

**BAEN201CCT**

***Modern Indian Literature***  
**Core Course in English**

*SLM based on UGC CBCS*

for

**B.A.**

**(Second Semester)**

**Directorate of Distance Education**

**Maulana Azad National Urdu University**

**Hyderabad-32, Telangana-India**

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Course-B.A

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**Modern Indian Literature**  
For B.A. 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester

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**Directorate of Distance Education**

Maulana Azad National Urdu University

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Director: [dir.dde@manuu.edu.in](mailto:dir.dde@manuu.edu.in) Publication: [dpublication@manuu.edu.in](mailto:dpublication@manuu.edu.in)

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(SLM based on UGC-CBCS)  
Editorial Board

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Dr Shah Alam	<i>Guest Faculty, DDE, MANUU</i>
Dr Mudasir Ahmad Gori	<i>Guest Faculty, DDE, MANUU</i>

**Directorate of Distance Education**  
Maulana Azad National Urdu University  
Gachibowli, Hyderabad-32 (TS), India

## Course Coordinator

Prof. Mohammed Abdul Sami Siddiqui  
Director, CPDUMT, MANUU

## Writers

## Unit No.

- Dr Ajay Deshmush, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Shri Muktanand College, Gangapur, Maharashtra. 1
- Dr Sachin Laxmikant Patki, Head and Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Adarsh College, Hingoli, Maharashtra. 2,17
- Dr Pradnyashailee Bhagwan Sawai, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Government College of Arts and Science, Aurangabad, Maharashtra. 3
- Dr Shankar Ambadas Gavali, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Milind College of Arts, Aurangabad, Maharashtra. 4,19
- Dr Mirza Maqsood Baig, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, People's College, Nanded. 5,8
- Dr Govindaiah Godavarthi, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, MANUU, Hyd. 6,7
- Dr Somnath Barure, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, VNGIASS, Nagpur, Maharashtra. 9,10,11,12
- Mr. S M Fasiullah, Counselor, Dr B.R Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad. 13,14,18
- Ms. Raeesabegum Usmani, Dept. of English, VNSGU, Surat, Gujarat. 15
- Dr Shamema T, Assistant Professor of English, Amal College of Advanced Studies, Nilambur, Kerala. 16
- Dr Mirza Sultan Baig, Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Indra Gandhi College, Nanded, Maharashtra. 20
- Mr Shihabudheen C, Assistant Professor of English, Amal College of Advanced Studies, Nilambur, Kerala. 21
- Dr Mudasir Ahmad Gori, Guest Faculty (English), DDE, MANUU, Hyderabad. 22
- Dr Sheikh Suhel, Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Sir Syed College, Aurangabad, Maharashtra. 23,24

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### **Proofreaders:**

<b>First</b>	: S M Fasiullah & Syeda Farha Shah
<b>Second</b>	: Syeda Farha Shah & S M Fasiullah
<b>Final</b>	: Dr Shah Alam & Dr Mudasir Ahmad Gori

## Message

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established in 1998 by the Act of Parliament of our beloved country. The four mandates of the university are (1) promotion of Urdu language, (2) accessibility and availability of professional and technical education in Urdu medium, (3) providing education through traditional and distance learning mode, and (4) a specific focus on women's education. These are the points that distinguish this central university from all other central universities and give it a unique feature. It has been emphasized even in the National Education Policy 2020 to achieve education in mother tongues and regional languages.

The very objective of promotion of knowledge through Urdu is meant to facilitate the accessibility of contemporary knowledge and disciplines to Urdu knowing community. For a long time, Urdu has remained devoid of scholarly materials. A cursory glance over a library or shelves of a book seller substantiates the fact that Urdu language is diminished to only a few "literary" genres. The same situation can be seen often in journals and newspapers. The writings available in Urdu take readers sometimes to the meandrous paths, sometimes involve emotionally in political issues, sometimes illuminate religions on creedal background, and sometimes burdened our minds with complaints. Further, the Urdu reader/community is unaware of the today's most important areas of knowledge whether it is related to his own health and life or related to the financial and commercial systems, whether it is related to machines and gadgets around him or the issues related to his environment or vicinity. The unavailability of content related to the above domains of knowledge has created an atmosphere of apathy towards attaining knowledge that exhibits the lack of intellectual abilities in Urdu community. These are the challenges that Urdu University is confronted with. The scenario of Self Learning Materials (SLM) is also not very different. The unavailability of course books in Urdu at school level comes under discussion at the commencement of every academic year. Since the medium of instruction of Urdu University is only Urdu and it offers almost all the courses of important disciplines, the preparation of books of all these subjects in Urdu is the most important responsibility of the University. To achieve these objectives, the Urdu university was commenced in 1998 with Distance Learning.

I am immensely pleased that due to the hard work of the concerned faculties and full cooperation of the writers, the process of publications of books has begun on massive scales. For the students of Distance Learning, the process of preparing and publication of Self Learning Materials (SLM) has begun in a minimum possible time. The books of first Semester got published and sent to the students. The books of second Semester too will be sent to the students shortly. I believe that we will be able to meet the requirements of a large Urdu knowing community through our Self Learning Materials and will fulfill the mandate of this University, and justify our presence in this country.

With best wishes.

**Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan**  
*Vice Chancellor*  
MANUU, Hyderabad

## Message

Distance mode of Education is globally accepted as a very useful and effective mode of education and a large number of population is getting benefitted with this mode of education. Keeping in view the educational situation of Urdu knowing population, MANUU has adopted the same from beginning of its establishment.

Maulana Azad National Urdu University began to function from 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and Translation Division. Regular mode of education commenced from 2004 and various departments were established which were followed by the appointments of faculty. Self learning material was prepared through writing and translation with full support of competent authority.

For the past few years UGC-DEB kept emphasizing on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Accordingly, at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, the syllabi of distance and regular mode are synchronized by following the norms of UGC-DEB and Self Learning Materials are being prepared afresh for UG and PG courses containing 6 blocks - 24 units and 4 blocks - 16 units respectively.

Directorate of Distance Education runs fifteen courses consisting of UG, PG, B.Ed (ODL), Diploma, and certificate courses. In a short span of time, courses based on technical skills will be started. A huge network of nine regional centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and five sub-regional centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. 155 Learner Support Center are running under these regional and sub-regional centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. DDE also utilizes ICT for its educational and administrative activities.

The admissions in all programs are done only through online mode. The soft copies of Self Learning Material for students are made available on the website of Directorate of Distance Education. In near future, the links of audio and video recordings will also be made available on the website. In addition, SMS facilities are being provided to students to have better communication. The students are informed through SMS regarding various facets of programs such as course registration, assignment, counseling, exams, etc.

Directorate of Distance Education will not only play a vital role in bringing educationally and economically backward Urdu knowing population into the main stream but also in increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio of the country.

**Prof. Mohd. Razaullah Khan**

*Director I/C, Directorate of Distance Education*

MANUU, Hyderabad

## **Introduction to the Course**

The course Modern Indian Literature (BAEN201CCT) is prescribed as a core course for the second semester undergraduate students. It aims at providing the students an insight into a basic understanding of literature written in English and other Indian languages, including poems and short stories. English translated texts from Indian languages also have been included in the course authored by both male and female writers. To study the poems and short stories by Indian writers, it is essential to know the background of literature written in Indian languages and English. Equipped with this knowledge, the learners will be able to comprehend the texts exactly as it is intended.

The course is divided into six blocks. Each block consists of four units. The first block contains texts from Indian languages. Hence, the background study of literature from Indian languages is offered here. The significance of translation also is a part of the first block. The second and third blocks focus on the history of Indian writing in English. The fourth block deals with the history of short story writings in Indian regional languages. Short stories written in English by Indian writers are discussed in block five, while the last block offers an overview of Indian women writers' contribution to the body of Indian writing in English. The course aims at familiarizing the learners with a wide range of writings. In each block, two units deal with the theoretical framework and the other two present a textual instance.

In this book, under each unit the objectives, key points of the topic, learning outcomes, glossary and sample questions are listed. At the end, a question paper is attached for giving the students an idea of the paper pattern. It is hoped that this Self Learning Material (SLM) will be helpful in appreciating the sociological approach to literature.

**Prof. Mohammed Abdul Sami Siddiqui**  
**Course Coordinator**



# **Modern Indian Literature**

**Core Course in English**

# Unit - 1: Literatures from Indian Languages

## Structure

### 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Objectives

### 1.2 Literatures from Indian Languages

#### 1.2.1 Sanskrit Literature

#### 1.2.2 Partition Literature

#### 1.2.3 Parsi Literature

#### 1.2.4 Dalit and Nomadic Tribe Literature

#### 1.2.5 Literature from other Indian Regional Languages

### 1.3 Learning Outcomes

### 1.4 Glossary

### 1.5 Sample Questions

### 1.6 Suggested Readings

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Human beings in the wake of civilization learned to express their emotions, thoughts and philosophy. The life, full of unpredictable events, sorrows and happiness was celebrated in a floral and figurative language. The songs of separation or union or narratives of overcoming the challenges, adventures became part of nostalgia. Human beings have recorded their lives in the form of memories. The verbal exploration of human experiences became part of literary tradition. These traditions have travelled all along from oral to written form. Literature across the world has a dual function of edification and amusement. It has travelled through various forms across different countries and continents of the world. Indian Literature can be referred to as the literature written in the Indian Subcontinent till partition and later on Independent India. In the modern sense of time, the concept of India as a nation was an outcome of the British Empire. It weaved Indian people together in the thread of national consciousness. India as a nation gave rise to the typical flavour of Indianness in its literature. Before this, India was known as *Aryavrata* or *Bharatvarsha* or *Hindustan*. These nomenclatures have different historical, cultural and racial

dimensions within the ambit of linguistic and literary discourse. So, the literature produced during each phase of the making of a nation has its influence on the minds of writers and readers.

Indianness is a much-celebrated concept in the Indian Writings in English. It is necessary to understand this because it brings socio-cultural, religious-political, linguistic and geographical underpinnings in the discussion of Indian Writings.

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## 1.1 Objectives

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This unit would try to explore the literature from Indian languages in brief. It would be impossible to make it exhaustive given the vastness of the literature from the Indian Subcontinent. The objectives of the unit are:

- To introduce the literature from various Indian Languages.
- To understand the great Indian literary tradition from regional languages.

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## 1.2 Literatures from Indian Languages

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### 1.2.1 Sanskrit Literature:

Sanskrit is a classical and ancient Indian language. It boasts to be the mother of many languages in and around the continent. It influenced various languages throughout the history of mankind and has enjoyed the status of epic language and language of elites from antiquity. Later on, due to its rigidity and politics of linguistic hegemony, Sanskrit lost its wide usage. However, the literature produced in Sanskrit left an indelible impact on the various genres and writing styles of Indian writers.

Sanskrit Literature began with oral traditions and later on developed in written scripts. Many of the Sanskrit texts belong to Indian Religions; Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. Much of these texts were written during ancient India. There are works related to science, arts and social sciences as well.

*Panchatantra, Hitopadesha, Rajtarangini, Mudrarakshasa, Ratnavali, Nagananda, Priyadarsika, Mattavilaas Prahasana, Baital Pachisi and Singhsan Battisi* etc. are popular and

part of classical, folk and popular culture. These have set the storytelling traditions and basics for narratology. Kalidasa's famous *Abhijnana Sakuntalam*, *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumarsavmbhava* and *Meghdutam* and *Banabhatta's Kadambari* are the most famous masterpieces of Sanskrit Literature. Hindu religious texts like *Shrutis*, *Upanishads*, *Bhagwad Gita*, *Bhagwat Purana*, *Ramayana*, and *Mahabharata* are revered and are part of a great legacy of the Sanskrit language.

With the passage of time Sanskrit lost its glamour and wide base of speakers. Radhavallabh Tripathi in the introduction to *Sodasi: An Anthology of Contemporary Sanskrit Poets* writes:

Sanskrit is known for its classical literature, even though the creative activity in this language has continued without pause from the medieval age till today [...]  
Consequently, contemporary Sanskrit writing suffers from prevailing negligence.  
[1992]

But literature in Sanskrit is produced in modern times too. In 2009, Satyavrat Shastri was honoured with Jnanpith Award for his contribution to Sanskrit Literature. He was the first recipient in the Sanskrit Language. Some other well-known writers in Modern Sanskrit Literature are Vidyadhar Shastri, Abhiraj Rajendra Mishra, and Jagadguru Rambhadracharya.

### **1.2.2 Partition Literature:**

Partition Literature is a canon of literature from the Indian Subcontinent depicting horrors of the division of the subcontinent into India, Pakistan and later on Bangladesh. This literature portrays the ballad of communal harmony, the rise of anxiety and gradual drift between India's major communities Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs; the trauma of Partition and the ensuing riots, bloodshed, displacement, problems of refugees, abductions, rapes, rehabilitation, etc. It underscores that human beings by nature are brutal and on the other, it asserts that humanity is a universal value that prevails irrespective of caste, creed, race and religion. It highlights that Partition instead of solving the problems have created a legacy of questions that are still haunting the collective memory of the people; identity crisis and issues of loyalty on both sides of the borders. Minorities across the borders suffer many issues of universal concern. The prominent writings on partition came from Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali and Hindi. Much of Partition literature has been translated into English.

**Saadat Hasan Manto's** short stories in Urdu are the classic of Partition trauma and realism. Manto has commented on the futility of partition. His brutally honest yet indifferent analysis of partition through his stories is remarkable. His stories like *Thanda Ghost*, *Khol Do*, *Tetwal ka Kutta*, *Toba Tek Singh*, etc. portray various dimensions of the partition. *Thanda Ghost* is the story where a dead body is raped for revenge. *Khol Do* peeps into the traumatic psyche of a beautiful girl who was gang-raped many times and her mechanical reaction to the words *Khol Do* are disturbing. *Tetwal ka Kutta* underscores the politics based on the language; through the character of the dog, the story criticizes the politics on Punjabi (Shahmukhi and Gurumukhi). *Toba Tek Singh* is the classic of people who found themselves in no man's land after partition.

**Amrita Pritam's** *Pinjar* (1950) is a classic feminist text of partition and its impact on women who were abducted on both sides of the border. Pooro alias Hamida was abducted by Rashid who forcefully converted her to Islam and married her after she was rejected by her family. History repeats itself and Hamida stands firm to recover Ramchand's sister from a Muslim family. The journey explores the feminine psyche and sense of redemption for Rashida who successfully recovers the woman. It also underlines the issues of continuous displacement of women from all the communities and destruction of their lives and dignity and that of their children who are neither accepted nor given human treatment. Hamida's denial to go back with her brother and her assertion to remain as Rashid's wife soulfully resolves the issue of such abducted women.

**Khushwant Singh's** *Train to Pakistan* (1956) peeps into the lives of villagers of Manomajra, a border village. Jugga and Noora's love story and Jugga's sacrifice to get Noora to cross the border in a train to Pakistan is depicted well. The train is the ghost of violence and partition atrocities havocked on human beings. **Qurratulain Hyder** is one of the most prominent writers from Urdu whose deep insights on partition have been reflected in her novel *Aag ka Darya* (1959). It explores the history of the subcontinent from Chandragupt Maurya to post-independence times in India and Pakistan. **Attia Hosain's** *Sunlight on the Broken Column* (1961) portrays the feudal family that is torn apart when one son decides to go to Pakistan and another remains in India after partition. It narrates the rich life of zamindars of Awadh and their subsequent decline, refugee problems and communal issues. The dismal transformation of a zamindar family into a compromising and struggling family amid refugees is worth reading.

**Dr. Rahi Masoom Raza's** *Aadha Gaon* (1966) translated into English as *The Village Divided*, criticizes the idea of Pakistan based on two-nation theory based on religion. It also focuses on the abolition of Zamindari system. The writer reveals that being homeless is the worst thing in the life of people. Leaving the places of their birth and travelling to alien lands in the hope of a better future is ridiculous. **Jyotirmayi Devi's** *Epar Ganga Opar Ganga* (1968) depicts the problems of women who were lost and recovered during the partition across the borders. Their womanhood is under scrutiny. They have to fight back not only the trauma of partition but also the tendencies of patriarchal society at home. **Bhisma Sahani's** *Tamas* (1974) gives the Marxist point of view of the partition. Sahani aptly reveals that common people did not bother about the religious issues as they have to fight for their everyday survival. Politicians have created these religious and fundamentalist tendencies for their benefit and destroyed the lives of innumerable people everywhere.

**Chaman Nahal's** *Azadi* (1975) portrays the lives of Lala Kanshi Ram, Prabha Rani, Arun and many more who were displaced across the borders due to Partition and unplanned transfer of population. It depicts how women were harassed and abducted, paraded naked and raped brutally. *Azadi* underscores the lives of refugees who had gone through hard times and prepared themselves to grow again from nothing. It also focuses on the sorrow of displacement and exile from one's soil. **Ashgar Wajahat's** *Jis Lahore Nahi Dekhya Who Jamiya hi Nahi* (1980) is a play focusing on the cultural ethos of Lahore. It hints at the futility of partition and the horrendous impact of partition on old people who never left their homes. Bebe, the central character, becomes a refugee in her own ancestral home. The play also talks about the efforts of local goons to misappropriate the property of old people.

**Salman Rushdie** makes use of magic realism in his novel *Midnight's Children* (1981). It explores the struggle of children born on the stroke of midnight on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947. Salim Sinai, Shankar, Padma and other children born at that crucial time have been bestowed with special powers. The book won three Booker Prizes – Man Booker Prize in its publication year in 1981, and Best of the Booker twice in 1993 and 2008. **Bapsi Sidhwa's** *Ice Candy Man* (1987) reveals the Parsi point of view on Partition. The minuscule Parsi community suffers the dilemma of supporting either Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs. But in the humbug of partition aftermath, the community becomes the binding agent, healing the wounds of victims of partition. **Amitav Ghosh's** *Shadow Lines* (1988) underscores that geographical borders are useless as they cannot

separate the cultural and linguistic ethos of people. **Mukul Kesavan's** *Looking through Glass* (1995) is fantasy fiction where a Photographer takes time to travel in past and finds himself in 1942. It is as though looking through the lenses of a camera on the times of crucial years of India's struggle for independence.

**Shauna Singh Baldwin's** *What the Body Remembers* (1999) portrays Sikh women Roop and Satya who are co-wives. It narrates the partition from Sikh women's perspective and asserts the inner strength to stand firm in times of crisis. The novel explores Roop's life from 1937 to the anti-Sikh riots after Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. **Kamleshwar's** *Kitne Pakistan* (2000) too explores world history from this perspective. It conveys that Pakistan is not a place rather it is a symbol of the tendency of division. He uses Pakistan as a metaphor of Partition. **Anita Rau Badami's** *Can you Hear the Night Bird's Call* (2007) reflects the anxiety and fear of being a woman during Partition and being a Sikh during Hindu-Sikh riots after Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. It also explores the problems of the Canadian diaspora and increasing demands of a separate state for Sikhs and Operation Blue Star etc. **Gulzar's** *Two* (2019) is deeply rooted in the places. It narrates the partition of people into two who were one before the division of the subcontinent. The characters travelling in a Kafil spread over the places and their stories are weaved beautifully from various historical socio-political events in India from partition to the Kargil war.

***Check your Progress***

1. The short story *Khol Do* is written by whom?
2. When was *Train to Pakistan* published?
3. Who is the writer of *Midnight's Children*?

### **1.2.3 Parsi Literature:**

Parsi Literature in English can be considered as an important aspect of Modern Indian Literature as it has given a new dimension of Ethnic literature from the periphery from a demographic point of view. Parsi fiction in English highlights the problems of the Parsi minuscule community in India, Pakistan and abroad. It becomes evident that demographically this community is on the verge of decline. Only a few thousand people across the world are surviving. Certain issues have troubled this community. When faced with invasions in Persia and

Zoroastrians fled from persecution. Some bands of refugees saved their lives and spread all over the world; especially to India during the 8<sup>th</sup> century at Sanjan, Gujarat. They sought refuge under King Jadi Rana. King sent the glass full of milk hinting at the situation that they don't have any place in his kingdom. But Parsi priest mixed the sugar and conveyed that they would mix into the King's culture and sweeten it without any disturbance. The wisdom of the priest appealed to the king. He gave them refuge on the following conditions (which eventually moulded the identity of the Indian Parsis):

1. Parsis were denied to speak their language Farsi. They would have to speak Gujarati.
2. Parsi women would wear the sari in a Gujarati style.
3. Parsis would not proselytize.
4. Parsis would venerate the cow.
5. Parsis would have to perform their religious ritual during the night only.
6. Parsis would not interfere in politics and not use weapons.

These conditions became the scar on their collective consciousness. They lost their mother tongue. The interfaith marriage was taboo for Parsis. In modern times, extreme individualism and westernization have caused them to alienate from the Indian cultural milieu. They faced the problems of survival in Muslim and Hindu majority spaces during various phases of history. This has resulted in cultural hybridity where Parsis follow certain Hindu and Muslim traditions. Major writers from the Parsi background are Rohinton Mistry, Bapsi Sidhwa, Cyrus Mistry, Ardshir Vakil, Boman Desai, Dine Mehta, and Firdaus Kanga.

**Bapsi Sidhwa** is famous for her novels such as *The Crow Eaters* (1978), *The Bride* (1983), *An American Brat* (1993), *Ice Candy Man* (1987), and *Water* (2013). *The Crow Eaters*, *Ice Candy Man* and *An American Brat* typically focus on the Parsi ethos in the Parsi community residing in Lahore in undivided India, during partition and independent Pakistan. Parsi community in her fictional world is highly influenced by Muslim culture and Urdu language. **Rohinton Mistry's** *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *A Fine Balance* (1995), *Family Matters* (2001), and *Scream* (2006) portray various issues and degraded financial conditions of the Parsi community residing in Mumbai. The city becomes one of the major characters in his fictional world. The Parsi community in Mistry's fictional world has



undergone political and financial turmoil in Post-independent India. It gets influenced and affected by the dominant Hindu culture with time. **Farukh Dhondy's** celebrated novels related to the Parsi community; *Poona Company* (1980) and *Bombay Duck* (1990) explore the writer's world and memories of Poona and Bombay. **Boman Desai's** *The Memory of Elephant* (1988) explores the eccentricities of the Parsi community through the collective memory of the characters stretched through three generations. **Firdaus Kanga's** *Trying to Grow* (1991) is a semi-autobiographical novel exploring the life of a boy suffering from brittle bones. It underscores the Anglophilia of the Parsi community and fond memories of the British Raj. **Dina Mehta's** *And Some Take Lover* (1992) explores the world of a Parsi young girl Roshani who faces the dilemma of Gandhian idealism and exploration of her sexuality through her love affair with a married man. **Cyrus Mistry's** *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* (2012) depicts the lives of people working in Doongarwadi (Tower of Silence). Parsis do not bury, cremate or drown their dead bodies as this would contaminate the holy trinity (Earth, Fire and Water) of the Parsi religion. It depicts the dilemmas and problems of corpse bearers who are treated like untouchables by Parsis in India.

#### **1.2.4 Dalit and Nomadic Tribe Literature:**

Dalit Literature being one of the most important canons in Marathi literature has given a great tradition of protest literature. Writers like Daya Pawar, Namdeo Dhasal, Shankarrao Kharat, Baby Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Pradnya Pawar, Mukta Sarvagaud, Urmila Pawar and many more have enriched this literature with its multifaceted protest discourse based on caste, gender and marginalization.

**Daya Pawar's** *Balut* is the first Dalit autobiographical narrative in Marathi language. It comments on the Balut system that was prevalent in Indian society. The interdependence of rural communities was aptly reflected through this system. But later on, the system prevailed in the caste system and became the oppressive apparatus. It portrays the journey of an untouchable who survived the atrocities of *Savarna* (upper caste) people. It is an inspiring narration that percolates the Ambedkarite movement. It initiated the new era of Dalit and marginal voices being compelled to be heard. **Shankarrao Kharat's** *Taral Antral* (1981) is the story of the struggle of Rama Mahar's son who became the Vice-Chancellor of a university. It portrays the graph of progress and developing the mindset of a community that strived hard for human status and socio-economic backwardness. It is a brilliant comment on caste politics prevalent in contemporary society.

**Sharankumar Limbale's** *Akkarmashi (The Outcaste)* reveals the dark zones in Indian life where human beings are gauged on the meters of their castes. Limbale mentions that his life is like hiding the spots of leprosy. He writes at the beginning of the book that he doesn't have any ancestry or proper genealogy and he would be able to talk about his mother or his grandmother, nothing more than that. His status as an outcaste is not only limited to the level of family, but it extends to his native place and even language. **Shantabai Kamble's** *Mazyra Jalmachi Chittarkatha (Kaleidoscope Story of My Life)* is the story of the emancipation and liberation of a Mahar girl whose passion for education established her as a sensible writer, progressive human being and ardent follower of the Ambedkarite movement. The language used in the narrative is remarkable and gives the essence of her life. **Mukta Sarvagaoud's** *Mitleli Kawade (Closed Doors)* reflects the life of a Dalit woman behind closed doors. She explores the mindset and nature of her community. Her shocking revelation of being a Dalit in different walks of life from student to professional and focuses on the repercussions in the life of a Dalit woman.

**Urmila Pawar's** *Aaidan (The Weave of my Life: A Dalit Woman's Memoirs)* is a narration of women of three generations and their struggle to be free and achieve human respect. She mentions that Aaidan means weaving anything from bamboo. She links the women of her family through this weaving of pain, suffering and dreams of liberation. The act of weaving from bamboo and the act of weaving from words somewhere links their lives. **Baby Kamble's** *Jin Aamuch* is a sociological and anthropological study of Mahar community residing in the western part of Maharashtra. Her depiction of community life full of lacuna and aspirations of a bright future under the influence of Dr. Ambedkar's movement are the hallmarks of her writing. Baby Kamble infuses her writing with the depiction of various traditions, customs, folk songs and remarkable use of language. The book is a treasure house for studying it from different anthropological and linguistic points of view. **Narendra Jadhav's** *Aamcha Baap Aani Amhi* highlights the journey of a family. It is a family narrative in the form of memoirs of the father's memories written in a diary format. Narendra and his siblings writing about their father and their struggle to rise above and achieve something in life. It depicts the graph of the achievement of family amid socio-cultural transformations. **Ibrahim Khan** in his auto-narrative *Muslim Mahar* underscores the problems of conversion. It once again focuses that conversion has not solved the problems of Dalits rather it has complicated their lives and new questions crop up regarding relatives, marriage ceremonies and final rites. The indelible stamp of Mahar identity has destroyed the harmony of their lives. They are not accepted as Muslims for being Mahar, on the

other hand, becoming Muslim has distanced them from Mahar or Navbaudha community.

Literature of nomads and tribal communities has also provided different dimensions of oppression prevalent in the social scenario in Maharashtra. Writers like Laxman Mane, Laxman Gaikwad, Ashok Pawar, Janabai Girhe and many others have portrayed the predicament of their caste which is always on the move. Their continuous displacement and oppression in society is heart moving.

**Laxman Mane's** autobiography *Upara* is a landmark work in Marathi literature. It changed the direction of Dalit autobiographies. Laxman Mane writes about his wandering 'Kaikadi' community. The title itself suggests the status of his community. It is also a love story in the shadow of socio-religious hegemony. It reflects the sense of superiority and purity in various castes and sub-castes in Hinduism. Mane suffers on both fronts; as a member of a wandering community, he has been systematically marginalized by upper-caste hegemony. On the other hand, he is rejected and harassed by his community members for marrying outside the community. The narrative is full of Kaikadi dialect. **Laxman Gaikwad's** *Uchlya* is another groundbreaking literary masterpiece in Marathi Literature. It gives insiders' views and glimpses of branded life of the 'Paradhi' community. Laxman Gaikwad's story reveals the atrocities done by police and upper-caste communities on the women, children and men of this community. The *branded-ness* of their criminality and the fact that these people have to earn their living by thieving and looting as they have been denied to accommodate in the mainstream life.

**Kishor Kale's** *Kolhatyach Por* (Against all Odds) portrays the life of 'Kolhati' community. The women of this community are artists and dancers. They use their art to earn bread and butter. But being artisans, they are considered as a thing of enjoyment. The narrative focuses on the struggle of Kishor's mother and his own to transcend the socio-cultural barriers. This is the story of a boy who challenges the norms of Kolhati community and becomes a doctor. The glory of emancipation and empowerment makes it a compelling narrative of marginal community. *Chorata* by **Santosh Pawar** also deals with the depiction of Paradhi youth. It is a story of Paradhi community their branded identity, their struggle to survive amid atrocities inflicted by police and upper caste people. It underscores the pathetic conditions of women, their struggle to live and the impact of blind faith on the Paradhi community. **Ashok Pawar's** *Birad* depicts the life and sufferings of 'Beldar' community. The narrative questions the authenticity and existence of socialism, a welfare state, democracy and fraternity. The Beldar community is

given animalistic treatment everywhere. Women in the community are troubled by their men. This patriarchal outlook can be seen in the narration. It also highlights the impact of the 'Phule-Shahu-Ambedkar movement' and the awakening of the writer and his community.

**Janabai Girhe's** *Marankala* portrays the life of the 'Gopal' community. The book traces the struggles of Janabai, a girl child, for education and becoming a teacher and upheavals that have shaken her lifetime and again. It talks about the importance of education and its spread in marginal communities. Education is the only panacea for the uplifting of marginal groups and women for a better life and status. **Raoji Rathod's** *Tandel* beautifully portrays the vivid aspects of 'Lamani' life. The narrative portrays the beautiful landscape of jungles, lamani people and their traditions, the history of their downfall from aristocratic community to wandering community. The book is enriched with folk songs and lamani dialect. It focuses on the writer's struggle for education and trying to reform his community. **Rajaram Aatram's** *Ughda Darawaza* highlights the life of a tribal community. The title hints at the lifestyle of the Adivasis. The natural surroundings, traditions, and the flavours of tribal dialects are sprinkled throughout the narrative. It highlights the pathos of the aboriginal people who once were the kings of the region, now turned to be primitives. The tragic change and the suffering of this tribal community are the essence of this narrative.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who is the writer of *Akkarmashi*?
2. Which problem is discussed in *Muslim Mahar*?
3. Which community is portrayed in *Marankala*?

### **1.2.5 Literature from other Indian Regional Languages:**

India has 22 official languages. This section will focus on some of the writers from regional languages.

V.S. Khandekar through his Marathi novel *Yayati* poses eternal questions on the concepts of morality, youth, lust and bonding of values and emotions in human life. P.L. Deshpande is a celebrated Jnanpith Award-winning Marathi writer. His humour and comic treatment of the characters provide a distinct Marathi flavour. V. V. Shirwadkar or Kusumagraj was an important

Marathi poet. Through his poetry, Shirwadkar explored the world of the common man. Through his poems like “Columbusa che Geet” (Song of Columbus), he inspires common people to do better in life irrespective of hurdles. He is famous for his poetry collection *Vishakha*. Manik Godghate or Grace and Suresh Bhatt are other famous Marathi poets. Grace is much difficult to understand and his poetry symbolizes life in its various manifestations. Suresh Bhatt is famous for his lyrical poetry. His ‘Ghazals’ are famous and adapted for films too.

Bhalchandra Nemade and Rangnath Pathare are other celebrated novelists from Maharashtra. Their writings have explored the human psyche and tried to treat the world from different perspectives. *Kosla*, *Jarila*, *Zool*, *Hool*, and *Hindu* are the famous novels of Bhalchandra Nemade. Nemade’s *Hindu* traces the lives of people from the commencement of Indus civilization. It has great anthropological value. Rangnath Pathare’s *Saat Patil-Kulvrutant* is an attempt to trace the genealogy of the Patil family and history for the last seven generations. *Tamrapat* is another well-known work by him.

Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Elkunchwar are well-known dramatists who have influenced modern literature in Marathi. Vijay Tendulkar’s *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Sakharam Binder*, *Ghidhade (Vulture)*, *Shantata Court Chalu Aahe (Silence! The Court is in Session)* created controversies after their publication. Mahesh Elkunchwar’s *Wada Trilogy* has talked about the decline and disintegration of social structure and change in family values. G.A. Kulkarni has become part of the cultural heritage of Marathi Literature through his short stories. His depiction of characters; his use of magic realism, special diction and plot structure have made him immortal in Marathi literature. He won Sahitya Akademi Award for his short story collection *Kajalmaya*. It includes the wonderful treasure of short stories with vivid philosophical dimensions.

Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, well known as Beypore Sultan, is a famous novelist and short story writer from Kerala. His unconventional style has made him popular. His language of writing is similar to common speech. He represented the marginalized characters. His famous works of fiction are *Balyakalasakhi*, *Janamadinam*, *Pathummayude Aadu* and many others. His famous short stories are *Anargha Nimisham*, *Visappu*, *Vidduikalude Swargam*, and *Sarpayajnam*.

Punathil Kunjabdulla is another celebrated writer and Sahitya Akademi award-winning novelist from Kerala. He is considered a practitioner of avant-garde literature in Malayalam. His

famous novels are *Smarakasilakal*, *Kannadi Veedukal*, *Ammaye Kaanan* and *Agnikinavukal*. His short story collections are *Aligarh Kathakal*, *Ente Priyapetta Kathakal*, *Kure Sthreekal*, etc. Perumal Murugan writes novels and short stories in Tamil. His writing highlights the dual standards and dichotomy prevalent in Tamil society. His novel *Madhorubhagan (One Part Woman)* created much buzz and controversy. He was banned and boycotted by rigid and orthodox communities and harassed by fundamentalists. This compelled him to give up writing as a creative writer in January 2015. His other notable works are *Eru Veyyil*, *Nizhal Mutram* and *Koolamadari*.

C.S. Lakshmi is a famous feminist writer. She is also known by her pen name *Ambai*. Her first Tamil novel was *Andhi Malai*. She is also a short story writer. Her famous short story collections are *Kanaiyazhi*, *Veetin Mulaiyil Oru Samaiyalarai*. S.L. Bhyrapaa is a prominent writer in Kannada Literature. He reflects the contemporary issues and problems in his novels. His famous novels are *Bheemkaaya*, *Vamshavriksha*, *Anveshana*, *Parva*, *Aavarana*, *Yaana* and the latest one *Uttarakaanda*. U.R. Ananthamurthy is another famous novelist from Kannada Literature. His magnum opus *Samskara* is a classic text. It gives glimpses of an orthodox Brahmin society.

Girish Karnad is at the forefront of Kannada literature by depicting the culmination of traditional and modern, absurd and wisdom through his dramas. His treatment of feminist point of view, presentation of folklores and interpretation of history has claimed him a place in modern Indian literature. *Hayavadana*, *Yayati*, *Agnivarisha*, and *Tughlaq* are some of his famous plays. Gudipati Venkata Chalam is the most influential modern Telugu writer. His beliefs in women's power to endure difficulties; and his distinct style of writing have earned him a prominent place in Telugu literature. His famous novels are *Maidanam*, *Sasirekha*, *Vivaham*, *Aruna*, *Anusuya* and *Ameena*. He has also contributed several short stories. His short story "Doshgunam" was adapted for a feature film "Grahamam".

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### 1.3 Learning Outcomes

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After going through this chapter students will be able to:

- Understand the literature from the regional languages of India.

- Know the different types of literary canons in India.
- Know Dalit and Tribal literature, Parsi literature, Partition literature, etc.

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## 1.4 Glossary

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<b>Khalsa:</b>	Pure
<b><i>Jin Aamuch:</i></b>	Our life
<b>Aaidan:</b>	Weaving anything from bamboo
<b><i>Aamcha Baap Aani Amhi:</i></b>	<i>Our father and we</i>
<b><i>Upara:</i></b>	Outsider
<b><i>Uchly:</i></b>	Picker / thieves
<b><i>Kolhatyach Por:</i></b>	<i>Son of Kolhati</i>
<b>Chorata:</b>	Thief
<b>Birad:</b>	Family
<b>Beldar:</b>	One of the nomadic communities
<b>Marankala:</b>	Deathly pains
<b>Tandel:</b>	Leader of tanda or group
<b>Lamani:</b>	One of the nomadic communities, Banjara

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## 1.5 Sample Questions

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### 1.5.1 Objective Questions:

#### Fill in the blanks:

1. Perumal Murugan wrote the novel *Madhorubhagan*. It means \_\_\_\_?
2. *Muslim Mahar* is written by -----?
3. The short story “Tetwal Ka Kutta” is written by \_\_\_\_\_.
4. “Ravi Ke Paar” is written by \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Ambai was the pen name of \_\_\_\_\_.

6. The play *Tughlaq* was written by \_\_\_\_\_.

**Mention whether given statements are True or False:**

1. “Khol Do” is a partition story.
2. *Ice Candy Man* deals with the story of the Parsi Community during Partition.

**Answer in one sentence:**

1. Mention any two novels by Rohinton Mistry.
2. Who is the writer of the Urdu novel *Two (Do)*?

### **1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Mention few major writers from Tribal Literature.
2. Mention some major novelists from South India.
3. Write a brief note on Sanskrit Literature.
4. Discuss the contribution of Girish Karnad to Kannada Literature.
5. Write a note on Ambai as a feminist writer.

### **1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write an essay on Partition Literature.
2. Write a detailed note on Dalit Literature.
3. Write a detailed note on Parsi Literature.

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## **1.6 Suggested Readings**

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1. Deshmukh, Ajay. *Ethnic Angst*. Bloomington: Partridge Publication, 2014.
2. French, Patrick. *Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 1998. Print.
3. Limbale, Sharankumar. *Dalit Aatmkatha: Ek Aaklan*. Pune: Dilipraj Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 2008.
4. Sadiq, Muhammad. *A History of Urdu Literature*. OUP India, 1995.



## Unit - 2: Significance of Literary Translations

### Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Literary Translation
  - 2.2.1 Introduction
  - 2.2.2 Types of Translation
  - 2.2.3 Literary Translation
  - 2.2.4 Historical Perspective of Literary Translation
  - 2.2.5 Significance of Literary Translation
  - 2.2.6 Literary Translation as New Writings
  - 2.2.7 General Difficulties in Translating Literature
- 2.3 Learning Outcomes
- 2.4 Glossary
- 2.5 Sample Questions
- 2.6 Suggested Readings

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### 2.0 Introduction

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Translation is a major tool for the transmission of knowledge. Translation helps us to know and read famous books which are written in other languages and it is through translation that books are recognized and studied throughout the world. Well-known examples are Newton's *Law of Gravitation*, Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, Freud's *Psychoanalysis* and Karl Marx's *Das Capital*. These books are recognized and studied not only in their country but studied all over the world. The same is the case with Hindi and Urdu literature. In India popular books on mythology, philosophy and arts are written in vernacular languages or Sanskrit. Recognized Indian poet and dramatist Rabindranath Tagore initially wrote his collection of poetry called *Geetanjali* in Bengali language but later he translated or transcreated it into English language. The book *Geetanjali* became so famous through its translation that Tagore was awarded the prestigious Noble Prize in 1913. The poetic genius of Tagore was now exposed to a wider

readership. Similarly, novels and short stories of Premchand, which were written in Hindi and Urdu, got translated into English. Translation plays an important role in bringing out the universal elements in world literature and therefore its relevance cannot be ignored. Previously translation was limited to modern literature but now its domain has become much wider. It has become very relevant in research works being done in various fields of medicine, commerce and business, science and technology, and others in different languages.

Translation is an activity that consists of the transmission of meaning from one language to another language. Translation has been defined by various scholars and writers in their own way; highlighting various features of translation. Following are some of the definitions which can help us to get the true meaning of translation.

- a. According to Newmark, “Translation is rendering the meaning of a text into another language in the way that the author intended the text”. (1988: 23)
- b. Munday defines translation as “The process of transferring a written text from source language to target language’. (2009:5)
- c. According to Nida and Taber, “Reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style”. (1974: 12)
- d. Paul Valery defines translation as “to translate is to reconstitute as nearly as possible the effect of a certain cause by means of another cause”. (Qtd. In Arjunwadkar, 1997:243-244)

Thus, rather than commenting on the complex opinions of the great theoreticians, one can say that there is a possibility of translation. The concept of translation changes from time to time and from country to country. The development of the theory of translation is different in India and abroad. In India, it has always been regarded as ‘New Writings’. In Sanskrit, the term ‘Chhaya’ is used for translation which means a shadow and image. Thus, this term suggests translation be similar but not the same as the original.

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## 2.1 Objectives

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There are multiple objectives of this unit. Some of them are to make students able:

- To understand the concept of literary translation.

- To study the history of literary translation.
- To study the basic characteristics of literary translation.
- To comprehend the significance of literary translation.
- To study literary translation as new writings.
- To know the general difficulties in translation process.
- To know various types of translation.

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## **2.2 Literary Translation**

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### **2.2.1 Introduction:**

The practice of translation is quite old as the tradition of creative literature. Translation or translation studies have a long history in many languages like Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Sanskrit, English and French. The translation of the Bible from its original Hebrew language into English language is established to be the highlight in translation studies. Ever since translation studies has been developing with its socio-political, cultural, historical and economic aspects. Translation studies have taken the social and cultural turn under cultural studies as a distinct discipline in the 1980s after a lot of linguistic experiments. Today it has developed as a multidimensional, multipurpose and interdisciplinary literary process as science of linguistics and genre of literature.

The word translation is defined by scholars and writers in different ways keeping its various functions in mind, but the most common definition of translation is that it is a process of transferring, replacing, recreating and remaking of the source text into target text which requires at least two different languages. Language is the primary source in the process and functioning of translation. Translation takes place only if there are two different languages. Thus, translation has a major function in the communication process. Communication is a process of understanding different messages from one person to another person. Communication may be verbal that is oral; or written or non-verbal that is through postures, gestures, body expressions, etc. Human beings follow both forms of communication but animals follow only non-verbal communication.

Language is indispensable for humankind. Translation, which means transference of a text from one language into another, is also not less important. The reason is the curiosity of the

human mind to know others. It is through translation that we can be informed and inform others. Nobody can learn all the languages of the world and thus it is translation that makes Shakespeare or Tukaram available to the world. Whether the perfect translation is accomplished or not is a debatable issue. But it is translation that has made the literary heritage of human civilization accessible to every part of the world. According to the dictionary of World Literary Terms, “There are masterpieces in more languages than even a professional scholar can hope to command, literary translation is therefore indispensable. (Shipley, 1993:342)

### **2.2.2 Types of Translation:**

Some of the major types of translation are as follows:

- a. Transposition Translation – It involves replacing one word class of the source language with another word class of the target language without changing the meaning of the message.
- b. Modulation Translation – Modulation is a variation of the form of the message obtained by a change in the point of view, it is unacceptable in the case of translation of revealed messages.
- c. Literal Translation – Literal translation is the direct transfer of explicit features of source language text into translating language text, here the translator’s task is adhering to the surface linguistic needs of the source language and translating language.
- d. Equivalence Translation – In this translation type, the translator replaces source language text through equivalents in translating language text.
- e. Adaptation Translation – This translation procedure is used where the situation being referred to by the source language message is unknown in the translating language culture and such cases, translators have to adapt.
- f. Free Translation – Free translation means translation of books without any norms or rules of translation procedure. Translator translates the book with a free mind and he/she does not pay much attention to its details.

### **2.2.3 Literary Translation:**

Literary translators along with the difficulties natural to translations of all fields must also think and consider the aesthetic aspects of the text, its beauty and style, as well as its marks like

lexical, grammatical or phonological; keeping in mind that one language's stylistic marks can be drastically different from another's. There are several definitions of translations but the most vital factor in the definitions is that it is utilizing the proper word like 'equivalency'. For a translator, the fundamental issue is searching for equivalents in meaning that produce the same effects in the translated text as those that the author was seeking for readers of the original text. The translator has to consider the text in such a way as if he is presenting a new text equivalent to the original text; creating the same values as it were in the original text. It is generally accepted that meanings are not translated but messages, which is the reason that the text must be considered in its totality.

The question or doubt arises when the source language and target language belong to different cultural groups; the major problem occurs for the translator in finding or replacing terms in the target language that can express the highest level of authenticity possible to the meaning of certain words. Literary translation, unlike the translation of technical or scientific material, is rarely mandatory service, yet it is perhaps one of the most challenging tasks where the role of the translator as a cultural mediator is even more significant. Within any particular genre, there are innumerable ways to approach the task of translation depending upon the translation brief, the text itself as well as prevalent norms and preferences. The practice of literary translation is a complex decision-making process influenced by age-old traditions; the practice of literary translation is a complex decision-making process.

Translation of various literary and scientific books from one language into another has always been a significant and challenging task. Literary translation plays a significant role in exchanging the cultural implications of various languages and nations. It also helps to understand and enhance intercultural understanding between the two. The majority of readers are interested and comfortable in reading in their mother tongue. Literary translations open new cultural understanding through the various genres of literature like plays, novels, short stories, etc. Along with novels, other literary genres are being translated nowadays to know and understand various cultural similarities and dissimilarities. Academic books and scientific books are translated in great numbers to exchange knowledge and information.

#### **2.2.4 Historical Perspective of Literary Translation:**

The history of translation and its practice is quite old in English literature. Many well-known authors and writers adopted the translation practice as their contribution to literature. It

was in the 14<sup>th</sup> century that translation practice started when the father of English poetry Geoffrey Chaucer adapted works from Italian, French and Latin languages. The examples of Chaucer's translated works are '*Knight's Tale*', *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Roman de la Rose*. Chaucer translated the works of Boccaccio and Boethius. Chaucer followed the concept of adaptations and translated the well-known works.

A popular English translation was Wycliffe's *Bible* appeared at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. English prose translations and adaptations started at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Thomas Malory translated *Le Morte d'Arthur*, which was an adaptation of Arthurian romances. Another example of Tudor translation is Tyndale's *New Testament* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which influenced other writers in later periods. There were many writers and translators who were very keen to translate the works of Plato and Aristotle in later periods. It was due to the efforts of Arab translators that works of Plato and Aristotle were originally translated from Greek into Arabic and then reached Europe.

Horace, Ovid, Petrarch and many modern Latin writers were key models for English Tudor poets and Elizabethan writers and translators. These authors followed and adapted Latin writers and wrote in the style in which the original writers had written and expressed their ideas. Elizabethan writers and translators did not just paraphrase but they focussed on the stylistic equivalence as well. The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw a great rise in the translation of literary works. The works of great writers like Virgil and Homer were recalled and translated by many translators into simple language. John Dryden translated the works of Virgil as if he would probably have written if he were alive. Alexander Pope also similarly translated Homer into simple language with more linguistic and stylistic equivalence. The 18<sup>th</sup> century again witnessed new developments in the translation process. They adopted their technique, style and composition of translation. Many translators adopted their composition and most of the time they omitted parts of the original works which they failed to understand or parts where they felt disenchanted. The best example of this kind of composition could be James Macpherson's *Translations of Ossian* which was his composition than mere translation.

19<sup>th</sup> century followed new standards of translations and adaptations which focussed on style and accuracy. J. M. Cohen had made a policy regarding the translation that emphasised the text and the only text and not more than the text. Cohen omitted only bawdy passages and texts and unnecessary explanatory footnotes in his translations. Victorian writers and translators emphasised and followed metaphrase or pseudo metaphrase which had a deep impact on the

readers and they felt as if they are reading foreign classical literature and writers. The finest example of translation in the Victorian period was Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam which was translated in 1859. The work became famous due to various Persian names and Biblical echoes drawn from the Persian original works. Benjamin Jowett set a new pattern of translation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when he translated great writers like Plato and Aristotle into simple and uncomplicated language and style. Translations of Jowett followed and set a new pattern that focussed on accuracy rather than the style in his work.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is Equivalence Translation?
2. Which concept of translation is followed by Chaucer?
3. Whose policy of translation is 'the text and the only text and not more than the text'?

**2.2.5 Significance of Literary Translation:**

Technically any piece of writing can be called literature. Literature is more commonly documented as a work that shows written creativity of long-lasting value. These are not only poems or novels or dramas but also writings that show the world beyond our imagination. Literature brings past to life, along with the lives of the great men and women and their adventures. It challenges our thoughts and ideas, it also assists us to read between the lines, and teaches us to discover and recognize various themes and identify hidden or contextual meanings of the texts. Even different cultures may be searched and better understood.

Literary translation is different from other types of translation. The reason is that the basic objective of literary translation is the supremacy of poetic communicative meaning. Literary translation also has aesthetic meaning in addition to providing information to the readers. The artistic images certainly have a deep impact on the reader's mind which is created in any piece of literary work. It may be in the form of an image of character or nature or any other thing. So, the translator must consider various features of the text while translating the literary piece of writing. The poetic focus of the text makes the translation of literary texts different from any other translation of informative books. It is very challenging to achieve the basic purpose of translation that is creating a particular image in the minds of readers while translating prose, poetry, or any other work of literature. Literary translation might include some deviation from the prescribed norms. Garcia Marquez, a well-known Columbian novelist, and short story writer

wrote the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Spanish language and later on translated it into English. Garcia Marquez himself remarked that the translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was better than the original novel. But other critics disagree with the view of Garcia Marquez and stated that his remark was mistranslated and that his translation of the novel was not better but was more accurate. This conflict explores the heart of literary translation.

In comparison to prose, novel and drama; poetry is the most difficult literary genre for translation. The basic reason for the difficulty in poetry is the use of symbolism as it is often heavily based on the source language. Poetry has various poetic devices like meter, the figure of speech, rhyming pattern, etc. which a translator has to consider while translating. Every word and line from any poetic piece has to be carefully considered not only for its skills to communicate its purpose but also translator's skill to adjust with a poetic style. Imagination plays a vital role in literature especially in poetry which goes beyond the established borders for other forms of writing. Creativity is always promoted and most of the time ideas and vocabulary may be developed in the literature that may not exist in real life. In all these situations, it is very difficult to translate such a piece of literature. It is the job of a literary translator who can go beyond and find out new and unknown and bring it to life for different linguistic and cultural readers.

Translating a literary piece of writing helps readers to learn and understand the cultures of different regions. A literary book always reveals different ideas, concepts, and thoughts of the author and also reflects his community, state, or nation indirectly. When the readers read the translated literary book, it helps them to understand the thoughts and ideas of the people from other communities and nations. Readers would have been deprived of the knowledge of other cultures without translation. Literary translation is a tool that opens the door for literature from other nations and cultures which may be otherwise inaccessible to the readers. Every language has its features and characteristics, so it the duty of a translator to check carefully that the meaning would not be changed while translating the literary work. It is very challenging for a translator to maintain the stability between what has to be translated correctly and what has to be understood. It will depend on the translator's choice of words and understanding of both languages that are SL and TL.

### **2.2.6 Literary Translation as New Writings:**

Though translation has acquired a new dimension due to the development in the field of both linguistics and critical theories in modern times, it is essentially considered a secondary



activity, mechanical rather than a creative process in the western tradition of scholarship and therefore considered lower status. In western metaphysics, translation is an exile. J. Miller remarks, “Translation is the wandering existence in a perpetual exile” (Translation Theory 135). The diachronic study of translation reveals that there is a fundamental difference between the western and the eastern attitude to translation when the translation was considered as a subsidiary and derivative in the west, in the east it is considered as new writing, creative process disregarding the traditional notion that it is a mere rendering of SL into TL text. As a critic deconstructs the text and then reconstructs it, so a translator decodes an SL text and then recodes it in the TL. Hence translation is creative for it recreates an SL text in a new way in the TL.

The Concept of translation as creative writing can be best understood if one examines the job of self-translators and transcreators. Self-translators and bilingual writers take liberty with the original writing and write differently in the target language. Tagore’s *Gitanjali* in English is vastly different from the original Bengali version of the poem. These writers write in the mother tongue that is L1 and also in the second language L2. Their writings in both L1 and L2 should be taken as new writings or creative writings and translations from SL into TL.

Transcreation means retreating an SL text on the target language taking absolute liberty with it and yet being fidel to it. The rendering of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* into English by R. K. Narayan and Rajaji respectively can be taken as examples of transcreation. It is not possible to reproduce a text perfectly in another language especially when the languages concerned are as distant as the Indian language and English. In other words, the translator takes the role of a creator and translation, when done well, turns out to be new writing.

In the west, the Bible translation has taken the form of creative writing. The history of Bible translation is in a sense the history of western culture in a microcosm. A translation text, it is said, is always a metatext or a text about a text. A target text is a metatext not only because it imitates the source text but because it differs from the source text, and that the way of target text chooses to differ from the source text is indicative of the target text’s conception of textuality. The difference between the source text and the target text is a shift of expression. This shift of expression makes translation ‘new writing’. The translator’s originality lies in an original recreation of the original.

Translator is a reader, an interpreter and a creator – all in one. In ancient India, translation was regarded as new writing. Sri Aurobindo says, “... A translator is not necessarily bound to the original he chooses: he can make his poem out of it if he likes and that is what is generally

done” (Translation: A Creative Process: 60). Prema Nanda Kumar suggests that the ancient Indian literary tradition had always given translation the status of new writing. The translation of stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* has produced new writing. The Indian old classics have undergone translation into several regional languages and in each case, translation has been regarded as ‘New Writings’ rather than mere imitations. So we have Sarala Das’ *The Mahabharata* in Oriya, Kasiram Das’ *Ramayana Kalpa Vrukshamu* in Telgu and in recent modern times Sri Aurobindo’s translation of some parts of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* which have been considered not only popular but also examples of new writings or creative writings. Thus, the translations of classics into regional languages were taken as ‘New Writings’.

Indian literary tradition takes translation as an autonomous creation equal to that of creative writing. Two significant anthologies of translation of our time namely, *Another India Writing in India* (1974) edited by Adil Jussawalla and Meenakshi Mukharjee bear testimony to how translations read like new writing. There are numerous examples of translations being regarded as new writing. A translation theorist, Sujit Mukherjee who has researched in this field observes that new literary texts derived from Itihas and Purana are obvious examples of this process.

### **2.2.7 General Difficulties in Translating Literature:**

- a. When translating scientific literature, the problems of style, lexical appropriateness and such niceties do not come in the way. On the other hand, literary translation brings multiple problems due to unfamiliar subjects, style and terminologies of both languages, and so on.
- b. Translating the poetic compositions is difficult. The problem is of the similes, metaphors, symbols, idioms, etc. of every language as they have their own cultural and conventional peculiarities because the concepts they express may usually be quite different from lexical meanings. Every language has its beauty and niceties which cannot be transferred exactly into any other language through translation.
- c. A translation cannot replace the original text because of its certain weakness. No translation can convey the sense and intended meaning of the SL text. Therefore, translation has the inherent weakness of imperfection.
- d. The translation of literature poses a good deal of problems for the translator. Literary translation involves not only the transfer of meaning from one language to another

language but also involves the translation of various poetic devices and literary devices from the Source language to the target language. Since the basic loss of meaning is one continuum between under translation and over translation, it is imperative on our part to divide literary translation genre-wise.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who translated *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gracia Marquez from Spanish to English?
2. Who said, “Translation is the wandering existence in a perpetual exile”?
3. Can we considered the translation as ‘New Writing’?

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## 2.3 Learning Outcomes

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After going through the unit, the students are expected to:

- Understand the meaning of literary translation and its historical perspective.
- Identify basic characteristics of literary translation.
- Understand the difference between literary translations and other types of translations.
- Understand the significance of literary translation.
- Comprehend the literary translation as the form of New Writings.
- Know various types of translation.

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## 2.4 Glossary

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**Adaption:** Change

**Bawdy:** Vulgar

**Concision:** Shortness

**Connotation:** Contextual / hidden meaning

**Corollary:** Consequence

**Diachronic:** Study regarding the development of a phenomenon through time

**Discerned:** Distinguish

<b>Emulate:</b>	Imitate
<b>Evocative:</b>	Suggestive
<b>Equivalence:</b>	Condition of being equal
<b>Lexical:</b>	Related to words
<b>Metaphrase:</b>	Word for word translation
<b>Metaphysics:</b>	Philosophical theory regarding what exists and how we know that exists.
<b>Modulation:</b>	The art of transition
<b>Niceties:</b>	Micro detail or distinction
<b>Opacity:</b>	Cloudiness
<b>Peculiarities:</b>	An odd or unusual feature or habit
<b>Rendering:</b>	Action of giving, yielding, or surrendering something
<b>Perpetual:</b>	Feeling or state that never ends or changes
<b>Species:</b>	Type / Kind
<b>Stylistic:</b>	The Study of Style
<b>Subtlety:</b>	Delicacy
<b>Transliteration:</b>	Process of transferring a word from the alphabet of one language to another
<b>Watchword:</b>	Motto / Slogan

## 2.5 Sample Questions

### 2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The translation of the Bible from its original \_\_\_\_\_ into English is proved to be a milestone in translation studies.
  - (a) Hebrew
  - (b) French
  - (c) Spanish
  - (d) Hindi
2. Translation is a process that involves at least \_\_\_\_\_ different languages.
  - (a) Four
  - (b) Three
  - (c) Two

- (d) One
3. The first translation in English was completed in the \_\_\_\_\_ century.
- (a) 13<sup>th</sup> Century
  - (b) 14<sup>th</sup> Century
  - (c) 15<sup>th</sup> Century
  - (d) 16<sup>th</sup> Century
4. Who translated Plato into simple and uncomplicated language?
- (a) Benjamin Jowett
  - (b) J. M. Cohen
  - (c) G. Chaucer
  - (d) John Dryden
5. Literary translation plays a significant role in exchanging the \_\_\_\_\_ implications.
- (a) Literal
  - (b) Political
  - (c) Cultural
  - (d) Historical
6. Garcia Marquez, a well-known novelist, and short story writer, was \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Indian
  - (b) British
  - (c) American
  - (d) Colombian
7. Literary translation also has \_\_\_\_\_ meaning in addition to providing just information to the readers.
- (a) Descriptive
  - (b) Analytical
  - (c) Aesthetic
  - (d) Informative
8. Who said “literary translation is a translational species in itself”?
- (a) Malory
  - (b) Jackson
  - (c) Chaucer
  - (d) Dryden

9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the central subject and key point of any argument about translation.
- (a) Literature
  - (b) Poetry
  - (c) Language
  - (d) Prose
10. Which is the most difficult genre for the translation process?
- (a) Novel
  - (b) Drama
  - (c) Prose
  - (d) Poetry

### **2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Write a note on types of translation.
2. Write a note on the challenges of translating poetry.
3. Write a note on literary translation.
4. Write a note on the historical perspective of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century translation.
5. Write a short note on the general difficulties of literary translation.

### **2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Define Literary Translation and its historical perspective.
2. Define Translation and its various types in detail.
3. Comment on the significance of Literary Translation.

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## 2.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 3: *I Shall Return to This Bengal*

### Structure

#### 3.0 Introduction

#### 3.1 Objectives

#### 3.2 *I Shall Return to This Bengal*

##### 3.2.1 Indian English Poetry

##### 3.2.2 Jibanananda Das: About the Poet

##### 3.2.3 Works

##### 3.2.4 Themes

##### 3.2.5 Jibanananda Das as a Partition Poet

##### 3.2.6 Critical Appreciation of the Poem

#### 3.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 3.4 Glossary

#### 3.5 Sample Questions

#### 3.6 Suggested Readings

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### 3.0 Introduction

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The human mind is very creative and human imagination has no limits. Poetry is the best example of the creativity of the human mind. Poems are written in almost all languages and all types of literature in the world. We have learned poems in our school days and we still remember them. It is the most loved genre of English literature. The poet expresses feelings, ideas and emotions with rhythm in the poems. Humans have used poems for recreation, for expression of love, for expression of patriotism, for expression of struggle, sacrifice, anger and many more feelings. When a poet writes a poem, the feelings and emotions come on the paper disguised in words. It is the first major literary genre. Genre means a style or category of art, music, or literature.

Poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction are the four genres of literature. Every kind of literature written throughout the world is divided into these four genres. They all differ from each other in many ways. The readers also have a choice of what to read and every genre of literature has its class of readers. Poetry is the most loved genre because it gives a soothing effect to the



mind and heart when it is read or sung. Yes, poems have a lyrical quality and they can be recited with the help of music. All poems are unique. One cannot find similarities in the two poems. Epic, narrative, romantic, dramatic, tragic and lyric are various types of poetic forms. Melodrama, tragedy and comedy are the sub-types of dramatic poetry. Other types of poems include ode, sonnet, elegy, ballad, song, etc. The readers do have some expectations before reading a particular text or piece of literature and they feel very happy and satisfied when their expectations are fulfilled.

*Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are the great epics of India. *Paradise Lost* by John Milton and *The Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Homer are epics. Romantic poetry is concerned with emotions, imagination and sentiments. The *Daffodils* by William Wordsworth is a romantic poem. Some specific features are followed by the poets while writing a poem. A poem does not follow paragraphs or sentences; it uses stanzas and lines instead. Sonnet, villanelle, and haiku are poetic forms that follow certain rules. Figures of speech are used to make a poem beautiful. They increase the effect of the poem and can be considered as literary tools. Metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, alliteration, personification, etc. are some of the figures of speech used in poems.

Indian English poetry is well-known worldwide and it is a part of Indian English literature. India is rich in culture, traditions and arts. Poems are composed, written and sung in India from ancient times. Religious scriptures are written in poetic form, it reflects a variety of spiritual traditions within India. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio started the genre of poetry in Indian English literature. Toru Dutt, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, etc., are some of the well-known poets of Indian English poetry. These poets portrayed India and Indian sentiments through their poems. They could read, write and speak English fluently because most of them had studied abroad. The Indian English poets were quite conscious of their native and local surroundings. The poetry of this time reflected the social, economic, political, religious and intellectual anxieties of people during India's struggle for independence. India was struggling for freedom and everyone was contributing in some way or the other. The poets awakened people and spread the message of freedom among the masses. But in the post-independence period, Indian poets developed their style. A large number of poets started writing poems in English during the sixties and the period after that. Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, Dom Moraes, K. N. Daruwala, Jayanta Mahapatra, A. K. Ramanujan, A. K. Mehrotra, Kamala Das, R. Parthasarathy, Keshav Malik, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre, Pritish Nandy, Gouri

Deshpande, Adil Jussawala, Shiv K. Kumar, and Gieve Patel along with other poets developed the genre and contributed to the corpus of Indian English poetry.

In this particular unit regarding the poem “I Shall Return to this Bengal”, we will discuss about Indian English Poetry. This unit will also introduce Indian English poetry before independence. We will further discuss the life and works of the poet Jibanananda Das and will critically appreciate the poem “I Shall Return to this Bengal”. This discussion will be followed by outcomes of what we have learned in this particular unit. There will be few suggested questions which are MCQs, short answer questions and long answer questions to enhance our understanding of the present topic. The recommended list of books for reading is given at the end of this unit. After studying this unit students will get an idea of how to read, analyse and enjoy any poem.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who wrote the great epic *Paradise Lost*?
2. Name two well-known epics written in India.
3. Name three Indian English writers.

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### **3.1 Objectives**

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The objectives of studying this unit are as follows:

- To know about Pre-Independence Indian English poetry.
- To learn about the contribution of Bengali poets to Indian English poetry.
- To be aware of the contribution of Indian English Poets in awakening people and achieving freedom.
- To know about the poet Jibanananda Das.
- To get familiar with the themes of Jibanananda Das’ poems.
- To study the poem “I Shall Return to This Bengal” by Jibanananda Das.

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## ***3.2 I Shall Return to This Bengal***

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### **3.2.1 Indian English Poetry:**

India is a country having unity in diversity. People of different castes, creeds and religions are residing here happily for ages together. India is rich in culture, heritage and literature. If anyone wants to know the heart of India and its rich cultural heritage, then one has to read good quality literature or poetry, in particular, to get acquainted with a variety of customs, traditions and rituals. Indian English poetry is rich in theme, language and imagery, etc. Every writer has the source of inspiration from various elements around him or her. These elements make Indian English Poetry 'Indian'. Writers and poets have depicted Indian ethos in their works through language, imagery, sensibility, feelings and emotions.

Every Indian writer has tried to keep 'Indianness' at the centre of his or her writings in Indian English literature. The cultural patterns of India, the folk literature, the songs are sung on various occasions and festivals have inspired Indian English literature. The contemporary socio-economic conditions have also inspired the writers and poets to contribute to this particular branch of literature. Indian Poets writing in English around the fifties have produced good quality poetry which has its roots in the traditional Indian sensibility and yet is modern in expression. Every writer or poet around the world tries to portray his or her culture, tradition and native elements in their literary creations, through which the readers get acquainted with their culture. Likewise, people around the world get to know about India through Indian English literature.

Writers and poets have a special gift of transforming any experience into the beautiful poem or literary piece. Common man will just experience and forget but literary artists, through their imagination and use of literary tools, give it back to the world in the form of literature. The basis of the writings of writers and poets is their experiences. Imaginations are also built and developed on experiences. Wordsworth stated, "Poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, recollected in tranquillity". Indian English poet living in India will write about India; which he or she has experienced. The essence of the writings would lie in the nativity. The region from where the writer or the poet belongs, its flora and fauna, food, dress, etc. all will become a part of the expression in the writings.

Indian imagery is beautiful indeed, but the poet, writer, or author should be honest enough to use this imagery for writing authentic literature. One cannot think and write a poem but the words should run on the paper directly through mind and heart in the form of a poem. Poetical enrichment of material should be taken care of, and not to be content with the decorative use of Indian imagery. The level of sensibility is a very important characteristic of Indian English Poetry. Indian poet cannot help but exploit the Indian experience in his poems. Indian English poets increasingly feel the need to portray all the Indian elements in their poems. The poet may like to write about the superstitions of crows or those details about the cow but in the readers' mind, he may do it for an exotic appeal to non-Indian readers, even though the poet may be able to justify his Indian material for poetic reasons.

Indian English poets from 1850 to 1900 were imitating the poets from the west. They were trying to write Indian poetry in western style. Many were influenced by English poets such as Matthew Arnold, Wordsworth, Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. 1900 to 1947 was the era of freedom struggle. The Indian English poets have expressed consciousness about renaissance, nationalism, patriotism and freedom through their literary creations. Poetry was used as a medium to awaken the people against the British Raj in this period.

Bengal was the first state to come directly in contact with British colonizers. Hence, Bengal witnessed the budding writers in the initial stage of Indian English poetry, though Bengali literature has its own root deep down in past centuries before. The Bengali literature grew in the times of Arakan kings. Daulat Qazi was the first poet of this kingdom. The poet Alaol wrote *Padmavati*. Michael Madhusudan Dutta published his first epic poem in 1860. *Vande Mataram* was written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam are world-famous poets of Bengali literature. Their works are translated in many languages including English and are still read worldwide. Sukanta Bhattacharya, Buddhadeb Bose, Nirendranath Chakravarty, Shakti Chattopadhyay, Jibanananda Das, Leema Dhar, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Sudhindranath Dutta, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Shankha Ghosh, Joy Goswami, Al Mahmud, Binoy Majumdar, Arun Mitra are some of the Bengali Poets who contributed to Bengali as well as Indian English poetry.

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is considered as the first stage of Indian English poetry. Henry Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, and Michael Madhusudan Dutt were some of the prominent poets of this stage. Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, Aurobindo Ghosh and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya were Indian English poets of the second stage. Nationality, spirituality and

mysticism were the chief elements of the poetry of this stage. Post-independence poetry is completely different from the poetry written in the pre-independence era. The poets became critical of the conditions in post-independent India. Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, Adil Jussawala, A.K. Ramanujan, Gieve Patel, Arvind Mehrotra, and Kamala Das are some of the post-independence Indian English poets. Arun Kolhatkar, Dilip Chitre, Meena Alexander, Jayant Mahapatra, Tapti Mukherjee and Sunita Namjoshi are few modern poets of Indian English literature.

Poetry was used as one of the means to raise a voice against British rule. English writings by Indians attracted the attention of the world in the first half of the nineteenth century. The renaissance in Bengal in the 18<sup>th</sup> century gave birth to literature in the pre-independence period. Toru Dutt is the first poet who has written about Indian myths and legends. Aurobindo Ghosh and Rabindranath Tagore can be considered as major poets of pre-independence Indian English Poetry. The British were the masters and were exploiting the Indians. They had enslaved many Indians. But with the beginning of the struggle for freedom for India's Independence; agitations, protests, strikes and demonstrations started taking place throughout the country. Lessons in nationalism and nationalistic consciousness were given to the masses; which was used as a weapon against the British Raj. Intoxicated with this spirit of Independence Indian English poets wrote poems full of the spirit of nationalism and freedom. Their poetry was influenced by Western science and the nationalistic ideas of the French revolution. Sarojini Naidu, Harindrananth Chattopadhyaya and others are the important Indian English poets of pre-independent India.

### **3.2.2 Jibanananda Das: About the Poet**

Bengal is the state in India, which is rich in literature, culture and arts. The great Rabindranath Tagore is from Bengal. Around 300 million people speak Bengali and it is their mother tongue. Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Rabindranath Tagore are the major poets of Bengali literature. Bengali literature achieved fame in the international literary world when the great poet Rabindranath Tagore was awarded Nobel Prize in Literature for *Gitanjali*, an anthology of poems translated into English by the poet himself with the title *Song Offerings*. Jibanananda Das is well known Bengali poet. He is popularly called 'Rupashi Banglar Kabi'. He is the most read Bangla poet after Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam. Jibanananda Das was born in 1899 in a small district town of Barisal, situated presently in the southern part of

Bangladesh. After completing his matriculation, he passed the intermediate exams from Brajamohan College. Then he left Barisal to join the University of Calcutta.

Jibanananda graduated from Presidency College, Kolkata, studied English literature, and graduated with BA (Honours). In 1919 his first poem appeared in print in the Boishakh issue of 'Brahmobadi Journal'. The poem was called "Borshoabahon" (Arrival of the New Year). He earned an M.A. degree in English from the University of Calcutta and joined the English department of City College, Calcutta as a teacher. Das passed away on October 22, 1954; eight days after he met with an accident with a tramcar.

### 3.2.3 Works:

Jibanananda Das was not known to many people when he was alive. He always kept himself away from the limelight. Only seven volumes of his poems were published when he was alive. But after his death, it was known that along with poems Das also wrote several novels and short stories. His unpublished works are still in the process of publication. When the great freedom fighter Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das died, Jibanananda wrote a poem called 'Deshbandhu'r Prayan'e' ("On the Death of the Friend of the Nation"). This poem was included in the anthology called *Jhara Palok* (1927).

The poems and other works of Das were published in various magazines, literary journals, and books in Dhaka, Calcutta, and many other cities. These included "Kallol", maybe the most well-known literary magazine of the contemporary times, "Kalikalam" (Pen and Ink), "Progoti" (Progress); co-edited by Buddhadeb Bose and others. In 1927 his first collection of poems was published which was called *Jhara Palok* (Fallen Feathers).

Jibanananda's work secured a prominent place in the very first issue of the magazine called "Kobita". This magazine was started by Buddhadeb Bose, Premendra Mitra and Samar Sen; the young activists in Calcutta. A poem called Mrittu'r Aagey (Before Death) written by Das has published in "Kobita" magazine. Tagore appreciated this poem and wrote a long letter to Bose and commented especially on the poem of Das. The famous poem of Jibanananda Das; "Banalata Sen" was published in the second issue of Kobita (Poush 1342 issue, Dec 1934/Jan 1935). Today, this 18-line poem has secured an important position in Bengali literature. *Dhusar Pandulipi*, his second volume of poetry was published in the following year. This volume established Das as a poet to reckon with.

Tagore appreciated the work of Jibanananda and gave place to his poem "Mrityu'r Aagey", the same poem that had impressed him three years ago in his poetry anthology entitled

“Bangla Kabya Parichay” (Introduction to Bengali Poetry). Jibanananda’s four poems: “Pakhira”, “Shakun”, “Banalata Sen”, and “Nagna Nirjan Haat” were part of an anthology that was published in 1939. This anthology was edited by Abu Sayeed Ayub and Hirendranath Mukhopadhyay. He was appointed to the editorial board of yet another new literary magazine “Dondo” (Conflict). By the last year of his life, Jibanananda was known as one of the best poets of the post-Tagore times. He was frequently invited to literary conferences, poetry readings, radio recitals, etc. “Banalata Sen” is one of the most loved poems of Jibanananda Das. This female character is referred to by name in the last line of each of its three stanzas. This poem is narrated by an unnamed traveller. The traveller sees this woman named Banalata Sen and describes her in the poem. Das was not a romantic poet at all but his poem ‘Banalata Sen’ is considered one of the finest romantic poems of Bengali literature. Historical consciousness can also be seen in the poetry of Jibanananda Das. The history of civilization and the freedom struggle of India are the recurring themes in the poetry of Das. In May 1954, he published a volume entitled *Best Poems* (Sreshttho Kobita). His “Best Poems” won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1955. Translation of any piece of literature does not mean translating the words. It means translating the emotions and sentiments also. The translation of some of the poems of Jibanananda Das was done by himself. Many translators have tried to translate his works into English.

#### **3.2.4 Themes:**

Jibanananda Das is known as the greatest modern poet of the Bengali language. He has gained love and fame from the people worldwide. Tagore is of course the most known poet of Bengali and Indian English literature, but after him, Jibanananda has earned the love of the masses and is considered as Bengal’s greatest modern poet. His poems are regarded as part of the Bengali pride and sentiments in India as well as in Bangladesh. Das wrote skillfully but as he was an introvert, not much of his literature was published during his lifetime. The Second World War had provoked many writers to write about the devastations and human condition. The ethnic, regional and social elements of the literature were very different after the Second World War. The war left a great impact on Jibanananda's poetic vision and his poetry underwent many cycles of change.

The demand for independence of India increased after World War II. Many poets wrote poems demanding freedom for India. Jibanananda recognized the need for communal harmony at

an early stage of his writings. The British were trying to divide India based on caste and religion. Jibanananda included a poem called “Hindu Musalman” in his very first book *Jhora Palok*. He never wanted to gain fame and name but made a significant contribution to modern Bengali poetry by his prose-poems and free-verse, written especially on the theme of melancholy. He was a poet of nature with a serious awareness of the life around him. He remained true to the poetic spirit without much pomp and show. He broke the traditional structure of poetry so we need to read his poetry between the lines to grasp the true meaning. He shaped a theme in words, metaphors and imagery. The major themes of his poems are attachment to his motherland and his views about life and death in general. He is a modern poet possessing a 20<sup>th</sup>-century modern mind which is thinking, sensitive and close to nature. He developed his own vocabulary in the poems he wrote. Many common and ordinary elements gained an important place in his poems. Jibanananda returns to thousands of his readers and touches them with his simplicity, powerful imagery and magnificent words.

***Check your Progress***

1. When and where was Jibanananda Das born?
2. Which collection of his poetry did receive Sahitya Akademy Award for Jibanananda Das?
3. Which is the first collection of poetry by Jibanananda Das?

**3.2.5 Jibanananda Das as a Partition Poet:**

The partition of India left a scar on the mind and hearts of the people on both sides. Jibanananda Das hailed from Barisal in East Bengal in undivided India. He has presented the beauty of Bengal in his poetry. The poems in his anthology *Rupashi Bangla* are full of vivid descriptions of the beautiful land of Bengal. ‘Go where you Will’ and ‘I have Seen Bengal’s Face’, these two poems of Das present the psyche of the Bengali people at the time of partition. They show the agony of the people who have been detached from their motherland. It is said that at the time of the Liberation War of Bangladesh, the soldiers kept copies of *Rupashi Bangla* in their camps and read the poems aloud as a source of inspiration.

**3.2.6 Critical Appreciation of the Poem:**

The poetry of Jibanananda Das compels the readers to travel in a meditative state. His words are beyond the imagination of the readers. He gives a special place to everyday ordinary



objects in his poetry. All the poets before Tagore came into the literary scene depicted the mundane life of contemporary Bengal in their poetry. His imagination is rooted in the soil of Bengal and his sensibility takes its inspiration from the people and culture of his motherland.

Jibanananda Das is different from all the modern poets of Bengal. The pictorial quality of his poems has impressed thousands of people across the world. He has described Bengal in a more general, symbolic and romantic manner. Jibanananda Das' connection with nature and especially that of Bengal is more specific, everyday, ordinary, and common but at the same time exciting and mysterious. His uniqueness lies in his ability to perceive beauty in the unimportant and small objects of nature, and in that sense, he truly made ordinary objects of Bengal beautiful in the eyes of his readers throughout the world. His language is unconscious; we have to feel his poetry, not read it. Picturesque description of nature is seen in almost all his creations. He is recognized as a modern poet of the twentieth century because he has represented the traits of people of this century through his writings.

He was called as lonely or the loneliest poet by his contemporaries. The reason for using such a label may be because of the severe sense of misery reflected through his poems. Jibanananda too had a great turmoil within himself. He could create a world for himself in the chaotic world outside. Most of his poems are neither rebellious nor angry nor dark, characteristics common to the poetry of many of his contemporaries. They are rather characterized by silence, tranquillity and a dreamlike ambience. The extremely beautiful and distant places as well as the sensuous sumptuousness of nature that his poetry draws on make this imaginative journey to be one with nature and hence with oneself possible and highly enjoyable. Written in 1948, the poem "I shall Return to this Bengal" expresses the desire of the poet to come back to his motherland even after his death. His soul is yearning for Bengal, his native land. The tired soul is searching for a place to rest and it wants to come back to its motherland. Wilderness, rivers, birds, paddy fields and humanity are inviting this soul to the native land. Let us appreciate the poem and try to learn the meaning by analyzing each stanza. This poem is written by Jibanananda Das in Bengali and is translated into English by Sukanta Chaudhari.

The poet loves his motherland, Bengal. He wants to visit Bengal whenever he takes birth on this earth. So, he says, 'I Shall Return to This Bengal'. He wants to return to Bengal; the place which has given him complete peace and contentment during his lifetime, and even after death he desires the same place. But to Bengal, he will return, not as a man. He does not want to take

rebirth as a human being because he has experienced the evil qualities of other humans. As an individual, he is tired of the miseries of life and now wants peace after his death. This can also be perceived as the glorification of death. Life has defeated the poet, so he wants to come back as an animal or bird. He will return as a myna or a fishing-kite or a dawn crow or maybe as a duck. As a human being, he has recognized this life as a stranger. He wants to come back to the river Jalangi. Now he wishes to be one with it, one with nature which is exciting and beautiful. So, he starts the poem with the following stanza. In the opening stanza of the poem, the poet expresses his earnest desire to come back to Bengal, his native land. He is confident that he will come back at the banks of river Dhansiri. He will disguise himself as mayna or fishing kite or dawn crow which floats on the bosom of the mist. He wants to return to the shade of the Jackfruit tree in the autumn season of harvest land. He yearns to be a duck floating in scented waters and come back for the love of Bengal.

I shall return to this Bengal, to the Dhansiri's bank:  
Perhaps not as a man, but mayna or fishing-kite;  
Or dawn crow, floating on the mist's bosom to alight  
In the shade of this jackfruit tree, in this autumn harvest-land.  
Or may be a duck- a young girl's bells on my red feet,  
Drifting on kalmi-scented waters all the day:  
For love of Bengal's rivers, fields, crops, I'll come this way  
To this green shore of Bengal, drenched by Jalangi's waves

Das has a rare skill of making the ordinary extraordinary. Poets normally write about peacocks and skylarks in their poems, but Jibanananda has given respect to the animals of the lower kinds like owl, mouse, crow, duck, and so on. He is capable of bringing out the poetic inspiration in him, he unites his self with the 'other', or rather appreciates the 'other' almost in the postmodernist way. The philosophy that depicts from his poems is that of a perfect living wherein human beings are placed at a necessary oneness with this other side of life considered as 'unreasonable', 'bestial'. That perhaps is also the reason why he appears to be a surrealist.

Surrealism is a term in literature which attempts to club together reality and imagination. Das seems to have left behind the dominance of the rational mind and reached out to the subconscious where all is one in terms of the irresistibility of the force of life and living itself. His poetic creations are fulfilled in discovering this irresistible throbbing life and beauty in

nature, in the nature of Bengal, and in being part of it. He is desperate to come back to Bengal and tells his readers that they may find him flying with the glass fly in the evening or he may also appear as an owl sitting on a silk-cotton tree or as a child who is tossing rice grains in the courtyard. He may also be seen disguised as white egrets swimming in the stream in the lands of Bengal. Let us read his earnest desire to return to Bengal in the second and last stanza of the poem 'I Shall Return to this Bengal',

Perhaps you'll see a glass-fly ride the evening breeze,  
Or hear a barn owl call from the silk-cotton tree;  
A little child toss rice-grains on the courtyard grass,  
Or a boy on the Rupsa's turgid stream steer a dinghy  
With torn white sail - white egrets swimming through red clouds  
To their home in the dark. You will find me among their crowd.

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### 3.3 Learning Outcomes

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After studying this unit, students should remember the following points:

- Figures of speech are used to make the poem beautiful. They increase the effect of the poem and can be considered as literary tools. Metaphor, simile, onomatopoeia, hyperbole, alliteration and personification are some of the figures of speech used in poems.
- Poets normally write about peacocks and skylarks in their poems, but Jibanananda has given respect to the animals of the lower kinds like owl, mouse, crow, duck, and so on.
- Jibanananda Das is a well-known Bengali poet. He is popularly called 'Rupashi Banglar Kabi'. He is the most-read poet in the Bangla language after Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam.
- Das proved how to remain true to the poetic spirit without much pomp and show. He broke the traditional structure of poetry so we need to read his poetry between the lines to grasp the meaning.
- The poet loves his motherland, loves Bengal. He wants to visit Bengal whenever he takes rebirth on this earth. So, he says, 'I Shall Return to this Bengal'; the place which has

given him complete peace and contentment during his lifetime, and in death too he desires the same place.

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### 3.4 Glossary

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<b>Genre:</b>	A style or category of art, music, or literature
<b>Melodrama:</b>	A sensational dramatic piece with overrated characters and exciting events intended to appeal to the emotions
<b>Imagery:</b>	Visually descriptive or figurative language, especially in a literary work
<b>Harmony:</b>	The combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce a pleasing effect: "the piece owes its air of tranquility largely to the harmony"
<b>Obscure:</b>	Not discovered or known about or uncertain
<b>Melancholy:</b>	A feeling of tremendous sadness, typically with no obvious cause

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### 3.5 Sample Questions

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#### 3.5.1. Objective Questions:

1. Human mind is very \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The poem, "I Shall Return to This Bengal" is written by\_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the best example of the creativity of the human mind.
4. Every Indian writer has tried to keep \_\_\_\_\_ at the center of his or her writings in Indian English literature.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ World War had a profound impact on Jibanananda's poetic vision.
6. The poetry of Jibanananda Das compels the readers to travel in a \_\_\_\_\_ state.

7. At a time when \_\_\_\_\_ was writing, many readers and admirers of his poetry had called him the lonely or the loneliest poet.
8. To \_\_\_\_\_ he wants to return, a place which has given him utmost fulfilment during his lifetime, and in death too he desires the same place.
9. The most important aspect of Jibanananda's perception of life is that in making the ordinary \_\_\_\_\_.
10. He wants to come back to \_\_\_\_\_ river.

### **3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Explain the term Genre.
2. What is Indian English poetry?
3. Write a note on Indian English poetry before independence.
4. Write a short essay on the life of Jibanananda Das.
5. Give information about Indian English poets of Bengal.

### **3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Critically appreciate the poem "I Shall Return to This Bengal".
2. Write a detailed note on the life and works of Jibanananda Das.
3. Analyze the poem "I Shall Return to This Bengal" in your own words.

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## **3.6 Suggested Readings**

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4. Chaudhuri, Sukanta (ed): *A Certain Sense – Poems by Jibanananda Das*. Translated by Various Hands, Kolkata: Sahitya Akademi, 1998.
5. Chowdhury, F. L. (ed). *I have seen the Bengal's face – Poems from Jibanananda Das* (An anthology of poems from Jibanananda Das translated in English). Creative Workshop, Chittagong, Bangladesh, 1995.
6. Chowdhury, F. L. and G. Mustafa (ed). *Beyond Land and Time* (An anthology of one hundred selected poems of Jibanananda Das, translated into English). Dhaka: Somoy Prokashan, 2008.
7. Dashgupta, Chidananda. *Selected Poems – Jibanananda Das*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2006.
8. Gangopadhyay, Satya. *Poems of Jibanananda Das*. Chhatagali, Chinsurah, West Bengal, India, 1999.
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10. Seely, Clinton B. *Scent of Sun* (An anthology of poems of Jibanananda Das in English translation), 2008.
11. Winter, Joe. *Bengal the Beautiful*. London: Anvil Press Poetry Ltd., 2006.
12. Winter, Joe. *Jibanananda Das – Naked Lonely Hand* (Selected poems: translated from Bengali). London: Anvil Press Poetry Ltd., 2003.

## Unit - 4: *Forward March*

### Structure

#### 4.0 Introduction

#### 4.1 Objectives

#### 4.2 *Forward March*

##### 4.2.1 Subject

##### 4.2.2 Theme

##### 4.2.3 Tone

##### 4.2.4 Imagery

##### 4.2.5 Poetic Devices

##### 4.2.6 Form

##### 4.2.7 Feeling

#### 4.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 4.4 Glossary

#### 4.5 Sample Questions

#### 4.6 Suggested Readings

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### 4.0 Introduction

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Srirangam Srinivasa Rao, a Telugu poet and lyricist from Visakhapatnam, is popularly known as Sri Sri. He is best known for his visionary poems; style and meter not used before in Telugu classical poetry. He was born in Vishakhapatnam of present day Andhra Pradesh on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1910. He completed his schooling at Vishakhapatnam. He was graduated from University of Madras in 1931. He was the first modern Telugu poet who wrote about the contemporary issues that affected the common Man's life. He wrote visionary poetry in style and metre which was not used in Telugu Classical poetry. He transformed the traditional Telugu poetry into Modern poetry. He spoke about the suffering of the whole world. He is a major radical poet who introduced free verse into his socially concerned poetry.

He was the member of Pen India, Sahitya Academy and Vice President of the South Indian Film Writers' Association. He was also the president of the Revolutionary Writers' Association of Andhra. He was conferred with the Soviet Land Nehru Award of India. He won

the Sahitya Academy Award in 1972 and Filmfare Award in 2002. He also won the Raja Lakshmi Award in 1979 by Sri Raja Lakshmi Foundation in Chennai. He was awarded National Film Award for Best lyrics in 1974 and Nandi Award for Best lyricist in 1981. Sri Sri, hailed as the harbinger of modern poetry.

Sri Sri started writing poetry as humorist “Abhudaya Kavi” or a progressive poet. He found the existing social system oppressive. He tried to awaken the populace with his work of art. He was the poet with social conscience. He was influenced by secular, liberal and humanistic ideology. He was compared with great romantic Telugu poet Devulapalli Krishna Shastri by Gudipati Venkatachalam. Krishna Shastri made his anguish known to the whole world while Sri Sri spoke in his voice about the anguish of the whole world. Krishna Shastri’s pain was the pain of the world and the world’s pain became Sri Sri's pain.

Originally titled ‘Mahaprasthanam’ in Telugu, the poem ‘Forward March’ reflects the social issues that people faced in 1930s and 1940s. He influenced a lot of people with his works. He was considered as a child prodigy as he started writing poems from an early age of seven. He broke the classical style of Telugu writing and introduced free verse in Telugu poetry. His works always address the present-day issues in the society.

He later worked in the Telugu film industry. Sri Sri was a screenwriter for several Telugu films. He was one of the best film song writers in India. He wrote about 1000 songs for Telugu films. A personal vision and a new sensibility are as important as social commitment for a poet. Sri Sri retained this to his distinct identity and achieved commendable success. He unified the fiery of spirit a revolutionary with genuine imagination of a poet.

***Check you Progress***

1. When and where was Srirangam Srinivasa Rao born?
2. Originally in which language was ‘Forward March’ written?
3. When did Srirangam Srinivasa Rao receive Sahitya Academy Award?

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## **4.1 Objectives**

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The objectives of this unit are:



- To acquaint students with Indian poetry in English.
- To make students understand the thought and imagination contained in the poem “Forward March”.
- To train students to explore language and vocabulary.
- To encourage students to do creative thinking.
- To enable students to appreciate the poem.
- To make student familiar with the Sri Sri’s revolutionary thoughts
- To enable students to analyze Sri Sri’s poetry in different way.

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## 4.2 *Forward March*

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### 4.2.1 Subject:

‘Forward March’ is a translated version of the poem ‘Mahaprasthanam’. *Mahaprasthanam* is the title of an anthology of poems written in Telugu language by well-known Telugu poet Srirangam Srinivasa Rao. It is an epic and magnum opus in modern Indian poetry. The poem reflects the social condition of 1930’s and 1940’s. ‘Mahaprasthanam’ meaning the ‘Great Journey’ published in 1950. It rocked the Telugu literary world. Later the translated version of the poem ‘Mahaprasthanam’ appeared as ‘Forward March’ in the collection *Three Cheers for Man* (1956). The poem in translation was later published in *Sri Sri Miscellany* in 1970. The poem was a result of diverse influences ranging from Adi Shankaracharya to Wilfred Owen. The poem introduced a new epoch in Telugu literature. It is the epoch making poem which influenced whole generation of poets. It gives a new idiom to communicate collective experience.

‘Forward March’ (English) or ‘Mahaprasthanam’ (Telugu) is the opening poem of Sri Sri’s famous anthology of poems *Mahaprasthanam*. He addresses the revolutionary youth of this world. He believes that youth can change this world into a better place. The marchers can destroy the orthodoxy and evil in the world. The title of the poem is the army command that is Forward March. This is an appeal to the marginalized, downtrodden and exploited people of this world to come forward and change this world.

The poem 'Forward March' sounds a trumpet for a new classless society. It appeals the youth to start a revolution for creation of a new world order by demolishing everything related with the present world which is out-of-date and rotten. In the poem the poet calls upon his young comrades to set on a new journey to discover a new world. He says that the hearts of the marchers are galloping with the desire to achieve their goal for establishing the new world by restructuring geography and reshaping history. No deserts and forests and hills can discontinue their forward march. The young revolutionary will assault all institutions founded on double standards and scams.

The poet appeals the marchers to be like destructive eagles or hounds and destroy the orthodox people. The poet further inspires them to move forward alike cyclonic wind. Their anger will tremble the mountains, rivers and oceans. The poem is based on the present orthodox world. It propagates that dishonest principles have to be shattered through revolution in order to set up newer utopian classless world. It should be based on freedom, progressive ideology, truth and equality.

#### **4.2.2 Theme:**

In the first stanza the poet appeals to modern young revolutionary youth to march forward for attaining a new world. He compares them with explorers of ancient times who used to explore new regions of the world for the betterment and prosperity of mankind.

'The waves are rolling' and 'the bells are tolling' is symbolic to the voice. It appeals to the youth to bring about a revolution because another world or better world is waiting for them where they can fulfill their dreams. The repetition of the word 'another' hints the possibilities of newer and better worlds. As it is a difficult task, the poet urges them to march onward with confidence and zeal like the waves. The poet compares the Marchers with the explorers of the new world and tells them they will have to face the same problem as the explorers of the modern world faced. Establishing a new ideal world is not an easy task so the revolutionaries must march ahead and ahead.

In the next stanza the poet carries forward the hope of revolution with high spirit; as he uses the words 'reel' and 'roll' to show the continuity of the march. He also reveals that the revolution has become the song of every soul. The poet assures every revolutionary that their wish is unstoppable and will definitely take them to their goals. He also mentions that the goal of

every revolutionary is already set. The revolutionaries' hearts are galloping like horse and they will definitely reach their goals. Time has come near the marchers to achieve their world of choice. He further tells that it is the right time to achieve their goal.

The voice of another world seems very dear to everyone but it is difficult enough. The poet ensures them that however difficult it is to achieve the newer world but it's not impossible to achieving. It anticipates countless sacrifices. Everyone is thrilled by the roaring waterfall of another world which is ideal, safer, equal and full of justice but it needs sacrifice. Revolutionaries have to march forward and always be ready for sacrifice. There will be the flood of blood and the roads will overflow with it. We have to dive in the deepest parts of oceans and swim all the shores to discover a new world.

Marxists always dream of achieving universal brotherhood and classless society by envisioning a world beyond borders and by redefining history. It is possible because geography and history are the products of our mind. We can erase the imaginary lines between the nations on the maps. History will also talk about the victory of common people, not of kings and queens. We must throw away the man-made barriers which act as hindrance from achieving an egalitarian society, equality and peace. No desert, no forest, no hill, nor any river can stop them from marching ahead in all directions East and West, South and North. This struggle for the newer world anticipates countless sacrifices but the revolutionaries must not stop.

The third stanza opens on the aggressive note. The poet appeals the young revolutionaries to be like eagles, lions and hounds; the youth must attack the deceptive, fraud and evil. Marchers must destroy the conservative and orthodox thoughts prevailing in the society. The poet becomes aggressive and orders the youth to finish confused, orthodox and senile people. He uses the words 'haggard' and 'laggards' for such people. The poet imagines that the enthusiasts of freedom; and the proud heirs of new world of tomorrow are sacrificing their lives and their sacrificial blood is 'dazzling red hot'.

They are marching ahead with the shouts of "Om Hari Om Hari Om". Here the poet recognizes the power of myths and tradition in reshaping the world. As per the Hindu mythology, Lord Shiva is associated with the words "Om Hari Om Hari Om". Lord Shiva saves all the gods from the demons in the war between gods and demons (or Asuras) for getting the nectar of immortality. In the same manner, the revolutionary youth must save this world from

wicked and evil people. The power of Shiva and agency of the revolutionaries together can change this world. Hence the revolutionaries must not stop while progressing towards the newer world of equality and justice.

In the fourth stanza the poet refers to the French Revolution which will definitely boost the revolutionaries with unstoppable spirit and can take them to the goals they dreamt of. He gives the example of Bastille Wall. It was the jail which was the symbol of exploitation and injustice. It was attacked by the mob of Parisians in the opening days of French Revolution. The poet inspires the revolutionaries to attack the 'Bastille Reactions' in our society. Orthodox people who oppose pious and honest work must be destroyed. Marchers must link up with high morals and look skyward. Surprisingly, you can see the grander of another world. They must hoist the flag of freedom. This can only establish the world of order.

In the fifth stanza the poet shows the elemental fury. He orders revolutionary marchers to move forward quickly and powerfully like the cyclonic winds, arrows and thunder. He tells them to make stronger efforts to achieve the desired goal. The marchers speed should be like cyclonic wind. Their pace must be more than the arrows or they should move faster than mind itself. They should blast like the thundering rain clouds.

Sixth stanza begins with the repetitive word 'yonder' which is generally used to refer something situated at a distance. The poet tells the marchers that impressive and wonderful world is waiting ahead. It is the beginning of Treta Yuga; where we could establish Ram Rajya. Treta Yuga is famous for Ram Rajya; the reign of justice, equality, peace and prosperity. It is visible now so the poet urges strongly to revolutionary youths to keep moving rapidly towards the goal.

In seventh stanza the poet uses the word 'leap' repetitively to give a strong effect. Further, he portrays the difficulties coming in the way. He warns that millions of roaring Meru Mountains can resist; there is strong whirling of the wind. The poet guesses that there might be a feeling among the marchers that the situation is very bad and without hope. Tidal waves of the oceans might pose danger. Though the condition is adverse; the poet is quite positive and full of hope. He believes that the youth will ignite the flame of Utopian world in the near future as the revolutionary youths are already on the march to achieve height of new ideal life. In the next stanza the poet reveals how it is difficult to acquire new world of equality, freedom and justice.

The poet immediately in the eighth stanza tells the revolutionary youths that their sacrifice must shine like the famous Niagara waterfall and the world's largest fresh waterlake; Nyanza. The youth must be restless like the waterfalls and must advance forward with all the strength, force and enthusiasm. Then revolutionary youths must announce the birth of another world which will be utopian in all aspects. Further, the poet asks the marchers whether they can listen to the ringing, singing and drum beating of the new world. The poet clearly indicates the advent of a Newer World.

In the last stanza, Sri Sri admires the comrades for revolting against the orthodox conservatives. The comrades challenge the unwanted legacy of orthodox people of the past. Now there is great hope for mankind and it is symbolized by 'Spire of Fire' which stands grand and high. It is designed to reflect the evolution of newer world. The poet appeals to the young revolutionary youth to come forward like serpents. Serpent symbolizes wisdom, fertility or creative life force. It is also the symbol of rebirth, transformation, immortality and healing. With this mythical imagery; the poet also uses modern imagery of greyhound. Greyhound symbolizes the knightly virtues like faith, occupation and prosperous way of life. It also stands for well mannerism and sensitivity.

The poet further tells the youth to be like Dhananjay of Mahabharata. He kept his personal agony aside and sounded the trumpet of war against his own people. He fought against the injustice and hypocrisy. He killed the near and dear ones who stood between the justice. He wants to bring about the newer world into reality. If the youth proceeds with all the strength, it will give birth to newer and truer world. All can sing in chorus that there is a newer world; the utopian world of justice, prosperity and peace. This will be the newer order of the world.

#### **4.2.3 Tone:**

Phrases used by the poet set the tone of the poem. He uses different phrases which change the tone of the poem. The phrase 'voice of another world' in the first stanza hints at the utopian world which the poet is dreaming of for the modern youth in the poem.

The poem moves forward on a confident note as the poet uses the phrase 'forward march' to motivate the revolutionary youth. The phrase 'song in our heart' shows the devotion of the poet towards his goal. 'Blood in flood', and 'leap the deep' give the strong approach in achieving the difficult goal. The phrases 'East and West', 'South and North' give universal tone of the

poem. 'Hounds of youth' denotes the unity of the youths. 'Turrets of humbug and hoax' describes group of deceptive and fraud people. The words like 'senile', 'time harrowed', 'haggard' and 'laggard' show the attitude of the poet towards confused, exhausted and negative people. The phrases like 'freedom's zealots', 'Om Hari Om Hari Om', 'drum beating', 'lo the splendor', 'lo the wonder', 'hail comrades', 'mankind's hope lit', 'newer truer world', 'banner of liberty' etc. all give positive and optimistic tone to the poem.

#### **4.2.4 Imagery:**

##### **Stanza I**

The images of 'wave' and 'bells' are used to indicate the calls to youths and to move forward to bring about the change.

##### **Stanza II**

The image of 'galloping hearts' indicate the firm resolve to reach the goal. The image of 'blood' is used to suggest that one is ready to sacrifice life in efforts to reach the desired goal. The image of 'desert' 'forest' and 'hills' and 'rivers' hint that these are not the barriers in attaining the goal. The image of 'east', 'west', 'north' and 'south' shows that the entire world should join the revolution.

##### **Stanza III**

The poet uses the image of 'duck' to suggest that conservative thinking should be abandoned.

The image of 'proud heirs' refers to the youth who will bring about the change.

##### **Stanza IV**

The image of 'sky' indicates the limitless possibilities.

##### **Stanza V**

The image of 'cyclonic wind' and 'rain clouds' hints at the speed at which one should try to attain the goal.

##### **Stanza VI**

The image of 'Treta' light suggests hope for the Ramrajya.

### **Stanza VII**

The image of boiling 'oil' indicates youthful zest.

### **Stanza VIII**

The image of 'Niagara' and 'Nyanza' indicates that the blood of youth is working vigorously to achieve the goal. The image of 'drum beating' indicates the triumph.

### **Stanza IX**

The image of 'serpent' gives the image of wisdom, fertility or creative life force. It is also the symbol of rebirth, transformation, immortality and healing. 'Greyhound' symbolizes the knightly virtues like faith, occupation and prosperous way of life. It also stands for good mannerisms and sensitivity.

#### **4.2.5 Poetic Devices:**

The poem is divided into nine stanzas.

#### **First stanza**

First stanza consists of eight lines. The rhyme scheme is aaa bcd ee. The rhyming words are 'rolling', 'tolling', 'calling', 'forge' and 'surge'. In the first two lines 'onomatopoeia' is used to create sound effect. Repetition is used in fourth and eighth line.

#### **Second stanza**

It consists of seventeen lines. The rhyme scheme is aaa bbb cc defgahh ij. The rhyming words are 'roll', 'soul', 'goal', 'clear', 'near', 'dear', 'call', 'waterfall', 'again', 'again'. Alliteration is used in first and second lines. Personification is used in third line. 'The blood in floods shall drench all roads' is an example of hyperbole.

#### **Third Stanza**

It consists of twelve lines. The rhyme scheme is abbc ddee fghi. The rhyming words are 'hoax', 'orthodox', 'marrowed', 'harrowed', 'spot' and 'shot'. Alliteration is used in eighth line and eleventh line. Repetition is used in the last line.

#### **Fourth stanza**

There are five lines in this stanza. The rhyme scheme is abbcc. The rhyming words are 'forward', 'skyward', 'world' and 'unfurled'. Repetition is used in the fourth line.

#### **Fifth stanza**

There are six lines in stanza five. The rhyme scheme is abbccd. The rhyming words are 'surge', 'forge', 'wind' and 'mind'. Repetition is used in the third line. Simile is used in the fourth line. Metaphor is used in the fifth and sixth line.

#### **Sixth stanza**

There are four lines in the sixth stanza. The rhyme scheme is aabb. The rhyming words are 'yonder', 'wonder', 'light' and 'sight'. Repetition is used in the first line.

#### **Seventh stanza**

There are ten lines in this stanza. The rhyme scheme is abc aa deffg. The rhyming words are 'leaping', 'whirling', 'booming', 'match' and 'catch'. Repetition is used in the first and fourth line.

#### **Eighth stanza**

There are eight lines in this stanza. The rhyme scheme is aba dd efg. The rhyming words are 'forward' and 'onward'. Simile is used in the second and third line.

#### **Ninth stanza**

It consists of eleven lines. The rhyme scheme is abaca add ae. The rhyming words are 'morn', 'horn', 'born'; 'yonder', 'splendor', 'wonder'; 'crown' and 'dawn'. Simile is used in the seventh line of the stanza. The poet has used the diverse figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, symbolism, and onomatopoeia very effectively in the poem.

#### **4.2.6 Form:**

The poem consists of nine stanzas. Each stanza is structured with different number of lines. The line breaks and use of different punctuation marks significantly add to the meaning of the poem. The repetitive use of certain words like yonder, yonder, yonder, yonder and leap leap



leaping, whirl whirl whirling, describes the high intensity of the spirit of the poet. The poet uses end rhyme, internal rhyme; near rhyme to create rhythmic effect in the poem. He uses the following words:

Rolling, tolling, calling,

Reel, roll,

Soul, goal

Clear, near

Call fall

Amain, again

Forward, skyward

World, unfurled

Yonder, wonder

Light, sight

#### **4.2.7 Feeling:**

The poem is quite revolutionary and full of hope and optimism for the newer world of equality and justice.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. Mention figure of speech used in 'The blood in floods shall drench all roads'.
2. Who wrote the anthology of poems *Mahaprasthanam*?
3. In which year was *Sri Sri Miscellany* published?

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### **4.3 Learning Outcomes**

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Learning about this poem and its poet shall:

- Increase the students' capacity to integrate knowledge.
- Develop the students' capacity to describe analyze and evaluate.
- Improve students' skills of appreciating the poem.
- Broaden the comprehension of the students.
- Familiarize the students with the great modern Indian poet Sri Sri.

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## 4.4 Glossary

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**Surge:** To move quickly and powerfully

**Turret:** Small tower of the castle

**Humbug and hoax:** Deceptive and fraud

**Rotten marrowed:** Corrupt

**Senile:** Behaving in a confused and strange way

**Haggard laggard:** Confused, exhausted

**Drizzling:** Showering

**Bastille:** Medieval fortress on the east side of Paris in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century; it was the symbol of the despotism of the ruling Bourbon monarchy. It was attacked by Parisians on the first day of French Revolution

**Converge:** Adjoin

**Bursting:** Fiery

**Yonder:** Used to refer to something situated at distance

**Turret:** Dwelling place

**Dock:** Jury box

**Senile:** Showing the weaknesses or diseases of old age

**Laggard:** A person who makes slow progress and falls behind others

**Bastille:** A fortress in Paris built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and used in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century as a state prison. It's stormed by the mob on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1789 marked the start of the French Revolution

**Treta:** It is one of the four Yugas (ages) in Hinduism; it is famous for Ramrajya; the reign of justice, peace, prosperity and equality

**Lo:** look! , see!

**Meru Mountain:** Mythical Golden Mountain in the Himalaya considers to be the access of the universe and the abode of the God

**Niagara:** A group of three waterfalls at the southern end of Niagara Gorge, spanning the border between Canada and United States

**Nyanza:** Is home to lake Victoria in Kenya, it is one of the largest fresh water lakes in the world

**Comrade:** A fellow socialist or communist

**Spire of fire:** It stands for grand and high; it is designed to reflect the evolution of modern metropolitan structure in Reno, Nevada

**Greyhound:** Symbol of knightly virtues like faith, occupation (hunting), sensitive and well mannered

**Dhananjay:** Dhananjay is also known as Arjun in Mahabharata; fought the war of Mahabharata. He is the protagonist of the Indian epic Mahabharata

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## 4.5 Sample Questions

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### 4.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Sri Sri was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award in the year\_\_\_\_\_.

(a) 1772

(b) 1972

(c) 1872 (d) 1952

2. 'Mahaprasthanam' was originally written in \_\_\_\_\_ Language.

(a) Kannada (b) Malyalam

(c) Telugu (d) Hindi

3. The 'Forward March' is a translated version of \_\_\_\_\_.

(a) 'Patjhar ki Awaz' (b) 'Khol do'

(c) 'Mahaprasthanam' (d) Thanda Gosht

4. In the year \_\_\_\_\_ Sri Sri was conferred the Filmfare Award.

(a) 1974 (b) 1983

(c) 1984 (d) 1994

5. \_\_\_\_\_ was the president of the Revolutionary Writers Association of Andhra in 1980s.

(a) Umarji Anuradha (b) Nathacha Appanah

(c) Sri Sri (d) Pitcheswara Rao Atluri

### Fill in Blank

1. Bastille symbolizes the \_\_\_\_\_ revolution.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Yuga denotes Ramrajya.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ reflects the evolution of modern metropolitan structure in Reno, Nevada.

4. Sri Sri won the National Film Award for the Best Lyrics in the year \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Sri Sri began his poetry writing as \_\_\_\_\_ poet.

### 4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What does 'Treta Light' refer to?

2. What did comrades do?
3. How will the Marchers deal with the opponents of the new world?
4. Give the central idea of the poem.
5. What does the poet mean by reshaping geography and remaking history?

#### **4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of Sri Sri's poem "The Forward March".
2. Describe "The Forward March" as a modern poem.
3. Discuss the theme of revolution in "The Forward March".

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#### **4.6 Suggested Reading**

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1. Rao, Srirangam Srinivasa (Sri Sri). *Sri Sri Miscellany: A Collection of English Writings*. Edited by K. W. Ramana. Vijayawada: Sri Sri Shashtipurthi Sangham Publication, 1970.

## **Unit - 5: Brief History of Indian Writing in English**

### **Structure**

**5.0** Introduction

**5.1** Objectives

**5.2** Brief History of Indian Writing in English

**5.2.1** Indian Poetry in English

**5.2.2** Indian Drama in English

**5.2.3** Indian Novel in English

**5.2.4** Indian Short Story in English

**5.3** Learning Outcomes

**5.4** Glossary

**5.5** Sample Questions

**5.6** Suggested Readings

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### **5.0 Introduction**

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The literature produced under the nomenclature of Indian Writing in English is an interesting by-product of a meaningful encounter between enterprising Britain and a colonized India. Historians also faced problem in clearly defining the nature and scope of Indian Writing in English due to two main reasons—firstly, this body of literature has acquired various nomenclatures from time-to-time as ‘Indian Writing in English’, ‘Indo-Anglian Literature’ and ‘Indo-English Literature,’ and secondly, the failure to make clear-cut distinction between the ‘Anglo-Indian literature’, literature in the Indian languages translated into English and original compositions in English by Indians. As a result of this confusion, many historians included works of many English writers who wrote about Indian social and cultural life; or even wrote about Indian flora and fauna. The confusion about the nomenclature of this body of literature comes to end with K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar’s use of the phrase, ‘Indian Writing in English’ in 1962 for his comprehensive study of the subject. The Sahitya Akademi has recently accepted

‘Indian English Literature’ as the most proper and suitable nomenclature for such kind of writing.

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## 5.1 Objectives

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The objectives of the unit are:

- To introduce the students with the body of literature called Indian writing in English.
  - To study the growth and development of Indian poetry in English.
  - To study the growth and development of Indian drama in English.
  - To study the growth and development of Indian novel in English.
  - To study the growth and development of Indian short-story in English.
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## 5.2 Brief History of Indian Writing in English

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### 5.2.1 Indian Poetry in English:

Henry Derozio (1809-1831) was the first Indian English poet who made a remarkable entry on the literary scene. He published two volumes of his poetry entitled *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems* (1828). He was deeply influenced by British romantic poets. Three years after the death of Derozio, there appeared Kashiprasad Ghosh (1809-1873). His first collection of verses entitled *The Shair or Minstrel and Other Poems* (1830) stood as a testimony of exceptional poetic genius. Other distinguished poets and their poetic creations include Rajnarain Dutt’s (1824-1889) verse narrative *Osmyn: An Arabian Tale* published in (1841), Shoshee Chunder Dutt’s (1815-1865) *Miscellaneous Poems* (1848) and Hur Chunder Dutt’s (1831-1901) *Fugitive Pieces* (1851). The most important poet on the scene of Indian English Literature is Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873). He wrote two long poems in English entitled *The Captive Ladle* (1849) and *The Athenaeum*. The change in the field of Indian English poetry came unnoticeably with the publication of *The Dutt Family Album* (1870). It is a family anthology in Indian English poetry. It is a collection of 187 poems by three Dutt brothers – Govin Chunder, Hur Chunder and Greece Chunder and their cousin, Omesh Chunder. The works of Ram Sharma or Nobo Kissen Ghose (1837-1918), include *Willow Drops*

(1873-1874), *The Last Day: A Poem* (1886) and *Siva Ratri, Bhagaboti Gita and Miscellaneous Poems* (1903). Ram Sharma wrote occasional poems and lyrics on various themes.

The appearance of Toru Dutt (1856-1877) on the literary scene of Indian English literature really marks the glorification of Indian poetry in English. She was the third and youngest child of Govin Chunder Dutt. Her real name was Torulata. She died of consumption at the age of twenty-one. Out of two collections of poems, only one appeared in her lifetime and that was *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876). Her second collection of poems published posthumously is the best example of creative genius. *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) reflect her inclination towards romantic poets of her time. Her life and poetic talent resembles that of John Keats, the British Romantic poet.

Toru Dutt's contemporary was Behramji Merwanji Malabari (1853-1912). His collection of poems consisting of 32 poems entitled *The Indian Muse in English Garb* was published at the same time when Toru Dutt's first collection of poems came on the literary scene. There were a few minor poets whose names are worth mentioning. In terms of Indian English literature, the Bengal presidency was supposed to be the home of Indian English literature and this presidency has a long-time dominance over Indian English poetry. Prominent among the poets of this presidency was Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909). He was the cousin of Toru Dutt and was an Indian civil Service official. His *Lays of Ancient India* (1894) is a collection of verse-translations from Sanskrit and Prakrit classics including the *Rigveda*, the *Upanishads*, Kalidasa and Bharavi, and Buddhist texts like the *Dhammapada* (1899) are the most ambitious undertakings by Dutt.

Aurobindo Ghose is the younger brother of Manmohan Ghose. He is also known as Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950). His early *Short Poems* (1890-1900) are mostly minor romantic poems dealing with the themes of love, death, liberty and sorrow. Among the longer poems of the initial phase are three complete narratives: 'Urvashi', 'Love and Death' and 'Baji Prabhau'. His magnum opus was *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*. Rabindranath Tagore was one of the prominent contemporaries of Sri Aurobindo. In age, Tagore was senior to Sri Aurobindo and started his poetic career much later. He was a poet, a dramatist, a novelist, a short story writer, a composer, a painter, a thinker, an educationist, a nationalist and an internationalist too. He wrote in Bengali and transcreated some of his works in English which won him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. He was the first Indian to be honored with the Nobel Prize. His *Gitanjali* (1912) was warmly received in London. It was followed by *The Gardener* (1913) and *The*



*Crescent Moon* (1913). After he was awarded the Nobel Prize, more poetic collections followed: *Fruit-Gathering* (1916), *Stray Birds* (1916), *Lover's Gift and Crossing* (1918) and *The Fugitive* (1921).

Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) earned early recognition in England as a poet. She started writing poetry at a very early age. Her first volume of poetry, *The Golden Threshold* (1905) was followed by *The Birds of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917). Her collections of poems appeared in *The Sceptred Flute* (1946). A small collection of her poems entitled *Feather of the Dawn*, written in 1927, was published posthumously in 1961.

Poets, during post-Independence, switched to realistic poetry instead of romantic. The first of the new poets is Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004). He is one of the most notable poets of the post-independence era in Indian English poetry. His *A time to Change* (1952) is followed by *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965) and *Hymns in Darkness* (1976). During the nineteen sixties, there appeared several poets writing with new zeal. The earliest among them all has been P. Lal (1912-2010). His poetic collections include *The Parrot's Death and Other Poems* (1960), *"Change!" They Said* (1966), *Draupadi and Jayadratha and Other Poems* (1967), *Yakshi from Didarganj and Other Poems* (1969), *The Man of Dharma and the Rasa of Silence* (1974) and *Calcutta: A Long Poem* (1977). His *Collected Poems* appeared in 1977. He also published creative translations of *The Bhagawad Gita* (1965), *The Dhammapada* (1967) and *Ghalib's Love Poems* (1971).

The most outstanding poet of the nineteen sixties is A. K. Ramanujan (1929-1993). His first volume of poems *The Striders* (1966) won him a Poetry Book recommendation. It is followed by *Relations* in 1971. Ramanujan also translated English poetry in Tamil and Kannada in *The Interior Landscape* (1967), and *Speaking of Siva* (1972) respectively.

R. Parthasarthy (1934–), a Tamil poet of high repute, is eagerly concerned with his native heritage. He published *Rough Passage* in 1977. Written between 1961-1975; *Rough Passage* is a poem in three parts – Exile, Trial and Homecoming. Gieve Patel (1940–) is a Parsi poet. His *Poems* appeared in 1966 followed by *How Do you Withstand, Body?* in 1976. Like Nissim Ezekiel, he is an outsider and is fully conscious of this fact. This consciousness has not created within him the feeling of rootlessness. Arvind Krishna Mehrotra (1947–) is the author of *Bharatnama: a Prayer* (1966), *Woodcuts on Paper* (1967), *Pomes/Poems/Poemas* (1971), and

*Nine Elosures* (1976). Pritish Nandy (1947–) is another prolific poet of the post-independence times. He has produced several collections of poems which include *Of Gods and Olives* (1967), *The Poetry of Pritish Nandy* (1973) and *Tonight This Savage Rite* (1977).

The nineteen seventies have witnessed the emergence of Shiv K. Kumar, Keki N. Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkar and Jayant Mahapatra in the Indian literary scene. Keki N. Daruwalla (1937–) is one of the most prominent poets of his times. He published works include *Under Orion* (1970), *Apparition in April* (1971) and *Crossing of Rivers* (1976). Shiv K. Kumar (1921-2017) is a senior poet who published his first volume *Articulate Silences* (1970) at the age of fifty years followed by *Cobwebs in the Sun* (1974), *Subterfuges* (1976) and *Woodpeckers* (1979). Jayant Mahapatra (1928–) began his poetic career with *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* (1971) and has further published *Svayamvara and Other Poems* (1971), *A Rain of Rites* (1976), *Waiting* (1979), *Relationship* (1980) and *The False Start* (1980). Arun Kolatkar (1932-2004) is a unique phenomenon among modern Marathi speaking Indian poets. His long poem *Jejuri* appeared in 1976. The work won him the Commonwealth Poetry Prize.

Women poets also form a sizeable contribution in the field of Indian English literature. The most prominent among all is Kamala Das (1934–), the most distinguished bilingual writer of Malayalam and English, she has published three books of poems in English: *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967) and *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973). She has recorded her experiences in her autobiography entitled *My Story*. There are more than thirty women poets with more than one collection in their names. The works of a few have the same intensity of expression as that of Kamala Das.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. Who is the author of *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems*?
2. In which year *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Field* by Toru Dutt was published?
3. Who did compose the collection of poems entitled *Summer in Calcutta*?

### **5.2.2 Indian Drama in English:**

The history of Indian English drama goes back to a time in 1831 when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo*

*Society in Calcutta*. After Banerji, Michael Madhusudan Dutt translated three of his own Bengali plays into English: *Ratnavali* (1858), a version of Harsha's well-known Sanskrit play *Sermista* (1859) and *Is This Called Civilization?* (1871). *Nation Builders* is another of his drama which is published posthumously in 1922. With the publication of Ramkinoo Dutt's *Manipura Tragedy* (1893), the phase of Indian drama published in Bengal comes to a completion.

Sri Aurobindo wrote five complete plays and six incomplete verse plays between 1891 and 1916. Of the earliest are two fragments written during his student days in London: *The Witch of Ilni: A Dream of the Woodlands* (1891) and *Achab and Esar*. The Baroda period covers *The Viziers of Bassora – A Dramatic Romance*, *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Rodogune* and three fragments: *The Maid in the Mill: Love Shuffles the Cards*, *The House of Brut* and *The Birth of Sin* (which appeared as a poetic dialogue in *Collected Plays*, 1942). *Prince of Edur* was written in 1907, while *Eric: A Dramatic Romance* and *Vasva Dutta* are assigned to the period between 1912 and 1916.

Rabindranath Tagore's dramatic contributions include *The Post Office* and *The King of the Dark Chamber*. These plays though were written by Tagore in Bengali but are translated by Devabrata Mukherjee and K. C. Sen respectively. Almost a dozen plays are written and translated by Tagore himself. These include *Chitra* (1913), *The Cycle of Spring* (1917; translated with the assistance of C. F. Andrews and Nishikant Sen) and *Sacrifice and Other Plays* (1917). All these plays are published in the *Collected Poems and Plays* (1936). *Red Oleanders*, translated by Tagore himself from his *Raktakarabi* in Bengali was first published in the *Viswa Bharati Quarterly* in 1924. Tagore's own translation of his *Natir Puja* appeared in the same journal in 1927, thus predating the one by Marjorie Skyes in 1950. Apart from the plays of Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and Chattopadhyaya, there are only a few efforts made during the period by the dramatists like Sarath Kumar Ghose's *The Prince of Destiny* (1910), Kedarnath Das Gupta's *Calif for a Day* (1916) and *Bharata*, and Dhan Gopal Mukherji's *Layla-Majnu* (1916).

Though The Bombay Amateur Theatre, the first theatre in Bombay, was built in 1776, the dramatic activities were confined to the performances of the touring European companies. With the emergence of the Marathi and Gujarati vernacular theatre, the English drama was challenged. Annasaheb Kirloskar's epoch-making production of *Shakuntal* in Marathi put a great challenge for the Indian English drama. However, during this time C. S. Nazir's verse play *The First Parsi*

*Baronet* (1866), D. M. Wadia's *The Indian Heroine* (1877) and P. P. Meherjee's *Dolly Parsen* (1918) are the only examples of dramatic efforts made during this time.

In The Madras presidency, The Madras Dramatic Society was founded in 1875 and The Oriental Drama Club in 1882. The first Indian amateur dramatic society in South India, The Sarasa Vinodini Sabha was founded in Bellary in 1890 by Krishnamachary. V.V. Srinivas Aiyangar was the most productive dramatist of the Madras presidency. His dramatic output includes *Blessed in a Wife* (1911), *The Point of View* (1915), *Wait for the Stroke* (1915), *The Bricks Between* (1918), *Dramatic Divertissements* (1921), *Ram Rajya* (1952) and *At Any Cost*.

The era was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi hence there has been a little dramatic output. A. S. Panchapakesa Ayyar (1899-1963) wrote half a dozen plays beginning with *In the Clutch of Humanity* (1926), *The Slave of Ideas and Other Plays* (1941), *Sita's Choice*, and *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* (1942). Thyagarajan Paramasiva Kailasam (1885-1946) wrote both in English and Kannada. His plays include *Little Lays and Plays* (1933) – a collection of three plays, *Karna or The Brahmin's Curse* (1946) and *Keechaka* (1949). His partly composed and orally recited plays include *Bhisma's Last Night* (on Markandaya), *The Fear, The Torture* (on Haischandra), *The Vow* (on Dronacharya and Drupada), *The Remorse* (on Rama and Sita), *Abnegation* (on Bhima), *Trishanku* and *Renuka*.

During the post-Independence period, drama didn't show much success in India. The Indian English drama witnessed a growing interest abroad. The plays of Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma and Gurcharan Das were successfully performed in Europe and the United States of America. The First Five Year plan encouraged the performing arts as an effective means of public entertainment and hence the National School of Drama was established in Delhi. Institutions for training in dramatics were founded in big cities, drama departments were established in some universities. At the same time, the National Drama Festival was started by the Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1954 in Delhi. These have led to the growth of regional language theatre only.

Asif Currimbhoy (1928-1994) was a business executive and the only dramatist who wrote dramas exclusively in English. Within a period of eighteen years beginning with 1959, he published no less than thirty plays. The earliest of his plays is *The Tourist to Mecca*. Other plays of Asif Currimbhoy are *The Restaurant* 1960, *The Captives* 1963, *Goa* 1964, *Monsoon* 1965, *An*

*Experiment with Truth* 1969, *Inquilab* 1970, *The Refugee* 1971 and *Sonar Bangla* 1972, *Om Mane Padme Hum* 1972, *Angkor* 1973 and *The Dissident M. L. A.* 1974. Pratap Sharma (1939-2011) was another dramatist who took efforts to keep Indian drama alive. He has plays like *The Touch of Brightness* (1968) and *The Professor Has a War Cry* (1970) to his credit.

Girish Karnad (1938-2019) is a Kannada actor, director, and playwright who not only revived the Indian drama in English but also gave a new identity to it. He translated his own drama into English. He has made use of myth in all his plays. His works include *Hayavadana* (1972), *Tughlaq* (1975), *Yayati* (1961), *Nagamandala* (1988), *Fire and the Rain* (1998), *Bali the Sacrifice* (1966), *Taledanda* (1990), *Wedding Album* (2006), *Boiled Beans on Toast* (2014), *Crossing to Telikota* (2019), *Collected Plays, Vol 1* (2005), *Collected Plays, Vol 2* (2005).

Mahesh Dattani (1958–) is one of the most prominent dramatists on the scene of Indian drama in English. The recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award, Dattani brought a kind of revolution in the field of Indian English drama. The prominent thing about Dattani is that he deals with the taboo issues in his plays. The most famous play for which he is awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award is *Final Solutions* (1993). He owns his own theatre company 'PlayPen' where he conducts workshops for emerging playwrights. His dramatic contribution includes plays like *Where There's A Will* (1988), *Dance Like A Man* (1989), *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *Do the Needful*, *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998), *Seven Steps around the Fire* (1998), *The Murder That Never Was* (2000), *Thirty Days in September* (2001), *The Girl Who Touched the Stars* (2007), *Brief Candle* (2009), *Where Did I Leave My Purdah* (2012) and *The Big Fat City* (2012). There are other dramatists who have very less dramatic output to their credit. Due to constraints, it is not possible to mention them all.

### **5.2.3 Indian Novel in English:**

The first Indian novel in English is Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's (1838-1894) *Rajmohan's Wife*. It was serialized in the Calcutta Weekly *The Indian Field* in 1864 and appeared in the book form only in 1935. This book marks the beginning of the Indian English novel. From its beginning to the end of the nineteenth century, there had been stray novels written by the writers from Bengal and Madras presidencies. Bombay presidency lagged much behind in terms of novel writing. Novels by three women novelists appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century. They are Toru Dutt's unfinished novel *Bianca or The Young Spanish*

*Maiden* (Calcutta, 1878); Krupabai Sathianadhan's *Kamala: The Story of Hindu Life* (Madras and Bombay, 1895), *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life* (Madras and Bombay, 1895) and Shevantibai M. Nikambe's *Ratnabai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Young Wife* (London, 1895).

Romesh Chunder Dutt translated his own novels *The Lake of Palms: A Story of Indian Domestic Life* (London, 1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra: An Indian Historical Romance* (London, 1909) into English. Like him, Sarath Kumar Ghosh wrote two novels namely *Verdict of the Gods* (New York, 1905) later published as *1001 Indian Nights: The Trials of Narayan Lal* (London, 1906) and *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (London, 1909).

Sirdar Jogendra Singh from Punjab wrote four novels. They are *Nur Jahan: The Romance of an Indian Queen* (1909), *Nasrin: An Indian Medley* (1900), *Kamla* (1925) and *Kamni* (1931). Indian English novels of the pre-independence and post-independence time were deeply influenced by the social, political and ideological movement caused by Mahatma Gandhi. The writers of the period were also greatly influenced by the same movement.

The most significant incident in the history of the Indian English novel in the 1930s was the appearance of the three leading novelists – Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao. Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) published his novels like *Untouchables* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1941), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), *Bit Heart* (1945), *Seven Summers* (1951), *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953), *The Old Woman and the Cow* (1960), *Death of a Hero* (1964), *Morning Face* (1970) and *Confessions of a Lover* (1976). In 1972, Mulk Raj Anand was awarded the Sahitya Akademi award for his works.

Rashipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan (1906-2001) wrote *Swami and Friends* (1935), *Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *Mr. Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952), *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man-eaters of Malgudi* (1962), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) and *Painter of Signs* (1976). His *The Guide* is supposed to be the finest creation for which he was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960. R. K. Narayan created an imaginary village for the setting of his novels known as Malgudi.

Raja Rao (1908-2006) was the youngest of the three novelists. He wrote the novels – *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) and

*Comrade Kirillov* (1976). Raja Rao was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1965 for his masterpiece *Serpent and the Rope*.

During the post-Independence period, the momentum of the Indian English novel is carried on by novelists such as Manohar Malgonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya and Khushwant Singh who appeared on the horizon of Indian English literature during the nineteen fifties and sixties. Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1988) penned novels such as *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952), *A Goddess Named Gold* (1960), *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) and *Dream in Hawaii* (1978). Like him, Manohar Malgonkar (1913-1998) continued the same spirit of Indian novel in English with his novels like *Distant Drums* (1960), *Combat of Shadows* (1962), *The Princess* (1963), *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) and *The Devil's Wind* (1972). Khushwant Singh (1918-2014) contributed to the stream of Indian English novel with novels like *Train to Pakistan* (1956), *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959) and *Delhi: A Novel* (1990). G. V. Desani is famous for the only novel *All About H. Hatterr* (1948).

The late nineteen sixties and seventies produced two prominent novelists – Arun Joshi (1939-1993) and Chaman Nahal (1927-2013). Arun Joshi has three novels to his credit. They are *The Foreigner* (1968), *The Strange Case of Bill Biswas* (1971) and *The Apprentice* (1974) while Chaman Nahal has to his credit the novels like *My True Faces* (1973), *Azadi* (1975), *Into Another Dawn* (1977), *The English Queens* (1979), *The Crown and the Loincloth* (1981), *Sunrise in Fiji* (1988), *The Salt of Life* (1990), *The Triumph of the Tricolour* (1993) and *The Gandhi Quartet* (1993).

Women novelists of the post-independence period also contributed a great deal to the development of the Indian English novels. Prominent among them are Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1927-2013), Nayantara Sahgal (1927-), Anita Desai (1937-), Shashi Deshpande (1938-), Shobha De (1948-), Githa Hariharan (1954-) and Manju Kapoor (1948-). Ruth Praver Jhabvala wrote eight novels – *To Whom She Will* (1955), *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *The Householder* (1960), *Get Ready for Battle* (1962), *Esmond in India* (1958), *A Backward Place* (1965), *A New Dominion* (1973), *Heat and Dust* (1975), *In Search of Love and Beauty* (1983), *Out of India* (1986), *Three Continents* (1987), *Poet and Dancer* (1993), *Shards of Memory* (1995), *My Nine Lives* (2004) and *A Judge's Will* (2013).

Nayantara Sahgal has in her name novels like *A Time to be Happy* (1963), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *Sunlight Surround You* (1970), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *A Voice of Freedom* (1977), *Indira Gandhi: Her Road to Power* (1982), *Plans for Departure* (1985), *Rich Like Us* (1985), *Mistaken Identity* (1988), *A Situation in New Delhi* (1989), *Lesser Breeds* (2003) and the novella *The Fate of Butterflies* (2019).

Anita Desai has written the novels beginning with *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-bye Blackbird* (1971), *Peacock Garden* (1974), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *Village by the Sea* (1982), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Journey to Ithaca* (1995), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), *The Zigzag Way* (2004) and *The Artist of Disappearance* (2011).

Shashi Deshpande wrote the novels like *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1982), *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1983), *That Long Silence* (1989), *The Matter of Time* (1996), *Small Remedies* (2000), *The Binding Vine* (2002), *Moving On* (2004), *In the Country of Deceit* (2008) and *Shadow Play* (2013). Shobha De has produced a number of novels including *Socialite Evenings* (1989), *Starry Nights* (1989), *Sisters* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Small Betrayals* (1995), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Speedpost* (1999), *Snapshots* (1995), *Strange Obsessions* (1992) and *Sethji* (2012). Githa Hariharan has penned the novels like *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), *The Art of Dying* (1993), *The Ghost of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), *The Winning Team* (2004), *In Time of Seige* (2003), *Fugitive Histories* (2009), *Almost Home* (2014) and *I Have Become the Tide* (2019). Manju Kapur has to her credit the novels like *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), *Custody* (2011) and *Brothers* (2016). Jhumpa Lahiri (1967-) has two novels to her credit – *The Namesake* (2003) and *The Lowland* (2013). Arundhati Roy (1961-) also has two novels in her name *The God of Small Things* (1997) and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) and Kiran Desai (1971-) has two novels to her credit. They are *Hullabaloo in Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006).

The contemporary male novelists have made remarkable contributions to Indian English novel. Amitav Ghosh (1956-) has nine novels in his name. They are *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosomes* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), *Flood of fire* (2015) and *Gun Island* (2019). Vikram Seth (1952-) has, apart from other works, produced three novels –



*The Golden Gate* (1986), *The Suitable Boy* (1993) and *An Equal Music* (1999). Shashi Tharoor (1956-) has three novels to his credit – *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), *Show Business* (1992) and *Riot* (2001). Chetan Bhagat (1974-) has till now produced eight best-selling novels – *Five Point Someone* (2004), *One Night @ the Call Center* (2005), *Three Mistakes of My Life* (2008), *2 States* (2009), *Revolution 2020* (2011), *Half Girlfriend* (2014), *One Indian Girl* (2016) and *The Girl in Room 105* (2018). Arvind Adiga (1974-) has penned five novels. They are *The White Tiger* (2008), *Between the Assassinations* (2008), *Last Man in Tower* (2011), *Selection Day* (2016) and *Amnesty* (2020).

***Check your Progress***

1. Which is the first English novel in India?
2. In which year *Untouchables* by Mulk Raj Anand was published?
3. Who is the author of *Waiting for Mahatma*?

#### **5.2.4 Indian Short Story in English:**

The story of Indian short story in English is shorter than that of the novel. The first collection of short stories appeared as late as 1885 by Shoshee Chunder Dutt entitled *Realities of Indian Life: Stories Collected from the Criminal Reports of India* (London, 1885). The second collection by the same author with Sourindra Mohan Tagore was *Times of Yore: Tales from Indian History* (London, 1885). Shoshee Chunder Dutt's *Bengaliana: A Dish of Rice and Curry and other Indigestible Ingredients* (1892) includes two long tales – 'The Reminiscences of a Kerani's Life' and 'Shunkur: A Tale of the Indian Mutiny of 1857'. Apart from this, he has in his name a number of short stories. P. V. Ramaswami Raju wrote *The Tales of Sixty Mandarions* (London, 1886) and *Indian Fables* (London, 1887).

The twentieth century saw the prominent short story writer in Cornelia Sorabji, a Parsi lady who wrote four collections of short stories as *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* (1901), *Sunbabies: Studies in the Child Life of India* (1904), *Between the Twilights: Being Studies of Indian Women by one of Themselves* (1908) and *Indian Tales of the Great Ones among Men, Women and Bird-People* (1906). Shankar Ram is another twentieth century short story writer whose collections of stories are *The Children of Kaveri* (1926) and *Creatures All* (1933). A. S. P. Ayyar, the novelist and the playwright, published three collections of stories – *Indian After-*

*Dinner Stories* (1927), *Sense in Sex and Other Stories* (1929) and *The Finger of Destiny and Other Stories* (1932). Mulk Raj Anand wrote seven collections of short stories – *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934), *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (1944), *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories* (1947), *Reflection on the Golden Bed and Other Stories* (1953), *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories* (1959), *Lajwanti and Other Stories* (1966) and *Between Tears and Laughter* (1973). R. K. Narayan, a great novelist and short story writer of twentieth century, published several collections of short stories such as *Cyclone and Other Stories* (1934), *Dodu and Other Stories* (1943), *Malgudi Days* (1943), *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories* (1947), *Lawley Road and Other Stories* (1956), *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970) and *Gods, Demons and Others* (1964). K. A. Abbas contributed four short story collections to Indian Writing in English. His short story collections are *Rice and Other Stories* (1947), *Cages of Freedom and Other Stories* (1952), *One Thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and Other Stories* (1957) and *The Black Sun and Other Stories* (1963).

The post-Independence Indian English novelists continued to contribute to this genre. Bhabani Bhattacharya produced two collections of short-stories – *Indian Cavalcade* (1948) and *Steel Hawk* (1968). Khushwant Singh has to his credit four volumes of short-stories namely *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* (1950), *The Voice of God and Other Stories* (1957), *A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories* (1967) and *Black Jasmine* (1971). Manohar Malgonkar's stories have been collected in *A Toast in Warm Wine* (1974), *Bombay Beware* (1975) and *Rumble-Tumble* (1977). Chaman Nahal and Arun Joshi produced single collection of short stories. They are *The Weird Dance and Other Stories* (1965) and *The Survivor* (1975) respectively. Ruskin Bond published a number of collections of short stories: *Neighbour's Wife and Other Stories* (1968), *The Maneater of Manjari* (1972) and *The Girl from Copenhagen* (1977). Manoj Das, winner of the Sahitya Akademi award for his Oriya writings, has published four collections of short stories: *Song for Sunday and Other Stories* (1967), *Short Stories* (1969), *The Crocodile's Lady* (1975) and *Fables and Fantasies for Adults* (1977). Sasthi Brata has penned two collections of short stories – *A Search for Home* (1975) and *Encounter* (1975).

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### 5.3 Learning Outcomes

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After going through the unit, the students will be able to:

- Learn about the development of Indian English literature.
- Understand various phases in which Indian English literature developed.
- Identify the development of Indian poetry, drama, novel and short story.
- Know the contribution of various writers to various genres of Indian English literature.

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## 5.4 Glossary

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<b>Nomenclature:</b>	A set of rules meant for forming and giving the names or terms in a particular field of arts or science
<b>By-product:</b>	A secondary product
<b>Eenterprising:</b>	Being very able
<b>Stagnant:</b>	Lacking changes
<b>Genre:</b>	A kind or category especially of literature or art

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## 5.5 Sample Questions

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### 5.5.1 Objective Questions:

#### Fill in the blanks:

1. Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Tagore's \_\_\_\_\_ is regarded as his masterpiece.

#### Say whether the following statements are True or False.

3. Toru Dutt is regarded as Indian romantic poet.
4. Bankim Chander Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife* is the first Indian English novel.
5. The novel, as a genre, witnessed late development.

#### Answer in one sentence.

6. What is the name of the theatre established by Mahesh Dattani?
7. Name any two contemporary novelists?

8. Name any two contemporary novelists who are awarded with the Booker Prize?
9. Name the author of the novel *The Guide*?
10. Write the titles of any of the two plays by Girish Karnad?

### 5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Why was there a kind of confusion regarding the nomenclature of Indian English Literature?
2. Write a note on the development of drama during pre-Independence times.
3. Evaluate the development of Indian short story in Indian English literature.
4. What contribution did Gandhian influence made on the Indian writers?
5. Comment on the contribution of women novelists during the post-Independence phase.

### 5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the development of Indian poetry in English.
2. Account for the development of Indian drama in English.
3. Critically evaluate the development of Indian novel in English.

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## 5.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1973.
2. Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Twice-born Fiction*. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinmann, 1971.
3. Naik M. K. ed. *Aspects of Indian Writing in English: Essays in Honour of K. R. Srinivas Iyengar*. New Delhi: The Macmillan Company, 1979.
4. Naik, M. K., Desai, S. K. and Amur G. S. (eds.) *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English presented to Armando Menezes*. Dharwar: Karnataka University, 1968; The Macmillan Company, 1979.
5. Naik, M. K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2006.

## **Unit - 6: Modern Indian Literature**

### **Structure**

**6.0** Introduction

**6.1** Objectives

**6.2** Modern Indian Literature

**6.2.1** Pioneers of Modern Indian English Literature

**6.2.2** Modern Indian Poetry

**6.2.3** Modern Indian Prose

**6.2.4** Indian English Drama

**6.2.5** Women Writers in India

**6.3** Learning Outcomes

**6.4** Glossary

**6.5** Sample Questions

**6.6** Suggested Readings

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### **6.0 Introduction**

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Modern Indian literature is the literature produced in the English language and the literature translated into English from the vernacular languages across India. It also encompasses Indian diaspora writings by writers of Indian descent. This literature was earlier referred to as Indo-Anglian literature, later gradually developed and identified as Indian English Literature. Literature is a mirror of life; as it does represent the human entity. Literature accounts for the culture, civilization, politics, socio-economic conditions, religion, beliefs, tradition, social stratum, science and technology, art and crafts, new emerging trends, lifestyle, history of a particular nation or people at any given point of time. Sometimes writers act as observers and visionaries, and literature becomes a tool to anticipate the future. In this unit, we shall read about Indian poetry, prose and drama in detail.

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## 6.1 Objectives

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The objectives of the unit are:

- To learn the background of Indian English Literature.
  - To read and familiarize with the contribution of modern writers.
  - To appreciate the style and aesthetics of modern Indian writers.
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## 6.2 Modern Indian Literature

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### 6.2.1 Pioneers of Modern Indian English Literature:

Modern literature in India was deeply associated with the advent of the English language into the realm of communication and English as a medium of instruction in education. Modern literature in India, in its early stages, can be categorically termed as Colonial and Postcolonial literature; the literature produced during the period of British rule and after the Independence.

In 1793, the first book *Travels of Dean Mahomet*, a travel narrative, written by an Indian author, Sheikh Dean Mahomed, was published in England. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first prominent Indian to write in English and was a social, religious, and educational reformer. The very first Indian novel *Raj Mohan's Wife* was written in English and was published in 1864, by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Rabindranath Tagore was the first Indian Nobel Laureate in literature for his famous work *Gitanjali*, which was written in Bengali and later translated into English by Tagore himself. Henry Derozio, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K Narayan, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and A.K. Ramanujan are some of the pioneering Indian English writers.

### 6.2.2 Modern Indian Poetry:

Poetry in India has a long legacy since its ancient times and modern poetry in English flourished by the dawn of the English language in the Indian literary firmament. Indian poets succeeded in customising and Indianizing the diction and form of Indian poetry in order to express the vivid social-cultural situations and variations of the vast canvas of India. Modern poetry concentrates on themes like freedom struggle, spirituality, gender issues, violence,

humour, irony, socio-economic equality, colonial effect, identity crisis, urbanization, industrialization, etc.

Henry Derozio was the first poet in the lineage of Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Toru Dutt, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, and Sarojini Naidu. These are some of the pioneers of Indian English Poetry. Modern or contemporary Indian English Poetry starts with the Independence and end of colonial rule. India was one of the many countries that got freedom from British rule and was one of the many newly emerging literatures after the Second World War. Nissim Ezekiel is to be identified as the most prominent figure along with Kamala Das and A. K. Ramanujan. Other notable poets include Dom Moraes, Jayantha Mahapatra, Eunice De Souza, Gieve Patel, Kersy Katrak, P. Lal, Vikram Seth, etc.

Nissim Ezekiel published his first collection of poems *A Time to Change and Other Poems* in 1952, which was a landmark of modern Indian poetry. Nissim Ezekiel was an Indian Jewish poet, playwright, editor and art critic. He is a prominent poet in Indian English writings. Ezekiel was the recipient of the 'Sahitya Akademi Award' in 1983 for his collection of poems *Latter-Day Psalms*. Ezekiel extensively used free verse in his poems and made them popular among his contemporaries. His poems are filled with humour and irony. His satire is subtle; his language is profound in extracting meaning from simple colloquial language. He tries to point out people habits, superstitions, lifestyle, undesirable attitudes, social taboos and traditions in such a way that they provoke laughter, mild irony, and nevertheless bring awareness. He uses English language in an Indianized; customized form that generates humour and the obvious reality of our life. For example in his poem 'A Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.', he says "she is coming from a good family"; he uses a present continuous tense to signify her family status, which is a translation of the native language, with grammatical errors which are considered to be common in day to day conversation in India. Few famous poems written by Ezekiel are "The Couple", "Enterprise", "A Time to Change", "Philosophy", "Island", "For Elkana", "The Professor", "Soap", "Marriage", "In the Country Cot", "The Paradise Flycatcher", "Night of The Scorpion", "Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.", "Entertainment", "Background, Casually" and 'Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher'. Apart from these poetical works he also has some prose works to his credit.

Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan (1929 – 1993) popularly known as A. K. Ramanujan was an Indian poet and a great scholar of Indian literature who was a linguistics Professor at

Chicago University. He was a philologist, folklorist, translator, and playwright too. He believed in modernity with tradition. He wrote in both the languages English and Kannada. He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for his *The Collected Poems* posthumously in 1999. His notable collection of poems are; *The Striders, Relations, Selected Poems, Second Sight*. ‘The Black Hen’, ‘Still Life’, ‘On The Death of A Poem’, ‘Prayers to Lord Murugan’, ‘Elements of Composition’, ‘Chicago Zen’, ‘Extended Family’, ‘Astronomer’ and ‘A River’ are some of his famous poems. Apart from these, few of his other English writings, other than Kannada, include *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology, Speaking of Siva, The Literatures of India* (Edited with Edwin Gerow), *Hymns for the Drowning, Poems of Love and War, Folktales from India, Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages, Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? In India through Hindu Categories*, (edited by McKim Marriott), *When God Is a Customer: Telugu Courtesan Songs by Ksetrayya and Others* (with Velcheru Narayana Rao and David Shulman), *A Flowering Tree and other Oral Tales from India* 1997, etc. In 1991, his essay “Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation” was included in B.A. History by the University of Delhi, in which he mentioned that Rama and Sita were siblings whereas in the most popular versions of Ramayana of Valmiki and Tulsidas, Rama and Sita were husband and wife. This became very controversial and his essay was removed from the syllabus in 2011. In 1976, the government of India awarded him the honorific title Padma Shri, and in 1983, he was given the MacArthur Prize Fellowship (Shulman, 1994). In 1983, he was appointed the William E. Colvin Professor in the Departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, of Linguistics, and in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, and the same year, he received a MacArthur Fellowship. As an Indo-American writer Ramanujan was exposed to Indian and as well as foreign ambiances, he reflected his thoughts in his poems like the “Conventions of Despair” and the disparities between the east and west. And he strongly argued that every dialect and every native should also be given importance.

Kamala Das (1934-2009) was born at Punnayurkulam, Malabar district, Madras Presidency (now Kerala), British India; in a sophisticated family. Her mother, Balamani Amma was also a writer. Kamala Das started writing at a very young age. She was married to a bank manager, at the age of 15. Kamala Das’s writings are about personal rather than talking about social issues like her contemporaries. She was bold and explicit in her writing style. She never felt shy or guilty about writing female intimate desires, which was widely considered a social taboo in Indian society. She also talks about male domination from the society and her family.



After her husband's death, she married a Muslim scholar, and upon his request, she converted to Islam. In her poem, "Dance of Eunuchs", Kamala Das sympathizes with eunuchs. Throughout the day, eunuchs dance in the sun, with colorful costumes, makeup on their faces. Their dance and makeup represent feminine desires and elegance; eunuchs' physical appearance of happiness is opposite to their inward grief, because of their status in the society. She traces this state of ambiguity with her own self. She was bold enough to express all her personal experiences in her writings. Some of her works are *The Sirens* (1964), *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973), *The Stranger Time* (1977), *Tonight, This Savage Rite* (with Pritish Nandy) (1979), *Collected Poems* (1984), *The Anamalai Poems* (1985), *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing* (1997), *My Mother at Sixty-six* (1999), and *Yaa Allah* (2001).

Some of the awards and honorary recognitions that Kamala Das received are *PEN Asian Poetry Prize* (1963), Sahitya Akademi Award (English) for her *Collected Poems* (1985), Muttathu Varkey Award (2006), and Ezhuthachan Award (2009). She was also shortlisted for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1984 and received Honorary D. Litt by University of Calicut in 2006.

Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the best known Indian English poets. His contribution to Indian English poetry is notable and he is a prominent writer who expresses Indian flavor and sensibility with wit and ease. In his poem "Dawn at Puri", the theme of landscape is used, the importance of pilgrimage and beliefs of the people associated with holy places are clearly dealt with. He is the first poet to receive the Sahitya Akademi Award for English poetry. His poems "Indian Summer" and "Hunger" are considered classics in modern Indian English literature. "The Captive Air of Chandipur on Sea" is a fine nature poem in which poet sensitizes the sadness of the seashore for the loss of fishermen. In the poem 'The Abandoned British Cemetery at Balasore' he expresses his anguish at the sight of graves through profound images. He has a great concern for nature, people, life and relationships. Jayanta Mahapatra was awarded Padma Shri, the fourth highest civilian honour in India in 2009. He wrote prose and poetry; he received Sahitya Akademi award for his collection of poems *Relationship*. Mahapatra's other significant poetic collections are *Close the Sky Ten by Ten*, *Svayamvara and Other Poems*, *A Father's Hours* and *Waiting*. He has a few prose works also to his credit.

There are many more poets who contributed to the ocean of Indian literature, and who owe an acknowledgment. But to list them all down might be a difficult task. There are some contemporary young poets, like Meena Kandasamy, Tishani Doshi, Sonnet Mondal, Akhil Katyal, Harnidh Kaur, Nabanita Kanungo, Arundhathi Subramaniam and Arjun Rajendran, who continue to contribute to the corpus of Indian English literature by using different and current trends, styles, and forms to represent their thoughts.

***Check your Progress***

1. Name the first book written in English in India.
2. Which is the first collection of poems published by Nissim Ezekiel?
3. For which collection of poems Jayanta Mahapatra did receive the Sahitya Akademi award?

### **6.2.3 Modern Indian Prose:**

Prose comprises both fiction and non-fiction writings of literature. Non-fiction comprises biographies, real incidents and historical events. Fiction is generally a literary piece written in the form of novel, short stories etc., which is not completely based on history or fact. Modern Indian prose or novel began with the new changes that happened in colonial and post-colonial India. The bourgeois or middle class became the platform for national movement. Obviously, the intellectuals from middle class became writers to express their views on colonial rule, new changes, new ideas, and eventually had taken new forms or genres of literature: novels, journals, newspapers, travelogues, biographies, auto-biographies, and essays.

Dr. Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, an Indian economist, politician, social reformer, and jurist is proclaimed as the Maker of Modern India. He opted for justice, education, liberation for all irrespective of caste and creed. He is the Author of the Indian Constitution and also proposed 'Hindu Code' bill for the security of Indian women on the grounds of having rights for property possession, security of marriage, political and educational rights; which was largely opposed by all the upper caste people. He authored 53 books including *Annihilation of Caste*, *Who were the Shudras?*, *The problem of Rupee*, *The Untouchables: Who Were They? And Why Were They Became Untouchables?*, etc. are very few among them. Another prominent socio-political figure

was M. K. Gandhi, who influenced masses to join India's struggle for Independence through his writings and protests. His autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, and India's first Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru's *Discovery of India*, *Glimpses of World History* and *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* are considered as classics, due to their authenticity and valor.

In fiction, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan are referred to as the trinity of modern English novel. Raja Rao (1908- 2006), an Indian groundbreaking writer, was among the most-popular Indian novelists writing in English during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Raja Rao uses the vernacular essence in his writings. The images and symbols he uses in his works are quintessentially Indian. He joined the Freedom struggle for independence. He worked as the co-editor of *Changing India*, an anthology of modern Indian thought. He also co-edited 'Tomorrow', a journal from Bombay. Some of his themes and personae are metaphysical. In his first novel, *Kanthapura* (1938), he uses the technic called 'Sthala Purana'; he beautifully describes the entire village and characters through the character, Achakka. He describes clearly how the upper caste is privileged and how the lower caste is marginalized, the young protagonists' Gandhian philosophy. His second novel *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960) is an autobiographical account of Raja Rao. The story is about a young intellectual Brahman and his wife seeking spiritual truth in India, France and England. It tries to inquire about the association of Eastern and Western cultural traditions. Nevertheless, it is a masterpiece of Raja Rao, which made him world popular. Rao was the recipient of several of India's highest honors: the Padma Bhushan in 1969, a fellowship in the Sahitya Academy, India's national academy of letters, in 1997, and the Padma Vibhushan, awarded posthumously in 2007. He won the Neustadt Prize in 1988. His works include novels: *Kanthapura* (1938), *The Serpent and the Rope* (1960), *The Cat and Shakespeare: A Tale of India* (1965), *Comrade Kirillov* (1976), *The Chessmaster and His Moves* (1988). Few of his fictional works such as short story collections are *The Cow of the Barricades* (1947), *The Policeman and the Rose* (1978) and *On the Ganga Ghat* (1989). His non-fiction includes *Changing India: An Anthology* (1939), *Tomorrow* (1943-44), *Whither India?* (1948), *The Meaning of India*, essays (1996), *The Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi*, biography (1998).

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami (1906 – 2001) was a popular Indian short story writer, novelist, columnist and elder brother of R.K. Laxman, a renowned cartoonist. He is

best known for his short stories, like 'Swami and His Friends', and creator of a fictional south Indian semi urban town, Malgudi. Malgudi appears in almost all of his works, and changes with time. R. K. Narayan came from a humble background, after his education he worked as a teacher but later decided to become a writer. His writing is simple and easy to understand, his characters resemble our next-door neighborhood people. His irony is appreciable and comprehensible. His characters are sensible and realistic. Most of his works are autobiographical. Narayan's decision of staying at home and writing was supported in every way by his family and in 1930 he wrote his first novel called *Swami and Friends* which was rejected by a lot of publishers. But this book was important in the sense that it was with this that he created the fictional town of Malgudi.

He worked for a newspaper 'The Justice' and as a columnist for 'The Hindu' and 'The Atlantic'. Critics compare him to the American writer William Faulkner, as his novels contain the beauty and simplicity of the ordinary life. His works give details of typical Indian village, its setting, its people, the common man and his everyday humour.

His second novel 'The Bachelors of Arts' was published in 1937, which was made out of his college experiences. The first two books were published by Graham Greene, an English writer who counselled him on writing for an English Audience. Karnataka Government asked him to write a book to promote tourism and he wrote a travelogue *The Emerald Route*, and with some changes he republished it in 1980. R. K. Narayan served as member of Rajya Sabha for six years. In 1956, he wrote *The Guide* while he was touring the United States, for which he won Sahitya Akademi Award. His works include novels *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Dark Room*, *The English Teacher*, *Mr. Sampath*, *The Financial Expert*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *The Guide*, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Signs*, *A Tiger for Malgudi*, *Talkative Man*, *The World of Nagaraj*, *Grandmother's Tale*, etc. His non-fictional works are *Next Sunday*, *My Dateless Diary*, *My Days*, *Reluctant Guru*, *A Writer's Nightmare*, *A Story-Teller's World* and *Gods, Demons and Others*. His short story collections are *Malgudi Days*, *An Astrologer's Day and other Stories*, *Lawley Road and other Stories*, *A Horse and Two Goats*, *Under the Banyan Tree and other Stories*, *The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories*. He was awarded the AC Benson Medal by the (British) Royal Society of Literature, of which he was an honorary member. In 1982 he was elected an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature

multiple times but never won the honour. In 2001, he was awarded India's second-highest civilian honour, the Padma Vibhushan.

Mulk Raj Anand (1905 - 2004) is a prominent Indian writer in English. He was a prolific short story writer, novelist, and a critical essayist. His characters are realistic and sympathetic, exploited and oppressed; he opted to write for the poor and oppressed people. His works display, different types of exploitations such as economic, political, religious, sexual and social exploitations at its peak level. In 1935 when *Untouchable*, his first novel was published, only a very few people appreciated the novel, and he faced much criticism against it. Newspapers in London commented it as 'a dirty work'. Slowly it gained popularity throughout the world, and was translated into more than twenty languages. A special feature of this novel is that the entire story takes place in a single day in the life of the protagonist Bakha, a scavenger boy. The entire action takes place within a period of less than twenty four hours. Bakha represents the whole community of sweepers, whose lives were miserable than slaves. The character of Sohini, Bakha's sister, not only resembles caste exploitation but also sex exploitation. His another novel *Coolie* is a story of a fourteen year old boy Munoo, an innocent orphan boy, compelled to move from place to place against his will in order to earn his living because his father and mother had died of the economic and social exploitation. The boy faces domestic exploitation at his uncle's house. *Coolie* is a picaresque novel. Plot and story moves from hills to the plains, village to city from the north to the west and again to the north. Anand wants to say that the exploitation is everywhere and universal. Anand deals with individual's quest for identity, freedom in the world of bizarre, expresses hope and possibility for a solution to the age old social evils and disorders. Some of his works include novels like *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud*, *The Village*, *Across the Black Waters*, *The Sword and the Sickle*, *The Big Heart*, *The Lost Child*, *Seven Summers: A Memoir*, *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*, *The Old Woman and the Cow* and *The Road*. He received International Peace Prize in 1953, Padma Bhushan in 1968, and Sahitya Akademi Award in 1971.

Anita Desai (born 24 June 1937) is an Indian novelist and Professor of Humanities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As a writer she has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize three times. In 1978, she received Sahitya Akademi Award for her novel *Fire on the Mountain*; she won the British Guardian Children's Fiction Prize for *The Village by the Sea*. *Clear Light of*

*Day* (1980) is another very popular work of Anita Desai; and her novel *In Custody* (1984) was adapted into an award winning film in 1993.

Arundhati Roy was born on November 24, 1961 at Shillong, Meghalaya. She is an Indian author, actress, and a political activist who is best known for the award-winning novel *The God of Small Things* (1997). She is concerned with social and environmental issues in her novels. Her other publications are: *Power Politics* (2001), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2002), *War Talk* (2003), *Public Power in the Age of Empire* (2004), *Field Notes on Democracy: Listening to Grasshoppers* (2009), *Broken Republic: Three Essays* (2011), and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014). In 2017 Roy published her second novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*.

Khushwant Singh is a famous Indian writer, journalist, lawyer and politician. He is popularly known for his widely read, legendary work in Indian literature, *Train to Pakistan* (1956). In this historical novel he discusses the partition of India in August 1947, with a focus on its conflicts, bloodshed between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. Some of the widely read and critically acclaimed books written by Khushwant Singh are; *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959), *Truth, Love and a Little Malice* (202), *Delhi: A Novel* (1990) and *The Company of Women* (1999). Singh initially was a strong supporter of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and served as Member of the Rajya Sabha between the years 1980–86. In 1984, he returned Padma Bhushan award which was conferred on him in 1974, after the incident of ruthless killing of Sikhs in Golden Temple in Amritsar. In the year 2007, Singh was awarded the Padma Vibhushan.

Vikram Seth is another famous Indian poet and novelist. His novel *A Suitable Boy* (1993) is the longest novel ever published in a single volume in the English language. His collections of poems include *The Humble Administrator's Garden* (1985), *Beastly Tales* (1991) and *Mappings* (1980).

Amitav Ghosh is a very prominent contemporary Indian writer. He has published many works of fiction and non-fiction. His novels include *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and *Sea of Poppies* (2008). His notable non-fictional works are *The Imam and the Indian* and *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016).

***Check your Progress***

1. Who is the author of the seminal text *Annihilation of Caste*?
2. Who authored the book *The Story of my Experiments with Truth*?
3. In which year the novel *A Suitable Boy* was published?

#### **6.2.4 Indian English Drama:**

There are many popular playwrights in Indian Literature who made the Indian literary platform to catch the attention of the world. Rabindra Nath Tagore, Mahesh Dattani, Girish Karnad and Vijay Tendulkar are some of the famous Indian English dramatists. During and after independence, Indian drama underwent many changes. Search for identity, conflict between Indian and colonial thoughts, new trends that invaded the society, and social issues like child marriage, atrocities on women, etc. became the popular themes for Indian English drama. Plays that were written in vernacular languages were translated into English. Indian writers were mostly influenced by western traditions as much development was already witnessed in English Drama. Mythological figures and myths became one of the trends to reach out to people. Writers used the mythological characters to express their views on modernity.

Tagore, a great playwright has many great plays to his credit like *Sanyasi or Ascetic* (1884), *The King and the Queen* (1889), *Sacrifice* (1892), *Malini* (1895), *Gandhari's Prayer* (1897), *Karna and Kunti*, *The King of the Dark Chamber* (1910), *The Post Office* (1912), *Chitra* (1913), *The Cycle of Spring* (1916), *Mukta Dhara* (1922), *Red Oleanders* (1924), *Natir Puja* (1926) and *Chandrakala* (1933). Tagore used philosophy, religion, social, political, myths and legendary figures in his plays.

Vijay Dhondopant Tendulkar (1928 – 2008) was a leading Indian playwright, movie and television writer, literary essayist, political journalist, and social commentator. He wrote thirty three full length plays and twenty three one act plays. Some of his plays are considered as classics in Indian English literature. He deals with social issues like dowry system, justice for women, and gender role in the newly changing modern society, gender discrimination, and class discrimination in India. His works were translated into English. Few of them are: *Silence! The*

*Court Is in Session, Ghashiram Kotwal, The Churning, The Threshold, Five Plays, The Last Days of Sardar Patel and The Mime Players, Mitrāchi Goshta: A Friend's Story, Kanyādān, The Cyclist, His Fifth Woman and Sakharam Binder.*

Girish Karnad (1938 - 2019) was an Indian playwright, film director, actor, Kannada writer, and a Rhodes Scholar. He is a remarkable writer of modern Kannada drama, later his works were translated into English. His plays *Nagamandala* and *Hayavadana* made him popular. He uses the theme of search for Identity. In the play *Hayavadana*, he uses images to represent human uncertainty in thoughts and deeds. He wrote many plays, and some of his plays which he transcreated into English are: *Tughlaq, Hayavadana, Yayati, Nagamandala: Play with Cobra, Fire and the Rain, Bali: The Sacrifice, Tale Danda, Wedding Album, Boiled Beans on Toast and Crossing to Talikota*. He received Jnanpith Award, the highest literary honour conferred in India, in 1998.

There are many other playwrights who contributed to the Indian Literature. Badal Sircar from Bengali language and Mohan Rakesh from Hindi language need special mention here. In addition, a few other writers whose works became popular and are widely read are *Victory* (1939) by R. S. Dalal, *Ordeal* (1857) by M. Mujeeb, and *Iron Road* (1970) by C. C. Mehta.

### **6.2.5 Women Writers in India:**

There are many women writers who write in English and other vernacular languages like Punjabi, Bengali, Kannada, Tamil, Oriya, Malayalam, Hindi, etc. They write on themes like gender sensitization, women oppression, child abuse, child labor, forcible widowhood, sati, child marriage, dowry system, domestic violence, sexual harassment, environmental issues, and women empowerment. Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Jhumpa Lahiri, Nayantara Sahgal, Kiran Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Mahaswetha Devi, Bharati Mukherjee, Arundhati Roy, Anita Nair, Manju Kapoor, Githa Hariharan, Ismat Chughtai, Namita Gokhale, Amrita Pritam and Meena Alexander are some of the famous women Indian writers in Indian Literature.

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## **6.3 Learning Outcomes**

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After going through the unit, the students are expected to:



- Have an understanding of history of Indian English literature.
- Gain knowledge of literary forms, and are expected to differentiate between Indian poetry and prose.
- Assess the purpose of writing any literary piece, and its impact on reader's mind.

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## 6.4 Glossary

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<b>Annihilation:</b>	Complete destruction or obliteration
<b>Sati:</b>	A former practice in India whereby a widow threw herself on to her husband's funeral pyre
<b>Vernacular:</b>	The language or dialect spoken by the ordinary people in a particular country or region
<b>Diaspora:</b>	People who have spread or been dispersed from their homeland
<b>Descents:</b>	The origin or background of a person in terms of family or nationality
<b>Colonial:</b>	Relating to or characteristic of a colony or colonies. (Britishers established colonies in other countries, in which they invade and rule like India, Africa, and Australia)
<b>Post-colonial:</b>	Occurring or existing after the end of colonial rule
<b>Travelogues:</b>	A film, book, or illustrated lecture about the places visited by or experiences of a traveler
<b>Anglicist:</b>	A group of people who supported teaching of modern western education to Indians in English
<b>Varna system:</b>	It is the social stratification or division based on the caste. Chaturvarna, means there are four varnas; Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishyas and Shudras
<b>Orthodox:</b>	Following or conforming to the traditional or generally accepted rules or beliefs of a religion, philosophy, or practice

<b>Laureate:</b>	A person who is honored with an award for outstanding creative or intellectual achievement
<b>Renaissance:</b>	The revival of European art and literature under the influence of classical models in the 14th–16th centuries
<b>Philologist:</b>	A person who studies literary texts
<b>Folklore:</b>	The traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth
<b>Hierarchy:</b>	An arrangement or classification of things according to relative importance or inclusiveness

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## 6.5 Sample Questions

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### 6.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The Indian English literature was earlier referred to as \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In which year the Indian Education Bill was passed?
3. What was the first Indian English novel?
4. Who was the first Indian Nobel Laureate?
5. Who was the author of *God of Small Things*?
6. Who wrote the novel *Untouchable*?
7. What is the title of Gandhi's autobiography?
8. Who authored *Discovery of India*?
9. What is the name of the fictitious town in the writings of R.K. Narayan?
10. Who is the author of the novel *The Suitable Boy*?

### 6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a brief note on Indian poetry.

2. What is modern Indian literature? Explain.
3. Mention some of the authors who wrote during colonial rule.
4. Write a brief note on Rabindra Nath Tagore's writings.
5. Name any five writings of Raja Rao.

### **6.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write an essay on Indian novel in English.
2. Discuss in detail the contribution of women poets to Indian poetry in English.
3. Trace the development of Indian English drama and its major playwrights.

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## **6.6 Suggested Readings**

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1. Batra, Shakti. *Modern Indian Literature Poems and Short Stories*. Surjeet Publications, 2018.
2. Chaudhuri, Amit, editor. *The Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature*. Vintage, 2004.
3. Delhi University. *Modern Indian Literature: Poems and Short Stories*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.
4. Iyengar, KR Srinivas. *Indian Writing in English (Rev. ed.)*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1972.
5. Iyengar, KR Srinivas. *Indian Writing in English (Rev. ed.)*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House 1972.
6. Naik, Madhukar Krishna. *A history of Indian English literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982.
7. Sinha, Birendra and Dinesh Mishra. *History of Indian English Literature*. Delhi: Pacific Books International, 2013.

## Unit - 7: *So Very Far*

### Structure

#### 7.0 Introduction

#### 7.1 Objectives

#### 7.2 *So Very Far*

##### 7.2.1 Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh- The Poet

##### 7.2.2 Summary of the Poem

##### 7.2.3 Stanza 1

##### 7.2.4 Stanza 2

##### 7.2.5 Stanza 3

##### 7.2.6 Stanzas 4, 5 and 6

#### 7.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 7.4 Glossary

#### 7.5 Sample Questions

#### 7.6 Suggested Readings

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### 7.0 Introduction

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“So Very Far” is a poem originally written in Hindi by Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh (1917—64) and was later translated by Vishnu Khare and Adil Jussawalla into English. The translated work is taken from his poetry anthology named *Muktibodh* (2016). Muktibodh belongs to modern Hindi literature. Like other writers of his age, Muktibodh protested against many social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities which are deep-rooted in Indian society. In his poem “So Very Far”, he raises his voice against class struggle, capitalism, corruption, economic inequality and particularly against bourgeois intelligentsia. Through this poem, one can understand the miserable living conditions of downtrodden and oppressed people. This poem clearly describes the supremacy of the bourgeois over the dejected working class. The poet’s heart is overwhelmed by the pathetic conditions faced by the suppressed and downtrodden labourers. The poem “So Very Far” is filled with the poet’s grim verbal arguments about the differences between the rich, privileged class and the poor unprivileged class. Thus, it is a

revolutionary and thought-provoking poem in nature. Though he was criticized by his contemporaries, he became famous for his sincere portrayal and honest versification.

“So Very Far” has 41 lines (this is probably because it is a translated version of Hindi) and is divided into 6 stanzas. This poem is not written in a conventional structure. Each stanza has a different number of lines. For example, the first stanza has 3 lines and the third one has 17 lines. The rhyme scheme is also differing from phrase to phrase and line to line. The language used in the poem is simple yet profound. Each word and phrase in the poem is loaded with great expression and demands explanation. The poem “So Very Far” is written from the first-person point of view and in free verse.

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## 7.1 Objectives

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After going through the unit, the students shall be able:

- To familiarize the students with English Indian poetry and its form in general.
- To understanding of the fundamentals of modern Indian literature and its significant role in influencing society.
- To analyse and appreciate the poem “So Very Far” in the context of the societal norms and forms of Indian society in specific.

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## 7.2 *So Very Far*

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### 7.2.1 Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh - The Poet:

Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh was born on 13 November 1917 in Sheopur district, Chambal region of Madhya Pradesh. His father Madhav Rao Muktibodh was a sub-inspector of police. His mother’s name was Parvathi Bai. Saratchandra Muktibodh, a popular Marathi poet, was his younger brother. Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh received his preliminary education at Ujjain and Indore and graduated from the University of Agra in 1938. He worked as a teacher at different places and then he completed his M.A. from Nagpur University in 1953. In 1958, he successfully secured the position of lectureship at Digvijay College, Rajnandgaon.

Muktibodh was a renowned Hindi poet, literary and political critic, and fiction writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His writings mark the beginning of the experimental poetry of the Modern Age. He was a communist for some time but a majority of his works represent his Marxist views. He founded the 'Madhya Bharat Pragatishil Lekhak Sangh'. He encouraged and ran study circles for teachers, writers, and women workers. He served as assistant editor of journals like *Nayak* and *Vasudha*. He worked as a journalist in the department of Information and Publication of the government of Madhya Pradesh for some time and then as editor in the regional News Services Division of All India Radio. As his Marxist ideology continued to influence him profoundly, he wrote several literary pieces on literary, political and economic affairs while working as an editor of the radical paper *Naya Khoon*.

Madhya Pradesh Government imposed a ban in 1962 on one of Muktibodh's great writings '*Bharat Itihaas aur Sanskriti*' (*India History and Culture*) which was prescribed as a textbook for higher secondary schools. He was criticized for some of the sensitive elements like Hinduism and Jainism from a Marxist point of view. This was a terrible experience for Muktibodh. However, Muktibodh was a courageous writer and a poet of commitment. He desired an egalitarian society and opted to write to change the social structure of society. Middle-class society and their struggle for existence is his main concern. His poems and writings directly criticize and pose questions, the ruling class: politicians, businessmen, and aristocrats. He raised his voice against social and economic inequality which is prevalent in society. Muktibodh truly has an international spirit in this sense. His writings directly question the social problems and indirectly inquire about the root cause of such problems.

The personae in his poems bring awareness and offer conversion of the attitudes towards the fears, illusions, and hypocrisy of the common man to social evils and to the people who are in power and position. The people who have the power to rule can never accept any kind of rejection, objection, or reform when they are challenged; as a result, the poor and the oppressed have to suffer. Muktibodh had to face many traumatic and horrible experiences because of his free expression of thoughts through his writings.

Muktibodh writes in his masterpiece *Andhere Mein*, "Hi, maine unko nanga dekh liya hai, is ki saza mujhe milegi, zarur milegi (Oh, I have seen him naked, I will be punished for this, surely will be punished for this)". Critics opine that Muktibodh's personae often conjecture and

are complex. His characters, themes, and images mainly project a quest for identity in search of the truth. Journey, quest, search, suffering, grief, inequality, corruption, politics, solitude, darkness, identity crisis, self-introspection, and surrealism are some of the common themes of his poems.

Muktibodh often portrays his characters in such a way that their inner conflicts represent the microcosm of the macrocosmic conflicts in society and are hence symptomatic. Muktibodh was influenced by many writers and great personalities such as Premchand, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, French philosopher Henri Bergson, the psychologist Sigmund Freud, and French and Russian literature especially the humanism of Leo Tolstoy.

Muktibodh breathed his last on 11 September 1964 at the age of 47. He didn't see any of his books published during his lifetime. He was never recognized or appreciated for his writings during his life span. In 2017 which is his birth centenary year, he became the most celebrated poet of Hindi. Many of his works were translated; seminars and conferences were held across India, paying tribute to the great poet. The news channels NDTV India and Aaj Tak telecasted programmes on his birthday and spoke about his literary legacy as a poet. TV shows acknowledged his enduring contribution to Indian society.

Muktibodh was certainly ahead of his times. His writings were indigestible and incomprehensible to his contemporaries. He anticipated the future consequences and impact of the political, economic, technological and social policies in their budding stage in his times. He envisaged our present society and suggested retrospection. He further rediscovered the times, events, and situations which were largely neglected by both past and present times.

## **Works:**

### **Anthologies of poems**

- *Chand ka Muh Tedha Hai* (The Face of the Moon is Crooked), 1964.
- *Bhuri Khak Dhul* (Brown Dust), 1980.
- *Andhere Mein* (In the Dark), translated by Krishna Baldev Vaid.
- *Pratinidhi Kavitayein* (Representative Poems), edited by Ashoka Vajapeyi, 1984.
- *Muktibodh Ki Kavitayen* (An Anthology of Poems by Muktibodh), 2004.
- *Dabre Par Sooraj ka Bimb*, 2002.

## Essays

- *Nayi Kavita ka Atmasangharsh tatha Anya Nibandha* (Self-conflict in New Poetry and other Essays), 1964.
- *Ek Sahityik ki Diary* (The Diary of a Litterateur), 1964.
- *Naye Sahitya ka Saundarya-Shastra* (The Science of Beauty in New Literature), 1971.
- *Samiksha ki Samasyain* (The Problems of Commentary), 1982.

## Criticism

- *Sahitya Bharti Kamayani: Ek Punarvichar* (Kamayani: A Reconsideration), 1973.

## History

- *Bharat ka Itihaas aur Sanskriti* (History and Culture of India)

## Short Stories

- *Kath Ka Sapna* (Dreams of Wood: An Anthology), 1967.
- *Satah Se Uthta Admi* (Man Arising from the Surface – An Anthology), 1971.

## Novel

- *Vipatra* (1970)

*Muktibodh Rachnavali* edited by Nemichandra Jain features the complete works of Muktibodh. It is in 6 volumes and published in 1980 by Rajkamal Publications, New Delhi. The veteran film director, Mani Kaul directed the Hindi feature film, *Satah Se Uthata Aadmi* (Man Arising from the Surface) based on the writings of Muktibodh. The film was screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 1981. In 2004, “Brahmarakshas ka Shishya”, a dramatization of Muktibodh’s story was presented in New Delhi by Soumyabrata Choudhury. The novel, *Vipatra* has also been made into an audio-book for the blind. While writing about Muktibodh, Ashok Vajpeyi utters that he, “had not made a success of anything in life; he wrote long poems in the days of short poems; he questioned his Marxist fellow writers; he was carving out a new aesthetics for Hindi poetry which had few admirers and his physical and economic circumstances were wholly inadequate. He was not drawn to success though he never wallowed in his failures. Endowed with a deeply interrogative mind, a robust critique of the civilization in which he was



born and placed, he saw with great agitation in his mind and fury in his soul the freezing of conscience in the independent democratic republic of India and decided to be the witness, candid and unforgiving.” (Ashok Vajpeyi, Updated: 27 Nov 2017, 4:42 PM, Engagement: 593, National Herald)

***Check your Progress***

1. In which year was Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh born?
2. Who was the editor of the radical paper *Naya Khoon*?
3. Who is the author of *Ek Sahityik Ki Diary*?

**7.2.2 Summary of the Poem:**

The Poem “So Very Far” was published in an anthology of poems *Chand Ka Munh Tedha Hai (Crooked is the Face of the Moon)* in 1964. The poem, entitled in Hindi ‘Main Tum Logon Se Door Hoon’ means ‘I am far from you People’, focuses on the class struggle between the rich and poor, working-class and aristocrats. Poet expresses his frustration and dissatisfaction towards his incompetence and calls people to eradicate and bridge such gaps. This poem is a denunciation of the richer and influential sections of our society who are infused with corruption and steeped with greed. Poet is annoyed at the scantiness of the common or poor man and the exuberant lifestyle of the rich. This poem expresses the poet’s anguish towards the corrupted and money-grubbed people and at his inability to change this situation.

“So Very Far” is written in free verse. The translated English poem is divided into six stanzas. The first stanza talks about the narrator’s aloofness and his indifference to society. The second stanza depicts the narrator's struggle, grief, and troubles experienced by him because of the discrimination from others. The third stanza describes the narrator's failures because of his honesty, and the success of unworthy people. He declares his incapacity to correct the malice of the people who have power. In the fourth stanza, he distinguishes rich from poor, and their pathetic conditions. The last two stanzas speak about what is real and what is unreal, concluding that only grief and pain are real and true, as the vitality of the richer class always subjugates the working class. We shall read critical analysis of the poem in the sections below:

### 7.2.3 Stanza 1:

The very first line of the poem is linked to the title of the poem. “I am so very far from you people”. The reference of “you people” is not mentioned in this stanza but the latter part of the poem answers this (the corrupted and the powerful). The narrator is very far, which means he is different from other people. The term ‘far’ signifies the poet’s aloofness from society. The term ‘Fire’ in the second line is used as a metaphor. ‘Fire’ can be interpreted as one’s zeal, desire and it can also be suffering and struggles. The narrator’s desires and thoughts are different from others. His sufferings are in alienation with others which he mentions in a later part of the poem. He says ‘That what’s poison for you is food for me’. ‘Poison’ is used as a metaphor, here his dislikes and prejudices. 'Poison' here is used as the juxtaposition to food which may be referred to as something that is extremely bad for a person and therefore generally unacceptable as food. Down the ages, there had existed a wide range of disparities between the proletariat and bourgeoisie. The proletariat is the working class or wage-earning class that does not enjoy any social amenities but offers its services. The bourgeoisie is the people who believe in materialistic values or conventional values and give importance to money, comfort, and fame. So, proletarian ideology is good food for the working or poor class, whereas it is a poison for the bourgeoisie or business class (referred by Chanchal Chauhan, JSTOR, vol 44).

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. In which language the poem ‘So Very Far’ was originally written?
2. Name the anthology in which the poem ‘So Very Far’ was published.
3. What is the metaphor of term ‘Fire’, used in the second line of the poem?

### 7.2.4 Stanza 2:

The second stanza starts with a contradictory statement: “Multitudes walk with me in my isolation”. Even though there are many people in his vicinity, the narrator feels abandoned because he is not dear to any of them and he is deeply hurt by their deeds. Some people who are also suffering like the narrator are described as “friendly hands”. For this reason, even his soul was troubled? The narrator considers this state of aloofness and loneliness as precious because he

is offered help from few people despite being disliked by many. He states that he is physically abused by these people both in public and private places. He says, 'you rain your blows on me' which means he has been attacked several times. He says 'Leaves of our blood-stained epics fly in our fight'; leaves here may represent rags or clothes which are stained with blood during the fight. This clearly states that he was severely beaten or hurt until his clothes were torn and were flying on his body. This series of attacks are described as 'epics'. An epic is a long narrative poem especially of the deeds and adventures of heroic or legendary or mythological figures in wars with mighty personalities or with superhumans. The narrator can be considered a heroic figure as he is fighting against mighty people.

### **7.2.5 Stanza 3:**

In the third stanza, the narrator talks about his failure. He says that he is covered in the trash of heaps. The word 'Trash' can be interpreted as waste material or it can be bitter criticism of the society. 'Spiral' is the age-old symbol of intuition. Here it symbolizes an inward journey in realizing one's own identity.

“Finding heaps on the spiral staircase  
Of corruption and cash”

The above line is an instance of a metaphor. The staircase connects two different levels of floors, up and down. Metaphorically, they can connect individuals of different layers. As the narrator is passing through the spiral staircase of corruption and cash that is built upon greed, he is finding only failure, heaps of trash. His intuition says the material things which are earned out of corruption are waste.

“And though I've gone straight.  
I'm still bitter in what I do, hate  
the poison.”

And if he goes straight also, that is, if he works genuinely or honestly, the result is not pleasing or satisfying to the narrator. He says human beings are greedy by nature. People are not satisfied with what they have. The narrator wants to clean the world, just like a scavenger collects all the waste and discarded things. 'Scavengers' are animals who feed on corpses. They

play an important role in balancing the eco-system by consuming dead animals. The narrator wants to correct all the troubles, odds, and inequalities but he is conscious of his inability to do so. He says that there is someone inside him who is roaring every day. The conscience of the narrator is making him restless. If a person has a moral sense, then he will be true to himself/herself and that inner voice is crying inside the narrator. Even though he works justly and sincerely, the end product is unpleasant and thus is a sort of poison. Despite working hard and with honesty, the final output or product of his work is not satisfactory.

#### **7.2.6 Stanzas 4, 5 and 6:**

In this last section of the poem, the narrator talks about modern technological innovations which can be enjoyed only by the richer sections. Class struggle and economic and social inequality are also described here. ‘Refrigerators’ are a symbol of keeping with care or shelter. ‘Vitamins’ signify necessary nutrients and radiogram represents communication. [Asian Literature (LIT 203) November 27, 2014 Response Essay: Modern Indian Literature: *So Very Far* by Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh (1917—64) translated from Hindi by Vishnu Khare and Adil Jussawalla]. His famished daughter represents the poor economical class that is deprived of facilities. The narrator and his daughter are unable to communicate. The daughter’s intestines suffer from the pain of hunger and her lungs are only filled with humility of having nothing that conveys her dire poverty. Only suffering is true and all else is false and unreal. The narrator has used many terms like delusion and deceit to express the notion that ultimate reality is nothing but a sequence of grief and the rest is just a delusion and unreal to the narrator. The pain and grief that emerged from having nothing out of struggle are real and all the factors and reasons are unreal. The narrator describes the pain, hunger, oppression, disparity, dire poverty, and subjugation of the poor who have nothing but suffering and grief. The profound meaning of grief is not just emotional loss but also indicates physical, economic, social, and cultural loss.

In the line “I am the split-eared, the underground wretch”, *split* or *split-eared* may represent a particular sect of yogis. A yogi is a person who practices the principles of an austere life. Thus, the narrator is living like a yogi who has renounced physical comforts to correct the disorders of the upper-class society or materialist way of living.

“Under your Chevrolets and Dodges I stretch,

Oil-covered black, Bowed by your orders.”

This represents the dominance of the rich over the poor or working class. Here *oil-covered black* signifies the work of a mechanic who repairs the cars of the rich by obeying their orders. The narrator is working as a mechanic to correct the mistakes and disorders of the upper class, and like a yogi, he is trying to wipe off the burden of bad deeds of the rich class.

***Check your Progress***

1. How many stanzas does the English translation of the poem contain?
2. Who are the 'friendly hands' in the poem?
3. What does the phrase 'oil-covered black' in the poem signify?

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### **7.3 Learning Outcomes**

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After going through the unit, the students are expected to:

- Appreciate the diction and syntax of the poem.
- Analyse the background of the author, style, and literary setting of the poem and are expected to apply it in real-life situations.
- Generalize the concepts of literary devices like similes, metaphors, symbols, etc.
- Comprehend the struggle for survival of an individual in social, political and economic inequalities, class struggle, dominance of influential sections, the social setting of Indian society in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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### **7.4 Glossary**

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**Persona:** A role or a character adopted by an author or an actor (personae is plural)

**Multitudes:** A large number of people or things

**Epic:** A long narrative poem

**Egalitarian:** Believing in or based on the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities

- Scavenger:** 1. Someone who collects things that have been discarded by others
2. Any animal that feeds on refuse and other decaying organic matter

**End-product:** Final result of an activity or process

**Famished:** Extremely hungry, starving

**Radiogram:** A combined radio and record player built into a cabinet with a speaker. Or a telegram sent by radio

**Gnawing:** Bite or chew on with the teeth; Cause lingering anxiety, torment, etc

**Delusion:** A mistaken or unfounded opinion or idea

**Split-eared:** This should probably be 'slit-eared'. The Hindi word in the original is 'kanphata', which is a designation for a sect of yogis. It is possibly used here to emphasize the persona's sense of his difference from the rest of society. (From the textbook)

**Austere:** Practising great self-denial (leaving all the comforts of the world)

**Metaphor:** A figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something that it does not denote to suggest a similarity. For example, the snow is a white blanket

**Intuition:** Instinctive (natural, innate, by birth) knowing, the ability to understand something without the need for conscious reasoning

**Symbolism:** Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities, by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense. Symbolism can take different forms. Generally, it is an object representing another, to give an entirely different meaning that is much deeper and more significant

**Conscience:** A person's moral sense of right and wrong viewed as acting as a guide to one's behaviour

**Signifies:** The meaning or idea expressed by a sign, as distinct from the physical form in which it is expressed

- Poetic diction:** Poetic diction is the term used to refer to the linguistic style, the vocabulary, and the metaphors used in the writing of poetry
- Syntax:** Syntax is basically about what word comes before and after another word. Syntax is often used in poetry, and it's usually discussed in connection with diction—that is, the poet's choice of words
- Legendary:** Remarkable enough to be famous; very well known
- Mythology:** A set of stories or beliefs about a particular person, institution, or situation, especially when exaggerated or fictitious
- Super humans:** Having or showing exceptional ability or powers
- Revolutionary:** Producing great changes, very new and different
- Bourgeois:** Dominated by commercial and industrial interests; of, relating to, or characteristic of the social middle class; marked by a concern for material interests and respectability and a tendency toward mediocrity (low quality, ordinary)
- Intelligentsia:** Intellectuals who form an artistic, social, or political vanguard or elite
- Vanguard:** The group of people who are the leaders of an action or movement in society, politics, art, etc
- Capitalism:** An economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market
- Dejected:** Lowered in rank or condition
- Overwhelmed:** Completely overcome or overpowered by thought or feeling
- Downtrodden:** Suffering oppression
- Privileged:** Not subject to the usual rules or penalties because of some special circumstance
- Versification:** The making of verses

**Conventional:** Of traditional design, formed by agreement or compact

**Rhyme scheme:** The arrangement of rhymes in a stanza or a poem

**Profound:** Having intellectual depth and insight

**Literary devices:** A literary device is a tool used by writers to hint at larger themes, ideas, and meaning in a story or piece of writing. There are many styles of literary devices, each serving a different purpose. For example, metaphor, simile, etc

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## 7.5 Sample Questions

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### 7.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Synonym of precious is \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Shining                      (b) Valuable  
(c) Heavy                        (d) Light
2. Opposite of grim \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Benign                        (b) Hard  
(c) Conflict                      (d) Horrible
3. Where was G. M. Muktibodh born?  
(a) Assam                        (b) Gujarat  
(c) Madhya Pradesh          (d) Odhisa
4. Meaning of delusion \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Correct                        (b) Understand  
(c) Misconception          (d) Anticipate
5. "So Very Far" was published in the anthology of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) *Dabre Par Sooraj ka Bimb*  
(b) *Muktibodh Ki Kavitaen*  
(c) *Chand ka Muh Tedha Hai*



(d) *Bhuri Khak Dhul*

6. What does 'friendly hands' refer to in "in my loneliness, friendly hands"?
7. What is the Hindi title of the poem "So Very Far"?
8. Who translated the poem "So Very Far" into English?
9. Which book features Muktibodh's complete works?
10. Who is 'someone' referred to in "someone inside me roars each day"?

**7.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Why is the narrator far from other people?
2. Explain "multitudes walk with me".
3. Why does the narrator want a scavenger?
4. Write a note on "correcting disorders".
5. Briefly discuss the title of the poem "So Very Far".

**7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write a note on the literary devices used in the poem "So Very Far".
2. How does the poet criticize the implications of modern technology on society?
3. Summarise and criticize the poem "So Very Far" from your point of view.

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## 7.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Asian Literature (LIT 203) Response Essay, Modern Indian Literature. So Very Far by Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh.
2. Celebrating Gajanan Madhav Muktibodh, a Marxist Poet Who Understood Both Darkness and Hope. By Priyadarshan, a Hindi novelist, critic, and journalist.
3. G.M.Muktibodh, "The Void", "So Very Far" by Tasneem Shanaaz, Sri Aurobindo College, University of Delhi.
4. Indian Express "Poet Of Dark Hope", written by Apoorvanand.
5. Modern Indian Literature, Poems, and Short Stories, Department of English, University of Delhi.
6. Muktibodh - the voice of courage and commitment, Vishnu Khare, National Herald Updated: 28 Nov 2017.
7. The ideological content of Muktibodh's poetry. By Chanchal Chauhan JSTOR(vol 44, no.4)

## **Unit - 8: *Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.***

### **Structure**

**8.0** Introduction

**8.1** Objectives

**8.2** *Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.*

**8.2.1** The Poet

**8.2.2** Poem at a Glance

**8.2.3** Critical Analysis

**8.2.4** Form of the Poem

**8.2.5** Theme/Summary

**8.2.6** Language Usage

**8.3** Learning Outcomes

**8.4** Glossary

**8.5** Sample Questions

**8.6** Suggested Readings

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### **8.0 Introduction**

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This unit will introduce Nissim Ezekiel and his poetry to students. At the same time, the students will also learn about the form, setting, theme and imagery used in the poem ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’. The poem is written in an ironical manner, criticizing the use of English by Indians. The poem has been anthologized across universities and colleges in the country.

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### **8.1 Objectives**

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In this unit, the students will know about:

- Nissim Ezekiel, the poet.
- Various aspects of his poem.
- Poet’s outlook towards the use of English language by the Indian people.

- How Ezekiel makes use of pun in the present poem.
- Ezekiel's poetic style to bring out the very casual attitude of Indians in making faulty use of English.

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## 8.2 Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.

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### 8.2.1 The Poet:

Nissim Ezekiel is one of the most celebrated poets in Indian English Literature. He was a poet, actor, playwright, editor and art critic. His writings have attracted readers from India and abroad. He has a long poetic career covering a period of more than forty years. His poetic potential can be established from the very fact that his first collection of poems *A Time of Change* was published when he was only twenty-eight years old. Ezekiel was born in Bombay on December 24, 1924 in a Jewish family. His family was a part of Mumbai's Marathi-speaking Jewish community. His father was a professor of Botany at Wilson College and his mother ran a school of her own where she was the principal. He was educated at Antonio D'Souza High School and Wilson College, Bombay from where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1947. He moved to England in 1948 and took admission in Birkbeck College, London. There he studied philosophy. He stayed in England for three and half years.

On his return from England, he immediately joined the literary world in India. This started with his joining as an assistant editor of *Illustrated Weekly* in 1953. In 1961, he founded a monthly literary magazine *Imprint*. He joined *The Times of India* as an art critic. From 1966 to 1967 he edited *Poetry India*. After coming back from England, he joined the department of English, Mithibai College, Bombay where he worked from 1961 to 1972. He served as a Professor of English at the University of Bombay in 1990s. He was the secretary of the Indian branch of the international writer's organization, PEN. He was obviously the mentor for the next generation poets including Gieve Patel, Dom Moraes and Adil Jussawalla. In 1964, he was a visiting Professor at Leeds University. In 1974, he was an invitee of the United States government under its International Visitors Programme. In 1975, he was a cultural Award Visitor to Australia. For some time, he was the Director of Theatre unit, Bombay. His works include *A Time to Change* (1952), *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965), *Three Plays* (1969) and *Snakeskin and Other Poems* (1974), translations from the Marathi of Indira Sant and *Hymns in Darkness* (1976). His poems had been

published in the world renowned journals and magazines like *Encounter*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *London Magazine* and *The Spectator*. He was awarded with Padma Shri Award in 1988. Ezekiel is the winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 for his book *Latter-Day Psalms*. He suffered with Alzheimer's disease which captivated him for a long time. After a prolonged battle with this disease, Nissim Ezekiel died in Mumbai on January 9, 2004 at the age of 79 years.

In 1952, Ezekiel's first book *The Bad Day* was published. It was a poetic anthology. He published another volume of poems entitled *The Deadly Man* in 1960. For some time, he worked as an advertising copywriter and general manager of a picture frame company from 1954 to 1959. Later he co-founded a literary monthly under the name *Jumpo*. His fifth volume of poems *The Exact Man* was published in 1965 at a time when he held short-term tenure as visiting professor at University of Leeds and University of Pondicherry. At a Writers Workshop, in 1969, Ezekiel published his *Three Plays* which includes the plays like *Nalini*, *Marriage Poem* and *The Sleep-walkers*. In the next year he presented an art series of ten programmes for Indian television. He translated Jawaharlal Nehru's poetry from English to Marathi in collaboration with Vrinda Nabar. This provided him with an opportunity to quench his thirst as a translator. His 'The Night of the Scorpion' is a very famous poem which is prescribed in Indian as well as Colombian schools for study. His poems are prescribed in NCERT and ICSE English textbooks. Following is the list of his literary output.

**Books:**

*Time to Change* (1952)

*Sixty Poems* (1953)

*The Discovery of India* (1956)

*The Third* (1959)

*The Unfinished Man* (1960)

*The Exact Name* (1965)

*Snakeskin and Other Poems* (1974)

*Hymns in Darkness* (1976)

*Latter-Day Psalms* (1982)

*Collected Poems 1952-88*

**Plays:**

*The Three Plays* (1969)

*Do Not Call it Suicide* (1993)

**Prose:**

*Selected Prose* (1992)

Naipaul's India and Mine

**Editor:**

*An Emerson Readers* (1965)

*A Joseph King Reader* (1969)

*Another India: Anthology of Fiction and Poetry* (1990)

***Check your Progress***

1. When and where was Nissim Ezekiel born?
2. In which year *Latter-Day Psalms* was published?
3. In which year Ezekiel was awarded Sahitya Akademi Award?

**8.2.2 Poem at a Glance:**

“Friends,  
Our dear sister  
is departing for foreign  
in two three days,  
and  
we are meeting today  
to wish her bon voyage.”

The first stanza of the poem is indicative of a formal beginning of the poem. The speaker addresses the audience as ‘friends’, which indicates that there is some formal relationship between the speaker and the audience. Welcome and farewell are the two important activities that every Indian is enthusiastic to attend. Farewell is very crucial event in every employee’s life. It is very common among Indians that they wish to remain in close relationship with their fellow colleagues that is why one finds the use of the words ‘friends’ and ‘sister’ used by the speaker to show the warmth of relations. The poet tries to show the tendency of the Indian people to treat the fellow-participants and colleagues and ‘friends’ as ‘brothers and sisters.’ Furthermore, this is proven by the poet when he makes use of the word ‘our sister’ to refer to Miss Pushpa. This kind

of use of the word signifies the nature of respect towards women. Moreover, it is a matter of one's upbringing which testifies that the person is of good nature. Though the relations among the colleagues are of formal nature but the speaker in the poem rather treats Miss Pushpa informally by addressing her as sister. In doing so he has pure intentions. The speaker expresses the reason behind the gathering. The speaker clarifies as to why they have come together. The participants of the gathering are all colleagues of the same establishment where Miss Pushpa is one of the employees. Miss Pushpa is quitting her job and within a day or two she plans to go abroad. This is the only reason why they have gathered. The speaker becomes the mouth-piece of the audience and on behalf of all he wishes Miss Pushpa goodbye.

“You are all knowing, friends,  
what sweetness is in Miss Pushpa.  
I don't mean only external sweetness  
but internal sweetness.  
Miss Pushpa is smiling and smiling  
even for no reason  
but simply because she is feeling.”

As it is the practice at every farewell party, at least in India, that people do not speak evil of the departing colleague. In this stanza, the speaker continues to enlist the good qualities in the personality of Miss Pushpa T. S. The tone of the speaker seems to be very casual and friendly. He has observed Miss Pushpa not only as a woman of external beauty and sweetness but she has been a woman who is very sober in her attitude and nature too. This internal sweetness, the speaker concentrates more. Secondly, the speaker focuses on another quality of Miss Pushpa that of smiling. She bears a smiling face which helps her to have a welcome gesture on her face. This feature is very rarely seen among people. The way in which these lines are written is very casual as the speaker makes use of layman English. The person who knows the use of language and how the use of certain words creates an altogether different impression could easily realize what syntactical error is there in this stanza. The last three lines of this stanza leaves the reader under the impression that Miss Pushpa is a woman of loose character. The use of words “smiling and smiling for no reason” certifies the shortcoming of her character. One must know that the speaker doesn't intend to blame Miss Pushpa's character. Contrary to this, the speaker intends to say that Miss Pushpa is a woman of good nature and meets people with smile on her face. In this

stanza, the speaker talks of the internal as well as external qualities of Miss Pushpa. Here Miss Pushpa's qualities are referred to as "sweetness" of her personality. The speaker intends to mention that Miss Pushpa has a smiling face.

“Miss Pushpa is coming  
from very high family.  
Her father was renowned advocate  
in Bulsar or Surat,  
I am not remembering now which place.”

The same casual tone of the speaker continues in this stanza as well. The speaker attempts to trace Miss Pushpa's origin. The speaker asserts that Miss Pushpa has descended from a high lineage. She belongs to a reputed family and to prove this, the speaker adds that Miss Pushpa's father was a well-known advocate. He at the time is unable recall the name of the place to which Miss Pushpa's father; an advocate, belonged to. He seems to be confused between Bulsar and Surat. He excuses the audience for the lapse in his memory.

“Surat? Ah, yes,  
once only I stayed in Surat  
with family members  
of my uncle's very old friend –  
his wife was cooking nicely ...  
that was long time ago.”

This stanza is in continuation with the previous stanza when the speaker suddenly digresses as he remembers his visit to Surat. He mentions that once he had been to Surat with family members to his uncle's old friend. He suddenly recalls that the wife of his uncle's friend was a good cook. She used to prepare tasty and delicious food for the guests. At the end of this stanza, the speaker says that it has been very long ago that he had visited Surat. No continuity of thought is seen in the expression of the speaker. His thoughts get diverted from Miss Pushpa to her father's profession, then to his origin and his own visit to Surat and so on.

“Coming back to Miss Pushpa  
she is most popular lady



with men also and ladies also.”

This is a very short stanza of three lines only in which the speaker attempts to regain continuity of his topic related to the farewell of Miss Pushpa. He now continues to highlight one more characteristic feature of Miss Pushpa’s personality that she is the most popular woman. The expression “with men and ladies also” disturbs the readers impression that if a woman is popular among men, it adds to the negative side of a woman’s personality. The intention of the speaker is not at all to crush down the image of Miss Pushpa. He simply intends to say that Miss Pushpa is a well-known and appreciated among her colleagues. The speaker deliberately comes back to the main purpose of the gathering that is the farewell party of Miss Pushpa.

‘Whenever I asked her to do anything,  
she was saying, ‘Just now only  
I will do it.’ That is showing  
good spirit. I am always  
appreciating the good spirit.’”

In this stanza, cooperative nature of Miss Pushpa is highlighted. By citing an example, the speaker says that whenever Miss Pushpa is told to do something, she never denied doing it. She always shows her readiness to do things that are expected from her. She always positively responded to the requests of her colleagues. Her readiness to do things is a sign of her good spirit. The speaker adds that he is a great admirer of such cooperative and good-natured people.

“Pushpa Miss is never saying no.  
whatever I or anybody is asking  
she is always saying yes,  
and today she is going  
to improve her prospects  
and we are wishing her bon voyage.”

The speaker in this stanza reiterates about Miss Pushpa’s cooperative nature. She never says no either to the speaker or anybody else regarding any work. She always displays positive gesture towards work. Her readiness for work is not limited to the speaker only but Miss Pushpa extended her readiness to everyone. The speaker once again mentions the reason of the

gathering. He says that though Miss Pushpa is a woman of good qualities but she is going abroad in order to improve her job prospects. Hence, at this occasion, the gathering of her colleagues is arranged to wish her good-bye. The speaker further wishes Miss Pushpa happy, successful and prosperous journey.

“Now I ask other speakers to speak  
and afterwards Miss Pushpa  
will do the summing up.”

This forms the concluding stanza of the poem. The speaker invites other people so as to express their views about Miss Pushpa. At the end of all, Miss Pushpa will respond to the comments of the speakers. Her speech will be the concluding part of the gathering.

***Check your Progress***

1. On which occasion have the people gathered?
2. Why is Miss Pushpa T.S. “departing for foreign”?
3. Why does Miss Pushpa always smile?

**8.2.3 Critical Analysis:**

“Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.” is an excellent example of Nissim Ezekiel’s poetic talent. In this poem, Ezekiel has brought the very Indian sensibilities to the surface. It is the only Indian poem in English, in which the poet has parodied the use of ‘babu English’, the ‘pidgin.’ Though the people present for the farewell of Miss Pushpa present themselves as fashionable but their mental vacuity is clearly reflected from the way they make use of broken sentences of English. The poem is the best piece of social satire in which the poet has criticized the wrong use of English by Indian Sahibs and Mem Sahibs. Ezekiel has brought to use present continuous tense in place of simple present tense to the forefront, which is a common mistake committed by Indians. The poet has attempted to make a parody of this mistaken use of language.

The poem is in the form of a farewell speech. A party has been organized in honour of Miss Pushpa who is “departing for foreign” in two or three days. Miss Pushpa is departing simply to improve her prospects. A number of friends have gathered to wish her goodbye and

also to extend good wishes to her for her better future. The poet has parodied the intense desire of the Indian people to express themselves through English language, no matter, be it broken English.

***Check your Progress***

1. Which English is parodied by the poet in the poem ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.’?
2. What is ‘pidgin’?
3. In which tense the poem is written?

**8.2.4 Form of the Poem:**

The poem, ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’ is written in free verse. It is written in simple and lucid language. The special thing about this poem is that any common man can understand it. It consists of forty-two lines which are unevenly divided. There are stanzas consisting of seven lines, five lines, six lines, nine lines and even three lines. Ezekiel is less concerned about symmetrical stanza form. He is more interested in conveying the feelings of the speaker. His main purpose in writing the poem is to humorously bring to the fore Indians use of English language.

**8.2.5 Theme/Summary:**

In the present poem, a friend of Miss Pushpa delivers the speech on the occasion of her farewell. People have gathered to bid her goodbye. The speaker begins by addressing the crowd that Miss Pushpa is “departing for foreign/ in two three days” (line 3-4). At the same time, he reminds the audience the reason behind their gathering: “we are meeting today/ to wish her bon voyage” (line 6-7).

The speaker then reminds the crowd of many good qualities of Miss Pushpa’s personality. At first, he talks about Miss Pushpa’s “sweetness” and says that she is sweet internally as well as externally (line 9). He recalls that she often smiles, “even for no reason,” (line 13) but just because she feels like smiling or she is in a mood to smile.

The speaker exploits the opportunity to remind the gathering that Miss Pushpa comes from a good family – “from a very high family” (line 16). Her father was a renowned advocate though the speaker doesn’t remember clearly to which place he belonged to whether he belonged to Bulsar or Surat. There is a touch of drama when the speaker suddenly recalls his visit to Surat. He remembers that once he had stayed at Surat: “Surat? Ah, yes/ once only I stayed in Surat/ with family members” (line 20-22).

Here it is to be noted that the speech is rambling, and even the logical connectives between ideas are missing. The following lines represent a sense of unconnectedness of ideas and thoughts. These lines take the readers away from the central concern of the poem. However, these lines are typical of the Indian way of thinking and speaking. There is no logical connections found in what the speaker says and what he intends. His speech is interrupted by his thoughts.

“I am not remembering now which place.  
Surat? Ah, yes,  
once only I stayed in Surat  
with family members  
of my uncle’s very old friend –  
his wife was cooking nicely ...  
that was long time ago.”

Further, the speaker continues saying that Miss Pushpa is a very popular lady among men as well as women. She is very co-operative individual. Ezekiel has made fun of the Indian people and their style of speaking English language. Through the speaker, Ezekiel wants to convey that Miss Pushpa never says ‘no’ to anything. Whenever she is requested to do something, she always responds wholeheartedly, “Whenever I asked her to do anything,/ she was saying, ‘Just now only/ I will do it.’” (line 29-31). This attitude of Miss Pushpa is indicative of her being a woman of good spirit. Hence, the speaker always appreciates the people of good spirit like Miss Pushpa.

The speaker glorifies the nature of Miss Pushpa saying that out of many good qualities of head and heart, Miss Pushpa has the foremost quality of saying ‘yes’ to everyone and for everything. The speaker is not the only one to whom Miss Pushpa cooperates. The speaker, after long elaboration, comes to the main point of his speech i.e. Miss Pushpa’s departure. For him,

Miss Pushpa is going abroad to improve her job prospects. The reason behind the gathering of friends is that they want to wish her goodbye. He concludes by saying that there are others who will to express themselves at this occasion. At the end, Miss Pushpa will express herself.

***Check your Progress***

1. In which poetic form the poem is written?
2. What is the tone of the poem?
3. How is the nature of Miss Pushpa T.S.?

### **8.2.6 Language Usage:**

In ‘Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.’ Nissim Ezekiel comments on the Indian way of speaking English. While doing so he attempts to capture all its nuances, the quirks, the familiar turn of phrases, the bizarre combination of school book formulas, and the shady use of grammar. He very deftly uses the voice of the speaker to ridicule the predictable emptiness of talks on such occasions in a very familiar and typically Indian tone of language that every Indian can identify with.

There are many examples of use of progressive aspect in the poem such as ‘is smiling and smiling’, ‘is feeling’, ‘is coming’, ‘was cooking’, ‘was saying’, ‘are wishing bon voyage’ etc. Instead of progressive aspect, the poet could have used simple present tense or past simple tense. Another noteworthy thing which is to be noticed in the poem is dropping of indefinite article at many places in the poem. The poet has also criticized the inappropriate use of English when the speaker mentions himself first and then others in the expression ‘I or anybody.’

It is characteristically an Indian poem in sense and context. It highlights the inappropriate use of language. The poet has made use of a fine balance of satire and humour to make the poem funny, and while doing so he has taken every care of the reader not being offended by it.

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## **8.3 Learning Outcomes**

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After going through the unit, students will be able to:

- Learn the typical Indian way of using incorrect English.

- Understand the emptiness and mental vacuum of modern people.
- Identify themselves as the speaker of the poem and improve their spoken English.
- Map the techniques of speaking correct English.

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## 8.4 Glossary

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<b>Goodbye:</b>	Farewell
<b>Depart:</b>	To leave; to set on a journey
<b>Bon voyage:</b>	Used to wish someone a good journey; used to express farewell and good wishes to departing traveller
<b>Renowned:</b>	Famous; well-known; popular
<b>External:</b>	Relating to the outside or an outer part
<b>Internal:</b>	Of, relating to, or located within the limits or surface
<b>Appreciate:</b>	To praise
<b>Prospects:</b>	Chances; scope
<b>Sum up:</b>	To conclude
<b>Assassination:</b>	To kill
<b>Lapses:</b>	Gap

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## 8.5 Sample Questions

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### 8.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Nissim Ezekiel was a/an
  - (a) American poet
  - (b) British poet
  - (c) Indian poet
  - (d) Irish poet
2. Miss Pushpa's father belonged to
  - (a) Bulsar

- (b) Surat
  - (c) Bombay
  - (d) Kanpur
3. Miss Pushpa has planned to go to
- (a) Her Village
  - (b) Grandmother's house
  - (c) In-laws
  - (d) Foreign
4. The party is arranged for Miss Pushpa's
- (a) Birthday
  - (b) Marriage anniversary
  - (c) Farewell
  - (d) None of the above
5. Miss Pushpa's father is a renowned
- (a) Judge
  - (b) Advocate
  - (c) Teacher
  - (d) Engineer
6. According to the speaker, when is Miss Pushpa departing?
- (a) In one week
  - (b) In 2-3 days
  - (c) In one month
  - (d) None of the above
7. For what does Miss Pushpa smile?
- (a) She is characterless

- (b) She is good natured
  - (c) She has Angelman syndrome
  - (d) None of the above
8. To which section of society does Miss Pushpa belong to?
- (a) Proletarian
  - (b) Lower middle class
  - (c) Elite class
  - (d) None of the above
9. With whom does the speaker stay in Surat?
- (a) With his friends
  - (b) With his relatives
  - (c) With the family members of his uncle's very old friend
  - (d) None of the above
10. Why is Miss Pushpa going abroad?
- (a) Her husband compelled her
  - (b) She is expelled from India
  - (c) To improve job prospects
  - (d) None of the above

**8.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Why is the party organized for Miss Pushpa T. S.?
2. Write a note on the features of Miss Pushpa's personality as described by the speaker in the poem.
3. Comment on the use of language in the present poem.
4. Describe in detail the use of poetic devices in the poem.



5. Nissim Ezekiel attempts to criticize the Indian style of using English language.

Comment.

### **8.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Comment on Nissim Ezekiel's attachment with Indian culture and sensibility with reference to the present poem.
2. Account for the use of irony and pun in 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.'
3. Critically evaluate the poem 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T. S.' in your own words.

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## **8.6 Suggested Readings**

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1. Parthasarthy, R. *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996.
2. Naik, M. K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2006.

## **Unit - 9: English Poetry in India**

### **Structure**

- 9.0** Introduction
- 9.1** Objectives
- 9.2** English Poetry in India
  - 9.2.1** A Brief Historical Survey
  - 9.2.2** Indo-Anglian Phase
  - 9.2.3** Post-Independence Phase
  - 9.2.4** Modern and Post-Modern Phase
- 9.3** Learning Outcomes
- 9.4** Glossary
- 9.5** Sample Questions
- 9.6** Suggested Readings

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### **9.0 Introduction**

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Indian English poetry and the whole of English literature in India was a result of the British influence and rule over the Indian populace. With the introduction of English education in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, English language entered into the realm of Indian life, though it had already entered among the elite class through education abroad. Many of them started expressing themselves in the newly adopted tongue. These educated Indians came in contact with English literature and the influence of which can be seen in early English poetry. This is true even in case of other genres as well but poetry appeared more borrowed entity in every way. Right from the language to sentiments, it imitated the English masters. In all its aspects like inspiration, imagination and guidance, it depended on its colonial forerunners. Most of the early poetry was the result of this cultural meet. Besides all these, it has come now a long way creating successfully an identity of its own in the literary circles both at home and abroad.

Indian English poetry has created a significant and self-sustaining tradition growing into an international entity with its own identity as part of syllabi and subject of discussions at various

levels. It is a rare and ignored breed; since its inception during the colonial rule it has remained on the periphery of the vast literary canvas of India. But, since the beginning, this so called hybrid form of poetry has served the purpose of honestly recording and representing Indian sensibility and emotional experiences at global level, using a global language. Now it is too late to consider English a foreign language, when India has emerged as the second largest country after the USA publishing a remarkable number of books every year in this language. The picture of poetry on paper in the rich course of Indian English Literature appears blurred. What though, even in faint, the poetry survived in the age of fiction and cinema is an interesting fact to be taken note of. Credit goes to the generations of poets, serving their winged words in multiple forms and meanings representing the mythical and cultural identity of the nation.

The journey in the early nineteenth century that started with the poetic creations of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-31), Kashiprasad Ghosh (1809-73), Michel Madhusudan Dutt, Romesh Chander Dutt (who was a civilian and economist and translated the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in English verse) and of course, Aru and Toru Dutt marked the beginning of what we now call Indian English Poetry. The important poets like Manmohan and Aurobindo Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and others rendered their services to the genre of poetry during this first phase. In the second phase, the poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Keki Daruwalla, Gieve Patel, R. Parthasarthy, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, Meena Alexander and Jayant Mahapatra with many others imbibed the new breath and imagined to divorce the readymade aesthetics and romantic mode of the first generation poets of the pre-independence period, which M. K. Naik called as the Gandhian phase.

Jayant Mahapatra is an addition in the same tradition; a major figure on the panorama of Indian English Poetry, is quite well known today. His heart-felt legacy and representation of the land of Orissa through his poetry, earns him a much esteemed position as a poet. P. K. Patra, a researcher in this field authenticates the same in the words, “Jayant Mahapatra is a true representative poet of Orissa. Orissa finds expression in his poems so immaculately. When the entire Oriya culture is about to collapse under the threat of globalization, it is Mahapatra who tries to hold it from such a tremor through his poetry. All his poems are a kind of attempt to reconstruct the Oriya identity which has lost its health and vigour”. Though the statement appears to be flooded with much acclaim to the poet, Mahapatra’s contribution deserves the identity he has earned. He is considered as one of the most widely read, discussed and published

Indian poet in this age; both at home, and abroad. Being post-modern poets, he is grouped with Nissim Ezekiel and A. K. Ramanujan but he is often criticized for his obscurity and allusiveness. Overall, Mahapatra and his contemporary poets in their journey as poets have become successful in creating their own places and in setting an idiom of their own.

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## 9.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this unit are as follows:

- To introduce ‘Indian English Poetry’ as a genre to learners.
  - To enable them to trace the history of Indian English Poetry canonically.
  - To inform them about Indian poets in English.
  - To familiarize them with major poets and their works in English.
  - To encourage the learners to enhance their love for poetry and its comprehension.
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## 9.2 English Poetry in India

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English poetry began in India with other writings in English but here focus will be only on English poetry in India. For the convenience of study we shall see its brief history canonically through different phases.

### 9.2.1 A Brief Historical Survey:

Amongst all forms of literature, poetry indisputably has the first claim for being the most primitive genre. In a country like India, it goes back to the ancient tradition of *Vedas*. *Vedas* are nothing else but poetry. The present Indian English Poetry relates to the ancient great *Vedic* tradition through its themes from history, mythology and culture, is a fact visible in the poems like *Jejuri* by Kolatkar, *Savitri* and *Krishna* by Niranjan Mohanty and *Prayers to Lord Jagannath* and *Relationship* by Jayant Mahapatra with many others.

History records that, for a longer period, Indian Poetry remained marginalised compared to other forms of literature for reasons unknown, and the great Indian Poetic tradition suffered a cultural and traditional amnesia. This is exactly what G. N. Devy, an Indian cultural theorist, in his famous critical treaties *After Amnesia*, traces in a broader context of literature, theory and

culture in our time. During the long Islamic regime, the traditional Indian poetic consciousness started losing its momentum, perhaps, due to the instability in life. This losing momentum continued till the colonialism, only to result in the complete 'poetic amnesia' and disruption of poetic tradition, as an impact of the western literature, culture and criticism. This does not mean that no poetry was written in between. Many poets continued putting their imagination and their verbal gamut in the form of poetry, no matter whatever their linguistic contours. Indian Poetry celebrates its unique identity, having manifold representations in terms of theme, form, language and cultural prosody, in more than thirteen rich regional Indian Literatures. To their best each of these literary poetic traditions, having in an average more than eight hundred years' grand past, and innumerable poetic works filled the gap created due to the amnesia.

A famous history book *Indian English literature* by M. K. Naik begins with the proclamation, "Indian English Poetry began as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India". In fact, it was an outcome of the cultural meet and, one more shade was added to the floral bouquet of Indian sensibility. No doubt, it has always been an area of controversy since its inception, but it continued to be the object of attraction for lovers of poetry from India and from across the globe. In fact, no literature of the world could emerge as a trend, without having a beginning period of denial and extreme kind of hatred. Indian English Poetry and the entire literature should not be looked as an exception for the same. In the last more than one century, this ignored creative art not only proved its existence, but also successfully created its own idiom and identity in the canon of world poetry.

English education with Macaulay's *Minutes* marked profound influence on the cultural and literary landscape of India. English not only became an integral part of administration, but also tempted the newly learned indigenous individuals to express creatively in the same. This language also helped in awakening the national spirit among the educated Indians during the colonial regime. English became a window to the western world of arts, science and knowledge in the fields of education and administration and filled the gap between the East and the West. It also served the purpose of being a link language in the linguistically plural country like India, by providing its services through translation. This language bridged the diverse linguistic constituents of colonial India into unified India we take pride in. In this regard, this foreign

tongue proved its metal being better option to our national language Hindi and same is the condition even now.

The Indian culture has witnessed many foreign invasions from the ancient times till the colonial rule and remained undeterred. Rather, its contact with the English rule enriched it by incorporating excellent elements from English culture and life from the West. The wealth of western information and knowledge made its course through this language with English life as reflected in its literature provided insights to the learned Indians in the succeeding period. The Indian intellectuals started visiting the foreign lands, quite often England, for higher studies and out of curiosity as well. During the pre-independence period, many English educated and trained Indians began to express in English their indigenous thoughts, emotions and sensitivity. English poetry in India is an outcome of this convergence.

***Check your Progress:***

1. English poetry in India began in?
2. What were the major influences on poetry in India?
3. Who were the early Indian English poets?

### **9.2.2 Indo-Anglian Phase:**

The history of Indo-Anglian poetry began with **Henry Louis Vivian Derozio**, who was half Indian, half Portuguese. As a teacher of English in the Hindu College, Calcutta from 1826 onwards, he inspired a number of young Indians (Gokak, *The Golden...*19). For his early contributions of sonnets such as ‘The Harp of India’ and ‘To India-My Native Land’ Derozio is regarded as the father of Indo-Anglian sonnets. His long narrative poem, ‘The Fakir of Jungheera’ describes the ill-fated life and adventures of widows. His poetry could easily be seen under the influence of English romantics and most prominently Lord Byron. Kashiprasad Ghosh, Michel Madhusudan Dutt, Aru and Toru Dutt and of course historian cum poet Romesh Chunder Dutt in the early nineteenth century, were the beginners of what we now call Indian English Poetry. **Kashiprasad Ghosh (1809-73)** tried his hand on lyrics with a moralizing note relating to the romantic and neo-classical colonial predecessors. “Indian festivals, landscape, Hindu traditions, customs and conventional social life and ethos appear to be the main themes in Ghosh’s poetry” (Naik 24). His famous publication, *Shair and Other Poems* in 1830 relates to

the tragic story of a poet bearing the loss of his beloved leading him to give up life. This poem brings the best description of nature with tiresome moralizing ideas.

Another poet in the same line, **Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73)** is acclaimed for being more original and more spontaneous than his contemporary poets. Among his few publications is his collection of poems *The Captive Lady* (1849) describing the story of legendary Rajput king Prithviraj Chauhan. His *Vision of the Past* is a slight sketch in blank verse describing the innocence and temptation in the life of man. A scholar of his poetry says, “Under the influence of Milton and the romantics like Scott and Byron wrote two volumes of poems. Indian history, legends and landscape figure prominently in the fabric of his poetry” (Dwivedi 46).

Then came poets like **Manmohan and Sri Aurobindo Ghosh** who contributed to the body of Indian English Poetry and left an imprint on the vast canvas of Indian Literature. Aurobindo’s *Urvashi* and *Love and Death* are narrative poems whereas his *The Rose of God* and *The Golden Light* are mystical poems. His supreme achievement was *Savitri* wherein he used the story of Savitri’s victory over death from the *Mahabharata*. At large, their poetry celebrated humanism and mysticism pioneering a way for Indian English poetry in the succeeding period. Sri Aurobindo is read and looked upon as a Yogi, a prophet, a patriot, a teacher, an interpreter of the *Vedas* and a critic of life and literature, “and there are many more to whom he is a man of letters in excelsis, a master of prose art, and a dramatist and poet of great power and versatility” (Iyengar 144).

**Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)**, the most versatile Bengali and English poet, receives a prominent place in this series of poets. “He wrote probably the largest number of lyrics ever attempted by any poet” (ibidem 99). Tagore translated *Gitanjali* in English and that bagged for him the prestigious Nobel Prize for literature in November 1913. Nigamananda Das, an Indian scholar quotes, “his magnum opus *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings 1912) explores four basic themes i.e. the relationship of God and the human soul, of God and nature, of nature and human soul and of the individual soul and humanity” (05).

**Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949)**, the Nightingale of India, also did a great job during this period on the Indian poetic platform. Like her contemporaries, she was something more than a poet. She was mother India’s most gifted child, readily sharing her burden of pain, fiercely articulating her agonies and hopes, and gallantly striving to redeem the mother and redeem the

time (ibidem 207). Her published poetry anthologies named *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wings* (1917) are full of poignant feelings and picturesque imagery. She wrote poetry under the influence of Keats, Shelley, Tennyson and others from the West. During this period religious, philosophical and spiritual poetry was written, of course with a few exceptions, having themes other than these. For a longer period, English romantics remained very much influential on the creative minds of Indian poets. Charu Sheel Singh, an eminent scholar of Indian English poetry observes in the succeeding ages: “Poetry, no more, remained a means to *moksha* liberation. The canonicity of the canon was flown to the winds and when this happened, we declared our-selves to be the post-modern poets. We brought vilifications in language, gross materialism ruled the poetic texture, and a sociological poetics trampled us down to the four walls of a city squire” (Foreword VI). Initially, this new branch of the vast grown Banyan tree of Indian poetry was known as Indo-Anglian Poetry. It was K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar who used the term, “Indian Writing in English” (Gokak, *Lits. in Mod...* 273).

***Check your Progress:***

1. The first attempt by an Indian to write in English was in the form of?
2. Which English school of poetry influenced these Indian poets during this period?
3. Who used the term, “Indian Writing in English”?

### **9.2.3 Post-Independence Phase:**

The Indo-Anglian romanticism came to an end with the lucid and simple exploration of village life in the backdrop of nature in the poems of Sarojini Naidu. Post-Independence India witnessed the true Indian voice in a foreign tongue (English) in terms of **Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004)**. Ezekiel undoubtedly was the leader of this fresh breath after independence. He is also remembered as the pioneer of modernism in Indian English poetry through rejection of the past. This was suggested in Ezekiel’s first book of poems entitled *A Time to Change* (1952). The new generation turned its back on tradition and found a new way rejecting the age-old romanticism in poetry. They proposed poetry without escapism and fancy ideas; written in clear, hard and unsentimental voice and most prominently written in everyday language. Ezekiel was the head undoubtedly. Another equally great poet was **P. Lal** who categorized Indian English poetry into Aurobindonean and Non-Aurobindonean poetry. He is the precursor of the movement against the



older poetry which was more hackneyed. Poetry written during this time showed both a break with the tradition and continuation of the same together. In this regard a researcher says, “Ezekiel’s *A Time to Change* (1952) brought evolutionary changes towards modernity. These changes appear in the form of protest, defiance of conventions, and an inclination towards experimentation, neo-realism and neo-symbolism” (Singh K. D. 03).

Indian landscape gave birth to many promising poets with fresh and vibrant voices in the sixties and onwards. Some of them could be enlisted as Dom Moraes, P. Lal, Adil Jussawalla (*Land’s End* and *Missing Person*), Kamala Das (*Summer in Calcutta, The Old Playhouse and other Poems*), A. K. Ramanujan (*The Strides, Relations, Second Sight* and others), R. Parthasarthy (*Rough Passage* and *Poetry from Leeds*), Pritish Nandy (*Gods and Olives* and many others) and Shiv K. Kumar (*Articulate Silences, Cobwebs in the Sun, Subterfuses, Woodpeckers, Woolgathering* and others) in the sixties who introduced new innovations in Indian English poetry. Whereas Keki N. Daruwalla, who was a police officer, was awarded the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award for his book of poems, *The Keeper of the Dead* (1984). Dwarika Nath Kabadi, Gieve Patel (*Body, How do you Withstand* and *Mirrored Mirroring*), A. K. Meharotra, Jayant Mahapatra, Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar, Saleem Peeradina, Agha Shahid Ali, Gauri Deshpande (*Between Births*, 1968; *Lost Love*, 1970 and *Beyond the Slaughter House*, 1972), Margaret Chatterjee, Meena Alexander (*Stone Roots*, 1980; *House of a Thousand Doors*, 1988; *River and Bridge*, 1995; *Illiterate Heart*, 2002; and *Raw Silk*, 2004), Eunice de Souza (*Fix*, 1979; *Women in Dutch Painting*, 1988; *Ways of Belonging*, 1990); Manohar Shetty, Vikram Seth, Imtiaz Dharkar (*Purdah, Post Cards from God, I Speak for the Devil, Leaving Fingerprints, Over the Moon*, 2014), Shahid Suhrawardy, Ayappa Paniker and Vilas Sarang and a host of other poets in the seventies and eighties, came forward to shoulder the responsibility of Indian English Poetry in the modern period. These poets have also been categorized into second and third generations of poets in the Post-Independence or Post-Colonial period in India. The innovative and creative expression of these poets received much critical acclaim as they were the part of the vast English colonial empire. Their creative ability and unique Indian sensibility triumphed in proving their poetic metal to flourish in the global era of competition.

***Check your Progress:***

1. Who was the leader of English poetry during post-independence period?
2. Which were the two phases of poetry according to P. Lal?
3. *Between Births* is an anthology by?

**9.2.4 Modern and Post-Modern Phase:**

Indian English poetry during this period developed intimate relationship with the international poetry and culture. Modernism made its course through social and economic progress of Indian milieu having strong attraction for western culture and language along with indigenous culture and languages. The new sensibility in poetry marked a quest for identity, a search for roots. It is a dynamic movement against the traditional form and diction. It is a phase of experimentation, introspection and self-actualisation. “They are sensitive and highly assimilative, and reflect in their verse the contemporary Indian preoccupations marked by changing social, cultural and ethico-moral values and more” (Singh K. D., 04). Quite often these modern and post-modern poets borrow certain things like individualistic approach, boldness and broader outlook of life from the ‘isms’ influential in the twentieth century. While experimenting they appear more artificial than being spontaneous, making their poetry complex and without warmth and poetic pleasure.

A host of Indian English poets have shown their talent through their poetry during this period. Some of them could be named such as Agha Shahid Ali (*The Wolf’s Postscript to Little Red Riding Hood, I See Chile in my Review Mirror and Even the Rain*), Saleem Peeradina (*Contours of the Heart, Uncommon Wealth, Heart’s Beast* and others), Manohar Shetty (*Morning Light, Personal Effects, Living Rooms, Body Language, Borrowed Time* and many), Vikram Seth (*All You Who Sleep Tonight, Mappings, The Frog and the Nightingale etc.*), Imtiaz Dharkar (*The Trick, Speech Balloon, Living Space, The Right Word, The Temporary Face*) and many others are ready to join the chain.

Jayanta Mahapatra and Niranjana Mohanty belong to the same tradition in the post-independence period. Their poetry, joining the voice of the mainstream poetry in India, appeared against the backdrop of Indian socio-cultural ethos and heritage. Both these poets deal with the

history, legends, myths, religion, folklore, traditions and the all-inclusive culture with the contemporary life and situations making the crucial part of their poetic enquiry. Mohanty's poetry in a unique way keeps pace with tradition and modernity, having a perfect blend of both in his eight poetic volumes published till his sad and early demise in 2008. Mahapatra also shows his strong bond and concern for the present day life and agonies of his fellow human beings through his poetic creation. The poet adopts two modes of expression first by turning to his self to introspect his own life and second by turning outside to observe and react ironically on the realities around.

Both these poets born in the mythical land of Orissa, and fortunately in the same period, express their self and their reminiscences of the conditions around them; through their poetry. Though they speak the same language and belong to the same period, their backgrounds are different. They belong to different religions. Mohanty was born and remained a staunch Hindu till his death in 2008, and Mahapatra is a born Christian leading a life amidst the Hindu dominated society. These features of their individual life linger through their poetic expressions shaping their imagination of life in the land of their possession. Their reactions on various issues from the past, its present implication, present situations around and innumerable other issues mark similarities and differences in vision and approach.

Though, we have made two categories of poets and their poetry as above but in case of majority of the poets in Indian English poetry, they kept writing poetry in all these phases. So, it is just for the sake of convenience, nothing beyond. There are other names as well but perhaps because of their comparative less visibility they are often not included in the university syllabi. One such name is of Keshav Malik (1924-2014). He was an art critic, artist and poet. He sees things through his artistic vision and penetration. His *The Lake Surface and Other Poems*, *Rippled Shadow*, *Poems C*, *Negative* and *Shapes in Peeling Plaster* are noteworthy. Monika Varma (1916) is one such poet with all grace, balance, melody and aesthetic sense and artistic beauty. Her compositions *Dragonflies Draw Flame*, *Post Imperative* and *Alaknanda* are worth reading. Suniti Namjoshi (1941) is another staunch feminist poet fighting for women. *The Jackass and the Lady* and *The Authentic Lie* are some of the important collections of her poems. Mamta Kalia (1942) also acquires space in the line of contemporary poets. Her *Tribute to Papa* and *Poems* (1978) sing the feminine desires, hopes, fears and loneliness. Roshen Alkazi's

simple, lucid and meditative contribution is small but remarkable. Her *Seventeen Poems* and *Seventeen more Poems* cannot be overlooked.

***Check your Progress:***

1. Which ‘isms’ are influential during this period of poetry?
2. What are the salient features of modern and post-modern English poetry in India?
3. What do you understand by ‘quest for identity’ and ‘search for roots’ in this context?

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### **9.3 Learning Outcomes**

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Reading this unit informs the reader well about English poetry in India as an independent genre. Origin and development of this genre is also traced, known and understood. A rough idea comes to the reader about the contact of the locals (Indians) with the colonizers, English language and literature which gave birth to Indian English literature and poetry in the succeeding times.

The reader is ignited in poetic spirit through this information about the genre. After reading the history of Indian English literature, the students will be able to trace the history of Indian English poetry. After reading this unit the students will note the important poets, their periods/phases, major trends, themes, popular forms, language of poetry, etc. which will help them to understand the important things about Indian English poetry.

Once the genre is introduced, the learner will get his enthusiasm boosted in the topics, culture, traditions, history, events, faith, legends, customs and myths they have in day-to-day life and in poetry they will compare to understand.

The learner will also know that one of the early motivations behind Indian poets writing in English were the great masters from European countries and most of them were English. Finally, the ability of the learner will get improved so as to read, appreciate and comprehend poems written by Indian English poets because of their knowledge of history of this genre.

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## 9.4 Glossary

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- Aesthetics:** A set of principles concerned with nature and appreciation of beauty
- Assimilation:** The process of understanding ideas
- Chaotic:** In a state of complete confusion and disorder
- Ethico-moral:** A systematic concept of right and wrong
- Ethos:** The characteristic spirit of a culture
- Feminism:** The advocacy of women's right on the grounds of gender equality
- Feminist:** A person who believes in feminism, and tries to achieve change that helps women to get equal opportunities
- Gandhian phase:** Gandhian Era in politics and its impact in literature and in social, cultural life in the country
- Genre:** A particular type/style of literature, art, film or music with special characters
- Indigenous:** Occurring/originating naturally in a particular place, native
- Literary canvas:** Things made up of or pertaining to literary compositions
- Modernism:** Modern character or quality of thought, expression or technique
- Postcolonial:** Occurring /existing after the end of colonial rule
- Postmodernism:** A late 20<sup>th</sup> century style and concept in the arts, architecture and criticism which represents a departure from modernism and is characterised by self-conscious use of earlier styles and conventions, a mixing of different styles and media
- Reminiscences:** A story told about past event remembered
- Romanticism:** A movement in the arts and literature in the 18<sup>th</sup> century emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity and primacy of the individual
- Sensibility:** The quality of being able to appreciate and respond to complex, emotional or aesthetic influences; sensitivity
- Values:** The regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth or usefulness of something
- Vedic tradition:** The ideas and practices of Vedic religion and laid down the basis of classic Hinduism

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## 9.5 Sample Questions

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### 9.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The relationship between India and Britain was of .....
  - (a) Master and servant
  - (b) Sahib aur Gulam
  - (c) Colonizer and colonized
  - (d) All the above
2. .... was the first Indian English poet.
  - (a) H. L. V. Derozio
  - (b) Kashiprasad Ghosh
  - (c) Michel Madhusudan Dutt
  - (d) Toru Dutt
3. ....wrote the book, *A History of Indian English Literature*.
  - (a) M. K. Naik
  - (b) A. K. Meharotra
  - (c) David Daiches
  - (d) D. V. Naik
4. *A Time to Change* (1952) was written by.....
  - (a) Jayant Mahapatra
  - (b) Nissim Ezekiel
  - (c) Keki Daruwalla
  - (d) d. Gieve Patel
5. .... is the author of the book *After Amnesia*.
  - (a) Homi Bhabha
  - (b) Jayant Naralika
  - (c) Ganesh Devi
  - (d) Aurobindo
6. *Geetanjali* was written by.....
  - (a) A. K. Ramanujan
  - (b) B. R. Parthasarthy
  - (c) Rabindranath Tagore

- (d) M. K. Naik
7. Who is the only recipient of Nobel Prize for literature from India?
- (a) Rabindranath Tagore
  - (b) V. S. Naipaul
  - (c) Arvind Adiga
  - (d) Arundhati Roy
8. Who is the author of the poem *Relationship*?
- (a) Sarojini Naidu
  - (b) Niranjan Mohanty
  - (c) Arun Kolatkar
  - (d) Jayant Mahapatra
9. Who among the following is not a modern English poet from India?
- (a) Nissim Ezekiel
  - (b) Saleem Peeradina
  - (c) Vikram Seth
  - (d) Manmohan Ghosh
10. Who was the first Indian woman English poet?
- (a) Aru Dutt
  - (b) Toru Dutt
  - (c) Sarojini Naidu
  - (d) Imtiaz Dharkar

### **9.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Comment on the origin of Indian English poetry.
2. What are the different stages in the history of Indian English poetry?
3. Enlist the characters of modern Indian English poetry.
4. Comment on the development of English poetry in India.
5. Illustrate the contribution of major Indian English poets.

### **9.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. How do you substantiate the view, “Indian English Poetry is an offshoot of English and Indian cultural meet”?

2. Discuss 'Indianness' in Indian English poetry on the basis of your study.
  3. How do you look at the statement, "Early Indian English poetry was a borrowed and imitative plume"?
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## 9.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 10: Indian Women Poets

### Structure

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### 10.0 Introduction

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Indian English poetry is an independent and globally renowned genre of literature. Contributions of a host of creative minds pioneered in shaping the poetic identity in this name during and after the *British Raj*. It originated out of the cultural encounter that knowingly or unknowingly happened when the British came to India. With the introduction of English education in India, a new class of Indians that further came into close contact with the English education, religion, literature, life and many other things at home and abroad. This resulted in boosting the creative ability to shape and express our sensibility and mentality holding firmly a tongue foreign at that time. However, the number of poets and their poetic contributions were very limited during the pre-Independence period. Even attitude wise, it appeared like they wished to be English poets more than Indian English poets during this early phase of poetry in India. With political freedom in 1947, we witnessed the true Indian sensibility flowing and being articulated through Indian English poetry as well.

In the journey of this proud creative expression, contribution of women poets is no less than their male counterparts. It is really interesting to witness their experiences, struggle,

sufferings and success through poetry. Poets like Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu pioneered writing poetry in English by Indian women during the colonial time. In the postcolonial period, Indian English poetry witnessed tremendous developments. Rise of the female poetic vision in this context is very much crucial to know and study. English poetry by these women poets could be seen as a rebellion against the traditional estimation of women as daughter, wife, mother and nothing beyond that independently. English education opened the doors of opportunity for them to know the new feminist ideology already shaped in the West. They embraced it wholeheartedly and the journey of expressing resistance and self-confidence through their poetic articulation began.

In free India, English poetry by the women poets also breathed freely to convey the failures, frustrations, disappointments and loneliness in life in general and love life in particular. The major poets among them are Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, Margaret Chatterjee, Meena Alexander, Eunice de Souza, Imtiaz Dharker, Monika Varma, Suniti Namjoshi, Sudha Iyer, Mamta Kalia, Roshen Alkezi, Sunita Jain, Meena Kandasamy, Rukmini Nair, Mani Rao, Nandini Sahu and many others. Whatever their social and professional stature be, their poetic articulation weighed the emotional burden of Indian women artistically.

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## **10.1 Objectives**

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After going through the unit, the students will be able to:

- Read the canon of Indian English poetry.
- Know the Indian women poets writing in English.
- Get an idea about the origin and development of Indian English poetry by women.
- Learn about the stages and trends in Indian English poetry by women.
- Get information of the major women poets and their major works.
- Explore the emotional world of women through representative poets.

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## **10.2 Indian Women Poets**

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Poetry, and for that matter no creative art makes any gender difference, is the universal experience for generations. Many women artists, poets and writers have shown this time and

again even in the times of male dominance in publication industry as well as in readership groups. Indian women English poets have shown their enthusiasm and zeal through their ability through translations and through original English articulation soon after. Let us see who these pioneers are in English poetry in India.

### **10.2.1 The Pioneers:**

Pre-Independence phase of poetry marked a divorce from the imitative phase of poetry that blindly imitated the English poets in themes and moods. Poets of this phase were either direct freedom fighters or at least were nationalist and assimilative. It was the period of literature of the soil; in no way an extension of English literature. The mystics like Tagore, Aurobindo and Manmohan Ghosh featured Indianness with their female counterparts who led the way inspiring generations of women in India.

**Toru Dutt** (1856-1877) pioneered as an Indian woman writing poetry in English. Being born and brought up in a Bengali family of Kolkata who converted to Christianity very early during the colonial era, Toru Dutt got the opportunity to learn western languages, literatures and cultures. After her early education at home, she left for France with her family and joined a French school. Later when the family left for London, Dutt sisters got another opportunity to get nurtured in the English atmosphere through classic texts like *Paradise Lost*. Seeds of poetry were cultivated early through her translations from Bengali and French into English. Toru among her siblings was an expert in all these languages.

*A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) is her first collection of poetry; most of it was translations from French into English with a few of her own compositions. Toru Dutt was not fortunate enough to enjoy the success of her publications at home and abroad as her collection of poems *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* was posthumously published in 1882. These ballads are truly Indian in genre and outlook and poetically express her coming back to her motherland. The poems reflect the knowledge of Toru Dutt about her country which she gathered from books and people. Her poetic craft could be seen in her articulation of poems deeply rooted in Indian traditions. A few of her popular poems are *Sita*, *The Lotus*, *A Sea of Foliage* and the often-read poem in Indian curriculum *Our Casuarina Tree*.

**Sarojini Naidu** (1879-1949) was also born in an educated Bengali family in Hyderabad. She had her education in Chennai, London and at Cambridge. After that she took a political flight through the Indian war of Independence using the platform of Indian National Congress. She became a follower of Mahatma Gandhi in ideals and practice. Naidu was proficient in

Bengali, Urdu, Telugu, English, Sanskrit and Persian. She took writing very early in her life. Her poems are both light (children's literature) and serious in nature dealing with the topics like patriotism, romance and tragedy. The lyrical qualities of her poems own for her the sobriquet 'The Nightingale of India'.

*The Golden Threshold* (1905) was her first collection of poems. Most of her poems are based on the themes from everyday things in life and from the natural world also. Her deep desire and enthusiasm in the freedom of her country also got infused through some of her poems. Her style of writing is simple and often using traditional tools like imagery (sensory), alliteration and direct and simple diction. Her noted poem "In the Bazaars of Hyderabad" was published in her collection of poems *The Bird of Time* (1912). This poem attracted the attention of many readers and critics. Her ability to articulate using the brilliant images of sense perception is praiseworthy in this poem and in many others. *The Feather of the Dawn* contained her poems written in 1927 which is again edited and published after her death in 1961. Thus, Naidu used her lyrical craft to inspire ordinary women to join the Indian war of independence and led her way as a pioneer.

Thus, these women poets toeing the path of their age have left their mark of Indianness on Indian English poetry that implies Indian life, its patterns, celebrations, myths, behaviours and perceptions. The true spirit of awareness about the matters of differences in Indian society is wellbalanced by poets like Sarojini Naidu and all others. Overall, they constituted a phase of sharing both nostalgia and quest for identity that comes in abundance in the later years.

### **10.2.2 Post-Independence Poets, Phase-I:**

This phase marked experimental approach of the poets as in other arts. This phase of post partition years reflects a sort of urgency in defining our national identity and at the same time unending traumatic search for self. The poets of this phase had to fight with the fall of traditional set up, fall of values due to industrialization resulting in cultural loss on one hand and on the other the western influences questioned their very existence. But one positive thing was that poetry exhibited the spirit of liberty in the lives of people in this phase to its very core. Many developments marked change in ordinary moments of life and in poetry as well. In short, poetry in this phase is no longer imitative but has become a voice of one's own. Women poets witnessed this change and participated in this transformation skilfully.

**Kamala Das** (1934-2009) was a Malayalam and English poet born in Kerala. She is known for her bold stance in dealing with the issues of women, sexuality, children, and overall treatment given to them. Kamala Das spent her early days in Calcutta and at her ancestral place in Kerala, Punnayurkulum. She took the writing following her mother but her inclination towards poetry was more under the influence of her uncle Nalpat Narayan Menon, a prolific writer and translator in Malayalam. Kamala Das, after her early marriage with Madhav Das who was a banker, published her works with his support. Taking this opportunity and the tumultuous atmosphere in the sixties in Calcutta about arts, she published volumes of poems in English.

*Summer in Calcutta* (1965) was the first collection of poems by Das. This volume received appreciation and rejection at the same time because of its explosive nature. The choice of themes, treatment, and bold expressions in this collection received attention of readers and critics. Unusual themes like that of eunuchs, freaks, and those frequently sought-after ones like love, lust, betrayal, and many other questions directly dealing with grave concerns about reality of life raging in the mind of an individual.

Her second book of poetry, *The Descendents* (1967) is even more explicit in nature. Poems in this volume are more direct in voicing the unspoken. Consciousness about death and its obsession grips the mind of the poet many times when one goes through the poems. Das basically is the poetess of love; her themes of unfulfilled love, yearning for love, quest for love, and her failure to find emotional fulfilment through love are some of the dominant themes throughout this collection.

*The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973) is a pack of mixed emotions, themes, and expressions. In this collection, the poetess enjoys her memories from childhood, especially her days spent with her granny. On the other hand, through another poem she speaks of her painful experiences, frustration, and failure in married life. *The Stranger Time* (1974) and *Collected Poems* (1984) are two more volumes of poems published in her name. Besides these, there are some other works both in English and Malayalam. Kamala Das calls for special consideration because of her handling the issues in a unique way. Ahead of her time and sometimes far ahead, she speaks through her poems in the interest of feminine self.

**Gauri Deshpande** (1942-2003) was born in Pune. She was daughter of Irawati Karve and granddaughter of Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve, an eminent social reformer. She wrote in both Marathi and English. Like her predecessor Kamala Das, she too continued with confessional poetry, hiding nothing. Most of her works, including poetry, had a touch of her own

life through life experiences, frustrations, tensions, and strained family relations representing her age. Mostly, she wrote about the commonplace. Still, a feminist enquiry had always been there in the backdrop. The popular themes in her poetry are love, betrayal, despair, loneliness, abandonment, and others she has worked upon in an appropriate manner.

She has published three volumes of poems, *Between Births* (1968), *Lost Love* (1970), and *Beyond the Slaughterhouse* (1972). Besides these, she has also contributed to other anthologies of Indo-English poetry. The poetess perhaps writes to get relief from tensions in ordinary life situations and demands utterance through her recurrent themes of lost love and isolation. She is comfortable with small poems and 'The Female of the Species' is her best work wherein she conveys her feminine feelings. This poem appears to have come into existence out of the need felt by the poetess to communicate with the world as a woman. Thus, the confession agenda continues projecting more thoughtful and provocative ideas through poetry.

**Margaret Chatterjee** (1925-2018) is equally important name in the canon of Indo-Anglian poetry. She was born in Paddington and studied at Oxford. There she came in contact with an Indian professor and came to India in 1946. She was a versatile genius; a philosopher, poet, musician, and critic. Being a student of philosophy and a scholar later on, her poetry also showed touch of her literary and philosophical ideas. With many other contributions, she has five volumes of poetry to her credit namely, *The Spring and the Spectacle* (1967), *Towards the Sun* (1971), *The Sandalwood Tree* (1972), *The Sound of Wings* (1978), and *The Rimeless World* (1987).

Chatterjee, like many other poets of her age, responded to the issues and interests of her time through her poetry but the human concern always remained central in many of her works. Readers and critics of her poetry classify her poems into four categories, poems of personal nature, her own experience-based poems, nature poems, and philosophical poems. She speaks about everything with a sense of responsibility but analysing the true situation. One such often read is 'August 15' where the poet speaks in turn of the tragic paradox of free India. Reading her poetry in comparison with the other contemporary poets will be of help in exploring the situations, practises, and manners through poetry.

**Meena Alexander** (1951-2018) is another important name without which no study of Indian English poetry could be complete. She is a leading woman writer who writes about her experiences from distant places. Meena was born in a Syrian Christian family from Kerala at Allahabad. Her father was a scientist, working for the Government of India. Soon, the family

moved to a newly independent country Sudan and thus began the journey of the poet that continued till her death in 2018 in New York. Among her published volumes of poems, a few are: *The Bird's Bright Ring* (1976), *I Root My Name* (1977) and *Without Place* (1978). She is known for her lyric poetry, making a point for migration and trauma as themes. Its impact on the individual life, subjectivity that occurs, and the violent situations tend to cross the borders are some other important concerns one finds in her poetic enquiry.

In her other volumes of poems such as *The Stone Roots* (1980), *House of a Thousand Doors* (1988), *Illiterate Heart* (2002), *Raw Silk* (2004), *Quickly Changing River* (2008), *Birthplace With Buried Stones* (2013), and *Atmospheric Embroidery* (2018), Meena Alexander has explored the themes of feminism, post-colonialism, dislocation, memory, and many others. She has also been credited for creating a new hybrid form of poetry which fuses the western romantic lyric tradition with non-western forms of Bhakti and Sufi poetry which came out of India. Reading her poetry would be of help in understanding the trauma of migration.

**Eunice de Souza** (1940-2017) has been widely acknowledged as a poet writing in English. She was born and brought up in Pune in a Goan Catholic Christian family. After her study of literature and her doctoral research from Mumbai University, she joined as a faculty of English literature in St. Xavier's College, Mumbai and worked there for thirty long years.

Among her noted works of poetry include, *Fix* (1979), *Women in Dutch Painting* (1988), *Ways of Belonging* (1990), *A Necklace of Skulls* (2009), and *Learn from the Almond Leaf* (2016). One important thing that needs to be mentioned about Eunice de Souza is that she is the only woman poet included in the *Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992).

Throughout her poetic contribution, De Souza shows concern for the Indian women in their contexts and roles. Whether it is about a maid servant, daily wage worker or an isolated housewife, her poems commonly explore the loss, isolation, and alienation that accompanies womanhood in our country. Her famous poems 'Bequest' and 'Advice to Women' reveal her sense of discomfort with patriarchal institutions. Perhaps, this approach of the poet made her remain single throughout her life. Reading her poetry will reveal the spirit and concerns that she had.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who is the author of *The Golden Threshold*?
2. Form which Indian state does Meena Alexander belong?

### 10.2.3 Post-Independence Poets, Phase-II:

English poetry in India or even other literary works cannot be classified into periods/phases creating watertight boundaries. Still, changes apparent in the changing times need to be attended. Hence, for convenience we are studying poetry in phases. Poets born in India and those who came to India and adopted the traditions became one with it. However, there are others, putting them in this category is uneasy; they too consider themselves Indian. Literary tradition in India warm-heartedly welcomed them and they become a part of this unique canvas.

**Imtiaz Dharker** (1954) was born in Lahore, Pakistan, grew up in Glasgow and now lives between London and Mumbai. She is a British citizen and poet, artist, and documentary film maker. Dharker is a celebrated poet in the United Kingdom and in other countries of the world, has to her credit seven collections of poetry: *Purdah and Other Poems* (1988), *Postcards from God* (1997), *Speak for the Devil* (2001), *The Terrorist at My Table* (2006), *Leaving Fingerprints* (2009), *Over the Moon* (2014), and *Luck is the Hook* (2018).

Home, freedom, travel, geographical, cultural offsets, the cultural conflicts within the society, and gender politics and differences are the main themes in Imtiaz Dharker's poetry. Her poetry gives space to various issues of Muslim women who in the opinion of Dharker experience injustice, oppression, and violence traditionally. However, the poet with the issue of marginal, oppressed, and the orthodox discusses the concept of national identity in her poems. She believes that nature of the term 'nationhood' signifies bigotry. According to her, it has always been used as a means to exclude others. She expresses the ideal spirit of being able to celebrate nationhood is to be open to the other cultures around. Thus, the continuous conflict between the religious and secular, local and outsider, and major and minor grip the tensions in her poetry. Reader of her poems finds his spirit awakened in a complete state of enlightenment and clarity.

**Sujata Bhatt** (1956) is an Indian poet born in Ahmadabad, Gujarat and brought up in Pune until she left for USA with her family in 1968. The poet got appreciation from all over the world for her early poem, 'Search for My Tongue'. She, being a Gujarati, writes Indian English rather than Anglo-Indian poetry. She also translated Gujarati poems into English. The poet in this poem speaks of her language and the division created, resulting in her split identity. She in a way admits that language divides us. Perhaps, reading her other poems would shed more light upon the divide created by language in the lives of immigrants, their situations, and helplessness.

Among her published works are *Brunizem* (1988), *The One Who Goes Away* (1989), *Monkey Shadows* (1991), *The Stinking Rose* (1995), *Point no Point* (1997), *Augatora* (2000), *The*



*Colour of Solitude* (2002), and *Pure Lizard* (2008). Bhatt uses her life experiences and knowledge sources while articulating her views through poetry. For example, she speaks of the post World War-II and the day-to-day routine in India in a delicate manner. Sujata, Bhatt through her handling of the themes, shows her maturity towards cultures amidst the colonial and racial prejudices around. Reading her poetry will unbind the colours of life in distant contexts for sure.

**Monika Varma** is another major contemporary poet though not famous like Kamala Das, Gauri Deshpande, and a few more but, her moderate and calm personality, her exclusive artistic responsiveness, and use of radiant writing and phrases seeks attention of critics and deserves appreciation. The poetess, unlike her other contemporary poets, exhibits her maturity not by crossing the boundary of graciousness and modesty in her choice of themes and expression. Her breathing language and eye-catching imagery prove her metal while singing her love songs.

She has published seven volumes of poetry, *Dragonflies Draw Flame* (1962), *Gita, Govinda and Other Poems* (1966), *Green Leaves and Gold* (1970), *Quartered Questions and Queries* (1971), *Past Imperative* (1972), *Across the Vast Spaces* (1975), and *Alaknanda* (1976). Such huge publication with no compromise in quality helps her stand tall in the world of poetry. Her mood in poetry is unlike the romantic poets; she emerges as a fresh morning singing of the nature; the dawn, the dusk, evening, night, the mountains, rivers, the sun, and the moon. Greenery and beautiful flowers keep her away from the personal losses. Overall, Monika Verma appears to have the attitude of being free of sobs and sighs with new ideals of romanticism while confronting the real world.

**Suniti Namjoshi** (1941) was born and brought up in Mumbai, India. She is an English citizen now living in the UK. Her works including poetry have been translated in many languages of the world. Her move towards challenging the traditional evils like prejudices, racism, and sexism prove her to be an inventive and experimental poet. Namjoshi is a poet, fiction writer, fabulist, children's story writer, a feminist writer, an activist, and a translator.

Namjoshi is a Diasporic transnational poet and writer. She textually attempts to construct an alternative universe in her poetry. She undertakes a comparative approach in selecting subjects and cross-cultural identities as her focus of attention in her works. It is argued that because of Indian laws, religious dogmas, social discourses, and the social stigma against homosexuality, the mission of creating alternative universe remains operative in her poetry. According to her critics, her works combine Feminism, Postcolonialism, and Queer theory. She

has many publications to her credit. Among them, her famous poetry volumes are *Poems* (1967), *More Poems* (1971), *Cyclone in Pakistan* (1971), *The Jackass and the Lady* (1980), *The Authentic Lie* (1982), *From the Bedside Book of Nightmares* (1984) *Flesh and Paper* (1986), *Because of India: Selected Poems and Fables* (1989), and *Sycorax: New Fables and Poems* (2006).

**Mamta Kalia** (1940) born in Vrandawan, Uttar Pradesh is a leading bi-lingual poet of English and Hindi. Kalia is the representative poet of the seventies; speaking of women, their roles, obsessions, oppressions, and feminism in practice. The poet has objection over the transformation of feminist movement into more of a brand focused on the liberalization of body. Born in an educated family, Kalia had a sort of legacy in poetry through her uncle, Late Bharat Bhushan Agrawal who was a prominent poet of the progressive movement. Mamta Kalia has a deep sensitivity towards people and life as a whole that could be met reading her famous books of poems, *Tribute to Papa and Other Poems* (1970) and *Poems* (1978).

The poet personifies change through her own contributions in confessional poetry that ruled for almost three decades in India. For Mamta Kalia writing is an antidote to sufferings and helplessness. She declares saying, “I write/ because I cannot bite”. This is really interesting to read and understand how confessional poetry underwent change in Kalia while coping with numerous difficulties of modern life.

Speaking about her first book of poems, *Tribute to Papa* is an ironical collection, where she attempts to parody most of the relationships. She says, the poems in this volume are against the established social values and relationships that are taken for granted for ages. She is subjective as a poet speaking about herself as a daughter, as a wife, as a mother, sister and in many such roles in our society. She speaks of her personal experiences but very different than her confessional predecessors like Das. Das shows her injuries through her poetry whereas Kalia attempts to change by healing that injury, is remarkable.

***Check your Progress***

1. When and where was Imtiaz Dharker born?
2. How many volumes of poetry are published by Monika Varma?
3. Who is the author of *Tribute to Papa and Other Poems*?

#### 10.2.4 Women Poets of 1990s and after:

Apart from the women poets discussed earlier, there are some other women poets who have contributed and voiced the issues and interests of women using similar idioms employed by their predecessors. These poets include Sudha Iyer, Rukmini Nayar, Mani Rao, Sunita Jain, and Roshen Alkezi. Exploring them would be of help in updating our knowledge of Indian women poets and their works.

**Sudha Iyer** (1933) is another established poet-critic having a brilliant academic and professional career. She worked as a teacher of English in various institutes of repute. Her poems have been published in many popular anthologies and journals in India and abroad. *Burning Drops* (1987) and *After the Silence* (1991) are her published volumes of poems. *Contemporary Indian English Love Poetry* (1990) and *Voices: Indian Poetry in English* are some noted examples where her poetry occupied space. She keeps musing about sadness, failures, mysteries, and betrayals in a philosophical manner. Her approach towards poetry is a kind of socio-political protest unlike those who keep sitting in ivory-towers thinking about common people only through their words.

Iyer's feminine perspective in her poetic creations is imbued with infinite capacity of women for enduring pain and torture. In an unusual manner she speaks of "nameless fear" many Indian women face, especially married ones. In her famous poem 'Fears of an Indian Bride', the poet relates to the issues of dowry demands and the consequences it leads into. She spares no evil and exposes through her poems everything that happens to women in our society. Overall, her poetry is a medium of resistance and protest against injustices, oppression, and brutality practiced by men on women.

**Rukmini Nair** is a poet, critic, and professor of Linguistics and English at IIT, Delhi. She has been invited and is a regular visiting faculty at various universities globally. With this brilliant academic recognition, she has also been considered as a significant postmodern poet in Indian English with her three published volumes, *The Hyoid Bone* (1992), *The Ayodhya Cantos* (1999), and the recent one *Yellow Hibiscus* (2004). In the year 1999, she received first prize in All India Poetry Society/British Council competition for her poem 'Kali'. She has also been featured in *Penguin New Writing in India* (1990) and the anthology *Mosaic* (1999) as award winning poet in India and in the UK.

'Kali' though apparently speaks of the Hindu Goddess, her bad temper, her equations with her son Ganesh, and partner Shiva; the poem has a clear existential message for the Indian

woman and her many socio-psychological trappings. Nair thus, in her articulations, brings the interplay between the esoteric and mundane in systematic subjugation of Indian woman over the centuries.

Nair deviates from her contemporary poets in many ways. It goes with her understanding and views about the world of women. In an interview she says, “I am very resistant to the idea that a woman is a palpitating emotional being limited to describing her feelings. As a result, I have tried deliberately to include forbidden ‘unwomanly’ qualities such as wit, a sense of humour, intellectual toughness and technical virtuosity within my own writings”. Thus, Nair contests a mythological belief that promotes gender and caste subalternity. She examines the dualities inherent in myths about women and attempts to establish a new relationship between myths and the contemporary socio-political condition says Shweta Tiwari, a scholar and critic of her poetry.

**Mani Rao** (1965) is an Indian born English poet, translator, and scholar who moved to Hong Kong in 1993 but is now based in Bangalore. Rao has worked in the field of advertisement and media for a considerable time in the beginning. She has published nine volumes of poems and many others as translations from Sanskrit and other languages. *Wing Span* (1987), *Catapult Season* (1993), *Salt* (2000), *Echolocation* (2003), *Mani Rao: 100 Poems* (2006), *Ghostmasters* (2010), *Echolocation* (2014), *New and Selected Poems* (2014), and *Living Mantra-Mantra, Deity and Visionary Experience Today* (2019) are her volumes of English poetry. Her translation of *Bhagavad Gita* (2015) is most appreciated work. Her poems have also been published in many anthologies and journals of repute. Mani Rao’s is the most unique writing style of her own in our times with a special leaning towards mythology, which she rewrites, retells or responds to myths in her works.

**Meena Kandasamy** (1983) is an Indian English poet, fiction writer, feminist activist, and translator from Chennai. As she is well known as an activist, working for liberation of women and the low castes, her works, including poetry, also feature the same spirit of activism. Like her predecessors and other contemporary poets, she too is a feminist. She has in her record two volumes of poetry, *Touch* (2006) and *Ms. Militancy* (2010). Though, her poetry is published in reputed magazines of poetry but, both her volumes of poems received severe criticism as well by her editors and critics. The poet is focused and she says, “My poetry is naked, my poetry is in tears, my poetry screams in anger, my poetry wreathes in pain, my poetry smells of blood, my poetry salutes sacrifice, my poetry speaks like my people, my poetry speaks for my people”.

It would be interesting to read Meena's poetry as she is perhaps the only representative of the direct caste victims in our society. A comparative reading of her poetic articulations with her other contemporary women poets perhaps would open many hidden layers of reality in our society.

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### 10.3 Learning Outcomes

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Students after reading this unit get formally introduced with the body of women poets. They may remember the poems studied by either of these poets during their studies. The brief description given of each poet, their major publications, places, roles and duties, their major themes, concerns, language, and techniques used in their poetry orient the reader in the genre. Poetry is just one aspect of the lives of these women, a brief description of their whereabouts will also help in connecting them with their work while reading this unit and individual works afterwards.

Many of these women poets are professionals as well. They are from various fields, their experiences are different, and concerns also differ to some extent. Still, they have something common like they are feminist to their very core, they resist against the socio-political, traditional, mythical, communal, caste, and many other forces through their works. They are well educated women; most of them have been to the developed countries, have studied and experienced the social life of women in that world and while reading them this could be felt by the students throughout their articulations. Finally, the students can have a few popular names, names of volumes, some popular poems and some broad ideas about Indian women poets in the form of ready reference.

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### 10.4 Glossary

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**Confessional:** Speech or in writing when a person reveals private thoughts or admits to past incidents, especially one about which they feel ashamed or embarrassed

**Canon:** A collection or list or criteria to judge something

**Ivory-tower:** A state of privileged seclusion or separation from the facts and practicalities of the real world

- Diasporic:** A Diaspora is a large group of people having similar heritage or homeland who have since moved out to places all over the world
- Sheaf:** A bundle of grain stalks laid lengthways and tied together after reaping
- Glean:** Gather after harvest
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## 10.5 Sample Questions

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### 10.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who was the first India Woman English Poet?  
(a) Aru Dutt                      (b) Toru Dutt  
(c) Sarojini Naidu              (d) Kamala Das
2. *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* is written by whom?  
(a) Sarojini Naidu              (b) Toru Dutt  
(c) Aru Dutt                      (d) Gauri Deshpande
3. Name the poet who was an active politician and member of Congress party during the colonial period.  
(a) Kamala Das                  (b) Toru Dutt  
(c) Gauri Deshpande          (d) Sarojini Naidu
4. *The Golden Threshold* was published in the year?  
(a) 1900                          (b) 1905  
(c) 1910                          (d) 1908
5. Who wrote the volume of poems *Summer in Calcutta*?  
(a) Sarojini Naidu              (b) Gauri Deshpande  
(c) Arundhati Roy              (d) Kamala Das
6. *The Descendents* by Kamala Das was published in the year?  
(a) 1965                          (b) 1967  
(c) 1968                          (d) 1969
7. A renowned poet Gauri Deshpande was the grand-daughter of whom?  
(a) Maharshi Karve              (b) Irawati Karve  
(c) Gopal Krushna Gokhale    (d) Lokmanya Tilak
8. How many books of poem are written by Gauri Deshpande?

- (a) Five                      (b) Three  
(c) Four                      (d) Six

9. Who wrote the poem 'Advice to Women'?

- (a) Imtiaz Dharker      (b) Eunice de Souza  
(c) Mani Rao              (d) Meena Kandasamy

10. *Sycorax: New Fables and Poems* (2006) is a book of poems by-

- (a) Sudha Iyer              (b) Rukmini Nair  
(c) Suniti Namjoshi      (d) Vijaya Goel

### 10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What do you understand by the term 'Confessional poetry'?
2. Write an Introduction of the poet Sarojini Naidu in brief.
3. How do you estimate the poet Kamala Das?
4. Give an account of Imtiaz Dharker as a poet.
5. What do you know about Rukmini Nair as a poet?

### 10.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the dominant themes common in the poetry of major Indian English women poets.
2. How do you look at the bold and realistic feminine expressions by many Indian women poets in their poetic expressions?
3. Elaborate the history of Indian women English poets in brief.

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## 10.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 11: A Country

### Structure

#### 11.0 Introduction

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### 11.0 Introduction

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Indian English Poetry since its inception during the colonial rule remained on the periphery of the vast literary canvas of India. Since the beginning, this so-called hybrid form of poetry served honestly the purpose of recording and representing Indian sensibility and emotional experiences at a global level, using a global language. Now, it is too late to consider English as a foreign language, when India has emerged as the second-largest country after the USA publishing a remarkable number of books every year in this language and literature. The picture of poetry in the rich corpus of Indian English Literature appears blurred today, though the fact that it has managed to survive in the age of fiction and cinema, is interesting to note. Credit goes to the generations of poets who through their verses in multiple forms and meanings represented the mythical and cultural identity of the nation.



The journey that started with the poetic creation of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghosh, Michel Madhusudan Dutt, Aru and Toru Dutt and of course, historian cum poet Romesh Chunder Dutt, in the early nineteenth century, was the beginning of what we now call Indian English Poetry. Important poets like Manmohan, Aurobindo Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, and others rendered their services to the genre of poetry during this first phase. In the second phase, poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Keki Daruwalla, Gieve Patel, R. Parthasarthy, Shiv K. Kumar, Arun Kolatkar, Meena Alexander and Jayanta Mahapatra along with many others imbued a new breath and divorced the readymade aesthetics and romantic mode of the first-generation poets in the pre-independence period, which M. K. Naik calls the Gandhian phase.

Jayant Mahapatra (1928), an addition to the same tradition, is a major figure on the panorama of Indian English Poetry and is quite well-known today. His heart-felt legacy and representation of the land of Orissa through his poetry, earns for him a much-esteemed position as a poet. The statement made by P. K. Patra in his scholarly article authenticates, “Jayant Mahapatra is a true representative poet of Orissa. Orissa finds expression in his poems so immaculately. When the entire Oriya culture is about to collapse under the threat of globalization, it is Mahapatra who tries to hold it from such a tremour through his poetry. All his poems are a kind of attempt to reconstruct the Oriya identity which has lost its health and vigour”. Though, the statement appears to pour much acclaim to the poet, his contribution deserves the identity he has earned. He is considered one of the most widely read, discussed and published Indian poet in this age; both at home and abroad. Although he is grouped with Nissim Ezekiel and A. K. Ramanujan as being post-modern poets, he is often criticized for his obscurity and allusiveness. Overall, Mahapatra in his journey of more than forty years as a poet has become successful in creating his own place and idiom. Many of his poems speak about his motherland India and of course while in comparison with other countries, his articulations turns severe. ‘A Country’ is one such poem where we read the unrest of the mind of the poet and his feelings for the land of his birth.

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## 11.1 Objectives

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Objectives of this study of the poem are as below:

- To read and understand the poem ‘A Country’ by Jayanta Mahapatra.
- To appreciate and enjoy the poem.
- To understand the thought and imagination contained in the poem.
- To acquaint the reader with the structure of the poem.
- To develop aesthetic sense in the reader so as to have pleasure from reading.
- To enhance love of reading and understanding poetry.

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## 11.2 *A Country*

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### 11.2.1 Jayanta Mahapatra as a Poet: An Introduction

Jayanta Mahapatra (1928-) is an addition in the poetic tradition of India that began with Henry Louis Vivian Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghosh, Michel Madhusudan Dutt, Aru and Toru Dutt and many others we have seen canonically in the introduction part. Mahapatra, a major figure on the panorama of Indian English Poetry, is quite well-known today. He is a major voice in Indian English poetry, born in the mystic land of Orissa, an eastern state in India on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, 1928. He lived throughout his life in the coastal town of Cuttack. Being born in a Christian family and growing up in a Hindu majority ethos, Mahapatra had keen interest in dealing with all these elements making a point in his poetry. Mahapatra after completing his master’s degree in Physics joined as a professor of Physics in the famous Ravenshaw College in Cuttack and worked at the same place till his retirement. Despite being a physicist by profession, he turned to poetry and successfully evolved as a poet. It adds to the mystery of his poetry and personality for a new reader. One has to accept after reading his poetry that professional life matters little to nothing in the cosmos of hobbies and interests, and if pursued positively it facilitates the interest in its own way. One such thing witnessed throughout is his analytical approach in his poetic endeavours, which was a result of his subject and training. Mahapatra’s interest and creative genius could be seen growing and attaining perfection through his poetic creations one after the other. It seems like poetry bridges the gap between his emotional bondage to his motherland, his fellow human beings and the state of affairs in their lives. Truly, the landscape of Orissa appears in its genuine colours through the poems of Mahapatra. It is not always in the happy mood, but the way it persists around him. Being a science student first and then a teacher of the same discipline, brought out in him the analytical approach that could be seen while dealing with

abstract themes like myth, faith, rituals, and many things related to the people of Orissa in his poetry. In a way, he integrates himself into the live heroic past of the country, its legends, myths, and reacts consciously to these amalgamated issues of life in his poetry. His *Relationship* is a fine example of the same; weaving the cobweb of history, myth, and vision. Very rarely, he speaks of his own historical past to establish a relation with the past, like Kamala Das and Niranjana Mohanty do, often referring to the dominant image of their respective grandmothers. Mahapatra's grandfather, Chintamani Mahapatra occasionally appears connecting him with the family past.

It is true that poetry came late to Mahapatra, at the age of forty in his life, but he compensated the same by producing seventeen volumes of poems in quick succession. He also tried his hand at writing short stories and produced two volumes of short stories. He has translated three volumes of Oriya Poetry into English and also written one book on Orissa. Besides these creative works, he has contributed articles for various magazines, periodicals and dailies at home and abroad. He has been editing a magazine named *Chandrabhaga* dedicated to poetry. These activities throughout his life perhaps, blessed him with the identity he possesses today.

Mahapatra's poetry has been awarded both at home and abroad with many prestigious awards. One such award, which brought recognition to the kind of poetry he wrote and perhaps is the first Indian English poet to be honoured with the same, was by National Academy of Letters (Central Sahitya Academy, New Delhi) for his *Relationship* in 1981. He has also been awarded by the Chicago Poetry Magazine with "Jacob Glatstein Memorial award (1975)", "Japan Foundation's Visitor's Award (1980)" and was the first prize winner in "Scottish International Open Poetry Competition 1990". In the year 1976-77, he had been invited to Iowa City for "International Writing Program". With these and many other awards and honours on his record, Mahapatra stands high for his unmatched poetic contribution in our time.

Among his famous collections of poems are: *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* (1971), *Svayamvara and Other Poems* (1971), *A Father's Hours* (1976), *A Rain of Rites* (1976), *Waiting* (1979), *The False Start* (1980), *Relationship* (1980), *Life Signs* (1983) *Dispossessed Nests* (1986), *Temple* (1989), *A Whiteness of Bones* (1992), *The Best of Jayanta Mahapatra* (1995), *Shadow Space* (1997), *Bare Face* (2000), and *Random Descent* (2006). With this, his poems

have been included in some of the latest prestigious international anthologies, *The Vintage Book of World Poetry* (Random House, New York, 1996) and *The Poetry Anthology 1912-2002* (Ivan R. Dee, Chicago, 2002). Besides this, he also wrote poetry in Oriya and did some poetic translations successfully. *The Green Gardner* (1997) and *Orissa* (1987) are the prose collections in his name. The recent book, *Door of Paper: Essays and Memoirs* (2007) voices many more things from his personal life that help in deciphering his poetry more intensely. With this strong base, Mahapatra stands ably as a representative poet of his land first and then of the country (India) in succession.

His heart-felt legacy and representation of the land of Orissa through his poetry earns for him a much-esteemed position as a poet. He is considered as one of the most widely read, discussed, and published Indian poets in this age; both at home and abroad. Though, he is grouped with Nissim Ezekiel and A. K. Ramanujan as being postmodern poets, he is often criticized for his obscurity and allusiveness. Overall, Mahapatra in his journey of more than forty years as a poet has become successful in creating his own place and in setting an idiom of his own.

***Check your Progress:***

1. Where does Mahapatra come from?
2. What legacy does he represent through his poetry?
3. Which book of poems by Mahapatra has been awarded by National Academy of Letters?

**11.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Poem:**

The poem, 'A Country' published in *Life Signs* (1983) by Mahapatra is not particularly about any one country; in fact, it addresses the situation of poverty-stricken countries in Asia. The poem has socio-economic, socio-political, historical, religious, and cultural undertones. The poet through various issues exposes the disparities among people and how raging poverty engenders violence. He also makes a plea for socialism so that there will be equality among people in terms of their livelihood. The straight forward approach should not distract us from the

true intent of the poet to highlight hunger; his all-time focus of attention in this poem as well. It also deals with the eternal search of the poet of his self, mythical history, losses, riches, faith, and many more things with the prominent national identity. In its subject and approach, the poem reflects his nationalistic fervour to the core.

The graphic account in the very beginning with ‘dust everywhere’ reminds the poverty among the Asian countries with different political systems, religions, faiths, and many other differences excluding “dust”. The speaker considers this memory as his burden. For the speaker, this land is of no use as it is burnt. The remaining in the form of scent of the incense sticks and ash keep piling up on their misty whites. Perhaps, the speaker suggests about the orthodoxy prevalent in India. Whatever the situation in these countries and forgetting the reality; Gods are to be prayed and offered incense sticks. Hence, perhaps the “the heaps of the dead are growing, piling up along with the incense...” and even people who appear older than their original age with their misty white heads, appear mysteriously in this first stanza.

The poet further refers to the tales told by the old people in sleepy voices. Maybe they are not capable of voicing them aloud; listening to them makes his ears tremble as those were horrible. The narration of such past tales usually in sleepy voices and eyes with no dreams and vision appears almost dead to him. The poet considers himself as a child who keeps dreaming. But, at this juncture, he finds his own interest of dreaming like a child in danger and he questions his self for wearing out and feeling for the girls dying unnaturally. The image of “breasts swollen with milk” suggests fertility and beginning of life, but the girls die even before that is suggestive.

The speaker further recalls the moments from his memories when he saw a graceful Naxal girl who appeared before him from nowhere that winter and feels hurt. She had a knife in her hand which the speaker says is as old as history. The poet is hurt not by seeing the violent face or conduct of that girl but due to the cause that engenders violence among such innocent people. The poet here highlights hunger that leads them to take part in such violent activities is a fact in Asian countries. Here the Naxalite problem, the movement, their rights and demands, and the government machinery handling these issues have been the focus of discussion. Many sacrifice their lives every year in this battle fought between the people and security forces. The issue has become historical now.

Finally, the speaker echoes the condition that he witnesses late at night, wherein, he sees his own country. Many things he accepts like sacrifices, loss of friends, dear ones in wars and in other events of violence between the Naxal organizations and the security forces. The speaker finds himself in difficulty. He finds no answer to his situation in vision. He attempts to investigate it in piety (Puri) and in fiery violence (Naxalism perhaps) or in both.

Ultimately, he learns that his conscience is entangled in prejudiced sorrow like socialism from where he fails to understand his self and that of others. He assumes himself to be on hills in strange shapes in the distance listening to “the faraway wailing hyenas/ aware of the dying countryside around them/ tortured by hunger and the reek of decay in the air/ after the age-old myths have been told all over again”. This confusing situation has left him mystified. Even the predators are in problem and they are aware of that. They are wailing for the loss of countryside leading them into hunger and death but perhaps why we humans fail to understand is the question of the poet.

***Check your Progress***

1. What do you understand by ‘search of self’?
2. What does ‘dust everywhere’ symbolise?
3. What do you think is the burden of the poet in this poem?

**11.2.3 Thematic Analysis of the Poem:**

‘A Country’ by Jayanta Mahapatra is a poem dedicated to the issues of his motherland and the whole of Asia. The major theme in the poem appears to be identity; identity of the poet and his country in an introspecting tone but the dominant issues like poverty, hunger, starvation, deaths, orthodoxy, conflicts among groups, and routine backwardness prevalent around him have been voiced seriously. Its history and myths have also been given space enough so as to highlight the roots of the problem his society/country is facing. Through his straight forward expression, the poet points at the conventional dogmas leading to chaos from generations.

The poet reminds of past stories narrated often by the old people in sleepy voices voicing the dead vision of the people. He questions his self for feeling for the dying girls before their

breasts are swollen with milk. Here, gender inequality, exploitation of women by patriarchal society has been exposed. His questioning to his self is ironic, and suggesting what can one do? It makes no difference. But at the same time, he voices his deep desire of dedication for his country. He acknowledges that, “Here is my world, and it makes me dream as a child...”. The poet is deeply committed in mind and spirit to the cause of his motherland. The poet’s dream for the betterment of his people who are drowned in countless problems is reflected in his poetry.

The issue of Naxalism has also been touched upon through the character of a “Naxal girl”. The poet refers to her in his memories. For the poet, “who appeared out of nowhere that winter, holding a knife as old as history?” Unequal distribution of resources among its citizens has led to many differences and has created a divide because of unequal opportunities. The girl holding a knife in protest has become historic in India. Through such references, the poet is seeking attention of the reader towards the dark holes in the lives of people in India and how they have missed the right path of livelihood.

The poet is neither a socialist nor a Marxist; he is just a sensitive human being who looks at the severe situation from humanitarian perspective. The poet also speaks of the war in Seventy-Two and its atrocities on people directly or indirectly. He speaks of the sacrifices and losses and accepts grief because of such losses of friends, brothers, and sons in the war of Seventy-Two. But, even after this acceptance finding an answer is not easy.

Penitence at Puri does no good to him, and his reasoning appears as “prejudiced sorrow like socialism”. Thus, theme of disgust grips the speaker and leaves him a failure. His referring to the wailing hyenas indicates dying of the countryside and through that poet’s eco-critical approach gets reflected. This death is multifaceted. Death of nature and forests symbolizes end of their dependents; the tribals and the wild life. The poem ends with re-telling of ‘age-old myths’; a meaningless routine.

#### **11.2.4 Critical Analysis of the Poem:**

Jayanta Mahapatra is a poet committed to the cause of uplifting his fellow countrymen through his poetic compositions. The poet, being a critical thinker and an academician in the field of science, relates scientifically to many historical, religious, mythical, and routine things in the course of his poetic ponderings. The title of the poem is a bit deceptive as it is not referring to

one country. As many countries referred to in the poem have witnessed oppression, violence and poverty, this poem justifies the geographical landscape it addresses. A reader can easily understand that this poem by Mahapatra is the best example of his relationship with his soil. The poet feels intensely bad for the situation of his people and expresses the pathos through his poetic composition. He was born and brought up as a Christian in Hindu majority society. Being exposed to the western world and its ideals early in life, the poet keeps comparing the life of people at home and abroad. Issues like faith, customs, illiteracy, rituals and rites, poverty, hunger, and deaths are very close to his vision of life in India. 'A Country' breaks the silence and lets the truth flow in the form of conviction about his country which is unfortunately negative.

Like in many of his poems, this poem also sheds light on the dusty paths of Asian countries like India. World has changed a lot but India along with many other countries from Asia is still busy in the age-old traditions. The poet metaphorically considers this identity of his country as his burden. Reasoning seems to have no meaning in this country, is the overall outlook of the poet in this case. Already driven by myths, this country has fresh myths like 'socialism', 'nationalism', and 'secularism'. The poet projects his reason as 'prejudiced sorrow' in the poem. Behind this reason we have starvation deaths, prostitution for feeding one's own self, deaths due to malnutrition, Naxalism, etc. The poet gives an unending list of problems and reports no solution for them even after such long time is suggestive. Perhaps, he wishes that the reader needs to be awakened to search for the solution.

The poet magnifies his vision and also comments on the denuding trees and fast deforestation around him. The wailing hyenas are symbolic representation of the dying ecosystem. Thus, the poet in this poem ponders over the condition of people, reasons behind them, and the condition of nature in India. Nothing appears to be positive for him. His veiled option of "pious penitence at Puri or as a revolutionary" also seems to have been out-dated. So, he has failed to understand his country and his own self as well. The speaker suggests that there is no future (betterment) to this country in vision. While telling this the poet is not negative but willing to make reader aware of the situation. Thus, the poem is an eye opener for the reader, it enlists the major concerns that need to be thought over and sorted out practically.



***Check your Progress***

1. How do you estimate Mahapatra's relationship with his country?
2. What eco-critical perspective do we witness in this poem?
3. Why does the poet say that this country has no future in vision?

### **11.2.5 The Poet and the Poem: Relationship**

Every poet is an individual first. Individuals have their own identities, relations, faiths, joys, and sorrows. They have their priorities and sub sequences as well. Jayanta Mahapatra is a man of his soil. 'A Country' is an embodiment of his bonding with his motherland. The poet to his very core seems to be connected to the issues of his country. Only an emotionally attached person can delve deep into the problems experienced by his people. In case of Mahapatra, he is the true voice of Orissa and India as well. He is very much concerned about the situation of his country. Jayanta Mahapatra opens his poem with dust everywhere. Starvation, poverty, and deaths are the issues of great concern for the poet and he sees this everywhere. In Gopalpur, Kalahandi, Cuttack, Bhubaneshwar, and Konark or anywhere in India you will see the signs of these problems without making any difference. In its true sense, this poem could be read as an eye opener exposing the myths of development in the Asian countries including India. The poet though begins with the Asian countries, suddenly limits his address to the issues of his motherland, India. He leaves no stone unturned to bring to light the reasons that have led to this pathetic situation. The poet is mature enough to raise an issue and relate it to the situation with all its roots and references.

Mahapatra is a Physics professor by profession. Through his scientific training perhaps he is shaped to look at things in such an unbiased way. He brings out the traditional wrongs done and which continue to be acted out all around in the name of religion, faith, rituals, and rites. He objects blind orthodoxy. Because of this religious orthodoxy people fail to look at things openly and reason its need, justness, and validity in multiple things. The most suggestive part of this poem is that people have to come out of the traditional beliefs and think reasonably and

logically. Answers to prevalent problems could be sought through logical thinking and reasoning spirit in the matters of faith and this he highlights by referring to pious Puri.

The poet is known for his historical and mythical references in his poetry. In ‘A Country’ also he uses such references to explore his views about his country. Quite often the poet appears to be grave in his poetic endeavours. Perhaps, his birth as a poet very late in his life at the age of forty contributed in making him over conscious about things. We have a series of poems digging deep the problems like ‘Hunger’, ‘Dhauri’, and even *Relationship*. The poet is proud of his grand past but conscious and logical to the extent that he questions the integrity of the legendry king Ashoka for causing bloodshed and then peace edicts on rock in one of his poems. Here in this poem also he breaks the mystery of his confusion regarding the situation around. Very clearly, he points on the issues creating trouble again and again. For the poet, they are deliberately created myths. The poet is keen to make his reader understand the complexities of life in India. Poetry often is different and poetry of Mahapatra is very much different, dedicated, committed, and serious to its very core addressing the issues of people to its best possible way. So, understanding his relationship with his land (physical, mental, spiritual, and cultural) helps his reader understand his stance in every poem we read.

Hence, intention of the poet is very clear, his sombre relationship makes him ‘wear out feeling for’ people of his country. The identity of India and of Asia that he expresses through his poem tells that it has not been able to rise above the colonial identity of the land of snakes and snake charmers and the poet expresses his anguish and pain regarding the same.

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### 11.3 Learning Outcomes

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After reading this poem, students will learn about the true identity of our country through the vision of the poet. The visible fact that relates to Asian countries in case of poverty, hunger, orthodoxy, and deaths exhibiting backwardness makes the reader aware at the outset in first stanza.

While reading the poem, they read about the poet and his burden. Poetry in this case continues to be equally responsible and real to its time and spirit. The reader is exposed to a series of problems this country is facing. A mutiny like Naxalism for the rights of sons of the soil

gives a blow to any conscious reader. This poem written in 1983 gives an early picture of the menacing problem that we have before us in abundance. The reader can compare and contrast his own experiences from various sources about the Naxal movement in many states of the country. The graceful appearance of the Naxal girl with a historical knife will be appreciated in its right strength.

The reader is also oriented in the traditional faiths, historical past, religion, rituals and rites prevalent which give no solution to the problems, the effect of which we see in the form of lack of reasoning. Finally, the speaker; who belongs to the masses, retells that neither penitence nor revolution is assuring. It is the myth that wins again; rotting the air. Structurally, the reader learns about the free form of the poem. Its loose structure in appearance running into stanzas of unequal length, mostly bound in content. Mahapatra is an excellent craftsman; his choice of words and his skill to transform words into phrases, clauses, utterances, and sentences with a definite sound, rhythm and rhyme and to form a structure of his own is unique. The poet's subtle use of words and diction with multiplied meanings is a remarkable experience for the reader. This has been the feature of postmodern poetry and Mahapatra justifies this in many of his expressions like, "the eyes are dead as stones", "makes me dream as a child", and "breasts are swollen with milk". His phrases are flawlessly structured with no undue advantage or poetic liberty.

The reader understands that diction employed in this poem by the poet is not only to satisfy the reader while reading but also to intensify the aesthetic sense of the reader. Imagery used by the poet through the images, "the dust", "burdened of eyes", "burnt air", "incense and ash pile", "old people", "sleepy voices", "dead eyes", etc. are varied, effective, and meaningful. The reader is introduced to mythical imagery marking the age-old practice of retelling the myths. Myths here are made by the authorities or by the policy makers perhaps; according to the poet. The poet exposes this myth by asking questions regarding his inability to understand the confusing atmosphere. Thus, overall, the learning outcome of the poem is in the form of growth of the reader in life experiences. Creating awareness about the surrounding, awakening the reader in the light of reasoning and posing questions before the system in power through poetry.

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## 11.4 Glossary

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**Countryside:** The land and scenery of rural area

**Decay:** Rot or decompose

**Fiery:** Consisting of fire or burning strongly

**Hyenas:** A doglike African mammal, noted as scavengers

**Myths:** A traditional story concerning the early history of people, events

**Mistywhite:** Covered with mist

**Naxal:** A member of a political organisation claiming legacy

**Penitence:** An action of feeling or showing sorrow and regret for having done wrong; repentance

**Pious:** Devoutly religious

**Reek:** Stink or strong unpleasant smell

**Socialism** A political and economic theory of social organisation which advocates that the means of production, distribution and exchange be owned or regulated by the community as a whole

**Stubborn:** Having or showing dogged determination not to change one's attitude

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## 11.5 Sample Questions

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### 11.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The hunger keeps growing from \_\_\_\_\_
  - (a) Turkey to Cambodia
  - (b) India to Bangladesh
  - (c) India to China
  - (d) Asia to Europe
2. What trembles the ears of the poet?
  - (a) Tales
  - (b) Sleepy voices

- (c) Past tales                      (d) Past tales by the old
3. When does the old speak of the past with sleepy voices?
- (a) In the morning                  (b) In the afternoon
- (c) In the evening                  (d) When darkness falls
4. Whose eyes according to the poet are “dead like stones”?
- (a) Of the old                        (b) Of the young
- (c) Of the women                  (d) Of the men
5. In which season did the poet encounter the Naxal girl?
- (a) Summer                         (b) winter
- (c) Monsoon                        (d) Spring
6. What becomes prejudiced sorrow in case of the poet?
- (a) His dream                        (b) His awareness
- (c) His reasoning                  (d) His aloofness
7. To whom does the poet listen from faraway?
- (a) Wailing hyenas                (b) Growling wolves
- (c) Barking dogs                  (d) Bastich bitch
8. The hyenas are aware of what?
- (a) Dying forest                    (b) Dying animals
- (c) Dying humans                 (d) Dying countryside
9. What did torture the poet?
- (a) Hunger                          (b) Reek
- (c) Hunger and reek                (d) Hunger, reek and its decay in the air
10. Does the poet become successful in understanding the situation?
- (a) No                                (b) Yes
- (c) Can't say                        (d) Perhaps

### 11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What do you think is the question of the poet?
2. Why do you think that the poet is unable to force an answer out?
3. What features of Asia have been mentioned by the poet in this poem?
4. What does the line, “it makes me dream as a child” symbolise?
5. How do you appreciate the lines, “my reason becomes a prejudiced sorrow/ like socialism”?

### 11.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Make an estimate of sombre relationship between the poet and his motherland in the poem ‘A Country’.
2. How do you appreciate the poem ‘A Country’ in the light of poverty, orthodoxy, faith and backwardness as its major themes.
3. Discuss myths and myth-making technique used by the poet in the poem ‘A Country’.

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## 11.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 12: *The Female of the Species*

### Structure

12.0 Introduction

12.1 Objectives

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### 12.0 Introduction

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Indian English poetry has earned an identity of being independent entity in the country and abroad through its praiseworthy poetic creations. Poetry written in the post-Independence period particularly, proves its coming of age both in manner and matter. The poets, Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, P. Lal, Adil Jussawalla, Kamala Das, A. K. Ramanujan, R. Parthasarthy, Pritish Nandy, and Shiv K. Kumar in the sixties initiated a sort of protest, defiance of conventions with an inclination towards experimentation as a feature of modern times. Most of these poets introduced new innovations in Indian English poetry. Whereas, Keki N. Daruwalla, Dwarika Nath Kabadi, Gieve Patel, A. K. Meharotra, Jayant Mahapatra, Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkar, Saleem Peeradina, Agha Shahid Ali, Gauri Deshpande, Margaret Chatterjee, Meena Alexander, Eunice de Souza, Manohar Shetty, Vikram Seth, Imtiaz Dharker, Shahid Suhrawardy, Ayappa Paniker, and Vilas Sarang with many other new poets in the seventies and eighties contributed to the body of poetry that took flight with high spirits. Indian English Poetry is rich in variety, is spectacular and has a sense of awareness of rights, introspective, and comparative world view. It possesses the ability to speak against the orthodoxy, blind faith,

urbanization, loss of nature, and environment (both physical and mental) and explores the themes of poverty, exploitation, extortion, corruption, religious hypocrisy and many other areas of life.

When we talk of the success of English poetry in India, it is not just because of the men but women also contributed equally, taking every nook of their world for an inquiry. It is really interesting to witness their experiences, struggles, sufferings, and success through poetic articulations. Poets like Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu pioneered in writing poetry in English by women during the colonial time. In the post-colonial period, Indian English poetry witnessed tremendous developments. Rise of the female poetic vision in this context is very much crucial to know and study. Poetry by them is not less than a rebellion against the traditional inference of women as daughter, wife, mother and nothing beyond that independently. English education opened for them doors of opportunity so as to acquaint with new feminist ideology of the West. They pursued it sincerely and the journey began of expressing resistance and self-confidence through their poetic articulations.

To communicate their frustrations, disappointments, failures, and loneliness in life in general and love life in particular these women poets left no stone unturned. Kamala Das pioneered in speaking the unspoken and voicing her obsession for love, unfulfilled desires, quest for identity, and many other things about women. Gauri Deshpande also continued the journey of confessions hiding nothing like her predecessors and contemporary poet friends. 'The Female of the Species' is a mouthpiece poem from her very first book of poems, *Between Births* published in 1968. This poem ruminates over the issues of women, their needs, difficulties, isolation, ungratefulness, and despair. In this unit, we are going to study the prescribed poem, the focus of the poet and her approach and insights.

***Check your Progress:***

1. Name the originators of confessional English poetry in India.
2. What did the first phase of English Poetry in India express?
3. Who were the early Indian English women poets?



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## 12.1 Objectives

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Objectives of this study of the poem are as below:

- Read and understand the poem, 'Female of the Species' by Gauri Deshpande.
- Appreciate the poem, its theme, vision, composition, and approach.
- Understand the form, idiom, mood, and tone in the poem.
- Develop aesthetic sense so as to have pleasure from reading.
- Read and learn how to analyse a poem.
- To relate with the issues raised in the poem.
- Sensitise the issue of women in the light of the discussion in the poem.
- To understand the approach and concern of highly educated women poets towards the condition of women in the country and abroad across castes and classes.

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## 12.2 *The Female of the Species*

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### 12.2.1 Gauri Deshpande as a Poet: An Introduction

Gauri Deshpande is a famous novelist, short-story writer, translator, social activist and a poet born on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1942 in Pune. She is a bilingual writer writing in Marathi and English. Irawati Karve, her mother, was a renowned Anthropologist, sociologist, educationist, and famous writer. Her grandfather, Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve, was an eminent social reformer who worked for the welfare of women for which Government of India honoured him with the highest civilian award, the *Bharat Ratna* in the year 1958. She completed her education in the famous Fergusson College, Pune, where she later on joined the department of English as a faculty. Later on, she joined as professor of English in the University of Pune and worked there till her retirement.

Though Gauri Deshpande was an English professor, she wrote both in Marathi and in English with an equal ease. Similar to her precursor, Kamala Das, she is known as honest, straight forward, and candid in her articulations. She too sustained with confessional poetry hitting the traditions and became one of the foremost Indian Women English poets. She is known for expressing her own self, unflinchingly and bravely. From her works of poetry, it is

understood that she focuses more on society and its effects on relationships at many levels. She advocates in her biography, “sense of social consciousness has been a constant part of a life right from her childhood”. Most of her works including poetry had something important and socially relevant to communicate. It has a touch of her own life through her experiences, frustrations, tensions, and strained family relations representing her age. Her marital life and her relationship with her daughters are inevitably linked with her poetry. She is primarily concerned about the various intricacies and inner conflicts of man-woman relationships. Besides this, she has also written about the commonplace, mostly exposing and questioning the hypocritical behaviour of the society against women. Being a part of independent society, the poet attempts to break the shackles used to limit the freedom of women in our society. In fact, the tension we see through this and through many such protest literature, is the result of stance by the female counterparts in real life and in literature as well. With this natural phenomenon, a feminist enquiry about the middle-class working women in our society had always been there in the backdrop of her poetry using her unique art of imagination and judgement about her clan. She has written about popular themes of her age dealing with various aspects of love, betrayal, despair, loneliness, abandonment, sex, and marital relationships. She has also worked upon foregrounding motherhood as the dominant theme in many *avatars*, especially the relationship between mother and daughter in the modern metropolitan society.

Gauri Deshpande has to her credit three volumes of poems published; *Between Births* (1968), *Lost Love* (1970), and *Beyond the Slaughterhouse* (1972). Besides these, she has also contributed to other anthologies of Indo-English poetry. She has translated the Marathi book written by Sunita Deshpande entitled; *Aahe Manohar Tari....* into English as *And Pine For What is Not*. Her Marathi translation of ten volumes of Sir Richard Burton’s *The Arabian Nights* published in seventies, was also well received. The poet perhaps writes to get relief from tensions in ordinary life situations and demands utterance through her recurrent social consciousness and the various conflicts in the form of lost love and isolation as themes. She is outspoken and forthright in her articulation. She appears to be comfortable with small poems and ‘The Female of the Species’ is her best work, wherein she gets across the deep feminine feelings. This poem appears to have come into existence out of the need felt by the poet to communicate the feelings of a disheartened, dismayed and dissatisfied woman to the world. This sense is not only seen on the emotional front but on the physical front as well in her works. As a result, the

affirmation agenda continues projecting more considerate and offensive ideas through poetry. Let us read and understand the prescribed poem by Gauri Deshpande.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who was Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve?
2. Name a few of Gauri Deshpande's poetic contributions.
3. Who is at the centre of Gauri Deshpande's poetic enquiry?

**12.2.2 Brief Summary:**

The speaker (persona) in the poem, 'The Female of the Species' published in the book; *Between Births* (1968), is a woman who speaks about the typical Indian gathering of women through her own experiences. They gather and have tea and talk about their lives mostly about their children. Like any other Indian woman, the poem brings a poignant picture of a woman who wants to talk about mundane things, her routine, insecurities with other woman; the poetic persona also speaks of the same need in this poem. To unburden her emotions, failures, despair in love, ungratefulness of children, and many other seemingly ordinary things in day-to-day life, she is in need of some other woman to talk with and get relieved.

Her ideas about love and life are very clear and universal. Love is the base of all relations and any woman plays all these roles of being a daughter, mother, wife, sister, teacher, doctor, nurse, and what not? Thus, motherhood in its many *avatars* is an unending theme in many of her poems including the present one. In her poetic discourse she envisions the need and presence of other woman to share her feelings and grief. She says, in such case, "a man is no use whatever then", husband, brother, father or even son makes no sense. For such talks of getting unburdened, you need to have your mother, sister, your bosom friend with whom you went to school and spent time throughout or your first love and her first child (both girls) and your second child that too, perhaps a girl. She wants the other person to share her desolation and this can only be a woman. The persona then says how comfortable it is to sit with her and sip while she is busy in her sewing work, responding and initiating in a discussion. This articulation of the poet reminds the fate of a mother to love her child in whatever condition she is. In comparison with male

counterparts, females are more emotional, splendid, and spongy in their own self. Hence, the speaker aspires for the other woman.

What do these women discuss? They discuss anything under the sky from their routine life. Normally, their discussions are very personal and most of them are about their worries and despairs. Sometimes a mother when neglected by her children or by her husband, never speaks about this because of love, thinking that it may hurt them. She has made sacrifices and spent entire life for them but they don't have time to care for her or to listen to her grievances and desires. Other than this, women keep doing household jobs, purchasing items of daily needs and facing problems in managing things, these are the concerns that are often the focus of such small and casual talks that provide them with relief. Hence, they speak about the rate of rice, price of tea, and the scarcity of kerosene. Thus, the persona as a representative of women gets relieved of her womanly burden by speaking to other women in some role and her need is fulfilled.

The speaker appears to be very genuine in her matter and manner throughout this poem. The poem expresses that life needs many things which might be very ordinary but they can never be replaced by other things however costly or comfortable. One very important thing the speaker says is that when it comes to speaking about deep injuries inflicted upon women by their loved ones, then one can pour out one's heart only to her mother, sister, her bosom friend or her own daughter to get relieved from the burden of insults, neglects, abuses, exploitation, violation of rights, and all the other problems faced by them. Deshpande very genuinely brings this open secret of oppression and exploitation to the notice of her readers and peacefully convinces them about the issues of women.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who is the poetic persona in this poem?
2. What is the topic of discussion between the women in the poem?
3. Why a woman needs another woman to talk with?

**12.2.3 Thematic Analysis:**

We have already seen a clear portrait of the anxieties and mode of expressions in Gauri Deshpande's 'The Female of the Species'. Poetry for her seems to be a medium to analyse the complexities of human relationships and human existence. Right from her first book of poems,

she sensitively captures the alienation and frustration that creeps into relationships. This poem is an audacious attempt of Gauri Deshpande to express the female desire to speak to other woman in all its intricacies. The poem in its approach is exclusive in speaking the feminine need of space. This space here is in the form of choosing a person to have a talk with. Human beings are social animals and hence, they need somebody to share something, appreciate somebody, criticise, have friendship, quarrel sometimes, envy and be envied, and keep comparing with people quite often. In short, we need people around for different purposes. The speaker in the poem also speaks of another woman she intends to speak with things of her heart, her yearnings, failures, frustrations, and routine things and what not. She is very much straight forward in her choice declaring, “A man is no use whatever then”. It means no man is of use or not allowed to share that space and be a companion in such poignant moments. The space demands another woman only that could be mother, sister, daughter, friend or friend’s daughter.

There is a reason behind forbidding men for such talks, because, men are men and not women to understand them. There are certain issues which could be discussed and understood by women only. Perhaps, this is the reason why mother-daughter relationship is very deep and they have an unparalleled understanding among themselves. The feminine anxiety is met during such clandestine talks when one woman is doing sewing or any other household chore. The visitor woman is well received by the host and offered a cup of tea as a sign of her kindness to her bosom friend. Do they need any special topic for discussion on such occasions? Experience advises that they don’t need to decide topics. In course of their enquiry and chat they open up many topics related to their daily life. The result mostly is in the form of catharsis. Hence, they need someone special for such talks.

The poem also speaks of “the ungratefulness of children”. Indian social structure is throughout inclusive and uncalculated when it comes to individual’s audit. Modern Indian society has adopted nuclear family norms in the urban areas. Thus, the parents keep working hard disregarding their health, physical, and economic abilities, needs and desires for the wellbeing of their children. But when children grow, they have a different world of imagination. Their aspirations are different, needs are different and likewise they change their behavior and ideas about family, the sacrifices and relations are at stake in such situations. Perhaps, the poet through this theme of ungratefulness of the young generation towards their parents seeks the attention of the reader and through the reader, the society at large so as to address this issue within the limits of her poetic art. Here, the belief, “literature aims at social change” does have

meaning. If we consider the period of composition of this poem and the present situation around us then we will notice countless examples of such ungratefulness of the young people to their parents. This poem of Gauri Deshpande is alarming even now.

The most common themes like gender discrimination, frustration, desire for freedom, aspiring for love, and loneliness are the contributing themes in the making of this poem dedicated to the cause of women exclusively. Men are there as their counterpart in the backdrop. A sort of catharsis is aimed at while initiating into the talk. Normally, the output of such routine talks could be felt in the form of cathartic effect the speaker experiences. As the poet is famous for her confessional expression, the poem may be read and received to some extent as her need to reverberate her despairs from personal life. Thus, it has many shades of themes but nothing going contrary, rather all these themes intersect for better cathartic effect for the poetic persona and the reader who receives within his limits.

***Check your Progress***

1. What do you understand by the terms, ‘female’, ‘the other one’?
2. The poem speaks of ungratefulness of whom and in what sense.
3. What is the importance of having casual discussion in the context of this poem?

**12.2.4 Critical Analysis:**

‘The Female of the Species’ is a poem about the other human being i.e., a woman referring to the womanhood at large in our society. So, throughout it relentlessly takes issues and interests of women for discussion. Gauri Deshpande being an educated and professional woman and since her childhood being a part of comparatively awakened atmosphere at home and in her close circles; could understand the apathy of her fellow women in the society. Her grandfather worked for the wellbeing of women throughout, for which he was honoured with “Bharat Ratna”, the highest civilian award in our country. Her mother also was a renowned anthropologist, sociologist and educationist of her time. Gauri Deshpande also worked as professor of English literature in the historical institutes of India. Hence, perhaps she joined the movement of women liberation by speaking of their grief, failures, exploitation, suppression, subjugation, despairs, and their desires through her poetic works both in Marathi and English. Even her other works justify her cause of supporting the voice of women in some form or the other.

This poem opens up something very crucial about women in our society through ages. The poet perhaps through her own experiences perceives the difficulties women have to face at home and outside the home in the male dominated society. The world of women has been limited both in vision and practice. Patriarchal society, through its do's and don'ts, systematically makes them believe and behave within their decided limits. So, they cannot go beyond talking about the, "rate of rice, price of tea and the scarcity of kerosene". The deeply rooted mythical quote, "man for the field and woman for the hearth" has worked in keeping them tied to this faith. Women have neither been listened seriously nor taken seriously by their male counterparts at home. So, they keep craving for the company of others like them and they find it in the form of their own sister, mother, friend and daughter naturally. The idea and philosophy behind is to provide relief and get relieved from the burden of guilt of being a woman.

On all these fronts, women have to pay the price of their decisions, independent thinking, choices, their dreams, and hardships they have been through sometimes for love, for family, for children and for their own wishes and desires. Failure of any kind amounts in their frustration and isolation resulting in their separation from family and loved ones. Gauri Deshpande through her confessions shows such events leading into experiences of loss of love, care and support in personal life. This consciousness in personal issues shapes her creative genius and her poetry speaks of ungratefulness of children. In fact, this is applicable to generations of children who have shown their ungratefulness to their parents and more seriously to their mothers. Because, mother carries her child in her womb for nine long months in whatever situation she exists. She never cares for day and night when it comes to working for her children. She has no need and desire other than the needs and desires of her children. What honour she receives after all these hardships? The female psyche is reiterated to expose ungratefulness, isolation, frustration, seclusion, and insecurity women earn in our society. Deshpande asserts and alludes to this aspect seeking attention of readers through this and many of her poems.

***Check your Progress***

1. How do you relate to the term 'womanhood'?
2. What is the burden of the poetic persona?
3. What hardships of women are discussed in this poem?

### 12.2.5 Stylistic Reading:

A poem is a complex work and a symbol of aesthetic sense of the poet in terms of articulation. Gauri Deshpande is known for her innovative poetic creations and her unique sensibility. Her poetry is expressive in nature and communicative in style. The poem, 'The Female of the Species' is one such short poem running through nineteen lines and five stanzas of unequal length written in conversational mode. This poem sustains the spirit of the poet expressing the feminine need and worries debating their psychological, social, biological, physical, and economic ambiguities. The speaker (poetic persona) is a woman hence; it is a woman's discourse with another woman.

Gauri Deshpande being a modern poet, exhibits divorce from the traditional devices like meter, rhymes and eventually concentrated on the complex tools like symbols and images, appropriate to the time and atmosphere. Her poetry, in absence of rhyme and meter, is 'free verse' popularly using some traditional tools of writing poetry.

The poem is a magnificent expression leading into warmth with eagerness. It not only persuades the reader, but transports him from being ignorant to knowledgeable. Gauri Deshpande in this poem shows her feelings through poetic expressions. Using her ability, she expresses sublimely through her art to awaken and receive emotional responses from the reader. These responses are often anticipated through the excellent use of weighty and solid thoughts, intense passion on the part of the poet, the rhetoric and figures of speech with diction and elevated composition as discussed by Longinus, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Greco-Roman critic in his famous treatise, *On the Sublime*. Gauri Deshpande is practising free verse but is sensitive to every core of her poetic expression, using her transcendent and arresting conversational weapon.

Various dispositions of the poet, like her character traits, abilities, psychology and typology, decide her temperament and sensitivity. Gauri Deshpande by profession was a teacher. So, her approach towards the issues of women and their exploitation is empathetic. The way, she elucidates upon the plight of women through the issues like privacy and space, their need for sharing and getting relieved from burden and sharing very personal things re-visioning life and its pleasures is adorable.

Imagery used by the poet is incidental and integral in this case to the theme of the poem expressing the ideas she wishes to express. Many ideas in her poems have been expressed openly and this poem is also an epitome of openness. The image of woman she has created is historic in the society we are a part of. Their casual talks, visits, sipping tea, sewing and discussions on the



rates of rice, tea and the scarcity of kerosene; helps the reader to visualise the scene. Further, it adds into the visual effects of life in perplexity due to the collapsed budget. The ungratefulness of children is another instance wherein the reader perceives the gravity of this social problem faced by the parents after such hardships in life.

Deshpande is an excellent craftsman; her choice of words and her skill to transform words into phrases, clauses, utterances, and sentences with a definite sound, rhythm and rhyme to form a structure of her own is unique. Her subtle use of words and the following diction with grave meaning is remarkable. The broken lines running into making irregular length of stanzas having nothing common other than the thread of woven theme it opens with and elaborates.

This poem, rich in complex expressions, speaks in straight conversational tone. Extensive use of conjunctions ‘and’ and ‘or’ gives an ardent look that adds to the eagerness of both listener and reader. As, it is a routine talk of women it hides nothing and you need not dive deep in search of meaning. Rarely, you come across the contrast between aspirations and reality of women expressed through talk. Common language has been used to express the routine, using very few poetic tools; still the use of alliterations and metaphors of love to address its loss is touching.

***Check your Progress***

1. What mode of expression does the poem, ‘The Female of the Species’ adopt?
2. How is the approach of the speaker towards women in this poem?
3. What is your response after reading this poem for the first time?

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### **12.3 Learning Outcomes**

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After reading this straightforward account of a woman through this poem, students will have an idea of the veiled world of women, their needs and vision. They will have an image of their mother, aunt, sister or any other woman around them who happened to be in the need to talk to someone. Women every now and then get busy in chit-chat with other women and discuss very ordinary issues, both pertaining to the individual and those that are common, which may now be understood by the readers of this poem with a larger perspective. Life is full of

meaningless things and it is with such meaningless incidents that life goes on. It is not always great; at times you have to keep count of the price of rice and tea. There are times when you struggle for survival. Women have borne the brunt of such calamities quite often.

Relationship between men and women and the breach that exists is discussed openly in this poem. A man is of no help to a woman to have her desired catharsis. She always needs her mother or sister or bosom friend or her first love, or daughter for such purgation of emotions through such talks will be well received by the readers.

Through this poem the readers, both male and female are made aware of the issues of being ungrateful to their parents. This severe social problem has been given thought by the poet so as to seek attention of the society. This will serve its purpose within the limits of literature for social change. The reader sees how parental need of care, love, involvement, and importance is dealt under the pretext of isolation and exclusion.

The poem speaks of the divide created between male and female world. Overtly, though it speaks of the need of a woman for conversation, it delves deeper into the issues of injustice, under estimation, lack of equal opportunity and discrimination faced by women. Neglect, lesser importance or no importance at all and domestic violence for dowry and other demands are common challenges faced by women in our society. At the time of composition of the poem, illiteracy and orthodoxy were major problems and women were the main victims of these social evils. Gauri Deshpande, through this poem seeks attention of the reader towards these issues around us.

In this poem, the reader witnesses a direct and gripping style of conversation. The poem introduces free-verse (*Vers libre*) composition which does not use consistent metre and rhyme. Diction is not special but impressive and evocative. The poem goes straight without any complications which are usually created due to use of grandiose language. Ordinary tools like imagery, metaphors, contrasts, and structural tools like alliteration shape the poetic corpus effectively. Frequent use of conjunctions makes it appear livelier and more casual. The reader enjoys the talk of the poetic persona easily.

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## 12.4 Glossary

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**Articulation:** The way you express your feelings and ideas

<b>Anthropology:</b>	The science of human beings especially: the study of human beings and their ancestors through time and space and in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations and culture
<b>Borne:</b>	Carried or moved by a particular thing
<b>Catharsis:</b>	The process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions
<b>Clandestine:</b>	Describing something secret
<b>Craftsman:</b>	Craftsman is an artist or someone who is extremely skilled at a trade or an art or craft
<b>Discrimination:</b>	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories
<b>Desolation:</b>	The state of a place that is empty where everything has been destroyed
<b>Grandiose:</b>	Characterized by affectation of grandeur or splendor
<b>Mundane:</b>	Common; ordinary; unimaginative or related to this world
<b>Purgation:</b>	Purification or cleansing
<b>Perplexity:</b>	Inability to deal with or understand something
<b>Poetic-persona:</b>	A persona, from the <i>Latin</i> for mask, a character taken by poet to speak
<b>Reverberate:</b>	Be repeated several times as an echo
<b>Scarcity:</b>	The state of being scarce or short in supply
<b>Sublime:</b>	Of very great excellence or beauty
<b>Slaughterhouse:</b>	A place where animals are slaughtered for food
<b>Ungrateful:</b>	Not feeling or showing gratitude

## 12.5 Sample Questions

### 12.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What does the speaker in the poem want to speak about?

- (a) Love                      (b) Despair  
(c) Ungratefulness      (d) All of these

2. Who does the speaker in the poem prefers to talk?

- (a) Daughter              (b) Mother

- (c) Sister                      (d) None of these
3. Who is the first love of the speaker in the poem?  
(a) Mother                      (b) Daughter  
(c) Sister                      (d) Daughter's daughter
4. What do the women in the poem do while talking?  
(a) Sewing                      (b) Sipping tea  
(c) Sewing and sipping tea    (d) None of these
5. What do the women discuss during their talk?  
(a) Rates of daily needs        (b) Scarcity of things  
(c) Both a and b                (d) None of these
6. How many characters do we have in this poem?  
(a) Three                      (b) Two  
(c) One                         (d) Four
7. Who is of no use according to the poetic persona?  
(a) Son                         (b) Father  
(c) Brother                      (d) Man
8. What style of articulation is employed by the poet in this poem?  
(a) Narrative                      (b) Dialogic  
(c) Conversational                (d) Descriptive
9. What scarcity do the women in the poem discuss?  
(a) Of kerosene                      (b) Of rice  
(c) Of lentils                      (d) Of tea
10. What is the form of the poem you studied by Gauri Deshpande?  
(a) Ballad                      (b) Sonnet  
(c) Free-verse                      (d) Lyric

### **12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What does the title of the poem 'The Female of the Species' suggest?
2. Discuss the theme/s in the poem 'The Female of the Species'.

3. Comment on the structure of the poem in brief.
4. Why do you think the speaker needs somebody to talk to?
5. What do you understand by the term “Catharsis” in the context of this poem? Discuss with examples from the text.

### **12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Discuss the “Woman Question” in Gauri Deshpande’s poem ‘The Female of the Species’ in the light of feminine approach and reality.
2. Comment on the poetic sensibility and poetic craft in the poem ‘The Female of the Species’.
3. How do you substantiate the view, “Gauri Deshpande seems to be lost in the dark forest of relationships” in her poem ‘The Female of the Species’?

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## **12.6 Suggested Readings**

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## Unit - 13: Brief History of the Short Story in India

### Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Brief History of the Short Story in India
  - 13.2.1 Short Story in Ancient India
  - 13.2.2 Short Story in Medieval India
  - 13.2.3 Short Story in Modern India
  - 13.2.4 Popular Short Stories from India
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### 13.0 Introduction

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India is a rich country when it comes to tales. It never had dearth of stories to inspire its people, teach them life lessons, and dictate them to do good and abstain from evil. Its tradition of oral stories goes back to time immemorial. At global level, stories existed in many forms such as anecdote, myth, fairytale, ballad, and parable. For example, “The Thousand and One Nights” (Arabian Nights), “Longes mac n-Uislenn” or “The Canterbury Tales” have enchanted us for centuries. As humans, we all like stories. We have grown up listening to stories of kings, queens, ghosts, heroes, and fairies. Stories are also a part of moral teachings, especially for children. Mothers and grandmothers use stories to feed children and to make them go to sleep. Bedtime stories are very popular among children. Animal and natural bodies such as sun and moon are major characters in such stories. In the oral tradition of literature, many stories have been passed on from generation to generation. Human beings can create stories out of almost everything. Stories are not only entertaining and inspiring but also used to impart moral teachings in many religions. In India, the *Jataka tales* and *Panchatantra* stories are rooted in moral and spiritual teachings. Short story as a present day genre of fiction has tale, anecdote, parable and legend as

its predecessors—all have existed with a variety of names in oral traditions of various languages and cultures across the world. Anecdote is a story about person or event. Myth is a story from the past mostly about Gods and courage. They often explain natural or historical events. Parable is a story that gives moral teachings. The stories told by Jesus in Bible are parables. The story about fairies, magic etc. is termed as fairytale. Legend is an unverifiable story about mythical or supernatural beings or events.

Short story has appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as the new genre. Short story writers blend their personal experiences and imagination to write stories. American fiction writer Edgar Allan Poe defines short story in his essay, ‘The Philosophy of Composition’, as “A short story should be read in one sitting, anywhere from a half hour to two hours.” Short story is normally comprised of series of events with only one effect and full of interesting diction. It is a short piece of narration. It is a genre of literature which is very popular throughout the world. It is supposedly one of the oldest forms of literature. They have existed in most of the human languages of the world.

In this Unit, we will discuss the history of short story in India, including the tradition of storytelling in ancient India, its traces in medieval India and its latest practices in modern India. Moreover, a survey of popular short stories from India included a separate section to benefit the readers. The learners can also find more comprehensive details about prominent Indian short story writers in other units of this course.

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## 13.1 Objectives

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The objectives of studying this unit are as follows:

- To understand short story as a distinct genre of literature
- To know the Indian traditions of storytelling
- To explore various Indian tales from the ancient time
- To appreciate the Indian storytelling practices from different regional cultures
- To learn about tales that originated in India and travelled across the world through oral traditions and translations
- To become aware of popular short stories from India

- To know modern and contemporary short story writers from India

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## 13.2 Brief History of the Short Story in India

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Storytelling is a popular practice in India right from the ancient times. Tales and myths are used by its people, who spoke various languages and dialects, to pass on life lessons, share thoughts and express emotions. The tradition of narrating and writing stories for a variety of purposes continues to date. In this section, we shall study the history of short story in India—its development from ancient times to modern days. At the same time, we shall also find out about popular short stories from India.

### 13.2.1 Short Story in Ancient India:

India has given a treasure of beautiful stories to the world of literature. The *Indian Jataka tales*, *Panchtantra*, and *Katha-saritsagara* are among the forerunners of the modern short story in the Indian context. However, a grand story or *Brahat-katha* remains essential source for many later tales and fables in India.

#### The Brahmanas

Earliest stories in India are traced back to The Brahmanas (900–700 BCE), a collection of prose commentaries serving as appendixes to the Vedas. Out of these commentaries, a few are didactic parables and legends such as the “Bharadvaja” story about seeking knowledge.

#### Jataka Tales

A more refined collection of stories comes from the Pali language as Jataka tales. The Pali language is popular for being the language of Tipitaka, the canon of the Theravada branch of Buddhism. The stories, which belong to sacred Buddhist literature, are set in or around Benares in modern day Uttar Pradesh. Some of these tales depict incarnations of Gautama Buddha in human or animal forms. Dating back to 300 BCE – 400 CE, around 550 tales have been recorded. These interesting stories, with a religious form and ethical motive rooted in Buddhism, aim at spreading practical wisdom. The story titled ‘The Monkey’s Heart’ from Jataka tales gives the wisdom that “Great is your body, verily, but how much smaller is your wit!” Also, a famous learning that “A wise enemy is better than a foolish friend” has come from the story ‘The Mosquito and the



Carpenter'. The Jataka tales have inspired Indian writers of each era and penetrated into various regional literatures.

### **Brahat-katha**

*Brahat-katha*, a collection of tales written originally in Prakrit inspired by the Buddhist sources, is a well-known *katha* (stories) preserved in various forms from the ancient period. The work was composed by Gunadhya during the Satavahana period between 200 BCE to 300 CE. Though its original text is lost, retellings of the tales in Sanskrit survived and passed on to generation after generation. Legend goes that Gunadhya wrote down as many as seven lakh stories in a dialect of Prakrit with his own blood. The king of his time refused to acknowledge his work. In his desperation, Gunadhya began offering his stories to the God of fire. The matter was brought to the king's attention, who then rushed to save those stories. By the time the king reached the spot, around six lakh stories were already burnt. The king saved remaining one lakh, and those stories became popular as *Brahat-katha*. A few notable *Brahat-katha* versions in Sanskrit are: *Panchatantra*, a collection of fables; Budhasvamin's *Brhatkathaslokaṃgraha* of 7<sup>th</sup> century, Somadeva's *Katha-saritsagara* in 11<sup>th</sup> century; Sivadasa's *Vetala-pancaviṃśati* of 11<sup>th</sup> century, a collection of tales involving ghost or spirit; *Sukasaptati* from 12<sup>th</sup> century, a anthology of stories narrated by a woman to her pet parrot; and *Simhasana-dvātrim-satika* from 13<sup>th</sup> century, a bunch of tales about courage and compassion of emperor Vikramaditya.

### **Panchatantra Tales**

A world-renown collection of Indian tales is *Panchatantra*, which dates back to 100 BCE–500 CE. Stories from *Panchatantra*, which itself has been inspired by *Brahatkatha*, have travelled far and wide. The Sanskrit word “panch” means five. This collection comprises five books of about 87 animal and magic tales believed to have been compiled in Kashmir. These tales are aimed at educating the sons of nobility and royalty. Like Jataka stories, Panchatantra tales are considered some of the oldest fables preserved from ancient time and told to children as bedtime stories across the world.

This collection of moralistic tales with animal characters that amuse and instruct are akin to those of “Aesop” fables in the Greek tradition. The actual name of the author of these tales is not known but a translation in Arabic done in about 750 CE attributes the tales to an Indian sage named Bidpai or “Vidyapati” in Sanskrit, which means a scholar at the royal court. These tales were translated in the sixth century into Pahlavi—the Iranian language of the Zoroastrian

literature or middle Persian—by a royal physician named Burzoe. His work along with his translation could not survive. However, a Syriac translation and an Arabic translation by Ibn al-Muqaffa have survived. The Arabic translation goes with the name “Kalīlah wa Dimnah”. This al-Muqaffa’s translation is named after the two jackals that appear in the very first story in the collection.

### **13.2.2 Short Story in Medieval India:**

The medieval period, which is classified by historians between 700 AD and 1857 AD, has witnessed different rulers ruling over various parts of the Indian subcontinent. Among these rulers, the Slave Dynasty, the Mughal Empire and the British Empire are worth mentioning. These rulers—foreign to the subcontinent—brought new languages and cultures. The two major languages, Persian and English, have not only become new source of expression and techniques but also left lasting impressions on local languages and cultures. Yet native writers continue to produce poetry, prose and fiction in vernacular languages while also experimenting with foreign languages. In addition, the influence of Brahat-katha, Jataka tales and Panchatantra fables spread to the medieval era and beyond.

#### **Panchatantra & its translations**

The Arabic translation of *Panchatantra* paved the way for these tales to reach Europe in the form of folklores and influenced fable writers of medieval times. A version of *Panchatantra* tales that exists in Europe dates back to 11<sup>th</sup> century. These tales in Europe are popular with the name “The Fables of Bidpai”. Another version in Hebrew, which is produced by Rabbi Joel, appeared in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and led to most of the European versions of these tales. A German translation titled “Das Buch der Beispiele” appeared in 15<sup>th</sup> century. Around the same time, Persian author Vaiz Kashifi translated “Kalilah-wa-Damnah” as “Anwar-e-Suhayli” for Persian readers. This Persian translation led to a Turkish translation “Humayun-namah” in 17<sup>th</sup> century. These ancient fables continue their journey to many other parts of the world, lure children and inspire adults.

#### **Katha-Saritsagara**

Somadeva, an 11<sup>th</sup> century Sanskrit writer from Kashmir, had penned folklore that were popular from the ancient time as a series of tales upon the order of King Ananta. Written to amuse the queen Suryamati, the collection of stories titled “Katha-Saritsagara” were said to have

been borrowed from Gunadhya's lost work *Brahat-katha*. *Katha-saritsagara* is a monumental work comprising 18 books. Each book has a number of tales spun together for two possible reasons: either they are narrated to same persons or revolve around their adventures. These noblemen are believed to be the King of Kosambi Udayana and his son Naravahanadatta. Somadeva's tales—divided into 124 sections known as *taranga*—have similarities to the European medieval fairy tales. *Katha-saritsagara* has been translated into English as 'The Ocean of Story' by Charles H. Tawney and it appeared in 1924-28.

### **Vetalapancavimsati / Baital Pachisi**

*Vetalapancavimsati* or *Baital Pachisi* is a collection of twenty-five tales of the corpse-possessing spirit dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The earliest known version of *Vetalapancavimsati* in Sanskrit is by Sivadasa. This anthology of tales is full of riddles and proverbial verses. Its earliest version appears in the 12<sup>th</sup> book of *Kathasaritsagara*. Written as a framing narrative, it is about a king and his quest to capture the vampire or ghost called "Vetal" or "Baital". The vampire tricks the king into assisting an ascetic perform a necromantic ritual in a cremation ground. The king is tested with bringing a corpse hanging on a tree nearby. In order to help pass the time, Vetal tells stories to the king and each story ends with a riddle which must be solved by the king. Failing to solve the riddle leads to defeat and death of the king. The cycle of story after story continues and eventually the king fails to solve a riddle and walks away in silence. Hence Vetal helps the king outwit the ascetic and saves his life.

### **Hitopadesha**

*Hitopadesha* is a collection of stories containing advice for the welfare of everyone. This work from the 12<sup>th</sup> century is considered to have been written by Narayana. Popular in Bengal, these tales appear to be an independent interpretation of the Panchatantra fables or similar to it. The term "Hitopadesha" is a combination of 'Hita' and 'Upadesha' which mean benefit or welfare and counsel or advice respectively. Written originally in Sanskrit in a reader-friendly manner, these stories have gained much popularity. *Hitopadesha* fables, which had been translated into various languages, help children become responsible adults. Some of the popular stories from *Hitopadesha* are: *Old Tiger and Greedy Traveller*, *Blind Vulture*, *Birds and Shivering Monkeys*, *Elephant and Jackal*, *Beware of Mean Friends*, *Washerman Donkey and Dog*, and *Jackal and Arrow*.

## **Burrakatha / Jangam Katha**

*Burrakatha* or *burra katha* are names for an art of storytelling in the Telugu culture. It is known with various names within the Telugu speaking belt— *Saradakatha* or *Tamboorakatha* in Telengana, *Jangam Katha* in coastal Andhra, and *Suddulu* or *Tandana Katha* in Rayalaseema. The word ‘burra’ or ‘tambura’ means a musical instrument like veena. The nomadic tribes of Jangam used ‘burra’ to narrate stories which were mostly mythological and religious. As a tool for special occasions, *burrakatha* performers entertain their audience with stories from classical Indian texts about kings, queens, and men of bravery and honor. In this tradition of storytelling, performance takes precedence over the story itself. In pre-Independence period, this art has been used by the Communists to resist colonial oppression.

## **Dastangoi**

*Dastangoi* is an art of storytelling which dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Persian term *dastangoi* comprises ‘dastan’ (epic) and ‘goi’ (tell). These medieval romances—*dastan* recited or read aloud orally—were tales of warfare, magic and adventure. For its theme and content, the narrator of dastan often borrowed from other sources such as Panchatantra, Arabian Nights, Rumi’s Masnavi, etc. The 16<sup>th</sup> century saw the evolution of the Persian style of dastan. It was naturally absorbed in Urdu though with few modifications. The dastan of Amir Hamza, narrating life and adventures of him, remains one of the popular dastans. The known print version of Dastan-e-Amir Hamza in 46 volumes dates back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though *dastangoi* emerged in the medieval period, this oral art of storytelling continues to entertain the audience even today.

### ***Check your Progress***

1. What is *Panchatantra*?
2. What does *Hitopadesha* mean?
3. Which is the popular *dastan* from 19<sup>th</sup> century?

### **13.2.3 Short Story in Modern India:**

In India, modern period historically begins after 1857. It was the time of the British Raj. The Britishers brought English, its literature and culture to the subcontinent. Modernism in Indian literature is considered to have begun from 1920s. In 1930s, Marxist literary efforts gained

momentum with the aim of highlighting social reality in literature and rejecting literary decorum. The publication of ‘Angarey’, an anthology in Urdu, not only irked the British government in 1932 but also tickled the sensibilities of traditional readership. In 1936, the Progressive Writers Association was founded in Lucknow, and later many such outfits sprung up in various regions of the country. For instance, Hindi short story writer Premchand and Urdu short story writers Saadat Hasan Manto and Ismat Chughtai had close associations with the Progressives. Though Indian writers adopted short story as a new genre, they also contributed to its development in their own ways. Modern litterateurs from various regional languages of India have produced short stories—some experimented with the form while others innovated local flavors in content and style. As in Europe, short stories in the literary form in India have also received much needed momentum from magazines. Most of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century short stories of India are inspired from folktales, legends, and parables. The early Indian English writers had to learn the English language and portray effectively contemporary Indian society to the readers. In modern Indian short stories, common man gained a special place and mundane things filled background in a beautiful manner. Stories of Tagore, Senapati and Manto, are a few example of the uniqueness of the form and style.

Though the modern period is considered to have started from 1920s, a host of writers from different regional languages already began writing short stories. Odia writer Fakir Mohan Senapati was the first Indian to give the short story its modern look. He published ‘Lachamania’ in 1868. In Bangla, the first short stories to have appeared were ‘Modhumati’ by Purna Chandra Chattopadhyaya in 1873, ‘Yugalabguriya’ by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in 1874, and ‘Bhikharini’ by Rabindranath Tagore in 1877. Tagore not only wrote around 118 stories—which were published in three volumes—but also introduced a few essential features of short story writing. Among his contemporaries were Probhat Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, Jaladhar Sen, Suresh Chandra Samajpati, Hemendra Prasad Ghose, Dinendra Kumar Roy, and Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay. In English, the first collections of short stories written by Indian authors—Shoshee Chunder Dutt and Sourindra Mohan Tagore—were published in 1885. Dutt wrote *Realities of Indian Life* while Tagore penned *The Times of Yore*. In 1898, Kamala Sathianandhan published *Stories from Indian Christian Life*. Sajjad Haider’s short story in Urdu appeared in 1900 in ‘Maarif’ magazine. In Tamil, Bharathiyar or Subramania Bharathi was the first to publish a short story titled ‘Tulasibhai’ in 1905. However, some regard ‘Kulathangarai Arasamaram’ written by Va.Ve.Su. Iyer as the first modern short story in Tamil. While

Bharathi's stories had more dimensions, Iyer short fiction was better in structure. In Telugu, Gurajada Apparao's short story 'Diddubatu' appeared in monthly magazine *Andhra Bharati* in 1910. Apparao is considered as the foremost contributor of short story in Telugu. He penned five short stories, including ever-popular 'Mi Peremiti'. In Hindi, 'Usne Kaha Tha' by Chandradhar Sharma Guleri is regarded as the first short story. Originally published in 1915, the story is a realistic portrayal of Sikh soldiers in the French trenches in the First World War. Meanwhile, Sane Guruji contributed 'Gode Goshti' (Sweet Stories) in Marathi. There are many such instances of short story appearing in numerous other regional Indian languages.

When it comes to women, they too started writing short stories very early. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Cornelia Sorabji published four short story collections including *Love and Life Behind the Purdan* (1901), *Sunbabies* (1904) and *Between the Twilights* (1908). Indian critic M.K. Naik regards Cornelia Sorabji as the first woman English short story writer. Though she was an advocate by profession from Kolkata, Sorabji wrote stories in an impressive manner.

After 1920, the Indian short story in English witnessed another momentum. At this time Shankar Ram wrote his short story collection *The Children of Kaveri* (1926). Social reforms were one of the major needs of writers of this time. Mahatma Gandhi had come to India and become active in the freedom struggle movement. Many people, including writers were among his followers. The writers took inspiration from his speeches and deeds. This period was rightly termed the Gandhian era. During this period A.S.P. Ayer, S.K. Chettur, K.S. Venkataramani and C. Nagarajan along with many other writers wrote about social reforms in society. The Indian writers became critical of the traditions and some short story writers started to focus on it through their writings. The big-trio of fiction—Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao—have also given fresh momentum to short story genre in the country. They were driven by the nationalist movement and contributed through their works in their own way. While Rao experimented with the form, Anand presented a vision of India and Narayan explored Indian life and reality. The trio depicted the cultural clash, which was prevalent, and it was closely examined in their creative works. Anand employs a variety of narrative moods, persons, social surroundings, and colors of life. He also criticizes evils like child marriage, patriarchy, untouchability, lack of sanitation and cruelty in society. Apart from the trio, writes such as

Khawaja Ahmed Abbas, Manjeri S. Isvaran, Louis Gracious and Ela Sen also immensely contributed to the nationalist movement through their stories.

The Indian writers yet to move to post-Independence phase when suddenly the Partition happened. As a mammoth historical event—full of bloodshed and human suffering—the partition became a source for thousands of stories in various languages including English, Urdu and Hindi. Manto produced numerous short stories on the theme of Partition. He showed the inhumane side of humans in his stories *Khol Do*, *Thanda Gosth*, *Tetwal Ka Kutta*, etc. Besides Manto, a host of other writers produced stories about the Partition. Some of them are: Khushwant Singh, Bhisham Sahni, Salman Rushdie, Amrita Pritam, Manohar Malgonkar, Chaman Nahal, Kamleshwar and Amitav Ghosh.

After Independence, the vision and perception of many writers changed. They had studied and stayed abroad and were influenced by the Western philosophy. Among the later twentieth century Indian short story writers are Anita Desai, Khushwant Singh, R.P. Jhabwala, Ruskin Bond, Manoj Das, Arun Joshi, Shashi Deshpande, Rohinton Mistry. These writers have discussed various issues like problems of alienation, negative sides of democracy system, woman hood, poor social condition of India, human psychological problems etc. For instance, Kushwant Singh, G.D. Khosla, and Attia Hossain reflected on economic development of the country as well. In the meantime, writers such as Jhabwala, Bunny Reuben, Ruskin Bond, Bhabani Bhattacharya took a satirical and paradoxical view of various issues in post-Independent India. Short story writers from 1970s and 80s—Keki N. Daruwalla, Padma Hejmadi, Anita Desai, Kamala Das, Hamdi Bey, Arun Joshi, Malgaonkar—dealt with effects of modernization and globalization on small town life while also throwing light on human psyche, politics, etc. Also emerged in 1960s a new Dalit writer named Baburao Bagul, who with his first collection of stories in Marathi titled *Jevha Mi Jat Chorali* (When I Concealed My Caste), gave an impetus to Dalit literature. Rohinton Mistry came up with his first book *Tales from Firozsha Baag* in 1987. It is a collection of 11 short stories revolving around life of residents of a Parsi-dominated apartment complex. Short story further developed at the hands of writers such as Amit Chaudhuri, Anita Nair, Farrukh Dhondy, Githa Hariharan, Shiv K. Kumar, Vikram Chandra, etc. An Assamese writer Jahnabi Barua used short story genre to highlight the social scenario in Assam, especially in her collection of short stories *Next Door*. Ratan Lal Basu's stories reflect the conditions of tribal people from West Bengal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal.

The short story is the oldest and the richest form of literature in India. The modern short story has been immensely enriched by writers from Senapati, Tagore, Haider and Apparao to Anand, Narayan, Rao, Singh, Joshi, Bhattacharya, Chatterjee, Sehgal, Abbas, Nair, Dhondy, Hariharan, Kumar. Women short story writers such as Anita Desai, Anjana Appachana, Ashapura Devi, C.S. Lakshmi, Chitra Banerjee Diwakaruni, Ismat Chughtai, Indira Goswami, Janice Pariat, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kamala Das, Mahashweta Devi, Qurratulain Hyder, Shashi Deshpande, Urmila Pawar, and many more have incredibly contributed a lot to the short story in India. The Indian short story writers are known for their deep understanding, the pure expression of life experiences, style, variety and innovativeness. These writers have adopted the genre and improvised on its form and style. It can be said that the Indian short story serves as a powerful vehicle of social awareness and a tool of painting the Indian social scene.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who are big-trio of fiction in Indian English literature?
2. Name any short story of Manto.
3. Who wrote 'Poisoned Bread' short story?

#### **13.2.4 Popular Short Stories:**

By now it is clear that Indian stories are popular within the country and beyond it. A collection of world's greatest stories published by Jaico Books places 'The Lost Child' by Mulk Raj Anand from India. Another anthology titled "100 World's Greatest Short Stories" gives space to a short story written by Tagore. However, let us refer to a few popular short stories which are often prescribed by Indian universities and colleges in their syllabi.

Tagore's story in Bangla *Kabuliwala* appeared in 1892. It is a tale of a man from Afghanistan who lives in Kolkata. The story helped in shaping a romantic image of Afghans among the Indian readers. Fakir Mohan published his Odia story *Rebati* in 1898. It is a story of a young girl from a backward village who wishes to get education in a conservative Odia society at time of a Cholera epidemic. The story revolves around the relationship between Rebati and a school teacher. Another story of Senapati titled *Lachmania* is about Rajput lady Lachhama, her husband Badal Singh, and their romance in the backdrop of the political tussle amid the Mughals and Marathas in Odisha. Vasanavikriti, a short story written by Malayalam writer Vengayil



Kunhiraman Nayanar, appeared in 1891. It is a story of a thief named Ikkandavaryakurupu, who serves jail term of 6 months and plans to have a good life after the return from jail. Premchand published a short story in Hindustani titled 'Idgah' in 1933. It is a story of an orphan child Hamid and his emotional bond with grandma Amina. Mulk Raj Anand published a short story titled *The Lost Child* in 1934. It is a story about a little child, who goes to the fair with his parents but gets lost there. Raja Rao's short story *Companions*, which appeared in 1947, is Sufiana tale with a parable pitch. R.K. Narayan's short stories titled *Malgudi Days* have gained a lot of popularity. There are about 32 stories—each of which portrays a facet of life in the fictional town of Malgudi. Manto's story *Toba Tek Singh* is about inmates of an asylum in Lahore, a few them are to be transferred to India after the Partition. Published in 1955, the Urdu story satires the India-Pakistan relationship. *We have arrived in Amritsar* by Punjabi author Bhisham Sahani is a story set just before the Partition wherein the characters are enroute to Amritsar in a train.

In post-Partition era, a number of stories have become popular. Malayalam writer V.M. Basheer's story *The Snake and the Mirror* is about a young doctor's encounter with a snake presented in a very humorous manner. His other story, *The Card Sharper's Daughter*, is about three characters—Ottakkannan Pokker, his daughter Sainaba and his daughter's lover Mandan Muthappa. Anita Desai's story titled *A Devoted Son* reflects contemporary urban life in the country. It appeared in 1978. Published in 1983, Kannada writer U.R. Anantha Murthy's *The Sky and the Cat* is a collection of short stories. It not only indicts tradition but also explores incendiary politics, relationships and various facets of life. Dalit writer Badhu Madhav's short story 'Poisoned Bread' is about a subjugated yet awakened Dalit child who voices his views and registers his protest against humiliation meted out to him and his grandfather. The story was published in 1992. *Draupadi* is a story about Dopdi Mehjen, a Robin Hood-like character from the Santhal tribe of West Bengal. The story, written by Mahasweta Devi, came out in 1997. Telugu writer Abburi Chaya Devi published her story *Bonsai Life* in 2012. The story is a plea to educate girls so as to free them from their 'bonsai life'.

In addition to the above stories, a list of some short story writers awarded by Sahitya Akademi under Short Stories category would add to the knowledge of the learners.

<b>Short Stories Collection</b>	<b>Name of Author</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Awarded</b>
<i>Golam</i>	Saurabh Kumar Chaliha	Assamese	1974
<i>Panchashati Galpa</i>	Atin Bandyopadhyaya	Bengali	2001
<i>Gwthenay Lamayao Gwdan Agan</i>	Dharanidhar Owari	Bodo	2020
<i>Badnami Di Chhan</i>	Ram Nath Shastri	Dogri	1976
<i>Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra</i>	Ruskin Bond	English	1992
<i>Anchao</i>	Mohan Parmar	Gujarati	2011
<i>Mohan Das</i>	Uday Prakash	Hindi	2010
<i>Krouncha Pakshigalu</i>	Vaidehi	Kannada	2009
<i>Sat Sangar</i>	Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din	Kashmiri	1958
<i>Athang</i>	Jayanti Naik	Konkani	2004
<i>Gachh Roosal Achhi</i>	Kamalkant Jha	Maithili	2020
<i>Jappana Ppukayila</i>	G.V. Kakkanadan	Malayalam	2005
<i>Ngamkheigee Wangmada</i>	Budhichandra Heisnamba	Manipuri	2018
<i>Aalok</i>	Asaram Lomate	Marathi	2016
<i>Kina Royeu Upamaa</i>	Lok Nath Upadhyay Chapagain	Nepali	2018
<i>Manojdasank Katha O Kahini</i>	Manoj Das	Odia	1972
<i>Aam Khass</i>	Gurdev Singh Rupana	Punjabi	2020
<i>Bareek Baat</i>	Ramsawroop Kisan	Rajasthani	2019
<i>Anabheepsitam</i>	Prashasya Mitra Shastri	Sanskrit	2009
<i>Sisirjali</i>	Kali Charan Hembram	Santhali	2019
<i>Jeejal</i>	Ishwar Moorjani	Sindhi	2019
<i>Appavin Snehidar</i>	Ashokamitran	Tamil	1996
<i>Tana Margam</i>	Abburi Chayadevi	Telugu	2005
<i>Dakhma</i>	Baig Ehsas	Urdu	2017

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### 13.3 Learning Outcomes

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After studying this Unit, students will be able to:

- Understand the tradition of storytelling

- Know the various sources of tales and fables in the country
- Explore the development of short story in India
- Distinguish between short story traditions from various Indian states
- Identify different popular short stories from India
- Understand a brief history of short story in India

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## 13.4 Glossary

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**Myth:** A story told from ancient times and transferred down through history. It is often transferred through oral tradition

**Fairy tale:** A type of short story that consists stories of fairies and their imaginary world

**Ballad:** A form of verse which can be sung with the help of music

**Parable:** A short story meant to teach some truth, religious principle or moral lesson

**Fable:** A short tale to teach a moral lesson. It is accompanied with animals or inanimate objects as characters

**Anecdote:** A short story regarding an incident or event, especially of an interesting or amusing nature

**Hitopdesha:** A collection of Sanskrit fables in prose and verse meant for teaching the young Princes

**Jataka tales:** A body of literature and stories comprising accounts of previous lives of the Buddha

**Panchatantra:** An ancient Indian collection of interrelated animal fables in verse and prose

**Genre:** A class or category of literature having a particular form, content, technique or thelike

**Legend:** Stories of great people

**Folktale:** Stories originating and traditional among a people or folk

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## 13.5 Sample Questions

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### 13.5.1 Objective Questions:

Answer the following in one sentence each:

1. What do you understand by the term *katha*?
2. When did the short story emerge as a new genre?
3. What is a fable?
4. What is a parable?
5. What is a legend?
6. What does *brahat-katha* mean?
7. Mention any one tale from Jataka.
8. How many books *Katha-saritsagara* has?
9. Write the name of any one translation of Panchatantra tales.
10. Who was the first modern Indian writer to publish a short story?

#### **13.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Write a note on *Panchatantra*.
2. What do you understand by *Hitopdesha*?
3. Briefly discuss *Dastangoi*?
4. What does *Burra Katha* mean? Explain.
5. Write a short note on any two modern short story writers.

#### **13.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Critically examine the development of short story during modern period in India.
2. Compare short story traditions in the ancient and medieval period.
3. Write a detailed account on *Brahatkatha*.

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### **13.6 Suggested Readings**

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## Unit - 14: Prominent Short Story Writers in Indian Literature

### Structure

- 14.0 Introduction
- 14.1 Objectives
- 14.2 Prominent Short Story Writers in Indian Literature
  - 14.2.1 Munshi Premchand (1880-1936)
  - 14.2.2 V.M. Basheer (1908-1995)
  - 14.2.3 Manik Bandopadhyay (1908-1956)
  - 14.2.4 Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955)
  - 14.2.5 Anna Bhau Sathe (1920-1969)
  - 14.2.6 Akhtar Mohiuddin (1928-2001)
  - 14.2.7 Saurav Kumar Chaliha (1930-2011)
  - 14.2.8 Madhurantakam Rajaram (1930-1999)
  - 14.2.9 Baig Ehsas (1948-)
- 14.3 Learning Outcomes
- 14.4 Glossary
- 14.5 Sample Questions
- 14.6 Suggested Readings

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### 14.0 Introduction

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Stories are integral to our existence as *Homo sapiens* and social animals. Take any source such as Mahabharata, Bible or Quran—which have existed for thousands of years—contain stories, based on real incidents or imaginary or a combination of both. We have always listened to stories and enjoyed them in our own mother tongues. What we call today as ‘short story’ is a genre and recently developed form of fiction in contemporary parlance.

India being a hub of languages has variety of regional literatures. These literatures in regional languages possess a rich repertoire of stories. In our country, we have been benefitted from our own collection of tales including *Panchatantra*, *Jataka*, *Hitopadesh*, *Bruhat Katha*, *Dashkumar Charit*, etc. Ever since English was introduced in India, efforts have been made by

writers from various linguistic backgrounds to bring stories from regional languages into a vast canon of English literature.

In this unit, we shall have an overview of regional short story writers and read in detail about some of the prominent short story writers, including Premchand, Manto, Basheer, Bandopadhyay, Sathe, Mohiuddin, Chaliha, Rajaram, and Ehsas. We shall learn some of their works in other units of this course. A few more names of short fiction writers from different regions are provided here for a broader picture:

- Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)
- Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-918)
- K.A. Abbas (1914-1987)
- Gopinath Mohanty (1914-1991)
- Mahim Bora (1924-2016)
- Iqbal Mateen (1929-2015)
- Manoj Das (1934-)
- Dilip Purushottam Chitre (1938-2009)
- Kiliroor Radhakrishnan (1944-)
- Manzoor Ahtesham (1948-)
- Om Prakash Valmiki (1950-2013)
- Pundalik Naik (1952-)

In this Unit, the focus remains on some of the prominent master craftsmen of stories in regional languages. They are award-winning story writers representing different cultures of the country. At the same time, we shall learn about Indian short story writers in English and women short story writers in other Units of this course.

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## 14.1 Objectives

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This unit aims to:

- Provide an overview of Indian short story writers from regional languages.
- Introduce some of the prominent short story writers in Indian literature.

- Familiarize learners with works, themes, contributions, etc. of some of the prominent short story writers from Indian literature.

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## 14.2 Prominent Short Story Writers in Indian Literature

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Indian literature has a range of literary masters who enchanted masses with their stories. A few of the prominent short story writers in Indian literature have been discussed below:

### 14.2.1 Munshi Premchand (1880-1936):

Dhanpat Rai, popularly known in the literary world of Urdu and Hindi as Munshi Premchand, was born in a small village of Lamahi in eastern part of Uttar Pradesh. He passed matriculation in 1898 and joined as a government teacher in 1900. It was in 1904 that he qualified teacher's training examination from Allahabad University and completed B.A. from the same university in 1919. During the peak years of India's struggle for freedom, precisely in 1921, he resigned from his government job as a mark of protest against the British Rule.

He was a prolific writer who initially wrote in Urdu with a penname 'Nawab Rai' and later switched to Hindi for a wider audience and adopted another *nom de plume* 'Premchand'. 'Munshi' was his honorific initial. He dedicated his whole life for writing and championing the cause of oppressed and marginalized people of the country.

He initially got influenced by Gandhian ideals but later joined Left-inclined Progressive Writers' Association. He was elected as its first president. While delivering presidential address in the Association's first conference in Lucknow in 1936, he expounded on purpose of a writer in the society. He inspired a whole generation of progressive writers, including Ali Sardar Jafri, Krishan Chander, Kaifi Azmi, etc.

In a literary plane, he retains the position of being one of the most prolific Hindi fiction writers of pre-Independence era. He had a unique style—an expression evolved from a combination of Urdu and Hindi. He produced more than ten novels and around 250 short stories in his lifetime. He can be regarded as one of the foremost literary geniuses in short fiction in India. In 1908, he published *Soz-e-Watan*, a collection of short stories criticizing prevailing conditions in colonial India. Some of his famous short stories are 'Kafan', 'Namak Ka Daroga',

‘Eidgah’, ‘Panch Parmeshwar’ (*Holy Panchayat*), ‘Zewar Ka Dibba’, ‘Bade Ghar Ki Beti’, and ‘Gilli-danda’.

His other notable works are: ‘Godaan’, ‘Gaban’, ‘Karmbhumi’, ‘Sevasadan’, ‘Rangbhoomi’, ‘Shatranj Ke Khiladi’, and ‘Nirmala’. Besides his short stories, his two popular novels are ‘Godan’ and ‘Rangabhomi’.

***Check your Progress***

1. In which year Munshi Premchand was born?
2. Who was the first president of Progressive Writers’ Association?
3. In which year *Soz-e-Watan* was published?

**14.2.2 V.M. Basheer (1908-1995):**

Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, popularly known as V.M. Basheer in Indian literary circles, is affectionately called ‘Beypore Sultan’. He was born in a timber merchant’s house in Vaikom, Kerala. He was a prolific writer, freedom fighter and spellbinding storyteller. At sixteen, he was enchanted by Mahatma Gandhi’s call for *Satyagraha* and ran away from his hometown to Malabar to take part in the nationalist movement. He was imprisoned twice in his life for anti-British activities, editing *Ujjivanam* journal and participating in *Salt Satyagraha*.

His stories are shaped by his sour and colourful experiences, a great deal of which he gathered while struggling for survival in his own state and travelling across the country and even going abroad. Being a keen observer of things around him, Basheer not only saw numerous characteristics among human beings but also created various characters from thick and thin of life. He added humor to his stories while narrating tales of poverty, hunger, love, and survival in his unique colloquial style which had no parallel in Malayalam literature. He brings local dialect of Malayalee Muslims into his stories.

He began writing for survival. His initial stories appeared in *Jayakesari*, a local newspaper. With the publication of his first story ‘Ente Thankam’, he set a realistic tone and style of his own. His literary career boosted with ‘Premalekhanam’, a novel having humorous love story and sharp criticism of religious conservatism and dowry. Later he came up with



another novel 'Balyakalasakhi', a tragic love story which is considered his *magnum opus*. Among his popular works are: 'Birthday', 'Tiger', 'The Card Sharper's Daughter', 'The Snake and the Mirror', 'Itiyan Panikker', 'My Grandad Had an Elephant', and 'Love Letter'.

His stories have been translated into various Indian languages. He was honored with numerous awards including Padma Shri, Sahitya Akademi Fellowship and Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award. With his power-of-pen, Basheer attained a position where his name became synonymous with Malayalam literature in modern times.

#### **14.2.3 Manik Bandopadhyay (1908-1956):**

Prabodh Kumar Bandhopaddhay is popularly known with pennames of Manik Bandhopaddhay and Manik Banerjee. He was born in a small town of Dumka in Bihar's Santal Parganas district to Harihar Bandhopadhyay and Neeroda Devi. He received his education in Bengal, studying in Midnapore Zilla School, Bankura's Welleslyan Mission College and Calcutta's Presidency College. Loss of mother at his early age affected him. This had bearing on his works at later stages. His academic expertise was in Mathematics. He worked as headmaster of Mymensingh Teacher's Training School. In 1940s, he joined Communist Party in Bengal. He worked for the government as Publicity Secretary.

It was his poverty, social conditions and personal experiences that compelled him to write. In 1935, he published his first short story 'Atasimami'. In the same year, he published two novels 'Janani' and 'Dibaratrir Kavya'. As a Bengali short story writer and novelist of repute, Manik produced around two hundred short stories and thirty four novels in a literary career spanning almost three decades. Instead of giving romantic pictures of Indian village lives in his fiction, he explored truth of existence and layers of human psyche through his characters. He was influenced by Adler, Jung, and Freud. His writings also show his inclination towards Marxism and Socialism.

Among his popular stories are 'Ajkal Parashur Galpa', 'Atasimami', 'Bandyopadhyay Shrestha Galpa', 'Halud Poda', 'Manik', 'Pheriwala', 'Pragaitihatik', 'Samudrer Svad', and 'Sarisp'. Some of his famous novels are 'Arogya', 'Chatushkone', 'Chihna', 'Dibaratrir Kavya', 'Janani', 'Padma Nadir Majhi', 'Putul Nacher Itikatha', 'Sarvajanin', and 'Shahartali'.

#### 14.2.4 Saadat Hasan Manto (1912-1955):

Saadat Hasan Manto was an extraordinary Urdu short story writer. He was born in Samrala of Punjab's Ludhiana. He lived through a depressing phase of India's history at Bombay and migrated to Pakistan after its creation. He came to Bombay in early 1930s in search of livelihood. He enrolled for graduation in Aligarh Muslim University and joined Indian Progressive Writers' Association (IPWA). His career in writing started with publications in newspapers and magazines. He wrote scripts for films and also worked for All India Radio to produce radio scripts.

In his early days of writing, he not only read and admired French short story writer Guy de Maupassant but also translated Victor Hugo's *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* as 'Sarguzasht-e-Aseer'. In his career spanning two decades as a writer, journalist and script writer for films and radio, Manto produced about 22 collections of short stories, 5 collections of plays for radio, 3 collections of essays, 2 collections of *khaka* and a novel. Apart from these copious works, he wrote numerous scripts for films.

His writings are distinct for the range of themes and unusual style. He used lucid language loaded with wit, punches, and crispness. He wrote about subjects of his time—horrors faced by humanity due to Partition of India, sufferings of human souls for survival, and social taboos. In his last phase of life of suffering, both financial and emotional, he produced greatest of his stories. Some of his greatest stories are 'Toba Tek Singh', 'The Dog of Titwal', 'The Last Salute', 'Khol Do', 'Thanda Gosht', 'Kaali Shalwar', 'The Assignment', 'A Tale of 1947', 'For Freedom', 'The Dutiful Daughter', and 'Ten Rupees'. Considering his popularity, a biopic was made on him based on some of his burning stories. A few of his stories were adapted into Bollywood film 'Mantostaan'.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. In which language did Saadat Hasan Manto write his short stories?
2. Who is the writer of the short story 'Toba Tek Singh'?

#### **14.2.5 Anna Bhau Sathe (1920-1969):**

Anna Bhau Sathe was a popular Marathi writer known for his revolutionary writings. He was born in Wategaon village of Sangli District, Maharashtra. Being born in the 'Maang' community, a lower caste in Hindu order of hierarchy, he experienced social injustice and suffering for being 'untouchables' in the society. He barely had any formal education because the school initially resisted giving him admission for being untouchable. When he actually got admitted, the hostility and humiliation did not let him continue. Life itself became his teacher and he later produced works that set a new trend in what is now called 'Dalit literature'.

His taste for art and literature sharpened when his family migrated to Mumbai in search of livelihood. He initially got attracted to folk entertainment performed by "tamasha" troupe of Bapu Sathe. He joined it and began signing folk songs. During those days with this troupe, he realized the need to fight against exploitative policies of the British and the caste system. He began singing for freedom and joined the Communist Party. He then sang to promote the communist ideology. In his late years, he was influenced by the cause championed by Dr. Ambedkar.

As a writer who saw inequality and injustice, he started depicting the lives of poor and oppressed people, peasants, and laborers in his short stories. While promoting socialistic philosophy in his writings, he continued to show sorrows and sufferings of the oppressed people. In his career of about three decades, he produced 14 short story collections in addition to 35 novels, 24 plays, and 12 screenplays. He is considered 'Lokshahir'. Some of his prominent short stories are 'Dole', 'Khulanwadi', 'Kombadi Chor', 'Pirajichi Bhangad', 'Saanwala', 'Sultan', and 'Teen Bhakri'. He gained much of his popularity with his novel 'Fakira', which he dedicated to Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar. He was awarded by the state government for this novel. He also joined freedom movement of Goa and Samyukta Maharashtra Movement. Some of his known plays are 'Mazhi Mumbai', 'Khhapya Chor', and 'Aklechi Gosht'.

#### **14.2.6 Akhtar Mohiuddin (1928-2001):**

Ghulam Mohiuddin Wani is better known in the world of Kashmiri literature as Akhtar Mohiuddin. He was a prominent short story writer and novelist who wrote both in Kashmiri and Urdu. Though little is known about his personal life, he remained one of the finest creators of

Kashmiri stories. He attained popularity for expressing voice and vibes of local folk through his fictional works.

He uses idiomatic language along with skillful treatment of plots and realistic portrayal of characters and settings to make his style unique. He wrote on a variety of themes including ecological concerns. His narration could keep readers spellbound and not leave them until they finish reading the stories.

In his literary career, he produced about 50 Kashmiri short stories in addition to many novels. His first collection of short stories titled 'Sat Sangar' came out in 1955. His other collection of short stories is 'Sonzal'. Some of his popular stories are 'Nav Bemaary', 'Aadam Chhu Ajab Zaat', 'Dand Wazun', 'Daryaayi Hund Yezaar', 'Jali Hindy Danda Phely', 'Aatank Vadi', and 'Aapan Hor Jang'. A collection of his five stories translated into English are available as *Short Stories of Akhtar Mohiuddin*. The five stories record historic events in Kashmir including 1947 and depict socio-political transition in the valley. He received many awards for his literary contributions including Sahitya Academy Award for 'Sat Sangar', Padam Shri, and 'The Kala Kendra Shield'. Among his novels are *Dod-Dag*, *Jahnamuk Panun Nar*, and *Zu-te-Zolan*.

#### **14.2.7 Saurav Kumar Chaliha (1930-2011):**

Surendra Nath Medhi is known in the literary world as Saurav Kumar Chaliha. He was a famous short story writer from Assam. He was born in the Mangaldoi town of Assam's Darrang District. He studied in Saint Mary's Convent School, Cotton College, and London University. A man of science by profession, Chaliha graduated in physics and worked as academician both in Germany and India.

He picked up pen as a passion to write about rural and urban social life to highlight rapid changes in the society in the backdrop of industrialization and world war. Writing in the literary period of Ramdhenu in Assam, he not only set a new trend of modernism but also gained distinct position for his writing style and expressions. His initial stories express anguish against industrial expansion, while later stories encompass his experiences of Germany, modernity and urban-centric life in Assam. He is considered as an innovative writer of short stories in Assam who

started his literary career with a path-breaking story 'Ashanta Electron'. This story introduced a genre of modernity in the regional literature.

He was a prolific writer who produced about 100 short stories in the Assamese language. His stories have been translated into many Indian languages and English too. Some of his most powerful stories are 'Ashanta Electron', 'Duparia', and 'Ehat daba'. He had been awarded by Sahitya Akademi Award for 'Golam', a collection of short stories. He also received Assam Valley Literary Award from Williamson Magor Education Trust for his literary contribution.

#### **14.2.8 Madhurantakam Rajaram (1930-1999):**

Madhurantakam Rajaram is a famous modern Telugu short story writer from the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. He was born in Chittoor district's Damalcheruvu village. While being a Telugu teacher at a government school in his village, he began writing for newspapers and magazines.

As a writer, he was a humanist whose writings depict paradoxes and complexities of life. He advocated holding on to values in thick and thin of life. He exposes weaknesses and strengths of human beings, and comments on good and bad qualities. His fictional world revolves around realistic portrayal of nature and lives of village folks and their naivety, poverty, and hardship. His stories are about middle and lower middle-class people. His style of narration is unique for many reasons, including local Rayalaseema dialect and first person narrative in many of his works.

He was one of the prolific writers of Telugu stories. He produced more than 300 stories in a literary career spanning over four decades. In addition to 13 collections of short stories, he wrote five plays, four dance dramas, three novels and many Telugu lyrics. Among his famous collection of stories are 'Madhurantakam Rajaram Kathalu', 'Kamma Temmera', 'Punarnavam', 'Tonu Veligenidmina Dipalu', and 'Vakragatulu Itara Kathalu'. His popular novels are 'Chinna Prapandcham - Sirivada' and 'Trisankudi Svargam'. His stories have been translated into English. A story of his appears in *Moisture Trapped in a Stone: An Anthology of Modern Telugu Short Stories*, and a collection of his forty stories translated into English is published as *Madhurantakam Rajaram Stories*.

He received Sahitya Akademi Award for *Madhurantakam Rajaram Kathalu*, a collection of stories recognized as a masterpiece in Telugu short fiction. He co-edited first volume of a series on Telugu short story writers entitled as *Telugu Kathakulu - Kathana Reethulu*. He translated many works from Tamil into Telugu, including ‘Akhilan’ and ‘Jayakantan’. He had been honored with Tanjore Tamil University Award for Translations in recognition of his contribution towards translation.

Besides creative writing and translation, he was actively associated with numerous literary organizations. He was honored with Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi Award, K. Srinivas Award and T. Gopichand Award. In addition, Anantapur’s S.K. University bestowed him with an honorary D.Litt.

#### **14.2.9 Baig Ehsas (1948-):**

Mohammed Baig is popular with his penname Baig Ehsas in literary circles. He is a noted Urdu short story writer from Hyderabad. He was born in erstwhile Hyderabad Deccan. He went to Govt. High School at Nizamabad, graduated in Urdu from Osmania University receiving BA and MA degrees and did Ph.D on Krishan Chander from University of Hyderabad (HCU). He has been into teaching profession for over three decades, serving at Osmania University and HCU in various capacities including Head of the Urdu department. He is a recipient of Best Teacher Award from Andhra Pradesh Urdu Academy.

His first collection of stories titled *Kosha-e-Gandum* appeared in 1979. After a gap of a decade, another collection of his stories *Hanzal* came out. It was a turning point in his literary career. He continued to write short stories, which reflect history and culture of multi-lingual and multi-religious Deccan region, particularly Hyderabad. He uses symbolism and other modern devices to bejewel his stories. In 2015, he published *Dakhma*, a collection of 11 short stories.

His stories have been translated into multiple languages including English, and received recognition from critics and the literary bodies across India. A collection of his translated stories appeared in English as *Twilight of the Mind: Selected Short Stories of Baig Ehsas*. Another collection of his translated stories on the theme of Hyderabad published as *Shades of the City*. Besides writing short stories, he edits *Sab Ras*, a literary magazine in Urdu published from Hyderabad by Idara-e-Adabiyat-e-Urdu. He also edits *Iqbal Review*, a journal of Hyderabad’s

Iqbal Academy. He co-authored Deccani Urdu Dictionary along with Dr. M. K. Kaul. He penned two monographs for Sahitya Akademi on Shaz Tamkanat and Jan Nisar Akhtar. He also edited selection of Ali Zaheer's poetry titled *Mishal Ba Kaf Sitare*. He served as a member of national and state level literary bodies, including Sahitya Akademi and NCPUL.

He received Sahitya Akademi Award for *Dakhma* in 2017. Among other honors bestowed on him include Madkhdoom Award, Jashn-e-Urdu Award, Best Writer Award from Telangana State, and Lifetime Achievement Award from Andhra Pradesh Urdu Academy.

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### 14.3 Learning Outcomes

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Upon completion of the Unit, students would be able to:

- Understand tradition of short story in Indian literature.
- Distinguish between short story writers from regional literatures and those writing in English.
- Identify prominent short story writers from regional literatures.
- Present a detail note on selected prominent short story writers, highlighting their works, styles, themes, and contribution in general.

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### 14.4 Glossary

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**Adler, Jung and Freud:** Three influential theorists of early Twentieth Century; Alfred Adler is known for individual psychology; Carl Jung has introduced analytical psychology; and Sigmund Freud came up with psychoanalysis

**Dakhma:** A circular, raised structure built for excarnation of the Parsee by the Zoroastrian community

**Dalit literature:** Literature of Dalits and by Dalits. Dalit literally means oppressed or broken. Dalit literature, an important stream of Indian writing in English and other Indian languages, is about oppressed castes and classes

**Dialect:** A variety of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group

**Guy de Maupassant:** A 19th-century French writer who is considered a master of the short story form

**Industrialization:** Development of industries resulting in social and economic changes at countrywide or regional scale

**Kathalu:** It is plural of Katha, which mean story in Telugu

**Khaka:** A personal sketch. It is an established literary genre in Urdu literature

**Lokshahir:** A people's poet

**Maang:** A lower caste in Hindu order predominantly found in Maharashtra State

**Magnum opus:** A work that has been given much critical praise or considered masterpiece

**Makhdoom:** A noted Urdu poet from Hyderabad

**Marxism:** A social, political, and economic philosophy named after German philosopher Karl Marx. It is a doctrine that views class relations and social conflict using a materialist interpretation

**Partition:** A historical event of subcontinent when India was partitioned into two nations, namely India and Pakistan. It resulted in violence and destruction on both sides of the border

**Progressive writers:** A group of writers associated with Progressive Movement whose initial manifesto was drafted by Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer. All India Progressive Writers' Association was formed in 1936

**Ramdheni Age:** A period in Assamese literary history which considered a golden era of modern literature. Its name comes from Ramdhenu, a literary journal

**Satyagraha:** A form of non-violent resistance championed by Mahatma Gandhi against tyrannical British rule in undivided India



**Socialism:** A doctrine of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community

**Tamasha:** A traditional form of Marathi theatre, usually with singing and dancing. It is performed by travelling theatre groups

**Untouchable:** Also known as *Dalit* or Harijan. Officially, a Scheduled Caste in the Indian society

**Victor Hugo:** A French poet, dramatist and novelist of the Romantic Movement

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## 14.5 Sample Questions

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### 14.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What was the Urdu penname of Premchand?
2. Who is the author of *Soz-e-Watan*, a collection of short stories that criticized prevailing conditions in colonial India?
3. The author of 'Ente Thankam' and 'Balyakalasakhi' is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Manik Bandhopaddhay's first short story \_\_\_\_\_ appeared in 1935.
5. Manto translated Victor Hugo's *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* as \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What is the name of Marathi short story writer who is considered 'Lokshahir'?
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is the first collection of short stories by Akhtar Mohiuddin.
8. Who wrote a path-breaking short story 'Ashanta Electron'?
9. Rajaram received Sahitya Akademi Award for \_\_\_\_\_, a collection of short stories.

10. *Dakhma*, a collection of short stories, was written by \_\_\_\_\_.

#### 14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a note on Premchand as a bilingual writer.
2. Discuss literary contribution of V.M. Basheer.
3. Write about life and works of Bandhopaddhay.
4. What are literary contributions of Rajaram to Telugu literature?
5. Write a note on literary contribution of Baig Ehsas.

#### 14.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss any two short story writers from Independence era, highlighting their contribution to the national movement through their works.
2. Discuss 'Partition' as a theme with reference to Saadat Hasan Manto.
3. Write a detailed note on Chahila as a trendsetter in modern Assamese literature.

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### 14.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 15: *The Holy Panchayat*

### Structure

15.0 Introduction

15.1 Objectives

15.2 *The Holy Panchayat*

15.2.1 Munshi Premchand: Life and Career at a Glance

15.2.2 *The Holy Panchayat*

15.2.3 Background

15.2.4 The Controversy

15.2.5 Conclusion

15.2.6 Title and Techniques

15.2.7 Theme of Friendship

15.3 Learning Outcomes

15.4 Glossary

15.5 Sample Questions

15.6 Suggested Readings

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### 15.0 Introduction

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‘The Holy Panchayat’ is a famous short story penned by a well-known Hindi writer of the early modern period Munshi Premchand. He has also been revered as a pioneer in Hindi Literature who wrote extensively on the unethical, immoral, and corrupt social, traditional, and customary practices prevalent in the contemporary society. The story narrates the common practice of village courts – commonly known as ‘Panchayat’ in addition to establishing and declaring justice as a duty of a *panch/judge*. This story is precisely focused on placing truth, honesty, justice, and the rightful responsibility as an accountable *panch/judge*, a leading member of the village's governing council. The judgment delivered by the Panchayat works twofold in the story; initially, the real justice separates two best friends, and later the same righteousness becomes the reason for the reunion of those separated mates. The detailed critical analysis of the story is presented in this unit while keeping in mind distinct parameters that govern form and meaning in the text.

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## 15.1 Objectives

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The unit has been designed to fulfill the following objectives:

- To make students see the rural modern India, in becoming, through literature written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- To enable students to find parallel between literature and society
- To enable students to have a close critical reading of Munshi Premchand's known short story 'The Holy Panchayat.'
- To explore the short story genre in translation from Hindi into English.
- To examine the socio, cultural and economic circumstances of the nineteenth and twentieth-century Indian rural society through the story.

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## 15.2 *The Holy Panchayat*

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A novelist, writer, editor, journalist, translator, and publisher Munshi Premchand (1880 – 1936) is a celebrated writer in Hindi and Urdu languages. He is considered as a Shakespeare of modern Hindi literature. He has contributed significantly in shaping fiction in Hindi and Urdu languages in the nineteenth and twentieth century. He is mainly known for his prolific and contemporary style of writing fiction. The critical aspect of his writing lies in bringing contemporaneity through his works. The themes, narrative, names, and situations are more realistic and mundane in stories that compel even the familiar readers to read and find parallels with their lives and surroundings.

Premchand has exclusively written about the contemporary social issues in his writings. He has made extensive use of realism in his writings owing to the realistic and rationalist approach he had towards society. Premchand has used writing as a vital tool to critique the stereotypical middle and lower classes of the biased and partial Indian community of the nineteenth century, where a person is judged more based on ones' gender, caste, creed, age, colour, religion, and region instead of individual abilities and capabilities. In addition, he has also raised the issues, social taboo one can call them, such as hypocrisy, patriotism, casteism, religion, regional biases, freedom movement, feudalism, colonialism, poverty, to mention a few.

Hence, his writing oeuvre revolves around exploring and highlighting the fundamental themes such as the burning social issues of poverty, orthodox and blind religious practices, patriarchy and miserable women, caste, class, gender, and communal discriminations, and other prevailing practices that can be found even today in the traditional Indian society.

### **15.2.1 Munshi Premchand: Life and Career at a Glance**

Munshi Premchand was born as Dhanpat Rai Shrivastava in a small village named Lamahi, situated on the outskirts of Benaras, India in July 31, 1880. Munshi Premchand was fondly known as ‘Nawab Rai’ in his inner circle of friends and acquaintances. He is chiefly known as a novelist, short story writer, and dramatist in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He had his initial works published under the pen name of ‘Nawab Rai’ before becoming famous as Munshi Premchand. Losing his mother at the tender age of eight years, his father, and a postal clerk posted in Gorakhpur, remarried soon. Due to his father’s posting in Gorakhpur, Premchand began his schooling there.

Premchand began his career in the field of teaching and school administration as soon as he passed matriculation in the year 1898. He successfully passed the higher secondary examination in the year 1916. Later on, he had studied Persian, History, and English Literature in graduation.

The first collection of Premchand’s short stories, five stories in total, was published in a book form entitled *Soz-e-Watan* in 1908. The short stories were centred on patriotism in the British Raj. Hence, it was received as sedition against the Raj. Legal action was taken against Premchand in the district magistrate’s court. During the hearing, he was legally cautioned not to repeat the same in the future. Moreover, all the copies of his books were burnt. This was why he began to write under a new pen name ‘Premchand’. It became an inseparable part of his writing career. This was just the beginning of Premchand’s many encounters with the British government.

Munshi Premchand was a keen and voracious reader. His areas of interests expanded from Indian mythology, Indian history, and Indian – Muslim cultural history. His deep interest was in reading the literature written across the world in contemporary Indian society. His wide-ranging reading interests highly influenced his writing and were reflected in his works. He has been celebrated as the earliest writer, writing in Urdu and Hindi, who shed light on the marginalized and underprivileged societal groups of Indian society. His stories were mainly focused on contemporary critical, social and political issues. He has also experimented with

penning the historical stories set in the recent past. He started to critique fundamental grim social inequalities and discrimination that largely went unnoticed in society and began a revolutionary reformation movement through his writing.

Premchand was writing in Urdu until about 1918, before Mahatma Gandhi declared Hindi as a national language. Therefore, he started penning works in Hindi as soon as Mahatma Gandhi made the announcement. He has been credited as the earliest writer who has introduced realism in Hindi literature.

Upon the call of the Non-cooperation Movement by Mahatma Gandhiji, Premchand immediately resigned from the government service. Meanwhile, he has also worked as a screenplay writer in the Hindi film industry in Mumbai. Soon he started a publication house named Saraswati Press in 1923. He could not manage to get financial stability even after running the publication house and began working as an editor of a Hindi journal called 'Madhuri' in Lucknow between 1924-25 and 1927-32. He also started a new journal named 'Hans' in the year 1930 that was followed by taking over another journal named 'Jagaran'.

Munshi Premchand has been credited to cater to the common reading audience. He has been considered one of those a few modern writers who penned works in the people's language, intended for the common mass, as was the case with the renowned English romantic poet William Wordsworth who began to write in 'vernacular' language to be able to reach out to the larger collective common audience. Munshi Premchand has also been credited to introduce current social, economic, and religious issues on the grass-root level. His stories and novels, mostly set in distant rural India, are filled with the issues such as discrimination based on age, gender, social/economic differences, region, religion, class conflict, communalism, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and the plight of poor farmers, including widely spread corruption in the contemporary society.

Premchand has written about 300 short stories and some twelve published novels, excluding one unpublished manuscript. His novels i.e. *Godan*, *Nirmala*, *Sevasadan*, *Rangbhumi*, *Karmabhumi* are widely celebrated as the greatest novels ever written in Hindi literature. His few renowned short stories are *Kafan*, *Panch Parmeshwar*, *Eidgaah*, *Poos ki Raat*, *Lottery*, and *Namakka Daroga*. He lived a very simple life. Many of his stories, novels, and novellas have been made into TV series, films, and drama. The Bengali legendary director Satyajit Rey made two films from Premchand's famous novels *Shataranj ke Khiladi* and *Sadgati*. His widely acclaimed novel *Godan* has been made into a film and television series. Many of his short stories

were adapted into television serials too. Besides, Premchand has tried his hand at writing some plays as well. His works have been translated into many languages across the nation in national and at the international level in many foreign languages.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is the real name of Munshi Premchand?
2. In which year *Soz-e-Watan* was published?
3. Who is the author of *Godan*?

**15.2.2 The Holy Panchayat:**

‘The Holy Panchayat’, a translated story written in Hindi entitled ‘Panch Parmeshwar’, is one of the famous short stories penned by Munshi Premchand. It was first published in 1916 in a periodical named *Saraswati*. It has been considered the first short story written in Hindi by Premchand. It was originally written in Urdu entitled ‘Panchayat’. To make his writings accessible to the wider readership he switched over from Urdu to Hindi.

The oeuvre of Premchand can be separated based on a variety of different themes that he would focus and write extensively on at a time. ‘The Holy Panchayat’ belongs to the earlier cluster of the short stories that were penned between 1916 and 1920. It includes ‘Bade Ghar ki Beti’, ‘Namak ka Daroga’, ‘Mamta’, ‘Saut’, ‘Rani Sarandha’, ‘Amavasya ki Raat’ just to mention a few. Hence, the stories in this cluster mostly shared a common theme of social issues such as gender inequality, discrimination in the society based on class, caste, gender, age, and region and so on. They are written in a narrative style. This collection mostly includes stories with reference to the ‘change of heart’, the changes people experience owing to their life choices, surprising situations that describe the problem, issue, or challenge that gets resolved by the end of the story. Premchand demonstrated how human beings evolve over the period of time, whether they willingly accept the changes, or the changes are enforced on them by the fate of life. His writing oeuvre came into being as a part of his active and nuanced observations and experiences around himself.

The current story ‘The Holy Panchayat’ follows the league and continues the saga of the identical writing which is a reflection of the society he lived in a typical style of Premchand. It is a ‘change of heart’ type story, which is centred on a small village that Premchand finely narrates. The story celebrates the significance of justice that has been considered above human emotions,



sentiments, friendship, and even affection. Justice is prioritized in the story even above the profound and solid human relationships such as friendship.

The story revolves around the lives of two childhood mates who were born in the same village in different communities. However, they grew up sharing brotherly love which resulted in creating a strong and inseparable bond between them and their families. The narrative celebrates two best mates Alagu Chaudhary and Jumman Sheikh. They are famous across the village for their deep bond of companionship. Despite having completely distinct personalities, their immense faith in one another actually became the source of admiration and appreciation across the village. They set an incredible example with their friendship in the village. People used to give examples of their friendship. However, since luck would have it, this bond was broken at the unimaginative moment of fate.

Jumman had an aged aunt living with him. She had some property on her name that she agreed to transfer on Jumman's name if he promises to take care of her. Initially Jumman agreed to the agreement and took her to his home. However, as soon as the property transfer was completed, he began to show his true colours. His wife and he were just interested in the property of the aunt and now since it was owned by them, they began to treat the old lady with rudeness and disrespect. They would not serve her well. She wouldn't be fed well. After a few days observation of such unanticipated behaviour from her nephew and daughter-in-law she decided to take refuge under the law and order of the village panchayat. She was requesting fair and respectful treatment according to the oral agreement that was done between khala and Jumman.

After some brainstorming, Alagu, Jumman's best mate was asked to precede the case as a chief panch. Upon hearing the news, the cunning Jumman was all smiles since he knew that Alagu would side him. However, upon hearing the arguments of both the sides, after a due consideration given by the committee under the leadership of the chief panch, it was decided that the claims made by Jumman's aunt are appropriate. The due respect and fitting fair treatment should be given to her with an immediate effect at Jumman's home since it is her legal right.

As soon as Alagu delivered the justice as a chief Panch of the case filed by Jumman's Khala (aunty), Jumman declare Alagu as his biggest enemy. The deep bond of love, care, concern, and loyalty that was developed over the long years suddenly turned into hatred, bitterness and the strong urge of vengeance against Alagu. The emotion of revenge for the betrayal as Jumman feels betrayed by his dearest mate took over the mind of Jumman without

realising his friend's (Alagu's) moral dilemma that he had to struggle as a while sitting on the sacred seat of a chief judge. On the other hand, Alagu was jammed between two extremely contradictory choices: what is a right thing to do as a duty bound judge and how much he cares for his dearest and nearest friend. However, in the end, truth and value turns out victorious in this emotional battle. Alas! It costs Alagu his year's long friendship with Jumman that was broken in no time.

The years passed by now with animosity between Alagu and Jumman. After a few years, Alagu was allegedly cheated upon by Sahu. In addition, Sahu puts up a complaint against the innocent Alagu in the village panchayat. The cunning and shrewd Sahu was well aware of the animosity between Jumman and Alagu. Hence, he proposed Jumman's name as a chief judge in his case. Sahu was planning on taking the full advantage of the hostility between the two friends tuned into close rivals and enemies.

Jumman, moreover, when heard of the case and a request to preside as a chief judge in this case, also cunningly grinned as he could finally get the opportunity to avenge Alagu. However, table turns when Jumman, as a chief judge in the case, after the due consideration over the matter on hand, was put in the similar situation as was the case with his best friend turned enemy Alagu. That was the moment of realization for Jumman. He realized the crucial moral dilemma, his responsibility while being on the seat, people's trust in the judgment and above everything the realization that God is watching you. The situation finally made him realize how personal or individual choices and favours have no place when you are being entrusted to speak on behalf of the God as a chief judge. Therefore, he honestly delivered the judgment. The justice was served in the most impartial and unbiased manner which was suitable to the position of a Panch. The Panch is expected to keep his perspective in check, be objective and look at the situation in a completely neutral fashion while looking into any case or situation. The panch is entrusted by not only people but is also believed to be a spokesperson of the God while delivering the judgment.

Therefore, 'The Holy Panchayat' is one of the most intriguing and relatable stories comes to an end. It has been considered as a critique of the contemporary society which was mostly corrupt, immoral, and actively practiced fraudulent and unethical values in the public life. Premchand, has tried his level best and fulfilled his moral duty as an observant and caring citizen of the society by bringing such widely prevailing wrongful practices to the fore. The story must have at least made a few people realized that they are being watched, if not by the silenced

society but by the God while practicing dishonourable and unlawful social practices and misguide underprivileged and innocent populace of the country. Premchand had made it almost a key target of his life to shed light on a variety of widely practiced fraudulent social practices in the name of development, societal traditions, ancient customs and age-old precious rituals through his extensive writing. His stories upheld a mirror to the society that needed to see its real corrupt reflection that was to be changed with an immediate effect.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is the Hindi title of 'The Holy Panchayat'?
2. In which year 'The Holy Panchayat' was published?
3. Who are the two leading characters in the short story?

**15.2.3 Background:**

Alagu Chaudhary and Jumman Sheikh have been raised together in a village. Jumman's father was a teacher. He was a strict, hardworking, and honest teacher and believed in living a sternly moral life. Since the very childhood, Jumman and Alagu studied and grew up together under Jumman's father's close inspection.

Jumman ended up as a writer, whereas Alagu lagged in studies since his father was a liberal form of education. Over the period, Alagu could not keep up with the further studies. Their ways parted soon. Yet, their deep bond of mutual respect and friendship remained intact and stood the test of time. They grew up sharing this deep bond of companionship. It was also extended in their families after getting married and having kids. No one in the entire village could ever think of seeing them as enemies or separated. The story celebrates the theme of 'change of heart'. It presents how this ideal thought and belief of 'change of heart' can be materialized in real life. The story establishes Premchand's very belief in fundamental human goodness.

The story has been structured in the typical style of Munshi Premchand. He often takes up many social issues, and the story then moves towards looking for the best possible resolution, an ethically accurate one. Typically in most of the Premchand short stories, as soon as the main characters are introduced, their family background, village, and surroundings have been narrated at length. They have been placed in the problematic emotional experience. Then the issue has

been highlighted. And the narrative works towards finding a morally truthful solution for the problem posed. A similar style has been used to 'The Holy Panchayat' as well. The issue of animosity between two best friends has been raised due to the character's moral dilemma. He was stuck between friendship and justice, duty and relationship, concern, and responsibility. In the end not only justice was celebrated but also the mutual bond of deep and true friendship lasted the test of time.

#### **15.2.4 The Controversy:**

Alagu has a calm and composed personality, whereas Jumman was a bit greedy by nature. Jumman Sheikh had an elderly widowed aunt living around his home. She owned a piece of land that was decided to be given to Jumman against the agreement of taking care of her by providing all the basic needs until she dies since she had no one to take care of her. As soon as the legal procedure was over, the poor widow started feeling neglected when Jumman and his wife would not follow the terms of the agreement. On the contrary, being dependent and living on the mercy of this couple, they would make her feel insulted.

Betrayed by her own nephew, the poor widow went to Panchayat to seek justice with a complaint against Jumman. The twist comes in the story when Alagu, who is Jumman's childhood best friend, was made the chief Panch for the case. Cunning Jumman was relaxed that result would certainly come in his favour since his best friend is looking after the issue. However, tables turn when Alagu, honestly following his responsibilities gives judgment against Jumman. Being the chief Panch he looked at the issue impartially and without any biases, as expected from a Panch. He delivers justice to the poor destitute widow.

Alagu, while following his duties, ended up losing his best friend Jumman. Moreover, Jumman declared Alagu as his enemy and started looking for a chance to avenge his insult and betrayal. Soon, Jumman got the opportunity he had been eagerly looking forward to. Jumman was nominated as a chief Panch in a complaint filed against Alagu. The overjoyed Jumman was fully ready to take revenge against him.

However, when Jumman seats as the chief Panch, he could not help but think as an impartial and neutral judge to deliver the judgment. It was then that Jumman had the realization of the significance of the responsibility one bears as a Panch. The conscience does not let one overlook justice and righteousness for one's personal gains. As soon as the case was over, Jumman rushed towards Alagu and said,

“My brother! Ever since you became Sarpanch and decided the case against me, I have been your deadly enemy. But today I learnt as a Panch that I am neither anybody’s friend nor anybody’s foe. A Panch cannot see anything except justice. Today I am convinced that God speaks through a Panch’s lips”.

#### **15.2.5 Conclusion:**

Thus, this story from the repertoire of Munshi Premchand establishes the fundamental value of the human nature that man is made up of both - good and bad. Sometimes bad overlooks or perhaps overpowers the good, for the time being. But one should keep faith in the fundamental goodness of man. The innate nobility of man’s nature shall win in the end. The story also strengthens our faith in the moral good and righteous nature of the position that a chief justice is entrusted with. The highest moral responsibility carried on the shoulders of a judge/panch plays as a real driving force at the crucial moments of delivering a judgment. The judgment becomes the decisive and critical instrument that could either make or ruin lives of innocent people.

Premchand very beautifully establishes the idea that justice should be respected and celebrated in any condition. Personal biases, prejudices and subjectivities must not affect the pious words of the Panch which are considered and revered as the words spoken by the God through the mouth of a panch. The story helps the reader in maintaining faith in the law and rules created by the society, in order to lead and sustain a just and healthy societal environment. It represents a staunch critique on the corrupt, unethical and completely fraudulent system of the then society. The story offers a sharp and clear mirror to the society who had been practicing unjust, corruption, challengeable social, traditional, and customary rituals, and ancient dogmas in the name of religion or great tradition of our civilization.

#### **15.2.6 Title and Techniques:**

‘The Holy Panchayat’ was originally written in Urdu entitled “Panchayat”, then in Hindi as ‘Panch Parmeshwar’ and finally translated into English as ‘The Holy Panchayat’. It is an appropriate title for Premchand’s well-known short story. The title carries the mystical element of justice not as a traditional but a significant moral value. It has traditionally been practiced in the Indian villages. The word ‘Panchayat’ is an obvious hint towards the governing council of the village and the way it runs the cases and manages the situations where many times they must take decisions for the conduct/misconduct against the people they know very well or who are close to their hearts. However, the word ‘Holy’ that refers to the spiritual sanctity of the responsibility of a panch/judge bestowed with while seating on the seat of the chief justice. It is

meant to take decisions that shall directly affect the lives of people who rely on it. The decisions also either strengthen or weaken the faith of people in the moral and traditional justice system of the villages.

It is also said the original title of the story was chosen as ‘Parmeshwar’ to establish the spiritual and honest action the Sarpanch is intended to take. Later on, the title was changed to ‘Panch Pareshwar’. The title suitably sets up the whole idea of keeping justice above and beyond one’s individual interests and subjective biases and preferences as a chief panch/judge. He/she should put in all the efforts to uphold the justice. For instance, both friends Alagu and Jumman despite having preferences and favouritisms against or for each other just could not bring themselves to deliver any unjust or biased judgment. Both of them, when offered individual opportunities desperately wanted to favour (in Alagu’s case) or avenge (in Jumman’s case) each other. They wanted to grab the opportunity of taking subjective and individual decisions. However, their moral conscience would not let them do so despite of having the strong desire. That resilient desire was subdued by the stronger sentiments of the realizations that they are being watched, if not by people that they can get away with but by the God who they can never escape.

Though Alagu was conscious of Jumman’s biased expectation in the case of Jumman’s aunt’s complaint but Alagu absolutely failed to overlook justice to favour his best friend. It created animosity between the best childhood mates. However, Jumman get the realization of Alagu’s verdict in his case and understands his situation of moral dilemma as a Panch, when he sits as a Panch in Alagu’s case. Despite having strong hatred towards Alagu, Jumman just could not make a biased decision. On the contrary, to everyone’s surprise Jumman announced the just and honest judgment that was certainly in favour of Alagu because it was his moral duty to do so as a judge.

It was the moment when the title was aptly justified in a dramatic manner. It is believed that the Panch speaks the Holy (pious and honest) words of Parmeshwar – the God. Justice, honesty, and truth are celebrated in the end above all the personal human emotions, partialities, and subjectivities in the story. This is how Premchand could set an example for the society to follow.

### **15.2.7 Theme of Friendship:**

In this story, Premchand is celebrating the strong and mutual bond of friendship between two childhood friends Jumman and Alagu. The Holy Panchayat is story of two mates who gets

separated over the ‘just verdict’ delivered by Alagu against Jumman being a chief Panch. Alagu while sitting on the pious position of a Panch could not bring himself to favour Jumman. However, the bitterness and hatred developed between the best friends soon comes to an end when Jumman was chosen as judge in Alagu’s case. The holy position he was asked to take would not allow him to play favouritism or biasness. Despite determining to avenge his insult from Alagu, Jumman ended up delivering a verdict in the favour of Alagu, because that was the right thing to do.

The ending of the story celebrates the mutual understanding, respect and duty one has to obey as a Panch, because Panch is Parmeshwar. The decision comes from the mouth of a Panch. These are the Holy words, directly delivered by the God. Thus, both friends clearly understand the truth that the Panchayat is a Holy place and the Panch is Parmeshwar. Hence, they reunited once again.

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### 15.3 Learning Outcomes

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Mentioned below are the learning outcomes of the unit:

- The short story ‘The Holy Panchayat’ celebrates the victory of justice and honesty above subjectivity and personal biases or favours.
- The Panchayat is revered as Holy in the Indian society since it is believed that the Panch represents God and justice which was clearly presented in the narration.
- Friendship is a pious relationship, which is beyond the trivial social and communal discriminations, commonly prevailing in the Indian society.
- The duty or responsibility should be prioritized over every mundane sentiments, to be fulfilled wholeheartedly.
- True bond and mutual affection between friends can stand the test of the time, only to come out victorious.

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### 15.4 Glossary

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**Panchayat:** A local governing council body of the village

**Panch:** The chief judge or the panel of judges unanimously selected by the villagers

**Holy:** Sacred, here a Panchayat, where justice is delivered at any cost, since it is considered to be spoken by God through the mouth of the Panch (the decision-maker)

**Dogma:** Code of belief, here refers to the unethical social and traditional practices prevailing in the nineteenth century India

**Panch Parmeshwar:** Here, the chief justice who presides over the case who is considered as a spoke person to the God

**Oeuvre:** Here, it refers to the rich and wide-ranging literary creation done by Munshi Premchand

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## 15.5 Sample Questions

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### 15.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who is the writer of the story 'The Holy Panchayat'?
  - (a) Munshi Premchand
  - (b) Sarojini Naydu
  - (c) Rabindanath Tagore
  - (d) Janendra
2. When was the story 'The Holy Panchayat' published?
  - (a) 1916
  - (b) 1915
  - (c) 1914
  - (d) 1961
3. What was the name of the periodical 'The Holy Panchayat' was first published in?
  - (a) *Saraswati*
  - (b) *Subodhini*
  - (c) *Samskar*



(d) *Sadhna*

4. What is the theme of the story?

(a) Friendship and justice

(b) Controversy

(c) Communal riot

(d) Social discrimination

5. What is the title of 'The Holy Panchayat' in Urdu?

(a) Panch Parmeshwar

(b) Panchayat

(c) Holy Panchayat

(d) Panch and Panchayat

**Answer the following questions in one sentence:**

1. What is Panchayat?

2. Why is Panchayat called the Holy Panchayat in the Indian traditional manners?

3. What was the complaint the aunt wanted to make in the Panchayat?

4. Why would Sahu chose Jumman as a chief judge in the case against Alagu?

5. What was the verdict declared by Jumman in the case against Alagu?

**15.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What is the central theme of the story?

2. Elaborate the title of the story 'The Holy Panchayat'.

3. Briefly narrate the conflict caused between Alagu and Sahu?

4. How did the best friends reunite in the end?

5. How does 'The Holy Panchayat' celebrate the importance of justice?

**15.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Comment in detail on the theme of the story 'The Holy Panchayat'.

2. Elaborate in detail “Celebrating the victory of Justice.”
  3. Write a detailed note on the common social tradition of law and order in India and rewrite the story in your own words.
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## 15.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 16: *The Card Sharper's Daughter*

### Structure

16.0 Introduction

16.1 Objectives

16.2 *The Card Sharper's Daughter*

16.2.1 A Critical Analysis

16.2.2 Narrative Technique

16.2.3 Major Influences on Basheer

16.2.4 Language and Humour

16.2.5 Basheer's Representation of Muslim Community and its Linguistic Forms

16.2.6 The Setting of Basheer's Stories

16.2.7 Basheer's Humanism and Characterization

16.2.8 Basheer's Social Context

16.2.9 Basheer's Use of Nickname and its Cultural Significance

16.2.10 Basheer and Ecology

16.3 Learning Outcomes

16.4 Glossary

16.5 Sample Questions

16.6 Suggested Readings

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### 16.0 Introduction

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Vaikom Muhammad Basheer (1908-1994) is one of the literary giants of Indian Literature. He is one of the world's greatest storytellers. He has originally written in the Malayalam language. His works have been translated into many other languages. Basheer is a novelist, short story writer, and journalist. He was also a freedom fighter and a humanist. Born on 20 January 1908, Basheer was the eldest of six children of a devout Muslim couple, Kayi Abdu Rahman and Kunjachumma. His father was a timber merchant from Thalayolaparambu, a village in Vaikom, Kottayam District, Kerala. Young Basheer grew up with a deep sense of social and political commitments. When Basheer was in school, he had a deep admiration for Mahatma Gandhi and his political ideologies.

Basheer altered the nature of Malayalam fiction. He turned his back on the use of mainstream standard literary Malayalam, its literary vocabulary, and its grammatical and structural patterns. Thus, Basheer's narratives revolutionized the art of storytelling in Malayalam Literature. His well-received novels are *The Love Letter* (1943), *Childhood Companion* (1944), *The Voices* (1951), *My Grandad Had an Elephant* (1951), *In the Shadow of Death* (1951), *The Principal Divine of the Place* (1953), *Elephant Scooper and Golden Cross* (1954), *The Shadows of Life* (1954), *Pathumma's Goat* (1959), *Walls* (1965), *The Magic Cat* (1968), and *The Loving Cockroach* (Published posthumously) (2006) and his well-recognized short stories are *The Birthday* (1945), *Jottings from Memory* (1946), *Invaluable Moment* (1946), *Fools' Paradise* (1948), *The Prostitute of the Poor* (1952), *The Card Sharper's Daughter* (1951), *The World-renowned Nose* (1954), *The Hunger* (1954), *A Bhagavadgeetha and Some Breasts* (1967), *Elephant-hair* (1975), *The Laughing Wooden Doll* (1975), *The Inheritors of the Earth* (1977), *The Fools' God-Man* (1991), and *The Snake Ritu* (1946).

Basheer has been affectionately called as 'Beyepore Sultan' by his people and admirers. He received the Padma Shri award in 1982. Under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, Basheer went to fight for the cause of Indian Independence. He joined the Indian National Congress, and even left for Kozhikode (Calicut) to take part in Salt Satyagraha in 1930. He was sentenced to imprisonment for three months for his involvement in the freedom struggle. Deeply inspired by the other revolutionary leaders of India such as Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru, Basheer always fought for fundamental right to freedom. Basheer had a great nationalistic and patriotic spirit.

Basheer's works are woven out of his varied experiences. Born in a middle-class family which had fallen from affluence Basheer moved from his central Travancore home to the Malabar region of Kerala to take part in the freedom struggle. The police arrested him for his participation in the freedom struggle and imprisoned him. His prison life and experiences inspired many great stories which depicted prison life with stark realism.

Basheer's vast experiences, particularly from his travels within India, had a great impact upon him as a man and as a writer. During his travels, from one place to the other he had to work for existence. He undertook many works at that time as a cook, a fortune teller, a fruit seller, an accountant, and a watchman. He lived with Sufi mystics in the hermitages of the Himalayas for more than five years. He began writing stories when he was in jail. After his release from prison, Basheer organized a revolutionary journal titled 'Ujjivanam' (Uprising) with an intention to

contribute to the liberation of his homeland, India. He also ran bookstalls. Later in his forties, he married Fabi Basheer who was much younger than him, and moved to Beypore, south of Calicut, and lived there till his demise on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1994.

The present unit briefly covers his life, major works, and the significant features of his works with a special reference to his famous short story *The Cardsharpers' Daughter* (1951). Critical scrutiny of the work will enhance the readers' understanding of the author's social context, and a unique writing style.

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## 16.1 Objectives

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After going through the unit, students will be able to:

- Understand Vaikom Muhammed Basheer as an Indian Writer.
- Introduce the author's major literary contribution.
- Examine Basheer's socio-cultural and political milieu.
- Critically evaluate the various aspect of Basheer's *The Cardsharpers' Daughter*.
- Understand the author's choice of characters.
- Analyze Basheer's realism.
- Understand the central thematic concerns of the text.
- Explore Basheer's deep Humanism.
- Understand Basheer's unconventional style of writing.
- Examine Basheer's literary representation of the Muslim community of Kerala.
- Learn Basheer's use of nicknames, a unique feature of his culture and language.

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## 16.2 *The Card Sharpers' Daughter*

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### 16.2.1 A Critical Analysis:

*The Cardsharpers' Daughter* (1951) is one of Basheer's remarkable short stories. It belongs to particularly two typical genres of stories: one is called 'Long Story' and the other is 'Sthalam Stories.' From the beginning to the end, the story abounds in laughter. Sarcastic, subversive, and mocking verbal exchanges of the characters, who inhabit the story, make it uniquely humorous. The protagonists of the story are two comic characters, Mandan Muthapa

and Ottakkannan Poker. Mandan Muthapa is a pickpocket. He is tall and of a black complexion. Ottakkannan Poker calls Muthapa a fool. Throughout the story, Muthapa entertains the readers through his foolish and laughter-provoking gestures. Ottakkannan Poker is a cunning one-eyed cardsharper of the place. His behaviour also enhances the element of laughter in the story. Zainaba is an important female character in the story. She is the one and only daughter of the cardsharper.

The narrator of the story, who introduces himself as a 'humble historian', appears before the story begins and states that he is going to inform us how Ottakkannan Poker, the cardsharper lost his game to the foolish and slow-witted pickpocket Mandan Muthapa and how Muthapa succeeded in winning the hands of Poker's daughter Zainaba.

Mandan Muthapa's love affair with Ottakannan Pokker's daughter Zainaba is central to the plot of the story. Muthapa is passionately in love with Zainaba, and he is dreaming of his marriage to her. But Pokker does not like Muthapa and considers him a fool. He strongly opposed to their marriage. Eventually, public interference takes the matter up and supports Muthapa. One day, Mandan Muthapa comes to play the card game with Pokker. He loses to Muthapa this time. This infuriates Poker because for the last Twenty years Pokker himself has been the winner. No one in the locality could beat him ever. The whole scene is highly humorous with its crowds gathered to participate and watch the game. For Muthapa, this card game is a game of life and his victory gives him a new status, the status of a wise man. In fact, it was Zainaba who revealed the trick to Muthapa for winning the game. She knew that her father Ottakkannan was doing some malpractice to win the game all the time befooling the crowd and participants. Zainaba disclosed this secret trick to Mandan Muthapa. After Muthapa won the game, Pokker's attitude to him gradually begins to change. Pokker lost his authority and dominance over both the game as well as poor and ordinary people like Muthapa. As a result, the marriage between Muthapa and Zainaba becomes a reality. Thus, the story closes with the description of their marriage festivities.

The lives of the marginalized, the power politics of the privileged, and social discriminations based on profession, social status, and money are Basheer's unwavering concerns in the work. The collective power of the common people to bring about changes in relationships and societies are also pointed out by Basheer through a seemingly simple and humorous short story. In the case of Muthapa, who belongs to the lower section of society, it is people's will also that wins upon Pokker's stubbornness and authority. The small village,

mentioned as 'the Sthalam', is where the incidents of the story occur. The tone and terminology of the story is in a fashion of a parody of historical fiction, conventions of the romantic genre, and is also a mockery of the serious traditions of literary writing. The story is also a satire on the power politics of all cultures, people, and political parties. A reader can find several instances for establishing this point from the text.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is the central idea of the novel?
2. Who wins the game at the end of the story?
3. Who is Mandan Muthapa?

**16.2.2 Narrative Technique:**

The narrator of the story takes an objective tone but becomes an omniscient participant in the events of the story. He makes his appearance at the very outset of the story and introduces himself as the narrator-historian who very well knows the events of the place. He announces that he is going to tell us the historical event in which the slow-witted Muthapa came victorious in the card game and let the authoritarian Pokker loses his card game. The narrator-historian employs a mock-serious tone whenever he makes his comments as the story progresses. He exaggerates trivial events to mock at the traditional grandiloquent style conventionally employed for narrating fiction and history. The narrator-historian of the story is also a participant who observed and was amused at the events that happened in his locality. It is the narrator who tells us that the love and marriage between Muthapa and Zainaba are in a sense a people's movement. It debunks the norms and notions of arranged marriage, patriarchy, and paternal authority.

***Check your Progress***

1. Comment on the narrator of the story
2. Which narrative method is employed in the story?
3. What is the narrator's comment on the marriage between Muthapa and Zainaba?

### 16.2.3 Major Influences on Basheer:

As has already been mentioned, Basheer's simple and vagabond lifestyle, his social contacts, friends and family, his travels, his participation in India's freedom movement and prison life had a profound impact on his personality. It is quite evident that the images, sounds, setting, characters, themes, and everything else he writes comes from his experiences, observations, and cultural and political context. Though noticeably short in size, his works are pithy and packed with his philosophies and perceptions about all the living and non-living organisms of the entire universe. His works have a great universal appeal. Basheer's picaresque sojourn to the various regions of human experiences, his involvement in freedom struggle, his prison life, his nervous breakdown, and life in the mental asylum were all grist to his mill. Basheer transformed these experiences into literary wonders. He adopted his own idiosyncratic style of writing subverting literary conventions.

Basheer was a contemporary of renowned Malayalam writers such as Karur Nilakandan Pillai (1858-1975), Kesav Dev (1904-83), Lalithambika Antharjanam (1909-87), Ponkunnam Varki (1908- 2004), PC Kuttikrishnan (1915-79) and S.K Pottakkat (1913-82). Basheer, like Pottakkat, travelled extensively. But surprisingly enough Basheer transformed each of his travel experiences into excellent stories challenging prevalent standardized norms of Malayalam. With these writers Basheer only shares a social consciousness. Basheer never imitated and employed the existing literary style and conventions of his contemporary writers.

Each work of Basheer has been a uniquely crafted microcosm of the world we live in. His awareness of the Second World War, British colonialism, India's freedom struggle and the problems of refugees found voices in his works. Issues like freedom, right to life, poverty, unemployment, gender, power, war, destruction, and death were crucial concerns in his works. His seminal work *The Voices* (1947) raises the fundamental questions of human rights and freedom.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. How did Basheer's travels shape his writings?
2. Write a brief note on Basheer's social and political consciousness.
3. Mention some of the crucial issues discussed by Basheer in his works.



#### 16.2.4 Language and Humour:

Revolutionizing the conventions of the literary Malayalam language Basheer invented his writing style. Embracing the unconventional and non-literary mode of writing, Basheer celebrates realistic, polyphonic, and colloquial linguistic patterns of the people around him. Basheer's extraordinary use of humour in his works is a significant aspect of his writings. The humorous interaction of the people who inhabit his works creates a kind of frankness, freedom, equality, and intimacy. Humour also functions as Basheer's strategy to dig at the norms, etiquettes, and formality of language. In other words, Basheer uses humour as an expression that comes honestly and spontaneously from the human heart. Basheer's use of colloquial Malayalam in his works is socially and politically relevant. The odd expressions, usages, jokes of his characters are designed to oppose and subvert notions of good language and bad language, the language of the high, and language of the low. There are plenty of excellent humorous scenes and conversations in *The Cardsharpers Daughter*. Mandan Muthapa's stealing scenes are instances. Basheer is here laughing at our exaggerated notions of good language and bad language. Basheer's style of narrative, which detailed daily incidents with a great sense of humour, has been a striking aspect that made his works extremely popular. No one of his contemporaries could surpass his extraordinary storytelling skills.

In Kerala notions of standard- Malayalam and bad Malayalam existed for a long time. Such distinctions also added to the hierarchical and feudalistic social structure of Kerala. In his works, Basheer has succeeded in expressing his broad vision of life that in a society with different communities and castes, the use of a language will have its variations. This is inevitable. As such, it is not fair enough to categorize language into high and low, and its speakers into inferior and superior.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. What is the peculiarity of Basheer's use of the Malayalam language?
2. How Basheer exploited humour as a strategy to interrogate the good/bad binary of language?
3. Mention an instance of humour in the story?

### 16.2.5 Basheer's Representation of Muslim Community and its Linguistic Forms:

Speech forms and patterns considered to be peculiar to a community, especially Basheer's Muslim community in Kerala have also been used in many of his work. *The Card Sharper's Daughter* also employs the uneducated, informal, regional linguistic expressions of Basheer's community. As a major writer to emerge from the minority Muslim community in Kerala, Basheer introduced Muslim background, household, characters, imagery, religious lore, expressions peculiar to the community. These elements, typical of his community, dominate some of his works. His trilogy *Childhood Friend* (1943), *My Granddad had an Elephant* (1951), and *Pathumma's Goat* (1959). Basheer brilliantly captured the community's sense of humour customs, manners, lifestyle, illiteracy, and gender inequality.

The community to which Basheer belonged is noted for its humour sense and capacity to crack jokes. And, in the socio-political landscape of Kerala, the Muslim community has for ages been a minority community, deprived, dispossessed, powerless, and marginalized. It has also been a culturally and educationally backward community. It is this predicament of the community and the overall socio-cultural structure of Kerala that produced Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, the novelist.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. How does Basheer depict the Muslim community of Kerala in his works?
2. Name Basheer's Trilogy.
3. What is the source of Basheer's humour in most of his works?

### 16.2.6 The Setting of Basheer's Stories:

In many of Basheer's works, the vivid strain of realism has been a conspicuous element. The marketplaces, teashops, and fairs during Basheer's times were the ideal locations where the collective life of ordinary people was enacted. Such marketplaces were quite common all over Kerala until very recently. They constituted a prominent site of Kerala's popular culture. The marketplace and teashops were not just venues for buying and selling goods for the local people. Instead, those venues function as sites of collective life and social interaction. *The Cardsharpener's Daughter* is set in a marketplace with its noisy crowd who gather the marketplace for socialization and entertainment. The cardsharper and pickpockets were all inevitable parts of a marketplace.

***Check your Progress***

1. What makes Basheer's settings realistic?
2. How does Basheer's setting of the stories reflect the Kerala culture of his times?
3. Where does the story of *The Cardsharpener's Daughter* set?

**16.2.7 Basheer's Humanism and Characterization:**

The weak, the excluded, the dispossessed, the deprived, and the marginalized dominate the character list of Basheer's worlds. Thieves, pickpockets, women, prostitutes, differently abled, children, animals are all lavishly portrayed by him. He foregrounded these people who belonged to the lower social rank and section of society. Their freedom, right to life, and right to equality are repeatedly asserted by Basheer in almost all his works.

In *The Cardsharpener's Daughter*, Ottakkannan Pokker is a one-eyed, stubborn man. He is a typical patriarchal father. Though authoritative, he is much concerned about the welfare of his daughter, Zainaba. The Patriarchal power structures and conventionalities are subverted in the story, through his final acceptance of Zainab's and Muthapa's union. It is the father's right and privilege to give consent when his children get married, which prompts Ottakkannan Pokker to be so aggressive and authoritative. When Muthapa's love affair becomes a public issue in which the local people become mediators, Pokker gives up. Basheer's women are modest, witty, and subservient to Patriarchal norms. For example, in another famous work of Basheer titled, *Pathummas's Goat*, the women of the household eat only after the men folk have eaten, and the result, at times, is that they have not enough to appease their hunger. Such images of female submissiveness recur in Basheer's novels. Basheer's view, when it comes to issues concerning women, Basheer takes a feminist stance. Through several humorous incidents Basheer shows his concern for unequal treatment of women, the frustrations of women in a patriarchal social set-up, and social injustices toward the poor. Basheer's works are all multi-voiced, the voices of the marginalized are made dominant and visible.

***Check your Progress***

1. Examine Basheer's portrayal of women.
2. Comment on Basheer's satire on patriarchy in the story.
3. Analyse the character of Ottakkannan Pokker.

### 16.2.8 Basheer's Social Context:

Basheer's works were produced during times when revolutionary changes had taken place in the socio-cultural sphere of Kerala. Yet, society was still conventional. People were generally poor and were largely unfamiliar with the innovative and modern lifestyles and culture of the West. As for the familial set-up, it was the extended family form that prevailed in society. Basheer's female characters always played conventional roles, subordinate and subservient to men. Society, particularly Basheer's Muslim community, was predominantly patriarchal. The dominance of male characters in Basheer's novels may be said to be in tune with this socio-cultural condition.

From a sociological point of view Basheer acquires a special significance. He was the first major Muslim writer to emerge as the prominent writer of Malayalam literature. He revolutionized the Malayalam literary frame and contributed significantly to the evolution of Malayalam literary writing. His fictional and non-fictional writings were quite genre blurring and unconventional in style, language, and thematic concerns. He was the first writer to introduce Muslim background, religious lore, imagery, dialect, lifestyle into Malayalam literary mainstream. Expressions and phrases peculiar to the community gave an all-new aspect to Malayalam language itself when he captured them with clinical precision in his writings. His Muslim background gave him authentic topics to be a master in the art of storytelling. His body of works was deeply rooted in his Muslim background, its customs, and manners. His novels *Balyakalasakhi* (1943), and *Pathumma's Goat* (1959) are classic examples.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. How did Basheer revolutionised Malayalam literary writer?
2. Discuss Basheer's Muslim context and its contribution to Malayalam literature.

### 16.2.9 Basheer's Use of Nickname and its Cultural Significance:

Basheer's use of the names in most of his stories has intricately linked to the cultural context of Kerala. The major characters of the story Mandan Muthapa and Ottakkannan Pokker and other minor characters of the story are all having their nicknames. 'Mandan' is a nickname and a colloquialism, generally used by the uneducated people of Kerala. The usage was quite common during the time in which the novel was written and published. The term 'Mandan'

means ‘idiot’ ‘fool’ ‘dunce’ ‘blockhead’. ‘Mandan’ does not refer to Muthapa’s family name or surname. In Kerala, nicknames are sometimes attributed to a person referring to the person’s gestures, behaviour, and even physiology. Nicknames also add to the humorous quality of Basheer’s works. Even the name Muthapa is a funny distortion of the Arabic term ‘Mustafa.’ However, such distortions of proper names, and putting nicknames are all one unique cultural segment of the uneducated community of Basheer and other communities in Kerala, such as Hindus and Christians as well. As such, Basheer’s choice of nicknames for his characters generates laughter.

#### **16.2.10 Basheer and Ecology:**

Vaikom Muhammed Basheer was so fond of Nature, earth, and all its inheritors. He was a champion of Animal Rights. He always maintained a deep dialogue with his environment, surroundings, and the innumerable creatures of the earth. In most of his works he celebrated the power and beauty of nature. The peaceful coexistence of humans, animals and nature has been deeply promoted by him throughout his fictional and non-fictional works. Nature vocabulary domineered his use of language, names of trees, flowers, fruits added colour to his works. Sitting under his mangosteen trees, Basheer reflected on the nature of the relationship between man and nature. Basheer’s literary characters embraced the bounty of our ecosystem. In the work *Inheritors of the Earth* (1977), Basheer spoke for the entire ecosystem and its inhabitants. Basheer’s emphasis on Nature is to be understood as his interrogation of anthropocentrism. Idea that humans are at the centre of the universe is subverted. Nature preservation, deep ecology, and eco-consciousness are some of the universal concerns in Basheer’s literary works.

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### **16.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- Briefly understand Basheer’s oeuvre.
- Understand the social background that shaped Basheer’s literary world.
- Explain some of the elements of Basheer’s distinctive writing style.
- Identify the culturally unique elements of the story.
- Understand Basheer as a satirist.
- Understand Basheer as an unconventional writer.

- Recognize various aspects of Basheer’s writing style.
- Know Basheer’s use of humour.
- Understand the social criticism in the story.
- Identify Basheer’s uniquely different use of language, particularly his use of colloquial Malayalam.

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## 16.4 Glossary

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**Sthalam Stories:** In Kerala, ‘Sthalam’ refers to a rustic, rural village. Three of Basheer’s works are set in such rural villages. *The Cardsharpener’s Daughter*, *The Principal Divine of the Place*, and *The Elephant Scooper and the Golden Cross* belong to Sthalam stories

**Long stories:** In Malayalam Literature ‘Neenda Katha’ (Long story) refers to the short stories of Vaikom Muhammed Basheer. A Long story is quite a bit longer than a short story and not as lengthy as a novella

**Polyphony:** A term coined by the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin. It refers to the presence of heterogeneous voices, dialects, slang, multiple perspectives in a literary text. Polyphony is a linguistic quality of a narrative. Basheer’s works are excellent examples of polyphony

**Nickname:** A nickname or a Sobriquet is a substitute for the proper name of a familiar person, place, or thing. It is commonly used affectionately or mockingly. Nickname is an aspect of Basheer’s use of colloquial Malayalam. Nicknames can generate laughter

**Mandan:** This Malayalam term is the nickname of Muthapa in the story. He was called ‘Mandan’ which means stupid or fool

**Ottakkannan:** A Malayalam term meaning ‘one-eyed’. It is also a nickname given to Pokker (Zainaba’s father) referring to his physiology

**Satire:** Satire is a genre of literature aimed at social criticism. The dominant feature of satire is humour. Satire achieves its purpose by exploiting the devices of parody, irony, laughter, exaggeration, and by laughing at the follies and foibles of human societies

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## 16.5 Sample Questions

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### 16.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which one these does not belong to Basheer's *Sthalam Stories*?
  - (a) The Cardsharpener's Daughter
  - (b) Pathumma's Goat
  - (c) The Principal Divine of the Place.
2. What is the profession of Ottakkannan Pokker?
  - (a) Card sharper
  - (b) Pickpocket
  - (c) Shopkeeper
3. Who coined the term Polyphony?
  - (a) Vaikom Muhammed Basheer
  - (b) Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin
  - (c) Greek thinkers
4. What is satire?
  - (a) A form of story
  - (b) A mode of social criticism
  - (c) A figure of speech
5. Who wins the card game at the end of the story?
  - (a) Zainaba
  - (b) Mandan Muthapa
  - (c) Ottakkannan Pokker
6. What is a Long story?
  - (a) Refers to Basheer's stories
  - (b) A genre in Malayalam Literature
  - (c) A lengthy story
7. In which year *The Cardsharpener's Daughter* was published?
  - (a) 1956
  - (b) 1957
  - (c) 1951
8. Basheer was affectionately called ----- by his people.

- (a) The king of Beypore
  - (b) Beypore Raja
  - (c) Beypore Sultan
9. Give an example of a nickname in the story.
- (a) Ottakkannan
  - (b) Muthapa
  - (c) Pokker
10. Who calls Mandan Muthapa a fool?
- (a) The people
  - (b) Zainaba
  - (c) Ottakkannan Pokker

**16.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Discuss the setting of the novel.
2. Realism in the portrayal of Mandan Muthapa.
3. Discuss the theme of marriage in the story.
4. Examine Basheer's social consciousness.
5. Examine Basheer's treatment of gender with a special reference to Zainaba.

**16.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Discuss the various aspects of Basheer's narrative techniques through an analysis of the story *The Cardsharpener's Daughter*.
2. Critically evaluate Basheer's use of language and humour.
3. What are the socio-cultural and political contexts of Basheer's works? Discuss with special attention to *The Cardsharpener's Daughter*?



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## 16.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Bašheer, Vaikom Muhammad . *Poovan Banana and the Other Stories*. Translated by Abdulla V, Orient Longman, 1994.
2. ---. *Basheer Fictions*. Edited by VanajamRavindran, Katha Books, 1996.
3. ---. *Me Grandad Ad an Elephant! Three Stories of Muslim Life in South India*. Translated by Ronald E. Asher and Achamma Coilparampil Chandersekarana.
4. Hasan, Mushirul, and M. Asaduddin. *Image and Representation: Stories of Muslim Lives in India*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
5. Sherrif, K.M. *Kunhupaathumma's Tryst with Destiny*. Kannur University, Thalassery Campus, 2005.

## **Unit - 17: The Short Story in Indian Writing in English**

### **Structure**

**17.0** Introduction

**17.1** Objectives

**17.2** Short Story in Indian Writing in English

**17.2.1** Introduction

**17.2.2** Short Story in Indian Writing in English

**17.3** Learning Outcomes

**17.4** Glossary

**17.5** Sample Questions

**17.6** Suggested Readings

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### **17.0 Introduction**

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The short story as a very popular form of literature includes plot, characterization, setting, theme, style, and point of view. It is not merely a shortened form of novel. The short story cannot be treated with the above mentioned features as in novel. Short story has a variety of themes and elements like novel and drama. It is the result of writer's putting up various elements in a shortened form. In short story, the plot is confined to the essentials of the characters to the indispensables and setting to a few suggestive hints. Mostly one of the elements may predominate on the other two. It means writer may write a short story by giving primary importance to plot only and characters and setting may be in the secondary stage. Even some writer may give primary importance to characterization than plot or setting. For some writer, setting may be primary than plot or character.

The language of the short story is appropriate, concise, and model of economy. Every word is equally important and should contribute to the effect of short story. Short story requires apt words and telling phrases unlike novel in which it has passages which could be scored out without disadvantage to the plot. The basic function of the short story is to give pleasure along with some moral and ethical teaching. Generally, it is read only in leisure time or to pass the

time. The aim of the writer is not only presenting various situations but also to focus on moral or ethical messages. The short story writers must use minimum vocabularies and language as simple and interesting as there may be varieties of themes for it. The form of short story is very easy to write as far as the story is concerned but conciseness plays vital role in it. Like novel, unnecessary, long narration, long speeches, and long conversation should be avoided. The conversations should be short and not the complex one. The short story has various subjects or themes like tragic, comic, horror, suspense, romantic, mythological, adventure, fairy tales, etc. The short story writer presents the real picture of life and society through different atmosphere or environment.

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## **17.1 Objectives**

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The main objectives of the unit are:

- To comprehend the meaning and origin of short story.
- To understand well-known Indian short story writers.
- To learn changing Indian short story writings.
- To know the development of the short story in Indian writing in English.
- To understand the major short story writers and their contribution.

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## **17.2 Short Story in Indian Writing in English**

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### **17.2.1 Introduction:**

It is very difficult to decide what distinguishes a short story from longer novels. Edgar Allan Poe defines short story in his essay ‘Thomas Le Moineau’ in 1846. According to him ‘a short story is that one should be able to read it in one sitting’. But nowadays it is difficult as expected length of one sitting may be briefer. Others define short story based on word count generally from one thousand to nine thousand words. It is impossible to provide concrete definition of the short story. Each definition highlights on different aspects and are not able to include all aspects. However, following are some of the definitions to get the brief idea about the short story.

- a) Chris Baldick in his 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms' defines short story as "A fictional prose tale of no specified length, but too short to be published as a volume on its own, as novellas sometimes and novels unusually are. A short story will normally concentrate on a single event with only one or two characters, more economically than a novel's sustained exploration of social background". (Baldick:, 1990: 128)
- b) M. H. Abrams in his 'A Handbook of Literary Terms' defines it as "A short story is a brief work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the component elements, the types, and the narrative techniques of the novel are applicable to the short story as well" (Abrams, 1999:286).
- c) H. G. Wells defines short story as "A short story is, or should be, a simple thing; it aims at producing one single vivid effect; it has to seize the attention at the outset, and never relaxing, gather it together more and more until the climax is reached. The limit of the human capacity to attend closely therefore set a limit to it: it must explode and finish before interruption occurs of fatigue sets in" (Rees: 1998, 203).
- d) Edgar Allan Poe defines a short story as "A prose narrative requiring from half an hour to one or two hours in its perusal." (Edgar Allan Poe: Review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's Twice Told Tales.)

The origin of short stories goes back to oral story-telling background which has produced with great epics like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Oral short stories were often described in the form of rhythmic verse. Such device helped to recall the stories easily. The oldest form of the short story is the anecdote. It was used to function as a parable, and it existed in the Roman Empire. Anecdote is a brief realistic narrative that embodies a point. The anecdotes were popular in Europe till the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the fictional letters of Sir Roger de Coverley were published. Another form which was near to the short story is the fable. Fable stories were originated by the Greek historian Herodotus almost in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Fables were short and concise tales with moral messages. These ancient fables are today known as Aesop's fables with high moral values and message.

The oral story-telling tradition was converted into written short stories in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Bocaccio's *Decameron*. These books are collection of individual short stories which gets converted into a larger narrative story. Chaucer wrote the short stories in the form of verse for his *Canterbury Tales*. These are the stories told by

the travelling pilgrims. Short stories continued to be written and translated into English during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of Italian writers. Steele and Addison wrote the stories with a purpose in 18<sup>th</sup> century but still it was different from the present one. The first English approach to the modern short stories was initiated by Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allan Poe in 1830. They have formulated the new and modern concept of short story writing. Both these writers put the stress on the concept that plot alone is not important in the short story. Edgar Allan Poe defined his principle as – “a skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents but having conceived with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out” (<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/400974-a-skillful-literary-artist-has-constructed-a-tale-if-wise>).

The short story is one of the popular forms of present day writing. Many writers criticize it as a sideline, or it is the medium for unsuccessful writer. On the other hand, many writers are successful and renowned due to their contribution to the short story. The popularity of the short story can be measured in a different way but one of the reasons may be it is leisure for the modern reader. The popularity of English short story has increased for the time of Stevenson. The short story writers like Kipling, Guy de Maupassant, Anton Chekov, Katherine Mansfield, Earnest Hemingway, William Saroyan and so on achieved the worldwide success through their short story.

***Check your Progress***

1. How does Edgar Poe defines short story?
2. What is the oldest form of short story?
3. Who formulated Modern concept of short Story Writing?

**17.2.2 Short Story in Indian Writing in English:**

Indian English short story was first introduced in the year 1898 with the publication of story collection named *Stories from Indian Christian Life*. The collected short story book was written by Kamala Sathianadan. In the primary stage the writers tried to write stories in their mother tongue. There was impact of western writers on these Indian writers. Short stories written at the initial stage were without style and technique. Writers wrote the stories with lack of

characterization and lack of psyche of the characters. Indian writers focused on social conditions and social problems in their short stories. With the passing of time, condition of writing short stories changed where new experiments and changes were made. Varieties of themes and characterization played vital role in their writings. The short story in Indian writing in English was systematically written after approximately 1920 where the writers focused on characters along with their social and educational background. Some of the writers focused on the psychology of the characters. Some of the writers tried to focus on the social issue of that time. Shankar Ram has published a collection of short story in the year 1926 entitled *Kaveri's Children* focusing on social issues like poverty, caste, and superstitious nature of the people.

The short story writers like A.S.P. Ayyer, K.S. Venkatramani, and K. Nagarjan were social reformers who tried to focus on the social problems of mid-thirties. It was also a period of India's freedom struggle where writers started to write their thoughts aggressively through the short story. Indian short stories flourished as the development of theme and characterization and handling of English language effectively and confidently. The situation and characterization appealed and attracted reader's attentions. The setting and atmosphere of the short story appeals to the readers within the surrounding scenery. Manjari Isavran depicted the evil pictures through his short stories which were happening around him. He has sympathy for poor and downtrodden people of society which he depicts in his short stories. K. Nagarjun, one of the leading writers of short story, depicts stories with humour and use of idioms of English. The short story in Indian writing in English was in the stage of developing in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The short stories written by Kamal Sathianandan focused on Indian Christian life. Venkatamani published two collections of short stories under the title *Paper Boats* in 1921 and *Jatadharam and other Stories* in 1945 depicting image of human mind and relationship among the characters with humorous touch.

R. K. Narayan was one of the leading short story writers in Indian writing in English. He focused on various themes through his stories like human weaknesses, horror, children behavior and mentality, political ideology, and supremacy and so on. Characterization and background setting belonged to a middle class of south Indian people. Most of the stories of R. K. Narayan are set in the town called Malgudi. R. K. Narayan has written many short stories which have been collected and published in six volumes, namely *Dodu and other Short Stories*, *Malgudi Days*, *Cyclone and other Stories*, *Lawley Road and other Short Stories*, *An Astrologer's Day and other Stories*, *A Horse and Two Goats*, etc.

Most of the stories from these collections were published in leading magazines and newspapers like Madras Daily and The Hindu and some are also published in foreign periodicals like 'The Reporter', 'The New York', 'In Vogue', etc.

*Dodu and other Stories* which is a collection of seventeen stories deals with different social problems like financial problems of middle class, education problems, problems dealing with south Indian marriages and so on. In *An Astrologer's Day and other Stories*, which includes thirty stories, social themes like crime and punishment, ambitious parents, and a naughty child with a below average ability are discussed in this collection. *Malgudi Days* is a collection of eighteen short stories. These are presented in a delightful manner. Short stories from this collection show Indian life and character. The well-known short stories from this collection are 'The Gold Belt', 'Cyclone', 'Under the Banyan Tree', 'An End of Trouble', 'The White Flower', 'Dasi and Bridegroom', 'An Evening Gift', etc. *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970), another collection of R. K. Narayan, includes five short stories. The stories from this collection are highly entertaining and delightful. R. K. Narayan's uniqueness of humor through comic characters is found in this collection.

In the middle of 1930s, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao contributed a lot for the development of Indian English short stories. Mulk Raj Anand tried to focus on artificiality of people and depicted the same in the short stories. Most of the stories focused on social injustice prevalent in the society and biased against lower caste and poor people. He tried to focus on rotten and brutal social traditions and customs of Indian society including the child marriage, brutality, patriarchy system and so on. His well-known and remarkable stories include – *The Cobbler and the Machine*, *Lost Child and other Stories*, *A Dog's Life*, *Between Tears and Laughter*, *Boots*, *The Barber Trade Union*, *Terrorist*, *Lament on the Death of Master of Arts* and so on. The short stories of Mulk Raj Anand depict various themes like social condition and the world of nature, situation and problems of women, struggle of existence, treatment for lower caste people, discrimination between low and high caste society, untouchability, superstitious nature, hypocrisy of the society and so on. Mulk Raj Anand wrote the short stories in satirical format as well. There were many stories focused on decayed and inhuman social conditions and traditions of Indian society.

Short stories writers from India were thoroughly influenced by the western short story writers. For example, Chatterjee influenced Sir Walter Scott, Rabindranath Tagore could be found inclined to the influence of his own favorite British writer. R.K. Narayan was also under

the great influence of American short story writer Anton Chekhov and Raja Rao was under influence of the French short story writers. Mulk Raj Anand was influenced by Russian short story writer Guy De Maupassant and Frenk O'Connor. Raja Rao shaped the English language to suit then Indian sensibility. His short stories expounds Indian –English tempo. Shiv Kumar aptly has said:

The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into making of theirs. We Indian think quickly and when we move quickly, there must be something in the sun of India that makes us rush and tumbled and run on. The Indian short story in English is indeed amazing. It covers many aspect of life (Kumar, 2004, 3).

Along with R. K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao also has contributed to a great extent to the development of short story in Indian English literature. He writes on social and political issues. He contributed to short story through his collections of short stories like *The Cow of the Barricades and other Stories* and *Policeman and the Rose*. *Policeman and the Rose* is one of the pure fiction. He has focused on the Indian problems deeply. His story focused on pathos and passion, and his unique mystery creates special attraction for the readers. He was also influenced by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. In his story *Nagisa* there is a character who was deeply influenced by thoughts and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. The well-known short story *Javani* deals with social problems and sufferings and miseries of widow. Through his stories, Raja Rao focused on various social issues and messages like sacrifice for the nation, problems of untouchable women, tyranny of the British rule, problems of lower caste and slum people, victims of destiny and so on. Raja Rao belongs from middle class family, so he was aware about the problems of middle-class Indian society. Most of his stories consist of his own experiences. The subjects, views and perceptions were changed after the India's independence. With the new atmosphere, Indian society was facing the problems of poverty, unemployment, selfishness, ignorance and so on.

After India's independence, the theme and subject matter of short story changed. Many writers were tried their hands in this format. Many writers changed their perspective and views after the independence. Though there was now independence but still the Indian problems did not changed. India was still facing the basic problems even after the independence like poverty, ignorance, unemployment, selfishness and so on. K. A. Abbas focused on these problems in his two collections of short stories namely *Blood Stone and other Stories* published in 1947 and



*Cages of Freedom and other Stories* published in 1952. Through his remarkable collection *One Thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and other Stories*, he presented the realistic condition of victims of partition of India and problems of people who suffered from the partition. Short stories of K. A. Abbas are sentimental and melodramatic. His short stories are satirical and focus on the bitter reality. Ruth Jhabwala also discussed the social issues and problems like identity, marriage issues and seeking of reality and so on. Manohar Malgonkar is another short story writer in India. He has written short stories and novels. He published three volumes of collections of short stories namely *A Toast in Warm Wine and other Stories*, *Bombay Beware and Rumble and Tumble*. He focused on army life, hunting and trade. He not only focused on individual part but also on setting and structure of the stories. Characters presented in his short stories are memorable. One of the feature of his short story is that he not only focused on individual part of the story but subject matter, content and even his characters are also unforgettable.

Ruskin Bond is another important short story writer from India. Though he was born in British but he spent his childhood in Himalyan and spent most of his life in India. He also worked for some years in Delhi and Dehradun as a journalist. He wrote different kinds of stories especially ghost stories like 'A Season of Ghost', 'A Face in the Dark and other Stories', etc. His short stories focused on variety of themes and subject matter and written in simple style. There is a description of Indian Bazaar and market in his stories. He also focused on the theme like separation, loneliness, and romance in his stories. His one of the well-known short stories is 'The Night Train at Deoli'. This story deals with the theme of love and romance. It shows writers attraction towards the girl who was selling the basket early in the morning at a railway station. He travels by the train again to find the girl and even plans to find the girl in her village. The description of nature, trees, streams, rivers, falls are also can be found in the stories of Ruskin Bond. He was a writer of nature. Manoj Das is one of the contemporary short story writer of Ruskin Bond. He was born and brought up in Assam, so most of his stories deal with social and cultural background from Assam. His well-known stories are *Song of Sunday and other Stories* published in 1967 and *Submerged Stories and other Stories* published in 1986. In his story 'A Night in the life of a Mayor', Mayor laughs at an old professor, who is a member of the corporation council. When he knows that the cow has chewed his grandfather's notebook, he is disturbed. In the evening, when Mayor was bathing into bank of river, he saw that the same cow was munching his clothes. The necked minister rushed immediately into the car. A small girl

gave him a frock and towel. Mayor realized his mistake and apologised the Professor for his offense. The message clearly comes out that man becomes down at any time. His stories are full of Indianness and he is a man of soil in real sense. One of his remarkable stories is 'Mystery of the Missing Cap'd' deals with satire on politics; the white cap of the leader is symbolized with a toy of the monkey. His characters are coming from Indian ground. Basic characteristics of his stories are too pointed out the weakness of the society.

Anita Desai was one of the well-known novelists and short story writers in post-independence era. She has published two collections of short stories entitled *Games at Twilight and other Stories* in 1978 and *Diamond Dust and other Stories* in 2000. Her short stories dealt with reflection of human mentality and human weakness. She focused on the themes like generation gap between father and son, struggle for identity, psychological problems of Indian society, and existentialism. Characters in her short stories are struggling for identity and existentialism. She focused on the problems which are not only Indian problems but also the situation can be found anywhere in the world as if their problems. She focused on the characters from children to elder people focusing on the psychological problems of Indian society and life.

Arun Joshi was another short story writer who also belongs to the same era. His famous short stories include 'The Gherao', which deals with the theme of principal and students for discipline and violence. His another story 'The Froniter Mail is Gone' deals with the theme of prostitution as a social issue and girls attraction to be richest as early as possible and *The Eve-teasers* deals with theme of social problem like teasing of the young girls by the young boys, and *The Servant* deals with theme of the servant who was accused for rape, and murders the housewife. He focused on burning issues in daily modern life. He focused on major themes like dishonesty, lust, murder, quarrel, prostitutions, and teenager's problems. One of the unique features of his short stories is unpredictable behavior of the main characters and also focused on new generations of Indian society.

Khushwant Singh was one of the notable writers of Indian English literature. He was famous for his novel *Train to Pakistan* based on partition theme. He also tried his hand in writing short stories. 'Karma' deals with the theme of slavish mentality of Indian people who were under the influence of British rule and their culture and life style and 'The Mark of Vishnu' is another famous story of Khushwant Singh which deals with theme of exposition of Indian superstition and blind faith. The servant Ganguram, a devotee of Lord Vishnu feed a king cobra every night. One day the children of house kill the cobra and put him in a Tin box. Then they give the tin to

the science teacher who opens it and finds a cobra alive. Ganguram dies on the spot. The snake bite leaves a 'V' mark on Ganguram's face. Ganguram used to smear the mark of Vishnu on his forehead every day. Khushwant Singh deals with the theme of Indian mentality, exposition of superstition, stupidity, and unconventional behavior of the society through his writings. He also tries to protest the policies of government through his articles, prose, and short stories. His stories are delightful, loathsome, well-made and bitter, but they are amusing. Some of his stories deal with stupidity, idiosyncrasy, and unconventional behavior of the Indian society. Khushwant Singh also reacted on bureaucracy in man in many of his short stories and novels. Sometime he also wonders about the policies of Government, he aggressively protests the policies of government through his articles, prose and stories without any fear and burden. He also focused on the affairs of the common people and society and also satires on these affairs in the society. As an advocate, he used to be angry on the things which are happening in the society and he used to express through his writings. He was deeply affected by the Partition of India and the same things he expressed in his well-known novel *Train to Pakistan*. Same feelings and agony can also be observed in his short stories as well.

Shashi Deshpande, Sahitya Academy Award winner in 1990, was known for her novels. She has written successfully short stories as well. Her famous short stories include – 'It was Nightingale', 'The Liberated Women', 'It was dark', 'A Man and Woman', etc. Through her short stories, she focused on problems of women's identity, women's struggle and fights for their existence, problems of arranged marriage and their role in Indian families. Her short story 'It was Nightingale' deals with the theme of the man women relationship. She is gender conscious woman who knows the problems of woman closely. Her other short story 'The liberated woman' deals with Indian customs and traditions. It was a tragedy of a woman who cannot take her own decisions in spite of her own earning. She cannot stand on her feet without the permission of the family and husband. The short story 'It was Dark' describes social problem like the miserable incident of an unmarried girl who got pregnant without marriage and she has to face humiliation of the society for carrying the child of unidentified rapist. 'A Man and Woman' shows another social issue. The story is about a secret closeness of a woman with her dead husband's brother who was seven years old. Shashi Deshpande writes about the confused women who do not have any direction in their life. The theme of her major stories is cooperation, stinginess.

Apart from these major short story writers, there are many other writers who tried to portray the problems of Indian society through their writings. Writers such as Sasthi Batra,

Margaret Chateerjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Keki Daruwalla, etc. have contributed for the development of short story. Short stories of Margaret Chateerjee have been written in 1960s in which we find the description of Bengali culture and traditions. She focused on Bengali life style. One of his famous story ‘Dogs and Man’ deals with the life of a veterinary doctor while another remarkable story ‘Tapan’s Mother’ deals with the relationship of the mother in law. The well-known short story ‘The Lantern’ deals with the changing atmosphere of the society and the life style of the new generation people. Sasthi Batra’s story ‘Wake No False Dawn’ deals the efforts of a roaming protagonist who fulfilled his dream of building a house and settled in a new home and having a new experience of life. Her characters act and think and behave in a different way. Her stories ‘One Evening’ and ‘If only’ deal with the theme of the failure of the characters. As a result of these, English short story in India has been rising since 1930s. Some of the writers focused whatever they found around their surroundings and some of them have experienced the problem. As a result of this, different variety of themes can be observed in Indian English short story writers.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who introduced short story in India?
2. Who were the contemporaries of R. K. Narayan?
3. What are major themes of Raja Rao’s short stories?
4. What are major features of Khushwant Singh’s short stories?

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### **17.3 Learning Outcomes**

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After going through the unit, the students are expected:

- To understand meaning, definition and origin of short story in general.
- To know Indian short story writers
- To comprehend various themes and subject matter of Indian short story writers.
- To understand the development of short story in Pre-independence and Post-independence era.

- To know Indian short story writers and their contribution.

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## 17.4 Glossary

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<b>Indispensable :</b>	Absolutely necessary
<b>Concise:</b>	Brief, short or to the point
<b>Seize:</b>	Grab
<b>Existentialism:</b>	A philosophical approach which believes on the existence of person
<b>Explode:</b>	Blow up, burst
<b>Exposition:</b>	Detailed introduction or explanation
<b>Denouement:</b>	Sequence of events at the end of story
<b>Amalgamated:</b>	Two or more things combined together to create one
<b>Anecdote:</b>	Unelaborated narration of single incident, new version of old jokes continue to be a staple of contemporary social exchange
<b>Fable:</b>	Short narrative in Prose or Verse
<b>Brevity:</b>	Shortness or briefness
<b>Parable:</b>	A Simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson
<b>Discrimination:</b>	Bias, Prejudice
<b>Rotten:</b>	Suffering from decay
<b>Superstition:</b>	Excessively credulous belief in and reverence for the supernatural
<b>Tyranny:</b>	Oppression or dictatorship
<b>Vivid:</b>	Clear, Bright
<b>Perceptions:</b>	The ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the Senses
<b>Prevalent:</b>	Widespread in a particular area at a particular time.
<b>Stinginess:</b>	Unwilling to give or spend.

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## 17.5 Sample Questions

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### 17.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who defines short story “as a short story is that one should be able to read it in one sitting?”

- (a) Thomas Le Moineau      (b) G. Chaucer  
(c) Boccaccio                (d) Addison

2. The oldest form of the short story is the \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) Fable      (b) Anecdote  
(c) Novel      (d) Drama

3. *Canterbury Tales* was written by \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) Boccaccio      (b) Homer  
(c) Herodotus      (d) Chaucer

4. The short story ‘The Night Train at Deoli’ is written by \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) R. K. Narayan      (b) Arun Joshi  
(c) Ruskin Bond      (d) Anita Desai

5. Indian English short story was first introduced in the year \_\_\_\_\_

- (a) 1890                      (b) 1870  
(c) 1910                      (d) 1898

6. *Malgudi Days* was written by \_\_\_\_\_

- (a) Raja Rao                (b) R. K. Narayan  
(c) Mulk Raj Anand      (d) Anita Desai

7. *Dodu and other Stories* which is a collection of \_\_\_\_\_ stories.

- (a) Twenty Stories      (b) Ten Stories  
(c) Thirty Five Stories (d) Seventeen Stories

8. The short story ‘Javani’ is written by \_\_\_\_\_.

- (a) Raja Rao                      (b) R. K. Narayan  
(c) Shashi Deshpande (d) Khushwant Singh

9. Shashi Deshpande received \_\_\_\_\_ award.

- (a) Booker Prize              (b) Sahitya Academy  
(c) Pulitzer                      (d) None of the above

10. The anecdotes were popular in Europe till the \_\_\_\_\_ century.

- (a) 17<sup>th</sup>                              (b) 18<sup>th</sup>  
(c) 19<sup>th</sup>                              (d) 20<sup>th</sup>

### **17.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Comment on the meaning and definition of short story.
2. Write a note on beginning of short story in Indian Writing in English.
3. Discuss R. K. Narayan as a short story writer.
4. What are problems or issues presented by Raja Rao through his short stories?
5. Shashi Deshpande as a short story writer. Discuss.

### **17.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write a detailed note on meaning, definition, and origin of short story.
2. Discuss the development of short story in Indian Writing in English?
3. Write a detailed note on major Indian short story writers.

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## 17.6 Suggested Readings

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# **Unit - 18: Prominent Short Story Writers in Indian Writing in English**

## **Structure**

**18.0** Introduction

**18.1** Objectives

**18.2** Prominent Short Story Writers in Indian Writing in English

**18.2.1** Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004)

**18.2.2** R.K. Narayan (1906-2001)

**18.2.3** Raja Rao (1908-2006)

**18.2.4** Manohar Malgonkar (1913-2010)

**18.2.5** Khushwant Singh (1915-2001)

**18.2.6** Shiv K. Kumar (1921-2017)

**18.2.7** Ruskin Bond (1934-)

**18.2.8** Keki N. Daruwalla (1937-)

**18.2.9** Amit Chaudhuri (1962-)

**18.3** Learning Outcomes

**18.4** Glossary

**18.5** Sample Questions

**18.6** Suggested Readings

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## **18.0 Introduction**

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India had spellbinding storytellers even before British landed on our soil. We have our own collection of stories—a good number of such stories are translated into English too. However, education in English came in Eighteenth Century in India following establishment of schools by Charles Grant of East India Company. Consequently, a century later Indian writers in English appeared on the literary scene. Thereafter, the Indian writers began producing their own fiction with nationalistic or regional flavors. We must bear in mind that the phrase “Indian

writing in English” has evolved following debates on “Anglo-Indian” and “Indo-Anglian”, and its contemporary connotation encompass any literary work produced in India in English.

In this unit, we shall not only have an overview of Indian short story writers in English but also read in detail about some of the prominent short story writers including Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Kumar, Ruskin Bond, Keki N. Daruwalla, and Amit Chaudhuri. It is worth noting that Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Raja Rao are among those writers in English who responded to India’s nationalist movement in their respective way. Anand presented a vision of Indian life. Narayan explored life and reality. Rao experimented with the form of short story. We shall learn in detail about some of their works in other units of this course. A few more names of writers of short fiction in Indian writing in English are provided here for a broader picture:

- Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1988)
- Ahmed Ali (1910-1994)
- Chaman Nahal (1927-2013)
- V.S. Naipaul (1932-2018)
- Salman Rushdie (1947-)
- Rohinton Mistry ((1952-)
- Vikram Seth (1952-)
- Amitav Ghosh (1956-)
- Shashi Tharoor (1956-)
- Upamanyu Chatterjee (1959-)
- Salil Desai (1969-)
- Aravind Adiga (1974-)
- B. Rangrao (?)

In this unit, the focus remains on some of the prominent master story tellers of modern short stories. These writers are award-winners and represent various phases and places of the country. Meanwhile, we shall learn about Indian short story writers from regional literatures and women short story writers in other units of this course.

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## 18.1 Objectives

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This unit aims to:

- Provide an overview of short story writers in Indian writing in English.
- Introduce some of the prominent short story writers in Indian writing in English.
- Familiarize learners with works, themes, contributions, etc. of some of the prominent short story writers in Indian writing in English.

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## 18.2 Prominent Short Story Writers in Indian Writing in English

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India has a great tradition of storytelling. As this unit deals with the prominent short story writers in Indian writings in English, it would be an imperative to mention about them one by one as below:

### 18.2.1 Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004):

Mulk Raj Anand, one of the trendsetters of Indo-Anglian fiction, was born in Peshawar in British India. As a pioneer in Indian writing in English, he penned short stories, novels and essays highlighting social issues including poverty and casteism. He graduated from Punjab University in Lahore and pursued higher education from University College London and University of Cambridge. He earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy.

He developed a circle of friends from literary and philosophical flare while being a researcher in England. Among his notable friends were E.M. Foster and T.S. Eliot. When he published his first novel *Untouchable*, his friend Foster penned its introduction thus giving a boost in his literary career. The novel, a first of its kind in English, lays bare the evils of caste system before English readers. Through his works, he not only showed dehumanizing conditions in which people were living within a colonized society but also exposed various layers of colonialism existing within the Indian society.

In his extensive literary career of about seven decades, he had been in search of a more humane, equitable and just India, which was trying to liberate itself from the clutches of

colonialism. He sensed that the caste system would remain a hurdle for India in becoming a modern society. Right from *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, he continued to raise his concerns through the novels and short stories. His mastery over fiction and ability to blend Western narrative technique with native storytelling method gave him recognition far and wide. He was considered to have been influenced by some of the greatest short story writers such as Anton Chekov, Guy de Maupassant, and O' Henry. He was one of the founding members of Progressive Writers Association.

He wrote on a range of subjects in both fiction and non-fiction, including in the areas of art, sculpture, politics, literature, and philosophy. Among his known short story collections are: *Between Tears and Laughter*, *Folktales of Punjab*, *Lajwanti and other Stories*, *Reflections on the Golden Bed and other Stories*, *The Lost Child and other Stories*, *The Power of Darkness and other Stories*, *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and other Stories*, and *The Barber's Trade Union and other Stories*. He received many awards including International Peace Prize, Leverhulme Fellowship, Padma Bhushan, and Sahitya Akademi Award.

### **18.2.2 R.K. Narayan (1906-2001):**

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, an erudite and prolific creator of fiction known to the world of literature as R K Narayan, was born in Madras, British India. His initial teacher was his maternal grandmother Parvati. His father was a school teacher. Due to frequent transfers of his father, Narayan had to study in many schools including Lutheran Mission School, C.R.C. High School, Christian College High School and Maharajah's College High School. He also went to Maharaja College of Mysore and completed Bachelor of Arts degree from there.

He got the taste for reading and literature at an early age. While being student, he began writing for newspapers and magazines. His first publication was a book review. It was in 1930 that he published his first novel *Swami and Friends*, which was possible due to assistance from his friend and mentor Graham Greene. In this novel he not only created a fictional place called 'Malgudi' but also a fictional world in it. In his subsequent fictional works, the Malgudi town continued to appear as a setting.

As a master storyteller for six long decades, he created stories that are rooted in Indian soil and culture—both in expression and setting. Through his stories, he introduced India to the

English audience at large—giving them fascinating plot, original characters, graceful narration, and simple language. His stories revolve around rural life and innocent children. He attempted to highlight social issues and needless practices of his times.

Though popular for his novels, Narayan wrote numerous short stories which have been published in six different collections. They are *Malgudi Days*, *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories*, *Lawley Road and Other Stories*, *A Horse and Two Goats*, *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories*, and *The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories*. His famous novels are *Swami and Friends*, *The Guide*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The English Teacher*, *Mr. Sampath*, *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, etc. For his literary contribution, he was honored with Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, AC Benson Medal, and Sahitya Akademi Award.

### **18.2.3 Raja Rao (1908-2006):**

Raja Rao, one of the three pioneers of Indian writing in English, was born in the town of Hassan in Mysore. His father served as the Pandit in the court of Nizam of Hyderabad. While being in Hyderabad, he not only learned Sufism but also Islamic theology and Urdu from Madrassa-e-Aliya at Gunfoundry. He went to Hyderabad's Nizam College to study English and then did bachelor's degree from University of Madras in 1929. Further, he studied history and literature in France at University of Sorbonne (Paris) and University of Montpellier. He served University of Texas at Austin as a professor of philosophy, and later was named professor emeritus upon his retirement.

In search of spiritual enlightenment, he went as far as Gandhiji's Ashram in Gujarat to Ramana Ashram at Tiruvannamalai and Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondichery. He was influenced by Atmananda Guru and Pandit Taranath. These two figures appear in his short fiction.

He actively took part in the Indian nationalist movement and involved in undercover activities against the then British rule. As a writer, he not only commented on the events from a nationalist's point of view but also on certain social institutions from a humanist's point of view. His short fiction shows his commitment to India's freedom struggle, his understanding and passion to write on village life, and his audacity to experiment with style and form. According to M.K. Naik, Rao experimented with the folk tale form with all the simplicity and credulity. In his

literary career he penned tens of stories—earliest of which show him as a struggling young writer while the later ones reveal him as a mature storyteller with stylistic formalism. He published his earliest short stories in Europe and the United States in 1933.

He published three short story collections. They are *The Cow of the Barricades and other Stories*, *The Policeman and the Rose*, and *On the Ganga Ghat*. His novels are *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, *The Cat and Shakespeare: A Tale of India*, *Comrade Kirillov*, and *The Chessmaster and His Moves*. He was honored with Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, Sahitya Akademi Award, and Neustadt International Prize for Literature.

#### **18.2.4 Manohar Malgonkar (1913-2010):**

Manohar Malgonkar, an Indian author, army officer and civil servant, was born in the Jagalbet village of Karwar (now located in Uttara Kannada). He belonged to royal family, and his maternal grandfather was governor of erstwhile Gwalior State. He received early education in Belgaum and schooling in the city of Dharwad, Karnataka. He graduated from Mumbai University. While serving the Indian Army in the Maratha Light Infantry and during the Second World War, he rose to become Lieutenant-Colonel. He lived his post-retirement life mostly at his bungalow in Jagalbet, where he operated manganese mines and indulged in farming.

He was an eminent writer of post-Independence era. Being the author of numerous books, which includes fiction and non-fiction, he immensely contributed to Indian writing in English. He was both a keen observer and an impressive storyteller who commented to important events and social realities of his times. Malgonkar produced a wide range of work, including adventure fiction, historical fiction, and military thrillers. Though he was charged by critics for not showcasing lives of poor and downtrodden people in his fiction and writing for entertainment, he humbly submitted that the Indian society consists of not just peasant, laborers and poor but all classes. He wrote about different aspects of human life and the characters he created belong to different strata of the society. His fictional works revolve around the themes of aristocracy, Partition of India, army life, violence, etc.

He wrote many short stories which were published as anthologies. His two popular collections of short stories are *Cactus Country* and *The Garland Keepers*. Among his other short story collections are *A Teller of Tales*, *A Toast in Warm Wine and other Short Stories*, *Bombay*

*Beware, Four Graves and other Stories, and Rumble Tumble.* He penned many novels in English. Some of them are *A Bend in the Ganges, Combat of Shadows, Distant Drum, The Princes,* and *The Devil's Wind.* He also wrote many books on history, including *The Men Who Killed Gandhi.* He also wrote articles for newspapers and scripts for films.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who authored the novel *Coolie*?
2. In which year *Swami and Friends* was published?
3. When and where Manohar Malgonkar was born?

**18.2.5 Khushwant Singh (1915-2001):**

Named Khushal Singh at birth in the town of Hadali in Punjab, Khushwant Singh was a literary giant in the Indian literary scene. He was a prolific writer, humorist, and journalist among many other professional associations to his name. He did his schooling from Modern School, New Delhi and then went to St. Stephen's College for higher secondary and Government College at Lahore for B.A. He studied L.L.B. from King's College, London. Prior to the Partition, he worked as a lawyer at Lahore Court. After 1947, he joined Indian Foreign Service and also worked for All India Radio. His career in journalism and editing numerous literary magazines, journals and supplements deserves a different chapter for its merit.

He began writing fiction in early 1950s titled *The Mark of Vishnu and other Stories.* He continued to write till his ripe age when he could no longer wield the pen. He wrote stories on a wide range of themes. A peculiarity of his fiction is that it contains satire, irony, and humor. These elements make his stories lively and pleasant for the readers. He also employs supernatural elements and folklore in his fictional works. His characters come from varied strata of the society—poor to rich, saints to criminals, and sane to insane. Though he gained much popularity for his novels, particularly on partition, his stories not only reveal Singh as a genius writer but also show a range of modern issues he commented on through his works of fiction.

In his literary career spanning more than five decades, he produced over a hundred works. Many of his stories that he published in numerous journals and at other places are now

available under *The Collected Short Stories of Khushwant Singh*. Some of his popular anthologies are *Paradise and other Stories* and *The Portrait of a Lady*. Besides short stories, his novels are quite popular too. *Train to Pakistan*, *Delhi: A Novel* and *I Shall never Hear a Nightingale* are among his famous works. He also picked best Indian stories that appear in two volumes under the title *Best Indian Short Stories*. He also translated various works from Punjabi to English. He was honored for his literary contribution with Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and Sahitya Akademi Fellowship.

#### **18.2.6 Shiv K. Kumar (1921-2017):**

Born in Lahore, Shiv K. Kumar was a short story writer, novelist, poet, and playwright of repute. He completed schooling from Dayanand Anglo Vedic (D.A.V) High School. He graduated from Government College at Lahore with a B.A. degree. He went to Lahore's Forman Christian College for M.A. and later moved to London for further studies. He did Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge in English Literature under the supervision of David Daiches.

Before moving to India after the Partition, he worked as a lecturer in D.A.V. College at Lahore. Upon migrating to Delhi, he worked for All India Radio and taught at Delhi's Hansraj College. While being at Cambridge, he also taught at Fitzwilliam College. He eventually settled in Hyderabad where he taught literature at University of Hyderabad and Osmania University.

His literary career began in his late 40s with the publication of his poetry. His verses for poetry brought to him so much reputation that his short stories never gained due attention. He published an anthology of short stories titled *Beyond Love and other Stories*. The collection has twenty five stories, which are simple, readable and short. His stories have characters from different backgrounds and various settings. He published second collection of stories titled *To Nun with Love and other Stories*.

Besides his own stories, he edited quite a few collections of short stories, including *A Portrait of India: A Selection of Short Stories*, *Contemporary Indian Short Stories in English*, *Short Stories of Yesterday and Today*, and *Modern Short Stories*. He also translated selected poems of Faiz Ahmed Faiz, which were published by Penguin. He received many awards including Sahitya Akademi Award and Padma Bhushan for his literary contribution. He also received Fellowship of the Royal Society of Literature.



### **18.2.7 Ruskin Bond (1934-):**

Ruskin Bond, a noted Anglo-Indian writer famous for producing copious fiction in English, was born in a cantonment town of Kasauli (now in Himachal Pradesh). He completed his schooling from Bishop Cotton School in Shimla. His parents separated when he was just eight. He lost his father at the age of ten. These events affected him immensely. He was later brought up by his mother and stepfather in Dehradun. After his high school, he went to Channel Islands in the United Kingdom at his aunt's house for better prospects. In London, he wrote his first novel *The Room on the Roof*, which is about an orphaned Anglo-Indian boy. It won him a literary prize. He used the money to publish the novel and then came back to Dehradun via Bombay.

He began writing in his late teen age and continues to wield the pen even in his eighties. In the literary career of over six decades, he produced a mammoth collection of works which include short stories, novels, children's fiction, essays and non-fiction. His fictional writings are diverse in subject, theme and presentation. Being an Anglo-Indian writer, he portrayed rustic in its purity while drawing inspiration from hills and valleys of Himalayas. His specialty lies in his ability to spellbound adults and children through his relatable characters, local settings and narrative style.

He produced as many as 500 short stories, several novels, poems, and essays to date. Some of his anthologies of short stories are *Times Stops at Shamli*, *The Tiger in the Tunnel*, *Ghost Stories from the Raj*, and *A Town Called Dehra*. Among his novels are *A Flight of Pigeons*, *The Sensualist*, *Angry River*, and *The Blue Umbrella*. He also wrote five books for children and hundreds of articles for newspapers and magazines. He was honored with Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri, and Sahitya Akademi Award for his literary contributions.

### **18.2.8 Keki N. Daruwalla (1937-):**

Keki Nasserwanji Daruwalla, an accomplished short story writer and poet, was born in Lahore, British India in a Parsee family. Though his early education happened in many places, he eventually graduated from Government College at Ludhiana with a master's degree in English literature. Their family migrated to Indian during the Partition. He joined Indian Police Service and served at multiple location including Agra, Barabanki, Dehradun, Farrukhabad, Lucknow,

Meerut, and Ranikhet. Earlier, he worked as lecturer at Government College, Lahore. He also served as Visiting Fellow at Oxford's Queen Elizabeth House.

His experiences of living in different Indian cities helped him create vivid settings and diverse characters in his works. He published *Love across the Salt Desert*, a collection of short stories. His stories are coloured with and developed in India's peculiar and diverse landscapes – right from Gujarat's Kutch to mountains of Uttarakhand. Narrated mostly in first person, the stories give women characters voices to express their moods and memories. Through his stories, he comments on social issues and intolerance while downplaying violence in the society. His stories not only explore vulnerabilities and debilities of humans but also inspire them and cause despair.

He published *Sword and Abyss* as his first anthology of short stories. Thereafter, he produced many short stories. Some of his collections of stories are *Love Across the Salt Desert*, *The Minister for Permanent Unrest & other Stories*, *Daniell Comes to Judgement: New & Vintage Daruwalla* and *Islands*. He also penned a novel titled *For Pepper and Christ*. In addition, he produced two three-act plays and several volumes of poetry. After a humble start with *Under Orion*, an anthology of his poems, he produced a total of about ten volumes of poetry. Some of his anthologies are *Landscapes*, *Night River*, *The Keeper of the Dead*, and *The Map-maker*. He was honored with Padma Shri, Sahitya Akademi Award, and the Commonwealth Poetry Award, Asia for his literary contributions.

### **18.2.9 Amit Chaudhuri (1962-):**

Amit Chaudhuri, a notable author of fiction in Indian writing in English, was born in Calcutta and brought up in Bombay (now Mumbai). He studied at Cathedral and John Connon School in Bombay and graduated from University College, London with a degree in English. He did his Ph.D. on D.H. Lawrence at Oxford's Balliol College. He comes from a wealthy and arts-loving family. His father was CEO of Britannia Industries and mother was an ardent fan and promoter of Rabindranath Tagore's songs.

In the world of contemporary Indian fiction, he stands out as a sublime creator of stories. His literary career began with the publication of essays. It followed with novels and short stories. His stories show fast changing Indian society, with the literary flavors of wit and minute details.

He has a mix background that not only shapes his experiences but also influences his stories – born in culturally-rich Calcutta, brought up in ever-happening Bombay, educated in epicenter-of-thought Oxford. His stories give a sense of rapid changes in the Indian society. He creates two kinds of characters – the one seeking oblivion and other seeking recognition.

He penned several short stories besides seven novels. Though he rose to popularity with novels, his short stories are read widely too. A good number of his stories are set in Calcutta and Bombay. His stories appear in a collection titled *Real Time: Stories and a Reminiscence*. He comments on a range of subjects in his stories, including memory, time, childhood, religion, and the Indian society in general. His popular novels are *A Strange and Sublime Address*, *Friend of My Youth*, *Afternoon Raag*, *Freedom Son*, *The Immortals*, *A New World* and *Odysseus Abroad*. He received many awards, including Sahitya Akademi Award, Commonwealth Writers’ Prize, and Los Angeles Times Book Prize.

***Check your Progress***

1. When and where was Khushwant Singh born?
2. Selected poems of which Urdu writer were translated by Shiv K. Kumar?
3. Who is the author of *Love across the Salt Desert*, the collection of short story?

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### **18.3 Learning Outcomes**

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Upon completion of the unit, students would be able to:

- Understand the tradition of short story in Indian writing in English.
- Identify prominent short story writers from different regions of the country who represent the canon of Indian literature.
- Identify various themes and works of short story writers from Indian writing in English.
- Present a detail note on select prominent short story writers in Indian writing in English, highlighting their works, styles, themes, and contribution in general.

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## 18.4 Glossary

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**Indo-Anglian:** A term used for Indian English writers. Indo-Anglian literature refers to the body of work produced by native Indian writers in the English language

**Anglo-Indian:** A term used for writers of English descent born or living in India, or those writers with mixed Indian and British ancestry

**Castism:** Related to caste system; prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of caste

**East India Company:** An English company formed for the exploitation of trade with East and Southeast Asia and India

**E.M. Foster:** An English novelist, short story writer, essayist and author of *A Passage to India*

**T.S. Eliot:** An American-English poet, playwright, literary critic, editor, a leader of the Modernist movement in poetry

**Anton Chekov:** A Russian playwright and short-story writer who is considered to be among the greatest writers of short fiction in history

**Guy de Maupassant:** A 19<sup>th</sup> century French writer who is considered a master of the short story form

**O' Henry:** An American short story writer known for surprise endings of his stories

**Progressive Writers Association:** A group of writers associated with Progressive Movement whose initial manifesto was drafted by Mulk Raj Anand and Sajjad Zaheer. All India Progressive Writers' Association was formed in 1936

**Graham Greene:** An English novelist regarded by many as one of the leading English novelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

**Nizam of Hyderabad:** The title of the monarch of Hyderabad State. The popular *Nizam* was Mir Osman Ali Khan

**Sri Aurobindo:** An Indian philosopher and spiritual reformer who introduced his visions on human progress and spiritual evolution

**Lieutenant-Colonel:** A rank of commissioned officer in the armies, most marine forces and some air forces of the world

**Aristocracy:** The highest class in certain societies, typically comprising people of noble birth holding hereditary titles and offices

**Partition of India:** A historical event of subcontinent when India was partitioned into two nations, namely India and Pakistan. It resulted in violence and destruction on both sides of the border

**Satire:** A genre of literature in which humor, irony, exaggeration or ridicule is used to expose and criticize people's stupidity or vices

**Irony:** A literary technique, rhetorical device, or event in which what appears on the surface to be the case, differs radically from what is actually the case

**Humor:** The quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech

**David Daiches:** A Scottish literary historian and literary critic, scholar and author of *Critical History of English Literature*

**Faiz Ahmed Faiz:** A Pakistani Marxist, poet and author in Urdu. Known for his revolutionary poetry and association with Progressive Writers' Movement

**Charles Grant:** A British politician known for championing the causes of social reform and Christian mission in India

**Malgudi:** A fictional town located in South India and appears in the novels and short stories of R. K. Narayan

**Colonialism:** A political-economic policy whereby various European nations explored, conquered, settled, and exploited large areas of the world including the Indian subcontinent

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## 18.5 Sample Questions

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### 18.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. 'Malgudi' is a fictional town in the works of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is the author of *Beyond Love and Other Stories*.
3. The author of *A Teller of Tales* is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Who among the writers you studied translated poems of Faiz Ahmed Faiz?
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is the Anglo-Indian writer from Dehradun.
6. *Love across the Salt Desert* is translated by Keki N. Daruwalla. (True/False)
7. Amit Chaudhuri's collection of short stories is titled \_\_\_\_\_.
8. *Best Indian Stories* is a collection of stories in two volumes selected by \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Raja Rao studied Urdu and theology at \_\_\_\_\_ in Gunfoundry, Hyderabad.
10. Who wrote 'Introduction' to Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Untouchable*?

### 18.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a note on Mulk Raj Anand.
2. What are the literary contributions of Ruskin Bond?
3. Write about the life and works of Raja Rao.

4. What are literary contributions of Khushwant Singh?

5. Discuss Shiv K. Kumar as a short story writer.

### 18.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss literary contributions of R.K. Narayan and Ruskin Bond to children's literature in English.

2. Analyze the life and works of Keki N. Daruwalla and Amit Chaudhuri.

3. Write a detailed note on Raja Rao as a modern short story writer.

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## 18.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Delhi University. *Modern Indian Literature: Poems and Short Stories*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.
2. Iyengar, KR Srinivas. *Indian Writing in English (Rev. ed.)*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1972.
3. Kumar, Shiv K. *Contemporary Indian Short Stories*. Delhi: Sahitya Akademi Publications, 2006.
4. Naik, Madhukar Krishna. *A history of Indian English literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2019.
5. Ramakrishnan, E.V. *Indian Short Stories*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2007.
6. Singh, Khushwant and Kiran Nagarkar. *Best Indian Short Stories – Volume I*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2006.
7. Singh, Khushwant and Kiran Nagarkar. *Best Indian Short Stories – Volume II*. New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2012.
8. Sinha, Birendra and Dinesh Mishra. *History of Indian English Literature*. Delhi: Pacific Books International, 2013.

## Unit - 19: *The M.C.C*

### Structure

19.0 Introduction

19.1 Objectives

19.2 *The M.C.C*

19.2.1 About the Author

19.2.2 The Plot

19.2.3 Characters

19.2.4 A Colonial Perspective

19.2.5 Themes

19.2.6 Symbols

19.2.7 Writing Style

19.3 Learning Outcomes

19.4 Glossary

19.5 Sample Questions

19.6 Suggested Readings

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### 19.0 Introduction

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The M.C.C. is the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of the semiautobiographical trilogy *Swami and Friends*. It can be read as the chapter of *Swami and Friends* or separately. This unit focuses on how Narayan portrays the joys, envies, and travail of childhood of Swami and his friends in the fictional town of Malgudi.

In this unit students are provided with various themes and symbols to understand the story comprehensively. It also gives the colonial perspective as the story is set in the British imperial rule in India. It gives the analytical understanding of the story. It also provides the writing skills of Great R. K. Narayan. It will be followed by the learning outcomes. It will further provide the crux of the story. It is followed by the glossary. Few sample questions have also been provided to give the analytical understanding of the story. It is followed by the list of books recommended for reading as it will enhance the understanding of readers about the story.



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## 19.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this unit are to:

- Acquaint students with short story of Indian writing in English.
- Enable students to understand and appreciate theme of the story.
- Understand the plot structure of the story.
- Familiarize students with R. K. Narayan's story.
- Analyze R.K. Narayan's *The M.C.C.* from colonial perspective.
- Students will be able to analyze characters, and symbols.
- Students will develop their ability to make a clear and rational argument in both verbal discussion and written form.

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## 19.2 *The M.C.C*

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### 19.2.1 About the Author:

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanswami is popularly known as R.K. Narayan. He was born on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1906 at Rasipuram, in Madras presidency of British India. In his family he was one among the eight children. His father was a school teacher. He completed his school education in Madras at his grandmother's home. His father was a teacher and was transferred to Mysore as the headmaster in Maharaja's High School, Mysore. Hence, he shifted to Mysore along with his parents. After completing his bachelors' degree from the University of Mysore, he got the invitation from Rockefeller Foundation United states. *Swami and Friends* is his first semiautobiographical novel and it was published in 1935. The short story, 'The M.C.C' is one of the chapters of this novel. R.K. Narayan is one of the trios of Indian writing in English along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao.

He wrote fourteen novels, more than two hundred stories, two travel books, a memoir, two plays and innumerable essays. His friend Graham Greene advised him to take the name R.K. Narayan. He is one of the most acclaimed writers in Indian writing in English. He received many awards like Sahitya Academy Award (1958), Padma Bhushan Award (1964), including Royal Society of Literature's A.C. Benson medal in 1980. He was selected as Rajya Sabha member in

1989. He was felicitated with the second-highest civilian award of Indian Republic Padma Vibhushan award in 2000. He died at the age of 94 on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2001 in Chennai Tamilnadu, India. His important novels are *Swami and Friends* (1935), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945), *Mr. Sampath* (1948), *The Financial Expert* (1952), *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1961), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *Talkative Man* (1986), *The World of Nagaraj* (1990), and *Grandmother's Tale* (1992), and popular short story collections are *Malgudi Days* (1942), *An Astrologer's Day and other Stories* (1956), *A Horse and Two Goats* (1970) and *Under the Banyan Tree and other Stories* (1985).

### **19.2.2 The Plot:**

The story is set in the small town of Malgudi that forms the locale of not just Swami and friends but of all Narayan's subsequent novels and most of his short stories. The M.C.C is set in 1930s British colonial rule. The story revolves around the characters of Swami, Shankar, Somu, Pea, and Rajam.

An important political leader was arrested by the English rulers in Malgudi and a procession took place. Swaminathan named as Swami joined Swadeshi Movement. This filled him with the spirit of freedom fever, and he protested British rule. Swami gets excited and it resulted into pelting on Headmaster's office. He breaks the windowpane of the Headmaster's office in Missionary school. Rajam's father being the superintendent of police dispersed the gathering. But there were many casualties. Unfortunately the peon of the Missionary school recognized Swami. Swami goes back to his home. He goes back to school in the morning next day. The headmaster calls Swami to check whether he has broken the windowpanes. When it is proved the headmaster punished Swami harshly. Swami leaves the school condemning the school headmaster and other officials as they are English people.

Swami's father also has sympathy for the protesters. As a result, Swami had to leave the Albert Mission School. Rajam breaks friendship with Swami. Rajam is anti-political as his father was a government servant and a superintendent of police. During the period of six weeks Swami becomes very stubborn. Swami's father admits him to the Second (C) of the Board High school. It is inferior to the Albert Mission School. Rajam comes to Swami's house to tell him that he is willing to befriend him. Swami accepted it. Swami gets happy in this school as he becomes the

centre of attraction in the class. The boys are curious about the newcomer. He is happy as the group of his friends still remained intact.

In the meanwhile, Swami is mistaken by the condition as Sankar disappears due to his father's transfer. Somu doesn't meet him and in this way, Swami was refrained from the entire group of friends. After three months with promotion Pea returns to the class. But he is full of anxieties and worries regarding his medical certificates, explanations, and exemptions. As a result, Swami was panicked. Though Rajam gets reconciliation with Swami but he is of dominant nature. Mani also starts visiting Swami and this makes Swami happy as his group of friends remain intact.

The old golden days of their friendship comes back again. Rajam puts a proposal that they should form a cricket team. It would prove exciting to challenge other teams. All the friends are agreed to be integral part of the team. They discuss a lot many names for the team. Swami is equally excited and suggested many catchy names viz Friend's Club, Jumping Star, Champion Eleven, Friends' Eleven, Friends' Union. They unanimously agreed on the name M.C.C. But the original full form of M.C.C. is Marylebone Cricket Club of London. But Swami is worried that they could get into legal troubles, since there is already a professional Cricket team using that name. They decide to tell the long form of M.C.C. as Malgudi Cricket Club if asked by someone. For daily use they decide to use the name The M.C.C. and Victory Union Eleven for tournaments. But they are afraid that the government will tax them double if they have two names. On this issue, even Rajam took an anti-government stand.

Mani is also accepted as an important founder member of the M.C.C by all the friends. He suggested them to order sports equipments to Messrs Binns, a reputed firm of Madras. The firm had arranged a catalogue of sports goods for the M.C.C. Rajam placed an order with the reputed firm of Madras after the deep study of the price and goods of the sports products. A few days later they received a postcard. They thought it is from Messrs Binns but in reality, it is from Sankar. He tells them he is doing well and that he is there with his parents. The three friends decide to reply him separately at 4:00 p.m. His letter is copied out with necessary modifications. After this they discovered that Sankar had not given his address.

At last, the much-awaited letter from Messrs Binns arrives along with a large catalogue. The letter has three implications, which the boys at once recognize.

(1) As the post office delivered the letter to the captain's address it meant that they gave the recognition to the team (2) that the Messrs Binns, the well-known firm of Madras took cognizance of their letter and a cover, with four – anna envelope and a catalogue with full details in it. Members of M.C.C. feel proud because such reputed firm recognized them.

But it was not clear that whether the Messrs Binns would send them the ordered items. In the reply letters the firm had asked to pay 25% of their order as an advance. But they misinterpret the letter while reading it. They conclude that the letter is sent by error to Rajam whereas it was intended for someone else. Hence, with the amusing covering letter it is sent back to the firm conveying sorry for receiving someone else's letter and requested them to send their kit as soon as possible.

Swami, Rajam and friends remain very positive and optimistic that the kit they ordered would soon be delivered to their place. The substantial time passed from the placement of the order but they neither got any reply nor any cricket items. All his friends lose their hope of getting kit but Rajam doesn't leave his hope. He prepares three bats of sandal wood on his own. He manages to get three old tennis balls from his father's office. All members of the team decide to use ground neighboring to Rajam's field. One of the team members Pea promises to arrange for the stumps from his home. They fix an early date for the inauguration of their club, the M.C.C. On the fixed day and time, they wait for Pea to come with the stumps. When he comes without stumps, he replies that he could not find the stumps even after a long search. But he is still sure, they are in the house. To overcome this problem, they mark three stumps on the wall of Rajam's house as the stump and start playing cricket. In this way The M.C.C. is inaugurated.

The match starts, Swami bowls the first ball and Rajam is declared out with the very first ball. They shout with joy and give him the title 'Tate'. Swami proves himself as a good bowler and is given the nickname as Tate by his friends, after Maurice Tate. Swami ignores his sick grandmother for his practice. She asks him to bring lemons, but he ignores. Later he realizes his mistake and feels sorry for her. The Board school has drill practice in the evening. It is compulsory for all the students in school. Swami finds it very difficult to manage both the drill practice and cricket practice. He always gets late for his bowling practice. It annoys Rajam. He

talks to the principal along with Swami, but the headmaster denies their request. The M.C.C. schedules a cricket match versus YMU (Young Men's Union).

Swami shares his inability to practice with a Physician named Dr. Kesavan to convince Swami's headmaster to allow him to skip drill practice. Swami gets happy and starts his bowling practice with his friends. Unfortunately, Dr. Kesavan doesn't have a word with the headmaster regarding Swami's issue. When the Headmaster is informed about Swami's skipping the drills, he decides to punish him. Swami gets horribly frightened and runs away from school. He is also frightened of his father as he will scold him. Swami remembers his past as a student. He meets Rajam and informs him about his running away from school. While wandering aimlessly Swami finds himself in the jungle and he faints.

As Swami couldn't reach home for long his father becomes worried and starts searching him everywhere. He even enquires at Rajam's home. Everyone in his home becomes anxious as it is already mid night. Ranga, a cart man finds Swami lying on the roadside unconscious. He takes him to Mr. Nair, District Forest Officer. He takes care of Swami. Swami becomes conscious after some time. He enquires about his parents. But Swami asks him about the day. Swami reveals him that he has cricket match on Sunday. But Mr. Nair tells a lie to him that the day is Saturday but actually it was Sunday. Mr. Nair doesn't want to upset him. On the other hand, the match begins at that time with Y.M.U. All the teammates miss Swami's bowling as his team is in trouble. As he is the frontline bowler of his team; all his teammates blame him. Rajam's father gets the location of Swami. He reaches there along with Swami's father to bring him back.

Swami returns home thinking that it is Saturday. But Mani arrives his home and enlightens him that he has missed the important match. Swami gets shocked. Mani let him know that Rajam got angry with him. Swami desperately wants to convince Rajam but he couldn't get the opportunity. There is no talk between the two for ten days. Mani updates Swami that Rajam's father was transferred. Rajam also leaves the town with his family the next morning. Swami makes up his mind to give Rajam a gift. But he has no guts to face him. Both of them go to the railway station. The train starts off and Swami recalls Mani about gifting a book to Rajam. They run along with the train. Mani gives a book to Rajam on behalf of Swami. But Rajam remains unmoved after getting a gift. Due to the noise of train Swami couldn't listen anything but Mani

tells him that Rajam has accepted his gift and he will put in writing to him. Swami remains doubtful about it.

***Check your Progress***

1. Give the locale of the story?
2. What is the full form of M.C.C.?

### **19.2.3 Characters:**

#### **1) Swami (or Swaminathan)**

Swami is a young boy and the central character in the story. He is alternately referred as Swaminathan. He is a ten year old boy living in the fictional town of Malgudi in the south India. He is from a upper middle class Hindu family. His father is a lawyer.

He goes to school like every child, but he does not like to study. He is sensitive enough, but he also dares telling lies to his father sometimes. Swami has group of friends at Mission School. But he is the fast friend of Rajam and Mani. He likes his granny's stories too much. He is a talented cricketer who leads his team M.C.C. to victory. He experiences the stage of Indian freedom struggle. He is a patriot and joins the Swadeshi Movement for some time. He becomes submissive for his friend Rajam.

#### **2) W. T. Srinivas**

Srinivas is Swaminathan's father and a lawyer by profession. He is worried about his son's studies like a typical Indian father. He not only encourages him to study hard but provides him with space for study. He also helps Swami in his studies. Being a concerned father, he gets strict but later he shows his concern for the well-being of his son.

#### **3) Laxmi (or Lakshmi)**

Laxmi is the loving mother of Swaminathan. She loves her family. As a typical Indian mother, she protects her son Swami whenever he finds himself in argument with his father. She is a loving character who is always concerned about her children.

#### **4) Mr. Ebenezer**

Mr. Ebenezer is Swami's scripture teacher at Albert Mission School. He is a Christian fanatic and degrades Swami's religion Hinduism and considers Christianity superior to other

religions. Later he was scolded by the headmaster of the school for his biased views towards the students.

### **5) Rajam**

Rajam is Swami's closest friend from the Albert Mission School. Rajam is witty and fearless in nature. He is the son of the Police Superintendent. Rajam is new to Swami's school and initially Swami and Mani view him as an enemy due to his quick wits, fine clothes and fearless nature. However, Rajam quickly becomes friends with Swami and acts as their ringleader. He is good at studies which further give him the attention of the class. He draws his confidence from his father's prominent position. His father's position causes him to be in opposition to the political activity that his friends support. Swami loves and admires Rajam but comes in conflict with him because Swami supports political action that opposes Rajam's father, and later because he can't keep his promise of playing the cricket match. Rajam becomes so angry at Swami for missing the cricket match that he stops talking with Swami. Rajam sometimes oppresses his friends, but more often he brings them together and supports for new goals most notably the making of a cricket team.

Swami initially liked him because he was different from the rest of the class. Rajam came from an educated family and he was good at English too. He accepts the heretic friendship with Swami.

### **6) Mani**

Mani is the close friend of Swami. He is a poor boy from a poor family. His parents couldn't pay for his school fees. He was young, talented and good in studies. But the flaw in his personality was that he challenges the people of his age to fight. Mani was rowdy in nature and used to dominate his entire class. He didn't like Rajam as he was jealous of his lifestyle which he couldn't afford. Mani is a fearless troublemaker who never does his homework, sleeps in the class and frequently resorts to violence to solve his problems. But he is also a loyal and affectionate friend. Swami is proud with him. Mani always plays an important role in Swami and Rajam's friendship.

### **7) Somu**

Somu is the close friend of Swami. He was the monitor of Swami's class in Albert Mission School and gets along with everyone, students and teachers, although he is not good at

academics. Swami thinks of Somu as the uncle of the class. When Somu treats Swami cruelly, Swami feels so bad that he is forced to confess that the people around him are more intricate than he might have guessed. Somu was dull in studies as a result he got failed in the class.

#### 8) Sankar

Sankar is one of the best friends of Swami. Swami used to admire his intellect and take his guidance. Sankar is known for his brilliancy in the class. Sankar eventually leaves Malgudi when his father transferred to other town, so he left Malgudi. Although Sankar writes to Rajam and his friends and his friends also intend to reply him but they couldn't keep in touch with Sankar as they don't have Sankar's new address.

#### 9) Samuel (or The Pea)

Samuel is the Christian friend of Swami. His nickname is Pea. Being the classmates in Mission School Swami and Samuel are fast friends. Swami acknowledges that the Pea is ordinary in many ways. They became friends over their shared sense of humour, and Swami can laugh with Pea in a way that he cannot with his other friends. Pea is Swami's only Christian friend, although he does not speak up for his Christian beliefs in the conflict between Swami and Ebenezer. Swami is less close with Pea after changing school. But they remained friends as they continued playing cricket in The M.C.C.

#### 10) Swami's Grandmother

Swami's paternal grandmother whom he calls Granny is a religious old woman. She lives with Swami and his parents. She is not a good-looking lady as she is fat and short. But she always believes that internal beauty is unbroken. Her relationship with Swami was continuously in flux. Swami thinks that his Granny is traditional and sometimes embarrassing but she is also a source of comfort and security for Swami. Granny sometimes tries to tell him the stories of their family's past but he was mostly not in a mood to listen to her as he was engrossed in his own world. Swami becomes impatient with Granny's growing needs as he is the caretaker of Granny.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. Who is Mr. Ebenezer?
2. Who was the monitor of Swami's class in Albert Mission School?
3. What is the nick name of Samuel?



#### 19.2.4 A Colonial Perspective:

R.K. Narayan wrote *Swami and Friends* in 1935 during the British Colonial era in India. These were the days of flourishing of creative writing in Indian writing in English. It inspired R. K. Narayan to write his distinctive personal comedy. He penned down his childhood memoirs in the historical context of British Colonial era. He depicted the story with a unique masterstroke which pinpointed towards the harsh British rule prevailing in India. He also gave the positive side of England and the game of cricket.

He is famous for his imaginative locale Malgudi in South India. He depicted every minute detail of Malgudi and British raj in his work. Swami is the central character in the story around whom the whole story revolves. Swami's friends are also depicted with different political backgrounds, but they have lesser ability to evaluate British raj through their immature ordinary perspectives.

R.K. Narayan narrated how firmly the British Empire rooted in India. Swami's story depicted how deeply the presence of British Raj influenced the life of every Indian in this pre-independence era. It directly or indirectly influenced every individual. Even the innocent children had the impact of British rule though their sparkling eyes pose them to be loving and exciting. In the beginning of the novel Narayan narrated the control of British imperialism over the Indian psyche and day to day life. It clearly revealed in the first chapter. Swami and his classmates attended the scripture class of Mr. Ebenezer, their fanatical Christian teacher. They enjoyed the class sometimes as Mr. Ebenezer showed them pictures based on Biblical stories. But the teacher focused on Christian teachings only. The imposition of Christianity on swami and his classmates in Missionary school initially proved the source of entertainment. But when Mr. Ebenezer started talking against the Hindu beliefs, Swami protested against him. This conflict proved the storm in the tea cup. Mission School Headmaster scolded Mr. Ebenezer, and Swami along with his classmates enjoyed it. Swami was glad to get away from punishment. Swami like other children was engaged in impressing his classmates. He was busy in attracting his father's attention too. However, the impact of colonial rule always remained in Swami's psyche without taking any special effort.

The lives of Swami and his friends were constantly occupied by British empirical rule. It was in many ways affected the lives of children. But colonial power was largely imperceptible to

them. But Narayan showed that colonialism brought slavery in many ways and imposed the culture of rulers on the ruled. At first Swami, Mani and Rajam were overjoyed about opening cricket club. But they realized that it was difficult than their anticipation. Everyone was disturbed due to the Government Taxes and Registration rules. For a short span of time this made Rajam furious against the government. He developed temporary sympathy for Gandhi's freedom struggle against the British Colonial Rule. Narayan wittily showed the impact of colonialism in the lives of Indians irrespective of richness, poverty, caste, or creed.

### **19.2.5 Themes:**

#### **1. Friendship:**

Swami, Mani, Rajam, Sankar, and Samuel are close friends despite their various ethnic backgrounds. They belong to different castes. Moreover, they have various views and desires on the different occasions of their lives. They respect their differences. They take love as a way of reaching and emotional conclusion in their own personal lives. They simply support one another by providing each other company. Without actually fixing problems they learn to cope up with one another.

But later Rajam enters their lives. He is arrogant boy having superior background. He wishes to be ahead of other friends in every competition and in every race of the life. He likes to be in the limelight. He is in the habit of ruling his friends. He is neither friendly nor trustworthy. Swami, the protagonist of the story is an important player of the team. He couldn't play the cricket match and MCC lost the match. Despite of being good friends Rajam got angry with Swami. The egoist Rajam denies excusing Swami. Swami is flattened. Still innocent Swami felt that Rajam will excuse him but Rajam determined not to excuse Swami. It is a very touching moment in the story. The departure scene at the railway station is very sensitive. Swami believes that Rajam will forgive him, and he becomes inconsolable for his dearest friend Rajam on his departure. Swami begins crying for his friend but Rajam remains unmoved. He keeps standing without uttering a single word, only looking at him without emotions.

#### **2. Malgudi:**

Malgudi is the fictional town created by R.K. Narayan. He is famous for his settings in the imaginative town. It is situated on the bank of the imaginary river Sarayu, by Mempi, near

then states of Madras and Mysore. Narayan has depicted Malgudi in the first of trilogy of novels *Swami and Friends* and later in *The English Teacher* and *The Bachelor of Arts*.

### **19.2.6 Symbols:**

#### **1. Rajam:**

Rajam is the son of a police officer and is commanding in nature. He shows the sign of dictatorship to his friend which symbolizes colonialism. It makes problems in Swami and friends. Rajam looks at the world with the perception of father. His father places money at the highest position. He uses his power and relationships accordingly. But sometimes Rajam becomes nervous as his father is always occupied in his own political issues. Rajam wants to be social and family support too. Hence, he puts forward the reality that even the law-abiding people require love, affection and support in life.

#### **2. The Protest:**

One can understand protest in many ways in *Swami and Friends*. But it suggests the frustration and anguish prevailing in the mind of Indians due to injustice and cruelty of British Colonial Rule. British Colonial Empire treated Indians as inferior as the animals. They exploited Indians mentally, physically and economically. This creates the rage in the minds of people in India which gives way to protest British Colonial rule.

#### **3. Cricket:**

Cricket symbolizes the dominance of British Colonial rule in the lives of Swami and his friends. It occupies every act of Swami and his friends in one way or the other. Cricket is a symbol of the cultural hegemony of British Colonial rule in India. It also symbolizes rivalry. Rajam and Swami develop enmity with each other. Rajam warns Swami of breaking their friendship to be in command of Swami's conduct. On the other hand, Swami only thought that it is wrong to skip classes for cricket match practice. This confirms that Rajam is psychologically tough, and he is only concerned about winning the game of cricket and ruling his friends indirectly. This symbolizes that the commoners like Swami and his friends must follow authority like Rajam. It also indicates that the people living in pre-independent era must obey the British Colonial rule. Swami has positive as well as negative influence of cricket in his life. In the beginning it helps Swami to do away with his political difference with Rajam. But cricket breaks their friendship when Swami couldn't play crucial match. R.K. Narayan narrates how the colonial empires played vital role in exploiting and controlling the lives of colonized people.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who is the symbol of colonization?
2. What does cricket symbolize?
3. Why did people protest?

**19.2.7 Writing Style:**

R.K. Narayan's writing technique is full of natural element. Realism and simplicity are the characteristic of his writing. It is full of humor. He painted the ordinary people. The essence of Narayan's objective style of writings lies in his detached spirit. His genuine and rational narration is in his outlook to combine his insight of life. It gives him distinctive ability to blend character and actions. Narayan's creative success is his use of some important fictional techniques he used in description, narration, characterization, and plot. His simple language, unique way of characterization, sense of appeal, vividness of final impression, selection of details, smoothness of dealing with time makes him different. His use of nuanced dialogues, gentle Tamil overtones based on the nature of his characterization makes him more unique. Beauty, simplicity, and subtle humors in tragic conditions made Narayan Indian Chekhov.

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**19.3 Learning Outcomes**

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After going through the unit, students are supposed to have following understandings:

- It has been observed that the author used child psychology to portray colonial aspect in the writing.
- It brought to the fore the perfect picture of colonized India.
- It depicted the English subjugation and Indians' submissive nature.
- It gave the optimistic side of Indian life.
- It became evident that the writer criticized the British rule without coming to the fore.
- Modern narrative technique is used by the author to accomplish his target.
- It supports students to use textual evidence to support various argument and line of thinking.
- It revealed the world of children in the British ruled India.

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## 19.4 Glossary

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**Tate:** Maurice Tate English fast –medium bowler

**Submissive:** Willing to obey someone else

**Colonial:** Belonging to a country that controls another country

**Heretic:** Someone who transcends accepted beliefs

**Sneer:** A mocking smile

**M.C.C.:** Melbourne Cricket Club

**Imperialism:** A policy of extending a country's power and influence through colonization

**British Raj:** Rule by British Crown

**Realism:** A practice of taking a situation as it is

**Fanatical:** Filled with excessive and single minded zeal

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## 19.5 Sample Questions

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### 19.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The M.C.C. is the chapter of the novel \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Swami bowled Rajam the very first ball and was called \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the long form of M.C.C.
4. The M.C.C. was first written in \_\_\_\_\_ language.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ cricket club was the name, Swami and friends decided to use for \_\_\_\_\_ tournaments.
6. Swami was admitted to \_\_\_\_\_ school.
7. Swami and friends ordered \_\_\_\_\_ Company for sport equipments.
8. The author created the fictional village \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The M.C.C. is \_\_\_\_\_ in nature.
10. Malgudi is situated on the bank of Imaginary River \_\_\_\_\_.

### 19.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Comment on Rajam's authoritative behavior in the story.
2. Why did Rajam break his friendship with Swami?
3. Discuss the process of naming of the cricket club.
4. Comment on Swami in brief.
5. How does Swami and his friends manage Cricketing equipments?

### 19.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Examine The M.C.C. as the story of colonized India.
2. Bring out the autobiographical elements in the story.
3. Illustrate how the game of cricket symbolizes colonialism.

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## 19.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Narayan, R.K. *Swami and Friends*. Indian Thought Publication. 2008.
2. Narayan, R.K. *Malgudi School Day*. Penguin Book India. Retrieved 2014-02-01 R.K. Narayan "Swami and Friends", Madras Indian Thought Publication, 1983.
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4. Rao, Ranga. *Markers of Indian Literature: R.K. Narayan*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2004.
5. Roy, Ruby. "A Critical study of R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends*". Kapaz Publication, 2014.

## Unit - 20: *Toba Tek Singh*

### Structure

20.0 Introduction

20.1 Objectives

20.2 *Toba Tek Singh*

20.2.1 Manto's Art of Short Story Writing

20.2.2 Plot Summary

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20.4 Glossary

20.5 Sample Questions

20.6 Suggested Readings

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### 20.0 Introduction

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Sadat Hasan Manto is one of the prolific Urdu short story writers and playwrights who are widely read in the Indian subcontinent. He is known for his bitter reflection of reality in his stories. He belonged to a Kashmiri family. He was born on 11 May, 1912 (then India under British Raj) in Samrala, Ludhiana. His name means 'weight' in Kashmiri Language. He died on 18 January, 1955 at the age of just 42 years in Lahore (Pakistan). Though he migrated to Pakistan but he was saddened with the saga of partition of India. Throughout his life, he yearned to return India but he failed to do so. His writings are found basically in Urdu—his mother tongue. At first he wrote short story at the age of just 19 years on a burning phenomenon of his times i.e. Jallianwala Bagh. His language of expression is very sharp and pungent because he penned the things how he came across. He wrote 22 short story collections, one novel, five radio-play series, three essay collections, and two collections of personal sketches. Several translators from India and abroad have translated Manto's writings into English but critical works on Manto in English still requires deliberations.

The present short story ‘Toba Tek Singh’ by Sadat Hasan Manto was originally written in Urdu language. This unit is based on the translated version of the source text. The purpose behind studying it in English is to provide some idea of the quality of literature produced in Urdu language.

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## **20.1 Objectives**

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The objectives of the unit under study are to:

- Understand the pre and post partition scenario of India.
  - Observe the socio, political, cultural and psychological repercussions of partition.
  - Provide an understanding of the term ‘lunatics’.
  - Describe the connection between politics, nation and geographical boundaries in respect to ‘identity crisis’.
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## **20.2 *Toba Tek Singh***

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### **20.2.1 Manto’s Art of Short Story Writing:**

Sadat Hasan Manto is a famous name among the Urdu readers. He is known for his subtle use of irony and satire on social norms and hypocrite society. Manto used his pen as a weapon against the social evils prevalent in contemporary society. He was a rebel for traditional hypocrisy and preferred to be the voice of the poor and helpless people. He exposed the reality and torn the curtains of snobbery in society to bring the truth behind man-woman relationships in his short stories. He bitterly criticized the snobbish nature of humans and false traditions in contemporary society. ‘Toba Tek Singh’ is one of the best stories written on the theme of partition, in which Manto has shown sanity among insane people. The story revolves around a lunatic, Bishen Singh, who is undergoing the pangs of nation’s partition. He is not ready to leave his hometown Toba Tek Singh. He is shocked by the news of partition of India, leading to his tragic death. Through this short story, Manto had expressed his inner desire of undivided India. He had nostalgia for united India and hatred for those who divided the nation under the banner of religion.



***Check your Progress***

1. Manto belongs to which family?
2. How many short story collections did Manto write?
3. Which things do make Manto special?

**20.2.2 Plot Summary:**

The Plot of the story of ‘Toba Tek Singh’ revolves around the central character Bishen Singh who is also called as Toba Tek Singh. The story is about the pangs of partition. The central character is a lunatic who had his land in Toba Tek Singh village. The third person narrator describes the events of the story. Manto wanted to highlight the ghastly experiences of partition of India. For this purpose, he preferred a person who has lost his senses. Bishen Singh had his land in Toba Tek Singh. Suddenly, he lost his mental balance and was admitted in an asylum in Lahore. The only thing which he could not forget was his world, the village Toba Tek Singh. He loved his birthplace so much that people in asylum used to call him by the name of his village.

Manto purposefully chose a lunatic to express the sense of uprootedness. Bishen Singh had great love for his birthplace. Even the thought of leaving his land was like dying. He used to inquire about the partition of India and geographical boundaries of Pakistan. He had no concern about the partition except asking about Toba Tek Singh whether it is in India or in Pakistan. He wanted his land to be left untouched. Manto has sarcastically presented the contemporary socio-political and geographical chaos in India-Pakistan with the help of lunatics. There are types of mentally retarded persons in the asylum and there were few criminals who were pretending as lunatic only to get excuse in their punishments. Bishen Singh used to mutter some meaningless words like, “*Upar di gurgur di annexe di bedhiyana di moong di daal of di Pakistan and Hindustan of di durrphiteymun*”, probably which meant ‘India-Pakistan go to hell’.

The story is set in the background of post partition era when the governments of India and Pakistan decided to exchange lunatics in the same way they had exchanged civil prisoners. It was decided that Muslim lunatics in India were to be sent to Pakistan and Hindu lunatics in Pakistan should be handed over to India. Manto doesn’t agree with the decision whether it was logical or illogical. His focus is on highlighting the decision of the sensible persons of both the

governments. There was frenzy all over. So Manto believed that these so called 'insane' people had not lost their sanity. They had no problem with religion, region, or language.

Bishen Singh is a mad person who is in Lahore asylum. He was about to be sent to India as there were no Sikhs in Lahore, in police custody. With the help of the discussions among the mad persons, Bishen Singh seems to be perplexed by the question whether they were in India or in Pakistan. He was ignorant about the territorial boundaries of the nations. The surprising and confusing question, for Bishen Singh, was 'If they were in India, then where was Pakistan? If they were in Pakistan, then how was it that the place where they lived had until recently been known as India?' The lunatic used to talk about borders, Jinnah, Master Tara Singh, Hindus, and Muslims. One lunatic was so distressed with the idea of partition that he climbed on a tree and lectured on the issue of partition and declared that he would live neither in India nor in Pakistan rather he will live on the same tree. After lot of efforts, he was coaxed down, he wept and embraced his Sikh and Hindu friends. He was distraught at the idea that they would leave him.

There were several lunatics who were disappointed by the idea of partition. Manto has criticized this idea with the help of insane people who were against partition. On the other hand, learned people who divided the nation at the cost of heavy bloodshed and violence were careless of the catastrophe. Among such lunatics are Hindu lawyer, a radio engineer, a fat Muslim lunatic and most importantly a Sikh lunatic Bishen Singh. The plot of the story tells about these lunatics and their response to the partition. Each lunatic seems to be affected by it adversely. Deep in their heart, they were embarrassed by partition.

The plot focuses on Bishen Singh's tragic death when he is told that he is sent to India and his village is left behind in Pakistan. He is so attached with his motherland that when the police were exchanging the lunatics, Bishen Singh inquired whereabouts of his land. He stood like 'a tree whose roots are deep inside' and nobody could uproot him. With a disheartening cry he falls by his face on ground. After fifteen years constant standing, he had fallen into no man's land, beyond barbed wire lied India and Pakistan against each other. Manto asserts that Toba Tek Singh lay in the middle, on a piece of land that had no name. The name itself becomes a symbol of unity, impartiality, and peace who knew no boundaries except an undivided nation.

***Check Your Progress***

1. Around whom the story revolves.
2. Where does the background of the story set?
3. What is the hometown of Bishen Singh?

**20.2.3 Themes:**

**i. Identity Crisis:**

Every human being is known by his ‘identity.’ It is a distinguishing character or feature of an individual which makes him/her different from others. People living in Indian sub-continent were living harmoniously. Issues of partition created havoc among the millions of people across the borders. With the idea of split of India, the question of identity arose. Readers can see that every person is known by his native place. When the country was divided millions of people lost their identity. The people who were known as ‘Indians’ became ‘Pakistani’. Toba Tek Singh is a man attached to his motherland. Belonging to an agrarian family he loved his own native place i.e., Toba Tek Singh. Very few people were aware of his name. He was called after his native place. He was horrified with the identity problem. He, like several others, never wanted to leave his birthplace. To leave the place, where they were born, bred, flourished, and earned name and fame, was not a joke. It was rooted deep in their mind and heart. This is the problem of migrants, who willingly or unwillingly, left their places under the name of nationality. The problem of partition gave birth to many burning issues including the problem of ‘identity crisis’.

Bishen Singh appears to be a victim of this frequent question. He is eager to know about his village and its inclusion in India or Pakistan. Partition has taken away the identity of millions of people due to migration. Both countries suffered from the issues related to migrants like, shelter, food, health, education etc. Landlords and elite class people had become beggars suddenly due to partition. Settling down in a new land was their biggest problem. Toba Tek Singh was aware of this issue like other lunatic in asylum who had delivered a lecture for hours on the abstract problem of partition. The lunatic concluded that he will neither go to India nor to Pakistan, rather he will prefer to live on the tree.

Such example is evident in the story. It happened with the young Hindu lawyer from Lahore who had gone mad over an unhappy love affair. His beloved lived in Amritsar whereas he lived in Lahore. He was distressed to hear that Amritsar was in India. He was already rejected by her but after going mad, he could not forget her. For this reason, he cursed the Muslim leaders for partition of India.

**ii. Humanitarian Outlook/ Disappointment from Violence and Bloodshed:**

Sadat Hasan Manto believes in one religion i.e., Humanity. He is very sensitive in presenting the human nature. Basically, he had a kind heart. In many of his short stories, he has given importance to the humanity. His first and foremost lesson in his writings is humanitarian approach. He doesn't follow the emotions based on religion or other things. His impulse focuses on the humanitarian ground. In real life, he had witnessed the ghastly effects of violence and bloodsheds which made him to realize his first religion as humanity. In other short stories also he has created such picaresque characters who surpass their religion. The only reason is that they had humanitarian approach. Humanitarian approach led Manto's popularity to the peak.

*Toba Tek Singh* is related to humanitarian approach. Though the story doesn't portray scenes of violence directly but in background, the readers come to know about it. Manto believed that no borders can divide the hearts of people. Fazluddin and Bishen Singh's family had strong humanitarian bondage. Fazluddin, his older friend, visits Bishen Singh, in asylum and brings sweets for him and tells him to convey his best wishes to his family which has already migrated to India. 'The sweets' indicate harmonious relations between Muslim and Sikh family, irrespective of religion, caste and creed. Toba Tek Singh's realization of uprootedness at no man's land, impels him to a heart-wrenching cry leading him to death. It rouses emotions of pity for the innocent person.

**iii. Love for Motherland:**

The foremost theme of the story is love for Motherland. Every fellow loves his birthplace and feels proud. Bishen Singh, though he had gone mad, still in his insanity, he had intense love for his motherland. He had his land in the district Toba Tek Singh. A farmer's attachment to his soil is very evident. He had a passion for his land that even after losing his mind, he could not forget it. He had forgotten the faces of his family members but remembered his land. It shows

Bishen Singh's committed love for his native. Bishen Singh was never convinced with the idea of partition of India, like other lunatics in the Lahore asylum. He was so anxious to know whether his village is in India or in Pakistan. He could not get the satisfying answer in asylum because all were ignorant of it.

**iv. 'Asylum' as a symbol:**

Manto had candidly presented the situation in asylum. The lunatics had no consciousness of self, but they were worried about the idea of partition and exchange of lunatics between governments of India and Pakistan. Manto had symbolically portrayed the image of 'an asylum' to represent the so-called learned people outside the madhouse. Few persons signed the papers and they split India into two nations. Manto raised the question over partition itself. He believed that whether it was logical or illogical point he didn't know but the exchange of lunatics on the base of religion itself was an absurd idea. He presented a mocking image of the world of reality where sensible men divide the nation. Asylum remains a perfect picture of the real world outside. Due to the foolish behaviour of politicians, innocent people like Toba Tek Singh must suffer at the cost of their lives.

**v. Multiculturalism / Unity in Diversity:**

Asylum is a perfect example to represent Indian society because we can find people of different religions speaking number of languages following their traditions and rituals without any problem. In asylum we can see lunatics of different religions like Hindu, Muslim, Sikhs and two Anglo-Indians. They had been living peacefully in the asylum before India-Pakistan issue. The creation of a new nation based on religion created a type of discomfort among all. Manto has very keenly focused on this issue with the help of mad people. Characters of different religions represent the multicultural aspect of Indian society which believed in unity in diversity. Partition on the basis of religion created havoc among the multicultural society. It shattered the walls of old days of united country.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is identity crisis?
2. Who is Fazluddin?
3. What is Multiculturalism?

#### **20.2.4 Characters:**

##### **1) Bishen Singh:**

Bishen Singh is the central character in the story. He belonged to a feudal family. His story is described in third person narration. Nobody knew what happened to him. He lost his mind suddenly and his relatives bound him with heavy chains and sent him off to the asylum. His significance is obvious through the title of the story. All incidence of the story revolved around his personality and his dilemma regarding where the district Toba Tek Singh will go after partition. He kept inquiring the other inmates but nobody could give him satisfactory answer as nobody knew whether it will be in India or Pakistan. The more he inquired, the more confused he was. The question distressed him more.

Toba Tek Singh's original name was Bishen Singh, which very few people knew. Everyone called him Toba Tek Singh as he belonged to the district where he had his lands. He never wanted to leave Toba Tek Singh after partition. Basically, he was a farmer and loved his land more than himself rather it can be said that the village was his identity. He forgot his daughter but could not forget his motherland. The only issue preoccupied in his mind is whereabouts of Toba Tek Singh after partition.

##### **2) A Muslim Lunatic:**

He is a minor character in the story. He used to read newspaper 'Zamindar' regularly for twelve years. His mad friend used to call him 'Maulvi Sahib'. His reply to a question 'what is Pakistan?' is very significant. He replies that Pakistan is a place in India where they make razors.

##### **3) Two Sikh Lunatics:**

They are minor characters. Through their dialogues readers come to know about Indians. They discuss that why they are sending them to India when they don't even speak their language. The other lunatic's answer is that he knew their language, and Indians are devilish people who strut around haughtily.

##### **4) Another Muslim Lunatic:**

He is also a minor character in the story. He was bathing and while bathing, shouts loudly 'Long live Pakistan' and slips on the floor and knocked himself out. It shows his obsession for Pakistan. 'Slipping' shows incorrect decision of partition.

**5) A Radio Engineer:**

He had a M. S. Degree and had been a radio-engineer. His name is not mentioned by the writer. He kept himself apart from other inmates of the asylum. He used to spend time in walking silently up and down a particular footpath in the garden. He appears to be affected by the news of exchange of the lunatics between the governments of India and Pakistan. He ran naked all over the ground after hearing the news of exchange.

**6) Mohammed Ali:**

He is a fat Muslim lunatic from Chiniot. He had been an enthusiastic Muslim League activist. He used to take bath fifteen or sixteen times a day but abandoned the habit overnight. Observing the similarity in names with Jinnah, one day he declares himself as 'Qaid-e-Azam. Seeing this, a Sikh lunatic declared himself as Master Tara Singh. They started fighting so they had to be shifted in separate cages for their brutality.

**7) A Hindu Lawyer:**

He was a young Hindu lawyer from Lahore. Due to an unhappy love affair, he had gone mad. He was distressed to hear that Amritsar was now in India, because his beloved was a Hindu girl from that city. Although she had rejected him already but he could not forget her even after losing his mind. For this reason, he cursed the Muslim leaders who had split India into two parts. So that his beloved remained Indian while he became Pakistani.

**8) Two Anglo-Indian Lunatics:**

They were kept in the European Ward. They were very worried about to hear that the English left after granting independence to India. They spent hours discussing how it would affect them. They were worried about whether European Ward would remain or disappear? Would they be served English breakfast, or they would be forced to eat poisonous bloody Indian chapattis instead of bread?

***Check your Progress***

1. How are the two Anglo-Indian lunatics different?
2. Who is Mohammad Ali?
3. What was the case of the young Hindu lawyer?

### 20.2.5 Literary Devices:

Literary Devices are the writer's techniques to describe and convey his ideas. These devices highlight the important concept or idea in a text for a better understanding. These literary devices are useful in various purposes in literature. They have intellectual as well as emotional effect. Manto is the master of modern Urdu fiction. Some of the literary devices used in the story are pinpointed briefly as follows:

**Symbolism:** It is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities in a hidden manner. Symbols can be an object, person, situation, or action. It contains connotative meaning. It suggests additional meaning rather than mere words. In this short story 'Madhouse' is a symbol for the outer world whereas 'lunatics' represent the politicians. Another symbol used in the story is 'separate cages' which is used to separate Sikh and Muslim lunatic represents two different countries: India and Pakistan. The two nations are like two different cages.

**Imagery:** Imagery is a literary device through which the writer creates an image. Different images have been portrayed by Manto in this story. For example: Toba Tek Singh stands on the no man's land like 'a tree', deep rooted in the land and 'falls' on the same place. It cannot be uprooted from its place. Image of a 'tree' is used for 'a man' to show his strength and power.

**Flashback Technique:** Flashback Technique is a narrative technique. It is used to describe events of the past. The narration takes the readers into the past and again brings back to the present. The main character remembers the events with intervals. It is told not in continuation but in fragments whenever he or she remembers. Manto has described Toba Tek Singh's life events into segments. Sometimes, it is told in the third person narration, sometimes guards of the asylum discussed his life and readers are informed about him. This technique is very similar to 'stream of consciousness technique'.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. Define 'Symbol'. Why is it used?
2. What is an 'image'?
3. What is flashback technique?



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## 20.3 Learning Outcomes

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In the end of the unit, students will be able to:

- Know about one of the gems of Urdu literature i.e. Sadat Hasan Manto.
  - Grasp the pre and post partition scenario of India.
  - Acquaint with the social, political, cultural, and psychological repercussions of partition.
  - Understand the psychological aspects of life.
  - Differentiate between positive and negative aspects of partition.
- 

## 20.4 Glossary

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**Lunatic:** Mad person, mentally retarded person

**Madhouse:** Asylum, place where mentally ill people are kept

**Frontier:** Border, boundary

**Custody:** Arrest, jail, charge of something

**Devilish:** Wicked, demonic

**Qaid-e-Azem:** Great Leader, title given to Mohammad Ali Jinnah

**To strut:** Walk pompously, parade

**Haughtily:** Selfishly, vainly

**Coax:** Persuade

**Distraught:** Very upset, nervous

**Distress:** Upset, distraught

**Uprigurgur di annexe di be dhiyan o mung di daal of di lalteen:** Whimsical utterances, meaningless words muttered by Toba Tek Singh

**Unkempt:** Disheveled, improper

**Impending:** Approaching, forthcoming

**Guffawing:** Amusement, crack-up

**Perplexity:** Confused, troubled, puzzled

**Abruptly:** Suddenly, unexpectedly

**Flustered:** Upset, nervous

**Supervision:** Handling, management of people or person, guardianship

**Uproot:** Abolish, eradicate, destroy

**Erupted:** Discharge

**Enrage:** Irritate, make angry

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## 20.5 Sample Questions

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### 20.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Basically Sadat Hasan Manto writes in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) English
  - (b) Urdu
  - (c) Persian
  - (d) Hindi
2. After partition of India, Manto migrated to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) Canada
  - (b) Iran
  - (c) Pakistan
  - (d) India

3. *Toba Tek Singh* is a tale about \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Feudalism
  - (b) Capitalism
  - (c) Partition
  - (d) Cruelty
4. The central character in the story *Toba Tek Singh* is \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Fazluddin
  - (b) Mohammad Ali
  - (c) Bishen Singh
  - (d) Balbir Singh
5. Bishen Singh is also known as \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Toba Tek Singh
  - (b) Master Tara Singh
  - (c) Karan Singh
  - (d) Sukhdev Singh
6. The short story *Toba Tek Singh* is set in \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Theatre
  - (b) Garden
  - (c) Hospital
  - (d) Lahore asylum
7. Bishen Singh belonged to a \_\_\_\_\_ family.
- (a) Aristocratic
  - (b) Feudal
  - (c) Labour
  - (d) Politician

8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the daughter of Toba Tek Singh.
- (a) Rupali
  - (b) RupKur
  - (c) Roopmati
  - (d) None of the above
9. The exchange of lunatics between India and Pakistan took place on \_\_\_\_\_ border.
- (a) Jammu
  - (b) Kucch
  - (c) Wagha
  - (d) None
10. Toba Tek Singh was \_\_\_\_\_ with the issue of partition.
- (a) Visionary
  - (b) Excited
  - (c) Confused
  - (d) Jealous

**20.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Discuss the humanitarian point of view in the story.
2. How is the attitude of the outer world with the lunatics in asylum?
3. Comment on the identity crisis in the story.
4. Which elements do make the story important?
5. Which things did cause Toba Tek Singh's death?

**20.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Comment on the character-sketch of Toba Tek Singh.
2. Discuss the repercussions of partition in the light of the story of *Toba Tek Singh*.
3. Discuss religious and psychological impact of partition with reference to the story *Toba Tek Singh*.

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## 20.6 Suggested Readings

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## **Unit - 21: Women Short Story Writers in India**

### **Structure**

**21.0** Introduction

**21.1** Objectives

**21.2** Women Short Story Writers in India

**21.2.1** Hindi Literature

**21.2.2** Bengali Literature

**21.2.3** Telugu Literature

**21.2.4** Marathi Literature

**21.2.5** Tamil Literature

**21.2.6** Urdu Literature

**21.2.7** Kannada Literature

**21.2.8** Gujarati Literature

**21.2.9** Odia Literature

**21.2.10** Malayalam Literature

**21.2.11** Panjabi Literature

**21.2.12** Assamese Literature

**21.2.13** Indian English Literature

**21.2.14** General Features - Themes and Ideas

**21.2.15** Multiplicity and Diversity

**21.2.16** Structure and Narrative Technique

**21.3** Learning Outcomes

**21.4** Glossary

**21.5** Sample Questions

**21.6** Suggested Readings

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### **21.0 Introduction**

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The short story is a literary genre and is a work of fiction, usually expressed in prose. Short stories are narrative in format, dealing with a variety of topics. It resists a universal definition as a genre, and it differs from a novel and a novella in terms of its aesthetics, artistic

methods, and literary devices. Unlike a novel, short stories often discuss a single exciting incident or situation. Like any other literary genre, the short story too, has its forerunners. It has its origin in anecdotes, fairy tales, fables, parables, and folk tales. Short stories are diverse depending on their lengths, types, periods of origin, methods, and approaches. As such, constructing a single theory on a short story and its various forms would be a complex process. The style, thematic concerns, literary devices, character types, plots of short stories vary according to the literary age in which they were being produced. Short stories can uniquely function as a reservoir that preserves history, culture, life, language, and other aspects of human life. No definition can encompass the multifarious character of the feature of the short story as a literary genre.

Indian short stories originated through rich mythology, folklore, and language. India's multilingual and multi-cultural tradition has been a source of inspiration for Indian writers. India's encounter with western colonialism and exposure to the English language and literature also provided Indian short story writers with subjects of significance. National identity, freedom, the celebration of tradition, the authenticity of language, impact of colonialism, politics, and partition have all been the major concerns of fit short story writers of postcolonial India. The emergence of Dalit literature as a form of social protest and social stigmas also contributed to the genre of Indian short story. Indian short stories found expression in both regional and English language.

Handed down from generation to generation, women's stories in India have been enriched and embroidered over the years. It must be noted here that until recently most writers were men and there existed literary patriarchy. Later, women writers of India gradually came to the limelight expressing their concerns about problems and struggles of women in the various sphere of life such as marriage, dowry, motherhood, widowhood, gender inequality, casteism, and class struggle. Among such women writers, Ismat Chughtai stood out in her use of literary devices like satire and humour to laugh at, expose and sharply criticises the injustices that prevailed in the society. After seven decades of independence, it is worth mentioning that short story writers of India, particularly, women have come a long way in expressing themselves and creating her stories. The voices of women have come to the forefront with ever more confidence, variety, and heterogeneity. Their works celebrated the multi-lingual and multi-cultural diversity of India, by critically reflecting on the complexity of the cultures of the country, its history, its

caste politics, atrocities, and gender discourses. The contemporary women writings of India particularly, short stories, explore and capture the significant changes that have taken place both in the tradition of women writing and in their culture. The diversity of their experiences, narrative styles, ways of protest, and gender expression have truly enriched the genre and tradition of short writing in India. This Chapter provides a brief survey of women short story writers in India, choosing only one or two prominent representatives from each literature mentioned.

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## 21.1 Objectives

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The objectives of the unit are as follows:

- Familiarise yourself with the renowned names of women short story writers in India.
  - Contextualising the writers mentioned.
  - Understand the female literary tradition of India.
  - Examine short story as one of the major genres of Indian Literature.
  - Recognize style and narrative techniques of Indian women short story writers.
  - Understand the major preoccupations of women short story writers of India.
  - Explore the various aspects of the genre of Indian short story.
  - Understand the diversity of Indian female literary aesthetics.
- 

## 21.2 Women Short Story Writers in India

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It is an arduous task and complex endeavour to bring all the women short story writers of India into a single chapter. As such, only a few women writers, representing each regional literature, are carefully accommodated and discussed.

### 21.2.1 Hindi Literature:

**Mamata Kalia (1940-)** is a prominent Indian writer in the Hindi Language. She was born on 2 November 1940 in Vrindavan, a city in Uttar Pradesh. She did her Masters in English from Delhi University. She was a professor at SNTD Women's University in Mumbai. She has written plays, novels, essays, poems, and short stories. Kalia's preoccupations have been the



nature of gender relationships in love, and social institutions like marriage and family. In most of her works, she has addressed the disintegration of cultural and societal values. She sensitively depicted the predicament of women both in domestic space and professional space. In Mamata Kalia's writings, her story collection *Rid*, *Her Puberty*, *The Investigation is Still Going on*, *Daily*, and *Famous Stories* are noteworthy. She bagged Vyas Samman, a literary award from India, for her well-received novel *Dukkham Sukkham* (2015).

**Geetanjali Shree (1957- )** is another renowned Hindi novelist and short story writer. Being her father a Civil Servant she had to live in various towns of Uttar Pradesh. Her upbringing at various places in Uttar Pradesh connected her with the Hindi language and literature. Her debut works 'Bel Patra' (1987), a short story was first published in *Hans*, a popular literary magazine of the time. This was followed by a short story collection titled *Anugoonj*. Geetanjali's novel *Mai* has been translated to English by Nita Kumar and through which she became a popular writer. *Mai* was nominated for Crossword Book Award and Nita Kumar received the Sahitya Akademi Award. Her later novels have been translated into various other languages like English, French, German, etc.

### **21.2.2 Bengali Literature:**

**Mahashveta Devi (1926-2016)** one of India's foremost writers, has several novels and short stories to her credit. Born on 14 January 1926 in Dacca, she hailed from a well-known literary family. Manish Ghatak, her father was also a novelist and poet. Dharitri Devi, her mother was also a writer and activist. She did her B.A. (Hons) in English from Visva-Bharati University and masters in English from Calcutta University. Published in several Indian and foreign languages, Mahashveta Devi writes of the lives of tribals and ordinary men and women. She has to her credit about one hundred novels and more than twenty collections of short stories. Being a prominent voice in Bengali literature, most of her works have been translated into English. The postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, translated some of her short stories into English. She sees her writing as a political commitment to bettering the lives of those on the margins. Among her many awards are the Ramon Magasaysay Award, the Sahitya Award, Padma Vibhushan, and the Jnanpith Award. She writes in Bengali. *Agnigarbha*, *Murti*, *Neerete Megh*, *Stanyadayani*, and *Chotti Munda Ebong Tar Tir* are her famous short story collections. She suffered a severe heart attack on 23 July 2016 and left this mortal world forever on 28 July 2016 due to multiple organ failure.

**Nabaneeta Dev Sen** (1938-2019) is another name Bengali short story writer. Hailing from a literary family, she was born on 13 January 1938 in Calcutta to the poets, Narendra Dev and Radharani Devi. After completing her M.A. from Jadavpur University she moved to the US for further studies and did other masters in comparative literature from Harvard University. Later, she completed her PhD from Indiana University. She wrote and published extensively in Bengali and tried her hands successfully at various genres such as poetry, short stories, plays, novels, literary criticism, travelogues, and translations. She also contributed to children's literature. Dev Sen published her debut short story collection *Monsieur Hulor Holiday* in 1980. In 2000, she awarded the Padma Shri. She also received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1999.

### **21.2.3 Telugu Literature:**

**Vasireddy Seethadevi** (1933-2007) born in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh on 15 December 1933, was a Telugu novel and short story writer. She penned around forty-two novels, ten short-story collections, and several essays. *Mareechika*, one of her novels was banned by the state government. Though it was released after she waged a war against the government. Her well-received novel *Mattimanishi* was translated into fourteen Indian and foreign languages and several of her novels were adapted into movies. She bagged Sahitya Akademi Award five times.

**Lalitha Kumari** (1950-) is better known to her readers by her penname Volga. She is from Guntur, Andhara Pradesh. She enthusiastically spoke about minority and Dalit women's issues in her writings. Being a feminist who belongs to the first-generation feminist, she staunchly believes that the strongest way to seek emancipation is forming a sisterhood. This view can be seen throughout the work titled *Vimuktha* (2011), a collection of short stories. In this collection, she brings a new narrative from a woman's perspective, reimagining Sita's post banishment life from Ayodhya. *Vimuktha* has been popularly translated into English with the title *Liberation of Sita*. This collection brilliantly explores five female perceptions of five women from the great epic *Ramayana*. These stories show Sita's bond with five of these women, which is a kind of feminist sisterhood. The patriarchal tyranny is deconstructed and interrogated through the voices of these women. In 2015, *Vimuktha* got Sahitya Akademi Award. Another short story *Asokam* (2016) is also a feminist retake on the epic *Ramayana*.

#### 21.2.4 Marathi Literature:

**Kusumavati Deshpande (1904- 1961)** is a Marathi writer from Maharashtra. She is well known for her comprehensive critical work on Marathi literature titled, *Kadambariche Pahile Shatak*. As a short story writer, she penned four collections of short stories in the Marathi Language: *Deepakali*, *Deepadan*, *Moli*, and *Pasang*.

**Malati Bedekar (1905-2001)** is one of the prominent feminist writers of Marathi literature. Born to progressive and educated parents, she enjoyed the literary space even when she was a young girl. She was married to the noted Marathi writer Vishram Bedekar. Steeped in topics related to the woman who questions her, some of her major works include *Kalyanche Nishwas*, *Hindolyawar*, *Bali*, and *Wiralele Swapna*. Some of her works are semiautobiographical in nature. It is worth mentioning that during the British regime in India, she was given the charge of an administrator for some tribes identified by the British as criminal tribes.

#### 21.2.5 Tamil Literature:

**Ambai (1944-)** is the penname of the renowned Tamil writer, C. S. Lakshmi. Her short stories and essays are widely read by the Indian reading community. Her stories are notable for its engagement with feminism, and it is through her the Tamil women writing got established. She founded a Research Archive on Women, named Sparrow. Ambai's works fiercely and boldly explored the complexities of relationships, sexuality, old age, struggles of women, suicide, childhood and parenting, and love and solitude. Her stories are diverse in depicting human conflicts. She reworked mythology gracefully in some of her works. Images of the city, particularly, Mumbai is a recurring image in some of her story collection. An example is a story *Then City that Rises from the Ashes*. Her recent collection, *Red-necked Green Bird* (2021) portrays the various transformations of Mumbai city. Her major works include *A Purple Sea*, *In A Forest*, *A Deer*, *A Night with a Black Spider*, *Andhi Malai*, *Varrum Eriyin Meengal*, and *Sirakukal Muriyum*. Many of her works were translated from Tamil to English. She paved the way for the future of Tamil translations.

**Bama Faustina Soosairaj (1958-)**, popularly called Bama, is a Tamil Dalit Christian feminist writer of stories and novels. Bama's ancestors were Dalit Hindus converted to Christianity. She was a nun for seven years only to rebel and leave the convent later. It is her multiple identities as a woman, as a Christian, and as a Dalit that made her reflect on the gender

question to become a committed feminist writer. She unconventionally wrote autobiographies with non-linear narratives and subversive humour. Among her works, *Karukku* (1992) and *Sangati* (1994) are autobiographical and elegiac in narrating and foregrounding her culture, community and cast identity. In the hands of Bama, humour is the weapon to expose the unjust practices, oppression, gender inequalities, and the cast politics of her community. *Ponnnuthayi* is Bama's much-celebrated and powerful short story which gutter inchingly interrogated the patriarchal social laws.

#### **21.2.6 Urdu Literature:**

**Ismat Chughtai** (1915 - 1991) was a renowned Urdu writer of short stories and novels. Being unapologetically feminist, she knitted stories about women's experiences in the patriarchal society. Unlike her contemporaries, Chughtai explored issues of homosexuality, desire, gender discrimination, class division, and dowry. Her short stories, verses, and non-fiction addressed the male gaze as another major concern, and she highlighted the significance of bringing the feminine perspective in women's writing. Her works also recounted her childhood and her nostalgia. Her emphasis on themes of freedom, independence, and politics led her readers and critics to interpret her works as having Marxist and feminist perspective. Her non-fiction works openly explored the necessity of freedom and expression. Her essay 'Aurat' brings out debates on patriarchy, the male gaze, and female sexuality. Her colloquial language makes her works uniquely extraordinary. Her much-discussed short story 'Lihaf' boldly unveils the same-sex desires of women. Readers received the work initially with charges of obscenity. She wrote about the life conditions of middle-class Indian Muslim culture, women, and their domestic lives. 'Tedhi Lakeer' is another work that masterfully unfolds the lives of Muslim women entangled in their desires. Chughtai's works have achieved greater contemporary relevance because the openness of her works allowed multiple readings on her preoccupations.

**Qurratulain Hyder** (1927 –2007) is an influential Urdu novelist and short story writer. She is well known for her classic *Aag ka Dariya* and autobiographical narrative *Kaar-e-Jahaan Daraaz Hai*. She was a Padma Shri and Jnanpeeth awardee of great distinction. From her earliest collection of short stories, Hyder exhibits a robust inclination for experimental and experiential writing. Locating her texts in history, she explores philosophical perspectives, cultural mores, customs, and traditions in language and form that are innovative advancements on the available and the accepted. Hyder challenges linear

narrative structures, improvising on traditional, indigenous accounts, and enriching them with her individualistic brand of modernism and postmodernism. Her narratives employ magic realism, pastiche, myths, vignettes, cinematic presentation, and stream of consciousness modes.

***Check your Progress***

1. When and where was Mahashveta Devi born?
2. Who wrote under the pen name 'Volga'?
3. Who is the writer of the classic novel *Aag ka Dariya*?

**21.2.7 Kannada Literature:**

**Janaki Srinivasa Murthy** (1945- ), popularly called Vaidehi has been a significant voice in Kannada literature in establishing Kannada women's writing. Vaidehi started her career in the 1970s and penned works that offered women's point of view. The male-centric society was always under scrutiny in her short stories, poetry, and novels. Her feminist text deconstructed myths and superstitions discourses on women. She received Sahitya Akademi Award for the collection, titled *Krauncha Pakshigalu* in 2009. A notable aspect of her stories was that she made her characters speak frankly about the patriarchal social system surrounding them. The dialect of her characters made her work exceptional. Her women resisted, protested, and hysterically raised their voice regarding sexual abuse.

**Anupama Niranjana** (1934-1991) advocated progressively about the women's respective and authored several stories and novels. Born in 1934 in British India, she was a doctor. Women's liberation and women's rights were the key ideas dealt with her in most of her works. She married Niranjana, a popular writer of Kannada Literatures. Anupama received Kannada Sahitya Akademy. Her renowned novel *Runamuktalu* has been adopted into a film. She wrote collections of stories for children, too. Her notable works are *Madhavi*, *Mukti Chitra*, *Taayi Magu*, *Aala*, *Sneha Pallavi*, and *Dinakkondu Kathe*.

**21.2.8 Gujarati Literature:**

**Marija Sres** (1943-) was born in Bratonci, Slovenia. In 1971 she went to Gujarat, India as a religious sister to work with rural women. She studied Gujarati literature and, for over thirty years, has worked with women of the Dungri Garasiya tribes. She has authored several books of

short stories and her work has been translated into several languages. The story collection titled, *First there was Woman and Other Stories: Folktales of the Dungri Garasiya Bhils* was retold by Marija.

**Dhiruben Patel (1926-)** is a prolific women writer of the Gujarati language, based in Baroda. She engaged herself by experimenting with multiple literary genres. Her novella *Aagantuk* got the great Sahitya Akademi Award in 2002. Another novel, *Aandhali Gali* explores the issue of marriage, gender relations, and loneliness. *Varta Samput* is a short story collection that unfolds various societal issues from the context of Gujarati culture, lifestyle, and social practices.

#### **21.2.9 Odia Literature:**

**Pratibha Ray (1944-)** is a well-known Odia writer based in Bhubaneswar. She enriched Odia literature by producing awe-inspiring short stories and novels. She unveils the life and culture of marginalised tribal people through her writings. Urban space and imagery are pervasive and passionately explored in her works. *Nilatrushna*, *Punyatoya*, *Silapadma*, *Uttaramarga Mahamoha*, and *Yagnaseni* are the novels in her account. Her famous short stories are *Pruthaka iswara*, *Mokshya*, and *Bhagabam ra desha*.

#### **21.2.10 Malayalam Literature:**

**Lalithambika Antharjanam (1909- 1987)** is a committed and prolific Malayalam writer during the British Raj. She was a reformist who recorded the gruesome history of India under British colonialism, and horrific violence accompanied it. Partition, communal violence, division based on religion, caste, rape, and murder were all documented and narrated from women's perspective in her stories. Her short story *A Leaf in the Storm* is a typical example. Antharjanam convincingly brings out the politics of rape in some of her stories. It was through her the feminist voices in Malayalam literature got shaped. She belonged to the Kerala Brahmin community of Nambudirees who the rightful owners of Hindu scriptures were. Her works brought debates on the patrilineal and patriarchal codes and rituals of Brahmins in Kerala. The exclusion of women from rituals, puberty discourses, seclusion for widows and child widows, and widow remarriage were all her major concerns that exposed the toxic patriarchal system and its practices. Some of her notable works are *Adyathe Kathakal*, *Agnisakshi*, *Ormayile Nidhikal*, and *Kodum Kattil Petta Orila*. Lalithambika's literary imagination crossed the borders of Kerala literature to accommodate the experiences of the other Indian women.

**Kamala Surayya** (1934-2009) is a world-renowned literary figure who hails from Kerala. She is a daughter of a famous Malayalam poet, Balamani Amma. Her literary creations found its place both in Malayalam literature and Indian English literature, is remarkable. She wrote poetry, fiction, short stories, and autobiographical works. Her controversial autobiographical work, *My Story*, is compelling. Most of her short stories set in matrilineal Nair Tharavadu. She is radical, deconstructive, and subversive in treating women's experiences. She sincerely and honestly subverts patriarchal constructions and stereotypes by foregrounding the female self. Her preoccupation with explorations of the female psyche have been unique and individualistic. She unscrupulously criticised patriarchal models for misrepresenting the female experience. The female body, identity, and sexuality have been the recurring topics of her literary oeuvre. Her writings resisted phallogocentric and celebrated the plurality of women's experience. Victimisation, exploitation, and abuse of women are some of her major concerns. Some of her works written in Malayalam are *A Doll for the Child Prostitute*, *Padmavati the Harlot and Other Stories*, *Alphabet of Lust*, *Pakshiyude Manam*, and *Naricheerukal Parakkumbol*.

#### **21.2.11 Punjabi Literature:**

**Ajeet Cour** (1934- ) is a Punjabi woman short story writer. In her works, Ajeet Cour foregrounds women's domestic and public experiences in patriarchal societies. She opens a discussion on women's liberation. She believes that the idea of freedom is not fully given to women. Women are allowed to enjoy freedom with boundaries and limitations. The question she evokes through her writings is about complete liberation in the true sense of the word is possible for women. Cour argues that economic liberation can bring complete independence to women. In her autobiography, *Weaving Water*, she talks about women's liberation. For her, freedom is not a simple affair of knocking down, but it is a concept to be achieved slowly and patiently and it is not generosity, too. Liberation of mind is the way to achieve empowerment. Some of her works are *Khanabadosh*, *Gulbano*, *Mehak di maut* and *Dhup wala Shahr*.

#### **21.2.12 Assamese Literature:**

**Arupa Patangia Kalita** (1956-) is a women short sort writer from Assam. She bagged the great Sahitya Akademi Award for seminal work *Mariam Austin othoba Hira Barua*. In her stories, she is brilliantly using folklore, rituals, and folk songs. She portrays marginalised communities in her stories and promoting their culture and life. She adopted distinctive styles

like social realism, magical realism, and surrealism. Other major stories include *Surabhi Barua*, *The Girl with Long Hair*, *Ayengla of the Blue Hills*, *The Call Girls at the Shelter Home*, and *The Rhythm of Hooves*.

***Check your Progress***

1. When did Janaki Srinivasa Murthy receive Sahitya Akademi Award?
2. What are the issues explored in *Aadhali Gali*?
3. Name the autobiography written by Ajeet Cour.

### **21.2.13 Indian English Literature:**

Short stories written in English by Indian women writers are also deeply enriched with the contributions of writings in English. Like short stories in regional languages, stories written in English are also worth noting in this context. They are thematic, strong, heterogeneous, and linguistically powerful. Some of the Indian English women short story writers are Ashapura Devi, Ismat Chughtai, Mahasweta Devi, Qurratulain Hyder, Indira Goswami, Krishna Sobti, Kamala Das, Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, CS Laxmi, Urmila Pawar, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Janice Pariat, and Kritika Pandey. All these writers deal with the lives of women, homemakers, and mothers. They talk about gender equations, politics, freedom struggle, colonialism, migration, and partition. Internationalism, multilingualism, multiculturalism, fluid identity, postcoloniality, hybridity, and other related topics have been some of the unique features of their literary creations. They adopted multiple narrative strategies to explore the psychic, emotional, and intellectual aspects of womanhood and femininity.

### **21.2.14 General Features: Themes and Ideas**

The women short story writers of India, discussed in this chapter, throw light on how women empowerment can lead to the progression of a nation and its literary, social, cultural, and political state. Their ideological and thematic concerns, their political stance and radical revisionist tendencies in their writings shaped women's writing in India. They redefined the role of women in the context of the social-political, economic, and intellectual changes that have come across on Indian soil. Some of these women writers' exposure to English education and western culture tremendously changed the nature of women writing in India. It is through their powerful stories, they addressed issues of colonialism, ideas of nationalism, the east-west



encounter, gender discourse, and the conflict between tradition and modernity. These women too contributed to the cause of independence. They clinically recorded the transformation of their country after colonialism. Both the public and private lives were mattered to them. Any discussion on Indian short story as a literary genre is not possible without considering the relevant and massive contribution done by the women of the country. A feministic aesthetics emerged gradually out of their literary style and preoccupations. Unsettling tradition and history, they knitted vignettes of her stories. The body of literature produced by the women writers paved the way for the evolution of feminist literary criticism in India. Masculine definitions of gender were rejected and designed their own rooms for artistic and creative expression.

#### **21.2.15 Multiplicity and Diversity:**

Indian women short writers come from various parts of the country, belong to different religions, born to different casts, write in different languages, and choose different genres. With the languages that have over a million speakers each and several more waiting to join the list, with a rich oral culture and thousands of dialects, and with a storytelling tradition that is part of every household and community, India offers a wealth of literature and genres and there is no way to represent them in a single chapter. Nonetheless, the writers mentioned above offer at least one glimpse of the range of women's writing from a regional Indian language. Can women's writing be defined by their gender alone? Or, to put it another way, do women write their gender? These continue to be troubling questions to which there are no easy answers. However, once women began to emerge into the mainstream literary world, many of them no longer wanted to be defined by their gender. Instead, they wished to be visible as human beings and writers. In some ways, it enables the reader to get a broad picture not only of the wealth of form and genre that characterizes writing by women, but it also provides a view of the changes that have taken place in such writing, in terms of both the subjects that women choose to write about and their preferred ways of writing about these.

#### **21.2.16 Structure and Narrative Technique:**

In the hands of Indian women short story writers, the very nature of storytelling has been deconstructed and redefined – for some writers, it becomes a long narrative with a beginning, middle and end, a plot, a structure; for others a fable, or a retelling of one; for others an email exchange, and so on. Similarly, the range of techniques deployed for narration that women now cover has broadened and expanded. One of the things that were believed to characterize

women's writing was also what helped to somehow label it as a minor form of writing, and this was the supposed preoccupation of women with the narrow world of the domestic sphere. But this is no longer true: women write about all kinds of issues; they choose all kinds of genres. The old taboos are being broken and new forms are being created. This unit does not limit the writers in terms of language and region. Yet, one can claim that the bringing together of the names and works of a handful of Indian women writers will help us understand the many contours of their works that remain unexplored and the many writers who have not received proper attention.

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### 21.3 Learning Outcomes

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The learning outcomes of the unit are mentioned below.

- Provide general awareness about Indian Women Short story writing
  - Explore structural and thematic concerns of short stories written by Indian Women writers
  - Understanding of the multicultural and multilingual Short stories of India
  - Analyse how women contributed to the emergence of writing in India
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### 21.4 Glossary

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**Realism:** Portrayal of reality and real-life characters

**Stream of Consciousness:** It is a narrative mode that portrays countless thoughts and feelings

**Patriarchy:** Men hold power in such a social system

**Male-gaze:** Masculine perception of visual image

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### 21.5 Sample Questions

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#### 21.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What is a short story?

2. Name two prominent Tamil women short story writers.
3. What is prose fiction?
4. Name a short story collection by Ismat Chughtai.
5. Mamata Kalia writes in ----language.
6. Name any Dalit women short story writer.
7. What is a genre?
8. ---- is the perspective of which a story is told. (Character view/ Narration/ Point of view)
9. Name a short story from Indian literature with gender as its prime theme.
10. What are the four major elements of a short story?

### **21.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Discuss how the women short story writers redefined the nature of the art of storytelling?
2. Examine the major thematic concerns in general of short stories of India by women.
3. Comment on the narrative techniques used in Indian women short stories.
4. Explain the theme of multiplicity and diversity in Indian women short stories.
5. Discuss Urdu women short story writers and contribution.

### **21.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Explain the contribution of Indian women writers to the development of the short story.
2. Explain the various aspects of short stories by Indian women.
3. How do Indian culture and tradition influence women short stories of India?

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## **21.6 Suggested Readings**

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1. Aftab, Tahera. *Inscribing South Asian Muslim Women: An Annotated Bibliography & Research Guide*. BRILL, 2008.
2. Aravind, Nirmala, and Prema Jayakumar. *Beyond Kerala: Anthology of Malayalam Short Stories by Women Writers*. 2011.
3. Bande, Usha, and Atma Ram. *Woman in Indian Short Stories: Feminist Perspective*. 2003.

4. Daiya, Krishna. *Post-independence Women Short Story Writers in Indian English*. Sarup & Sons, 2006.
5. Das, Kamala. *The kept woman and other stories*. Om Books International, 2010.
6. Dharmarajan, Geeta, and Mary E. Gibson. *Separate Journeys: Short Stories by Contemporary Indian Women*. U of South Carolina P, 2004.
7. Kali for Women, and Laura Kalpakian. *Truth Tales: Contemporary Stories by Women Writers of India*. Feminist P at CUNY, 1990.
8. Matti, H. S. *Contemporary Indian English Women Short Story Writers*. 2006.
9. Miller, Jane E. *Who's who in Contemporary Women's Writing*. Psychology P, 2001.
10. Saksena, Manmohan. *Indian Short Stories*. 1953.

## Unit - 22: Women Short Story Writers in Indian Writing in English

### Structure

22.0 Introduction

22.1 Objectives

22.2 Women Short Story Writers in Indian Writing in English

22.2.1 Background

22.2.2 Women Writers before Independence

22.2.3 Women Writers after Independence

22.3 Learning Outcomes

22.4 Glossary

22.5 Sample Questions

22.6 Suggested Readings

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### 22.0 Introduction

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When we study short story, we ought to start by considering what a short story is, and the following definition is well worth bearing in mind, “A brief fictional prose narrative that is shorter than a novel and that usually deals with only a few characters. The short story is usually concerned with a single effect conveyed in only one or a few significant episodes or scenes. “The form encourages the economy of setting and concise narrative; character is disclosed in action and dramatic encounter but is seldom fully developed” [*Encyclopedia Britannica*]. In other words, we can say it is a piece of literature that can possibly be read in just one sitting. The intention is to emphasize the self-contained incidents or the events that are associated with an aim to produce a single effect or mood. Some of the common elements that go in making a short story or a novel are: character, setting, conflict, plot, and resolution. It is believed that a short story must run from 5000 to 10000 words. Interestingly if a short story is less than 500 words it is called **flash fiction** or **micro-fiction**.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is a short story?
2. Define Flash fiction?

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## 22.1 Objectives

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This unit has the following objectives:

- To understand definition of short story.
- To know some of the Indian women short story writers.
- To recognize some of the common themes employed by these women writers.
- To prove that women are at the center of their writings.
- To understand the contribution of Indian women writers in Indian Writing in English

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## 22.2 Women Short Story Writers in Indian Writing in English

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### 22.2.1 Background:

Since independence, the Indo-Anglian literary scene has witnessed myriad colours and changes. Writers in imaginative and fictional literature have emerged in hundreds, and have left deep and inerasable imprints on the literary map of the world. The women writers have gained the critical and intellectual acclamation all over the world in terms of quality as well as quantity. These mentally fertile and emotionally balanced writers have proved that women are not weak and passive in any way. They are sensitive enough to distinguish the reality and transform the same into artistic fantasy. They have hardly left any aspect of life unnoticed and uncommented. However, what has remained issue of the supreme significance for them is the 'woman', her status, role, identity, and equality within the home and in socio-cultural setup. The surprising and superb thing about them is their individualistic treatment of women. Each author has shown master-mindedness in the portrayal of Indian women which does not overlap with others in the least possible degree. This creativity bestows upon them originality and personal identity. Therefore, the description of women in Indian English Short Stories provides a full and comprehensive range. But the presented image of 'woman' is still suffering and stoical, despite having achieved much. There is a gulf between the two sexes in terms of position and power.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is the importance of women writing in English?
2. Trace the background of Indian women writing in English.

Indian Women writing in English is being acknowledged as the leading style in the present century in English language and Literature. It includes the role of English as a global applauder in humanities and arts and the status of English in India. These women writers have verbalized their purpose and intention through their texts. It was requisite and need of the hour for the women to stand and raise their voices, to give voice to the voiceless, and make the world realize that they are not anyhow less than men. They have tested to portray women as substantial, invincible, and visionaries. To overcome and stand iron like in their lives, the writers succeeded in bringing out in the limelight their characters. However, the Indian women writers tried well to emboss and imprint their potentiality in a male-dominated society at best. The indispensable expansion in modern Indian fiction is the development of a feminist or women-centered approach that wishes to show and understand their experiences, from their point of feminine consciousness and sensibility. The theme is from childhood to muliebrity (feminists) in a progressive society and their dignity.

Today, the writings of Kamla Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Geetha Hariharan, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur, Shobhaa De and most female writers have become an ineradicable imprint on the audience of Indian Writing in English. It would be necessary to have a brief glance of the prominent women writers in Indian English Writings.

### **22.2.2 Women Writers before Independence:**

#### **Kamla Markandaya (1924-1978):**

She was born in Chimakurti, Mysore in 1924-2004. Kamala Purnaiya Taylor used Kamla Markandaya as her pseudonym. She is one of the fine novelists in Indian writing in English. In addition to this, she is a journalist and a Madras University graduate. Many of her short stories were published in various Indian newspapers. Soon after India's Independence, she relocated to Britain, yet she tagged herself as an Indian immigrant. She is particularly known for her style of writing about cultural clashes that exist between Indian urban and rural societies. Her first novel, *Nectar in a Sieve* was published in the year 1954. It was a bestseller and cited as an American Library Association Notable Book in 1955. Her other notable works include *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), etc.

On being asked once, if she might set a book in England where she lived with her British husband. "No," she replied, "I don't know England well enough, and don't think a static

society—that is to say a society which has solved its problems mildly and satisfactory way—can produce me into writing about it”.

The portrait of women in fiction has undergone a significant transformation throughout the last four decades. Now women writers no longer stick to the conventional prototype but represent women as portrayals of endurance, self-sacrificing, towards conflicts, female characters searching for individuality, women emancipation from various walks of life. Women have been shown advanced in fields like education, sports, medical science, engineering and what not.

### **Mahasweta Devi (1926-2016):**

She is an Indian social activist and writer. She is famous for her works related to *Lodhas* and *Shabars* the tribal community of West Bengal. She is also an activist who dedicated her life to the struggles of tribal people in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh. In her regional fiction she often depicts the oppression done to tribal people by the authoritarian upper caste landlords and government officials. Postcolonial critic Gayatri Spivak has translated the short stories of Devi into English.

Some of her important short story collections are *Breast Stories* and *In the Name of the Mother*. *Breast Stories* is translated by Gayatri Spivak. The book’s blurb describes it the best: “Breast Stories is a collection of short fiction about the breast as more than a symbol of beauty, eroticism, or motherhood, but as a harsh indictment of an exploitative social system and a weapon of resistance.” *In the Name of the Mother* is a set of four stories that expose the traditional portrayal and concept of women and their link to motherhood, which often conceals a communal abuse and attempt to restrict women to their socially prescribed roles.

### **Nayantara Sahgal (1927- Present):**

Born in 1927, she is one of the few Indian writers writing in English. Her fictional and nonfictional works focus on India's elite class responding to the crises produced by political change. She has the honour to be the first female Indo-Asian writer to receive worldwide recognition. Some of her notable works are: *Prison and Chocolate Cake (memoir)* (1954), *This Time of Morning* (1965), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *Rich like Us* (1988), and *Lesser Breeds* (2003).



**Ira Trivedi: (1984 till Present):**

She is an Indian writer, yoga teacher and speaker. Her published works are *What Would You do to Save the World? The Great Indian Love Story and There is no Love on the Wall Street*, all of which have translated into some regional languages. Her latest book, *There is no Love on Wall Street* was released at Jaipur Literary Festival by Pulitzer Prize winning author Junot Diaz which was translated into Greek and Spanish. Popular Channel V series 'Gumrah: End of Innocence' has been adapted into a crime book '*Gumrah: 11 Short Teen Crime Stories*' by Ira Trivedi. It was launched by Chetan Bhagat in January 27, 2016. Bhagat has written the prologue and foreword for the book, which is a collection of 11 spine-chilling crime tales inspired from lives of real adolescents. Each story portrays common mistakes committed by teenagers of today and the profound consequences that such mistakes can lead to. *India in Love, Marriage and Sexuality in 21<sup>st</sup> Century* is another important short story collection by Ira Trevedi.

**Anita Desai (1937- Present):**

Anita Desai's women characters in her works are radical and are in contradiction of the patriarchal community to discover their potentiality, regardless of the consequences that such mayhem may affect their lives. Desai's women, thus wish freedom within the patriarchal society as it is one of the ways that will thrive in fulfilling them. Bimala is a model of a limitless woman in the novel *Clear Light of Day*. She is an unmarried woman. Few of her women characters, like Tara in *Clear Light of Day* achieve gratification in their marriages. It is observed that through Bimala, Desai opines to a kind of feminist empowerment that lies in not restraining women to themselves. *Cry the Peacock*, the first novel by Anita Desai, is thoughtful and empathetic for her protagonist and deals with Maya's psychological problems but Gautama's coldness disappoints her. She aims at the discovery of different mental states, psychic interpretations, inner motives, and existential exploitation of men.

*Diamond Dust* is a hit collection of nine short stories by a talented and versatile writer. Desai's characters and settings cross the globe; she is almost equally at home in America, England, Mexico or India. She writes about the upper educated classes with quiet sarcasm and she can turn her storytellers craft to a working class man and his dog with equal empathy. A truly global writer yet there is a sense of a craft being honed. Desai's short novels refine that and stretch her talents and, indeed, it is the longer pieces here which are more impressive. Some of the shorter stories are pleasant but not particularly memorable.

### **Shashi Deshpande (1938-Present):**

The mid-twentieth century witnessed the emergence of outstanding women writers in Indian Literature. Shashi Deshpande is the second daughter of the famous Kannada dramatist, and Sanskrit scholar Shiranga. She graduated in Journalism from Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Mumbai. She worked as a journalist for the magazine *On Looker*. She is a winner of the Sahitya Akademi award, for her novel *That Long Silence*. She states the problems and solace of the middle-class Indian women. Her feminism is particularly Indian because it is born out of the dilemma of Indian women positioned between strange and unequal identity. The conventional women characters are tied with the family and profession to maintain the virtues of Indian culture.

The role of anger and destiny are playing as main themes around which Deshpande knits her tale. Deshpande describes the role of wrath in her words, "I thought of Puradars's line, the hour strikes and I was terrified. I stopped believing in the life I was leading suddenly it seemed unreal to me and I know I could not go on." Shashi Deshpande's novel '*A Matter of Time*' is a continuation of her exploration into many facts of the female experience in writing. It is a story around three generations of women coming to fundamentals with their life in a female world. Deshpande brings Rushdie's novel out from weeping New York City to a composed and mediating Karnataka hills in the gaps for a reader to envision. The underlying theme in Shashi Deshpande's works is human relationships especially the ones that exist between father and daughter, husband and wife, between mother and daughter. In all these relationships, women occupy the central and crucial stage, and importantly the narration shifts through femininity.

There are three types of suffering women characters which reoccur with slight changes. The first type belongs to the protagonist's mother or the mother figure, the old-fashioned woman, who believe that their place is with her husband and family. The next type of woman is braver, independent and defiant, like Sarah's friend Nathan in the '*Dark Holds No Terror*' and the third type of women are the women sandwiched between traditional and emerging women. Deshpande sympathizes with women like Indu of '*Roots and Shadows*', who leaves her husband to seek refuge in her ancestral home. As Shashi Deshpande explained about the feminist approach in her writing once, "If others see something feminist in my writings, I must say that it is not consciously done. It is because the world for women is like that and I am mirroring the world." Hence, we see that her protagonists are generally strong towards the end, but they cannot separate themselves from tradition, therefore, they want freedom but not at the cost of tradition.

Some of the short stories of Shashi Deshpande are: *The Legacy* (1978), *The Miracle* (1986), *It was Dark* (1986), *It was Nightingale* (1986), and *Collected Short Stories* (2003).

Not many readers of Shashi Deshpande may be aware that her first experiments in writing fiction started with the short story. Over the years, she has published about a hundred stories in literary journals, magazines and newspapers, in between writing her immensely popular novels which are now read all over the world, and taught in universities wherever Indian writing has an audience.

In the collection *Collected Stories*, we find Shashi Deshpande at her best, writing with subtlety and a rare sensitivity about men and women trapped in relationships and situations often not of their making. The wife of a successful politician who must look to a long-lost past in order to keep up the pretence of contentment; a little girl who cannot comprehend why the very fact of her being born is a curse; a young man whose fantasy of love drives him to murder; a newly-wed couple with dramatically differing views on what it means to get to know each other every one of the characters here is delineated with lucidity and compassion.

#### **Bharti Mukherjee (1940-Present):**

She is yet another Indian writer, born on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1940 in Calcutta. She did her M.A. in English and Ancient Indian culture from the Baroda. Her struggle with identity first as an immigrant from India then an Indian emigrant in Canada and finally as an immigrant in the United States has led to her current contentment of being an immigrant in a country of immigrants.

*The Tigers' Daughter* (1972), is her first novel, it talks about a privileged Indian woman shaken by the culture of America and on her homecoming to India by a transformed Calcutta. *The Tigers' Daughter* centers on a Punjabi woman existing in Florida, and *Leave it to Me* focuses on modern American woman strained into the life of a Puritan ancestor who ran away with a Hindu raja. Mukherjee's later works include *Wanting America: Selected Stories* (1995), *Darkness* (1985) and *The Middleman and Other Stories* (1988). Mukherjee's first collection of short fiction is something of a transitional work in documenting the shift in sensibility that occurred when she left Canada for the United States. Three of its twelve stories reveal a lingering bitterness about Canadian prejudice toward its Indian citizens and concern themselves with the problems that such prejudice generates in the lives of individuals still wrestling with the question of whether they believe themselves to be in voluntary exile or hopeful self-transformation.

### **Shobhaa De (1948-Present):**

She is a well-known Indian writer, known as India's Jackie Collins. She was born in a Brahmin Family of Maharashtra. At present, she is currently working as a columnist with *Fortnight Magazine*; *The Week*; and *Many a Times*. She is hailed for accelerating the pace and creating a sexual revolution through her writings in the column; *The Sexes of the Magazine*. Her important works are: *Socialite Evening* (1989), *Starry Nights* (1989), *Sisters* (1992), *Sultry Days* (1994), *Shooting from the Hip* (1994), *Small Betrayals* (1995), *Second Thoughts* (1996), *Selective Memory* (1998), *Speedpost* (1999), *Spouse* (2005), *Shobhaa at Sixty* (2010), and *Shetaji* (2012).

She began her literary exploration by selecting the fiction genre. In 1989, she published her debut novel entitled *Socialite Evenings*. The novel explores the dynamics of Indian elites. It was severely criticized for its irritable content, although it was a huge commercial success. Most of her works are scaled as best-selling books. They were a huge hit and this carried stardom to her name. The transformation and augment of women's writing is attributed to her for the daring voice and thoughts which is prominent in her works.

*Starry Nights*, the second work, is believed to have been inspired by two famous Bollywood off-screen couples. Her highly individualistic style of writing is also considered challenging and valiant. Another interesting fact about her writing is the invention of 'Hinglish', an unnatural blend of Hindi and English.

In her latest book - *Superstar India: From Incredible to Unstoppable*, Shobhaa gives us a close picture of an agreeable reality check. Is India actually shining? "The answer to that question is both Yes and No". Celebrating sixty years of independence coupled with her sixtieth birthday, the author takes us through a collection of sex and its choices, the money power, attitude, marriage, Bollywood, our need for superheroes to cling to....and much more. The book is simple and easily read, well researched, humorous and at the same time thought-provoking and creative about hypocrisy, greed and *chalta-hai* (let go) attitude. Where is the quality of life in today's India? Yet this country has what it takes to be a superstar. Relocating back to India from the western world is on a rise, but is it because the quality of life is better here? No. It is the Moolah that attracts many of them back to their roots.

Shobhaa De has touched on the pulse of what makes India the much talked about country all over the world. Talking out of her personal experience of raising five children she puts herself

as a protagonist to bring various messages to the readers. Her passion and love for her country are undeniable. The simplicity of the language makes it even more pleasurable to read.

*Lockdown Liaisons*, her latest collection of short stories that first came out as weekly e-books through June and July, and have now been compiled into a paperback. “Some stories were written in a day, some in two. Putting down 2,000 to 2,500 words a day became my ‘new normal’,” she shares, adding, “I was responding to so many stimuli. I was devouring news reports, watching the pandemic take over our world and our lives.

### **Manju Kapur (1948 till Present):**

She is now undoubtedly an established and endorsed writer in the Indian English fiction. She has attracted and extracted a lot of debate from the great thinkers and critics. Her fiction has a bottomless potential and can be interpreted from the several angles. Her books are really ‘writerly texts’ with a treasure of meanings. They please the readers as well as brainwash the misled people. Although she has been commented upon for her feministic concerns and the treatment of gender issues, yet there is still a tremendous scope for more study to explore other numerous aspects which her works deal with. The critical studies that are available on Kapur’s writings show that she has been read and researched for only small projects like research papers, reviews and articles.

### **22.2.3 Women Writers after Independence:**

#### **Sudha Murthy (1950- Present):**

An engineer by profession, Sudha Murthy rose to the fame of an author in Kannada and English. In her writing she draws experiences from the busy life. Told simply, her stories are about everyday matters and issues that are evident to relate. For example, her book *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*, is specifically about her childhood experiences of growing up under the supervision of grandparents. “It doesn't matter how intelligent you are, how well off you are, or how well connected you are. Your perseverance, your courage - if you keep that intact, only such people will always be successful.” Having worked with people from different walks of life, Sudha Murthy believes that her true calling is to serve others. *Something Happened on the way to Heaven* is an important collection of 20 short stories. The stories in this book are not written by Sudha Murthy herself, she is the editor of this book. Yet every single story of this book will give you the same vibes you would have got reading her stories. These stories cover different types of struggles and issues faced by common people in society and will make

you believe in humanity. The book captures the kindness, joy, hope, and faith that our life is full of, even as we make our way through the daily struggles. Some of her other short story collections are: *Grandma's Bag of Stories*, *The Bird with Golden Wings*, *The Magic Drum and other favourite Stories* etc.

**Gita Sahgal (1956 till Present):**

Gita Sahgal is a writer and journalist on issues of feminism, fundamentalism, and racism. She is also director of a prize winning documentary. She is also a human rights activist. She has been a co-founder of women's organization. She is the daughter of famous novelist Nayantara Sahgal. Among the famous writings and film production of Gita Sahgal some are *Tying the Knot* and co-edited *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain* with Nira Yul Divas. In her early years in Delhi, she was a part of a feminist network that fought against the laws of dowry and rape. Rape and sexual violence against women in India continue to be major problems.

**Arundhati Roy (1961- Present):**

India witnessed one of the great women writers of all time in the form of Arundhati Roy. She grew up in Kerala, she trained herself as an architect at the Delhi School of Architecture but discarded it in between. She opines that "A feminist is a woman who negotiates herself into a position where she has choices." The International community knows Arundhati Roy as an artist with her debut novel '*The God of Small Things*'. It won Britain's premier Booker prize, the Booker McConnell in 1997. Roy is the first non-expatriate Indian author and the first Indian woman to have won this prize. Arundhati has never admitted that she is a feminist. But *The God of Small Things* reveals at many places her feminist stance and her heroine represents feminine sensibility. The novel is unique and special in every aspect as it touches the heart of the readers and a linguistic experiment with the English language.

The stylistic writings include the use of words, phrases, and even sentences from vernacular language, use of italics, subject less sentences, faulty spellings, deviation from normal word order, the single word sentences, change of word classes, clustering of word classes and a variety of other techniques. Her two important articles are 'The End of Imagination' and 'The Greater Common Good.' In 'The End of Imagination', she brings out the eroticism on the arm policies of the Government of India. She recounts the destructive consequences of nuclear weapons not only on fellow human beings but our ecology also: "Our cities and forests, our

fields and villages will burn for days. The wind will spread the flames when everything there is to burn has burned and the fires die, smoke will rise and shut out the sun. Temperatures will drop to far below freezing and nuclear winter will set in. Water will turn into toxic ice”.

Her radical nature invited her lot of criticism. “Each time I step out, I hear the snicker-snack of knives being sharpened but that’s good. It keeps me sharp”, Arundhati Roy responded on being asked in an interview of an Indian magazine. She has rejected and was pleased to have found (from somewhere way back in her past) a National award that she could return because it allowed her to be a part of a political movement initiated by writers, film-makers and academics in this country who have risen up against a kind of ideological brutality and an assault on collective IQ that will tear Indians apart and bury them very deep if they do not stand up to it now. She states, “I’ve always said that amongst great writers there are selfish writers and generous writers”. Selfish writers leave you with the memory of their brilliance whereas generous writers leave you with the memory of the world that they have evoked”. She opines, “the secret of the Great Stories is that they have no secrets. You know how they end, yet you listen as though you don’t. In the Great Stories, you know who lives, who dies, who finds love, who doesn’t”. Some of the other notable works of Arundhati Roy are: *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, *Listening to Grasshoppers*, *My Seditious Heart* and *Broken Republic*, etc.

#### **Kiran Desai (1971- Present):**

She is the daughter of Anita Desai, a famous writer in Indian English literature. Although born in India she is a permanent resident of the USA. She won the Booker prize and the National Book Critics Circle fiction award for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* in 2006. Her first work *Hullabaloo* (1998) won ‘Betty Trask Award’, for the new novels by citizens of the Commonwealth of nations.

Indian women writers have offered a new scope and magnitude to the writing of Indian English. We know it developed over a period of time and was not born in one day. It took the efforts of great personalities to bring Indian writing in English to its present climax of existence. It must be made clear that Indian literature is not all about novels but also of short stories and poetry. Before the birth of the novel, it is believed that many women writers, composed songs, wrote short stories and small plays. This fact still echoes that women were the upholders of the rich Indian tradition of fables and storytelling.

It is therefore, evident that there are many women writers from India who created a great impression by employing their works both fiction and nonfiction among the literary fraternity. Apart from the women writers discussed above, the other writers which could not be discussed here. We are confident to claim that Indian women writers are not anyhow less than male writers of India or for the matter less than any women writers of the globe. They can equally evoke emotions and imagination to leave an imprint on the minds and psyche of the readers. These writers through their texts or characters are conveying message regarding various aspects of life, related to women, society, identity, or culture. They want to prove the point that women have come a long way from old age customs and traditions. They are the epitome of strength and courage.

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### 22.3 Learning Outcomes

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After studying this chapter, students will be familiarized to:

- Women short story writers of Indian writing in English.
- Offer a comprehensive understanding of various themes and issues prevalent in their writings.
- Analyze the works from various perspectives like gender and sexuality or any feminist perspective
- Analyze any literary text in the course.
- Understand the contribution of Indian women writers in Indian writing in English

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### 22.4 Glossary

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**Feminism:** It is a range of movements that aim to redefine the political, social, ideological economic and personal equality of the sexes

**Gender:** It refers to the features of men, women, boys and girls that are socially constructed. It includes the typically assigned roles to men and women

**Patriarchy:** A hierarchically structured society in which men hold more power

**Misogyny:** The hatred against women



**Muliebrity:** The state of being a woman, the features of a woman's nature, femininity or womanhood state of living or having objective reality

**Marginalisation:** It means the treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral. It is the social process of becoming or being made marginal, especially as a group within the larger society

**Oppression:** It means the prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority or the state of being subject to oppressive treatment

**Discrimination:** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, sex, or disability

**Engraver:** A person whose job is to engrave things or one who cuts designs or words on metal, glass, or wood

**Prejudice:** A preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience

**Idiosyncrasy:** A mode of behaviour or way of thought peculiar to an individual

**Hierarchy:** A system in which members of an organisation or society are ranked according to relative status or authority

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## 22.5 Sample Questions

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### 22.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Feminism deals with the rights of
  - (a) Men
  - (b) Women
  - (c) Both
  - (d) None
2. #Metoo Movement was part of...
  - (a) Feminism
  - (b) Structuralism
  - (c) Deconstruction
  - (d) None
3. Kamala Markandaya is an \_\_\_\_\_ Writer
  - (a) French
  - (b) German

- (c) British
  - (d) Indian
4. Bharti Mukherjee was born in the year
- (a) 1940
  - (b) 1950
  - (c) 1943
  - (d) 1961
5. *Nectar in Sieve* is a novel by
- (a) Shobaa De
  - (b) Bharti Mukherjee
  - (c) Kamala Markandaya
  - (d) Manju Kapur
6. *Some Inner Fury* is work by
- (a) Shobe De
  - (b) Bharti Mukherjee
  - (c) Kamala Markandaya
  - (d) Manju Kapur
7. "Darkness" is a short story by
- (a) Bharti Mukherjee
  - (b) Anita Nair
  - (c) Gita Sehgal
  - (d) None
8. *Cry the Peacock* is a work by
- (a) Kamla Das
  - (b) Gurmeet Kour
  - (c) Anita Desai
  - (d) None
9. Kiran Desai is the daughter of
- (a) Anita Desia
  - (b) Manoj Desia
  - (c) Harpreet Kour
  - (d) None

10. *Starry Nights* and *Superstar India* are works of

- (a) Shashi Deshpande
- (b) Shobha De
- (c) Kiran Bedi
- (d) None

**22.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What is a short story?
2. What are some of the important works of Arundhati Roy?
3. Do women Support Patriarchy? Explain.
4. Why is feminism different for different people?
5. Discuss the theme of the *Nectar in a Sieve*.

**22.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Explain the various themes prevalent in the works of Indian women writers.
2. Shobha De writes about everyday issues. Discuss.
3. Discuss some of the Indian Women short story writers in Indian Writing in English.

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**22.6 Suggested Readings**

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1. Basu, Aparna. *Women in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Pratham Books, 1990.
2. Beauvoir, De Simone. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Books, 1974
3. Bharat, Meenakshi. *Desert in Bloom: Contemporary Indian Women's Fiction in English*. eds. Meenakshi, Bharat. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004.
4. Bhasin, K. *What is Patriarchy? Women Unlimited*, 2006.
5. Freud, Sigmund. *On Sexuality*. Penguin Books, 1977.
6. Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. London: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 2012.

## Unit - 23: *The Sound of Falling Leaves*

### Structure

- 23.0 Introduction
- 23.1 Objectives
- 23.2 *The Sound of Falling Leaves*
  - 23.2.1 Plot
  - 23.2.2 Characters
  - 23.2.3 Portrayal of Women
  - 23.2.4 The Theme of Partition
  - 23.2.5 Tradition vs. Modernity
  - 23.2.6 Narrative Technique
- 23.3 Learning Outcomes
- 23.4 Glossary
- 23.5 Sample Questions
- 23.6 Suggested Readings

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### 23.0 Introduction

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Qurratulain Hyder was born on 20 January 1927 in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh. She was the daughter of pioneers of Urdu short story writing, Sajjad Haidar and Nazra Zahra. She was named after the famous Iranian poet Qurrat-ul-Ain Tahirih. She was called as “Ainee Aapa” by her friends and admirers. She is a trend setter in Urdu fiction and regarded as “Grand Dame” of Urdu Literature.

Qurratulain completed her education from Indraprastha College, Delhi and Lucknow University’s Isabella Thoburn College. She migrated to Pakistan in 1947 as communal riots broke out in India in the wake of partition. Then she went to England and worked as a journalist in BBC for some time. Then she decided to return to India in 1960. She worked as a journalist but also published short stories, novels and literary translations regularly. She lived in Bombay for almost twenty years before shifting to Noida near Delhi. She was the Managing Editor of the

magazine *Imprint*, Bombay (1964-68) and a member of the editorial staff of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (1968-75). She remained unmarried.

Hyder was a guest lecturer at the universities of California, Chicago, Wisconsin and Arizona. She was a visiting professor at the Urdu Department at Aligarh Muslim University. She was also Professor Emeritus, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan Chair at Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi. She was in residency at the University of Iowa's International Writing Program in 1979. Hyder started writing at a young age of eleven. Her first short story, *Bi-Chuhiya* (Little Miss Mouse) was published in children's magazine *Phool*. She wrote her first novel *Mere Bhi Sanam Khane* at the age of nineteen. She wrote 12 novels and four collections of short stories. She has translated many works. Her own works has been translated into English and other languages. Her significant works are:

- 1) *Mere Bhi Sanam Khane* (1949)
- 2) *Safina-e-Gham-e-Dil* (1952)
- 3) *Aag ka Darya* (River of Fire) (1959)
- 4) *Patjhar ki Awaz* (The Sound of Falling Leaves) (1965)
- 5) *Raushni ki Raftar* (The Speed of Light) (1982)
- 6) *Chay ke Bagh* (Tea Plantations) (1965)
- 7) *Aakhir-e-Shab ke Humsafar* (Travellers unto the Night) (1979)
- 8) *Gardish-e-Rang-e-Chaman* (1987)
- 9) *Chandni Begum* (1990)

#### **Novellas**

- 1) *Dilruba*
- 2) *Sita Haran*
- 3) *Agle Janam Mohe Bitiya Na Kijo*
- 4) *Kaar-e-Jahan Daraz Hai* (The Work of the World Goes On)

Hyder got Jnanpith Award for her novel *Aakhir-e-Shab ke Humsafar* (Travellers unto the Night) in 1989. She received Sahitya Akademi Award for her collection of short stories *Patjhar ki Awaz* (The Voice of Autumn) in 1965. She won Soviet Land Nehru Award in 1969 and Ghalib Award in 1985. She was conferred the Bahadur Shah Zafar Award by the Urdu Academy in 2000. The Government of India conferred upon her Padma Shri in 1984 and Padma Bhushan in 2005 for her contribution to Urdu literature. Hyder died in a Noida hospital on 21 August 2007 due to lung illness. She has been buried in the Jamia Milia Islamia cemetery, New Delhi.

***Check your Progress***

1. When and where was Qurratulain Hyder born?
2. Who is called 'Aini Aapa'?
3. Who is the writer of *Aag ka Dariya*?

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## **23.1 Objectives**

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There are multiple objectives of this unit. A few of the objectives are:

- To acquaint students with Indian partition literature.
- To familiarize students with Qurratulain Hyder's writings.
- To understand the plot structure and theme of the story.
- To show the impact of partition on women as depicted in the story.

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## **23.2 *The Sound of Falling Leaves***

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### **23.2.1 Plot:**

The story begins with the description of narrator's encounter with her old friend. Her friend was searching a place of her in-laws. She did not bother to enquire about the narrator but promised to meet her later. The narrator then tells her story from a flat in Lahore. She begins her story introducing herself and reveals her name. The story is the first-person narrative of Tanvir Fatima, the daughter of a Zamindar from Meerut. After initial education at Aligarh, she went to Delhi for higher education. She was fascinated by the fashionable life of the elite class of Delhi. She was seduced by Major Khushwaqt Singh while doing M.Sc. in Delhi. This brief affair ended due to communal differences between them. At partition, Tanvir finds herself across the border, while her married lover remains in India. She then enters into relationship with Faruq who advised her to migrate to Pakistan with him. Meanwhile Faruq continue to run business in India and look after his family there. Faruq had settled Tanvir in Lahore and would visit her five or six times a year. Tanvir adjusted herself to a life in Pakistan. She waits for a marriage proposal from her suitor Faruq but it ends up in despair. Faruq became indifferent to her. Finally, she marries

Viqar Sahib, known for betraying women and helped him in running his dance school. But there seems to be a vacuum in her life. She cannot forget old memories and remembers Khushwaqt.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who is the protagonist in the short story 'Patjhar ki Awaz'?
2. From where does Tanvir Fatima belong to?
3. Who was Khushwaqt Singh?

**23.2.2 Characters:**

**1) Tanvir Fatima**

Tanvir Fatima is the narrator of the story. Her father was a zamindar who used to live in Meerut. The family observed purdah system and Tanvir was secluded even from her cousins. But her parents loved her and allowed her to pursue education in Delhi as she was brilliant in studies. She was quite fascinated by the ambience of Aligarh Muslim Girls' College where she studied. She went to Delhi to do post-graduation in Chemistry. She was tall, slim and beautiful. Hence, she assumed the air of superiority. One of the women who used to search brides for their sons had sent a marriage proposal to her. But her parents rejected the proposal as she was young. Meanwhile she continued to be with her friends at the college who belonged to noble families.

Tanvir Fatima met Khushwaqt Singh at the party hosted by one of her friends. She was befriended by Khushwaqt Singh. She entered into relationship with him despite being warned by her friends. She was not bothered even when her reputation was tarnished. She was beaten often by Khushwaqt. She lied to her parents about the injuries caused by Khushwaqt. Their brief affair came to an end when his fiancée turned up in Delhi and maligned her image. Khushwaqt later proposed her for marriage but she rejected due to communal differences. Her affair with Khushwaqt maligned her image. She was even called a "nympho" by a student leader. She agreed with the views of her friends and wondered what led her to indulge in an affair. She would meet Khushwaqt whenever he would visit Delhi. But he suddenly disappeared from her life.

Tanvir then entered into relationship with Faruq, one of the rich businessmen. She moved around with him in elite society of Delhi. She migrated to Pakistan during communal riots on the insistence of Faruq. He later arrived in Pakistan and promised to marry her. But he did not wind up his business in India. He planned to visit Lahore every month. He purchased a small home for

her in Lahore and kept some of his relatives there for her company. He deposited a meager amount of Rs.10,000 in her account. She was so shocked that she did not even try looking for a job. Faruq then became indifferent to her and his visits were infrequent.

Then Tanvir came into contact with Viqar who was an old friend of Faruq. He ran a school for dancing in Lahore. Tanvir had an argument with the college principal and resigned from the job. She then lived with Viqar who asked her for help as he needed someone after divorcing his wife. Tanvir later got married to him and got busy in domestic chores. She resigned herself to fate. But she recalls her past memories and remembers Khushwaqt.

## **2) Khushwaqt Singh**

Khushwaqt Singh was a Chauhan Rajput from a place near Jhansi. He was an army man. He was tall, sturdy and dark skinned. He loved Ghalib's poetry and would often quote his verses. He was extremely gracious. He met Tanvir at the party thrown by Daljeet Kaur, one of Tanvir's friends. He invited all the friends of Tanvir to a movie. Tanvir could not refuse because he was a friend of Daljeet's brother. She alone accepted the proposal despite being warned by her friends. He took Tanvir to different places and entered into a relationship with her.

Khushwaqt used to beat Tanvir quite often. But he also loved her intensely. He even went to Ooty with her. Then his leave ended and they returned to Delhi. Suddenly, his fiancée, an Indian Christian came and maligned Tanvir's image. Khushwaqt had promised to marry her but he changed his mind after meeting Tanvir Fatima. He proposed Tanvir for marriage but she rejected it owing to communal differences. He lost his temper and beat Tanvir severely. He went with his fiancée, Katherine Dharamdas to Agra and got married with her. But he continued meeting Tanvir whenever he visited Delhi. Later he asked Faruq, his friend to bring Tanvir to airport for few hours during his transit. Then he left Delhi and never returned.

## **3) Faruq**

Faruq was a rich businessman. His wife was conservative and illiterate. He wanted to marry a modern, educated girl who could accompany him in elite society. When he met Tanvir, he thought that she is a good match for him. He entered into a relationship with her. He would take her to different places all over India. He would gift her jewellery. During communal riots, he instructed Tanvir to move to Pakistan. He was supposed to join her later.

Faruq planned to open a branch of his business in Lahore in Tanvir's name. He promised to marry her in Lahore. However, he did not want to leave Delhi permanently as his father was a nationalist. He intends to visit Lahore every month. He purchased a small house in Lahore and



kept her with his distant relative to provide her company. Despite being a millionaire, he deposited Rs.10,000 in a bank in her name. He would visit Lahore five or six times in a year. He kept Tanvir well informed about the news in Delhi but never discussed about marriage.

Faruq was religious and superstitious. He used to visit Ajmer shrine every year. He believed in astrologers, palmists, soothsayers and necromancers. When Tanvir's father died, he consoled her and asked her to pray regularly. Faruq's daughter got married and his son left for Oxford. His wife suffered from Asthma. His business spreads in many countries. He built a new mansion in Nainital. Later, his visits to Lahore became infrequent and he became indifferent to Tanvir.

#### **4) Viqar Hussain Khan**

Viqar Hussain Khan was an old friend of Faruq. He was tall, sturdy and dark middle aged man. He belonged to a rich family from Rampur. He ran away from home in childhood and worked in circuses, carnivals and touring theatres. He travelled all over the world and married all kinds of women. He eloped with the daughter of a Marwari money-lender from Calcutta. He would ill-treat her but she remained devoted to him. He used to run a dancing school when Tanvir first met him. He had rented a flat on the third floor of a building in a Connaught Circus where he ran his dancing school. Dancing lessons were imparted by him, his wife and two Anglo-Indian girls. He made a lot of money with his Sunday morning "Jam Sessions".

Viqar moved to Pakistan as he lost everything after partition. He went to Lahore and lived in a flat behind Mall Road in Lahore. The flat he acquired was a music school run by Arya Samaji Hindus before partition. Viqar had brought a small collection of records from Delhi. He borrowed some money from Faruq, bought a gramophone, some old furniture and started his dance school. His venture was successful.

Later Viqar divorced his wife and she left for India. He complained against his wife to Tanvir and asked her to put his house in order. Tanvir moved in with Viqar and helped him in his dance lessons. Later Viqar got married to her.

#### **23.2.3 Portrayal of Women:**

*The Sound of Falling Leaves* is an authentic portrayal of women in the society and their struggle to assert their individuality. The narrator begins the story by informing that she was busy in purchasing vegetables and cooking food as she says: "my mind was busy planning the evening meal" (68). Just then she saw her old friend who had been there to one of her in-laws place. The friend didn't even ask her how she landed at that wretched place and promised to visit

her later. The narrator ponders: "I am insignificant, not worth much talking about. Nobody gives a damn for me. Neither do I?" (69-70) Tanvir Fatima, the narrator then recounts that her family observed strict purdah as she was secluded even from her cousins. Hyder highlights the social practice of 'purdah' and restrictions imposed upon women. Tanvir reflects that her restricted childhood is perhaps one of the many reasons that may have governed her personality and choices.

Tanvir Fatima then narrates about her relationships with men. She first entered into a relationship with Khushwaqt Singh which was resented by her friends though they didn't tell her openly about it. She mentions that Delhi was buzzing with the tales of two "loose" girls who run around with men and fool their parents. Sarla, her friend said that "our society is not prepared yet to accept modern, educated girls" (71). Some said that "One rotten apple can spoil a barrel" (74). Some others would say "No wonder people say girls should not go to college" (74-75). The narrator herself thinks "that is why parents don't like giving us freedom" (75). Yet she continued her relation with Khushwaqt Singh who used to beat her often. This suggests that a girl might embrace freedom and transgress moral norms, but she is regarded as an object of subjugation. Later Khushwaqt Singh proposes to marry her but she refuses. This denial to enter into matrimonial alliance is due to the communal differences between the two. It points out the greater necessity for woman to marry within her own community. Her ambitions and pride might also have compelled her to reject the marriage proposal. She cannot fathom whether her affair was due to society or her own desires.

Tanvir Fatima then enters into an affair with Faruq, a rich businessman who was fed up his conservative wife and wanted a modern woman who can move around with him in elite circles of Delhi. Faruq migrates to Pakistan with Tanvir after partition but continues to do business in India as well. Faruq buys her a small home in Lahore, leaves relatives with her and even deposited Rs.10,000 in her name despite being a millionaire. Tanvir adapts to the conditions in Lahore and would wait for Faruq for months while he would be in India. Faruq became indifferent to her and she could not get any marriage proposal from him.

Later, Tanvir Fatima meets Viqar Khan, an old friend of Faruq. Viqar had married all kinds of women and had an eye on Tanvir too. Meanwhile, Tanvir turned down many offers for a job of a lecturer in Chemistry as she was unsure of her present state. Viqar was unable to handle his business alone and complained to her, "as I was naturally obliged to look after his domestic needs" (81). He informed her that he has divorced his wife, and got himself married to Tanvir

without asking her consent. Tanvir had to marry Viqar, a middle-aged and already married person because “marriage provides a roof over girls head” (81). It shows how an educated girl finds herself in a dark house in Lahore. She is frustrated despite living with a man of her choice with a decent income. She is weary of her life in a transformed society. She lingers into the past, remembers Khushwaqt Singh and cannot detach from past experiences and memories.

Tanvir’s agonized feelings mourn the loss of her first love. It suggests that life for a deserted woman offers no choice but endless sufferings. Like other women, she yearns for happiness and free life but suffer humiliation. She broke traditional norms yet turn back in anguish. The story thus depicts the destiny of an educated Indian girl. Tanvir Fatima is a representative of the so-called emancipated educated Indian women in post-Independent India. It shows that these women transgress social norms, but their inner femaleness makes them to compromise.

***Check your Progress***

1. Why does Tanvir Fatima reject the proposal from Khushwaqt Singh?
2. Why does Tanvir Fatima migrate to Pakistan?
3. Who is the husband of Tanvir?

**23.2.4 The Theme of Partition:**

Partition is one of the most significant events in the history of India. It led to horrific acts of physical violence, mass killings, rapes, plunder and arson. It wounded the psyches of the victims. There were a series of violations of trust at the political level. Muslim League Leaders of U.P. and Bihar abandoned the people they represented to acquire positions and power in Pakistan. Indian National Congress abolished princely states and Zamindari system which led to the feeling of disillusionment. The event also witnessed personal betrayals which was evident in communal riots. Large scale migrations broke familial ties and women were the worst sufferers.

Hyder witnessed the trauma of partition riots. Their house at Dehradun was burnt and she had to migrate to Pakistan in December 1947. She provides a glimpse of the times of partition in this story. The story reflects the turbulent times of partition and suffering of female characters in this backdrop. Tanvir Fatima, the protagonist experiences this violation of trust inflicted upon her body similar to the violation of trust inflicted on the body of India during partition. Khushwaqt physically and sexually exploited her and her love with Khushwaqt failed due to

partition. Tanvir's father was worried about her safety and dignity due to communal riots that broke out in the wake of partition. He could not go to Pakistan because of his ancestral property. He sent his sons to their aunt's place in Hyderabad. Due to threat of communal violence, Tanvir had to leave for Pakistan and settle in a small house with Faruq. Faruq left her with a refugee family in Lahore. Faruq did not want to leave Delhi permanently as his father was a nationalist. Faruq had to shuttle continuously from India to Pakistan and maintain both the families in India as well as Pakistan. Tanvir had to wait for Faruq for a long time. The alienation and feeling of exile experienced by those who migrated after partition is reflected both in the life of Tanvir and the refugee family of Faruq's distant relative with which he settles her in Lahore. Tanvir narrates her feelings thus: "The change in my life was sudden and drastic; it left me stunned. I just couldn't understand what had happened. One moment there had been my gay and abundant life in undivided India, the next I found myself in a dark and dingy house in the Lahore of '48..." (76). She resents her life in Pakistan but tries to adjust in an alien land. She suffered another betrayal when Faruq dodged her on a marriage proposal despite living as a couple.

Viqar Khan who used to run a dance school in Delhi lost everything after partition. He settled in Lahore in a small flat where he reopened his dancing school. The flat which belonged to a Hindu family before partition was allotted to him. The Hindu family used to run Indian music school there. Now this was replaced by western music school run by Viqar. It reflects the changes in society after mass migrations and relocations caused by partition. Viqar married Tanvir without bothering to obtain her consent. She resigned herself to fate and managed the affairs of Viqar. But she cannot forget past memories and remembers Khushwaqt.

Tanvir Fatima was cheated by the political betrayal of the Indian sub-continent due to partition. She was also betrayed by patriarchal forces. Thus, Hyder has shown the trauma of partition on families, personal relationships and women in particular.

***Check your Progress***

1. In which year India was divided?
2. Who abolished the Zamindari system in India?
3. Who was Viqar Khan?

**23.2.5 Tradition vs Modernity:**

Qurratulain Hyder depicted the changing cultural scenario where traditional values were fading away in the face of modernization. The protagonist finds herself lost within this newly

emerging social order that portray constant clash between tradition and modernity. Tanvir had to practice purdah in childhood but she was never restricted from acquiring higher education. She observed that young girls would acquire education at elite institutes such as Lady Irwin College, St Stephen's College, visit Roshanara and Gymkhana Clubs, Hotel Imperial and watch plays and concerts. It was a modern society as college girls and daughters of rich businessmen visit such places and mingle freely with military officers and civil service people. Hyder portrayed Delhi society that was modernizing due to the influence of colonial rule and had distanced from traditional life. However, modernization led to the clash between new and old ways of life. The marriage proposal sent to Tanvir was rejected by her parents because she was too young and pursuing education, contrary to the traditional outlook where girls were married at an early age. Tanvir narrates that Delhi was buzzing with the tales of two "loose" girls. The adoption of modern behavior was resented by society that was struggling to uphold traditions in the wake of modernization. The narrator was brought up in a traditional atmosphere of Meerut and Aligarh but adopts modern life in Delhi. Her restricted life in childhood perhaps might have prompted her to rebel in a way and indulge into affairs with many men. She first enters into a relationship with Khushwaqt Singh despite being warned by her friends. Her relationship with Khushwaqt represents new social order. It enabled her to get exposed to new world of freedom, adventure and luxury that she never experienced before. She went to South hill station instead of North hill station with him for fear of getting noticed by people whom their family knew. This new freedom draws her closer to Khushwaqt and she becomes his mistress. Tanvir's affair could not remain a secret and she does not hide it. She does not consider herself bound to follow patriarchal social norms. Her behavior and conduct are resented by her friends. The clash between tradition and modernity is highlighted in the differences of opinions between Tanvir and her friends. Tanvir ponders why she maintained an affair which suggests how young girls found themselves stuck between traditional roles and modern desires. Tanvir refuses Khushwaqt's marriage proposal but continued affair with him.

Later Tanvir enters into a relationship with Faruq, a rich businessman. Faruq's wife was conservative and illiterate but he wanted a modern woman who could accompany him in elite circles. Although Faruq was married, their relationship was not considered wrong by society. Thus changing values in new social order were witnessed in postcolonial era. Even Viqar Khan who ran a school in Delhi adopted western culture. Even in Lahore, he was able to open a dance school. The school received good response in a conservative society. The old Indian music

school run by Hindus was replaced by a western dance school. Thus Hyder depicts clash between tradition and modernity in this story. The traditional society was slowly replaced by a modern way of life.

***Check your Progress***

1. From which type of family does Tanvir Fatima belong to?
2. Why the marriage proposals sent for Tanvir Fatima were rejected by her parents?
3. How was Faruq's wife?

**23.2.6 Narrative Technique:**

Stream of consciousness technique is used in the story. The story is written in the first-person narrative from the perspective of the woman protagonist. It reveals the various thought processes of the narrator as she relives in her mind the turning points in her life that transformed her drastically. It depicts the changing scenario in the life of a Muslim woman born in India but later lived in Lahore in the post-partition era. It is a straightforward narrative which reflects author's own experiences. The story opens in post-partition era in Pakistan, in a small house in Lahore. The narrator describes her meeting with an old friend who promised to visit her house later. This brief encounter with an old friend throws narrator into a reverie of the past and she recounts her life story and explained what led to her present state. The narrator's thoughts move back and forth in time and place. She recollects one event after another that shaped her destiny. She provides a brief glimpse of her past. She narrates that she was brought up in a traditional atmosphere in Meerut and got educated in Aligarh in the same atmosphere. Exposure to the modern society while pursuing education in Delhi changed her outlook. She entered into a relationship with Khushwaqt who left Delhi and never returned. She became a fiancée of Faruq who wanted a modern woman to accompany him in elite circles. Due to partition, she had to migrate to Pakistan on the insistence of Faruq. Her feeling of disillusionment is expressed in her interior monologue: "The change in my life was sudden and drastic; it left me stunned. I just couldn't understand what had happened. One moment there had been my gay and abundant life in undivided India, the next I found myself in a dark and dingy house in the Lahore of '48..."(76) Faruq settled her in Lahore but later became indifferent towards her. She had to seek solace in the company of Viqar, a womanizer. She expresses her feeling towards Viqar thus: "I

listened to his tale half-heartedly, for I couldn't care less. Everything in life seemed so trivial, so colourless, so utterly without any meaning or purpose" (81). She had to marry Viqar as she had no choice. The narrator then turns into present and remembers Khushwaqt.

Thus, narrative technique deployed in the story captures narrator's feelings both during pre-partition era and post-partition times.

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### 23.3 Learning Outcomes

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By the end of this unit, students will be able to learn:

- Partition is the predominant theme of most of the Urdu writers.
- It has been observed that Hyder's writings deal with the theme of partition, impact of colonial rule and partition on women and communalism in sub-continent.
- Hyder's characters are aristocratic, belong to upper class and act contrary to the social norms.
- Women were the worst sufferers of partition as it is evident from the agony of the protagonist in the story.

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### 23.4 Glossary

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**Shrieked:** A short, loud, high cry as an expression of a powerful emotion

**Alley:** A narrow road or path between buildings

**Commodore:** An officer of high rank in the navy

**Wretched:** Unhappy, unpleasant person

**Seclusion:** Cell or a room where men and women are kept separate

**Pampered:** To treat with too much kindness and attention

**Lingers:** To take a long time to disappear

**Brocade:** Heavy decorative cloth with a raised design often of gold or silver threads

**Whisked:** To take something or someone, somewhere else suddenly and quickly

**Boisterous:** Noisy, energetic and rough

**Grape-vine:** Hearing from someone who heard it from someone else

**Bruises:** Injury or mark on the skin as a result of beating

**Desolate:** Unattractive and empty, extremely sad and feeling alone

**Amiably:** Pleasant and friendly

**Barrel:** A large container made of wood, metal or plastic

**Lull:** A period of quiet or reduced activity

**Stunned:** Shocked or surprised very much

**Dingy:** Dark and often dirty

**Numb:** Unable to feel anything, usually for a short time

**Hijrat:** Urdu word meaning migration

**Relentlessly:** Continuously in a severe or determined way

**Palmists:** A person who looks at the lines inside the hand and tells what will happen in future

**Soothsayer:** A person who has the ability to know and tell about future

**Necromancers:** People involved in black magic evoking evil spirits for bad purpose

**Enticed:** To attract to a particular place or activity by offering something pleasant or advantageous

**Carnival:** A special occasion of public enjoyment and entertainment

**Grumbled:** To complain about someone or something in an annoyed way

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## 23.5 Sample Questions

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### 23.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Qurratulain Hyder was named after the Iranian poet \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Hyder's first story \_\_\_\_\_ was published in a children's magazine.
3. Hyder received \_\_\_\_\_ award for her collection of stories *Patjhar ki Awaz*.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the narrator of the story.
5. Tanvir Fatima was seduced by \_\_\_\_\_ while she was doing M.Sc. in Delhi.
6. Tanvir was called \_\_\_\_\_ by the student leader.
7. Tanvir migrated to Pakistan on the insistence of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Faruq deposited Rs. \_\_\_\_\_ in Tanvir's account for her sustenance.
9. Tanvir marries \_\_\_\_\_ in Lahore.
10. Viqar ran \_\_\_\_\_ school in Lahore.



**23.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Explain the significance of the title of the story.
2. How did Tanvir Fatima's affair with Khushwaqt Singh come to an end?
3. Why did Tanvir's marriage with Faruq could not materialize?
4. Why Tanvir had to marry Viqar?
5. Which narrative technique is used in the story?

**23.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Examine the theme of partition in the story.
2. Discuss *The Sound of Falling Leaves* as a clash between tradition and modernity.
3. Describe how personal story and national history is intertwined in *The Sound of Falling Leaves*.

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## 23.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Brooks, Geraldine. *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women*. Doubleday, 1995.
2. Butulia, Urvashi. *The Other Side of Silence -Voices from the Partition of India*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998.
3. Dhawan, R.K. Ed. *Indian Women Novelists*. Set III, Vol. 6. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1995.
4. Hyder, Qurratulain. *The Sound of Falling Leaves*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Vol.1. Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014.
5. .... . *A Season of Betrayals- A Short Story and Two Novellas*. edited and introduction by C.M. Naim. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1999.
6. Swan, S.P. *The Feminine Voice in Indian Fiction*. New Delhi, Asia Book, 2005.

## Unit - 24: *Squirrel*

### Structure

24.0 Introduction

24.1 Objectives

24.2 Squirrel

24.2.1 Plot of the Story

24.2.2 Characters in the Story

24.2.3 Narrator's Visit to the Library

24.2.4 Condition of Women in Indian Society

24.2.5 Women as Depicted in Journals

24.2.6 Attitude of the Library Staff

24.2.7 Use of Symbolism / Imagery

24.2.8 Squirrel as a Feminist Story

24.2.9 Writer's Vision

24.3 Learning Outcomes

24.4 Glossary

24.5 Sample Questions

24.6 Suggested Readings

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### 24.0 Introduction

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*Squirrel* is written by C.S. Lakshmi who adopted the pseudonym Ambai. C.S. Lakshmi was born in a large middle-class Brahmin family in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu in 1944. Ambai was the third child of her parents. She was an unplanned child and her gender and dark complexion led to the prejudices against her. She was sent to a Tamil medium school unlike her siblings. Her family was conservative, and she was taught to adhere to Tamil life and culture. She was expected to be a perfect wife, mother and daughter having no desires or demands. She wished to pursue MA in Madras Christian College, but her father opposed her decision. Later he relented as Ambai's mother supported her. C.S. Lakshmi adopted the pseudonym Ambai because she was influenced by a character Ambai in Devan's novel *Parvatiyin Sangalpam*. After completing MA, she worked for a while as a schoolteacher at Panruti. She was fired for her anti-establishment activities. Then she took up a job as an English tutor in Tyagaraja College in

Madras. Meanwhile, she received UGC fellowship and enrolled for Ph.D. in JNU, Delhi in 1967. She worked on American policy towards refugees deserting Hungary due to unsuccessful revolution of 1956. She is married to Vishnu Mathur, the film maker, and lives in Mumbai.

Ambai started writing at an early age. In 1962, she published her first work *Nandimalai Charalilae (At Nandi Hills)*. She wrote a novel *Andhi Maalai (Twilight)* in Tamil in 1966 which got her “Kalaimagal Narayanaswamy Aiyar” Prize. Her short story *Siragukalmuriyum (Wings will be Broken)* was published in magazine *Kanaiyazhi* in 1967. This story was published in a short story collection under the same name in 1976. She was awarded a two-year fellowship for a project on Tamil women writers in 1976. This was published as a book titled *The Face behind the Mask* in 1984. Her Tamil short story collection titled *Veetinmulaiyilorusamaiyalarai (A Kitchen in the Corner of the House)* was published in 1988. Lakshmi Holmstrom has translated some of her works such as *A Purple Sea* (1992) and *In A Forest, A Deer* (2006). Ambai jointly won the Vodafone Crossword Book Award with Lakshmi Holmstrom in the Indian language fiction translation category for *In A Forest, A Deer*. She got Lifetime Achievement Award by the Canada-based Tamil Literary Garden in 2008.

Ambai has contributed significantly to women’s studies. She published her research work and other articles in newspapers such as *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* and journals like *Economic and Political Weekly* under her real name C.S. Lakshmi. She was a visiting fellow at the University of Chicago’s Institute for Culture and Consciousness in 1992. She persuaded the University to acquire Roja Muthiah Chettiar’s collection of books and other material and established Muthiah Research Library. She has been a research officer at the Indian Council of Historical Research. She worked on research projects – *Illustrated Social History of Women in Tamil Nadu* and *An Idiom of Silence: An Oral History and Pictorial Study*. This was published as two volumes of the *Seven Seas and Seven Mountain Series*. The first volume, *The Singer and the Song* is a collection of interviews with women musicians published in 2000. The second volume *Mirrors and Gestures* is a collection of interviews with women dancers published in 2003. Lakshmi founded SPARROW (Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women) in 1988. It is an NGO which archives the work of women writers and artists. She worked as its Director and a member of its board of trustees. She also worked as a member of the University of Michigan’s *Global Feminism’s Project*.

She wrote few novels and many short stories. She is famous for writing about women. The present story was first written in Tamil titled as “Anil”. It was translated into English by

Vasanth Kannabiran and Chudamani Ragavan. The story is about the problems faced by women in Indian society. Ambai adopts different style and narrative technique to express her emotions.

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## 24.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this unit are:

- To acquaint students with Indian feminist literature.
  - To familiarize students with Ambai's writings.
  - To understand the plot structure and theme of the story.
  - To analyze Ambai's *Squirrel* as a feminist story.
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## 24.2 *Squirrel*

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### 24.2.1 Plot of the Story:

The story initiates with the narrator's expedition to the library. The library contains books on feminism and the narrator intends to study the material. She was surprised to find that books written by women writers were not maintained properly. They were considered insignificant; hence nobody reads those books. Nevertheless, the narrator searches the books to read them. She is transposed into a state of reverie wherein she realizes the condition of women. She realizes the suffering and trauma of Indian women in a patriarchal set-up after reading books and letters she found in the library. She shares her agony with the squirrel which was sitting on the books. The reading of journals makes her aware that women contributed to literature, but it was neglected. She was pained to find the books in a disorderly state. The librarian informed her that Government did not consider it necessary to spend money on the maintenance of the books. So, the books will be burnt. The narrator is pained to know this and leaves the library.

#### ***Check your Progress***

1. What was the penname of C.S. Lakshmi?
2. Why were the books written by women writers not maintained properly?
3. Why the government could not maintain library?

## **24.2.2 Characters in the Story:**

### **1. The Narrator:**

The narrator is a protagonist of the story. She is a staunch feminist. The story is based on her expedition to a library which was renowned for a good collection on women's writing. The visit to a library evokes certain emotions in her. She asks the librarian to enable her to know the library collection so that she could read some of the books. She wanted to know the books kept on the top floor of the library. The librarian informs her that there is nothing but dust. The fact that books written by women were kept in a dusty place indicates that these books were less read and hence neglected. The narrator asks the librarian to show her some books. The narrator realizes that the books were not maintained properly. Nevertheless, she finds some books and journals and reads them. She finds squirrel sitting on the books and enters into a conversation with her. It is her only link to reality.

The reading of the books and journals makes her aware of the condition of women in male-dominated Indian society. She comes to know about the various social customs such as dowry system, injustice to widows, unacceptance of married women in parental homes, rigid religious restrictions on women, difficult life of Devdasis etc. She realizes that adherence to these customs was an injustice to women. At the same time, she also comes to know the contribution of women in different spheres of life but due credit was never given to them. She compares the book with Ahilya and herself with Lord Rama. Like him, she aims to raise voice for women and women writers and attempt to revive them. She realizes that women writers contributed significantly but it remained a neglected zone.

The narrator observes the attitude of the librarian staff who were negligent in their duties. They failed to maintain those books properly. The librarian tried his best to preserve the books but the government apathy discouraged him. The deplorable condition of the books pained the narrator. She leaves the library disappointed when the librarian informs her that these books will be burnt as they are considered insignificant.

### **2. Squirrel**

The character of squirrel is highly symbolic. It stands for the inner world of the narrator. The narrator found squirrel sitting on a pile of books mended with paste. It looked at the narrator and licked the paste with great enjoyment. Squirrel is a companion of narrator in a world of illusions. It is her only link with reality. The only thing that the narrator knows about squirrel is that it was not fond of Vai Mu Ku, the editor of a journal and a novelist who dealt with widow

remarriage, the upliftment of Devadasis and other social issues in her works. The narrator enters into a conversation with the squirrel. Squirrel saw a picture of Balammal on Chintamani journal and went away. It came again and sat on the journal which discussed Factory Act. The narrator asked it the reason to visit the library again. She questions it whether it could not find enough trees outside since it eats nuts. She is baffled so as to what makes squirrel lick paste so much. She asks it to go away on trees. But squirrel refused and laid down leisurely there itself. The narrator thinks that the paste must have made her aware of the pathetic condition of women and neglect of women writers. There is a string that links the squirrel and the narrator and takes them into another world. Squirrel surrenders after the librarian says that books are to be burnt since they are useless.

### **3. The Librarian**

The librarian was sincere and performed his duties well. When the narrator visits the library and asks him about the collection on the top floor, he tells her that there is only dust. On further enquiry, he informs her that books written by women were kept there. He helped the narrator in finding the books that she needed.

The librarian wanted to mend the torn books. He stitched those books and pasted the gum on it. He wanted to improve the condition of the library. So he wrote several letters to higher authorities in this regard. There was a file on his desk which he named STRING. It was lying on his desk since three years. It was his favourite file but it was torn and its colour faded. It maintained his correspondence with higher authorities. The first letter is his request that some string could be provided in order to sort out old magazines and tie them according to their months and years. The authorities replied that it was not customary to provide string to libraries and instead reprimanded him for breaking the rule. The librarian wrote another letter to the authorities and explained them that if magazines are not separated according to their matter, they will become useless. The authorities asked him to whom it will become useless and to which region such people belong to. The librarian was fed up with this callous attitude of the higher authorities. So he himself bought a ball of string and tied the magazines. Then he again wrote a letter to the authorities asking them to reimburse the money he spent but his appeal fell on deaf ears.

The librarian told the narrator that anyway those books are not read by many people. The Government cannot afford to spend on its maintenance. The librarian argues that these books are waste, so they should be burnt. This reflects the agony of the librarian.

***Check your progress***

1. How does the narrator come to know about the condition of women?
2. How is the narrator linked with the squirrel?
3. What does the squirrel stands for?

**24.2.3 Narrator's Visit to the Library:**

The narrator visits library one day. The library consists of many books on feminism. The narrator asks the librarian what was there on the top floor of the library. The librarian replies that there is nothing but dust. The narrator asks him about the books on the top floor. The librarian informs her that books written by women were kept there. The narrator thought that the condition of books written by women must be good. She wanted to read those books. The narrator requests him to show those books to her. The librarian took her to the top floor and reluctantly showed her some books on her insistence. The narrator became engrossed in searching more books. A Squirrel also comes there and eats the gum attached on the cover of the books. The narrator enters into a conversation with the squirrel. Squirrel represents narrator's inner world. The transition between dream and reality is represented by the squirrel. The narrator finds the volumes of *Penmadhibodhini* and *Jaganmohini* there. She also finds torn book of 19<sup>th</sup> century which she touched and felt as if she has touched rose. She finds many books on the top floor but she was disappointed when she saw the condition of the books. She finds the library a dark and dusty place.

***Check your Progress***

1. What does the squirrel represent?
2. Which books does the narrator find on the top floor of the library?
3. Why was the narrator disappointed?

**24.2.4 Condition of Women in Indian Society:**

The narrator read some books and other material in the library. She then realized the condition of women in Indian society. She compares the book with 'Ahalya', the wife of Rishi



Gautama who was seduced and deceived by Indra into believing that he was her husband. She was then turned into stone as a punishment but later came back to life when Lord Rama touches it. The narrator mentions about 'Rani Victoria Kummi', a group dance performed in praise of Queen Victoria. She refers to Buckingham Carnatic Mill strike incident when a woman worker died in a firing by a British police officer during the hunger strike of the workers. The narrator was sad for Anna Sathianathan, a famous writer who was on her death-bed and asked her husband to pray for her. She was a converted Christian who established a school to spread literacy among women. The narrator also talks about Snehlata, a Bengali girl who committed suicide protesting against dowry as she could not prevent her father from mortgaging their house to raise money for the dowry. She also mentions about 'Mamigal', Chennai women who would play badminton and other games encouraged by their upper class guardians. This was resented by male writers who felt that English games would make Tamil women emotionally vulnerable and they should perform 'Kummi' or pound rice for physical exercise. The narrator came to know about Sister Subbalakshmi, a renowned social worker and a widow who provided shelter and education to Brahmin widows. But orthodox priestly class opposed her and she had to concede to their demands. The narrator observed that Indian women were taught religion, which itself was gender biased so that they could follow it. She mentions the incident of a widow with hairs who was not lit pyre as she has not obeyed the dictates of religion. She informs that 'Devdasis' dedicated to temples have to face several difficulties. She recalls the efforts of Ramamrutham Ammal who belonged to Devdasi community and played an active role in abolishing the Devdasi system. Her novel *The Reformed Rake* is a rationalist argument against Devdasi system. She mentions that Mahatma Gandhi delivered a speech to 'charkha making' women. She also refers to Tamairaikanni Ammal who called for the active participation of Tamil women in the mass movement against the imposition of Hindi as the national language. She also mentions Shanmuga Vadivu, the daughter of a great musician, Veenai Dhanammal and K.B. Sundarambal, a singer and an actress. Thus the narrator highlights the contribution of women in different spheres of life which remained unknown. At the same, she also observed the difficulties women faced in our patriarchal society.

***Check your Progress***

1. How do the Devdasis suffer?
2. How the Tamil women do participate in politics?

#### 24.2.5 Women as Depicted in Journals:

The narrator found some journals on the top floor of the library which offered glimpses into the life of women in those days. When the narrator searches for the books, the journals 'Penmadhi Bodhini' and 'Jagan Mohini' fell on her. She read those journals and came to know that 'Penmadhi Bodhini' was the first journal founded in 1891 for women run by a woman with articles written by women. It aimed at bringing reform and guided women in leading happy married lives. 'Jagan Mohini' was a journal founded in 1924 by Vai. Mu. Kodainayaku Ammal, a novelist who was married at the age of five and had no formal schooling. Her novels dealt with widow remarriage, the upliftment of Devadasis and other social issues. She picks up a journal *Chintamani* and finds a faded picture of Balammal on it. Balammal founded this journal for improving the condition of women and spreading knowledge among them. The narrator finds rust-coloured dust on the picture of Rani Victoria Kummi published in the journal *Viveka Chintamani*. She finds the picture of a husband carrying parcels as his wife walks beside him swinging her arms, on the cover page of September 1943 issue of the journal *Ananda Vikatan*. She also comes to know that Kalki's novel *Tyagabhumi* was serialized in the popular journal *Ananda Viketan*. The heroine, Uma Rani is a neglected wife who later on protests against her husband, becomes self-sufficient and declares that she is not a slave. The narrator finds the picture of Ammu on the cover page of the journal *Kalki*, run by R. Krishnamurthy whose pen name was Kalki and who wrote on Gandhian thought. She refers to Kasini, a columnist who wrote about recipes and jewellery designs in the women's section of a journal. The narrator comes to know that these women's journals counseled women on 'good behaviour' and chastity, urged them to be patient, advised that home is the rightful place for them and husbands objects of worship.

The narrator finds the letter of Mary Carpenter, a British social reformer who supported the movement for higher education for women. She also reads a popular Tamil tale where the protagonist Nallathangal faced cruelty at her in-laws place. Unable to bear it, she returns to her parents home only to be chided who taunt her that it would be honourable for her to jump into a well rather than returning to her father's home. This provokes her to plunge into a well along with her children.

Thus the narrator realized the condition of women through the reading of these journals.

***Check your Progress***

1. Which was the first journal founded for women?
2. What was the aim of Penmadhi Bodhini?
3. What does the narrator realize after reading the journals kept on the third floor of the library?

**24.2.6 Attitude of the Library Staff:**

The librarian considered the books written by women writers as insignificant. So he informed the narrator that there is nothing but dust on the top floor of the library as books written by women were kept there. During lunch, women staff would talk about cooking and other domestic issues. It seemed that they just wait for lunch time and would indulge in idle talk. They would not perform the assigned task properly. The library staff would repair the torn books. The man who catalogued Telugu books muttered to himself that all books are torn. Books had been pasted but it is a temporary arrangement. Books need to be catalogued.

The librarian wrote a letter to higher authorities many times asking them to reimburse the money he spent on thread but to no avail. The narrator was told by librarian that books in the library are waste, hence they should be burnt. This makes the narrator sad and she leaves the library with a heavy heart.

***Check your Progress***

1. How does the women staff of the library behave?
2. What efforts did the librarian take to repair the books?
3. What did the librarian intend to do with the books at the end?

**24.2.7 Use of Symbolism/Imagery:**

Ambai used symbolism in this story to depict the condition of women in Indian society. The character of squirrel is symbolic. It stands for the inner world of the narrator. The transition between dream and reality is made through symbolism of squirrel. The narrator recalls ‘Ahilya’ incident when Ahilya who was transformed into stone comes back to life when Lord Rama touches it. She compares the book with Ahilya and herself with Lord Rama. The narrator says,

“Each book that was stroked and awakened to life was a very Ahalya. But which epic was there that recorded its history?”

As Lord Rama, she will strive to revive the neglected women writers.

The narrator finds “a heavy dictionary yellowing with age”. The images such as ‘tongues hanging out...’, ‘a dog-eared fold on the cover’, a ‘spine of the book...broken’ etc are used to highlight the deplorable condition of books. The narrator also draws the imagery of Krishna’s appearance in his chariot to preach sermon of non-attachment to refer to the negligent attitude towards library and apathy to books. The image of fire is used to suggest the books written by women were useless for the librarian and deserved to be burnt. The image of window is actually a reference to ‘Vadakkirutal’ which is a ritual of fasting unto death, facing north, undertaken in protest or sorrow.

***Check your Progress***

1. What does the squirrel stands for?
2. What does the image of fire suggest?
3. Why do the narrator compare herself with Ahilya?

**24.2.8 Squirrel as a Feminist Story:**

Feminism is a movement that advocates social, political, economic and intellectual equality for women. There are two strands in feminist criticism; the first is concerned with woman as reader which involves women accepting their images created by male writers. The second is concerned with woman as a writer where woman creates textual meaning. It also deals with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature written by women. It includes female creativity, female language, corpus of female writing and study of past writers and works.

The story ‘Squirrel’ questions the patriarchal modes prevalent in Indian society. It also emphasizes on the neglect of women’s literature. The narrator’s visit to the library makes her realize the status of women’s writing. Books written by women writers were kept on the third floor of the library as they were considered insignificant. They were covered with dust and the government was not willing to provide funds for the repair of the books.

The narrator read some books and journals in the library and came to know the condition of women in Indian society. She came to know about Devdasi tradition, dowry system and other

social customs which oppressed women. But she also became aware of the contribution of women in different fields which was not known before.

The story points out that women writers were considered inferior to male writers. So their literature was repressed and ignored. Through the story, Ambai intends to bring to light the contribution of women writers and accord them the status that they deserve.

***Check your Progress***

1. What are the two strands in feminist criticism?
2. How does Ambai bring to light the contribution of women writers?
3. Are Indian women liberated, according to Ambai?

**24.2.9 Writer's Vision:**

Ambai perceives that an understanding of our present existence can be enhanced from our understanding of our past. She believes that historicizing the self is perhaps the way to self-realization. She undertakes this task in the present story. The author is an ardent supporter of woman's rights. *Squirrel* is a feminist story that questions patriarchal attitude in society and also highlights the neglect of the works of women writers. It points out that patriarchal modes are prevalent even in literary world. The author compares squirrel with herself and the neglected women writers. To her, the books on the top floor of the library signify a whole generation of survival. She reads those books and journals and opines that these private and social lives depicted in the works of these women writers reflect their suppressed inner thoughts. She realized the hardships that these women writers must have faced during their times.

***Check your Progress***

1. Describe Ambai's vision as evident in the story.
2. How does the narrator relate herself with women writers?

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**24.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this unit, students will be able to understand that:

- Fully awakened feminine sensibility has emerged in Indian Women Writing.

- Women were discriminated in Indian patriarchal society.
- Female writing was regarded as inferior to male writing.
- Modern narrative technique is used by the author to voice her concerns.

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## 24.4 Glossary

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<b>Meshed:</b>	To fit together, or to be suitable for each other
<b>Anticipation:</b>	To imagine or expect that something will happen
<b>Slithered:</b>	To move smoothly while twisting or curving
<b>Rustled:</b>	Cause to make soft sounds
<b>Flicked:</b>	To move with a short sudden movement or to hit quickly and lightly
<b>Startled:</b>	To do something unexpected which surprises or sometimes worries
<b>Crumbled:</b>	To cause to break into small pieces
<b>Minced:</b>	To cut food into very small pieces
<b>Caressing:</b>	A gentle loving touch
<b>Descended:</b>	To come down
<b>Screeched:</b>	A long loud high unpleasant noise
<b>Paunch:</b>	A fat stomach
<b>Bloat:</b>	Swollen or rounded
<b>Malice:</b>	The wish to harm other people
<b>Exorcise:</b>	To force out an evil spirit from a person or a place
<b>Craned:</b>	To stretch in order to look at something
<b>Prostrate:</b>	Lying down in obedience or worship
<b>Mamigal:</b>	Aunties
<b>Kama:</b>	The God of love in Hindu mythology
<b>Ecstatic:</b>	State of extreme happiness, pleasure

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## 24.5 Sample Questions

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### 24.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ wrote under the pseudonym *Ambai*.

- (a) Qurratulain Hyder
  - (b) C.S.Lakshmi
  - (c) Anita Desai
  - (d) Kamala Das
2. *Squirrel* was first written in \_\_\_\_\_ language.
- (a) Tamil
  - (b) Sanskrit
  - (c) English
  - (d) Marathi
3. \_\_\_\_\_ was the title of the story in Tamil.
- (a) Kasini
  - (b) Penmadhi
  - (c) Anil
  - (d) Murugula
4. The story was translated into English by \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Ambai
  - (b) Anita Desai
  - (c) R.K. Narayan
  - (d) Vasanth Kannabiran & Chudamani Ragavan
5. \_\_\_\_\_ represents narrator's inner world.
- (a) Squirrel
  - (b) Nallathangal
  - (c) Librarian
  - (d) Kasini
6. The narrator finds volumes of \_\_\_\_\_ on the third floor of the library.
- (a) Penmadhi Bodhini & Jaganmohini
  - (b) Newspapers
  - (c) Journals
  - (d) Science magazines
7. The narrator and the squirrel were sad for \_\_\_\_\_, a famous writer who was on her deathbed.
- (a) Ambai
  - (b) Anna Sattianandhan

- (c) Lakshmi Murthy  
(d) Kamala Das
8. \_\_\_\_\_ threw her son in well and herself plunged into it.  
(a) Nallathangal  
(b) Uma Rani  
(c) Lakshmi  
(d) The narrator
9. In \_\_\_\_\_, Uma Rani declares that she is not a slave.  
(a) Kasini  
(b) Tyagabhumi  
(c) Penmadhi Bodhi  
(d) Jaganmohini
10. \_\_\_\_\_ tells about the new pattern of bangles.  
(a) Jaganmohini  
(b) Penmadhi Bodhini  
(c) Tyagabhumi  
(d) Kasini

#### **24.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Comment on the use of symbolism in the story.
2. What does the condition of the books on the top floor of the library indicate?
3. Why did Nallathangal commit suicide?
4. Why were the women who played badminton scorned by male writers?
5. Discuss the narrative technique in the story.

#### **24.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Examine 'Squirrel' as a feminist story.
2. Discuss how the story highlights the neglect of the women's literary works.
3. Bring out autobiographical elements in the story.



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## 24.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Holmstrom, Lakshmi. 'Introduction', *A Purple Sea*. New Delhi: AEWP, 1992.
2. Krishnakutty, Gita. *Ambai (Katha Perspective)*. New Delhi: Katha, 1999.
3. Lakshmi, C.S. *The Face Behind the Mask: Women in Tamil Literature*. New Delhi: Vikas, 1984.
4. Tharu, Susie and K. Lalita eds. *Women Writing in India*. Vol.2, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995.

# Maulana Azad National Urdu University

Programme: Undergraduate

II Semester Examination, August/ September - 2021

BAEN201CCT/ UGEN201CCT: Modern Indian Literature

Time: 3 Hours

Total Marks: 70

**Note:** This question paper consists of two parts: Part-A and Part-B. Number of words to answer each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.

**Part-A** contains **10** questions of which students are supposed to answer **08** questions. Answer each question in approximately 100 words. Each question carries **05** marks.  
(8x5=40 marks)

**Part-B** contains **05** questions of which students are supposed to answer **03** questions. Answer each question in approximately 250 words. Each question carries **10** marks.  
(3x10=30 marks)

## Part-A

- 1) What is the poetic device used in Nissim Ezekiel's poem 'Goodbye Party for Miss Pushpa T.S.'? Elaborate.
- 2) What are the different ways in which the persona desires to return to Bengal in Jibananda Das's poem 'I Shall Return to this Bengal'?
- 3) Comment on the themes of journey and revolution in Sri Sri's poem 'Forward March'.
- 4) Discuss Saadat Hasan Manto's story 'Toba Tek Singh' as a satire on Partition.
- 5) How does the persona emphasize class/caste divisions in the society in G. M. Mukhtobodh's poem 'So Very Far'?
- 6) What were the problems that the boys had to come across while setting up the cricket team in R.K. Narayanan's 'M.C.C.'?
- 7) Comment on the theme of hunger and poverty in Jayanta Mahapatra's poem 'A Country'.
- 8) Why did Algu Chowdhari and Samjhu Sahu approach the Panchayat in Premchand's 'The Holy Panchayat'?
- 9) What does Ambai's story 'Squirrel' try to convey through the condition of the books in the third floor of the library?
- 10) Why does the narrator of the story 'The Card-Sharpener's Daughter' say that "Ottakannan Pokker is the tragic protagonist of this story"? Elucidate.

## Part-B

- 11) Comment on the relevance of Zainaba to the story 'The Card-Sharpener's Daughter'.
- 12) How does Jumman Sheik realise his mistake in the story 'The Holy Panchayat'?
- 13) Attempt a detailed critical analysis of the poem 'I Shall Return to this Bengal'.

- 14) Discuss the relevance of the setting to the theme of the story 'Toba Tek Singh'.
- 15) Analyse the following lines from the poem 'A Country':

“Why am I hurt still  
by the look in the hand  
of that graceful Naxal girl  
who appeared out of nowhere that winter,  
holding a knife as old as history?”

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