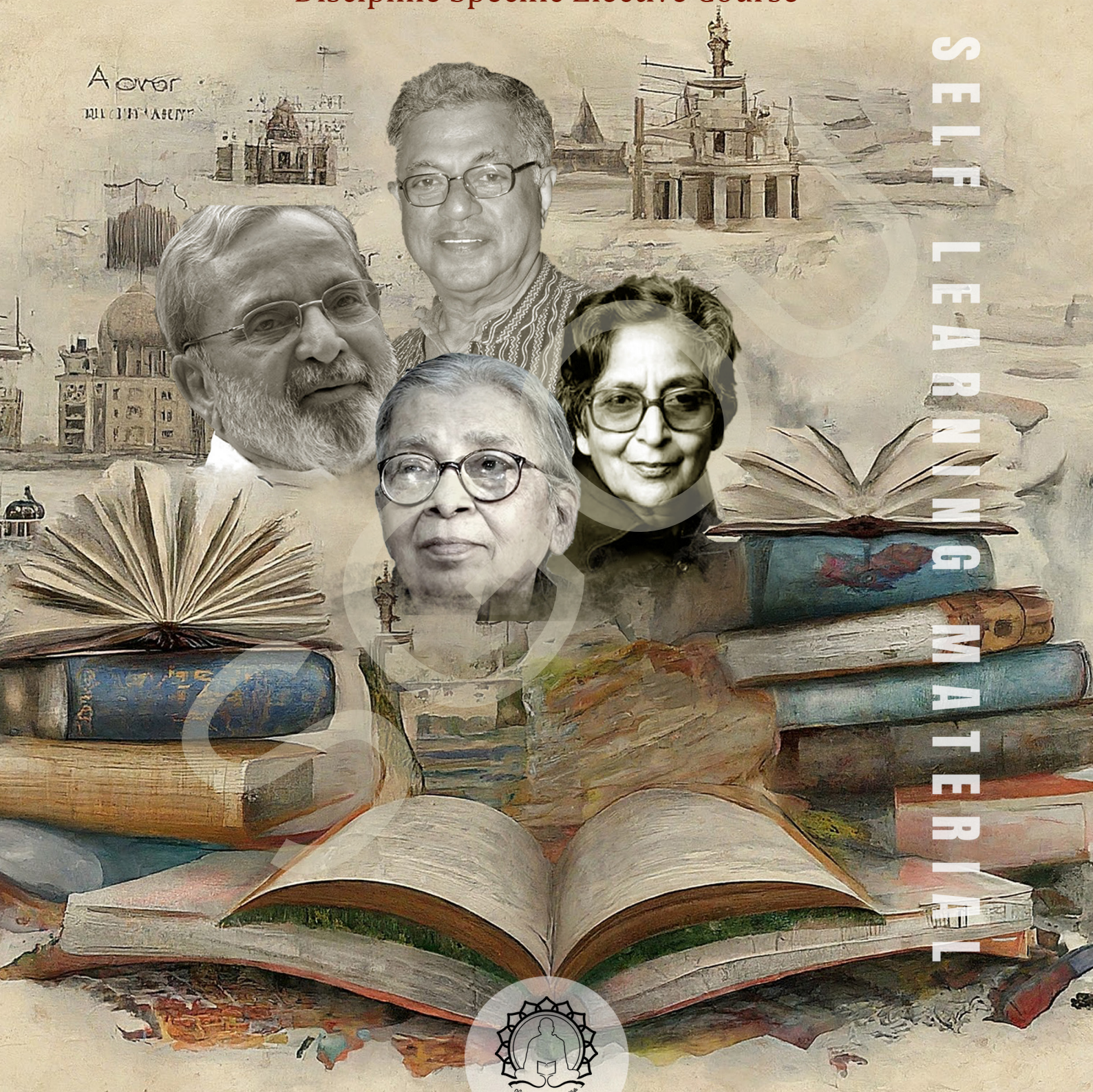
Regional Literatures in Translation

COURSE CODE: B21EG01DE

Undergraduate Programme in English

Discipline Specific Elective Course



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

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Regional Literatures in Translation

Course Code: B21EG01DE

Semester - IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course
Undergraduate Programme
English Language and Literature
Self Learning Material

(With Model Question Paper Sets)

SGOU

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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 undergraduate programme in English Language and Literature has been designed to be on par with the high-quality academic programmes offered at state universities throughout the country. Considerable emphasis has been placed on incorporating the latest trends in the delivery of programmes focused on English Language and Literature. Our aspiration is that this programme will augment your aptitude for comprehending both the language itself and its accompanying literary works. 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.

01-06-2024

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BLOCK - 01

Essay

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Unit 1

Indian Literature in English Translation: An Introduction - G.N. Devy

Learning Outcomes

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

- get an insight into the importance of English language in the translation of Indian literature
- become aware of the role of the English language in transforming and providing a space for sharing Indian literature with other Indian language readers
- acquaint themselves with the colonial designs behind the translation of that era and the compulsions of the market in the post-colonial era
- examine the power dynamics and cultural implications involved in translating regional Indian texts into english

Prerequisites

Colonial language has acquired a privileged place in most third-world countries and literary communities possessing "translating consciousness". In India, several languages are simultaneously used by language communities as if these languages formed a continuous spectrum of signs and significance. The use of two or more different languages in translation activity cannot be understood properly through studies of foreign-language acquisition.

J.C. Catford presents a comprehensive statement of theoretical formulation about the linguistics of translation in *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*, in which he seeks to isolate various linguistic levels of translation. His basic premise is that since translation is a linguistic act, any theory of translation must emerge from linguistics: "Translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another; clearly, then, any theory of translation must draw upon a theory of language - a general linguistic theory'.

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Translation involves more than just language; it also deals with aesthetics and ideologies, influencing how we view literary history. It's not merely swapping words from one language to another; it's about recreating the ordered structure of signs in a new language. Translation doesn't just move meaning; it attempts to breathe new life into the original in a different linguistic context. Similar to how literary works remain anchored in their original time and style while evolving through history, translations both mimic and go beyond the original. The challenges in translation mirror those in understanding literary history, particularly in tracing origins and the flow of time. Both fields require a reevaluation of how we perceive the beginnings of literary traditions, especially by communities with a focus on translation.

The author of the essay Ganesh N. Devy (1 August 1950-) is an Indian literary critic and former professor. He is known for the People's Linguistic Survey of India and the Adivasi Academy created by him. He is a renowned thinker, activist, and institution builder. He is credited with the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre at Baroda. He writes in three languages- Marathi, Gujarati, and English. His first full length book in English is *After Amnesia* (1992). He has written and edited nearly ninety books in areas including Literary Criticism, Anthropology, Education, Linguistics, and Philosophy. He gave up his academic career in 1996 to work with de-notified and nomadic tribes; and Adivasis. He carried out the largest survey of languages with the help of nearly 3000 volunteers. In 2015, Devy returned Sahitya Academy Award to the government as a mark of protest against, 'growing sense of intolerance towards differences of opinion.'

Keywords

Translation, Structural linguistics, Sign, Revitalization, Indian metaphysics, Indologists, Cultural revivalism, Orientalism

Discussion

1.1.1 A brief summary of the essay

The history of translation is the history of human civilization and understanding, and sometimes of misunderstanding. Stories travel from culture to culture, and their transmission through translation takes innumerable forms. The classic case is our own *Panchatantra.* In an evocative essay, Amitav Ghosh (1994) has the following to say about *Panchatantra:*

"These stories too have no settings to speak of, except the notion of a forest. Yet the *Panchatantra* is reckoned by some to be second only to the Bible in the extent of its global diffusion. Compiled in India early in the first millennium, it passed into Arabic through a sixth century Persian translation, engendering some of the best known middle eastern fables, including parts of the *Thousand and One Nights.* The stories were handed on to the Slavic languages through Greek, then from

Hebrew to Latin, a version in the latter appearing in 1270. Through Latin, they passed into German, and Italian. …These stories left their mark on collections as different as those of LaFontaine and the Grimm brothers, and today they are inseparably part of a global heritage."

Apart from the academy, some significant translations during this period were those sponsored by UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. Foremost among them are: Bibhutibhushan Bandopadhay's Bengali novel *Pather Panchali: Song of the Road* (1968, trs. T.W. Clark and Tarapada Mukherji), known worldwide for its film version by Satyajit Ray; Manik Bandopadhyay's Bengali novel, *The Puppet's Tale* (1968, tr. S.L. Ghosh); Shridhar Pendse's Marathi novel, *Wild Bapu of Garambi* (1968, tr. Ian Raeside); Thakhazi Sivasankara Pillai's Malayalam novel, *Chemmeen: A Novel* (1962, tr. Narayana Menon), Premchand's Hindi novel, *Godan: The Gift of a Cow* (1968, tr. Gordon Roadermal) and Aziz Ahmad's Urdu novel, *The Shore and the Wave* (1971, tr. Ralph Russell). The absence of any dialogue among translators about their craft and the lack of any tradition of documentation of problems encountered by individual translators meant that they worked in a kind of vacuum, depending mainly on their instincts and their own resources. Structural linguistics considers language as a system of signs, arbitrarily developed, that tries to cover the entire range of significance available to the culture of that language. The signs do not mean anything by or in themselves; they acquire significance by virtue of their relation to the entire system to which they belong. This theory naturally looks askance at translation which is an attempt to rescue abstract significance from one system of signs and to wed it with another such system. But language is an open system. It keeps admitting new signs as well as new significance in its fold. It is also open in the socio-linguistic sense that it allows an individual speaker or writer to use as much of it as he can or likes to do. If this is the case, then how 'open' is a particular system of verbal signs when a bilingual user, such as a translator, rends it open? Assuming that for an individual, language resides within his consciousness, we can ask whether the two systems within his consciousness can be shown as materially different and whether they retain their individual identities within the sphere of his consciousness. Or do such systems become a single open and extended system? If translation is defined as some kind of communication of significance, and if we accept the structuralist principle that communication becomes possible because of the nature of signs and their entire system, it follows that translation is a merger of sign systems. Such a merger is possible because systems of signs are open and vulnerable. The translating consciousness exploits the potential openness of language systems; and as it shifts significance from a given verbal form to a corresponding but different verbal form it also brings closer the materially different sign systems. If we take a lead from phenomenology and conceptualize a whole community of "translating consciousness" it should be possible to develop a theory of interlingual synonymy as well as a more perceptive literary historiography.

The translation problem is not just a linguistic problem. It is an aesthetic and ideological problem with an important bearing on the question of literary history. Literary translation is not just a replication of a text in another verbal system of signs. It is a replication of an ordered sub-system of signs within a given language in another corresponding ordered sub-system of signs within a related language. Translation is not a transposition of significance or signs. After the act of trans-

lation is over, the original work still remains in its original position. Translation is rather an attempted revitalization of the original in another verbal order and temporal space. Like literary texts that continue to belong to their original periods and styles and also exist through successive chronological periods, translation at once approximates the original and transcends it.

The problems in translation study are, therefore, very much like those in literary history. They are the problems of the relationship between origins and sequentiality. And as in translation study so in literary history, the problem of origin has not been tackled satisfactorily. The point that needs to be made is that probably the question of origins of literary traditions will have to be viewed differently by literary communities with translating consciousness. The fact that Indian literary communities do possess this translating consciousness can be brought home effectively by reminding ourselves that the very foundation of modern Indian literature was laid through acts of translation, whether by Jayadeva, Hemcandra, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, H.N. Apte, or Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. We began our discussion by alluding to the Christian metaphysics that conditions the reception of translation in the western world.

Indian metaphysics believes in an unhindered migration of the soul from one body to another. Repeated birth is the very substance of all animate creations. When the soul passes from one body to another, it does not lose any of its essential significance. Indian philosophies of the relationship between form and essence, structure and significance are guided by this metaphysics. The soul, or significance, is not subject to the laws of temporality; and therefore significance, even literary significance, is ahistorical in Indian view. Elements of plot, stories, characters, can be used again and again by new generations of writers because Indian literary theory does not lay undue emphasis on originality. If originality were made a criterion of literary excellence, a majority of Indian classics would fail the test. The true test is the writer's capacity to transform, to translate, to restate, to revitalize the original. And in that sense, Indian literary traditions are essentially traditions of translation.

Part 1 Translation

In India, as in the world today, translation is the air we breathe: not only in its original sense of 'carrying over' (trans-latio), the condition of meaning – of the conversion of words into signs – but a ceaseless process whereby we make sense of cultures, languages, institutions, and social practices. Yet, while Translation Studies has flourished as an academic discipline, there has perhaps been insufficient attention to the everyday life of translation as a social necessity and public instrument. The editors of the volume, *"Textual Travels: Theory and Practice of Translation in India*," Mini Chandran and Suchitra Mathur, cite Roman Jakobson's distinction between intralingual, interlingual and inter-semiotic translation to conceptualise the diversity of translation today and to indicate their own concerns as academics seeking to intervene in a field that is not for academics alone. This is a timely and important venture at a time when 'literary' translation has absorbed the greater part of scholarly attention, and Cultural Studies has failed to reach a consensus on the use of the term 'translation' for a wide variety of social processes. Yet, as Finbarr Flood's remarkable book *Objects of Translation* (2009) shows, one can also think of objects, customs, and institutions as carried over from one culture to another, and acquiring, in this process of transference, new layers of social meaning.

In his famous essay, "On the Different Methods of Translation" (1813), Friedrich Schleiermacher called everyday translation 'the conversations of the marketplace.' As nations appear to mix in our time to a greater extent than they did before, the marketplace is everywhere and these are conversations of the marketplace, whether they are social or literary or political, really do not belong in the translator's domain but rather in that of the interpreter. Schleiermacher was dismissive of these translations of the marketplace, preferring to focus on literary translations alone, but globalisation and its effects have made such a restriction impossible for us today. The human use of language itself produces a world penetrated by the phenomenon of intertextuality – the presence of signs in other signs, texts in other texts, shadows of other meanings possess and inhabit 'all' texts, rendering them always different from themselves. They are intertextual sites, filled with ghosts or visitants from a different cultural order. As Walter Benjamin emphasised, it is important that a translation be recognised as such: All translation is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages. '(T)he foreignness of languages' – I think it is important for us to hold on to that phrase, to ask how translation can both grant autonomy to what is linguistically and culturally other, and, at the same time, make the stranger welcome. For, it is more or less accepted today that the translator's task is not to produce the illusion that the work was originally written in the language of the translation. It is only by recognising 'difference' that translation can live, that it can inhibit the precarious middle-ground between languages and cultures; for if there were no differences, translation would not be necessary, and if translation could obliterate difference, it would not be translation. Schleiermacher thought that, the goal of translating in a way such as the author would have written originally in the language of the translation is not only unattainable but is also futile and empty in itself. For whoever recognizes the creative power of language, as it is one with the character of the nation, must also concede that for each of the greatest authors his whole knowledge, as also the possibility of expressing it, is formed in and through language. For the nineteenth-century philosopher, this assumption is premised upon the notion of a mother tongue as it is upon the idea of the nation. But both notions are under attack today and have never been comfortable assumptions in India. We live in a country with 22 official languages as listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, 29 languages with more than a million speakers each, and at least 415 living languages, though the survival of many is threatened. Translation is not, though current theory seems to assume this, a postcolonial concern seeking to link countries like India to a postulated 'global' community. In India, it has always been practised between languages and ethnic communities, if one looks at the evidence provided by the circulation of both ancient and modern literary texts, from Sanskrit and Persian to the modern Indian languages, and in them, between Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Assamese, and so on.

Part II Themes

In recent days there has been a great deal of debate on the significance of the two words "Indian" and "literature," though not always in a contiguous context, and certainly not on the same level of theoretical and political resonance. Taken separately, neither "Indian" nor "literature" would elicit a uniform response even from the common reader. While who or what is "Indian" has always remained a matter of contention among sections of the citizenry, especially in post-independence India, what constitutes "real" literature has also been

a matter of serious debate, more particularly in these turbulent times when the conflicting claims of a fragmented public on the society's cultural capital have proved to be a little too difficult to settle. The wrangles on the political and social fronts that the country witnessed after the events in post-Babri Ayodhya and post- Godhra Gujarat, are pointers to the semantic difficulties associated with the word "Indian". Similarly, at the centre of the newly proliferating body of Dalit and female writing appearing in almost all the Indian languages today is an uncertainty regarding its status as "literature" or perhaps as "Literature".

To link the two terms and talk about a unified "Indian literature" in such a contested terrain would seem a little perverse. More perverse is the attempt to elaborate a concept of Indian literature connected by a commonly shared sensibility. In the fast-changing global scenario of economic liberalisation and cultural recolonisation, where artistic sensibility are expected to lose their regional flavours and merge into an international sensibility of global currency, such an attempt might lead to further problems. Alternatively, just as the advocates of liberalisation and globalisation nurse fond hopes of a strengthened Indian polity and economy to emerge from the present global climate, the proponents of cultural globalisation too visualise a reinforced Indian sensibility and Indian literature to come out of the present imbroglio. But if we examine things a little more closely, we realise that unlike in the spheres of economy and polity, the warring supporters of global and Indian sensibilities are not likely to remain at loggerheads with each other in the literary sphere. This is primarily because there has been in vogue, at least since India came into contact with the European literary ideology, a strong perception that the literary experience is perhaps universal in significance. Goethe's 'Weltliteratur' and Tagore's 'Viswasahitya,' both meaning "world literature", were attempts at theorising this perception, though the Euro-centric bias of the two concepts escaped the notice of the two visionaries in their own times. The perception certainly was at the heart of ancient Sanskrit poetics as well, which obviously was one reason why the European view found immediate acceptability in the Oriental world in the era of modernity and colonisation. What all this suggests is that the cultural roots of Indian literature and Indian sensibility should be construed as running deeper and stronger than the roots of the corresponding tendencies in the socio-economic realm.

We are grappling here with questions of knowledge formation, and in this context, it is worthwhile to remember that knowledge is not a neutral category that gets circulated in a society in an unmediated way. In fact, certain segments of society decide what is to be counted as knowledge in given moments of social development. If knowledge in India with its long history of the imperial rule continues to be tainted by colonial ideology even decades after independence, it only proves Gramsci's thesis that material presence is not essential for the exercise of cultural leadership by a dominant group over an underprivileged group. Imperialism must have come to an end, but not the "Empire", as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri recently proclaimed. This, notwithstanding the theoretical distinction they want to be maintained between the two concepts, as the lineaments of the decentred and deterritorialised cultural empire evolving in India today does not seem to be far removed from the global scenario appearing in their cartography. Literary scholars in India then will have to be self- critical about colonialism's impact on their own cultural responses that leads to the building up of a new empire. This will also make it imperative for them at this juncture in time, that is, after more than five decades of independence and 500 years of colonial and imperial rule, to rethink concepts like İndianness, Indian sensibility, and Indian

literature a little more closely and critically than has been done before, so that they might uncover the complicity of these concepts with the ideology of colonialism.

1.1.4 Indian Literature– A Contested Category

A literary sensibility, needless to say, always operates in the context of a unified body of literature and integrated literary culture. Can we in the present context speak about such a unified body of Indian literature and an integrated environment of Indian literary culture? Very few accounts of Indian literary history are seen to maintain this vital distinction. The title of the influential Chicago University primer, *The Literatures of India,* seems to recognise this point. Literature in India, as any textbook history of Indian culture would tell us, is as old as its painting or its sculpture, perhaps a little less old than its community life. Sustained scholarly pursuit of the history of this literature, however, is of fairly recent origin and would not go back beyond the dawn of the 19th century. This indeed is the moment of the constitution of Indian literature as a theoretical category.

This certainly is not to deny the self-knowledge of the identity of the several regional literatures in India by regional language scholars in the past, though historiographic accounts of these literatures too do not go far back beyond the early 19th century. In fact, the first histories of most regional languages too get written only during this time. It is around this time, again, that Indian literature gets constituted as a self-validating body of knowledge. It has been pointed out that the first scholar to use this term was not an Indian, nor were Indian scholars particularly interested in tapping the unifying potential of the term in the 19th century, it was the German romantic theorist Wilhelm von Schlegal, who in 1823 used it synonymously with Sanskrit literature. Since then, a number of western Indologists have used the term to refer to the unified literature of India, mainly Sanskrit but at times also, along with Sanskrit literature, literatures written in Pali and the several dialects of Prakrit. Very rarely did modern north Indian languages like Bengali, Urdu or Hindi find a place in the accounts of these writers, though literary histories pertaining to some of these linguistic cultures were appearing in parts of India during this period. The strong tradition of Tamil literary culture that had deep roots in entire south India or the Kannada tradition of a somewhat later period also went unrepresented in their works. M Garcin de Tassy's two-volume *History of the Literature of Hindu and Hindustani* (French original, 1839-47; revised, enlarged and published in three volumes in 1870-71), Albrecht Weber's *History of Indian Literature* (German original, 1852), George A Grierson's *Modern Vernacular Literature of Hindustan* (1889), Ernst P Horowitz's *A Short History of Indian Literature* (1907), Maurice Winternitz's three-volume *History of Indian Literature* (German original, 1908-22) and Herbert H Gowen's *History of Indian Literature* (1931) are some of the literary histories that contributed towards the constitution of the category of Indian literature. TRS Sharma in the preface to his three-volume anthology of *Ancient Indian Literature* is indirectly referring to the Sanskrit bias of early European scholars when he dwells upon the practical problems that he encountered in locating translations of literature from ancient India.

"Even today European scholars of modern south Asian languages and literature feel compelled to legitimise themselves and their fields of study, working as they do in departments of South Asian studies - at times designated even now as departments of Indology - that are dominated largely by classical Sanskrit scholars. This is what one should infer from

the introduction to a volume of modern South Asian literature and film written by scholars working in European universities in which the editors unambiguously state that one of the motives behind the compilation of the volume is the need to let the world know of the "seriousness" of the discipline. The unabashed eurocentrism of this statement apart, what one is to understand from this is that in spite of the enormous scholarship that has been produced on Indian literature by scholars of various hues from the south Asian subcontinent, the European scholarly attitude to this archive remains unchanged from what it was in the 19th century represented by the works mentioned. All these works without exception also shared the class and caste bias of the tradition of Sanskrit-based Hindu orthodoxy. Some present-day critics recognise this, as is indicated by the following comment of Sheldon Pollock in his introduction to a recent anthology of essays on literary cultures from South Asia. Making references to the early work in Indology by western scholars starting from Hegel and Schlegel, Pollock says:

Sanskrit was posited as the classical code of early India, congruent with new linked conceptions of classicism and class…The real plurality of literature in South Asia and their dynamic and long-term interaction were scarcely recognised, except perhaps incidentally by Protestant missionaries and British civil servants who were prompted by practical objectives of conversion and control?

1.1.5 The Theoretical Category

The above-mentioned works by western Indologists would bring the story of the constitution of Indian literature down to the first quarter of the 20th century. It is now that we see Indian scholars show interest in the emerging genre and pick up the blueprint of what was virtually a project conceived in the west. Indian scholars who have theorized Indian literature in diverse ways in the 20th century include KR Srinivasa Iyengar, Sri Aurobindo, Krishna Kripalani, Umashankar Joshi, VK Gokak, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Sujit Mukherjee, Sisir Kumar Das, G N Devy and Aijaz Ahmad. Most of these scholars with the obvious exception of Aijaz Ahmad, whose sensitive and highly nuanced elaboration of the category of "Indian literature" is in effect an acknowledgement of the impossibility of positing such a category, arrive at the broad possibility of conceiving an Indian literature either as the expression of an essential Indian culture or as the unity of discrete literary formations. The reformist- nationalist-modernity projects that were under way in all parts of India in the early 20th century acted as a great unifying force at this juncture. So did the progressive literary movement (Indian Progressive Writers Association, IPWA), which launched in 1939 a journal under the title New Indian Literature from Lucknow. Since its inception in 1954, the Sahitya Akademi, under the tutelage of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who was also the first president of the Akademi, has been propagating the idea of the unity of Indian literature by using the slogan "Indian literature is one though written in many languages". The title of the Akademi's journal *Indian Literature*, echoing the name of its short-lived IPWA forerunner, is more than symbolic in this sense.

That Indian literature as a theoretical category was constituted in the 19th century would nowadays be disputed only by bigoted adherents of cultural revivalism. Many thinkers of liberal per-suasion can be seen, sometimes explicitly, but more often implicitly, to be opposing this bigotry. Sisir Kumar Das's move in publishing the last two volumes, the ones pertaining to the period since 1800, of his projected multi-volume history of Indian literature can be read as an implicit criticism of this

bigotry. Though the reasons given for publishing the eighth and ninth volumes ahead of the volumes pertaining to the earlier periods is the easy availability of material pertaining to the modern period, one cannot ignore the fact that in doing this he is also focusing on the period when Indian literature actually came into being as the object of knowledge. Perhaps he is also suggesting that object's chronological extension back into the past is yet to be properly realised. This indeed is how all subject disciplines are conceived and constructed. An object of knowledge is constituted as a discipline with well-charted boundaries and well-define objectives in answer to certain political compulsions. Indian literature too, when constructed as a discipline, was meant to answer certain political and ideological needs. What are the ideological compulsions that rendered the co situation of Indian literature imperative in the 19th century? A closer look at the nature of the scholarship produced on Indian literature during the period in question would help us to understand this problem. The 19th century and after that period in Indian history, is the period of colonialist and capital expansion, of social reform movements, of nationalist awakening, and the freedom struggle leading finally to the country's independence. It is also the period of increasing modernisation of the society with its attendant good and evil effects, of an expanding English studies programme, of a proliferating print culture, of the democratisation of the reading public and, in the sphere of literature, of an overall consolidation of the western ideology of the aesthetic. The impact of these diverse developments can be seen imprinted in the kind of scholarship on Indian literature that got constituted during this period.

The developments indicated above are too panoramic and complex for us to do justice to all of them in an analysis of this kind. But we'll briefly examine three issues that are intricately related to the question of Indian literature and see how they have interacted with one another to produce the kind of scholarship associated with the category of Indian literature. We have already made a passing reference to the first of these in our preliminary remarks on the tradition of Sanskrit-based Hindu orthodoxy that animated much of the work connected with Indology. We shall also examine the question of language that has played a crucial role in the construction of the category. The co-option of the category by the nationalist discourse for the production of the metaphysics of a national literary sensibility will be the third issue under analysis.

1.1.6 Orientalism and After

Much of course has been written on western Indology and the scholarship on Indian culture that it has generated. This especially after Edward Said's path-breaking critique of Orientalism was published in 1978. One certainly cannot underestimate the enormous amount of research carried out on India by European Orientalists of the 18th and 19th centuries. Much of what would otherwise have been lost of classical Indian scholarship was salvaged by the painstaking research of scholars like Charles Wilkins, Albrecht Weber, William Jones, Henry Colebrooke, Nathaniel Halhed, Max Mueller and Maurice Winternitz. However, as several later scholars have pointed out, there is an important lacuna in their work plan and their output, which is too systematic and too consistent to be treated as an instance of casual oversight. This relates to the tacit concurrence that they gave to the division of Indian history into a predominantly Hindu ancient India, a Muslim-dominated medieval India, and a British-designed modern India.

Further, the general framework of their analysis assumed that real and valuable contributions to Indian literature were made in ancient

India, that is, in the past of India prior to the Islamic conquest. Very little of the present of literary India is explored in the literary histories mentioned above. Weber's *History of Indian Literature* discusses only the Vedic and Sanskrit periods of the Indo-Aryan language, while Winternitz surveys Vedic and Upanishadic literature as well as the writings in classical Sanskrit and Prakrit in his history. In doing this the two were only following the footsteps of Sir William Jones, Indologist and the founder of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, who as early as 1786 had declared that in his studies he would be confining his researches "downward to the Mohammedan conquests at the beginning of the 11th century, but extend them upwards, as high as possible, to the earliest authentic records of the human species." Though some later scholars like George A Grierson have deigned to consider specimen texts from the regional languages too, a good majority of early Indologists were resolutely opposed to the idea of treating works that belonged to Indian regional literatures of the modern period as part of the Orientalist canon. It is against this background that Said's general observations on the politics of the Orientalist scholarship assume significance. There are problems with Orientalism both in terms of theory and methodology, that led to the assumption, widespread among post-colonial thinkers today, of the presence of a historically homogeneous other in parts of what is called the third world, though one might find it difficult to concur on the basis of this with Aijaz Ahmad's assessment of it as "a deeply flawed book". An important reality that the book has allowed us to see is the deep ideological complicity between Orientalism and the project of colonialism. This indeed is a complex question on which much has been written by researchers, historians, and social scientists of all persuasions so that it might be well-nigh impossible to summarise the arguments or keep track of the direction in which the research is progressing. In fact, it is possible that the conflicting interests of the European powers on the Indian subcontinent during the 18th and 19th centuries might be said to have cast their shadow on the Orientalist discourse, though Said has nothing to say on this. Whatever little has been done by recent researchers on this question is enough to indicate that this discourse was saturated from the very beginning with the claims and counter-claims of rival colonial powers, especially the English and the French in the Indian context. It is the presence of such competing interests that goes to make this body of knowledge ideological and its complicity with colonialism real. The Orientalist's refusal to recognise the value and authenticity of the several kinds of modern literature in Indian languages then is to be read as a manifestation of this complicity. One of the general studies on Indian literature by the Indologist Edwin Arnold, entitled *Literature of India*, was issued in 1902 from a press in New York called the Colonial Press. The suggestion might sound a little too cynical, but it would not be altogether absurd to say that Colonial Press would have made a suitable imprint for a great deal of the ideological material published during the period even outside the New York Press.

The above complicity can be seen at work, though at a less conspicuous level, in the scholars' handling of the language question. This becomes important because this was the key issue abated by the literati, especially the Anglicists and the Orientalists in both India and Britain, for over three decades in the early years of the 19th century till it was finally resolved by Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education" (1835). The establishment in 1917 of Hindu College in Calcutta - an institution meant to propagate secular values through "modern" (English) education, but which nevertheless flaunted a non-secular banner in its name - is a significant moment in this debate

that has been characterised by contradictions and paradoxes.

Outwardly the Orientalists were against the introduction of English in India in place of Sanskrit and Persian. Perhaps they earnestly believed, contrary to the position taken by many social reformers in India, that this was a gravely mischievous step to take for the British administration in India. But the deep-seated identity of ideological interests between the Orientalists and the British government on one hand and the Orientalists and the Anglicists on the other can be seen in the refusal of all to honour the presence of India represented by its regional languages. Looking at things in retrospect we realise that the real dispute was not between the Orientalists and the Anglicists, but between regional or local cultures and the big event represented by the great tradition of Indian culture that both the Orientalists and the Anglicists in their own separate ways propped up.

Macaulay did not want to do business with the regional languages. As his 'Minute' makes clear, the coloniser's objective in spreading English education was to form a class of persons who could be depended upon in interpreting the land and culture of India for the Britisher - a class immortalised in Macaulay's oft-cited phrase, "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste and opinion". The Orientalists and the Anglicists both concurred with this view enshrined in the 'Minute.' One might perceive a subtle transition of intellectual authority taking place here, a symbolic exchange, so to say, between the past glories of Sanskrit and the present powers of English. The Orientalists - and through their work, the elite public opinion in India - appeared to be conceding the modernised, Anglicised presence of India to the colonial rulers in return for an acknowledgement of the glories of the country's Vedic and Sanskritic past, in a process that Nigel Leask has aptly described, in a related context, "reverse acculturation." The process involved a legitimisation of the colonial rule whose burden it was to recover the past glories and traditions of India that had fallen into decay arguably under the Muslim rule. This perhaps is how Said should make sense to us. For if we followed this logic, what Said said was that the imperialists used the Orientalist's intellectual mastery over India's past to legitimise and reinforce their own physical control of the present.

1.1.7 The Language Question

History repeats, and not always as farce. This is what we are to gather from the recurrence of the debate on the feasibility of using the English language by Indians for creative purposes in post-independence India. But what scholars like Budhadev Bose and P Lal could not prove through their theoretical perambulations in the 1950s and 1960s, the novelists of Rushdie's generation a few years later have shown through practice: that the language question, framed as a question pertaining to the perceived spontaneity of creative expression, after all, was a non-question as far as the politics of writing was concerned. One could excel and prove to be a creative genius in an alien language, evading in the process all questions pertaining to the politics of writing. This observation gains immense value when we remember that such politics was precisely what Bankim Chandra and MM Dutt were indirectly concerned with when they thought it fit to reject the English language as the medium of creative expression in the 19th century. And certainly, one should also remember that the writers of Rushdie's generation are working in an altered cultural environment in which literature itself has been enlisted in the service of an unscrupulous global and globalised economic order by contemporary capitalism. Since this is not the place to go into

the details of that development, let us leave that aspect unelaborated for the present. This problem concerning the language of literature will appear to be more relevant in a discussion of Indian literature, as literature is always written in a specific language.

OV Vijayan who brought about a radical change in the literary sensibility of the Malayalam readers in the 1960s with his groundbreaking novel *Khasakinte Itihasam* (1969), was in the habit of saying that one knows a region by its characteristic fauna. The variety of fish that one gets in Chennai will be different from what one gets in Mumbai, Tunis or Manchester. A place name can act as a metaphor for a whole lot of characteristics- and this would include the smell of the fish one eats - that make up the identity of the people who inhabit the place. Language, a system of metaphors, at a certain level can also be treated as a metaphor for the system built up around a place. One is known by the language one speaks. This is one reason why theorists say that language is ideological. What this implies for the theorists of Indian literature, however, is that an exclusive focus on the language of literature would render unsustainable formulations like "a literature written in several languages." One might talk about Hindi literature, Tamil literature or Bengali literature because these are kinds of lit- erasure based on specific languages and linguistic cultures. But can one talk about Indian literature, unless by that one means, as many 19th century Orientalists did, Sanskrit literature, or as several present-day western critics mean Indian English literature?

This question emanates centrally from the politics of writing and in this sense is closely affiliated to the question that agitated the minds of the likes of MM Dutt and Bankim Chandra in the 19th century. It is in this context that the observation regarding the Orientalist constitution of Indian literature becomes a fact of critical significance. If the real specimens of Indian literature are to be found in the regional languages of India, the chimera called Indian literature that exists outside the nation's linguistic system must be construed as an invention of somebody. The scholar Niharranjan Ray has been quite emphatic about this point. He says: Literature is absolutely language-based, and language being a cultural phenomenon, it is all but wholly conditioned by its locale and the sociohistorical forces that are in operation through the ages in that particular locale. If that be so, one may reasonably argue that the literature of a given language will have its own specific character of form and style, images and symbols, nuances and associations, etc.

1.1.8 Politics of Writing

This brings us back to the questions of the politics of writing and the relation between ideology and literature that were raised only incidentally in these pages. It may not be possible, either theoretically or in terms of a cohesive methodology, to carry forward a sustained argument in support of the presence of an ontologically related body of knowledge with a shared discursive history called Indian literature. We can, however, do this by invoking the ideology of nationalism and the sense of cultural identity that the project of nationalism during the last phase of the colonial rule made room for. This precisely was what the Indian scholars, who took up the task of collaborating a concept of Indian literature in the 20th century were aiming at. The Tamil nationalist poet Subramania Bharati said that Indian nation speaks 18 languages, though her "chintana (i.e., thinking) is one", Indian spirit animating all the writings from the Indian subcontinent that was echoed later in the slogan of the Sahitya Akademi. But it was natural for several 19th-century Orientalists, inspired

as they were by the spirit of the many newly emergent nations in Europe vying with each other for cultural capital by making claims on folk and literary traditions, to invent a glorious past for the culture of India that was so dear to them. India thus emerges as a landmass of divided interests in the present but connected by a common and glorious past. Indian literature, then, is both a product of this constructed past and an active agent in the construction of that past.

The three issues examined above are also crucial for understanding the dynamics of the modernity project in India. While talking about Ideological scholarship, the debate on language, and the nationalist question, we are in a deeper sense, asking questions concerning the nature and spread of the colonialism-driven modernity project and its impact on the country's polity and culture. Modernity is often regarded as a mindset rather than a physical condition, or a mindset emerging from a physical condition, that, in spite of its perils and contradictions, welcomes change, growth, and progress. It is an experience of unity binding entire humankind together, cutting across distinctions of class, caste, race, gender, language, and nationality. Though individual important in this dispensation, one is an individual only in as much he - often he, and seldom she - crystallises within himself the universal, humanistic values sacralised by modernity. Here indeed are contradictions, which account for the demoniac sects in the writings of several European romantic and modern- its writers of the past centuries. Marshall Berman, one of the we commentators of modernity who gives a balanced evaluation Tit, defines it as "a body of experience that finds ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, the transformation of ourselves and the world- and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are". Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology.

Tradition, which is often placed in opposition to modernity, encompasses the obverse of the above attributes. Tradition epitomises ignorance, changelessness, narrow-mindedness, and lack of power. Traditional India was a compendium of all these vices in British historical accounts. The British punted it as their historical responsibility as enlightened members of the civilized world to change this situation. This is the background of the colonialist's grand project of reform and accompanying discourse of modernity, complex, contradictory, and elaborate, in which scholars from both India and Britain participated with varying degrees of commitment. It would have been impossible for 19th and early 20th-century scholars from India, whether of the Orientalist, Anglicist, the reformist, or nationalist cast of minds, to remain uninfluenced by its project and this discourse. The contradictions and complexes that we noticed in Indian responses to orientalism and nationalism are in fact, linked to the divided logic within modernity itself. That is why a Nehruvian nationalist slogan like India's unity lies in its diversity" also becomes the credo of Indian modernity. One need not be exceptionally intelligent to realise that the slogan, "Indian literature is one though written many languages," is only the literary-critical analogue of the nationalist modernity's precept concerning India's unity lying in its diversity.

This genealogy of Indian literature, however, does not preclude, as several scholars point out, the presence of myths, legends, and stories, as well as perhaps even patterns of narration of stories, that have for centuries bound a variety of literature of India together. This may be treated as an aspect of the dialectic of India's modernity. One might come

across myths, motifs, and attorns of storytelling that appear and reappear throughout India in both the ancient and medieval periods of its history. Scholars like Ayyappa Paniker would say that there is a specifically Indian way of narrating stories that have existed in India from earlier times. The Sanskrit stories in the *Panchatantra* and the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata,* the *Pali Jatakakathas,* the *Rihatkatha* stories written in the Paisachi language, the *Fathasaptasati* in Prakrit and the *Cilappatikaram* and *Fanimekalai* stories in Tamil have for centuries circulated across new subcontinent in all languages in various forms and have remained a perennial source of inspiration for all Indian writers.

At medieval times Tamil and Kannada 'Bhakti' tradition of writing that spread from the southern regions of India towards the northern parts of the country also threw up patterns of feeling and thinking that have affected the entire literature in the subcontinent. A process of synthesis and cross-fertilisation can be seen at work here, whose fruits in the form of great imaginative literature have accrued not only to the people of India but, as Uma Shankar Joshi observes, to "the peoples of far-off lands, making the idea of Indian literature relevant from the point of view of the foreign appropriators even in those early days. Joshi's reference to the point of view of the foreign "appro- priators" in the statement above is significant in that it draws focused attention on the single sense in which the concept of Indian literature becomes meaningful today. One might invoke it as a theoretical category in order to signify the distinctiveness of India's literature in relation to the literature in the rest of the world. One posits it in opposition to the non-Indian literature and from the perspective of the non- Indian reader. What we do when we take this position is to recognise India's status as a nation in the political map of the world. A nation obviously should have an army and a currency, but it should also have a literature of its own. In this context, one certainly cannot present Indian literature as the expression of an essential Indian spirit or of a commonly shared sensibility, because the nation in question is stable only on the map of the world. Its borders keep changing from writer to writer, from reader to reader and from subject to subject. This is what one is to deduce from the lack of a perfect fit that exists between the images of India appearing in, or the nations constructed by, Saadat Husain Manto, Mahasweta Devi, Gopinath Mohanty, Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, Laxman Gaikwad, Bama, VKN, UR Anantha Murthy and Shashi Tharoor, to mention a few representative "Indian" writers from various languages. No one would dare to talk about an essential Indian spirit running through the works of these writers who share the same nationality and perhaps the same period of writing, but whose histories, contexts, mindsets, experiences, lifestyles, languages and sensibilities are different, from the other. These writers dwell in different Indias, and to speak of them as sharing a common culture and a common sensibility is to beguile oneself. If one still wants to talk about a common Indian literature with reference to these writers, one might say, twisting somewhat the spirit of the Sahitya Akademi motto regarding the oneness of Indian literature, that they are writers divided by the same literature.

Recap

- Translation is the representation of Indian plurality and plays a pivotal role in Indian English literature.
- A literary translation has a double existence as a work of literature, and as a work of translation.
- The linguistic success of a translation depends on the richness of diction and the flexibility of structures in TL.
- Translation is a great tool for literary criticism and comparative literature.
- Many Indian classics got worldwide reputation and acclaim through English translation.
- Colonial literature really helps in popularizing the branch of Indian English literature due to its universal acceptance.
- English language gave Indian literature a common forum for expression and brought it to the attention of the world.
- Indian English literature also gained much popularity in Commonwealth countries because of its English translations.
- The translated works gave expression to the Indian experiences, cultures, and life situations.

Objective Questions

1. Give an example for a collection of stories that have been transmitted through translation?
2. Name the author of the book, *Objects of Translation*.
3. What is the meaning of 'Viswasahitya'?
4. "Material presence is not essential for the exercise of cultural leadership by a dominant group over an underprivileged group." Whose thesis is this?
5. The first scholar to use the term Indian literature was not an Indian. Who was that scholar?
6. Do you agree that there is a Sanskrit bias for European scholars working in departments of south Asian Studies, often designated as departments of Indology?
7. "The real plurality of literature in South Asia and their dynamic and long-term interaction were scarcely recognised, except perhaps incidentally by Protestant missionaries and British civil servants who were prompted by practical objectives of conversion and control." Who said?
8. Who was also the first president of the Sahitya Akademi?

9. Sir William Jones, Indologist was the founder of which society?
10. Name the scholar who made general observations on the politics of the Orientalist scholarship?
11. Who wrote Literature of India?
12. "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste and opinion" This phrase is associated with whom?
13. The Minutes on Indian Education is associated with whom?
14. Who wrote the first Indian novel in English?
15. Who is the author of *Khasakinte Itihasam*?

Answers

1. *Panchatantra*
2. Finbarr Flood
3. World literature
4. Gramsci
5. Wilhelm von Schlegal, German romantic theorist
6. Yes
7. Sheldon Pollock
8. Jawaharlal Nehru
9. Asiatic Society of Calcutta
10. Edward Said
11. Edwin Arnold
12. Macaulay
13. Macaulay
14. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee
15. OV Vijayan

Assignments

1. Evaluate the role played by your mother tongue in your daily activities in the workplace and domestic domains respectively. Which one do you use more- English or the mother tongue?
2. How do the power dynamics between languages affect translation?

3. India has a complicated linguistic scenario- its official language is not even understood in various parts of the country, it has languages of varying ages existing side by side, and today it is linked together by the foreign language of English. Explain.
4. Prepare a detailed analytical study on how the art of translation influences Indian English literature.
5. How 'Anadamath' and its translations contributed to the making of the nation?
6. Keeping in mind all that you have read about equivalence and translation, what is your assessment of these various translations.
7. What are the merits of a good translation?
8. What are the barriers faced during a good translation?
9. What are the features of a good translation?
10. What are the things that lead to a bad translation?
11. What are the things that are dependent on the success of a translation?
12. How does translation become one of the primary needs of literary criticism?

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SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

BLOCK - 02

Poetry

SGOU

Unit 1

She, He and Language - Vaidehi

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the poem as a social evaluation
- familiarise themselves with the features of Kannada poetry
- get an insight upon the use of voice within poetry
- grasp the problem put forth in the poem.

Prerequisites

Janaki Srinivasa Murthy, known by her pseudonym Vaidehi, is a prominent Kannada writer. Born into a traditional Brahmin family in the Udupi district of Karnataka in 1945, Vaidehi is a versatile writer who has written poems, short stories, novels, children's plays and essays. Her first collection of short stories titled *Mara Gida Balli* was published in 1979. She has carved a niche for herself in Kannada literature and several of her works have been translated into English. She won the Sahitya Akademi Award for her short story collection *Krauncha Pakshigalu* in 2009.

First published in 1999 in the poetry collection titled *Parijatha*, "She, He and Language" was translated into English in 2009 by Dr. Ramachandra Sharma and Ahalya Ballal. The poem, though it renders difficulty in translation, is one of the iconic pieces of Kannada literature.

Keywords

Gender and language, Marital discord, Communication gap, Self-centredness

Discussion

2.1.1 Summary

The poem"She,He and Language" discusses the gendered nature of language and the consequent gap in communication. It provides instances where the communication between men and women are misdirected because of this gap. The poem has two voices, one male and the other female. Presumably, the voices are that of a married couple. To each utterance by the female, the male has a completely misdirected response, confirming that they both inhabit entirely different worlds and speak a language foreign to each other.

2.1.1 Analysis

Vaidehi explores the communication between genders and the idea of a gendered language in her poem “She, He and Language.” The poem opens with the wife saying words like hunger and thirst to which the nonchalant husband instructs her to eat well and drink. Here, we can safely assume that the couple are alluding to entirely different kinds of hunger and thirst. The communication between them has broken down completely, so much that when the woman cries, her husband smiles.

The miscommunication continues to the next stanza where husband says window and the wife presumes it to be door. Vaidehi introduces a clever metaphor when the wife misconceives the husband saying wall for space. The poetic persona questions “was it because all is revealed when a wall breaks?” The wall here can also be assumed to be the language barrier between them, the breaking down of which would make everything visible.

When the woman makes payasam, her husband thinks it is rayatham. She questions why is everything so out of place. The poet goes on to make a brilliant comparison of the couple to a person who sticks his/her head under water. There is no air between them and hence, the sound waves get lost in between. This implies that there is lack of common medium of communication between the man and the woman. The poem takes a darker tone when the wife mentions suicide as an escape from such a situation and her husband who fails to understand the situation laughs it off. This also points to the dismissal of female woes as inconsequential by men.

Whenever a partner utters something, an entirely different meaning is understood by the other, leading to a banter of words. This can also be a low-key reference to the battle of words that often ensue from lack of proper communication.

In the final stanza the woman asks which of them is more insane and the man presumes it to be a death wish. The poem ends with the woman mentioning the opening of a window and her husband asking “What? Hunger, thirst?,” confirming that the language gap between them is unresolved.

Vaidehi has used the example of a couple to illustrate the misdirection and miscommunication that ensues between the genders. This is because language is essentially gendered and the experiences of one gender may not find an equivalent in the other’s language. The consequence is that they keep getting lost in the process of communication without reaching any common ground.

The poem is curiously devoid of emotions and is in the form of a conversation which the reader listens in on. Some of the poetic devices used in the poem are metaphor (words said with head under water) and simile (comparison of land to hump-back of fish). Pithy, sparsely written and ironic, the poem is a carefully crafted piece of work.

Recap

- In "She, He and Language," Vaidehi explores gendered communication breakdowns through a couple's misinterpretations of everyday words.
- The poem's opening scene reveals a disconnect as the wife's cries are met with her husband's indifferent response, signaling a breakdown in understanding.
- Miscommunication escalates when simple words like "window" are misconstrued as "door," highlighting the growing divide between the couple.
- Vaidehi cleverly employs metaphors like the breaking wall to symbolize the collapse of communication barriers between genders.
- The poem's darker turn addresses serious topics like suicide, highlighting the dismissal of female struggles by male partners.
- Through banter and misunderstandings, the poem delves into the consequences of inadequate communication in relationships.
- The final stanza leaves the couple's language gap unresolved, underscoring the ongoing struggle to find common ground.
- Vaidehi uses the couple's dialogue as a lens to examine broader gendered language dynamics, revealing the complexities of communication.
- The poem's emotionless tone and conversational format allow readers to witness the disconnect firsthand.
- Employing metaphor and simile, Vaidehi crafts a succinct, ironic piece that sheds light on the intricacies of gendered communication.

Objective Questions

1. What is the theme of the poem?
2. Who are the poetic personas?
3. Who explores communication between genders in the poem "She, He and Language"?
4. What is the central idea of the poem?
5. How does the husband react when the wife mentions suicide?
6. What is the tone of the poem?

Answers

1. Gendered nature of language and miscommunication
2. The poetic voices belong to a married couple
3. Vaidehi
4. Gendered language
5. Laughs
6. Dark

Assignments

1. Comment on Vaidehi's use of language in the poem "She, He and Language."
2. Explain the theme of the poem with reference to the text.
3. What is the significance of the title "She, He and Language"?
4. Explore feminist voices in Kannada literature.
5. Examine the characteristics of Vaidehi's poetry.

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Unit 2

Close to My Heart - Tarannum Riyaz

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the poem as a poem of yearning
- familiarise themselves with the features of Urdu poetry
- get an idea about the use of emotions within poetry
- familiarise themselves with the characteristics of Urdu poetry in translation

Prerequisites

Tarannum Riyaz was a renown Urdu poet, short fiction writer, translator, critic and novelist. Born in Srinagar, Kashmir in 1960, she worked on television and radio for numerous years before turning into a senior fellow at the Ministry of Culture. She has several collections of short fiction, a couple of novels and poetry collections to her credit. A recipient of several national and international literary awards, she passed away on 20 May 2021 after testing positive for COVID19. Her poems have been translated into Hindi and English and are part of the curriculum at various universities. Tarannum Riyaz is noted for her use of female voice in Urdu poetry and most of her poems are also on the major preoccupation of Urdu poetry – love. Her poems express a range of female emotions ranging from love and yearning to anger and grief.

The poem "Close to My Heart" appeared in the collection *Purani Kitabon ki Khushboo* (2005) and was translated into English by Jaipal Nangia in Indian Literature (Vol XLVII No.3) in 2003. The poem is in the form of a mother's yearning for her child's return. Highly emotive, the poem presents the theme of love through a female perspective.

Keywords

Love, Mother-child relationship, Yearning

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Discussion

2.2.1 Summary

The poem "Close to my Heart "is the form of a mother's yearning for her absent child. The mother who has sent her child away for his/her studies feels longing for the child's presence and pleads him/her to return soon.

2.2.2 Analysis

The poem "Close to My Heart" bares open a mother's heart before the reader. In the opening stanza, Riyaz presents us the image of a mother fondly going over the possessions of the child in the silent bedroom. The room is neat and tidy contrary to its usual state and this creates a sense of loss or absence in the mother.

The next stanza explains the circumstances for the absence of the child. The mother had sent the child away to study, convincing herself that it would create a brighter future. But what the mother did not anticipate was the sense of loneliness and grief that she would suffer in the absence of her child. She pines for the return of her child with "anguished eyes."

In the third stanza, the mother appeals to the child to come home and turn everything upside down, with the vigour and carelessness of childhood. She says that she does not mind the child playing music at a high volume or creating a mess as long as she can feel the presence of the child in the house. The poem ends with the mother saying that she would hold the child close to her heart and never let go.

Riyaz portrays a mother's emotions upon the absence of her child with fidelity. Her words are expressive and convey the anguish of the mother. The imagery in the poem, especially in the first stanza, is commendable. Highly emotive and relatable, the poem "Close to My Heart" becomes a representative of the poetry of yearning/longing that Urdu poetry is famous for.

Recap

- "Close to My Heart" exposes a mother's longing for her absent child through poignant imagery
- Riyaz's poem delves into a mother's grief as she navigates the absence of her child sent away for education
- The mother's plea for her child's return, despite the chaos it may bring, resonates with deep emotional longing
- The poem concludes with a vow from the mother to always hold her child close to her heart
- Riyaz captures the essence of a mother's sorrow with expressive language and vivid imagery
- "Close to My Heart" exemplifies the theme of yearning prevalent in Urdu poetry, making it highly relatable
- The neatness of the child's room accentuates the mother's sense of loss, setting the tone for the poem's emotional journey

Objective Questions

1. What are the possessions in the child's room?
2. Why did the mother send away the child?
3. What emotion does the poem "Close to My Heart" evoke in the reader?
4. How does Riyaz present the mother's emotions in the poem?
5. What is the state of the child's bedroom in the opening stanza?
6. What is the mother's reaction to her child's absence?
7. What does the mother long for in the poem?
8. How does the mother describe the child's behaviour in the house?

Answers

1. Hockey stick, computer, table, sandals
2. For his/her studies
3. Longing
4. Fidelity
5. Neat
6. Grief
7. Return of her child
8. Careless

Assignments

1. Explore the themes of the poem "Close to My Heart."
2. How does the poem "Close to My Heart" become a poem of yearning? Elucidate.
3. Comment on the use of imagery in the poem "Close to My Heart" by Tarannum Riyaz.

Suggested Reading

1. "Prof Riyaz Punjabi's Wife Passes Away in Delhi." *Greater Kashmir,* www.greaterkashmir.com/kashmir/prof-riyaz-punjabis-wife-passes-away-in-delhi.
2. "Riyaz, Tarannum." *Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation,* en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarannum_Riyaz.
3. "Riyaz, Prof." *Poetry International,* www.poetryinternational.com/en/poets-poems/poets/poet/102-2738_Riyaz.

SGOU

Unit 3

Empty Space - Amrita Pritam

Learning Outcomes

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

- identify the poem as a love poem
- familiarise themselves with the features of Punjabi poetry
- get an insight on the use of affective poetry
- explore the theme of the poem

Prerequisites

Amrita Pritam was a popular Punjabi poet, novelist and essayist. Born in Mandi Baha-uddin, erstwhile Punjab and in present-day Pakistan, Pritam started writing poems at the age of sixteen. Though she started out as a romantic, later she became a prominent figure of the Progressive Writers' Movement. Post-partition, she and her family migrated to India and has remained popular in both India and Pakistan. She was a feminist and is most known for her writings related to the horrors of partition. She has to her credit over hundred books of poetry, fiction, biographies, and autobiography. She was a recipient of Sahitya Akademi Award (being the first woman to do so, in 1956), Bharatiya Jnanpith (1982), Padma Shri (1969), Padma Vibhushan and Sahitya Akademi Fellowship (2004). She passed away on 31 October 2005 in New Delhi at the age of 86.

The poem "Empty Heart" was translated into English by D. H. Tracy and Mohan Tracy in 2011. The poem is about two lovers fighting against the world and themselves in their endeavour to be together.

Keywords

Love, Inner and outer turbulence, Social ostracization

Discussion

2.3.1 Summary

The poem is presented to us in the form of a image where the lovers are ostracized by the society. At first, they are unable to process it and stay in their own personal worlds. Finally, they reach out towards each other and move with the hope of finding a place where they can experience freedom without fetters.

2.3.2 Analysis

The poem "Empty space" presents us with the story of two lovers who are cast out from the society. When the poem opens, the poet says, "There were two kingdoms only: / the first of them threw out both him and me. / The second we abandoned." This stanza points to the two worlds that the lovers inhibit. One is the real world which has condemned them for their love and the second is their inner world, a world of their own making, which they abandoned because they couldn't still accept their rejection from the real world.

The next stanza describes the state of the lovers after their exile. They are both lost in their personal hell, unable to move a limb and even consider each other. The "bare sky" denotes that the couple had nothing to call theirs, save each other. But, at that particular moment even that was not there. They were completely isolated.

In the final stanza, the lovers come to their senses. The line "Then like a poison he drank the fondness of the years" indicates that their love had turned bitter but since they had nowhere/ nobody else to turn to, they sought refuge in each other's company. With heavy hearts they hope to find a place where they could seek shelter and be free. Though their love is no longer sweet, they can only suppress the dissatisfaction and try to make things work between them. The tone of the poem at this point indicates that it is only a bleak hope. Amrita Pritam's genius in using plain, unadorned words for conveying emotions is evident in this poem. Sparsely written, the poem is powerful and leaves a lasting impression on the reader.

Recap

- "Empty Space" portrays the plight of two lovers ostracized by society
- The poem delineates the lovers' inner and outer worlds, marked by rejection and isolation
- After exile, the lovers find solace in each other's bitter company
- Despite their bitter love, the couple seeks shelter and freedom together
- Amrita Pritam's adept use of simple language evokes powerful emotions in "Empty Space"
- The sparsely written poem leaves a lasting impact on the reader, showcasing Pritam's literary prowess

Objective Questions

1. What happened to the lovers in the two worlds?
2. What is the final decision in the poem?
3. What does "Empty Space" depict?
4. What is the significance of the two kingdoms mentioned in the poem?
5. How are the lovers described after their exile?
6. What do the lovers seek refuge in?
7. How does the poem portray the lovers' hope?
8. What is notable about Amrita Pritam's writing style?
9. What impression does "Empty Space" leave on the reader?

Answers

1. The lovers are exiled from the first world and they abandon the second
2. The lovers decide to seek shelter and find a space of their own
3. Exile
4. Dual worlds
5. Lost
6. Each other
7. Bleak
8. Plain
9. Lasting

Assignments

1. Explain the significance of the title in the poem “Empty Space”?
2. Comment on the ending of the poem “Empty Space.”
3. How does Amrita Pritam treat the theme of love in her poem “Empty Space”?
4. Explore the use of language in Amrita Pritam’s poetry.

Suggested Reading

1. "Amrita Pritam: The First Eminent Female Punjabi Poet." *TimesNext,* timesnext.com/amrita-pritam-the-first-eminent-female-punjabi-poet/.
2. "Amrita Pritam." *Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation,* en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amrita_Pritam.
3. "Empty Space." *Poetry Foundation,* www.poetryfoundation.org/poetry-magazine/poems/54736/empty-space.

SGOU

Unit 4

A Love Song Between Two Generations - K Siva Reddy

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the poem as a love poem
- familiarise themselves with the features of Telugu poetry
- explore the use of various images in the poem
- explore the theme of the poem

Prerequisites

Born in 1943 at Tenali in Andhra Pradesh, K. Siva Reddy started writing poetry at the age of seven. His first collection of poetry was published in 1973. In his later life, he moved to Hyderabad in pursuit of his poetic career. In 1996, he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for the collection titled *Mohana! Oh Mohana!*. He also won the Saraswati Samman in 2018 for his collection *Pakkakki Ottigilite*. He retired as the principal of Vivek Vardhini College in Hyderabad. He has also translated numerous African and European poems into Telugu. Reddy's verses are a reflection of Marxist, Naxalite ideologies and a sense of modernism pervades his works. He has sixteen collections of poetry to his credit and continues to be one of the most influential voices in Telugu poetry.

The poem "A Love Song Between Two Generations" was first published in Telegu in the year 2003 in the collection titled *Vrittalekhini* and translated into English M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma in *Mohana! Oh Mohana!* Published in 2005. The poem with the parent-child-relationship and the changes it undergoes over time.

Keywords

Love, Generational differences and Journey of life

Discussion

2.4.1 Summary

The poem is a father's words addressed to his child. The father talks about the distance that has crept between him and his child and wonders when they will grow close. He then realises that the distance can never be crossed and it is something that exists in all the generations. The poet tries to redefine the meaning of filial love and comes to the conclusion that love is only a journey through people from one generation to the next.

2.4.2 Analysis

The poem "A Love Song Between Two Generations" is a father's rumination on the nature of his love for and relationship with his child. The opening stanza with a deliberation on the nature of space between the father and the son. The poet questions whether there is a space between the father and child, if it is so, how would one measure it, Reddy asks. He is at a loss as to what stance he should take and where he should begin in his quest to understand and relate to his son.

The poet goes on to say that it might not be just his son who is moving away, but he himself might be also keeping the distance quite unconsciously. When he asks the son to come to him, he replies that he is near the father. This is a universal situation where the parent-feels that the child is distant but the child assures the parent that he/she has gone nowhere. It is indicative of the distance that has crept between the generations.

The poem then moves on to a philosophical discussion on love. The poet opines that perhaps love is a search for intimacy and that closeness can lead to negligence. He uses the metaphors of having the world in one's palm and looking into a mirror to explain this negligence of the apparent.

In the next set of lines, K. Siva Reddy finds his son in his own position. The son has found love that he claimed did not exist. The father calls him foolish and says love might be a myth. The poet uses a number of images and metaphors to convey the inner turmoil of the-father and the son during their search for love. Once the son has had a daughter whom the poet puts to sleep, Reddy comments that this filial distance is a cycle which repeats itself through the generations. He uses the image of a man travelling with a saddi moota or a packed lunch to depict the journey for love, and urges the son to travel without any expectations.

Recap

- "A Love Song Between Two Generations' delves into a father contemplation on his relationship with his child.
- Reddy reflects on the spatial and emotional distance between himself and his son inthe opening stanza.
- The poem explores the universal theme of parental concern over perceived distance from their children.
- Reddy philosophizes about love, suggesting it may lead to neglect when intimacy is achieved.

- The father discovers his son experiencing love, prompting inner turmoil and skepticism.
- Reddy observes the cyclical nature of filial distance across generations.
- The poet uses vivid imagery, like a man with a packed lunch, to illustrate the journey for love.
- Reddy advises his son to travel without expectations in the pursuit of love.
- "A Love Song Between Two Generations"offers poignant insights into the complexities of familial relationships and the quest for love.

Objective Questions

1. Who is the poetic persona in the poem “A Love Song Between Two Generations”?
2. What is the theme of the poem?
3. What does the poem explore?
4. Who is the central figure in "A Love Song Between Two Generations"?
5. What does Reddy question about the relationship between father and son?
6. What does Reddy opine about love?
7. What does Reddy suggest closeness can lead to?
8. Who finds love despite claiming it did not exist?
9. What does Reddy observe about filial distance?
10. What does Reddy use to illustrate the journey for love?

Answers

1. The poetic persona is a father who is talking to his son
2. The theme of the poem is filial love and intimacy
3. Relationship
4. Father
5. Space
6. Search
7. Negligence
8. Son.
9. Cycle
10. Images

Assignments

1. Comment on the treatment of love in the poem “A Love Song Between Two Generations.”
2. Analyse the language of K. Siva Reddy’s poem “A Love Song Between Two Generations.”
3. Examine the use of imagery in the poem “A Love Song Between Two Generations.”
4. Explore the poetic style and diction of K. Siva Reddy.

Suggested Readings

1. "A Love Song Between Two Generations'' *Poetry International,* www.poetryinternational.com/en/poets-poems/poems/poem/103-16127_A-LOVE-SONG-BETWEEN-TWO-GENERATIONS.
2. "K. Siva Reddy" *Wikimedia Foundation*, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ K._Siva_Reddy.
3. "Self-expression as Self-extinction" *Poetry International,* www.poetryinternational.com/en/poets-poems/article/104-16117_Self-expression-as-self-extinction.

BLOCK - 03

short Fiction

Unit 1

Eidgah - Premchand

Learning Outcomes

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

- familiarise themselves with Hindi literature of the early 20 th century
- identify the themes, symbols and literary style used in the text
- locate texts within the socio-cultural paradigms which produced them
- examine characteristic features of Premchand's writing

Prerequisites

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw a surge in demands for independence. Nationalism and the sense of patriotism were at their peak during the time Premchand wrote. India struggled under colonial and feudal oppression. The common people, exploited by money lenders and zamindars, joined farmers' movements and revolts like the Blue Mutiny, Mappila Rebellion, and Punjab Agrarian Riots, while Dadabhai Naoroji's drain theory highlighted the resource exploitation by colonizers, emphasizing that independence also meant freedom from poverty and exploitation.

During this period, women and Dalits were the most degraded groups, with poverty pushing many women into prostitution and marginalizing them due to practices like child marriage and the prohibition of widow remarriage, while Dalits faced extreme dehumanization and poverty. The impact of colonization persists today with continued poverty, farmer suicides due to harassment by landlords, and ongoing exploitation by upper-class, upper-caste groups, despite constitutional safeguards improving the plight of women and Dalits.

As a reflection of the socio-political situation of the time, the literature during the period also engaged with nationalism, patriotism and the Indian independence movement 'The Progressive Writers' Association emerged during this period and it comprised writers who had Marxist leanings. They wrote against colonialism and capitalism. They held that "the new literature of India must deal with the basic problems of our existence today – the

problems of hunger and poverty, social backwardness, and political subjection" (Anand 20). The members of the Association, such as Mulk Raj Anand, Premchand, Saadat Hasan Manto, Mirza Adeeb, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Rabindranath Tagore and others focused on the nationalist movement in India and the plight of the common people. They advocated egalitarianism and fought against human rights violations by both the colonisers and the landlords. They employed social realism in their works and depicted the socio-political realities of the society they inhabited.

The works produced during this period are remarkable for their depiction of the under-privileged sections of the society, especially the farmers, Dalits, prostitutes, child widows and the lower classes. Munshi Premchand (1880-1936), known in literary circles as Upanyas Samrat Emperor among (Novelists), is considered one of the stalwarts in the arena of Hindi literature. He wrote mainly in Hindustani, Urdu and Hindi. Premchand was the first Indian writer to use social realism in his works. His works are informed by his personal experiences during his travels and stay in various parts of India including Gorakhpur, Kanpur, Banaras etc. He was deeply influenced by the Indian nationalist movement and many of his works engage with the patriotism and the Indian struggle for independence. His very first published story, "The Most Precious Jewel in the World" (1907), is centred on these themes with the title referring to the last drop of blood needed for India's independence.

He was the first President of the 'Progressive Writers' Association and his works show a deep engagement with the issues of the poor and the downtrodden. Premchand wrote on myriad themes including patriotism, poverty, corruption, colonialism, religion and the zamindari system. Most of his works, feature working class protagonists struggling for survival. Besides, he showed a keen interest in social issues such as child marriage and widow remarriage.

"Eidgah" was first published in Hindustani in 1933 in a collection titled *Maansarovar.* Set on the day of Eid, the story moves from a village to the Eidgah in the town where a fair is held during Eid. It follows the four-year old protagonist, Hamid and the moral dilemma he faces when he goes to the fair with his friends. Premchand views the fair through the eyes of the children and poignantly portrays the selfless love that propels Hamid to buy tongs for his grandmother, resisting his desire for toys. The story has been translated into English multiple times, with the most frequently cited translation being that of the eminent writer, Khushwant Singh.

Keywords

Childhood and innocence, Carnivalesque, Material and the spiritual, Colonialism, Rural life in India

Discussion

3.1.1 Summary

Paragraphs 1-20

The story is set on the day of Eid, which comes thirty days after Ramadan. Everyone in the village is excited and they wake up early to go to the Eidgah mosque, which is three miles from the village, after settling household matters. The little boys in the village are very excited about going to the Eidgah, although most of them have not kept the fast. They have been waiting for the day of Eid. They are not concerned about whether there is enough milk and sugar for the vermicelli pudding; they just want to have it. They do not know why their father is running to the house of Chaudhri Karim Ali; nor do they know that if Chaudhri changes his mind the day of Eid-could be turned into a day of grieving.

All the boys have pocket money which they count and recount. Mahmood has twelve pice and Mohsin has fifteen pice, with which they will buy toys and sweets and pipes at the Eidgah fair. The happiest of them is the four-year old Hamid who looks thin and starved. He parents had passed away and his Granny Ameena looks after him. His grandmother tells him that his father has gone to earn money and will come back with sack loads of silver and that his mother has gone to Allah to bring him gifts. The hope makes Hamid happy even though he lives in poverty. He believes that when his parents return, he can have all that he wants.

On the day of Eid, Ameena cries in the hovel, as she does not even have a handful of grain- She wishes that her son, Abid, were there. Hamid comes and tells her that he would come back quickly from the fair. But Ameena is worried about her grandson walking alone for three miles without even a pair of shoes to protect his little feet. But since she does not have the money to buy the ingredients for the vermicelli on the way back, she decides to stay in the village and ask someone to lend her theingredients.

The villagers leave in a group. Hamid and the other boys run ahead in excitement and they are curious to see the outside world. They see the mansions of the rich, surrounded by high walls outside and fruit-laden trees inside. Then, they see the law courts, the college and the club. Even grown up men study in the colleges. Hamid thinks that they might also be lazy like the adult students in his school. They see the Masonic Lodge where magic is performed. The villagers believe that the members of the Lodge make skulls move about and that is why they do not allow outsiders to enter. In the evenings, the White people, including the Memsahibs play badminton. The children are surprised that grown- ups, including women, play games. They say that the women in their houses would not even be able to hold a racket or leap and jump around like the Memsahibs. But Mohsin points out that a Memsahib cannot do the things his mother does, like grinding maunds of grain or drawing hundreds of pitchers of water.

They reach the fair ground and go to the stalls of the sweet-meat vendors which have colourful sweets piled up. The villagers believe that after nightfall, Jinns come and have all the sweets that remain and pay the shopkeeper in rupees. When Hamid asks where the Jinns would get rupees from, Mohsin replies that Jinns always have money since they can enter any treasury and take all the money they want. Iron bars cannot stop them and they can move from one place to another quickly. Mohsin also says that if the Jinns like someone, they will give him baskets of diamond. Hamid is curious to know if they are very big. Mohsin replies that even though each one is as big as

the sky, they can enter a tiny pot if necessary. Hamid says if someone could teach him the secret to keep a Jinn happy, he will make at least one happy with him.

Paragraphs 21-40

Mohsin does not know how to make a Jinn happy. However, he is sure that Chaudhri Sahib has a lot of Jinns under his control, who tell him everything that happens in the world. If something is stolen in the village, Chaudhri Sahib can trace it and he even knows the name of the thief. Now Hamid realizes how Chaudhri Sahib became so rich and earned so much respect.

People from all around are coming into the town, some in tongas and ekkas and some in motorcars. Everyone is excited. Although the villagers look very shabby and rustic as compared to the others, they are not bothered. They are content with their own lives. The village children, who are not familiar with the sights around them, stare at each new thing with wonder. Hamid is almost hit by a car. But they are too excited to notice. Gradually, the Eidgah comes into view. The villagers line up behind the others and the prayer begins. The worshippers move in coordination and repeat the movements of prayer, making it a grand spectacle.

After the prayer, the men embrace each other and move to the stalls. Both adults and children are equally excited about buying sweets and other items. The village children see the swings and the roundabouts. Mahmood, Mohsin, Noorey and the other boys play on the roundabout. Hamid does not join them as he has only three pice and he does not want to waste it on a few rounds. Next, they go to the toy shops where lifelike, beautiful toys are kept on display. Hamid is enchanted. Mahmood buys a policeman in khaki holding a gun, Mohsin buys a water carrier holding a water bag, Noorey buys the figurine of a learned lawyer wearing a black gown over a white coat and Sammi buys the figurine of a washer-woman and a small tambourine. All the toys look lifelike. Each of them costs two pice and Hamid cannot buy such expensive toys for himself. He knows that they will get damaged quickly. He decides not to buy them as they will not be of use to him. Mohsin, Mahmood, Noorey and Sammi flaunt their toys in front of Hamid. Although he says he is not interested in any of those, he craves to have a toy. But the other boys do not allow him to even touch theirs. When they reach the sweet shop, the other boys buy a lot of delicious sweets while Hamid looks on hungrily. The others tease him, pretending to offer their sweets to him and then withdrawing their hands. They insult him for not having enough money to buy some sweets for himself.

Paragraphs 41-60

The boys continue taunting him and they suspect that he is keeping his money safe to buy sweets when they have eaten theirs and then tease them. After the sweetshops come the hardware shops and jewelleries. The boys are not interested in these stalls as there is nothing of interest to them. But Hamid stops in front of a shop selling tongs. He remembers that his granny does not have tongs and burns her fingers on the iron plate when she makes chapattis. He thinks that if he buys her a pair of tongs, she would be very happy and she would never again burn her fingers. Hamid tells himself that toys are not very useful and they are just a waste of time as one loses interest in them after a few days.

Hamid's friends have walked ahead and they are drinking sherbet. Hamid is upset that they are so selfish that they have not given him even one piece of sweet. He decides that if they ever ask him to play with them or do odd jobs for them again, he will refuse. He

believes that when his grandmother sees the tongs she would be very happy and bless him and proudly show off the tongs to the women in the village. He is sure that the blessings of elders are heard in the court of Allah and hence, Allah would reward him. Hamid is disappointed that his friends insult him for not having any money and decides to teach them a lesson. He tells himself that he will not play with toys or tolerate their nonsense and when his parents return with lots of money and gifts, he will give them each a basket of toys and teach them how to treat friends.

Hamid asks the shopkeeper the price of the tongs. Since he has not seen any adults with Hamid, he tells him that the tongs are not for him. However, Hamid insists on knowing the price and after a little bit of haggling, he gets it for three pice right when he is about to walk away in fear that the shopkeeper shouts at him. He carries it on his shoulder like a gun and shows it proudly to his friends. Mohsin laughs and asks what he will do with the tongs. Hamid throws the tongs on the ground to show that it is sturdy and tells Mohsin that if the water-carrier is thrown like that, all the bones in his body will break. When Mahmood asks if those tongs are some kind of a plaything, Hamid explains that they are. The tongs can be anything he wants them to be. If he places them on the shoulder, it is a gun; if they are wielded in the hands, they will make the sound of cymbals. He says that the tongs are like a brave tiger and they are so powerful that they can break all the other toys with just one smack.

Now the other children have second thoughts about their toys. Sammi asks if they could exchange their toys. Hamid pretends not to look at Sammi's tambourine and says that the tongs have the power to tear out its bowels. Unlike Sammi's toys, the tongs can weather water and storms bravely. Now, everyone is interested in the tongs. But their money has already been spent and they are far away from the fair ground. Besides, it is past 9.00 AM, and since it is becoming hotter, everyone wants to get home quickly. Even if the boys try to persuade their fathers, they would not be able to buy the tongs now. The other boys think that Hamid is a rascal who deliberately saved up money to buy the tongs.

Paragraphs 61-80

The boys are divided into two groups. Hamid is on one side and Mohsin, Mahmood, Sammi and Noorey on the other. They are arguing the case of the toys. Sammi defects to the other side. The other three boys, although they are older than Hamid, are not willing to debate with him because right is on his side. Besides, Hamid has the moral power of having done something right, while the others have only clay toys which do not serve any useful purpose. Hamid's steel tongs are now like iron. They cannot be defeated and they are very powerful. If a tiger comes to attack the boys, all the other toys will get scared and run away or cry; but the pair of tongs, the Champion of India, would attack the tiger and defeat it.

Mohsin, Mahmood and Noorey try to convince Hamid of the power of their toys; but they fail. Hamid's tongs remain the most powerful. Mohsin then tells Hamid that his tongs will burn in the fire every day. But Hamid retorts that only the brave can jump into a fire and that while their toys would run away, the Champion of India, the tongs, will have the courage to leap into the fire. Mahmood tries again to prove the superiority of his lawyer, saying that while the lawyer will have a chair and table, the tongs will only have the kitchen floor to lie on. Hamid replies that the tongs will not stay in the kitchen and that they will knock Mahmood's lawyer down on the ground when he sits on his chair. Thus, Hamid wins the debate and the tongs are accepted as the Champion of India. Hamid's three-pice worth purchase is the winner.

The boys now request Hamid to give them the tongs in exchange for their toys for a short while. Hamid readily agrees and admires the toys secretly. Hamid tries to console the others by saying that he is just teasing them and that their toys are definitely better. But the boys are not convinced and they tell him that no one will bless them for the toys. Mahmood adds that probably they will get beaten for spending all the money on these toys. Hamid knows that the other boys' mothers will not be as happy to see the toys as his grandmother would be when he gives her the tongs. He is proud of the way he has spent his three pice. The tongs have been recognized as the Champion of India and the king of toys.

By eleven, all those who had gone to the fair are back home. Mohsin's sister begins playing with the water carrier and soon it falls on the ground and breaks. When the brother and sister begin fighting over it, their mother slaps both of them. Noorey keeps his lawyer on a plank mounted on the wall like a throne and fans him with a bamboo fan. He knows that there were khus curtains and electric fans in real courts. The figurine falls down and breaks. As for Mahmood, he takes his policeman for rounds in the night in a basket decorated like a palanquin, with his brothers. But he stumbles and the basket slips out of his hand. Mr. Constable loses one leg in the accident.

Paragraphs 81-91

Mahmood tries to stick back the broken leg with the milk of a banyan sapling, but fails. Mahmood then cuts the other leg to match the size of the broken one so that the policeman could sit. Mr. Constable is turned into a holy man who would sit at one place and guard the village. Sometimes, he is like the image of a deity. Sometimes he is used only for weighing things. His appearance could be changed as Mahmood wished.

When Hamid reaches the house, his Granny Ameena is very happy and kisses him. Suddenly she sees the tongs and asks him where he got them from. Hamid replies that he bought them for three pice. Ameena is angry. She scolds him for both buying anything to eat or drink and asks him if he could not find anything better than the tongs. Hamid is hurt. He replies that he bought them to prevent her fingers from burning on the iron plate. Ameena's anger suddenly turns into a silent, solid love full of tenderness. She wonders how selfless a child Hamid is and how he might have suppressed his own desires for her. She is touched that he thought of his grandmother even at the fair. And then, the strangest thing happens – stranger than the role of the tongs is the role of Hamid, the child, playing the part of Hamid, the old man. Granny Ameena is now Ameena, the little girl. She cries and asks Allah to bless her grandson. Hamid has no idea what is going on in his grandmother's mind.

3.1.2 Themes

i. Childhood and Innocence

The major theme of Premchand's "Eidgah" is that of childhood and innocence. The protagonist is a four-year old boy called Hamid, an orphan who lives with his grandmother. He is very innocent and firmly believes his grandmother's stories about his parents. His belief that his father will earn a lot of money and return, while his mother has gone to get gifts for him from Allah points to his absolute trust in Ameena. As Premchand says, he lives on the hope created by his innocence.

For children, festivals offer opportunities to buy toys and sweets for themselves. They have the freedom to explore the outside world, bargain with shopkeepers and buy things like the adults. They wait for the Eidgah fair every year so that they can be like grown- ups and go out into the world. All the children are excited. In childhood, they have the liberty to cele-

brate even if they do not observe the fast. The children's perception of the adult world is visible throughout the story. They know that they do not need to fast. They are unaware of the struggles of daily existence. They do not want to know whether there is enough milk or sugar for the vermicelli pudding; nor do they understand why Abbajan is running to the house of the zamindar, Chaudhri Karim Ali. Their's is a small world filled with happiness. Their curiosity about the outside world is visible in their awe for the courts and colleges and the White people who play badminton. Supernatural elements form the reality for them. All the boys believe that Jinns come and buy sweets from stalls. Childhood perception is shaped largely by stories heard from adults.

At the fair, all the boys, except Hamid, buy toys. The money they have is thoughtlessly spent in the initial excitement, as happens in the case of children. Hamid is aware of the hardships his grandmother faces and this is symbolically represented in his child's mind through the image of the tongs burning her hands. It is his innocent love for her that propels him to control his desire for toys and sweets. The other boys are quite immature and refuse to give him the toys since they are new. Premchand says: "But young boys are not givers, particularly when it is something new". Here, he is making a general observation about childhood.

Hamid's vulnerability is visible throughout the story when he looks hungrily at the toys and wishes to touch them. His innocence finally wins and his tongs become the Champion of India. All the children believe that the tongs are the most powerful and besides, Hamid will get blessings from Allah. The idea of the blessings might have come through stories or religious teachings. Their wish for the blessings points to how social institutions such as the family and religion shape the child's mind.

At the end, Granny Ameena herself metaphorically turns into a child who is being taken care of by Hamid, the old man. This symbolic return to childhood is a return to a time when she felt safe and protected among elders. The perception of childhood is a romantic, where one is cared for and protected .

ii The Carnivalesque

The Russian theorist, Mikhail Bakhtin, wrote extensively on the 'carnivalesque', based on his observations of the carnival.

> The term 'carnival' was initially used to refer to the festive season in the West before Lent. Gradually, it came to indicate festivals which involved features of the Western carnival, such as parades, special costumes, excessive drinking and eating, depictions of the grotesque.

The carnival and the carnivalesque are characterized by several features, including eccentric behaviour, co-existence of opposites (Carnivalistic mésalliances), free interaction of people irrespective of class, race and community, and profanation (whereby the 'sacred' is brought down to the level of the earthly, and often treated irreverently). Bakhtin argues that the carnival is fundamentally anti-elitist and is against the feudal system. He developed the concepts in his two major works, namely, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929) and *Rabelais and His World* (1965).

"Eidgah" shows features of the carnivalesque as outlined by Bakhtin. The Eidgah functions as the site of the carnival. The carnivalesque mood is visible from the very beginning. A festive aura surrounds the village and everyone wants to celebrate even if they have to borrow money. At the fair, there are thousands of people, laughing and talking and buying things. The polyphony, or multiplicity of voices, is a characteristic feature of the carnival. At the Eidgah fair, people, irrespective

of their class, mingle with each other. Hamid and his friends are symbolic of this. One boy has fifteen pice, another has twelve, while Hamid has only three. The amount indicates their class status. But they go together as a group, enjoying the sights together. There is a break in their routine and the world is turned upside down, as Bakhtin says. Liberation from authority and control is yet another feature of the carnivalesque, which finds reflection in the boys. They are away from the adults and they have the freedom to explore the world without anyone controlling them. The villagers also enjoy a kind of freedom from the burdens imposed by the zamindars and the governmental machinery.

iii. The Material and the Spiritual

The story portrays a conflict between the material and the spiritual, with the latter winning at the end. Spirituality, in the form of religion as well as the supernatural, plays a major role in the Indian social order. In almost all religious communities, people believe in God as well as in other beings such as Yakshis, Nagins, Jinns etc. The story itself is set against the background of the Islamic festival of Eid. The very first paragraph reveals the excitement of the common people when religious festivals are celebrated. They count the days after Ramadan during which they fast from dawn to sunset, and wait for Eid when the fast is broken. All the villagers wake up early to go to the Eidgah mosque. Even when mired in poverty, they borrow money to go to the fair and cook special dishes, pointing to how important the festival is for the people. One of the major reasons for the involvement of all classes of people is the belief that at the prayers in the mosque, "neither wealth, nor status matters because in the eyes of Islam, all men are equal". The egalitarian spirit of Islam is reflected here. The boys' discussion about Jinns and the Masonic Lodge points to how supernatural entities are central to the common people's lives, even from childhood. Religion also plays a major role in inculcating values among the people. Hamid buys tongs for his grandmother because he believes that Allah will bless him for caring for the aged. He is taught to wait patiently for his mother to come back with gifts from Allah. Benevolence, patience, hope and the spirit of sacrifice are inculcated in children through religious teachings.

The material realm is symbolically represented through money and the toys and sweets that the other boys buy. While Mahmood, Mohsin, Noorey and Sammi have quite a lot of pocket money, Hamid is relatively poor in terms of material belongings. He is unable to buy toys or sweets even though he longs for them. However, his spiritual qualities are represented through the tongs. He saves his precious three pice for his grandmother and does not buy anything for himself. His selflessness and sacrifice come from his deep-rooted love for his family. He also believes that his grandmother will bless him and that the blessings of elders are heard in the court of Allah and immediately acted upon. He is kind and selfless and is considerate towards others. The spiritual lessons learnt in childhood enable him to behave thus. Besides, he is also willing to share his tongs with the other boys even though they have not been kind to him. Hamid is mature beyond his years and tells himself that the toys will interest him only for a short period of time, while the tongs will prevent his grandmother's fingers from burning on the iron plate. The clash between the material and the spiritual is symbolized by the boys' discussion regarding whose possessions are better. Finally, the tongs emerge as the winner, pointing to how the spiritual ultimately wins over the material.

iv. Colonialism

The descriptions indicate that the story is set

in colonial India. As the boys move out of the village, they see law courts, the college and the club. In the club, "the white folk play games in the evenings". The British established the first law courts, western-style universities, colleges and clubs in India. The clubs were often exclusively for the colonizers as in the case of the club in "Eidgah". The boys are surprised that grown-up men play games. They are even more awed when they come to know that even the Memsahib (the White women) play with rackets (which probably means they play badminton, which was a popular sport among the British in India).

> Badminton is believed to have been played in a rudimentary form in India more than 2000 years ago. The term 'badminton' is derived from the name of the estate of the Duke of Beaufort in Gloucestershire, which was called Badminton House. It was the Duke who took a version of the game called Poona.

They compare the Memsahibs with the women in their homes who cannot even hold a racket properly, indicating their acceptance of the superiority of the colonizers. As Gramsci remarks, the colonizers rule by creating consent among the colonised. The consent is instilled at a very young age in the minds of the colonized people, as in the case of the boys. The toys also symbolize the colonial governmental machinery. The policeman has a red turban, which was a characteristic of Sikh police officers in British India. The lawyer also sports a colonial costume. The boys buy these toys mainly because of their awe towards the colonisers and in fact, treat the toys with respect. The lawyer is seated on a plank mounted high on the wall like a throne; Noorey fans him because he knows that there are khus fans and electric fans in law courts. The first modern law courts were established in India by the British and fans were installed there. The boys' awareness of the colonial governance system is evident here.

v. Rural Life in India

"Eidgah" portrays the nuances of rural life in India. The story is set in a village with beautiful trees and fields. Houses have gardens with mango and leechee trees laden with fruits. The people live according to a routine, visiting the fields and cooking food at home, except when there are festivals. The poverty that characterized Indian villages during the colonial period is evident in the story. Many of the people borrow money to celebrate Eid. One of the characters in the story is "out of breath running to the house of Chaudhri Karim Ali", who is the all-powerful zamindar. The zamindari system in India was a cause of misery for the common people. They often harassed the poor farmers and lent money on interest at high rates. As a result, many had to work as bonded labourers for zamindars. Besides, the all-powerful feudal lord could take away all their possessions or harass them in any way. This is evident when Premchand says: ". . .if the Chaudhri were to change his mind, he could turn the festive day of Eid into a day of mourning". The boys believe that Chaudhri has Jinns under his control and that they report everything going on in the world to the zamindar as a result of which he can trace stolen things and even tell them the name of the thief. The all-powerful aura of Indian zamindars, who used money and power to exploit the poor, during the colonial times is portrayed here.

3.1.3 Symbols

Premchand utilizes a number of symbols in "Eidgah". The festival of Eid itself stands for the spirit of equality and brotherhood that characterizes Islam. The varying amounts of money that each of the boys hold points to how class acts as a barrier to the egalitarian spirit in the village. People with more money, such as Chaudhri Karim Ali, possess more

power than the poor villagers. The vermicelli pudding that Granny Ameena intends to cook with borrowed ingredients stands as a symbol of the festive spirit which transcends class barriers.

The toys that Hamid's friends buy symbolize the human affinity to material possessions. Mahmood, Noorey, Mohsin and Sammi think only of themselves and they wish to buy more and more toys and sweets. However, Hamid's tongs stand as a symbol of his selflessness and his love for his grandmother. Besides, Hamid knows that when he gives the tongs to his grandmother, she will bless him and Allah will act upon the blessings. In a way, the tongs serve as a symbol of spiritual enlightenment. The elevation of the tongs to the status of the Champion of India also symbolizes the victory of the poor working class over the rich who live in luxury.

The toys also assume symbolic significance when we take into consideration the temporal setting. The story is set in colonial India. Mahmood's policeman with the red turban is a replica of the British police officer in India. Formal law courts were established in India by the British and the toy lawyer with his western gown and coat is a version of the British lawyer. Both the policeman and the lawyer symbolize the colonial governmental machinery. In a way, Premchand predicts the collapse of the British empire when he writes of the two toys meeting a pathetic end. The lawyer falls down from his pedestal and his bier was dumped on a dung heap. The policeman breaks one of his legs and he cannot walk or sit. Mahmood cuts the other leg to the size of the broken one and makes him sit as a holy man or deity. The plume on his turban is removed. The boys can make any changes they like on the policeman and sometimes he is just used for weighing things. The author points to the possibility of the empire collapsing little by little as a result of the rebellion by the colonized people of India. The removal of the plume, which was a part of British police/ army uniform, indicates the absolute subversion of colonial authority. Premchand seems to tell us that, like the toy, the British empire would be at the mercy of Indian people and that their power will soon vanish.

3.1.4 Narrative Style

The story shows the characteristic features of Premchand's writing, especially the use of the social realist mode. The lived reality of the working class and the villagers is depicted in "Eidgah". Their struggles for survival in the midst of poverty, the hold of the zamindars and the colonizers get reflected in the story. The omniscient narrative style is used, with the narrator providing us glimpses into Hamid's mind. There is a combination of description and conversation in the story. Imagery is used extensively and detailed descriptions of the village and the boys' trip to the fare are provided. The translator has retained words from the original, including the title "Eidgah" (which refers to an open space where Eid prayers and the fair are held), Jinns, tongas, ekkas, halva, chapattis, sherbet and khus. There is also a reference to the Hindu God of wealth, Kubera. Such techniques have been used in the translation to retain the flavour of the source culture. On the whole, the language and style capture the pathos of the story, and portray the world of children and that of the villagers vividly.

Recap

- "Eidgah" is a short story by Munshi Premchand
- Premchand was a member of the Progressive Writers' Association
- The story was originally written in Hindustani
- It was published first in 1933 in a collection titled *Maansarovar*
- Premchand was inspired by a real Eidgah located opposite the Dargah of Hazrat Mubarak Khan, in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh
- The protagonist is a 4-year-old orphan called Hamid, who lives with his grandmother, Ameena
- The story is set against the backdrop of Eid festivities in a village in colonial India
- The plot unfolds mainly at the fair at the Eidgah and in Hamid's village
- Other than Hamid, there are four children playing a major part in the story – Mahmood, Mohsin, Sammi and Noorey
- Mahmood buys a toy policeman; Mohsin buys a water-carrier; Sammi buys a washer- woman and a tambourine; Noorey buys a toy lawyer; and Hamid buys a pair of tongs for his grandmother
- Hamid buys the tongs to prevent his grandmother's fingers from burning on the iron plate while making chapattis
- Childhood and innocence feature as major themes
- Features of the carnivalesque, as outlined by Mikhail Bakhtin, can be seen in the story
- The zamindari system finds reflection in the character of Chudhri Karim Ali
- The story concludes with Hamid, the child, playing the part of Hamid the old man and his grandmother metaphorically becoming a little girl

Objective Questions

1. Who is the protagonist of "Eidgah"?
2. Which festival is being celebrated in the story?
3. Why does Hamid buy the tongs?
4. What happens to the toy water-carrier?
5. Who worked on the concept of the carnivalesque in relation to literature?
6. According to the boys, how does Chaudhri Karim Ali get to know of all that happens in the world?

Answers

1. Hamid
2. Eid
3. He buys the tongs to prevent his grandmother's hands from burning while making chapattis.
4. It slips from Mohsin's sister's hands and breaks
5. Mikhail Bakhtin
6. Through the Jinns he has under his control

Assignments

1. Comment on the use of symbols in "Eidgah".
2. Attempt a Marxist analysis of the short story.
3. How does the Eidgah turn into a carnivalesque site?
4. Attempt a character sketch of Hamid.
5. Elaborate on the conflict between the material and the spiritual as represented in "Eidgah".

Suggested Readings

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SGOU

Unit 2

Draupadi - Mahasweta Devi

Learning Outcomes

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

- identify features of subaltern writing
- familiarise themselves with literary expressions of Naxalism
- identify the themes, symbols and literary style used in the text
- locate texts within historical frameworks
- use the paradigms of subaltern studies and Marxism for interpretation of texts

Prerequisites

The 20th century saw the emergence and flourishing of subaltern literature. Writers such as Gaddar, Manoranjan Byapari, Mahasweta Devi, Bama and Daya Pawar are among the noted writers who worked on subalternity. The issues of tribal communities found reflection in the works of Temsula Ao, Mahasweta Devi, Mamang Dai, Ramdayal Munda and Narayan among others. The lived reality of the tribes were brought to the sight of the mainstream by these writers. Special awards like the Govind Gare Award have now been instituted for tribal literature and literary festivals like the 'Festival of Letters' by the Sahitya Akademi, offering space for tribal writers who had till recently been kept out of the limelight.

Mahasweta Devi lived during the period of Marxist rule in West Bengal. She wrote in Bengali and worked for the welfare of the Dalits and Adivasis, especially the tribes in West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Devi spent years living with the Adivasis in these regions, learning from them and working for their welfare. She focused specifically on the issues faced by tribal women. Her works engage with the human rights violations faced by marginalized groups. She wrote on the exploitation of Dalits

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and Adivasis by upper-caste landlords and money lenders. Devi also opposed the Communist government's policy of taking land from poor farmers and then handing it over to industries at nominal prices. She has also been a vocal critic of the atrocities committed by the government machinery in conflict zones in the name of ensuring stability.

She was witness to the Naxal issues that arose during the 1960s and 70s. Devi, having stayed with the tribes, had a profound knowledge of the atrocities they had to face at the hands of the government as well as the police. The Dalit and tribal women were doubly marginalized - one by the patriarchal social order and second, by the Brahmanical mainstream. They were assaulted, raped and murdered since the communities did not have the power to stand up against the authorities. Custodial killings and encounter deaths were usual during the period when the government attempted to crush the Naxalite Movement. Human rights violations were the norms rather than the exceptions and any kind of dissent was suppressed brutally. Despite constitutional safeguards, the lower castes and the tribes were discriminated against. The situation has not undergone much change even today and the violence against tribal communities has not ceased, as is evident from the frequent reports of assaults, rapes and murders of tribal subjects, especially women.

Devi's short story "Draupadi", published in 1978 in her anthology titled *Ahnigarbha*, is set in the late 1960s or early 1970s in the Naxal dominated areas of West Bengal. It captures the lived reality of the Santhal tribe and their oppression at the hands of the landlords and government machinery. The protagonist represents the gendered subaltern subject, doubly marginalized by the mainstream patriarchal social order. The narrative style and the mixture of English and Bangla reveal a uniquely tribal aesthetic underlying the work. The translation of the story by Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak took it to the whole world and today, it is a textbook prescribed for study in many universities in India and abroad.

Keywords

Subalternization of tribal communities, The gendered subaltern, Tribal resistance and naxalism, Violence and the repressive state apparatus, The question of identity

Discussion

3.2.1 Summary

Paragraphs 1-25

The story begins with factual data regarding Dopdi Mejhen, a Santhal woman who was part of the Naxalite Movement of the 1960s and 70s. The army has initiated operations to capture her. Dopdi is 27 years old and the wife of Dulna Majhi who is no more. She is from Cherakhan, Bankrahjarh, a remote tribal area in West Bengal. The government has announced a reward of one hundred rupees for providing information about her or for assisting in her arrest. Two uniformed officers are discussing the matter. The first officer says that

her name is not listed and asks how someone can have an unlisted name. The second one reads out further details and says that she was born the year her mother threshed rice at Surja Sahu's house in Bakuli. His wife gave him the name. Surja Sahu has been killed by the Naxals. Dopdi is depicted as a wanted woman accused of Naxalism. The dossier reads that Dulna and Dopdi worked at various fields in Birbhum, Burdwan, Murshidabad and Bankura. In 1971, during Operation Bakuli, which was carried out to exterminate the Naxals, the couple lay down on the ground, pretending to be dead. They were the 'culprits' in the murder of Surja Sahu and his son, and in the occupation of 'upper caste' wells and tube wells during the drought. They also refused to hand over three Naxal activists to the police.

The next day, Captain Arjan Singh, the brain behind the operation, realizes that the two escaped and he becomes depressed and anxious. Dulna and Dopdi went into hiding. The special forces, mistaking other Santhals to be Dulna or Dopdi, killed many innocent tribal people. The narrator remarks that although the Indian Constitution deems everyone sacred, such 'accidents' happen because the couple was skilled in hiding and also because the special forces cannot distinguish between people of the Austro-Asiatic Munda tribes. Whenever an attack takes place in police stations or the house of landlords, the eye-witnesses say that they saw a couple ululating and singing in a savage language.

Captain Arjan Singh is again entrusted with executing Operation Forest Jharkhani in order to capture the couple. He is very disturbed and finally takes retirement. He goes to Mr.Senanayak, who the narrator terms sarcastically as "an elderly Bengali specialist in combat and extreme-left politics". Senanayak delivers long speeches on how to capture the Santhals and motivates the fighting forces. He says that since Dopdi and Dulna are guerrilla fighters who use primitive weapons, they should be killed instantly, as it is a repulsive form of warfare. He believes in the apprehension and elimination of enemies. Senanayak knows that the opposite side – that is, the Naxals - cannot be understood or destroyed if they are not taken seriously. He tries to (theoretically) become one among them. Senanayak is depicted as a pseudo-intellectual who is going to write about all this one day and show how only he could properly understand the tribes.

There were constant Naxal attacks on police stations and the houses of landlords. After the attack, the Naxals would disappear into the forest of Jharkhani. Dopdi and Dulna could be perfect informers as they had worked in the lands of all major landholders. The army surrounds the forest. One day, the army informant, Dukhiram Gharari sees Dulna drinking water from a pond and informs the soldiers who shoot him dead. Before he dies, he shouts "Ma-ho", which is later understood to be a war-cry that the Santhals of Maldah used at the time of Gandhi. Senanayak instructs the army to use the corpse as a bait to capture Dopdi; but they fail as no one comes to take the body. Dukhiram is killed by the Naxals for being a spy. The search for Dopdi continues in vain; the fighting forces are sure that she is helping the Naxals. However, they are not even sure who the Naxals are or if there are Naxals involved in the attacks. Their ideas of the Naxals are all hypotheses formulated by higher authorities.

Paragraph 26-50

The authorities do not have any clear information on the Naxals or their activities. They do not have an answer when questioned about the heavily mutilated bodies of Santhals or about the confrontations. Their answers to

queries pertaining to the combat in the region are always ambiguous. They desperately want to capture Dopdi, as she is a very dangerous Naxal who actually gets involved with the oppressed tribes and fights against the landlords and the government. Senanayak believes that Operation Jharkhani Forest cannot stop till she is captured. Dopdi can lead them to the other Naxals.

Dopdi is walking slowly across the forest with some rice which Mushai tudu's wife had given her. She wishes she had some kerosene with which she could get rid of the lice; but she knows that the smell of kerosene would lead the police to her. Suddenly she hears someone calling her name. She does not respond. She knows never to respond when she hears her name, as it could be the army or police pursuing her. That day, in the panchayat office, she had seen the notice about the reward of two hundred rupees for capturing her. Mushai tudu's wife tells her that the army is better prepared this time and asks her not to come again.

Paragraph 51-75

Mushai's wife is afraid that their village and huts would be burnt down if Dopdi is captured. Dopdi asks about the Santals, Dukhiram, Shomai and Budhna, who had betrayed them. She says that she cannot run away anymore and she is ready to let the army 'kounter' her. Seeing Mushai's wife's fear, Dopdi assures her that she will not reveal their names. She knows that the army and the police will torture her. She decides to bite off her tongue if her mind and body gives way under torture. She is aware that extreme violence is inflicted on Naxals and that women are raped brutally by the policemen.

She hears someone calling her Dopdi again. She does not respond; she tries to remember who other than Mushai and his wife know her real name. To all the new Naxals and acquaintances, she has given her name as Upi Mejhen. She remembers the incident that caused the murder of Surja Sahu, the landlord. It was drought and Surja Sahu decided to dig two tube wells and three wells within the compounds of his two houses. There was no water anywhere else. Surjan Sahur refused to share the water with the lower castes and the tribal people and asked them to get out of his house. This provoked them, a quarrel ensued and they decided to kill the landlord.

Paragraph 76-100

They surrounded Surja Sahu's house in the night. Sahu took out his gun, but he was tied up with rope. Dulna said he wanted to give him the first blow as he was still forced to work as a bonded labourer for Sahu, as his great-grandfather had borrowed some paddy from the landlord. The desire for revenge was very strong among the Santhals. When the news of Surja Sahu's death got out, the army and police came, shouting over the mike for the Naxals to surrender. They attacked the village and the poor tribes there. Dopdi and Dulna escaped with the help of others. They decided to work around the Jharkhani belt and Dulna told his wife that this would be the best arrangement as they would not have children this way and they would be able to carry forth their mission of wiping away the landlords, moneylenders and the policemen.

Dopdi knows she is being followed and that Shomai and Budhna had betrayed her. She feels proud that she is not a half-breed like them. They are the offspring of American soldiers stationed at Shiandange and that is why they betrayed their community. Otherwise, no Santhal would betray another Santhal. Ini-

tially, she thinks of going to the forest and informing the others. But she knows that this will be dangerous for her companions, as the person chasing her would discover the hideout and the other Naxals. She remembers that she still has the scythe with which she killed the betrayer, Dukhiram. She decides to run towards the camp, make the policeman chase her till he is tired and then throw him in a ditch and kill him. Dopdi has seen the new camp. She had sat in the bus station and observed the activities of the police. She was supposed to communicate the message to the Naxals in code. But now, this was not possible. There were strict instructions that if Dopdi did not return and she was 'kountered', they would change their hideout. They will not wait for her and risk the lives of the others. The direction of the hideout is to be indicated by the tip of a wooden arrowhead kept under a stone. Dopdi likes this arrangement.

Suddenly she hears someone shouting: 'Apprehend!" What had seemed to be lumps of rocks in front of her were actually the police and their informers. They stand up one by one and Dopdi sees Shomai and Budhna. Behind her is Rotoni Sahu, Surja Sahu's brother. He has probably hit her as indicated by the line "under Dopdi's ribs, the canal dam breaks". Senanayak is happy that his method of using the Naxal activists' own technique against them worked. However, he is slightly regretful because Dopdi is a field hand and just a few years back, he had written that he supported the Naxal movement from the point of view of the field hands who were oppressed. He knew that the people who had read it would call him a hypocrite for attacking Dopdi.

Dopdi understands that she has been captured and moves to the next step. She ululates three times aloud as a signal to her fellow Naxals. The news that Draupadi Mejhen is captured is passed to the police stations, the media and the leaders. It takes an hour to get her to the camp, where she is questioned for another hour. At 8.57, Senanayak leaves for dinner, saying: "Make her. Do the needful". It seems like a million years have passed before Draupadi opens her eyes. She has been raped multiple times. There is blood under her body, and her arms and legs are tied to four posts. She bites her lower lip to prevent herself from crying out for water. She wonders how many men came 'to make her' (meaning raped her).

Paragraph 101-122

Draupadi realizes that she has been made upright. Her breasts are wounded and the nipples are torn. She had passed out after six or seven men raped her. She sees her white cloth and hopes that they have abandoned her. But she is raped again and again by more men. In the morning, she is brought to the tent and thrown on the straw. The white cloth is thrown over her body. The Burra Sahib has breakfast, reads the newspaper and sends the radio message about Draupadi's apprehension. Then he orders a policeman to bring her to his tent.

When the policeman informs her that she has to go to his tent and pushes a water pot forward, she gets up, pours the water down on the ground and tears the white cloth with her teeth. The policeman thinks she has gone mad and runs to ask his superior what he should do next. The commotion makes Senanayak come out. He sees Draupadi naked, walking towards him with her head held high. He is shocked. She stands before him with her wounded breasts. Her thighs and pubic hair are coated with dry blood. Draupadi comes closer, stands with her hand on her hips, laughs and tells him that she is the object of his search, Dopdi Mejhen. She asks him to see how his subordinates executed his order to 'make her'. When Senanayak asks where her clothes are, the policemen reply that she will not put them on and keeps tearing them. Draupadi's black

body comes even closer to Senanayak. He is unable to understand her indomitable laughter. Her lips bleed. She wipes the blood on her palms and says in a voice that is as loud and sharp as her ululation: "What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?" She spits blood on Senanayak's white shirt and says that there is no man there that she should be ashamed of her nudity. She tells them that she will not let them put clothes on her and asks what more they can do to her. She tells them to 'kounter' her. Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two wounded, bleeding breasts, and for the first time in his life, he is afraid to stand before a helpless unarmed target.

3.2.2 Themes

i. Subalternization of Tribal Communities

The tribal communities are perhaps the most oppressed and marginalized groups in India. They are denied even basic human rights and, in the country, 'development' has still not reached the tribes. They are silenced and relegated to the margins by the mainstream. In "Draupadi", the initial murder is that of Surja Singh. The dispute arises because of his refusal to provide water to the Santhals and the untouchables at the time of drought. When the entire village is burning, the landlord digs two tube wells and three wells in his compound and refuses to give water to the lower caste people. The reaction from the Santhal community arises not from their desire to resist, but from their yearning to live. The major reason for the emergence of Naxal groups and extreme-left wing parties was the exploitation of the tribes and the lower castes at the hands of the landlords.

The Adivasis are denied an identity and as the narrator remarks, all tribal people look the same to the mainstream. They are grouped into one category with no recognition of the peculiarities of each tribe. For the government and the officials, they constitute a confusing, insignificant group called 'the tribes. They are the subaltern groups who are rendered voiceless by the mainstream. Antonio Gramsci was the first to use the word 'subaltern', which refers to a group which is completely marginalized by and under the control of a powerful community which denies them a voice. The tribal subjects are denied access to public facilities and are ill-treated by the upper castes. As the story reveals, they are mostly illiterate and no government has taken the effort to address their concerns. Despite constitutional safeguards, the Adivasis have not been able to escape oppression. When the oppression is from the government machinery itself, they are rendered totally helpless. Dopdi, Dulna and the others cannot approach any court of law or police station, as they are all under the control of the landlords and moneylenders. Innumerable tribal people were and still are killed in real or false 'encounters' by the police and army, who label them as 'Naxals'. Draupadi's rape is not merely an act of violence against a woman. It is a symbolic act of violence against the downtrodden tribal people who are denied a voice. The policemen are fully aware that since Draupadi is a tribal woman, no one will speak up for her. The consistent subalternization of tribal subjects is visible in the story.

ii. The Gendered Subaltern

Tribal women are doubly subalternized owing to their status as Adivasis and as women. Their gender makes them doubly marginalized. In the story, tribal women suffer the most at the hands of the officers. Draupadi thinks to herself that if they 'kounter' her, her "sex is a terrible wound". She is aware of the plight of Naxal women who were raped by policemen. Tribal women are oppressed by both the men

in their own communities and by the mainstream. While Dulna is merely killed, Draupadi is repeatedly raped. The maximum amount of torture is inflicted on her because she is a woman. When Senanayak says 'Make her', he is actually giving permission to the officers to rape her and make her give information about the other Naxals. Her gender is used as a tool to manipulate her into submission.

Her lack of education and her status as a tribal woman gives the policemen immense power over her. They are aware that no one will question them if they rape and kill an Adivasi woman. She is used as an object of pleasure by the officers. Like the Kshatriya princess Draupadi, Dopdi is also shamed. However, no man comes to save her, unlike in the case of Draupadi. Dopdi does the exact opposite of what the princess did. She refuses to clothe herself again. This is her way of challenging prevalent notions of modesty and an act of resistance against Brahmanical dominance.

In the *Mahabharata,* Draupadi has five husbands and this is one reason why she is humiliated by the Kauravas. She is treated as an object meant to unite the Pandavas and provide them comfort. She is never seen resisting or challenging her husbands. In the story, Dopdi is raped by many men, indicating her similar status. She is objectified and used for the pleasure of the men. However, she refuses to bow down and uses her mutilated body to challenge male authority and question the idea of chastity. Gendered subalternity works at multiple levels in the text, making Draupadi a victim of the patriarchal Brahmanical culture and propelling her to resist.

iii. Tribal Resistance and Naxalism

Naxalism emerged in India in the late 1960s as a reaction to the oppression of Adivasis and lower class/caste people by landlords and zamindars. This is evident in the short story. The very first quarrel in Bakuli occurs when the landlord refuses to share water with the Santhals and the lower castes. Even in post-independence India, the rich could take arbitrary decisions and impose them on marginalized groups.

Dulna and the others know very well that all government institutions will favour the landlord. As such, the only option left before them is to attack Surja Sahu. Dopdi remembers that Dulna's mouth was watering when he said he wanted to give him the first blow. Dulna's great-grandfather had borrowed a little bit of paddy from the landlord and Dulna thus became a bonded labourer. The immensity of the oppression inflicted on him makes him harbour revenge and react in a radical way.

The Naxals pass information about oppressive zamindars and moneylenders and murder them. One of the major reasons for this is the failure of the government and the judiciary in accommodating marginalized communities. The legal systems and redressal mechanisms are still far out of the reach of tribes in remote parts of India. The Santhals are aware that unless they fight for themselves, they will continue to be oppressed. The only means available to them is the path of warfare using rudimentary weapons. They challenge the mainstream and the governmental machinery through their violent acts in order to assert their rights and escape oppression.

The use of the name 'Draupadi/ 'Dopdi' itself can be interpreted as an act of resistance. She was named 'Draupadi' by the upper-caste landlord's wife. When the tribal mother names her daughter 'Draupadi', she seems to be 'obeying' the upper caste mistress. However, it is an act of resistance. Draupadi was actually an upper caste princess in the *Mahabharata.* The adoption of the name by the mother might have been an attempt at asserting her right to be treated at par with the mainstream. How-

ever, the protagonist uses the name Dopdi to refer to herself. She derives strength from her tribal identity and refuses to integrate with the mainstream.

Draupadi, with her black body, pushing Senanayak with her mangled breasts at the end of the story is the ultimate symbol of the resistance of the gendered subaltern. The breasts symbolize her femininity and the blackness, her tribal identity. The repeated raping has rendered her body powerless. She uses this very powerless entity to assert her power. She refuses to be clothed and asks them what they can do to her. The bewilderment and helplessness of Senanayak and the policemen give her a certain sense of power. As a captured tribal woman, this is her only way of reacting against the violence inflicted on her body and mind. She says that there is no man there and hence she is not ashamed. This is an open attack on the masculinity of the officers. The unexpected reaction from Draupadi leaves the Senanayak afraid. Instead of being shamed, she chooses to react, thus questioning notions of chastity. The mainstream, represented by Senanayak, takes a step back and crumbles in the face of resistance from the subalternized tribal woman.

iv. Violence and the Repressive State Apparatus

Louis Althusser identifies two mechanisms that the state uses to bring people under its control – the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) and the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA). The ISA works to propagate the state's ideology and ensure submission through seemingly non-violent ways. The family, schools, legal systems, and religion are used as means to coerce people into following the ideals of the state. The RSA comprises the police, the army and the criminal justice system, which use violence and force to bring people under control.

The functioning of the RSA and the ensuing violence is evident in Devi's short story. The police and the army are employed to fight against the Naxals. When the narrator says: "Why after confrontations are the skeletons discovered with arms broken or severed? Could armless men have fought? Why do the collarbones shake, why are the legs and ribs crushed?", she actually hints at how the government creates reports of false confrontations and encounters. Often, innocent Santhals were killed and presented to the world as Naxals. The extreme violence inflicted on the tribal community is evident here. The violence on women does not stop at beating or third-degree torture. They are raped repeatedly, as in the case of Draupadi, till they begin cooperating with the police. Fear is instilled in the minds of the Adivasis and they are forced, through violent means, to behave in ways favourable to the state.

v. The Question of Identity

The question of identity features as a major theme in the short story. The very title of the story indicates this. The title says 'Draupadi', while the protagonist and her community address her as Dopdi. Gayatri Spivak, the prominent Subaltern Studies scholar, remarks in her Foreword to "Draupadi" that the two versions of the name may indicate either of two possibilities – either that the protagonist cannot pronounce her Sanskritised name 'Draupadi' or that the Pandava queen herself might have been named 'Dopdi'. Her identity and subsequently, her name, varies over the course of the story. Till she is apprehended, she is called Dopdi. From the time of her arrest, the narrator uses the name 'Draupadi' as the mainstream addresses her. There is a shift from her tribal identity to that of a wanted criminal in the mainstream society. The 'criminality' associated with her grants her entry into the sphere of the upper castes, and gives her a new identity.

In the beginning of the story, the first officer is confused as to who Dopdi is, as her name is not there in the list. The second officer reads out the name 'Draupadi Mejhen' from the list and only then are they able to identify her as a human being. The first officer's question: "How can anyone have an unlisted name?" points to how the identity of a human being is reduced to an entry in a list. The human subject ceases to exist if the records do not show her/his name. This becomes very evident in the case of the Adivasis who are denied visibility and agency in the public sphere.

The narrator remarks sarcastically that innocent Santhals get killed just because the mainstream cannot distinguish one Adivasi from the other. She says that for the special forces combating Naxals, all tribals of the Austro-Asiatic Munda tribes appear the same. The careless attitude of the government machinery towards tribals is evident here. Their identity is subsumed under the umbrella term 'Adivasis'. Irrespective of the group to which they belong, they are treated as a homogenous community. The peculiarities and distinctiveness of the various tribal communities in India are often erased, leading to a submergence of their identity.

Language also serves as a marker of tribal identity in the story. The witnesses of Naxal violence report that they sing in a 'savage' tongue. Such terms are intended to dehumanize the tribals who are equated with animals. The incomprehensible song makes the mainstream feel threatened. When Dulna roars 'Ma-ho' before dying, the officers panic and try to find the meaning of the exclamation. They wonder if it is a slogan. The narrator says sarcastically that even the 'tribal specialist types' could not decipher the meaning. Finally, Chamru, a Santhal tells them the meaning without much ado. He is amused with the specialists and giggles. This is his way of challenging the authority of the mainstream through his indigenous language. Although the protagonist is named Draupadi, she refers to herself as 'Dopdi'. She does not use the Sanskritised name because she refuses to part with her tribal identity or integrate with the mainstream. Language thus plays a crucial role in creating and determining the identity of the tribal subject.

3.2.3 Symbols

"Draupadi" abounds in symbolism. The title itself is symbolic of the protagonist's refusal to accept Brahmanical hegemony, she refers to herself only as Dopdi, which is very different from the Sanskritised name 'Draupadi'. The adoption of the name of the Kshatriya princess from Indian mythology would be symbolic of her integration with the mainstream. Hence, she does not use the name.'Dopdi' stands as a symbol of her Santhal identity. The guns and the bullets represent the state which attempts to crush tribal resistance through violent means, without giving them a chance to voice their concerns. The list that the officers discuss in the first part point to how bureaucratic red-tape and the obsession with documents denies visibility to the marginalized people.

Senanayak, as the name indicates, is the leader of the special forces. The name itself is symbolic. It is a word used to refer to the commander of the army and is frequently used in the *Mahabharata* (to which the story carries multiple allusions). He is representative of the pseudo-intellectuals who read books, write articles and seemingly stand on the side of the underdogs, but actually subscribe to bourgeois norms. He is a left-leaning intellectual who works against the very principles of Marxism. He uses his knowledge to crush the Santhal resistance because his allegiance lies with the mainstream Brahmanical social order.
Dulna's corpse and Dopdi's weak, mangled

body are both symbols of tribal resistance. They challenge the very hegemonic systems that destroy them. Dopdi's act of tearing off her clothes and refusing to cover herself is also an act of symbolic resistance. Unlike the Kshatriya princess Draupadi in the *Mahabharata,* she does not wish to clothe herself. Her nakedness becomes symbolic of her resistance against Brahmanical norms of modesty and her own subalternization.

3.2.4 Narrative Style

The omniscient narrative style is used here and the readers get acquainted with the characters and the events through the eyes of the unnamed narrator. Dopdi's thoughts as she is being chased are presented with clarity. The conversations also give a dynamic quality to the narration. The narrator's tone is sarcastic when she talks of the special forces, the government and the Constitution, pointing to the general lack of trust in the governmental machinery among the Adivasis.

The story begins in the form of an official document. "Name Dopdi Mejhen, age 27, husband Dulna Majhi (deceased), domicile….". It is actually a notice announcing a reward for anyone helping the police arrest Dopdi. It gives the aura of a newspaper report or journalistic writing to the story. There are detailed descriptions of the terrain inhabited by the Adivasis and the images are quite vivid. Mahasweta Devi uses phrases and slogans from Santhali quite often. This has a defamiliarizing effect, making the story stay close to its Santhali identity.

> Defamiliarization is a concept central to the Russian Formalist School. It was propounded by Viktor Shklovsky and refers to the use of language in such a way that the familiar is rendered

The use of the de-Sanskritised name 'Dopdi' is also an attempt at ensuring that the protagonist remains attached to her roots. It is also interesting to note that the narrator begins using the name Draupadi to refer to the protagonist from the time she is captured. This indicates a split between the first and second parts of the story. The tribal subject is forcefully taken to the domain of the upper castes and a new identity is imposed on her in the second part; hence she is called by her official name, 'Draupadi'. The story contains other allusions to the *Mahabharata.* The term 'senanayak', which is a Sanskrit term for 'commander' is used as the name of the leader of the special forces. The name indicates his status as a powerful person. The person initially in charge of combating the Naxals is Captain Arjan Singh. This is again an allusion to the warrior Arjun in the *Mahabharata.*

Onomatopoeic words such as "putt-putt", "crunch-crunch", "mow-mow" etc create a musical effect. This is ironic since these words are used in the context of the army attacking the village. Some words are repeated immediately, as in the case of "march-march", "fire-fire" and "surrender-surrender". These are words related to the police and special forces and they are repeated to portray the effect the violence has on the poor tribals. Words such as 'apprehend', 'kounter', 'elimination' etc are used repeatedly throughout the text. Repetition is a feature of Santhali as is evident from the song: "Hendre rambra keche keche pundi ramba keche keche". The writer has attempted to transport the Santhali ethos to the Bangla story through such repetitions, and the translator has successfully managed to retain such elements.

Another interesting aspect of the language is the misspelling of words and omission of sounds as in the case of 'kounter'. It is actually a shortened version of 'encounter'. The tribal people are mostly uneducated and when the police and media talk about 'encounter',

they hear it as' 'kounter'. Mahasweta Devi has incorporated this as a way of highlighting the modes in which the Santhals perceive the world and the language of the government. The italicized words are actually written in English in the original Bangla text. It is to denote this shift in language that the translator, Gayatri Spivak, italicizes the words. The message of hybridity conveyed by the mixture of Bangla and English in the original is transported to the readers of the English text.

Recap

- "Draupadi" was originally written in Bangla in 1978 by Mahasweta Devi
- It was first published in Devis' anthology *Agnigarbha*
- The work was translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak and later anthologized in *Breast Stories* (1997)
- It is set against the backdrop of the Naxalite Movement in Bengal in the 1960s and 70s
- It is set in a remote area in Bengal, dominated by Naxals
- The story moves between several places including the remote villages Bankrahjarh and Bakuli, and the forest of Jharkhani in West Bengal
- The title is an allusion to the name of the Kshatriya princess Draupadi, in the *Mahabharata*
- The protagonist is a Santhali woman called Draupadi/Dopdi
- She and her husband, Dulna, are being hunted by the special forces for their Naxalite activities
- She is finally apprehended by Senanayak and raped multiple times by many men
- She reacts by refusing to be shamed
- She tears away her clothes and pushes back Senanayak with her mangled breasts
- The subalternization of tribal communities and their resistance is visible in the story
- Dopdi is symbolic of the gendered subaltern
- Violence, the functioning of the RSA and the question of identity feature as prominent themes
- The name 'Dopdi' serves as a symbol of her Santhali identity
- The third-person narrative style is used
- The narrator uses sarcasm and irony as means of portraying the distrust of the Adivasis towards the governmental machinery
- Santhali phrases and words are incorporated in the text.

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- Repetition of words and sounds, which is a feature of Santhali, can be seen in the text.
- The translator has italicised the words that are written in English in the original text in order to retain the flavour of the original.

Objective Questions

1. Who translated "Draupadi" into English?
2. What happens to Dopdi after she is apprehended?
3. How did the policemen find Dopdi?
4. Why doesn't Draupadi go to the forest when she is being chased?
5. Who is representative of the gendered subaltern in the story?

Answers

1. Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak
2. She is arrested and taken to the camp where she is questioned, and raped multiple times.
3. With the help of Surja Sahu's brother, Rotoni Sahu and the two Santhals, Shomai and Budhna.
4. he does not want the police to discover the Naxal hideouts or arrest her fellow fighters.
5. Dopdi

Assignments

1. Analyse "Draupadi" as a subaltern text.
2. Discuss violence as a theme in "Draupadi".
3. Attempt a Marxist analysis of the short story.
4. How has the writer employed symbols in "Draupadi"?
5. Attempt a feminist analysis of the text.

Suggested Reading

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BLOCK - 04

NOVEL

SGOU

Unit 1

Samskara: A Rite For A Dead Man -U.R. Ananthamurthy

Learning Outcomes

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

- understand the various themes and motifs present in the novel *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*
- get an insight upon the caste system that prevailed in the Hindu society
- get an idea about how the society had been divided into water tight compartments of different castes
- learn how caste function as the determining factor of one's character

Prerequisites

U. R. Ananthamurthy, or Udupi Rajagopalacharya Ananthamurthy is one of the greatest writers in Kannada Literature. His contribution to literature is so remarkable that he was awarded both the Jnanpith award and the Padma Bhushan for it. He is considered as one of the pioneers of the 'Navya' movement or Modernism in Kannada literature. His works discuss social issues ranging from casteism among the Brahmins to political issues between bureaucrats. Ananthamurthy's works were translated both into international and regional languages. He was one of the finalists for the Man Booker International Prize in the year 2013. His main works include *Prashne*, Aakasha *Mattu Bekku*, *Samskara, Bhava, Bharathipura,* and *Avasthe.* Many of his novels and short stories have been adapted to well acclaimed films.

The novel *Samskara* is a religious novel about a decaying Brahmin colony in a south Indian village and contemporary poetic reworking of ancient Hindu themes and myths. In India the caste system of Hindu religion, which has been supported by religious text like *Bhagavad Gita Rig-Veda* and *Manusmriti*, has an immense influence on the lives

of Indian people on day- today life and it makes a big conflict to the India the Protagonist, people. The novel intricately navigates the moral dilemmas faced by Praneshacharya, and his community, particularly regarding Naranappa's cremation. Amidst societal expectations and financial enticements, the arrival of Chandri, Naranappa's devoted companion, catalyzes a profound awakening within Praneshacharya. Their encounter unravels suppressed desires and existential reflections, setting the stage for a profound exploration of morality, desire, and societal norms.

Keywords

Caste, Death, Superstition, Rites, Customs, Prostitution, Individuality

Discussion

4.1.1 Summary

The novel *Samskara* describes the journey of a learned and orthodox Brahmin named Praneshacharya in search of himself. His life was so monotonous as he had only been concentrating on the Vedic texts and taking care of his invalid wife Bhageeraati. He was happy about his wife's condition which had been a blessing for him because he didn't have to deviate from his ideas of being a Brahmachari. His life was completely changed with the death of a young degenerate Brahmin by the name Naranappa.

Naranappa was a Brahmin who was considered degenerate due to his acts like drinking, eating meat, and sleeping in brothels. He had brought himself a concubine named Chandri and were devoted to each other. They took the matter of Nranappa's cremation to the wise and learned Praneshacharya. The Brahmins were confused about his cremation as they feared that they would have to admit him as a Brahmin if they cremate him which they didn't want to. But if they left his body there, the Muslims who had been close with him might consider cremating his body which would make things even worse for them. Brahmins who seemed disinterested in the beginning started showing some interest when Chandri mentioned that she would give her gold to meet the expenses.

Praneshacharya was a pure soul who had no interest in gold. All he cared about was the answers he got from his Vedic texts. Finding no luck in the texts he decided to go to the temple to seek answers for his quest. While returning from the temple he saw Chandri who came to request him in person about the cremation of Naranappa. Chandri really thought highly of him like the other Brahmins. She knew he was different and begged before him on her knees. This was when her breasts touched his knees and he started to lose his balance.

He fell on his knees, brushed his fingers against her soft hair and was soon embraced by her as she realised the purity of his heart. He felt all the suppressed desires raging to-

wards him, and he called out 'Ma'. She fed him some bananas, laid her saree on the floor and put him to sleep. She held onto him and wept. She cried her heart out for Naranappa. This is where the first section of the novel ends.

The second section of the novel begins with Praneshacharya waking up in the woods with Chandri. It was both a literal and metaphorical waking up for him. He asked Chandri to confess to the Brahmins of the Agrahara regarding their sin as he had considered having sex as a sin. Chandri refused to do so even though she knew that it would be a great relief for him to get the load off his shoulders. Chandri left the place after cremating Naranappa's body with the help of a Muslim friend as she couldn't bare to watch Nranappa's body rot.

After the sexual affair with Chandri, he found it difficult to take care of his wife. At first, he believed that she disgusted him, but later realised that it was the guilt inside him that was making him lose control. He could also feel that he isn't acting himself. He started to feel all the desires he had suppressed when he was a boy of 16. He looked for Chandri to reveal their secret as he was not brave enough to talk to the Brahmins. He couldn't find Chandri, and the next time the Brahmins had approached him regarding Naranappa's cremation, he asked them to do whatever they wanted to do. While taking a swim in the river, Praneshacharya could feel all his boyhood urges returning to him. He went to the woods where he had slept with Chandri to relive those moments. Meanwhile his wife had caught the plague and died. He cremated her and left the Agrahara. He decided to go on a spiritual journey.

The third section of the novel starts with Praneshacharya leaving the Agrahara on a spiritual journey. He starts the journey as a normal Brahmin, leaving behind all his money and jewels. His first destination was Kundapur where he expected to find Chandri. On his way he met a young guy named Putta. Putta reminded him of his sins from the past life as he couldn't get rid of him no matter how hard he tried. He could still feel his sexual urges and desires rushing towards him as he was attracted to a curvy gymnast and another beautiful young girl named Padmavati. He was supposed to stay with Padmavati that night, but before that Putta took him to the temple for supper. At the temple feast, while he was conversing with his neighbour, he understood that the cook had recognised him. Inorder to avoid further complications, he decided to leave the place with the help of Putta.

When he got out, he decided to go back to his village instead of going to Padmavati's place. This was when realisation dawned on him. He understood that he no longer wanted to conform to the norms and regulations laid before him by the Brahmin communities. He was ready to talk to the Brahmins about his actions and he was not sorry for it, and he wanted to give Naranappa a proper samskara. He realised that he was only being human, and he has not done anything wrong.

On hearing the name Durvasapura, Putta wanted to accompany him as his friend Naranappa lived there. Praneshacharya did not want to complicate it any further by mentioning Naranappa's death to Putta. This time he was fortunate to get rid of Putta thanks to a bullock cart. He asked Putta to go meet his wife as only one person could travel in that Bullock cart. Finally, the novel ends with Praneshacharya returning to Durvasapura in the expectation that he would be able to make a fresh start.

4.1.2 Analysis

The novel *Samskara* by U. R. Ananthamurthy describes the journey of a Brahmin Guru 'Praneshacharya' in search of himself following the death of another Brahmin Naranappa. Praneshacharya was a highly respected Brahmin who had never deviated from the path of truth and purity. He was well versed in all the Vedic texts and was titled 'Vedanta Siromani.' Praneshacharya was married to an invalid girl named Bhageerathi with whom he couldn't have a physical relationship. He considered this as a boon as he would never have to break away from his ideas of purity. He dedicated his life to taking care of her. He was proud of the sacrifice he had made. His life was so ordinary and eventless until the untimely death of a young degenerate Brahmin named Naranappa.

Naranappa died of plague and a group of Brahmins consulted Praneshacharya regarding his cremation. They were confused as Naranappa had never once lived like Brahmin. He was a drunk who ate meat. He slept in brothels and had even brought a prostitute belonging to a lower caste to the agrahara. The Brahmins of the Agrahara took this matter to Praneshacharya who was the most learned of them all. The Brahmins were worried about the case because they feared the Muslims taking control of Naranappa's body as he had been close with them. Praneshachrya tried to figure a way out of this mess. He as usual relied on his sacred texts and the Vedas but none of them could answer him. Naranappa's concubine Chandri, the young prostitute he had brought to the agrahaa was actually devoted to Nranappa and was ready to give up her ornaments to meet the expenses of the funeral. Certain Brahmins started to show a sudden interest at the mention of the gold.

Praneshacharya was a pure soul who didn't have any interest in gold. As he couldn't find any answers from his sacred texts, he decided to go to the Hanuman temple to pray for an answer. Chandri understood that he was the only Brahmin who was true to his beliefs in the entire Agrahara. She decided to meet him in person and talk to him directly about the cremation of Naranappa. She sensed something divine in him and decided to pray to him on her knees regarding the matter. While he was returning from the temple still clueless about what to do, Chandri consulted him. She fell on her knees and begged him to do something. This was when Chandri's breasts touched Praneshacarya's knees. He felt something move inside him. He felt his boyhood desires that had been laid away for so long returning to him. The touch of Chandri's firm breasts made him thirsty for them. He tried to maintain his composure but his weak body fell down to Chandri. He brushed his fingers through her hair. Chandri could feel his warmth and the purity of his heart. She embraced him tightly. As her breasts tightened against him, all his control was lost. The hunger that he had not so far appeased began to make its urgent claims now and the Acharya faintly called out, 'Ma.' Chandri pampered him like he was a child. She gave him some bananas to eat. She laid her saree on the floor and put him to sleep. She held onto the Acharya and sobs her heart out for Naranappa. The first section of the novel ends here.

The second section of the novel begins with Praneshacharya waking up with Chandri in the woods. This awakening was both literal and metaphorical for Praneshacharya. He asked Chandri to talk to the Brahmins of the Agrahara about his sin. He believed that he no longer deserved to be treated as the Guru as he had lost all his purity for having sex, that

too with a low caste woman like Chandri. He believed that he had no right to make an opinion on the cremation of Naranappa as he is now no more of a Brahmin than Naranappa. It was a great relief for Praneshacharya as he felt like a load lifted off his shoulders. Chandri didn't believe that Praneshacharya is unworthy in any way. She thought of not telling the Brahmins about what happened between the two of them. Chandri left the place after cremating Naranappas's body with the help of a Muslim friend named Ahmad Bari who owed Naranappa a favour. She did this because she couldn't see her beloved Naranappa's body rot waiting for the Brahmins to figure out their beliefs and superstitions.

After the sexual affairs he had with Chandri, he returned to his invalid wife, Bhageerati. He who had taken care of his wife his entire life found his hands trembling while touching her. He felt disgusted when he saw her skinny body and flat chest. Something told him from within that she is the reason for all his sufferings. He soon realised that it wasn't her that was troubling him, but the guilt he felt inside that was consuming him. This was the same 12-year-old person he had married when he was 16. She was the same woman whom he happily took care of after returning from his studies. She was the same woman whom he considered a blessing from God as he thought it was a gift from God for keeping himself pure. But at this moment he could feel the 16-year-old boy inside him, not the one who had sacrificed all his desires, but the one with a heart full of desire and passion. These desires made him believe that he has lost all his divinity. He disowned all his responsibilities. At first, he thought it was a blessing that Chandri didn't open up to the public. But now he couldn't bear this guilt, even though he didn't have the courage to talk to the Brahmins about his sin. He called for Chandri to talk to the Brahmins, but she was nowhere to be found. The next time the Brahmins asked Praneshacharya about the cremation of Naranappa, he asked them to do whatever they wanted to do.

Meanwhile Praneshacharya decided to take a swim in the river. While swimming, he could feel all the 16-year-old urges rushing back to him. He got out of the river and went to the forest where he and Chandri had slept together. He stayed there for some time and returned home. His wife had caught the plague and soon surrendered to death. After cremating his wife, Praneshacharya decided to go on a spiritual journey. With this, the second section of the novel ends.

The third section of the novel describes the spiritual journey of Praneshacharya. His first intention was to move to Kundapura in search of Chandri. The fifteen lace-embroidered shawls, the two hundred rupees, the balsam necklace set in gold, all that had been conferred on him by the Mutt in honour of his erudition and forensic skill are left behind in the deserted house. On his way to Kundapura, a village headman who had failed to recognise him gave him fruits thinking that he was a Brahmin in search of alms. He refused to take the fruits and moved further. On his journey to Kundapura he met a young man named Putta who followed him almost everywhere he went. Putta was a guy who belonged to the Malera caste. Praneshacharya somehow felt that Putta was like the sins of his previous lives following him. Putta took him to a restaurant to buy him coffee. On the way he kept shooting riddles at him. Later he took the Acharya to a temple festival where the Acharya was mesmerised by the acrobatics skills of an extremely curvy girl. The girl reminded him of Chandri's charms. Then Putta took him to another beautiful young girl named

Padmavati. Acharya was asked to stay at her place for the night and resume his journey in the morning. Praneshacharya was totally ok with this. Then Putta took him to the temple for supper. This was a place where only Brahmins could dine.

At the temple feast which was only open to Brahmins, Praneshacharya met a person who had wanted his advice in marrying off his underage daughter. While they were talking, Praneshacharya understood that the cook had recognized him and he had gone to the chief to report the presence of the great Praneshacharya in the temple. Inorder to avoid this, Praneshacharya with the help of Putta got out of the temple hall. When Putta was about to take him back to Padmavati's place Praneshacharya decided not to go. He was somehow convinced that he couldn't hide forever and someday he will have to face reality. He thought it would be best if this happened sooner rather than later. He decided to return to the Agrahara and talk to the Brahmins about everything that happened since the day they had approached him. He was not sorry for his actions; hence he didn't want to apologise. He was confident and he decided to talk to them. He was no longer ready to live according to the rules set by someone else for him. He wanted to make decisions for himself. This was actually an awakening for Praneshacharya. He understood that all these years, he had been a puppet in the hands of the Brahmin society. This spiritual awakening gave him the grudge to go back to his village and address the Brahmins. He also wanted to give a proper Samskara for Naranappa. He told Putta that he wanted to return to his village Durvasapura. On hearing the name Durvasapura, Putta insisted that he too shall go with him, because he wanted to meet his friend Naranappa, who had helped him through his hard times, there. Praneshacharya didn't want to complicate the situation by telling him that Naranappa was no more. As they proceed on the road, a bullock cart proceeding to Durvasapura offers to take one of them. Putta asked Acharya to go by cart and proceeded to meet his wife living with her parents at Thirthahalli. The novel ends with Praneshacharya journeying back to Durvasapura in anxious expectation.

Recap

- Orthodox Brahmin Praneshacharya embarks on a journey of self-discovery
- His life revolved around Vedic texts and caring for his invalid wife
- Naranappa's death, a degenerate Brahmin, disrupts Praneshacharya's life
- Brahmins debate Naranappa's cremation, fearing implications
- Chandri, Naranappa's concubine, offers gold for cremation expenses
- Praneshacharya seeks answers in texts and temple
- Unexpected intimate encounter between Praneshacharya and Chandri
- Praneshacharya struggles with guilt and newfound desires
- Chandri cremates Naranappa with help from a Muslim friend
- Praneshacharya's wife dies of plague

- He leaves the agrahara on a spiritual journey
- Meets Putta, who becomes an unwanted companion
- Experiences attraction to other women (gymnast, Padmavati)
- Avoids recognition at a temple feast
- Decides to return to his village instead of staying with Padmavati
- Realizes he no longer wants to conform to Brahmin community norms
- Accepts his actions as human, not wrong
- Plans to give Naranappa a proper samskara
- Manages to part ways with Putta
- Returns to Durvasapura, hoping for a fresh start without conforming to set norms

Objective Questions

1. Who is the author of the work Samskara: *A Rite for a Dead Man*?
2. What was the title given to Praneshacharya for being a very learned scholar?
3. What community did the young man Putta belong to?
4. Why is Naranappa considered a deranged Brahmin?
5. What was the name of Naranappa's concubine?
6. Why were the Brahmins worried about Naranappa's cremation?
7. How did Chandri cremate Naranappa's body?
8. What is the central theme of the novel *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*?
9. What does the writer compare Putta to in the novel Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man?
10. How many sections does the novel *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man* a can roughly be divided into?

Answers

1. U. R. Ananthamurthy.
2. Vedanta Siromani
3. Malera
4. Naranappa is considered a deranged Brahmin as he drinks, eats meat, and sleeps with prostitutes belonging to lower castes.
5. Chandri
6. The Brahmins were worried about Naranappa's cremation as they feared that

the Muslims might do the cremation and convert him into a Muslim.

7. Chandri cremated Naranappa's body with the help of a Muslim man named Ahamed Bari.
8. The journey of a learned Brahmin into self-realisation.
9. The writer compares the character Putta to the sins from Praneshacharya's previous lives.
10. Three

Assignments

1. Analyse the character of Praneshacharya in *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*. How does his journey of self-discovery reflect broader themes of tradition versus modernity and individual autonomy versus societal expectations?
2. Explore the significance of Naranappa's character in *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*. How does his unconventional lifestyle challenge the orthodox Brahmin community, and what role does his death play in catalysing the narrative's events?
3. Discuss the symbolism of Chandri in *Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man*. How does her character serve as a catalyst for Praneshacharya's transformation and moral introspection?

Suggested Reading

1. Ananthakrishnan, R, Hegde, J, Bhattacharyya, P., Shah, R., Sasikumar, M. "Simple Syntactic and Morphological Processing Can Help English-Hindi Statistical Machine Translation." *In the Proceedings of International Joint Conference on NLP(IJCNLP08),* Hyderabad, 2008.
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3. Stent A, Marge M, Singhai M. "Evaluating evaluation methods for generation in the presence of variation." *In Proceedings of CICLing 2005,* Mexico City, pp 341-351, 2005.
4. Purple Pencil Project. "Book Review: 'Samskara' by U.R. Ananthamurthy." *Purple Pencil Project,* https://www.purplepencilproject.com/book-review-samskara-u-r-ananthamurthy/.
5. 99 Books Cart. "Samskara Novel Plot Summary." *99 Books Cart Blog,* https://www.99bookscart.com/blog/view/650cc15f2770e11620a5a49c/samskara-novel-plot-summary.

BLOCK - 05

DRAMA

SGOU

Unit 1

Silence! The Court is in Session -Vijay Tendulkar

Learning Outcomes

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

- describe, analyse, interpret and evaluate dramatic literature theatrical productions
- identify the role of social activism in addressing community issues.
- analyse the impact of societal judgment on individuals' lives.
- evaluate the effectiveness of mock trials in highlighting societal injustices.
- examine the complexities of societal norms and their effects on individual freedoms.

Prerequisites

Drama stands out among all literary genres as the most captivating and splendid form of literature, finding expression through performance on stage, radio, or television. In every dramatic presentation, essential features known as dramatic elements are at play, skilfully manipulated by actors to shape and enhance the narrative's meaning. Thus, drama becomes a visual composite vividly illustrating the magnificent saga of human life, bringing stories to life in a compelling and immersive manner.

Furthermore, drama serves as a powerful vehicle of instruction and illumination, conveying profound truths and insights about the human experience. Through character portrayal and the unfolding of events, drama offers audiences the opportunity to reflect on existence's complexities and gain new perspectives on life. In India, drama boasts a rich and glorious tradition, dating back centuries and encompassing a diverse range of styles and themes, from ancient Sanskrit plays to modern productions. Reflecting the cultural richness and diversity of the nation, Indian drama captivates hearts and minds through its unexpected twists, stirring emotions, and lasting impact on those who experience its power firsthand.

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar was a leading Indian playwright, a creative genius and won several prestigious awards: Padma Bhushan, Sangeet Natak Academy Award and the Maharashtra state State Government Award. He Participated in the Quit India Movement and is mentioned as an angry young man of Indian theatre. He was the author of 28 full length dramas and 24 one act plays and eleven plays for children He is a dramatist, political journalist, screen and television writer. Also he is a keen observer of the social, political and moral degradation of contemporary society.

Silence! The Court is in Session is an English translation of a play originally written in Marathi in 1967 by Vijay Tendulkar, which won the Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay Award in 1917. *Titled Shantata's Court Chalu Aah* in Marathi, the play offers a glimpse into the lives of men and women in the 1950s. Based on a short story by Swiss writer Friedrich Dourrenmatt, it unfolds over three acts, focusing on the lives of ordinary people. The story revolves around "The Sonar Moti Tenement Progressive Association" in Bombay, whose primary objective is to raise awareness of important issues. The troupe gathers to stage a mock trial, protesting President Johnson's production of atomic weapons, highlighting the play's engagement with social and political themes.

Keywords

SMTPA Mock trial, Atomic weaponry, Socially committed activists, Indian community, Infanticide, Social causes

Discussion

5.1.1 Act Wise Brief Summary

Act I

The first act introduces all the eight characters. The characters are divided into two categories, one claims to exercise authority over the other. Mr. Kashikar, Sukhatme, Karnik and Ponkshe dominate Mrs. Kashikar and Balu Rokde. The first act brings out a clear picture of Leela Benare outsmarting the crude middleclass men.

Act II

There is a major shift and transformation in Benare's character. The eloquent schoolteacher becomes speechless. The free uninhibited spirit becomes less defensive. In Act I the characters were introduced by Benare but in Act II the character brings out to the lime light the darkened life of Benare. She is found guilty of the crime of infanticide and illicit relationship with Professor Damle.

Act III

This act presents before us an immobile and broken Benare crushed by her peer group. Benare's future is left weak with no economic support, no male protection or job security. The play starts on a playful mock trial and ends up on a serious note. The play ends with a song of a grieving sparrow who is left homeless, which symbolically represents the destitute Benare.

5.1.2 Detailed summary

The Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association is gathering to put American President Lyndon B. Johnson on mock trial for his role in the proliferation of atomic weaponry. The SMTPA is composed of socially committed activists who try to raise awareness of issues of significance affecting members of their Indian community that might be overlooked in favour of more pressing concerns. As various members of the association arrive, important information about their backgrounds, present circumstances, and interrelationships are conveyed: there is Mr. Kashikar, a social worker, and his wife, who is doting but unable to give him children; the pretentious actor, Karnik; the lawyer, Sukhatme; the science student, Ponkshe; the vibrant and free teacher, Benare; and the ward of the Kashikars and errand-boy of the troupe, Balu Rokde. Two members of the group, Professor Damle and Mr. Rawte, are not able to make it to the performance. Samant, a local village man, is there to help them into the hall they'll be using for their evening show.

Performance time is still a few hours away, so those who have made it decide to pass the time through improvisation; this is also done to help Samant, who has to help fill in tonight, understand a courtroom's proceedings. Though the roles that most of them are slated to play remain essentially unchanged, there will be one very great change: a new defendant will be put on trial. Since Benare happens to have left the room at this time, the others decide she will be placed on trial. When she returns and discovers what is taking place, she suggests thievery as a replacement for the crime they have chosen for her: infanticide. The crime was not chosen randomly: the vivacious, early-30s woman is routinely criticized behind her back for her "unconventional" lifestyle. Soon enough, it becomes pointedly apparent that there may be little about this trial of Benare that is purely random.

The very purpose of the SMTPA is indicative of the collective opinion the members hold of themselves. They have ordained themselves as an entity charged with educating the more ignorant members of the community; more than just educating them, they see themselves as guiding them to a more elevated understanding of social causes. In reality, they seem more interested in being judgmental of others than in bringing them up to equal standing.
When Balu Rokde offers the enticing information that, in reality, he did once see Benare inside the home of Professor Damle, the "mock" part of the trial begins to blend with real life. Samant fabricates a theory to explain what Rokde actually witnessed that day: Benare was having an affair with Damle and wound up pregnant, a scenario which, of course, would naturally end with the infanticide with which she is charged. The only problem is that Benare's response to Samant's entirely constructed fiction is too emotionally overwrought to be acting: in fact, Samant has, entirely by accident, hit upon a real-life truth. At that point, when it seems that an unexpected and ugly truth has inserted itself too deeply into the proceedings to turn back, the mock trial takes on an increasingly dramatic tone. When Benare attempts to flee the room, she finds it has been locked from the outside, trapping her in the role of criminal defendant. The trial continues with testimony from two of the men that Benare pleaded with them to marry her and help protect the child from being raised illegitimately, but that both men rejected her.

Sukhatme takes on the role of the prosecutor in the mock trial—he was the one who suggested that Benare be put on trial in the first place. He goes overboard in painting Benare as the very embodiment of the corruption of

the institution of motherhood. Presiding over the trial is the status-conscious Mr.Kashikar, who, in addition to being judge, breaks with precedent, tradition, and convention by temporarily putting aside his judicial robes and taking the stand as a witness. He explains he feels free of duty and impartiality to the extent that he castigates all adult unmarried girls as a "sinful canker on the body of society" before providing yet more damning evidence about Benare.

The prosecution having rested, the trial is turned over to the defence to call witnesses. There is just one problem: all three witnesses who could possibly be called to refute any of the allegations being made against Benare just so happen not to be present. The prosecuting attorney goes on to give his closing argument and then, at the judge's request, goes on to present closing arguments for the defence. Judge Kashikar inquires if Benare has anything at all to say in her defence.

There is an imagined scene (the lights change and the others freeze in place) in which Benare proceeds to give a long, passionate speech. She details how she never quite fit into society and how she once tried to end her life but did not succeed, consequently having a greater appreciation for life. Her failed love affair with Damle meant she was once again in trouble, but she would raise the child anyway. She laments how people cannot mind their own business and stay out of others' private lives, and she resents that even though she's given her all to her job, the administration wants to remove her for being an unwedded mother. At the conclusion of this emotionally intense monologue, the action of the play resumes as normal.

Kashikar reiterates how grave her crime is for society as a whole, and he delivers a guilty verdict as well as punishment: the illegitimate foetus growing inside Benare is to be aborted. Benare collapses to the floor.

Suddenly, the drama is broken by the sound of the locked door opened by the villagers who have come to the mock trial of President Johnson. As if coming out of a dream state, the actors on stage slowly remove the trappings of their "characters" and become their real selves again. As Benare remains unmoving on the floor, they try to persuade her that it was all nothing but a game and not to take it seriously, but she remains lifeless. The others leave her there as they wander off to prepare for the scheduled performance. Finally, the only thing left on stage is her body crumpled on the floor, along with a little stuffed bird from Samant.

5.1.3 Characterisation

Raghunath Bhikaji Samant

Samant is a local villager who helps get the actors set up with the hall. He is a simple man, one who is mostly kind throughout the play. However, when asked to pretend to be a witness to Benare's "immoral" behaviour, he finds it easy enough to fabricate a story about her being pregnant with Damle's child and claiming she will kill herself. While Samant is not as deliberately cruel and manipulative as the others, it says something about him (and people in general) that he finds it easy to be swept up in the malicious game.

Leela Benare

Benare is an unconventional schoolteacher who is not shy about expressing her opinions and lives life just a little off the beaten path. Unfortunately, others see things differently and cast the relatively innocuous independence of the early-30s single woman in a much harsher and more judgmental light. Thanks to the random timing—perhaps—of not being in the right room at the right time, she is chosen to play a woman on trial for infanticide in a mock trial that takes a dark turn toward the

serious. While she mocks the whole thing at first, we see her grow tenser, more frightened, and more burdened as the trial goes on. She tries to escape it numerous times but can never manage to do so, and she sits to hear judgment passed upon how she chooses to live her life.

Sukhatme

A major player among the Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association, he is usually cast as a lawyer in the association's mock trials because he is a lawyer in real life, albeit one who apparently isn't very talented. Here, he is the attorney in charge of prosecuting the mock case against Benare. He unflaggingly and happily persecutes her the entire time, showing no mercy but disingenuously protesting that the whole thing is a game.

Balu Rokde

Rokde is a young man who was raised and supported by the Kashikars as a sort of son. He is clearly rather servile to them, though we learn later that Kashikar might harbour suspicions about him and his wife. Rokde is a nervous man, but once urged to take the stand to testify—first as to seeing Damle and Benare alone together, and second as to Benare's attempted seduction of him—he grows in confidence and relates his observations and experiences in an excitable and callous fashion. There also seem to be fabrications in his stories.

Ponkshe

A science student and member of the acting group. Ponkshe is initially not as interested in the fake trial but comes to relish his role within it, delivering pertinent information about Benare that helps bring about her "conviction."

Mr. Kashikar

He is another power player alongside Sukhatme in the Association. In his real job, he is a social worker and seems very proud of himself; in the mock trial, he sits in judgment as the presiding justice overseeing the case. Towards the end, he makes an unprecedented break with all legal convention by taking the stand as a witness speaking harshly against the defendant. Throughout the trial, he tries to be as stern and commanding as possible, and he clearly enjoys his position of power. He utters numerous cruel, disparaging comments about Benare as an individual and about unmarried women in general. The old married childless couple, Mr.Kashikar and Mrs. Kashikar adopts and raises up Balu Rokdeashikar.

Mrs. Kashikar

The wife of Kashikar, she is insecure about not having children and masks it with judgment and cruelty. She is gleeful throughout Benare's trial and physically and emotionally manipulates Benare to keep participating even though she desperately does not want to. The happiness of her marriage with Kashikar is rather suspect, as he is often openly impatient and derisive of her

Professor Damle

"The Intellect" who abandons Leela Benare. A member of the acting troupe and Benare's lover, he does not appear on stage during the show. He is married with five children, has an important university job, and is considered an upstanding member of the community. No one feels compelled to judge him for getting Benare pregnant.

5.1.4 Themes and Techniques

The play is radical in its subject and aggressive in its tone. It is based on grave social problem of unmarried motherhood. It depicts the hypocrisy of a cross section of middle-class men in the metropolitan city.

Silence:The play represents the patriarchal conspiracy to silence the voice of women in the name of social justice.

Court: The play depicts the process of justice devoid of human life.

Session: The play represents the prevalent social structure which is biased against women. The themes of his plays are gender inequality, social inequality, alienation, individual-isolation, love, marriage, sex and violence.

Mock-trial - it is a play within a play. Mock-trial is a new technique implemented and introduced by Vijay Tendulkar. It is an act or imitation trial. The songs play a significant role in the play, each act depicts the growth of the characters. The techniques of satire, irony, pathos and mock elements are used to criticise the middle-class attitude towards life.

Conclusion : The play is set up in modern independent India which focuses on the ideals of men and women in society. It presents the socio-economic system which consists of wielders of authority, controllers of opinion and initiators of action. The exploitation of patriarchal society is revealed.

Recap

- The Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association gathers to put American President Lyndon B. Johnson on mock trial for atomic weaponry proliferation.
- SMTPA, comprised of socially committed activists, raises awareness on community issues.
- Members' backgrounds and relationships are revealed as they arrive for the trial.
- Benare is unexpectedly chosen as the trial's defendant, highlighting societal judgments.
- The SMTPA aims to educate but leans towards judgmental attitudes.
- Balu Rokde's revelation blurs the lines between mock trial and reality.
- Samant's accidental truth complicates Benare's trial.
- Benare finds herself trapped in the trial after a dramatic turn of events.
- The prosecution paints Benare as corrupt, while the judge adds damning evidence.
- Benare's impassioned defence leads to a guilty verdict and a tragic end.

Objective Questions

1. What kind of play is *Silence! the Court is in Session*?
2. What is the main theme of *Silence! the Court is in Session*?
3. Who is Kashikar in the play *Silence! the Court is in Session*?
4. What was Leela Benare accused of?
5. Who translated *Silence! the Court is in Session*?

Answers

1. Social drama (A play within a play)
2. Societal criticism
3. The judge
4. Infanticide accusation
5. Priya Adarkar

Assignments

1. How does the play *Silence! the Court is in Session* expose the society's mindset? Explore.
2. Discuss the social message we get from the play *Silence! the Court is in Session*?
3. How is motherhood described in *Silence! the Court is in Session*? Explain.
4. Analyse the language and style of *Silence! the Court is in Session*
5. What is the message of the play *Silence! the Court is in Session*? Explain.

Suggested Reading

1. Duthade, Shivanand Sahadu. "Humanist Perspectives in Vijay Tendulakar's Play "*Silence! The Court is in Session*"."
2. Garima. "Treatment of Women in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session and Kamala: A Mirror to Indian Society."*
3. Joseph, John Peter. "The Playwright as a Social Critic: A Critical Study of Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session.*"
4. Suma, S . "Structural Features and Stylistic Devices in Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* and *Kamala."*

SGOU

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

BLOCK - 06

Life Writing

SGOU

Unit 1

I Am Vidhya: A Transgender's Journey -Living Smile Vidya

Learning Outcomes

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

- compare and contrast biography and memoir
- identify the language, diction and characteristics of the memoir
- understand, accept and empathise with the transgender community
- critically examine transgender life and literature in the socio-cultural scenario

Prerequisites

Life writing, encompassing autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, and diaries, holds a significant place in Indian English literature. This genre offers a deeply personal glimpse into individuals' lives, reflecting the rich awareness of India's diverse cultures, histories, and experiences. Over the years, Indian English writers have contributed immensely to this genre, creating works that resonate with authenticity, emotional depth, and cultural richness.

One of the earliest and most notable examples of life writing in Indian English literature is Mahatma Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth*. This autobiography chronicles Gandhi's journey from his childhood to his role in India's struggle for independence. The book is not just a personal account but also a philosophical treatise, offering insights into his thoughts on non-violence, truth, and justice. Gandhi's candid reflections on his successes and failures make this work a timeless piece in Indian literature.

In more recent times, autobiographies like *Unbreakable* by Mary Kom, the Indian boxing champion, have gained popularity. Her story of rising from a small village in Manipur to becoming a world champion boxer is an inspiring tale of perseverance and determination.

Mary Kom's narrative provides a unique perspective on the challenges faced by women in sports in India, highlighting issues of gender, class, and regional disparities.

Memoirs have also carved out a significant space in Indian English literature. *A Life Less Ordinary* by Baby Halder is a powerful memoir of a domestic worker who, despite her circumstances, finds solace and strength in writing. Her story sheds light on the often-overlooked lives of domestic workers in India, bringing their struggles and resilience to the forefront. Halder's narrative is a testament to the transformative power of education and self-expression.

Biographies also play a crucial role in Indian English literature, with works such as *Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi* by Katherine Frank providing detailed insights into the lives of prominent figures. This biography of India's first female Prime Minister explores her political career, personal life, and impact on Indian society. Frank's meticulous research and engaging writing style make this biography a compelling read.

Life writing in Indian English literature is not limited to famous personalities alone. The genre has expanded to include the voices of the marginalized and the underrepresented. For instance, *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* by Living Smile Vidya is a poignant autobiography that narrates the struggles and triumphs of a transgender woman in India. Vidya's story highlights the social ostracism faced by transgender individuals and their fight for dignity and acceptance.

Keywords

Gender identity, Gender expression, Tirunangai, Transphobia, Nirvana, Reet, Chatla, Sex transition, Kothis, Gender dysphoria.

Discussion

6.1.1 About the Author: Living Smile Vidya

Fig 6.1.1 Vidya

Vidya is a theatre and film artist who acts and directs. She was not born a woman but became one. A transgender woman who radiates wisdom, by being called Smiley, her life is an epitome of pain and perseverance. Vidya is an excellent academic, a passionate actress, and an irresistible author. She is also a transgender activist and blogger. Her autobiographical memoir, *I am Vidya – A Transgender's Journey*, was originally written in Tamil and later translated into English and seven other Indian languages. Despite holding an MA first rank in Linguistics, she once had to beg due to her gender crisis. Currently, she is a transgender, feminist, and Dalit activist who also volunteers for destitute causes.

> "It is better to be hated for what I really am than to be loved for what I am not"
> -Living smile Vidya

I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey by Living Smile Vidya is an autobiographical account of her transition from man to woman. Originally written in Tamil, this book is translated into English. Vidya's journey was filled with pain and perseverance, despair and destitution, begging, beatings, and hard work to attain nirvana. For Vidya, nirvana meant Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS), the transition from birth sex to trans sex, liberation from male to female, and from humiliation to dignity.

Vidya was the only male child among three sisters in her family. Her parents had high hopes and expectations for her. However, our society is still orthodox about human sexuality and does not accept transsexuality, which doesn't conform to traditional concepts. Civil society often refuses to acknowledge that being transgender is as natural as being male or female. All unrest starts when this simple truth is ignored, and peace comes when one's right to choose their sex is accepted.

This autobiography reveals the excruciating experiences of a transsexual person on her journey to ascertain her gender identity. Vidya's story raises persistent questions about human sexuality and highlights the malignancy of civil society. Transgenders are teased, trailed, and insulted constantly. They are denied justice, dignity, freedom, fraternity, and a normal life. Vidya, however, is a superb fighter who never succumbs to negative forces.

6.1.2 Chapter-wise Summary

6.1.2.1 Chapter 1: Nirvana

I, Vidya, a transgender woman, was on my way to Cuddapah by train for my sex transition operation, which we called nirvana. I wore an old sari and a tiny nose-stud. I had booked my train ticket from Pune to Cuddapah the day Sarada Nani agreed to send me for my nirvana. Accompanying me were Suganthi Ayah, Satya, and Nagarani.

Sarada Nani was an important figure among transgenders in Pune. Her daughter was Aruna Amma, and I was her Chela daughter. Satya, my senior in the group, had a dark complexion and was solidly built with thick hair like Suganthi Ayah. Suganthi Ayah was always plaintive, and we teased her by calling her grandma.

That night was long. I tossed and turned, waking up to find the whole train asleep. Tomorrow was my nirvana. How long I had waited for this moment! What humiliations I had suffered! I had mortgaged my pride, buried my anger, and even begged on the streets, all for my dream of nirvana. I stayed awake the whole night, eagerly welcoming the new day.

We arrived at Cuddapah nursing home and rushed in. The nursing home was right on the street, and we were herded upstairs by an attendant who spoke Telugu to Sugandhi Ayah. She must have been a regular visitor there. The room had three steel cots, with many female names scrawled on the walls, seemingly reserved for transgenders. Nirvana was a hazardous operation, and they might have feared dying, but I didn't feel like writing my name. I was certain I wouldn't die.

Tension was palpable. We didn't mind the strange smell in the room. Fear gripped us as we gave blood for testing. The report would come in half an hour. It was an HIV test, the only test they conducted, as they charged more for HIV-positive patients. A woman from our street, who had been in Pune for many years, was lying post-operation, HIV-positive. It was a rude shock for us. The test report showed none of us had AIDS.

First, they took Satya for the operation, which was over in barely twenty minutes. They dropped her on a steel cot covered with newspaper. I was nervous as they took me next. "Repeat the name of Mother," Ayah told

me. But it was no operation theatre; it was a slaughterhouse. They removed my skirt, and I curled up for a spinal injection. I hadn't lost sensation when the surgeon's scalpel first cut into my abdomen. Another anaesthetic followed. I screamed in pain, constantly repeating "Matha… Matha…" as Ayah had instructed. They seemed to dig deep into my innards, removing my penis and testicles. Years of silent shame ended then.

The operation took only twenty minutes. They dumped me, too, on a newspaper-covered steel cot. I tried to withstand the pain. Satya was sobbing uncontrollably. This pain would obliterate all other pains we had experienced before. I thanked them for making me female. Maleness was removed from my body, and my life was fulfilled. I could sleep in peace. At last, I attained nirvana. I had become a woman. I was no longer Saravana. I was Vidya, a complete woman. I was no longer a brother to Radha and Manju; I became their sister. I requested Appa to accept me as a girl.

6.1.2.2 Chapter 2: Appa

My father was Ramaswami, and my mother was Veeramma. They married in 1973 and started their life in a small hut on an unoccupied piece of land at Attumanthai Street. My father was a municipality sweeper, and my mother was a brave woman, as her name suggested. She was hardworking and sweet-tempered, but submissive to her husband's tyrannical ways. She died in an accident when I was just eleven.

I was born on 25th March 1982 as their sixth child after years of praying for a boy. Their first son was stillborn, and two sisters, Vembu and Vellachi, succumbed to a mysterious disease. Radha and Manju were my surviving sisters. My birth brought them joy, and they named me Saravanan. My parents suffered caste oppression all their lives and desperately hoped for a son to liberate them. My father dreamed his son would become a district collector. All his future ambitions centred on me. I was named after the God of Vayalur Murugan temple, as Saravanan is another name for Murugan.

At home, my mother and sisters pampered me. As a son, I enjoyed special privileges and didn't have to do any work. That was my father's decree. The only thing he wanted from me was to study. I was the male heir of the family, so my parents had a special love for me, though it was gender discrimination. When my mother died, Radha took over all household duties, even though she was barely ten. I continued to enjoy all the love and affection at home by virtue of being a boy.

To my father's joy, I studied well. My academic excellence gave them immense pleasure. When I ranked first in the first grade, my father carried me on his shoulders around Bupesh Gupta Nagar, announcing the news to everyone. Though Appa loved me very much, he had never shown affection before. Radha woke me up early to study, and Manju brought me tea and biscuits. Appa made me do third-grade exercises when I was still in the first grade. I was an eager student and did well in school, but later I began to resent Appa's harassment. I lost simple joy and freedom. Appa denied me games and made home a virtual prison. He never allowed me to play with other children.

When I was eleven, my mother died in a road accident. My grief knew no bounds as she loved and protected me. Appa then married Lata, who was younger than Radha. Chithi (stepmother) was a good person and treated me with love. I continued to do well in school, but Appa's oppressive ways intensified. He never allowed me a normal childhood. When I came second in the sixth-grade exam, I wet

the bed out of fear of Appa's reaction. He kicked me in the stomach and beat me black and blue. Chithi and my sisters tried to save me, but they were thrashed, too. My father was a figure to be feared, a tyrant.

6.1.2.3 Chapter 3: The Princess

"I am the princess
A fresh new rose.
Will my dream come true?"
(p. 18. *I am Vidya*)

I had a desire for my dream to come true. I had a longing to be a girl. I performed dance movements in tune with a radio song while wearing Manju's skirt. When everyone was out, I would wear girls' clothes, sing, and dance, shutting myself inside at my grandmother's house. I loved practising this. One day, the grandma caught me, and she wondered what I was up to. She thought I might be playfully imitating some dance. We did not have a TV, and we did not have electricity. We only had a Philips radio.

I loved the charisma of the film heroes, their style, majesty, and valour. The heroines attracted me the most. I danced and courted the heroes in the same way as the heroines did. I also masqueraded as the heroines, for which I used Manju's skirts, midis, bangles, jewels, etc. To achieve long and plaited hair, I put a thin cotton towel on my head. I indulged in disguising myself as a woman in secrecy. My family did not view it seriously initially. They saw no risk in that at first.

One cold morning, while we children were reading our lessons, our neighbour came running to our house with bad news. So, Appa and I went to the government hospital. Amma had met with an accident on her way to work. Her body was brought home in an ambulance. By now, all relatives and neighbours had crowded. We could not bear Amma's loss. We were waiting. Appa had terrorised her, kicked her, and beat her. She accepted all taunts and beatings like a fool. She thought domestic brawls should not be taken out to others. She was a strong person. She had great willpower. All respected her. I stayed there waiting for a while. I thought no one would notice me. I got up and went into the middle house, and I started to dance while wearing Manju's skirt. I danced for a long time. Fathima Akka caught me dancing in girl's clothing. The news spread. Appa slapped me. I was in a panic after Amma was taken away. It was a terrible loss.

Hardly one year later, Appa remarried. A year later, Prabha was born. My girly ways were viewed seriously by now. Chithi and sisters scolded me. People approached me differently. I prefer skirts and blouses. People looked at me with disfavour. What was wrong with that preference? Why couldn't I wear skirts? I found my way natural. Others saw it as odd. I asked Appa to buy *midi* and skirt for me. He thrashed me terribly.

I liked wrapping a towel around my chest like heroines in bath scenes. I watched it in the mirror. My family and others noticed my unusual behaviour. I had an effeminate voice. I tended to walk and gesture like a woman. People started teasing me. They called me girly, sissy, etc. But I enjoyed the epithets secretly. Their teasing delighted me. I thought the onlookers saw through my natural inclinations. I preferred to join the girls at their games. Girls' games truly attracted me. I had a special love for Amruthavalli among my schoolmates. She had thick double plaits and a sweet smile. We had a dance contest once. Students commented that mine was a better performance. On another occasion, I performed a snake dance in a mock play. I craved for the career of a film heroine.

Radha was married when I was in 8th grade. It was a blow. She was like a mother to me after Amma's death. Chithi consoled me. I moved to Bishop Heber School in the ninth grade.

Boys taunted me for my female demeanour. Though schoolmate boys constantly troubled me, I kept up my learning. Even adults insulted me for my femininity. I grew lonely, and my studies began to suffer. Still, my dancing to radio songs continued. I passed tenth with 84% marks. I joined the eleventh grade at Bishop Heber in Trichy. Those boys, too, were unfriendly to me. They jeered and insulted me. My irresistible femininity was revealed.

My classmates continued to sneer at me. Constant insults made me shrink into myself. I felt lonely. The school was intolerable, and my studies suffered. To make matters worse, Manju married and moved out. Chithi's daughter Prabha was a relief. She was my sister whom I petted. Playing mock fights with her consoled me much. At seventeen, I wanted to be a woman. That was my natural inclination. I took the insults in the other way. They were jeering at my femaleness. I started wearing unisex dresses.

Nearby our home at Samarasampetti, a river flowed where I went regularly to bathe and wash clothes. I enjoyed the loneliness, and I swam in my wild fancies. My feminine instincts aroused. To my solitude, there came Ilango, a handsome young man with a thick moustache. Usually, I did stay shy away from boys since they used to insult me rudely. But Ilango was friendly with me. He did not tease me. He would tell me about beautiful girls he saw and loved. I would be thrilled then to hear his stories. I blushed when Ilango came. We talked a lot. I wished to spend more time with him. Whenever he came late or didn't turn up, I felt extremely sad. It was not love or lust. Ilango kindled the suppressed feminine waves in me.

6.1.2.4 Chapter 4: My First Friend

In class XI, I struggled to concentrate on my studies. Indignation brewed in my mind against my father's tyrannical ways. I was filled with fear and anxiety. When I got 74% in the public examination, he beat me black and blue. For years, I had swallowed Appa's torture without protest, but that day, I raised my voice and shoved him. He fell down, and I panicked. I tried to hang myself, but Chithi stopped me. It was absurd. After that, Appa changed a lot. However, what was done couldn't be undone. Appa wouldn't talk to me, and I avoided him.

In those days, IT became prominent. I chose to study computer science. Appa borrowed money for my fees, and his creditors harassed him in public. He suffered insults for my sake. I couldn't understand his love for me. He had high dreams for me. My problems grew so big that I couldn't focus on my studies. I visited Radha often, whose house was behind the Trichy district collectorate. Mama noticed my abnormal behaviour. He scolded me for eating, talking, and walking like a girl. I was attracted to Radha's saris. Whenever no one was around, I wore her sari and danced to TV songs. I used a towel for long hair. This secret practice gave me solace. It was an escape from depression. I visualised myself as a complete woman. I draped a towel across my chest and found pleasure in it. I was a girl born in a boy's body. I tried my best to hide my femininity. I had to speak and walk like a man. I shrank into myself. Bitter school memories haunted me in college, but college was less troublesome than I expected. After class, I went to the library at 1:30 every day. I became acquainted with several authors like Jayakantan, Janakrishnan, Anton Chekhov, Sholokov, Maxim Gorky, and others.

I was no longer afraid of Appa. I wanted to be a heroine. I was a woman trapped in a male body. In my thoughts and emotions, I was a woman. I swayed my hips like a female, let my hair loose like a lady, and behaved like a woman. One day, while returning from Radha's house by bus, a man sat next to me. He

asked if I was from Somarasampettai. I got irritated. He was a fat, dark man of twenty-five. Soon, I realised he was like me. His name was Senthil, a bank employee. He knew the art of conversation, and I liked him. I took his mobile number because I longed for such a friendship. The next day was a holiday. We went to Kuzhumayi temple. The Amman festival there was known for a blood-shedding ritual using goats and chickens. The whole place was a calm countryside. We sat in the rural serenity and talked about ourselves. We shared our experiences, likes and dislikes, desires, dreams, problems, and more. He was a woman like me. I was delighted to have found a woman friend. I learned many things from her, including about an NGO where people like us were welcome. Meeting Senthil was remarkable in my life.

6.1.2.5 Chapter 5: A Different World

I did not want to continue with science after my BSc in Computer Science. I wanted to join MA Linguistics, which shattered Appa's hopes. I dropped the idea of joining Pondicherry University for an MA in Linguistics because I would have to stay in a hostel, and I was scared to stay with boys. Instead, I joined MA Linguistics at Tamil University and commuted from Trichy to Thanjavur by train. I left home at 7 am and returned by 9:30 pm. This routine continued throughout the course. I enjoyed my university days more than my undergraduate days because there were no lewd comments, insults, or pinpricks.

My aim was to be an actress. I spent more time in dramatics than in linguistics and focused on theatre. Still, I read my lessons in the library for the exams. I introduced myself to the head of the drama department, Prof. Ramaswamy, and requested a chance to act in a department production. At that time, I had a keen interest in acting. Prof. Ramaswamy, a calm white-bearded man, was immersed in work. I visited him regularly and was eventually given a role in "Samban." No one bothered about my femininity. I read many books on theatre crafts and plays. S. Murugaboopathy was my ideal playwright. I liked the magic and surrealism of his craft. I also enjoyed the train journey. However, I never dreamt that I would beg on the same train route one day. Train travel brought many friends, one of whom was Revati, who was a year older than me and a junior assistant in a government department. We became close friends because we both loved books. But people started commenting on our relationship, so I decided not to embarrass Revati and avoided her.

I visited the NGO more often. Thoughts about my existence and future began to trouble me. I started worrying about my womanhood. The visitors there were men dressed in men's clothes but feminine internally. They called each other 'dee,' the pronoun Tamil girls used to address other girls. I visited regularly in male attire. There were also people in women's clothing. They were tirunangais who had undergone sex transition operations. Shalini was a tirunangai who was short and used little makeup. She was pretty, and I liked her. Senthil had told me not to divulge my identity there, so I strenuously pretended to be manly. But the pretense couldn't hold for long.

6.1.2.6 Chapter 6: A Time for Fare wells

I showed a greater interest in theatre, poetry, and seminars, almost stopping attending classes. But I studied hard during the two-week study leave. University days were free from harassment, and I had three close friends who were girls in my class. My classmates hadn't recognised my femininity; I appeared to be a man but was a woman inwardly.

In dramatics, I had many friends who saved me from mental traumas. Prof. Ramaswamy started rehearsing a play he had written and

asked me to work backstage. Ramaswamy and his entire team stayed there for ten days, consisting of playwrights, actors, and other artists. Everyone in the team was truly committed to theatre. The play, *Agitator Comrade Periyar,* was staged at Yadava College for Men in Madurai. It was a realistic drama based on a true story, and Ramaswamy was deeply involved in the real theatre movement. I met Muragabhupati, whose plays I had read and loved for their surreal world. I also met Selvon and other important figures from theatre and literature. Working on the Periyar play was a fruitful experience, giving me many useful lessons. When the play was performed a second time, I had a role and was in charge of its audiovisuals. Once, I acted as a girl, and they liked my acting. This became a routine rehearsal, where my inner self was expressing rather than acting. They realised the truth. I continued to visit the Trichy NGO, meeting many tirunangais and kothis there and at bus stands. I longed to exhibit my femininity, so I roamed about as a kothi. Usually, kothis and tirunangais wandered for sex work, which was their livelihood. I watched everything about transsexuals closely. I had a burning desire to express myself. Some men pursued me when I strutted around, and I led them on before disappearing abruptly. I enjoyed this cruel revenge for insulting my effeminacy. Meanwhile, my MA result was declared, and I got first rank in MA Linguistics at the university. Unfortunately, I couldn't celebrate my success. Pursuing a PhD in dramatics had been my dream, but the woman in me was growing intense. I had several choices: I could be a theatre person, join a job of my father's dream, or continue my studies. The most important was to obey my urge to break away from being male. How could I tell this to my father and family? If I disclosed my femininity, wouldn't they be rudely shocked?

I had many kothis as friends in the NGO. One was Sri, a kothi with a Master's degree in Computer Science and a job in a private IT company. He was the youngest in his family and faced the same problems as I did. Now, he had a good income and freedom. I went to Koovagam, the annual congregation of kothis and tirunangais. Sri earnestly asked me not to give up my studies. He wanted me to do my PhD, act in drama if I desired, and follow his line of enjoying private desires and freedom while being a good son to the family. I knew I would become a beggar on the streets if I castrated. I broke into pieces, but my resolve was firm. I hated being a man and would live as a woman, or else I would commit suicide. That night, I went to Nehru, a friend who worked in the film industry as an assistant director. I broke into tears before him. He gave me water and patiently heard me. I vented all my pent-up emotions and bottled truth. He was shocked and advised me not to play with fire. However, he understood me and promised to get me a job. After a couple of days, I met Kumaran and went to Chennai. I told Chithi that I had got a job in Chennai and must leave tomorrow. I started at 3:30 pm before everyone came home. I did not ask Appa or anyone else. Appa came anxiously, and I gave no chance to speak and said, "Bye, Appa." He looked at me with tearful eyes, and I walked away from him as fast as I could.

6.1.2.7 Chapter 7: A New Path, A New Way.

At first, I had to find a place to stay in Chennai. Kumaran and I searched in many areas and finally found a good room near the Devi Cinema complex on Mount Road. We shared the room. Kumaran was a close friend of Nehru and struggled to accept that I was a tirunangai. I shared my problems with him and was so exhausted that I fell asleep as soon as we entered the room. In the evening, we went to the beach.

The next day, Kumaran took me to SWAM, an NGO for kothis, while I was in male dress. The following morning, I went back to see if I could get a job so I could be a full-time kothi, but I soon realised it wasn't the place for me. I met many kothis at SWAM and introduced myself as Preeti, not disclosing my male name.

The next day, Kumaran took me to THAA, an NGO near Nungambakkam, where I met Neelamma and Dhanamma. They invited me to stay with them. Soon, the director of the NGO, Asha Bharati, joined us, and I disclosed my problems to her. She advised me to remain a man, continue my education, and act in theatre. But theatre was a casual foray; sex was my bare necessity and existence. I was a woman, not a man.

I got a job at a survey company after an interview and agreed to start the next day. On the way back, I contacted Prof. Ramaswami and confided in him about my identity. He was shocked but said everything would be okay if I pursued a PhD. I finished the survey task quickly and went to THAA, where I met many transgender friends and chatted with them. I had a strong urge to disown my maleness and become a woman, even if it meant begging on the street. If I changed sex, I would likely end up as a beggar or a sex worker. Neither my theatrical experience nor my MA would help me. I decided to be a transwoman in both mind and body. The transformation was inevitable.

Kumaran and I went to meet Aruna, a tirunangai who accepted me as a daughter. She faced similar problems and was also brilliant in academics. I stayed with her for two days and asked for a job in her NGO. She advised me to live the life of a tirunangai first. I decided to plunge into the life of a woman. Aruna decided to send me to Sarada Ammal in Pune, along with her amma and my nani. I immediately quit the survey job and handed all my male clothes and certificates to Kumaran before going to Aruna's. Sri and Kumaran came to see me off at the railway station. Kumaran was overwhelmed, and Sri made a last-minute attempt to dissuade me from a sex change. Despite their advice, my resolve was firm. I needed to liberate the woman in me from my male body.

At Chennai railway station, amid busy passengers, I sat as calm as an island, thrilled at the thought of becoming a woman. I was no longer Saravanan but Preeti. As the Dadar Express sped towards Mumbai, I sat in the speeding train, dreaming of Pune, my home of peace and liberation.

6.1.2.8 Chapter 8: Accept Me

Kalaichelvi Ayah and Shanti Amma accompanied me to Pune. They bossed me around and gave me frequent errands. Priya, who joined the Tirunangai group at sixteen, was also with us. We were the same age and height, and she had a fair complexion and a lovely smile. I liked her company. Once we reached Pune, Kalaichelvi Ayah took an auto to our destination. We went straight to Nani. When I saw her reclining on a wide cot, I saluted and fell at her feet as advised by Ayah. She gave a well-bred speech: I could sing or dance as much as I wanted, but I had to respect elders and be nice to youngsters. I was to go out with Satya to beg and bring in no less than three hundred rupees for my castration. Ayah asked for my name for the reet (registering in the Tirunangai clan). I said Preeti. She asked me to change it because another Preeti had died young. Satya suggested the name Vidya, saying our names would rhyme since we were sisters.

In the house, I first met Shilpa, who was tall and fair. She introduced me to Lakshmiammal, an elder member of the household. Nandiammal was a dark beauty who was always smartly dressed. Chitramma and Seetamma

were the other two Tirunangais in the house. They maintained a hierarchy of mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother (amma, nani, and dadi).

It had been three months since I left home without telling my family where I was going. A month after I arrived in Pune, a tsunami struck, hitting Tamil Nadu hard. My family must have been worried. Radha called Prof. Ramaswami, whose number I had given her. Hesitantly, he revealed that I was a Tirunangai. Radha was upset and couldn't digest the truth. Appa kept asking about me, and eventually, Radha broke down and told him. He turned to stone. I couldn't imagine their agony, but I couldn't help it.

Arunamma summoned me to Chennai. I was in turmoil, thinking about how my family would react. I left for Chennai, ready to face the situation. When I met Radha at the railway station, my heart stood still, and my eyes welled up. I wore a black sari, yet she called me Saravanan. I asked her to call me Vidya, as 'Saravanan' sounded strange to me. Appa refused to see me in a sari. He was broken to see me and felt his dreams had been shattered. Radha seemed to accept me, remembering my childhood fascination with her clothes. I wore a shirt, and Appa agreed to speak with me. He wept throughout. Appa struggled to understand me. "Wouldn't you accept me, Appa, if I had been maimed?" I burst into tears, standing before Appa like a criminal. I felt responsible for shattering his dreams and causing his woes. Finally, I felt relieved that my family knew the truth.

6.1.2.9 Chapter 9: My World, My People

Tirunangais are not accepted in families and society. I was a woman, but they saw me as male. When they refused to accept my gender identity, how could I live with them? I told them not to worry about me. I was educated and could live on my own. Tirunangais were harassed and even attacked in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, so they migrated to North Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, and Delhi.

I knew what awaited me in Pune. I did not want to be a sex worker, so begging was the only option. I set aside my MA in Linguistics. In Tirunangai's diction, "shopping" was a euphemism for begging. Satya Akka and I went begging. Sundaramma Nani housed me in a tin shed, where Satya and Senbagam also stayed. First, I begged at Swar Gate. Satya, being a senior in the Tirunangai clan, bossed over me. She selected a shop, clapped her hands, and stood there. She told me to start begging from the next shop. Once I chose sex change, begging was my destiny. At first, I couldn't beg. My eyes welled up, and I thought of my MA in Linguistics. Satya called me an idiot and said my MA was useless here. Clapping was a transgender Morse code to attract other Tirunangais in times of need. We begged along one side of the shops without stopping for lunch. We got snacks from snack shops. Satya introduced me to various bazaars and market roads for future begging. Our begging ended by six in the evening, and we exchanged our collection for higher denominations. Within two months, I became an independent beggar. I learned the tricks of the trade and saved fifty rupees daily for personal needs.

I took a break from begging to visit Chennai and experimented with train begging. Senbagam and Vasanti Ayah joined me. Train begging was harder than in bazaars. I begged on trains on the Chennai, Coimbatore, and Hyderabad routes. Later, Priya and Pradeeksha joined me, and we begged on trains together. Priya was sweet and sociable, making friends with ticket clerks, traders, vendors, drivers, and station masters. Priya and Pradeeksha rented a house and paid for the advance, utensils, and

other essentials. I contributed an amount every month. We stayed together and begged on many trains, enjoying our freedom and femininity.

6.1.2.10 Chapter 10: Chatla

I felt ashamed of begging. Fear, ego, and memories of my degree and awards held me back. Transgenders enjoyed no social security; even the government did not recognise us. Begging was my only source of income. I had no other choice. I was the butt of ridicule, enduring many insults. Every time I begged, I took it as revenge against society, my way of claiming compensation. I simmered with wrath against the shameless society.

Begging was no joke. I had to walk miles every day. Begging was unwelcome everywhere. Security often stopped us from shops and malls. We had to keep clapping until we received alms, given not out of sympathy or love but to rid them of a nuisance. Train begging was equally hard. We walked all day through moving trains. One day, a Tamil woman insulted me, asking if I wasn't ashamed to beg and if I wasn't physically fit. I retorted angrily, asking if she would tell her husband to give me a job in his company. Society was always callous to transgenders. Passengers pretended to sleep or be absorbed in a book when we begged.

Tamils were the most antagonistic towards transgenders. My worst experiences came from them. One such bitter experience was on the Nagercoil train. Four tall and strong men were sitting in the second compartment. One gave me two rupees, and when I asked for five, another slapped me on the cheek. When I protested, all four attacked me. I somehow struggled away, tears rolling down my cheeks in self-pity. The two-rupee coin felt like a burden of shame. I cursed them and threw the coin out of the train. They held my hands behind the ladder, pulled my hair, and one belted me with the buckle end. My cheekbone broke, and I started bleeding. I screamed, but no one helped. They pushed me out at the next station. I felt painful and helpless.

Violent attacks happened when I was alone, so I teamed up with Priya and Prateeksha. Despite the threats and humiliations, I saved money for my nirvana (castration). I needed money to fulfil my dream of nirvana, which would remove my maleness. In some countries, sex reassignment surgery (SRS) was legal. It involved many tests over six to eighteen months. A psychiatrist and a gynaecologist had to recommend SRS. The operation was expensive and could include facial feminisation, speech therapy, breast augmentation, and the insertion of a plastic vagina. Identity documents were also provided with a name and sex change certificate, which is necessary for education and employment. But in India, we only underwent castration without government approval. No tests were conducted except for HIV. Only local anaesthesia was used, which was often ineffective, making the pain intolerable.

After the operation, we reached Chennai by train and stayed at Neelamma's residence. She looked after us for forty days, nursing our wounds, feeding us, and helping us clean up and change dressings. 'Haldi mehandi' followed, which is a ritual announcement to the transgender community that I became a tirunangai. Many attended, dancing, singing, and making merry. After the ritual bath, I wore a green sari, green blouse, and green ornaments. Then, I poured milk into the sea and exposed my private parts to the sea, announcing my identity to nature. I repeated the procedure before a black dog and a green tree. Satya did the same with me. Thus, we became complete women. This ritual was known as 'chatla.'

6.1.2.11 Chapter 11: Sales Experiences

After forty-five days of recuperation, we returned to Pune. I shared my experiences with everyone. I intensely longed to visit my family in Trichy – Radha, Manju, Appa, Chithi, and Prabha. Nani gave me permission and money for the trip. From Trichy, I went straight to Radha's house. As soon as I saw her, I broke into tears. Appa, Chithi, Manju, Prabha, and Mama all came to meet me, overwhelmed with emotion. I stayed home for two days, eating, sleeping, and chatting with everyone.

After nirvana, I was less enthusiastic about begging, so my income decreased. Nani scolded me, urging me to earn more to ensure a dignified old age. Tirunangais had no joy; my degree wouldn't help me. Prateeksha and I went to Surat with Vasanthi Ayah, but begging there was less profitable. We thought of going back and had a new business plan: buy quality textiles from Surat and sell them on the train. However, we didn't have enough money to invest.

After much brainstorming, we decided to sell simple articles on the train. I had a good friend, Abu, a canteen manager on the train. He treated me with respect and encouraged me to sell tea and biscuits. Nani was surprised at our business plans but gave us permission to do so. Prateeksha's friend Kumar helped us sell small articles like keychains and pouches, but we couldn't sell anything. We were exhausted, with aching feet and sore throats. People were not interested in buying from us.

The second day was also a failure. Despite the good quality and reasonable prices of our goods, our gender prejudiced people against us. I felt miserable. I called Murugabhupati and told him what had happened, requesting him to get me a job. I wanted to return to Chennai, and he promised to help. Instantly, I decided to stop begging and leave Pune, planning to run away without letting anyone know.

6.1.2.12 Chapter 12: Back to Struggle

Monsoon rains hit Maharashtra hard. The torrential rain caused trains to be cancelled and shopping complexes to be almost deserted, badly affecting business. Using this as an excuse, I told Nani I would stay in Vaidawadi until the rain stopped, and she agreed. I booked my ticket at Lonavala, where I had young friends, Sabbu and Sheba. We begged there for ten days. I left at midnight when Sabbu and Sheba were asleep.

I was happy to be back in Tamil Nadu, but where could I go? My family wouldn't accept me as a woman. I liked Pune, where I was free to be myself, but there I would be a beggar or sex worker. My train stopped at Trichy, and I went to Radha's house. She welcomed me warmly, and I told her I would stay for some days as I was on a serious job hunt.

Muragabhupati and Selvan were trying to find a job for me. I reached the University, where Prof. Ramaswami was not surprised to see me as a female but worried that I hadn't completed my PhD. I wanted to register for a PhD, and Ramaswami promised to help me. But where would I find money and means for four years? I requested his help in finding a job and a place to stay.

For many days, I visited the university and met my friends, who were friendly and didn't embarrass me. I spoke to Nehru about my problem. Meanwhile, I was hospitalised for appendicitis and underwent an urgent operation. I became famous in the nursing home, made friends with all the nurses, and was discharged after a week. Radha took me home and looked after me until I recovered.

Mama castigated me because of the insults

and humiliations around me, so I wanted to leave immediately, even at eleven at night. I called Murugabhupati, who invited me to Madurai. The next day, I went there and told him I needed a job. He had found a sponsor for my PhD, but I did not want to pursue it. I needed a job.

6.1.2.13 Chapter 13: A Job for Me

The next morning, I left for Madurai. When I reached the Periyar bus stand, Gopi and his friend Kannan were waiting for me. They took me to Murugabhupati's hotel room, where his theatre friends and his brother, the Tamil author Konangi, were. They were happy to see me after a long time and hugged me with compassion. In the evening, we watched a Kashmiri dance drama.

I was offered a place with an NGO that supported the tirunangai cause. Still, I declined because their focus was on HIV/AIDS awareness, not on addressing transgender grievances or improving their welfare. They didn't ensure our safety and dignity or fight to liberate us from begging and sex work. Malaichami took me to Vijaya Auntie, who was ready to accept me as a daughter. She was an angel to me, and I became a member of her family. Despite her turbulent life, she made me feel happy and comfortable, cooking excellent food for me. There was a bloom in my looks.

I went to a small private bank in the Ellis Nagar area that lent money to people. Anand Kumar, the manager, asked me about my education. It was the first meaningful interview I had. I attended another interview at their Coimbatore corporate office with their managing director, Udaya Kumar. He treated me as a fellow human and gave me an appointment.

6.1.2.14 Chapter 14: A New Journey

I joined the Madurai branch of the bank. The branch manager, Anand Kumar, was helpful and kind-hearted. He treated me with respect as a colleague, and the other colleagues also treated me as an equal. Their comradeship meant a great deal to me. Soon, I had many friends in Madurai, most of whom belonged to literary circles. I met Chezhiyan, Ravi, Arogyam, Stalin, and others. They motivated me to write for a magazine called *Mozhi*, published by my friends.

I had been passing through the darkest part of my life, but now I was emerging into the light. Vijaya Auntie, my bank colleagues, and my literary friends showered me with love, care, and respect. Nehru introduced me to Sivaraj, who invited me to a mega event in Chennai to honour a musician. I inaugurated the function by lighting a lamp. At that event, I met Balabharati, an attractive personality. We discussed the problems of tirunangais, and he encouraged me to write about transgender experiences. When I mentioned the difficulty of finding a publisher, he suggested starting a blog. My blog quickly became popular.

When Vijaya Auntie left for the US to join her brother, I moved out of her house and found accommodation in a women's seminary hostel. Initially, they were reluctant to allow a transgender person. My instincts were simple: to live a normal life like everyone else. Being a tirunangai was as natural as being a man, woman, or any other creature. But people didn't understand this simple truth. Tirunangais needed equal opportunities to work and earn a livelihood. The world offered them no security. Transgenders were publicly assaulted without any response, even from the police. Most tirunangais were unlettered because they were denied educational and employment opportunities.

I wrote about the bitter experiences of tirunangais, and my blog had a far-reaching impact. I was featured in a Tamil magazine and became a celebrity. I made friends everywhere and

attended many literary meetings in Madurai. My inhibitions faded, and I became an active social being. It meant that while one tirunangai was socially accepted, others were not. They, too, must be integrated into the mainstream of social life.

6.1.2.15 Chapter 15: I Want to Live – With Pride

I needed to change my name from Saravanan to Living Smile Vidya. I applied to the Tamil Nadu Government Department of Stationery and Printing, citing my sex change operation as the reason. The application was turned down. So, I met an advocate and sent applications to the Taluk Office, District Collector, and Chief Secretary. The Taluk Office wanted me to present myself personally and asked for my ration card, which I did not have. The Printing Department asked for a medical certificate, but I explained that the operation had no legal sanction. My application was thwarted again, so I went to court. The court ordered an examination of the case, and I had to acquire a medical certificate from Madurai Medical College. After one and a half years, I finally got my name changed.

Everywhere I went, I faced ridicule and hurtful comments, not just from men but also from women and even children. My sex and skin were natural, but the lascivious looks, ridicule, and lewd comments in Madurai were intolerable. The uncultured behaviour was too much, so I decided to move to Chennai.

In our democracy, Dalits and feminists have a voice, and their rights are considered. But transgenders are the Dalits of the Dalits, the most oppressed section of people. They do not have equality, freedom, or fraternity. A male-dominated society does not accept a man transitioning to a woman. A tirunangai is seen as a disgrace to the family. There must be legal approval to enable them to live freely. Sex change operations must be medically upgraded and legally approved. Name and sex change certificates should be issued, and reservations could also be considered.

6.1.2 Analysis

I am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey is a poignant and captivating autobiography that takes readers on an intimate and often harrowing journey into the life of Vidya, a transgender woman from Tamil Nadu, India. Through her raw and honest storytelling, Vidya lays bare the complexities of gender identity, the relentless societal stigma and discrimination faced by the transgender community, and her unwavering resilience in the face of adversity.

At the heart of Vidya's narrative is her profound and innate sense of being a woman trapped in a male body. From a young age, she recounts her fascination with traditionally feminine activities, such as wearing her sisters' clothing, practising dance moves, and emulating the mannerisms of beloved on-screen heroines. This deep-rooted connection to her true self is both a source of solace and torment as she grapples with the expectations and pressures imposed upon her by a society that refuses to acknowledge her identity.

Vidya's struggles are further compounded by the rejection and lack of understanding she faces from her own family, particularly her father, who had envisioned a different future for his son. The book poignantly captures the emotional turmoil and heartbreak that accompany this rejection, as Vidya's dream of living authentically as a woman is met with resistance and incomprehension from those closest to her.

Despite these formidable obstacles, Vidya's determination to embrace her true self remains steadfast. Her decision to undergo gender reassignment surgery, a process she refers to as "nirvana," is a pivotal moment in the narrative, symbolising her unwavering com-

mitment to living authentically as a woman, regardless of the consequences.

Yet, even after her transition, Vidya's journey is far from over. The book paints a stark and unflinching picture of the marginalisation and discrimination faced by transgender individuals in India. From the lack of legal recognition and protections to the harsh realities of begging on the streets to fund her surgery, Vidya's experiences shed light on the systemic barriers and societal prejudices that continue to oppress and marginalise the transgender community.

What makes Vidya's story truly remarkable is her resilience and strength in the face of these adversities. Her willingness to confront societal prejudices and fight for acceptance is both inspiring and humbling. As she navigates the complexities of her new life as a woman, Vidya's personal growth and empowerment become a central focus of the narrative. Her foray into the literary world and her advocacy for transgender rights serve as powerful examples of her determination to create positive change and raise awareness about the challenges faced by her community. From attending literary events and workshops to starting her own blog and gaining recognition as a writer, Vidya's journey is a testament to the transformative power of self-expression and the pursuit of one's authentic voice.

Moreover, Vidya's eventual employment and newfound sense of self-worth offer a glimmer of hope and possibility amidst the struggles she has endured. Her experiences in the workplace, where she is treated with respect and dignity by her colleagues, underscore the importance of creating inclusive spaces and fostering understanding and acceptance within society. Throughout the narrative, Vidya's raw and honest storytelling allows readers to truly immerse themselves in her experiences, both the triumphs and the heartbreaks. Her vivid descriptions of the emotional and physical challenges she faced during her transition, as well as the discrimination and violence she encountered, are visceral and deeply affecting. However, it is Vidya's unwavering spirit and her refusal to be defined by her struggles that truly resonate. Her journey is a powerful reminder of the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of living authentically, regardless of the obstacles that may stand in one's way. Through her story, Vidya challenges readers to confront their own biases and preconceptions while also offering a glimpse into the lived experiences of the transgender community. Her narrative serves as a poignant call to action, highlighting the urgent need for greater understanding, acceptance, and legal protections for individuals whose gender identities do not conform to societal norms.

Ultimately, *I am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* is a moving and essential read for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of gender identity and the ongoing struggle for equality and acceptance faced by the transgender community worldwide. Vidya's story is a universal one – a tale of self-discovery, perseverance, and the relentless pursuit of happiness and fulfilment in the face of overwhelming adversity.

6.1.3 What Does It Mean to Be a Transgender?

Transgender is an umbrella term that includes people whose gender identity does not match their birth sex. Cisgender is the opposite term, referring to people whose gender identity matches their birth sex. Birth sex is the sex (male or female) assigned at birth. For example, a trans woman feels internally that she is a woman, though she was assigned male at birth. A transgender man feels himself to be male, though he was assigned female at birth.

Transgender customs and behaviours do not

conform to generally accepted norms. Gender identity is expressed through how one walks, talks, dresses, and styles their hair. A trans woman has the demeanour of a woman, and a trans man shows a man's mannerisms and style. Gender transition can involve sex reassignment surgery, breast augmentation, hormone therapy, and genital fixation. Advanced medical treatments are now available. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Sexual orientation refers to emotional or sexual preference. There are homosexuals, heterosexuals, and bisexuals. Homosexuals are attracted to the same sex (male to male or female to female) and are called gays and lesbians. Heterosexuals (straight) are attracted to the opposite sex. Bisexuals are attracted to both men and women. Trans people can be straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

A transgender person is born male or female but has a gender identity mismatch. An intersex person is born with ambiguous genitalia (not clearly male or female). For example, a baby with male chromosomes may have female genitalia and features, and a baby with female chromosomes may have male genitalia and features. A transgender person can be intersex and vice versa. Transgenders suffer from traumas due to gender identity crises. They often realise their gender does not conform to their birth sex during adolescence, leading to stress and unrest. A trans man intensely wants to get rid of his femaleness, and a trans woman longs to shed her maleness. They feel afraid to express their gender identity but also feel a strong compulsion to live as they are. Social stigma, harassment, and insult add to their mental agony, leading to a psychological disorder known as gender dysphoria.

Gender identity is one's internal conviction of being male or female, which may sometimes be contrary to birth sex. Understanding the transgender community is as important as their rehabilitation. The term gender equity must be broadly redefined to include the transgender community as well. People have the right to be treated as who they are.

6.1.4 Challenges the Trans People Face

Though trans people are increasingly accepted in society, much more needs to be done to help them lead normal lives like all men and women. Some of the key challenges they face are as follows:

1. Lack of Education and Employment

Transgenders often live in poverty. Most are uneducated and unemployed, relying on begging and sex work for their livelihood. Few trans people are educated. Even those who are educated face exclusion from jobs, businesses, and mainstream economic activities due to transphobia. Society must change. Government bodies and NGOs need to ensure their education, employment, and normal life. Trans rights should be addressed fairly, and gender minority reservations should be considered.

2. Stigma and Discrimination

In film and media, transgender people are often portrayed in clumsy dresses and awkward voices, depicted as criminals and kidnappers. They are labelled as sexual perverts and disease carriers, leading to societal stigmatisation and discrimination. They face public jeering, denunciation, and ridicule, even from children. They are often insulted and cruelly assaulted in public, with police often not taking their cases seriously. Their safety and well-being must be ensured.

3. Lack of Legal Support

There are insufficient laws to protect trans rights. Name and sex change certifications and sex change operations are yet to be legally validated. Laws should be enacted to protect them from public assault and social stigmatisation.

4. Identity Documents

Trans people change their name and sex and undergo sex change operations but don't receive certificates for these changes. These certificates are essential for travel, applying for passports, registering in schools or colleges, employment, and other needs.

6.1.5 Socio-Cultural Exclusion of The Transgender Community.

The transgender community was not as discriminated and stigmatised during the Mughal regime in India as it is today. Their situation worsened during British rule and after independence. Research studies have been conducted on transgenders, focusing on their gender crisis, social stigma, freedom, fraternity, rights, and justice. Even after 75 years of independence, the demographic figure of hijras remains unknown. It was in 2011 that the Election Commission of India agreed to classify them as 'others' in the census. In 2014, the Supreme Court of India decreed to identify them as 'third gender'.

Hijras are largely excommunicated from their families and society because their gender identity and expression do not match their birth sex. Most families in India consider a transgender child a stigma and disgrace, leading to threats, harassment, and attacks even from family members. Transgenders have no future other than begging or sex work. They are disowned by their families and thrown into trauma and despair. Most eunuchs are unlettered, making it hard for them to get a job. People are generally reluctant to employ transgenders in businesses or firms. Proper healthcare is denied to them, and they are abused and ill-treated in healthcare settings as well.

Trans rights to education and employment are bluntly denied everywhere. They are cruelly excluded from economic activities. They don't have the means to earn a livelihood, find accommodation, or access education. Even if qualified, people are unwilling to employ or accommodate them. They are not included in social welfare schemes either.

Tamil Nadu is the first state to announce social welfare schemes for trans people. Free sex reassignment surgery (SRS) in government hospitals, housing, education, and scholarships for higher studies have been introduced. A Transgender Welfare Board was set up in 2008. Ration cards, identity certificates, and other documents are also issued to them. Society needs to understand and accept the transgender community.

6.1.6 Glossary of Transgender Identification Terms

TERMS	MEANING
01. LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer.
02. Lesbian	A woman sexually and emotionally fascinated to other women.
03. Asexual	A person who lacks interest in sexual activity.
04. Bisexual	A person who is sexually attracted to more than one gender.
05. Gay	Man or woman sexually attracted to the same gender.
06. Gender dysphonia	Mental disorders related to gender crisis.

07. Gender expression	Expression of gender through appearance, clothing, voice, physical traits and demeanors.
08. Transphobia	Fear of transpeople.
09. Homophobia	Fear of people sexually oriented towards the same gender.
10. Biphobia	Fear of bisexual people.

Recap

- Vidya's journey as a transgender woman
- Struggle with gender identity from childhood
- Conflict with patriarchal society's expectations
- Rejection by family, especially father
- The decision to undergo gender reassignment surgery
- Harsh realities of begging and sex work
- Resilience and determination to embrace true self
- Advocacy for transgender rights and empowerment
- Pursuit of education and literary aspirations
- Challenges of social stigma and discrimination
- Lack of legal protections and recognition
- Importance of self-expression and authentic living
- The transformative power of acceptance and inclusivity
- The universality of Vidya's story of self-discovery
- Call for greater understanding and equality
- Hope for a more inclusive and accepting society
- Vidya's unwavering spirit and resilience

Objective Questions

1. What was Vidya's birth name?
2. Which subject did Vidya rank first in for her Master's degree?
3. Which city did Vidya go to for her gender reassignment surgery?
4. What was Vidya's source of income after her surgery?
5. In which city did Vidya start working at a bank?
6. What was the name of the NGO Vidya visited in Chennai?
7. Who accompanied Vidya to Pune for her surgery?
8. What ritual did Vidya undergo after her surgery?
9. Who was Vidya's father?
10. Which literary figure helped Vidya find a job?
11. Which term did Vidya use for her gender reassignment surgery?
12. What was the name of the hostel Vidya stayed in Madurai?
13. Which magazine did Vidya write for?
14. What legal issue did Vidya face regarding her name change?

Answers

1. Saravanan
2. Linguistics
3. Cuddapah
4. Begging
5. Madurai
6. SWAM
7. Sarada Nani
8. Chatla
9. Ramaswami
10. Murugabhupati
11. Nirvana
12. Seminary
13. Mozhi
14. Court

Assignments

1. What is nirvana? Explain the term in a transgender's perspective.
2. Discuss the struggles and sufferings in Vidya's journey to become a tirunangai.
3. Examine Vidya's association with theatrics before she became a cine artist.
4. Comment on the parivar system of tirunangais.
5. How does Vidya compare sex change operation in India and abroad?
6. Explain Vidya's begging expedition. How did she get fed up with begging?
7. Cite the terrible violence she suffered during train begging at the hands of the Tamil foursome.
8. Exemplify her attempts to stop begging and start selling on train. Why did that fail?
9. What, according to Vidya, are the problems of the tirunangai community?
10. Examine the role and response of the family during Saravanan's transition to Vidya.

Reference

1. Rupa Publications, 2014.Vidya, Living Smile. *I Am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey*.
2. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350094910_Sufferings_and_Challenges_of_a_Transgender_in_Living_Smile_Vidya's_I_am_Vidya_-_a_Transgender's_Journey

Suggested Reading

1. Penguin Books Limited, 2010.Revathi, A. *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story.*
2. Oxford University Press, 2015.Tripāṭhī, Lakshmīnārāyaṇa. *Me Hijra, Me Laxmi.*
3. *Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India.* Yoda Press, 2006. Reddy, Gayatri. *With Respect to Sex:*

MODEL QUESTION PAPER SETS

SGOU

Model Question Paper

Set-01

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE : ……

Reg. No : …….....
Name : ……...

BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION- FOURTH SEMESTER
DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE

B21EG01DE - REGIONAL LITERATURES IN TRANSLATION

(CBCS - UG)

2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours Max Marks: 70

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or a sentence. (10×1= 10)

1. Who wrote the book Objects of Translation?
2. What is the meaning of "Viswasahitya"?
3. Who founded the Asiatic Society of Calcutta?
4. Who is the author of the poem "She, He and Language"?
5. What is the pseudonym of Janaki Srinivasa Murthy?
6. In which year did Vaidehi win the Sahitya Akademi Award?
7. What is the name of the protagonist in the story “Draupadi”?
8. Which tribal community does Dopdi belong to?
9. Who is the "specialist in combat and extreme-left politics" mentioned in the story “Draupadi”?
10. Who wrote the play Silence! The Court is in Session?
11. What is the original language of the play Silence! The Court is in Session?
12. Who is chosen as the unexpected defendant in the mock trial in the play "Silence! The Court is in Session"?
13. What crime is Benare accused of in the mock trial?
14. What is the term for people whose gender identity matches their birth sex?
15. In which year did the Supreme Court of India decree to identify transgenders as 'third gender'?

Section B

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences. (5×2=10)

16. What was the main argument in Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education"?
17. What is the central theme of Vaidehi's poem "She, He and Language"?
18. How does the poem "She, He and Language" portray communication between the married couple?
19. How does Dopdi's response to being raped differ from the mythological Draupadi's response to being disrobed?
20. What does Senanayak's order "Make her. Do the needful" imply?
21. How does Samant contribute to exposing Benare's personal life?
22. What is ironic about Sukhatme presenting both prosecution and defence arguments?
23. How does the play Silence! The Court is in Session use the "play within a play" technique?
24. What symbolic meaning does the stuffed bird have at the end of the play Silence! The Court is in Session?
25. What is gender dysphoria?

Section C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6×5=30)

26. Discuss the role of translation in shaping the concept of "Indian literature" in the 19th and 20th centuries.
27. Analyse the language debate in Indian literature between English and regional languages.
28. Analyse the use of metaphors in "She, He and Language" and their significance in conveying the poem's message.
29. Discuss how Vaidehi explores the concept of gendered language in her poem "She, He and Language".
30. Analyse how the story “Draupadi” portrays the subalternization of tribal communities in India.
31. Discuss the symbolism of Dopdi's name and how it relates to questions of identity in the story “Draupadi.”
32. Analyse how the play Silence! The Court is in Session critiques middle-class Indian society's attitudes towards women.
33. Discuss the significance of the mock trial format in exposing societal hypocrisy in Silence! The Court is in Session.
34. Examine how Benare's character evolves over the course of the play Silence! The

Court is in Session.

35. Explain how the play Silence! The Court is in Session uses satire and irony to convey its social message.
36. Analyze the challenges faced by transgender individuals in India with regard to education and employment.
37. Discuss the significance of Vidya's autobiography in raising awareness about transgender experiences and rights.

Section D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. **(2×10 = 20)**

38. Critically examine the politics of constructing a unified "Indian literature" in the context of India's linguistic and cultural diversity.
39. Evaluate the effectiveness of Vaidehi's "She, He and Language" in addressing the communication gap between genders. Consider the poem's structure, imagery, and cultural context in your response.
40. Evaluate how Mahasweta Devi's "Draupadi" critiques state violence and repression against tribal communities. Discuss the literary techniques used to convey this critique.
41. Critically analyse the major themes explored in Silence! The Court is in Session and discuss how they reflect broader issues in Indian society.

SGOU

Model Question Paper

Set-02

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE : ……

Reg. No : …….....
Name : ……...

BA ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
END-SEMESTER EXAMINATION- FOURTH SEMESTER
DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE

B21EG01DE - REGIONAL LITERATURES IN TRANSLATION
(CBCS - UG)
2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours Max Marks: 70

Section A

Answer any ten of the following questions in one word or a sentence. (10×1= 10)

1. What does the term "translating consciousness" refer to?
2. Who said, "Indian literature is one though written in many languages"?
3. Who translated Tarannum Riyaz's poem "Close to My Heart" into English?
4. In which year was Tarannum Riyaz born?
5. What is the title of the collection in which "Close to My Heart" appeared?
6. What is the name of Dopdi's deceased husband?
7. In which Indian state is the story “Draupadi” set?
8. What is the reward amount announced for Dopdi's capture?
9. In what year was the play Silence! The Court is in Session originally written?
10. What award did the play Silence! The Court is in Session win in 1917?
11. Who is the judge in the mock trial Silence! The Court is in Session?
12. What is Sukhatme's profession in real life in Silence! The Court is in Session?
13. Who is described as "The Intellect" in the play Silence! The Court is in Session?
14. What does SMTPA stand for?
15. What is the term for people whose gender identity does not match their birth sex?

Section B

Answer any five of the following questions in one or two sentences. (5×2=10)

16. How did Edward Said's critique of Orientalism impact the study of Indian literature?

17. What is the main emotion expressed in Riyaz's poem "Close to My Heart"?
18. How does the mother in the poem "Close to My Heart" want her child to behave upon returning?
19. Why does Dopdi decide to bite off her tongue if tortured?
20. How does the story “Draupadi” subvert the mythological narrative of Draupadi?
21. How does the locked door in the play Silence! The Court is in Session contribute to the dramatic tension?
22. What is significant about Mr. Kashikar taking the witness stand in the play Silence! The Court is in Session?
23. How does Mrs. Kashikar's inability to have children influence her behaviour?
24. What purpose do the songs serve in the play Silence! The Court is in Session?
25. What is the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation?

Section C

Answer any six of the following questions in one paragraph. (6×5=30)

26. Explain the role of English translations in popularising Indian literature globally.
27. Discuss how nationalist ideology shaped the concept of Indian literature in the 20th century.
28. Apply your understanding of imagery to explain how Riyaz creates a sense of longing in "Close to My Heart".
29. Compare and contrast the themes of love in Vaidehi's "She, He and Language" and Riyaz's "Close to My Heart".
30. Analyse how the story “Draupadi” portrays the gendered nature of violence against tribal women.
31. Discuss the significance of language and naming in the story “Draupadi” in relation to tribal identity.
32. Analyse how the play Silence! The Court is in Session explores the theme of individual freedom versus societal norms.
33. Analyse the role of caste and religious orthodoxy in the novel Samskara: A Rite for a Dead Man. How does Ananthamurthy use these themes to explore broader social issues in Indian society?
34. Examine how the play Silence! The Court is in Session critiques the justice system through its portrayal of the mock trial.
35. Analyse the character of Leela Benare and her role in highlighting gender inequality in Silence! The Court is in Session.
36. Analyse the importance of legal recognition and documentation for transgender individuals in India.
37. Evaluate the role of societal stigma and discrimination in shaping the experiences of transgender individuals, as depicted in Vidya's autobiography.

Section D

Answer any two of the following questions in 300 words. **(2×10 = 20)**

38. Synthesise the approaches of Vaidehi and Tarannum Riyaz in exploring human relationships through their respective poems. Consider their use of language, emotional appeal, and cultural contexts in your response.
39. Compare and contrast the characters of Dopdi and Senanayak in the story "Draupadi." Evaluate how they represent different ideological positions and power structures.
40. Compare and contrast the treatment of male and female characters in Silence! The Court is in Session and discuss how this reflects broader gender issues in Indian society.
41. Examine the socio-cultural exclusion of the transgender community in India, its historical context, and recent developments in addressing their rights and welfare.

SGOU

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
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ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
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നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

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