a solid and compassionate style, keeping the emotions of her readers in mind. Her delivery of messages is at the forefront of her narrative's clear and exact focus.

Arundhati Roy



The God of Small Things, Arundhati Roy's debut novel published in 1997, shot her to instant fame. It was notable then for a novel with an ethos so specifically Indian—and also Kerala roots—to win the prestigious British literary award, the Booker. An original English novel and Indian tale, and true to the setting and characters it detailed, the novel sparked readers' imagination and gave many Indians the hope that they, too, had a tale to tell. She was the first Indian citizen to win the Booker Prize.

This novel is intense to read because of its beautiful English language and disturbing plot. *The God of Small Things* takes readers on a pulchritudinous yet melancholy tour through the English-speaking region of India. This novel has the power to astound like none other, causing the reader to experience the agony and heartache of a mother, the sorrow of a child, the suffering of lovers who were torn apart, the forced maturity

imposed upon children, and the division of families.

The Booker Prize was controversially awarded and received fewer favourable reviews in the UK. Carmen Callil, a 1996 Booker Prize judge, branded the work "execrable," and *The Guardian* referred to its setting as "profoundly gloomy." E. K. Nayanar, the former Chief Minister of Roy's state of Kerala, blamed the book specifically for its frank depiction of sexuality, as she faced obscenity charges due to its publication.

Contemporary Writers

Amitav Ghosh



Amitav Ghosh's fiction appears to be directly influenced by current academic debates about colonialism and culture. His debut book, *The Circle of Reason* (1986), primarily written in Rushdie's magical realist style, tries to revive India's ongoing tradition of cultural interaction with the Gulf Nations and Egypt across the Indian Ocean. *In an Antique Land* (1992) challenges the privileges of the academic anthropologist's "scientific" perspective by fusing travelogue with historical contemplation.



As a proponent of postmodernism, Amitav Ghosh concentrates solely on the oppressed, typically non-white, victims of colonialism in his works. Instead of the white masters, the oppressed are given the centre of attention. The second novel of Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy was written over three and a half years. Amitav Ghosh's stories include a colourful cast of sailors, prisoners, and labourers sailing out, hoping to change their lives. It appears that he is aiming at the characters. The British are portrayed in the work as cunning, wicked and vicious.

The Sea of Poppies concludes with the triple-masted schooner Ibis rocked by a furious storm. Amitav Ghosh describes the devastation wrought by the Japanese invasion of Burma and its impact on the army officers and populace in *The Glass Palace*. With so much human misery, wars, deaths, destruction and dislocation, he evokes a mood of pessimism. According to Ghosh, who wrote the story of sacrifice in *The Shadow Lines*, the rescue of May from Muslim mobs during the religious riots of 1963–1964 in Dhaka is a significant sacrifice. Ghosh acknowledged his growing understanding of the colonised people's hopes, setbacks and disappointments. In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh uses the Western invasion of Eastern culture to frame the discussion of environmental and cultural challenges. *The Circle of Reason* uses the collapse of traditional village life as an allegory for the modernising influence of western culture and the subsequent eviction of non-European peoples due to imperialism. *An Antique Land* uses a post-modernist perspective to outline current racial and political divisions. Ghosh's ambitious novels explore the

nature of national and human identity, notably that of the people of India and South Asia, using sophisticated storytelling techniques.

Shashi Tharoor



Shashi Tharoor is distinguished as an International figure from India who graduated from St. Stephen's and went to work for the UN. His book *The Great Indian Novel* turns the *Mahabharata* into an allegory of contemporary Indian history, perhaps a little too relentlessly. As the title suggests, *The Great Indian Novel* provides an irreverent view of the history of modern India, in line with the scepticism of many recent historical novels. Similarly, he does not hesitate to use one of the great epics for these goals.

Novelists like Tharoor have been much more willing to rewrite the genres of Indian literary tradition than to simply put contemporary material in traditional forms, which would run the risk of reproducing the type of orientalism

that has always defined India in terms of the glories of an unchanging past. Through his work, Tharoor affirms and strengthens Indian cultural identity by considering plurality and openness in India's multifaceted culture. He also wants to deepen people's understanding of Indian history and culture.

The Bombay film industry is explored in *Show Business* (1992). According to Tharoor, the country's culture is characterised by "current mythologies created by popular Hindi movies." He illustrates his viewpoints on India's diversity by using these myths. His other fictional works include *The Five Dollar Smile and Other Stories* (1990) and *Riot* (2001).

Vikram Seth



Vikram Seth was born in Calcutta in 1952 and received his education there and at the universities of Oxford and Stanford. In addition to *Mappings* (1981), *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985), *The Golden Gate* (1986), *All You Who Sleep Tonight* (1990), and *Beastly Tales from Here and There* (1991). He has also penned a notable novel titled *A Suitable Boy* (1993), the libretto for an opera titled *Avion and the Dolphin*

(1994), an award-winning travel book named *From Heaven Lake* (1983), and a novel about the world of Western classical string instruments titled *An Equal Music: A Novel* (1999).

Among modern Indian authors, Seth is the most well-known writer due to the widespread success of his stories. Seth accurately depicts the social and political climate of post-independent India. In his fiction, we can see the excellent blending of societal context and personal portrayal, loaded with acute perception and focused intent. He concentrates on the social, political, as well as the mental health of general public and individuals. He worked well to portray the country's political situation and to demonstrate how several social, conservative, and stringent issues revolved around governmental matters. None of the parts of the state can continue to be distinct and unaffected. Political and societal developments impact family life and individuality.

Manu Joseph

An Indian journalist, writer, and editor of *OPEN* magazine, Manu Joseph was raised in Chennai, though he was born in Kottayam, Kerala. The Malayalam movie *Thoranam* was directed by his father, Joseph Madapally, a reputed filmmaker. After graduating from Loyola College in Chennai, he left Madras Christian College to work as a staff writer for *Society* magazine. He has written columns for *The International New York Times* and *The Hindustan Times* and served as editor of *OPEN* magazine earlier. He was a Chevening Scholar in 2007 and at present resides in Delhi. His first novel, *Serious Men* (2010), was





honoured with the PEN/Open Book Award and the Hindu Literary Prize. For a feature film *Serious Man* released in 2020, Sudhir Mishra has adapted Joseph's novel with the same title. *The Illicit Happiness of Other People*, his second novel, was released in September 2012.

Chetan Bhagat



Chetan Baghat is a rising figure in contemporary Indian English fiction. A novelist, columnist, public speaker and screenplay writer, Baghat was born in 1974 into a regular Punjabi family. He got most of his education from his hometown. His novels are adapted to successful movies. A motivational speaker who could grasp the minds of the young generation with good deeds

and thoughts, most of his views are focused on youth and issues based on national development which occupies the most crucial part of society. He is one of the most successful authors, and his novels have been awarded as best-selling works.

Chetan Bhagat won many awards and recognitions, such as the Society's Young Achiever's award in 2004 and the "Public Recognition" award in 2005. He also wrote screenplays for the films of his novels like *One night @ The Call Centre* as *Hello*, *Five point Someone* as *3 Idiots*, *The Three Mistakes of My life* as *Kai Po Che* and *Two States* with the same name. His works also include *Half Girlfriend* (2014), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *Making India Awesome* (2015), *What Young India Wants* (2012) and *One Indian Girl* (2016).

Amish Tripathi



Amish was born in 1974, and completed his higher education from IIM Kolkata. His first book, *The Immortals of Meluha* (Book 1 of the *Shiva Trilogy*), was a bestseller, which profoundly influenced him to leave his job in financial services and devote himself to a full-time writing career. He is a producer of movies in addition to being an author and a diplomat for the Indian

government. His writing career started with a philosophical argument sparked by a fascinating fact he and his family learned from a television programme. As the Persian gods were known as *asuras* and the Indian gods as *devas*, they discovered a conflict between the two religions. In pre-Islamic Zoroastrian Persian myth, their gods were *asuras* and their devils *daivas*. The conflict between the concepts of good and evil in these myths piqued his curiosity about what exactly evil is. He wrote about the philosophical theory with the support of his family. The idea quickly became an adventure tale about the Hindu god Shiva. Tripathi took about five years to complete the novel.

Amit Chaudhuri

Amit Chaudhuri, a versatile genius, is a novelist, poet, essayist, literary critic, editor, vocalist, and composer. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2009. From 2006 to 2021, he served as a Professor of Contemporary Literature at the University of East Anglia. Since 2020, he has served as a Professor of Creative Writing at Ashoka University in India, where he has also served as Director of the Centre for Creative and Critical Studies. He bagged the recognitions of The Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Fiction, the Commonwealth Writers Prize, the Betty Trask Prize, the Encore Prize and the Sahitya Akademi Award. For his book *On Tagore*, he was awarded the Rabindra Puraskar by the West Bengal government. Amit Chaudhuri was the first recipient of the Infosys Prize for outstanding contribution to the Humanities in Literary Studies in 2013. The award was given by a jury that included Amartya Sen, Akeel Bilgrami

from Columbia University, Homi Bhabha from Harvard, Sheldon Pollock from Columbia, and Upendra Baxi, a legal



scholar at Warwick. Chaudhuri is, of course, a brilliant scholar with a fantastic record for literary work, demonstrating a degree of sensibility and a kind of gentle humanism that is unique. It is impressive how someone with Amit Chaudhuri's spectrum of talent and commitment to the highest calibre of work has achieved such consistency.

In 2016, Penguin Random House India reissued Chaudhuri's 1991 novel, *A Strange and Sublime Address*, as a 25th-anniversary edition with a preface by the Irish writer Colm Toibin. His second book, *Afternoon Raag*, weaves his Oxford experiences with recollections of Bombay. It received the Encore Award and was released in 1993. Penguin Random House India released the book as its 25th-anniversary edition in 2019 with a foreword written by James Wood. His fifth book, *The Immortals*, released in 2009, follows Nirmalya and his music instructor Shyamji as they study and practise Indian classical music in a changing world. The sixth



book by Chaudhuri, *Odysseus Abroad*, came out in 2014. It follows the student protagonist Ananda throughout a single day in July 1985 in London. The seventh book by Chaudhuri is *Friend of My Youth*, released in the US in 2019, in the UK in 2017, and in India in 2018. It tells the story of a novelist named Amit Chaudhuri, visiting his hometown of Bombay for a book presentation.

the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2018, becoming the fourth Malayalee to win



Anees Salim

Anees Salim is an Indian writer best known for his works *The Blind Lady's Descendants*, *Vanity Bagh* and *The Small Town Sea*. Born in Varkala, Kerala, Salim currently resides in Kochi. *The Blind Lady's Descendants* earned him

this award for English work. His columns have been published in *The Indian Express*. In all of his novels, Muslim characters play significant roles, because he has “a good comprehension of their apprehensions, difficulties, and misunderstandings.”

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണം

കുരിശുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണം

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