

**MAEN302CCT**

**Indian Writing in English**

**M.A. English**  
**(Third Semester)**

**Centre for Distance and Online Education**  
**Maulana Azad National Urdu University**  
**Hyderabad-32, Telangana- India**

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**Indian Writing in English**  
for  
**M.A. English**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Semester**

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• <b>Ms. Khadija Begum</b> , Research Scholar, Dept. of English, Hyderabad	15
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## Contents

**Message**  
**Message**  
**Introduction to the Course**

***Vice Chancellor***  
***Director***  
***Coordinator***

<b>Unit</b>		<b>Page No.</b>
1.	Introduction to Indian Poetry in English	11
2.	A) Toru Dutt – “Sita” B) Kamala Das – “Introduction”	28
3.	Jayanta Mahapatra – “Hunger”	45
4.	Narayan Surve – “Karl Marx”	57
5.	Introduction to Indian Fiction in English	73
6.	Women Novelists in Indian Fiction	88
7.	Shashi Deshpande – <i>Roots and Shadows</i>	102
8.	Cyrus Mistry – <i>Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer</i>	116
9.	Introduction to Indian Drama in English	131
10.	Mahesh Dattani – <i>Tara</i>	145
11.	Women Dramatists in Indian Writing in English	159
12.	Uma Parameswaran – <i>Sita’s Promise</i>	170
13.	Background to Indian Prose Before 1947	185
14.	Rabindranath Tagore – “What is Art?” (from <i>Personality</i> )	198
15.	Indian Prose Writers after 1947	211
16.	APJ Kalam – “The Dreams and the Message” (from <i>Ignited Minds</i> )	224
	<i>Sample Question Paper</i>	235

## Message

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established in 1998 by an Act of the Parliament. It is a central university with NAAC accreditation and the mandate of the university is: (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, there has been a dearth of course material in Urdu. The non-availability of books in Urdu is a matter of concern and Urdu University considers it a privilege to be part of the national process of providing course material in mother tongue/home language as per the vision of NEP 2020. Further, the Urdu speaking community is at a disadvantage in gaining updated knowledge and information in emerging areas or newer knowledge in existing fields due to non-availability of reading material in Urdu. The unavailability of content related to the above domains of knowledge has created an atmosphere of apathy towards attaining knowledge that could significantly affect the intellectual abilities of the Urdu knowing 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/college 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, MANUU makes available course material in the form of Self Learning Material (SLM) to the students of Distance Learning. The same is also available for sale to anyone interested in gaining knowledge through Urdu. To further provide access to learning, eSLM in Urdu is available for free download from the University website.

I am immensely pleased that due to the hard work of the concerned faculty and full cooperation of the writers, the process of publications of books has begun on a massive scale. To facilitate the students of Distance Learning, the process of preparing and publication of Self Learning Material (SLM) is of paramount importance to the University. I believe that we will be able to meet the requirements of a large Urdu knowing community through our Self Learning Material 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

In the present era, distance education is recognized as a very effective and useful mode of education all over the world and a large number of people are benefiting from this mode of education. Maulana Azad National Urdu University also introduced the distance learning mode since its establishment in view of the educational needs of the Urdu speaking population. Maulana Azad National Urdu University started in 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and the regular programmes commenced from 2004, and subsequently various departments have been established.

The UGC has played a vital role in efficiently regulating the education system in the country. Various programs running under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode at CDOE are approved by UGC-DEB. The UGC-DEB has emphasized on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Since Maulana Azad National Urdu University is a dual mode university catering to both distance and traditional mode of learning, to achieve its goal in line with the UGC-DEB guidelines, Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) was introduced and Self Learning Materials are being prepared afresh for UG and PG programmes containing 6 blocks with 24 units and 4 blocks with 16 units respectively.

The Directorate of Distance Education offers a total of seventeen (17) programmes comprising of UG, PG, B.Ed., Diploma, and Certificate programmes. Along with this, programmes based on technical skills are also being started. A huge network of nine Regional Centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and six Sub-Regional Centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, Varanasi, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. Apart from this, an extension center has also been established in Vijayawada. More than one hundred and sixty Learner Support Centres (LSCs) and twenty Programme Centres are run simultaneously under these Regional and Sub-Regional Centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. The Directorate of Distance Education makes full use of ICT in its educational and administrative activities, and offers admission to all its programs through online mode only.

The soft copies of Self Learning Material (SLM) for students are made available on the website of the Directorate of Distance Education and the links of audio and video recordings are also made available on the website. In addition, facilities of E-mail and WhatsApp groups are being provided to the students through which the learners are informed about various aspects of the program such as course registration, assignments, counselling, examinations, etc. In addition to regular counseling, additional remedial online counseling is being provided from the last two years to improve the academic standards of the students.

It is expected that the Directorate of Distance Education will play a vital role to bring educationally and economically backward population into the mainstream of contemporary education. In near future, changes will be made in various programmes under the New Education Policy (NEP-2020) in view of the educational needs and it is hoped that this will help in making the Open and Distance Learning system more efficient and effective.

**Prof. Mohd. Razaullah Khan**  
***Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education***  
MANUU, Hyderabad

## Introduction to the Course

The M.A. English programme is designed to give a sound knowledge of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory so as to empower the prospective students for higher studies and employment, apart from helping them prepare for competitive exams. It is spread over two years (four semesters) minimum duration. The objectives of the programme are as follows:

- a. to provide a sound base in the English language
- b. to provide insights into the development of English and the phonological, morphological, syntactical and stylistic aspects of language
- c. to provide knowledge in the teaching of English
- d. to explore the various literatures in English
- e. to provide exposure to the different genres, movements and periods of English literature
- f. to facilitate critical and analytical abilities
- g. to introduce literary theory and criticism
- h. to build confidence among learners with language skills in English
- i. to enable the working target group to enhance their qualifications and
- j. To facilitate higher education in the open distance learning mode.

At the end of the two-year post graduate programme in M.A. English, the learner would have mastered the theoretical knowledge of the English language and literature. The learners would be able to appreciate literatures in English, take up critical analysis, understand the different movements, periods and concepts in the study of English language and literature. The two-year programme will prepare the learner for competitive examinations, for employment and for research by developing their skills, apart from leading to refinement.

The course “Indian Writing in English” aims to acquaint the learners with the development and scope of Indian writings in English through representative texts drawn from poetry, drama, fiction, and prose. It also introduces them to Indian authors writing in English and to writers whose works are translated into English from other Indian languages. The course is divided into four Blocks and each Block has four Units.

This SLM is supplemented by audio-video lessons. You may visit IMC MANUU YouTube channel <http://youtube.com/u/imcmanuu> for the complete list of AV lessons in English.

With you in your journey through the fields of English language and literature!

**Dr. Gulfishaan Habeeb**  
**Professor of English &**  
**Course Coordinator**



# **Indian Writing in English**



# Unit-1: Introduction to Indian Poetry in English

## Structure

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Objectives

#### 1.2 Introduction to Indian Poetry in English

##### 1.2.1 Early Phase or Imitative Phase (Pre-Independence)

##### 1.2.2 Middle Phase or Assimilative Phase (Independence Movement)

##### 1.2.3 Later Phase or Experimental Phase (Post-Independence)

##### 1.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

#### 1.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 1.4 Glossary

#### 1.5 Sample Questions

#### 1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Let us begin this course on Indian Writing in English by first understanding what we mean by Indian writing in English. Just as we have British literature, American literature, Canadian literature, etc can we also say Indian literature? If yes, does Indian literature imply only the writings in English? Then what about Bengali literature, Telugu literature, Urdu literature, Punjabi literature, Tamil literature? Is this not Indian literature? Since India is a land of many languages and literatures, Indian literature may be used as a collective term for literatures in different Indian languages. When we specifically refer to literature written in English by Indians, it is termed as Indian Writing in English. In this Unit, we will introduce Indian poetry in English. The earliest Indian writing in English is poetry, so it is important for you to have an idea about Indian poetry in English.

---

## 1.1 Objectives

---

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- examine the early Indian poetry in English
- study the different phases on Indian poetry in English
- understand the characteristics of Indian poetry in English
- be familiar with some famous Indian poets in English

---

## 1.2 Introduction to Indian Poetry in English

---

The beginnings of Indian poetry in English may be traced to Henry Derozio. A famous poem written by him is “Harp of India.” Though some critics consider Indian poetry in English to be the oldest form of Indian Writing in English (IWE), it is to be remembered that the *Travels of Dean Mahomet* was published much earlier in 1794. Henry Derozio is, however, considered to be the first one to write Indian poetry in English. Derozio and other poets writing in the early phase used English language free of Indianism. Their poetry reflects the influence of British poetry and is free of Indian sensibilities. So, it was generally imitative, especially of British romantic poetry. This is the first phase of the development of Indian poetry in English. In the next phase, the poets were more assimilative, and we find a blend of romanticism and nationalistic fervour in their poetry. Gradually, the Indians began to experiment, and a newer and more original form of Indian English poetry emerged. Let us now look at each of these phases separately.

### ***Check your progress:***

1. What is Indian writing in English?

---

2. Name the first work in Indian writing in English.

---

3. Give the name of a poem by Henry Derozio.

---

### **1.2.1 Early Phase or Imitative Phase (Pre-Independence)**

Before the Indians started writing poetry in English, English poetry was being written in India by the Britishers. A section in the first English newspaper in India was reserved for poetry. The Britishers contributed small poems in this and other newspapers. Thereafter, with the spread of English in India, the Indians also started writing poetry in English. The period up to 1900 may be broadly classified as the early phase of Indian poetry in English. Some scholars consider 1850 to 1900 as the early or first phase but this would exclude Henry Derozio. We may consider 1835, the year of Macaulay’s *Minute* as the starting point but this year also excludes Henry Derozio. So, we may simply consider the early or first phase as from early nineteenth century to 1900. Poetry of this phase is also referred to as Anglo-Indian poetry.

**Check your progress:**

1. The earliest English poetry in India was written by the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What is the poetry of the early phase also known as?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Pre-independence poetry was imitative. State whether True or False.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Henry Louis Vivian Derozio** (1809 – 1831) was born in Kolkatta to an Indian father and an English mother. He is considered the first poet to write Indian poetry in English. His two collections of poetry are, *Poems* (1827) and *Fakeer of Jungheera and Other Poems* (1828). Like the other writers of this age, he was also influenced by the Romantic poets such as, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Byron. The poets during this phase were careful not to use Indianisms. They were writing for the elite class and were conscious in their use of the English language. The influence of the Romantics is clearly perceptible in this early phase.

Henry Derozio nurtured great love for India and his poems reflect his love for the motherland. In the poem, “To My Native Land” is a Petrarchan sonnet in which he writes:

My country! In thy days of glory past  
A beauteous halo circled round thy brow  
And worshipped as a deity thou wast \_  
Where is thy glory, where the reverence now?  
.....  
Well \_ let me dive into the depths of time  
And bring from out the ages, that have rolled  
A few small fragments of these wrecks sublime

.....  
The sense of patriotism is also reflected in the poem, “The Harp of India.” The poem is given below:

Why hang’st thou lonely on yon withered bough?  
Unstrung forever, must thou there remain;  
Thy music once was sweet \_ who hears it now?  
.....  
..... \_ but if thy notes divine

May be by mortal wakened once again,  
Harp of my country, let me strike the strain!

Derozio bemoans the state of India under colonial rule. A country rich in literary tradition and culture, has lost her prestige due to imperialism. He is confident, however, that India will regain her past glory. He wishes to contribute in his humble way in restoring India's glorious heritage and literary tradition. This sense of patriotism is felt in other poets too during the colonial or pre-independence stage.

***Check your progress:***

1. Derozio bemoans the state of India under \_\_\_\_\_ rule.
  2. "To My Native Land" is a \_\_\_\_\_ sonnet.
  3. Who is considered the first poet in India to write in English?
- 

**Michael Madhusudan Dutt** (1824-1873) started writing in English from an early age like Derozio. His first sonnet was dedicated to his friend he hoped his sonnets would rival Italian sonnets in the course of time. In 1849 *The Captive Lady* was published. It is a long narrative poem like Derozio's *Fakeer*. Like Derozio, he was also influenced by the British romantic poets like Wordsworth.

**Romesh Chander Dutt** (1848-1909) translated the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* into English and was instrumental in introducing the Indian epics to the English audience. Kashi Prasad Ghose (1808-1874) introduced Indian themes in his English poetry. Apart from the influence of the Romantics on his poetry, the influence of the Cavalier poets and the neo-classicism is also present. "Shair" or poet is influenced by "The Lay of the Minstrel" by Sir Walter Scott.

***Check your progress:***

1. Who wrote *The Captive Lady*?
- 
2. Who translated the *Ramayana* into English?
- 
3. Which poem is influenced by "The Lay of the Minstrel?"
-

Another great poet of this phase is **Toru Dutt** (1856-1877). She was born into a family of literary interests. After initial education in Bengal, she was educated in France and England. She wrote essays on Henry Derozio. Later she translated some French poems into English with her sister. She also wrote a French novel. Her collection of poems in English were posthumously published in 1882 under the title *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. Some of the poems in this collection are “The Lotus,” “Sita,” and “The Tree of Life.” The recurrent themes in her poetry are patriotism, separation, loneliness, and death. She makes good use of Hindu mythology in her poems. In the poem “The Lotus,” she writes against the backdrop of Hinduism where the lotus flower holds religious significance. But the allusions and imagery are drawn from western classical mythology. The poem is reproduced below:

Love came to Flora asking for a flower  
 That would of flowers be undisputed queen,  
 The lily and the rose, long, long had been  
 Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power  
 Had sung their claims. “The rose can never tower  
 Like the pale lily with her Juno mien” \_  
 “But is the lily lovelier?” Thus between  
 Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche’s bower.  
 Give me a flower delicious as the rose  
 And stately as the lily in her pride” \_  
 “But of what colour?” \_ “Rose-red,” Love first chose,  
 Then prayed, \_ “No, lily-white, \_ or, both provide;”  
 And Flora gave the lotus, “rose-red” dyed,  
 And “lily-white,” \_ the queenliest flower that blows.

This poem is a sonnet of 14 lines written in the form of a Petrarchan sonnet with an octave of 8 lines and a sestet of 6 lines. The influence of the Romantics is also clearly seen in this poem. Like the other Indian poets writing in English during the early phase, her poetry is also imitative. In another poem, “Our Casuarina Tree” one can find the influence of the Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Keats. It also shows the influence of the Victorian poet Mathew Arnold. The poem is autobiographical as an expression of sorrow on the death of her siblings and nostalgic of the past.

***Check your progress:***

1. Name a sonnet by Toru Dutt.

---

2. When was her collection of poems published?

---

3. What is title of her posthumously published collection of poems?

---

### **1.2.2 Middle Phase or Assimilative Phase (Independence Movement)**

The next phase in Indian poetry in English is from 1900 to 1947 when India won independence from the British rule. During this phase which is characterized by the Independence Movement, we find the poets still under the influence of the British Romantic poets, but there is a clear shift from imitative to assimilative poetry. The poetry in the middle phase is nationalist and full of patriotic fervour. The element of mysticism in the poems of Tagore and Aurobindo mark a shift from Romanticism. Philosophical poetry written during this phase the maturity of the Indian poets writing in English. Nature continued to inspire them, and their poetry is full of Nature imagery. Sarojini Naidu and Harindranath Chattopadhyay also fall into the middle phase.

***Check your progress:***

1. Mention any three poets of the middle phase.

---

2. What is the role of nationalism in this phase?

---

3. Why is this phase called assimilative phase?

---

**Sri Aurobindo** (1872-1950) wrote extensively and in many genres. *Savitri* is a long narrative poem, almost twice as long as Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*. He took active part in India's struggle for freedom. His early education in England helped him master the classical languages and on return to India, he also studied Sanskrit. His poetry is an expression of spiritual experience. The mystical quality of his poetry is remarkable. His poetry is also a reflection of his philosophy. His *Collected Poems* is a vast collection running into 750 pages. His poetry serves as



a bridge between the present and the future divine life. His belief was that man could achieve enlightenment both by divine blessing and by self-realization which helps to aim and achieve higher goals in life. He wrote sonnets, lyrics, and epic with equal ease. He made skilful use of blank verse.

***Check your progress:***

1. Which poem is longer than Milton's *Paradise Lost*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Aurobindo's poetry is an expression of \_\_\_\_\_ experience.
3. Aurobindo's poetry serves as a bridge between the present and the future \_\_\_\_\_ life.

**Sarojini Naidu** (1879-1949) is referred to as the Nightingale of India. She was a gifted poet who used her poetry to express her strong nationalist feelings. She draws heavily from Indian imagery though her poems, mostly lyrics, are inspired by the British Romantics. She took an active part in India's freedom movement and held various political positions, both before and after India's independence. Her first collection of poems was published in the year 1905. It is titled *Golden Threshold*. Later, in 1912, *The Bird of Time* was published. This collection reveals her deep sense of nationalism. *The Broken Wing* was published in 1917. This is also a collection of her poems. Her last volume of poems, *Feather of the Dawn* was published posthumously in 1961. Nationalism, patriotism, and love are recurrent themes in her poetry. Let us read one of her famous poems, "The Bangle Sellers."

Bangle sellers are we who bear  
Our shining loads to the temple fair  
Who will buy these delicate, bright  
Rainbow-tinted circles of light?  
Lustrous tokens of radiant lives,  
For happy daughters and happy wives.

Some are meet for a maiden's wrist,  
Silver and blue as the mountain mist,  
Some are flushed like the buds that dream  
On the tranquil brow of a woodland stream,  
Some are aglow with the bloom that cleaves

To the limpid glory of new-born leaves

Some are like fields of sunlit corn,  
Meet for a bride on her bridal morn,  
Some like the flame of her marriage fire,  
Or, rich with the hue of her heart's desire  
Tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear,  
Like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

Some are purple and gold-flecked grey  
For she who has journeyed through life midway,  
Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest,  
And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,  
And serves her household in fruitful pride,  
And worships the gods at her husband's side.

***Check your progress:***

1. Who is referred to as the Nightingale of India?

---

2. What is the first collection of Sarojini Naidu's poems titled?

---

3. To which phase does Sarojini Naidu belong?

---

**Rabindranath Tagore** (1861 – 1941) is the first Indian to receive the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his collection of poems *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings). This was originally written in Bengali and translated into English by Tagore himself. He was a poet, short story writer, playwright, essayist, painter, and a political activist. Like the other writers of this phase, his poetry is also an expression of patriotism and nationalism set in India's freedom movement. His love for India, his deep sense of longing to regain India's glorious past, and his yearning for India's freedom are reflected in the poem, "Where the Mind is Free." The poem is given below for you to read:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high  
Where knowledge is free  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments  
By narrow domestic walls  
Where words come out from the depth of truth  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection  
Where the clear stream of reason has lost its way  
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
Into ever-widening thought and action  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Tagore's poetry is spiritual and mystic too. Nature imagery is extensively employed in his poetry. In this, the influence of the Romantic poets is clearly seen. Shelley and Keats had a greater influence on him. The recurrent themes are God, soul, individual self, and humanism. The long poem "The Child" was written in ten sections originally in English within one night of inspiration. The child is symbolic of the divine child who would unburden man and lead him to fulfilment.

***Check your progress:***

1. When was Tagore awarded the Nobel Prize?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ imagery is extensively employed in Tagore's poetry.
3. Name two poems/volumes of poetry by Tagore.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1.2.3 Later Phase or the Experimental Phase (Post-Independence)**

There is a marked shift in the poetry during this phase. It is very unlike the poetry of the two earlier phases. The Indian poets in English had arrived at an experimental stage and with very less influence of the British poets. India's political freedom also gave its writers a sense of freedom of expression. The socio-economic development witnessed in India during the post-independence stage, the industrial growth, the changing cityscapes, the advancement in transport and communication facilitated the poets writing in this stage. Most of these early writers were critical of the poetry written in the first two phases.

The emergence of the new-modernist poetry in this phase is a result of the contribution to Indian poetry in English by poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, A.K. Ramanujan, Gieve Patel, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra, Agha Shahid Ali, Vikram Seth, etc. Their poetry breaks away from the traditional forms and an increasing use of free verse is prominent in this phase. The poets draw inspiration from various continental writers and do not depend only on the Romantics or the Victorians as in the first two phases. There is a search for their Indian roots and experimentation with stream of consciousness technique and newer forms of writing like free association of ideas.

During the experimental phase, the poets move away from the past and the idealism, spirituality, religion, mysticism, and romanticism do not appeal to them anymore. There is a search for self-expression an aesthetic form uniquely Indian. They feel a sense of alienation. The self and its journey are important themes in this phase. However, the impact of modernism was felt on Indian poets too who once again find roots in the past and in tradition. But, by the time modernism started in Indian poetry in English, post-modernism had already been ushered in English literature. Let us learn a little more about some poets of this phase in the following sub-sections.

***Check your progress:***

1. Mention any three poets of the later phase.

---

2. What is the role of experimentation in this phase?

---

3. Why is this phase called experimentative phase?

---

**Nissim Ezekiel** (1924-2004) is considered the father of modern Indian poetry in English. He is a poet of sensibilities, and we find the use of satire, humour, and irony in his poems which may be called poems of social consciousness. Like other poets of this phase, Ezekiel moves away from the spirituality and romanticism of the earlier phase. The poet seeks to create a distinct identity for Indian poetry in English outside of British influence. In 1952, his first collection of poems, *A Time to Change* was published. As the title indicates, it heralded a change Indian poetry in English by breaking away from the past and by laying importance on the self. In his poetry, we find experimentation with form and style, a shift toward realism and symbolism,

both influenced by Yeats. A few opening stanzas from his poem, “Night of the Scorpion” are given below for you to read:

I remember the night my mother  
Was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours  
Of steady rain had driven him  
To crawl beneath a sack of rice.

Parting with his poison-flash  
Of diabolic tail in the dark room \_  
He risked the rain again.

The peasants came like swarms of flies  
And buzzed the name of God a hundred times  
To paralyze the Evil one.

.....

**A.K. Ramanujan** (1929-1993) was honoured with Padma Shri award in 1983. Apart from several translations, his original poetic works were published as *The Striders* (1966), *Relations* (1971), *Selected Poems* (1976), *Second Sight* (1986), while *Collected Poems* was published posthumously in 1995. For Ramanujan, the poet is absent from the poem. A very short poem, “On the Death of a Poem,” explains his theory of poetry:

Images consult  
One  
Another,  
A conscience-  
Stricken jury,  
And come  
Slowly  
To a sentence.

It must be remembered that Ramanujan did not lay claim to any theory. For him, a poem is independent of the poet. He wrote poetry as it came to his mind, without a conscious attempt. But there is a conscious attempt to give form to the poem. Indianisms, Indian ethos, and locale are clear in his writings marking his poems as deeply rooted in Indianness.

**Kamala Das** (1934-2009) is famous for her poetry in English though she also wrote fiction in Malayalam. Her poetry may be considered confessional poetry and her poems chiefly revolve round themes of love, betrayal, female body, domestic issues, etc. She is often considered as the first feminist poet of Indian poetry in English. *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), *The Anamalai Poems* (1985), *An Introduction* (1965), *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973) are some of her poetic works. In many ways *An Introduction* which is an autobiographical poem, is representative of her individuality and femininity and is a bold expression her longing for a man's love. In her poems, we find a complete shift from colonial to personal themes. An excerpt from *An Introduction* is given below:

I don't know politics but I know the names  
Of those in power, and can repeat them like  
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with Nehru.  
I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,  
I speak three languages, write in  
Two, dream in one.  
Don't write in English, they said, English is  
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave  
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,  
Everyone of you? Why not let me speak in  
Any language I like? .....

***Check your progress:***

1. Who is considered the father of modern Indian poetry in English?

---

2. Name two poems by Ramanujan.

---

3. What is *An Introduction* by Kamala Das representative of?

---

**Jayant Mahapatra** (1928-2023) wrote several poems of poetry. He was the winner of the Sahitya Academy Award in 1981 and was also honoured with Padma Shri. However, he later returned the Padma Shri. *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* (1971), *A Rain of Rites* (1976), *Waiting* (1979), *Relationship* (1980), *Land* (2013) are some of his poetry collections. Apart from social,

cultural, and historical themes which pervade his poems, Jayant Mahapatra's poems also revolve round the recurrent themes of love, loneliness, death, decay, and poverty. Like Kamala Das, his style is colloquial with a dream-like quality that reminds one of Jung. Pain is a pervading aspect in his poetry linking them to the Indian reality and his contemporary times. An extract from the poem "Freedom" is given below:

At times, as I watch,  
It seems as though my country's body  
Floats down somewhere on the river.

Left alone, I grow into bamboo,  
Its lower part sunk  
Into itself on the bank.

Here, old widows and dying men  
Cherish their freedom,  
Bowling time after time in obstinate prayers.

**Aga Shahid Ali** (1949-2001) lived a secular and multicultural life and the same is reflected in his poems. His poems are spread over a wide range of topics, including injustice and social inequality. He stayed in the US from 1975 to his death in 2001 and wrote numerous poems rich in imagery, theme, and diction. However, as a Kashmiri, his heart pained with the political unrest in the valley and his nostalgia for his native place is evident in a poem titled "Postcard from Kashmir." In this and in "Dear Shahid" we notice diaspora. An extract from "Postcard from Kashmir" is given below, followed by an extract from "Dear Shahid."

**"Postcard from Kashmir"**

Kashmir shrinks into my mailbox,  
My home a neat four by six inches.

I always loved neatness. Now I hold  
The half-inch Himalayas in my hand.

This is home. And this the closest  
I'll ever be to home....

### **“Dear Shahid”**

Dear Shahid:

I am writing to you from your far-off country.

Far even for us who live here

Where you no longer are.

Everyone carries his address in his pocket

At least his body will reach home.

#### ***Check your progress:***

1. Mention any two recurrent themes in Mahapatra’s poems.

---

2. Name two poems written by Aga Shahid.

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### **1.2.4 Let Us Sum Up**

In this Unit, we took a quick survey of Indian poetry in English. We tried to study the three major phases in Indian poetry in English with reference to some major poets and their works in each phase. This Unit serves to introduce you to the specific topics on Indian poetry in English that you will read in the following Units. The background to Indian poetry in English is presented in this Unit for a better understanding of the Units to follow.

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## **1.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should have gained information about Indian poetry in English, its origin and development, the different phases and the major poets.

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## **1.4 Glossary**

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**IWE:** stands for Indian Writing in English, the body of writings written by Indians living on Indian soil or by the diaspora. A distinguishing characteristic is that while they write in English, their mother tongue is some other Indian language

**Pre-Independence:** that period of Indian history before India won Independence and was still under the colonial rule of the British.



**Post-Independence:** that period of Indian history after India won her Independence from the British rule in 1947

**Confessional Poetry:** refers to the sub-genre of self-revelatory poetry common during the 1950s and 1960s in American. The poetry of Sylvia Plath is termed confessional poetry

**Patriotism:** expressing love and devotion to one's country

**Nationalism:** identification with one's own country, an expression of the political supremacy of one's nation

**Feminism:** a movement and theory upholding the rights of women and advocating equal rights of men and women

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## 1.5 Sample Questions

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### 1.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. What does IWE stand for?
  - a. International Women in English
  - b. International Women Education
  - c. Indian Writing in English**
  - d. Indian Women in English
2. Who is considered the first poet in Indian English?
  - a. Dean Mahomet
  - b. Henry Derozio**
  - c. Rabindranath Tagore
  - d. Sarojini Naidu
3. "Harp of India" is a poem by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Kamala Das
  - b. John Milton
  - c. Jawaharlal Nehru
  - d. Henry Derozio**
4. Which of the following was awarded the Noble prize?
  - a. Sarojini Naidu
  - b. Henry Derozio
  - c. Nissim Ezekiel

**d. Rabindranath Tagore**

5. Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. **The Captive Lady**
  - b. The Captive Prince
  - c. The Captive Indian
  - d. None of these
6. The poem “The Lotus” by Toru Dutt is \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. An elegy
  - b. A Shakespearean sonnet
  - c. **A Petrarchan sonnet**
  - d. A ballad
7. Sri Aurobindo wrote the poem \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. The Harp of India
  - b. Savitri
  - c. **Bangle Sellers**
  - d. Paradise Lost
8. Who is called the Nightingale of India?
- a. **Sarojini Naidu**
  - b. Toru Dutt
  - c. Kamala Das
  - d. John Keats
9. *Gitanjali* is a work by \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Sri Aurobindo
  - b. **Rabindranath Tagore**
  - c. Kamala Das
  - d. Nissim Ezekiel
10. Agha Shahid Ali belongs to the \_\_\_\_\_ phase of Indian poetry in English.
- a. Imitative
  - b. Assimilative
  - c. **Experimental**
  - d. Ancient

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

1. Write a brief note on Henry Derozio.
2. What are the characteristics of the early phase of Indian poetry in English?
3. What is the role of nationalism in Indian poetry in English?
4. Examine in brief the greatness of Rabindranath Tagore.
5. Write a note on the later phase of Indian poetry in English.
6. Discuss in brief the poetry of Kamala Das and Sarojini Naidu.
7. Write a short note on Indian poetry in English.
8. Examine the experimentation in Indian poetry in English.

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

1. Trace the origin and development of Indian poetry in English.
2. Examine in detail the three phases in Indian poetry in English.
3. Evaluate the contribution of the Indian poets in English.

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## **1.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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Chaudhuri, Rosinka. Ed. *A History of Indian Poetry in English*. Cambridge UP, 2016.

Iyengar, K.R. Srinivas. *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Pub. 1984.

King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*. OUP, 2012.

Naik, M.K. *History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Academy, 1982.

Prasad, Hari Mohan. Ed. *Indian Poetry in English*. Trinity Press, 2015.

## **Unit-2: A) Toru Dutt – “Sita”**

### **B) Kamala Das – “Introduction”**

#### **Structure**

##### **2.0 Introduction**

##### **2.1 Objectives**

##### **2.2 A) Toru Dutt – “Sita” B) Kamala Das – “Introduction”**

###### **2.2.1 “Sita” by Toru Dutt**

###### **2.2.1.1 About Toru Dutt**

###### **2.2.1.2 Summary of “Sita”**

###### **2.2.1.3 Analysis of “Sita”**

###### **2.2.1.4 Conclusion**

###### **2.2.2 “An Introduction” by Kamala Das**

###### **2.2.1.1 About Kamala Das**

###### **2.2.1.2 Summary of “An Introduction”**

###### **2.2.1.3 Analysis of “An Introduction”**

###### **2.2.1.4 Conclusion**

##### **2.3 Learning Outcomes**

##### **2.4 Glossary**

##### **2.5 Sample Questions**

##### **2.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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## **2.0 Introduction**

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You were introduced to Indian poetry in English in the previous Unit. Indian poetry in English is a fascinating fusion of creative creativity, linguistic variety, and cultural legacy. Over time, it has changed to reflect the sociopolitical environment, individual experiences, and the pursuit of identity. Indian poetry in English is a colourful tapestry made from many strands of human experience, history, and culture. Since its inception during the colonial era, it has developed into a powerful medium for social critique, identity development, and self-expression. Indian poetry in English has its origins in the British colonial era. English became the universal language, and Indian poets started using it to express themselves creatively. The verse they wrote depicted their quest for identity, the clash of cultures, and the desire for freedom. Toru Dutt and Kamala Das are two notable pioneers in this genre who have made a lasting impression. You will read “Sita” by Toru Dutt and “An Introduction” by Kamala Das in this Unit.

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## 2.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- become familiar with Toru Dutt and Kamala Das
- understand the context in which they wrote
- appreciate and critically interpret their works

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## 2.2 A) Toru Dutt – “Sita” B) Kamala Das – “Introduction”

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### 2.2.1 “Sita” by Toru Dutt

Three happy children in a darkened room!  
What do they gaze on with wide-open eyes?  
A dense, dense forest, where no sunbeam pries,  
And in its centre a cleared spot.—There bloom  
Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace  
Tall trees: there, in a quiet lucid lake  
The while swans glide; there, "whirring from the brake,"  
The peacock springs; there, herds of wild deer race;  
There, patches gleam with yellow waving grain;  
There, blue smoke from strange altars rises light.  
There, dwells in peace, the poet-anchorite.  
But who is this fair lady? Not in vain  
She weeps,—for lo! at every tear she sheds  
Tears from three pairs of young eyes fall amain,  
And bowed in sorrow are the three young heads.  
It is an old, old story, and the lay  
Which has evoked sad Sita from the past  
Is by a mother sung... 'Tis hushed at last  
And melts the picture from their sight away,  
Yet shall they dream of it until the day!  
When shall those children by their mother's side  
Gather, ah me! as erst at eventide?

### 2.2.1.1 About Toru Dutt

Toru Dutt lived a brief life, but her achievements were brilliant. She was born in a progressive Bengali family in Calcutta in 1856. Her father, Govind Chander Dutt was from one of the wealthiest families of Calcutta and her mother was very religious. Her family converted to Christianity in 1862. The early education of Toru Dutt and her siblings was given at home by her father and a private tutor. In 1869, her family migrated to Europe where Toru got admission in to a French school. Subsequently, they moved to England and Toru continued her education there. While reading French and English, Toru started translating poems from French to English. The family shifted to Cambridge in 1871 and returned to Calcutta in 1873. Toru also translated stories from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, and *Sakuntala*, and created a companion Sheaf gathered from the Sanskrit Fields. After her death, a series of books were published which include *Sheaf* (1878), *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882), *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers* (1879) and one unfinished novel *Bianca, or The Young Spanish Maiden* (1878).

#### Toru Dutt as a Poet

Toru evolved into a genius as she grew up in an intellectual environment and was introduced to languages such as Bengali, English, French, and Sanskrit. By the age of 13, she had been to Europe with her family, which expanded her knowledge of Western culture and literature. This absorption was reflected in her works, where she flawlessly blended Indian and European themes.

Toru wrote *Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, a compilation of English translations of French poetry, when she was just 15 years old. This achievement demonstrated her outstanding skill and drew acclaim from renowned figures such as Edmund Gosse. Her later poetry, published in *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, gave fresh life to Indian mythology and folklore, recounting ancient stories like Savitri Satyavan and Lakshmana's sorrow with lyricism and empathy.

Toru's literary pursuits went beyond poetry. Her unfinished novel *Bianca, or The Young Spanish Maiden*, written in English, provided insight into her potential as a prose writer. Furthermore, her French book, *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers*, displayed her language range and ability to craft fascinating storylines outside of the Indian milieu.

Toru died of TB at the age of 21. Despite her brief career, her status as a pioneer of Indian English writing is unchallenged. Toru's works not only questioned the colonial narrative, but also cleared the road for future generations of Indian authors to express themselves in English while maintaining their cultural identity. Her life was marked by misery and a sense of approaching doom, highlighting the need of persistence and fortitude in the face of adversity. Her path was defined by exceptional language skill, cultural conflicts, and literary achievements that have inspired generations.

### **2.2.1.2 Summary of "Sita"**

The poem "Sita" begins by introducing three joyful children who are in a dimly lit room. The contrast between happiness and darkness sets an intriguing tone. The children are intently looking at something, their eyes wide open in curiosity. The mother's storytelling transports the children to a dense forest. The forest is so thick that even sunlight struggles to penetrate it. Amidst this forest, there is a clear opening or spot. Within this spot, beautiful things come to life. The forest floor is adorned with enormous flowers. These flowers grow on vines that lovingly wrap around tall trees. The forest is populated by tall, majestic trees. Nearby, there's a serene and clear lake. Graceful white swans glide across the tranquil lake. The word "brake" refers to the underbrush or thickets. A vibrant peacock leaps into view. Wild deer dash through the forest, creating a lively scene. Sunlight filters through gaps, illuminating patches of yellow grain. The forest seems to hold both beauty and sustenance. Mysterious altars emit blue smoke. The forest holds an air of spirituality or ritual. In this idyllic setting, a peaceful poet-anchorite resides. The poet-anchorite lives harmoniously with nature. The focus shifts to a weeping fair lady. Her tears are not without purpose. The lady's tears have a profound effect. As she weeps, something remarkable happens. Her tears transformed into tears shed by the three children. The emotional connection between the lady and the children is powerful. The children are deeply affected by the story. Their heads bow in shared sorrow. The tale being told is ancient and timeless. The word 'lay' refers to a poetic composition or song. The story revolves around Sita, the heroine of the Ramayana. Sita's tragic experiences resonate with the children. The mother sings this poignant story. Eventually, the tale reaches its conclusion. The vivid imagery fades as the story ends. The forest, the lady, and the children dissolve like a fading picture. Despite the ending, the children will continue to dream about this magical scene. The impact of the story lingers. The

poet wonders when the children will gather around their mother again. The nostalgic longing for those evenings when they listened to their mother's tales resurfaces.

### **2.2.1.3 Analysis of "Sita"**

Toru Dutt's 'Sita,' which appears in her book *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, is more than just a retelling of the epic *Ramayana's* revered queen. It is a moving examination of empathy, grief, and the timeless power of storytelling across generations. The poem takes place in a home environment, with a woman narrating Sita's desertion to her three children. The vivid visual transports us to the forest, reflecting Sita's sadness and the quiet witness of nature. The youngsters, fascinated by the story, shed tears in sync with Sita's. This reflecting effect is significant. It dissolves the distinction between the past and the present, resulting in an inter-generational interaction in which empathy flows freely.

The children do not criticize Sita; rather, they empathise with her grief, demonstrating the universality of suffering. However, the poem makes a minor shift. The mother is hushed in the middle of her narration, probably due to the father's displeasure. This interruption alludes to societal prejudices and the suppressing of female voices, drawing a connection between Sita's societal exile and the mother's silence within the home. However, the poem does not finish there. Despite the pause, the tale continues. The concluding sentence expresses a bittersweet reality. While respecting the narrative's historical origins, it implies that Sita's story transcends time, remaining relevant and tragic for future generations.

The poem's power lies in its ability to evoke empathy. Sita's pain becomes the reader's pain, emphasizing the human connection that transcends time and culture. By using children as witnesses, the poem creates a dialogue between generations, ensuring that stories like Sita's are not forgotten. The silencing of the mother adds a subtle layer of social commentary, highlighting the silencing of female voices in both historical and contemporary contexts. The final line underscores the enduring power of storytelling. By calling Sita's tale an "old, old story," the poem suggests that it will continue to resonate with readers for generations to come.

Toru Dutt's "Sita" is more than a poem. It's a tapestry of empathy, inter-generational understanding, and societal critique. It serves as a reminder of storytelling's ability to link us beyond time and geography, ensuring that voices like Sita's continue to resonate throughout history.



Overall, “Sita” demonstrates Dutt’s literary brilliance and ability to weave personal connections into historical themes. Through powerful imagery and concepts, the poem invites readers to connect with a timeless narrative while considering its modern significance.

#### **2.2.1.4 Conclusion**

Toru Dutt, a gifted poet and writer, had a lasting effect on literature and society. Her literary works went across geographical borders. She blurred the barriers between East and West, constructing stories that highlighted the universality of human emotions and experiences. Her poetry moved audiences all throughout the world, stressing our shared humanity. Her linguistic brilliance defied established conventions. She rejected the concept that only English could represent Indian writing by being fluent in numerous languages, including English, French, Sanskrit and her native Bengali. Her bilingualism strengthened her writings, giving them a distinct combination of cultural subtleties.

Toru Dutt’s female heroines were more than just characters; they represented courage and empowerment. She used subtle references to gender norms and cultural expectations in their stories. Her essays promoted women’s empowerment while quietly criticising the existing quo. Toru Dutt's literary legacy has endured. Her poetry and prose are still being studied, recognised, and adored. Her lucidity inspires contemporary writers, and her lyrics have eternal beauty for readers. Toru Dutt’s influence continues beyond her life, impacting the literary scene even now. Toru Dutt’s life exemplifies the power of knowledge, cultural discovery, and creative expression. Though she died too soon, her efforts left an indelible impression on the landscape of Indian writing, setting the way for a bright future where varied voices can resound.

#### **2.2.2 “An Introduction” by Kamala Das**

I don't know politics but I know the names  
Of those in power, and can repeat them like  
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with Nehru.  
I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,  
I speak three languages, write in  
Two, dream in one.  
Don't write in English, they said, English is  
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave

Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,  
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in  
Any language I like? The language I speak,  
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses  
All mine, mine alone.

It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,  
It is as human as I am human, don't  
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my  
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing  
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it  
Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is  
Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and  
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech  
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the  
Incoherent mutterings of the blazing  
Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they  
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs  
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.  
When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask  
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the  
Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me  
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.  
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.  
I shrank Pitifully.

Then ... I wore a shirt and my  
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored  
My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl  
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,  
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,  
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit

On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.  
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better  
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to  
Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.  
Don't play at schizophrenia or be a  
Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when  
Jilted in love ... I met a man, loved him. Call  
Him not by any name, he is every man  
Who wants. A woman, just as I am every  
Woman who seeks love. In him... the hungry haste  
Of rivers, in me... the oceans' tireless  
Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone,  
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,  
Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself I  
In this world, he is tightly packed like the  
Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely  
Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,  
It is I who laugh, it is I who make love  
And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying  
With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,  
I am saint. I am the beloved and the  
Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no  
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

### **2.2.2.1 About Kamala Das**

Kamala Das, who later converted to Islam and became Kamala Surayya, was a literary figure whose uncensored poetry sparked controversy and destroyed traditions. Born in 1929 in Kerala, India, she made her entry into the literary world at an early age, making an everlasting influence on Indian writing in English and Malayalam. Here, you will study about her life, career, and accomplishments, focusing on the lady who dared to talk openly about female desire, cultural restraints, and her personal experiences.

Kamala Das' passion for language began early, nourished by her great-uncle, a well-known writer. She began writing at the age of 15, inspired by her mother, who was also a poet. She married a year later and balanced family chores with creative hobbies, writing late into the night.

Das's literary expressions went beyond poetry. She moved into prose with the controversial work *Alphabet of Lust* (1976), which delves further into topics of sexuality and societal censure. Her short works, such as *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* (1977) and *Padmavati the Harlot* (1992), exemplified her capacity to depict oppressed voices with empathy and compassion.

Her most powerful work might be her autobiography, *My Story* (1976). It was first serialised in Malayalam as *Ente Katha*, and it became a phenomenon because of its unflinchingly honest description of her life, relationships, and hardships. While subsequently conceding some fictionalisation, the work remains a powerful analysis of female identity and cultural expectations.

Das' literary skill gained her various prizes, including the PEN Asian Poetry Prize (1963), the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award (1968), and the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award (1985). Her strong ideas and frank tone, however, drew criticism and even threats. She stayed committed to her goal, utilising her work to challenge conventional standards and push for individual liberty.

Kamala Das died in 2009, leaving a significant literary legacy. She resisted classification, writing in both English and Malayalam and moving smoothly between genres such as poetry, prose, and autobiography. Her unabashed honesty and investigation of forbidden issues inspired other authors to defy norms and express themselves truthfully. While her work has been praised and criticised, there is no disputing her influence on Indian literature and her role in sparking debates about societal standards and personal expression. Her journey exemplifies courage, originality, and the power of words to confront and change.

***Check your progress:***

1. Kamala Das won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award (1968), and the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award (1985). (True/False)

### 2.2.2.2 Summary of “An Introduction”

The poet acknowledges her lack of interest in political intricacies but asserts her familiarity with the prominent figures in power. The repetition of names is akin to reciting days of the week or months, emphasizing their ubiquity and influence. She can effortlessly recall the names of influential individuals, highlighting their impact on society. The repetition reinforces their significance. The reference to Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, symbolizes the nation’s post-independence era. By starting with Nehru, the poetess acknowledges the pivotal role he played in shaping India. The speaker asserts her Indian identity and emphasizes her brown skin, which connects her to her cultural roots. She refers to Malabar, which is a coastal region in Kerala, known for its rich heritage. The poetess is multilingual, adept at three languages. This linguistic diversity reflects India’s multicultural fabric. Despite speaking multiple languages, her dreams occur in a single language. Dreams become a personal, intimate space where language transcends boundaries. Critics and others discourage her from writing in English, considering it foreign to her. English is often associated with colonial history and privilege. The pressure to conform to one’s mother tongue is imposed on her. The poet questions why she should adhere to this limitation. She addresses critics, friends, and relatives who impose restrictions. The plea for solitude suggests a desire for autonomy. The speaker challenges societal norms and asks why she can not express herself freely. She yearns for linguistic freedom. The poet asserts her right to choose her language. Her language becomes an extension of herself. The language she adopts becomes uniquely hers. Its imperfections and peculiarities are part of her identity. The closing line emphasizes her individuality. She claims ownership of her language and its nuances.

The poet acknowledges her dual identity, straddling both English and Indian cultures. The humor lies in this blend, yet she asserts its authenticity. The poem’s essence lies in its humanity, transcending cultural boundaries. The poetess implores the reader to recognize this shared humanity. The language she uses expresses her emotions, desires, and aspirations. It becomes a vessel for her innermost feelings. Just as cawing serves a purpose for crows and roaring for lions, her language serves her. It fulfills a vital role in her life. Her language is uniquely human, connecting her thoughts and experiences. It exists in the present moment, not elsewhere. Her language reflects her conscious mind, perceiving the world. It is attuned to reality. Unlike the inanimate speech of nature (trees, clouds, rain), her language is vibrant and purposeful. It doesn’t merely exist; it communicates. Even the chaotic sounds of a funeral pyre lack the coherence of her language. Her words hold meaning and clarity. The poetess reflects on

her physical growth from childhood to adolescence. The emergence of hair symbolizes maturity. Her yearning for love is universal, yet she lacks clarity on what exactly to seek. The encounter with a sixteen-year-old youth is both intimate and symbolic. The closed door suggests secrecy. The emotional impact surpasses physical violence. Her vulnerability and emotional pain are palpable. The burden of womanhood—physical and emotional—weighs heavily.

The poet describes a time when she defied traditional gender norms by dressing in masculine clothing and cutting her hair short. She intentionally rejected the markers of femininity. This rebellion against societal expectations highlights her desire to break free from prescribed roles.

She sarcastically lists the roles imposed on women: being a dutiful daughter, wife, and homemaker. These roles confine women to specific behaviors and suppress their individuality. The phrase “fit in” emphasizes the pressure to conform to societal norms. The “categorizers” represent society’s rigid expectations. They demand that the speaker conform and not challenge the status quo. The imagery of “lace-draped windows” suggests the confined space of women’s lives, where they are expected to remain indoors and passive. She mocks the idea of choosing a name or identity. She has used different pen names (Amy, Kamala, Madhavikutty) throughout her life, reflecting her multifaceted self. The pressure to conform to a single identity is stifling.

She rejects societal labels and expectations. She refuses to pretend or conform to stereotypes. The mention of “schizophrenia” and “nympho” highlights the judgment and stigma associated with mental health and sexuality. She challenges the notion that women should silently endure heartbreak. She refuses to be ashamed of her emotions. Her love transcends individual names. She sees her lover as a representative of all men’s desires. This universalizes her experience of love. She connects her longing for love to the vastness of nature. She compares herself to both rivers (passionate) and the oceans (patient). Her desires are natural and all-encompassing. She questions identity and finds a universal “I” within everyone. She sees this self everywhere. The metaphor of the sword in its sheath suggests hidden potential and restraint. She acknowledges her experiences—loneliness, joy, love, shame, mortality—as part of her existence. Her vulnerability and humanity are evident. She embraces contradictions: sin and sanctity, love and betrayal. She shares common human experiences. Her empathy extends to others’ joys and sorrows. The poem concludes with a powerful assertion of selfhood. The speaker claims her identity, refusing to be confined by societal roles or labels.

### 2.2.2.3 Analysis of “An Introduction”

Kamala Das’ “An Introduction” is more than just a self-presentation. It is a forceful combination of personal introspection, societal observation, and feminist critique. “An Introduction” begins with an apparently hilarious statement: the poetess claims to know the names of all Indian leaders, beginning with Nehru. However, this information feels empty, like a meaningless recital. It contrasts with the lack of control she felt growing up and being married at such a young age. The poem opens with the speaker acknowledging her knowledge of political personalities while emphasising her own lack of agency. She stresses her multilingualism and desire to write in her preferred language, stressing the battle for genuine self-expression.

The poem explores the physical and mental hardships of motherhood. The poetess discusses how her body changes during puberty, including the “weight” of her breasts and womb, which appears to diminish her soul. Societal pressures add to her load, requiring her to adopt a specific position and follow established norms. However, defiance arises. The speaker refuses to be a passive receiver of others’ expectations. She reclaims her freedom to communicate in several languages, breaking down linguistic and cultural barriers. She refuses the expected position of a meek and dutiful wife, saying, “I won’t cook anymore.”

The poem looks at the complexity of love and desire. The speaker understands the need for “satisfying love,” but sees the futility of escaping the “two dream(s) in one” existence, in which personal wants collide with society standards. Faced with societal and relationship limits, the poetess wants an escape. She yearns for freedom, expressing her wish to fly “out of my prison” and “dance in the light.” The poem does not provide a clear escape, but it does conclude with a forceful declaration of self: “I, too, name myself I.”

The poet defends her unusual combination of English and Indian languages, describing it as “honest” and “human.” She opposes society efforts to meet linguistic norms. She recalls her background and the confining expectations imposed on her as a woman, including the need to dress, act, and fulfil specified responsibilities. She defies these constraints, rejecting labels and society efforts to categorise her.

The speaker describes a difficult early sexual encounter and expresses her longing for love. She underlines the universality of love and loss, implying a common human emotion that transcends individual identity. The poem closes with the poet underlining her connectedness to everyone else. She claims to embody a variety of sensations and emotions, blurring the distinction between self and other.

The absence of metre and rhyme scheme reflects the poetess' inner turmoil and mobility of ideas. This conveys a sense of urgency and uninterrupted contemplation, indicating the poetess' internal conflict. Words like "I" and "my" highlight her struggle for self-determination and identity. "Swelled and one or two spots grew hair" likens the female body to nature, both beautiful and burdensome. "My sad woman-body felt so battered" equates the speaker's emotional condition with physical suffering. "Lace-draped windows" symbolise societal limitations on women's freedom and expression.

Hence, it can be concluded that "An Introduction" is a brave and honest depiction of a woman's fight for self-definition in a limited culture. It struck a chord with women across countries and decades, igniting discussions on gender equality and personal liberty. The poem's raw honesty, ageless topics, and uncompromising attitude remain relevant and compelling today.

#### **2.2.2.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, Kamala Das's "An Introduction" is more than simply an introduction to herself; it is also an introduction to a powerful voice of revolt and self-discovery. By combining personal experiences, societal critique, and raw emotions, the poem provides a timeless analysis of women, identity, and the human desire for freedom. Her bold "I" resonates across history, pushing readers to question cultural standards, accept their complexity, and claim their true identities. This introduction, then, serves as a powerful reminder that the path to self-definition is a never-ending struggle, but one worth fighting for since it unlocks the key to ultimate freedom. The poem is still a light of resistance, reminding us that the struggle for equality and individual expression is never fully done. It invites readers to join the discourse, encouraging them to reflect on their own positions and contribute to creating a society in which every "I" is really recognised and valued. The poem invites us to begin on our own adventures of self-discovery. By accepting our limits and embracing our intricacies, we can all embrace our identities and dance freely in the light. Her mastery of language and style lifts "An Introduction" beyond a personal declaration. It becomes a tribute to poetry's transforming power, providing a platform for individual voices to emerge and alter the bounds of literary and self-expression.



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## 2.3 Learning Outcomes

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After completing this Unit, you should be able to have an understanding of the prescribed poems. You should know how the historical/ideological setting (colonial India, feminism) influences the topic and style of each poem.

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## 2.4 Glossary

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**Anchorite:** a hermit, someone who lives in seclusion for religious reasons

**Brake:** a thicket or dense undergrowth

**Lay:** a poem, often one with a narrative element

**Sita:** a central character from the Hindu epic Ramayana, known for her devotion and suffering

**Swan:** a large, graceful waterfowl

**Nehru:** First Prime Minister of India

**Malabar:** Coastal region in Kerala, India

**Critics, friends, visiting cousins:** References to people who criticized Das's use of English and other languages.

**Amy, Kamala, Madhavikutty:** Different names used by the speaker (Das) at different points in her life.

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## 2.5 Sample Questions

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### 2.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Who are the three happy children gazing at the poem's scene?
  - (a) Rama, Lakshmana, and Hanuman
  - (b) Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana**
  - (c) Three unnamed children
  - (d) The Pandava brothers
2. Which literary device is used in the line "Gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace/Tall trees"?
  - (a) Simile
  - (b) Metaphor
  - (c) Personification**

- (d) Alliteration
3. What impact does the mother's story have on the children?
- (a) It fills them with fear and nightmares.
  - (b) It sparks their curiosity and imagination.**
  - (c) It bores them and makes them sleepy.
  - (d) It motivates them to visit the forest themselves.
4. What is the significance of the "poet-anchorite" residing in the forest?
- (a) She provides guidance to the children.
  - (b) She symbolizes spiritual peace and isolation.**
  - (c) She guards the forest from harm.
  - (d) She represents a threat to the children.

5. Kamala Das' 'Introduction'

The line "My sad woman-body felt so beaten" uses \_\_\_\_\_ as a literary device.

- (a) Simile
  - (b) Personification
  - (c) Metaphor**
  - (d) Hyperbole
6. What does the poetess' desire to "fly out of my cage" symbolize?
- (a) A wish to travel the world
  - (b) A yearning for financial freedom
  - (c) A longing for emotional liberation**
  - (d) A hope for social acceptance
7. What is the central theme explored in the poem?
- (a) The beauty of nature
  - (b) The struggles of motherhood
  - (c) The power of female friendship
  - (d) The quest for individual identity**
8. What is the significance of the repeated phrase "I too call myself I"?
- (a) It shows the speaker's pride in her heritage.
  - (b) It emphasizes her desire for independence.
  - (c) It highlights her connection to other women.
  - (d) It symbolizes her claim to a unique identity.**

9. What does the phrase "categorizers" refer to?
- (a) People who judge others based on their appearance
  - (b) Individuals who impose societal norms and expectations**
  - (c) Friends who offer unsolicited advice
  - (d) Religious leaders who dictate moral codes
10. Who is the "fair lady" weeping in the poem "Sita"?
- (a) The mother telling the story
  - (b) A fictional character created by the children
  - (c) Sita, suffering in exile**
  - (d) A goddess lamenting the forest's beauty

### 2.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. How does Kamala Das utilise language in the poem to question societal expectations?
2. Examine this duality by finding two opposing feelings or emotions conveyed in the poem.
3. Compare and contrast the speaker's usage of the symbol "cage" with regard to their identity and goals.
4. Toru Dutt uses the children's experiences in the poem to enrich her picture of Sita and the narrative of her exile.
5. Compare and contrast the poem's metaphorical depictions of nature.
6. The poem expresses both beauty and melancholy. Identify two lines or pictures that demonstrate this duality and explain how they add to the poem's overall meaning.

### 2.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

1. How does the poem "Introduction" express the struggle between personal ambitions and social expectations?
2. How does Kamala Das utilise language to question existing conventions and empower the speaker?
3. Attempt a critical analysis of the poem "Sita" by Toru Dutt.

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## 2.6 Suggested Learning Resources?

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Haq, K. (Ed.). (1990). *Contemporary Indian Poetry*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

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

Mehrotra, A. K. (Ed.) (2003). *A History of Indian Literature in English*. NY: Columbia U. P.

Mukherjee, M. (1979). *The Twice Born Fiction: Indian Novels in English*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann.

Verghese, C. P. (1971). *Problems of the Indian Creative Writers in English*. Bombay: Somaiya.

## Unit-3: Jayanta Mahapatra – “Hunger”

### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Jayanta Mahapatra – “Hunger”
  - 3.2.1 About Jayanta Mahapatra
  - 3.2.2 Major Themes in Mahapatra’s Poetry
  - 3.2.3 “Hunger” by Jayanta Mahapatra
- 3.3 Learning Outcomes
- 3.4 Glossary
- 3.5 Sample Questions
- 3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 3.0 Introduction

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Without the poetic corpus of Jayanta Mahapatra, Indian English poetry seems to be inadequate so far as post-Independence Indian English poetry is concerned. This Unit will elucidate some of the major aspects and essential ideas of poetry which help to locate the social milieu and find Mahapatra’s position in the post-Independence literary scene. An enormous amount of contribution of Mahapatra in post-Independence Indian literary studies has crystallized the deeper layers of the social ills of poverty and hunger. More importantly, his poem “Hunger,” in particular, will be taken into account for a detailed understanding and an objective analysis.

#### *Activity*

1. What kind of major social issues are reflected in Mahapatra’s poetry?

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2. Name which phase of Indian Poetry you will study here.

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## 3.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- study Jayanta Mahapatra as a poet
- discuss “Hunger,” as a post-Independence Indian English poem
- examine the major themes in Mahapatra’s poetry
- attempt a detailed analysis of “Hunger”

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## 3.2 Jayanta Mahapatra – *Hunger*

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### 3.2.1 About Jayanta Mahapatra

Born in the year 1928 in a Christian family in Cuttack, Odisha, Jayanta Mahapatra lived his entire life there with some intermittent temporary settlements to some other places. His study was completed at Ravenshaw College in Cuttack and read the subject of Physics at Patna Science College. With this formative schooling and knowledge of the concerned subjects, he visited several educational and academic institutes in Odisha in order to provide teaching services to the students. Therefore, a specific locale becomes one of the central aspects in the body of Mahapatra’s poetic works and he follows his penchant to reside in this locale of the territory.

The influence of his family structure fostered a formative shape on the poetic personality of Mahapatra. The family-oriented residual experiences that he faced since his childhood impacted a deep-seated scar both in his mind and his works. However, it is essential to take into account that dire economic want compelled his grandfather to get converted to the Christian religion in 1866. When considering the poet's family history, it is important to remember that in 1866, his grandfather was forced to become a Christian due to extreme financial difficulties. Conversions to Christianity in India throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century were primarily motivated by two factors: a hope to get away from poverty and hunger and a desire to heal the lasting wounds of one's caste status. When the Christian missionaries first came to India at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they offered the common people free education and food in exchange for their conversion to Christianity. The common people, who were struggling to make ends meet, had no choice but to take on the new religion as their own. In the nineteenth century set-up, the changing of the religion occurred predominantly for two possible causes- to come out of starvation and abject poverty and also to extricate oneself from the deep scar of the low-birth or

the marginalized sector of the society. Moreover, when the missionaries belonging to the Christian culture reached India mostly in the early times of the nineteenth century, they preached free education and food to the common mass only if they submitted themselves to the conversion into and acceptance of the Christian religion. The people who remain in the margins of society could not help but accept the option of a new religion as their own.

In the territory-oriented issue of Odisha, the missionaries of the Christian culture invaded the place in 1822 and shaped the formulations and formations of cultural representation for the revival of its local cultural narratives. It happened to be a long-lasting tussle since the crucial question of the nature of language. In fact, in 1895 Hindi language was made the language of schools in Odia areas minimalizing the Odia language of its rightful claim by the central administration. It was made possible only in 1905 that another policy came out and Odia found its respectable place in the field of language and other academic domains in this complete process a chain of public figures, thinkers, and writers came to the scene and approached the issue with a coalitional perspective and gave voice to their compassionate understanding of the local culture in the society.

The tradition that is reinforced in the present context brings a number of great poets including Jayanta Mahapatra. Though he started off composing poetry in his forties, Mahapatra incessantly worked on the historical framework of Odisha and brought out an element of imagism in his poetic corpus based on myths, folklore and legends coming from the local colour of Odisha. Several references to the seamy sides of the Kalinga war of the primitive milieu and to the 1866 famine in Odisha have been reflected in Mahapatra's powerful expressions of language in his poems. Succinct traces in the historical timeframe when the people's lives are at a vulnerable condition revitalize Mahapatra's points of powerful intervention as he formulates a narrative structure around these uncharted incidents. Further, vital aspects of natural scenery and their interconnected images—the historical and folklorist— became central in his body of works, in general.

Initially, the poetical works of Jayanta Mahapatra were published in international periodicals such as the *Kenyan Review*, the *Critical Quarterly*, and the *Sewanee Review*. His collection of poems includes: *Shadow Space* (1997), *A Whiteness of Bone* (1992), *Life Signs* (1983), *Relationships* (1980), *A Rain of Rites* (1976), and *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* (1971). A poet of critical acclaim and laurels, Mahapatra also translated Odia poetry by Routray, Soubhagya Mishra and Sitakanta Mahapatra. Further, he edited journals including

*Chandrabhaga* and *Kavya Bharati*. His powerful contribution to Odia literature left an indelible mark in the mind of the readers who can cherish and enrich the understanding of the body of his works.

Jayanta Mahapatra emerged as one of the powerful voices in post-independence Indian English poetry and aesthetically enlightened India's rich cultural heritage, regional roots, myths, legends, and folklorist tradition profusely steeped in Indian cultural ethos. He intricately conjures up the past with the present and brings new styles and concepts to his poetry. His poetic excellence is resonant with a post-colonial tone and tenor. Bruce King rightly pointed out that the towering poetic personality of Jayanta Mahapatra appeared to be more akin to the modernist movement of the first part of the 20th century, with its use of strong symbols to provide non-linear, fragmented structures coherence and open-ended literary forms which brought him close to the avant-garde artists, so to say. Mahapatra's poetic disposition is similar to "an estranged, distanced, sensitive artist rather than an invisible or playfully prominent post-modernist author." Further, King adds that "there is less importance on the material world and more emphasis on subjective memory and the inner self resulting in the complex repertoire of the human psyche and society. The central focus from the social to "the psychological" stands "in contrast to the post-modernists emphasizes almost totally self-enclosed forms."

Before moving on to the discussion of Jayanta Mahapatra and his poetry, it is noteworthy that Jayanta is, in the first place, an Odia poet of Odisha. Firstly, he is an Odia, next comes his Indianness in his poetry. Within the cacophony of globalization, Mahapatra dedicated himself to bringing out his own identity and his nativist position in his poetic creativity. Some other contemporary poets and thinkers like Ramanujan, thrives on his root belonging. Through the vivid use of temples, myths and landscapes, he feels enraptured to look for his roots and find a space of identity. He is fond of the present and at the same, deeply engrossed in the glorious past.

Mahapatra became aware of the prevalence of abject poverty-stricken scenarios, the plight, the deplorable conditions and women as passive objects of the chauvinistic gaze and deceitful intentions played out in the society; it tinged his poetry with claustrophobic inertia. In the poems "Hunger", which is to be dealt with here, "Whorehouse in Calcutta Street", and "Man of His Night", he highlights the issue of sexuality and its commodification in the local setting of his works. Mahapatra is quite aware of the commercialization of sex – which used to be a commonsense reflection of love and the path to procreation. However, it has been replaced by its



romantic bonding and is utilized for loveless lust and monetary interests. He appeared empathic at the helpless condition of the poor women.

Jayanta Mahapatra brought about his first poetic volume entitled *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* and the book came out in Dialogue Publication, Calcutta. The work, although a miniature version of mainly shorter poems, bordering on lyrical precision, verbal play and imagistic forms, just talked of the emergence of the new writer. Most of the poetic works which he included were imagistic windows, full of image, imagery and imagism, the imagist in the making, the footfall of his sounding nearer, but one could not guess it then, nor the materials were so laconic and meaningful. When it brings to the light, the imagery takes off its wings just like the gossamer glistening underneath in the morning sunlight; when it grows dark and opaque, the imagery takes wings again with the shadows lurking in, darkness encircling and the birds returning back to their nests. He has played with words linguistically and the jargon of words predominates the tone and tenor of the poems.

During the seventies, he received many prizes and accolades of honour and certificates and has shared his lectures and speeches worldwide, going overseas. Jayanta was rewarded with the SAARC Literary Award for 2009, the Allen Tate Poet Prize for 2009 and an honorary doctorate from Ravenshaw University in the same year. In addition to the award collection, he also received Padma Shri from the Government of India in 2009, and is well-acclaimed for his contribution to literature and society, by and large.

Mahapatra is considered as one of the imagist poets and this is the reason why the images cannot be defined in descriptive terms, analyzed and explained. Apart from an imagist's perspective, and delving, he appears as a nihilist too, taking a cue from unrestrained thinking, unambiguous reflections and the half-blurred space, and this all shows his subterranean voyage from here to astronomy. To read him is not to be flippant and happy, but to be laden and pensive, pale and repulsive. A poet of sobriety, he takes life in a manner of gravity. Many read him, but fail to derive from him as his poetic body of works ostensibly appears obscure and seems to have a lack of meaning. But the meaning that is in search of is not there in his poetic composition. He is so in concrete and ambivalent that words fail to claw at him. Moving shadows and images can never be deciphered in logical structures and patterns and this is the issue in the context of the poet in the searing search of meaning, but linguistic presentation. Light and darkness are two sides of the same coin and these switch on and off places in his poetry. A poet of some Oriya

heart and soul, he cannot rest anywhere barring it, the mind cannot lift to barring the place where he was born, got his schooling from, just falling short of being a Rupert Brooke.

Jayanta Mahapatra went on to publish one book following another to offer a comprehensive overview of the locale in Odisha in order to reinforce his poetic position. Mahapatra's *Svayamvara and Other Poems* ((1971) was just a little bit better than the former. *A Rain of Rites* (1976) is a book which received appreciation and praise for its powerful expression and directness of the poetic language which made his poetry take flight. *Dawn At Puri* is one of his often anthologized poems in this collection. *The False Start* (1980) is his noble attempt whereas *Waiting* (1979) is a book of historical time frame. The relationship brings him the laurel in the form of the Sahitya Akademi Award. But one should not mistake the *Temple* (1989) of Jayanta Mahapatra as George Herbert's *The Temple*, as the title has contradictory opposites and there is nothing like that which Herbert has precisely described in his poetry.

Apart from being a poet, he shows his creative skill as a prose writer, a short story writer, a reviewer, an editor, and a translator and his books have arrived from small and big presses. Before getting his name and fame in our country, he had been famous elsewhere as he used to send his poems to foreign journals. Some of these were rejected definitely, but instead of that, he got rewards for his poetry. Sometimes the editors misjudge the entries and the same makes way when published elsewhere. K.S. Ramamurti states:

Mahapatra is again a poet whose poetry shows the stamp of modernist and post-modernist influences. The recurrent themes of his poetry are loneliness, the complex problems of human relationships, the difficulties of meaningful communication, the life of the mind in relation to the life of the external world and the complex nature of love and sex.

In *Two Worlds: The Imagery of Jayanta Mahapatra*, a book of criticism, M.K. Naik writes:

An intensive scrutiny of Mahapatra's imagery reveals that his images are drawn from two worlds viz., the exterior world of phenomenal reality and the surrealistic world and the way these two worlds are related is equally significant. The image is for Mahapatra not merely what Wyndham Lewis called, the primary pigment of poetry; it is almost his characteristic way of reacting to experience, ordering it and recording it.

***Check your progress:***

1. The first poetic publication of Jayanta Mahapatra is *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten*. (True/ False)
2. Jayanta Mahapatra received Padma Shri from the Govt. of India in 2009. (True/ False)

**3.2.2 Major Themes in Mahapatra's Poetry**

Jayanta Mahapatra is primarily known for using a realistic approach to make his poetry more appealing, meaningful and effective. Mahapatra has a penchant for depicting extreme poverty, starvation and hunger, as well as the economic and survival sex of women. Critics like K.A. Paniker find grief, loss, dejection, and rejection as dominant concerns in Mahapatra's poetry. Some of Mahapatra's poems like "Hunger," "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street," "A Missing Person," etc. poignantly depict the sorrows and sufferings of Indian society. In these poems, Jayanta Mahapatra illustrates the issues of sex, sexuality, prostitution, and poverty, inter alia, very vividly.

"Hunger" deals with themes of sexuality and poverty among other things. It depicts how a hungry fisherman compels his hungry daughter to indulge in prostitution. Immediately after the fisherman's departure, his daughter opens her 'wormy legs' wide, and the invited customer feels the 'hunger there'. There appear to be two distinct sources of hunger. Mahapatra illustrates very poignantly how one's ethical principles, human relationships, and companionship can be degraded by hunger.

Similarly, Mahapatra's "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street" deals with the theme of sexuality and prostitution as in "Hunger." Though guilt-conscious for a while, the customer in "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street" who is fancied by resembling beautiful faces on the hoarding and posters in a Calcutta street, satisfies his sexual urges with prostitutes. However, the profession of prostitution continues without the concern of poverty in this poem. The poem depicts the most realistic picture of the relationship between a customer and a prostitute. Both poems, "Hunger" and "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street" depict the plight of prostitutes who are compelled to sell their bodies for money in Indian society. These poems captivate the readers' emotions with their portrayal of hunger brought on by poverty and yearning for sexual fulfilment. The daughter of the fisherman and the prostitute at the whorehouse in "Hunger" and "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street" are depicted as sub-humans. Both poems highlight the contrast

between the desire of the body and that of the mind. Through the realistic portrayal of sexuality, hunger, and human feelings in these poems, Mahapatra explores the bitter truth of Indian life.

His poem, “A Missing Person” is about an anonymous countryside rural woman who leads her life without a distinct identity or entity of her own. The poem raises concerns about Indian women of nondescript villages and their time spent in utter neglect, poverty, hunger, hopelessness, and a shortage of resources and food. In a way, Mahapatra critiques the age-old evils and wrongs of Indian society which deprived them of their human rights.

Mahapatra’s poems like “The Logic,” “The Abandoned British Cemetery at Balasore,” “Grass,” “The Exile,” “Total Solar Eclipse” and “The Moon Moments” deal with psychological and philosophical themes. For example, “Logic” which is an imagistic poem, explores the constraints of human understanding and the transient nature of life. ‘The Abandoned British Cemetery at Balasore’ talks about the poet’s reflections upon the abandoned and neglected cemetery of British times where several Britishers died of cholera and were buried. The well-known poem, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* by Thomas Gray, is somewhat reminiscent of this poem even though the two poems bear no similarities at all. His poem “Grass” which deals with the themes of death, destruction, and remembrances, is a symbol of lost childhood and those small moments which we never paid attention to. “The Exile” explores the tussle between good and evil by blending the elements of realism and surrealism. “Total Solar Eclipse” depicts the two contradictory approaches – the scientific and superstitious to deal with these themes. Another philosophical poem by Jayanta Mahapatra, “The Moon Moments,” reflects the poet's intense sense of dissatisfaction and disappointment while yet exuding optimism.

### **3.2.3 “Hunger” by Jayanta Mahapatra**

“Hunger” is one of the most thought-provoking poems ever written by Jayanta Mahapatra who is not only a poet, but a realist, a feminist, and a post-modernist. Jayanta Mahapatra, a poet whose schooling is in physics, depicts in “Hunger” what has been left uncharted. Flesh trade and woman trafficking is the point of deep concern for the poet. How the helpless conditions of life, and survival-threatened circumstances lead one to the crossroads of life is pensively pen-pictured throughout the poem.

Mahapatra’s “Hunger” is a very disturbing poem that depicts the interwoven themes of sexuality and poverty. The poem narrates the story of a fisherman who lives with his daughter in utter poverty and hunger. The twin curses of humanity, hunger and poverty, and the struggle for survival consume their lives to such an extent that human relationships lose all their significance

and their sense of respect or compassion is also lost. The daughter is forced to turn to prostitution to support the family's financial situation and to satiate their hunger. Driven by cravings for sex, a customer visits the fisherman's daughter. To get financial benefit from this customer, the father even tells lies, saying that her daughter has just turned fifteen:

“I heard him say: My daughter, she's just turned fifteen...  
Feel her. I'll be back soon; your bus leaves at nine.  
The sky fell on me, and a father's exhausted wile.  
Long and lean, her years were cold as rubber.  
She opened her wormy legs wide. I felt the hunger there,  
the other one, the fish slithering, turning inside.” (15-21).

In these lines, Mahapatra displays the subtle irony of the moral decay of poverty-stricken men-women relationships. The father and the customer and their both explicit and implicit exchange of thoughts and words add grim reality to the poem and make it a dismal state. The fisherman invites the customer to ‘feel’ his fifteen-year-old daughter and also to finish the intercourse business as soon as possible lest he miss his bus, leaving at nine. The mechanical manner in which ‘she opened her wormy legs wide’ and the words ‘her years were cold as rubber’ implies that the girl has become indifferent. The young man experiences the ‘hunger there,’ implying his hunger for sexual urges implying his hunger for sexual urges and ‘the other one’ implying the father and daughter’s hunger for food. ‘Wormy legs’ is ambiguous. It might describe her lean legs or the legs that are infected due to the unhygienic living conditions. As the intercourse takes place, the poet evokes a frenetic phallic image, ‘the fish slithering, and turning inside.’ It brings together all the themes implied in the poem in one breathtakingly imaginative vision. A satisfying union results from the young man's sexual and the fisherman's and his daughter's bodily needs being fulfilled. The girls’ mechanical indulgence in sex is a damning indictment of the poverty that results from commercialization of an act of love into a commodity that can be offered to everyone. The protagonist's internal perfection of self is what gives his poem its form and subject, more so than the external actions that help the theme develop.

Though the poem is of a confessional tone, it cannot be taken for granted who the unknown listener cum customer is in the poem and with whom the old fisherman is speaking in exchange for money for the sale of sex. A poem of loveless lust and hunger in manifold forms, sexual craving and love, it bears out from his within with a view to owning and possessing the body and gratifying the pleasure principle. All of a sudden, the fisherman blankly asked him if he

intended to ‘have her trailing’ the nets which a father should not have, but went for it for making a livelihood with excruciating struggle and deeply entrenched suffering.

In the due course of the poem, the customer followed him passing the sands and his mind was astonished by the desires and inclinations of his flesh. In the third stanza of the poem, the poet turns out to be reflecting on taking liberties with the language. In the last stanza, he relishes and enjoys physical proximity. A small girl was offered to and she got into it. The girl’s father went away to appear again. The sky seemed to be scrambling and fell upon the deal struck down.

The poem “Hunger” explores physical passion, sexual longing, loveless desire; domineering love, and the trade of sex for financial gain. There is a strong sense that a terrible moral crime is going to upsurge on the sprawling sands of this beach. The speaker, despite his own disgust, submits to the bodily desire and has a sexual encounter with the fifteen-year-old daughter of the fisherman. But what he came up with his experience at the end is terrifying: ‘Long and lean, her years were cold as rubber.’ The act is utterly dehumanized, lacking all its sense of joy, comfort, or pleasure. Instead, it emanates a sense of utter disgust and a laid-back mood in the speaker.

***Check your progress:***

1. Jayanta Mahapatra’s poem “Hunger” is in a confessional tone. (True/ False)
2. The poem “Hunger” explores physical passion, sexual longing, loveless desire; domineering love, and the trade of sex for financial gain. (True/ False)

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### **3.3 Learning Outcomes**

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On the completion of this Unit, students shall be able to grasp:

- Indian ethos and culture and Mahapatra's sensibility toward it
- the eternal silence of the unknown
- the plight and degraded condition of the poor and hungry people
- Mahapatra’s poetic flight of imagination, insightful contemplation, imagery and myth, critical gaze and penetration.

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### **3.4 Glossary**

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**Hunger** - Both physical and hunger for food

**Hard to believe** - deep and profound

**Trailing** - throwing the net to entrap

**Thumping** - throbbing

**Burning the house** - guilt conscience

**Days and nights** - unstoppable sexual encounters

**Feel her** - quenching physical proximity

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### 3.5 Sample Questions

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#### 3.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. The aspect of hunger in the poem “Hunger” has \_\_\_\_\_ types. **(two)**
2. Mahapatra converted to \_\_\_\_\_ religion.
  - a. Islam
  - b. **Christianity**
  - c. Buddhism
  - d. Jainism
3. The poet was born in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. **1928**
  - b. 1958
  - c. 1938
  - d. 1948
4. His poem “Close the Sky, Ten by Ten” was published in \_\_\_\_\_. **(1971)**
5. The girl in the poem “Hunger” is \_\_\_\_\_ years old. **(15)**
6. The setting of the poem “Hunger” is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. House
  - b. Restaurant
  - c. **Beach**
  - d. Temple
7. The speaker in “Hunger” poem meets the \_\_\_\_\_ at the beginning of the poem.
  - a. Traveller
  - b. Banker
  - c. **Fisherman**

- d. Trader
8. Jayanta Mahapatra is an \_\_\_\_\_ poet.
- Bengali
  - Bihari
  - Odia**
  - Urdu
9. The collection of poems titled *Relationships* (1980) is written by \_\_\_\_\_.
- Ruskin Bond
  - Meena Kandaswamy
  - Jayanta Mahapatra**
  - Mirza Ghalib
10. Jayanta Mahapatra's poetry collection titled *A Rain of Rites* is published in the year \_\_\_\_\_. (1976)

### 3.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

- Why is the girl in the poem compared to a rubber?
- What is your impression of the hunger present in the poem?
- Is the poem "Hunger" only about poverty? Elaborate.
- What is the crux of the poem "Hunger"? Discuss.
- Do you agree that the title of the poem "Hunger" is apt? Justify.

### 3.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

- Discuss the role of hunger in the poem "Hunger."
- Critically analyze Jayanta Mahapatra as an Odia and Indian English poet with reference to the poem "Hunger."
- Compare and contrast the characters of the fisherman and the customer in the poem "Hunger."

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## 3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*. Oxford. OUP. 2005. Print.

Naik, M. K. *Indian English Poetry: From the Beginnings up to 2000*. New Delhi. Pencraft International. 2009. Print.



## Unit-4: Narayan Surve – “Karl Marx”

### Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Narayan Surve – “Karl Marx”
  - 4.2.1 About Narayan Surve
  - 4.2.2 Text of the poem
  - 4.2.3 Summary
  - 4.2.4 Structure
  - 4.2.5 Style
  - 4.2.6 Symbolism
  - 4.2.7 Figures of Speech
  - 4.2.8 Themes
  - 4.2.9 Critical Appreciation
- 4.3 Learning Outcomes
- 4.4 Glossary
- 4.5 Sample Questions
- 4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 4.0 Introduction

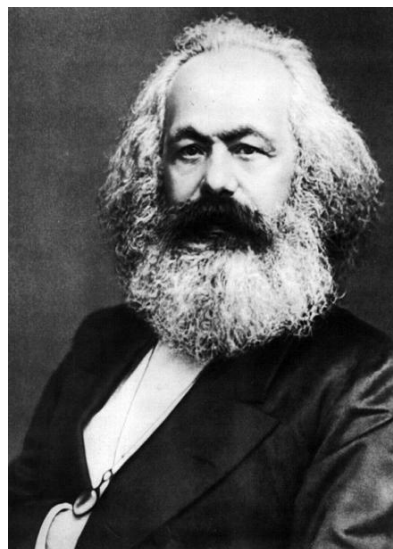
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“Karl Marx” is a poem written by Narayan Surve, a well-known Marathi poet. It was published in his collection of poems, *Sanad* in 1982. The Marxist affiliation of Narayan Surve has never been a secret. He is one of the few poets in Maharashtra who openly admits that learning about Marxism has improved his understanding of life and society, as well as giving his poetry depth, breadth, and a sympathetic perspective. Because of this, his poetry effortlessly depicts the ideas and philosophy of the Marxist school and appeals to men and women from middle-class families, laborers, factory workers, and intellectuals all at once. His work received overwhelming admiration of people from all walks of life.

Karl Marx was a German philosopher and a socialist. Karl Heinrich Marx was born on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1818 at Trier, Prussia, Germany. He studied law and philosophy at the universities of Bonn and Berlin. He had four children; Jenny Caroline, Jenny Laura, Jenny Julia Eleanor, and Edgar (3 more of his children died in a very short span of time after their birth). He wrote many books, such as, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), *Wage Labour and*

*Capital* (1849), *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852), *Grundrisse* (1857-58), *Capital* - Vol. I (1867), Vol. II (1885), Vol. III (1894), and *The Civil War in France* (1871). His most famous works are *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*. He died on 14<sup>th</sup> March 1883 (Aged 64) due to bronchitis and pleurisy in London.

Marx's theories about society, economics, and politics, collectively known as "Marxism," are the foundation of many socialist and communist ideologies. He argued that capitalism was the cause of poverty and inequality, and he proposed a society based on collective ownership of the means of production. He also argued for a classless society, free from oppression and exploitation. Marx's ideas influenced generations of writers, social scientists and political activists. He is one of the most influential figures in history. The poem "Karl Marx" is a tribute by Narayan Surve to Karl Marx.



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## 4.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to enable you to:

- know the life and career of Narayan Surve
- identify the literary works of Narayan Surve
- relate with the original and translated text of the poem
- describe the structure of the poem
- illustrate the style of the poem.
- exemplify the symbolism of the poem.
- explain the figures of speech used in the poem
- elaborate on the themes of the poem
- i. critically appreciate the poem

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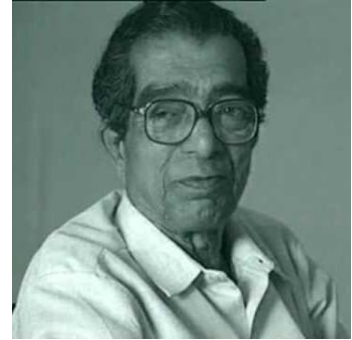
## 4.2 Narayan Surve – “Karl Marx”

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### 4.2.1 About Narayan Surve

#### Life & Career

Narayan Gangaram Surve was born in Mumbai on October 15, 1926. His mother abandoned him almost immediately after his birth. A textile worker, Gangaram Kushaji Surve, picked up the boy, brought him home, and decided to adopt him. His wife, Kashibai, a textile worker, agreed to raise the boy as their own son. Kashibai and Gangaram worked in the binding and spinning sections of the Indian Woolen Mill respectively.



The boy was named "Narayan," meaning ‘human refuge.’ It is also the name of Lord Vishnu, a god from Hindu mythology. In this way, the abandoned boy got the name, Narayan Gangaram Surve. Narayan was raised with the love and affection of the Surve family and co-workers of his adoptive parents. Narayan had only completed primary education but he learnt various languages, including Urdu.

Narayan’s childhood was filled with traumatic events. He grew up in the streets, worked in various sections of textile mills, worked in the canteen, worked as a labourer, worked as a housekeeper and did many such odd jobs. He worked as a peon in the Bombay Municipal Corporation for a few years. He described his conditions in his collection of poems, *My University*, as follows :

Didn’t have a house, nor relatives and friends,  
All that existed was the earth below our feet,  
As also the shelter of the shops; besides,  
The footpath of the Nagarpalika was open, free of cost.

(*My University*, 1966)

He was a self-taught person. From childhood, he started writing poetry and stories, performed in theatres, sang folk songs, participated in workers' agitations and the Indian freedom movement. His personal condition in particular and the condition of the working class in general imbibed a spirit of revolution in him and brought him closer to Karl Marx and his philosophy. In his poem, ‘Four Words’ he writes:

The issue of daily bread is everyday’s

at times outside the mill gate, at times inside,  
I am a labourer, a sharp open sword  
hey the group of learned! I'm going to commit an offence.

In 1961, he became a school teacher. He married Krushna Salunke in 1962. He began writing poetry and other literary works after achieving some level of stability in his life. Whatever he experienced, observed, and soaked up during his hardships, he started to express through poetry. His literary work depicts the struggles and life of working-class people.

Narayan Surve received numerous awards from the government and various civil and literary societies, including the Govt. of India's Padma Shri Award, Maharashtra State Award, Soviet Land Nehru Award, Sur Singar Kala Academy's Narsimha Mehta Award, Karad Literary Award, Best Teacher Mayor's Award, Kavi Kusumagraj Award, Organisation of Understanding and Fraternity Award, Yashwantrao Chavan Pratishthan Award, Kabir Sammanin Award, etc.

Narayan Surve received many honors. He received the First Fellowship of the Board of Literature and Culture, Maharashtra, in 1978. He was the president of Dalit – Adivasi - Gramin - Stree Muktiwadi and Janavadi Samyukta Sahitya Sammelan (Schedule Caste – Schedule Tribe – Rural – Women Libertarian Populist United Literary Conference) at Walve in 1989.

Narayan was the president of the First Kamgar Sahitya Sammelan (Workers Literary Conference), held in Pune in 1992. He was the president of the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (Marathi Literary Conference) held at Parbhani in 1995. He served as convener of the Marathi Advisory Board of the Sahitya Akademi. He worked as a member of the board of studies at Pune University, Shivaji University, and Marathwada University.

Narayan is considered as a pioneer of Dalit poetry in Marathi. His conversational style of poetry was appreciated and received by all classes of people. He came to be known as a proletarian poet not only in India but also in other countries, such as; Soviet Russia. He died on August 16, 2010, as a result of a long-term illness. For aspiring youth and poets, Narayan Surve is a legend.

### **Literary Works**

Narayan Surve penned the following literary works (Sahitya Academy & Abhinav Bhasha Abhyas Kendra, 1993):

#### **i. Poetry**

- *Aisa Ga Mi Brahma* (I Sing like this Brahma), Bombay: Abhinav Prakashan, 1962.
- *Majhe Vidyapeeth* (My University), Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966.

- *Jaheernama* (Manifesto), Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1975
- *Sanad* (Charter), Bombay: Granthali, 1982.

## ii. Essays

- *Manus, Kalavant Ani Samaj* (Human, Artist & Society) Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1992.

## iii. Translations (Stories & Novel)

- *Teen Gund Ani Saat Katha* (Three Gangsters and Seven Stories) Bombay: Lok Vangmaya Griha, 1974.
- *Dadar Pulakadil Mulen* (Children from Dadar Bridge) Pune: Varada Books, 1975.


## iv. Edited Works

- *Comrade Dange: Bharatiya Rajkarnatil Vadal* (Comrade Dange: A Storm in Indian Politics), Bombay: Shalaka Prakashan, 1986.
- *Dalit Kavyadarshan* (Dalit Poetic Philosophy), Bombay: Lok Vangmaya Griha, 1992.
- *Kavita Shramachi* (Poetry of Labour), Bombay: Maharashtra Kamgar Kalyan Mandal, 1993.
- *Gani Chalvalichi* (Songs of the Movement), Bombay: Lok Vangmaya Griha, 1993.

### 4.2.2 Text of the poem

<p>कार्ल मार्क्स</p> <p>माझ्या पहिल्या संपातच मार्क्स मला असा भेटला</p> <p>मिरवणुकीच्या मध्यभागी माझ्या खांद्यावर त्याचा बॅनर होता. जानकी अक्का म्हणाली, 'बळिखलंस ह्याला - ह्यो आमचा मार्क्सबाबा</p> <p>जर्मनीत जलमला, पोताभर ग्रंथ लिवले आणि इंग्लंडच्या मातीला मिळाला. संन्याशाला काय बाबा सगळीकडची भूमी सारखीच तुझ्यासारखी त्यालाही चार कच्चीबच्ची होती.' माझ्या पहिल्या</p>	<p><b>“Karl Marx”</b></p> <p>Here is how I met Marx during my very first strike.</p> <p>In the middle of a protest march, banner of him on my shoulder, Janaki Akka pointed: “D’you know him? <b>This here, is our own Markusbaba-</b> born in Germany, wrote sackful of books then met his end in England. Nothing unusual for a sanyasi, eh? Land, for them, is the same everywhere. Just like you, he had four kids.” That was how I met Marx during my very first strike.</p>
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<p>संपातच      मार्क्स मला असा भेटला</p> <p>पुढे एका सभेत मी बोलत होतो,      तर या मंदीचे कारण काय?      दारिद्र्याचे गोत्र काय?</p> <p>पुन्हा मार्क्स पुढे आला; मी सांगतो म्हणाला, आणि घडाघडा      बोलतच गेला.</p> <p>परवा एका गेटसभेत भाषण ऐकत उभा होता.      मी म्हणालो –      'आता इतिहासाचे नायक आपणच आहोत, यापुढच्या सर्वच      चरित्रांचेही.'      तेव्हा मोठ्याने टाळी त्यानेच वाजविली खळखळून हसत, पुढे येत;      खांद्यावर हात ठेवीत म्हणाला,      'अरे कविता-बिबिता लिहितोस की काय?      छान छान.      मलासुद्धा गटे आवडायचा.'</p> <p><i>Original Text in Marathi</i>      (Source: <a href="http://millmumbai.tiss.edu.in">http://millmumbai.tiss.edu.in</a>)</p>	<p>Later, as I was speaking at an assembly      (So, what are the reasons for this      downturn?      What are the root causes of poverty?)      Marx pushed his way forward      and said: I'll tell you-      then shot his mouth off, going on and on.</p> <p>The day before yesterday,      during a picket outside a mill-gate,      there he stood      hearing me holding forth.      I said:      "Now, we are the protagonists of history      and the subject of all accounts that will be      written."      He clapped the loudest of all,      then came forward,      placed a hand on my shoulder,      and with a hearty laugh said:      "Man, you do write poetry, d'you not?      Good, Good!      Y'know, I used to like Goethe.      Once." (<i>Sanad</i> 1982)</p> <p><i>English Translation by Mustansir Dalvi</i>      (Source: <a href="https://raiot.in">https://raiot.in</a>)</p>
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<p><b>Activity :</b></p> <p>Listen to the Hindi translation of Narayan Surve's poem, "Karl Marx" by Sudhanva Deshpande and write your observations on the conversational style of the poem in both languages. You can access the audio through the following link or the given QR code.</p> <p><b>YouTube Link:</b>  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ca73I-iVZ1g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ca73I-iVZ1g</a></p>	
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### 4.2.3 Summary

The poem tells the story of the poet's first encounter with Karl Marx. The poet narrates how he met Karl Marx during his first strike. Janaki Akka, an old lady striker, introduced him to Marx as Markus Baba, saying he was born in Germany, wrote a sackful of books, and died in England. She also mentions that this is nothing unusual for a sanyasi, implying that Marx was like any other sanyasi who is not attached to a particular land. She said that Marx had four kids, just like the poet. In this way, the poet came to know about Karl Marx through Janaki Akka.

Narayan again found Marx while addressing the causes of the downturn and poverty at an assembly. Marx interrupted him and announced that he would explain the causes of the downturn and poverty. While the poet was addressing a picket outside a millgate, he again saw Marx listening to him. The poet said that, "Now, we are the protagonists of history and the subjects of all accounts that will be written." Marx clapped loudly, approached the poet, put his hand on his shoulder, and said, "Man, you do write poetry, d'you not? Good, Good! Y'know, I used to like Goethe, Once." Goethe was a German poet and playwright. In this way, the poet expressed his encounters with Karl Marx and the impact it had on his life.

### 4.2.4 Structure

The poem is written in three parts, each of which tells a different story.

1. The first part is a recollection of the young man's first introduction to Marx during a protest march.
2. The second part deals with Marx's interruption during an assembly while the young man was delivering a speech.
3. The third part describes the young man's encounter with Marx at a picket outside a millgate.

The structure of the poem creates a story-like narrative about the poet's encounter with Karl Marx. It starts with Janaki Akka's introduction of Karl Marx to the young man (poet) during a strike and then transitions to an assembly where Marx interrupts the young man while he is giving a speech. The poem then shifts to the day, when the young man is picketing outside a mill gate and Marx again appears, this time applauding the young man's speech.

In the first part, the young man was introduced to Karl Marx, in the second part, Karl Marx explain the causes of the poverty of the working class, and in the third part, the young man advocates the ideas of Marx through speech and poetry and thus tries to become the protagonist of history like Marx. Marx put his hand on the young man's shoulder and praised his poetry as a

gesture of his approval. In this way, the structure conveys the story of the young protester's encounter with Karl Marx, and how Marx turns him into a poet and a leader inspiring, and guiding people, fighting for their rights.

The structure of the poem shows how important Marx was to the young man and highlights his role as a teacher and guide.

#### **4.2.5 Style**

The poem is written in a conversational, informal tone. The poet speaks of Marx in a respectful yet jovial manner, indicating the admiration and appreciation he has for the revolutionary thinker. The poem is full of revolutionary energy, with the poet and Marx both standing together in solidarity to fight for the same cause. The poem is a reminder of the power of community and the importance of coming together to fight for causes that we believe in.

The imagery of Marx placing his hand on the poet's shoulder is particularly evocative, conveying the connection and bond between the two. Through this one action, Marx conveys his approval of the poet's words and his appreciation of their spoken poetry. It shows the relationship between Marx and the poet as well as the revolutionary spirit of the time through its casual tone and images. The language appears very simple and lucid but carries a deeper meaning.

#### **4.2.6 Symbolism**

The poem is full of symbolism, from the characters to the language used by the poet. The character of Janaki Akka is symbolic of the working class, as she introduces the poet to Karl Marx and references his four children. This alludes to the notion that Marx's ideas were a product of his experiences, as he was a member of the working class himself. This is further highlighted by the language used to describe Marx, as Janaki Akka calls him "Markus Baba", which can be translated as "Saint Marx."

Karl Marx is also symbolic in the poem. His presence in the poem is an allusion to his revolutionary ideas, as he stands for the power of the working class to fight for its rights. Marx is also a symbol of the history of labor and its struggles, as the poem mentions his books and his death in England. Marx, who advances and stands up during the assembly, is a representation of the strength of knowledge and the fortitude to stand up for what is right.

The language used by the poet is also symbolic of the themes explored in the poem. The poet refers to us as the "protagonists of history" and the "subject of all narratives that will be written," which stands for the notion that people are responsible for forming history and that it is important to preserve their voices. This is further highlighted by Marx's reaction to the poet's



words, as he claps the loudest and praises his poetry. This is symbolic of the idea that knowledge and art can be powerful tools for change.

The poem "Karl Marx" is a powerful piece that utilizes symbolism to explore themes of history, politics, and labor through the narrative of the poet. Through the characters, language, and the events of the poem, the poet is able to convey a powerful message about the power of knowledge and the importance of standing up for what is right.

***Check your progress:***

1. Into how many parts is the poem, "Karl Marx" divided?

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2. What is the tone of the poem, "Karl Marx?"

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#### 4.2.7 Figures of Speech

The poet has vividly used figures of speech to capture the essence of the moment and give the readers a variety of images. Let us try to understand the figures of speech used in the poem:

Sl. No	Figure of Speech	Verse/Verses	Explanation
1	<b>Metaphor</b>	“Nothing unusual for a sanyasi, eh? Land, for them is the same everywhere.”	Janaki Akka is comparing Karl Marx to a "Sanyasi," a Hindu ascetic, indicating that his journey and his writings were a spiritual quest and suggesting that he was in search of a greater understanding of the world.
2	<b>Simile</b>	"Just like you, he had four kids"	The use of simile implies that Marx and the poet are on the same path and brings Marx down to the level of common people, like the poet. It makes Marx seem more accessible and more like an ordinary man.
3	<b>Hyperbole</b>	"wrote sackful of books"	This is an exaggeration that implies the magnitude of Marx’s work and the impact it had on the world. It also serves to emphasize the importance of Marx’s writings and the legacy

			that he has left behind.
4	<b>Rhetorical Question</b>	"So, what are the reasons for this downturn?" "What are the root causes of poverty?"	The poem also contains rhetorical questions that serve to emphasize the importance of the question and to imply that Marx has the answers.
5	<b>Pun</b>	"Man, you do write poetry, d'you not?"	The poem ends with a pun. When Marx says, "Man, you do write poetry, d'you not?" he is referring to the poet's writing as well as his speech. This is a clever way of emphasizing the power of words to evoke emotion and create change.

**Table No. 4.1: Use of Figures of Speech**

The figures of speech used in this poem are effective in conveying the poet's admiration for Marx and his legacy and used to bring the scene to life.

#### **4.2.8 Themes**

There are several themes portrayed in the poem. Let us try to understand these themes:

**i. Spirit of Revolution:** The poem starts with the poet's recalling how he first encountered Marx during his first strike. Janaki Akka pointed out Marx's life and work to the poet, emphasizing how he was born in Germany but ended his life in England. This serves to highlight the universality of Marx's work and message, suggesting that his ideas and beliefs could cross international borders. This is symbolic of the revolutionary spirit of the poem, and of Marx's philosophy, which focused on the empowerment of the oppressed. The poet mentioned the event of speaking at an assembly and Marx pushing his way forward to give his opinion. This is symbolic of Marx's role as a revolutionary, speaking truth to power and inspiring people to fight for change.

**ii. Solidarity and Collective Action:** The poem also suggests that by sharing Marx's work and ideas, people can become the "protagonists of history" and be the subject of all accounts that will be written. This emphasizes the power of solidarity and collective action in driving change. The poem ends with Marx clapping for the poet and the words of encouragement he provides. This is symbolic of the ongoing support and inspiration that Marx's work has

provided to revolutionaries and activists around the world. It is a reminder that, despite the odds and obstacles, change is possible when people come together and stand up for what is right.

**iii. Admiration for Karl Marx:** The poem also conveys a sense of admiration for Marx from the young man, as he is often depicted in awe of him. This is demonstrated through the use of imagery and figurative language when describing Marx, such as the mention of him being "born in Germany" and having "written sackfuls of books." The poem also conveys the idea of Marx being a timeless figure, as he is described as a "Sanyasi," which is an Indian term for a wandering Hindu ascetic.

**iv. Power of Poetry:** This poem reveals the power of poetry and its ability to move people and inspire them to action. The poet's words during the picket outside the millgate are full of passion and power and are a testament to the power of poetry to move people to action. The poem also speaks to the power of Marx's words. Marx's presence is felt throughout the poem, and his words resonate with the poet. His words provide the poet with an understanding of the root causes of poverty and the way forward.

**v. Intersection of Poetry, Politics, and Philosophy:** Another important theme is the intersection of poetry, politics, and philosophy. There are three main individuals mentioned in the poem: Karl Marx, Goethe, and the poet. All three individuals were involved in intellectual pursuits and activism in their own ways, with Marx focusing on economics and social change, Goethe exploring a wide range of subjects and promoting cultural innovation, and the poet using poetry to express emotions and ideas. Through their interactions and shared interests, they represent a potential intersection between these different fields, where poetry, politics, and philosophy can inform and enrich each other. The poet vividly interweaves all these themes in the poem.

***Check your progress:***

1. Mention two figures of speech used in the poem.

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2. Write any two themes portrayed in the poem.

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**About Goethe**

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was a German writer, scientist, statesman, and philosopher. He was born on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1749 at Frankfurt, Germany. Goethe wrote a number of plays, poems, and novels, including the classic works, "The



Sorrows of Young," "Werther," and "Faust". He was also a key figure in the development of German Romanticism and is considered to be the greatest German literary figure of all time. His works have been translated into numerous languages and continue to inspire readers today. He died on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1832.

#### **Activity:**

To know more about Goethe and his work, visit <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/586> OR you can scan the given QR Code to visit the site.



#### **4.2.9 Critical Appreciation**

This poem explores the idea of Marx as a figure in history and how he is viewed by modern society. The poem paints a picture of Marx as a person, rather than as a figure of history. It is told from the perspective of an individual (poet) who meets Marx during a protest march and, later, at a picket line outside a mill gate. Sarang (1982) in his paper, 'Remarks on Modern Marathi Poetry,' commented on this poem: "This is a straight, simple poem. No 'complexity,' no 'sophistication.' But, again, there must be few Marathi poets who could write: 'This is how I met Marx on my very first strike,' simply because few of them, if any, have been on a strike. This is poetry with an integral social awareness (Sarang, 1982)."

The poem captures the life of Marx through vivid details and imagery. The speaker describes Marx as a "sanyasi" - a spiritual leader and mentions his four children. This helps to humanize Marx and show that he was an ordinary man like any other person as well as a revolutionary leader. The poem also captures the emotion of the speaker upon meeting Marx, as they clap loudly and engage in conversation.

This poem captures the significance of Karl Marx's legacy in a powerful way. It highlights the impact he had on the world through his writings and teachings, as well as his life experiences. The poem conveys the idea that Marx was not only a great thinker but also a practical leader who was willing to stand up for what he believed in. The poem also pays homage to Marx's ability to relate to people from different backgrounds and circumstances, as evidenced by his presence at a protest march and picket line.

The poem also reveals Marx's passion for literature, as evidenced by his appreciation of Goethe, a famous German poet. This shows that Marx was an intellectual who was interested not

only in the theory of politics and economics but also in the arts. The poem is a powerful reminder of Karl Marx's relevance to our lives today. His writings and teachings continue to influence our thinking and our actions, and his life experiences offer valuable lessons to us all.

Patwardan (2018) in his blog, 'When I Met Karl Marx and Narayan Surve', says: "Sensitive people meet Marx often in their life. They meet Marx when they see abject poverty, people suffering disgrace. Some get stunned by the realisation, some smile at him and carry on as if nothing happened...They (workers) are afraid of his (Karl Marx) appeals to their conscience. It will mean protesting against some of the established malpractices. They meet Karl Marx, but unlike Narayan Surve, they do not carry his banner on their shoulder – figuratively, I mean. Perhaps managers and union leaders do not raise their voice because they know that they can't challenge the 'system' (Patwardan, 2018)."

By reading this poem, we can gain insight into the life and work of Karl Marx and understand why his legacy is still so important today. The poet's awe of Marx is a reminder of his impact. The poem also serves as a reminder of the power of history and how it can shape our understanding of the world. A famous mainstream Marathi poet, Kusumagraj defined Surve's poems as weapons of struggle. In short, this poem is a thought-provoking and powerful tribute to Karl Marx.

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### 4.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you will be able to have an understanding of Narayan Surve's life and career, gaining insights into his poem with reference to the structure, style, symbolism, diction, and themes.

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### 4.4 Glossary

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**Nagarpalika** Nagarpalika is a Marathi word for Municipal Corporation.

**Janaki Akka** Janaki is a woman's name. She is an elderly lady mentioned in the poem. Akka is a Marathi word used for older sister or older lady.

**Markusbaba** A Marathi nickname for Karl Marx. Karl Marx was a German philosopher.

**Sanyasi** A Hindu ascetic who has renounced the world and is dedicated to a life of

spiritual discipline.

**Picket** A protest action in which demonstrators line up at a particular site as a form of protest

**Protagonists** It refers to the leading characters in a story.

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## 4.5 Sample Questions

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### 4.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. When was Narayan Surve born?

- a. 15th October, 1925
- b. 15th October, 1926**
- c. 15th October, 1930
- d. 15th October, 1940

2. Who adopted Narayan Surve?

- a. Gangaram Kushaji Surve**
- b. Kashibai Surve
- c. Indian Woolen Mill
- d. Bombay Municipal Corporation

3. What kind of poetry did Narayan Surve write?

- a. Romantic poetry
- b. Proletarian poetry**
- c. Nature poetry
- d. Patriotic poetry

4. What award did Narayan Surve receive from the Government of India?

- a. Padma Shri Award**
- b. Narsimha Mehta Award
- c. Yashwantrao Chavan Pratishthan Award
- d. Maharashtra Bhushan Award

5. Who introduced the poet to Karl Marx?

- a. Goethe
- b. Janaki Akka**
- c. Marx himself

- d. The poet's mother
6. Karl Marx's most famous works are *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital*. [True/False]
7. Markusbabais a Marathi nickname for German philosopher Karl Marx. [True/False]
8. The character of Janaki Akka in the poem is symbolic of the working class. [True/False]
9. Janaki Akka compares Karl Marx to a "Sanyasi," a Hindu ascetic. [True/False]
10. The poem "Karl Marx" reveals the power of poetry and its ability to move people and inspire them to action. [True/False]

#### 4.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. What was Narayan Surve's childhood like?
2. What kind of literary works did he contribute?
3. What awards and honors did Narayan Surve receive?
4. What does the speaker learn about Marx during their first strike?
5. How does the poet first meet Karl Marx?

#### 4.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Write a critical note on the poem, 'Karl Marx'?
2. Discuss in detail the themes are portrayed in the poem "Karl Marx."
3. How does the poem use symbolism to explore its themes?

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## 4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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## **Unit-5: Introduction to Indian Fiction in English**

### **Structure**

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction to Indian Fiction in English
  - 5.2.1 Development of the Indian English Novel
  - 5.2.2 Thematic Diversity
  - 5.2.3 Modes of Representation
  - 5.2.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.3 Learning Outcomes
- 5.4 Glossary
- 5.5 Sample Questions
- 5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### **5.0 Introduction**

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Traditionally, Indian literature denotes the body of writing (and oral compositions as well) in any of the various Indian languages. Indian Fiction in English refers to the fiction produced by “authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality” (Naik, 1982) and it also includes Indian diaspora writers writing in English. With a history spanning over two centuries, Indian fiction in English is undeniably the most complex, rich and intrinsic part of Indian literature.

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### **5.1 Objectives**

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- delineate a short history of Indian English fiction
- understand the trends in its growth from the very beginning till the turn of the millennium
- identify the concerns, themes and different modes of the novels.

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## 5.2 Introduction to Indian Fiction in English

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Introduction of English in India through Macaulay and Lord Bentick's policies was more of a colonial endeavour to create Indian 'babus' facilitating the colonial rule and in turn to obliterate the indigenous, traditional and cultural identity. But little did they know that this would turn into a blessing in disguise and, in a few years, result in the Renaissance in Indian literature reviving its culture, identity and value system. When it comes to Indian English novel, its birth was no mean feat and had been a two-fold challenge for the Indian writers as neither the language English nor the form was native to them.

Unlike its western counterpart, the Indian English novel had no tradition or literary historical genealogy to call its own. Its advent was as a postcolonial genre whose emergence was generated by the colonial encounter and the novelist Amit Chaudhuri, therefore, rightly calls Indian English novel a 'colonial child', and a 'cross pollination of language, race and art'. Other determining factors behind its rapid growth were the arrival of the printing press in India, the establishment of universities and institutions of higher education, growth in literacy rate and increase in publications in English language in India.

### 5.2.1 Development of the Indian English Novel

#### Early Period:

Early Indian fiction writers in English toyed with the novel form and were caught in the web of awkward imitation, influenced by the European masterpieces of Tolstoy, Balzac and Dostoevsky in English translations and works of the English Romantics and the early Victorians, Dickens and Thackeray. But despite working with a genre and a language beyond their comfort zone, the Indian writers tried to find a new voice in this alien language and retain the Indian tradition of storytelling, thus rendering an Indianness into the novels in respect of themes, techniques and human values.

Among the early fiction writers there is a tendency to critique the English as well as the local Indian reality, as we find in *A Journal of 48 hours of the Year 1945* by Kylash Chunder Dutt, published in The Calcutta Literary Gazette (6th June 1835) This is the tale of an unsuccessful revolt against the British. Shoshee Chunder Dutt's (1825-1 886) short novel, *The Republic sf Orissa: Annals from the pages of the Twentieth Century* published in the Saturday Evening Hurkam (1845). The action in this tale takes place in the second decade of the twentieth

century. The British are defeated and a republic is established in Orissa. Interestingly, both take the form of ‘annals’ or historical accounts, but are set in the future imagining uprisings against British rule.

Romesh Chunder Dutt translated his own Bengali novels into English - *The Lake of Palms: A Story of Indian Domestic Life* (1902), and *The Slave Girl of Agra, an Indian Historical-Romance* (1909) - one a novel of social reform and widow remarriage and the other a historical romance as suggested in the title. Sarath Kumar Ghosh wrote a fantasy, *1001 Indian Nights: The Trials of Narayan Lal* (1906), and *The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna* (1909). Ghosh's second novel is perhaps one of the earliest to explore the East-West encounter, a popular theme in the Indian English novel.

### **Period of Pre-Independence and Nationalism:**

The intellectuals in India before Independence concentrated on the national awakening and the society in a realistic manner. These writers were not merely the imitators of the West but they had in the words of Meenakshi Mukherjee, “direct involvement in values and experiences which are valid in the Indian context.” The contender to the title of first Indian English novel, mostly claimed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s only novel in English *Rajmohan’s Wife* (1864) also represented a vigorous exercise in social realism. First serialised in the Calcutta weekly *The Indian Field* in 1864 this work was published in book form only in the year 1930. It deals with the social issues of the day and focuses on the effects of a bad marriage on a woman Matangini suffering at the hands of her husband Rajmohan.

Other first-generation novelists to record the rich heritage and social transformation in India are Lal Behari Dey’s *Govinda Samanta or the History of a Bengal Raiyat* (1874), Toru Dutt’s *Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden* (1878), K.K.Lahiri’s *Roshinara* (1881), K.Chakravarti’s *Sarata and Hingana* (1895), Krupabai Satthianadhan’s *Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life*(1895). Other early attempts in telling a truly Indian story in the form of novel could be seen in Madhaviah’s *Thillai Govindan* (1908) and K.S. Venkataramani’s *Murugan the Tiller* (1927)

Women writers too have carved their niche in the field of Indian English fiction are Rajalakshmi Debi, whose novel in verse form, *The Hindoo Wife or The Enchanted Fruit* , was published in 1876, and Cornelia Sorabji, a distinguished lawyer, who published three collections of short stories- *Love and Life Behind the Purdah* (1901), *Sun Babies* (1904), and *Between the Twilights* (1908). While Sorabji never wrote a novel, Rabindranath Tagore's sister Swarnakumari

Ghosal (1855-1932) wrote three - *The Fatal Garland* (1910), *An Indian Love Story* (1910), and *An Unfinished Song* (1913). Another woman writer of note was Shevantibai Nikambe, a social reformer and educationist, who wrote *Ratnabai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Wife* (1895).

The early novelists depicted rural and domestic life, filled with superstitions and religious whims, with an equal emphasis on morals and social ills. In spite of that, their creative efforts were rather imitative and lacked original treatment of their subjects. Though their world was different from the socio-ethical world of the British novelists, they imitated the Western novel in respect of plot-construction, characterization and narrative technique. The early novels were, therefore, sketchy, domestic and aloof from the political happenings. But soon this gap would be filled in by the works of the famed 'trio' who would establish Indian English as the *lingua franca* in Indian literary circles.

The real beginning of Indian novel in English took place in the 1930s with the likes of writers as Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, who explored contemporary Indian society without distorting the reality. With the publication of *Untouchable* (1935), *Swami and Friends* (1935) and *Kanthapura* (1938) the tradition of Indian English fiction took its roots in the soil of a foreign language. Along with their originality in uncovering the hypocrisies and shams of Indian society, alleged pseudo-intellectuals and cracks and crevices of the prevailing caste and class systems, they added the political motif which was sorely missing in the earlier works. Gandhi and his movement became a leitmotif in their novels.

Mulk Raj Anand, a social realist and justly called 'Dickens of the East' for his sympathetic portrayal of the low and socially disadvantaged sections of the society, is unique in the way he makes the otherwise victims of society appear as real-life heroes who incessantly fight till the end against all the challenges society throws at them. For Mulk Raj Anand, the novel is "the creative weapon for attaining humanness – it is the weapon of humanism. Though influenced by Dickens, Wells and Tolstoy in both form and characterization, he followed the Indian tradition of story-telling, with his themes and events all rooted in the Indian soil. Anand carries the double burden of both eastern and western philosophical tradition to shape his writing- the Western Marxism and the Eastern Gandhianism. He deals with themes related to human predicaments, such as protest against social and industrial evils, the sorry plight of women in India, excesses and brutalities of caste, class and imperialism. Anand's early novels, *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940)

The *Sword and the Sickle* (1942) and *The Big Heart* (1942) testify to this point, as Anand has brought in them the lower class down-trodden people such as the scavengers, the coolies, the leather-workers, and the untouchables who form the bulk of Indian society. His novel *Untouchable* is a classic experimentation in respect of theme and technique. It represents a day from morning till evening in the life of a sweeper boy named Bakha who, in the words of E. M. Forster is “a real individual, lovable, sometimes grand, sometimes weak, and thoroughly Indian.”

R. K. Narayan is a novelist of a middle-class sensibility. He was a natural story-teller who, with his rustic style, portrayed the real rural India in his novels. Much in the line of Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha, Narayan had his own fictional South Indian town called Malgudi, the setting for most of his works. His simple, elegant and humorous style is aptly employed in his *Swami and Friends* (1935) and his short story collection *Malgudi Days*. With his straightforward narration and use of simple English, he depicts human life and relations. His most famous novels are *The Guide* (1958), *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1961) and *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983). His other novels, *The Painter of Signs* (1976), *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938), *The English Teacher* (1945) and *Mr. Sampath* (1949) describe South-Indian life.

The last of the trio to examine the Indian sensibility and contribute to the Indianisation of English is Raja Rao, whose concern with philosophical and mythological aspects distinguishes him from Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. Influenced by Vedantic philosophy which serves as the framework for most of his works, he is also a believer in Gandhian ideology and expresses his religio-social and political concerns in a language ‘of ... (his) intellectual make-up’. His first novel *Kanthapura*, a masterpiece, describes the village life and peasant sensibility. R. K. Srivastava remarks: “Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* ... is India in miniature.” On language crisis, Raja Rao, in his “foreword” to *Kanthapura*, says: “We cannot write like English. We should not. We can write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us.” K.S.Venkataramani, A.S.P. Ayyar, Ahmed Ali, Dhan Gopal Mukherji, K. A. Abbas and Humayun Kabir have also written novels on the rural, political and social life of India.

***Check your progress:***

1. Indian Fiction in English refers to the fiction produced by “authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality” (True/False)
2. Narayan has his own fictional South Indian town called Malgudi as the setting for most of his works. (True/False)

### **Period of Post-Independence:**

The third stage in the development of the English novel in India was in the post-independence era through works of Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande etc. Termed as the modern novel now and freed from the shackles of colonial imitation, it is more experimental in theme and form in the hands of the writers. Trends of modernism soon started to surface in their works in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century and the focus shifted to man and his self as subject matter rather than society and the nation. The psychological novel depicting the human personality and inner realities of life thus replaced the realistic novel. A number of novelists, like Arun Joshi and Anita Desai have explored the psychological and sociological conflicts in an individual's life.

The modern Indian writers dealt with man's alienation from his self, his class, his society and humanity at large. In other words, the centre of their novels shifted from society to an individual. In the 1940s, G.V. Dasani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) made a major breakthrough in formal experimentation and became a masterpiece of remarkable artistry. After the 1950s, most Indian novelists, in their eagerness to find new themes, "renounced the larger world in favour of the inner man" and engaged themselves in "a search for the essence of human living." Most of Anita Desai's novels reveal the breakdown of relationships. She deals with the psychological aspects of her characters. Anita Desai explored the inner climate, the climate of sensibility in her novels and added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian women writers in English fiction. A striking feature of Arun Joshi's fiction is his experimentation with different narrative techniques. The contributions of Kamala Markandanya, Manohar Malgaonkar and others have already been recognized. Beginning with Ruth Praver Jhabvala, known for her engaging comedies of North Indian urban middle class life, the women novelists have displayed not only authenticity but also brought a freshness to their works, whereas Kamala Markandaya takes us to the heart of a South Indian village where life has apparently not changed for centuries. She depicted rustic and urban realism in her work. Another writer Nayantara Sahgal, with her work *Rich Like Us* (1985), has shown a very charming way of storytelling, and Kamala Das with her autobiographical and bold works treaded the paths hitherto unknown for Indo-Anglian novelists.

Among the contemporary writers, Amitav Ghosh has shown his genius in Indian English fiction. His two novels – *The Circle of Reason* (1986) and *The Shadow Lines* (1988) established

Ghosh as “the finest writer who were born out of the post Midnight’s Children revolution in Indo-Anglian fiction. Vikram Seth attained a dizzy height of success with *The Golden Gate* (1986) and *A Suitable Boy* (1993). His experiment with the novel in verse, using Onegin stanzas in his novel *The Golden Gate* was a never treaded path for a modern contemporary novelist. Upamanyu Chatterjee, with his novel *English August* (1988), established his ironic tone and hit all the foibles of the Indian bureaucracy. Chatterjee brilliantly uses Indianised English in the novel. His contemporary Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is one of the greatest achievements of Indian English fiction. In the 1990s, Rohinton Mistry has emerged as a significant novelist. His *Such a long Journey* (1991) is his maiden attempt in the genre in which he deals with the predicament of modern life. These novels depict the betrayals of post-colonial era – symbolized most powerfully by the period of Emergency of 1975. And there were these few ‘Bombay novels ’(Bombay as the major setting) as in Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozsha Baagh* where the city plays a paradigmatic site for exploration of that which haunts the margins of an aspiring democratic nation- the disenfranchised and unvoiced minorities.

### **The Millennial period:**

Arundhati Roy shows real psychological depth while conveying the realities of culture and history. Her novel *The God of Small Things* free from the shackles of conventional writing, successfully experiments with the language, and has been duly rewarded for that. As with Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai’s work also manages to explore the post-colonial chaos and despair. Her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* satirizes society at large. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) spans continents, generations, cultures, religions, and races. Her narrative style, creative use of language and handling of plot put her among one of the most acknowledged and widely read authors. Amongst the new young writers, the most read is perhaps Chetan Bhagat. With four back to back selling novels, *One night @ the Call centre*, *Five Point Someone*, *2 States*, *Three mistakes of my Life*, The influence of Bhagat’s writings has been so impactful, that even Hindi films are adapting his novels on the big screens.

### **5.2.2 Thematic Diversity**

Indian fiction in English deals with a wide range of themes, reflecting on a multifarious range of issues, like social realism, women’s issues, freedom struggle, historical and political matter. The first generation of Indian English writers projected the themes of nationalism, the freedom struggle, Partition, social reform, rural-urban conflict, freedom and the plight of the untouchables and the landless poor.

**Historical, Political and Nationalist themes:**

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, R.K.Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*, Nayantara Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy*, K.A.Abbas's *Inquilaab*, etc are a few examples of Indian writings in English revolving around the theme of the independence struggle and the aftermath of the freedom movement in post-independent India.

The Partition left an indelible impact on few writers and led them to highlight its ill effects in their writings. Prominent among such writers are Khushwant Singh (*Train to Pakistan*), Manohar Malgaonkar (*A Bend in the Ganges*), Chaman Nahal (*Azadi*), and H.S.Gill's *Ashes and Petals*.

**Social Realism:**

Depicting social issues for the purpose of social reform was one of the major themes in the Indian writings in English during that period. Some of the distinguished works which played an instrumental role in bringing about social reform were, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable*, *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud* ; R.K . Narayan's *Swami and Friend*, *The Dark Room* ; Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, *The Serpent and the Rope*, *The Cow of the Barricades* ; G. V. Desai's *All About H. Hatter* ; Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* and Kamla Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, *A Silence of Desire* and *Possession*. These works depicted Indian society, especially the common man and the working people, and extensively dealt with several aspects of social reform, such as exploitation of the untouchables, the landless peasants, tea garden workers and the problems of industrial labour.

**Women's issues:**

A major development in modern Indian English writings is the growth of a feminist or woman-centered approach, that seeks to project and interpret experience, from the point of a feminine consciousness and sensibility. The portrayal of the predicament of middle class educated Indian women, their quest for identity, issues pertaining to parent-child relationship, marriage and sex, and their exploitation are the hallmark of the modern Indian writings in English. These writings represent the contemporary modern woman's struggle to define and attain an autonomous self-hood. The women writers in English have been instrumental in popularizing this theme.

The social and cultural changes in post-independent India has made women conscious of the need to define themselves, their place in society and their surroundings. The female characters in such writings are at great pains to free themselves from stultifying, traditional constraints. The female quest for identity has been a pet theme for many Indian English writers.



They indicate the arrival of a new Indian woman, eager to defy rebelliously against the well-entrenched moral orthodoxy of the patriarchal social system. These female characters are modern, strong and take bold decisions to survive in the society.

The feminist thought and the feminist movements in the west had some influence on the women's movement in developing countries like India. Yet feminism as it exists today in India has gone beyond its western counterparts. Some of the prominent writers who have changed the concept of feminism in Indian English literature are Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Kamala Das, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Shashi Deshpande, Shobha De, Nayantara Sahgal and Manju Kapur, Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai.

### **Indian Diaspora and Migration**

Another prominent aspect of the social fabric during this period was that it was the era of immigrants who left their lands to explore new horizons. Many of them took to writing in English to describe their predicaments and experiences. The major theme in their works is the dilemma of Indian immigrants torn between the two worlds.

They evoke ideas of homeland, their personal feelings towards rootlessness, their problems of adjustment, suppression, frustration, anger, identity crisis, resistance, humiliation and moral dilemmas. Bharti Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter*, *Wife*, *Desirable Daughters*, *The Tree Bride*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth* all belong to this category. This group of Indian English writers express their inner turmoil caused by the immigrants as they try to settle down in the alien land.

The Indian writers who wrote in English about their first-hand experience in foreign lands, delved upon the theme of East-West encounter and highlighted the interaction between the Oriental and Occidental people and cultures and is best portayed in Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope*, Kamala Markandaya's *The Nowhere Man*, *Some Inner Fury*, Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* and Balchandran Rajan's *The Dark Dancer* and *Too Long in the West*.

#### ***Check your progress:***

1. The modern Indian writers dealt with man's alienation from his self, his class, his society and humanity at large. (True/False)
2. Diaspora writers evoke ideas of homeland, their personal feelings towards rootlessness, their problems of adjustment, identity crisis, etc. (True/False)

### 5.2.3 Modes of Representation

The writers of Indian English fiction have employed a diverse range of vehicles of expression for their narratives and have dexterously utilized different modes of representation such as magic realism, graphic mode of storytelling, social realism in their works.

#### Social Realism

Indian English novels begin as novels of social realism, depicting life as it is and also highlighting aspects of man's struggle towards socialist progress for a better life. The novels of the 1930's reflected the progressive philosophy of the writers. They were vocal about the injustice, cruelty and exploitation that the masses faced. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and Bud* (1938) took the creative imagination from historical romances to social realism. G.V. Desani's *All about H. Hatterr* (1948) took it further to the psychological probing into individual personality. The Fifties was a period of socially conscious novels such as Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), K.A. Abbas's *Inquilab* (1955) and R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* (1958) which were imbued with didactic rumblings in the agonized psyche of the characters. Nayanatara Sahgal's *A Time to be Happy* (1958) traced the development of nationalist movement and the contrast offered by the old devoted nationalists with young pragmatic mercenaries. The Sixties showed the development of psychological novels which highlighted the Indian identity under the onslaught of the cultural influences of the west, while Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964) was an attempt on the terrorist movement in India. Bhabani Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966) and R.K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967) gave a perspective analysis of the historical process of social changes in India after Independence. Arun Joshi's *The Foreigner* (1968), on the other hand, rendered the alienation of Indian expatriates in the quagmire of intercultural flux. The decade of the Nineties was the harbinger of more profitable business for the western publishers and it gave a special niche to Vikram Seth, Shobha De, Amitav Ghosh, Upamanyu Chatterjee and they made quick bucks. The Western readers suffering from the angst of depression and melancholia needing some kind of diversion have turned to Indian novels in English for getting spiritual solace. Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* and Balraj Khanna's *A Nation of Fools* highlighted their divine propensities. Githa Hariharan too hit the buzzer with her novel *The Thousand Faces of Night*.

### **Magic Realism:**

Magical realism is a narrative mode of fiction in which magical and realistic elements coexist with equal ontological status and also presents magical and realistic happenings where “the supernatural is not a simple or obvious matter, but it is an ordinary matter, and everyday occurrence—admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and material realistic” (Zamora). The narrative style blurs the distinction between the supernatural and the mundane realist. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* is regarded as a forerunner of renaissance in the Indian English writing which opened up a new universe of Indian English literature.

Amitav Ghosh explored in his first magical realism novel, *The Circle of Reason*. It revolves round the protagonist Nachiketa, a Bengali orphan who is called ‘Alu’ (potato) because his head is shaped like one. Magic realism is employed in the incident when an ordinary incident of Alu’s burial is used to create a sense of extraordinary in his survival and was saved by the machines. His other novel, *The Calcutta Chromosome* has its themes represented by the elements of magic realism. Other examples of this technique are Shashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* (1989), Boman Desai’s *The Memory of Elephants* (1988), Indrajit Hazra’s *The Burnt Forehead of Max Saul* (2000), Rukun Advani’s *Beethoven Among the Cows* (1994), Vikram Chandra’s *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* (1995), Tabish Khair’s *An Angel in Pyjamas* (1996) and many more.

### **Graphic Novels:**

A comparatively new space and medium of representation in the contemporary field of narration is seen in the emergent form of graphic novels. The verbal-visual literacy of this hybrid medium opens up a new horizon to capture the site of dissent in the Indian context of political, social and cultural hegemonies and mirror the otherwise concealed grimness of the society. The literary territory of Indian graphic narratives beginning with the very first *Amar Chitra Katha* by Anant Pai in 1967 has come a long way representing one’s identity and culture in the matrix of suppressed voices. Artist Orijit Sen, creator of the graphic narrative *The River of Stories* (Kalpavriksh, 1994) pioneers for its journalistic approach, capturing the plight of ‘adivasis’ due to the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam. Following Sen, the first graphic novel to receive widespread attention was Sarnath Banerjee’s *Corridor* (2004) followed by his other two novels - *The Barn Owl’s Wondrous Capers* (2007) and *Harappa Files* (2011). Vishwajyoti Ghosh’s *Delhi Calm* (2010) uses the look of faded newspapers to emphasize the psychic impact of the historical event of the Emergency. Srividya Natarajan’s *Bhimayana* and *A Gardener in the Wasteland* examines the age-old issues of caste violence using the medium of graphic novels. Sajid in his

debut novel *Munnu*, beautifully crafts the Kashmiris as the endangered *hangul deer* (the Kashmiri stag) against the backdrop of curfews, crackdowns, disappearances, assaults, barbed wire and the daily occurrences of military aggression. Similar voices of alternative perspectives are seen in *Kari* by Amruta Patil (2008), *Devi* by Shekar Kapoor (2007), *Shaheen Bagh* by Ita Mehrotra (2021) and many more.

#### 5.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

This Unit deals with Indian English fiction and attempts to trace the stages of development of the Indian English novel through the various phases of Indian political, social and cultural history and also tries to underline the thematic diversity found in the novels. It also categorizes the novels under the modes of representation, specifying the key features of each mode with varied examples.

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### 5.3 Learning Outcomes:

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On completion of this Unit, you shall be able to:

- have a general understanding of novel as a genre
- trace the trajectory of Indian English novel
- have an idea of the thematic repertoire of Indian English novel
- understand the modes of presentation employed in Indian English novel

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### 5.4 Glossary

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**Diaspora:** it refers to the people who had to leave their homeland and settle down in some other land of which the culture is different, and these people feel nostalgic about their homeland and at times create in fiction ‘imaginary homelands’ or write about the challenges of acculturation, acclimatization or adjustment with the host-land.

**Fiction:** it denotes the element of made-upness or concocted-ness in a narrative--be it in prose or verse. Since, the fictional world is the most imagined of all, novel and short stories are jointly called fiction in common parlance.

**Story within story :** it refers to a story- scheme in which a frame narrative contains other constituent narratives which together form a supra-story structure like in some of the Indian

Epics and story-cycles. Some modern examples would be like Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozshah Baag* and Basheer's *The Scattered Souls*

**Lingua franca:** a language that is used by the masses and understood generally by all

**Magic realism:** a technique of writing in which the unreal and the real are treated alike and presented with the same degree of realism that their difference does not even seem to exist.

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## 5.5 Sample Questions

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### 5.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Which among the following novels are written by Mulk Raj Anand?
  - a. *Untouchable* (1935)
  - b. *Coolie* (1936)
  - c. *Two Leaves and Bud* (1938)
  - d. All of the above**
2. Which among the following novels are written by Amitav Ghosh?
  - a. *The Circle of Reason*
  - b. *The Calcutta Chromosome*
  - c. *Sea of Poppies*
  - d. All of the above**
3. Which among the following is/are novels on the theme of Partition?
  - a. *Tamas*
  - b. *Ice-Candy Man*
  - c. *Train to Pakistan*
  - d. All of the above**
4. Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* portrays Oriental and Occidental cultures or East-West encounter. (True/False)
5. *A Bend in the Ganges* is written by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Manohar Malgaonkar**
  - b. Chaman Nahal
  - c. Khushwant Singh
  - d. Saadat Hasan Manto
6. Which of the following texts is a novel written by Shashi Tharoor?

- a. *The Great Indian Novel*
  - b. *An Era of Darkness*
  - c. *Inglorious Empire*
  - d. *Pax Indica*
7. Vishwajyoti Ghosh's *Delhi Calm* (2010) uses the look of faded newspapers to emphasize the psychic impact of the historical event of the Emergency. (True/False)
  8. The literary territory of Indian graphic narratives beginning with the very first *Amar Chitra Katha* by Anant Pai in 1967 has come a long way representing one's identity and culture in the matrix of suppressed voices. (True/False)
  9. Diaspora refers to the people who had to leave their homeland and settle down in some other land of which the culture is different. (True/False)
  10. A language that is used by the masses and understood generally by all is called *lingua franca*. (True/False)

#### 5.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Write briefly about the formative stage in Indian fiction in English.
2. Name some major women novelists and write about their contribution to Indian English novels.
3. What is a graphic novel? Write a short note on its emergence in India.
4. How would you distinguish between Indian English novels written in pre-independence and post-independence period?
5. Explain how social realism is employed as a mode of representation in Indian English novels.

#### 5.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

1. What do you understand by *Indian Fiction in English*?
2. Trace the important milestones in the development of Indian English novel from the post-Independence phase to the present times.
3. Assess the contribution of Anand, Narayan and Rao to the development of Indian English novel.

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## 5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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Chaudhari, Amit. *Clearing a Space: Reflections on India, Literature, and Modernity*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.

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

Mehrotra, A. K. eds. *An Illustrated History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.

Mehta, P. P. *Indo- Anglian Fiction: An Assessment*. Bareilly: Prakash Book, 1978.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. *The Twice Born Fiction*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1971.

Naik, M. K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982.

Rushdie, Salman and Elizabeth West, eds. *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing in English*. London: Vintage, 1997.

## Unit-6: Women Novelists in Indian Fiction

### Structure

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Objectives

6.2 Women Novelists in Indian Fiction

6.2.1 Socio-cultural context shaping women's literary expressions

6.2.2 Introduction to key themes in Indian women's novels

6.2.3 Key figures in Indian women's fiction

6.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

6.3 Learning Outcomes

6.4 Glossary

6.5 Sample Questions

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 6.0 Introduction

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In the first Unit of this block i.e. (Unit-5), you have already learned about the origin and development of Indian fiction in English. You may also have studied about some of the prominent novelists in Indian writing in English. Now we shall study some Indian women novelists who write in English. The term, women novelists in Indian fiction, refers to the body of literature that is produced by Indian women in Indian writing in English. Indian English literature is an umbrella term for the Indian writers (both male and female) contributing to the existing body of Indian literature written in English. We also need to understand that **Indo-Anglian literature** refers to the genre that was created by Indian writers by writing in English while **Anglo-Indian literature** refers to works of Englishmen on several themes related to India. In this Unit, we will explore some of the women novelists who created a hallmark for themselves in the field of Indian English fiction.

#### *Check your progress:*

1. What is Anglo-Indian Literature?
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## 6.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- explore the contributions and representations of women novelists in Indian fiction
- understand the themes, narratives, and the socio-cultural context surrounding these works

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## 6.2 Women Novelists in Indian Fiction

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The emergence and evolution of women's fiction in India is a rich and multifaceted journey that reflects the changing social, cultural, and political landscape of the country. Here's an overview:

**Early Beginnings:** Women's fiction in India traces its roots back to ancient times, with examples of women-authored literature found in texts like the Rig Veda and the Mahabharata. However, it wasn't until the colonial period that women began to actively engage with Western literary forms and genres.

**Colonial Era:** The British colonial rule in India brought about significant changes in society, including the rise of education for women from privileged classes. Early women writers such as Krupabai Sathianadhan and Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain emerged during this period, addressing issues of women's education, marriage, and social reform.

**Pre-Independence Era:** The early 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a surge in women's voices in literature, with authors like Sarojini Naidu and Kamala Das contributing to poetry and prose. The progressive movements and struggles for independence provided a platform for women to articulate their experiences and aspirations through fiction.

**Post-Independence Period:** Post-independence, Indian women writers gained increasing visibility and recognition, exploring a diverse range of themes and styles. Writers such as Ismat Chughtai, Kamala Markandaya, and Nayantara Sahgal broke new ground in addressing taboo subjects like sexuality, caste, and gender discrimination. The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of feminist literature, with authors like Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, and Arundhati Roy exploring women's agency, identity, and empowerment.

**Contemporary Era:** In recent decades, Indian women writers have continued to flourish, both within India and on the global literary stage. Authors like Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai,

Jhumpa Lahiri, and Arundhati Subramaniam have garnered international acclaim for their nuanced portrayals of Indian women's experiences. The advent of digital platforms and social media has provided new avenues for women writers to share their stories and connect with diverse audiences.

### **6.2.1 Socio-cultural context shaping women's literary expressions:**

The socio-cultural context plays a pivotal role in shaping women's literary expressions in India. Here's a discussion on how various socio-cultural factors influence women's writing:

#### **Patriarchal Society:**

- India, like many societies, has traditionally been patriarchal, where power and privilege are often concentrated in the hands of men.
- Patriarchal norms and values dictate gender roles, expectations, and limitations placed on women, both within the family and society at large.
- Women writers often engage with and challenge these patriarchal structures through their narratives, exploring themes of oppression, resistance, and female agency.

#### **Cultural Traditions and Values:**

- India boasts a rich tapestry of cultural traditions, languages, and customs, which shape the worldview and artistic sensibilities of its writers.
- Cultural values such as duty, honor, and familial obligations often feature prominently in women's fiction, reflecting the complex interplay between tradition and modernity.
- At the same time, women writers may also interrogate and subvert cultural norms, questioning entrenched beliefs and practices that perpetuate gender inequality.

#### **Socio-Economic Factors:**

- Socio-economic disparities in India have a profound impact on women's lives and opportunities, influencing their access to education, employment, and social mobility.
- Women from marginalized communities may face additional barriers due to caste, class, or religious discrimination, which are often reflected in their literary works.
- Economic independence and social empowerment emerge as recurring themes in women's fiction, as writers explore the struggles and aspirations of women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

### **Colonial Legacy and Post-Colonial Realities:**

- India's colonial past continues to reverberate in its socio-cultural landscape, shaping contemporary discourses on identity, nationalism, and cultural authenticity.
- Women writers may grapple with the legacy of colonialism, interrogating Eurocentric narratives and reclaiming indigenous voices and perspectives.
- Post-colonial realities, including globalization, urbanization, and technological advancements, also influence women's literary expressions, offering new opportunities for creative exploration and engagement with global audiences.

### **Feminist Discourses and Movements:**

- The rise of the feminist movements in India has provided a platform for women writers to articulate their experiences, challenge gender norms, and advocate for social change.
- Feminist literary theory and discourse inform the work of many women writers, shaping their perspectives on gender, power, and representation.
- Women's fiction often serves as a site of resistance and solidarity, amplifying marginalized voices and advocating for gender equality and justice.

The socio-cultural context in India is a dynamic and multifaceted terrain that shapes and informs women's literary expressions in myriad ways. From interrogating patriarchal norms to celebrating cultural diversity, women writers engage with complex social realities, offering insights into the lived experiences of women in Indian society. Through their narratives, they not only reflect upon but also contribute to shaping the socio-cultural landscape, challenging stereotypes, and envisioning more inclusive and equitable futures.

### **6.2.2 Introduction to Key Themes in Indian Women's Novels:**

Indian women's novels are rich tapestries that intricately weave together various themes reflecting the multifaceted experiences of women in Indian society. These novels serve as powerful vehicles for exploring and interrogating complex issues, challenging stereotypes, and amplifying marginalized voices. Here are some key themes prevalent in Indian women's novels:

#### **Identity and Self-Discovery:**

- Many Indian women novelists delve into the exploration of identity formation and self-discovery, portraying protagonists who grapple with questions of selfhood, belonging, and cultural identity.

- Characters navigate the intersections of gender, class, caste, religion, and regional identities, reflecting the diverse and heterogeneous nature of Indian society.
- Novels often depict journeys of self-realization and empowerment as women assert agency and challenge societal expectations to carve out their own paths.

#### **Patriarchy and Gender Inequality:**

- Patriarchy and gender inequality are central themes in Indian women's novels, highlighting the pervasive power structures that limit women's autonomy and opportunities.
- Authors critically examine the impact of patriarchal norms and practices on women's lives, addressing issues such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry, and gender-based discrimination.
- Through their narratives, women writers expose the injustices of patriarchal systems and advocate for gender equity and social change.

#### **Family and Relationships:**

- Family dynamics and interpersonal relationships feature prominently in Indian women's novels, offering insights into the complexities of familial bonds, traditions, and expectations.
- Novels explore themes such as mother-daughter relationships, sibling rivalries, marital discord, and inter-generational conflicts, revealing the tensions between tradition and modernity.
- Women writers examine the ways in which familial structures both support and constrain women's aspirations, highlighting the negotiations and sacrifices inherent in navigating familial roles and responsibilities.

#### **Feminism and Women's Empowerment:**

- Feminism and women's empowerment emerge as recurring themes in Indian women's novels, reflecting the growing consciousness and activism surrounding gender equality and women's rights.
- Authors challenge traditional notions of femininity and advocate for women's agency, autonomy, and liberation from oppressive social norms.
- Novels celebrate female resilience, courage, and solidarity, offering inspiring portrayals of women who defy conventions, pursue their passions, and assert their rights.

### **Social Justice and Marginalization:**

- Indian women's novels often confront issues of social justice and marginalization, shedding light on the experiences of marginalized communities and individuals.
- Authors explore themes such as caste discrimination, religious intolerance, poverty, and marginalization of LGBTQ+ communities, highlighting the intersections of oppression and privilege.
- Novels serve as platforms for amplifying marginalized voices, fostering empathy and understanding, and advocating for social change and inclusivity.

Indian women's novels are characterized by their diversity, depth, and resonance, offering nuanced portrayals of women's lives and experiences in Indian society. Through the exploration of key themes such as identity, patriarchy, family, feminism, and social justice, women writers engage with pressing issues and contribute to ongoing conversations about gender, power, and equality. These novels not only entertain, but also educate, inspire, and empower readers, making invaluable contributions to literature and social transformation.

### **6.2.3 Key Figures in Indian Women's Fiction**

#### **Kamala Markandaya:**

Kamala Markandaya (1924 – 2004) was an Indian novelist and journalist known for her insightful and poignant portrayals of Indian life and culture. Born Kamala Purnaiya in Mysuru, Karnataka, she later moved to England and married an Englishman. She wrote under the pseudonym Kamala Markandaya to avoid bias based on her gender and ethnicity.

Markandaya's writing often focused on the social, cultural, and economic changes in India during the 20th century. Her novels explore the complexities of human relationships and the impact of modernization on traditional ways of life. One of her most acclaimed works is *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), which tells the story of a rural Indian woman named Rukmani and her struggles against poverty and societal changes.

In *Nectar in a Sieve*, Markandaya addresses themes such as industrialization, urbanization, poverty, and the clash between tradition and modernity. The novel is praised for its lyrical prose and compassionate portrayal of characters facing adversity. Markandaya's other notable works include *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), and *Possession* (1963). Her novels often depicted the human condition in the face of social and economic

challenges, and they provided a nuanced perspective on the changes occurring in India during the post-colonial period.

Although she might not be as widely known as some other Indian novelists, Kamala Markandaya's contributions to literature have left a lasting impact, particularly in her exploration of the human experience within the context of a changing society.

### **Anita Desai:**

Anita Desai, one of India's most accomplished contemporary writers, is renowned for her insightful exploration of human emotions, relationships, and cultural identity. Born in 1937 in Mussoorie, Desai has penned numerous critically acclaimed novels and short stories that offer profound insights into the complexities of Indian society. Her works often feature female protagonists grappling with personal and societal challenges, navigating the tensions between tradition and modernity. Desai's novel "Clear Light of Day" (1980) is a poignant exploration of family dynamics and memory, set against the backdrop of post-partition India. In "The Village by the Sea" (1982), she portrays the resilience of two young sisters as they confront poverty and adversity in a rural Indian village. Desai's nuanced characterizations, lyrical prose, and keen observations of human behavior have earned her widespread recognition and accolades, establishing her as a literary luminary in the global literary landscape.

### **Arundhati Roy:**

Arundhati Roy is a towering figure in contemporary Indian literature, acclaimed for her singular voice, incisive social commentary, and lyrical prose. Born in 1961 in Shillong, Meghalaya, Roy burst onto the literary scene with her debut novel, "The God of Small Things" (1997), which won the prestigious Booker Prize and garnered international acclaim. Set in Kerala, India, the novel is a lyrical exploration of love, caste, and societal norms, weaving together themes of memory, loss, and forbidden desire. Roy's fearless critique of injustice and inequality extends beyond her fiction to her prolific essays and activism, where she advocates for environmental justice, human rights, and anti-globalization movements. Despite facing controversy and criticism for her outspoken views, Roy remains an indomitable force for social change and a powerful voice for the marginalized and oppressed. Her contributions to literature and activism have earned her widespread admiration and cemented her status as one of India's most influential contemporary writers.

**Kiran Desai:**

Kiran Desai is a prominent Indian novelist known for her evocative storytelling and intricate exploration of identity, displacement, and globalization. Born in New Delhi in 1971, Desai grew up in India and later moved to the United States, experiences that deeply inform her writing. Her acclaimed novel "The Inheritance of Loss" (2006) won the Man Booker Prize and garnered international acclaim for its poignant depiction of characters grappling with the complexities of migration, cultural alienation, and social upheaval. Set in the foothills of the Himalayas and in New York City, the novel weaves together multiple narratives that illuminate the interconnectedness of lives across continents and generations. Desai's lyrical prose and keen observations of human frailty and resilience resonate with readers worldwide, establishing her as a leading voice in contemporary literature.

**Jhumpa Lahiri:**

Jhumpa Lahiri is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author renowned for her poignant explorations of the immigrant experience, cultural identity, and belonging. Born in London to Bengali immigrant parents and raised in Rhode Island, Lahiri's writing reflects her bi-cultural upbringing and the complexities of navigating multiple worlds. Her debut collection of short stories, "Interpreter of Maladies" (1999), won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and announced her as a formidable talent in contemporary literature. Lahiri's subsequent novels, including "The Namesake" (2003) and "The Lowland" (2013), further cemented her reputation for her nuanced characterizations, exquisite prose, and poignant insights into the human condition. Lahiri's writing captures the universal themes of love, loss, and longing, while also shedding light on the particularities of the immigrant experience and the tension between cultural heritage and assimilation.

**Shobha De:**

Shobha De is a prolific Indian author and columnist known for her candid portrayal of contemporary Indian society, particularly its urban elite. Born in 1947 in Mumbai, De began her career as a model before transitioning to writing, where she quickly gained recognition for her bold and provocative style. Her novels, including "Socialite Evenings" (1989), "Starry Nights" (2014), and "Sultry Days" (2020), offer satirical glimpses into the lives of India's affluent and glamorous, exploring themes of ambition, desire, and the pursuit of pleasure. De's writing is characterized by its sharp wit, incisive social commentary, and fearless exploration of taboo subjects. As a columnist and social commentator, De continues to spark debate and controversy

with her outspoken views on politics, culture, and feminism, making her a polarizing yet influential figure in Indian literature and media.

### **Mahasweta Devi (1926-2016):**

Mahasweta Devi (1926 – 2016) was a prominent Indian Bengali writer and social activist known for her powerful and socially relevant literature. She was born in Dhaka (now in Bangladesh) and later became a professor of English literature. Mahasweta Devi's work often focused on the struggles of marginalized communities, particularly indigenous peoples and tribal communities in India.

Her writing was characterized by a deep commitment to social justice and a keen understanding of the complexities of the socio-political landscape. Mahasweta Devi used her literary voice to shed light on the exploitation, oppression, and displacement faced by tribal communities and other disenfranchised groups.

One of her most famous works is *Hajar Churashir Ma* (The Mother of 1084), a novel that deals with the Naxalite movement in Bengal and its impact on families. The title refers to the police record number assigned to a deceased person. The novel explores the psychological and emotional trauma experienced by a mother who discovers that her son has been killed by the police.

Another notable work by Mahasweta Devi is *Aranyer Adhikar* (Right to the Forest), which highlights the struggles of tribal communities against the exploitation of their lands and resources. Her writings often challenged established norms and brought attention to the plight of those on the fringes of society.

Apart from novels, Mahasweta Devi wrote short stories and plays, and she was involved in activism for tribal rights and social justice. Her work earned her numerous awards, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Jnanpith Award, and the Ramon Magsaysay Award.

Mahasweta Devi's legacy extends beyond her literary contributions; she is remembered for her advocacy and her ability to give a voice to the marginalized through her writing. Her works continue to be studied and celebrated for their social and political relevance.

### **Nayantara Sahgal (1927- Present):**

Nayantara Sahgal is an Indian author known for her novels and her engagement with social and political issues. Born on May 10, 1927, she comes from a distinguished family, being the daughter of Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, a prominent political figure and diplomat, and the niece of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.



Nayantara Sahgal's early novels often explore the social and cultural changes in post-independence India. Her debut novel, "Prison and Chocolate Cake" (1954), was followed by several others, including *The Day in Shadow* (1971) and *Rich Like Us* (1985). *Rich Like Us* won the Sahitya Akademi Award and focuses on the political and social upheavals during the Emergency in India (1975-1977).

One of her significant works is "Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi" (1992), a biography of her cousin, the former Prime Minister of India. The book is notable for its critical examination of Indira Gandhi's political career and the events that shaped modern India.

Nayantara Sahgal has been an active participant in discussions on politics, human rights, and freedom of expression in India. She has been outspoken on issues related to secularism and has raised her voice against communalism. In 2015, she made headlines when she returned the Sahitya Akademi Award as a form of protest against what she perceived as a growing climate of intolerance and the silencing of dissent in the country.

Her literary contributions and her involvement in socio-political issues have earned Nayantara Sahgal recognition and respect in India and beyond. Through her novels and activism, she continues to be a significant voice in the literary and political landscape of India.

#### **Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1927-2013):**

She was born to German and Polish parents and later married Cyrus Jhabvala, a young Parsi architect. Her creative spirit finds artistic expression during her time in India. She authored eight novels in addition to editing a couple anthologies of short stories. She focused on the upper and middle class Indian culture that was familiar to her. Her imaginary world is largely set in the home and deals with familial themes. She also touches on the subject of the interaction between Indian and European civilizations. Her keen ability to observe and understand Indian society, combined with her critical thinking skills, allowed her to portray people's daily lives in a variety of situations with accuracy. Jhabvala is particularly aware of the status of women in the Indian culture, and her novels show how her conduct changes as a result of the shifting cultural landscape. One of those figures in her *Esmond in India* is Madhuri. *Get Ready for Fighting, Love Nature, Whom She Wants, Heat and Sand* are some other notable works. The titles of these books attest to her Indianness and display her interest in and admiration for Indian culture.

#### **Manju Kapur (1947-Present):**

She is now indisputably a well-known and braced author in Indian English fiction. She has been a source of discussions for great critics. Her writing has limitless potential and may be

read from many angles. Her writings are rich in symbolism. They both amuse the readers and brainwash the misled individuals. Some of her important works are *Difficult Daughters*, *A Married Woman*, *Home*, etc.

**Gita Sahgal (1956-Present):**

Gita Sahgal, a distinguished writer and journalist, has devoted her work to addressing issues related to feminism, fundamentalism, and racism. Beyond her literary pursuits, she has also made a mark as a director, earning recognition for a prize-winning documentary. In addition to her creative endeavors, Sahgal is a committed human rights activist and a co-founder of a women's organization.

As the daughter of the renowned novelist Nayantara Sahgal, Gita Sahgal has contributed significantly to literature and film production. Some of her notable works include "*Tying the Knot*," and she co-edited "*Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain*" with Nira Yaul Divas.

During her early years in Delhi, Sahgal was actively involved in a feminist network that fought against oppressive laws related to dowry and rape. Unfortunately, the issues of rape and sexual violence against women persist as significant challenges in India.

Some other notable women novelists in Indian English fiction are Bharti Mukhejee, Sudha Murthy etc. Their contribution to Indian English literature is immense. However, we are not discussing them in detail in this Unit.

***Check your progress:***

1. Mention any two important novels of Anita Desai.

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2. Who wrote the famous novel *The God of Small Things*?

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**6.2.4 Let Us Sum Up**

There is no denying that Indian women novelists have expressed the bitter realities of India in the current literary scenario. They are treated equally now with male novelists because they have exceeded the literary standards set by male writers. These women novelists and their works have received global recognition and have large viewership and readership across the globe. They have enjoyed considerable scholarly attention and are subject to many research proposals in different educational institutions. They have received fair consideration in literary

criticism, especially feminism and its related areas. Apart from the Indian women novelists that were discussed above, there are several other women novelists writing in Indian English fiction who are also considered important, such as Anita Nair, Chitra Banerjee, Sunita Namjoshi, Nergis Dalal, Krishna Saboti, Gita Hariharan, Gauri Deshpande, Namita Gokhle etc. Their writings have also received fair attention from readers.

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### 6.3 Learning Outcomes

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Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to know the historical background of Indian women novelists in Indian writing in English. You should be able to identify some of the famous women novelists writing in Indian English fiction. You should also be able to appreciate the contribution of these women novelists to Indian English fiction.

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### 6.4 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

**Gynocriticism:** It is the study of women's writing. The term gynocritics was coined by Elaine Showalter in 1979 to refer to a form of feminist literary criticism that is concerned with women as writers

**Patriarchy:** A hierarchically structured society in which men hold more power

**Misogyny:** The hatred against women

**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

**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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## 6.5 Sample Questions

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### 6.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Who wrote the novel *Namesake*?  
(a) Shashi Deshpande      (b) Arundhati Roy      (c) Kiran Desia      (d) **None of the them**
2. The novel *Inheritance of Loss* as written by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Gita Mehta      (b) Rama Mehta      (c) Anita Desia      (d) **Kiran Desai**
3. Kamla Markandaya was born in the year \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) 1924      (b) **1925**      (c) 1926      (d) 1927
4. *Difficult Daughters* and *Home* are novels written by \_\_\_\_\_. (**Manju Kapur**)  
(a) Sudha Murthy      (b) Gita Mehta      (c) Manju Kapur      (d) Gita Hariharan
5. Which of the followings novels is written by Shobha De?  
(a) **Sisters**      (b) *Home*      (c) *Haveli*      (d) *Nectar in Sieve*

### True or False

1. Kiran Desia is the daughter of Anita Desia. \_\_\_\_\_ (**True**)
2. Arundhati Roy wrote the novel *God of Small Things* in the year 1997. \_\_\_\_\_ (**True**)
3. *The Tiger's Daughter* is a novel by Sudha Murthy. \_\_\_\_\_ (**False**)
4. The short stories of Mahasweta Devi were translated by Gayatri Spivak. \_\_\_\_\_ (**True**)
5. Gita Sehgal is known as Nightingale of India. \_\_\_\_\_ (**False**)

### 6.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. What is Gynocriticism?
2. Define feminism.
3. Write a short note on Arundhati Roy as a novelist.
4. Mention any five important works of Manju Kapur.
5. What is Indo-Anglian Literature?

### 6.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Write a detailed note on the contribution of Indian women novelists to Indian English fiction.
2. What are some of the common themes explored by Indian women writers in their novels?
3. Write brief notes on the following novelists:
  - (a) Kamala Markandaya
  - (b) Shashi Deshpande
  - (c) Anita Desia
  - (d) Jumphah Lahiri

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### 6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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Aparna, Basu. *Women in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Pratham Books, 1990.

K.R. Srinivasa, Iyengar. *Indian Writing in English*. London: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 2012.

Meenakshi, Bharat. *Desert in Bloom: Contemporary Indian Women's Fiction in English*. Eds.

Meenakshi, Bharat. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004.

## Unit-7: Shashi Deshpande – *Roots and Shadows*

### Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Objectives
- 7.2 Shashi Deshpande – *Roots and Shadows*
  - 7.2.1 About Shashi Deshpande
  - 7.2.2 Summary
  - 7.2.3 Characters
  - 7.2.4 Themes
  - 7.2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.3 Learning Outcomes
- 7.4 Glossary
- 7.5 Sample Questions
- 7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 7.1 Introduction

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Women writers hold a significant place in Indian writing in English. They have produced myriads of work highlighting modern age-old customs or traditions in an oppressive male-dominated society, and the predicament of Indian women. Shashi Deshpande is one such writer who displays a keen insight into the psychological experience of her female characters that encompasses the entire orbit of the dilemma of women in contemporary Indian society. She voices her concerns for middle class, educated, sensitive and career-oriented women who are hesitant to reclaim their identity in the changing social realm. The Unit attempts to understand the concerns shown by Shashi Deshpande in *Roots and Shadows* through different women characters smothered by a matrix of exploring their inner self to assert their individuality. It also analysis the vivid details of various women characters and their emotions of greed, jealousy, anguish, fears provided by the novelist. The Unit highlights the escalating positivism in the succession of the woman protagonist in the novel of Shashi Deshpande.

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## 7.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce the novel, *Roots and Shadows* by Shashi Deshpande
- examine the importance of Shashi Deshpande

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## 7.2 Shashi Deshpande – *Roots and Shadows*

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### 7.2.1 About Shashi Deshpande:

Shashi Deshpande is a renowned name in the field of contemporary fiction writers in Indian writing in English. She was born in Dharwad, Karnataka, on August 19, 1938, to the famous R.V. Jagirdar and Sharda Arya. Her father was a well-known scholar of Sanskrit, novelist, playwright, actor, and translator of numerous national-heritage Sanskrit plays. She is a polyglot who is well versed in Sanskrit, Marathi and Kannada.

Born into an upper middle class family, Deshpande studied at British Convent School. She moved to Bombay University to obtain a degree in Economics and Political Science in 1956. She also studied Law in Bangalore and started her first job as a lawyer. She completed her Diploma in Journalism at Vidya Bhavan in the year 1970 and worked for the magazine ‘Onlooker’ as a journalist. Shashi Deshpande was married to a doctor named Dhirendra H. Deshpande. She felt isolated for a long time after her return from London to Bangalore after spending a year there. Her husband encouraged and supported her to pen down her experiences. On her father’s advice, she published her first short story titled “The Legacy” in 1972. She published her first novel titled *Roots and Shadows* in 1983, followed by *The Dark Holds No Terror* in 1986 that talked about marital rape. She won the Nanjangud Thirumalamba Award for the same in 1989. After two years, she published *That Long Silence*. It was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1990. Deshpande returned the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2015 in the wake of a protest against the inefficiency of the organization to protect violence against authors. In 2009, she was awarded the prestigious Padma Shri Award. The novel *Shadow Play* by Deshpande made it to the shortlist for The Hindu Literary Prize in 2014. In her inaugural address at the 2018 Goa Arts and Literature Festival (GALF), she urged her countrymen to consider the consequences of seeking the Hindu nation as a threat to secularism and recalled similar events that led to the formation of India and Pakistan in the past.

*A Summer Adventure* (1978), *The Hidden Treasure* (1980), *The Only Witness* (1980), and *The Narayanpur Incident* are Deshpande's four children's books. She is the author of numerous short stories, including *It Was the Nightingale* (1986), *The Intrusion and Other Stories* (1994), *The Legacy and Other Stories* (1978), *It Was Dark* (1986), and *The Miracle and Other Stories* (1986). She wrote thirteen novels with women as central characters in addition to short stories and children's books. The first is *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, which was published in 1980, and the second is *If I Die Today*, which was published in 1982. She published her critically acclaimed 1983 novel *Roots and Shadows* after two years. *Come Up and Be Dead* came out in 1985, and *That Long Silence* came out in 1988. The year 1994 saw the release of *The Binding Vine*, *A Matter of Time* released in 1996, and the release of *Small Remedies* in 2000. She has also published a number of essays, including *Writing from the Margin*.

Shashi Deshpande writes elaborately on women issues that serve as the ideal panacea for various challenges a woman undergoes in a society. Through her characters, she brings out the oppressive nature of patriarchy in Indian society that clutches women to their homes where they are unable to express themselves. She delves deep into the psychological trauma that women undergo in society even after knowing the social, economic, and political exploitation at the hands of patriarchal powers.

Deshpande's concern for women's emancipation is strong. Her works show the reclamation of women's identity in a mild manner where she portrays home as a place of peace, love, and security. U.S. Rukhaiyar writes:

Shashi Deshpande is also a good crafts-person. She knows that art lies not in saying a thing, but rather in showing a thing. Hence, she is very careful in developing the plot and character and their proper interaction, psychological analysis of the characters, symbolism and imagery, language and rhythm, and the weaving of all of them into a living whole.

Through her novels, Deshpande presents an awareness about the tribulations faced by contemporary women through her female characters. Let us now move to the next section to learn about the text prescribed in the syllabus.

### **7.2.2 Summary**

This section will provide a detailed summary of the novel *Roots and Shadows* written by Shashi Deshpande. Shashi Deshpande published her debut novel, *Roots and Shadows*, in 1983.



The novel explores the feminine sensibilities through various female characters in the novel. It encompasses three generations of a joint Brahmin Maharastrian family. The protagonist, Indu, asserts her femininity in order to achieve freedom in a society dominated by men. In the novel, Akka, who is seriously ill, summons Indu to her ancestral home after a decade. In addition, she was present for Mini's wedding and the resolution of ancestral property disputes. In the past, Indu left her family as an orphan to make her way through life in unconventional ways. She wedded Jayant against her family's desires to execute her opportunity against the well-established customs. However, presently she feels close to home affinities with her abandoned past. Another act of treachery in Indu's life was her marriage to Jayant, and as a result, she made the decision to go back to her parents' house. A means of resisting patriarchy's traditional hold was personal choice marriage. Indu realizes that her responses to Jayant and other people like him are set in stone, reducing her ability to express herself. She was unable to escape the shadows of her orphanage's insecurity in his company. Indu looks out for her childhood friend Naren, who left the house a long time ago and got into a lot of weird things. Indu's ability to think creatively was appreciated and encouraged by Naren. Naren cherishes Indu's writings and encourages her to resume her career as a journalist in order to replicate the experiences of women's angst. Despite her disgust with Jayant, Indu yields to Naren's demands.

After Indu arrives, Akka quickly passes away, leaving the ancestral home and property in Indu's name, which shocks the rest of the family. Indu's assessment of this responsibility gives her insight into Akka's suffering. Indu is moved to reevaluate her grandmother's actions after learning about the terrible struggles Akka faced as a young woman against the irrational, tyrannical authority of her treacherous husband and treacherous mother-in-law. Akka made two endeavors to take off from her home, yet her mother-in-law whipped her for that and secured her for three days, with the extra discipline of starvation. After her mother-in-law's death and her husband's stroke, Akka only regains her strength and freedom. After becoming a widow, Akka devotes herself to household duties and endures all torture in silence.

Akka was the only person in the family who could make decisions. A portion of Akka's wealth had also been set aside for Mini's marriage. Mini reveals to Indu that she has decided not to respond to her requests for marriage. She even hesitates to call her husband's name. Mini acknowledges that women's intelligence is always a burden. Many of Akka's family members, including Padmini's parents and brothers, were worried that Indu would not honor Akka's request that she pay for Padmini's wedding. Indu fulfills Akka's wishes, but after hearing

Padmini's story, she tries to convince Padmini to marry Naren rather than marry according to Akka's choice. However, Padmini and her parents are unwilling to alter Akka's decision, much to her dismay. Indu ponders over the fate of women in large, traditional Hindu families, where they are merely puppets.

After Mini marries, Indu decides to sell the ancestral home. Some of her uncles, the older members of the family, are against her decision to sell the house, but her cousins are happy with it and ask Indu to help them get settled with the money. After negotiating the sale, Shankarappa bought the house and said he would tear it down and build a new hotel there. Indu becomes overcome with emotion when the time comes to say goodbye to her ancestral home. She shakes violently at the thought that the house would be destroyed.

In the end, Vithal tells Indu that someone drowned in the pond. Indu is worried about Naren because she does not want to take a bath there. When Indu found out that it was Naren, she was dumbfounded. Indu felt a strange fear creep into her mind, and the family was in a dark mood. She finally decides to go back to her house and resume her married life with Jayant. In the final section of the book, Indu returns to her home after Naren's death, suggesting that she has left her illusion and returned to reality. The novel has a happy ending that gives readers hope for a new day.

As a result, despite the difficulties she faces on her journey to assert her identity in society, Indu makes a name for herself in the novel. As a determined woman, she redefines her path through trials and tribulations by putting all of her fears aside and refusing to conform to social norms. She overcomes her imagined shortcomings and emerges as a self-confident individual. Indu achieves self-sufficiency and fulfilment with courage, dignity, responsibility, and an independent spirit.

***Check your progress:***

1. Shashi Deshpande, in her novel *Roots and Shadows* (1983), explores the feminine sensibilities through various female characters in the novel. (True/False)

### **7.2.3 Characters**

There are a myriad of characters in the novel as it tells the story of a joint Maharastrian Brahmin family where three to four generations of the family experience life differently. The novel comprises nearly two dozen characters. Interestingly, the female characters in the novel

portray a mosaic of experience for readers to know about women in different phases and situations in life.

**Indu:** The novel's protagonist comes from a Maharastrian Brahmin family with a middle class upbringing. She is sensitive, smart, educated, and focused on her career. Because she was of a different caste, Indu's mother was not accepted by her father's family. This brought about disdain against the relatives by her dad, Govind. Her father gave her to her family after her mother passed away. Together with her father, Indu was cared for by a matriarch, Akka. Since she was a young girl, Indu did not want to conform to the patriarchal standards of her family's society. She went on to leave her home at a young age to marry Jayant, the man of her choice, demonstrating her independence and identity through education.

Indu found herself ensnared in the same cycle that she had broken earlier to assert her voice as a modern woman after her marriage. She comes to the painful realization that, despite her education and exposure, she is unable to fully express herself to her husband, who attributes her passionate behavior. She acknowledges that she is not different from women who circumambulated the tulsi plant in order to extend their husbands' lives. Contrary to her romantic fantasies, she comes to the realization during her marriage that her educated and allegedly 'modern' husband is just a typical Indian husband for whom she must play the role of a passive and submissive wife in order to keep him happy and satisfied. Indu continued the tiresome task of writing for the magazine, despite her reluctance, to satisfy Jayant. She did not want to work for the magazine because she was dissatisfied with her encounter with a so-called social worker who had won an award for social services.

When she tells Naren, with whom she is having an affair, about her innermost feelings and aspirations, a significant shift occurs in her life. By encouraging her to fully accept herself, Naren aids in her deepening self-awareness and positivism. Indu is at a crossroads where everyone eventually needs to consider themselves. In order to demonstrate that her marriage was successful, she had concealed her identity and sense of self. She only expresses her true feelings and self-image in private with Naren. She emerges as a determined woman at the conclusion. She stands up to the shortcomings of life despite being torn between ancient customs. Indu's odyssey reveals the crisis of the contemporary "new woman" caught between the past, the present, and her future.

**Akka:** In the novel, Akka is a domineering mother figure. After Indu's mother passed away, she took care of her and raised her. She adheres to untouchability so fervently that she

refuses to visit the hospital for fear of being touched by nurses from lower castes. She represents the society's traditional values. She is a guidebook steeped in ancient values and customs. She was in charge of how the women in the house behaved.

When Akka was twelve years old, she wed a man twice her age who was also twice her size and had coarse features. She tried to flee several times from her difficult marriage. After her marriage, Akka went through inhumane circumstances. She attempted to flee twice when she was thirteen, but her mother-in-law caught her and whipped her. She was starved after being kept in a room for three days. When her husband was paralyzed, she showed the other side of her character by preventing his mistress from meeting him. She moved to her brother's house after her husband died. There, she enforces strict rules for all the women in the house. In the face of Akka's venomous tongue, Indu's grandfather Kaka transforms into a submissive character. She prohibits Indu from speaking with a boy in the library. She also told the women in the house not to call out their husband's name because doing so would show disrespect and shorten his life. She held to the traditional way of life for widows. In the novel, she demanded that Atya keep her head shaved for the rest of her life.

Despite her condemnation of Indu for her life choices, she gave Indu all of her wealth, even though she was wealthy and had no children. In the hope that Indu would not only preserve but also enhance the legacy, Akka had handed it over to her. In spite of Akka's rage at Indu's stubbornness, she secretly admired her granddaughter, who was so well-educated, free, and creative. As a result, she had left her legacy to Indu. Indu left her family to marry Jayant and escaped the clutches of those who deny women their freedom to make choices and, in turn, expect them to behave in a certain way. This was due to Akka's authority and the dictating atmosphere in the family.

**Padmini:** Mini is a young girl who is submissive, obedient, and silent. She is dedicated to her family and follows the elder members' rules. She was raised in a strict environment and has always possessed all of the traditional feminine traits. She also went by the name Mini. Mini accepts, while following in their footsteps, that a girl has no 'choices.' She was allowed to study not because she was independent but because she would make a good wife for they thought educated girls get better proposals.

The idea that people would reject her because of her physical appearance or the way she dressed was fed into Mini's mind. She has lost all interest in marriage after receiving multiple rejections, and her only wish is to get married as soon as possible to protect her parents from the

groom hunt. Mini was promised to a distant relative of Akka in exchange for Akka agreeing to cover the costs of the wedding because Mini's father, Anant, was struggling financially. Mini views her husband as a diviner and considers his home to be her final residence.

**Jayant:** Jayant is Indu's husband, and she married him against her family's wishes. Despite his academic credentials, Jayant was a typical Indian man. Jayant came from a different social class. Indu wanted Jayant to give her a sense of safety and stability, but his company did not reflect her choices. He was offended by the passionate behavior of his wife toward him because he did not like it. Jayant had a significant influence on his wife's mind and shaped her in accordance with his instructions. He was a man who wanted her to stick to socially acceptable boundaries. He advises his wife not to quit her job and to make a deal with the editor's attitude. He acknowledges that she is helpless against the system as a whole and urges her to follow it. Jayant despises Indu's displays of passion. He was unaware of Indu's needs and desires in a marriage that required her to submit to Naren, with whom she could fully express herself and experience freedom.

**Naren:** Naren is a free and independent individual who does not adhere to social norms. He was Indu's childhood friend. He has an affair with Indu after falling in love with her. He helps Indu discover her inner strength and offers her a new perspective on life and the world around her. She is encouraged to pursue a career as a journalist and work on issues pertaining to women because he recognizes her ability to write stories. In the company of Naren, Indu feels joy and fulfilment. Lastly, Naren is an ideal match for Indu's desires, which had been suppressed by Jayant's male idealism of a patriarchal society. In the novel, Naren passes away, and Indu returns to settle down with Jayant following this incident.

***Check your progress:***

1. Mini's father, Anant, was struggling financially. (True/False)
2. Jayant had a significant influence on his wife Indu's mind. (True/False)

#### **7.2.4 Themes**

In *Roots and Shadows*, Deshpande portrays a world with great inequalities for women through her characters from different classes, religions, genders, castes, and workplaces. Human suffering forms the basis of most of the characters in the novel that moves from family, community and nation. The major themes outlined in the novel are discussed below.

**Marriage:** In Indian society, marriage is regarded as a sacred union between two souls. Through a joint family, the author depicts a variety of marriages in the novel. Deshpande describes marriage as a female subjugation institution. The novelist depicts marriage as a *cul-de-sac* for a woman in Indian society that makes her dependent on a man through the characters of Indu, Akka, Padmini, Sunanda Atya, and many others. She also mentions that men and women have different interpretations of marriage.

Deshpande uses the example of Padmini, who is married off in desperation after receiving numerous rejections, to illustrate the difficulties that middle-class families face in their search for a suitable partner for their daughters. Deshpande considers the fact that, like Padmini, other Indian girls suffer from the same mental trauma and submit to their parents' wishes; for them, marriage is more important than a woman's desires. As a result, Deshpande raises important questions about arranged marriages in her work.

Through Indu's character, Deshpande emphasizes the importance of listening to one's conscience when making a decision about marriage and remaining committed to it. She also shows the readers that freedom in a marriage can be achieved by daring to act in accordance with one's beliefs. In the novel, Indu makes the decision to return to Jayant in the hope that she will do what is best for her.

In her writing, Deshpande exposes society's hypocrisy and double standards. Padmini marries a man of high social standing and receives a handsome dowry instead of Naren, who would have been a better match for her. Deshpande subtly brings up the issue of dowry, which is very common in Indian society. She makes the point that getting married is more of a social obligation than a choice about how one wants to live their life.

**Relationships:** Deshpande portrays marriage as a social obligation that may or may not result in a perfect union. She reveals the truth about the marriage between Akka and Indu. Akka was a victim of the widespread practice of child marriage in India. She witnessed her husband and other family members torturing her physically and mentally. Akka was abused by her husband and other family members when she got married when she was thirteen. Deshpande expresses her disapproval of the unpleasant and painful sexual violence that occurs during marriage. Deshpande, for another illustration, depicts Indu's dissatisfaction with her marriage to Jayant. Jayant's dislike of her passionate behavior bothers her. In the presence of Jayant, she is unable to fully express herself, so she opens up about herself in front of Naren, who gives her desires wings. Outside of her marriage to Naren, Indu is content.

Deshpande also discusses the challenges faced by male counterparts as a result of society's strong hold on traditions. Indu learns that her college friend Hemant is also unhappy with his marriage. He shuns marriage as a “trap” and observes that love is a higher priority than the warmth of individual relationship in a marriage.

**System of Joint Family:** The novel describes the joint family structure that is the foundation of Indian culture. Nearly a dozen characters, whose lives are intertwined and dependent on one another, form the basis of the novel, which is based on a Brahmin Maharastrian family. Shashi Deshpande also considers the ways in which various family voices contribute to the suppression of women in India's traditional society. Deshpande writes that even Kaku, a childless widow with a shaved head and short hair, was treated badly by other patriarchal family members. She was given the status of a second-class widow because she was burdened with being a widow.

In addition, she shows how difficult it can be for a woman to express herself, as Indu and Akka did, while at the same time giving in to the needs of her family like Padmini does. As a result, the novel depicts a typical Indian joint family in miniature, complete with a rainbow of characters.

**Modernity versus tradition:** In the novel, Shashi Deshpande presents a contrast between tradition and modernity. The novel looks at Indu's inner self, which is a symbol of the New Woman who lives in close contact with society and ignores all of its strict rules. Deshpande introduces the new woman, who is well-informed and confident in the decisions she makes to improve her life. She portrays Indu's frustration with harmful patriarchal customs. She is free to discuss anything she finds interesting. Outside of politics, corruption, and other topics, she is free to consider her own enclosed self.

She represents traditional Indian society, which is deeply rooted in patriarchy, through the characters Akka and other females in the household. A woman has little freedom of choice and is perceived as a shadow of man. Through her character, Indu, she dismantles a centuries-old custom and asserts her identity through her actions. During the course of Indu's odyssey, she simultaneously reveals her fragmented, domesticated mind. Shashi Deshpande expresses her concerns regarding the anxiety that a middle-class, educated, independent woman of change experiences when she is expected to play multiple roles in a patriarchal society, including mother, daughter, and wife.

The fact that Indu went to her ancestral home demonstrates her connection to her customs. She left the place a decade ago to take the unconventional route that depicts breaking away from customs that held her tightly in the name of being a good woman. Deshpande shows the horrifying practice of child marriage in traditional society through Akka's character. In contrast, Indu is a modern woman who asserts her will to change her life. Through the character of Mini, Deshpande demonstrates the persistence of patriarchal society after so many years. Mini did not voice her concerns as she accepted the challenge of marriage. Mini's crisis is a metaphor for women who are dependent on men. Indu emerges as a determined woman who refuses to conform to patriarchal society's dictates as a result of her conformity to western values, despite the conflict between tradition and modernity.

### **7.2.5 Let Us Sum Up**

Deshpande is established as a significant contemporary feminist author through *Roots and Shadows*. It brings to light the harsh realities of patriarchy in Indian society, and the novel is a significant piece of Indian Writing in English. Through her works, Deshpande depicts the centuries-long marginalization of women, their quiet suffering, and passive resignation. Deshpande confronts history, politics, and female hardships through Indu's character. She reminds readers throughout the book that women do have the right to live and should not be subjected to essentialism and biologism. The novel serves as a metaphor for the dialectical nature of men and women pitted against one another in a material struggle for power. The terms 'Root' and 'Shadows' refer to the marginalized culture. In the face of fateful change, the old traditions become shadows. It also suggests that life is cut off from the binding force when the root is removed, opening up new possibilities.

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## **7.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should have become aware of Shashi Deshpande's contribution to Indian writing in English, with particular focus on her novel *Roots and Shadows*. You should have gained a good understanding of the novel's plot, characters, and summary.



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## 7.4 Glossary

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1. **Myriads** – a large number of people or things
2. **Predicaments** – an unpleasant situation
3. **Polyglot** – a person who can speak many languages
4. **Panacea** – cure to all problems
5. **Tribulations** – anything that is a reason or cause of suffering or a problem
6. **Resolute** – determined in action
7. **Solicitations** – asking for something from someone
8. **Imbroglia** – a situation that is confusing or embarrassing
9. **Repugnance** – having a feeling of disgust

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## 7.5 Sample Questions

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### 7.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Which of the following novels is not written by Shashi Deshpande?
  - a. *Roots and Shadows*
  - b. *That Long Silence*
  - c. *Family Matters*
  - d. *Small Remedies*
2. Who is the protagonist in the novel *Roots and Shadows*?
  - a. Urmi
  - b. **Indu**
  - c. Dimple
  - d. Maya
3. *Roots and Shadows* was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. 1985
  - b. 1992
  - c. 1993
  - d. **1983**
4. Who was Indu's husband in the novel?
  - a. Narem

- b. **Jayant**
  - c. Vithal
  - d. Sunil
5. Who was having an affair with Indu in the novel?
- a. **Naren**
  - b. Jayant
  - c. Vithal
  - d. Sunil
6. What was Indu's profession that she gave up later on?
- a. Teacher
  - b. Manager
  - c. **Journalist**
  - d. Home maker
7. After how many years does Indu return to her ancestral house?
- a. **10 years**
  - b. 12 years
  - c. 15 years
  - d. 5 years
8. Who did Akka bequeath her property to, in the novel *Roots and Shadows*?
- a. Padmini
  - b. Geeta
  - c. **Indu**
  - d. Govind
9. Who is the speaker of these lines, "Now I felt clean, as if I had cut away all the unnecessary, uneven edges off myself"?
- a. Geeta
  - b. **Indu**
  - c. Sunil
  - d. Akka
10. How did Naren help Indu?
- a. in writing.
  - b. in going back home.

- c. **in knowing herself truly.**
- d. Does not help her.

### 7.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Give a detailed character sketch of the character Jayant.
2. Why was there a tension between Indu and Akka?
3. Why did Indu leave her ancestral home?
4. How did Naren help Indu realise her emotions?
5. What did Indu do with the money after selling off her ancestral house?

### 7.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Comment on the title of the novel *Roots and Shadows* by Shashi Deshpande.
2. How is the novel *Roots and Shadows* a microcosm of contemporary females in the Indian society?
3. Discuss the journey of Indu in the novel and how she emerged as a woman of determination at the end of the novel?

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## 7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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Agarwal, Beena. *Mosaic of the Fictional World of Shashi Deshpande*. Book Enclave, 2009.

Atrey, Mukta. *Shashi Deshpande: A Feminist Study of Her Fiction*. DK Publishers, 1998.

Bhalla, Amrita. *Shashi Deshpande*. Atlantic, 2010.

Jain, Jasbir. *Gendered Realities, Human Spaces: The writing of Shashi Deshpande*. Rawat Publications, 2003.

Mohan Indira, T.M.J. *Shashi Deshpande: A Critical Spectrum*. Atlantic Publishers, 2004.

Pathak, R.S. *The Fiction of Shashi Deshpande*. Creative Books, 1998.

Prasasree, S. *Women in the novels of Shashi Deshpande*. Sarup and Sons, 2003.

Sandhu, Sarabjeet. *The Novels of Shashi Deshpande*. Prestige Books, 1991.

Sharma, Siddartha. *Shashi Deshpande's Novels: A Feminist Study*. Atlantic Publishers, 2005.

## Unit-8: Cyrus Mistry – *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*

### Structure

8.0 Introduction

8.1 Objectives

8.2 Cyrus Mistry – *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*

8.2.1 About Cyrus Mistry

8.2.2 Summary

8.2.2 Characters

8.2.3 Themes

8.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

8.3 Learning Outcomes

8.4 Glossary

8.5 Sample Questions

8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 8.0 Introduction

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Indian writing in English covers a wide range of topics, voices, and themes. The caste system in Indian society has been the subject of the writings of many authors. Cyrus Mistry has contributed immensely in raising the issues of the marginalised communities in India as depicted in the novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*. The text focuses on the section of the Parsi community in India that is subject to public discrimination. These people, known as Khandhias, carry dead bodies on their shoulders to the tower of silence, where vultures consume the dead bodies. Mistry is the first author to express the concerns by accurately portraying discrimination against Khandhias in Bombay.

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### 8.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce the novel, *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* by Cyrus Mistry
- examine the contribution of Cyrus Mistry as a significant Indian author

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## 8.2 Cyrus Mistry – *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*

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### 8.2.1 About Cyrus Mistry

Cyrus Mistry was raised in Mumbai. He is Rohinton Mistry's brother. He wanted to be a musician when he was in school. He played the piano, alongside his siblings and he wanted to create music in the style of Western traditional music. He tried to write pieces for piano and violin, string quartets, and other pieces. Additionally, he actively pursued courses in harmony and counterpoint under Joachim Buehler at the Max Mueller Bhavan and at the Bombay School of Music. However, it did not take him long to confess to himself that he would not be a great musician.

Mistry graduated from St. Xavier College, where he was taught by excellent instructors who influenced his writing career. He freelanced as a journalist and contributed numerous articles to *Debonair* magazine. He was denied re-confirmation in the school for his contribution to putting together an understudy strike. He wrote *Doongaji House* during this time off from his studies, which won him the Sultan Padamsee Award in the year 1978. The play *Doongaji House* was his most significant English contribution to contemporary Indian theatre. After reading *Doongaji House* in manuscript form, and his first short stories, which were published in Indian magazines, his brother, Rohinton Mistry was inspired by his writings to begin writing the stories for his own first book, *Tales From Firozsha Baag* (1987). Cyrus Mistry shared that before becoming relatively more successful writers, both of them were unsuccessful musicians. In an interview, Mistry admitted that writing for the stage excites him and it helped shape his novels.

Other than composing specific books, Mistry served as an independent columnist for a quarter century. Also, during this period, he composed scripts for short movies and a few narratives. In 1989, he wrote the dialogue and screenplay for the Gujarati feature film *Percy*. *Percy*, his collection of short stories, is the basis for this movie. In 1989, the film received both the critics' award at the Mannheim Film Festival and the National Award for Best Gujarati Film.

After almost twenty years, Mistry published his debut novel, *The Radiance of Ashes*, in 2005. It made itself to the Crossword Prize shortlist. In the early 1990s, *The Radiance of Ashes* is a coming-of-age story about a young man who becomes politically active in Bombay. According to Mistry, he does not really know how a writer makes art out of his own experience. However, he says that he had a deeply romanticized relationship with the city that was torn apart in a most

disturbing manner during and after the riots of 1992-1993. He wrote the book nearly ten years after the riots, but it helped him deal with the fundamental shifts that had occurred in the city.

Cyrus Mistry's second book, *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*, which came out in 2013, won the Sahitya Akademi Award and the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature in 2014 and 2015 respectively. In the middle of a bustling city, *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* describes, for the first time in any fictional work, the untouchable khandhias, a marginalized and outcast segment of the Parsi community. Mistry claims that he learned about a khandhia strike in 1941 that ended almost before it could begin. In 1993, he was doing research for a documentary film he was working on for a producer who had pitched the idea to a foreign television channel (aside from the fact that there was never a film about the subject). Mistry reviewed this snippet of data twenty years at some other time when he was thinking about a subject for his new book. It became the seed of his story, "developing later in a very different direction." The DSC Prize (for South Asian Literature, 2014) was unquestionably the award that meant the most to him. This was primarily because of how much cash it had, which helped pay off debts.

The following are some of his most significant contributions as a writer: *The Prospect of Miracles*, *The Radiance of Ashes*, *The Chronicle of the Corpse Bearer*, *Passion Flower*, and *Seven Stories of Derangement*, among others. Mistry's first collection of short stories, *Passion Flower*, contains seven tales of madness. Family is where the characters' mental illness takes place. The author is currently working on his third novel, and he currently resides in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu. According to the author, the novel-in-progress does not feature a single Parsi character and is set in Kerala.

Let us move to the next section where you will learn about the text prescribed in the syllabus.

### **8.2.2 Summary**

The 2014 DSC Prize winning novel, *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*, for South Asian Literature written by Cyrus Mistry was published in 2013. The novel is based on sub-group among Parsi community residing in the Doongerwadi area of Bombay called as Khandhias i.e., Parsi Corpse bearers who carry the bodies of dead people to the towers of silence where the dead bodies are left to be consumed by vultures. It is set against the backdrop of pre-independence time in India. In 1991, Mistry researched the subject for a documentary film, but it could not be made so he decided to write the novel. The plight of a small minority and stark of their lives would have been unnoticed without *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*.

The novel is divided into three parts. The first part is titled 'Present tense Bombay, 1942'. The second part is titled 'Echoes of a living past'. The third part is named as 'Future imperfect.' Each part is like time travel in the title it suggests. The novel begins with the introduction of the protagonist Phiroze Elchidana as a khandhia, but as the novel unfolds the readers learn that he is the son of a revered Parsi priest. He compounded his family's disappointment by falling in love with Sepideh, the daughter of a khandhia. However, their love is considered taboo because of the differences in their caste and social standing. He goes on to defy his family by marrying her and becoming a corpse bearer himself. For Phiroze, there is no return (not that he seeks it), for his love for Sepideh, or Seppy as he calls her, is enough. But Seppy dies soon after, leaving Phiroze with a daughter in a great pool of sorrow. The writer gives a detail description of Khandhia's colony that is segregated from the city life and leaves the poor untouchable neglected and isolated from the Parsi community. It was a ghetto that was marginalized by the noncompliant authorities and perceptions of old beliefs, all these factors sum up to the worst period of any corpse bearer's life during 1940 onwards is well captured.

The novel outlines the situations that turned Phiroze into a rebel. He narrates his journey from the day he was born, to his becoming a corpse bearer. In the second section of the novel, the protagonist and narrator, Phiroze Elchidana keeps scribbling details of his life in the novel. Phiroze or Elchi is a dull person who falls short of his parents' expectations, and a tramp, who later becomes a corpse bearer by choice after falling in love with a girl Sepideh, daughter of a corpse bearer Temoo. Seppy dies after seven years of their union. Phiroze's brother, Vispy is a brilliant student. Mother Hilla is very much dissatisfied with her married life and very close to Vispy an ideal son she desired. Phiroze outlines daily incidences in the novel that shows sibling rivalry. His father, the head priest of the Soonamai Ichchaporia fire temple could not accept his son's conversion to khandhia. His religious beliefs hold him so hard that he never accepts his son ever again.

As a young corpse bearer living in Bombay, he is deeply devoted to his work, which involves carrying dead bodies to the cremation ground and performing the last rites according to the customs. Despite the social stigma attached to his profession, Phiroze views his work as a sacred duty to help the souls of the departed to rest in peace. As a khandhia, Phiroze must work to ease the passing of others, frequently at the expense of his own dignity and health, even as he deals with his own grief.

In Mistry's novel, *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*, the portrayal of the life of corpse bearers is depicted as one of constant hardship and discrimination. Due to the small number of people who perform this difficult task, the burden of carrying corpses falls heavily on the shoulders of the few. In one instance, Phiroze faints while carrying a corpse, and the resulting coverage in the *Bombay Chronicle* highlights the strong reactions of the community towards these menial workers. This incident also exposes the hypocrisy and mistreatment of the community towards the corpse bearers. The Parsi Panchayat, in response to the incident, decides to launch an investigation, and the manager of the corpse bearers, known as Buchia or the 'corker,' is suspended along with members of the corpse bearer community. Despite Phiroze's difficulties and financial issues, the board of trustees neglects the hard work and unreasonable working hours that these men have to endure. Moreover, Phiroze and Rustom, a senior and a mentor of the corpse bearers, are enlivened by the struggle and non-cooperation movement declared on the radio. They decide to go on strike, and all members of the Khandhias, for the first time in history, declare a strike to protest against their mistreatment. As the radio announces the independence of India, Phiroze and his community finally gain some status, better wages, free days, and fixed working hours, breaking free from the shackles of Buchia's sadistic treatment.

The theme of death is recurrent in John Keats' poetry, as exemplified in his statement in "Ode to a Grecian Urn" that "she cannot fade." In a similar vein, Phiroze's fear of Seppy fading from his memory is highlighted in Mistry's novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*, as he remarks on the speed with which the details of the deceased can fade away. The author portrays the novel as a "romantic tale," which is reflected in its beautiful and yearning last words, "That will meet her in the future," notwithstanding the neediness, put-downs, and distance experienced by the marginalized community of corpse carriers.

When Phiroze visits his father's home after many years of being turned out, he is hesitant to approach the door. He observes a flicker of warmth in his father's eyes, which ignites a desire to embrace him, but he refrains from doing so as his father deliberately steps aside to avoid physical contact.

In the culminating scene of the novel, Phiroze fulfills his final obligation as a corpse bearer by transporting his own father's remains to the cremation ground. This event serves as a moment of deep reflection for Phiroze, who contemplates the experiences and lessons he has gathered throughout his tumultuous life. Through this introspection, Phiroze arrives at a sense of



closure and peace. The narrative concludes with Phiroze imparting his newfound understanding that love and empathy hold greater value than societal hierarchies or customs. In doing so, Phiroze aspires that his actions and insights will serve as a model for others to follow.

***Check your progress:***

1. The novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* is divided into three parts: 'Present tense Bombay, 1942', 'Echoes of a living past', and 'Future imperfect.' (True/False)

### **8.2.3 Characters**

*Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* by Cyrus Mistry is a novel that portrays a range of complex characters, each with different struggles and on a journey of self-discovery. The characters in the novel are depicted with responsiveness and profundity, and their accounts act as a discourse on the cultural bias and segregation faced by marginalized communities in India.

**Phiroze Elchidana:** Phiroze is the protagonist of the novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* by Cyrus Mistry. He is a member of the community of corpse bearers in Mumbai, a group of people who are responsible for carrying dead bodies to the cremation ground and performing the last rites according to Parsee customs.

Phiroze is a profoundly sympathetic and sensitive individual who invests wholeheartedly in his work as a body carrier, regardless of the social disgrace surrounding it. He views his work as a sacred duty to help the souls of the departed to rest in peace. Phiroze's empathy towards the dead bodies he handles is evident when he imagines their stories and personalities.

Phiroze's life is filled with tragedy, beginning with a disturbed childhood, sibling rivalry, and finally being ostracized by the family. Phiroze is in love with Sepideh, a Khandhia girl. Their love is considered taboo because of the differences in their caste. He risks his reputation in demonstrating his loyalty and commitment to her.

Throughout the novel, Phiroze shows great resilience in the face of adversity. He faces many challenges, including societal prejudice, the loss of his father and his love for Sepideh, yet he persists in his work as a corpse bearer and in his devotion to Sepideh.

Phiroze is a complex and multi-dimensional character. He is a deeply empathetic person who takes great pride in his work and shows great loyalty and love towards those close to him. Despite the challenges he faces, he shows great strength and resilience, making him a compelling and sympathetic character.

**Sepideh:** The character of Sepideh in the novel assumes a pivotal role in shaping the narrative and the protagonist's trajectory. As a corpse bearer girl, Sepideh defies the rigid caste and class hierarchies that govern her society. Her unwavering spirit and unyielding commitment to social justice inspired Phiroze to take up her cause and become a vocal advocate for the rights of his community.

Sepideh and Phiroze's relationship is marked by a deep, unwavering love that goes beyond social norms and familial pressures. Despite her father's disapproval, Sepideh marries Phiroze and stands by him as he takes on the mantle of a corpse bearer to be with her. Through their union, the novel highlights the transformative power of love and the ways in which it can challenge established norms and conventions.

The role that Sepideh plays in Phiroze's life is central to the novel's exploration of themes of identity, social justice, and human connection. Through her influence, Phiroze is able to shed the insecurities and anxieties that had previously plagued him and find a sense of purpose in championing the cause of his community. Sepideh's bravery and fortitude serve as a catalyst for Phiroze's transformation and help to propel the novel's narrative forward.

Overall, the character of Sepideh represents a powerful force for change in the novel, challenging the societal norms that seek to keep her community oppressed and subjugated. Her love and unwavering commitment to justice serve as an inspiration to Phiroze and to readers alike, highlighting the importance of standing up for what is right in the face of adversity.

**Vispy:** In the novel, Vispy assumes the role of the elder brother to Phiroze, who was already attending a prestigious English-medium school near Flora Fountain when Phiroze was born. Phiroze did very well in school and was highly regarded by his teachers for his academic accomplishments and good behavior. However, the significant age gap between the two siblings meant that they had little in common when it came to shared interests or a close brotherly relationship.

Phiroze and Vispy are related by blood, but their age and upbringing differences set them on very different paths. While Vispy enjoyed a privileged education and opportunities for intellectual growth, Phiroze's experiences were likely shaped by a different set of circumstances. The novel's exploration of the brothers' differing backgrounds underscores the role that socio-economic factors can play in shaping an individual's life and prospects.

Vispy's relationship with Phiroze sheds light on the complex family dynamics and the various factors that can shape the bonds between siblings in the novel's larger context. The

portrayal of the brothers' relationship as distant and disconnected speaks to the larger themes of isolation and disconnection that run throughout the novel. By exploring the nuances of familial relationships, the novel offers a nuanced perspective on the complexities of human connections and the forces that can either bind or divide individuals.

**Rustom:** Rustom is an important character in the novel, as he plays a crucial role in shaping Phiroze's worldview and guiding him through the challenges of his life. Everyone in the community respects Rustom, who is depicted as a wise and compassionate man. He is a veteran corpse bearer and has been in the profession for many years. Rustom is a father figure to Phiroze, and he takes him under his wing, teaching him the intricacies of the job and providing him with guidance and support.

Despite his gruff exterior, Rustom is shown to be a compassionate and empathetic person. He is deeply committed to his work as a corpse bearer and sees it as a sacred duty. Rustom is also deeply committed to helping the downtrodden and marginalized members of society, and he often goes out of his way to help those in need.

Rustom's character is also significant in the novel as he represents the resilience and strength of the human spirit. Despite facing numerous hardships and challenges in his life, including the loss of his wife and son, Rustom remains steadfast and committed to his work and his community. Overall, Rustom is a complex and multifaceted character in *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*. His wisdom, kindness, and compassion make him an important mentor and father figure to Phiroze, while his commitment to his work and his community make him a symbol of the strength and resilience of the human spirit.

In conclusion, *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* features a range of complex and well-developed characters, each of whom plays an important role in the story. From Phiroze and Sepideh's struggle for love and acceptance, to the tension between tradition and modernity, the novel offers a vivid portrayal of life in Bombay's Parsi community. The characters in the novel are memorable and multi-dimensional and help to bring the themes of the novel to life in a compelling and engaging way.

#### **8.2.4 Themes**

*Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* explores the lives of an ostracized community of corpse bearers in Bombay. The novel is set against the backdrop of the city's Parsi community and pre-independence times in India. It explores various themes which are discussed below.

**Identity:** One of the major themes in the novel is the concept of identity. The protagonist, Phiroze Elchidana, struggles with his identity as a member of the Parsi community, as well as his identity as a corpse bearer. He falls in love with a Khandhia girl named Sepideh, which is forbidden in the Parsi community due to their different castes. He is forced to take on the identity of a Khandhia and give up his identity as a priest's son. Phiroze is torn between his love for Sepideh and his duty towards his family. He decides to wed Seppy and subsequently he is ostracized by his loved ones. The novel, thus, highlights the complex and often conflicting nature of personal identity and the challenges individuals face in defining themselves within societal norms and expectations.

**Social marginalization:** The novel explores the lives of the Khandhias, a marginalized sub-community among the Parsis. The novel portrays the prejudices and segregation faced by the community of corpse bearers, who are considered untouchables and are ostracized by society. The novel highlights the destructive nature of prejudice and the need for social change. Despite being highly skilled and talented, Phiroze is forced to lead a life of social exclusion and discrimination. Like other Khandhias, he too is denied basic human rights and treated like an outcast by the upper castes. The novel also exposes the corrupt and exploitative practices of those in positions of power, including the police and politicians, who take advantage of the marginalized and powerless members of society. The novel portrays how caste discrimination has permeated every aspect of Indian society and how it is used to deny basic human dignity to these communities.

**Social Justice:** The novel highlights the struggle for social justice in India. The characters in the novel are portrayed as victims of a highly stratified and hierarchical society. They are denied basic human rights, such as education, healthcare, and job opportunities, due to their caste and social status. The characters in the novel, including Phiroze, are shown as being aware of their oppression and fighting back against it. They form alliances and solidarity networks to challenge the status quo and demand their rights. The novel highlights the importance of collective action in bringing about change and achieving social justice. The novel also portrays the challenges and obstacles that marginalized communities face in their struggle for social justice. The novel portrays how the marginalized communities are fighting for their rights and how they are slowly gaining the courage to challenge the status quo. The novel highlights the importance of collective action and solidarity in the struggle for social justice. The

novel also highlights the dangers of resistance and the risks involved in challenging the dominant social order.

**Love:** The theme of love is also important in the novel. Phiroze falls in love with a high-caste Parsi woman, Sepideh, and their relationship challenges the social norms and taboos of their respective communities. Their love also raises questions about identity and belonging, as Phiroze struggles to reconcile his love for Sepideh with his own cultural identity. Phiroze's love for Sepideh is portrayed as a powerful force that transcends the barriers of caste and class. Despite the obstacles, Phiroze and Sepideh continue to love each other. Their love is passionate and intense, but ultimately tragic.

Phiroze's relationship with his father is a complex one. His father is a bitter and angry man who is ashamed of his son's job as a corpse bearer. Despite this, Phiroze loves his father and tries to understand him. Their relationship is strained, but ultimately loving.

Phiroze develops a close friendship with a fellow corpse bearer named Nusswan. Their friendship is based on their shared experiences and the bond they have developed through their work. Their friendship is one of the few sources of joy and companionship in Phiroze's life.

**Loss:** The novel also explores the pain and grief that come with loss, as Phiroze's love for Seppy is ultimately doomed. Phiroze is left heartbroken with a daughter after seven years of marriage. His loss of Sepideh's love is one of the defining moments of his life, and it shapes his view of the world.

Phiroze experiences the death of his father, his mentor, and his lover. Phiroze's father dies, leaving him alone in the world. His father's death is a profound loss for Phiroze, as he has lost his only family member. This loss leaves Phiroze feeling adrift and alone in the world.

Phiroze's job as a corpse bearer is a source of shame and isolation. He is an outcast in society, and his job defines him in the eyes of others. Phiroze's loss of identity is a theme that runs throughout the novel, as he struggles to find a place in the world. The novel thus highlights the complexity of human emotions and the struggle to find meaning and hope in the face of loss.

**Tradition and Modernity:** The conflict between tradition and modernity is another major theme in the novel. The Parsi community is portrayed as being caught between the traditional values of their culture and the pressures of modernity. The novel explores the tension between the two, as well as the need for cultural preservation in the face of rapid social and technological change. The novel thus highlights the importance of maintaining cultural identity and traditions, while also embracing new ways of thinking and living. The novel also examines

the role of family and tradition in Indian society. Phiroze's relationship with his father, who is also a corpse bearer, is an important aspect of the novel, as is the tension between tradition and modernity that is reflected in Sepideh's struggle to reconcile her own desires with her family's expectations. The characters in the novel are shown as being caught between tradition and modernity, and struggling to find a space for themselves in a rapidly changing world.

**Life and Death:** The theme of life and death is also important in the novel. As a corpse bearer, Phiroze is constantly confronted with the reality of death. The novel explores the meaning of life and death, as well as the importance of rituals and traditions in the face of mortality. The novel thus highlights the human struggle to find meaning and purpose in life, as well as the inevitability of death. Phiroze's job as a corpse bearer gives him a unique perspective on death and mourning. The novel explores the rituals and customs surrounding death in Indian society, as well as the emotional and psychological impact of loss and grief.

Overall, *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* is a thought-provoking and poignant novel that explores a range of complex and relevant themes related to Indian society and culture. In conclusion, *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* is a novel that explores a range of complex themes, from identity and prejudice to love and loss. Through its vivid portrayal of the lives of Mumbai's corpse bearers, the novel sheds light on the challenges faced by marginalized communities and the need for social change. At the same time, the novel also explores universal themes such as the meaning of life and death, the tension between tradition and modernity, and the struggle to find personal identity and purpose in a complex and rapidly changing world.

***Check your progress:***

1. *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* explores the lives of an ostracized community of corpse bearers in Bombay and it is set against the backdrop of -independence times in India. (True/False)

### **8.2.4 Let Us Sum Up**

*Chronicles of the Corpse Bearer* establishes Mistry as an important contemporary writer. The novel is a significant text in Indian writing in English as it brings to surface the harsh realities of the Parsi community in India and sub-human treatment of corpse bearers. The novel also tells us about the deep-rooted bifurcation of Indian society into castes and sub-castes, and the difficulty faced by people by marrying into a different caste. The novel successfully showcases tragedy of Khandhias within their own community.

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### 8.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you are expected to get acquainted with marginal writings as an important part of Indian writing in English. You should know the contribution of Cyrus Mistry to Indian writing in English, with a special focus on his prize-winning novel *Chronicles of the Corpse Bearer*.

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### 8.4 Glossary

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**Virtuoso** - a person highly skilled in a particular artistic or creative pursuit, such as music, painting, or writing.

**Columnist** - a person who writes regular articles for a newspaper, a magazine, or a website, typically offering opinions and commentary on current events or topics of interest.

**Discursively** - characterized by or using lengthy, detailed explanations or discussions that explore a wide range of topics or ideas.

**Khandhia** - a corpse bearer in the Parsi community.

**Tangible** - capable of being touched, felt, or handled; having physical substance and perceptible by the senses.

**Reconcile** - to restore friendly relations between two or more people or groups; to resolve or settle a disagreement or conflict.

**Gruff** - something that is rough, harsh, or brusque in manner or speech.

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### 8.5 Sample Questions

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#### 8.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Which of the following novels is not written by Cyrus Mistry?
  - a. *The Radiance of Ashes*
  - b. *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*
  - c. *A Fine Balance*
  - d. *The Prospect of Miracles*
2. Who is the protagonist in the novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*?
  - a. Sepideh

- b. **Phiroze Elchidana**
  - c. Buchia
  - d. Farokh
3. *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer* was published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. **2013**
  - b. 2012
  - c. 2014
  - d. 2011
4. Which bird did Phiroze kill as a child while trying to make it fly like a kite?
- a. Sparrow
  - b. **Parrot**
  - c. Crow
  - d. Vulture
5. Who was Phiroze married to?
- a. **Sepideh**
  - b. Temoo
  - c. Vithal
  - d. Homraz
6. Which community does Sepideh hail from?
- a. Priest
  - b. **Khandias**
  - c. Kshatrias
  - d. Dalit
7. Why is Phiroze arrested in the novel?
- a. He was a drug peddler
  - b. He murdered someone
  - c. **He stole a dead body**
  - d. He refused to perform his duty
8. Where do Khandhias carry the corpse for final rites?
- a. Tower of Death
  - b. Tower of Peace
  - c. **Tower of Silence**



- d. Tower of Vulture
9. Which bird eats the corpses at the Tower of Silence?
- a. **Vulture**
  - b. Crow
  - c. Sparrow
  - d. Pigeon
10. Phiroze's father was the head priest of \_\_\_\_\_
- a. Temple of sun
  - b. Temple of fire**
  - c. Temple of air
  - d. Temple of water

#### **8.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:**

1. Give a brief character sketch of the character, Phiroze Elchidana.
2. Why was there a tension between Phiroze Elchidana and his father?
3. Write a short note on the treatment of Khandias in the novel.
4. Why does Phiroze steal a corpse in the novel?
5. Why is there a sibling rivalry between Phiroze and his brother Vispy?

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

1. Comment on the title of the novel *Chronicles of the Corpse Bearer* by Cyrus Mistry.
2. How is the novel *Chronicles of the Corpse Bearer* a microcosm of the exploitation of corpse bearers in contemporary Indian society?
3. Examine the theme of love and sacrifice in the novel *Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer with special reference to the character portrayal.*

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## 8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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## **Unit-9: Introduction to Indian Drama in English**

### **Structure:**

**9.0** Introduction

**9.1** Objectives

**9.2** Introduction to Indian Drama in English

**9.2.1** Pre-Independence Phase

**9.2.2** The Post-Independence Phase to the Eighties

**9.2.3** The Eighties to the Post-Millennium

**9.2.4** Let Us Sum Up

**9.3** Learning Outcomes

**9.4** Glossary

**9.5** Sample Questions

**9.6** Suggested Learning Resources

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### **9.0 Introduction**

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The history of Indian drama dates back around 5000 years and is literally steeped in the culture and traditions of the land. These performances were often recitation, singing and dancing narratives. Therefore, from Sanskrit drama to folklore, and then to western influences on contemporary writings, we will trace a journey through the origin and development of Indian drama in English. At the outset, it is pertinent to mention that, although the writing of Indian drama in English is a recent phenomenon or, to be more precise, with the coming of the East India Company, many major dramatic texts written in Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, or other regional languages have now been translated into English. Therefore, in this journey of tracing the origin and development of Indian drama in English, the entire history of Indian drama from ancient times to the modern day will be briefly discussed.

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### **9.1 Objectives**

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The primary objective of this course is to familiarise the learners with the origin and development of Indian English drama. Further, we will study some major Indian English dramatists and place them in the historical context.

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## 9.2 Introduction to Indian Drama in English

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Spanning over centuries, the history of Indian drama traces its roots back to the beginning of the classical dramatic tradition. Evidence of drama and dramatic performances are found in the *Epics*, the *Puranas* and all forms of cultures. The compendiums on drama: the *Natasutra*, which the *Nāṭyaśāstra* by Bharatamuni precedes, and the *Daśarūpa* by Dhananjaya, have been written between 2000 BCE and the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, have helped in theorising, defining, and structuring the Sanskrit dramaturgy and poetics. The literary historians record the period between the first century and the tenth century as the glorious time of Sanskrit drama with vigorous dramatic creativity following the detailed theoretical prescription laid down by early theoreticians like Abhinavagupta and Dandin. Later centuries, culminating in the fifteenth century, record the stagnation, deterioration, and final decline of the Sanskrit drama. Among the reasons for the illustrious dramatic tradition to lose its positions are internal socio-cultural instability and foreign invasions. Kalidasa, Bhavabuti and Bhasa are a few of the classical period playwrights who survived the test of time. The gradual decline in the originality and creativity of Sanskrit drama, the rise and appealing nature of the folk theatre, the translations of Sanskrit plays into regional languages; and the colonial encounter that resulted in the influence of Western and European models on local theatrical traditions, have helped in the rise of Modern Indian Theatre and modern Indian dramaturgy.

### 9.2.1 Pre-Independence Phase

Perhaps the earliest Indian English play was written in 1831, when Krishna Mohan Banerjee wrote *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes illustrative of the present state of Hindoo Society in Calcutta*. Banerjee's play is an attack on Hindu Brahmanical orthodoxy. The play is built upon the conflict primarily between tradition and Western imported modernity in India, delineated through the characters: the orthodox Brahmin father, Mohadeb; and his liberal-minded Western-influenced son, Banylal. After a gap of thirty years and more, in 1866, C.S. Nazir wrote the verse play *The First Parsi Baronet*. In 1871, Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote, *Is This Civilisation?* a translation of *Ekei Ki Bale Sabhyata?*. Like Banerjee, Dutt also looked at the influence of the West on Indian youth in a farcical way. The late nineteenth century saw a few more attempts in drama like D.M Wadia's *The Indian Heroine* (1877) and Ram Kinoo Dutt's *Manipur Tragedy* (1893).

In the following decades, there was a considerable absence of talent in Indian drama in English. After decades-old hiatus, plays modelling on Elizabethan, Indian classical, and folk tradition began to appear in the twentieth century. As a result, the number of playwrights and the number of plays had increased exponentially.

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) is one of the foremost Indian English writers. Influenced by Western dramatic tradition, especially the Elizabethan and the Shakespearean, Sri Aurobindo brings stylistic grandeur and thematic magnificence to his poetic plays. With five full-length five-act plays in blank verse, and many incomplete plays to his credit, Sri Aurobindo foregrounds life and love in its myriad shades. The complete plays are *The Viziers of Bassora*, *Rodogune*, *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Eric* and *Vasavadutta*. Out of the five, the only tragedy is *Rodogune*, and the rest four are comedies. Chronologically, the plays were written from 1905 to 1915, and the earliest complete play is *The Viziers of Bassora*; however, the only play published during his lifetime is *Perseus, the Deliverer*. The incomplete plays written during 1891-1915 include *The Witch of Ilni*, *The House of Brut*, *The Maid in the Mill*, *The Prince of Edur*, *The Prince of Mathura*, *The Birth of Sin* and *A Fragment of a Play*. *The Witch of Ilni* was Aurobindo's first attempt in drama, and *Vasavadutta* the final one.

Sri Aurobindo does a thematic cull out from the story "Nur al-Din Ali and the Damsel Anis al-Jalis" in *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* for his play *The Viziers of Bassora*. This romantic play deals with the love and hardship of the young lovers Anice-al-jalice, the slave girl and the excellent vizier Alfazzal's son, Nureddence face and the eventual trump of love. A tragedy in its thematic treatment *Rodogune*, set in imaginative Syria, revolves around the rivalry between the two sons of Cleopatra: Antiochus and Timocles. The playwright's obsession with foreign settings continues in *Perseus: the Deliverer*. In the dramatic romance, *Eric*, the playwright, reaffirms the supremacy of love. Sourcing from Somadeva Bhatta's *Kathasaritsagara*, the play *Vasavadutta* is fully Indian in setting and characterisation. In S.S. Kulkarni's opinion, the plays of Aurobindo are influenced by the English theatre of the late Victorian era, which Robert Bridges and Stephen Philips dominated. The influence of the Elizabethan model and the use of blank verse have continued in Vasudeva Rao's *Nala and Damayanti* (1928) and in the post-independence play *The Flute of Krishna* (1980) by P.A. Krishnaswamy.

The blending of Puranic themes and the intellectual idiom of the times makes Tyagaraja Paramsiva Kailasam (1884-1946) one among the well-known dramatists of the late century.

Episodes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* make a comeback through his plays. Ekalavya, Krishna, Kunti, Karna, Droupadi, Bharata, and many more characters from the epics become the centre of the dramatic action in the plays, *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfilment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *The Curse or Karna* (1946), and *Keechaka* (1949). The influence of Greek and Elizabethan forms of tragedy is evident in his plays.

Episodes from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavata*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Bible* continued to get dramatised and modified in Nalini Mohan Chatterjee's *Krishna* (1937), Swami Sivananda's *Radha's Prem* (1945), K.S. Ramaswami Sastri's *Droupadi* (1939), T.K.N. Trivikaram's *Zero B.C. or Christopanishad* (1947). This imaginative and the mythical paved the way for the real in the plays of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya (1898-1990). As a socially committed playwright, he looks critically at the slum lives of workers, the psyche of people from different social backgrounds and questions the social evils of the times in his *Five Plays* (1937), i.e. *The Parrot*, *The Sentry's Lamb*, *The Window*, *The Coffin* and *The Evening Lamb*. Compared to these social plays, the apparent influence of Western Drama is less in Chattopadhyaya's hagiological plays, like *Jayadeva*, *Pundalik*, *Saku Bai*, *Mira Bai*, *Choka Mela*, *Eknath*, *Tukaram*, *Raidas*, *Kannappan*, and *Siddharta: Man of Peace*. An exception to Aurobindo's magnificence in style and theme with the metaphorically enriched poetic style, T.P. Kailasam's subversive treatment of the characters from the epics, and Chattopadhyaya's genuineness in depicting the social realities and the sainted is Bharati Sarabhai. While her contemporaries were imitating the West, she stood out with the subtlety in theme and craft. Dovetailing the public and the private life of women, Bharati Sarabhai in *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952) brings alive the world of women. *The Well of the People* is about a Brahmin widow's desire to go on pilgrimage to Haridwar; when it is thwarted, she decides to build a well for the Harijans in her village with the money she saved. *Two Women: A Play in Three Acts* revolves around Anuradha and Urvashi, depicting the domestic life of a minority of rich people.

Comparatively, an apparent change in theme and style is observed in the plays of V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar. A master of social comedy, Aiyangar looks at the follies and idiosyncrasies of the "sophisticated middle-class people seen in the urban societies of Madras, Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. Apart from comedies, the two volumes of his plays *Dramatic Divertissements* (1921) contain his attempts at historical drama and serious drama. Events from India's long history of invasion and struggle for independence set the plots of many plays such as

*The Bride of God* (1931) by Annayya, *A Mother Sacrifice* (1941) by A.S. Panchapakesha Ayyar, *Captive Soil* (1945) by Mrinalini Sarabhai and *The Absconders* (1947) by N.R. Deobhankar.

Evils in society challenging the existence of the self, inequalities among people, corruption, the hypocrisy of social institutions and people, and revolt against conventions become the subjects for the development of dramatic action in the plays of A.C. Krishnaswami's *The Two Twice-Borns* (1914), Nirranjan Pal's *The Goddess* (1924), V. Narayanan's *Where God Is Not and Other Playlets* (1933), D.M. Borgaonkar's *Image-Breakers* (1938), Balwant Gargi's *The Vulture and Other Plays* (1941), Khwaja Ahmed Abbas's *Invitation to Immortality* (1944), Ajoy Chunder Dutt's *Milly* (1945), Purushottam Tricumdas's *Sauce for the Goose* (1946), V. Rampall's *Almight Gold* (1947), and 'Ranganath's' *A Star is Born* (1947). Contemporary life and its complexities take the centre in the works of A.S.P. Ayyar's *Slaves of Ideas and Other Plays* and J.M. Lobo-Prabhu's *Collected Plays* wherein they voice and condemn the sophistication of contemporary lives. Ayyar uses prose effectively to convey the message, and Prabhu, a skilful maker of dialogues and situations, fails to bring life to characters and convincing climaxes.

Other allegorical plays of the pre-Independence phase include *Princess Kalayani* (1930) by Svarnakumari Devi Ghosal, *The Eastern Farce* (1931) by M.S. Gopal, *Kailash* (1944) by P.A. Krishnaswami, and *Deluge* (1944) by Shanti Jhaveri. Predominantly the good-evil binary is used in depicting the nation's struggle to liberate from the coloniser. *The Trial Celestial* (1940) by Suryadutt J. Bhatta has Almighty, Voltaire, Astral Spirit, and an Old Man as characters. S. Fyzee-Rahamin's *Daughter of Ind* (1940) is a discourse on love and its sentimentality. With a Prologue, an Epilogue and a Narrator, the play develops through the untouchable girl, Malti's love for her English master. Prabhu's *Mother of New India* (1944) calls on channelling one's inner strength to benefit all.

The pre-Independence phase of Indian drama in English will not be complete without mentioning Rabindranath Tagore's contribution. As is well known, Tagore was interested in the poetic presentation of his ideas than in considering the theatrical aspect of his plays. However, most of his plays come under Indian literature in translation, as Tagore himself translated most of his plays from Bengali to English. Some of his notable plays are: *The Genus of Valmiki* (1881), *The Fatal Hunt* (1882), *Nature's Revenge* (1884), *Chitrangda* (1892), *The Trial* (1897), *The Crown* (1908), *Penance* (1909), *The Post Office* (1912), *Red Oleanders* (1924). His dramatic pieces centre on religion, spirituality, politics, and legends. The enormous number of plays, both recorded and unrecorded during the pre-Independence phase, reveal the interest of the

playwrights in experimenting in the English language. In their obsession with the Western dramatic tradition, most of the playwrights of this phase failed to produce organic dialogues, relatable plots, the right audience, and achieve stage success. Compared to its unpromising status, the varieties in theme, style, characters and techniques give Indian Drama in English a promising future.

### 9.2.2 The Post-Independence Phase to the Eighties

The plays written and published during the post-independence period show greater influence of the West than the ones produced during pre-Independence phase. Playwrights like Bharati Sarabhai, D.M. Boragonakar, Lobo Prabhu, and V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar continued writing and publishing their works, mainly one or two in the early post-Independence phase as well. In the partitioned and spiritually barren India, the necessity to lean onto the cultural, mythological and religious antiquity was in vogue. Swami Avyaktananda in *India through the Ages* (1947) employs the dramatic medium to show some salient features of the religious and the cultures that met on the Indian soil. The verse-play *The Flute of Krishna* (1950) by P.A. Krishnaswami deals with the legend of a girl Murali and a young man Vidyaratna who, by their devotion to Lord Krishna, become respectively His flute and the bamboo stick used to tend cows. Dilip Kumar Roy's *Sri Chaitanya* (1950), and *The Beggar Princess* (1956), written with Indira Devi, deal with the life of the devotees of Lord Krishna. Episodes from the *Ramayana* and the Mahabharata have continued to make their presence felt and at times get contemporary treatment. Plays like V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar's *Ramarajya* (1952), Smt. K.B. Thakur's *Mother and the Child* (1960), Kamala Subramaniam's dramatic dialogue *Gandharee and Kaikeyee* (1962), D.A. Sadar Joshi's *Acharya Drona* (1963), Padmanabha Krishnamurthi's *Uttara Geetha or the Geetha Reminded* (1964), Mathuram Boothalingam's *Alone in Ayodhya* (1970), and Keshavadasiji's *Geethacharya and Other Dramas* (1972) have stories and characters from the epics. K. Nagaraja's *Chidambaram* (1955) is a chronicle play in fourteen episodes. This flashback play has characters like Arjuna, Shiva, Madhavi, Kannagi, Patanjali and Vyagrapada. G.V. Desani's poetic play *Hali* (1950), is rich in symbolism and imagery. Praised for its originality, this play has Hali, Mira the mother, Maya the foster mother, Isha the Lord, Rahu the rival, Rooh Hali's beloved, the magician and the Narrator as its characters. The central character Hali undergoes a series of trials and tribulations before triumphing in love.

The ancient history, contemporary politics, and turmoil are discussed in many plays of the post-Independence phase. Events and episodes from the Mughal history form the crust of the



dramatic action in S. Janaki's *The Siege of Chitor* (1960) and Dilip Hiro's *To Anchor a Cloud* (1972). Shivaji's controversial killing of Afzal Khan gets a dramatic rendering in verse by Lakhan Deb. Deb's *Tragic Claw* (1967) is successful in depicting the valour and heroic stature of Shivaji.

The life and career of Mahatma Gandhi is a subject which has naturally fascinated many post-independence playwrights. The many facets of Gandhi's life get detailed in K.S. Ranagappa's *Gandhiji Sadhana* (1969), Shivkumar Joshi's *He Never Slept So Long* (1972), K.A. Abbass' *Barrister at Law* (1977). Lakhan Deb deals with the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi in *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1974), wherein people of varied political ideologies become the visitors. The pre-Independence and post-Independence political scenarios, conflicts, and the urge for national integration become the subject matter for plot development in V.K. Gokaka's *The Goddess Speaks* (1948), R. Javanthinathan's *Guardianship* (1949), D.M. Borgaonkar's *One-Act Plays* (1957), Santha Rama Rau's *A Passage to India* (1960), Mrs J.M. Billimoria's *My Sons* (1963), Husenali Chagla's *The Mussalman* (1966), K. S. Rangappa's *They Live Again* (1969), Anil Saari's *Prefaces* (1969), Hushmat Sozrekashme's *Vikramjeet* (1970), and Manohar Malgonkar's *Line of Mars* (1978).

Asif Currimbhoy occupies a unique place in post-Independence dramatic literature by dint of his fecundity and versatility, and firm grasp of the varied facets of life. He debates and questions the overt unfairness that divides people. The hopelessness of the young generation, the predicaments, and the necessity to survive, riot, existential crisis, and revolution become the playwright's primary concern. His plays *The Tourist Mecca*, *The Clock*, *The Doldrummers*, *The Dumb Dancer*, *OM*, *Thorns on a Canvas*, *The Restaurant*, *The Captives*, *Goa*, *Abbe Faria*, and *Monsoon, or a Noah' Ark* discuss issues on the emotional, the private, and the public realities of life. *Inquilab* (1970), a play in eight acts centres on the Bengal Naxalite movement; *The Refugee* (1971) depicts the Bangla migration to India in the same year. The plays like *Sonar Bangla* (1972), *Om Mane Padme Hum* (1972), *Angkor* (1973), *The Miracle Seed* (1973), *The Dissident MLA* (1974), *This Alien...Native Land* (1975) discuss socio-cultural issues about the citizens of the country and its neighbouring countries. Episodes from Gandhi's life form the input for the dramatic action in *An Experiment with Truth*. Currimbhoy has done his best to vocalise the political insecurities of the times.

Modernity, its clash with the tradition, the idiosyncratic nature of people, the cultural conflict people are caught in, and the consequent social problems become the centre of concern

in plays like *The Jolly Club* by V.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar and *One-Act Plays* (1957) by D.M. Borgeonkar. J.M. Lobo Prabhu's volume of six plays, *Collected Plays* (1955), is an exposition to the hypocrisies and double standards of the elites. The fragility of human nature gets ridiculed in the plays of Prabhu. Undoubtedly, the playwright is a skilful maker of dialogues and situations but fails to bring life to characters and convincing climaxes.

All facets of human character are cleverly exploited in the plays like *The Tool of the Gods* (1958) by V. Subha Rao, *The Carnival* (1960) by M.V. Rama Sarma, *The Accused* (1961) by Kaiwara Raja Rao, *The Point of Light and End of Hunger* (1967) by Satya Dev Jaggi and *The Director General* (1968) by Husenali Chagla. Nissim Ezekiel's volume of plays, *Three Plays* (1969), *Nalini: A Comedy*, *Marriage Poem: A Tragicomedy*, and *The Sleepwalkers*, a one-act farce, ridicules the gullibility, vulnerability, and hypocrisy of human nature. The first two plays show the contrast between dream and reality, between the fake and the genuine while the last one is a satire on excessive Indian fascination for everything that is American. The play *Nalini* displays considerable craftsmanship in the handling of realistic dialogues. *The Song of Deprivation* (1969) is a conversation between He and She, about hypocrisy and other drawbacks of contemporary society. Arati Nagarwalla's *The Bait* and Dina Mehta's *The Myth Makers* came out in the year 1960.

A play in three acts, Gurcharan Das's *Larins Sahib* (1970) deals with the happenings after the death of Ranjith Singh, the Lion of Punjab. Henry Lawrence, the East India Company's Resident in the Court of Ranjith Singh's son Dalip Singh, fails miserably in his desire to become 'Angrez Badshah'. *Mira* (1971) focuses on Mira's love for God; *Jackhoo Villa* discusses the moral deterioration in a Hindu family in Simla. The decline of the aristocracy and its impact on familial relationships become the focus of action in Sri Devi Singh's *The Purple-Braided People* (1970).

Set in the semi-urban Parsi sub-culture of the Sanjan/Nargol area of South Gujarat, Gieve Patel's *Princes* (1970) discusses the ongoing conflict between two Parsi families over a male child whose father and dead mother belongs to the respective families in conflict. Patel's use of language, character, dialogue and situation makes the *Princes* one of the crucial plays of the time. *Savaksa* revolves around the sixty-year-old titular character's desire to marry the twenty-year-old Perin. Murali Das Melwani's *Deep Roots* (1970) delineates the clash between tradition and modernity. The conflict arises between the Westernized Arvind's and the traditionalist father's notions on life. Rajinder Paul's *Ashes above the Fire* (1970) deals with love where it is

conceived as a kind of killing. The theme of sex gets an overt treatment in *The Professor has a Warcry* (1970) and *A Touch of Brightness* (1970) by Pratap Sharma. A farce *Dr Lover* (1972) by S.A. Gaffoor delineates Dr Lover as a self-styled specialist in lovesickness and his way of dealing with clients; and in Shiv K. Kumar's *The Last Wedding Anniversary* (1975) discusses marital incompatibility and its consequences.

Girish Karnad is preoccupied with the retelling of Indian myth and history. Based on *Katha-Sarit-Sagara*, Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* (1975) depicts three characters Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini. He deploys the conventions and motifs of folk art like masks and curtains to project a world of intensities, uncertainties and unpredictable denouements. Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence*, *The Court is in Session* (1967), *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1972), and *Mitrachi Ghosta* (1981) deal with gender issues, political violence, etc. M.V. Rama Sarma's *Collected Plays* (1982) contains playlets like "Youth and Crabbed Age", "Like to Like", and "This Busy World". The three-act play *Shakuntala* looks at the stages in the eponymous character's life as "The Maiden", "The Castaway" and "The Woman". "Marpessa", and "Urvasi" discusses the supremacy of human over the divine. *Towards Marriage* and *The Carnival* deals with life and the play *The Mahatma* (1979) concentrates on the martyrdom of Gandhi.

M. Krishnamurti's *The Cloth of Gold* is worth mentioning as it is the only philosophical dance-drama in verse found in the field so far. Other plays of notable merit during this phase include Narayan Prasad's *Battle for Light* (1964), the short plays: *The Way Up, A- Mourning Do We Go*, *Call It a Day* (1966), *Refineries Unlimited*, and *Indo- Anglians in Anglia* (1964) by Krishna Gorowara. P.S. Vasudev's *The Forbidden Fruit* (1967), Mrinalini Sarabhai's *Vichar* (1970), Som Benegal's *Caesarian* (1971), Madhu Rye's *Saral and Shampa* (1972), Lawrence Bantleman's *The Award* (1973), Ahmed Akhtar's *Anarkali* (1978), Masti Venkatesa Iyengar's *Kalidasa* (1980), K.S. Duggal's *To Each a Window: Six Radio Plays* (1981), Louella Lobo Prabhu's *Broken Melody* (1981), and *Image Breakers* by D.M. Borgaonkar.

In this period, initiatives in magazines, periodicals, and journals to promote Indian Drama in English by publishing play scripts, reviews, and discussions on drama were in vogue. Some of them were *Enact*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *Carvan*, *Triveni: Journal of Indian Renaissance*, *Bhavan's Journal*, and *Modern Review*. The announcement in 1968 by The Theatre Group, Bombay, of the Sultan Padamsee Award for Indian plays in English gave much-needed encouragement to a floundering genre. The award was won by Gurcharan Das for *Karin Sahib*, but also in the competition were Gieve Patel's *Princes* and Dina Mehta's *Myth Makers*.

The fascination with the Western dramatic tradition has continued in this phase, and playwrights failed to tap fully the rich sources of the ancient Indian literature and history for their themes. There are many three-act plays in the phase, the five-act structure of the Elizabethan Drama and the western one-act play form appears to have influenced some playwrights. Other reasons include the lack of a “living theatre”, the failure to inculcate the theatrical practices of the Indian dramatic tradition, the apprehension to experiment with dramatic techniques and the inability to make the language organic and relatable for the audience. Overall the stagnation in dramatic art continued.

### 9.2.3 The Eighties to the Post-Millennium

In terms of quality, drama continued its slow pace but from 1831 to 1980, not less than 500 plays by Indian English Writers appeared: and during the short period of the last twenty years, about 75 have been published. One Critic avers that if Indian English drama wishes to go ahead, it must go back first, i.e. only a purposeful return to its roots in the rich tradition of the ancient Indian drama. From the eighties onwards, playwrights like Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani, Manjula Padmanabhan, and Vera Sharma, with their ease in dialogue construction and experimentation with the techniques and themes, helped in breathing a new life into Indian Drama in English. Gieve Patel, Nissim Ezekiel, Dina Mehta, and Girish Karnad continued writing plays.

The poet Gieve Patel's *Mister Behram* (1988), the first Indian play to deal seriously with Parsi life and character got added to his two unpublished plays *Princes* and *Savaksha*. Appeared in 1991, Cyrus Mistry's play *Doongaji House* treats the Parsi community with seriousness. It discusses the common human desire for happiness, which is often thwarted by forces beyond the individual's comprehension, and the ultimate loneliness and vulnerability of all human beings. *The Legacy of Rage* is another play of Mistry. Dina Mehta's *Brides are not for Burning* (1993), discusses the social issue of dowry and its impact on young brides. Through the play, she reveals the social situation in its many-sidedness. *Getting Away with Murder* (1989) is Mehta's other play.

Some of the notable plays of the time are T.S. Gill's *Asoka* (1983), V.D. Trivedi's *Gandhi: A Play* (1983), Prema Sastri's *Gandhi: Man of the Millions* (1987), G. Prasant's *The Myth Resurrected* (1991) is a bold attempt to present Oedipus myth from an Indian point of view. Nissim Ezekiel's *Don't Call It Suicide* (1993), Madhuri Kamat's *Whose Father, What Goes*, Gopi Krishnan Kottoor's *The Mask of Death: The Final Days of John Keats* (1996). R. Raj Rao's

*The Wisest Fool on Earth and Other Plays* (1996) is a collection of three one-act plays and a monologue.

Girish Karnad continued writing plays, and he effectively demonstrated how Indian English drama could revitalise itself by employing experimental models through plays like *Naga-Mandala: Play with a Cobra* (1990), *Tale-Danda* (1993), *The Fires and the Rain* (1998), *Bali: The Sacrifice*, *Wedding Album* (2006), *Boiled Beans on Toast* (2014), and *Crossing to Talikota* (2019). Like Tagore, Karnad translated his plays from Kannada to English.

The first Indian English playwright to win the Sahitya Akademi Award, Mahesh Dattani is among the notable playwrights of contemporary times. His plays include *Final Solutions and Other Plays* (1994) and *Collected Plays* (2000). His plays draw our attention to the complex prejudices of class, gender, race and religion in a very subtle and effective manner. While mythology and history are Karnad's favourite subjects, Dattani remains preoccupied with social and political realities in India today.

Shashi Tharoor's *Twenty-two Months in the Life of a Dog: A Farce in Two Acts* is a diverting take-off on the Emergency of 1975. Khushwant Singh's *Tyger, Tyger, Burning Bright* presents a mixed group of tourists trapped in the guest house of a national game preserve for two days, with reports of a man-eater roaming around. The significant playwrights of contemporary times include Ramu Ramanathan, Kiran Nagarkar, Gautam Raja, Vikram Kapadia, Rahul da Cunha, and Zubin Driver. The centrality of women's world in Vera Sharma's *Life Is Like That* (1997) and *Reminiscences* (1997) bring out the life of widowed and aged women. *The Early Bird* (1983) is a collection of one-act plays, and *The Chameleon* (1997) is a collection of radio plays by the playwright. The presence of woman playwrights in this phase of Indian Drama in English is more palpable and includes Uma Parameswaran's *Sons Must Die* (1962), *Meera* (1971), *Sita's Promise* (1981), *Dear Deedi* (1989); Manjula Padmanabhan's *Light Out* (1984), *Consequences* (2014); Poile Sengupta's *Mangalam* (1993). *Good Heavens* (2006); Zahida Zaidi's *Burning Desert* (1998); Anupama Chandrasekhar's *Kabaddi-Kabaddi* (2004), *When the Cross Visit* (2019); and Prasanna Ramaswamy's *Karna* (2010).

#### **9.2.4 Let Us Sum Up**

In this age of technological and information revolution, English is no more an imported language. Now Indian Drama in English is vibrant with experiments in plot construction, theme, technique, and style. Further, looking at the remarkable increase in plays being written in India in English since the turn of the century, one can make out that the status of Indian Drama in English

in the twenty-first century is not that of the ‘sad Cinderella’. Accordingly, there is an exponential increase in the number of plays being published, performed and the number of theatre festivals, playwriting competitions and workshops on playwriting across India. To name a few, include Writers’ Bloc in partnership with the UK’s Royal Court Theatre, British Council, and the Jindal Group, Artists’ Repertory Theatre Royal Court Theatre workshop, Mahindra Excellence in Theatre Awards, The Hindu theatre festival, and *The Hindu*’s ‘MetroPlus Playwright Award’. Unquestionably, the history of Indian Drama in English has progressed gradually but immensely; and its future is bright.

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### 9.3 Learning Outcomes

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Upon the completion of this Unit, you should be able to know about the origin of Indian plays in English and trace the development of Indian drama in English

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### 9.4 Glossary

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- **Dramaturgy:** the art of writing plays or producing them
- **Fecundity:** Intellectual fruitfulness; creativity
- **Subtlety:** The ability to notice and recognize things which are not obvious, especially small differences between things.
- **Prejudices:** a strong unreasonable feeling of not liking or trusting somebody/something, especially when it is based on his/her/its race, religion or sex
- **Centrality:** The quality of being essential or of the greatest importance
- **Exponential:** Becoming more and more rapid

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### 9.5 Sample Questions

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#### 9.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. In which year did Krishna Mohan Banerjee write *The Persecuted*?
  - a. 1840
  - b. 1831

- c. 1836
  - d. 1832
2. *Nāṭyaśāstra* was written by
- a. Bharatamuni
  - b. Dhananjaya
  - c. Vishwamitra
  - d. Bhartrihari
3. Which of the following is not a playwright of the pre-independence era?
- a. Sri Aurobindo
  - b. Michael Madhusudan Dutt
  - c. Tyagaraja Paramsiva Kailasam
  - d. G.V. Desani
4. Which of the following is/are the playwright of the post-independence era?
- a. Kiran Nagarkar
  - b. Uma Parameswaran
  - c. Manjula Padmanabhan
  - d. All of the above
5. Who amongst the following is the first recipient of Sahitya Akademy's award for the best drama?
- a. Vijay Tendulkar
  - b. Mahesh Dattani
  - c. Girish Karnad
  - d. Shashi Tharoor

**Answer Key:** 1. (b) 2. (a) 3. (d) 4. (d) 5. (b)

### 9.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Indian English theatre faces a lot many obstacles. Do you agree? Why/ why not?
2. What are the specific challenges that the Indian English playwright faces because of the language itself? How can the playwright overcome them?
3. Briefly discuss some major pre-independence Indian English dramatists.
4. Briefly discuss some prominent post-independence Indian English playwrights and their plays.

5. What could be the possible reasons for the failure of Indian English theatre as compared to the success of the theatres in other Indian languages?

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

1. What did the pre-Independence Indian English playwrights write about? Is there a discernible pattern in their writing? Why/ Why not? Discuss.
2. What are the differences between the pre-Independence Indian English playwrights and post-Independence playwrights? Discuss this highlighting the contributions of post-Independence playwrights.
3. Discuss the origin and development of Indian drama in English.

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## **9.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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Bhatta, S. Krishna. *Indian English Drama: A Critical Study*. Sterling Publishers, 1985.

Chakraborty, Kaustav, editor. *Indian Drama in English*. 1st edition, PHI Learning Private Limited, 2014.

Deshpande G.P., editor. *Modern Indian Drama an Anthology*, Sahitya Akademi, 2000.

Giri, Dipak, editor. *Indian English Drama: Themes and Techniques*. Vishwabharati, 2017.



## Unit-10: Mahesh Dattani – *Tara*

### Structure

10.0 Introduction

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Mahesh Dattani – *Tara*

10.2.1 About Mahesh Dattani

10.2.2 Summary

10.2.3 Themes

10.2.4 Major Characters

10.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

10.3 Learning Outcomes

10.4 Glossary

10.5 Sample Questions

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 10.0 Introduction

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Indian drama has a rich history that dates back to ancient times. The earliest plays were performed in Sanskrit during the Vedic period (1500-500 BCE), with the *Natyashastra*, written by Bharata Muni in the 2nd century BCE, being the earliest play. Classical Indian Drama included both Sanskrit drama and regional folk theatre, with the former being highly formal and stylized and the latter being more relaxed and performed in local languages. During the medieval period, regional forms of drama were performed in various parts of India, such as *Yakshagana* in Karnataka, *Tamasha* in Maharashtra, and *Bhavai* in Gujarat. These forms of drama were often performed in the local language and were influenced by the culture and traditions of the region. In the modern era, Indian drama has continued to evolve and diversify. The rise of drama as a genre of Indian writings in English began to emerge in the nineteenth century. British colonialism played a significant role in the development of Indian drama, as it provided an audience and infrastructure for the production of English-language plays. The first Indian English-language play, "The Persecuted" by Mahesh Chandra Ghosh, was staged in 1831. The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of new forms of drama, such as street theatre, protest theatre, and experimental theatre. Indian playwrights of the time often wrote plays that reflected

the colonial realities of their time, with themes of cultural conflict, nationalism, and social reform. One notable playwright was Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote plays such as "The Post Office" and "The King of the Dark Chamber," which explored themes of humanism and spirituality. In the post-independence period, Indian drama continued to evolve and diversify and playwrights such as Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar emerged as major figures, known for their socially and politically intriguing works that addressed issues such as gender, caste, and identity. Today, Indian drama is a vibrant and diverse art form, with a wide range of styles and genres. It continues to be an important medium for exploring social, political, and cultural issues and for expressing the creative imagination of the Indian people. Indian drama is a dynamic and diverse genre, with new voices and perspectives constantly emerging.

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## 10.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce you to Mahesh Dattani, a major Indian contemporary dramatist in English
- examine the play, *Tara* by Mahesh Dattani

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## 10.2 Mahesh Dattani – *Tara*

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### 10.2.1 About Mahesh Dattani

Mahesh Dattani was born in Bangalore, India in 1958. He belonged to a family of lawyers and worked in advertising before changing his career path to focus on writing and theater. Dattani is well-known for his bold depiction of contentious themes in Indian society such as homosexuality, communalism, and the oppression of women. He is a well-known playwright in India who has made significant contributions to Indian literature in English. He is renowned for his compelling plays that delve into various social issues in Indian society. The characters in his plays often wrestle for some kind of freedom and happiness, but are restricted by the shackles of conventional morality, traditional notions of gender, and unfulfilled and repressed desire. His plays often deal with topics such as gender, sexuality, identity, class, and religion. He has been acclaimed for his ability to create multi-dimensional characters who struggle with these issues in realistic and nuanced ways. The first play written by Mahesh Dattani was "Where There's a Will," which premiered in Mumbai in 1988. Some of Dattani's most famous works include:

- *Dance Like a Man* (1989)
- *Final Solutions* (1993)
- *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1995)
- *Tara* (1997)
- *Seven Steps around the Fire* (2000)
- *Thirty Days in September* (2001)

These plays have been performed widely across India and have been highly praised by audiences and critics alike. Aside from his work as a playwright, Dattani is also a screenwriter, director, and actor. He has been honored with several awards and accolades for his contributions to Indian literature and theater, including the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Padma Shri. In fact, he is the first ever Indian playwright in English to have won the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award for his book titled *Final Solutions and Other Plays* (1993).

### **10.2.2 Summary**

*Tara* is a play written by the acclaimed playwright Mahesh Dattani that explores the themes of gender identity, self-identity, and sibling love. The play tells the story of Chandan and Tara, two Siamese twins who were separated at a young age and now live with physical challenges such as limps and artificial legs. Despite their physical differences, the two share a strong emotional bond and care for each other deeply. The play is narrated by Chandan, who has now adopted the name Dan and become a successful writer. Dan wants to tell the story of his childhood and his relationship with Tara through his writing, using his memories to bring the past to life. Therefore, the play makes use of the flashback technique to narrate the story of his childhood. As he reflects on his past, the play takes the audience on a journey through the twins' childhood in Bombay, India, where they lived with their parents, Mr. Patel and Bharati, and interacted with various characters who impacted their lives.

Chandan and Tara are Siamese twins born to Bharati, who is a housewife from Kannad, and Patel, who is from Gujarat. Patel's parents did not approve of their marriage because of their difference in regions and cultures. Bharati's father is a wealthy politician and has influence on family decisions. The twins have a rare and complex medical condition with three legs, and one leg is joined and fed by the female child's blood. Siamese twins are a rare and complicated medical situation that needs special care. It is important to give the twins the medical attention they need and respect them as individuals. The family should get support and resources to make choices about the twins' care and future. Dr. Thakkar performs a surgical procedure to separate

the twins, knowing that the common leg could survive if it remained with the female child. However, Bharati and her father bribe the doctor and persuade him to perform the operation in a way that leaves the leg with Chandan, due to their preference for male child. The doctor goes against medical advice and performs the surgery as requested by Bharati and her father. Unfortunately, the leg dies two days later, leaving both Chandan and Tara with one artificial leg each, resulting in their disability. Chandan's maternal grandfather leaves him a significant amount of money, but he divides his house in Bangalore between the twins. Patel, Chandan's father, wants him to follow in his footsteps and become a professional, but Chandan has a different aspiration of becoming a writer. Both children face health problems due to their disability and are considered "freaks," or not normal. This story is presented in the play as Chandan or Dan (after moving to the US, Chandan has altered his name to Dan) is shown recalling the events from his memory.

The play *Tara* is written in two acts. The play begins with Dan, a character residing in London, writing in his room. The use of flashbacks and lighting effects depicts both London and Bombay, which is the original hometown of Patel and Bharati. The plot develops through Dan's narration, with his room being the only realistic set while the other levels of the stage depict the play's plot through flashbacks. The play portrays Bharati showering love and affection on Tara, who is unhappy with her wooden leg and desires to lead a fulfilling life despite her disability. Tara loves her mother but feels that her father is indifferent towards her health due to her mother's affection. The character of Roopa is introduced in the first act of the play. Roopa is a girl from the neighbourhood who visits their house and Bharati requests her repeatedly to become Tara's friend. However, Roopa exploits this request and tells about the family to her friends. She is a character who has probably been created to provide comic relief from the otherwise, serious play. She speaks poor English and Kannada and Tara mocks her. She even tries to make sexual advances towards Chandan, but does not succeed in doing so.

Chandan, on the other hand, is shown as a character who wants to become a writer in spite of the fact that his father wants him to be a working professional. As Tara grows older, her health deteriorates, and she is diagnosed with needing a kidney transplant. Bharati, out of love and compassion for her child, ultimately decides to donate her kidney to Tara. However, Bharati is portrayed as a nervous person, possibly attempting to conceal some sense of guilt. Patel is concerned about Bharati's health and urges her to be cautious. In the play, the climax revolves around Tara's emotional disillusionment as she discovers the truth before her death. Patel, her

father, reveals the secret that Bharati, Tara's mother, had wanted to tell her. Patel explains that three people are to blame for the twins' situation - the grandfather, Bharati, and himself. Although, the twins had a third leg that Tara had been feeding, Bharati and her father consciously preferred to provide Chandan with that leg due to the inherent gender bias in their minds. The doctor was bribed to perform the operation against medical advice. If the leg had been given to Tara, she could have had a normal life. The revelation that her mother was the cause of her ruin leaves Tara shocked and unable to cope. Tara had been blaming her father for indifference, but it was her beloved mother who made the wrong decision.

Dan has left his family and is currently residing in London to distance himself from their influence. In his current state, he is working on a play titled "Twinkle Tara" which brings back memories of his past. He reminisces about his and Tara's birth as twins, saying "The way we started in life. Two lives and one body in one comfortable womb." However, fate is cruel to them as Tara is forced to undergo a kidney transplant, with her mother being the donor. Sadly, the operation is unsuccessful, leading to Tara's passing. Eventually, Bharati, Tara's mother, also dies. Dan receives a telegram from his father asking him to return home, but he declines and asks his father to visit him in London instead. At the end of the play, Dan tears up his written papers, revealing that his goal was never to publish a book, but rather to relive his past and keep the memories of Chandan and Tara alive. The play's conclusion emphasizes the power of memory and its impact on our perception of the past and present. Overall, Tara is a moving and thought-provoking play that addresses several important themes and issues. Dattani's skillful storytelling and character development make the play a compelling read and an insightful commentary on the human experience. The play concludes with Chandan and Tara's spirits depicted standing together in a loving embrace, each now possessing two normal legs.

Throughout the play, Dattani explores the complexities of family dynamics and societal expectations, as well as the effects of trauma on individuals and their relationships. He highlights the struggles of those who are considered "different" by society and how their experiences shape their sense of self and their relationships with others.

***Check your progress:***

1. Chandan and Tara are Siamese twins born to Bharati and Patel. Bharati is a Kannad while Patel is a Gujarati. (True/False)

### 10.2.3 Themes

The play, *Tara*, explores the themes of identity, gender, and familial conflicts in Indian society. The play *Tara* revolves around the lives of Tara and Chandan, conjoined twins, who undergo painful surgery and have artificial limbs because of their parents' preference for the male child and this is kept a secret from the children for a very long time. Dattani portrays the struggles of a middle-class family grappling with a secret from the past that challenges their deeply ingrained values and beliefs. The play examines the complex dynamics of power and decision-making within the family, as well as the impact of societal norms and expectations on individual identities. The play centers on the moral and social issues faced by middle-class urban families and examines the tensions and power struggles between characters in these families. It deals with various themes such as gender identity, past revelations, disabilities and their impact, patriarchy, decision-making within families, societal pressures to adhere to traditional values, and the development of young people in a flawed and oppressive environment that does not allow them to develop freely and naturally.

The following are the main themes of the play *Tara*:

**Gender Discrimination:** While gender discrimination is a pervasive issue in India, Dattani weaves it into a larger tapestry of themes, including class, patriarchy, power dynamics, scientific progress, and the societal acceptance of disabilities. In Dattani's view, the patriarchal system in India hinders the development of healthy relationships between people. *Tara* is his final commentary on gender identity, portraying the struggles of individuals whose identities are suppressed by societal norms and expectations. Throughout the play, Dattani emphasizes the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation. The characters of Dan and Tara exemplify the difficulty of accepting oneself and the consequences of rejecting others based on their gender identity. In the end, Dan apologizes to Tara for making her gender identity his tragedy, highlighting the harm caused by not accepting and embracing the identities of others. Dattani's work sheds light on the complex issues facing individuals in Indian society, and his exploration of themes related to gender, sexuality, and identity has received critical acclaim.

**Patriarchy:** In Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara*, patriarchy and gender prejudice are key themes that shape the power dynamics within the family and society at large. The story revolves around Siamese twins, Chandan and Tara, who are separated at birth by Dr. Thakkar. Despite knowing that Tara's third leg, with her blood supply, could be used to give her a normal life, the doctor is influenced by Bharati and her influential father to provide Chandan with that leg, who

would otherwise be left with a natural disability. The consequences of this unethical decision are devastating for everyone involved. Both children grow up as invalids, causing great concern for their parents and the wider community. Bharati's relationship with Patel is also affected, and her guilt drives her to become overzealous in her care for Tara. Roopa, another character, represents the social perspective and sheds light on the harmful effects of societal biases and power imbalances. Dattani uses *Tara* to highlight the damaging effects of patriarchy and gender prejudice on individuals and society.

**Familial Tension:** In the play, the revelation at the end exposes the significant role of patriarchy within the system. Patel is aware that Bharati and her father are making an unnatural decision based on gender prejudice. Similarly, Dr. Thakkar is conducting an unethical and unscientific operation by doing the surgery according to the wishes of Bharati and her father for his own vested interests, but Patel is too powerless to protest or suggest that the doctor follow the correct course of action. Patel himself is a victim of the patriarchal system, as he shows no remorse for the wrongdoing, and Bharati suffers from abnormality due to her guilty conscience. The character of Tara is the only rebel in the play, as she suffers and protests against the system. The audience sympathizes with her tragedy, while Chandan escapes to a far-off place and fights his battle in withdrawal. Only in spirit do the two children come together in love, as they once were in their mother's womb. Therefore, the play is a tragic portrayal of the lives of ordinary people in the urban middle class who are subject to this oppressive patriarchal system.

**Identity and memory:** Dan writes the play using his memory and he recalls the incidents in flashbacks. Thus, memory is an essential theme and component of the play. In the beginning of the play he says, “Yes. I have my memories. Locking myself in a bedsitter in a seedy suburb of London, thousands of miles from home hasn’t put enough distance between us”. Both Tara and Chandan are conscious of the fact that they need to have an identity or otherwise they will be ostracized as disabled persons. Chandan is seen struggling throughout the play to make his name as a writer and is able to do so by narrating the play – the story of “Twinkle Tara.” Hence, identity and memory are important themes of the play.

**Sibling bonding:** The bond shared by Chandan and Tara in the play is singularly the most beautiful aspect of the play. Irrespective of the family conflicts, struggles, secrets, and other issues they both love each other dearly. Chandan’s love for Tara is evident in the fact that he writes his story about her titled as “Twinkle Tara” and even in the end of the story, both embrace

each other in love. While Tara is always very supportive of Chandan and his plans. Therefore, sibling bonding is one of the most major themes of the play.

***Check your progress:***

“Yes. I have my memories. Locking myself in a bedsitter in a seedy suburb of London...” Who says this?

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#### **10.2.4 Major Characters**

The characters in Dattani's plays are regular people whose feelings and attitudes are usually shaped by social values and restrictions. In Dattani's plays, the characters often feel alone and search for their own identity and freedom while living within their society. The major characters of the play are given below:

**Chandan or Dan:** Dan is an older version of Chandan and the author of the play. He is portrayed as an invalid who has moved to London to distance himself from his past and the societal norms that have influenced his life. Despite not being as outraged as his twin sister, Tara, he recognizes the gender discrimination she has faced in their traditional middle-class Indian family. Chandan is depicted as a character who deals with his struggles by withdrawing into his own world and music. Although Tara's character attracts the sympathy of viewers, the play also acknowledges Chandan's battles. His character remains unaffected by Roopa's sexual advances as he prefers to be unique and independent. Dan's love for his sister, Tara, is clear throughout the play, and the final scene depicts him embracing her in the other world.

**Tara:** The main character of the play is Tara, the twin sister of Chandan, who is a victim of patriarchy in urban, middle class society. Tara's tragic story revolves around the fact that she was born conjoined twin with her brother Chandan. Due to the decision of her gender-conscious mother and her powerful father, the third leg that was fed by Tara's blood was given to Chandan, making her disabled for life. She dislikes her father, Patel, for accepting middle-class morality, gender discrimination, and patriarchy. Tara loves her mother, who cares about her career and health but she is completely destroyed when her father, Patel, tells her how her mother and grandfather made the wrong decision to give the third leg to the male child and prevailed upon Dr. Thakkar to commit an unethical act to ruin the twins' lives. The revelation shatters Tara's spirit, and her mother's donation of a kidney to revive her fails, ultimately leading to her death as an unfortunate victim of gender prejudice, patriarchy, and the immoral decision of Dr. Thakkar.



In several scenes, she is shown as an angry person who fights her battles, such as when she blackmailed her classmate into doing her homework for her or showed up Roopa for her lack of usage of certain idioms. These moments provide insight into Tara's inner life and generate sympathy for her. She refuses to go for kidney transplant or pursue her studies in college. Tara is a rebellious victim of gender prejudice and patriarchy in the play who has been made a handicapped child by a gender-conscious society, and Dattani portrays her as a fighting, rebellious character.

**Bharati:** The character Bharati is a representation of a middle-class housewife from Karnataka. As a traditional middle-class woman, she is influenced by gender prejudice and tends to make decisions. Her husband Patel is not happy with her due to her father's overbearing influence and interference in their family matters but he is powerless. Bharati, under her father's influence, convinces Dr. Thakkar to make the wrong decision of giving a leg to a male child, which ultimately ruins the lives of both Tara and Chandan. Despite feeling pity for her children, Bharati is consumed with guilt for her role in ruining her daughter's life. She becomes sick and overly particular about Tara's health. She, however, threatens her husband that she may reveal the secret to the children, but he retaliates and says that he would himself tell the secret. Bharati's main concern is to make sure that Tara has a healthy life despite her disability. She requests Roopa to become friends with Tara. She is full of remorse and wants to repent for her actions. So, she decides to give her kidney to Tara to atone her wrongdoing, even though an alternate kidney had been arranged. Throughout the play, she is portrayed as a nervous, sick, and compassionate character.

**Patel:** Patel, a Gujarati man, is married to Bharati, a woman from Karnataka. Their inter-caste and inter-regional marriage results in Patel's parents disowning him, causing him to rely on his influential politician father-in-law from Bangalore. Due to this, Bharati becomes the decision-maker in the family, much to Patel's resentment, as he values the patriarchal tradition of sons following their father's profession. Patel sends Chandan to London to pursue higher education. Patel is aware that Bharati's father has enticed Dr. Thakkar to do an unethical surgery in lieu of fulfilling Dr. Thakkar's own vested interests which has caused Tara's life to be ruined unjustly. Despite this, Patel remains a traditional father and upholds the Gujarati practice of killing infant daughters. Bharati is aware of this and is unhappy with Patel's indifference towards Tara. Their relationship becomes strained, and the tension affects their children as well. Tara

sees patriarchal values as prevalent in the family, as major decisions are made by the male figures. Patel represents middle-class morals and biases in the play.

**Roopa:** Roopa is a typical adolescent girl who lives her life according to her desires. Upon discovering that Bharati is from Karnataka, Roopa becomes involved with the Patel family. In the play, Roopa is portrayed as a humorous character who speaks poor English and Kannada, contrary to Tara. Although she is a mean and offensive character, her actions and dialogues are intended to make the audience laugh. Roopa is a smart girl who exploits Bharati's concerns for Tara, and her attempts to pursue Chandan are a source of entertainment in the play. Roopa is representative of an interfering middle-class family. When she and her friends learn about Tara's artificial leg, Bharati requests her help, but Roopa instead tells her friends about Tara's situation. This behavior causes Tara to become annoyed and furious with Roopa in some scenes, as she ridicules her for her poor English, Kannada, and unpleasant habits, even describing her as "ugly." Nevertheless, Roopa provides a comedic element to the play and Dattani intentionally created her character as a source of laughter in the play in order to counter the more serious themes of disability, identity, and family relationships explored by Tara and Bharati.

**Dr. Thakkar:** The middle class in India is subject to societal prejudices that control both science and morality, leaving the freedom of the individual as a mere mockery. In the case of Tara, Dr. Thakkar knew that attaching the prosthetic leg to the male child, Chandan, would not be beneficial to Tara and could even endanger her life. Thus, he should have made the medical decision without consulting the family. However, Bharati's father's influence coerced him into making an ethically wrong decision and providing Chandan with the leg. The successful operation lasted only two days and led to the devastation of Tara, solely due to her gender at birth. Despite his powerful and cruel role in the tragedy, Dattani places Dr. Thakkar in the background, indicating that he played no emotional role in the family conflict. Middle-class morality accepted his treacherous behavior as a very normal aspect of the biased societal prejudices. Patel's revelation to his children put the blame on Bharati's father, mother, and his own inability to confront the decision.

### 10.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

Mahesh Dattani explores poignant themes through the play *Tara*. He has presented the dynamics of an urban middle class family that has its fair share of conflicts, tensions and secrets and he subtly comments on the status of women in society, patriarchy being imposed by women themselves, societal pressures and expectations and the preference given to a male child over the

female child despite living in metropolitan cities and being educated and aware. The play also comments on Chandan or Dan's search for identity and the bond that the conjoined twins share with each other as Chandan feels that Tara is not only his sister but rather his other half. Therefore, Mahesh Dattani is a contemporary dramatist who writes on themes that are not only relevant in the present social milieu but also of universal human appeal.

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### 10.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have become acquainted with the brief history of drama as a genre in India. You should have gained an understanding of *Tara* and Dattani's contribution.

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### 10.4 Glossary

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**Intriguing** – Fascinating or arousing curiosity

**Vibrant** – Full of energy and enthusiasm; bright and striking

**Dynamic** – characterized by constant change or progress

**Wrestle** – struggle

**Shackles** – anything that limits or curtails an individual's liberty or capacity to act

**Repressed** – to consciously or unconsciously suppress or hold back emotions, desires, or memories

**Acclaimed** – highly recognized and respected in one's field

**Nuanced** – complex and deep; intricate

**Premiered** – the first performance of a work of art such as play, film, Broadway etc. in public

**Accolades** – praise and recognition

**Siamese Twins** – conjoined twins, who are identical twins and physically attached to each other at the time of birth

**Persuade** – convince

**Flashbacks** – a technique used by writers and filmmakers where a character recalls events from the past that have shaped character's attitude or mindset in the present

**Conceal** – hide

**Disillusionment** – feeling disappointed or betrayed

**Grappling** – struggling to overcome

**Pervasive** – widespread; commonly found

**Tapestry** – a kind of weaving different threads in order to create a design

**Reconciliation** – restoration of a relation

**Resentment** – bitterness; feeling of anger

**Perpetrated** – to carry out or commit a harmful, illegal, or immoral act

**Milieu** – the environment or setting in which something or someone exists or operates

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## 10.5 Sample Questions

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### 10.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. What is the title of the work written by Dan or Chandan in the play?
  - a. “Twinkle Tara”
  - b. “Lovely Tara”
  - c. “Dazzlig Tara”
  - d. “Little Tara”**
2. Which of the following play is not written by Dattani?
  - a. Dance Like a Man
  - b. Tara
  - c. Nagamandala**
  - d. Bravely Fought the Queen
3. In the play *Tara* whom does Bharati request to be friends with Tara?
  - a. Prema
  - b. Roopa**
  - c. Nalini
  - d. Dan
4. Which of the following is not the major theme of the play?
  - a. Gender Discrimination
  - b. Identity
  - c. Familial Conflicts
  - d. Homosexuality**
5. The play *Tara* is in how many acts?

- a. Five Acts
  - b. Three Acts
  - c. Two Acts**
  - d. One Act
6. Dan is an older version of Chandan and the author of the play. (**True/False**)
  7. Patel sends Chandan to London to pursue higher education. (**True/False**)
  8. In the play, Bharati is a representation of a middle-class housewife from Karnataka. (**True/False**)
  9. Chandan's love for Tara is evident in the fact that he writes his story about her titled as "Twinkle Tara". (**True/False**)
  10. The character of Roopa represents the social perspective and sheds light on the harmful effects of societal biases and power imbalances. (**True/False**)

#### **10.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:**

1. Briefly comment on gender stereotypes and prejudice prevalent in Indian Society
2. How is the play *Tara* a reflection of urban family dynamics in India?
3. Comment on the structure and ending of the play.
4. Patriarchy is perpetrated by women, more than by men. Explain this statement through the events and the character of Bharati in the play.
5. Briefly explain the role played by the character of Roopa in moving the events of the plot forward.

#### **10.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:**

1. Discuss the various themes of the play in detail.
2. How apt is the title *Tara*? Justify.
3. Write a character-sketch of Chandan.
4. Who do you think is responsible for the cruel fate of the twins Tara and Chandan and why?
5. Explain the bond shared by Tara and Chandan as given in the play.

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## 10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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Naik, M.K. and S.M. Shirodkar, editors. *Mahesh Dattani and Indian Drama in English: Critical Perspectives*. Prestige Books, 2011.

## **Unit-11: Women Dramatists in Indian Writing in English**

### **Structure**

**11.0** Introduction

**11.1** Objectives

**11.2** Women Dramatists in Indian Writing in English

**11.2.1** Post-Independence Indian Women Dramatists

**11.2.2** Major Women Voices of Contemporary Indian English Drama

**11.2.3** Let Us Sum Up

**11.3** Learning Outcomes

**11.4** Glossary

**11.5** Sample Questions

**11.6** Suggested Learning Resources

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### **11.0 Introduction**

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In the present Unit, we will attempt to comprehend some major and minor voices of Indian English drama as well as the contributions of women playwrights in the pre-independence and post-independent phase. Theatre in India has a long tradition, but there was hardly any woman dramatist before the nineteenth century. Even the roles of female characters used to be performed by male actors. When the demands of realism reached every corner of the country, the trend not only changed in favor of women, but sought to influence the women into joining theater. In the theatres of all regional languages of the country, women appeared on the scene by the middle of the twentieth century. The theater form, street theater, emerged as a promising medium to explore women's issues as well as a forum where the female audience could relate their problems and issues. Thus, the role of women is an integral aspect in the progression of modern theater.

The early works of women dramatists were considered and recognized as insignificant, but as time passed the situation changed and women started to write promising plays. In India, plays in regional languages such as Marathi, Kanada, Bengali, Tamil and Malyalam, etc., are found even before the plays were written in English. The plays in regional languages by Indian women are less in number, and the plays in English by women dramatists are fewer in number. Bharati Sarabhai performed a pioneering role in inspiring numerous women to write plays. She

presents the dimension of age-old customs and beliefs deeply rooted, particularly in women. Another major voice of the colonial era was Mrinalini Sarabhai who presents Indian freedom movement and the pre-independence politics of our country. Swarnakumari Devi Ghoshal and Shanti Jhaveri also wrote plays. Most of the women dramatists of the pre-independence phase crossed the usual domestic boundaries. The Indian freedom movement and politics of contemporary time greatly influenced these playwrights.

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## 11.1 Objectives

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The objectives of the Unit are to:

- study the major and minor Indian women playwrights in English.
- explore the significance of women's contribution to Indian English drama
- comprehend the diversity, equality, and uniformity perpetuated by women playwrights
- analyse the substantial and seminal role of women playwrights in enriching the Indian English theatre

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## 11.2 Women Dramatists in Indian Writing in English

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Indian women first forayed into the field of drama as actors. Later, they started contributing to Indian drama in English. Kamla Subramanam, S.Janki, Mrs. Billimoria, K.B.Thakur and Shanta Rama Rau are some major contributors.

### 11.2.1 Post Independent Indian Women Dramatist:

The noted Indian theatre critic Tutun Mukherjee in her famous article, *Proglemenon to Women's Theatre in Staging Resistance*, argues, that post-colonial Indian English drama has grown more varied, rich and diverse both in content and semiotics. Women dramatists in Indian writing in English began their contribution in late nineteenth century. The phase of post modern is productive for women dramatist because a number of women dramatist emerged with innovative, experimental and sensitive topics. Their plays performed successfully in theatre as well as compelled audience to think over it. The involvement of women in theatre is not a result of one day. There are movements, efforts, struggle and resistance behind it. The Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) contributed immensely in the popularization of drama and encouraging



women. It provided a platform for women dramatists and actors to present their issues from their own perspectives.

There are some women dramatists in the early post-independence period, such as Kamla Subramanam, S.Janki, Mrs. Billimoria, K.B.Thakur and Shanta Rama Rau. Shanta Ram Rau explores the Indian freedom struggle. She was greatly influenced by the epics. She deals with the characters of Gandharee and Kaikayee. The early phase of post-independence Indian English drama was predominated by Dina Mehta, Manjula Padmanabhan and Uma Parmeshawaran.

Initially, women entered the theatre as actors. Later they became successful producers and directors. Women directors brought new dimensions to subject. The women's experiences have been dealt with in the drama by women directors. The socio-cultural, political, psychological and economical condition of women extensively presented in plays to bring equity and grant a status of person to women. The point of view shifted to women's perspective. During the 1980s, a number of serious and promising directors came to the forefront, such as Laxmi Chandra, Chama Ahuja, Neelam Mansingh Chaudhary, Sheila Bhatia, B. Jayshree, Nadira Babbar, Arundhati Rajee and so on.

The postmodern phase witnesses a versatile role of women because they have successfully performed as actors, producers and directors. Their theatrical performances are not only appreciated in India but reached across the country. Women playwrights for the first time in Indian history started to write their own script, act, produce and direct their plays in an efficient way. The playwrights such as Poile Sengupta, Veenapani Chawla, Gowri Ramnarayan and Manjima Chatterjee set a new consolidated platform and a new model for that, if they have potential, they can break the traditional boundaries of artistic creativity. The image of Indian theatre as male oriented has changed now. Now, theater is an open entity for all.

From 1990, the impact of technology, privatization, and globalization has immensely changed the ideological framework of our country. The country witnessed a number of women playwrights in this phase such as Poile Sengupta, Pritam k Chakrovarthy, Veenapani Chawla, Anuradha Marwah, Annie Zaidi, Tripuri Sharma, Shiavni Tibrewala, Meher Pestonji, Anupama Chandrasekhar, Deepika Arvind, Nayantara Roy, Ninaj Khodaji and so on. Most of these dramatists employ the theme of classical Indian and western technique to present their plays. Some women dramatists of this phase employ the technique of Girish Karnad in using the Indian epics, myths, and folktales as well as revising and interpreting them in an innovative style.

There are women dramatists who revived the Sanskrit tradition of musical drama by using music, dance and song with dialogues. These dramatists attempted to use Indian folktales with western jazz. These dramatists are successful in enriching the soil of Indian drama by practicing the inner world of the feminine psyche in theatre.

***Check your progress:***

1. The Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) contributed immensely in the popularization of drama and encouraging women. (True/False)

### **11.2.2. Major Women Voices of Contemporary Indian English Drama:**

Indian women with serious notes appear in theater little later, but the contemporary scenario of Indian English playwrights has created a promising picture. The women writers of this phase have broken the traditional boundaries of restrictions and produced challenging plays. These dramatists deal with the themes of love, sex, anxiety, psychology, transgender, poverty, myth in such a way that they stand equally or more competent than male playwrights of India. In this section we are going to discuss some major women dramatists and their contributions to Indian English drama.

**Uma Parmeshwaran:** She was born in Madras in 1938 and now permanently resides in Canada. She performed multiple roles such as poet, critic, fiction writer, and dramatist and story teller. During her stay in India around the 1960s, she wrote a play on partition entitled *Sons Must Die*. Her other plays are *Meera*, *Sita's Promise*, *My sister*. Her plays are anthologized as *Sons Must Die* and published in 1980 as a part of the South Asian Canadian Literature Series. Parmeshwaran as a dramatist presents permanent exile abroad and yet continues to draw on her cultural and aesthetic system. In most of her plays she recalls the Indian past with its mythology, legend, gods and goddess. The aspects of immigrants such as anxiety, crisis, identity and alienation find attention in her plays. She is one of the early promising playwrights of India who attempted to popularize Indian plays with Indian aesthetic and essence. She also imbibes versatile themes in her plays to substantiate her position as a playwright.

**Pritam K Chakrovarthy:** She hails from Chennai and performs versatile roles such as independent researcher, director, and playwright and film critic. She possesses extensive experience of theatre. She appears in a solo popular play *Mirror* at Pragirathi foundation. She wrote the English plays *Can Care* and *Dushatara*. She has been intensely involved with voicing silence, the gender wing of M.S. Swaminathan research foundation (MSSRF) with Mangai, and a

Chennai-based theatre director. Her solo performances toured India and abroad as a result of her Fulbright scholarship.

**Anju Makhija:** Like her other contemporaries, Anju Makhija is also a translator, playwright, poet and freelance writer. She has contributed plays such as *If I Wish Were Horses*, *All Together*, *The Last Train*, and *Total Summer Masala*. Her plays *If I Wishes Horses* and *The Last Train* were short listed for the BBC world playwriting award 1999. Her play *All Together* won a prize at a national film festival in California. She has co-edited three volume series of plays by Indo-English playwrights and an anthology of women's plays.

**Ninaj Khodaji:** Ninaj Khodaji is another promising women playwright of contemporary time known for her two plays *Strangers* and *Insomnia*. The play *Stranger* is a story of five unknown people and their journey expressed through prose, verse and telephonic conversation. The unique style of Khodaji impresses the audience. She wrote her play *Insomnia* for the Royal Court Theatre, London. It comprises four monologues from young theatre actors and a director. The play is set on a serious note because the Mumbai riot of 1993 is the backdrop of the play. The physical and internal consequences of such a war are efficiently explored through the play. The role of Ninaj Khodaji in enriching the Indian English Drama is significant. Though her plays lack feminine sensibility but as far as the exploration and comprehension of human themes concerned, she stands as significant.

**Annie Zaidi:** Annie Zaidi is a versatile genius who wrote poetry, drama, fiction, essays and scripts for Hindi and English stage. She has contributed four major plays: *Jaal* (Hindi), *Name Place Animal Thing* (English), *Seva* (Hindi-English) and *Jaam* a radio play. Her first full length play *Jaal* opened at Prithvi theatre in 2012 as a part of Writers Block. Her other popular play *Name Place Animal Thing* was shortlisted for The Hindu Metroplus Playwright Award in 2009. Her radio play *Jaam* remained as a regional winner at BBC international playwright competition 2011. The contribution of Annie Zaidi to Indian English drama is significant in many ways.

**Manjima Chatterjee:** Manjima Chatterjee is a Noida based teacher and theatre practitioner. Her play *Limboo* was shortlisted for metro plus playwright award in 2010. In this play she looks at the issue of marriage from the perspectives of three couples. The transformation of contemporary Indian theatre and the shift from rural ethos to metro culture have been crucially dramatized in the plays of Manjima Chatterjee. The urban spaces have occupied a prominent position in the plays of Manjima Chatterjee. Through these spaces she personifies the aspects of

gender, culture and politics. Her play *The Mountain of Bones* is a commentary on the wastage of food and she interpreted that the wastage attitude of food is a result of misguided policies and misplaced priorities.

**Anupama Chandrasekhar:** Another prominent voice of contemporary Indian English drama is Anupama Chandrasekhar who has significantly shone through her promising plays and diverse subjects. The basic threshold of conventional Indian English drama has been broken by contemporary women playwrights with serious, diverse and considerable plays. The approach, boldness and courage these women writers have shown immensely helped to consolidate the framework of Indian English Drama. Anupama Chandrasekhar is also a major voice among those who broke that threshold. Her popular play *Acid* was runner up for the Jane Chamber International award for women playwrights in 2005. Her popular play *Free Outgoing* was premiered at the Royal Court Theater in London in 2007 to critical acclaim. The play was performed throughout the world and returned to Royal Court Theatre again.

**Deepika Arvind:** Deepika Arvind is a Bangalore based playwright who has won fellowships and awards for her creative writing. She has recently appeared in Black Coffee productions *The God of Courage* and Rafiki's *The Memorandum*. Deepika Arvind's play *Nobody Sleeps Alone* gave her popularity. The play explores the life of gangsters in Mumbai that affects the peace of the city. As mentioned earlier, like her other contemporary playwrights, Deepika Arvind too, laid an emphasis on the exploration of urban space.

**Veenapani Chawla:** Veenapani Chawla is a noted voice of contemporary Indian English drama. She is basically recognized as a script writer and director of theatre. Her name is often associated with the experimental playwrights of contemporary times. She has acted in plays at an early age with Amol Palekar. She officially started her career with the play *Sita*. Her substantial contribution to theatre includes *Oedipus*, *Trojan Women*, *Impressions of Bhima*, *Khandava Prastha*, *Ganpati* and *The Hare and the Tortoise*. The reviews on her plays are eloquent testimonies of her ability in fusing tradition and modernity. She writes on diverse themes from myths to contemporary issues, and provides various new techniques of theatrical presentation and performance.

**Dina Mehta:** Dina Mehta is a noted voice of Indian English drama. She is recognized as a fiction writer, playwright and critic. Born in the year 1928, she contributed a dozen plays and her first full length play is *The Myth Makers*. Her other popular play *Brides are Not Burning* won the BBC international competition in 1979. Her popular play *Getting Away With Murder* was on

the short list of seven specially commended radio plays out of 902 entries submitted for the BBC world competition 1989. Some of her popular plays are *One Plus One Makes Nine and Sister Like You*. The play *Sister Like You* is on the theme of domestic violence and was also shortlisted. Dina Mehta combines the realistic elements of society in her plays and brings social issues to limelight. The play *Brides are Not Burning*, as the title indicates, deals with the social problems of dowry and the harassment brides suffer. The play *Getting Away with Murder* is a story of three women who experience childhood sexual abuse, infidelity, discrimination and insecure relationships. The play *A Sister Like You* is set in Mumbai and portrays the local situations in realistic manner.

**Manjula Padmnabhan:** Manjula Padmanabhan is a versatile writer and is recognized as an artist, cartoonist, illustrator, journalist, and playwright. She contributed twenty one children's books and a long cartoon strip which was published in book form in the year 2001. Padmnabhan came to limelight with her play *Harvest* and was selected, out of approximately 1500 entries from 75 countries, for the first prize in the first Onasis International Cultural Competition at Athens. She is the first Indian dramatist to receive that honor. She has made a significant contribution with her plays such as *Lights Out*, *The Artist Model*, *Harvest*, *The Mating Game Show*, and *Hidden Fires*. She produced plays with the intention that theatre is not an open-ended process rather a finished product. You have studied the play, *Lights Out* in the course on English Drama. Her play *Harvest* deals with an impoverished family living in a single chawl of Bombay. The protagonist of the play decides to sell his organs for survival and that episode creates a larger impact of the play. The play *The Artist Model* deals with metaphysical questions relating to art and exploitation sextet comprises a series of six short skits about aspects of sexuality. The play *Hidden Fires* is a series of five powerful monologues through this Padmanabhan tackles the issues of violence, intolerance and narrow concepts of community.

**Poile Sengupta:** Poile Sengupta aka Ambika Goplakrishnan is a prolific writer of contemporary Indian English Drama. The issues of women from the perspective of women is portrayed, discussed and debated in her plays. Her anthology of six plays titled *Women Centre Stage: The Dramatist and the Play* with a foreword by the noted Indian author Shashi Deshpande is published by Routledge. In an interview with Anita Singh, she says, "I don't want to be categorized as a feminist writer; I am a writer with the consciousness of women. I cannot escape my gender but that is not my soul identity." Her first full length play *Mangalam*, written in 1993, deals with subjugation, generation gap, multilingualism and cultural transmission. Her play

*Alpina* and *Samara's Song* efficiently portrays the political despotism and loss of political values. The play *Keats Was a Tuber* personifies the contemporary Indian education system enslaved to the *Minute* of Macaulay. The play *Inner Laws* consist only female characters and in a humorous tone express the enmity of between daughters in laws and mothers in laws. Glen Odom in his book *World Theories of Theatre* considered Poile Sengupta as prominent voice of Asian continent for her efficient and acute representation of gender bias discourse.

***Check your progress:***

1. Manjula Padmanabhan has written plays such as *Lights Out*, *The Artist Model*, *Harvest*, *The Mating Game Show*, and *Hidden Fires*. (True/False)

### **11.2.3 Let Us Sum Up**

In this Unit, we focus on the contribution of Indian women playwrights in English. The issues of women from the perspective of women is efficiently presented in the plays of women playwrights. The post-independence phase has proven as a golden period for Indian women writers. The writers like Bharati Sarabhai contributed in the pre-independence phase, but writers who appeared on the scene later, like Poile Sengupta, Manjula Padmanabhan, Dina Mehta, Veenapani Chawla, Deepika Arvind and others were successful in breaking the traditional framework and scenario of Indian women playwrights by writing sensational and promising plays. These writers not only produced their plays for the purpose of reading but also successfully staged their plays in the English language.

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## **11.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand the journey, emergence and present condition of Indian women playwrights writing primarily in English. You should have also gained an understanding of Indian women dramatists and their contribution to Indian drama in English.

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## **11.4 Glossary**

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**Natyashashtra** – A world classic book on drama by Bharat Muni

**Lingua Franca** – Medium of communication

**Versatile** - Multidimensional

**Gender** – Socio-cultural discourse of obligation

**Marginalized** – Treating as Secondary

**IPTA** - Indian Peoples Theatre Association

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## 11.5 Sample Questions

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### 11.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Who wrote the play *Mangalam*?
  - a. Manjula Padmanabhan
  - b. Poile Sengupta
  - c. Dina Mehta**
  - d. Veenapani Chawla
2. *Harvest* is the popular play by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Manjula Padmanabhan**
  - b. Deepika Arvind
  - c. Jyoti Mhapsekar
  - d. Dina Mehta
3. The play *Nobody Sleeps Alone* brought fame to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Deepika Arvind
  - b. Manjima Chatterjee
  - c. Vera Sharma
  - d. Poile Sengupta**
4. *Suki* is a popular children cartoon script penned down by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Manjula Padmanabhan**
  - b. Dina Mehta
  - c. Uma Parmeshwaran
  - d. None of the above
5. The popular play *Acid* is written by which of the following playwrights?
  - a. Anupama Chandrasekhar
  - b. Deepika Arvind
  - c. Manjima Chatterjee

- d. None of the above**
6. Which of the following plays explores the theme of partition?
- Sons' Must Die**
  - Alipha
  - Samara's Song
  - Jaal
7. *Jaal* is a popular play by which of the following playwrights?
- Annie Zaidi**
  - Uma Parmeshawaran
  - Poile Sengupta
  - Deepika Arvind
8. Ambika Gopalkrishnan is the real name of which of the following playwrights?
- Manjula Padmnabhan
  - Dina Mehta
  - Poile Sengupta**
  - Annie Zaidi
9. Which play of Manjima Chatterjee was shortlisted for the Metro Plus award?
- Limboo
  - The Mountain of Bones
  - Both**
  - None of the above
10. Which of the following is an early voice of Indian women playwrights?
- Bharati Sarabhai**
  - Usha Ganguly
  - Dina Mehta
  - Pritam K Chakrovarthy

### 11.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

- Who wrote the popular play *Strangers of Insomnia*?
- Which phase witnessed a galaxy of women playwrights?
- Who authored the play *Hidden Fire*?
- Who is the writer of the play *Brides are Not for the Burning*?



5. Who wrote the play *Total Summer Masala*?

### 11.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

1. Why Indian women playwrights were less in number before pre-independence period?
2. In what ways are contemporary Indian women playwrights innovative, explorative, and inventive?
3. Critically examine the contemporary Indian women playwrights with artistic excellence?

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## 11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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Banes, Sally. *Dancing Women: Female Bodies Onstage*. Routledge, 2013.

Dalmia, Vasudha. *Poetics, Plays and Performance: The Politics of Modern Theatre*.

Dharwadkar, Aparna. *Theatre of Independence: Drama, Theory and Urban Performance in India Since 1947*. OUP, 2009.

Gargi, Balwant. *Theatre in India*. Theatre Arts, 1962.

Gupta, Somanatha. *The Parsi Theatre: Its Origins, and Development*: Seagull Books, 2005.

Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. Sahitya Akademi, 1995, OUP, 2008.

Ravande, Durgesh. *Indian English Drama: A Gynocritical Perspective*. Atlantic, 2016.

## **Unit-12: Uma Parameswaran – *Sita's Promise***

### **Structure**

**12.0** Introduction

**12.1** Objectives

**12.2** Uma Parameswaran – *Sita's Promise*

**12.2.1** About Uma Parameswaran

**12.2.2** Summary of *Sita's Promise*

**12.2.2.1** Scene – I

**12.2.2.2** Scene – II

**12.2.2.3** Scene – III

**12.2.2.4** Scene – IV

**12.2.2.5** Scene – V

**12.2.2.6** Scene – VI

**12.2.2.7** Scene – VII

**12.2.2.8** Scene – VIII

**12.2.2.9** Scene - IX

**12.2.2.10** Scene – X

**12.2.3** Plot of the Play

**12.2.4** Themes of the Play

**12.2.4.1** Love and Devotion

**12.2.4.2** Duty and Responsibility

**12.2.4.3** Spiritual Growth and Enlightenment

**12.2.4.4** Nature and Harmony

**12.2.4.5** Identity and Self-Realization

**12.2.4.6** Divine Intervention and Providence

**12.2.4.7** Social Justice and Equality:

**12.2.5** Characters in the Play

**12.2.5.1** Sita

**12.2.5.2** Rama

**12.2.5.3** Lakshmana

**12.2.6** Let Us Sum Up

**12.3** Learning Outcomes

**12.4** Glossary

**12.5** Sample Questions

**12.6** Suggested Learning Resources

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## 12.0 Introduction

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The cultural atmosphere in Canada reflects a blend of various influences, where Indo-Canadian playwrights play a significant role. These writers originating from the Indian subcontinent bring a unique perspective to Canadian theatre, incorporating narratives, concepts, and characters that mirror the complexities of diasporic existence. From examining issues of identity and inclusion to confronting cultural disagreements and celebrating diversity, Indo-Canadian playwrights have made substantial impacts on theatre in Canada and globally. Among the prominent figures in the realm of Indo-Canadian theatre is Uma Parameswaran. Across her extensive career, Parameswaran has produced notable contributions to Indian and Canadian theatrical realms, enriching the stage with poignant storylines. This unit delves into the exploration of Uma Parameswaran's production *Sita's Promise*.

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## 12.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to help you to:

- delve into cultural representation and identity in *Sita's Promise*.
- analyze the gender dynamics and roles of female characters.
- take a look into how mythology is used in modern times or present-day situations.
- explore the impact of diasporic experiences on identities.
- look at *Sita's Promise* and the societal criticism that it has received.

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## 12.2 Uma Parameswaran – *Sita's Promise*

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### 12.2.1 About Uma Parameswaran

Uma Parameswaran is a versatile writer, professor, and literary critic whose scholarship has taken her across decades, countries, and genres. Raised in India in Tamil family, she was born in 1938 in Madras or Chennai. The foundation for Parameswaran's potential as a writer was laid in her childhood, which implanted in her an intense affection for literature, art, and traditional storytelling. But when she moved to Canada as a student and thereafter joined the University of Winnipeg as professor, her life took a very different path. Parameswaran became

active in theatre after moving to Canada, using her Indian roots and experience as an immigrant as motivation. Her early writings addressed issues of cultural conflict, alienation, and identity, making her a well-known writer in the Indo-Canadian literary landscape. Her writing centred on the intercultural shift, delving into themes of identity, exile, and belonging. Consequently, she became one of the leading voices of Indo-Canadian literature.

Parameswaran has contributed significantly to literature with works like *The Liberation of Ardhanari* and *Mangoes on the Maple Tree*, which delicately examine the immigrant experience. Her poetry collections, including *The House of the Diaspora* and *The Flowering of Desire*, blend personal narratives with sociopolitical commentary. Additionally, she has authored plays, non-fiction pieces, and edited anthologies, solidifying her position as a prominent figure in South Asian Canadian literature. Beyond her creative works, Parameswaran is also an accomplished professor and scholar. Her critical writings and scholarly publications have made a significant impact on South Asian and diasporic literature studies. Active involvement in literary conferences, editorial boards, and mentoring emerging writers has left a lasting impression on the academic community.

Parameswaran's literary contributions have been acknowledged through various awards, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Literary Award and the Governor General's Literary Award. Her works have been translated into multiple languages, transcending national boundaries and reaching a global audience. Her life and works exemplify the transformative power of language and storytelling, bridging cultures, and inspiring future generations of writers and scholars.

## **12.2.2 Summary of *Sita's Promise***

### **12.2.2.1 Scene – I**

The play starts with the portrayal of Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana during their period of exile in the forest. Rama, the prince of Ayodhya, is accompanied by his spouse Sita and brother Lakshmana, as they are banished by their father Dasaratha due to their stepmother Kaikeyi's demand. They have travelled extensively through the forests, assisting sages and battling demons. While discussing their upcoming journey back to Ayodhya, Sita expresses worry about their forest life reaching its conclusion. In contrast, Lakshmana asserts that their upbringing was as warriors and leaders, not as exiles. This scene also showcases Sita's love for nature when she

encounters an injured bird and rushes to see it. Their lives during exile have been brought to light by the dramatist in the play.

#### **12.2.2.2 Scene II**

In this scene, like the previous one, Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana are engaged in different tasks. Lakshmana is sharpening the arrows, Rama is resting against a tree, and Sita is organising berries. Three young girls from a nearby ashram visit them to showcase their new dance attire and performance. The discussion shifts to their duration in the forest and the option of moving forward. Lakshmana proposes the idea of fixing the hut roof, as they are going to stay here for a long time, while Rama thinks about the tranquility of their current place. However, Sita expresses a wish to explore the world, feeling an urgency due to time passing. She admires a bird, desiring to discover more about its travels, as Rama and Lakshmana debate the practicality of their plans. In the end, Rama acknowledges their responsibility to return to Ayodhya despite their hesitance, emphasising the call of duty over personal wishes.

#### **12.2.2.3 Scene – III**

Rama and Lakshmana arrive home after their daily chores, while Sita is eagerly talking with a gypsy queen. She provides an ointment for their injured bird. The gypsies, known for their lively music and dancing, entertain Sita by performing and sharing stories of their homeland. They also offer fortune-telling services in exchange for grain. Sita indicates interest in adopting their carefree lifestyle but is disheartened when Rama firmly prohibits her from having her future foretold. Rama stresses the value of living optimistically each day through faith and prayer rather than seeking knowledge of what lies ahead. They depart after promising to bring rare fruits and flowers. In this scene, you can find out the themes of hospitality, curiosity about the future, and Rama's philosophical outlook on life.

#### **12.2.2.4 Scene – IV**

In this scene, Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana make their way to the highest point of a hill. After reaching there, they engage in a deep conversation about the essence of humanity and the concept of time. Rama considers the natural human desire for exploration. He doesn't support the idea of future prediction. He advises that one should welcome each day with new hope and faith, while future predictions can bring sorrow.

Sita affectionately recalls her first meeting with Rama and remembers about the inner strength she felt within herself at that moment. Rama while talking about the nature of time and consciousness highlights the limitations of human perception in comparison to the divine insight.

Suddenly, they witness a vision of a girl lying on the ground, appearing to be under the influence, eliciting differing responses from Rama and Sita. They continue the discussion and talk about the importance of love and duty. Lakshmana doesn't support Rama's firm commitment to duty, as it underscores the complex nature of human emotions and experiences.

Ultimately, Rama decides to continue their journey the following day to return the injured bird to its nesting place in the far north. They seek blessings for their journey through place and time. In this scene, you can find out the themes surrounding human nature, the passage of time, the dynamic between love and duty, and the complexities inherent in human emotions and experiences.

#### **12.2.2.5 Scene – V**

In this scene, Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana go to Brindavan. It is a place linked with Krishna's birth, who is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. They admire the enchanting scenery, like the milky white flowers near the Yamuna River. Nearby, they catch the sound of young girls' anklets. Sita pays close attention as the girls jokingly complain about their clothes going missing and milk and butter being stolen. The girls start their dance performance in which they showcase their love and affection for Lord Krishna. Following the dance, they return to the stage. Sita talks about the absence of jealousy among the girls and praises their pure love for Krishna. Lakshmana amusingly remarks on Rama's newfound grasp of human connections and divinity.

#### **12.2.2.6 Scene – VI**

In scene IV, King Himavan warmly welcomes Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana as they climb higher into the mountains. He guides them to the foot of Parvati's consecrated domain, where all living beings joyfully offer praise to Lord Shiva. The king also signifies the holiness of the place where even the youngest child is familiar and mirrors Shiva's divine qualities. While the king is appreciating the majestic surroundings, a group of children emerges, and dancers showcase a Natesa Kavuthuvam performance. They showcase the divine characteristics and steps of Lord Shiva in their dance performance. In this scene, you will see respect and festivity honouring the divine essence within the natural realm.

#### **12.2.2.7 Scene - VII**

In this scene, Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana reach the grove, expecting Jatayu's appearance on the advice of King Himavan. Lakshmana predicts that Lord Shiva will be performing a dance in Tillai's golden hall in January. It symbolises divine adoration and the privilege of witnessing Shiva's cosmic dance. They don't find any physical halls or temples. Rama suggests that Tillai

may represent the heart of mankind, where Shiva's presence will manifest. As Rama speaks, a temple appears on the screen, depicting Shiva in the Nataraja pose, symbolising the cosmic dance of creation, preservation, and destruction. The scene ends with the characters gazing in wonder at the divine manifestation before them.

#### **12.2.2.8 Scene – VIII**

In this scene, they meet Jatayu, and he transports Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana to the shores of Lake Agassiz, which is known as the primaeval ocean. The inhabitants of that region give them a very warm welcome. They are impressed by the bird transporting Sita, signifying her importance. While they watch, a group of Arctic terns emerges on the scene alongside Sita, who is encircled by Native American children executing a traditional dance in her honor. This moment shows the end of the journey and the gracious welcome they encounter in this unfamiliar territory, marking the end of their long and challenging journey.

#### **12.2.2.9 Scene - IX**

In this scene, Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana walk on the shores of Lake Agassiz, where they are warmly welcomed by the people. One day, they go far away and witness the majestic sight of Lord Vishnu. He appears on the screen atop the ancient coils of Adishesha. Adishesha is the primal snake of existence. Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana felt happy after having the sight of the divine presence and performed a respectful dance, namaskaram, and kneeled before Lord Vishnu.

Lord Vishnu warmly speaks to Rama. He recognizes him as his dear child. Rama shows deep respect and willingness to embrace everlasting life, but Vishnu gently reminds him that his journey is not finished yet. Rama doesn't want to depart from the divine presence. Lord Vishnu instructs Rama to go back to Dandakaranya and complete the visit to Sage Agastya as per the schedule. Rama stands up unwillingly and accepts his wish. He realises that there are still duties to be done in the earthly realm before achieving eternal happiness.

#### **12.2.2.10 Scene – X**

In this concluding scene, Sita finds herself encircled by native youngsters who identify her as the child of a renowned individual. They are astonished by the blossoms that sprout wherever she steps. Sita modestly clarifies that she is not the Great Spirit's daughter, but rather, she is equally a part of the Great Spirit as everyone else. When Rama and Lakshmana come there, the children display their fondness for Sita and their wish for her to linger. Sita responds to their affection and conveys her desire to stay in their beautiful land. Despite having to depart, she

assures the children that she will return, promising to construct a shrine and sing melodies with them. The scene concludes with a dance showcase by the cast.

### **12.2.3 Plot of the Play**

Uma Parameswaran's *Sita's Promise* takes us on a fascinating journey that reminds us the timeless tale of the *Ramayana* with contemporary themes and philosophical reflections. The play's plot construction is expertly crafted, guiding viewers through the challenges and victories which main characters, Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana, face during their time in exile. The plot of the play occurs in a sequence of scenes, each structured meticulously to explore into different aspects of the characters' experiences and inner changes. The play takes us on a journey from their initial exile from Ayodhya to their interactions with divine beings and earthly obstacles. The plot of the play navigates the complexities of human emotions, relationships, and spiritual evolution.

One of the important aspects of the plot's construction is its flexibility, facilitating seamless transitions between scenes in different locations and time frames. Whether the characters are trekking through forests, encountering wise beings, or observing otherworldly events, each scene adds to the plot of the play, leading towards a climactic resolution. The scenes are put in order which can't be disturbed. The transition of one scene to another can bring the incompleteness in the play.

Furthermore, the plot has balanced and good elements of customary Indian dance, music, and symbolism. It enhances the storytelling and immersing the audience in the cultural setting of the *Ramayana*. The play, through lively dance sequences and evocative music, breathes life into the charm and splendor of ancient Indian mythology, heightening the audience's connection with the narrative. The theme of love, duty, sacrifice, and the everlasting journey for spiritual enlightenment makes the plot structure of the play. As the characters tackle with their personal challenges and shared fate, the play explores strong philosophical inquiries concerning the essence of being and the human experience.

At the end, it can be concluded that the play displays the artistry of its narrative construction, skillfully merging tradition with modernity to produce a theatrical encounter that forces the audience to think on a deep level. Through its rich storytelling, dynamic characters, and profound themes, the play provides a timeless exploration of the human spirit and its continual pursuit of truth and transcendence.



***Check your progress:***

1. Uma Parameswaran's *Sita's Promise* reminds the readers about the timeless tale of the *Ramayana* with contemporary themes and philosophical reflections. (True/False)

## **12.2.4 Themes of the Play**

### **12.2.4.1 Love and Devotion:**

The theme of love and devotion has been shown through the deeply intertwined relationship between Rama and Sita. Their relationship acts as the emotional anchor of the story, which showcases the lasting strength of love in challenging times. Despite the problems of their exile, Rama and Sita maintain a persistent commitment to each other. Their love serves as a source of persistence and inner strength. Sita makes the decision to accompany Rama into exile. She had the option to remain in the palace in Ayodhya, but she preferred to support her husband in his difficult time. This sacrifice for their unity exemplifies their unwavering dedication. Throughout the tale, their love is depicted as superior and unconditional, symbolising the eternal connection between soulmates.

### **12.2.4.2 Duty and Responsibility:**

The concept of duty and responsibility is a key theme in the play. It has been shown in the moral dilemmas faced by the characters. As the prince of Ayodhya, Rama struggles with conflicting desires and his obligation to his kingdom. His sense of duty drives him to respect his father's wishes and endure exile, despite the injustice of his banishment. Throughout the play, Rama embodies the qualities of a noble and virtuous protagonist by prioritising the welfare of his people over his personal happiness. Similarly, Sita shows a profound sense of responsibility as Rama's wife, standing by him through hardships with unwavering loyalty.

### **12.2.4.3 Spiritual Growth and Enlightenment:**

In the play, you will find that all characters are on a journey of self-discovery. In every scene, they are moving from one place to another, meeting sages, gods, and Jatayu. While they have encounters with celestial beings and at other places, they also have philosophical discussions about life, consciousness, and duty. How one can reach a higher level of consciousness is told by the protagonist. Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana undergo profound spiritual growth, gaining insight into existence and life's true meaning. Their experiences in the forest act as a catalyst for their spiritual awakening, prompting them to reassess their beliefs and pursue a

deeper understanding of the universe. After reading the play, you can find out the philosophy of enlightenment.

#### **12.2.4.4 Nature and Harmony:**

All scenes of the play are set in forest, mountains and grove. The play shows a connection between nature and harmony. It depicts that the forest, river, mountain, and grove are the divine places. One can find celestial being in these places. You will find Sita interacting with the flora and fauna of the forest. It shows that there is an inherent connection or harmony between human being and nature. Sita gets very anxious when she finds an injured bird. In fact, they go on a journey to provide a safe place to the injured bird only. They find comfort and peace in the lap of the nature. They live in the forest harmoniously. In modern time, it gives a message to protect our ecosystem.

#### **12.2.4.5 Identity and Self-Realization:**

Identity and self-realization emerge as repeated themes in the play. The characters face questions of purpose and destiny in various scenes of the play. Sita particularly struggles with her identity as a wife, queen, and divine being. She ultimately embraces her innate strength. Throughout the play, she undergoes a journey of self-discovery. She wants to be independent in her thoughts and beliefs. She praises the bird, as she can choose her path. She wants to see the world and doesn't want to stick to one place. In the play, it has been shown that she has a keen desire to explore the world. In the concluding scene, she also makes a promise of revisiting the place, although she knows that she is not going to fulfil that promise. The question of identity has been dealt with symbolically by the playwright in the play. In the same way, Rama and Lakshmana deal with their identities and roles, wrestling with duty and honour in the face of challenges.

#### **12.2.4.6 Divine Intervention and Providence:**

The whole play is about the long journey in which the characters visit various places and interact with the divine beings. During their interaction, the gods or goddesses guide them and shape their destiny. The play beautifully portrays the mortal and immortal levels of consciousness. The thin line of the connection between the mortal and divine worlds is visible during those interactions. The characters learn about the workings of the universe in those interactions. When Rama wishes to stay with Lord Vishnu, it is the advice of Lord Vishnu only that a person has to do his duty first before moving to the celestial being. Any kind of worldly bondage can work as an obstacle in the path of achieving a celestial goal. It was only the divine

intervention that was framing the storyline of the play. Hence, the divine intervention plays a significant role in the play.

#### **12.2.4.7 Social Justice and Equality:**

The play raises various issues in the storyline, like caste, class, gender, compassion, and understanding. Sita's desire to explore the world has been shown by the symbol of the bird. She appreciates the fact that she can choose her path on her own and can explore the world. Sita does not make any discrimination on the basis of class or caste during her interaction with gypsies. She continues to meet them even after the denial. She treats flora and fauna equally in the play. The characters of the play portray an inclusive and promoting society where all the living species of the earth should be treated equally. Class, caste, and gender conflicts have been created by human beings. The celestial beings don't make such discrimination. In one of the scenes, it is shown that a child is showcasing the qualities of a divine being.

#### ***Check your progress:***

1. Sita shows a profound sense of responsibility as Rama's wife, standing by him through hardships with unwavering loyalty. (True/False)

### **12.2.5 Characters in the Play**

#### **12.2.5.1 Sita**

Sita is a character who represents the symbol of innocence and spontaneity through her interactions with nature and appreciation of simple joys. She feels the same pain when she finds an injured bird. Her compassion shines through as she cares for the injured bird. It shows her empathy and kindness towards others. Sita, despite the constraints of her duties, desires for freedom and exploration, seeking adventure and new experiences beyond her current surroundings. She wants to explore the world like a bird. Her dedication and unconditional love for Rama highlights her devotion and deep affection. On the other side, her desire for personal identity and independence showcases her inner strength. Her inquisitive nature also sets her apart as a seeker of knowledge, pondering life's deeper questions and seeking wisdom.

#### **12.2.5.2 Rama**

Prince Rama is a character from the epic tale of the *Ramayana*. He is shown as a dutiful and noble individual who upholds his responsibilities and righteousness in challenging situations. He respects the opinions of his wife, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana. He is emphatic and compassionate in his interactions. The philosophical insights of Rama are shown in the

discussions while he talks about duty, love, and destiny. He is also very spiritual, courageous, and protective. He bravely confronts obstacles, but his main priority is to establish peace and order while remaining humble and reflective of his own limitations. His character embodies values of courage, humility, and wisdom.

### **12.2.5.3 Lakshmana**

Lakshmana is a remarkable character known for his loyalty and dedication towards Rama and Sita during their exile. He fulfils his responsibilities meticulously, ensuring the safety and well-being of his loved ones. His compassion and sensitivity show through as he looks after people and is aware of their feelings and needs. Furthermore, he has a thorough awareness of spiritual notions and reflects on the deeper elements of life. Lakshmana and Rama have a relationship of respect and devotion, symbolizing sibling qualities that inspire us all.

### **12.2.6 Let Us Sum Up**

Uma Parmeswaran's *Sita's Promise* is more than a dance play with entertainment value. It is a patchwork of various intertwined themes. The play narrates the story of Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana during their exile. The play successfully raises the question of Sita's autonomy, kindness, and identity. Sita has been portrayed beyond the conventional portrayal of the Ramayana. The play presents the alternative perspectives of Sita's character. The search for Arctic Tern for home becomes the plot of the play. Through this play, Parmeswaran successfully portrays the various issues of the immigrants, like displacement and the desire for belongingness. *Sita's Promise* is a dance drama that gives place to Indian classical dances such as Bharatanatyam and Odissi. Dance is something that is beyond the language barriers. The speaker of any language can relish any form of the dance of the world. The conflict over the language barriers faced by the immigrants has been resolved by the playwright. It symbolizes that, apart from language barriers, there is one common connection between all species in the world. Parmeswaran discusses the issues of cultural interchange and adaptation in the play. When Sita meets the native children, the scene metaphorically symbolizes the future migration of South Asian communities to Canada. It helps us understand multicultural societies and navigate cultural assimilation. Additionally, the play presents divine beings, which enhance cross-cultural understanding. Hence, it can be concluded that the play helps spectators engage in cross-cultural conversations and conventional narratives and raises the question of identity.

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## 12.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should be able to identify and discuss key themes and ideas in *Sita's Promise*, such as female empowerment, familial responsibility, and the intricacies of relationships. You should also be able to investigate the cultural and historical contexts that shape the characters' identities and behaviours in the novel.

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## 12.4 Glossary

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**Sanctified:** Made holy or sacred.

**Veena:** A traditional Indian stringed musical instrument.

**Unparalleled:** Unequaled, having no equal or match.

**Consort:** A spouse, especially a reigning queen.

**Boons:** Favors, blessings, or benefits.

**Brahma:** In Hinduism, one of the principal gods and the creator of the universe.

**Hermitages:** A secluded dwelling place, often inhabited by hermits or those seeking solitude.

**Rakshasas:** Malevolent mythological beings in Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

**Paralysis:** A condition characterized by the loss of muscle function.

**Majesty:** Grandeur, dignity, or imposing beauty.

**Gypsy:** A member of a traditionally itinerant ethnic group with origins in South Asia.

**Ointment:** A semisolid preparation applied to the skin for medicinal or cosmetic purposes.

**Sarcastically:** In a manner characterized by irony or mocking humor.

**Impetuous:** Acting or done quickly and without thought or care.

**Fortitude:** Courage in pain or adversity.

**Divinity:** The state or quality of being divine, godlike.

**Anguish:** Severe mental or physical pain or suffering.

**Renunciation:** The formal rejection of something, typically a belief, claim, or course of action.

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## 12.5 Sample Questions

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### 12.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. Who wrote *Sita's Promise* ?
  - a. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
  - b. Anita Desai
  - c. Uma Parameswaran**
  - d. Arundhati Roy
2. What is the central theme of *Sita's Promise*?
  - a. Modern Indian politics
  - b. Ancient Indian mythology**
  - c. Post-colonial literature
  - d. Environmental activism
3. Which character in *Sita's Promise* represents unwavering devotion and loyalty?
  - a. Sita**
  - b. Ravana
  - c. Hanuman
  - d. Lakshmana
4. What event serves as the catalyst for the narrative in *Sita's Promise*?
  - a. Sita's abduction**
  - b. Ram's coronation
  - c. Lakshmana's exile
  - d. Hanuman's search for Sita
5. What is the significance of the title *Sita's Promise* in the context of the play?
  - a. It refers to Sita's vow to maintain her chastity during her captivity.
  - b. It symbolizes Sita's commitment to upholding righteousness.**
  - c. It represents Sita's promise to visit the place again.
  - d. It signifies Sita's determination to seek justice for her abduction.
6. Which character plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the past and the present in *Sita's Promise*?
  - a. Rama
  - b. Sita

- c. **Hanuman**
  - d. Bharata
7. How does *Sita's Promise* explore the complexities of gender roles and relationships?
- a. **Through the portrayal of Sita's strength and resilience**
  - b. Through the examination of Ram's internal conflicts
  - c. Through the interactions between Sita and other female characters
  - d. Through the portrayal of societal expectations on masculinity
8. Which literary device is prominently used in *Sita's Promise* to juxtapose contemporary issues with ancient mythology?
- a. Symbolism
  - b. Foreshadowing
  - c. **Allegory**
  - d. Irony
9. What cultural and historical contexts are intertwined in *Sita's Promise*?
- a. The partition of India and Pakistan
  - b. The Indian independence movement
  - c. **The Ramayana epic and contemporary Indian society**
  - d. The Mughal Empire
10. What message or moral lesson does *Sita's Promise* aim to convey to its readers?
- a. The importance of familial duty
  - b. The consequences of blind devotion
  - c. The power of forgiveness and redemption
  - d. **The endurance of love amidst adversity**

### 12.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. In Uma Parameswaran's *Sita's Promise*, what is the significance of Sita's pledge and how does it alter her character throughout the story?
2. How does Uma Parameswaran's portrayal of Sita in *Sita's Promise* contradict established gender norms and prejudices about the character?
3. What function does the setting play in *Sita's Promise*, and how does it relate to the overall theme and atmosphere of the story?

4. Discuss Sita's interpersonal dynamics with the other characters in the storey, particularly her interactions with Rama and Lakshmana.
5. What are some major motifs or symbols employed by Uma Parameswaran in *Sita's Promise*, and how do they contribute to the narrative and thematic components of the text?

### 12.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

1. In *Sita's Promise* by Uma Parameswaran, how does the author depict Sita's character throughout the narrative?
2. Analyse the significance of the promise motif in Uma Parameswaran's *Sita's Promise*.
3. Explore the role of gender dynamics and agency in *Sita's Promise* by Uma Parameswaran.

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## 12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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Parameswaran, Uma. *Sons Must Die & Other Plays*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1998.

Pereira, Lidwina. "Between Two Cultures: Uma Parameswaran's *Sita's Promise*." *Language in India* 19.3 2019.

Ratnaparkhi, Pranavkumar Ulhas. "*Sita's Promise* in *Ramayana's* New Aarctica Kanda: Reimagining and Reimaging Sita in the Tribal Ambience." *Interface a National Research Anthology on Indigenous Language, Literature & Culture*. 2021.

Thomas, Sonja Marie. "Uma Parameswaran." 2004.

Vedavalli, Mrs R. "Sending Roots: A Study of Uma Parameswaran's *Sita's Promise* and Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees." *Critical Essays on Canadian Literature*. 2002. p. 131.



## **Unit-13: Background to Indian Prose Before 1947**

### **Structure**

**13.0** Introduction

**13.1** Objectives

**13.2** Background to Indian Prose Before 1947

**13.2.1** Raja Rammohan Roy and the Early Contributors to Prose in English

**13.2.2** 1857-1920

**13.2.3** 1920-1947

**13.3** Learning Outcomes

**13.4** Glossary

**13.5** Sample Questions

**13.6** Suggested Learning Resources

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### **13.0 Introduction**

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The 19<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the fruits of English education which had been sponsored by the British after the Uprising of 1857. The missionary schools were soon imparting English education across the country and many philanthropists started schools for the members of their own community where education was imparted in the English language. The result was that within a short period, a generation of Indians was writing and speaking in English with great care. Most of the prose written by Indians in English was either political, historical, or philosophical.

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### **13.1 Objectives**

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The objectives of this Unit are as follows:

- to familiarize you with prose In Indian English and major writings in Indian English prose
- to trace the development of Indian prose in English before 1947 in terms of content

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## 13.2 Background to Indian Prose Before 1947

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### 13.2.1 Raja Rammohan Roy and the Early Contributors to Prose in English

Indian prose in English finds its beginnings in the writings of social reformer and Father of the Indian Renaissance, Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Having worked for the East India Company, Rammohan Roy came to an understanding that his fellow Bengalis could benefit from the introduction of the English language. English was already the dominant world language. Since Persian had ceased to be the language of exchange, Rammohan Roy adopted English. In ‘A Letter to Lord Amherst on English Education,’ Rammohan Roy argued that Sanskrit language will be difficult to teach to Indian learners, whereas Vedantic knowledge conveys archaic ideas unsuited for the present age. Therefore, emphasized Roy, there is a need for “a more liberal and enlightened system of instructions” which can only be achieved through the commencement of “the arts and sciences of Modern Europe.” This was also the subject of the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy of the 1820s regarding the nature of education that the British East India Company was to regulate on local populations.

Today, Rammohan Roy is much remembered for his social and religious reforms, however, in each of these cases, he had to resort to writing to make his rhetoric more appealing and well documented using the medium of the English language. These reforms were, namely, Brahma Samaj and the movements against Sati, caste rigidity, child marriages, and unfair treatment of women. Some of the most important writings that Roy produced were: *Brief remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of females according to the Hindoo Law of Inheritance* (1822), *Universal Religion: Religious Instructions Founded on Sacred Authorities* (1829), *Monotheistic System of the Vedas* (1817) .

The profound impact of colonial education, which resulted soon after Macaulay’s *Minute* was put to practice, introduced Indians to the potential of prose, a medium relatively unknown to them. Sisir Kumar Das in *A History of Indian Literature*, volume viii (1991), writes:

A majority of the writers associated with the journals either knew English or were exposed to the English language, and this conditioned their world-view and literary style to a great extent. Most of them ... did not write with literary pretensions; but all of them, consciously or unconsciously, took part in the great experiment which brought about a real breakthrough in Indian literature. An awareness of social problems, a rational view as opposed to a theocentric universe,

a spirit of enquiry, a desire to examine one's past heritage—all these appeared in prose rather than in poetry. Here is the historic importance of prose in Indian literature.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt, though a poet and a playwright in his own right, produced letters in English, written mainly to his old school friend Gour Dass Bysack, which make interesting reading and are full of vigour and humour. One notices in them the eagerness with which he devoured the European classics, the rigorous schedule for learning languages which he set himself, and the strongly creative response he brought to these enterprises.

After this phase, there came a significant turn in Indian writing in English as the exposure to English that colonialism necessitated led some Indian writers to discover prose and the realist novel, or blank verse and the sonnet. Other writers with a similar social background and with the same Macaulayan education reversed the procedure, as it were, and sought to tie and wax themselves to an English stem. Prior to the 1857 uprising and in the aftermath, there was also a subtle hint of nationalist sentiment brewing in the hearts of many people who felt betrayed/exploited by the British regime who, for various reasons, either failed to keep its promises or simply because of its moral and cultural superiority did not wish to care for fair treatment of its Indian subjects. But based on the historical record, there was not much action or any sort of activity on the part of Indians to rebel against the British Raj until the start of the twentieth century, when the nationalist movement came into full swing.

The first Indian novel in English, *Rajmohan's Wife: A Novel* (1864) was followed by considerable prose documents such as *On the Origin of Hindu Festivals* (1870), *Bengali Literature* (1871), *The Study of Indian Philosophy* (1873) and *Vedantic Literature* (1894) . Speaking on the subject of nationalism, Bankim Chandra in one of his essays asked “Why is India a subject country?” and answering, “[Because] there is no Hindu history. Who will praise our noble qualities if we do not praise them ourselves?” One member of the Dutt family, Hur Chunder Dutt, in the preface to *Lotus Leaves* (HC Dutt, 1871), explains nationalist spirit slightly from a historical standpoint: “We have many histories of India from school-histories up to elaborate treatises, but no work embodying Indian historical incidents and characters and older traditions in a poetical form. Yet India is truly the land of romance and poetry. . .”

An administrator working for the colonial empire, Romesh Chunder Dutt's grasp of the political and economic situation of India is thoroughly recorded in his scholarly papers, *The Peasantry Bengal* (1875), *A History of Civilization in Ancient India* (1889) and his most

prominent work *The Economic History of India (1902, 1904)* have been designated as “the first history of a colonial regime written from the point of view of the subject of the colonial empire.” It contains what was later called the “economics of colonialism.”

### 13.2.2 1857-1920

The most remarkable prose of the latter half of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century comes from the Bengali triumvirate Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekanand and Sri Aurobindo. Tagore, coming from a long line of art-oriented family, had established himself as a writer in his mother tongue, writing prose in English was something he began much later. After winning the Nobel Prize in 1913, Tagore started touring various countries, mostly Western, among the fierce nationalist movements to overturn the British reign all throughout the country of his birth.

This in turn had made a crucial impression on Tagore’s perception as, he came to believe in the notion of cosmopolitanism as against the idea of nationalism. *Nationalism (1917)* delivered as a lecture in the USA, warns Indians to resist the temptation to think of the West as mere savage in the name of modernization as opposed to the traditional East, for “true modernization is freedom of mind, not the slavery of taste.” His other creative endeavors in English prose were: *Creative Unity (1922)*, *The Religion of Man (1930)* and his last gift to this field was *Crisis in Civilisation (1941)*. According to MK Naik:

Tagore’s prose in English reveals him as an internationalist and humanist preaching the gospel of universal harmony between man and man, man and nature, man and the divine. He derives his philosophical thoughts from the Upanishads, the Gita, Buddhism, and Vaishnavism. There is an unmistakable ring of personal conviction in his words. They spring from a mind in which these age- old thoughts are not merely traditional truisms learned by rote, but living truths felt in blood. Tagore’s prose is remarkable less for the qualities of precision and logical argumentation than for its frequent spells of impassioned, semi-poetic utterance.

Much like Tagore’s emphasis on the world rather than on one nation, Swami Vivekanand was a person with a two-fold vision. He simply wished to bring home to the West the true nature of Hinduism and he aspired to work for the upliftment of India. He took India’s message to the West with his speech at the Parliaments of the Religions in Chicago, in 1893. For the next three years, he kept on spreading to the West various aspects of the Hindu religion. He then went on to establish the Ram-Krishna Mission in 1898 consisting of his huge following, both East and West.

In his speeches he advocated a clear-cut program of reform: India must discover her true religion, *Advaita* in its purest form. As for his contribution to English Prose, a compiled work containing majorly his impromptu speeches given at events was published posthumously as *Complete Works* (Volume I to VIII, 1907-1951).

The earliest prose-writings by Sri Aurobindo were a series of nine radical political essays published in a Bombay journal, *Indurprakash*, in 1893-94, entitled 'New Lamps for Old.' All through his life, Aurobindo was a great admirer of Swami Vivekanand, and that influence is perceptible in his prose, ranging from religious and occult to literary and philosophical themes. After his acquittal in the Alipore Conspiracy Case 1909, he started the *Karmayogin* - a weekly review of religion, literature, science, philosophy, etc. Soon after his arrival in Pondicherry, he founded the monthly *Arya* (1914-21), in which most of his later prose writings would appear. In his own words, this journal attempted to present "a synthetic philosophy which might be a contribution to the thought of the new age that is coming upon us." Topics that were covered under this project were: religion and metaphysics, social, cultural, and political issues, and literary criticism. Aurobindo's crowning achievement in prose comes with *The Life Divine* (1939-40). Centering around the theme of "affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence, this rather lengthy treatise argues that man's highest aim is the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realization of God within and without. His other noteworthy works are *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Renaissance in India* (1920), *The Foundation of Indian Culture* (1953), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1919), and *War and Self-determinism* (1920) .

The Maratha region produced prose writings by Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Naoroji, also known as "The Grand Old Man of India" in his *Poverty of India* (1873) and *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901), boisterously claimed that British administrative and economic policies were hugely undermining the real interests of India which could be avoided by giving Indians fair share in government of their own. His numerous speeches have been collected in *Essays, Speeches, Addresses and Writings* (1887) and *Speeches and Writings* (1916). Mahadev Govind Ranade, a scholar and a patriot, a social and religious reformer and a thinker, had a great influence on people of his generation. His *Rise of the Maratha Power* (1900) was a pioneering effort which laid the foundation of historical research in the Maratha region. His other seminal work, *Essays in Indian Economics* (1898), arguably makes him the 'Father of Indian Economics'.

Tilak's writings disarm stylistic graces and rely exclusively on unvarnished logic, direct argumentation and apt expressions. He was an erudite scholar as is evident through his *Writings and Speeches* (1922). Meanwhile, Gokhale was a disciple of Ranade and a contemporary of Tilak. His *Speeches and Writings* (1908) are indicative of an earnest, gentle and cultured man, solely dedicated to the nation's cause.

The most notable Indian English prose writer from the South in this period was Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, the distinguished Indo-Sihalese scholar. His writings were creative, Indian in nature, and dealing with philosophical and religious subject matter. In *The Dance of Shiva* (1918), Coomaraswamy talks about the statue of Natraj, which is symbolic of Shiva's dance, the dance of life and death which is further presented through the subtle features of Natraj's pose. Some of his prose writings are: *Essays on National Idealism* (1909), *Art and Swadeshi* (1911), *Introduction of Indian Art* (1913), *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon* (1913), *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (1916), *A New Approach to Vedas* (1933), *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934) and *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (1956).

In Gujarat, the social reformer Behramji M. Malabari presented Indian literature in English with valuable nationalist guise in the form of memoirs, letters, biographies, articles, etc. For the most part of his life, Malabari was known for being a social reformer who authored the famous *Notes on Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood* (1884) and as the man who compelled a reluctant bureaucracy to come forward with the *Age of Consent Act* (1892). The range and quality of coverage in the *Indian Spectator*, the weekly in English that Malabari brought out virtually single-handed, reflect his clever concerns as a patriot. A nationalist in the true sense of the word who believed that imperialism had smothered endogenous development in Indian society, he was simultaneously appreciative of the benefits to India from imperialism. His ultimate landmark for his people was justice for the oppressed, not just women.

Some political leaders and freedom fighters of the early 20th century also made important contributions to prose writings. Among them were Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Moti Lal Nehru, and Lala Lajpat Rai. Malviya was an Oriental scholar with unorthodox knowledge and experience. Moti Lal Nehru was overshadowed by his son's fame but, in reality, he was an impressive orator. Rai for most part of his life, was a social activist and always worked for the greater good of society. Through his English paper, *The People*, and several books, for instance, *Young India* (1917) and *The Political Future of India* (1918), Rai helped start political

emancipation and religious, social, and educational reform. Muslim political thought was represented by Syed Ahmed Khan, author of *The Spirit of Islam* (1891).

***Check your progress:***

1. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy is an Indo-Sihalese scholar whose writings deal with philosophical and religious subject matter. He authored *The Dance of Shiva* (1918).  
(True/False)

### **13.2.3 1920-47**

The year 1920 was a landmark year in Indian politics as it saw the rise of Mahatma Gandhi who in the same year launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. The First World War (1914-1918) of course, created an immense impact. Slowly and steadily Gandhi became the face of the Indian freedom struggle and acquired a pan-India character. The writings of this phase include Jawaharlal Nehru and his associates who looked up to Gandhi. Indian English prose of this age was largely influenced by socio-political developments.

#### **Gandhi's Writings:**

Post 1857, English prose was flourishing in India and Gandhi's output in English language and his impact on the Indian English is significant. Born to middle-class Gujarati parents, Gandhi was deeply rooted in the Hindu faith. After an undistinguished school career, he went to England where his larger tryst with the English language started.

M.K. Gandhi's prose writings in English can be divided into three phases:

- A. First Phase (1888-91) : This period covers his visit to England as a fresh college student. His *London Diary* was a product of this phase. It was written from the viewpoint of a nineteen-year-old boy finding his feet in London. His 55 page long essay *Guide to London* also records his experience in London. These early writings lack literary flair.
- B. Second Phase (1893-1915) : This period falls during his period of stay in South Africa. This period reflects his maturity. By this time, Gandhi was a pamphleteer, journalist, and author. The titles of his pamphlets are as follows: *An Appeal to Every Briton in South Africa* (1895), *The Indian Franchise* (1895), *Grievances of the British Indians in South Africa* (1896). During this period, he launched a journal, *The Indian Opinion* (published in Gujarati and English; 1903-14). Gandhi's first major work,

*Hind Swaraj* appeared in this period. It was originally written in Gujarati but was later translated into English by Gandhi himself.

- C. Third Phase (1915-48): In this phase, Gandhi published two well-known journals, *Young India* (1919-1932) and *Harijan* (1933-48). All the writings of Gandhi appeared in these journals in serial order. Most of them were originally written in Gujarati but via translation became a part of the English language. Apart from these, his speeches do deserve a mention, like the *Benaras Hindu University Speech of 1916*, the *Speech at the Trial of 1922*. He also reviewed Miss Mayo's *Mother India*. Gandhi also left behind a large number of letters written in English.

### **Nehru's Writings:**

Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, was the political successor of M. K. Gandhi. He is the longest-serving Prime Minister of India, an office he held for seventeen years. He received his education at Harrow and Cambridge. He was a man of various talents. A prolific writer, an efficient thinker and a brilliant conversationalist.

Jawaharlal Nehru loved traveling and in the year 1927 he visited Russia and the book *Soviet Union* (1928) was a product of this trip. It is a collection of sixteen articles which he calls "some random sketches and impressions." It cannot be denied that Nehru looked up to Russia as India's great neighbor. Nehru's literary output in the English language is immense. Like *Letters from a Father to his Daughter* (1930) establishes him as a letter writer. It has letters written by him in 1928 to his only child Indira, where he makes a readable account of the early world history of the world from the inception of the earth to the writing of Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Another important book by Nehru is *Glimpses of World History* (1934). It comprises of letters to Indira from prison during 1930-33. It is a survey of world history from the start of human civilization to the nineteen thirties. *An Autobiography* (1936) was written when Nehru was forty-five, a strong and mature face of Indian politics. Nehru's personality has many shades. He revered Russia and was attracted to Socialism, if not Marxism. He had a scientific temper. All these shades are visible in this book. He is also aware of his identity, as he calls himself "a queer mixture of East and the West."

But his most popular and most-read book is *The Discovery of India* (1946). The book was also made into a television serial by name "*Bharat Ek Khoj*" directed by Shyam Benegal. This book was written in 1944 when Nehru was imprisoned in the Ahmednagar Jail. Nehru did not base the book on his whims and fancies, rather he discussed the questions and issues in



Indian history with his congress colleagues like Maulana Azad, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and others with whom he discussed the present, the past and the proposed future of India. What emerged from these discussions was published as *The Discovery of India*, which was edited by Indira Gandhi and Aanand Sharan. It is a personalized narrative of an erudite and sensitive scholar. In this book, he sets out to prove that there is an undying spirit of India that unites us. We may look different, and our faiths may be different but we are one. Nehru's prose reveals his personality-sincere, idealistic, western, and cultured.

***Check your progress:***

1. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote *The Discovery of India* (1946), which was also made into a television serial by Shyam Benegal as "*Bharat Ek Khoj*".

**Notable Associates of Gandhi:**

There are other notable associates of Gandhi who are important and popular names in the freedom struggle but are not a part of the so-called mainstream who developed some sort of difference with the Gandhian philosophy. The two most prominent names are Subhash Chandra Bose (1897-1945) and B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956). Bose was a firebrand leader who formed the Indian Nation Army in East India, one of the landmarks in the history of modern India. But before this, Bose was a bright student at the famous Presidency College, Calcutta (Kolkata) where he read philosophy and was influenced by German philosophers like G.W.F. Hegel and Immanuel Kant. His father was a literature enthusiast and read William Shakespeare, John Milton, Matthew Arnold, and, as a result, Bose acquired this taste. J.S. Bright edited his *Important Speeches and Writings* (1946). B.R Ambedkar was one of the most educated men of his times. Ambedkar graduated from Elphinstone College, University of Bombay, and studied economics at Columbia University and the London School of Economics, receiving doctorates in 1927 and 1923 respectively. He was a critic of Gandhi and his policies regarding the untouchables. He wrote vastly on politics, religion, society, philosophy and economics. *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development* (1916), *The Problem of the Rupee: its origin and its solution* (1923), *The Annihilation of Caste* (1936), *Federation Versus Freedom* (1939), *Thoughts on Pakistan* (1940), *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah* (1943), *Mr. Gandhi and Emancipation of Untouchables* (1943), *What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables* (1945).

**Journalism:** Journalism played an important role during the Pre-Independence times. Leading leaders of the independence struggle like Tilak, Gandhi, Bhagat Singh were journalists or rather contributed to journals or newspapers. Sachidanand Sinha edited the *Hindustan Review* (1899), *The Searchlight* (1918), and *The Indian Nation* (1931). *Swarajya* (1921) by Subhash Chandra Bose and *The National Herald* (1938) started by Jawaharlal Nehru. There were journals too like, *The Modern Review*, *The Aryan Path* and *Vedanta Kesari*.

**Religious and Philosophical Prose:** The most significant writer of this period is Dr Sarvepally Radhakrishnan (1888-1975), a teacher of philosophy who also became the second President of India. He was born in an orthodox South Indian Bramhin family and educated in Christian institutions which gave him an opportunity to have the best of both faiths. His M.A. dissertation on “The Ethics of the Vedanta” (1908) was a response to the Western claim that Vedanta did not have any space for ethics. Radhakrishnan’s magnum opus, *Indian Philosophy* (Vols. I and 2, 1923-27) is a comprehensive account of Indian philosophy. In *The Hindu View of Life* (1926), he strongly advocates Hinduism as a way of life, an attitude that constitutes tolerance, and refutes the notion that it is rigid and full of doctrines and superstitions. *Kalki* or the Future of Civilization focuses on the negative side of mechanization and technology and prays for a world that thinks about the harmony of the soul. His own personal faith is laid out in *An Idealist View of Life* (1932) . *East and West in Religion* (1933) beautifully captures the contrast between the two worlds.

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### 13.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have become aware about the evolution of Indian prose in English. You should have also been familiar with the major prose writers and their contributions to Indian prose in English before 1947.

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### 13.4 Glossary

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**Macaulay’s *Minute*:** On 2 February 1835, British historian and politician Thomas Babington Macaulay presented his ‘Minute on Indian Education’ that sought to establish the need to impart English education to Indian ‘natives’.

**Uprising of 1857:** The Uprising of 1857 was the conscious beginning of the Independence struggle against the colonial tyranny of the British. There are various names for the uprising of 1857 – India’s First War of Independence, Sepoy Mutiny, etc.

**Brahmo Samaj:** The Brahmo Samaj was a monotheistic sect of Hinduism. The movement began through meetings of Bengalis in Calcutta in 1828.

**Harijan:** The term Harijan, or '**children of God**', was coined by Narsinh Mehta, a Gujarati poet-saint of the Bhakti tradition, to refer to all devotees of Krishna irrespective of caste, class, or sex. Mahatma Gandhi, an admirer of Mehta's work, first used the word in the context of identifying Dalits in 1933.

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## 13.5 Sample Questions

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### 13.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. In which year was Macaulay’s *Minute* published ?
  - a. 1888
  - b. 1905
  - c. **1835**
  - d. 1857
2. Which is the first Indian novel in English?
  - a. Gora
  - b. **Rajmohan’s Wife**
  - c. Umraojaan Ada
  - d. Kanthapura
3. When was the Ramakrishna Mission established?
  - a. **1898**
  - b. 1863
  - c. 1852
  - d. 1900
4. Who is not a part of the ‘Triumvirate’ from Bengal?
  - a. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee
  - b. Swami Vivekananda
  - c. Sri Aurobindo

**d. Rabindranath Tagore**

5. Who is known as 'The Grand Old Man of India?'
- a. **Dadabhai Naroji**
  - b. S.C. Bose
  - c. M.K. Gandhi
  - d. Motilal Nehru
6. In which year was *The Dance of Shiva* published?
- a. 1947
  - b. **1921**
  - c. 1931
  - d. 1918
7. Who started the newspaper 'National Herald'?
- a. **Jawaharlal Nehru**
  - b. S.C. Bose
  - c. Indira Gandhi
  - d. Rajendra Prasad
8. What was the name of the newspaper started by Subhash Chandra Bose?
- a. **Swarajya**
  - b. The Pioneer
  - c. The Times of India
  - d. The Hindu
9. Who directed 'Bharat Ek Khoj?'
- a. Mani Kaul
  - b. **Shyam Benegal**
  - c. Satyajit Ray
  - d. Bimal Roy
10. Who coined the term 'Harijan'?
- a. Narsinh Mehta
  - b. **M.K. Gandhi**
  - c. G.B. Pant
  - d. B.R. Ambedkar

### **13.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:**

1. Write a short note on Gandhi's third phase as a writer.
2. Write a short note on the beginnings of prose writing in English in India.
3. Examine the contribution of any three Indians to the Indian English Prose?
4. Write a note on religious and philosophical prose of the period 1920-1947.
5. Assess Nehru as a prose writer.

### **13.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:**

1. Assess Raja Rammohan Roy's contribution to the Indian English Prose.
2. Examine in detail Indian prose in English before 1947.
3. Evaluate the three phases in the development of Indian prose before 1947.

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## **13.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna (ed.). *A History of Indian Literature in English*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982.

Naik, M.K. (ed.) *Perspectives on Indian Prose in English*, New Delhi: Abhinav, 1982.

## Unit-14: “What Is Art?”

### Structure

14.0 Introduction

14.1 Objectives

14.2 “What Is Art?”

14.2.1 About Rabindranath Tagore

14.2.2 Main Argument of the Essay

14.2.3 Critical Summary of the Essay

14.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

14.3 Glossary

14.4 Learning Outcomes

14.5 Sample Questions

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 14.0 Introduction

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Art is a broad range of human activities that involve creating works that express emotions, ideas, or values in ways that appeal to the senses and imagination. Art can be in any form of visual, auditory, or performing art, like painting, sculpture, music, literature, dance, theatre, film, and photography. Art has played a significant role in human culture for centuries and has been used to communicate various messages, such as religious and spiritual beliefs, political and social commentary, and personal expression. The definition of art has transformed over time, and different cultures and individuals have had diverse perceptions of what constitutes art. It can be beautiful or unsettling, representational or abstract, and can manifest in various forms based on the artist's vision and intention.

Rabindranath Tagore, a well-known Indian writer and philosopher, wrote an essay called "What is Art" in which he delves into the nature and purpose of art. This essay was written in the book *Personality* published in the year 1917. According to Tagore, true art is not just created for the pleasure of an audience, but is an expression of an artist's innermost experiences and emotions. He argues that art is a means of self-expression that allows individuals to connect with the world around them. Furthermore, Tagore asserts that art should not be seen as a way to escape reality, but as a tool to gain a deeper understanding of it. He also emphasizes the

prominent role that art can play in creating a sense of community and promoting social change, as it has the power to bring people together across cultural and national boundaries. Overall, Tagore's essay provides a thoughtful exploration of the significance of art in human life.

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## 14.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce you to Rabindranath Tagore as a major literary figure in Indian Writings in English
- explain the essay, “What is Art?” by Rabindranath Tagore
- understand the main argument of the essay

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## 14.2 “What Is Art?”

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### 14.2.1 About Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore was a renowned Indian cultural icon who was born in the year 1861 and lived up to 1941. Born into a family of intellectuals and cultural figures in Calcutta, now known as Kolkata. Tagore was a versatile writer who wrote poems, fiction, drama, essays, and songs, and is best known for his collection of poems called "Gitanjali," which earned him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. His literary works often explored spiritual and philosophical themes, including nature, love, and human relationships. Tagore was also a social reformer who advocated for the upliftment of women and the underprivileged sections of society. In addition to his literary pursuits, Tagore was a prolific songwriter and composed over 2,000 songs. His compositions continue to be popular in India and Bangladesh, with his song "Jana Gana Mana" becoming the national anthem of India, and his poem "Amar Shonar Bangla" becoming the national anthem of Bangladesh. Tagore was also a painter, philosopher, and a pioneer of modern Indian education. He founded Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, West Bengal, which aimed to integrate Eastern and Western education. His legacy continues to inspire people around the world, and his artistic and literary works remain an integral part of Indian and Bengali culture.

### 14.2.2 Main Argument of the Essay

Rabindranath Tagore, an Indian poet, philosopher, and Nobel laureate, had a distinctive viewpoint on art. He believed that art went beyond just the depiction of reality; it was a way to express the human spirit and unveil the beauty of life. Tagore considered art to encompass all creative forms, such as literature, music, drama, and dance, and believed that artistic expression was an essential part of human nature. He wrote the essay “What is Art?” in the year 1917 in his book *Personality*. One of the significant themes in Tagore's philosophy of art was the idea that art could transcend reality. He felt that art should not only represent the world but also reveal a deeper truth about human experiences. According to him, art was a way to connect with the infinite, to explore the mysteries of existence, and to rise above the limitations of the material world. Tagore saw art as both a means of individual expression and communication between people. He believed that art had the power to unite people, break down linguistic and cultural barriers, and create a sense of harmony and shared purpose. He viewed art as a way to connect people across time and space, to share common experiences and emotions, and to bridge cultural gaps. However, Tagore also recognized that art was highly personal and idiosyncratic. He held that all creative artists should have the liberty to freely express their unique visions and perspectives without being restricted by external rules or conventions. True art, in Tagore's view, was created as an expression of the artist's innermost thoughts and emotions, rather than for fame or recognition. Tagore believed that art had the ability to transform individuals and society. He saw art as a means of education, inspiring people to reflect deeply on their lives and their place in the world. Art, according to him, had the power to awaken people to new possibilities, new ways of seeing and experiencing the world, and new ways of relating to others.

One of the ways Tagore believed art could transform society was by breaking down barriers between different cultures and societies. He saw art as a way of celebrating diversity while recognizing the essential unity of all human experience. Tagore was convinced that Indian art had a unique contribution to make to the world, as it was an essential part of Indian culture, expressing the spiritual and mystical dimensions of human experience. Despite his strong connection to Indian culture, Tagore believed that art was a universal language that could connect people from diverse fields and spheres. He saw art as a way to connect people across time and space, bridge cultural differences, and create a sense of shared humanity. In summary, Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of art emphasized its ability to transcend reality, connect



people, and transform individuals and society. He believed that art was a universal language that could be expressed in many forms, and that true art came from the heart.

***Check your progress:***

1. Tagore believed art could transform society was by breaking down barriers between different cultures and societies. (True/False)

### **14.2.3 Critical Summary of the Essay:**

In the beginning of the essay, Rabindranath Tagore delves into the various ways in which humans interact with the world, including fulfilling physical needs and seeking knowledge and understanding through intellectual pursuits. Tagore emphasizes the importance of finding simplicity and unity amidst the complexity of the world, and suggests that art may play a role in fulfilling this need. Further, he introduces the idea of a "personal man," which refers to a third aspect of the self beyond physical and intellectual needs. This aspect seeks fulfillment through personal relationships and emotions, rather than through practicality or utility. Tagore contrasts this aspect of the self with the world of science, which is seen as abstract and unable to fulfill the needs of the personal man. He also suggests that there is a real and mysterious world that can only be experienced through emotions and personal connections. Throughout, the essay highlights the importance of personal connections and emotional fulfillment alongside practical needs and intellectual pursuits.

Tagore writes that the question "What is Art?" is an important one that has been debated for centuries. While art has grown by its own impulse and has been enjoyed without a clear understanding of its nature, we now live in a time where we seek to scrutinize and understand everything, even our unconscious processes. Various individuals have attempted to answer the question, and their answers have introduced conscious purpose into a realm that was previously spontaneous and half-conscious. These discussions have provided us with standards to judge art, leading some to challenge the supremacy of longstanding immortals. In Bengal, this meteorological disturbance in art criticism has arrived, leading to questions about how art should be judged based on its universal understanding, interpretation of life, usefulness, or expression of a particular person's genius. As such, it is important to consider the elements that make up a work of art, such as its form, content, and context, in order to appreciate its aesthetic and emotional impact. Ultimately, understanding the nature and purpose of art allows us to appreciate its power and importance in our lives and how it shapes our understanding of the

world and ourselves. However, instead of approaching the question with a rigid definition, we must embrace the complexity and fluidity of the subject. Art is a living thing that grows and evolves, and to limit our vision in order to see it more clearly would be to miss its essence. Tagore argues that rather than beginning with a definition, we must consider the multifaceted and interconnected nature of art. We must examine the context in which it is created and consumed, as art is shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors. Likewise, our perceptions of art are shaped by our own experiences and perspectives.

According to Tagore, in order to understand art fully, we must take a holistic approach that considers the complexity of the subject. By doing so, we can gain a deeper appreciation of its role in our lives and in shaping our understanding of the world. He argues that humans have a unique ability to pursue activities that go beyond their immediate needs, such as the pursuit of knowledge and doing good for others. In contrast, animals are largely confined to their necessities for self-preservation and race preservation. However, Tagore cautions that when a person suppresses their desire for pleasure and converts it solely into a desire for knowledge or doing good, it may suggest an unhealthy capacity for experiencing pleasure. He holds that literature requires disinterested enjoyment, encompassing a wide spectrum of emotions and experiences with unique properties.

The key difference between humans and animals is the capacity to pursue activities beyond immediate necessities, enabling us to explore and experience the world in ways beyond survival. He compares the way in which humans and animals approach the acquisition of knowledge. While animals primarily require knowledge for practical purposes, such as obtaining food and shelter, humans have the ability to pursue knowledge beyond their immediate needs. This allows humans to engage in creative and innovative pursuits and develop a deeper understanding of the world. Tagore also notes that humans have a greater surplus of resources than other animals, which provides them with the freedom to pursue goals that go beyond basic survival needs. This is unlike a retail shopkeeper, who must spend most of their earnings on necessities, and has limited resources left for other purposes.

Therefore, the ability of humans to pursue knowledge for its own sake is a result of our surplus resources and freedom from immediate survival needs. This enables us to explore and innovate and gives us a greater understanding of the world and our place in it. He, further, discusses the idea that humans have the ability to pursue knowledge for its own sake, leading to a sense of freedom and pure enjoyment. Unlike animals, who primarily acquire knowledge for

practical purposes, humans have a surplus of resources that allows them to engage in creative and innovative pursuits. Art is a vital element of human existence, born out of the surplus emotional energy that individuals possess. Human civilization is built upon the surplus emotional energy that individuals possess, and art is one of the most significant outlets for this energy. Art enables individuals to express themselves and achieve a sense of fulfillment and completion. It allows them to communicate their deepest feelings and experiences to others and establish a bond of understanding and empathy.

The author holds that the creation of art is not a luxury but a necessity for humans. It provides a means of transcending the limits of physical existence and reaching for the eternal. Artists express their surplus emotional energy through various forms of art such as painting, sculpture, music, and literature. Similarly, warriors use music and decorations to express their heightened consciousness and individuals with strong religious beliefs create temples, shrines, and images of worship to fulfill their religious personality. Thus, art is an essential aspect of human existence, enabling individuals to give expression to their surplus emotional energy, communicate their deepest feelings and experiences, and achieve a sense of fulfillment and completion. Art is not a luxury but a necessity for human well-being and the advancement of civilization.

Tagore discusses the relationship between human consciousness, self-expression, and artistic creation. The author argues that humans possess a unique ability to be self-aware and express themselves, which arises from an excess of feeling that cannot be completely absorbed by external objects. This overflow of feeling requires an outpouring of expression, which humans achieve through art. He also distinguishes between knowledge and personality, stating that while knowledge can provide information about the world, it cannot fully reveal the essence of a person. Rather, it is through the creative forces of emotion and feeling that humans can transform external objects into a part of their living structure and create themselves as individuals.

Further, the author points out that religion can be a particularly powerful source of creative expression, as it involves a deep emotional connection to the divine that transcends mere theological knowledge. Tagore highlights the significance of emotion and self-expression in human life, particularly in the realm of artistic creation. He also discusses the relationship between the external world and human personality. He also asserts that the world we perceive appears to us as a distinct entity, rather than simply a collection of invisible forces. However, the

world as we perceive it is only a partial representation of reality, and it is only when we engage with it emotionally that it becomes fully our own.

Tagore discusses how the outer world, which is perceived through our senses and mind, becomes a part of our personality through our emotions. Our emotions change the external world of appearance into a more internal and intimate world of sentiments. The world, as we perceive it, is man's world and not an abstract world of physics or metaphysics. It grows and changes with us, becoming great or small according to the quality and magnitude of our assimilation. He suggests that literature is not just about the bare facts but also about the emotional response it evokes in us. The Upanishad states that we feel close to wealth not because of its material value, but because we feel ourselves in our wealth. The aspects that evoke our emotions also tend to profoundly affect our self-feelings, intensifying our consciousness. Nevertheless, Tagore cautions that we should not touch the world of science with our emotions because it is a world from which the details of personality have been deliberately erased.

The world that we experience is not just a collection of impersonal forces, but rather a manifestation of our own perception. Our senses and minds play a crucial role in shaping this world, giving it form, color, and movement that is unique to human experience. As we interact with this world, through different emotional responses such as love and hate, pleasure and pain, fear and wonder, it becomes a vital aspect of our personality, growing and changing along with us. Our emotions are like gastric juices, transforming the appearance of the world into a more intimate realm of sentiments, where outer stimuli can trigger inner emotional responses. This relationship between the outer world and our emotions is called "rasa" in Sanskrit rhetoric, and it is the stuff that great poetry is made of. True literature cannot simply provide a set of bare facts, but must evoke personal emotions and feelings, bringing ideas to life through the lens of our own experiences. It is not the fact of the sunrise itself that is perennially interesting, but rather the personal response that it evokes within us. Wealth, for example, is not valuable to us solely for the fact of possessing it, but rather because it becomes a part of our sense of self. The touch of a harp string is similarly evocative, arousing feelings within us that intensify our consciousness.

While science may strive for objectivity and the removal of personal elements, literature and art must embrace subjectivity and the intimate connection between personal experience and the outer world. The language of poetry must conjure up images and sensations that speak to the heart, evoking personal responses that defy analysis and speak directly to the human experience. In the world of utility, human personality cannot help but be revealed, even though the

expression of personality is not the main objective. During day-to-day life, we tend to be economical with our expression, as our consciousness is not heightened enough and our habits take over. However, when our consciousness is at its peak, our personality is at its flood-tide, and we feel a deep urge to express ourselves for the mere sake of expression. This is where Art comes in, and we do not remember anything about the issues pertaining to utility and necessity as we strive to reach for the stars.

Tagore holds that man's energies tend to meet and mingle along two parallel lines: utility and self-expression. Constant human associations gather sentiments around our objects of use, inviting the assistance of Art to reveal themselves. For example, the ornamental sword blade reveals a warrior's pride and love, and the wine goblet reveals the comradeship of festive gatherings. In a city where citizens take pride in their citizenship, public buildings must reflect this pride in their architecture. When the British capital was relocated from Calcutta to Delhi, there was much debate about the architectural style that should be used in the new structures. Some argue for the Moghal period's Indian style, which was a collaboration of Moghal and Indian geniuses. They forget that all true art is born of emotion. Moghal Delhi and Moghal Agra exhibit human characteristics in their architecture. The Moghal emperors were more than just administrators; they lived, fought, loved, and died in India. Their reigns' memorials are immortal works of art that live on not only in great buildings, but also in paintings, music, and stone, metal, cotton, and wool fabrics. The British government in India, on the other hand, is official and thus an abstraction. The true language of art cannot convey anything through it. Law, effectiveness, and exploitation cannot create legendary stones by themselves.

Lord Lytton, who possessed more creativity than required for an Indian viceroy, made an effort to imitate the Durbar ceremony, one of the Moghals' official state ceremonies. State ceremonies, on the other hand, are artistic creations that inevitably result from the reciprocity of close ties between the populace and their ruler. They exhibit all the characteristics of imitation when they are imitated. Comparing a man's and a woman's attire reveals how utility and sentiments manifest themselves in different ways. Typically, a man's attire avoids all that is superfluous and purely ornamental. But a woman has innately chosen the ornamental, not just in her attire but also in her demeanour. Because a woman is more concrete and personal than a man in her place in the world, she needs to be picturesque and musical to express who she truly is. She should be assessed on her enjoyment rather than just on her utility. She therefore takes great care to convey her personality rather than her job. Therefore, Tagore claims that personality

expression—rather than anything abstract or analytical—is the main goal of art. As a result, music and picture language are used in painting.

Due to this confusion in our thinking, we mistakenly believe that the creation of beauty is what makes art an object, when in reality, beauty in art has only ever been a simple tool, not its full and essential meaning. This has led to debates over whether manner or substance is the fundamental component of art. Such discussions, however, are pointless because they disregard the principle of unity, which is the real foundation of art. The essential aspects of art cannot be found through analytical analysis. We can learn about a diet's food value by looking at its constituent components. However, its unity, which is impossible to evaluate, is what gives it flavour. True art does not accommodate abstract concepts; rather, in order to be accepted, they must be personified. Poetry chooses words that have essential characteristics, are not just for informational purposes, but have ingrained themselves into our hearts, and have not lost their shape due to excessive use in the marketplace. History stays outside the purview of literature as long as it replicates science and deals with abstractions. However, as a factual account, it stands alongside the epic poetry. The telling of historical events gives the period to which they are ascribed a sense of personality.

The essay describes the relationship between the personal man and the world around him, as well as the difference between how artists and scientists perceive and interpret the world. The author emphasizes the importance of seeing the individual and unique aspects of things, rather than generalizing and classifying them. The artist seeks to find the harmony and personality in things, while the scientist tries to find objectivity. The author highlights the Eastern belief in a universal soul and the importance of simplicity and purity in life, as well as the connection between personal nature and philosophical ideas in Indian literature. The role of literature and art has expanded to various aspects of human life such as history, science, philosophy, and social consciousness. Art is a representation of human personality and it reflects the personality of the artist who has created it. Art seeks to reveal the infinite side of humans by creating symbols that have the elements of immortality, reflecting humans' pursuit of perfection. Ultimately, the creation of art leads humans to connect with their divine nature, and to build a world of truth and beauty. In this world, wealth is not solely based on material possessions, and humans recognize that the real is not merely what is seen.

#### 14.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

To conclude, we can say that the essay “What is Art?” by Rabindranath Tagore, very lucidly explains the complex and multi-layered concept of art. He makes the reader understand that the subjective personality and style of the author, the socio-political context and the matter or content all equally contribute to what we call as art. He explains that art is, in a way, a reflection not just of the social context in which it is created, but rather it is unique because of the individual personality of each artist, which is reflected in his work of art. He establishes the relationship between personality and art in an impressive way and also does not believe in any rigid and fixed ideology or definition of art, as it is an ever-evolving concept where the personal touch of the author does wonders for the readers/audience.

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### 14.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have gained a comprehensive understanding of the essay, “What is Art?” You should have understood how art is an expression of the artist’s personality. Tagore stressed the significance of individuality in art, highlighting the necessity for artists to convey their distinctive vision and perspective.

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### 14.4 Glossary

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**Versatile:** Diverse and multitalented

**Prolific:** highly voluminous; writing in huge quantity

**Pioneer:** founder

**Unveil:** to reveal

**Transcend:** to go beyond

**Idiosyncratic:** highly distinct and individualistic

**Mystical:** something which is perceived to be beyond the grasp of the usual human comprehension or understanding; mysterious experiences

**Scrutinize:** to examine carefully in a detailed way

**Meteorological:** relating to the atmosphere or weather

**Multifaceted:** having multiple dimensions or aspects

**Holistic:** all- encompassing

**Disinterested Enjoyment:** detached appreciation, in which one is able to derive pleasure from something without any ulterior motive or personal involvement

**Surplus:** an excess of something beyond what is needed or required

**Empathy:** the capacity to put oneself in another person's shoes, to feel what they are feeling, and to respond in a compassionate and supportive way

**Outpouring:** sudden and abundant release or expression emotions, ideas, or energy

**Metaphysics:** Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that explores the nature of reality, being, existence, and the universe

**Assimilation:** Incorporation and integration

**Manifestation:** expression, presentation

**Crucial:** significant

**Stimuli:** any factors or events that elicit a response or reaction in an organism or system and they can be external or internal

**“Rasa”:** a term used in Indian aesthetics to describe the emotional response that is evoked in a reader or viewer by a work of art or literature. It refers to the "essence" or "flavor" of an emotional experience evoked by art

**Rhetoric:** the art and study of using language effectively and persuasively in speaking or writing

**Perennially:** happening repeatedly or persistently over a long period of time

**Harp String:** a tightly stretched cord or wire that produces a musical sound when plucked or strummed

**Evocative:** something that is capable of eliciting a strong emotional or sensory response in someone

**Flood-tide:** here, overwhelming and powerful

**Comradeship:** A friendly relationship between people who share a common goal or interest

**Immortal:** something or someone that lives forever, or is eternal and never dies

**Picturesque:** something that is delightful; beautiful

**Concrete:** detailed and specific as opposed to a general or abstract concept

**Principle of Unity:** In art, the principle of unity can be seen as a reminder to approach life with a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence



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## 14.5 Sample Questions

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### 14.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. When was the essay “What is Art” published?
  - a. **1917**
  - b. 1927
  - c. 1922
  - d. 1930
2. According to Tagore, which is the most important principle of art?
  - a. Principle of Rigidity
  - b. Principle of Unity**
  - c. Principle of Consistency
  - d. Principle of Flexibility
3. Who does the ‘personal man’ refer to in the essay?
  - a. One who only thinks of his personal needs.
  - b. One who is a very private person and hides his emotions from others.
  - c. One who is beyond physical and intellectual needs that seeks fulfillment through personal relationships and emotions, rather than through practicality or utility**
  - d. One who is only bothered for fulfillment of his biological needs.
4. How is the dress of a woman different from that of a man?
  - a. It is simpler and plainer than men.
  - b. It is cleaner than the dress of men.
  - c. There is no visible difference.
  - d. It is more decorative than the dress of men.**
5. From which book has the essay “What is Art?” been taken?
  - a. *Gitanjali*
  - b. *Personality***
  - c. *Nationalism*
  - d. *The Wreck*
6. According to Tagore, in order to understand art fully, we must take a holistic approach that considers the complexity of the subject. (True/False)

7. The essay describes the relationship between the personal man and the world around him. (True/False)
8. Tagore emphasizes the importance of finding simplicity and unity amidst the complexity of the world, and suggests that art may play a role in fulfilling this need. (True/False)
9. The essential aspects of art cannot be found through analytical analysis. (True/False)
10. Art is a representation of human personality and it reflects the personality of the artist who has created it. (True/False)

#### **14.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:**

1. What is the main argument of the essay, “What is Art?” by Rabindranath Tagore? Discuss in brief.
2. How does Tagore differentiate between an artist and a scientist?
3. How does the author comment on the ability of human beings to attain knowledge for their own sake as compared to animals?
4. Why is art a necessity for human beings?
5. How does the external world become an integral part of one’s personality?

#### **14.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:**

1. Elucidate Tagore’s views on Art as given in the essay “What is Art?”
2. What does Tagore support: ‘Art for Art’s sake’ or ‘Art for utility’? Discuss in detail.
3. Discuss how the principle of unity is the primary principle of art.

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## **14.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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Alam, Fakrul and Radha Chakravarty, editors. *The Essential Tagore*. Harvard University Press, 2011.

Chakraborty, S.K. *Tagore's Concept of Art*. Abhinav Publications, 1988.

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Kripalani, Krishna. *The Art of Rabindranath Tagore*. Rupa & Co., 2010.

Radhakrishnan, S. *Rabindranath Tagore: An Interpretation*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

Radice, William. *Tagore: At Home in the World*. Penguin, 1996.

Ray, Krishna. *Rabindranath Tagore: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 1989.

Sen, Amartya. *Tagore and His India*. Oxford University Press, 1997.

## **Unit-15: Indian Prose Writers after 1947**

### **Structure**

**15.0** Introduction

**15.1** Objectives

**15.2** Indian Prose Writers after 1947

**15.2.1** An Overview of Social, Political, Economic and Literary Conditions after 1947

**15.2.2** The Four Phases of the Indian Prose Writing after 1947

**15.2.3** Indian Prose Writers after 1947

**15.2.4** Let Us Sum Up

**15.3** Learning Outcomes

**15.4** Glossary

**15.5** Sample Questions

**15.6** Suggested Learning Resources

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### **15.0 Introduction**

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Indian prose writing after 1947 has a rich and diverse literary landscape that reflects the political, social, and cultural complexities of post-independence India. Writers such as R.K. Narayan, Jhumpa Lahiri, Arvind Adiga have created a literature that was both socially relevant and accessible, reflecting the changing socio-political conditions of India after 1947. They explored themes such as partition, identity, the everyday lives of ordinary Indians, and they addressed larger social issues as well, such as caste, gender and poverty.

Thus, Indian prose writing after 1947 has been a journey of discovery, experimentation, and evolution. Indian prose writing has constantly evolved and adapted to the changing times. The works of these writers continue to resonate with readers around the world and offer a unique insight into the complex realities of post-independence India. Through their writings, they have captured the hopes, dreams, and struggles of a nation and its people.

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## 15.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- analyze the social, cultural, and political contexts that shaped Indian prose writing after independence
- identify the major literary trends in Indian prose writing after 1947
- examine the works of major Indian prose writers after 1947 and evaluate their contribution

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## 15.2 Indian Prose Writers after 1947

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### 15.2.1 An Overview of Social, Political, Economic and Literary Conditions after 1947

Indian writing in English emerged as a major literary discipline after India gained independence in 1947. The literary landscape of post-independent India was shaped by the changing social, political, and economic conditions of the country. In this section, we will discuss these conditions in detail and how they influenced the literary works of this period.

**Social Conditions:** One of the biggest challenges for post-independence India was casteism, which is deeply rooted in Indian society. Discrimination based on caste was prevalent in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, and social status. Another challenge was communalism, which refers to the hostility between different religious communities. India witnessed several communal riots in the post-independence period, which had a significant impact on the social fabric of the country. Illiteracy and gender discrimination were also major issues. Women's rights were severely curtailed, and education and economic opportunities for women were limited.

The Indian writing in English of this period reflects the social realities of India and the efforts of writers to bring about social change. Writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Arundhati Roy explored themes of casteism, communalism, and gender discrimination in their works. They highlighted the social injustices prevalent in Indian society and aimed to create awareness about them.

**Political Conditions:** The political condition of post-independent India was marked by the establishment of a democratic government, the adoption of a new constitution, and the formation of political parties. India faced several challenges, such as border disputes with

neighboring countries, the integration of princely states, and the establishment of a federal system of governance.

The Indian writing in English of this period reflects the political concerns of India and the efforts of writers to address political issues. Writers such as Khushwant Singh, Kiran Desai, and Arundhati Roy explored themes of political corruption, authoritarianism, and communalism in their works. They highlighted the need for a more inclusive and democratic society and aimed to create awareness about the political challenges facing India.

**Economic Conditions:** The economic condition of post-independent India was marked by the challenges of poverty, unemployment, and economic growth. India was an agrarian economy at the time of independence, and the majority of the population was engaged in agriculture. However, agriculture alone could not sustain the growing population of India. India faced several economic challenges, such as the need for industrialization, modernization of agriculture, and the creation of job opportunities.

The Indian writing in English of this period reflects the economic realities of India and the efforts of writers to explore the economic challenges facing India. Writers such as Aravind Adiga, Kiran Desai, and Nayantara Sahgal explored themes of poverty, migration, and globalization in their works. They highlighted the economic disparities in Indian society and aimed to create awareness about the economic challenges facing India.

**Literary Conditions:** In the post-independence era, Indian writing in English witnessed the emergence of new literary trends, such as modernism and postmodernism. Writers such as Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, and R.K. Narayan contributed to the modernist movement by experimenting with form and language in their works. Postmodernism, which emphasizes the fragmentation of narrative and the deconstruction of meaning, was another literary trend that gained popularity during this period. Vikram Seth's "The Golden Gate" and Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines" are examples of postmodernist works that challenge traditional forms of narration.

In addition, the development of new literary forms was a prominent feature of Indian writing in English during this period. One such form was the Indian English novel, which blended Western literary techniques with Indian cultural themes and motifs. Another form was the short story, which gained popularity as a medium for exploring the social and political realities of post-independent India.

Therefore, the literary condition of post-independent India was marked by the emergence of new literary forms and trends, including modernism, postmodernism, and the Indian English novel. Writers of this period experimented with form and language to create new and innovative forms of storytelling, which reflected the changing social, political, and economic conditions of post-independent India.

***Check your progress:***

1. Name the Indian prose writers who wrote on the political conditions of India after independence.
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2. Mention the two literary trends that emerged in the post-independent era.
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### **15.2.2 The Four Phases of Indian Prose Writing after 1947**

In this section, we will study the different phases of Indian prose writing after independence, each marked by unique literary trends and movements. From the early post-independence phase, characterized by social realism, to the contemporary phase with its renewed focus on social issues, we will explore the evolution of Indian prose writing through the years.

**The Early Post-Independence Phase (1947-60):** This period was marked by writers such as R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao, who focused on exploring the everyday lives of ordinary Indians. These writers were influenced by the social realism movement and sought to create a literature that was both timely and simple to grasp.

**The Experimental Phase (1960-80):** During this period, Indian prose writing underwent a significant shift towards experimentation with form and language. Writers experimented with a range of literary forms, from stream-of-consciousness narratives to postmodernist techniques. They also explored themes that reflected the authentic Indian experience and moved away from the exotic depictions of India that had characterized much of colonial literature. For instance, writers like Raja Rao and Kamala Markandaya experimented with stream-of-consciousness techniques and non-linear narratives. Other writers, such as Anita Desai and Arundhati Roy, used unconventional narrative structures and experimental forms to challenge conventional notions of storytelling. Moreover, writers like Kiran Nagarkar and Vikram Chandra used elements of magical realism in their works, blending fantasy with reality in order to explore complex themes and social issues.

**The Post-Modern Phase (1980-2000):** The post-modern phase was marked by a further departure from realism and a greater emphasis on self-reflexivity. Writers such as Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, and Amit Chaudhuri emerged during this period and their works explored themes such as globalization, cultural identity, and the complexities of modernity. This period was marked by a greater willingness to engage with literary theory and a rejection of traditional narrative structures.

**The Contemporary Phase (2000-present):** The contemporary phase is characterized by a return to realism and a renewed focus on social issues such as caste, gender, and poverty. Writers such as Jhumpa Lahiri, and Aravind Adiga have emerged during this period, and their works explore themes such as the immigrant experience, contemporary Indian society, and the challenges of social mobility. This period is marked by a greater diversity of voices and a renewed emphasis on social relevance.

Therefore, the Indian prose writing scene after 1947 can be divided into distinct phases, each marked by different literary trends and movements. While each phase is unique, they are all characterized by a willingness to engage with the complexities of Indian society and to create a literature that is both socially relevant and artistically innovative.

***Check your progress:***

1. Mention the major themes explored by the Indian prose writers during the experimental phase.
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### **15.2.3 Indian Prose Writers after 1947**

After India gained independence in 1947, there was a surge of creativity and energy in the literary field. Indian writers, liberated from the shackles of colonialism, were eager to express themselves and their experiences. The post-independence era witnessed the emergence of a new breed of writers in India. This period saw the growth and development of Indian writing in English, as well as other Indian languages. In this section, we will take a look at some of the most prominent Indian writers after 1947.

## Prose Writers:

1. **Sudhin Ghose (1899-1965):** Ghose grew up in a family of freedom fighters and was heavily influenced by the Indian independence movement. Ghose's writing style was marked by a poetic and lyrical quality and often dealt with themes such as love, loss, and the struggle for identity in a rapidly changing world. In addition to “And Gazelles Leaping,” Ghose's other notable works include “Crush,” “The Flame of the Forest,” and “The Vermilion Boat.”
2. **Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004):** He was a prolific writer who is known for his socially conscious novels, such as “Untouchable,” “Coolie,” and “The Private Life of an Indian Prince.” His works focus on the lives of the marginalized and the oppressed. Anand's writing is characterized by its realism and its compassionate portrayal of the lives of the downtrodden.
3. **R.K. Narayan (1906-2001):** He is considered to be one of the pioneers of Indian Writing in English. His novels, such as “Swami and Friends,” “The Bachelor of Arts,” and “The Guide,” are known for their simplicity and humor. Narayan's works offer a vivid portrayal of Indian society, its traditions, and its way of life. His style of writing is characterized by a gentle, understated humor and a deep understanding of human nature.
4. **Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1988):** He was a novelist and a short story writer as well. Bhattacharya's works are known for their strong political and social themes and their portrayal of rural India. Bhattacharya's early novels, such as “He Who Rides a Tiger” and “Music for Mohini,” focused on the struggle for Indian independence and the social issues that plagued rural India. His later works, such as “A Dream in Hawaii” and “So Many Hungers!”, explored the themes of migration and diaspora. Bhattacharya's literary style was characterized by a fusion of Indian and Western literary traditions, and his works were often praised for their lucidity and simplicity of language.
5. **M. Anantanarayanan (1907-1981):** He was a renowned Indian diplomat, writer, and translator. His literary career spanned over five decades and included several novels, short stories, and essays. His works were characterized by a keen insight into human nature and an acute awareness of the political and social issues of his time. Some of his notable works include the novel “Samskara,” which explores the themes of death,



- religion, and caste, and the collection of short stories "Two Measures of Rice." Anantanarayanan was also a prolific translator, translating works from Tamil and Hindi into English.
6. **G.V. Desani (1909-2000):** He was an author and philosopher who is best known for his experimental novel "All About H. Hatterr" published in 1948. The novel is a satirical and surrealistic account of the adventures of the eponymous H. Hatterr, an Anglo-Indian who travels throughout India and encounters a diverse range of characters and situations. Desani's use of language is inventive and playful, blending English with Indian words, phrases, and idioms, and he employs a variety of literary techniques such as puns, parody, and metafiction.
  7. **Manohar Malgonkar (1913-2010):** He is best known for his novels, which are set in colonial India and explore themes such as identity, race, and class. His novels often depict the conflicts between the British rulers and the Indian people, and the impact of colonialism on Indian society. Some of his notable works include "The Princes," "A Bend in the Ganges," "Bandicoot Run," and "Distant Drum." Malgonkar was also a prolific writer of short stories, essays, and non-fiction works. He wrote about a wide range of topics, including history, nature, and wildlife. He was a keen observer of Indian society and culture and his writings provide a valuable insight into the social and political conditions of his time.
  8. **Khushwant Singh (1915-2014):** He was a prominent Indian writer who wrote both in English and Punjabi. His novels, such as "Train to Pakistan," "I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale," and "The Company of Women," are known for their wit, humor, and social commentary. Singh's writing is characterized by his ability to capture the nuances of Indian society and his sharp observations on human behavior.
  9. **Balachandra Rajan (1920-2009):** He is best known for his novels and his works focused on exploring the cultural and social complexities of India. His novels, "The Dark Dancer" and "Too Long in the West," are notable for their nuanced portrayals of the relationships between individuals and their cultural and social contexts. His writing often dealt with themes such as identity, tradition, and modernity. In addition to his work as a writer, Rajan was also a respected literary critic and scholar. He wrote extensively on Indian literature and culture, as well as on the work of writers such as William Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot.

10. **Kamala Markandaya (1924-2004):** She was a celebrated Indian writer and her works are notable for their sensitive portrayal of human relationships and their powerful social commentary. Her powerful literary works explored the complexities of Indian society and the struggles of ordinary people. Markandaya's writing often depicts the harsh realities of rural life, poverty, and social inequality, highlighting the experiences of women, Dalits, and other marginalized communities. Markandaya's writing is marked by its poetic language and vivid descriptions of Indian life, as well as its social and political commentary. Markandaya went on to write several other acclaimed novels, including "A Silence of Desire," "Possession," and "Two Virgins."
11. **Chaman Nahal (1927-2000):** He was an author and academician who wrote in both English and Punjabi. Nahal's writing often explored the themes of identity, nationalism, and the human condition, and he was known for his poignant portrayals of the struggles of ordinary people. Nahal's most famous work is his novel, "Azadi" which, was published in 1975. The novel explores the political, social, and psychological impact of the partition of India on its people. Nahal's other notable works include "The Man from Chinnamasta," "A State of India," and "The Triumph of the Tricolour."
12. **Nayantara Sahgal (1927-2022):** She is a prominent Indian writer, novelist, and political commentator. Her novels focused on the social and political issues of the time. Her works often explore themes of gender, identity, and the struggle for independence. She has written novels like, "Prison and Chocolate Cake," "A Time to Be Happy," "This Time of Morning," "Storm in Chandigarh," and "Rich Like Us," which are an exploration of political corruption and social injustices that plague India.
13. **Anita Desai (1937-):** She is a renowned author who has written extensively on the themes of alienation, cultural conflict, and the struggle to maintain identity. Her novels, such as "Clear Light of Day," "In Custody," and "Fasting, Feasting," explore the complexities of the human condition and the tensions between tradition and modernity. Desai's writing is characterized by her attention to detail and her use of vivid imagery. One of the defining features of her writing is her mastery of language and her ability to use it to create richly textured and nuanced portrayals of her characters and their surroundings

14. **Arun Joshi (1939-1993):** He is well-known for his exploration of existentialist themes in his works. Joshi's first novel, "The Strange Case of Billy Biswas," published in 1971, established him as a prominent voice in Indian literature. The novel explores the idea of an individual's search for meaning in a world that seems meaningless. Joshi's subsequent works, including "The Apprentice" and "The Last Labyrinth," continue to explore similar themes, with a focus on the alienation and despair of modern life. Joshi's writing style is characterized by its introspective and philosophical nature. His works are notable for their vivid and evocative descriptions of Indian landscapes and culture.
15. **Vikram Seth (1950-):** He has written both prose and poetry. His novel *A Suitable Boy*, which is one of the longest novels in the English language, explores the lives of a large and diverse cast of characters in post-independence India. Seth's works are known for their intricate plotting, their lyrical language, and their exploration of themes such as love, family, and cultural identity.
16. **Arundhati Roy (1961-):** Arundhati Roy is a prominent Indian author and activist who is known for her exploration of themes such as corruption, inequality, and environmental degradation, and her novels often tackle these issues head-on, offering readers a window into the social and political realities of contemporary India. Roy's writing is also notable for its experimental form and narrative structure. She often blends together different genres and styles, and her novels feature multiple perspectives and voices, creating a rich and multi-layered reading experience. Roy's writing is characterized by her vivid use of imagery, and her lyrical, poetic language. *God of Small Things*, is her famous work.
17. **Amit Chaudhuri (1962-):** Amit Chaudhuri is a notable Indian author, poet, and critic. His works often explore themes of identity, memory, and cultural exchange. Chaudhuri is known for his experimentation with form and style, often blurring the boundaries between fiction, memoir, and essay. His works, such as "A Strange and Sublime Address," "Freedom Song," and "The Immortals," explore themes such as memory, identity, and the urban experience. Chaudhuri's writing is characterized by its sensitivity to language and its exploration of the nuances of human experience.
18. **Jhumpa Lahiri (1967-):** She has won numerous literary awards for her works, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000 for her collection of short stories,

“Interpreter of Maladies.” Her works explore themes of cultural identity, displacement, and the immigrant experience. Lahiri's writing is characterized by its understated elegance, its attention to detail, and its exploration of the complexities of human relationships.

19. **Kiran Desai (1971-):** She is a contemporary Indian writer who won the Booker Prize in 2006 for her novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. Her works explore themes such as identity, belonging, and the complexities of human relationships. Desai's writing is characterized by its keen observation of human behavior and its exploration of the tensions between tradition and modernity. Desai's writing style is often described as lyrical, with a strong emphasis on sensory details and a deep understanding of human emotions. Her characters are often portrayed as outsiders, struggling to navigate their way through a world that is both familiar and foreign.

20. **Aravind Adiga (1974-):** Aravind Adiga won the Booker Prize in 2008 for his novel *The White Tiger*. His works explore themes such as class conflict, corruption, and the struggles of ordinary people to survive and thrive in a rapidly changing society. His writing style is characterized by its dark humor, sharp wit and biting social commentary.

In recent years, Indian writing in English has continued to flourish with a new generation of talented writers emerging. The themes explored in their works are wide-ranging and reflect the diverse experiences of contemporary India. Some of the prominent writers in this wave of contemporary Indian literature are Madhuri Vijay, Manu Joseph, Anuradha Roy, Amitabha Bagchi, Sujatha Gidla, Kiran Nagarkar, Meena Kandasamy, Shubhangi Swarup, Tishani Doshi, and Anuk Arudpragasam. These writers experiment with form, style and language, while exploring themes such as gender, sexuality, caste, class, politics, and identity. They offer fresh perspectives on contemporary India and its place in the world, and showcase the richness and diversity of Indian literature in English today.

***Check your progress:***

1. Mention the themes explored by Arun Joshi.

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2. 2. What are the characteristics of Khushwant Singh's writing style?

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### 15.2.4 Let Us Sum up

Indian prose writing after 1947 has emerged as a rich and diverse literary landscape, reflecting the socio-political and cultural complexities of post-independence India. The development of Indian writing in English can be seen in phases as well, namely - the early phase, the experimental phase, and the modern phase. These phases were influenced by the social, political and economic conditions of the time. Prose writers after 1947 explored themes such as cultural hybridity, identity, and the everyday lives of ordinary Indians. Prominent writers of this period include R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Anita Desai, and Arundhati Roy, among others. They created a new literary tradition that reflects the diverse realities of India. Indian writing in English after 1947 has evolved from being primarily political and socially relevant to a more experimental and accessible form of literature.

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## 15.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have understood the socio-political, literary, and economic conditions of India after independence and how they influenced the development of Indian writing in English. You should have gained an idea about Indian prose in English after 1947 and the contribution of the prose writers of this period through the four different phases.

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## 15.4 Glossary

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**Postcolonialism:** A critical approach to studying the cultural, economic, and political effects of colonialism, often with a focus on resistance and subversion of dominant power structures.

**Realism:** A literary style that emphasizes the accurate and detailed depiction of everyday life and social issues.

**Modernism:** A cultural movement that emerged in the early 20th century, characterized by experimentation with new forms and styles, as well as a rejection of traditional norms and values.

**Cultural identity:** It refers to the sense of belonging and connection to a particular cultural group, which shapes an individual's beliefs, values, and behaviors.

**Literary experimentation:** It refers to the use of innovative techniques and styles in literature to challenge traditional forms and create new ways of storytelling.

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## 15.5 Sample Questions

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### 15.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ explored the themes of casteism, communalism, and gender discrimination in their works. (**Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and Arundhati Roy**)
2. . Writers such as \_\_\_\_\_, Kiran Desai, and Arundhati Roy explored themes of political corruption, authoritarianism, and communalism in their works. (**Khushwant Singh**)
3. Writers of \_\_\_\_\_ period experimented with form and language to create new and innovative forms of storytelling. (**Post-Independence**)
4. Writers of the Early Post-Independence Phase were influenced by the \_\_\_\_\_ movement. (**Social Realism**)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ used elements of magical realism in their works, blending fantasy with reality. (**Kiran Nagarkar and Vikram Chandra**)
6. In the Post-Modern Phase, writers explored themes such as \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and the complexities of \_\_\_\_\_. (**globalization, cultural identity, modernity**)
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ phase is characterized by a return to realism and a renewed focus on social issues such as caste, gender, and poverty. (**Contemporary**)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ grew up in a family of freedom fighters and was heavily influenced by the Indian independence movement. (**Sudhin Ghose**)
9. The novels “The Princes,” “A Bend in the Ganges,” “Bandicoot Run,” and “Distant Drum.” are written by \_\_\_\_\_. (**Manohar Malgonkar**)
10. \_\_\_\_\_ wrote extensively on the work of writers such as William Shakespeare and T.S. Eliot. (**Balachandra Rajan**)

### 15.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Write a short note on the social, political and economic conditions of post-independence India.
2. Write a short note on the Experimental Phase.
3. What were the themes explored by R.K. Narayan and Mulk Raj Anand?
4. Why is Manohar Malgonkar an important literary figure?
5. What a short note on Arundhati Roy.

### **15.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:**

1. How did the social, political, and economic conditions of India after 1947 affect the literary development of the period?
2. Write about the different phases of literary development in India after 1947.
3. Discuss the major Indian prose writers after 1947 and their contributions.

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## **15.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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Iyengar, S. (2003). *Indian Writing in English*. Sterling Publishers.

Naik, M. K. (2016). *A History of Indian English literature* (3rd ed.). Sahitya Akademi.

## Unit-16: “The Dream and the Message” (from *Ignited Minds*)

### Structure

16.0 Introduction

16.1 Objectives

16.2 “The Dream and the Message” (from *Ignited Minds*)

16.2.1 About APJ Abdul Kalam

16.2.2 *Ignited Minds*: An Overview

16.2.3 “The Dream and the Message”

16.2.3.1 The Incident

16.2.3.2 The Dream

16.2.3.3 Nature, Forces of Good, Destruction

16.2.3.4 Stages in Life and Career

16.2.4 Let Us Sum Up

16.3 Learning Outcomes

16.4 Glossary

16.5 Sample Questions

16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 16.0 Introduction

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Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, commonly referred to as the "People's President" of India, was a renowned scientist, a prolific writer, an inspiring speaker and a visionary leader. Kalam was born in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1931. He was a key figure in India's space and missile development projects. He tried to inspire the people with his words and actions. He not only lectured across the country, but also authored numerous books. One such work is *Ignited Minds*, which explores the barriers keeping India from taking on the challenge of development. Kalam dedicates this book to an intermediate student that he met. In this Unit, we shall discuss “The Dream and the Message.” This essay appears as a chapter in Kalam’s book *Ignited Minds*.

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### 16.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- know about the author and his works



- get an overview of the work *Ignited Mind*
- explore the theme of “The Dream and the Message”
- understand various arguments in the essay
- appreciate the message of the essay

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## 16.2 “The Dream and the Message” (from *Ignited Minds*)

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### 16.2.1 About APJ Abdul Kalam

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam was a prolific writer of several books in a variety of genres, including science fiction, memoirs, and inspirational writing. His autobiography *Wings of Fire*, which tells a compelling story of his life from impoverished origins to his ascent to prominence as a scientist, is one of his best-known writings. Many people may find encouragement from him as he discusses his experiences, principles, and the obstacles he overcomes in this book. In addition to being educational, Kalam's writings are also quite inspirational. His writings are understandable to a broad readership because of his ability to communicate difficult concepts in an approachable and straightforward way. He intends to encourage young people and inculcate a feeling of self-worth, tenacity, and patriotism through his works.

Dr. Kalam was also a motivational speaker. His talks are distinguished by a special fusion of passion, humility, and knowledge. He frequently discussed the value of education, creativity, and young people's influence on the future. Besides his scientific accomplishments, Kalam is also recognized for his literary works.

Some of the most notable awards and honors bestowed upon Dr. Kalam are:

- *Bharat Ratna*: He received the highest civilian honour in India in 1997 in recognition of his enormous and significant contribution to scientific research and the advancement of Indian military technology.
- *Padma Vibhushan*: In 1990, he received India's second-highest civilian honor for his remarkable contribution of extraordinary order in the fields of science and engineering, especially missile technology.
- *Padma Bhushan*: India's third-highest civilian award was given to him in 1981 for his distinguished service of high order in the field of space science and technology.
- *Indira Gandhi Award for National Integration*: In 1997, he was awarded for his efforts towards promoting national integration.

- *Ramanujan Award*: The Alvars Research Centre, Chennai, honoured him in 2000 for his contributions to science.
- *Von Braun Award*: The National Space Society award was bestowed upon him in 2013 in recognition of his excellence in the management and leadership of a space-related project.
- *Hoover Medal*: This prestigious American award bestowed upon him in 2009 for his outstanding extra-career services to humanity.
- *King Charles II Medal*: The Royal Society of UK honored him in 2007 for his contributions to science and technology.

### **16.2.2 Ignited Minds: An Overview**

Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam envisions the future of India shaped by the young generation. His book *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the Power Within India* revolves around the liberation of inherent qualities of the country's citizens. The book explores why, despite possessing abundant skills, resources and talents, our country with the potential to be the best, often settles for the worst. The book delves into what is lacking in our collective efforts.

The central theme of *Ignited Minds* is that a country's citizens have the ability to realize their aspirations of living truly wonderful lives by working hard. Kalam does not offer a prescriptive solution. Rather, he talks about a range of topics and ideas that piqued his interest while traveling the nation. Over the course of his two-year trip, he engaged with thousands of schoolchildren, teachers, scientists, and saints. These concerns include the need for a politics-and religion-neutral sense of patriotism, the significance of having positive role models in our lives, and the requirement of having faith in our own abilities.

Kalam emphasizes the significance of children having role models and nurturing dreams, highlighting that actions stem from aspirations. The central focus of the book is his interaction with the children of our country, acknowledging them as the primary scientists, as science evolves from their inquisitive questions.

The book is organized into clear and easy-to-understand chapters, each containing the remarkable experiences of Kalam as he reflects on his past. Through these experiences and observations, he elucidates the significance of the youth's participation in nation-building. The book includes a dedicated chapter honoring the renowned mathematicians of our country for their invaluable contributions to the scientific world.

He shares his experiences in dialogues with religious leaders, exploring how spirituality can enhance a country's development and its people. He candidly discusses the successes and failures encountered in various projects related to rocketry, missiles, and launch systems. He also addresses the under-utilization of resources in science and technology and advocates for tapping into this untapped potential.

The book's message regarding the nation's context aligns well with the dynamics of large organizations. It encourages individuals not to waste time on what already exists but to set their vision and strive to achieve it. Kalam's assertion: "When a nation doesn't have a vision, small minds take over its affairs," resonates beyond nations and applies to significant organizations.

The book emphasizes not limiting one's thoughts, noting that a person is confined only by their thoughts, which have the power to transcend borders. The phrase "bounded thoughts" may seem contradictory, but it reflects how individuals have structured their lives. The book encourages starting the process of unraveling one's thoughts.

In fact, Kalam possessed a visionary outlook, recognizing vast potential in the youth to contribute significantly to the betterment of the country. He strongly advocated for investing in the young generation to yield benefits for our country. His concepts elucidate how we can ignite a passion within them and leverage their stimulated minds for the continuous development of the nation. With a mission to witness India as a developed nation, he emphasizes throughout the book the importance of adopting a broader perspective to achieve our aspirations. Kalam underscores that only a united vision, launched with renewed determination, can set the young force into effective action. His vision is for a knowledgeable, powerful, and transparent India, transcending religious and political boundaries. The recurring mantra throughout the book is to "dream, dream, dream!"

***Check your progress:***

1. Kalam was born in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu. (True / False)
2. "When a nation doesn't have a vision, small minds take over its affairs." It is stated by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam. (True / False)

### **16.2.3 “The Dream and the Message”**

#### **16.2.3.1 The Incident**

The narrator recounted being en route from Ranchi to Bokaro in Jharkhand on 30 September 2001 when the helicopter transporting them crashed just moments before landing. The helicopter hit the earth with a thud due to engine failure, but fortunately, everyone on board had a miraculous escape. Besides the gratitude expressed to God and being unfazed by the event, the speaker proceeded with their scheduled program of delivering a talk to the students in Bokaro. Later that night, a panel of doctors convinced the narrator to take a tranquilizer to alleviate their perceived shock. The drug caused them to sleep several hours. They failed to rise at the usual 6 a.m., and ended up waking after eight o'clock.

#### **16.2.3.2 The Dream**

The narrator wondered about his disturbed sleep following the crash as to why humanity—which is regarded as the finest of God's creations—has been so severely split by violence. He explained that he imagined a dialogue between five highly esteemed figures who represent the best qualities of the human intellect and whom they really like. The narrator described an intense, moonlit desert experience that was more real than a dream, where they were surrounded by sand. Standing in a circle with their garments billowing in the breeze were five men: Emperor Asoka, Caliph Omar, Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein and Abraham Lincoln.

Standing next to the magnificent Emperor Asoka, who lived two lives—one as a merciless invader and the other as a kind ruler—the narrator felt small. The narrator was next to a monarch who had just returned from a costly conquest, according to reports. At least 3,000,000 persons lost their lives at the Battle of Kalinga, and an equivalent number were injured. The narrator saw Asoka fall to his knees, taking off his crown and armor, his face mirroring the dead all around him. The narrator saw the birth of Ahimsa Dharma as Asoka gazed at the sky, the bright moon, and down at the horror he had produced, with blood dripping everywhere. Emperor Asoka obeyed God's call to spread human love.

As the narrator stood by, they wondered about the reasons behind the Kalinga war, the assassinations of Abraham Lincoln and Mahatma Gandhi, and similar events. They questioned whether God Almighty had weakened in His Creation and if the devastation of mankind was essential for a rebirth. In the midst of the blissful silence, Mahatma Gandhi spoke, expressing that the divine message they were hearing was the message of creation. He suggested that, being

inhabitants of planet Earth, they could convey humanity how individuals of all racial backgrounds, faiths, and tongues can coexist in harmony and prosperity. Gandhi pondered whether the unique blessings bestowed by God through deeds and efforts were effective, questioning the existence of any divine message or doctrine. He emphasized the possibility of divine beauty entering the human soul, leading to happiness blossoming in the body and mind.

Asoka shared his realization that there is no victory in causing suffering, asserting that triumph lies in a peaceful kingdom. Caliph Omar, reflecting on his experience in Jerusalem, highlighted the equality of all men and the futility of forcing others onto a particular path, recognizing that one receives only what is ordained by God.

Einstein recalled Werner Heisenberg's view about a ship lacking a compass in the West, proposing that the compass found by individuals like Tagore and Gandhi should be placed in the human ship to realize its purpose. Abraham Lincoln, drawing parallels with Mahatma Gandhi, spoke about the importance of happiness coming from a family's prosperity and God's grace. He suggested that conflicts arise from losing sight of ethical values in the pursuit of prosperity and power, questioning the role of human consciousness in political, scientific, and theological thinking. Lincoln pondered the acceptability of spirituality in the business of life.

Mahatma Gandhi recalled sage Ashtavakra, emphasizing the inseparability of the phenomenal universe from consciousness. He advocated for the business of life to be focused on peace and prosperity rather than exploitation and conflict, declaring this as their message to the planet. Gandhi concluded that everything they do and any doctrine they espouse should be for the good of humankind.

The following morning, the narrator recounted sitting for some time, drinking their tea, and contemplating the strange dream. Reflecting on the possibility of the helicopter losing power at a higher altitude, they recalled a recent plane crash that claimed the lives of a promising leader and a team of young journalists just hours before their own mishap. Grateful for their survival, the night's experience held a message for them, prompting thoughts on what actions to take.

### **16.2.3.3 Nature, Forces of Good, Destruction**

Glancing out of the window, the narrator observed the sun high in the sky and felt a soothing breeze. They shared a deep connection with nature, considering it a friend that gives without reservation, akin to the generosity of a mango tree. Whether near the sea at Rameswaram, Thumba, and Chandipur, in the desert at Pokhran, or amidst gigantic boulders in Hyderabad, nature's presence reminded them of the divine force pervading all creation.

Continuing to contemplate the dream, the narrator acknowledged the historical struggle between the forces of good aiming to improve life and the human race's capacity for destruction. They cited examples such as Gandhi and other saints advocating for a virtuous life, contrasted with the immense loss of life in events like the Second World War and the dropping of atomic bombs. The narrator mentioned conflicts like Bosnia, the Israel-Palestine conflict, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Bhopal gas tragedy, the violence in the Kashmir Valley, and the attempt to paralyze the country on 13th December 2001, terrorist attack on India's Parliament. Expressing concern, the narrator questioned where it would all end and whether humanity was destined to self-destruct.

The narrator asserted that there was a need to find an everlasting solution. He mentioned recalling a poem written a few years ago titled "The Tree of Life." The narrator expressed that the five great human beings seen in their dream lived at different times. He observed that in the modern world, there were few examples of individuals embodying qualities arising from realizing the nature of the mind. Recounting an encounter with a child who inquired about their favorite character in the Mahabharata, he shared admiration for Vidura, highlighting Vidura's resistance against authority's wrongdoings and the courage to dissent in the face of adharma.

Expressing concerns about the lack of true Viduras among contemporary leaders, the narrator noted the discouraging quality of public life, characterized by low discourse and the prevalence of negative emotions. Feeling a new determination, they described their most important decision to focus on discovering India's true self in its children, transcending personal achievements and scientific careers.

#### **16.2.3.4 Stages in Life and Career**

Reflecting on the different stages in a man's life, as outlined by Dr. Wayne W. Dyer, the narrator drew parallels to nations undergoing transitions. He mentioned the athlete stage, warrior stage, and big brother stage, emphasizing the difficulty of transitioning from the warrior stage to the big brother stage. The narrator introduced a higher stage termed the realization stage, where a nation recognizes its true essence and acknowledges the shared responsibility for the Earth. The narrator discussed his diverse career stages, from leading the team at the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) to their involvement in the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and participation in India's mission to become a nuclear-weapon state. He highlighted the spin-offs from missile technologies that brought happiness, such as the KR coronary stent and lightweight Floor Reaction Orthosis (FRO) calipers.

Sharing his experiences as the Chairman of the Technology Information, Forecasting and Assessment Council (TIFAC) and later as the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, the narrator emphasized the importance of building technological strength, adapting technology to societal needs, and formulating a vision for the nation. The narrator expressed the realization of the need to transition to a new stage after the helicopter mishap in 2001, which was reinforced by a visit to Mata Amritanandamayi's Ashram in Kerala. On Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, he formally wrote to the Prime Minister about his decision to retire and engage in activities like visiting schools and addressing students.

Contemplating the possibility of a fourth stage, the narrator expressed uncertainty about its success but emphasized the power of commitment to a dream. He revealed a longstanding desire to undertake research and teaching, leading to a shift to Anna University, his alma mater. The narrator expressed the joy of being among young and creative individuals and pondered the elders' responsibility to guide the energy of the youth constructively for nation-building.

The narrator recommended that spirituality should be integrated with education, emphasizing self-realization as the focal point. The idea being conveyed is that each individual must become aware of their higher self, recognizing themselves as links from a great past to a grand future. According to the narrator, individuals should awaken their dormant inner energy and allow it to lead their lives. He believes that the brilliance emanating from minds engaged in constructive endeavors will contribute to bringing peace, prosperity, and bliss to the nation.

***Check your progress:***

1. Dr Kalam and his team met with an accident at the time of helicopter landing in Bokaro, Jharkhand. (True / False)
2. Dr Kalam talks about five great men he has seen in his dream. (True / False)

**16.2.4 Let Us Sum Up**

The essay titled “The Dream and the Message” is an extract from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam’s book *Ignited Minds*. In this essay, Kalam recalls his dream he had after he met with an accident during his visit to Bokaro in a helicopter. In his dream, he saw five great persons who together signify “the finest attributes of human mind.” The five men are: Emperor Ashoka, Caliph Omer, Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Einstein.

Ashoka, known for his Kalinga war, gave up violence and embraced 'ahimsa' or non-violence and propagated love for human beings. Mahatma Gandhi spoke of the divine message of peaceful coexistence of people of different races, religions, and languages. He is known for his non-violence movement. Abraham Lincoln, who parallels Gandhi in some aspects, said that happiness comes with a family's prosperity at various levels. Albert Einstein, through an analogy, said that humanity without spirituality is like a ship without a compass. Caliph Omer, after conquering Jerusalem, declares that everyone is equal and there is no use in pressuring someone else to choose a particular path.

All these great men, in the dream of Dr Kalam, highlight the importance of peace and prosperity while rejecting violence and destruction. In his vision for a better India, Kalam suggests that education should incorporate spirituality, focusing on self-realization. It is also essential that people recognize their connection to a larger history and future, and awaken their inner energy to guide their lives.

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### 16.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should be able to appreciate APJ Abdul Kalam and his works, understand the theme of *Ignited Mind*, gain an understanding of the key message of 'The Dream and the Message.'

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### 16.4 Glossary

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**Ahimsa** - an ethical principle in Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism which entails not causing harm to other living things

**Kalinga** – a historical region in India and powerful kingdom once ruled over by Ashoka. After the Kalinga War and the resultant bloodshed, Emperor Ashoka accepted the path of non-violence

**Omer Caliph** – the second Caliph of Islam, known and respected for his justice and authority

**Vidura** – a prominent character in the Hindu epic Mahabharata, regarded as a paragon of truth, judgement, dutifulness, and steadfastness in dharma.

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### 16.5 Sample Questions

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### 16.5.1 Objective Type Questions:

1. APJ Abdul Kalam was born on \_\_\_\_\_.(15<sup>th</sup> October 1931)
2. The helicopter carrying APJ Abdul Kalam and his team crashed in \_\_\_\_\_ on 30 September 2001. (**Rameswaram** )
3. The men APJ Abdul Kalam saw in his dream are:
  - a. Mahatma Gandhi & Abraham Lincoln
  - b. Emperor Asoka & Caliph Omar
  - c. Albert Einstein
  - d. All the above**
4. APJ Abdul Kalam emphasizes the significance of children having role models and nurturing dreams in the essay \_\_\_\_\_ .
  - a. Ignited Minds**
  - b. The Dream and the Message
  - c. Wings of Fire
  - d. None of the above
5. Gandhiji emphasized the possibility of divine beauty entering the human soul. (**True / False**)
6. Caliph Omar, reflecting on his experience in Jerusalem, highlighted \_\_\_\_\_ of all men and \_\_\_\_\_ of forcing others onto a particular path. (**equality, futility**)
7. Mahatma Gandhi recalled sage \_\_\_\_\_, emphasizing the inseparability of the phenomenal universe from consciousness. (**Ashtavakra**)
8. APJ Abdul Kalam revealed a longstanding desire to undertake research and teaching, leading to a shift to \_\_\_\_\_, his alma mater. (**Madras Institute of Technology**)
9. APJ Abdul Kalam served as the Principal Scientific Adviser to \_\_\_\_\_ . (**Government of India**)
10. The following are the four stages of life mentioned by APJ Abdul Kalam. (**True / False**)
  - a. athlete stage
  - b. warrior stage
  - c. big brother stage
  - d. realization stage

### 16.5.2 Short Answer Type Questions:

1. Write a brief note on Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's writings.
2. Bring out details of Dr Kalam's scientific contributions.
3. Comment on the four stages of life and career as mentioned by Dr Kalam.
4. Briefly discuss the five men Dr Kalam saw in his dream.
5. Shed light on the awards and honors received by Dr, APJ Abdul Kalam.

### 16.5.3 Long Answer Type Questions:

1. APJ Abdul Kalam's work *Ignited Minds* is an address to the young generation. Discuss.
2. Write a detailed note on the dream of APJ Abdul Kalam as narrated in the essay.
3. Education with spirituality is essential for progress. Discuss in the light of APJ Abdul Kalam's essay "The Dream and the Message."

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## 16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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- Bhushan, K., and G. A. P. J. Katyal. *APJ Abdul Kalam: The Visionary of India*. APH Publishing, 2002.
- Kalam, Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul. *Ignited Minds: Unleashing the power within India*. Penguin Books India, 2003.
- Kalam, Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul, and Arun Tiwari. *Wings of Fire: An Autobiography*. Universities press, 1999.
- Kalam, Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul, and Dr. Anup Kumar Das. "Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam: The People's President." *Vigyan Prasar*, October 2015, vol. 18, no. 1, pp.32-34.
- Singh, Deepak Kumar. "APJ Abdul Kalam: A Motivational Icon for the Youth in India." *The Creative Launcher*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 14-18.
- Vohra, Neharika, and V. Venkata Rao. "Dr APJ Abdul Kalam in Conversation with." *Vikalpa*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2009, pp. 61-68.

## MODEL QUESTION PAPER

### MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY

#### Master of Arts English

III SEMESTER EXAMINATION, January 2021

#### Paper : (MAEN302CCT) Indian Writings in Literature

Time: 3 hours

Max. Marks 70 marks

Note : This question paper consists of three parts : Part – A, Part-B and Part-C. Number of words to answer each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.

**Part–A** contains **10** compulsory questions of multiple choice/fill in the blank/very short answer type question. Answer all questions. Each question carries **1** mark. **(10x1=10-marks)**

**Part-B** contains **08** questions of which students are required to answer **05** questions. Answer each question in approximately 200 words. Each question carries **06** marks. **(5x6=30 marks)**

**Part-C** contains **05** questions of which students are required to answer **03** questions. Answer each question in approximately 500 words. Each question carries **10** marks. **(3x10=30 marks)**

### Part-A

#### Question : 1:

- i. Who got Sahitya Academy Award for his play, *Final Solutions*?
- ii. Kamala Das was a poet and short story writer from\_\_\_\_\_
  - a. Orissa
  - b. Andhra Pradesh
  - c. West Bengal
  - d. Kerala
- iii. Abdul Kalam became\_\_\_\_\_ President of India.
  - a. 11<sup>th</sup>
  - b. 10<sup>th</sup>
  - c.9<sup>th</sup>
  - d.12<sup>th</sup>
- iv. Hilla is character in the novel\_\_\_\_\_
  - a. *A Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer.*
  - b. *Roots and Shadows.*
  - c. *God of Small Things*
  - d. *Nectarina Sieve*
- v. Who among the following was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award for his collection of poems *Relationship*?
  - a. Jayant Mahapatra
  - b. Tagore
  - c. Kamala Das
  - d. Ramanujan
- vi. Who among the following translated the Bengali poems of Gitanjali into English?
  - a. Tagore
  - b. Gandhi
  - c. Ambedkar
  - d. Narayan
- vii. Who wrote the collection of poems, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*?
- viii. Hemant, Padmini and Shyamrao are characters in the novel\_\_\_\_\_.
- ix. Who among the following worked as a professor at Winnipeg University?

- a. Uma Parameswaran      b. Kamala Das      c. Toru Dutt      d. Sarojini Naidu
- x. I am sinner,  
I am saint. I am the beloved and the  
Betrayed. In which poem do the above lines  
appear?
- a. Introduction      b. Hunger      c. Karl Marx      d. Sita

### **Part B (Short Answers)**

2. What is the central theme of the poem, *Karl Marx*?
3. Write a brief note on the growth of Indian English Prose after Independence
4. What is Abraham Lincoln's philosophy of life?
5. Sketch the character of Farida
6. Discuss the narrative technique in the novel, *A Chronicle of a Corpse Bearer*.
7. Consider the achievements of Mahesh Dattani as a playwright.
8. Discuss the use of myth in Uma Parameswaran's play, *Sita's Promise*
9. What is the contribution of Jayant Mahapatra to Indian English poetry?

### **Part C (Essays)**

10. Discuss the message of Abdul Kalam in his essay, *The Dream and the Message*
11. Analyze the greatness of Tagore with reference to the essays prescribed for your study.
12. Consider feministic aspects in Sashi Deshpande's novel *Roots and Shadows*.
13. What according to you are the significant themes in the play, *Tara*? Discuss.
14. Write a critical appreciation of any one of the poems prescribed for your study.

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