

Indian Writing in English

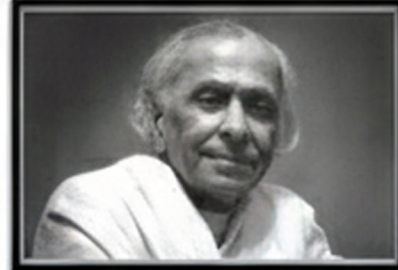
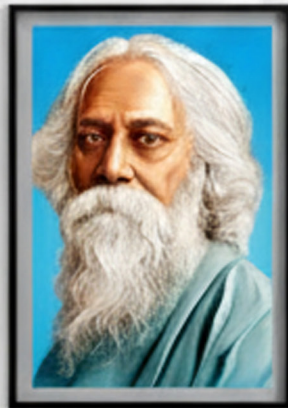
COURSE CODE: M21EG04DC

Discipline Core Course

Postgraduate Programme

English Language and Literature

Self Learning Material



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OPEN UNIVERSITY

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

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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
with Model Question Paper Sets



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Indian Writing in English

Course Code: M21EG04DC

Semester- I

Discipline Core Course

Postgraduate Programme in

English

Language and Literature

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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed “blended format,” a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The university aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The MA English programme by the University offers a detailed exploration of literature, linguistics, and language studies. We provide rigorous curriculum in literary analysis, linguistic theories, and applied language skills. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university’s student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V. P.

01-10-2025

Contents

BLOCK-01	Socio-Political and Literary Background	1
Unit 1	A Historical Overview	2
Unit 2	Poetry	28
Unit 3	Drama	43
Unit 4	Prose and Fiction	60
BLOCK-02	Poetry & Drama	78
Unit 1	Poetry	79
Unit 2	Drama	121
Unit 3	Poetry	140
Unit 4	Drama	163
BLOCK-03	Prose and Fiction	178
Unit 1	Prose	179
Unit 2	Fiction	190
Unit 3	Fiction	207
Unit 4	Short Story	224
BLOCK-04	Critical Responses	244
Unit 1	Indian English Poetry	245
Unit 2	Indian English Drama	259
Unit 3	Indian English Novels	271
Appendix-1	Poets of Indian English Literature	281
Appendix- 2	Playwrights in Indian English Literature	293
Appendix- 3	Indian English Prose and Fiction Writers	301
	Model Question papers	315

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.

► Increased access

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 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

► Socio-cultural rebirth

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.

The Indian Renaissance can be divided into 3 phases:

First Phase

► Early period

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.

Second Phase

The goal of the second stage was primarily to bring together anti-colonial politics and the social quest for



► Social concerns

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.

Third Phase

► Fusion of ideologies

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.

► *Brahmo Samaj*

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.

► *Prarthana 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 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.

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,



► Vivekananda's spiritual realm

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.

► Phule's reforms

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 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.

► Nationalism

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 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.

► Ideological transformation

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 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.

► Literary rebellion

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.

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, 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



► A new model of Socialism

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.

► Secular strand

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 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

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.

► Crisis

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 ‘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

► Emergency period and democracy



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

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.

► Effects of colonial rule

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.

► Struggle

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

► Feminist movement

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.

► Second phase

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, 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.



► Third Phase

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.

► Discrimination

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.

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



► Dalit literary expression

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 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



► Process of globalisation

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*.

► Diasporic population

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 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.

► Significant population

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.

► Democratisation of literature

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.

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



► General consumption

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, *Fasting, 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.

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Suggested Reading

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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 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.

► Sarojini Naidu

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.

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.

► Nationalism in poetry

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 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

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 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

▶ Ezekiel's Indian identity

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.

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

- Allegories in Khair's poetry

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.



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.

Vijay Seshadri

- Seshadri's imagined world

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.

Mamang Dai

- Nature in Dai's poetry

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.

Jeet Thayil

- Thayil and Emotional poetry

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.

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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.

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 *Natyashastra* (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 *Natyashastra* 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

► Father of Indian theatre

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.

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

► Father of Sanskrit drama

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.

► Famous plays of Bhasa

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.

1.3.6 Kalidasa

► Playwright of the Gupta age

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*).

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

► Loknatya

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.

1.3.9 Modern Indian Drama

► Three phases of modern Indian theatre

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.

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.

► A medium for performing local dramas

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 are briefly analysed.



- Loyal to traditional notions of caste and religion

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

- Social drama challenges the social code

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 Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, and Jayashankar Prasad, who have researched and used historical sources to portray their worldviews and familiarise the world with Indian



► Historical sources

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 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

- Free the stage from commercialism

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

- Amateur Kannada 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.

- Karnataka Hindi Amateurs

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

- 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 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

► Creating awareness about social responsibility

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

- Strengthen progressive tendencies

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.

- Oldest performing art groups

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.

- New playwrights

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?

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Suggested Reading

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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.



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."

► Dadabhai Naoroji, Ram Gopal Ghose and others

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



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

► Works on Gandhi

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. Dhebbhar's *Lectures on Gandhian Philosophy* (1962). All these works reflect how Gandhian philosophy and Nehruvian philosophy influenced people.

► Gandhi's critics

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).

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?

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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 combined to create Rushdie's language, also referred to as



► The Third Phase

“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.

► Global readership

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.

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.

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Suggested Reading

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3. Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 1982.



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.



SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Which document is termed the “Magna Carta of English education in India”?
Ans. Wood’s Despatch 1854
2. Macaulay’s Minute (1835) advocated:
Ans. “Downward filtration” via English-medium elite
3. The Oriental–Occidental controversy centred on:
Ans. English vs Indian languages
4. Charter Act 1813’s primary effect on education was to:
Ans. Open India to Christian missionary teaching
5. Which year saw India’s first railway?
Ans. 1853
6. India’s share of global GDP fell to about 2 percent by 1947 from an earlier:
Ans. 25–35 percent
7. Warren Hastings founded which institution in 1781?
Ans. Calcutta Madrasa
8. William Jones established the Royal Asiatic Society in:
Ans. 1784
9. The Charter Act 1833 did NOT:
Ans. End missionary activity
10. Who coined “downward filtration”?
Ans. Lord Macaulay
11. Which university was NOT established by Wood’s Despatch?
Ans. Allahabad
12. The Draconian Dramatic Performances Act was passed in:
Ans. 1876
13. M. K. Naik’s distinction:
Ans. Anglo-Indian vs Indian English literature
14. Which author is listed among early Indian writers in English?
Ans. Michael Madhusudan Dutt
15. Thomas Babington Macaulay’s Minute argued English literature was superior because:
Ans. It taught “useful knowledge” and modern science



16. The Sanskrit treatise central to Indian dramaturgy is:
Ans. Natya Shastra
17. Which form is NOT part of classical Sanskrit theatre?
Ans. Prabandha
18. The Vidusaka in Sanskrit drama functions as:
Ans. Comic servant or clown
19. Which play enacted anticolonial protest in 19th-century Bengal?
Ans. Dinabandhu Mitra's Nil Darpan
20. The term "rasa" in Sanskrit aesthetics denotes:
Ans. Emotional flavour or sentiment



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

(Detailed)

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ contextualise the historical development of Indian English poetry from colonial to contemporary periods
- ▶ analyse the distinctive contributions of selected poets to the Indian English literary tradition
- ▶ examine major themes including nationalism, identity, feminism, environmental consciousness, and cultural belonging in the selected poems
- ▶ apply critical analysis techniques to interpret figurative language, symbolism, and poetic devices
- ▶ evaluate how personal experiences and cultural contexts influence poetic expression and thematic development
- ▶ appreciate the diversity and evolution of Indian English poetry through comparative study of different generations and regional voices

Background

The tradition of Indian poetry in English represents a fascinating intersection of colonial history, cultural adaptation, and literary innovation. Beginning with early pioneers like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Toru Dutt in the nineteenth century, Indian poets have consistently transformed English into a vehicle for expressing distinctly Indian experiences, emotions, and worldviews. This literary movement gained significant momentum through the independence struggle, as poets like Sarojini Naidu employed verse to inspire nationalist sentiment whilst preserving regional cultural elements and traditional Indian literary aesthetics.

The evolution of Indian English poetry reflects the diverse experiences of a multicultural nation navigating the complexities of postcolonial identity. From the partition trauma explored by confessional poets to the environmental concerns addressed by contemporary tribal voices, this literature encompasses various regional, ethnic, religious, and generational perspectives. Modern Indian English poets have expanded the boundaries of the form by addressing



issues of gender equality, urban alienation, globalisation, and cultural preservation whilst maintaining deep connections to local landscapes, mythological traditions, and philosophical concepts.

Indian English poetry demonstrates remarkable linguistic creativity, blending English literary techniques with Indian rhetorical traditions, imagery drawn from specific regional environments, and culturally embedded metaphors. These works often employ vernacular influences, code switching, and indigenous philosophical frameworks that create a unique poetic voice neither purely English nor entirely regional, but authentically Indian English. This hybrid literary tradition continues evolving as contemporary poets explore new themes including environmental justice, digital age experiences, and global cultural connections whilst preserving the distinctive characteristics that define Indian English poetry as a significant contribution to world literature.

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

Nationalism, Confessional Poetry, Cultural Identity, Allegory, Environmental Consciousness, Intergenerational Trauma, Religious Conversion, Postcolonial Literature

Discussion

2.1.1 “Coromandel Fishers”- Sarojini Naidu



Fig 2.1.1 Sarojini Naidu

Sarojini Naidu, famously known as the “Nightingale of India,” was a distinguished poet and an influential figure in India’s struggle for freedom. Praised by Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, her poetry combined musicality with deep patriotic and social consciousness. Starting her poetic career at the tender age of twelve, Naidu’s works reflect themes of nature, love, death, and nationalism. Beyond poetry, she was an ardent advocate for women’s rights and civil liberties, playing a key role in India’s fight against colonial rule during a turbulent historical period.

“Coromandel Fishers” portrays stark yet spirited lives of fishermen along the Coromandel Coast of southeastern India. Using vivid imagery and rich figures of speech, Naidu portrays the fishermen’s daily struggles against the relentless forces of the sea. The poem’s natural elements - boats, nets, fish, birds, waves, coconut trees, and celestial bodies - are woven skillfully with metaphors reflecting the socio-political plight of colonial India. Through their courageous confrontation with nature’s fury, the fishermen become symbols of resilience and hope, inspiring a call to action for India’s freedom movement.

“The Coromandel Fishers”



Fig 2.1.2 “The Coromandel Fishers”

*Rise, brothers, rise; the wakening skies pray to the morning light,
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has
cried all night.
Come, let us gather our nets from the shore and set our catamarans
free,
To capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we are the kings of
the sea!*

*No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track of the sea gull's
call,
The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother, the waves are our
comrades all.
What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of the
sea-god drives?
He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in his breast our lives.*

*Sweet is the shade of the cocoanut glade, and the scent of the
mango grove,
And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon with the sound of
the voices we love;
But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray and the dance of the
wild foam's glee;
Row, brothers, row to the edge of the verge, where the low sky
mates with the sea.*

Summary-“The Coromandel Fishers”

“Coromandel Fishers” stands as one of the most celebrated poems in Indian English literature. Written during the early 20th century when India was under British colonial rule, this poem operates on multiple levels of meaning, addressing both the daily lives of fishermen along the Coromandel Coast and serving as a powerful allegory for India's freedom struggle. The poem appears

► Dual interpreta-
tion

in Naidu's first poetry collection, *The Golden Threshold* (1905), establishing her reputation as the "Nightingale of India".

► historical significance

The poem was written during a crucial period in Indian history when the independence movement was gaining momentum. Sarojini Naidu, herself an active freedom fighter and political leader, crafted this work to serve multiple purposes: celebrating the maritime culture of coastal India while simultaneously inspiring nationalist sentiment. The Coromandel Coast, stretching along the southeastern shores of India through Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, has been historically significant for its fishing communities and maritime trade. The poem thus depicts authentic regional life while embedding deeper political meanings.

► Dawn preparation

The opening stanza begins with the stirring call "Rise, brothers, rise", immediately establishing an urgent, communal tone. The personification of natural elements creates a serene dawn scene where "the wakening skies pray to the morning light" and "the wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has cried all night". These images transform the harsh maritime environment into a nurturing, familial space. The fishermen are portrayed gathering their nets and preparing their catamarans to "capture the leaping wealth of the tide", with the proud declaration that they are "the kings of the sea". This transformation of routine labour into an adventurous, royal pursuit subtly parallels the colonial subjects who must assert their rightful ownership of their land.

► Brotherhood and Divine Protection

The second stanza deepens the familial metaphors by presenting the sea as a mother figure, clouds as brothers, and waves as comrades. This creates a sense of kinship between the fishermen and their natural environment, suggesting that they belong to this maritime world by birthright rather than mere occupation. The stanza acknowledges the dangers they face, asking "What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of the sea god drives?". However, this rhetorical question demonstrates their fearless acceptance of risk, trusting that divine protection will safeguard their lives. In the allegorical reading, this represents the freedom fighters' willingness to face the dangers of resistance whilst maintaining faith in ultimate victory.



- The Choice Between Comfort and Freedom

The final stanza presents a deliberate contrast between the comfortable pleasures of land and the more meaningful joys of the sea. While the “shade of the cocoanut glade” and “scent of the mango grove” offer immediate comfort, the “kiss of the spray” and “dance of the wild foam’s glee” provide deeper satisfaction. The poem concludes with an exhortation to “row to the edge of the verge, where the low sky mates with the sea”. This horizon represents the meeting point of earth and infinity, symbolising the goal of freedom that requires effort and courage to achieve. The metaphor suggests that true fulfilment lies not in accepting comfortable subjugation but in striving towards the challenging goal of independence.

2.1.2 Critical Analysis

- cultural synthesis

“Coromandel Fishers” stands as one of the finest achievements in early Indian English poetry, representing Sarojini Naidu’s masterful weaving of artistic excellence with profound social and political commentary. Published in her debut collection ‘The Golden Threshold’ in 1905, this poem adapts traditional Indian folk songs into English literary expression while retaining an authentic voice and purpose. Set on the historically significant Coromandel Coast, once linked to the Chola dynasty and central to India’s maritime heritage, it celebrates coastal fishing communities and serves as a sophisticated allegory for national awakening and resistance.

- Technical excellence

The poet employs personification to transform the natural world into living presences, with the sea assuming maternal qualities, dawn offering a protective embrace, and winds behaving like tired children seeking comfort. This technique forges an intimate bond between the fishermen and their environment, suggesting they are rightful inheritors of the maritime world rather than mere labourers. Family metaphors extend beyond individual images to create a comprehensive framework in which community bonds mirror national unity.

- rhythmic mastery

The poem’s rhythmic structure, built on anapestic metre, captures the natural flow of waves breaking against the shore and the steady pull of oars through water. This musical quality reflects the poet’s grounding in both English Romantic traditions and Indian oral forms, producing a hybrid voice that resonates with Western and Indian sensibilities alike. Consistent rhyme and flowing

cadences make the verse memorable and mirror the repetitive yet ever-changing nature of maritime life.

► dual symbolism

On an allegorical level, the urgent call 'Rise, brothers, rise' serves both as the fishermen's daily summons and a clarion call for national awakening during India's independence movement. Gathering nets and preparing catamarans symbolises the organisation needed for political resistance, while the 'leaping wealth of the tide' represents the inheritance of freedom colonial subjects must reclaim. The voyage towards the horizon where 'the low sky mates with the sea' becomes a powerful metaphor for the march to independence, a distant but attainable goal requiring collective effort and steadfast resolve.

► timeless relevance

The poem's central tension between the comfortable pleasures of the land and the more meaningful joys of the sea reflects universal human conflicts between safety and growth, conformity and authenticity. Presenting fishermen as 'kings of the sea' elevates their labour, honouring their courage and wisdom while challenging social hierarchies that devalue manual work. The portrayal of humans living in harmony with nature offers valuable insights for modern environmental consciousness, suggesting that true fulfilment lies in respectful coexistence rather than exploitation.

► linguistic innovation

The poet's language balances simplicity with sophistication, making the poem accessible to coastal communities and urban readers alike. Local sensory details, such as the scent of mango groves and the sight of coconut glades, create authentic regional colour without seeming exotic. The work demonstrates that English prosody can adapt to Indian aesthetic traditions without losing its essence, helping to establish the legitimacy of Indian English literature during the colonial period.

► multifunctional impact

As both literature and political communication, 'Coromandel Fishers' helped establish Indian English poetry's credibility by showing that complex ideas could be expressed without sacrificing emotional authenticity. Its celebration of working-class dignity gave voice to often overlooked communities, while its blend of local specificity and universal themes created a model for nationalist literature that could unite diverse Indian audiences and reach international readers.



- modern applications

Today, the poem continues to speak to readers navigating tensions between comfort and aspiration, individual fulfilment and collective responsibility. The fishermen's choice to embrace the challenging joys of the sea inspires personal transformation and social activism. Its emphasis on community solidarity remains relevant for environmental protection and social justice movements, while its celebration of traditional knowledge offers a counterbalance to globalisation's impermanence.

- lasting inspiration

The poem embodies the power of literature to serve artistic, cultural, and political purposes simultaneously. Through vivid depiction of coastal life, sophisticated literary techniques, and potent allegory, Naidu created a work that transcends its historical moment while remaining rooted in specific cultural realities. Its ongoing appeal lies in demonstrating how aesthetic excellence and social commitment can strengthen one another, offering a lasting model for writers seeking to combine beauty with meaningful social engagement.

2.1.3 “*The Freaks*” - Kamala Das



Fig 2.1.3 Kamala Das

Kamala Das, a pioneering voice in Indian English poetry, is renowned for her candid and confessional style that explores women's experiences with love, identity, and societal constraints. Her intimate and bold writings have established her as a feminist icon who fearlessly addresses issues like marital discord, female sexuality, and emotional alienation. “*The Freaks*,” from her 1965 collection *Summer in Calcutta*, illustrates this fearless exploration of complex human relationships and emotional realities.

“*The Freaks*” is a moving lyric poem that addresses the troubling emotional landscape of a loveless relationship marked by physical desire devoid of spiritual and emotional connection. The poet draws a clear distinction between love and lust, portraying a relationship where both partners behave unnaturally, motivated more by obligation than genuine affection. The poet exposes the tragic reality of many arranged marriages where the emotional needs of women are neglected, and intimacy becomes a mechanism for maintaining social appearances rather than mutual fulfilment. Through this poem, Kamala Das highlights the loneliness and frustration that come from a loveless relationship where two people act out their roles but do not really connect.



Fig 2.1.4 “The Freaks”

*He talks, turning a sun-stained
Cheek to me, his mouth, a dark
Cavern, where stalactites of
Uneven teeth gleam, his right
Hand on my knee, while our minds
Are willed to race towards love;
But, they only wander, tripping
Idly over puddles of
Desire. Can this man with
Nimble finger-tips unleash
Nothing more alive than the
Skin's lazy hungers? 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 snakes of silence.
I am a freak. It's only
To save my face, I flaunt, at
Times, a grand, flamboyant lust.*

Summary-“The Freaks”

► Intimate
disconnect

This poem represents the contemporary Indian woman's complex experience of physical desire stripped of emotional connection, reflecting themes frequently explored in modern Indian women's poetry. It examines the disconnect between bodily intimacy and spiritual fulfilment, a subject that has become central to understanding female sexuality and autonomy in postcolonial Indian literature. The poem's unflinching portrayal of loveless physical relationships reflects the broader literary movement where Indian women poets have begun articulating previously suppressed experiences of female desire, emotional emptiness, and the search for authentic connection.

► Emotional
detachment

The opening section presents an honest assessment of physical attraction devoid of emotional resonance. The woman's description of her lover's 'sun stained cheeks', 'dark mouth like a cave', and 'uneven, unhealthy teeth' establishes an atmosphere of aesthetic and emotional dissatisfaction. This detailed physical inventory reflects the speaker's psychological detachment, where even intimate moments fail to bridge the emotional gap between the partners. The wandering mind during attempted closeness symbolises the fundamental absence of genuine connection, a theme that resonates throughout contemporary Indian women's poetry dealing with unfulfilled relationships. The clinical observation of physical features suggests a woman who has learned to protect herself emotionally by maintaining analytical distance from supposedly intimate encounters.

► corrupted
desire

The central metaphor of “puddles of desire” powerfully captures the stagnant, polluted nature of their physical relationship. Unlike flowing rivers or clear springs that might symbolise healthy desire, these stagnant puddles suggest contamination and lifelessness. This imagery reflects the broader theme in Indian women's poetry where physical relationships become sites of exploitation rather than mutual fulfilment. The speaker's



recognition that her lover seeks only to satisfy 'his physical hunger' reveals the one-sided nature of their encounter, where her emotional and spiritual needs remain entirely ignored. The phrase 'skin's lazy hunger' suggests how physical desire can become mechanical and divorced from deeper human connection, reducing intimacy to mere biological function. This critique of male centred sexuality appears frequently in contemporary Indian women's writing as a form of resistance against patriarchal expectations.

► performative identity

The poem's conclusion examines the speaker's sense of alienation from social expectations of female desire and passion. Her identification as a 'freak' reflects the profound isolation experienced by women who cannot conform to prescribed emotional responses, whether traditional submissiveness or contemporary assertions of sexual liberation. The performance of 'flamboyant lust' becomes a protective mask, allowing her to maintain dignity whilst concealing her emotional emptiness. This performative aspect of female sexuality appears throughout Indian women's poetry as writers examine how women navigate social expectations while preserving their authentic selves. The contrast between outward passion and inner coldness reveals the psychological cost of maintaining relationships that fail to provide genuine connection or emotional sustenance.

► literary tradition

This poem contributes to the significant body of contemporary Indian women's poetry that boldly examines female sexuality, desire, and emotional authenticity. Like the pioneering work of Kamala Das, who first brought these themes into Indian English poetry, this piece continues the tradition of confessional writing that refuses to romanticise or idealise intimate relationships. The frank treatment of physical desire alongside emotional emptiness reflects the complex reality faced by contemporary Indian women who must navigate between traditional expectations and modern freedoms while searching for authentic connection. The poem's strength lies in its refusal to sentimentalise either the speaker's situation or her responses, instead presenting the harsh realities of relationships built solely on physical attraction without emotional foundation.



2.1.4 Critical Analysis

Kamala Das's poem "The Freaks" offers an intimate and poignant glimpse into a loveless, emotionally barren relationship, boldly exploring themes of sexual dissatisfaction, emotional emptiness, and social pressures. As a noted Indian poet and feminist, Das often drew from her personal experiences to explore the harsh realities many women face in marriage, particularly the difference between physical intimacy and genuine emotional connection. The poem exposes a deeply fractured relationship where lust has replaced love, ultimately making both partners "freaks" who deviate from what is natural and expected in love-making.

The poem opens with striking and unflattering descriptions of the male lover. His "sun-stained cheeks" and "dark cavern" of a mouth with "stalactites" for teeth paint a vivid picture of physical repulsion from the woman's point of view. This raw imagery immediately distances the reader from conventional romantic idealisation. Instead of glorifying the lover, Das dissects his physical presence to symbolise not only his unattractiveness but also his moral and emotional sterility. The lover's superficial touch - his "nimble fingertips" that only awaken "skin's lazy hungers", symbolises the shallow physicality of their relationship. It is a relationship focused solely on body and desire but devoid of emotional warmth or intellectual engagement. The woman's mind wanders even in moments of physical closeness, underscoring the emotional disconnect.

This emotional desolation is further elaborated through the potent metaphor of the "empty cistern." Normally, a cistern holds life-sustaining water; here it represents the woman's heart, dry and barren, waiting to be filled with the nourishing waters of love. But instead of love, her heart is filled with "coiling snakes of silence," a powerful image symbolising isolation, pain, and unspoken suffering. The snakes suggest a creeping poison that silently destroys her spirit and vitality. This metaphor vividly captures the despair and loneliness of a loveless marriage.

The poem also explores the psychological dimension of the woman's predicament. She feels abnormal or "freakish" for her lack of desire and emotional

connection, in contrast to societal expectations of passionate femininity. To mask her frigidity and protect her dignity, she pretends to display “a grand, flamboyant lust,” effectively playing a role to satisfy social and marital norms. This façade highlights the tragic divide between external appearances and internal realities, revealing the pressures women face to conform even when they feel disconnected or empty inside.

The poem can also be read as a critique of patriarchal control and the institution of arranged marriage. The female persona’s experience reflects the larger problem of women’s desires and needs being suppressed or ignored in marriages arranged without their full consent. The woman’s sense of entrapment and her reluctant participation in the relationship speak to the lack of autonomy common to many women. Her plight is emblematic of broader gender inequalities that deny women emotional and sexual fulfilment.

Stylistically, Kamala Das’s poem is marked by its confessional tone, direct language, and powerful imagery. The plainness of the words contrasts with the intensity of the emotions conveyed. This openness allows the reader to step into the woman’s experiences fully. The repetition of certain phrases and the stark contrasts between images - such as light and darkness, emptiness and longing - enhance the poem’s emotional impact. Unlike the idealised language of traditional love poetry, Das’s realistic and often unsettling imagery serves to underscore the poem’s themes of alienation and fractured intimacy.

Furthermore, the poem reflects Kamala Das’s broader literary project of challenging social hypocrisy and revealing the hidden, often painful realities of women’s lives. “The Freaks” is part of her larger feminist discourse that calls for recognition of women’s emotional and sexual autonomy and critiques the ways societal norms undermine this.

The poem is a courageous and unvarnished portrayal of the emptiness underlying physical intimacy without love. Through vivid imagery, sincere emotional expression, and social critique, the poem highlights the destructive effects of loveless relationships on women’s



psyche and identity. Kamala Das's fearless exploration of these themes makes "The Freaks" a powerful feminist statement about love, desire, and freedom in a male-dominated society. It remains a relevant and moving reflection on the need for genuine emotional connection and respect in intimate relationships.

2.1.5 "Grandfather"- Jayanta Mahapatra



Fig 2.1.5 Jayanta Mahapatra

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 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*.

Mahapatra's poem "Grandfather" (1983) reflects on a tragic historical event, the Orissa famine of 1866, through a deeply personal and biographical lens. The poem recounts the harrowing experiences of Mahapatra's own grandfather, Chintamani Mahapatra, who was forced to convert to Christianity due to the severe hunger and starvation during the famine. By retrieving his grandfather's "yellowed diary" and questioning its contents, the poet attempts to revive and understand that critical, painful moment in his family's history. *The poem* is more than a reflection on hunger; it also contemplates identity, faith, and survival, ending with the poet's search for his own place in the social and spiritual order.



Fig 2.1.6 "Grandfather"

The poem shows how hunger can force individuals to make unimaginable choices. Mahapatra's grandfather metaphorically dies as a Hindu when he abandons his ancient faith in order to survive, highlighting the conflict between physical survival and spiritual identity. The poem reveals a painful transformation caused by famine and desperation, while also raising questions about faith, belonging, and the legacy of difficult decisions.

*The yellowed diary's notes whisper in vernacular.
They sound the forgotten posture,
the cramped cry that forces me to hear that voice.
Now I stumble back in your black-paged wake.*

*No uneasy stir of cloud
darkened the white skies of your day; the silence
of dust grazed in the long afterniin sun, ruling
the cracked fallow earth, ate into the laughter of your flesh.*

*For you it was the hardest question of all.
Dead, empty tress stood by the dragging river,
past your weakened body, flailing against your sleep.
You thought of the way the jackals moved, to move.*

*Did you hear the young tamarind leaves rustle
in the cold mean nights of your belly? Did you see
your own death? Watch it tear at your cries,
break them into fits of unnatural laughter?*

*How old were you? Hunted, you turned coward and ran,
the real animal in you plunigng through your bone.
You left your family behind, the buried things,
the precious clod that praised the quality of a god.*

*The impersihable that swung your broken body,
turned it inside out? What did faith matter?
What Hindu world so ancient and true for you to hold?
Uneasily you dreamed toward the center of your web.*

*The separate life let you survive, while perhaps
the one you left wept in the blur of your heart.
Now in a night of sleep and taunting rain
My son and I speak of that famine nameless as snow.*

*A conscience of years is between us. He is young.
The whirls of glory are breaking down for him before me.
Does he think of the past as a loss we have lived, our own?
Out of silence we look back now at what we do not know.*

*There is a dawn waiting beside us, whose signs
are a hundred odd years away from you, Grandfather.
You are an invisible piece on a board
Whose move has made our children grow, to know us,*

*carrying us deep where our voices lapse into silence.
We wish we knew you more.
We wish we knew what it was to be, against dying,
to know the dignity*

*that had to be earned dangerously,
your last chance that was blindly terrifying, so unfair.
We wish we had not to wake up with our smiles
in the middle of some social order.*

Summary

The poet begins by discovering his grandfather's old diary, its pages faded with age, which becomes a window



into the suffering his ancestor experienced over a century ago. Through the diary, Mahapatra tries to “listen” to his grandfather’s voice, as if the pages themselves could call out the pain and hardship he experienced.

As Mahapatra reads, he learns that the famine was more than just a lack of food: it was a time when the sun was mercilessly hot, the land split with deep cracks, and the usual sounds of laughter from the peasants had disappeared. The entire countryside was gripped by a hopeless silence. The sky, empty of clouds, offered no hope of rain, and rivers dried up, leaving dead trees standing as symbols of despair and barrenness. Hunger transformed people; deprivation made them wander like wild animals, some even eating tamarind leaves for survival. The diary describes how people lost their dignity, becoming desperate and animalistic in their search for food.

The poet’s grandfather faces agonising choices as death looms, haunting him with its unnatural laughter. The man knew he could not outlast the famine unless he changed something fundamental about himself. The diary reveals moments of extreme weakness, when the grandfather found himself too tired to move, too hungry to think, and too alone to hope - all the while surrounded by the deaths of many others.

Driven by “the real animal,” meaning the most basic urge for survival, Mahapatra’s grandfather left both his family and his ancestral Hindu faith, a sacrifice shaped not by cowardice but by the desperation of hunger. He converted to Christianity, seeking food and safety, though this act brought spiritual pain, challenging his sense of identity and belonging. Faith, which had anchored him through tradition, became powerless in the face of raw survival. His conversion was not an enthusiastic embrace but rather a reluctant compromise, a way to avoid death and continue his family’s line.

The poet meditates on what it might have felt like for his grandfather to surrender his faith, imagining the tortured conscience and psychological turmoil that accompanied this decision. Yet “the separate life” of a Christian over years helped his grandfather and his descendants survive. The poet observes that, in the present day, he and his son discuss this past quietly when monsoon rains



fall, as if the rain mocks the terrible dryness that brought so much misery.

Looking at the family's legacy, Mahapatra admits there is a divide between generations. His son, bright and optimistic, feels the family lost something when they left Hinduism, while the poet himself sees the choice as an act of resilience, a way to endure impossible circumstances. Both reflect on the past, but with different emotional responses, highlighting the complexity of heritage and survival.

The poet imagines a new dawn, a bright future, that the grandfather could not see in his time of suffering. He acknowledges that his family's existence rests on the grandfather's harsh decision and wishes that Chintamani Mahapatra could see the lives of his descendants. Still, questions remain: What did his grandfather truly feel at the edge of death? What does it mean to abandon dignity and tradition in order to survive? The poet and his family feel the weight of uncertainty and regret as they navigate their place in a world shaped by two faiths.

Overall, the poem suggests that the grandfather's difficult choice is now part of the family's identity, a story etched into memory and inheritance. The act of conversion, though "blindly terrifying," allowed survival but left deep spiritual and cultural scars. Even as the poet and his family find comfort in food and safety, they feel torn between two social worlds, the inherited traditions of Hinduism and the adopted faith of Christianity, never fully belonging to either.

Analysis

This haunting autobiographical poem by Jayanta Mahapatra explores the profound moral complexity of survival during the devastating Orissa famine of 1866, while examining themes of intergenerational trauma, cultural identity, and religious conversion under extreme duress. Written in 1983, the work represents one of the most powerful examples of Indian English poetry's engagement with colonial period trauma and its lasting effects on subsequent generations. The poem emerges from Mahapatra's discovery of his grandfather Chintamani Mahapatra's diary, written during a famine that killed over one million people, roughly one third

► Ancestral trauma



of Orissa's population. Through this personal lens, the poet interrogates both historical catastrophe and its continuing impact on family identity and cultural belonging.

► historical discovery

The opening stanza establishes the poem's central conceit through the metaphor of discovering ancestral memory preserved in written form. The 'yellowed diary's notes whisper in vernacular', suggesting how time has aged both the physical document and the memories it contains, while the vernacular language emphasises the authentic Indian voice speaking across generations. The phrase 'forgotten posture' and 'cramped cry' evoke both physical suffering from hunger and the emotional anguish of desperate circumstances, while the speaker's stumbling 'back in your black paged wake' suggests how discovering this history disrupts his understanding of his own identity and heritage. The black pages symbolise both the darkness of that historical period and the moral ambiguity surrounding his grandfather's choices, creating uncertainty about how to interpret this ancestral legacy.

► environmental catastrophe

The subsequent stanzas create a vivid picture of famine conditions that drove people to desperate measures. The absence of clouds in white skies and the 'silence of dust' in afternoon sun create an atmosphere of hopelessness where even nature seems dead, while the 'cracked fallow earth' suggests how drought has rendered the agricultural foundation of society useless. The image of dust 'eating into the laughter of your flesh' powerfully conveys how famine literally consumed human joy and vitality, transforming living beings into mere survivors focused only on basic needs. This environmental devastation becomes the backdrop for understanding how extreme circumstances can force individuals to abandon their most fundamental beliefs and relationships in order to survive.

The central crisis of the poem emerges through the grandfather's transformation from human to animal driven by starvation. The comparison to jackals searching for food suggests how hunger reduced him to basic survival instincts, while the 'real animal' plunging through his bone indicates how desperation became physically embodied. This animal imagery culminates in his decision to abandon both family and religious faith, described

► moral transformation

as burying 'the precious clod that praised the quality of a god'. The conversion to Christianity represents what the poet calls 'spiritual death' chosen to avoid physical death, highlighting how colonial period relief efforts often came with religious strings attached that exploited people's desperation. The poem thus interrogates both individual moral choices and the broader systems that created such impossible circumstances.

► psychological cost

The middle section of the poem explores the psychological and spiritual costs of religious conversion during extreme circumstances. The rhetorical questions about whether his grandfather heard 'young tamarind leaves rustle' or saw 'your own death' suggest the hallucinations and psychological deterioration common during severe malnutrition. The reference to death tearing at cries and breaking them 'into fits of unnatural laughter' evokes the madness that often accompanies extreme hunger, while also suggesting how survival itself can become a form of insanity when it requires abandoning one's deepest values. The description of faith as something that 'swung your broken body' and 'turned it inside out' emphasises how religious conversion violated his grandfather's fundamental sense of self, creating internal contradictions that persisted throughout his life.

► generational divide

The poem's exploration of intergenerational impact reveals how historical trauma continues affecting subsequent generations long after the original events. The poet and his son discuss 'that famine nameless as snow', suggesting how this family history remains both present and incomprehensible to those who did not experience it directly. The 'conscience of years' between father and son reflects different generational perspectives on their ancestor's choices, with the young son perhaps viewing the lost Hindu heritage romantically whilst the poet recognises the conversion as necessary survival strategy. This generational divide illustrates how trauma creates ongoing identity questions for families whose cultural continuity was disrupted by extreme historical circumstances, leaving descendants uncertain about their authentic cultural belonging.

► contemporary consequences

The conclusion addresses the continuing impact of the grandfather's choices on his descendants' sense of identity and social position. The poet acknowledges that his grandfather's conversion enabled their family's survival and eventual prosperity, making him 'an invisible piece on a board whose move has made our children grow'. However, this gratitude conflicts with feelings of cultural loss and social alienation, particularly the experience of waking 'with our smiles in the middle of some social order' where converted families occupy ambiguous positions between communities. The final lines express the profound desire to understand what it meant 'to be, against dying, to know the dignity that had to be earned dangerously', suggesting how survival under such circumstances required a courage that later generations struggle to comprehend or evaluate.

► colonial exploitation

The poem's treatment of religious conversion reflects the complex dynamics of colonial period relief efforts, where missionaries often provided food and shelter conditional on religious conversion. This practice exploited people's desperation whilst claiming to offer spiritual salvation, creating what the poem describes as earning dignity 'dangerously' through choices that were 'blindly terrifying, so unfair'. The grandfather's conversion represents both practical survival strategy and profound cultural betrayal, highlighting how colonial systems forced impossible choices on Indian families whilst claiming moral superiority. The poem thus critiques not only individual moral choices but the broader colonial apparatus that created circumstances where such choices became necessary for survival.

► literary significance

Mahapatra's treatment of this family history illustrates how contemporary Indian English poetry engages with colonial period trauma through personal narrative rather than abstract political commentary. By focusing on one family's experience, the poem makes the broader historical catastrophe comprehensible whilst avoiding generalisation that might diminish its human impact. The work contributes to the significant body of Indian literature exploring intergenerational trauma, joining other writers who examine how historical events continue affecting families decades or centuries later. This personal approach allows readers to understand both the immediate circumstances that forced desperate

choices and their continuing psychological and cultural consequences for subsequent generations.

► cultural
liminality

The poem's exploration of cultural identity reflects the broader experience of Indian Christian families, particularly those whose conversion occurred under duress during colonial period crises. The sense of belonging 'neither here nor there' that characterises the poet's relationship to both Hindu and Christian communities illustrates how religious conversion often created permanent cultural ambiguity rather than clear new identity. This experience of cultural liminality appears frequently in postcolonial literature, where characters struggle with hybrid identities that result from historical disruptions to cultural continuity. The poem thus speaks to broader questions about authenticity, belonging, and identity that affect many postcolonial families whose cultural histories were interrupted by colonial period traumas.

► enduring
significance

The poem ultimately functions as both personal meditation and historical testimony, preserving family memory whilst interrogating the moral complexity of survival under extreme circumstances. The poem refuses to offer simple judgements about his grandfather's choices, instead presenting them as responses to impossible situations created by larger historical forces beyond individual control. Through its combination of personal narrative and historical context, the work demonstrates how individual family stories illuminate broader patterns of colonial period exploitation and trauma. The poem's power lies in its honest examination of how extreme circumstances can force people to abandon their most fundamental values whilst questioning whether such choices constitute moral failure or necessary adaptation to unbearable conditions. Most significantly, it shows how these historical traumas continue shaping family identity and cultural belonging long after the original crises have passed.

2.1.6 “Background, Casually”- Nissim Ezekiel



Fig 2.1.7 Nissim Ezekiel

Nissim Ezekiel is widely regarded as a pioneering figure in Indian English poetry, known for his reflective and confessional style that bridges Indian themes with modern English verse. Often called the ‘father of modern Indian English poetry,’ Ezekiel explores issues of identity, belonging, culture, and personal experience. His poetry vividly captures the complexities of being an Indian writing in English and negotiating multiple cultural influences. He writes with irony and humour, yet with deep sincerity, often addressing his roots, social dynamics, and existential concerns.

“Background, Casually” is a long autobiographical poem, divided into three sections. In this poem, Ezekiel presents a self-portrait that blends biographical details with reflective insights. He speaks candidly about his alienation and his deep attachment to India, particularly the city of Bombay, which he embraces as his home despite its difficulties. His roots as a Jew in a predominantly Hindu and Muslim society mark him as an outsider, yet he claims a strong commitment to his chosen land and culture. The poem also touches on his childhood, schooling, and struggles abroad, all woven together with a tone of irony, straightforwardness, and personal revelation.

Summary - “Background, Casually”



Fig 2.1.8 “Background, Casually”

- Bantering childhood introduction

It is a long poem consisting of three sections, each section comprising five stanzas of five lines each. The first section opens with a light and playful tone. Ezekiel describes himself as a “poet-rascal-clown,” a frightened child who did not eat or sleep properly and was weak and thin, a “boy of meagre bone.” He admits that he was not good at games like other normal boys: he did not know how to fly a kite properly, and even when he borrowed a spinning top, he failed to make it work. Overall, he presents himself as a failure in many ways.

- Religious school discrimination

Ezekiel was born a Jew in India and faced many hardships at school. He was sent to a Roman Catholic school where Christian boys bullied him because Jews were blamed for betraying Christ. He calls himself a “mugging Jew” among wolves - those Christian boys who showed no kindness or “Christian charity.” Ironically, even though he was hated, Ezekiel won the Scripture prize at school, showing that he knew the Christian Bible better than the Christian boys themselves. But his happiness did not last, as he was punched by a Muslim boy, indicating he was rejected by multiple communities.

The Hindus also were unkind to him. Though undernourished, they were stronger and often bullied Ezekiel. He sometimes felt superior to them because of their poor language skills and apparent laziness. During one noisy quarrel, Ezekiel was forced to defend himself with a knife.

► Failed religious instruction

Continuing in an ironic tone, Ezekiel talks about how his family wanted him to become a rabbi, a Jewish religious leader, but he felt he was not worthy, lacking the morals needed for such a noble job. He was aware of religious practices at home on Friday nights but admits he never had real religious enthusiasm. Though he listened to Hindu yogis and Jewish priests, nothing made him better or more spiritual.

Time passed. At the age of twenty-two Ezekiel was sent to London for higher study with the help of a friend who paid his fare. In London he composed the following apt lines to describe his condition:

*Philosophy,
Poverty, and poetry, three
Companions shared my basement room*

► London struggles

During his lonely time there, he observed the world around him keenly. He lived in London for two difficult years, isolated and poor, without truly taking part in society.

► Exile hardship and hope

In the second part he describes his stay in London, his failures and his return to India. He lived all alone in London for two years. He suffered a hard and cheerless life. He was sad and miserable. A woman cheered him and told him, "my willing ears." He was aware of his failure in everything. Indeed it was a bitter realisation. As he was extremely poor, he worked as a menial servant on an English cargo ship which took French guns and mortar shells to Indo China. He "scrubbed the decks, / And learned to laugh again at home."

On his return to India he was a total failure. He had studied a bit of philosophy, which proved useless in real life. His study of philosophy added to his own exasperation. How to adjust his circumstances was a serious problem. He was in utter confusion and did not know what to do. But in the best tradition of anglophiles like Nirad Chaudhuri and V. S. Naipaul he indicts the Hindus:



*All Hindus are
Like that, my father used to say
When someone talked too loudly
Or knocked at the door like the devil.
They hawked and spat. They sprawled around.*

► Return confusion
and critique

In spite of such difficulties, he remained attached to India and the city of Bombay. He married, which was the worst mistake of his life. He changed many jobs. He saw himself as a fool.

Such has been his background of which he sings but he knows that more remains to be sung. He now sings of:

► Ongoing ancestral
reflection

*My ancestors, among the castes,
Were aliens crushing seed for bread
(The hooded bullock made his rounds)*

In the third part Ezekiel expresses his complete identification with India. He remembers a Major in the British army who told him dreadful stories of the Boer War in Africa. Such stories frightened the child Nissim and gave him terrifying dreams. He would dream that a fierce man had bound his hands and feet. Childhood colonial nightmares

As a grown up man he dreams only of words which he feels cannot betray. He continued to compose poems until he lost his grip on worldly reality and missed the worldly prize. Opportunities in life made him a poet. He is fully dedicated to poetry as his profession. People may call him a fool but he does not care. Wisdom consists in making the best use of one's opportunities. He harnesses his inner tensions and frustrations, and also the failures and difficulties that life holds in store. Such personal experiences constitute the theme of his poetry. He writes:

► Committed
poetic vocation

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

Ezekiel is committed to his chosen profession, poetry. He is also committed to India and to Bombay, the city of his choice. Acceptance of Indian reality is a vital factor in Background Casually. Ezekiel seeks his identity in Indian soil. His escape is not from community but into



it. He is proud of the Indian environment. He has made his commitment. India is his home and he will continue to live here. He has kept his commitment by depicting Indian environment and reality of life in his chosen city, Bombay, which has shaped his sensibilities. Identity rooted in India

The poet serenely accepts the reality:

*The Indian landscape scars my eyes.
I have become a part of it
To be observed by foreigners
They say that I am singular,
Their letters overstate the case.
I have made my commitments now.
This is one; to stay where I am,
As others choose to give themselves
In some remote and backward place.
My backward place is where I am.*

► (Serene acceptance of India

“Background Casually” reflects some of Ezekiel’s well defined attitudes. K. N. Daruwalla remarks, “The first is to stay where he is. He seeks his identity in the country and its incongruities. He is basically an urban poet, the city spilling into his verse not as cosmetic but as an organic growth. His poetry is confessional in the literal sense, littered with a record of his failures.”

Critical Analysis

Nissim Ezekiel’s “Background, Casually” is a powerful example of confessional and reflective poetry in modern Indian English literature. It presents the poet’s personal journey through memories, identity and belonging, blending autobiography with social commentary. Ezekiel reflects on his life as an Indian Jew, an intellectual and an artist negotiating between two cultures. The poem becomes a record of self-discovery and transformation through acceptance.

Ezekiel’s tone throughout the poem is ironic yet sincere. Irony becomes a means of self-examination rather than mockery. He is able to laugh at his own weaknesses and the absurdities of others without bitterness. The self-description as a “poet, rascal, clown” is a striking example of self-ironic humour, revealing his intellectual honesty and emotional distance. Humour softens the pain of alienation and expresses humility rather than despair.

► Critical affirmation of identity

► Journey of selfhood.

► Irony and humour.



- Simple expressive language.

The poet's diction is simple, conversational, and direct. Instead of ornamental or abstract language, Ezekiel chooses everyday words that reflect clarity and sincerity. His lines flow naturally, capturing speech rhythms familiar to Indian speakers of English. Short lines such as "Philosophy, / Poverty, and poetry, three / Companions shared my basement room" show how he uses rhythm and repetition to convey inner struggle and resigned acceptance. His tone alternates between playfulness and gravity, mirroring the complexities of life itself.

- Structure and growth.

In structure, the poem's three sections trace a movement from confusion to understanding, from alienation to acceptance. The chronological arrangement - childhood, exile, and return - mirrors the growth of the poet's consciousness. The first section uses a lighter tone and irony; the middle section reflects bitterness and struggle; the final section settles into calm acceptance. This structural progression gives the poem coherence and a sense of moral evolution.

- Vivid local imagery.

Imagery also plays an important role in shaping the poem's meaning. Ezekiel's use of concrete and local imagery, - school scenes, London's basement rooms, the Bombay landscape - grounds his reflections in lived experience. Metaphors such as "the hooded bullock made his rounds" evoke continuity and endurance in Indian life. Through these images, Ezekiel finds poetic beauty in the ordinary and the overlooked.

- Reflective social irony.

Irony reappears in his cultural criticism. The poet mocks narrow religious divisions and superficial intellectualism. His critique of both Western materialism and Indian complacency exposes hypocrisy but never turns cynical. Ezekiel's irony is balanced with compassion; he observes without condemning. This reflective irony gives his poetry moral depth and psychological realism, making him a humane observer of life.

- Understated poetic control.

Ezekiel's stylistic grace also lies in his rhythmical control and use of understatement. He avoids exaggerated emotion. The controlled tone conveys maturity and self-discipline. His confessional voice does not seek pity but insight. By transforming personal failure into artistic achievement, Ezekiel achieves poetic detachment. His restraint, irony and linguistic precision make the poem both intimate and universal.



- Calm self-acceptance.

The final section affirms his identity and creative purpose. The poet's acceptance of Bombay and India as his true environment represents spiritual closure. The conclusion, "My backward place is where I am," combines irony with serenity, suggesting that contentment arises from understanding one's place rather than seeking escape. Ezekiel's language here becomes calm and declarative, reflecting confidence in his chosen commitments. Recap:

- Artistic maturity achieved.

Thus, *Background, Casually* stands as a landmark in modern Indian English poetry for both its content and technique. It reveals Ezekiel's mastery of irony, humour, realism, and structural coherence. The poem's blend of personal confession, social insight, and stylistic restraint turns private experience into universal art. Through this poem, Ezekiel teaches that wisdom lies in self-knowledge, creative endurance, and acceptance of reality.

2.1.7 "This Summer – The Cicada's Song"- Mamang Dai



Fig 2.1.9 Mamang Dai

Mamang Dai (born 1957) hails from the Adi community of Arunachal Pradesh, where she first cultivated a childhood fascination with botany amid the pristine forests of her home state. This early love of plants and landscapes informed both her fiction and poetry, animating each line with vivid natural detail. A recipient of the Padma Shri in 2011, she credits writers such as

Italo Calvino, Peter Matthiessen, Barry Lopez, Jorge Luis Borges and Rumi for shaping her imaginative vision. Although Dai publishes acclaimed prose works, her guide *Arunachal Pradesh: The Hidden Land* remains a bestseller, she regards poetry as her “real lifeline,” the medium through which she most deeply connects to her surroundings and her inner world.

Dai’s career path has been as varied as the landscapes she describes. A former member of the Indian Administrative Service, she left government service to pursue journalism with *The Telegraph*, *Hindustan Times* and *The Sentinel*. She then honed her voice on radio as an anchor and interviewer for TV-AIR and Doordarshan in Itanagar. A pivotal period followed as a programme officer with the World Wide Fund for Nature, where her deepening engagement with environmental conservation profoundly influenced her creative work and reinforced her commitment to bearing witness to nature’s fragility.

Her literary style blends a conversational diction with richly layered ideas, seamlessly weaving familiar local imagery into expansive imaginative landscapes. In the poem “The Voice of the Mountain,” for example, she writes, “We live in territories forever ancient and new, and as we speak in changing languages,” evoking both the timeless quality of place and the fluidity of cultural expression. Her prose, too, remains accessible, inviting readers into Arunachal’s ancient traditions without sacrificing the depth and complexity of her subject matter.

Throughout her work, Dai underscores the writer’s role as a witness, preserving the customs, stories and survival strategies of her people. She believes that writers “keep written records” that shape how future generations perceive their own histories and values. As a member of a marginalised tribe, she embraces this duty, using her art to illuminate the humanity of her community and to challenge broader audiences to reconsider assumptions about Northeast India.

Feminism courses strongly through Dai’s narratives, where women emerge as fully rounded individuals - independent and self-reliant, yet sensitive and empathetic. Her heroines confront patriarchal constraints



with courage and nuance, reflecting Dai's belief that strength and vulnerability coexist within every woman. This balanced portrayal enriches her characters, making them both relatable and inspiring to readers navigating similar social dynamics.

The poem “This Summer - The Cicada's Song” illustrates Dai's gift for using nature imagery to explore cultural identity and tradition. Written as a dramatic monologue in four unrhymed stanzas, the piece adopts the voice of the cicada itself, drawing readers into the insect's world while casting light on human experience. Through this perspective, Dai shows how the smallest voices of the natural world can carry profound truths about our shared heritage and our continuing quest for meaning.

Summary: “This Summer - The Cicada's Song”



Fig 2.1.10 “This Summer – The Cicada's Song”

The poem takes us to Mamang Dai's homeland, where nature and local traditions are closely linked. It is written as a dramatic monologue, meaning the speaker is talking to someone, though we do not know their exact identity. It is suggested that the cicada is speaking throughout the poem. The poem has four stanzas. There is no fixed rhyme scheme.

In the first stanza, the cicada tells us that its song remembers stories from the past. The call of the cicada is compared to the song of a warrior who is trapped and hidden among the trees. These trees are silent observers, keeping many secrets about battles and history. The cicada's empty shell is compared to

words and stories that have been forgotten, left behind like the shells on the leaves.

The second stanza asks, “Time – what is it?” and tries to answer. Time is described as a man who loved the clouds and mist. He shares songs with others. The poem goes on to connect time with changes in the landscape, like flowers, sunshine, and even man-made things like trains. Both nature and human progress are shown to be part of the place’s history. The act of sharing songs or stories is repeated as something important.

In the third stanza, we learn that progress has not always been good. Many songs and stories have been lost. The cicada remembers the past and feels sorry for the loss of natural beauty, especially because butterflies and other living things have been disturbed or destroyed by people wanting to build and change things.

The fourth stanza ends with the return of summer. Time is described as “slanting” or passing across the land. The cicada says we can learn what it means to care for things from a distance. This could suggest that nature is not as close as it used to be, or that we should learn to appreciate it even when it is far away.

Critical Analysis

The poem presents the voice of a cicada and uses this small insect as a symbol for memory and tradition. The cicada’s song is more than just a sound - it stands for the stories, struggles, and changes of the land and its people. This is a clever choice, as cicadas are known for singing in the summer; their voices become a chorus that fills the air, just as old songs and stories filled life in the past.

The poem is written as a dramatic monologue. The speaker seems to be sharing their thoughts with an imagined listener. In the poem, the cicada looks back on the past and sees both beauty and sadness. The reference to singing “the songs of the caged warrior” suggests that the land and its people have a history of struggle, sometimes hidden and sometimes forgotten. The “anonymity of trees” is an image of secrets kept and battles fought silently in nature. The poet compares the empty shells left by cicadas to “forgotten words,” showing how stories and history can be lost over time.

The poem also explores the idea of time. When the speaker asks “Time - what is it?”, the answer links time to changes in nature and in human life. Clouds, mist, flowers, sunlight, and even trains are mentioned as symbols of how things change and move forward. The train is especially important. It is a man-made object, showing human progress, but it appears alongside natural images. Mamang Dai wants us to see how nature and civilisation are connected, and how both can shape the land.

There is a gentle sadness in the poem. In the third stanza, the cicada asks for forgiveness from butterflies and for the beauty that has been damaged by people “in the hunt for life.” Here, the poem reminds us that human actions sometimes destroy nature, and progress can mean that old songs and natural wonders are lost. The “bright, crackling words” show that new things have replaced the old, but these changes also bring regret.

The poem ends by describing the season of summer, saying that time is “slanting across the land.” This means time is passing and history is being made. The poet says that these changes can help us understand what it means to “love from a distance.” There are many ways to read this idea. It could mean people now have to love nature from afar, as it is no longer as close and untouched as it once was. It could also mean the writer wants readers to learn to care about the poet’s homeland, even if it is physically distant or culturally unfamiliar.

Throughout the poem, the poet uses simple language and everyday images to talk about big ideas like memory, change, and loss. There are no rhymes and the lines are short, which makes the poem sound natural and direct. The cicada’s song stands for all the voices and stories that are in danger of being forgotten. The poet asks readers to respect both nature and tradition, reminding us to listen carefully and remember the things that matter.

The poem’s message is not only about regret for what has been lost, but also about hope for understanding and respect. It encourages us to value the environment and remember the history that shapes us. By sharing the perspective of the cicada, the poet makes it easier for everyone to understand and connect with these feelings, even if they come from a faraway land.



2.1.8 “Life Sentence”- Jeet Thayil

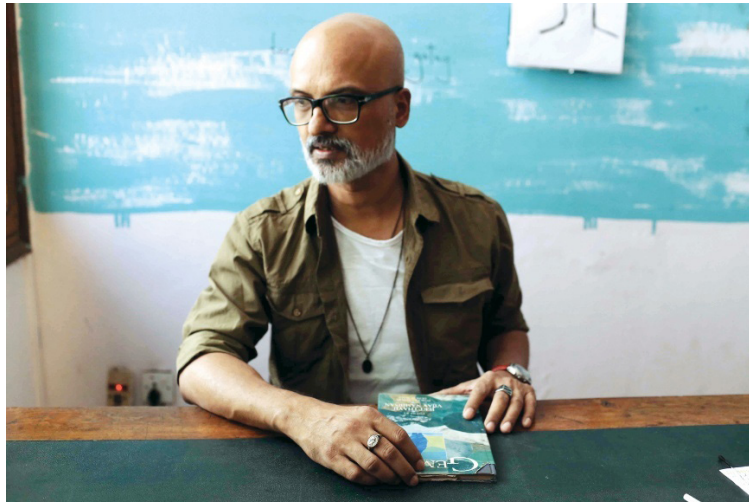


Fig 2.1.11 Jeet Thayil

Jeet Thayil, born in Kerala in 1959, is one of India’s most distinctive contemporary writers, celebrated for his work as a performance poet, librettist, novelist and journalist. Educated in Hong Kong, New York and Bombay, he draws on global cultures and his own turbulent experiences to create a voice that is at once deeply personal and richly allusive. His mastery of lyricism and his willingness to confront difficult themes have earned him accolades from peers such as Vijay Seshadri, who praises Thayil’s “command of the poetic and historical past” and the “archaeological richness” of his invented language. His major poetry collections *Gemini II: Selected Poems* (1994), *Apocalypso* (1997), *English* (2004), *These Errors are Correct* (2008) and *Collected Poems* (2015) show his daring exploration of addiction, loss, love and mortality. His first novel *Narcopolis* (2012) was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and won the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, and his novels *The Book of Chocolate Saints* (2017) and *Low* (2020) further establish his range and depth as a storyteller.

‘Life Sentence’ returns to Thayil’s confessional style and addresses the profound grief following the death of his wife. In this concise yet intense poem the image of a ghost conveys how the memory of a beloved partner continues to haunt each moment of daily life. Thayil’s precise language and sparse images reveal the burden of guilt and longing that accompanies personal loss. Every recollection of his wife becomes a vivid echo that both wounds and sustains the speaker.

By focusing on his own bereavement Thayil turns private sorrow into a universal reflection on mourning and remembrance. The poem invites readers to consider how love and loss remain intertwined long after a life ends. Its economy of words and haunting tone make it a powerful text for exploring the ways in which memory shapes identity and offers a path toward healing through honest expression of grief.

Summary- “Life Sentence”

The poem opens with an invitation to consider the ghost not as an enemy but as a needy presence seeking return. By addressing the reader in the second person “you’re not opposed to the ghost”, the poem places us directly into the speaker’s conflicted mindset. The ghost is personified as female, which immediately conveys intimacy and suggests a specific lost individual rather than a general spectre. From the outset, the tension between compassion and avoidance is established, prompting reflection on how we respond to those we have failed. Compassion versus avoidance.

In the next lines, the ghost is described as “distracted, or busy,” preoccupied with finding “a way back in.” Yet the poem emphasises the futility of this desire: the “shore appears distant, not to mention, impossible to attain.” The shore functions as a powerful metaphor for the boundary between life and death, and its inaccessibility underscores the permanence of loss. Thayil’s use of simple yet evocative language captures the frustration of longing for reunion when the chasm separating the living and the dead can never truly be bridged. Unbridgeable life-death chasm.

The third segment explores how the ghost’s former friends have ceased to speak her name, and her identity fades into “static and the clatter.” Here the familiar idea of neglecting memory is rendered through auditory imagery. “Static and clatter” evoke the everyday noise of modern life, conversations about “meat and money”, which drowns out the memory of the departed. This contrast between mundane concerns and the sacred act of remembrance highlights how practicalities can gradually erode emotional bonds, leaving bereaved individuals struggling against the tide of normality. Noise erodes memory.

Thayil then shifts focus to the speaker’s own response. He admits that he “forgets to speak her name” and no longer utters her “lovely name.” This omission is not portrayed as spiteful but as willful avoidance: the speaker chooses comfort over confrontation with guilt. Although he is “not crazy or bitter,”



he deliberately sidesteps her reproach. This self-awareness reveals the complexity of grief, where love and responsibility collide with fear and shame, and where remembering can feel as painful as forgetting. Avoidance fuels guilt.

The poem's crucial moment arrives with the imagined question: "Why, why did you not look after me?" This haunting refrain crystallises the speaker's regret and sense of failure. Without naming the ghost explicitly as the speaker's wife, the poem invites readers to infer a deeply personal loss. The absence of narrative detail makes the question all the more universal, akin to an accusation that echoes through the corridors of memory, sentencing the speaker to perpetual remorse for a lapse in care or affection. Question of deep regret.

Critical Analysis

Jeet Thayil's "Life Sentence" opens with an invitation to consider the ghost not as an enemy but as a needy presence seeking return. By addressing the reader in the second person, "you're not opposed to the ghost", the poem places us directly into the speaker's conflicted mindset. The ghost is personified as female, which immediately conveys intimacy and suggests a specific lost individual rather than a general spectre. From the outset, the tension between compassion and avoidance is established, prompting reflection on how we respond to those we have failed. Compassion versus avoidance.

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The title, "Life Sentence," resonates on multiple levels. On one hand, it suggests a judicial punishment to be served over a lifetime; on the other, it hints at the burden of each living moment becoming a reminder of past omission. The speaker's guilt transforms every day into a term of penance, with memory functioning as both judge and jailer. Thayil's juxtaposition of legal language and emotional suffering deepens the poem's thematic impact: grief itself becomes a sentence from which there is no appeal. Guilt as eternal punishment.

Despite its brevity, the poem's structure and tone foster an atmosphere of confession. The second-person address creates a sense of distance, as though the speaker is both owning his failing and inviting the reader to consider their own omissions. The lack of stanza breaks and the flowing syntax mirror the relentless nature of remorse, while the plain diction makes the poem accessible to readers of all backgrounds. This restraint intensifies the emotional charge, proving that concise language can convey profound complexity. Confessional, compact style.

"Life Sentence" speaks to universal experiences of grief, memory and unresolved responsibility. By employing the ghost as a central metaphor, Thayil explores how our failures to nurture and remember loved ones can linger far beyond their passing. The poem urges readers to confront uncomfortable



questions of duty and compassion and to recognise how easily daily life can eclipse deeper bonds. Ultimately, it stands as a testament to the power of poetry to give voice to the silent ache of loss and to remind us that true remembrance requires both courage and care. Universal grief and remembrance.

Summarised Overview

This unit examined six significant poems representing different generations, regional perspectives, and thematic concerns within Indian English poetry. The collection shows the rich diversity and continuing evolution of this literary tradition through works spanning over a century of creative expression.

Beginning with Sarojini Naidu's "Coromandel Fishers," the unit explores early nationalist poetry that employs maritime imagery to inspire independence movements whilst celebrating regional coastal culture. The poem operates simultaneously as authentic regional literature and sophisticated political allegory, demonstrating how Indian English poets successfully combined artistic excellence with social commitment.

Kamala Das's "The Freaks" represents confessional poetry that boldly challenges social conventions surrounding female sexuality and relationships. Through intimate personal revelation, the poem addresses broader themes of emotional authenticity, marital dissatisfaction, and women's psychological autonomy, contributing to feminist discourse in Indian literature.

Jayanta Mahapatra's "Grandfather" presents historical trauma through personal family narrative, exploring religious conversion during the 1866 Orissa famine and its intergenerational impact. The poem demonstrates how individual family stories illuminate broader patterns of colonial period exploitation whilst examining the moral complexity of survival under extreme circumstances.

Nissim Ezekiel's "Background, Casually" offers autobiographical reflection on cultural belonging and identity as a Jewish Indian poet. Through honest examination of childhood experiences, educational challenges, and cultural negotiations, the poem addresses universal themes of belonging, alienation, and the search for authentic identity within diverse societies.

Contemporary voices include Mamang Dai's "This Summer: The Cicada's Song," which connects environmental awareness with tribal cultural preservation through innovative use of nature imagery and dramatic monologue techniques. The poem demonstrates how marginalised communities use literature to preserve traditional knowledge whilst addressing contemporary ecological concerns.

Jeet Thayil's "Life Sentence" examines grief and memory through modernist confessional techniques, exploring how unresolved guilt and loss continue affecting individuals throughout their lives. The poem's psychological complexity and symbolic sophistication represent contemporary developments in Indian English poetry's engagement with universal human experiences.

Assignments

1. Analyse "Coromandel Fishers" as both regional literature and political allegory, examining how Naidu successfully combines authentic cultural representation with nationalist inspiration
2. Evaluate the confessional elements in "The Freaks" and discuss how Das uses personal revelation to address broader social issues concerning female autonomy and emotional authenticity
3. Examine the treatment of historical trauma in "Grandfather," focusing on how Mahapatra explores the moral complexity of survival decisions and their intergenerational consequences
4. Discuss identity formation in "Background, Casually" with specific reference to Ezekiel's negotiation of religious, cultural, and linguistic influences in creating authentic self-representation
5. Analyse environmental themes in "This Summer: The Cicada's Song" and evaluate their connection to cultural preservation and tribal identity in contemporary Indian English poetry
6. Explore representations of grief and memory in "Life Sentence," using close reading techniques to examine how Thayil employs symbolism and psychological realism
7. Compare approaches to cultural belonging across three selected poems, demonstrating how different generations of Indian English poets address themes of alienation and acceptance



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1. Dai, Mamang. *The Balm of Time*. Penguin Books India, 2008.
2. Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publishers, 2012.
3. Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 2017.
4. Prasad, G.J.V. *Writing India, Writing English: Literature, Language, Location*. Routledge, 2011.
5. Singh, K.K. *Indian English Poetry After Independence*. Book Enclave, 2006.

Suggested Reading

1. Das, Kamala. *Summer in Calcutta*. Everest Press, 1965.
2. Ezekiel, Nissim. *Collected Poems 1952-1988*. Oxford University Press, 1989.
3. Mahapatra, Jayanta. *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten*. Oxford University Press, 1971.
4. Naidu, Sarojini. *The Golden Threshold*. Heinemann, 1905.
5. Thayil, Jeet. *These Errors Are Correct*. Tranquebar Press, 2008.



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

(Detailed)

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

► Early life

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.



► Choice of language

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*.

► Thematic and technical complexity

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.

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.

► Contesting norms

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.

2.2.1 Act-wise Summary

Act I

► Waiting for parents

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.



► 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.

► Planning Lata's career

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 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.

► Patriarchal control

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 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

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 Chenni Amma.

► Conditions

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.

► Imposed social rules

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 possibility of such a selection. She has already made arrangements for all prominent newspapers and dance

► Strategy



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.

The scene shifts once again to the past. The young Ratna and Jairaj are entering the garden, which is flooded with



► Frustrated Jairaj

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. They seem happy and are helping each other to get ready. The Older Jairaj continues to speak, narrating an

► Human fallibility

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 Analysis

► 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.

Amritlal cannot tolerate the sound of dancing bells in his home, since they signify that Jairaj and Ratna



► Moral Anxiety

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 as fundamentally different. This difference is expected to be observed in terms of cultural roles, social activities,

► Identity and society

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.

► Conflict

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.

► Binaries

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.

► Myth of masculinity

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 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' 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

► Family and gender politics

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.

► Strategies

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.

► Conflict of values

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.

► Choice

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 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.

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



► Historical reception of issues

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?

Reference

1. Chaudhuri, Asha Kuthari. *Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction*. New Delhi: Foundation Books, 2005.
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3. Reddy, K. Venkata and R.K. Dhawan. (eds). *Flowering of Indian Drama : Growth and Development*. New Delhi: Prestige, 2004.
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Suggested Reading

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.

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

Poetry

(Non-Detailed)

Learning Outcomes

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

- ▶ trace the major historical phases of Indian Writing in English.
- ▶ distinguish key characteristics of Indo-Anglian poetic forms.
- ▶ interpret symbolism and imagery in selected poems.
- ▶ evaluate how cultural and social themes inform Indian English poetry.

Background

Indian Writing in English began before full British rule and developed through missionary schools and Macaulay's Minute of 1835, which established English as a teaching language. Early poets such as Henry Derozio and Michael Madhusudan Dutt adopted Romantic forms to explore Indian themes, inaugurating the Indo-Anglian renaissance. Rabindranath Tagore's Gitanjali fused devotional lyricism with universal spirituality. Arun Kolatkar and Gieve Patel introduced modernist and ecological concerns, while Mamta Kalia's verse critiques social norms. This evolution reflects continuous negotiation between Indian cultural identity and English poetic conventions.

Keywords

Poetic evolution, Indo-Anglian renaissance, Symbolism, Personification, Irony, Cultural identity, Ecological critique | Spiritual lyricism



Discussion

2.3.1 “Our Casuarina Tree” - Toru Dutt

Toru Dutt (1856-1877) remains one of the most remarkable figures in early Indo-Anglian literature, writing with exceptional skill in three languages - Bengali, French, and English - before her tragically early death at twenty-one. Born into an affluent, intellectually vibrant Bengali family during the cultural renaissance of nineteenth-century Bengal, she received an extraordinary education that included extensive European travel and immersion in Western literary traditions. Her family's conversion to Christianity in 1862 and subsequent sojourns in France and England provided her with unique bicultural perspectives that profoundly influenced her poetic vision. Despite her brief life, Dutt produced work of lasting significance, including translations of French poetry, original verse in French, and the celebrated collection *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. Her poetry demonstrates remarkable maturity, combining intimate knowledge of Indian landscape and culture with sophisticated command of European poetic forms and sensibilities.



Fig: 2.3.1 Toru Dutt

- Memory through natural symbolism

“Our Casuarina Tree” stands as one of the finest examples of Indo-Anglian poetry, representing a profound synthesis of personal memory and natural imagery. Composed by Toru Dutt, the first Indian poet to write in both French and English, this reflective poem transcends mere botanical description to become what critics have termed “the poetic evocation of a tree.” However, the work operates on multiple levels simultaneously. The casuarina tree functions both as a tangible natural object and as a powerful symbol of memory, loss, and the inexorable passage of time. Through this dual representation, Dutt achieves what literary scholars recognise as “recapturing the past, and immortalising the moments of time so recaptured.”

- Biographical context and influences

The poem emerges from Dutt’s personal experience of the casuarina tree that stood outside her family home in Bengal, visible through her window. Born Tarulatha Dutt in 1856 into an affluent Bengali family steeped in literary tradition, she became a harbinger of Indo-Anglian literature during the cultural renaissance of mid-nineteenth-century Bengal. Her family’s conversion to Christianity in 1862 and their subsequent relocation to France following the death of her younger brother Abju profoundly influenced her literary sensibility, imbuing her work with themes of exile, loss, and nostalgic remembrance.

Summary- “Our Casuarina Tree”

The poem unfolds across five carefully structured stanzas, each advancing the central theme through systematic progression from objective observation to deeply personal reflection.

- Vivid ecological description

Stanza one establishes the poem’s foundation through vivid botanical imagery. Dutt presents the tree as a living ecosystem, describing how a creeper ascends its trunk “like a huge python,” winding around the rugged bark in serpentine coils. The branches teem with life as birds and bees gather amongst the leaves and flowers, whilst at night the nightingale perches solitary, filling the darkness with melodious song.

Stanza Two shifts focus to temporal observation, relating the tree to the poet’s daily rhythms. Each morning upon waking, her gaze inevitably finds the tree.



- Daily rhythms and seasons

During winter months, a grey baboon assumes statue-like stillness, contemplating the sunrise whilst its offspring frolic amongst the flowering boughs. The tree casts shadows across the nearby broad tank, where water lilies bloom “like amassed snow.”

- Emotional transformation through memory

Stanza Three marks the poem’s emotional transformation as Dutt connects the tree to precious memories of her deceased siblings. She explicitly states that the tree’s magnificence alone does not account for her deep attachment. Rather, its significance lies in the childhood hours she spent beneath its branches playing with her brother and sister. Their memory ensures the tree’s eternal place in her heart, and she envisions their images blending perpetually with the tree’s form until “hot tears blind her eyes.” The tree’s dirge-like murmur might somehow reach the distant realm where her lost loved ones now reside.

- Personification and shared grief

Stanza Four employs personification to humanise the tree completely. Dutt recalls hearing the tree’s wail even in distant foreign lands, describing its lament as equivalent to “human recordation of pain and regret.” This technique elevates the tree from natural object to empathetic companion in grief.

- Artistic consecration and immortality

Stanza Five concludes with the poet’s artistic mission. She expresses fervent desire to consecrate a song in the tree’s honour, hoping that love might protect it from oblivion’s curse. This final stanza transforms personal memory into universal artistic statement, seeking to immortalise not merely the tree but the profound human experiences it represents.

2.3.1.1 Analysis

- Romantic sensibility meets culture

“Our Casuarina Tree” shows remarkable literary sophistication through its masterful blend of romantic sensibility and Indian cultural specificity. The poem reveals strong Wordsworthian influences, particularly in its treatment of nature as catalyst for memory and philosophical reflection. Like the opening passage of “Tintern Abbey,” Dutt begins with detailed natural description before progressing to deeper recollection and meditation.

The poem’s central strength lies in its successful personification of the titular tree. Through the striking



- Masterful personification technique

image of the tree “gallantly” wearing the creeper as a “scarf,” Dutt transforms static botanical description into dynamic personality. This personification reaches its culmination in the fourth stanza, where the tree’s voice transcends geographical boundaries, connecting the poet to her lost siblings across continents and perhaps beyond life itself.

- Ecosystem as nurturing sanctuary

Dutt’s imagery creates a comprehensive ecosystem around the tree, establishing it as nurturing sanctuary for diverse life forms. The baboon family that “haunts its boughs” represents continuity of natural cycles, playing, swinging, and meditating whilst watching sunrise. This parallels the human family memories associated with the tree, suggesting nature’s capacity to sustain both literal and metaphorical life across generations.

- Celebration to elegiac remembrance

The poem’s emotional architecture follows a carefully constructed progression from celebratory description to elegiac remembrance. Initially, the tree exists within a “gay and lively picture” populated by dancing water lilies reminiscent of Wordsworth’s daffodils. However, as Dutt’s focus shifts from external observation to internal reflection, a “slightly sombre note creeps in.” The transition from “animal movements” to painful memory demonstrates the poet’s psychological journey from present perception to past experience.

- Exile and displaced identity

The poem’s treatment of exile and displacement reflects Dutt’s biographical circumstances as an Indian intellectual writing in English whilst living in France. The tree becomes an anchor to Bengali identity and family heritage, its “dirge-like” sounds potentially reaching across oceans to connect separated loved ones. This geographical dimension adds postcolonial resonance to what might otherwise remain purely personal elegy.

- Cultural specificity meets universality

Dutt’s technical achievement lies in maintaining perfect balance between specific cultural detail and universal emotional truth. The baboons, water lilies, and nightingale root the poem firmly in Indian landscape, whilst themes of loss, memory, and the desire for artistic immortality speak to readers regardless of cultural background. The poem succeeds as both ethnographic document and transcendent literature.

The concluding stanza’s invocation of “Love” to defend against “Oblivion” elevates personal grief into artistic

- Cultural specificity meets universality

- Cross-cultural literary achievement

manifesto. Dutt positions poetry itself as bulwark against time's erosive power, suggesting that artistic creation can preserve not merely individual memory but collective cultural experience. This ambitious claim places "Our Casuarina Tree" within the tradition of great memorial literature whilst establishing Dutt's distinctive voice within Indo-Anglian poetry.

Through its synthesis of romantic technique, Indian subject matter, and profound personal emotion, "Our Casuarina Tree" stands as pioneering achievement in cross-cultural literary expression, demonstrating how individual experience can achieve universal significance through skilled poetic transformation.

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

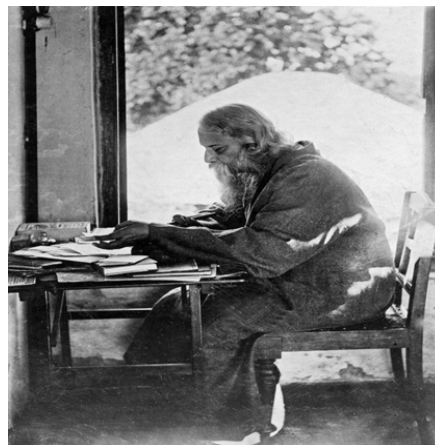


Fig.2.3.2 Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore stands as one of the most influential literary figures in modern world literature, embodying the role of poet, philosopher, educator, and social reformer. Born in 1861 into the culturally rich Tagore family of Bengal during the height of the Bengali Renaissance, he emerged as a towering intellectual whose influence extended far beyond the boundaries of India. His multifaceted genius encompassed poetry, music, art, and educational reform, making him a true polymath of his era.

"Gitanjali," meaning "Song Offerings," represents Tagore's masterpiece and the work that catapulted him to international fame. This collection comprises 103 deeply spiritual poems originally composed in Bengali and later translated into English by Tagore himself. Published in

1912, “Gitanjali” garnered immediate critical acclaim and secured Tagore the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, making him the first non-European recipient of this prestigious honour.

The collection’s profound impact stems from its unique ability to express universal spiritual truths through accessible, yet sophisticated language. T.S. Eliot praised these poems for expressing “in perfect language permanent human impulses,” highlighting their timeless relevance. The work successfully bridges Eastern philosophical traditions with Western literary sensibilities, presenting complex theological concepts through simple, optimistic, and deeply moving verse. “Gitanjali” remains a testament to the power of devotional poetry to transcend cultural boundaries and speak to the fundamental human search for meaning and divine connection.

2.3.2.1 Summary

Song 1: “Thou Hast Made Me Endless”

The poet speaks to God with great humility and asks for divine help in writing poetry.

The poet begins by saying that human souls live forever because God wants them to. However, our physical bodies are weak and fragile, like clay pots that can easily break. God keeps filling these pots again and again, which means when we die, we are born again in new bodies. This shows the poet believes in the Hindu idea that souls move from one life to another.

Next, the poet uses a beautiful comparison. He says he is like a simple flute made from reeds, and God is like a skilled musician who plays this flute. When God plays the flute (inspires the poet), beautiful music comes out. This music represents the poems that the poet writes. The poet can only create good poetry when God gives him inspiration. God plays this music everywhere - on hills and in valleys - meaning God’s inspiration comes to the poet wherever he goes.

When God touches the poet’s soul and fills him with inspiration, the poet feels incredible joy. In these moments, he forgets about his physical body and feels united with God. This is what religious people call a mystical experience.



The poet then explains that God is very generous and has spread his gifts throughout all of nature. However, human beings are too small and limited to receive all of these wonderful gifts. The poet compares humans to small children whose hands are too tiny to hold all the presents their parents want to give them. God has been giving these gifts for thousands of years and still has more to give, but people are not wise enough or great enough to use all these blessings properly.

Throughout the song, Tagore uses everyday objects to explain deep spiritual ideas. Bodies become pots, souls become water, poets become flutes, and God becomes a musician. This makes difficult concepts easier to understand.

Analysis

Song 1 establishes the foundational theme of “Gitanjali” through its exploration of the relationship between divine creativity and human receptivity. The poet begins his song offerings in a spirit of profound humility, acknowledging the eternal and immortal nature of the human soul as ordained by divine will. Tagore employs the metaphor of the human body as a “frail vessel” that God repeatedly empties and refills, suggesting the cyclical nature of life, death, and rebirth inherent in Hindu philosophy of transmigration.

The central metaphor transforms the poet into a reed flute and God into a skilled musician. Through this imagery, Tagore illustrates that divine inspiration enables him to create poetry, with God playing fresh melodies through him across hills and valleys. This metaphor emphasises the poet’s dependence on divine grace for artistic creation whilst simultaneously celebrating the omnipresence of God in nature.

The poem progresses to describe the mystical union between human and divine consciousness. When God touches the poet’s soul, he experiences inexpressible joy, transcending physical limitations and losing personal identity in unity with the Infinite. The song concludes by acknowledging divine generosity scattered throughout nature, whilst recognising human inadequacy to fully receive such abundance. Like a child whose hands are too small for the gifts offered, humanity cannot comprehend the infinite nature of divine blessings.



2.3.2.2 Song 50: “I Had Gone a-Begging From”

This is a story about a poor beggar who learns an important lesson about giving and receiving from God.

The poet imagines himself as a poor beggar who goes from house to house asking for money or food. One day, while he is begging, something amazing happens. God appears in the sky like a magnificent king, filling the heavens with beautiful light and glory.

The beggar (the poet) expects that God will give him some money without being asked, just like a kind rich person might do. Instead, God surprises him by asking, “What do you have to give me?” The beggar thinks this is strange and funny. How can a poor person give anything to the all-powerful God?

Feeling confused and a bit embarrassed, the beggar reaches into his small bag and pulls out just one tiny grain of corn. This is all he is willing to give to God. When the beggar returns home that evening, he makes a surprising discovery. In his storage box, he finds one small grain of gold.

Seeing this golden grain, the beggar immediately understands what has happened. God has given him gold in return for the corn, but only as much as he was willing to give. The beggar starts crying because he realises his mistake. If he had given everything he owned to God, he would have received much more in return.

The poem teaches that if we want to truly know God and receive his blessings, we must be willing to give everything we have. We cannot hold back and expect to receive the full benefits of God’s love. People who give generously to God receive generous rewards in return.

This story is similar to an old Indian tale about Lord Krishna and his poor friend Kuchela. When Kuchela visited Krishna and offered him some simple rice, Krishna was so pleased that he made Kuchela very wealthy. The message is the same: sincere giving, even of small things, pleases God greatly.

Like the beggar in the poem, most people learn this truth too late. We are often too selfish or scared to give



our all to God, and only afterwards do we realise what we have missed.

Analysis

Song 50 presents a parable about charity and self-sacrifice through the narrative of a beggar's encounter with divinity. The poet pictures himself as a mendicant seeking alms from door to door when suddenly God, the "king of kings," appears in magnificent splendour. Instead of offering charity as expected, God poses the transformative question: "What have you to give to me?"

Bewildered by this role reversal, the poet reluctantly offers a single grain of corn from his meagre possessions. Upon returning home, he discovers a grain of gold in his store, prompting bitter tears of regret for his miserliness. The poem's moral centres on the principle that complete self-sacrifice and total surrender to divine will constitute the only path to spiritual realisation. Those who give everything receive everything in return, though this truth often becomes apparent too late.

Tagore draws upon the mythological story of Lord Krishna and his childhood friend Kuchela to reinforce this theme. Kuchela, living in poverty, visits Krishna bearing only handful of rice. Krishna's joyful acceptance of this humble offering transforms Kuchela's circumstances, flooding his home with wealth and splendour proportionate to his generous spirit.

2.3.2.3 Critical Analysis

The genius of these two songs from "Gitanjali" lies in Tagore's masterful synthesis of profound spiritual philosophy with accessible, concrete imagery. Both poems exemplify what T.S. Eliot recognised as the expression of "permanent human impulses" through "perfect language." Tagore achieves this by grounding abstract theological concepts in familiar, domestic metaphors that resonate across cultural boundaries.

Thematic Coherence and Progression

Song 1 and Song 50 function as complementary explorations of human-divine relationship, examining both reception and offering aspects of spiritual communion. Song 1 focuses on humanity's role as recipient of divine



inspiration, whilst Song 50 examines humanity's responsibility as giver in the divine economy. Together, they present a complete cycle of spiritual exchange that defines authentic religious experience.

The progression from Song 1's emphasis on divine grace to Song 50's stress on human responsibility reflects Tagore's sophisticated understanding of spiritual development. The poet must first recognise his dependence on divine inspiration before learning the paradoxical truth that genuine receiving requires generous giving.

Metaphorical Sophistication

Tagore's metaphorical technique demonstrates remarkable consistency and development. The "frail vessel" metaphor in Song 1 establishes human vulnerability and dependence, whilst the "flute of reed" elevates this vulnerability into artistic possibility. These images prepare readers for Song 50's beggar metaphor, which completes the trinity of human poverty, artistic potential, and spiritual possibility.

The domestic nature of these metaphors reflects Tagore's commitment to making spiritual truth accessible. Vessels, flutes, beggars, and children populate everyday experience, yet Tagore transforms them into vehicles for profound theological insight. This technique demonstrates what critics recognise as the "humanisation of the divine" characteristic of "Gitanjali."

Philosophical Depth

Both songs engage seriously with core Hindu philosophical concepts whilst maintaining universal applicability. Song 1's treatment of transmigration avoids doctrinal complexity by focusing on experiential rather than theoretical understanding. The repeated filling and emptying of the vessel suggests cyclical renewal without requiring specific theological commitment.

Similarly, Song 50's exploration of karma and divine reciprocity transcends sectarian boundaries. The principle that generous giving produces abundant receiving resonates across religious traditions, whilst the Krishna-Kuchela parallel provides specific cultural grounding for Indian readers.



Literary Technique and Style

Tagore's mastery appears in his ability to maintain devotional intensity without sacrificing literary sophistication. Both poems employ dramatic structure, moving from initial situation through complication to resolution and reflection. Song 1 progresses from humble acknowledgment through metaphorical exploration to philosophical conclusion. Song 50 follows narrative arc from expectation through surprise to regretful wisdom.

The poet's voice remains consistently humble yet confident, reflecting what critics identify as the "absolute humility" that opens Song 1. This tone enables Tagore to make profound spiritual claims without appearing presumptuous, positioning himself as fellow seeker rather than spiritual authority.

Cultural Synthesis

These songs exemplify Tagore's achievement in creating authentically Indian literature accessible to global readership. The integration of Hindu philosophical concepts with universal human experiences demonstrates sophisticated cultural translation without betraying essential meaning. Western readers can appreciate the spiritual insights without requiring extensive knowledge of Hindu theology, whilst Indian readers recognise familiar concepts presented with fresh artistic vision.

Contemporary Relevance

The themes explored in these songs remain remarkably contemporary. Song 1's treatment of artistic inspiration speaks to modern discussions of creativity and its sources. Song 50's examination of charity and social responsibility resonates with contemporary concerns about inequality and moral obligation. Both poems address fundamental questions about meaning, purpose, and human relationship to transcendent reality that persist across historical periods.

The timeless appeal of these works lies in their successful combination of specific cultural wisdom with universal human concerns, presented through language that achieves both spiritual elevation and artistic excellence. They demonstrate why "Gitanjali" secured Tagore's international reputation and continues to reward careful literary study.



2.3.3 “An Old Woman” - Arun Kolatkar

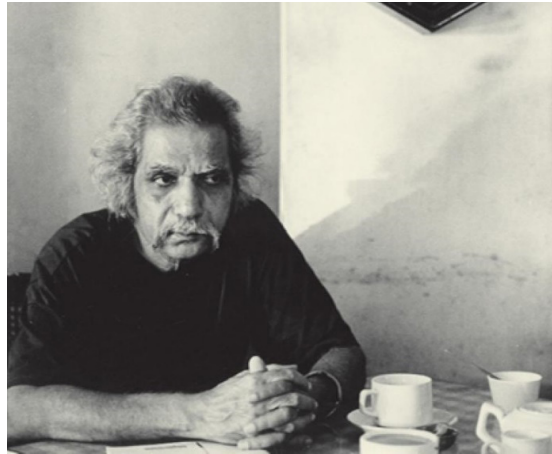


Fig 2.3.3 Arun Balakrishna Kolatkar

Arun Balakrishna Kolatkar (1932–2004) was a celebrated Indian poet who wrote in both Marathi and English. Born in 1932 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, he described his childhood home as “a house of cards” with mud-floored rooms that needed weekly cow-dung plastering for upkeep. By profession, he was a graphic designer in the advertising world and only began writing poetry in the 1960s. Colleagues nicknamed him the poet with a “two-headed pencil” because of his skill in both languages. He stood alongside modern Marathi poets such as Vilas Sarang, Dilip Chitre and Vinda Karandikar.

Kolatkar’s poetry often critiques post-colonial India with a blend of dark humour. His first English collection, *Jejuri*, won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1977, and his Marathi collection, *Bhijki Vahi*, earned the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2005. Early influences included Marathi devotional verse and the popular theatre form *tamasha*, while later he drew inspiration from American Beat poets like William Carlos Williams. He joined the modern Marathi poetry movement led by B. S. Mardhekar and lived a reclusive life, even without a telephone. He died in September 2004. His poems frequently offer whimsical, tilted commentaries on social customs, avoiding typical political rhetoric. Featured in his acclaimed collection *Jejuri*, “An Old Woman” turns a mundane encounter at a hill shrine into a profound commentary on identity, prejudice, and human resilience. Addressed directly to “you,” the poem draws the reader into the pilgrim’s shifting perceptions, revealing how quick judgments obscure deeper truths.

Summary - “An Old Woman”

► Temple guide’s plea

The poem “An Old Woman” takes us to the busy precincts of the Khandoba temple at Jejuri, where pilgrims gather to pay homage. An elderly woman stands by the pathway, her weathered face marked by a life of hardship. She offers to guide each visitor to the sacred horseshoe shrine, for a small fee of fifty paise. If a pilgrim hesitates, she gently reminds them of the shrine’s blessings, turning their devotion into a means of earning her keep.

► Faith and money

Beneath this simple exchange lies a sharp observation of society. The poet shows how blind faith can be turned into commerce. A pilgrim’s reluctance to hand over fifty paise becomes a moment of moral discomfort, yet the woman’s earnest appeal makes refusal awkward. In this way, the poem highlights how even a tiny sum can carry weight in human interactions and reveals how religious ritual and money can become intertwined.

► Dignified and resilient

The old woman is portrayed with dignity rather than pity. Although aged and poor, she refuses to beg outright. She laments, “What else can an old woman do on hills as wretched as these?” yet she offers genuine help in exchange for her fee. Her resilience shines through every line, reminding us of her strength and resourcefulness even in the face of poverty.

► Compassionate connection

By the end, the speaker’s view has shifted from annoyance to compassion. At first, he finds her persistence trying. But on meeting her gaze, he recognises her quiet desperation and admires her refusal to resort to charity. The fifty-paise coin transforms from a mere payment into an act of shared humanity, bringing pilgrim and guide closer and challenging us to consider our responses to vulnerability. Recap:

Critical Analysis

► Immersive second-person

The poem “An Old Woman” masterfully intertwines a simple narrative with modernist techniques to critique socio-economic and religious dynamics. Employing a second-person address, the poet draws the reader into the pilgrim’s shoes, so you initially share his prejudice and impatience. As you walk the crowded path to the Khandoba temple, the old woman’s insistent plea for fifty



paise jars against your devotional purpose, forcing you to confront your own assumptions about age, poverty and agency.

► Faith as commerce

At the heart of the poem lies a sharp commentary on the commodification of faith. The old woman insists on payment—not as charity but as deserved “wages” for her guidance—turning sacred ritual into a commercial enterprise. By describing her eyes as “bullet holes,” the poet evokes both violence and vulnerability, yet the way the cracks spread outward suggests her endurance and the fragility of the world around her. This imagery fractures your worldview: the ordinary pilgrim path suddenly yields surreal fissures, and you realise that a single encounter can reshape perception.

► Mundane to surreal

Structurally, the poem shifts from straightforward dialogue to vivid metaphor, illustrating the poet’s modernist impulse to transform the mundane into the extraordinary. The repeated plea for fifty paise becomes a refrain that underscores how small sums of money can carry enormous social and emotional weight. Each mention of the coin cracks through the surface of ritual solemnity, revealing the transactional underpinnings of purportedly selfless devotion.

► Dignity and resilience

Ultimately, the poem celebrates the old woman’s steadfast dignity. Her refusal to beg outright, even as she laments, “What else can an old woman do on hills as wretched as these?”, casts her not as a helpless figure but as one exercising agency within oppressive circumstances. The pilgrim’s final sense of himself as “small change” contrasts sharply with his earlier confidence, highlighting the theme that true value lies not in social status or outward appearance, but in inner resilience. Through a blend of colloquial language and penetrating metaphor, the poet delivers a haunting meditation on empathy, reminding readers that beneath every weathered exterior may lie an unbreakable spirit.

2.3.4 “On Killing a Tree” - Gieve Patel



Fig 2.3.4 Gieve Patel

Gieve Patel is a prominent modern Indian poet writing in English, also known as a playwright, painter, and doctor. He is deeply connected to environmental causes and is part of the Green Movement, which strives to protect the earth from damage. Many of his poems express concern about how humans mistreat nature, and he also writes about social inequalities in India. Patel is sometimes called the “poet of the body” because he explores themes related to the human body’s fragility and impermanence.

“On Killing a Tree” stands as one of the most powerful environmental poems in contemporary Indian literature, serving as both artistic achievement and urgent ecological manifesto. Written during an era of increasing environmental awareness, the poem addresses the critical issue of deforestation and its devastating impact on global climate patterns. Patel employs the destruction of a single tree as a microcosm for humanity’s broader assault on nature, creating a work that functions simultaneously as conservation poetry and social commentary.

The poem’s significance extends beyond mere environmental advocacy to encompass a fundamental critique of human attitudes towards the natural world. Through bitter irony and deliberate detachment, Patel exposes the methodical cruelty inherent in deforestation whilst simultaneously celebrating nature’s remarkable resilience and regenerative power. The work emerges as a prescient warning about climate change, greenhouse

effects, and global warming, issues that have become increasingly urgent in contemporary discourse.

Patel's approach combines technical precision with emotional restraint, creating a clinical description of environmental destruction that paradoxically intensifies the poem's emotional impact. By adopting the voice of an instructor explaining the "proper" method of killing a tree, the poet creates a disturbing irony that forces readers to confront their complicity in environmental degradation. The poem thus functions as both artistic expression and environmental activism, demonstrating literature's capacity to address urgent social issues through powerful imagery and sophisticated technique.

Summary-"On Killing a Tree"

The poem explains in detail how killing a tree is not as simple as chopping it down quickly. Firstly, the poem points out that a tree grows strong over many years by slowly absorbing water, nutrients, and sunlight from the earth. Because of this, a single strike or knife jab will not harm the tree deeply. Even if the tree is cut near the ground, green shoots will start to grow from the stump, showing its natural ability to survive.

The poem goes on to describe how to ensure the tree is truly killed. The roots, which hold the tree firmly to the soil and provide nourishment, must be uprooted completely. The tree must be pulled out with ropes and torn away from the earth, its "mother." After pulling it out, the tree is left exposed to the sun, where it scorches, hardens, and eventually withers away.

Throughout the detailed description, the poem highlights the violence involved in destroying a living organism like a tree. It shows how humans use cruel and forceful methods, like hacking, chopping, and burning, to destroy what took years for nature to nurture. The tree becomes a symbol of nature's patience and resilience, while humans come across as harsh and careless destroyers motivated by greed.

Critical Analysis

Gieve Patel's "On Killing a Tree" shows great skill in using dramatic irony and satire to deliver a strong environmental message. The poem pretends to give a how-to guide for destroying a tree, which forces readers



► Ironic complicity

to feel complicit in the act even as they become aware of its horror. This sustained ironic tone treats violence against nature as if it were a routine task, making us uncomfortable by exposing how detached we can be from the damage we cause. By never directly condemning the act, Patel makes us supply our own moral judgement, which makes the poem's warning all the more powerful.

► Natural metaphor

The tree stands for all natural systems, symbolising the delicate web of life that supports our planet. Patel writes of the tree "slowly consuming the earth" and "rising out of its crust" to show that it is not separate from the world but part of its very fabric. The roots, which must be violently torn out, represent our literal and metaphorical connections with nature. When the poem speaks of the sun "scorching" the exposed roots, it turns a natural element into a weapon, just as human actions turn life-sustaining processes into instruments of destruction.

► Prophetic vision

Although it was written long before climate change became a public concern, the poem reads like a warning about global warming and ecological collapse. Patel's vision of systematic destruction foreshadows the environmental crises we now face, from extreme weather to loss of biodiversity. His focus on changing climate patterns anticipates scientific findings that only later became widely known. This sense of prophecy gives the poem lasting power and reminds us that literature can often see events coming before they are fully understood.

► Craft and grammar

Patel's craftsmanship in the poem is impressive. Its structure mirrors the stages of tree killing, with each stanza mapping a phase of destruction. The language combines precise, almost clinical terms with emotional restraint, creating a tension between form and content that underlines the poem's themes. The use of present tense makes the violence feel immediate, as though we are witnessing it now. Active verbs stress human responsibility, while passive descriptions of nature's response show its helplessness. This careful use of grammar and vocabulary turns an instruction manual into a powerful moral critique.

► Enduring impact

"On Killing a Tree" works both as an environmental plea and as fine literature. Patel avoids preaching by embedding his message within a compelling artistic form. The poem changes how we see everyday acts of destruction by making the familiar seem strange, creating a lasting



awareness that goes beyond the page. Its combination of technical skill, foresight and moral urgency marks it as essential reading for anyone interested in how poetry can address ecological issues and shape our understanding of nature.

2.3.5 “After Eight Years of Marriage”- Mamta Kalia



Fig 2.3.5 Mamta Kalia

Mamta Kalia is a distinguished Indian writer known for her short stories, plays, poems, and essays. Over the years, she has received numerous awards recognising her contribution to literature. Her poem “After Eight Years of Marriage” offers a wry portrayal of married life for a woman in a traditional Indian household. Through gentle sarcasm, Kalia reveals the many compromises expected of a wife and questions whether true happiness can exist under such rigid customs.

Summary - “After Eight Years of Marriage”

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

“After Eight Years of Marriage” recounts the first visit

of a married woman back to her parental home after spending eight years in her husband's household. The title itself reflects the strict societal rules that often prevent newly married women from seeing their parents for long periods.

Upon her arrival, her parents ask the expected question: Is she happy? Instead of laughter, her pent-up sorrow bursts into tears and she can only nod in reply. In her mind she sees happiness and sadness entwined like light and darkness. She remembers laughing once with her family over a rare treat of watermelon and a night in which her grief was so intense that she almost harmed herself.

Life in her husband's home of twelve people affords her no time for personal joy. All her days are consumed by relentless household chores and by caring for two young sons she regards as as unwelcome as goats in the courtyard. Beneath the watchful eyes of her elders she finds no romance, no beauty and no intimacy. Yet, resigned to her role, she greets her parents with a smile that masks her deep longing for freedom.

Critical Analysis

Mamta Kalia's poem exposes the emotional cost of tradition through understated irony and vivid domestic detail. By framing the narrative around a long-overdue visit home she highlights the ways in which social customs deprive women of autonomy and intimacy. The repeated question "Are you happy?" becomes a bitter refrain, underscoring how impossible it is to answer honestly under family pressure.

Kalia contrasts fleeting moments of joy, such as sharing watermelon, with persistent sorrow and drudgery. The image of two sons compared to goats serves as a striking metaphor for how the wife's own children can become burdens rather than sources of comfort. Through her depiction of a crowded joint family where every movement is monitored, Kalia critiques the erosion of individual identity.

Despite her suffering, the woman learns to feign contentment, a poignant commentary on resilience born of necessity. The concluding act of forced cheerfulness before her parents captures the tragic irony of her situation. Kalia's simple yet powerful language allows readers to feel the weight of unspoken sacrifices and to question the true cost of adhering to social expectations.



Summarised Overview

This unit traces Indian English poetry from its nineteenth-century beginnings through the literary renaissance to modern works. It introduces Toru Dutt's personal lyricism, Tagore's spiritual vision in *Gitanjali*, Kolatkar's modernist imagery, Patel's environmental manifesto, and Kalia's ironic social critique. Through these poets, learners will examine how cultural context and poetic form interact to create universal meaning.

Assignments

1. Analyse symbolic meaning in "Our Casuarina Tree."
2. Examine spiritual themes in selected songs from *Gitanjali*.
3. Compare romantic and modernist techniques in Tagore and Kolatkar.
4. Discuss environmental imagery and irony in "On Killing a Tree."
5. Interpret social commentary in "After Eight Years of Marriage."

Reference

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4. Sree, S. Prasanna. *Silent Suffering & Unheard Agony in Regional Writings on Women*. Sarup, 2008.



Suggested Reading

1. Dutt, Toru. Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan (K. Paul, Trench & Company, 1882)
2. Tagore, Rabindranath. Gitanjali (Niyogi Books, 2012)
3. Kolatkar, Arun. Jejuri (Poetrywala, 1976)
4. Patel, Gieve. How Do You Withstand Body (Clearing, 1976)
5. Kalia, Mamta. Poems (Penguin, 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.

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

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

► Vijay Tendulkar's style

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.

► The attack

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 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.

- Abused wife

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

Ponkshe: A failed academic who works as a clerk and is a member of the mock court room play. Ponkshe 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

- The deconstruction of modern society

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

► The open ended-ness

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.

► Metatheatre

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

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 themes

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 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.

► Naïve 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 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.

Vritra attempts to defend Vishwarup, but Indra chases him away and kills him. Parvasu 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. Kritya arrives and begs to be released from his dilemma. Arvasu learns to be unselfish and requests Indra to free Kritya's soul. Rain finally happens at the end, as a result of the exchange and realisation of sacrifice, and the land becomes fertile again.

► Arvasu's sacrifice

2.4.2.2 Characterisation

Yavakari: He is wise but spiteful. He believes that his father, a wise sage, is being humiliated by his brother Raibhya and his son Parvasu. 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 Parvasu. He fornicates with Vishakha, provoking Raibhya's rage. He enlists the assistance of Brahma Rakshasa, a demon soul, and murders him.

► Yavakari's enraged character

Raibhya: Yavakari's uncle and Parvasu'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, Parvasu, 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.

► Raibhya's negative role

Parvasu: Raibhya's eldest son is Parvasu. 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, 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

► Parvasu's crimes



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 themes of the play

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 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.

► Fire and the Rain

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.

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*.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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1.



SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. A.K. Ramanujan's essay emphasises that Indian thought is:
Ans. Often context-sensitive and particular
 2. Which poet predates Macaulay's Minute yet wrote in English?
Ans. Dean Mahomet
 3. The "tinai" in classical Tamil poetics refers to:
Ans. Landscape-based thematic genre
 4. Which modern Indian English poet is known for urban irony and masculine identity?
Ans. Nissim Ezekiel
 5. In Sanskrit drama, "bhava" is:
Ans. The actor's outward expression of emotion
 6. Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a satire on:
Ans. Judicial hypocrisy and patriarchy
 7. In *The Fire and the Rain*, Parvasu's primary flaw is:
Ans. Sacrificial cruelty and egoism
 8. Karnad's play draws myth from:
Ans. Mahabharata and Puranas
- Assertion (A): Natya Shastra prescribes ten rasas.
Reason (R): It was compiled by Bharata Muni.
Ans. A true, R true, R does not explain A
9. In modern Indian drama history, the Dramatic Performances Act enacted censorship in:
Ans. 1876
 10. Which play uses "play within a play" to critique social norms?
Ans. *Silence! The Court is in Session*
 11. The concept of *abhinaya* includes:
Ans. Dance, gesture, facial expression, speech
 12. Which poet is known for bilingual code-mixing and diaspora themes?
Ans. Sujata Bhatt
- Assertion (A): Modern Indian English poetry began only after 1947.
Reason (R): No earlier Indians wrote poems in English.
Ans. A false, R true



13. The “urban pastoral” is a term applied to:
Ans. Modern city poetry that evokes nature
14. In Tendulkar’s play, the accused Leela Benare is a:
Ans. Teacher-cum-actress
15. Girish Karnad belongs to the literary movement called:
Ans. Neo-mythological theatre
16. The term “rasa” literally means:
Ans. Essence or juice
17. Which drama scholar introduced the term “Sanskrit dramaturgy”?
Ans. B.K. Sarkar
18. In The Fire and the Rain, Nittilai represents:
Ans. Tribal wisdom and compassion



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

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

- The essay in six parts

“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 Taini 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.

3.1.2 Analysis

- Mode of questions in the essay

“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:

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?



► Indianness in 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

► Phalanx of quotations

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.

► There is nothing uniquely Indian.

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.

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 views are rooted in its consciousness. They opine that, in India, viewpoints are subordinated by spirituality and



► Western view of India

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.

► Unity amid diversity

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.

► 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.

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

► Indian and Western perspectives

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.

► The approach of *Akam* and *Puram*

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 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.

► Context-sensitive approaches in Indian tradition

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.

► Focus on coherence, not unity, in Indian literature

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.

► Spatial and temporal aspects in Indian perspectives

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 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 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



► The exchange between Indian and Western

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.

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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

- Establishment of railway changes the fortune of Malgudi

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.'

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.

► Rosie's affair with Raju

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

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

- Spiritual transformation

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.

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.

- Rosie's irresistible urge to dance

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.



- 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.

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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.

- Nicknamed 'Shame' and 'Good News'

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



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

► Theme of *shame*

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 nepotism and corruption

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.

► Mental retardation

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.

- 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.



- Harappa misuses his power

The character Harappa symbolises the corruption 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

- 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

- Women were viewed as properties of men

is as if it would “extrude consciousness through 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 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.

- Connection between ordinary lives and the politics of a nation

The novel is a great piece of art that informs the 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.

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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 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.

- Reminisces about many events

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



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

► Quest for identity

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.

► 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).

► Modern and educated husband

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



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).

► Returning to India

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.

► A new cultural identity

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.

► Capability to adapt

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.



► 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.

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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.

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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

► Ali Hussain and Mehmood

“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.

► Mahmood’s good old days

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.

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 Mehmood 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. 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



- Wearing the false identity

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.

- Story on bourgeois Dalit officers

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.

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



► Mutual understanding and becoming intimate

The next night Shobha comes home early so that they 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 is Shobha 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



► Revelations of secrets

and he received the dead child with his own hands and it 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

► Communication in a relationship

“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.

► Structure and technique of the story

“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



► Role of darkness

to bond. Both of them have been searching in the dark for a sense of normalcy ever since the death of their child.

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.

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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.



SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. A.K. Ramanujan's essay contrasts Manu with:
Ans. Kant
2. In Ramanujan's terms, a "context-free" statement is:
Ans. Valid across all situations
3. The guide-turned-spiritual figure in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* is:
Ans. Raju
4. Rosie's transformation in *The Guide* symbolises:
Ans. Female agency and self-realisation
5. Salman Rushdie's *Shame* is set primarily in:
Ans. Pakistan
6. The protagonist Omar Khayyam Shakil in *Shame* represents:
Ans. National guilt and paralysis
7. Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* explores:
Ans. Diaspora and identity transformation
8. Anita Nair's *Mistress* is set in:
Ans. Kerala
9. Ruskin Bond's "The Kite Maker" features the theme of:
Ans. Tradition vs change
10. Arjun Dangle's "Promotion" depicts:
Ans. Dalit assertion and bureaucratic bias
11. Jhumpa Lahiri's "A Temporary Matter" uses a blackout to reveal:
Ans. Marital secrets and emotional distance
12. Assertion (A): *The Guide* employs magical realism.
Reason (R): Raju actually brings rain by his prayers.
Ans. A false, R false
13. In *Shame*, Sufiya Zinobia's ultimate act is:
Ans. Violent spree symbolising suppressed rage
14. Jasmine's multiple name changes include all EXCEPT:
Ans. Jan



15. In “The Kite Maker,” the city setting is:

Ans. Delhi

16. The key critique in “Promotion” concerns:

Ans. Caste bias in government jobs

17. Lahiri’s short story collection from which “A Temporary Matter” is drawn is:

Ans. Interpreter of Maladies

18. Assertion (A): Ramanujan uses Kenneth Burke’s drama pentad.

Reason (R): To show universal structure in narratives.

Ans. A true, R true, R explains A

19. In Arjun Dangle’s “Promotion,” why does the clerk refrain from formally contesting his delayed promotion?

Ans. He accepts caste bias as irreversible

20. In Jhumpa Lahiri’s “A Temporary Matter,” the gradual sharing of secrets during nightly blackouts primarily serves to:

Ans. Rebuild emotional intimacy before final revelation



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.

- Hunger, conversion and social estrangement

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:

The separate life let you survive, while perhaps
the one you left wept in the blur of your heart.

- Mahapatra's affinity to both Odisha and India

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.

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.

► Past, changes and nostalgia

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.

► Thayil’s depth and frustrations in his poems

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.

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.

- Other significant contributors

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 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.

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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.



1.

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.

► Based on Mahabharata

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*.

► Plots and subplots

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.

► The story of Aravasu

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.

► Ending relationship with Vishaka

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.

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*?

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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.

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.

► Narrative pattern

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.

► Ordinary characters

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.

► Confluence of the past and present

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.

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.

► 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*.

Her *Mistress* is a visually appealing, vibrant, and captivating story, with a background of the Kathakali

- Kathakali an art form in Kerala

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.

- Radha and Nila

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.



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.

Reference

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Suggested Reading

1. Chaudhuri, Amit. *Clearing a Space: Reflections on India, Literature, and Modernity*. Peter Lang, 2008.
2. Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991*. Penguin, 1992
3. Ulka, Anjaria. *A History of the Indian Novel in English*. Cambridge U P, 2014.

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.

Appendix-1

Poets of Indian English Literature

Michael Madhusudan Dutt

Michael Madhusudan Dutt began writing English poetry at seventeen and studied a remarkable range of languages, including English, Bengali, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit. Educated at the Hindu University of Calcutta, the cultural heart of Bengal's western-educated middle class, he converted to Christianity in 1843 and adopted the name Michael, composing a hymn for his baptism. His early English work included sonnets, shorter poems and two long narrative poems, among them the patriotic "The Captive Ladie" (1849), which evokes India's historical past and helped spark nationalist sentiment. Although these initial efforts met with limited success, they established his reputation as a dynamic and volatile poet.

Turning to Bengali, Dutt composed five original plays between 1858 and 1860 - *Sarmistha*, *Padmavati*, *Ekei Ki Boley Sabyata*, *Krishna Kumari* and *Buro Shaliker Ghare Ron* - drawing themes from the Mahabharata and setting them in a Western dramatic style. His debut drama *Sarmistha* (1858) is widely regarded as the first original Bengali play, earning him the title of the first Bengali playwright. At the same time, he collected subjects for his writing from ancient Hindu epics, Sanskrit Puranas and French and English literatures, demonstrating an experimental approach to form and language.

Between 1860 and 1862 Dutt produced his principal works in

Bengali, ranging from long narrative poems to lyric cycles and epistolary verse. Notable compositions include "Tilottamasambhab" (1860), a narrative poem on Sunda and Upasunda; "Meghnadbadh" (1861), his epic masterpiece drawn from the Ramayana; "Brajangana Kabya" (1861), a series of Radha-Krishna lyrics; and "Birangana Kabya" (1862), twenty-one epistolary poems modelled on Ovid's *Heroides*. He pioneered the Bengali sonnet form, *amitraksar*, both in Petrarchan and Shakespearean modes, and experimented with blank verse featuring run-on lines and irregular caesuras. His profound love for India shines through his portrayal of King Porus's resistance to foreign invasion. Later works include a volume of Bengali sonnets (1866), his final play *Maya Kannan* (1872) and an incomplete prose Iliad titled *The Slaying of Hector*.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose

Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872 to 1950) was a philosopher, poet, yogi and Indian nationalist whose work spanned the struggle for freedom and the development of a new spiritual vision. Educated first at the Christian Monastic School in Darjeeling and later at the University of Cambridge, he mastered classical Greek and Latin as well as modern European languages. Returning to India in 1892, he immersed himself in his native culture, studying yoga and Sanskrit. Between 1902 and 1910 he took part in the independence movement and was imprisoned in 1908, an experience that led to a profound



mystical transformation. In 1910 he sought refuge in Pondicherry, where he devoted his life to developing what he called “integral” yoga, a holistic practice aimed at transforming human life into a divine existence. With Mirra Alfassa, known as the “Mother”, he founded the Aurobindo Ashram in 1926, which became a centre for spiritual seekers worldwide.

Aurobindo regarded poetry as a living force rather than a merely instructive art. He believed that great verse must unite the highest rhythmic energy, the fullest integration of form and thought, and the deepest vision of truth within the soul. For him poetry was a “real mantra” and a “rose of God”, intended not for scholarly study but for the delight and realisation of a sacred life. In his view poetic language should be lively, stimulating and imbued with the seer’s inspiration, guiding the reader towards self-realisation and a profound sense of unity with the cosmos.

Among his principal works is the philosophical epic *Life Divine* (1919), which explores liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. His long poetic saga “*Savitri*” presents an inner epic of the soul’s journey and the larger spiritual reality of the oversoul. Other major writings include the essays *Essays on the Vedas* (1922), the anthology *Collected Poetry and Drama* (1942), the treatise *Yoga Integration* (1948), and the sociocultural studies *Human Cycle* (1949) and *Human Unity Ideals* (1949). Posthumously published volumes such as *Savitri: Legends and Symbols* (1950) and *Vedas* (1956) further attest to his enduring influence on Indian English literature and spiritual thought.

Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 and the composer of India’s national anthem. A multitasking figure, he excelled as a Bengali playwright, poet, novelist, visual artist and composer, while also advancing Brahmo Samaj philosophy. As a cultural reformer he transformed Bengali art by moving beyond classical conventions. His life’s work blended spirituality and creativity, and his meeting with Albert Einstein symbolised a union of science and the sacred.

Tagore’s writing is renowned for its lyrical beauty and deep humanism. He crafted spiritual songs that transcend time and place, inviting readers to contemplate the divine in everyday life. Drawing inspiration from medieval poets such as Kabir and Ramprasad Sen, his style combines simplicity with profound insight. His commitment to social progress and cultural exchange led him to travel widely, sharing his vision worldwide and earning acclaim across continents.

His short stories include “*Bhikharini*”, “*Kabuliwala*”, “*Kshudita Pashan*”, “*Atottju*”, “*Haimanti*” and “*Musalmanir Golpo*”. His novels encompass *Shesher Kobita*, *Noukadubi*, *Gora*, *Chaturanga*, *Ghare Baire* and *Jogajog*. Among his celebrated poetry collections are *Gitanjali*, *Sandhya Sangit* (Evening Songs) and *Prabhat Sangit* (Morning Songs). His patriotic compositions *Jana Gana Mana* and *Amar Sonar Bangla* serve as the national anthems of India and Bangladesh respectively, reflecting his enduring legacy.



Toru Dutt

Torulata Govin Chunder Dutt, baptised in 1862, was the first Indian woman poet to write in English and French. Born into a liberal Calcutta family that encouraged education, art and languages, she mastered Sanskrit, English and French before the age of twenty. Her earliest volume, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876), presented 165 poems translated from French to English by Toru and her sister. These translations attracted the attention of critic Edmund Gosse and introduced Toru to London's literary circles, where her singular voice was both celebrated and exoticised.

Toru's original poetry blends Indian myth and colonial experience to explore cultural identity and moral truth. In her ballads "Sita," "Buttoo" and "Lakshman," she retells episodes from the Mahabharata with heightened verisimilitude, emphasising class conflict and ethical lessons. Poems such as "Our Casuarina Tree," "The Tree of Life" and "Baugmaree," collected in *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882), evoke her nostalgia for India's landscape and traditions while reflecting her encounters with Christianity and European culture. Her sonnet "Lotus" symbolises cultural fusion, intertwining occidental roses and lilies to reveal the Indian lotus as a powerful national emblem.

Despite her premature death at twenty-one, Toru Dutt's impact continues through her translations and original works, many of which appeared posthumously. Her essays on Sanskrit texts and translations of the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Vishnu Purana demonstrate her scholarly

rigour. The posthumous novella *Bianca, or the Young Spanish Maiden* (1878) and her French translations in *The Bengal Magazine* (1874–1877) further attest to her versatility. Toru's commitment to preserving indigenous moral principles and her pioneering role in Anglo-French-Indian literature continue to inspire readers and scholars worldwide.

Sarojini Naidu

Sarojini Naidu was born on 13 February 1879 in Hyderabad and emerged as a leading political activist, feminist and poet. A prodigy, she entered the University of Madras at twelve and won the highest college rank with a scholarship. She continued her studies at King's College London and Girton College Cambridge, where she engaged in women's campaigns in the United Kingdom. Deeply influenced by the Indian National Congress, she joined its ranks and became a devoted follower of Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Swaraj. In 1917 she co-founded the Women's Indian Society with Annie Besant and others. She led the Dharasana Satyagraha when Gandhi was imprisoned after the Salt March and endured multiple imprisonments herself. In 1947 she became the first Indian woman appointed Governor, and she passed away on 2 March 1949 in Lucknow.

Naidu's poetic voice earned her the affectionate title 'Indian Nightingale' for its lyrical sweetness and rich imagery drawn from Indian life. She blended the melodic qualities of the British Romantic tradition with vivid portrayals of local scenes and customs. Unlike contemporaries who relied on Western



metaphors, she localised her imagery, as exemplified in her celebrated poem “The Bangle Sellers”. Her work spans light verse for children to profound meditations on tragedy, patriotism and romance, always infused with an Indian soul. Her mastery of English prosody, varied metres and rhymes lent her poems a powerful emotional presence and musical flow that delighted readers.

Her principal collections include *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917). In 1916 she published *Muhammad Jinnah: An Ambassador of Unity*, and later volumes such as *The Sceptred Flute* (1928) and *The Feather of the Dawn* (1961) appeared posthumously. Among her most admired poems are “The Bangle Sellers”, “In the Bazaars of Hyderabad” and “Palanquin Bearers”. Her writings for children and adults alike reflect her commitment to women’s rights, national freedom and the beauty of Indian culture.

Nissim Ezekiel

Nissim Ezekiel was born on 16 December 1924 in Mumbai into a Jewish family. He earned a bachelor’s degree in Literature from Wilson College, Mumbai in 1947 and then studied philosophy at Birkbeck College, London. Returning to India, he joined the *Illustrated Weekly of India* as Assistant Editor in 1953 and later worked at All India Radio for ten years producing arts and literature programmes. In the 1990s he served as professor of English and reader in American literature at the University of Mumbai. His multifaceted career also encompassed acting, playwriting, editing and art criticism, establishing him as a central figure in postcolonial Indian English letters.

Ezekiel’s poetry is often regarded as the foundation of modern Indian English verse. Influenced by T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, he rooted modernist techniques in Indian themes, imagery and metropolitan settings, especially Bombay. His tone is detached and ironic, laced with scepticism, humour and occasional self-mockery, yet marked by precise, succinct and structured language. He explored the individual’s value, the pleasures and trials of Indian urban life, religious uncertainty and social hypocrisy, and he wrote both regular and free verse. His love poems eschew overt sentimentality for authentic emotion, while his social commentary reveals empathy for suffering and scorn for pretension.

His best-known poems include “A Morning Walk”, which portrays Bombay as a “barbaric city infected with slums”, and “Island”, where the city “blossoms into slums and skyscrapers”. Other notable pieces are “Healers”, “Hangover”, “The Professor” and “Irani Restaurant Instruction”. His collected works, published throughout his lifetime and posthumously, reflect a unique Indian modernism that remains influential. Ezekiel passed away in 2004 after a long battle with Alzheimer’s disease, leaving a lasting legacy as the father of modern Indian English poetry.

A K Ramanujan

Attipat Krishnaswami Ramanujan was a distinguished 20th-century poet, folklorist and philologist who wrote in English, Kannada and Tamil. Born in Mysore, he earned his BA and MA at the University of Mysore, followed by a graduate diploma and PhD in Linguistics from Deccan University, Pune. Exposed to Shelley and Yeats at seventeen, he later



embraced the imagist ideas of Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams. His deep engagement with Tamil Sangam concepts of inner and outer worlds (akham and puram) and South Indian oral traditions such as Yakshagaana and Harikatha shaped both his original verse and his acclaimed translations of classical Tamil and Kannada poetry.

Ramanujan's work explores themes of family, history, society, cities, the human body, nature and culture. In "Extended Family" he maps his identity onto kinship ties, ending with the poet's self as inseparable from familial bonds. His title "The Last of the Princes" wryly undercuts regal nostalgia with irony. Rather than sketching broad generalisations about India, his poems ground themselves in specific events or scenes, allowing values to shift unpredictably as each poem unfolds. His translations reveal multiple layers of commentary, through prefaces and introductions, that bridge modern creativity and ancient poetic forms.

Stylistically, Ramanujan fused modern English poetic techniques with South Indian conventions, using wordplay, puns, inner rhymes, understatement, compression and elliptical progression. His verse often changes direction abruptly, echoing medieval Tamil saints' poetry in its sudden shifts of tone and attitude. He resisted fixed perspectives, favouring a tone of distant neutrality that invites readers to engage actively with ambiguities. Through this synthesis of Indian and Western poetics, Ramanujan forged a unique voice in Indian English literature that remains influential and distinctly contemporary.

Jayanta Mahapatra

Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry emerges from the landscapes and traditions of Orissa, weaving together existential reflection, memory and the rituals of his native land. Educated in science yet deeply attuned to the metaphysical, he constructs an inner world of solitude, silence and desire that reflects India's cultural heritage and the modern individual's sense of rootlessness. His verse often probes the emptiness that underlies social sincerity, love and human relationships, inviting readers to explore the shifting boundary between dream and reality.

Mahapatra's style is marked by rich imagery and a careful melody of language, held together by subtle patterns of silence rather than by straightforward narrative or argument. He employs disconnected syntax and deliberate grammatical disruption to evoke the unspoken depths of experience. In poems such as "Dawn at Puri" he portrays the holy city with haunting precision—the crow's call, a skull on the sand and widowed women at the temple gates—while "An Old Country" and "The Tattooed Taste" offer a stark critique of economic inequality and political neglect. The poem "Hunger" confronts the desperation that leads to exploitation, and his explorations of erotic love marry logic with tenderness.

Mahapatra was the first Indian poet writing in English to receive the Sahitya Akademi Award and was honoured with the Padma Shri in 2009, which he returned in 2015 to protest growing intolerance. Alongside A K Ramanujan and R Parthasarathy, he helped establish



Indian poetry in English as a distinct tradition. His principal volumes include *Shadow Space*, *Bare Face* and *Random Descent*. He has also published a short-story collection titled “The Green Gardener,” demonstrating his lyrical voice in prose as well as in poetry.

R Parthasarathy

Rajagopal Parthasarathy is celebrated as one of the foremost Indian poets writing in English, whose work bridges dramatic visual imagery with a prosaic tone. Trained in both Indian and Western literary traditions, he channels the tension between these civilisations into his verse, using precise language to create enduring images rather than relying on melody. His poetry often feels like a clear window onto lived experience, inviting readers to see familiar scenes with fresh eyes.

Central to Parthasarathy’s work is the theme of exile—both cultural and personal—and the quest for belonging. In *Rough Passage* (1977), a sequence of thirty-seven parts organised under “Exile”, “Tamil” and “Home Coming”, he reflects on the dislocation of moving between India and England and on the uneasy homecoming that follows. His five-part poem *An Unfinished Biography* further examines memory and travel, offering a candid self-portrait that resists grand narratives. Throughout these works he uses irony and understatement to reveal the poet’s inner struggles with identity and roots.

Parthasarathy has also contributed as a translator and critic, bringing medieval Tamil literature to new audiences. His contemporary English rendition of the fifth-century epic *Cilappatikaram*, published as *The Tale of the Anklet*, won the Sahitya Akademi Translation Prize

and the A. K. Ramanujan Book Prize. His other notable collections include *Poetry from Leeds* (1968) and *A House Divided: Poems of Love and War*, which evokes India’s post-colonial journey through personal and national histories. His work remains a touchstone for readers exploring the complexities of cultural exchange.

Gieve Patel

Gieve Patel combines his medical practice with a profound engagement in poetry, drama and visual art, earning his place among the pioneers of modern Indian English poetry. Born and based in Mumbai, he staged his first dramatic performance in 1966 and has exhibited his paintings in major shows both in India and abroad. Trained as a doctor, he brings a clinical precision to his creative work while remaining self-taught in poetry and the visual arts. His early collection *How Do You Withstand* (1966) confronts youth’s encounter with death, disease and moral challenge in everyday life. *Body* (1976) intensifies these concerns by examining violence against the human form, whether enacted by the state or the individual psyche. In *Mirrored Mirroring* (1991) he turns to irony and passion in addressing the divine, weaving pronounced natural imagery into his free-verse lines.

Patel’s poetry is marked by lucid, carefully modulated rhythms that respond to each poem’s thematic needs. He favours clarity of expression yet does not shy away from ambiguity or the occasional obscurity when it serves the work’s depth. His poem “The Ambiguous Fate” evokes communal strife through the voice of the isolated Parsi community, lamenting the deprivation that accompanies moral



refusal. Patel's attention to social injustice and human vulnerability is balanced by his metaphysical inquiry, for he believes that only through the material body can one reach spiritual insight. Ordinary individuals inhabiting urban landscapes populate his verse, their daily acts rendered with empathetic detail and occasional startling contrasts between the humane and the grotesque.

In addition to his poetry, Patel has written several plays, including *Princes*, *Savaksa* and *Mr Behram*, all of which reflect his interest in character interaction and social tensions. His dramatic work mirrors his poetic style in its free-verse dialogue and fluid structure, often allowing voices to overlap and images to collide. Through his multidisciplinary practice as poet, playwright, painter and physician, Gieve Patel articulates a unique perspective on the body, society and the enduring quest for spiritual meaning within modern India.

Keki N. Daruwalla

Keki N. Daruwalla was born in Lahore and educated at Punjab University before joining the Indian Police Service in 1958. His career in the civil service, which culminated in postings across India, profoundly shaped his outlook and inspired recurring themes of violence and moral conflict. After retiring and settling in Chandigarh, he emerged as a major voice in Indian English poetry, winning the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984 and the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for Asia in 1987.

Daruwalla's verse is distinguished by its muscular imagery, ethical urgency and formal versatility. He moves seamlessly between metrical patterns and free verse, combining epic scope with finely

observed detail. His landscapes range from ancient Kalinga under Ashoka to the tumult of urban Bombay, serving not merely as backdrop but as a paradigm for human experience. He adopts an ironic stance toward passivity, ritual and incompetence in Indian life while evoking desire, memory and the fleeting nature of sensation with unflinching clarity.

His debut collection *Under Orion* (1970) established his reputation, followed by *Apparitions in April* (1971), *Crossing of Rivers* (1976) and *Winter Poems* (1980). Subsequent volumes such as *The Keeper of the Dead* (1982), *Landscapes* (1987) and *A Summer of Tigers* (1995) further explore cruelty, conscience and cultural encounter. In *Night River* (2000) and the theatrical monologues of *The Map Maker* (2002), Daruwalla's interest in philosophical notions of time, space and the inner world reaches new heights, confirming his status as a pivotal figure in contemporary Indian poetry.

Shiv K. Kumar

Shiv K. Kumar emerged as a distinct voice in Indian English poetry after overcoming the personal trauma of divorce, which reshaped his creative identity and inspired a fresh exploration of life's possibilities. Educated and well versed in both Indian culture and Western literary traditions, he began publishing only after this turning point and quickly gained recognition for his candid and vivid portrayals of human experience. Over a career spanning more than three decades, he earned a reputation for balancing introspection with social insight, using poetry as a means to assert his renewed self.



Kumar's work is notable for its blend of confessional tone, urban and natural imagery, and biting humour. He often juxtaposes everyday scenes with philosophical reflection, as in "Revelation" and "Buddha at a Night Club", where religious themes are playfully subverted to explore youthful romance. In "Sounds of Hunger" he contrasts the pangs of physical appetite with a deeper longing for intimacy, while "Clouds" humanises the sky to emphasise the link between the ordinary world and its wider variations. His lines are direct and declarative, inviting readers to engage with the rawness of emotion and the sardonic wit that underlies his observations.

Kumar's eight principal poetry collections chart his evolving vision: *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). These volumes reflect India's shifting landscapes and cultural tensions, while showcasing his ability to turn commonplace experiences into potent verse. Through his fearless exploration of self and society, Kumar cemented his place among the leading postmodern and postcolonial poets of his generation.

Eunice de Souza

Eunice de Souza earned her place as one of India's foremost poets in English through a career that also encompassed literary criticism and fiction. Born and raised in Poona's Goan Roman Catholic community, she drew on that milieu in her first collection, *Fix* (1991), to expose middle-class hypocrisy with spare irony. Her subsequent volumes,

including *Women in Dutch Painting* (1995) and *These My Words* (2000), maintain a conversational tone and economical language, often adopting the dramatic monologue form she favoured. She translated personal and familial experiences into poems such as "Autobiographical", "One Man's Poetry" and "Forgive Me, Mother", weaving loss, alienation and the struggles of Indian womanhood into controlled but powerful verse.

De Souza's style is characterised by a wry, sardonic voice that balances clarity with underlying emotional intensity. Her poems often begin with deceptively smooth statements that reveal fury, perplexity or suffering as they progress. In "Marriages are Made", she critiques patriarchal institutions with withering wit, while "Another Way to Die" and "The Road" juxtapose lightness of tone against themes of dissolution and uncertainty. Her collection *Songs of Innocence* (2006) breaks free from timidity to confront the chasm between past and present, and her final poems—remarked upon for their crystalline minimalism—demonstrate a mastery of restraint and resonance.

Beyond her poetry, de Souza's only novel, *Dangerlok* (1997), and her essays on criticism showcase her sharp intellect and commitment to exploring women's issues in diverse social contexts. Her inclusion as the sole Indian woman in the *Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992) attests to her distinctive contribution. Through her lucid cadences, precise prosody and fearless engagement with social injustice, Eunice de Souza crafted a body of work that continues to challenge and inspire readers.



Adil Jehangir Jussawalla

Adil Jehangir Jussawalla was born in Mumbai and spent much of his early adult life in England, where he studied architecture, read English at Oxford, and taught at a language school. After returning to Mumbai, he taught English at St Xavier's College from 1972 to 1975 and became an Honorary Member of the International Writing Program in Iowa in 1977. His first poetry collection, *Land's End*, written mainly in England and Europe, was published when he was twenty-two. It captures the contradictions of modern life—the artificiality and vulgarity of the age, the complex emotions and desires, and the gap between dream and reality, beauty and ugliness of love. His second collection, *Missing Person* (1976), written after returning to India, is informed by a Marxist perspective and explores the chaotic plurality of world cultures.

Jussawalla is an urban poet who frequently addresses themes of alienation and the absurdity of metropolitan existence. Though he published only two collections over more than a decade, he remains a significant voice influenced by T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, noted for lines such as “Webbed in English ironies, I cough.” His poem “Sea Breeze Bombay” poignantly responds to the 1947 Partition, depicting Bombay as a “surrogate city” that provided refuge for thousands of displaced people amid violence and upheaval. The city is portrayed as an alternative mother, sheltering uprooted refugees.

Through his work, Jussawalla captures the fractured experience of postcolonial India, exploring tensions between cultural identities and realities of urban life. His poetry combines powerful

imagery with reflective tones to examine love, displacement and the search for belonging within the complexity of the modern world. His contributions remain important for their emotional depth and insightful meditation on Indian urban realities.

Kamala Das

Kamala Das, also known by Madhavikutty, is a renowned bilingual poet who wrote in English and Malayalam. Her poetry is largely confessional and autobiographical, providing deep introspection and a powerful expression of female sensibility. Kamala Das is celebrated as a confessional poet alongside figures like A K Ramanujan, Nissim Ezekiel, Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. She candidly reveals the injustices and humiliations she endured in a male-dominated society, openly discussing her intimate relationships and traumatic sexual experiences. Poems such as “The Sunshine Cat,” “The Invitation,” and “The Looking Glass” illustrate this therapeutic confession, offering readers a glimpse into her personal life.

Central to Das's work is her portrayal of love, often marked by frustration and unfulfilled desire. She writes boldly about unrequited love, highlighting her emotional need and the pain of imbalanced relationships. In “The Sunshine Cat,” she criticises her husband for his selfishness and lack of true affection, exposing the dynamics of control and surveillance within her marriage. The treatment of sexuality in her poems is forthright and unflinching. She dismantles taboos by using explicit language that emphasises the repulsive and oppressive side of sexual relations for women, portraying physical union as a means of stripping women of their



independence and highlighting male dominance.

Das's poetic style is characterised by simplicity, clarity and rhythmic control, making her messages accessible and impactful. Her use of vivid imagery, especially in themes of love and sex, engages readers without becoming monotonous. Beyond personal confession, her poetry is a voice of protest against women's exploitation and the patriarchal order. Through her fearless self-expression, she helped articulate a new feminine identity in Indian poetry, inspiring many Indian women to recognise and assert their own voices in society.

Arun Kolatkar

Arun Kolatkar (1932–2004) was a bilingual poet, visual artist, and rebel known for his modernist and experimental approach. Rooted in Western imagism, Chinese ideograms, Indian Bhakti traditions, and Japanese haiku, Kolatkar's poetry combines diverse influences with an internationalist sensibility. His landmark English poetry collection *Jejuri* won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize and portrayed a symbolic pilgrimage to the shrine of Khandoba using montage techniques and evocative imagery.

Though set in religious contexts, Kolatkar's poems are often secular and explore modern life's ambiguities with detached observation and symbolic resonance. Unlike some of his contemporaries who experienced discomfort using English, Kolatkar's style is objective and reflects an independent, "alfresco individualism." His work's lyrical and visual qualities distinguish him as a key figure in Indian

modern poetry.

Kolatkar's contribution spans English and Marathi poetry, with translations between the two languages. His broad artistic interests and innovative form-making have left a lasting impact on Indian poetry, making him one of the few Indian poets recognized globally alongside figures like Kabir.

Vikram Seth

Vikram Seth is a contemporary Indian poet and writer known for his neoformalist style that embraces traditional poetic forms like sonnets and quatrains alongside free verse. Educated at Oxford, Stanford, and Nanjing University, Seth's poetry combines artistic rigor with a cheerful, confident voice. His works often celebrate everyday life's simplicity and explore themes of familial longing, youth restlessness, and cultural identity.

Seth's poetry shows a rare blend of old and new, mixing rhyme and meter with contemporary idioms. Collections like *Mappings* reflect his nostalgic attachment to India, while his travel experience in China and later life in America inform poems that explore loneliness and belonging across cultures. Seth uniquely incorporates mundane objects in his work, making poetry accessible and refreshingly light-hearted yet thoughtful.

Celebrated for his artistry and refusal to delve into self-absorption, Seth maintains a balance between serious themes and playful expression. His poetry is considered a major part of today's eclectic and self-conscious literary scene, making him an important voice in Indian English literature.



Meena Alexander

Meena Alexander, born in Allahabad and raised partly in Kerala and Sudan, is a prominent contemporary Indian poet recognized for her profound literary contributions. Holding a BA from the University of Khartoum and a PhD from the University of Nottingham, Alexander's poetic voice reflects a rich blend of postcolonial experiences. Her poetry collections, such as *Atmospheric Embroidery* and *Birthplace with Buried Stones*, explore the tensions between personal memory, societal history, and cultural identity. Alexander's work often grapples with the alienation resulting from colonial legacies and linguistic displacement, vividly portraying the struggles of being a postcolonial Indian English poet.

Her poetry is noted for its intense imagery and the intricate interplay of historical, mythological, and linguistic elements. Influenced by English Romantic poets, Alexander sought to integrate their aesthetic styles while developing her own voice. Her writings frequently include potent symbols like blood, flowers, and birds, highlighting cultural and political themes. Additionally, she authored novels and scholarly works that contribute to feminist and postcolonial discourse, making her an important feminist voice in Indian literature.

Alexander's work represents a poignant effort to negotiate multiple identities and cultures, using English as a medium imbued with the cadences of her mother tongue Malayalam. Her poem "Illiterate Heart" exemplifies the tensions of language, identity, and exile, identifying the personal as deeply political in a global context of dislocation

and transformation.

Tabish Khair

Tabish Khair is a contemporary Indian poet, essayist, and novelist born in 1966, noted for his secular and socially conscious literary stance. Educated in Bihar and later in Copenhagen, where he completed a PhD on alienation in Indian English novels, Khair's poetry and prose address themes of social justice, cultural alienation, and political critique. His collections, including *Where Parallel Lines Meet* and *Man of Glass*, reflect his acute awareness of class, regional, and cultural nuances within India.

Khair's poetic style is characterized by an asymmetrical tone that captures the rawness and complexity of urban Indian life. His poems often serve as brief narrative allegories, reflecting frustration, nostalgia, and longing, while critiquing social inequalities and enduring hardships. His works evoke vivid images of everyday struggles seen through a materialist lens, capturing ordinary people's lives with empathy and subtle commentary.

Living and teaching overseas, Khair represents the liberal, modernist branch of Islam in India, advocating social justice and engaged literary practice. His poetry fuses personal reflection with broader cultural issues, establishing him as a critical voice in contemporary Indian English literature.

Vijay Seshadri

Vijay Seshadri, born in Bangalore in 1954 and raised in the United States, won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 2014. His work is acclaimed for exploring human consciousness from birth to dementia, integrating wit, gravitas, and compassion.



Seshadri's poetry, including collections like *3 Sections* and poems such as "Road Trip" and "Enlightenment," probes deep philosophical and historical themes with accessible yet richly nuanced language.

His poem "The Disappearances" became widely recognized after publication following the September 11 attacks, reflecting on loss and trauma in American history. Seshadri's voice balances seriousness and lightness, combining intellectual depth with rhythmic vitality, making complex subjects relatable. His work addresses personal identity, memory, and existential concerns using vivid imagery and varied poetic forms.

Seshadri's cross-cultural background enriches his perspective, exemplifying the global nature of contemporary poetry. His poems often meditate on history and human experience, affirming the power of poetry to illuminate life's mysteries with both humor and solemnity.

Mamang Dai

Mamang Dai, born in Arunachal Pradesh in 1957, is a poet, novelist, and former civil servant known for capturing the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Northeast India. Her poetry collection *Midsummer-Survival Lyrics* reflects the lyrical simplicity and technical depth of her poetic vision. Dai's work draws on the terrain of rivers and mountains, embedding nature's mystery and legends into her verse.

After leaving the Indian Administrative Service, she pursued journalism and literary writing, gaining recognition for her vivid portrayal of northeastern landscapes and indigenous traditions. Dai's writing avoids simplistic conclusions, instead embracing

complexity and nuance inherent in her homeland's cultural memory and geographic specificity.

Her involvement with literary organizations and awards, such as the Verrier Elwin Award, highlight her role in promoting Northeast Indian literature. Dai's poetry melds contemporary concerns with a deep connection to place and identity, contributing significantly to the diversity of Indian English literature.

Jeet Thayil

Jeet Thayil is an Indian poet, novelist, musician, and librettist known for his avant-garde and emotionally intense work. Author of four poetry collections including *These Errors Are Correct* and *English*, Thayil injects themes of drugs, alcohol, sex, and death into his writing, paralleling influences like Keats and Baudelaire. His first novel *Narcopolis* received critical acclaim, winning the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature and being shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and Hindu Literary Prize.

Thayil's poetry and prose break new ground by exploring marginalized and taboo subjects with brutal honesty and lyrical innovation. His style is often compared to celebrated transgressive writers like William S. Burroughs and Roberto Bolano, blending Indian sensibilities with international literary currents.

His works such as "The Heroin Sestina" showcase his skill in capturing the fragmented, painful experiences of addiction and urban life. Thayil remains a provocative and influential figure in contemporary Indian English poetry, offering fresh perspectives on modernity, suffering, and creativity.



Appendix- 2

Playwrights in Indian English Literature

Bhartendu Harishchandra

Bhartendu Harishchandra (1850–1885), hailed as the Father of Modern Hindi Literature and Theatre, was born in Banaras and profoundly influenced by the Bengal Renaissance. He began writing at a young age and became known for revitalizing Hindi literature by blending traditional forms with contemporary issues, especially during British colonial rule. His work includes novels, poems, essays, and plays that sought to awaken social consciousness and foster national pride, making Hindi a respected literary language at a time when Urdu was prominent.

He was a prolific playwright with major works such as *Satya Harishchandra*, *Bharat Dhurdasa*, *Neel Devi*, and *Andher Nagari*. These plays often served as sharp political and social satires, exposing hypocrisy, corruption, and lethargy within Indian society and governance under colonial domination. Particularly, *Andher Nagari* gained widespread popularity due to its critical depiction of misrule and became an idiom for corrupt administration. Bhartendu also played roles as director and editor, using theatre and journalism to influence public opinion and promote Hindi culture and nationalism.

Apart from drama, Bhartendu excelled as a poet and journalist, editing influential Hindi magazines like *Kavi Vachan Sudha* and *Harishchandra Patrika*, which advanced Hindi literature and social reform. His commitment

to education led him to start a school for the poor and champion women's education. Although he died young, his legacy shaped modern Hindi literature, theatre, and language development, inspiring future writers and nationalists.

Krishna Mohan Banerjee

Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1813–1885) was a renowned social reformer, scholar, linguist, and Christian missionary born in Calcutta. Coming from humble origins, his education was made possible through patronage which led him to graduate from Hindu University. Under the influence of Alexander Duff, he converted to Christianity in 1832, after which he faced personal hardships including losing his teaching job and separation from his wife temporarily. He later became the principal of the Church Mission School and the first Bengali priest of the Church of Christ, focusing on preaching in Bengali.

Banerjee's contributions to Indian English literature and theatre include his play *The Persecution or A Dramatic Scene Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta* (1831), which critically examined social practices in Hindu society. Apart from drama, he was an editor and publisher, playing an important role in intellectual and religious discourse by publishing works such as *Inquirer* and editing the Bengali adaptation of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. His writings often dealt with the interpretation of Hindu philosophy, Christian theology, and social reform.



A key figure in the intellectual history of colonial India, Krishna Mohan Banerjee influenced many through his advocacy for education, religious reform, and cultural dialogue. His literary and religious work contributed to early modern Indian literature and missionary activity, bridging Western and Indian thought, and impacting subsequent literary and social movements.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824–1873) was a pioneering Bengali poet and the first notable playwright of modern Bengali literature. Multilingual and highly erudite, Dutt transitioned from English to Bengali writing, creating innovative poetic and dramatic works that broke from classical conventions. His exposure to Indian epics and Western literature led him to compose plays like *Sharmishtha* (1858), which was based on characters from the *Mahabharata* and marked the first original Bengali play, written in blank verse.

Dutt's works such as *Padmavati* (1860) and *Tilottamasambhav* introduced blank verse to Bengali drama, freeing it from the strict constraints of rhymed poetry and enabling new expressive possibilities. He also translated important works like *Nildarpan*, spreading social awareness through literature. Dutt experimented extensively with language and poetic forms, helping to modernize Bengali literary culture and influencing successors like Rabindranath Tagore.

Beyond drama, Dutt's legacy includes epic poems, narrative works, and literary translations, marking him as a critical figure who merged European literary techniques with Indian themes. His efforts laid the foundation for the Bengali Renaissance and continued to

inspire literary and theatrical innovation in Eastern India.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose

Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872–1950) was a prominent Indian philosopher, yogi, poet, and nationalist leader deeply involved in India's freedom struggle before turning to spiritual pursuits. Educated in England and fluent in multiple Indian and European languages, Aurobindo's literary works encompass philosophy, poetry, and drama reflecting themes of life, love, struggle, and transformation. His plays, written primarily in blank verse, include notable works like *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, and *The Viziers of Bassara*, which blend Indian spiritual thought with Greek mythology and contemporary philosophical ideas.

Aurobindo's dramatic writings showcase his lyrical skill and his interest in human and cosmic themes, weaving together political, romantic, and spiritual elements. His play *Vasavadutta* centers on love and reconciliation, emphasizing wisdom and joy derived from overcoming ego-driven desires. His work as an Indo-Anglian playwright reflects a synthesis of Eastern and Western literary traditions, aiming to elevate theatre beyond mere entertainment toward conveying profound truths and universal human experiences.

Besides drama, Aurobindo authored influential philosophical texts such as *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*, integrating his poetic and spiritual vision. His theatre and poetry have inspired generations, intertwining his revolutionary activism and spiritual evolution to articulate a vision of human progress and soul liberation.



Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), the first Asian Nobel laureate in Literature, was a multifaceted genius - poet, playwright, philosopher, artist, and composer- who transformed Bengali theatre and literature. His prolific output includes over 50 dramatic works spanning genres such as traditional drama, musical plays, dance-dramas, and symbolic verse plays. Early works like *Valmiki Pratibha* incorporated music and song, while later works like *Raja O Rani* and *Visarjan* marked his full dramatic maturity, featuring complex emotional and philosophical themes.

Tagore's dramatic oeuvre evolved to emphasize internal reflection and spiritual themes over external action, as seen in plays like *Achalayatan* and *Dakghar*, the latter one of his most well-known plays outside Bengal. His dance-dramas - *Chandalika*, *Tasher Desh*, *Chitrangada*, and *Shyama* - combine mime, dance, music, and choreography, though their influence remained limited mainly to performing troupes. His theatrical vision was rooted in blending traditional Indian aesthetic principles with universal human values, seeking a uniquely Indian theatre form that upheld synthesis and internality.

His plays are praised for their poetic depth, philosophical insight, and melodic beauty, influencing not only Bengali theatre but also modern Indian drama. Tagore's legacy endures as a pioneering force who interwove artistic innovation with spiritual and social consciousness in Indian theatre.

Harindranath Chattopadhyay

Harindranath Chattopadhyay (1898–1990) was a multi-talented Indian

English poet, playwright, actor, and musician, also notable as the first elected member of the Lok Sabha from Vijayawada. Coming from a prominent family, including his sister Sarojini Naidu, Chattopadhyay's work spanned literary and performing arts reflecting social realism and philosophical themes. His plays often addressed social issues like poverty, workers' struggles, and existential concerns, combining realism with optimistic undertones.

Notable plays such as *The Window* depict the travails of poor workers, balancing social critique with hope, while *The Sentry's Lantern* explores pragmatic responses to life's hardships. His versatile artistic career included acting and music, enriching his theatrical productions with multifaceted perspectives. Honored with the Padma Bhushan, his contributions helped advance Indian English drama by engaging with contemporary societal issues while maintaining literary and dramatic quality.

Chattopadhyay's theatre highlighted human dignity and social justice, uplifting marginalized voices through empathetic narratives, blending traditional Indian values with modern theatrical forms, and influencing generations of playwrights and performers.

T. P. Kailasam

Thyagaraja Kailasam (1885–1946) was a pioneering playwright in both Kannada and English, renowned for his wit, satire, and critique of social norms. Influenced by modern English drama and prominent dramatists such as Ibsen and Bernard Shaw, Kailasam actively contributed to the Indian theatre scene after returning to Bangalore. His Kannada plays - like *Tollugatti*, *Home*



Rule, and Ammavara Ganda - featured sharp social criticism often delivered through comedy, representing everyday lives and conventional beliefs.

In addition to his Kannada works, Kailasam also wrote English plays such as *Burden* and *Karna's Curse*, which creatively adapted themes and characters from Indian epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. His English plays exhibited a sophisticated fusion of classical Indian literature with modern theatrical style. Recognized for his liberal and humanistic values, Kailasam laid a solid foundation for amateur theatre, gaining popularity for his spontaneous wit and sharp dialogue.

Despite limited recognition from scholars during his lifetime, Kailasam was beloved by the public for his genuine portrayal of society and his ability to infuse humor and critical thought into his works. His legacy as the “Karnataka Prahasana Pitamaha” (Grandfather of Kannada Satire) remains significant in Indian theatrical history.

B. V. Karanth

Babukodi Venkataramana Karanth (1929–2002) was a versatile Indian theatre personality known for revolutionizing South Indian theatre through his innovative direction, writing, and musical contributions. Starting as a child actor, Karanth trained in Hindustani music and earned advanced degrees in theatre arts. He founded the renowned theatre group *Benaka* in 1974, which became a cornerstone of performing arts in Karnataka and beyond.

Karanth's prolific career included directing around 150 plays in multiple languages—Kannada, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Malayalam, and

Urdu. Some of his well-known works include *Sattavara Neralu* and *Jokuma Raswami*, alongside major productions of Shakespearean plays like *Hamlet*. His approach integrated folk traditions and modern theatrical techniques, making significant contributions to Indian theatre aesthetics and pedagogy, including leadership at the National School of Drama.

Widely admired for his creative vision and commitment to theatre development, Karanth's legacy endures through his pioneering productions, mentorship, and the cultural resurgence he fostered in Indian theatre, making him a celebrated figure across the country.

J. M. Lobo Prabhu

J. M. Lobo Prabhu is recognized as one of the last prominent figures in pre-independence Indian English drama. Although he wrote over a dozen plays, only a few such as *Mother of New India* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) were staged before India's independence. He later published a *Collected Plays* volume in 1956. Prabhu's writing style is noted for its clarity and compelling dialogue, yet his characters sometimes lacked the emotional depth and relatability that audiences seek.

His plays reflect social and political themes significant during colonial and early postcolonial India, attempting to engage with the urgent issues of identity and nationalism. Despite critical literary skill, his plays did not achieve widespread popular acclaim, partly due to challenges in fully capturing the complexities of human behavior on stage. Nonetheless, his contributions paved the way for later Indian English playwrights by helping to create a canon of English-language drama in India.



Lobo Prabhu remains an important historical figure representing the transition period of Indian English theatre, fostering a tradition that subsequent playwrights built upon in the decades following independence.

Asif Currimboy

Asif Currimboy is a prolific Indian playwright known for his socially and politically engaged theatre. Influenced by Shakespeare, Currimboy produced over 30 plays covering a vast range of genres, including farce, comedy, tragedy, and historical drama. His works critically examine themes such as violence, political conflict, communalism, and social inequity, reflecting a deep concern with the realities of post-independence India and its neighbors.

Currimboy's plays, such as *The Clock*, *The Refugee*, *Goa*, *Inquilab*, and *Sonar Bangla*, often employ satire and realism to highlight corruption, hypocrisy, and power struggles within Indian society. He was particularly affected by the political turbulence and violence of the 1960s, which is vividly depicted in his dramatic works. His sharp social critique, combined with compelling characters and narratives, has contributed significantly to contemporary Indian theatre.

Recognized for his fearless engagement with difficult topics, Currimboy's legacy lies in his ability to use theatre as a medium of resistance and social commentary. His plays continue to be influential in stimulating political awareness and challenging societal norms in Indian theatre circles.

Girish Karnad

Girish Karnad (1938–2019) was

a seminal figure in modern Indian theatre, credited with establishing a unique theatrical tradition that bridged Indian classical and contemporary forms. Growing up in Karnataka, Karnad absorbed influences from folk performance forms like Yakshagana alongside Western playwrights such as Brecht, Ionesco, and Beckett. His plays often explore themes of identity, history, mythology, and existential conflict, blending realism with symbolism and experimental techniques.

Karnad's major works include *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala*, and *Taledanda*, which dramatize historical and mythological stories with contemporary relevance. *Hayavadana* skillfully employs the classical Indian tale of the "transposed heads" to explore philosophical questions about identity and selfhood, while *Nagamandala* addresses issues of gender and sexuality within a folktale framework. Karnad's use of myth and ritual connects ancient cultural narratives to modern concerns.

His multifaceted career extended to acting, directing, and screenwriting, complementing his literary contributions. Karnad's articulate blend of Indian traditions with modern theatre, his innovative dramaturgy, and intellectual depth have left a lasting impact on Indian and global theatre, inspiring generations of playwrights and artists.

Vijay Tendulkar

Vijay Tendulkar (1928–2008) was a pioneering Marathi playwright and one of the most influential figures in Indian theatre, whose works address social, political, and psychological themes with unflinching honesty. His plays



often reflect the struggles of the middle and lower classes, focusing on issues of power dynamics, violence, gender conflicts, and existential angst within contemporary Indian society.

Tendulkar's best-known plays include *Gidhade*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Final Solutions*, and *Taledanda*, which expose social hypocrisies and human vulnerabilities. His writing employs complex characters trapped in emotionally charged situations, often symbolizing broader societal struggles. His plays are marked by sharp dialogue, realism, and intense engagement with difficult social realities, creating a theatre of confrontation and critique.

Tendulkar's work revolutionized Marathi theatre and Indian drama at large, influencing both regional and national cultural landscapes. Recognized with numerous awards, including the Padma Bhushan, his legacy continues to inspire theatre practitioners committed to socially conscious storytelling.

Badal Sircar

Badal Sircar (1925–2011) was a revolutionary Bengali playwright who profoundly influenced Indian theatre with his innovative concept of "Third Theatre" or street theatre. His plays often deal with the existential meaninglessness and social struggles of modern man, critiquing socio-political injustices and ecological issues. Sircar's street theatre aimed to democratize drama by removing the barriers of conventional stage, making it accessible to marginalized communities and using it as a tool for social change.

His work addressed topics like unemployment among educated youth, social disparities, communalism,

terrorism, and corruption, using minimalist staging and direct audience engagement to heighten impact. Sircar's theatre emphasized collective performance, improvisation, and the breaking down of hierarchical relationships between actors and audiences, fostering a participatory political consciousness.

Through "Third Theatre," Sircar created a potent platform for addressing urgent contemporary crises, revolutionizing Indian dramatic performance by combining artistic innovation with grassroots activism. His legacy remains vibrant in theatre practice and social movements across India.

Safdar Hashmi

Safdar Hashmi (1954–1989) was a militant Marxist playwright and activist whose contributions to Indian street theatre redefined political drama and resistance arts. Active since college as a member of the Indian People's Theatre Association, he co-founded *Jana Natya Manch (JANAM)*, which used street theatre to expose political corruption, social injustice, and electoral malpractices. Hashmi's work combined artistic skill with fervent political commitment.

His notable street play *Kursi*, *Kursi* criticized electoral fraud under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's government, staged repeatedly to mobilize public opinion. In 1989, Hashmi was tragically assassinated during a performance of *Halla Bol* by political adversaries, highlighting the risks faced by politically engaged artists in India. His death galvanized the street theatre movement, elevating it as a symbol of resistance.



Safdar Hashmi's legacy endures as a symbol of fearless artistic activism and remains honored annually on National Street Theatre Day, inspiring generations of theatre practitioners to blend art with social and political struggle.

Alaque Padamsee

Alaque Padamsee (1928–2018) was a towering figure in Indian advertising and theatre, celebrated for his multifaceted career as an actor, director, and advertising pioneer. Known as the “father of Modern Indian Advertising,” Padamsee created iconic campaigns and built over 100 brands in India. His dynamic theatrical career included acting in films such as *Gandhi* (1982), where he portrayed Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Padamsee's dramatic works reflected his engagement with historical and cultural themes, including productions like *Noor*, focusing on Noor Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal, and *A Quiet Desire*, exploring Rabindranath Tagore's life and relationships. He innovatively adapted Kipling's *The Jungle Book* into a coming-of-age story titled *Yeh Bhi Jungle*, *Woh Bhi Jungle*, blending Indian narratives with universal themes.

Honoured with prestigious awards like the Padmashri and Sangeet Natak Akademi Tagore Ratna, Padamsee's legacy spans advertising, theatre, and cinema, with his creativity influencing multiple domains of Indian popular culture and arts.

Mahesh Dattani

Mahesh Dattani is a renowned contemporary Indian playwright and director known for his nuanced exploration of social and familial issues within Indian society. His plays often focus

on complex relationships, especially those of women and marginalized groups, addressing themes of gender, sexuality, identity, and social taboos. Dattani's work is recognised for its sensitive portrayal of human emotions amid the constraints of traditional Indian culture.

Notable plays include *Where There's a Will*, *Tara*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, and *Final Solutions*, which highlight social issues such as gender discrimination, communal tensions, and the plight of transgender individuals. His play *Seven Steps Around the Fire* addresses the experiences of a hijra (transgender) woman, showcasing his commitment to giving voice to marginalized communities. Dattani's works combine compelling narratives with social critique, provoking audiences to reflect on contemporary social realities.

Dattani has significantly contributed to modern Indian theatre by bringing underrepresented stories to the forefront and blending elements of realism with dramatic structure. His influence extends beyond India, with several plays produced internationally, affirming his role as a prominent voice in global theatre.

Shanta Gokhale

Shanta Gokhale is a distinguished Indian playwright, critic, translator, and journalist, celebrated for her contributions to Marathi and English theatre. Beginning her career with literary criticism and fiction, Gokhale transitioned into theatre, gaining insight and inspiration from notable figures like Satyadev Dubey and Girish Karnad. She penned plays such as *Avinash*, *Dip*, *Dop*, and *Rosemary for Remembrance*, which reflect her deep engagement



with contemporary social and cultural themes.

Gokhale's critical works include *Marathi Theatre: Playwright at the Centre*, which traces the development of experimental theatre in Mumbai. She also edited *The Scenes We Made*, an oral history capturing the evolution of progressive theatre movements. Through her writing and activism, she has played a key role in nurturing experimental and alternative theatre forms.

Her multifaceted involvement in theatre - as playwright, critic, and historian - has enriched Indian cultural discourse, helping preserve and promote diverse theatrical traditions and encouraging creative innovation within Indian theatre.

Manjula Padmanabhan

Manjula Padmanabhan is a multifaceted Indian playwright, journalist, and writer recognized for her incisive focus on gender, social marginalization, and urban life. Her early works, including *Lights Out!* and *Hidden Fires*, use experimental formats such as monologues to shed light on the struggles of women, the impact of communal conflicts, and the alienation inherent in modern cities.

Padmanabhan's plays often portray the fragmentation of traditional family systems, sexual exploitation, and the exploitation of women in patriarchal society. Her themes encompass identity, powerlessness, cultural estrangement, and social alienation, making her a poignant voice in feminist and contemporary Indian theatre. Additionally, she has authored several children's books and collections of short stories, further diversifying her literary output.

Renowned for her daring and socially conscious storytelling, Padmanabhan continues to influence Indian theatre by challenging audiences to confront difficult societal issues and by expanding the artistic possibilities of theatrical expression in India.

Mahasweta Devi

Mahasweta Devi (1926–2016) was a towering figure in Indian literature and activism, known for her powerful depiction of marginalized communities, especially tribal groups, Dalits, and women. Her literary works focus on social injustice, exploitation, and the resilient spirit of oppressed people. Though primarily a novelist and short story writer, she also adapted some of her works for the stage, thereby using drama to reach a wider audience.

Her plays and literary adaptations deal with complex socio-economic themes ranging from feudal oppression to urban underworld struggles, portraying the lives of the dispossessed with vivid realism and empathy. Works like *Mother of 1084* address political violence and social trauma, demonstrating her commitment to raising awareness about the plight of the downtrodden. Her use of drama extended her activism by making pressing social issues more immediate and accessible to the public.

Mahasweta Devi received numerous awards, including the Jnanpith, Padma Vibhushan, and Ramon Magsaysay awards, recognizing her profound contributions to literature, social justice, and human rights. Her legacy as both a writer and an activist continues to inspire social movements and artists committed to justice and equity.



Appendix- 3

Indian English Prose and Fiction Writers

Swami Vivekananda

Swami Vivekananda (1864–1902), born Narendranath Datta, was a Hindu monk, philosopher, and writer who played a crucial role in spreading Indian spiritual traditions like Vedanta and Yoga to the West. His most famous moment came with his speech at the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, where he called for religious harmony and tolerance, which won him global recognition. In India, he worked tirelessly for social reform, education, and the upliftment of the poor, founding the Ramakrishna Mission to carry forward his ideals of service and spiritual growth.

Vivekananda's prose writings, though often overshadowed by his religious role, reveal a master of expository style. His essays and lectures employ rhetorical devices like similes, metaphors, and paradoxes, expressed in a straightforward and rhythmic manner. They combine clarity with musical qualities such as euphony and cadence, making his works thought-provoking and accessible. He believed good prose must be simple yet expressive, and his writings consistently reflected that conviction.

In collections such as *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* and *Selections from Swami Vivekananda*, his stress on the unity of religions, freedom from fanaticism, and the cultivation of the spirit emerges with persuasive force. His style, both expository and associative,

occasionally takes on a poetic rhythm, yet always remains natural and harmonious. Thus, Vivekananda's contribution lies not only in his philosophy but also in shaping Indian English prose as a vehicle for spiritual and social ideas.

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), celebrated as the "Father of the Nation," was not only a political and moral leader but also a significant prose writer. Trained in law in London, Gandhi became famous for his philosophy of non-violent resistance, *Satyagraha*, which he applied in South Africa and later in India's struggle for independence. A prolific journalist and editor of newspapers like *Young India* and *Harijan*, he infused political writing with moral urgency and remarkable stylistic clarity.

Gandhi's prose style was characterized by simplicity, precision, and an avoidance of literary ornamentation. He wrote with honesty, ensuring that words directly matched his thoughts, which gave his works both power and credibility. His writings spanned political pamphlets, like *Hind Swaraj* (1909), to deeply personal and spiritual works, most notably his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (1927–28), which blends candid self-reflection with philosophical insight.

Across his three literary phases - London, South Africa, and India - Gandhi used prose to engage with issues such as colonial exploitation, communal harmony, and rural development.



His works combined straightforward communication with a pragmatic vision of reform, shaping them into both political instruments and enduring literary contributions. Today, his *Collected Works* serve as testimony to his ability to create powerful writing aimed at truth, reform, and the moral awakening of society.

Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), India's first Prime Minister, was not only a statesman but also a major prose stylist in Indian English writing. Educated in England at Harrow, Cambridge, and the Inner Temple, Nehru combined Western education with deep concern for India's history and destiny. His prose is infused with lyricism and intellectual depth, blending science, history, and politics with literary charm. Nehru's works enriched Indian English prose with a distinctive style that was at once rational, modern, and evocative.

Nehru's key writings include *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1930), written to his daughter, Indira, introducing her to world history with clarity and imagination; *Glimpses of World History* (1934), a remarkable narrative of human civilization; and *An Autobiography* (1936), which remains one of his finest works. These texts reflect his secular worldview, faith in scientific temper, sympathy for socialism, and a literary skill that made complex political and historical topics engaging for a wide readership.

In addition to scholarly works, Nehru's collected speeches and essays, such as *The Unity of India* and *India and the World*, reveal his reflective political voice and sensitivity to cultural pluralism. His writing style—both lucid and poetic—gave shape to modern India's liberal

democratic ethos. As an author, Nehru left behind not just political thought but also enduring contributions to the development of Indian English literature.

S. Radhakrishnan

Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was a philosopher, scholar, and statesman whose prose made significant contributions to Indian English literature. His writing style is distinguished by clarity, simplicity, and a direct manner of expression, using the minimum words necessary to convey his ideas effectively. Radhakrishnan's prose aims to make complex philosophical and religious concepts accessible to readers, reflecting a blend of both Western and Indian intellectual traditions.

Radhakrishnan focused much of his writing on Indian philosophy and comparative religion, with notable works like *Indian Philosophy*, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, and *An Idealist View of Life*. His style avoids unnecessary ornamentation; instead, his choice of words is functional, aiming to elucidate rather than decorate. Through his articulate prose, he was able to reinterpret Advaita Vedanta and Indian spiritual ideas in a way that resonated with Western audiences, building bridges between cultures.

His prose embodies the virtues of good writing - clarity, simplicity, and euphony - making difficult philosophical concepts easier to grasp. Radhakrishnan himself believed a writer should be as straightforward as possible, ensuring ideas are clear and without ambiguity. His ability to synthesize Indian philosophical heritage with modern thought has earned him lasting recognition among literary and academic circles alike.



Nirad C. Chaudhuri

Nirad C. Chaudhuri was a renowned Bengali-English writer and intellectual famous for his distinctive and richly detailed prose style. His writings are highly erudite and blend personal reflection with deep cultural, historical, and social critique. His best-known work, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, is celebrated for its vivid observations of colonial India and complex blend of Indian and Western perspectives.

Chaudhuri's prose is marked by precision and elegance, often containing witty, ironic, and sometimes contentious commentary. His style reflects his belief that "style is the subject itself," meaning that the essence of writing lies in how it is expressed as much as what is communicated. His extensive body of work, including biographies and essays like *Scholar Extraordinary*, serves as a powerful intellectual engagement with colonialism, nationalism, and identity.

Despite his scholarly rigor, Chaudhuri's prose retains a personal and narrative warmth, making his critical works accessible and compelling. His writing influenced generations of Indian English writers and scholars, standing out for its complexity, depth, and challenging viewpoints. He also worked extensively as a journalist and commentator, shaping public discourse in mid-20th-century India.

C.S. Lakshmi (Ambai)

C.S. Lakshmi, also known by her pen name Ambai, is an influential Tamil writer and feminist scholar whose prose marks a distinctive contribution to Indian English and Tamil literature. Lakshmi's writing focuses on feminist themes,

exploring the lives and experiences of women with sensitivity and subtle irony. Her stories are noted for their detailed characterizations and strong feminist sensibility, blending realism with poetic undertones.

She began her literary career in Tamil with works like *Andhi Maalai* ("Twilight") and the short story collection *Siragukal Muriyum* ("Wings Will Be Broken"). Her prose style is clear yet rich with subtext, often using everyday domestic settings to critique larger societal issues related to gender and identity. She has also been instrumental in feminist scholarship and oral history work, notably founding SPARROW, an archive dedicated to preserving women's writings and art.

Lakshmi's contributions extend beyond fiction; her academic and activist efforts in feminist studies have helped shape contemporary Indian discourse on gender. Her prose style combines simplicity and lyrical qualities, making her an important voice in both literary and scholarly fields. This dual role as writer and researcher lends her work a unique combination of artistic and intellectual rigour.

Kancha Ilaiah

Kancha Ilaiah, a Dalit intellectual and political theorist, is known for his powerful writings that challenge the caste system and advocate for marginalized communities in India. His prose is direct, polemical, and engaged with issues of social justice, culture, and identity. Coming from an oppressed Shudra background, Ilaiah's writing is deeply personal, blending autobiography with sharp political critique.

His seminal work, *Why I am Not a Hindu*, is a bold critique of Brahmanical



dominance and Hindutva ideology, and is distinguished stylistically by its accessible yet compelling and confrontational tone. Ilaiah's prose aims to break social taboos and stimulate debates on caste, religion, and equity by laying bare the experiences of those historically silenced. His writing style is blunt and emphatic, shaped to provoke thought and inspire political awareness.

Beyond his critical essays, Ilaiah merges academic rigor with grassroots realities, addressing themes like land reform, empowerment, and cultural resistance. Through his vivid, straightforward style, he has become a significant voice in Indian English literature, especially in Dalit and social liberation writing.

Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy, internationally acclaimed novelist and activist, rose to fame with her Booker Prize-winning novel *The God of Small Things*, which is notable for its lyrical prose and intricate narrative structure. Her writing combines poetic, evocative imagery with deep political and social critique. Roy's prose style shifts fluidly between fiction and essay, marked by rich descriptions that often address themes of oppression, injustice, and human rights.

In addition to fiction, Roy is a prolific essayist, known for her sharp and courageous political writings against corporate globalization, environmental degradation, and state violence. Her essays such as *Power Politics* and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* showcase her ability to blend intellectual rigor with compelling narrative and moral passion. Roy's prose is both poetic and direct, capable of conveying complex political realities in an accessible yet eloquent

manner.

Her fearless activism has occasionally led to legal challenges in India, yet her work continues to shape debates on democracy, freedom, and justice. Roy's distinctive style, a fusion of literary beauty and pointed political commentary, makes her one of the most influential contemporary Indian English writers.

Ramachandra Guha

Ramachandra Guha is a prominent historian and public intellectual whose prose style is accessible, analytical, and richly descriptive, making complex historical and socio-political ideas understandable to a broad audience. His writing reflects a balance between scholarly depth and narrative clarity, often infusing history with contemporary relevance. Guha's works range from environmental history, such as *The Unquiet Woods*, to cultural studies like *Corner of a Foreign Field* on cricket, as well as biographies including *Gandhi Before India*.

Guha's prose is characterized by concise language, clear structure, and careful argumentation, supported by extensive research. His ability to engage readers beyond academic circles has made him a key figure in popularizing history and social sciences in India. He frequently writes for newspapers and journals, combining rigorous scholarship with lively commentary on politics, culture, and the environment.

Through his lucid and engaging writing, Guha explores themes of modernity, democracy, and environmentalism, emphasizing the complexity and pluralism of Indian society. His style reflects a commitment



to factual precision and intellectual openness, making his contributions central to contemporary Indian English prose.

Indian English Fiction Writers

Khushwant Singh

Khushwant Singh (1915–2014) was a renowned Indian writer and journalist, known for his historical and social novels as well as his sharp journalistic voice. His famous works include *Train to Pakistan* (1956), which dramatically portrays the tragic partition of India through the eyes of ordinary peasants who had coexisted peacefully prior to the violence. Singh's narrative combines a gritty portrayal of political events with a deeply human perspective, highlighting the courage and sacrifices of common people such as the Sikh peasant Jugga.

Singh's writing style is often chatty, digressive, and infused with an irreverent tone. This is especially clear in novels like *Delhi: A Novel* (1989), which uses an aging writer as a narrator to explore centuries of India's capital through episodes, anecdotes, and interactions with contrasting characters. Singh's prose reflects his journalistic background, balancing historical detail with a conversational and approachable narrative style.

Apart from fiction, Singh was a prolific editor and translator, contributing to disseminating Sikh religious texts and Indian history. His literary legacy includes a belief in expressing Indian culture openly, including themes like sex and social realities that were often considered taboo. Singh's works combine romantic nationalism with

social realism, offering a critical yet empathetic lens on India's complex past and society.

R.K. Narayan

R.K. Narayan (1906–2001) established himself as a pioneer of Indian English fiction through his creation of the fictional town of Malgudi, which serves as a microcosm of Indian life. His stories, like *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *The Guide* (1958), are marked by gentle irony, humor, and a subtle exploration of the conflicts between Western modernity and traditional Indian values. Narayan's prose is characterized by simplicity and clarity, colored by a warm empathy for ordinary people and their struggles.

Narayan's narrative technique often involves dual narration and a circular structure, as seen in *The Guide*, where the story alternates between past and present, creating deep layers of meaning. His use of irony is delicate but pervasive, manifesting through his characters' motivations and the unfolding of their dilemmas. His literature brilliantly captures the contradictions and subtleties of daily life in India through compassionate and humorous storytelling.

His work exhibits a pronounced sense of place, with Malgudi representing both a fictional town and a symbol of India's evolving societal landscape. This sense of setting anchors Narayan's stories, where the blending of tradition and modernity is played out against the backdrop of India's socio-political changes. His style remains accessible, making profound observations about the human condition without losing simplicity.



Raja Rao

Raja Rao (1908–2006) is distinguished from his contemporaries by the spiritual depth and philosophical underpinnings of his prose. Coming from Karnataka and influenced by spiritual mentors and Indian mysticism, Rao's novels reflect a deep commitment to India's spiritual heritage. His political novel *Kanthapura* (1938) explores the impact of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals on rural Indian communities, depicting how the Gandhian freedom struggle transformed social and caste divisions in a village.

Rao's style of writing is often allegorical and metaphysical, merging the political with myth and symbolism. For instance, *Kanthapura* is structured as a *sthalapurana* (a traditional temple history), narrated from the perspective of an elder woman, blending folklore with contemporary political realities. His later work, *Comrade Kirillov*, showcases his fascination with existential philosophy, exploring political ideology and Indian identity through the lens of his Marxist alter ego.

Unlike Narayan or Anand, Rao's fiction is less focused on social realism and more on philosophical meditation. His prose is dense and reflective, often requiring readers to delve into complex metaphysical questions. Rao's contribution lies in blending Indian spirituality and philosophy with English literary traditions, making him a key figure in Indian English literary modernism.

Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand (1905–2004) is regarded as a foundational figure in Indian English literature through his pioneering social realism and focus

on oppressed classes. Coming from a modest Hindu family, Anand's early novels such as *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) depict the brutal realities faced by India's marginalized in a colonial and caste-ridden society. *Untouchable* tells the story of Bakha, a young sweeper, highlighting the indignities of untouchability and caste oppression.

Anand's writing champions the downtrodden while embracing both Gandhian and Marxist ideologies. His prose attempts to capture the rhythms and dialects of northern India, translating them into English with a focus on social justice and human dignity. Though his style occasionally reflects the limitations of early Indian English literature, his work remains significant for its earnestness and political commitment.

His novels explore class, caste, and colonial exploitation in depth, acting as literary chronicles of India's social movements and transformations. Anand's approach offered a voice to those silenced by mainstream literature, establishing the Indian novel in English as a tool for social awareness and reform.

Govindas Vishnoodas Desani

Govindas Vishnoodas Desani (1909–2000) was a British-Indian writer known for his idiosyncratic and experimental prose, which combined satire, mysticism, and cultural critique. Born in Kenya, raised in India, and spending much of his adult life in the UK, Desani's most famous work, *All About H. Hatterr* (1948), lampoons both Indian and Western cultural practices with a playful and farcical tone.

His prose is notable for its linguistic inventiveness and dense symbolism,



reflecting his deep study of Indian mysticism, yoga, and occult philosophies. Desani's writing embraces a blend of prose poetry, satire, and philosophical exploration, drawing comparisons to literary modernists and standing out for its complexity and humor. His work influenced later generations of Indian English writers by pushing the boundaries of narrative style and language.

Alongside fiction, Desani contributed journalistic writings, reporting, and humor, broadening his literary repertoire. His vibrant personality and fusion of Eastern and Western thought secured his place as a unique and pioneering figure in Indian English literature.

Nayantara Sahgal

Nayantara Sahgal, born in 1927, belongs to the illustrious Nehru family and has spent much of her youth at Anand Bhavan, the Nehrus' ancestral home. She was educated in history at Wellesley College in the United States and returned to India in 1947. Her novels deftly bridge the personal and the political, focusing on themes like the Indian freedom struggle, communal tensions, and identity crises among the English-educated Indian elite. Works such as *A Time to Be Happy* and *Storm in Chandigarh* reflect these concerns along with her close proximity to significant political figures.

Sahgal's characters are usually from India's upper class, reflecting societal duplicity, religious adherence, and moral complexities. She avoids stereotypes and captures their authentic struggles with identity and belonging. Her writing is marked by a clear style that portrays educated, English-speaking Indians

who grapple with their cultural heritage while navigating modern realities.

Her literary contributions include novels, autobiographies, and collections of letters such as *Relationship*, which reveal the socio-political challenges faced by those defying traditional norms. Her style serves as a lens into the contradictions of India's elite, combining political insight with personal narratives, making her a pivotal voice in post-independence Indian English literature.

Diasporic Writers

Jhumpa Lahiri

Jhumpa Lahiri, an Indian-American writer born in 1967, is celebrated for her poignant storytelling about the immigrant experience. Her breakthrough came with *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), a collection of short stories that won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Her works often explore themes of cultural assimilation, family dynamics, and the emotional challenges faced by Indians or Indian-Americans negotiating between two worlds.

Lahiri's prose is characterized by simplicity, elegance, and deep psychological insight. She employs lucid, straightforward English that reflects the everyday realities and inner lives of her characters. Her storytelling is layered and subtle, addressing complex themes such as grief, marital strife, and cultural dislocation with emotional depth and clarity.

Apart from *Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri's notable works include *The Namesake* and later novels written in Italian as well. Her writing draws heavily from personal experiences and intimate observations, making her narratives



authentic and universally relatable. Her works remain key contributions to diasporic literature and Indian English fiction.

Kiran Desai

Kiran Desai, born in 1971 and daughter of author Anita Desai, is a prominent contemporary Indian English novelist known for her richly imaginative and socially insightful works. She gained international acclaim with her novels *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, the latter of which won the Booker Prize in 2006. Desai's stories often probe themes of communication breakdown, globalization, and postcolonial identity.

Desai's style is imaginative, vivid, and marked by a blend of humor and acute social observation. Her narratives often highlight the tensions between tradition and modernity, portraying India's diverse cultures and the impact of shifting socio-political realities on individuals and communities. Her use of local color and detailed characterizations makes her work resonate widely.

Besides literary honors, Desai has received prestigious fellowships and influence through her engaging storytelling. Her works capture the essence of contemporary India with sensitivity and creativity, cementing her place as a significant voice in modern Indian English fiction.

Kamala Markandaya

Kamala Markandaya was a pioneering Indian English novelist whose works explored the tensions between tradition and modernity in Indian society. Born in southern India, she wrote about a wide range of characters, from

impoverished peasants to aristocratic ladies, capturing the socio-economic changes shaping India. Her debut novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), depicts the hardships of rural life through the story of a poor farming woman, while later works such as *A Handful of Rice* (1966) continued to explore the struggles of the underprivileged in changing times.

Markandaya's narrative style blends compassionate portrayal with social realism, highlighting the resilience of Indian women constrained by societal norms yet filled with enduring spirit. Her stories are characterized by their rich depiction of Indian customs and the emotional endurance of her characters amidst adversity. Her novels also examine the evolving socio-cultural landscape, including the impact of colonialism and urbanization on traditional lives.

Beyond fiction, her work sheds light on women's roles and gender dynamics, often challenging the patriarchal framework with nuanced female characters. Markandaya's novels serve as social documents reflecting the marginalized voices of Indian society, combining lyrical prose with storytelling that has earned her critical acclaim both in India and abroad.

Ruth Praver Jhabvala

Ruth Praver Jhabvala was a prominent Indo-British author and screenwriter, renowned for her nuanced stories about Indian life and cross-cultural encounters. Born to a Jewish family in Germany, she moved to India after marrying architect Cyrus Jhabvala, living there for many years. Her literary works, including *Heat and Dust* (1975), which won the Booker Prize, often depict the lives of Indians within the colonial and post-colonial



context as well as the cultural dissonance between East and West.

Jhabvala's prose style is clear and elegant, marked by its perceptive insight into the human condition, social norms, and cultural complexities. Her stories reveal both the charm and constraints of Indian society, often focusing on everyday people grappling with issues of tradition and modernity. In addition to her novels and short stories, she contributed extensively to film and television scripts, adding to her reputation as a versatile storyteller.

Underlying much of her work is a gentle but unflinching examination of cultural identity, displacement, and belonging. Her writings, both fictional and non-fictional, offer a sophisticated commentary on colonialism's aftermath and the personal struggles entwined with social change, making her a significant figure in Indian English literature.

Shashi Deshpande

Shashi Deshpande is a celebrated Indian English writer known for her portrayal of contemporary middle-class women's lives and inner conflicts. Born in 1938 into a literary family in Karnataka, she has written novels, short stories, and a screenplay, many of which explore themes of gender, identity, and societal expectations. Her works, such as *That Long Silence* and *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, highlight the psychological journeys of women navigating patriarchy, marriage, and selfhood.

Deshpande's prose is lucid, sensitive, and deeply introspective. She skillfully depicts the emotional landscapes of her characters, balancing realism with a nuanced understanding of traditional and modern Indian cultural pressures.

Her writing is often described as feminist, emphasizing women's resilience and the quest for self-discovery amidst social constraints.

Through her narratives, Deshpande challenges gender norms and gives voice to women's experiences, including their silences and struggles. She draws upon Indian myths and folk traditions, weaving them into contemporary settings to enrich her characters' journeys and address broader social changes, thereby contributing significantly to Indian feminist literature.

Anita Desai

Anita Desai is recognised as a pioneer of the psychological novel in Indian English literature. Born into a literary family in India, she has authored sixteen novels, several collections of short stories, and poetry. Her fiction delves deeply into the inner lives and emotional struggles of her characters, often focusing on women grappling with issues of identity, alienation, and familial relationships. Her nuanced exploration of psyche and social context places her among the most significant Indian novelists of her generation.

Desai's writing style is marked by its sensitive portrayal of ordinary life and the conflicting pressures faced by individuals in contemporary India. Through novels like *Clear Light of Day* and *Voices in the City*, she depicts the psychological and cultural tensions of India's urban milieus, exploring themes of nostalgia, estrangement, and cultural identity. Her prose is lyrical yet clear, raising universal questions through culturally specific settings.

Her work also addresses broader themes such as the impact of colonialism,



modernity, and cross-cultural experiences. Desai has been shortlisted thrice for the Booker Prize and received numerous accolades, including the Sahitya Akademi Award. Both as a writer and an academic, she has contributed significantly to shaping Indian English literary discourse.

Bharati Mukherjee

Bharati Mukherjee is a celebrated Indian American writer known for her fiction and essays addressing immigrant experiences and cultural dissonance. Born in India and relocating to the United States, she offers incisive portrayals of the psychological and societal challenges faced by South Asian immigrants. Her early collections like *The Middleman* and *Other Stories* won critical acclaim and awards for their vivid depiction of cultural conflicts and personal identity crises.

Mukherjee's narrative style is direct yet nuanced, blending sharp social commentary with intimate character studies. Her novels, including *Desirable Daughters* and *Jasmine*, often tackle issues of assimilation, displacement, and the transformation of self in diasporic contexts. Her work criticizes conventional attitudes towards women in South Asia while exploring the complexities of cultural hybridity.

Apart from fiction, Mukherjee is also known for her activism and critique of cultural stereotypes. Her stories emphasize the resilience and adaptability of immigrants, weaving personal and historical narratives to explore the lived realities of migration in a globalized world.

Anita Nair

Anita Nair is a contemporary Indian novelist whose work stands out for its unique thematic concerns and narrative style. Unlike many of her contemporaries, Nair often situates her fiction in rural India, exploring lives away from urban centers and spotlighting traditionally neglected voices. Her debut novel *The Better Man* addresses complex gender dynamics, ambition, and jealousy within a rural setting, showcasing her ability to blend local color with universal human themes.

Nair's writing incorporates compassionate and clear prose, seeking to portray women's experiences and societal roles with depth and authenticity. Her novel *Ladies Coupe* is celebrated for its exploration of female empowerment and independence, depicting various women's lives connected by the metaphor of a train journey. Nair's stories often critique patriarchal norms and question traditional gender roles.

With a blend of realism, philosophical inquiry, and social awareness, Nair remains a prominent literary voice. Her later works continue to engage with contemporary issues faced by Indian women, maintaining a compassionate tone and a commitment to highlighting marginalized perspectives.

Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy first gained international acclaim with her debut novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), which won the Booker Prize and remains a landmark of Indian English literature. Set in Kerala, the novel explores intimate themes such as family trauma, forbidden



love, caste and societal fractures through lyrical and haunting storytelling. Its vivid and candid portrayal of sexuality and social taboos provoked controversy but also opened new horizons for Indian fiction by addressing suppressed histories and marginalised voices.

Following this success, Roy returned to fiction with her second novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). This ambitious work weaves multiple stories of disenfranchised communities across India, including Kashmir, Delhi and the northeast, spotlighting issues of displacement, religious conflict and social injustice. The novel's expansive narrative and poetic prose continue Roy's blend of literary beauty with urgent political engagement.

Most recently, Roy has published her memoir *Mother Mary Comes to Me* (2025), which while not fiction, enriches her literary output with intimate recollections. Her fiction remains distinctive for its poetic style, bold narrative choices and unwavering commitment to giving voice to India's marginalized and silenced across cultural and political divides.

Contemporary Writers

Amitav Ghosh

Amitav Ghosh is a leading contemporary Indian English novelist whose works are profoundly influenced by postcolonial discourse, history, and cultural interaction, especially across the Indian Ocean. His debut, *The Circle of Reason* (1986), adopts a postmodern style reminiscent of Salman Rushdie, blending travelogue and fiction to depict complex global exchanges influenced by colonialism. Ghosh's storytelling focuses primarily on the

stories of the oppressed and displaced, often sidelining colonial rulers in his narratives.

Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy, with *Sea of Poppies* as a central piece, portrays a diverse cast of sailors, laborers, and prisoners, emphasizing the harsh realities of colonial exploitation and the brutal impact of imperialism. His works highlight the human cost of historical catastrophes like the Japanese invasion of Burma and religious riots in Dhaka, painting a somber yet compelling picture of loss and resilience.

Thematically, Ghosh explores identity, displacement, and environmental concerns, often framing Eastern culture's encounter with Western imperialism in nuanced ways. His sophisticated narratives combine historical depth with literary innovation, making him a significant figure in contemporary Indian English literature with global relevance.

Shashi Tharoor

Shashi Tharoor is a prominent Indian author and international figure known for his literary and political engagement. An alumnus of St. Stephen's College and former United Nations diplomat, Tharoor combines intellectual rigor with accessible storytelling. His notable work, *The Great Indian Novel*, is a satirical re-imagination of the Indian epic *Mahabharata* that allegorizes modern Indian history, blending mythology with contemporary political events.

Tharoor's work seeks to revise and reinterpret Indian literary traditions with a modern understanding of culture and history. He emphasizes India's pluralistic identity and openness, challenging the monolithic portrayals of Indian culture



often found in colonial narratives. His literary output includes fiction, essays, and stories that reflect India's socio-political complexities and historical mythologies.

Moreover, Tharoor writes about the cultural impact of Indian cinema and popular mythologies, using his fiction to explore how these narratives shape Indian identity. His broad intellectual and literary contributions mark him as an influential voice in India's cultural and political discourse.

Vikram Seth

Vikram Seth is a prolific and versatile Indian author known for his wide-ranging contributions to fiction, poetry, and drama. Born in Calcutta and educated in premier institutions, Seth's oeuvre includes novels such as *A Suitable Boy*, a sweeping narrative describing post-independence India's social and political milieu. His literary talents extend to opera librettos and large-scale poetic works.

Seth's writing is characterized by its acute sociopolitical awareness and detailed portrayal of individual human experiences within broader historical contexts. His narratives often explore themes of family, identity, love, and artistic expression, balanced with political commentary on the evolving Indian nation-state.

His works stand out for their linguistic elegance, meticulous craftsmanship, and expansive scope. Seth's ability to interweave intimate personal stories with national history situates him among the most important contemporary Indian authors writing in English.

Manu Joseph

Manu Joseph is an Indian journalist, writer, and editor known for his sharp commentary and literary prowess. Born in Kottayam, Kerala, and raised in Chennai, he comes from a family with cinematic roots, his father being a renowned filmmaker. After completing his education at Loyola College, Chennai, Joseph embarked on a career in journalism, writing for major publications including *The International New York Times* and *The Hindustan Times*. He also served as editor of *OPEN* magazine, enhancing its reputation.

Joseph's novels are noted for their incisive social critique and dark humor. His debut novel, *Serious Men* (2010), won several prestigious awards, including the PEN/Open Book Award and the Hindu Literary Prize. Adapted into a film titled *Serious Men* in 2020, the novel explores themes of caste, ambition, and social mobility in contemporary India. His second novel, *The Illicit Happiness of Other People* (2012), delves into complex human emotions and societal taboos.

Joseph's writing is distinguished by its bold storytelling and engagement with pressing social issues. His journalistic background enriches his fiction with realism and attention to contemporary Indian societal dynamics, making him a significant literary voice of his generation.

Chetan Bhagat

Chetan Bhagat is one of the most commercially successful contemporary Indian English authors, known for his accessible writing style that appeals particularly to the youth. Born in 1974 in



a Punjabi family, Bhagat's novels often focus on India's middle-class issues related to education, love, and career aspirations. His clear, straightforward narrative style and relevant themes have led to several of his works being adapted into blockbuster Bollywood movies.

Bhagat has written novels such as *Five Point Someone*, *One Night @ the Call Centre*, *The Three Mistakes of My Life*, *2 States*, and *Half Girlfriend*. His books explore modern India's cultural and social challenges, particularly from the perspective of young urban Indians. Besides novels, Bhagat is also a columnist and motivational speaker, emphasizing youth empowerment and national development.

While popular and widely read, Bhagat's works have sparked debates about literary merit versus mass appeal. Nonetheless, his impact on popular Indian English fiction and youth literature is undeniable.

Amit Chaudhuri

Amit Chaudhuri is a bestselling Indian author known for his mythological fiction, especially the *Shiva Trilogy* which began with *The Immortals of Meluha*. Born in 1974 and an alumnus of IIM Kolkata, Tripathi's career shifted from finance to full-time writing following the success of his first book. His works blend ancient Indian mythology with contemporary storytelling, making traditional stories accessible and engaging for modern readers.

Tripathi's narrative style often incorporates philosophical reflections alongside action and adventure. His *Shiva Trilogy* presents Hindu mythology through a fresh lens, exploring themes of good versus evil, belief, and morality.

Beyond writing, Tripathi is involved in filmmaking and serves as a cultural diplomat, further promoting Indian heritage.

His success has popularised mythological fiction in Indian English literature, inspiring a new genre that combines folklore with modern narrative techniques.

Amit Chaudhuri

Amit Chaudhuri is a multifaceted Indian author, poet, literary critic, and musician, celebrated for his gentle humanism and literary finesse. Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 2009, Chaudhuri has held academic positions including at the University of East Anglia and Ashoka University in India. His literary awards include the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, and the Commonwealth Writers Prize.

Chaudhuri's fiction, such as *A Strange and Sublime Address* and *Afternoon Raag*, often weaves personal memory with cultural reflections, exploring the nuances of urban life and artistic identity in India and abroad. His work is known for its lyrical prose, subtle emotional depth, and focus on everyday human experiences.

Besides fiction, he has contributed extensively to literary criticism and cultural studies, gaining recognition for his sensitive exploration of Indian music, culture, and history. His literary and scholarly output showcases a rare blend of creativity and intellectual rigor.

Anees Salim

Anees Salim is an acclaimed Indian writer from Kerala, born in Varkala in 1970, who has emerged as one of



contemporary India's most distinctive English-language novelists. Currently residing in Kochi where he works as Creative Director for FCB Ulka advertising firm, Salim's journey to literary recognition was unconventional, he completed only high school education in Malayalam medium before entering the advertising industry in the late 1990s. His early writing attempts met considerable rejection, with his first two novels turned down by publishers, yet persistence led to his breakthrough with *Tales from a Vending Machine* (2013), which secured acceptance within a week and resulted in four additional book contracts. His published works include *The Vicks Mango Tree*, *Vanity Bagh*, *The Blind Lady's Descendants*, *The Small-Town Sea*, *The Odd Book of Baby Names*, and *The Bellboy*, each demonstrating his mastery of dark comedy blended with poignant social observation.

Salim's literary achievements are particularly remarkable for their diversity and prestige within Indian letters. He won The Hindu Literary Prize in 2013 for *Vanity Bagh*, followed by the Raymond Crossword Book Award for Best Fiction in 2015 for *The Blind*

Lady's Descendants. His crowning achievement came in 2018 when he received the Sahitya Akademi Award for *The Blind Lady's Descendants*, making him the fourth Malayalee and the first to win this honour specifically for English fiction - previous Malayalam recipients Kamala Das and Jeet Thayil won for poetry. Additional recognition includes the Bangalore Atta Galatta Literature Festival's Best Fiction Award for *The Small Town Sea* and the Valley of Words Best Book Award for *The Odd Book of Baby Names*. His work has gained academic credibility with *Vanity Bagh* being included in university curricula and his novels translated into multiple regional languages.

Salim's literary contribution is distinguished by his authentic portrayal of Muslim experience in contemporary India and his deliberate cultivation of authorial invisibility. His writing style features "unadorned, precise prose" that masterfully combines humour with profound melancholy, often exploring themes of mortality, family dynamics, and community identity through characters who navigate the intersection of tradition and modernity.

MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg. No :
Name :

MA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FIRST SEMESTER EXAMINATION
DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE - M21EG04DC
Indian Writing in English (CBCS – PG)
2025–26 Admission Onwards (SET - A)

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any five of the following questions in two or three sentences each.

Each question carries 2 marks. (2 x 5 = 10)

1. Name two key social reform movements associated with the Indian Renaissance.
2. What was the primary aim of Woods Despatch (1854) in the context of education?
3. Who coined the term “subaltern,” and what does it signify in postcolonial studies?
4. Identify one key feature of Sarojini Naidu’s poetic style.
5. Who wrote “On Killing a Tree” and what environmental concern does it highlight?
6. What social issue does Vijay Tendulkar address in “Silence! The Court is in Session”?
7. Define “context-sensitive thinking” as discussed by A.K. Ramanujan.
8. What central theme underpins Salman Rushdie’s Shame?

SECTION B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each.

Each question carries 5 marks (5 x 6 = 30)

9. Discuss how the introduction of English education functioned as a tool of cultural colonialism in India.



10. Explain the role of the Brahmo Samaj in shaping modern Indian social thought.
11. Discuss the role of nationalism in Sarojini Naidu's "Coromandel Fishers".
12. Examine the romantic elements in Toru Dutt's "Our Casuarina Tree".
13. Explain how dramatic conventions in Karnad's "The Fire and the Rain" reflect conflict between duty and desire.
14. Analyse the use of farce and social critique in Tendulkar's "Silence! The Court is in Session".
15. Discuss Ramanujan's use of the Stanislavskian exercise to interrogate Indian thought.
16. Examine the role of power outage as a narrative device in "A Temporary Matter."
17. Critically assess how caste consciousness shapes Waghmare's actions in Arjun Dangle's "Promotion."
18. Analyse how Ruskin Bond uses nature imagery to evoke nostalgia in "The Kite Maker."

SECTION C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each.

Each question carries 15 marks. (15×2=30)

19. "Indian English literature emerges both as a site of colonial imposition and postcolonial resistance." Critically discuss with reference to key reformers and writers.
20. How does "The Freaks" reflect the conflict between social expectations and personal emotional reality?
21. Critically assess how gender politics are dramatized in Dattani's "Dance Like a Man".
22. Analyse the evolution of Raju's identity in Narayan's The Guide.





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DISCIPLINE CORE COURSE - M21EG04DC

Indian Writing in English (CBCS – PG)

2025–26 Admission Onwards (SET - A)

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any five of the following questions in two or three sentences each.

Each question carries 2 marks. (2 x 5 = 10)

1. Define the “Indian Renaissance” in the context of nineteenth-century literary history.
2. Name one poem by Nissim Ezekiel and its central theme.
3. Define confessional poetry with reference to Kamala Das.
4. Identify the dramatic significance of the mock trial in Tendulkar’s play.
5. What narrative technique does Jayanta Mahapatra use in “Grandfather”?
6. Who is Marco Polo in The Guide?
7. What secret does Shobha reveal on the final night in “A Temporary Matter”?
8. What narrative perspective does Bond employ in “The Kite Maker”?

SECTION B

Answer any six of the following questions in half a page each.

Each question carries 5 marks (5 x 6 = 30)

9. Analyse the transformations in Indian educational policy from Macaulay’s Minutes to Woods Despatch.
10. Evaluate the contributions of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee to early Indian English fiction.



11. Examine the interplay of tradition and modernity in Sri Aurobindo's prose writings.
12. Discuss the spiritual symbolism in Tagore's selected songs from *Gitanjali*.
13. Explain how Tendulkar's satire in "Silence! The Court is in Session" exposes middle-class hypocrisies.
14. Analyse the thematic interplay of memory and loss in Mahapatra's "Grandfather".
15. Describe the structural use of dual timelines in Dattani's "Dance Like a Man".
16. Discuss Narayan's portrayal of gender roles in *The Guide*.
17. Explain the significance of darkness in Lahiri's "A Temporary Matter."
18. Evaluate the role of memory in shaping identity in Bond's "The Kite Maker."

SECTION C

Answer any two of the following questions in four pages each.

Each question carries 15 marks. (15×2=30)

19. Discuss the role of feminist voices in shaping contemporary Indian English literature.
20. Discuss the dual interpretation of *The Coromandel Fishers*? as both a regional celebration and a political allegory.
21. Analyse Ramanujan's context-sensitive thinking in "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" across cultural examples.
22. Examine gender roles, patriarchy, and artistic identity in Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* with biographical context.



സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണം

കുതിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
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**DON'T LET IT
BE TOO LATE**

**SAY
NO
TO
DRUGS**

**LOVE YOURSELF
AND ALWAYS BE
HEALTHY**



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