

BAEN401CCT

Literary Cross Currents



Directorate of Distance Education

Maulana Azad National Urdu University

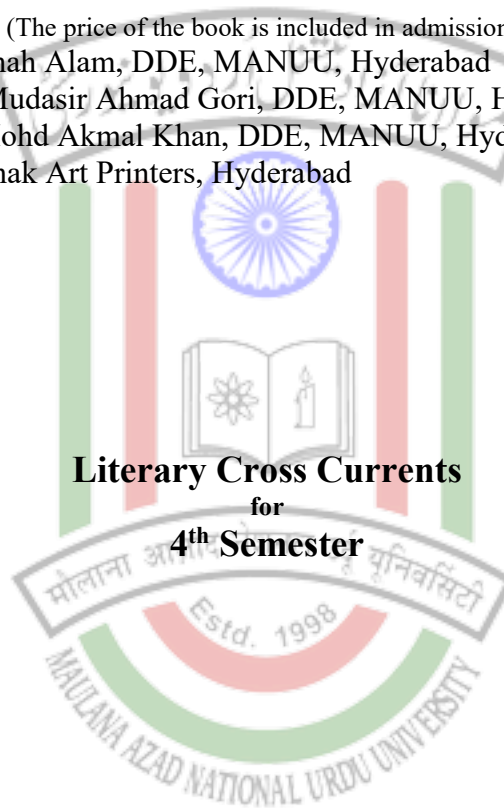
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(SLM Based on UGC CBCS)

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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

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

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

For the past few years UGC-DEB kept emphasizing on synchronizing the syllabus of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Accordingly, at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, the syllabus of distance and regular mode is synchronized with the conventional mode and UGC CBCS. Self Learning Material is being prepared afresh for UG and PG courses in compliance to UGC DEB Regulations as per new syllabus under semester mode.

Directorate of Distance Education runs UGC approved programmes and offers UG, PG, B.Ed (ODL), Diploma and certificate courses. A network of nine regional centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and five sub-regional centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. More than 100 Learner Support Centers are run under these regional and sub-regional centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. DDE also utilizes ICT for its educational and administrative activities.

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

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

Prof. Mohd. Razaullah Khan

Director, Directorate of Distance Education

MANUU, Hyderabad

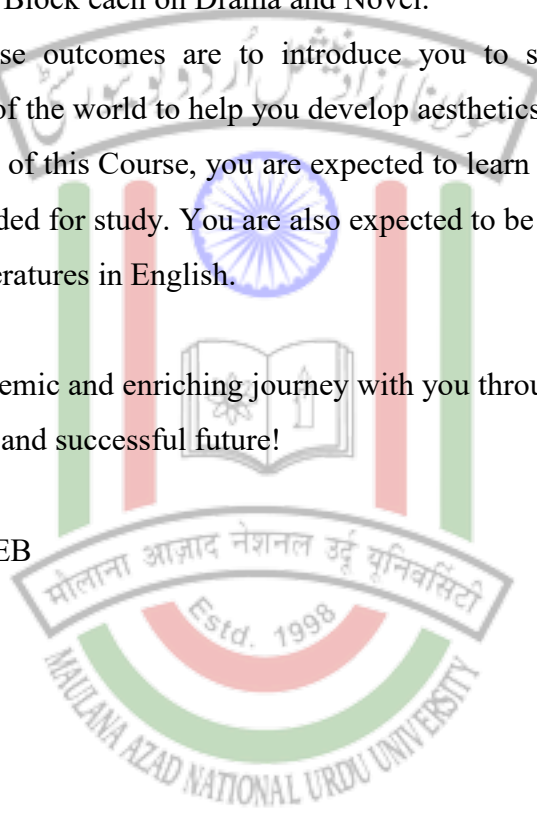
Introduction to the Course

This Course is prescribed as a compulsory core course under CBCS and LOCF for the students enrolled in the 4th Semester B.A. In the pages that follow, you will find self-learning material with clearly laid-down objectives and learning outcomes. In the earlier Semesters, you studied the Courses, *Individual and Society*, *Modern Indian Literature* and *British Literature*. In this Semester, you will study *Literary Cross Currents*. In this Course, you will read about topics such as poetry from the Renaissance to the Modern period; Latin American Writing; African and Indian Writing apart from a Block each on Drama and Novel.

The expected Course outcomes are to introduce you to some samples of literature produced in different parts of the world to help you develop aesthetics for literature of any region or period. Upon completion of this Course, you are expected to learn the literary style and theme of the individual texts included for study. You are also expected to be familiar with various genre, periods, movements and literatures in English.

We look forward to an academic and enriching journey with you through your B.A. programme.
My best wishes for a bright and successful future!

Dr. GULFISHAAN HABEEB
Professor of English &
Course Coordinator



Literary Cross Currents





Unit – 1: Renaissance: Characteristic Features

Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Objectives
- 1.2 Renaissance: Characteristic Features
 - 1.2.1 The English Renaissance
 - 1.2.2 Characteristic Features of Renaissance
 - 1.2.3 Rebirth of Classical Learning
 - 1.2.4 Objective Outlook
 - 1.2.5 Individualism
 - 1.2.6 Revolt against the Pope
 - 1.2.7 Humanism
 - 1.2.8 Exploration and Discoveries
 - 1.2.9 Scientific Experimentation
 - 1.2.10 Architectural Splendour
 - 1.2.11 Literary Attainment under Renaissance
 - 1.2.12 Influence of Renaissance
 - 1.2.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.3 Learning Outcomes
- 1.4 Glossary
- 1.5 Sample Questions
- 1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1.0 Introduction

The Renaissance was a literary and intellectual movement that began and swept all over Europe in the 16th century. However, it did not remain limited to mere Europe; rather it had a far-reaching influences and effects on all walks of life irrespective of any region or background. In order to have a glimpse of what Renaissance actually is and what are its characteristic features and how it has influenced the literary and intellectual caliber of the people, it is better to start with the very word Renaissance. The very word Renaissance means “rebirth”. The word began to make its marks in the Middle or even in the Dark Age. The starting point of this movement was from Italy, but later on it stretched its wings in England and other part of Europe. And

specifically speaking, the period of the English Renaissance was in between 1500 and 1688. This period was marked due to numerous traits. The chief being the idea of putting emphasis on the divine rights of kings to rule, second is propagation of humanistic ideas and emphasis on humanism.

Humanism centers on the idea of dignity and greatness of man. Perhaps the most alluring part of this is the scientific exploration and discoveries made in this period. This period or movement is also marked by the idea of Protestant Reformation and the inculcation of printing press that has revolutionized the literary and intellectual well-being of the people at a massive scale. During that period, there was an increasing interest in classical learning. In addition, there was a radical shift that took place with regard to the ideas of science, religion and politics. There was an embellishment of urban society and an increasing influence on the individual abilities of human beings. Creativity and curiosity were the top trends of that period. There was not only an exploration of scientific discoveries and growth of commerce and expansion of new worlds and continents rather rationalism and logic also gain much prominence during Renaissance.

Check your progress:

1. In which century the Renaissance was spread in England?

2. What is the literal meaning of ‘Renaissance’?

1.1 Objectives

This objectives of this Unit are to help you:

- with the term, idea and concept of Renaissance and its chief attributes and characteristics that emerged in Italy in the 14th century.
- to be aware about chief attributes and characteristics of Renaissance period that began in Italy and all over Europe with the passage of time in the 16th century.
- comprehend different literary terms used in Renaissance period such as humanism, individualism, exploration and rebirth.
- differentiate among diverse forms of chief attributes and characteristics of Renaissance period.

- understand the distinction between scientific exploration used in different domains of human activity and regional discoveries made during Renaissance period.
- feel at home while drawing a distinction between Italian concept of Renaissance and that of the English Renaissance.
- to be aware of the terms such as rebirth, renewal, classical learning, humanism and individualism made use during Renaissance period.

1.2 Renaissance: Characteristic Features

1.2.1 The English Renaissance:

The term and movement known as Renaissance was essentially a European idea, movement and concept which emerged in Italy and later spread to Germany, France and England. The English Renaissance was perhaps the most glorious part of Renaissance, and it had numerous illustrious figures that shaped the entire destiny of English literature and the chief among them are Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Francis Bacon and Christopher Marlowe. Some of the chief attributes of the English Renaissance are love for knowledge and learning, freedom of speech and action, rebirth of intellectual ideas and thoughts, humanistic outlook, scientific exploration, love for beauty, affiliation for adventure, recall for past, considerable amount of interest in exploration, focus on individual, wish for limitless wealth and crave for power and pomp in the worldly domains.

The English Renaissance has conveyed the ideas which were not limited to mere that age and time, but also for ages beyond time and space. Before Renaissance, Europe was intellectually dead, but Renaissance brought a new spirit and inspiration to intellectual minds of Europe through renewal and rebirth process. This movement had given a voice to the people and there was freedom of expressions and actions. There was an awaking spirit among people with regard to the revolt and rebellion. Freedom of thought and action was a chief trait of the Renaissance period in general and the English Renaissance in particular. Love and curiosity towards learning and knowledge was yet another significant feature of the English Renaissance movement. There was a significant contribution that had been transformed during that period with regard to exploration and inventions in all walks of life.

Check your progress:

1. Mention three features of the English Renaissance.

1.2.2 Characteristic Features of the Renaissance:

As far as the concept of the English Renaissance is concerned, it is mainly related with the revival or rebirth of classical values and civilization. It started in Italy, and later it flourished in England, where it took the shape of the English Renaissance. Though its influences reached England a little late, but the influence it carried on English literature was very much deep. Encarta Encyclopedia comprehensively defined Renaissance and its chief attributes as “The term *renaissance* means a rebirth or fresh beginning. It is used primarily to describe the period of remarkable flowering of artistic and intellectual life in Europe, a period that is known simply as the Renaissance. The Renaissance began in Italy and eventually expanded to Germany, France, England, Spain, the Netherlands, Poland, and Russia.” It was a literary, cultural, artistic as well as intellectual phenomenon that involved all walks of life. Let us now study the chief attributes of this period.

1.2.3 Rebirth of Classical Learning:

Before the advent of Renaissance, there was a little awareness among common people about the classical literature such as Latin and Greek. The taste and aroma of that literature was mainly limited to scholars and philosophers having intellectual caliber. Nobody other than the intellectual class of the society had access to classical literature, but with the advent of Renaissance layman was able to have access to the translation of classical literature, especially that of Greek. The aroma and taste of classical literature was so striking that people shifted their attention towards classical from medieval literature. People began to divert their attention from the controversies of philosophy frequent in the medieval literature toward the classical literature. The flair for the medieval began to diminish as people of artistic caliber started writing in line with the classical mode of writing. That is why Renaissance is deemed to be rebirth of classical literature and end of medieval literature and age.

1.2.4 Objective Outlook:

The Renaissance is also marked by numerous other attributes other than the revival and rebirth of classical learning and literature. And the chief among them is the concept of objectivity or objective outlook. Renaissance has stressed upon its writers, intellectuals and philosophers to have derived their knowledge and learning from concrete and physical objects rather than

shifting their attention and sources from abstract things. It had given immense emphasis on the physical and factual world and ideas, and had taken the writers and readers out from the world of idealism. This can be marked by yet another radical shift that has been witnessed during Renaissance time. This period has even discarded the evergreen philosophical notions of Aristotle. Though religion and Christianity had not been totally rejected during that period, but the theological ideas were mainly concerned with physical and concrete objects and ideas rather than of abstract ideas such as life after death. Reality and actuality were given much prominence during Renaissance rather than idealistic or abstract idealism.

1.2.5 Individualism:

Another chief characteristic of Renaissance is ever-increasing focus and rise on the matter of individual, which gives birth to individualistic outlook. Before Renaissance in the period of medieval literature and age the writers were unknown or anonymous. No one used to be aware of their personal traits and artistic talents. They used to write their poetry and other form of art. It came to readers, but the writers were unknown. There are numerous well known poetic versions which are still famous and even quoted, but there is a lack of writers or poets name as they wrote anonymously and hence their writing came to the world but the writers remained unknown. But with the advent of Renaissance there was an increasing trend among writers to be famous and popular among their readers and among literary circles that gave rise to the individualism aroma of artists as well as the writers. Medieval traditions of anonymous writing was rejected and discarded by the writers. This is perhaps the third major radical change that had been brought about by the Renaissance period. Now, writers and artists used to sign their work before giving it to someone else as a token of their property or artistic stature, which is a clear sign of individual attention and focus on the part of writers and artists as a whole.

1.2.6 Revolt against the Pope:

This is another significant feature of Renaissance that had brought about fourth radical change that was brought about by Renaissance. During medieval age churches and Popes were deemed to be apex center of materialism, corruption and other malice practices which have been aptly depicted by W.H. Hudson in these words “of spiritual zeal and energy very little was now felt in the country. The greater prelates heaped up wealth, and lived in a godless and worldly way; the rank and file of the clergy was ignorant and careless; the mendicant friars were notorious for their greed and profligacy.” But with the advent of Renaissance there was a death or decline of Pope Authority and likewise the authority of church. Pope and other church figures were

involved in worldly affairs such as politics and corruption. They were involved in administrative set up rather than providing console to the spiritual domains. So, their downfall and lack of prestige is sure to come and it has been sped up by the advent of Renaissance. Church figures began to flourish themselves and their families instead of serving and casting influence on the society. Hence, with the advent of Renaissance the supporters of Catholic Church became more vocalize and began to speak against the authority of Pope. That all resulted in the shift of Pope Courts to Avignon as order issued by French King in the 14th century.

1.2.7 Humanism:

It is another influential attribute of Renaissance age or period. Basically, it is a philosophical term and idea which lays stress on the dignity and high value of human beings. It is perhaps the most core feature of Renaissance period which emerged in Italy and later spread all over Europe. Humanists were not at all concerned with the idealistic values and ideals of medieval period. Humanist believed that religion and Christianity was no more a source of spiritual inspiration for the people or human beings. Humanists were against the medieval writing norms where religion and religious depiction was the chief theme. Before Renaissance religious was the major focus of attention among writers and literary artists but that tone was changed influentially under the dominance of humanism. Humanism unlike medieval was a secular and cultural movement. Humanists believed that through classical literature and writers human beings can learn how to live a life in this world. Humanist movement was yet another radical change that Renaissance brought about. The chief humanist writers of Renaissance period were Francesco Petrarch, Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola, Giovanni Boccaccio, Baldassare Castiglione and Leonardo Bruni.

Check your progress:

1. Name few prominent writers of Renaissance Age.

1.2.8 Exploration and Discoveries:

It is one of the most paramount attribute of Renaissance period. There was exploration and exposure in all walks of life. During that period, merchants and businessmen expanded their trades and business across lands and cultures. For that purpose, there was a discovery of new markets and trade routes across Asia and America. It all resulted in discoveries of new regions and continents. Christopher Columbus was the one who explored American region. Lisa Jardine in her book talked about this aspect of Renaissance in these words, “As a result of these

speculative voyages, new trading bases and new ports where ships could take on fresh supplies during long journeys were established all over the world. Portuguese entrepreneurs backed a series of explorers heading south from Lisbon along the west coast of Africa in search of alternative access to central Africa's reputedly rich gold supplies. They discovered the island groups of the Azores, Madeiras, and Canaries. By the end of the 15th century they had reached Sierra Leone and the Guinea coast of Africa.” So, this period had marked the sense of exploration and discoveries which were not merely limited to scientific discoveries rather of all walks and domains of human activity.

1.2.9 Scientific Experimentation:

As stated above, Renaissance was a period of exploration and discoveries but scientific exploration and progress was in full swing during that time. Scientific exploration and experimentation touched new height under the umbrella of Renaissance. Advancement made in science can be seen in diverse field of activities in human life. Medical science reached its apex with the discovery of human anatomy by Andreas Vesalius. The domain of navigation also attained remarkable attainment. In addition, there was noticeable advancement that was made in the field of mathematics, navigation, medicine, and astronomy. Galileo projected the world famous theory during that time and it was that the earth revolves around the sun. It was opposite to the belief held by Roman Catholic Church which was based on the idea that earth is the center of this universe. He did not bother the order issued by the church and hence had to face death imprisonment but it opened the Vista of logic, reason and fact rather than traditional beliefs which had no logical grounds. During Renaissance period Sir Isaac Newton presented the three laws of motion.

1.2.10 Architectural Splendour:

As Renaissance was highly inspired by the classical tradition of Roman and Greek, so is the art of architecture that was adopted, developed and perfected during Renaissance period derived mainly from Roman and Greek. They drew their inspiration from the architectural height of Roman and Greeks. Filippo Brunelleschi was the one who laid the foundation of architecture of Renaissance during 15th century. He did so by erecting the church of “*San Lorenzo*” and the “*Pazzi Chapel in Florence*” although, Renaissance artists and architectures imitated the style of Roman and Greeks but had contributed significantly their own work as well. The great dome of Brunelleschi in cathedral of Florence was one of the wonders of the architectural style of Renaissance period. Apart from the religious and church based building, their interest in secular

building such as theaters and libraries were also the focus of attention on the part of architectural height of the Renaissance period. “*Olympic Theater*” and “*Villa Rotonda*” were the remarkable building of that period.

1.2.11 Literary Attainment under Renaissance:

Renaissance had a great influence and impacts on literature in general and English literature in particular. The English literature touched its new horizons and heights under the shadow of Renaissance shelter. Writers like Shakespeare had taken the literary heights across the literary and cultural boundaries. He made literature beyond age, time, and genre. Literature, especially English literature, attained universality during the Renaissance period in general and under Shakespeare stature in particular. Even in literary writing there was an imitation and copying in terms of style, tone, and themes of Roman and Greeks as far as Renaissance writers are concerned. The key writers who contributed during the English Renaissance are William Shakespeare, Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, John Milton and Ben Jonson. With the invention of printing press, the boom of literature and literary horizons touched new heights. The numbers of books multiplied, which has positive influence on English literature. English writers were the trendsetters in this regard, who explored new horizons and heights during the Renaissance period.

The most significant contribution that was made with regard to English literature was the inculcation of poetic form that was termed as sonnet. It was a poetic device that was meant “little song”. There were two types of sonnets that emerged during that period. These were Italian or Petrarchan sonnet and English or Shakespearean sonnet. Both types of sonnets were consisted of 14 lines and these were written keeping in view iambic pentameter form. In Italian or Petrarchan form of sonnet there was an Octave of 8 lines and Sestet of 6 lines, while in English or Shakespearean sonnet there were three quatrains of 4 lines and a couplet of 2 lines. Mostly, sonnet followed the structural paradigm in which an issue or question was raised in the first part while that question or issue was addressed or resolved in the second part of sonnet. It was a powerful poetic tool that was meant to express emotions, and it usually had a well-lit structure. The themes of such sonnets were either based on brevity of life, on the nature of love or based on human desires.

Check your progress:

1. Name few British Renaissance writers.

2. How many lines does a sonnet contain?

1.2.12 Influence of Renaissance:

The most significant influence of Renaissance was the renewal and rebirth of classical learning, literature and values which renewed the spirit of classical learning such as Roman and Greeks. Secondly, the entire fabric of society undergoes a radical shift as there was an emergence of urban society during that period. Thirdly, this movement though was artistic, literary and intellectual had brought about radical shift in the basic domains such as politics, religion and scientific notion. Fourthly, this movement had rejected the idea of church and pope authority as well as discarded the notions of idealism. The aroma of logic, reason and argument emerged during that period which had a major influence on the writers and artists. Though, most of the writers and artists of that period imitated, but there was a significant contribution that they made in addition to imitation. Another significant influence of that period was that it gave raise to human and individual values.

The concept of humanism had made a major impact on the society and in the lives of human beings in particular. The most and radical impact was the sense of exposure, exploration and inventions that were of multiple nature. These were not merely limited to any single domain of human activity; rather it diversified from simple scientific domain to regional and continental domain. There were scientific inventions that made the lives of people more easy and evolving. There were discoveries of new regions and worlds along with the advent of new trade routes and market which had far-reaching influence as far as the embellishment of new and modern human culture and civilization are concerned. The very word rebirth that was associated with the word Renaissance had crafted the idea that Europe had left the old and worn out ideas of middle ages and turned towards new ideas, concepts and progressive mode of moving ahead in life and that was the emergence of new and civilized world in which we are in.

1.2.13 Let Us Sum Up:

It was a distinctive period in terms of the rebirth or renewal of classical learning or literature. Inspiration was derived from Roman and Greeks traditions and values. It emerged as Italian Renaissance and there were three major focuses of that initial phase of Renaissance and this included emergence of rural society, recovery from the disaster of the 14th century and attention on individualism. Later it turned out to be an English Renaissance. The Renaissance period was marked with the humanist approach that focused on the notion of self-belief, individual dignity and to assert the value of human beings in general. Then we have diverse

fundamental and radical change that took place with regard to politics, religion and science. In addition, the period of Renaissance was remarkable due to its beauty of creativity and curiosity. It had also marked with the sense of exploration that was scientific, with regard to trade and invention of printing press and gunpowder. In all and all, the spirit of Renaissance was strong that initiated from Italy and swept all over Europe and England. It had far-reaching influences on all walks of human activity, with unlimited numbers of opportunities for all forms of arts.

1.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you are expected to:

- be familiar with the term, idea and concept of Renaissance and its chief attributes and characteristics that emerged in Italy in the 14th century.
- be aware about chief attributes and characteristics of Renaissance period.
- understand different literary terms used in Renaissance period such as humanism, individualism, exploration and rebirth.
- draw a distinction between Italian concept of Renaissance and that of the English Renaissance.

1.4 Glossary

Attribute: Characteristic

Subsequent: Following

Humanism: A cultural and intellectual movement in 14th – 16th century Europe.

Individualism: A social theory favouring freedom of action for individuals over collective or state control.

Aroma: Fragrance

Caliber: Competence

Layman: Common person

Striking: Remarkable

Trait: Characteristic

Stature: Height

Materialism: Constant concern over material possessions and wealth

Malice: Wickedness

Prelate: Bishop

Mendicant: A religious friar, forbidden to own personal property, who begs for a living

Friars: Monk

Profligacy: Wastefulness, shameless and immoral behaviour

Medieval: Of or related to the Middle Ages

Entrepreneur: A person who organizes and operates a business venture

Inculcation: Instill

Paradigm: Pattern, model

1.5 Sample Questions

1.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When did the intellectual, literary and artistic movement of Renaissance swept all over Europe?
 - (a) In the 15th century
 - (b) In the 16th century
 - (c) In the 17th century
 - (d) In the 18th century
2. Where did the intellectual movement of Renaissance emerge, after which it spread to all over Europe?
 - (a) In ancient Rome
 - (b) In ancient Greek
 - (c) In Italy
 - (d) In modern England
3. When Renaissance movement made its way to all Europe, we have witnessed the emergence of the English Renaissance, and it was extended _____.
 - (a) Between 1500 and 1688
 - (b) Between 1510 and 1677
 - (c) Between 1520 and 1667

- (d) Between 1530 and 1657
4. What is meant by classing renewal of learning and literature in the context of the Renaissance movement?
- (a) The learning and literature of Italy
(b) The learning and literature of England
(c) The learning and literature of Greeks
(d) The learning and literature of Roman and Greeks
5. Which movement changed the authority of the Pope and revolted against papal monopoly?
- (a) Middle Ages
(b) Dark ages
(c) Renaissance period
(d) Liberal humanism
6. Humanist movement that emerged during Renaissance period was focused on the influence of the role of _____.
- (a) Individual human being
(b) Human being as a whole
(c) Urban class of society
(d) Literary and classical term
7. Poetic form of illustrious nature that developed during Renaissance period as a part of influence on literature was known as _____.
- (a) Free verse poems
(b) Epic form of poetic verse
(c) Sonnet form of poetry
(d) Tragic nature of poetry
8. Renaissance form of sonnet that emerged during that period consisted of which of these sonnets _____.
- (a) Italian form of sonnet
(b) Greeks form of sonnet
(c) Italian and English form of sonnet
(d) Modern form of sonnet
9. Which aspects of human society and activity gone through radical shift of paradigm during the Renaissance period?

- (a) Social fabric of society
- (b) Economic system of human society
- (c) Social, political and religious aspects of society
- (d) All the above-mentioned aspects

10. Renaissance period of intellectual movement marked a dynamic influence on _____.

- (a) Scientific exploration
- (b) Regional exploration
- (c) Economic boost routes
- (d) All the above-mentioned

1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the radical and paradigm shifts and changes that had been brought about by Renaissance in Europe in the 14th century?
2. What were the impacts of scientific discoveries and inventions that were made during Renaissance period towards the development of modern human society?
3. Examine the rebirth and revival of classical learning and literature under the umbrella of Renaissance?
4. What are the diverse literary and artistic devices and imitations that were introduced during Renaissance period?
5. What are the impacts of Renaissance movement on individual, religion, pope and on the English literature as a whole? Briefly discuss these key issues.

1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What impacts or influences had been brought about by the movement of Renaissance in embellishing the modern human culture and civilization? Discuss in detail.
2. What are the chief characteristics of the intellectual, literal and cultural movement termed as Renaissance? Briefly discuss the key ideas.
3. How has the concept of humanism and individualism influenced the life of individual as well as human beings in general? Support your answer from both the prospective.

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Daiches, David. *A Critical History of English Literature*. Supernova Publishers & Distributors (Pvt.) Ltd, New Delhi, 2019.
2. Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2017.
3. Long, William J. *English Literature: Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the Englishspeaking World*. Rupa Publications India, New Delhi, 2015.
4. Compton-Rickett, Arthur. *A History of English Literature*. Nabu Press, New Delhi, 2010.
5. Jardine, Lisa. *Worldly Goods: New History of the Renaissance*. London: Macmillan, 1996.



Unit – 2: On His Blindness

Structure

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Objectives

2.2 On His Blindness

2.2.1 Summary

2.2.2 Critical Study

2.2.3 Themes

2.2.4 Style

2.2.5 Poetic Devices

2.2.5.1 Symbolism

2.2.5.2 Personification

2.2.5.3 Allusions

2.2.5.4 Other Poetic Devices

2.3 Learning Outcomes

2.4 Glossary

2.5 Sample Questions

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

2.0 Introduction

As the name of the sonnet suggests it is about blindness and is an autobiographical poem. In this sonnet John Milton highlighted his feelings and emotions as a blind poet. The very tip of the sonnet is suggestive of the fact that poet thinks it impossible to serve God as he is unable to see. But as the sonnet progresses, he realizes that it is the will of God to keep doing his work keeping aside the fact that he has lost his sense of sight. At the end of the sonnet, we are informed that the poet is satisfied with the fact that he is serving God the way angels are doing in heaven. Apart from these the sonnet has a numerous Biblical hints that are indicative of Milton's persistence and faith in God and religion. It is due to Biblical notes in the sonnet it is also considered as a religious poem by few critics.

John Milton was a renowned English poet, considered by some as the second greatest English writer after Shakespeare. He became blind at the age of 44 in 1652. This disability poses a great threat to his intellectual ability to write and hence the relationship between him and God

becomes intricate. He is not able to understand what is the motive of God behind taking his sight. At the tip of the sonnet he is seemed depressed when he says “*that one Talent which is death to hide*” (line 3). In the later part of the sonnet a realization is dawned upon him that it is the will of God that the poetry of Milton must be to glorify and praise his God. After losing one of his strong and sharp senses the poet is seemed a bit depressed as he thinks it will prevent him to do justice in serving God the way He deserves to be glorified:

.... though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account.... (lines 4-6).

The tone and diction of the poem are highly religious and biblical. Most of Milton’s poetic verses are all about the relationship between God and man. He considered it as his important duty to unearth the mystery of God for the common people which will make them to honour and glorify the deeds of God. After losing sight at first he was unable to comprehend the logic of it and then wanders whether it will still be possible for him to do justice with God in his poetic vision. Finally, he realizes that if he will not be able to do the similar justice to Him, he will not be brought to account by God due to his disability to see. The second section of the sonnet is more composed and calm as compare to first. In that part Milton is able to visualize that there are numerous modes of serving and honouring God. It is the inner self, intent and grace that are counted before God.

John Milton, a renowned English poet, man of letter, polemicist and civil servant was born in 1608. The period in which he was active in his creative writing was a turmoil of political instability. The most important work that Milton has composed is *Paradise Lost* which was written in 1667 in blank verse. Most of his themes are relevant to political and religious situation of his time. In addition, personal and patriotic themes along with self determination and thirst for liberty are also there in his poetic works. His poetic work gets started after publishing “On Shakespeare” in 1630, *Comus* in 1637, “Lycidas” in 1638 and after blindness he published his masterpiece *Paradise Lost*. Due to the poetic and literary stature that he carried throughout before and after his blindness William Hayley considered him as greatest English author and as one of the preeminent writers in the English language.

He is considered one of the forerunners of the sonnet based on the theme of religion and politics. He was perfect in writing different types of sonnets i.e. political, personal, elegiac and occasional. He was born in a well to do family and held the position of the official secretary for

Foreign Tongues to the Commonwealth Council of State. His knowledge about classical learning and especially outstanding grip over numerous languages such as French, Italian, Greek and Latin was matchless and these have marked their impression in his poetry. As a poet he is ranked among the top most poets of not merely of his age but of English poetry. But his poetic vision is threatened by the infliction of blindness which he thought as a hurdle in justifying the ways of God, though his masterpiece *Paradise Lost* was written after his blindness. *On His Blindness* deals with the frustrated feelings and later salvation. As in the word of Joshua “Milton places the emphasis, not on his suffering or disability, but rather on his fear of being punished.”

Check your progress:

1. At what age did John Milton become blind?

2. Who composed “Lycidas”?

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understand about the sonnet in general and the types of sonnets that Milton wrote in particular.
- study the recurrent ideas in the sonnet “On His Blindness.”
- know the diverse autobiographical elements of John Milton’s life and his blindness.
- analyze the sonnet from different perspectives i.e. its language, style and structure.
- draw literary as well as poetic devices from the sonnet “On His Blindness.”

2.2 On His Blindness

2.2.1 Summary:

The sonnet under analysis is about the personal disability that the poet experiences at the age of 44. He loses his sense of sight much earlier as compare to the age when it is expected to lose senses. At the loss of sight everything becomes dull, dry and gloomy for him. Before this, it

is dawned upon him that being a poet and creative is the gift that God has bestowed him with. But now he thinks that this talent and gift will go useless and he will not be able to do justice with God as he will not be able to see and describe the mysterious glories of God that are prevailing everywhere in the world. At the same time though he thinks that his gifted and inborn poetic and artistic abilities will be with him but he will not be able to utilize his creativity as he used to do before his blindness.

God has taken back his power to see and outer visualization but at heart his realization and trust in God has manifolded. He committed to serve, honor and glorify God even more than before who has gifted him with such a unique and flawless talent. Since then his devotion and poetic vision entirely shifted towards God, His praise and justification of His ways. He is committed to do so that after death he may not be brought to account by God for not justifying his talent and poetic vision. He is afraid that he may not unearth the mysteries clear to the people that are clearer and obvious to him as dawned upon him by God. Though, there is a mild tone of inquiry before God that how he can do as much justice to his talent as a man with sight can. Yet he leaves no stone unturned to do justice with his talent and justifying the ways of God to men all through life afterward.

At this point, his own conscience comes to rescue and consoles him by saying that God is great and he does not expect anything from men neither does He needs anything. His empire is too big and fabulous. He has numerous and countless angels as His servants who are always ready to carry out his directions and commands. His servants execute and accomplish his direction on land, on sea and in space everywhere without fail. Men being mortal cannot serve and glorify God in the same fashion, they can only seek His mercy. At this point he realizes that those who are unable to do justice with their talent due to any reason must not lose heart rather they need to be patient and seek mercy and kindness from God.

Check your progress:

1. Why is the poet afraid of God?

2. Who consoles the poet?

2.2.2 Critical Study:

This sonnet is considered to be one of the most crafted pieces of verse in English poetry. It is a story of a person who is a renowned poet and has become blind. His story of blindness has

been narrated by him in this poem. He turned blind at the age of 44 in 1652. Hence, his life becomes a story of grim, gloom and sadness. But as he was a learned and an intellectual so his study about religion and biblical know-how comes to save him from that pathetic situation. That is why Milton's faith is getting much stronger in God and religion and this sonnet termed as religious sonnet apart from being autobiographical.

He has realized that what is done by God is done due to one or the other reason. Man may not be able to comprehend but God has a definite motive behind everything and we are to serve God in whatever condition we are in. Hence, after this realization, the faith and commitment towards God increases manifold and he became more devoted to justify and glorify. When his inner self comes up with a complain before God that being a blind how can he be equal to the task of expressing His glory, his conscious comes to console him and teaches him to be patient and it is what keeps him on the right track.

The notion of patience is being personified in this sonnet. It is that persona that consoles him that he should not worry about the work he will not be able to do due to his blindness. He will not be held responsible for it as God has countless agents in the form of angels who are committed to carry out his instructions and commands. They are never tired or get bored of their jobs. Patience further consoles him that one should be calm and compose in either pain or pleasure. One should not mere enjoy pleasure rather he should face pain with patience as well. The concluding line is the message or the objective of the sonnet for which it is written. Milton is of the view that a person should work to his full abilities and leave rest to God. He must be in patient state of mind and beg for His mercy. True devotees don't complain rather they wait for His mercy without losing temper.

There are two dynamics of the sonnet: in the initial part there was mourning and lamentation on the part of the speaker. Being poet and translator, he must have planned lots of things but would not be able to do so due to being blind. He was upset because he was under the belief that if God has granted someone with abilities or skills, he must be held responsible if one has not done justice to it. But his blindness will not allow the speaker to execute all in befitting manner. But in the second part considering his knowledge more than God as a blasphemous act, the speaker tried to control his emotions. "Patience" is an allegorical term being used to console speaker asserting the fact that God doesn't need any work or job from human being. There are angels who are doing His jobs perfectly. Man has only one thing to do and that is to obey the will

of God and seek His mercy. In addition, God can be served and glorified through faith, trust and belief rather than any work done to Him.

2.2.3 Themes:

The sonnet has a religious touch, hence, the basic and fundamental theme of the sonnet is to accept the absolute supremacy of God and bow before Him. It is mandatory for a man to have complete trust and faith in Him without being complaining in any condition. It is due to this recurrent idea this sonnet is considered to be one of the purest and noblest of entire English poetic verses. At first, a complaint is raised by inner self of the speaker as it is highly personal sonnet but then his own conscious comes to his rescue and puts him on the right track and doesn't let him stray away. In this way, according to theme the poem can be divided into two parts i.e. complain and its solution both within one's own self.

Accepting the ways of God is another significant idea of the sonnet. God is our creator and he has all the rights to either put human in pleasure or pain. We have to bow and accept the reality with absolute faith and trust in Him. Trust and faith in God are something that must not be shaken in whatever condition one is in. The underlying message of the sonnet is that only those people who have unshaken trust and don't complain are the ones who are dear to God. They will be equally rewarded in due course of time in numerous ways, not necessarily in the temporary world. It is due to this unshaken faith that his major poetic work *Paradise Lost* is composed when he was blind.

Another theme that can be traced in the sonnet is the revelation that the speaker goes through. In the initial part, the tone and articulation were something that needs to be amended which the speaker does in the second part of the poem. Submission to will of God is associated with patience and dignity in bowing before God. The trauma that initiated with lamentation, concluded in regret, doubt and questioning later is anti-climaxed in the end through solace and complete surrender before God. Patience, will power and strength of faith stand as a mighty force in between blindness and regret. The revelation has transformed the inner self and conscious of the speaker which is the most important part of a man's life.

2.2.4 Style:

One of the rarest qualities of Milton is his diction and way of narration which is considered as his "grand style." This grand style marks its glimpses in this sonnet as well. The diction and pattern that has been implied by Milton to convey his message and inner self is unique and is far away from the familiar and common style of writing of his time. It is a unique

amalgam of Latinism, archaism and Italian expressions and phrasing which are indicative of his learned abilities and his craftsmanship to use them in a befitted manner.

It is due to his expression, diction and variety that this sonnet is considered as intellectually allusive. It comes from the mind of a highly learned man. It presents the flow of constant echoes from inner self, conscious and mind. In addition, there are self-realization, consolation and suggestions as well. The impact does not lie in what is being narrated but in what is being suggested. The style that Milton has followed in composing this sonnet is Petrarchan. As Petrarchan sonnets have fixed and strict tone of narration, so is the tone of “On His Blindness”. The initial eight lines are termed as Octave and the concluding six lines are Sestet. The rhyming pattern that this sonnet has followed is abba abba cdecde.

The poet used very simple and concise diction in order to convey his personal agony and transformation. The sonnet is in the form of monologue which has added charm and fascination to the poem. The Sonnet is written in Petrarchan style and there is a break in the mid of eighth line. But like a typical Italian or Petrarchan sonnet there is discontinuity between the two parts of the sonnet i.e. octave and sestet. The submission to the will of God has an ever-lasting impact on the mind of the readers.

Check your progress:

1. Which type of sonnet is “On His Blindness”?

2. What is the rhyme scheme of “On His Blindness”?

2.2.5 Poetic Devices:

2.2.5.1 Symbolism:

Symbol is used by the poet in the very first line of the poem when he says “light is spent.” Light is a symbol that stands for his sense of sight which has gone forever and marks as not mere physical disability but a disability of the mind and vision. “Light” has another symbolic significance as God is always allied with light in Bible. Right after the creation of the universe, light was the initial most thing that was created by the Creator. The concept of piety and sin is essentially interlinked with light and darkness respectively. Hence, loss of light is not merely restricted to the physical loss of sight it has much deeper connotation. It may refer to loss of faith and trust in God. It may disrupt the connection between man and God. So, light has been used in a much deeper and broad canvas.

“Dark” mentioned in the second line is actually the opposite of light. Once the light has gone there was a complete darkness all-round the speaker. In addition, it is also indicative of the problems and hurdles that he is going to face after becoming blind. Once the places and things which were familiar to him, will no more be familiar now. On the deeper note the word dark is symbolically used by the poet. It is symbolic of presence of sin and absence of God. God is linked with light and light is linked with piety. So, mentioning dark is actually a hint towards darkness inside that can be seen in the first half of the sonnet. In addition, it is symbolic of the fact that the world is a place of sin and darkness and one has to be very careful and have strong faith in God to seek His mercy.

Check your progress:

1. What is the symbol of ‘light’ in this sonnet?
-

2. What is the symbol of ‘dark’ in this poem?
-

2.2.5.2 Personification:

As it is seen in line seven when the speaker poses a question “Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?” which is thought to be blasphemous in nature, there is advent of “Patience” in the sonnet. The rest of the sonnet is about the negotiation between the speaker and the patience. But it is to make clear that the very advent of patience is not the arrival of some new character in the sonnet to pacify the speaker. It is the very inner self, conscious or part of his mind that came to his rescue on two levels; to save him from blasphemy and to pacify his inner regret and frustration after becoming blind. Hence, patience has been implied as a personification. It came to argue and disregard the initial attitude of the speaker. Personification is indicative of the notion that the battle is not mere limited to outward physical disabilities rather it throws light on internal mental conflicts, fears, regrets, doubts and worries.

2.2.5.3 Allusions:

It is clear from the theme and tone of the sonnet that it has religious connotation. Hence, sonnet has numerous implicit and explicit allusions to Bible. For instance, to some critics loss of light or sense of sight that the speaker loses in the sonnet is something that is folktale of “Ten Virgins” in the *Book of Matthew*. In this tale ten virgins took out lamps to see the bridegroom but five foolish virgins forget to take oil for the lamps and in the middle of the night they were unable to lit their lamps to meet bridegroom. Here speaker too is worried that in the absence of

light he will not be able to meet his bridegroom that is obviously Christ. Similarly, the hint of “talent” can be fable of Ten Virgins from the same *Book of Matthew*. Here a rich man, before going to journey, distributes his money which is talent in biblical tone, among his servants to use it wisely. Two of them did so but third one buried it in the ground and hence was punished by his master. In the same way if the speaker will not be able to utilize his talent, on account of hiding it he will be punished.

2.2.5.4 Other Poetic Devices:

Apart from above mentioned there are other numerous devices that the poet used in the sonnet “On His Blindness” to enrich its linguistic, semantic and impact value. One of the devices is alliteration that has been used to dress up his thought in a plain and explicit manner. In addition, he has used alliteration to juxtapose different ideas like in “patience, to prevent” in line 8. Other instances of alliteration are:

days in this dark world and wide (L 2)

Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent (L 4)

my Maker (L 5)

exact day-labour, light denied (L 7)

Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state (L 11)

o'er land and ocean (L 13)

serve who only stand (L 14)

Although, Milton has adopted a simple and plain style, discarded all the ornamental devices yet, there are devices like assonance has been employed here and there. Instances are subsequently quoted:

I consider how my light is spent (L 1)

in this dark world and wide (L 2)

And that one talent which is death to hide (L 3)

true account, lest he returning chide (L 6)

“Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?” (L 7)

But Patience, to prevent (L 8)

That murmur, soon replies: “God doth not need (L 9)

man's work or his own gifts (L 10)

Is kingly; thousands at his bidding (L 12)

And post o'er land and ocean (L 13)

“Spent, / Ere”, “wide, / And”, “hide / Lodged”, “bent / To”, “present / My”, “chide; / “Doth”, “prevent / That”, “need / Either”, “best / Bear”, “state / Is” and “speed / And” acted as an instances of enjambment in the sonnet. “Denied?” (L 7), “rest:” (L 13) and “wait.” (L 14) mark their emergence as end-stopped line. And apostrophe is also visible in L 7 & 8 “Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?” / “I fondly ask.”

Check your progress:

1. Give three examples of alliteration from this sonnet.
-
-

2.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to:

- have exclusive comprehension of the term sonnet in general and types of sonnets Milton wrote in specific.
 - encompass the two layers of thoughts that have been depicted in the sonnet “On His Blindness”.
 - catch few glimpses of the personal meditational notes of Milton once he became blind.
 - comprehend the themes, styles and different devices that have been used by the poet.
 - underline several literary and poetic devices used in the poem.
-

2.4 Glossary

Blank Verse: A poem in unrhymed iambic pentameter.

Spent: Gone out

Ere: Before

Half my days: Half of the age

Talent: Poetic talent

Maker: Who makes (here God)

Doth: Does

Chide: Scold

Exact: Demand

Light denied: Blind

Fondly: Foolishly

Yoke: A wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plow or cart that they are to pull. (here it means ‘problem’)

2.5 Sample Questions

2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. John Milton was an _____ poet.

- (a) Irish
- (b) American
- (c) English
- (d) Indian

2. John Milton was born in _____.

- (a) 1708
- (b) 1778
- (c) 1608
- (d) 1652

3. “On His Blindness” is a/an _____.

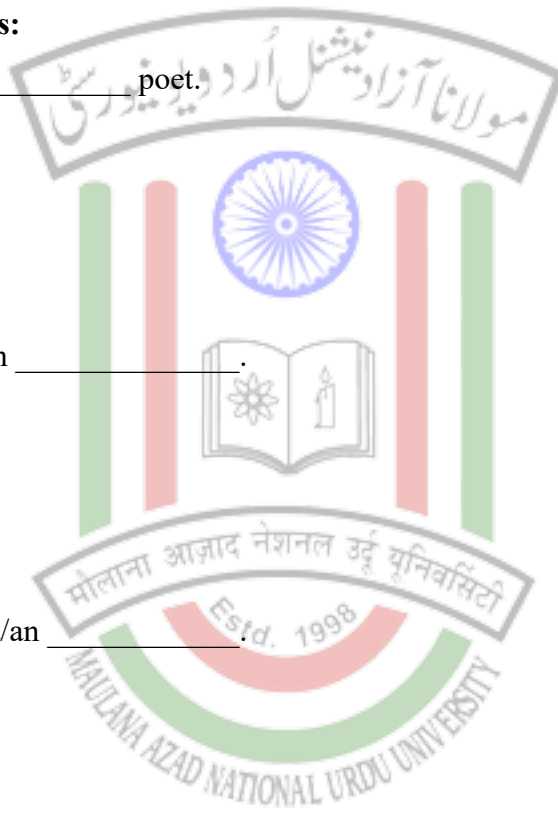
- (a) Ode
- (b) Elegy
- (c) Sonnet
- (d) Epic

4. A sonnet contains _____.

- (a) 12 Lines
- (b) 10 Lines
- (c) 13 Lines
- (d) 14 Lines

5. “On His Blindness” is a _____.

- (a) Shakespearean sonnet



- (b) Petrarchan sonnet
- (c) None of the above
- (d) Both of the above

6. A Petrarchan sonnet contains _____.

- (a) Three quatrains and one couplet
- (b) One octave and one sestet
- (c) Two quatrains and one sestet
- (d) One sestet and two quatrains

7. Milton became blind at the age of _____.

- (a) 34
- (b) 44
- (c) 54
- (d) 32

8. Milton became blind in _____.

- (a) 1608
- (b) 1674
- (c) 1642
- (d) 1652

9. The sonnet “On His Blindness” was published in _____.

- (a) 1673
- (b) 1670
- (c) 1678
- (d) 1664

10. In the poem “On His Blindness” Milton was saved by _____.

- (a) Ego
- (b) Patience
- (c) Anger
- (d) Frustration



2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How can you say that “On His Blindness” is a Petrarchan sonnet?
2. What are the themes of the poem “On His Blindness”?
3. Identify the Biblical references in the poem.

4. What does the poet mean by ‘death to hide’ in the poem?
5. In the sonnet “on His Blindness” what is the problem identified in the octave? What solution is given in sestet?

2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What is a sonnet? Discuss in detail giving examples from “On His Blindness.”
2. How does Milton justify the ways of God to men in “On His Blindness”?
3. Critically analyze the sonnet “On His Blindness.”

2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Chandra, R. L. (1993). John Milton: the Man and his Concept of Liberty (Ph. D. Thesis), Department of English, V. B. S. Purvanchal University, India.
2. Cohen, J. L. (2017). Shining Inward. *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies*, 11(1), 53–68. <https://doi.org/10.3828/jlclds.2017.4>.
3. Dahami, Y. S. H. (2020a). Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*: A Renaissance Image of Man, *International Journal of Scientific Engineering and Science*, Vol. 4(1); pp. 25-31.



Unit - 3: Romanticism: Characteristic Features

Structure

3.0 Introduction

3.1 Objectives

3.2 Characteristic Features of Romanticism

3.2.1 Glorification of Nature

3.2.2 Theme of Artistic Beauty

3.2.3 Artistic Creativity and Imagination

3.2.4 Theme of Solitude

3.2.5 Use of Personification

3.2.6 Acceptance of Emotions

3.2.7 Use of Spiritual and Supernatural Elements

3.2.8 Writing about Self and Autobiography

3.2.9 A Break from Convention

3.2.10 The Critique of Progress

3.2.11 Celebration of Isolation and Melancholy

3.2.12 Idealization of Women

3.2.13 Examples of Romantic Literature

3.2.14 Function of Romanticism

3.2.15 Contrasts with Neoclassicism

3.2.16 The Influence of Romantic Literature on Our Literature Today

3.2.17 Famous Romantic Writers and their Selected Works

3.2.18 Conclusion

3.3 Learning Outcomes

3.4 Glossary

3.5 Sample Questions

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources



3.0 Introduction

Romanticism was one of the dominant literary movements, particularly in music and painting. It was an artistic, literary, musical and intellectual movement that originated in Europe towards the end of the 18th century. Although many dates are assumed as the beginning of the romantic era, the publication of the collection of poems *Lyrical Ballads* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Wordsworth in 1798 is mostly noted as the opening of the romantic era and the

period ends with the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837. It was the age of revolution in both the history of politics as well as literature and was characterized by its prominence on emotion and individualism as well as the adoration of all the past and future. Thus there was a craving for freedom by throwing away of long accepted rules.

Romanticism appeared in the 1790s in Germany and Britain in its most lucid form and was generally treated under the head 'the Romantic Movement' or Romantic Revival. The main focus this movement was on freedom of self-expression of individuals. The well-ordered rationality of the Augustan era was seen as mechanical, impersonal and artificial. The novel concerns were shifted to sincerity, originality and spontaneity. The well-mannered classical models were reinstated upon which neo-classicists like Alexander pope, John Dryden and Johnson and they were placed in much value. The consideration of seeing an artist as a genius or 'prophet' came in wake of this. Moreover, poets envisaged themselves as free spirits as they used to express their own imaginative truth.

3.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- give you broad details about widespread concerns that shaped British nineteenth-century romanticism
- provide an understanding of the characteristic features of literary romanticism
- aid you to interpret romantic literary texts and
- lead you through literary discourse based on the period.

3.2 Characteristic Features of Romanticism

Romanticism was in full swing in the late 18th and early 19th centuries that emphasized artistic freedom, nature and the significance of emotion. The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge marked the origin of the romantic era and paved the way by accompanying the change of literary styles. It was concerned with the age of enlightenment and was noted as a reaction to the industrial revolution. Renaissance one of the

supreme Romantic movements in English Literature brought a transformation in England and European life. Writers of this period were protesting against the effort to explicate the world and human nature through science and the lens of the industrial revolution.

Romanticism as a literary and artistic movement started in reaction against to the age of Enlightenment and partly to the industrial revolution was exemplified in music, visual arts, and literature. This period was coincided with the revolutions in France and America and hence is also known as the 'Age of Revolutions'. The French Revolution was a revolt against the monarchist dictatorship's unfair laws and unequal distribution of resources. It was also a battle to achieve equality and remove oppression. People were angered by increasing taxation, oppressive feudal system, crop failures and economic crisis. All these socio-political factors led to the outbreak of French Revolution.

The French Revolution was began in 1789 and the effect of it did not confine itself only to France, but also spread to England. It has a crucial influence on British, political, philosophical and intellectual life in the 19th century. The writers of the period were also inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution. They are also focused on different aspects of Romanticism. Although Romanticism had influenced the writing style of authors, not all the writers of this period followed this style in their writings.

The romantic artists highlighted that sense and emotions - not simply reason and order - were in the same way vital means of experiencing and understanding the world. Romanticism venerated the perception and individual imagination in the persistent exploration for freedom and individual rights. Its principles of the inventive, subjective authorities of the artists drove avant-garde movements radiant into the 20th century.

Many of the romanticists underscored the individual's bondage to nature and an In addition, an effort to stem the tide of increasing industrialization, many of the Romanticists emphasized the individual's connection to nature and a romanticized past. There are certain distinctive features and styles that mark a piece of writing as a part of the Romantic Movement.

3.2.1 Glorification of Nature:

Nature presents a crucial part in romantic literature. Most of the romantic poets glorified the beauty of nature in their writings and showed how one can find inspiration through the magnificent natural world. Nature is sometimes seen as the opposite of the rational and is one of the most powerful symbols in literature from this period. Romantic writers offer deep and personal imagery of nature and its influential and wild qualities. Poets like John Keats in his

poems such as *To Autumn* celebrating Autumn by symbolizing the beauty in ephemeral by realizing that his life and career is very short he was dying of consumption.

*“Where are the songs of spring? Ay Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thou music too,-
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;(23)”*

Coleridge also shared Keats’ love for nature and upheld his adoration to nature by showing the interaction between man and nature by focusing on human characters and natural forces. In his poem *Kubla Khan* he underlines the difference between man and nature by presenting caverns as a symbol of everything in nature that we can’t understand and dominate and are measureless to man.

“Through caverns measureless to man (4)”

Likewise, he also refers the humans sacred relationship with the rivers, streams and springs by saying *“Through wood and dale the sacred river ran”* (26). In his another poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, he presents nature as more powerful and terrifying than man can comprehend.

*“As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.
Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.”*

3.2.2 Theme of Artistic Beauty:

Aestheticism or pursuit of beauty and elevation of taste was an important part of romantic literature. The theme of aesthetic beauty is always explored by Romantic writers, not just of nature but as a juxtaposition of the eternal and ephemeral. They gave descriptions of female beauty and complimented women of the romantic epoch for their exquisiteness rather than constrained and artificial. Byron’s *She Walks in Beauty* is a sample for this.

*“She Walks in Beauty, like the night
of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that’s best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;”*

3.2.3 Artistic Creativity and Imagination:

Creativity and imagination are the most prominent aspects of romantic poetry. When the previous generation focused on reason, Romantic writers delve into the significance of creative impulse and imagination. They employed the function of imagination and creativity, as well as the artistic perspective. They knew that writers and artists can look at the world differently. Thus they incorporated that forethought in their work. Wordsworth by observing the power of imagination defines imagination as ‘*The mean of deep insight and sympathy, the power to conceive and express images removed from normal objective reality*’. Romantic authors and poets offered mental images to the readers that are not literary existed. So many images such as clouds at the sunset, blue and black sky, shining stars, tall-green mountains, and river banks at the sunset, elliptical galaxy, and many other imaginary visuals filled the mind of readers. As experiences and ideas pave the way for imagination, it has a greater role in romanticism. When Keats found the ultimate reality only in imagination, Shelley contemplated poetry as the manifestation of imagination. Nevertheless, Romantics supposed that nature, creative imagination, and genius are closely associated with one another.

3.2.4 Theme of Solitude:

Romantic writers assumed that creative inspiration derived from solitary exploration. Thus they found solitude is much required to contemplate and exulted the feeling of being alone and create. *The Immortality Ode, The Solitary Reaper, To the Cuckoo and Tintern Abbey*, all seem to have been composed upon emotions reminisced in tranquility. In his *Tintern Abbey* his visit is reflected through powerful lines:

*“These beauteous form,
Through a long absence,
have not been to me
As in a landscape to a
blind man’s eye.”*

Romantic poets believed that one gets peace and tranquility by being alone. Wordsworth, Mary Shelly, and William Blake and many other writers went through this experience of being alone and this could create them most celebrated works. *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*, is a poem which opens with the speaker recalling a particular experience where he was alone. Likewise, he feels utmost happiness when he sees the bliss of solitude’. When solitude is represented as a ground for the heightened state of being the poet enjoys it. The Solitary figure

became prominent and important in Romantic prose and poetry as the masses could relate to the solitary figure.

3.2.5 Use of Personification:

Romantic poetry makes good use of personification to call their readers attention and make them return to nature. Most of the romantic writers used this technique for giving immanent objects human characters to allow the readers to better identify with what is portrayed on the stage. We can see personification of everything from animals and birds to aspects or natural events. In many poems such as *Ozymandias*, *Ode to the West Wind*, and *To a Skylark*, there is use of personification to show the likeness between nature and the individual spirit. Similarly, in Byron's poem *Darkness*, he personifies war:

“And War, which for a moment was no more
Did glut himself again (38).”

3.2.6 Acceptance of Emotions:

Most of the Romantic writers used emotion over reason in daily life. Emotion played a crucial role in nearly all writing from the Romantic period. While reading works written in this period we will be able to see feelings described in all forms. The earlier writers of the Enlightenment period assumed that all knowledge was achievable through human reason. Many attitude and characteristic of the Romantic era were precisely contrary to the Enlightenment period. They supposed that using emotions over reason was the more righteous choice. Therefore they presented their emotions such as fear, love, sorrow and loneliness through their writings. This focus on emotion dissented the notions of rationality and made romantic poetry extremely readable and relatable.

3.2.7 Use of Spiritual and Supernatural Elements:

The romanticism movement strictly rejected rationalism as a constraint for creativity and imagination. Moreover, they considered an artistic skill as God gifted or faculty. Thus writer, painter, and sculpture were free to construct their own world by means of their own imaginations. Many of the writings have Gothic motifs and supernatural elements which served as symbols for emotions of depression, guilt and other gloomier feelings. For instance, Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* narrates about a supernatural woman with whom a knight falls in love. In the same way in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, spirits both malicious and heavenly interfere in the natural world. In this way writers were given firsthand freedom to deal with their

imaginations. The supernatural elements together with other elements such as the innocence and wisdom of children, continuous desire to explore, the enigma of existence and death crafted romanticism one of the influential literary movements.

3.2.8 Writing about Self and Autobiography:

Most of the works of the romantic era often explored the self of the writer and are mostly personal in nature. We will be able to see autobiographical elements in the prose and poetry of this period. Writing about the self is a significant indicator of the changeover from the culture of the Enlightenment to romanticism. The importance placed on creativity and feelings was one of the major characteristics of this period. The source of most of the works were the background and life surroundings of the writer. In Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, he says 'that a man should battle so much about himself'. The lines from Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium Eater* 'No precedents that I am aware of' is an example for this.

3.2.9 A Break from Convention:

Romanticists were engrossed to movements associated to freedom from oppression and individualism. Movements such as the French Revolution, and many other movements toward democracy, inspired many Romantic philosophers and writers. Likewise, they also believed that individuals should be permitted to choose how they wanted to write and what, instead of abiding by classical conventions and formal rules.

Romantic writers also assumed that the matter of writings should come from the writer's mind, with minimal outside input. Being imitative, or replication of works was seen as the worst sin. Romantic poets such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth disrupted the conventions of the time by using the language of ordinary speech in their poetry, rather than following the more erudite rules that other poets had followed before.

Walt Whitman, an American poet, occupied a step further by writing poetry in free verse, without any meter or rhyme. Although this is very familiar in poetry today, it was a revolutionary choice at that time that shattered all former rules. Here is the first canto of Walt Whitman's celebrated poem *Song of Myself*:

*"I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you."*

You will notice how he does not follow to any type of meter and rhyme scheme. As an alternative, he writes a poem that runs like a conversation.

3.2.10 The Critique of Progress:

Industrialization and Urbanity were perceived largely in a negative light by most romantics. Though they presumed the importance of progress, they condemned the way it impacted the common people. The Industrial Revolution in England had created a large number of the working class that worked in unsafe and strenuous conditions. The gap between the rich and the poor was increasing every day. Romantic writers focused on the horrid side of urbanization and commercialism and used their writing to discuss about social transformation in England. Mary Shelley's famed novel *Frankenstein* can be considered as a specimen for Romantic novel that shown the perils of technology deprived of emotion. In the plot, we can see Victor Frankenstein preoccupied with the search of knowledge forgets to question his own consciences and ends up creating a monster. At one moment, the monster even exclaims: "Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed?"

3.2.11 Celebration of Isolation and Melancholy:

Romantic writers used melancholy as a key element in many works, usually seen as a reaction to destined failure. Writers anticipated to explicit the pure beauty they perceived and failure to do so effectually caused in desolation like the sort stated by the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in *A Lament*:

*"O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb.
Trembling at that where I had stood before,
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!"*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American poet and essayist. In his essay *Self-Reliance* one of the pivotal works of Romantic writing, he urges the value of looking inward and outlining your own path, and believing in only your own means.

3.2.12 Idealization of Women:

Most of the literary works presented women as idealized love interests, beautiful and pure, but commonly without anything else to offer. Paradoxically, the most noteworthy novels of the era were written by female writers. Although Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, and Mary Shelley are example for this they had to be primarily published under male pseudonyms because of these

mindsets. Most Romantic literature is instilled with the idea of women being innocent, flawless beings to be admired, respected and mourned but never trusted upon.

3.2.13 Examples of Romantic Literature:

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven*

The Raven is an emotive poem by Edgar Allan Poe, an American writer. It is about a man longing for his lost love. Held in a state between insomnia and slumber, the man sees a raven resting on a bust over the door. He opens talking to this bird, who always repeats the same word in response: “Nevermore.”

Then, methought, the air developed denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Fluctuated by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the clumped floor.

“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee

Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;

Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”

Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

The narrator gradually loses his hold on lucidity and sees the bird as a supernatural visitor. In the above verse is depicted as he is fantasizing, thinking that the angels have sent the raven to make him forget his lost Lenore.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*

Frankenstein by Shelley is another work which is often considered a good example of romantic literature. This novel centers on Dr. Victor Frankenstein and his efforts to reawaken a corpse. The novel narrates Frankenstein starting to feel guilty as he haphazardly brought a new life into the world, and he absconds in revulsion, embarrassed of what he has done. This reaction leads to the novel’s overwhelming proceedings, as the creature tries for vengeance against Frankenstein for having brought to the world and then transferring him to the life of an outcast.

Emily Dickinson “‘Hope’ Is the Thing with Feathers”

Emily Dickinson’s poem *Hope*, published posthumously, is a testimony to hope:

“*Hope*” is the thing with feathers –

That perches in the soul –

And sings the tune without the words –

And never stops – at all –

And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –

*And sore must be the storm –
 That could abash the little Bird
 That kept so many warm –
 I've heard it in the chillest land –
 And on the strangest Sea –
 Yet – never – in Extremity,
 It asked a crumb – of me.”*

Dickinson fills the little poem with many of the tokens of Romantic literature: worship for nature, a linking with sentiments (in this case, optimism and a desire for comfort) deep sense of solitude from the rest of the world and personification of “the little Bird”.

3.2.14 Function of Romanticism:

Romanticism in literature values universal human emotions like loss, love, failure and triumph. The texts published during the romantic era did not focus on scientific theories and valiant religious statements, instead, they bring to light didactic elements and teach right versus wrong. These accessible pieces of literature depicted the ordinary life of the common man and highlighted them as readers. These works were also focused on the value of nature in the richness of human experience as well as the necessity for isolation to attain spiritual or emotional growth.

3.2.15 Contrasts with Neoclassicism:

Neoclassicism and Romanticism are often viewed as reactionary movements that ascend from different historical periods. Neoclassicism, a response against the renaissance, was a Western cultural movement in the visual arts and decorative, literature, music, architecture and theatre that described inspiration from the culture and art of classical antiquity. When Neoclassicism concentrated on reason, objectivity and intellect, romanticism stresses on nature, creativity, and emotions. The major differences between Neoclassicism and Romanticism are given below.

Neo-Classicism Vs. Romanticism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greek/Roman influence • Emphasis on society • Age of Reason (Rationality, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medieval/Oriental influence • Emphasis on individual • Age of passion

Philosophy, Deism) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used a calm, rational tone • Euro-centric • Subject matter was mostly cities and urban life • Era of The Enlightenment (Science) 	(Emotion, imagination, Spirituality) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used a spontaneous, sometimes moody tone • Interest in the Exotic • Subject matter was mostly Nature: pastoral and wild • Era of Revolution (Social Justice)
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3.2.16 The Influence of Romantic Literature on Our Literature Today:

Romanticism as a literary movement had a remarkable influence on literature today. As most of the romantic writings are showing the legacy of Romantic writers through their body of work, it remains standard and accepted even now. Poems and novels of major romantic writers are still taught in most English literature classes. More notably, however, they also nurtured new themes and broke conventions in ways that transformed the arena for contemporary authors.

Most English literature prior to the Romantic Movement was targeting on studying the Classics and essays, with an attention to truth and wisdom. There were very explicit resolutions that well-admired writers were anticipated to follow. Romanticism in literature changed the emphasis of literature toward imagination and emotions.

3.2.17 Famous Romantic Writers and their Selected Works:

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

The Lyrical Ballads, The Prelude, Tintern Abbey, Ode on Intimations of Immortality, The Solitary Reaper, The Daffodils, Upon Westminster Abbey

Walter Scott (1771-1832)

Ivanhoe, The Black Dwarf, life of Napoleon, Lives of the Novelists, Old Mortality

Robert Southey (1774-1843)

Joan of Arc, Life of Nelson, Roderick, A Vision of Judgment

S.T. Coleridge (1772-1834)

Biographia Literaria, Kubla Khan, Dejection: An Ode, Table Talk, Christabel

Lord Byron (1788-1824)

Child Harold's Pilgrimage, Don Juan, Lara, The Siege of Corinth

P.B Shelley (1792-1822)

On the Necessity of Atheism, The Revolt of Islam, Prometheus Unbound, Adonais, Ode to a Skylark

John Keats (1795-1821)

Endymion, La Belle Dame Sans Merci, Ode to a Nightingale, Ode on a Grecian Urn, Isabella

Jane Austen (1775-1817)

Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Mansfield Park

Charles Lamb (1775-1834)

Essays of Elia, Tales from Shakespeare, The English Comic Writers, The Old Familiar Faces

William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

The Round Table, The Spirit of the Age

3.2.18 Conclusion:

Romanticism witnessed a shift from faith in reason to faith in feelings, senses and imagination. Their focus shifted from urban society to the rural and natural and was more concerned about subjective poetry than public, impersonal poetry. Romantic writers were bothered about intuition, individual and imagination. Emotion and imagination are more significant than reason. Romantic writers tend to cultivate a respect for primitivism, a love for nature and a valuing of the common man. They also romanticized country life by convicting that many of the ills of society are a consequence of urbanization.

Romantics were also engrossed in the medieval past, the spiritual, the supernatural, the exotic and the “gothic.” They were concerned with individualism, human rights, and freedom from oppression. Their main focus was on psychology, introspection, sadness and melancholy. The art often pact with humanity, death and mankind’s feelings about these things. The artist was a very individualistic creator whose creative spirit was more vital than the traditional procedures.

3.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should be able to understand the characteristic features of English Romanticism, evaluate various thematic perspectives and styles within English Romanticism, and identify major authors and texts of Romantic literature.

3.4 Glossary

Ephemeral: Something which lasts for a short period of time

Hue: Form, Color

Stubble: The short stalks left in a field after crops have been harvested

Cavern: A large cave

Malevolent: Having an evil or harmful influence

3.5 Sample Questions

3.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The Romantic movement is also called 'The Romantic Revival' because it revived _____.
 - (a) The value of classical school of Poetry
 - (b) The Values of the Greek Poetry
 - (c) The values of Roman Poetry
 - (d) The Values of Elizabethan Poetry
2. Who were the authors of the *Lyrical Ballads*?
 - (a) Wordsworth and Southey
 - (b) Wordsworth and Shelley
 - (c) Wordsworth and Coleridge
 - (d) Wordsworth and Walter Scott
3. Who wrote the poem The Rime of Ancient Mariner?
 - (a) Wordsworth
 - (b) Shelley
 - (c) Coleridge
 - (d) Byron
4. What historical movement sparked the romantic movement?
 - (a) Industrial revolution
 - (b) World War II

- (c) The Vietnam War
- (d) Political affairs

5. Romanticism is closely associated with _____.

- (a) Drama
- (b) Novel
- (c) Poetry
- (d) Prose

6. *Lyrical Ballads* was published in _____.

7. Who is the author of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*? _____.

8. What major event coincided with the Romantic movement? _____.

9. Emerson was an _____ poet and essayist.

10. The Romantic period ends with the accession of _____.

3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What does romanticism in literature mean?
2. Who were the most famous writers during the British Romantic era?
3. What is the main idea on Romanticism?
4. What is the theme of nature in Romantic literature?
5. Romanticism is a break from convention. Illustrate.

3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the characteristics of romanticism?
2. Compare and contrast between Neoclassical Age and Romantic Age in English literature.
3. Discuss the influence of The French Revolution on British Romanticism.

3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Abrams, M H. *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Oxford University Press, 1953.
2. Daiches, David. *Critical Approaches to Literature*. Orient Longman. 1956.
3. Eliot, T. S. *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*. Faber and Faber, 1933.

Unit – 4: Ode to Autumn

Structure

4.0 Introduction

4.1 Objectives

4.2 Ode to Autumn

4.2.1 The Romanticism and Poetry

4.2.2 John Keats

4.2.3 Odes of John Keats

4.2.4 *Ode to Autumn*

4.2.5 Critical Appreciation of the *Ode to Autumn*

4.3 Learning Outcomes

4.4 Glossary

4.5 Sample Questions

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

4.0 Introduction

Like Christopher Marlow and Emily Bronte, John Keats also died quite early, at the age of twenty-five due to tuberculosis. As poets were also called foreseers, he must have foreseen his death coming closer to him. He writes in one of his sonnets “When I have fears that I may cease to be”:

“When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean’d my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactry,
Hold like rich garners the full ripen’d grain...”

Despite his early departure, he continues to be one of the most celebrated poets of English literature. His love for nature, creativity, simplistic style has attracted and influenced the pre-Raphaelites. His natural imagery and sensualities made him one of the most genuine poets among the romantics. The Encyclopaedia Britannica writes that Keats was an English Romantic lyrical poet “who devoted his short life to the perfection of a poetry marked by vivid imagery,

great sensuous appeal, and an attempt to express a philosophy through classical legend”¹. His notable poems include “Endymion” “Poems”, “Sleep and Poetry”, “Lamia”, “Hyperion”, “Isabella”, “The Eve of St. Agnes”, “La Belle Dame sans Merci”, “Ode to Psyche”, “On First Looking into Chapman's Homer”, “On Indolence”, “Ode to a Nightingale”, “Ode on a Grecian Urn” and “Ode to Autumn”, “On Melancholy” and “The Fall of Hyperion”.

4.1 Objectives

The objective of this Unit is to introduce one of the most celebrated English poets and his poems, especially his odes. It also introduces the ode, It also briefly introduces the critical appreciation in its last part to train students to apply various existing and new approaches to the text.

4.2 Ode to Autumn

4.2.1 The Romanticism and Poetry:

Romanticism (around 1800-1850) was a literary, artistic, and intellectual movement that set a tone against the Classical patterns of the literary/artistic expressions of the Augustan age to the new age. The earlier poetry and prose were written in classical style, with proper diction and pattern with reason. The Romantics emphasized nature, idealization of nature, liberty in style, loaded with nature, emotion, individualism, reaction to industrialism, and preference to medieval over classics. The Encyclopaedia Britannica considers Romanticism as “a rejection of the precepts of order, calm, harmony, balance, idealization, and rationality that typified Classicism in general and late 18th-century Neoclassicism in particular.” It is also a reaction against the Enlightenment and 18th-century rationalism and physical materialism in general. Romanticism was also characterized for its rejection to orthodoxy, love for nature, simplicity, supernatural elements, etc. Romanticism in English literature is categorized with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) by William Wordsworth and its *Preface* (1800) to the second edition. As William Wordsworth explains in his Preface, the poetry is “the spontaneous overflow

of powerful feelings: it takes its origin in emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced and does itself actually exist in the mind."In the previous Unit, you have studied the characteristics of Romantic literature. Let us now study Keats as a Romantic poet.

4.2.2 John Keats (1795-1821):

John Keats was one of the notorious romantics for his sensual poetic imageries. He was born on 31st October 1792 in Moorgate, London. His life was not so happy because his father died quite early, and his mother married another person. John and his brothers George and Tom and young sister Fanny grew up at his grandparents' place. "Keats was able to continue at Clarke's school, despite losing his father at the age of eight and his mother six years later. These early years were plagued by sudden accidents and emotional turmoil. His mother took a second husband only two months after Keats's father had been fatally thrown from his horse: a precipitate remarriage that may have been behind Keats's later identification of himself with Shakespeare's Hamlet. After a dispute over a family will, Mrs. Keats (now Mrs. Rawlings) deserted her children, who were reared by their maternal grandmother for a number of years" (Garrett 1). His life was like other English kids during the Victorian period. At the age of fifteen, he had to discontinue his education and start an apprenticeship at the hospital. At the age of twenty-one, he abandoned the surgeon practice and dedicated his life to poetry. Meanwhile his poetic experiment "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" gained notable popularity among the literary circles. This has boosted her confidence and career in poetry. He started working towards the perfection of poetry. He also started reading old and new/contemporary poets. John Garrett writes, "Keats was preparing himself for the great task that lay ahead, which, he thought, must be the production, like his great precursors Spenser and Milton, of a long heroic poem, since 'epic was of all the king'. The preparation involved not only an intensive reading course, but the experience of different scenes from which the materials of future poetry could be gathered". He decided to take a long journey by walking throughout the south of England. Then in "the summer of 1818, just after his brother George had married and emigrated to America, Keats embarked on his most ambitious excursion, a 1000-mile tour, largely on foot, of the Lake District and Scotland (a brief visit to Northern Ireland was also slotted in) with his friend Charles Brown" (3). He felt sick after a few days and died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-five on 23 February 1821. His poetic genius produced remarkable poems of English literature and also

inspired many Pre-Raphaelites. He published three volumes of poems during his lifetime. The first one *Poems* came out in 1817 followed *Endymion: A Poetic Romance*, in the next year. His last volume *Lamia, The Eve of St Agnes, and Other Poems* was published in 1920.

4.2.3 Odes of John Keats:

Ode is a lyrical poetic form in English literature, derived from the Greek word '*aeidein*' meaning *chant/sing*. It was originally accompanied by dance and music but later the Romantic poets use this form to express their strong feeling that addressed an event, a person, or thing. This poetic form is further divided into three subcategories. The Pindaric ode, the Horatian ode, and Irregular ode. "The Pindaric is named for the ancient Greek poet Pindar, who is credited with innovating this choral ode form (as opposed to monodies, odes sung by individuals, which were written by Greek lyric poets Alcaeus and Sappho). Pindaric odes were performed with a chorus and dancers, and often composed to celebrate athletic victories. They contain a formal opening, or strophe, of complex metrical structure, followed by an antistrophe, which mirrors the opening, and an epode, the final closing section of a different length and composed with a different metrical structure. William Wordsworth's poem "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" is a very good example of an English language Pindaric ode"².

Like sonnets, the ode form of poetry was also further modified and developed by English poets. John Keats added creative genius to this form. He found that the existing style of Ode is not adequate to express emotion, feeling, and philosophy thus he developed his pattern which later came to be known as the 'Keatsian Ode/Great Ode' – an amalgam of both the classics and romantics. His odes were romantic. Like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelly, Keats also wrote remarkable odes. His five odes are "Ode to Psyche", "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode to Autumn", "Ode on Melancholy."

4.2.4 Ode to Autumn:

This three-stanza "Ode to Autumn" is an unusual romantic poem because it is different from the description of nature, written around the mid of September 1819. Typically, the romantics celebrated the spring as in Shelly's "Ode to the West Wind" wherein he expresses "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?". But this ode of Keats is an attempt to celebrate the end of the season and quest to find beauty, peace, and harmony (music) in the autumn.

To Autumn

- by John Keats

“Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.”

4.2.5 Critical Appreciation of the *Ode to Autumn*:

This Ode is composed of three stanzas. Each stanza of eleven lines in iambic pentameter. Each stanza is further divided into two parts; the first part comprises of quatrain stanza with an ABAB rhyme scheme, and the second part is a septenary stanza. There seems to be no uniformity in the rhyme scheme in the second stanza of each stanza. This could be one of the reasons why Keats was being criticized for not following the pattern of poetry. However, one could observe a rhyming pattern on CDEDCCE in the second stanza of the first main stanza and CDECDDE in the second and third stanza. If one distance from the Formalist approach for a while and tries to read this poem through the lens of Neo-Historicism where one studies how power, class, ideology worked in society, one will discover the reason behind the criticism on Keats. S/he would find how his working-class social background played important role in receiving criticism. But his language also depicts the actual reality of the poetry and language of the working class of that time.

As discussed earlier, this is an unusual ode that celebrates the end of the spring but at the same time the beginning of another season, i.e., autumn. Keats asks where those beautiful melodious songs of 'Spring' are? but at the same time, he ensures the reader that doesn't lament for the past, something which has already gone. Be ready to see the emerging beauty of nature in a different form i.e., 'autumn'.

“Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,— ”

Keats writes to his friend J.H. Reynolds after two days, "I never liked stubble fields so much as now – Aye, better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm – in the same way, that some pictures look warm – This struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it."

Nature remained an important theme in Keats's poetry like other romantics. This poem is yet, a celebration of another season of nature, slightly different from the traditional perception of celebrating the spring. Poet in this poem attempt to convey that beauty exists and transcends its forms and never dies.

The poet begins with the calm and quite beautiful nature of Autumn where he sees trees are loaded with fruits and flowers because of "the close bosom-friend of the maturing sun". It begins with early autumn to the heralding of winter. Keats also trying to project his philosophy of the life cycle that one is born and matures and dies and gain a new one born.

Keats's imagery is very powerful here he compares Autumn with a female goddess who is seen as sitting on the greenery.

*"Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;"*

Her "hairs soft lifted" by the winnowing wind. Sleeping in the field and squeezing the juice from the apple to cider. Keats is also notorious for his sensual imagery as depicted in the poem. In the last stanza, poet informs the reader not to worry about the disappearance of the spring songs but to get to know the appearance of the new songs of the new season. Listen to the music and humming of the new beginning. Another symbolic interpretation can be done with the analogy of the maturity of the season Autumn which ripped the fruits with the maturity of poet's poetry which is ripped and now is the time for his to go and new age would begin with his poetry's harvesting and enjoying reading those throughout the ages.

4.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit you should be able to introduce Romanticism, romantic poetry, and its characteristics. You should be able to understand Odes, their types, and how Keats developed his pattern of ode writing. You should also be able to appreciate Keats' poetry.

4.4 Glossary

The Augustan age

The Augustan age includes the reign of Queen Anne, King George I, and George II of the first half of the 18th Century to the death of Alexander Pope (1744) and Jonathan Swift (1745). During this time there was a revival of Italian art, culture, and literature. The writers of this age were influenced by the great writers of Italy like Virgil and Ovid. "The Augustan Age was also

marked by the evolution of satirical verse, the development of the novel, and the use of melodrama over political satire. The Augustan Age was also noted for the changes in philosophical thought, for example, the formalization of capitalism. The writing during this period was highly regulated and stylized, but the borders of the movement are unclear. Meaning, scholars are undecided on when exactly it begins and ends. But, the literature produced during the reign of Queen Anne, King George I, and George II is considered part of the literary period”.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood/Pre-Raphaelites

It was a movement in arts, literature, painting, and music in mid of 19th century. The association was founded in 1848 by William Holm Hunt, the Rossettis (W.M, D.G, and C.G. Rossetti), John Everett Millais and others. The group encouraged the Italian arts and rejected the mechanist approach adopted by the mannerists. Its fundamental goal was “to purify the art of its time by returning to the example of medieval and early Renaissance painting. Although the life of the brotherhood was short, the broad international movement it inspired, Pre-Raphaelitism, persisted into the twentieth century and profoundly influenced the aesthetic movement, symbolism, and the Arts and Crafts movement.

The Cockney School

The Cockney School was a term that was applied to a couple of nineteenth-century poets and essayists in England. It first appeared in the debated reviews of the 1817s Blackwood’s Magazine. This group was reformative, politically conscious, and democratic in its tone. The essays and poems cover the working-class life and struggle. Essayist William Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt were the prime targets of the criticism in the magazine. The poets such as P.B. Shelly and Keats also being regarded as Cockney poets. Keats was also being criticized for his “low diction” but his diction represented the diction of the working class of England. Like, the Caste system in India, Class remained one of the major demarcations in the social hierarchy of English society. Many people were being criticized, discouraged, looked down upon because of their humble and low-class origin. The cockney school was being criticized not just because of its aesthetic diverges but also because of the origin of the people of this group in the low class. “John Keats's origins were lowly, though not as abject as was made out later in his life by critics trying to consign him to the 'Cockney School of poetry’.”

The Lake Poets

Like The Cockney School, Lake poets were a group of romantic poets from the Lake District of England including William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, and Robert Southey.

The Negative Capability

John Keats used this phrase to describe the state of being wherein an individual is capable of overcoming uncertainties. He argues that this is a great quality of poets to pursue a vision beyond the artistic existence – which is beyond the physical i.e., metaphysical and philosophical rather than artistic.

4.5 Sample Questions

4.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following is not the ode of John Keats?
 - (a) Ode to the West Wind
 - (b) Ode to a Nightingale
 - (c) Ode to a Grecian Urn
 - (d) Ode to Psyche
2. *Lyrical Ballads* is written by _____.
 - (a) William Wordsworth
 - (b) Samuel Tylor Coleridge
 - (c) P. B. Shelley
 - (d) Both 'a' and 'b'
3. Who coined the phrase “Negative Capability?”
 - (a) William Wordsworth
 - (b) S.T. Coleridge
 - (c) William Blake
 - (d) John Keats
4. Which of the following is not a part of *The Pre-Raphaelites*?
 - (a) William Holm Hunt
 - (b) C.G. Rossetti
 - (c) John Everett Millais
 - (d) John Keats

5. Keats' "Ode to Autumn" is a _____.

- (a) A celebration of the new season
- (b) Mourning for the Spring
- (c) Celebration of Auguston age
- (d) All of the above

6. John Keats died of _____.

- (a) Plague
- (b) Tuberculosis
- (c) Black Death
- (d) None of the above

7. Ode to Autumn is divided into _____.

- (a) Four Stanzas
- (b) Two Stanzas
- (c) Three Stanzas
- (d) Five Stanzas

8. John Keats belongs to _____ school of poetry.

- (a) Pre-Raphaelites
- (b) Cockney
- (c) The Lake Poets
- (d) All of the above

9. Etymologically the word "Ode" is derived from _____.

- (a) Greek
- (b) Latin
- (c) French
- (d) German

10. The following lines are from a/an _____ by Keats.

*When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high-pilèd books, in charactery,
Hold like rich garners the full ripened grain;*

- (a) Poem



- (b) Ode
- (c) Essay
- (d) Sonnet

4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Who are the members of the Cockney school of poetry?
2. Which classical group of poets influenced the Augustan poets?
3. Why are the Pre-Raphaelites called so?
4. What are the odes written by John Keats?
5. How were the romantic poets different from their immediate predecessors?

4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the characteristics of Romantic poetry?
2. What is an Ode? Discuss the different types of Odes?
3. Critically analyze John Keats's "Ode to Autumn?"

4.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Asa Briggs, *A Social History of England*, Penguin; 3rd Revised edition, 2000.
2. Corns, T N (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry*. Cambridge: University Press, 1973.
3. David Daiches, *A Critical History Of English Literature - Volume I, II, III, & IV* Supernova Publishers; 1st edition 2011.

Unit – 5: Victorian Poetry: Characteristic Features

Structure

5.0 Introduction

5.1 Objectives

5.2 Victorian Poetry: Characteristic Features

5.2.1 Characteristic Features of Victorian Poetry

5.2.2 Victorian Dilemma or Spiritualism versus Materialism

5.2.3 Dramatic Monologue

5.2.4 Pessimistic and Realistic Poetry

5.2.5 Scepticism

5.2.6 Victorian Morality

5.2.7 Sensuous, Pictorial and Symbolical Poems of the Pre-Raphaelite

5.3 Learning Outcomes

5.4 Glossary

5.5 Sample Questions

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

5.0 Introduction

Victorian poetry refers to poetry written during the reign of Queen Victoria in England during 1837 to 1901. This period in English literature is preceded by the Romantic period. Victorian poetry is considered as the beginning phase of modernism in English literature. These poems were strongly influenced by the existing social, political and cultural conditions in England. Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92), Robert Browning (1812-89), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-61), Matthew Arnold (1822-88), Edward Fitzgerald (1809-83), Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-61), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-94), William Morris (1834-96) and Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909) are the prominent poets in Victorian period. These poets exhibited the Victorian living condition or the life in general of the Victorian people in their poems. Of them Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning are considered as the popular poets in Victorian poetry. This chapter is broadly discussing the characteristic features of Victorian poems.

5.1 Objectives

The major objective of this Unit is to identify the major characteristic features of Victorian poetry. It also discusses the social and political structure that existed in England during Victorian period. This Unit attempts to familiarize you with the major Victorian poets and their remarkable poems in English. It also tries to analyse some of the major Victorian poems in English in order to trace out the characteristic features of Victorian poems.

5.2 Victorian Poetry: Characteristic Features

The poems written during the Victorian period in England are termed as Victorian poetry in English. The major Victorian poets are Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92), Robert Browning (1812-89), Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-61), Matthew Arnold (1822-88), Edward Fitzgerald (1809-83), Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-61), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-94), William Morris (1834-96) and Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909). The characteristic features exhibited in the poems of these poets are generally termed as the characteristic features of Victorian poetry.

5.2.1 Characteristic Features of Victorian Poetry:

The major Victorian poets exhibited some features in their poems. These features are commonly termed as the characteristic features of Victorian poems. These features are prominently political, sociological and stylistic in nature and structure. The major characteristic features of Victorian Poetry are given below:

- Victorian Dilemma or Spiritualism versus Materialism
- Dramatic Monologue
- Pessimistic and Realistic Poetry
- Scepticism
- Victorian Morality
- Sensuous, Pictorial and Symbolical Poems of the Pre-Raphaelite

During the Victorian period, the people were in great confusion. This sociological confusion or dilemma is discussing under the title of “Victorian dilemma or Spiritualism versus Materialism.” Dramatic monologue was actually a new form of poetry started during this period.

This is broadly discussing under the title “Dramatic Monologue.” One of the major striking features of Victorian poetry was its pessimism and realism. It is discussed in the subsection, “Pessimistic and Realistic Poetry.” Scepticism was one of the features of Victorian period. It is abundantly reflected in Victorian poetry. It is discussing under the title “Scepticism.” The characteristic feature of Victorian morality is discussing under the title “Victorian morality.” Victorian poets abundantly used sensory devices and imagery. This is discussed further in the subsection “Sensuous, Pictorial and Symbolical Poems of the Pre-Raphaelite.”

Check your Progress:

1. What is Victorian English poetry?

2. Mention two major features of Victorian poetry?

3. Name two major Victorian poets?

5.2.2 Victorian Dilemma or Spiritualism versus Materialism:

The word dilemma means confusion. Cambridge dictionary defines the term as “a situation in which a difficult choice has to be made between two different things you could do.” The word also signifies “a difficult situation or problem.” Victorian dilemma was a major sociological feature of Victorian England. Charles Darwin’s remarkable scientific text “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for life” was published in 1859. The publication of this text (shortly named as “On the Origin of Species”) was a bolt out of a clear sky in Victorian society. The publication of this text and its theme questioned the spiritual and divine aspects in the society. The text stroked the very foundation of theological discourses in human life. Moreover, scientific and technological advancement was also contributed for the emergence of blatant materialism in England. The Victorian people were in a great confusion. This dilemma is powerfully presented in Matthew Arnold’s poem *Dover Beach*.

The sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world (81)

Here the poet examines the world of belief and disbelief. According to the poet, the Sea of Faith, the world of religion and spirituality, was once at its peak. That world of faith was just like a bright girdle furled around earth shore. However, that is not seen now. The poet could only hear its melancholy and long withdrawing roar. The advancement of science and technology vehemently questioned the spirit in religion and faith. Victorian period was the period of advancement of science and technology and the withdrawing of religion and faith. Here, the Victorian people became confused. Both spiritualism and materialism thrived in front of them. They don't know what to choose and what to reject. This dilemma or confusion is termed as the Victorian dilemma. This sociological feature is prominently reflected in Victorian poetry. Poets like Matthew Arnold are suggesting the subject of "Love" as a major solution to this chaotic world.

5.2.3 Dramatic Monologue:

Dramatic Monologue is a form of poetry popularised by the major Victorian Poet Robert Browning. It was one of the major features of Victorian poetry. In Dramatic monologue one character alone speaks while one or two characters silently hear the words of the speaker. It is a mono (single) speech (logue). Here, the listeners are mute spectators. Dramatic monologue also exposes the inner psychological mind of the speaker too while he/she talks to the listeners. M. H. Abrams in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms* specifically says that a dramatic monologue has the following features

- (1) A single person, who is patently not the poet, utters the speech that makes up the whole of the poem, in a specific situation at a critical moment.
- (2) This person addresses and interacts with one or more other people.
- (3) The main principle controlling the poet's formulation of what the lyric speaker says is to reveal the reader (...) the speaker's temperament and character (70)

In short, dramatic monologue is a lyrical poem through which the solo speaker exposes his/her character and temperaments to the mute listeners. Robert Browning was a prominent Victorian poet who composed many of his poems in Dramatic Monologue. His poems *My Last Duchess*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, and *Andrea del Sarto* are dramatic monologues. In his poem *My Last Duchess* the Duke, the speaker, says to the listeners:

Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whenever I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. (74)

The Duchess was a jovial lady and hence she smiled at everyone without any reservation which was against the wish of her husband. So, the Duke gave the commands and all her smiles stopped together. Her portrait is hanging in the wall. The portrait is as beautiful as she is alive. Here, the poet is exposing the mind of a psychopath Duke and the innocence of his wife, the last Duchess. The poem delineates the inner psychology of urbanism in Victorian period. This psychological study of Victorian period became so powerful in the hands of Robert Browning through his Dramatic Monologue.

5.2.4 Pessimistic and Realistic Poetry:

Victorian poems are generally considered as pessimistic and realistic poems. The word pessimism means negative thinking. Cambridge dictionary defines pessimism as “emphasizing or thinking of the bad part of a situation rather than the good part, or the feeling that bad things are likely to happen than good things.” With the advent of industrialization and science and technology stiff competition arose in the societal life. The condition of human life became so stark with the advent of machines in his/her work environment. The outlook was pessimistic in general during this era. Matthew Arnold exemplifies this pessimistic nature of Victorian England in his poem *Dover Beach*:

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night. (82)

Here the poet is delineating the world as a land of dreams which is so various, beautiful and new. However, the new world has neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude and peace. The advent of industrialization brought blatant materialism in Victorian England. But it only made lucrative material advancement. It failed to bring joy, love, light and peace in the world. The poet is comparing such a world to a darkling plain where ignorant armies clash by night without knowing who the friend is and who the foe is. Realism is another characteristic feature of Victorian poetry. Realism is a movement in literature which presented the world as it is in literature. Realism was actually a revolt against romanticism. Realistic presentation of life in literature is named as realism. There were many realistic poets in Victorian period. Alfred Lord Tennyson was the prominent realistic poet in Victorian period. His poem *Ulysses* vividly marked the features of Industrialization and the following geographical explorations. Tennyson presented the Victorian England as it is in his poem *Ulysses*. The poem was an exemplary dramatic monologue. In the poem the speaker Ulysses says:

I am a part of all I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move (72)

Here, the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson marks the advent of industrialization and the following geographical explorations in England. Expansion of the kingdom was a prominent motto of Victorian England. Different explorers began to explore at different unknown nations. Ulysses says that he became the part of all that he had met as an explorer. However, all these explorations and its experiences are an arch where through he could see the untraveled world. The poet means that each exploration and its experience is an impetus for the next exploration. Victorian English poems are the reflection of the Victorian England.

Check your Progress:

1. What is the Victorian Dilemma?

2. Define the term “Dramatic Monologue.”

3. Is there pessimism in Matthew Arnold’s poem *Dover Beach*?

5.2.5 Scepticism:

The word scepticism means doubt. Merriam Webster dictionary defines scepticism as “an attitude of doubt or a disposition to incredulity either in general or toward a particular object.” The Victorian poems specifically exhibited the theme of scepticism. The advent of industrialization brought blatant materialism in England and the people were in a great void. They were sceptical about the existence/role of institutions like religion. This scepticism, according to poets like Alfred Lord Tennyson, was essential in order to open the world of reason and to fight against their uncertainties. In his remarkable poem *In Memoriam*, Alfred Lord Tennyson says:

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest
doubt, Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them: thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own;
And power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinai's peaks of old,
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud (Tennyson).

In Memoriam was a poem written over the untimely demise of the poet's close friend Arthur Henry Hallam. Here the poet exclusively describes the role of doubt and scepticism to bring light. According to the poet faith lives in honest doubt. He says that his friend gathered strength by fighting against doubts. He made his judgment not blindly but rationally. According

the poet that his friend confronted the ghosts/threats of his mind rationally without any institutional prejudices. *In Memoriam* was a poem in search of identity and meaning by rejecting the age old institutionalized meanings of life. It took place by bringing sceptical thought. It was this sceptical thought which brought in later the rational/scientific spirit in the societal discourses.

5.2.6 Victorian Morality:

Victorian morality is another prominent feature of Victorian poetry. The industrial revolution and the following advancement in science and technology made a leviathan form of social advancement in Victorian England. This social advancement brought some kinds of repressive and suppressive moral codes in Victorian England. This is commonly known as Victorian morality. Robert Browning in his dramatic monologue *My Last Duchess* portrays the picture of a morality ridden man: the Duke. He was too severe and harsh towards his wife, the Duchess. She hasn't the freedom even to smile at strangers due to her feminine identity.

Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whenever I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. (74)

Here, the Duchess unconsciously smiles at strangers out of innocence. However, the moral ridden society takes it as a crime. Hence, her husband, the Duke, commanded her death. The same Duke is now talking about his second marriage with a new woman.

Check your Progress:

1. Whose untimely demise inspired Alfred Lord Tennyson to write the poem *In Memoriam*?

2. Do you think that the Duke in the poem *My Last Duchess* is a representative of Victorian Morality?

5.2.7 Sensuous, Pictorial and Symbolical Poems of the Pre-Raphaelites:

One of the striking features of Victorian poetry is its sensuous, pictorial and symbolical quality. Such a genre in Victorian English poetry was actually introduced by the Pre-Raphaelites. Pre-Raphaelites are those groups of painter poets who wrote sensuous, pictorial and symbolical poems. The themes of these poems could be painted very easily. This group includes the

remarkable Victorian English poets Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was formed by three English painters: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt in 1848. Amongst them Dante Gabriel Rossetti and some of his companions like William Morris and Algernon Charles Swinburne were poets too. Hence, they were popularly known as “painter poets.” They made “painting” effects to their poetry by inserting sensuous, pictorial and symbolic elements in their poetry. This movement was an escape from the materialism of the Victorian period. The main aim of their poetry was nothing but pure enjoyment. Hence, they totally rejected the didactic purpose of poetry. The pictorial effect of Victorian poetry could be seen in Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *The Blessed Damozel*:

The blessed damozel leaned out
 From the gold bar of Heaven;
 Her eyes were deeper than the depth
 Of waters stilled at even;
 She had three lilies in her hand,
 And the stars in her hair were seven (84)

This group of Victorian poets followed themes of medieval lore and spirit. Rossetti’s *The Blessed Damozel*, *Rose Mary*, *Sister Helen*, and *Mary Sister’s Sleep* is the prominent Victorian Pre-Raphaelites poems which are deeply steeped with the themes of medieval spirit. The medieval touch in theme and presentation could be seen in the poems of Algernon Charles Swinburne. His poems like *The Garden of Prosperpine*, *Venus and Adonis* and *Hero and Leander* exhibits the theme of medieval lore. One of the striking qualities of Pre-Raphaelites poems is that its musicality. Algernon Charles Swinburne’s *Chorus from ‘Atlanta’* exhibits this musical quality of Victorian poems:

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal’s hair
 Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
 The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
 Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
 The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
 But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
 To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
 The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies (Swinburne).

It was Robert Buchanan who called the Pre-Raphaelite poetry as “the fleshy school of poetry.” They made their poems too voluptuous and sensuous as part of their ornamentation of poetry. Usually they decorated the feminine beauty with such voluptuous and sensuous language. Dante Gabriel Rossetti brings such a sensuous language in the second stanza of his poem *The Blessed Damozel*:

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary’s gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn (84-85).

The poet in the eighth stanza of the same poem pictorially represents the blessed damozel in the following language:

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm (86).

The sensuous and voluptuous language in Victorian poetries mostly abounds in the poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In his another poem titled as *Troy Town*, the poet explicitly presents the heroine as:

See my breast how like it is,
See it bare for the air to kiss;
Is the cup to thy heart’s desire
O for the breast, O make it his (Rossetti).

The same poem begins with a sensuous, voluptuous and pictorial representation of Helen of the Troy. It follows:

Heavenborn Helen, Sparta’s queen,
Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
The sun and moon of the heart’s desire:
All Love’s lordship lay between (Rossetti).

We can see abundant of examples for sensuous, pictorial and symbolic elements in Victorian poetry. This group of poets who wrote sensuous, pictorial and symbolic poems during the Victorian period is popularly known as Pre-Raphaelite poets.

In essence, Victorian English poetry abounds with innumerable characteristic features. All of these characteristic features are essentially reflects the Victorian society in general. Scientific and technological advancement brought vehement changes in England like Industrialization and colonization. The scientific outlook in society made a direct clash with religious and spiritual institutions in the Victorian England. People became so confused what to choose and what to reject. The blatant urbanization forced to infuse some ludicrous moral aspects in society which were totally against minority sections like women. Poets wrote about these realistic and pessimistic undercurrents in society. New forms of poetries like Dramatic monologue became so popular. The Pre-Raphaelite poets wrote sensuous, pictorial and symbolic poems that could be “painted” with equal effect. Victorian poetries were the exact representation of Victorian England tinged with the artistic and aesthetic qualities.

Check your Progress:

1. Name any two Pre-Raphaelite poets in English literature?

2. Why the Pre-Raphaelite poets are called the “painter-poets”?

3. Mention any two characteristic features of Victorian English poetry.

5.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have got an idea about the characteristic features of Victorian poetry. You should be able to identify the characteristic features of Victorian poetry from the poems of popular Victorian poets like Robert Browning, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Matthew Arnold and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. You should have also become familiar with poetic forms like the dramatic monologue. You should have also got an idea about the Pre-Raphaelite poets and their contribution to Victorian poetry.

5.4 Glossary

Victorian Dilemma: A confusion of Victorian people about what to choose and what to reject; either science or religion.

Dramatic Monologue: A form of poem in which one character alone speaks while one or two characters silently hear the talk of the speaker.

Pre-Raphaelite Poets: A group of painter-poets who wrote sensuous, pictorial and symbolic poems that could be painted with equal effect.

Scepticism: The attitude of doubting knowledge claims set forth in various areas.

Pessimism: A tendency to see the worst or negative aspects of the things.

Realism: Presenting the world as it is instead of presenting the world as it appears to the state of mind of the writers.

5.5 Sample Questions

5.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. *My Last Duchess* is a poem written by _____.
2. Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* is published in _____.
3. Identify the given lines of the poem: _____.
Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whenever I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together.
4. Whose untimely demise inspired Alfred Lord Tennyson to write the poem *In Memoriam*?
5. Who was the poet of the poem *Chorus from 'Atlanta'*?
6. Among the following poets who is not a Victorian poet?
 - (a) Dante Gabriel Rossetti
 - (b) Alfred Lord Tennyson
 - (c) Elizabeth Barrett Browning
 - (d) William Wordsworth.
7. Who called Pre-Raphaelite Poetry as "fleshy school of poetry"?

- (a) William Morris (b) Dante Gabriel Rossetti
(c) Matthew Arnold (d) Robert Buchanan

8. “She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven”

This is taken from the poem _____.

- (a) *My Last Duchess* (b) *Ulysses*
(c) *The Blessed Damozel* (d) *Dover Beach*

9. Among the following themes which is the most appropriate and suitable theme of the poem *Dover Beach*?

- (a) Victorian Dilemma
(b) Love-hate relationship between husband and wife
(c) Pollution in *Dover Beach*
(d) Romance

10. Who is the speaker in the poem *My Last Duchess*?

- (a) the Duchess (b) the Duke
(c) the Emissary (d) none of the above

5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Give a brief description of the characteristic features of Victorian poems.
2. What is Victorian Dilemma?
3. What is Pre-Raphaelite School of poems? Who are the prominent Pre-Raphaelite School of poets?
4. What is Dramatic Monologue? Give an example of Dramatic Monologue.
5. Discuss the theme of geographical exploration presented in Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem *Ulysses*.

5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Which are the major characteristic features of Victorian poetry? Illustrate with suitable examples from various Victorian English poems.
2. “Victorian English poems are the reflections of the Victorian England.” Discuss this statement in relation with the advent of industrialization and science and technology in Victorian England.
3. What is Pre-Raphaelite School of poems? Illustrate with suitable examples from the various Pre-Raphaelite poems.

5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Arnold, Matthew. "Dover Beach." *Whispering Reeds An Anthology of English Poetry*, edited by D. K. Barua, Oxford University Press, 2002, 81-82. Print.
2. Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Bangalore: Thomson Heinle, 2003. Print.
3. Browning, Robert. "My Last Duchess." *Whispering Reeds An Anthology of English Poetry*, edited by D. K. Barua, Oxford University Press, 2002, 74-75. Print.
4. Buchanan, Robert. *The Fleshy School of Poetry*. London: Strahan & Co., 1872. Print.



Unit – 6: *My Last Duchess*

Structure

6.0 Introduction

6.1 Objectives

6.2 *My Last Duchess*

6.2.1 About the Poet

6.2.2 Summary

6.2.3 Critical Study

6.2.4 Themes

6.2.4.1 Jealousy and Self-importance

6.2.4.2 Discernment Hierarchy

6.2.4.3 Art and Truth

6.2.5 Dramatic Monologue

6.2.6 Poetic Devices

6.2.6.1 Imagery

6.2.6.2 Language and Form

6.2.6.3 Irony

6.3 Learning Outcomes

6.4 Glossary

6.5 Sample Questions

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

6.0 Introduction

The poem “My Last Duchess” is a dramatic monologue by Robert Browning and was published for the first time in 1842 in his poetic collection entitled *Dramatic Lyrics*. It is a well-known example of Browning’s masterpiece contribution to dramatic monologue. Duke of Ferrara is indicating the portrait of his late wife to the representative of a count, whose daughter duke is intended to remarry. Through the description of different events and ideas, the inner self of the duke is revealed to the readers. The poem opens with duke’s description of the portrait of his late wife who was very kind, courteous and can easily be pleased by anybody. It seems that duke does not like the manners and the likes of her wife and that is why she is murdered. The culmination of the poem indicates the intention of the duke who is now interested to remarry with the daughter of count.

The poem is set in Italy during Renaissance but it tells more about Victorian notions towards the era. The narration in the poem is a dramatization of Spanish nobleman, Alfonso II, who was duke of Ferrara in Italy during 16th century. The name of his wife was Lucrezia who died three year after her marriage. The poem is the inner voice of the speaker, duke, who out of jealousy and pride is showing the art gallery to his would-be father-in-law's agent. Initially, it shows the gentle aspect of his life but as soon as he starts talking about his late wife the inner resentment, jealousy, pride, and cruel nature of the duke is revealed.

As the initial part of the poem indicates that the duke is soft and sophisticated as he uses the tone, diction, and surrounding. But as soon as he starts pointing to the follies of his late wife the entire impression on the mind of the readers begins to collapse. The mindset of the duke is a typical mindset of an aristocratic background. It seems duke is a disturbed person who is talking to himself as there is no response or comments from the addressee or the listener in the poem. "Will't please you sit and look at her?" is indicative of his authoritative outlook which is culminated with the view that later he orders the listener to sit down and have a glance at what he wants to show to him.

"I gave commands;

Then all smiles stopped together."

Robert Browning was born in Camberwell, London in the year 1812. At the beginning he was instructed by private tutor but later on he went to London University. *Pauline* was the first long poem by him that was published in 1833 but it was the publication of *Men and Women* in 1855 that made him a famous and well-known poet. In 1846, he was married to Elizabeth Barrett and after that next 15 years of his life was spent in Italy. It was the period when most of his poetic works were inspired and composed by him. The poem 'My Last Duchess', one of his best dramatic monologues, published in *Dramatic Lyric* in 1842. Initially, it was titled 'Italy' but later it was given the title 'My Last Duchess' in 1849.

Browning's utilization of diction can be best termed as "monstrous angels" in the words of John Schad. While talking about the language of the Browning Amrollah Abjadian is of the view that "Browning was ... very individualistic. Therefore, he allowed himself considerable license with the language. His English was not that of the universities, and it appeared eccentric to his contemporaries ... Browning's grammar is his own. His sentences are frequently interrupted by a long parenthesis. His most characteristic punctuation is the impatient dash. He omits articles and relative pronouns, and he likes to heap alliterations on his verse". In addition,

his style of narration is distinctive as compare to his contemporaries. In the words of Wilfred L. Guerin, style or manner is more significant than the words present on the pages when he says, “Only to the extent that the reader understands that what the Duke is saying is revealed largely by how he says. It can he really fathom the full implications of the Duchess’ story. One of the beautiful ironies of the poem, after all, is the reader’s awareness of implications that the Duke does not consciously intend”.*

Though the language is simple, conventional and direct but implied thoughts are so deep that it shows the complexity of Browning’s form of poetry. The poem is indicative of the incidents that are dramatized and centered around the 5th Duke of Ferrara and his wife who died at the age of mere 17. Through the effective utilization of the technique of dramatic monologue, Browning was able to unleash the character traits of duke and duchess of the time of Renaissance in Italy. Their psychological and apparent traits are being depicted by the poet. Keeping in view the mood, thought process and feelings of inner self are elaborated through the Duke of Ferrara, the speaker and agent of count.

Gender role and cruelty of men towards women is indicative from the way duke has treated his late wife. He does not like either of her traits or her likes. He treats her as an object rather than human being. Some critics are of the views that duchess was neither the first of his wife who met the same fate and nor will the last to be treated like this as the mindset of men especially of aristocratic class will never be changed. Browning has exposed the inner self and self-projected image of the duke who has hanged the portrait of duchess. The duke points towards her follies as she can’t speak so he satiates his pride and assertiveness by self-speaking ill about her. Hence, men are projected as victorious, arrogant, jealous, and assertive while women are portrayed as submissive, looser, and doom to face all this on the hand of men.

Check your progress

1. In which collection of poetry ‘My Last Duchess’ was published first?

2. To which century the Duke of Ferrara belonged?

6.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- know the dramatic monologue, a poetic form.
- comprehend the nature of elite in the Renaissance Age.
- understand the dominance and cruelty of patriarchal society towards women.
- analyze and appreciate a literary work from various angles.

6.2 *My Last Duchess*

6.2.1 About the Poet:

Robert Browning (7 May 1812 – 12 December 1889) was a Victorian poet, playwright, and master of dramatic monologue. Some of his other well-received dramatic monologue poems are ‘The Last Ride Together’, ‘Porphyria’s Lover’, ‘Fra Lippo Lippi’, ‘Andrea Del Sarto’, and ‘The Laboratory’. He married Elizabeth Barrett Browning, a well-known poet and six years older to him. Elizabeth Barrett Browning is best known for her *Poems*, a collection of poems published in 1850. Immense popularity of this collection made her a serious contender for the position of Poet Laureate in 1850, after the death of William Wordsworth. Eventually, the position went to Alfred Lord Tennyson. Due to the health issues of his wife, they moved to Italy after their marriage and resided there till the death of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. After her death, Browning came back to England with his only son. Few of the best known works of Robert Browning are *Men and Women* (1855), a poetic collection, *The Ring and the Book* (1868), a long blank-verse poem, *Pacchiarotto*, and *How He Worked in Distemper* (1876), a poetic collection, *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*, *Saviour of Society* (1871), a long poem, *Bells and Pomegranates No. III: Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), a poetic collection, *Bells and Pomegranates No. I: Pippa Passes* (1841), a play, *Bells and Pomegranates No. II: King Victor and King Charles* (1842), a play, and *Bells and Pomegranates No. IV: The Return of the Druses*, (1843) a play.

6.2.2 Summary:

The poem ‘My Last Duchess’ is a dramatic monologue. While discussing about dramatic monologue, we readers must remember three characteristics- there will be a single speaker, audience may be one person or more than one, even the reader can be the addressee, and while talking the speaker reveals his/her personality consciously or unconsciously. The poem begins with a subtitle indicating the very tone and setting of “FERRARA”. In the very initial line of the

poem, the speaker points toward a portrait of his last duchess which is affixed with a wall. The phrase 'last duchess' in the first line is indicative of the notion that the speaker in the poem is the "duke of Ferrara" and he is talking about his deceased wife. The duke is very much fascinated by the artistic skills of the artist Fra Pandolf who has painted such a portrait. The duke is delighted that every stranger including the addressee who when looks at the portrait tries to pose a question to him with regard to "depth and passion" of duchess expressional charm. At this point, the duke draws the attention of the readers that he keeps the portrait behind the curtain with an objective that only he may cast aside her.

In the second stage, the duke answers the question posed earlier. He hints out the "spot of joy" on the cheeks of duchess and the blush she was having was not merely due to his presence over there. As the painter was working on the portrait, she might have covered her wrist and later on it might be noted that portrait is unable to depict the exact "half blush" of her cheeks. Then, the duke notices that duchess had a heart "too soon made glad." Hence, she did not have any discernment and reacted to each and every one with the same note of joy. Here, duke quotes some instances of things that got similar appreciation and compliments such as the necklace given by him, the scene of sunset, "cherry branch" that was gifted to her by any fool, and the mule she used to ride on. These objects had the same favorable look, blush or sign of approval from duchess. Duke then mentions the most cherishable gift given to her that is the "nine-hundred-year-old name." But for innocent duchess the gifts given by the duke and others had same importance or appreciation which could not be tolerated by the duke.

With regard to duchess inability to distinguish, the duke is of the view that he will not raise that issue before her. He thinks it is such a trivial thing if he will point to her in order to criticize her, it will be a matter of embarrassment for him. Even if the duchess is ready to correct her manner, it will be a matter of debasement for him to point out her behaviour. At this point, the duke terminates the idea with the comment "I choose, never to stoop." Here, the duke adds the notion that whenever he happened to pass by her, she used to smile. At the same time, he is embarrassed as her smile was same for everyone who happened to pass by her, not for him alone. But now, she and her smile exist only in painting and she is standing "as if alive" and is unable to do whatever she used to do in her life.

At this culminating point the duke asks the envoy to come with him downstairs so that they can have meeting with others people. He comes to the point of business to discuss for which his addressee has come to his estate. The addressee is the representative of a count who is

unnamed. Here duke comes up with his hidden motive to marry the lovely daughter of the count. Keeping in view the property and prosperity of the count, the duke is expecting a handsome dowry. But prior to heading towards the downstairs, the duke asks envoy to have a glance at another art work that is of bronze sculpture of “sea horse” which is tamed horse of Neptune. It is a rarest piece of art that is crafted for duke by “Claus of Innsbruck”. The poem started with the appreciation of duchess portrait and culminated with his plan to remarry.

Check your progress:

1. Who is the addressee in the poem ‘My Last Duchess’?
-

2. To which English Age did Robert Browning belong to?
-

6.2.3 Critical Study:

There are diverse elaborations of the poem ‘My Last Duchess’, as duchess seems to be presented as a victim of an outrageous act done by duke who slayed her. Secondly, the dramatic monologue has ironic role to play in the poem. The duke outbursts and the more he talks about the more sympathies of the readers he loses instead of gaining any favor from them. It is necessary to note the use and ability of Browning to inculcate the technique of monologue in order to portray the inner and psychological trauma of duke. It is further shown how a particular person acts and behaves in a specific situation when he or she is entangled in it.

William Raymond while talking about ‘My Last Duchess’ considered it as an influential poem due to “fuses character and incident, thought and emotion.” Through the utilization of dramatic monologue the entire stature of the character is shown before the readers. The duke does not merely tell all in a moment but also leaves no stone unturned to attempt to justify it. In the process of justification, he goes far ahead in revealing and unearthing about himself and he seems to be fully exposed. Some critics are of the view that by setting the poem in renaissance context the poet has affixed historical context to it. On the contrary others have talked high about the historical context and relevance of the poem.

The poem is a psychological depiction of Duke’s mind who is always suspicious and have doubts with the faithfulness of his wife. When he says that she can easily be pleased and carried away by men and foolish things it is indicative of his jealousy, pride, and resentment which ultimately led him to take violent act of slaying his wife. Another significant aspect of his

character is that he is always filled with negative and black thought in his mind with regard to duchess and he never tries to understand her in true sense who is innocent, kind, and courteous.

Duke thinks it as his disregard that duchess' appreciation for the precious gifts that he gave to her is same as the trivial and ordinary things like branch of cherry, mule, and things like that. He is always class and status conscious but duchess is least concerned about these things rather she is pure and genuine at heart. Lastly, the dismay and frustration of duke can be seen at apex when he comes up with the remark:

*“..... Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whenever I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile?”*

Check your progress:

1. Who is full of pride and arrogance in the poem?

2. Who is innocent and kind-hearted in 'My Last Duchess'?

6.2.4 Themes:

6.2.4.1 Jealousy and Self-importance:

After going through the poem, it can easily be noted that there are three major themes i.e. jealousy and pride, discernment of status, and truthfulness of art. Although, the poem is a presentation of an eponymous duchess but it is a tale of a jealous duke at the same time. There is a shift between what duke wants to portray himself in the poem and what is being seemed to be portrayed about him. He is shown pointing towards duchess for her pride and openness to please anyone and draw attention of everyone but actually he is showing his own pride and jealousy. Duke always tries to draw attention towards the dual side of duchess. When she blushes for the painter, he shows that she is unable to comprehend his compliment as she is “too soon made glad.” But showing this the duke is showing pride, jealousy, and discomfort of his own nature as stated subsequently:

*“'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek.”*

The amount of jealousy and dismay on the part of duke can be measured from the very fact that whatever pleases and gives solace to duchess gives discomfort and displeasure to duke.

From this perspective a psychological feature of pride, jealousy and displeasure arises in the life of duke due to her same response towards the necklace given by him, delightful sunset, gifted cherry bough by any fool and ride on mule. These activities later lead duke to self-projection and resentment. He considers all these activities of duchess are of trivial nature which he cannot “stoop to blame.” He does not show his resentment before duchess as he deems it will lower his esteem. All these resentments later lead him to slay duchess as is the implied meaning of the poem. Hence, the poem can be taken as a study of consequences that pride and jealousy can lead a man even to take the life of his beloved.

6.2.4.2 Discernment Hierarchy:

Another prime theme in the poem is the ladder of discernment. At one hand is the duchess who is joyous and can easily be pleased and obliged. She looks at every one with pleasing and smiling face but on the other hand is the duke who is opposite to it. Instead of being happy and jolly in her company he grows feelings of regret and discomfort which later forces him to take violent action. The very portrayal of duchess by duke is indicative of above stated fact:

*“Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, ’twas all one!”*

The same is in the case of all the things that favor and please her lead him to anguish and dismay. Although he articulates these things trivial but these have drawn him mad and he murders his beloved wife. There is implied meaning that this strict discernment on the part of duke is due to his elite background. He is aware of his social status and hence, considers it trivial to point out the behaviour of duchess.

6.2.4.3 Art and Truth:

The other recurrent idea in the poem is the concept of art and truth. ‘My Last Duchess’ is a piece of art and its truth. The idea of art is reflected through the portrait of duchess and the bronze Neptune and how these pieces of art have multilayered truths of contradictory nature. The portrait of duchess contains such contradictory truths and the main among them is the concept of life and death. Although, she is physically dead as she is slayed by her own husband but she stays alive in the portrait. The concept of this life is figurative yet the duke repeatedly articulates as “as if she were alive”. In fact she used to live in his imagination and he has never come out of

her thought. Blush and smile too have contradictory influence; for duchess this is a tool of pleasure and getting favour while it puts jealousy and resentment in duke. Another contradictory truth is duke is pleased with the portrait of Neptune but the things that please his wife is not acceptable for him.

6.2.5 Dramatic Monologue:

The poem is a dramatic monologue where there is a solo speaker and a specific listener or listeners termed as addressee or addressees. It is essential for the readers to read in between the lines to comprehend what he or she is trying to convey. From these two angles we realize that duke of Ferrara is the speaker of the poem; one through the setting of Ferrara, a city in Italy and the other from the concept of “last duchess.” The listener to whom the speaker is conveying his tale is the agent of a “count.” It is dramatic monologue in the sense that one character is talking to another and there is a certain action going on. While talking to the envoy the personality of speaker is revealed which is one of the characteristic features of dramatic monologue. Hence, we can say that Browning used dramatic monologue to give vent to what he wants to express. It is made known to the readers about the death of duchess in the poem. As the poem opens, we come across that the duke, who is the speaker, is talking to someone and hinting him towards the portrait of the duchess.

While admiring the painter who has painted it the duke says “That's my last Duchess painted on the wall.” Then the speaker talks about the reaction of the people when they come across to this portrait and he also tries to guess the reaction of the addressee. Perhaps he observes in other people’s eyes what he himself tries to visualize. Then, the tale of the speaker continues and he talks about her late wife and even criticizes her for being pleased by everything. He also points towards the things that please her i.e. gifts from men, sunset, pet mule and the branch of cherry gifted to her by any fool. As the tale goes on the readers come across the personality of the duke, duchess and the addressee. He informs the readers about the nature and likes of her lady when he says “too soon made glad.” Through the use of dramatic monologue Browning was able to obtain two purposes; he reveals the character of late duchess and the psychological state of the duke.

Check your progress:

1. Does the speaker reveal his personality in a dramatic monologue?

-
2. Can the readers be audience in a dramatic monologue?

6.2.6 Poetic Devices:

6.2.6.1 Imagery:

The analysis of the poem reveals that Browning has used numerous poetic and figurative devices to make his idea more refined which has added aesthetic flavor to this poem. The use of concrete images makes the context of this poem more absorbing. Subsequent are the instances of the imagery in the poem ‘*My Last Duchess*’:

“That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,”

“..., Notice Neptune, though”

“Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity”

“Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!”

There is an instance of using simile when the duke reveals that his late wife is seemed alive in the painting:

“That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall”

“Looking as if she were alive.”

6.2.6.2 Language and Form:

The language used to convey poet’s thoughts is simple, conventional and direct. However, there is a use of interrogative poetic expressions that are found in the poem:

“That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,”

“Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said”

“The curtains I have drawn for you, but I)”

“Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet”

“She had /A heart--how shall I say?”

The poem is composed in the form of heroic couplet with a regular rhyme scheme in each couplet.

6.2.6.3 Irony:

The poem has hints of irony. We are informed that duke gave mere a day to painter to paint the portrait. It is not because he has some busy schedule rather it was only due to the doubts duke had towards the character of duchess. While talking about the follies of duchess, the duke comments that he will not complain to duchess as these are trivial matter, it is also ironic because it was not a trivial matter for him. It gave vent to feelings of dismay, resentment and displeasure in his heart and mind which ultimately led him to murder his wife. When duke says that duchess

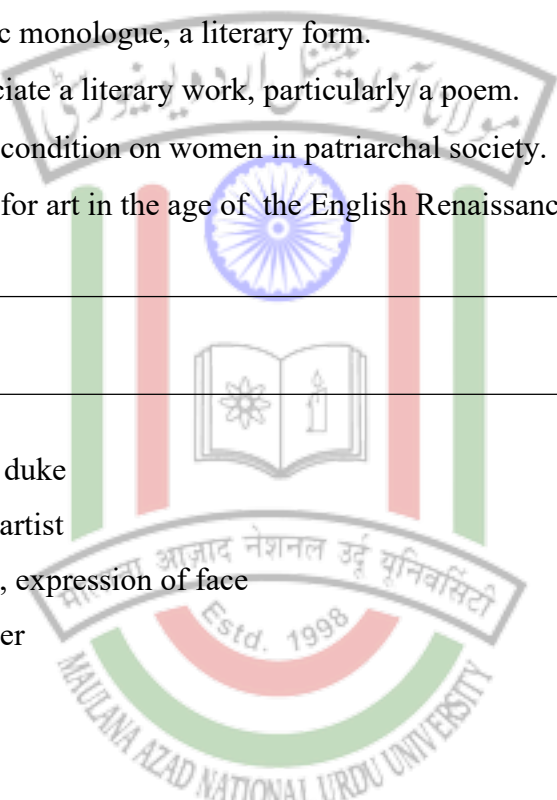
was easily pleased by anyone, implied meanings are that he projected her as unfaithful but ironically in the culminating lines we are informed about his own intention to remarry with the daughter of a count.

6.3 Learning Outcomes

There are various outcomes of the Unit. At the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- know about the poet Robert Browning.
- understand dramatic monologue, a literary form.
- Analyze and appreciate a literary work, particularly a poem.
- realize the pathetic condition on women in patriarchal society.
- know the penchant for art in the age of the English Renaissance.

6.4 Glossary



Duchess:	The wife of duke
Fra Pandolf:	A fictitious artist
Countenance:	Appearance, expression of face
Earnest:	Intense, sober
Glance:	Look
Durst:	Dare
Mantle:	Cloak
Laps:	A border or loose part of a cloak
Flush:	Blush, glow, redden
Courtesy:	Politeness, civility
Favour:	Gift
Officious:	Wearisome, meddlesome
Trifling:	Trivial, petty
Forsooth:	Indeed, really, truthfully
Count:	Earl, male ruler of a county

Munificence: Generosity, Kindness

Neptune: The God of the ocean and of earthquakes

Claus of Innsbruck: A fictitious sculptor

6.5 Sample Questions

6.5.1 Objective Questions:

- Robert Browning was a poet of _____.
(a) Romantic Age (b) Modern Age
(c) Victorian Age (d) Elizabethan Age
- Robert Browning was born in _____.
(a) 1822 (b) 1812
(c) 1912 (d) 1712
- My Last Duchess is a/an _____.
(a) Epic Poem (b) Elegy
(c) Dramatic monologue (d) Sonnet
- The poetic collection *Men and Women* was published by _____.
(a) Elizabeth Barrett Browning (b) Robert Browning
(c) Alfred Lord Tennyson (d) William Words Worth
- The setting of the poem 'My Last Duchess' is _____.
(a) London (b) Greece
(c) Italy (d) Rome
- Who is the speaker in the poem 'My Last Duchess'?
(a) The envoy (b) The Duchess
(c) The duke (d) None of these
- Fra Pandolf was a/an _____.
(a) English sculptor (b) Fictitious painter
(c) Musician (d) Singer
- 'My Last Duchess' was first published in the year _____.
(a) 1842 (b) 1942
(c) 1824 (d) 1855

9. In which poetic collection 'My Last Duchess' appeared for the first time?

- (a) *Men and Women*
- (b) *Dramatic Lyric*
- (c) *Pacchiarotto, and How He Worked in Distemper*
- (d) None of the above

10. How many years was Robert Browning younger to his wife?

- (a) 8 years
- (b) 10 years
- (c) 6 years
- (d) 4 years

6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on dramatic monologue.
2. Is the poem 'My Last Duchess' a dramatic monologue? How?
3. Analyze the character of the Duchess in 'My Last Duchess'.
4. Discuss the tone of the poem in brief.
5. What does the duke want to tell the messenger?

6.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Analyze the character of duke in detail.
2. Write a critical appreciation of the poem 'My Last Duchess'.
3. Can the poem 'My Last Duchess' be read from a feminist perspective? Discuss.

6.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Bloom, Harold (2001) *Bloom's Major Poets: Robert Browning*. New York: Infobase Publishing.
2. Browning, Robert (1898) *Dramatic Romances*. New York: Crowell and Company.

Unit - 7: Modern Poetry: Characteristic Features

Structure

7.0 Introduction

7.1 Objectives

7.2 Modern Poetry: Characteristic Features

7.2.1 The Emergence of Modern Poetry

7.2.2 Movements in Modernism and its Impact on Modern Poetry

7.2.3 Style and Technique of Modern Poetry

7.2.4 Themes of Modern Poetry

7.3 Learning Outcomes

7.4 Glossary

7.5 Sample Questions

7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

7.0 Introduction

The term "modern poetry" is used to refer to poetry that was created in the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries. It is distinguished by a departure from conventional forms and structures, as well as a focus on free verse and linguistic exploration. Many contemporary social, political, and cultural developments had an influence on modern poets since they frequently attempted to represent the complexity and fragmentation of the modern world in their works. T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, E.E. Cummings, and Langston Hughes are a few well-known contemporary poets. Modern poetry, often known as poetry of the 20th century, is a varied and complex literary form that includes a variety of styles, themes, and literary devices. Breaking from established forms and frameworks and emphasizing free verse are two characteristics of this avante-garde poetic age.

7.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understand the historical and cultural context of the time period that led to the rise of modern poetry.
- analyze the themes, techniques and styles used in modern poetry.
- develop critical thinking and analysis skills by understanding the modernist movement.
- appreciate the artistic value of modern poetry.

7.2 Modern Poetry: Characteristic Features

7.2.1 The Emergence of Modern Poetry:

Modern poetry can be dated to the late 19th and early 20th century, a time characterized by social and cultural change.

Rise of the Modern Poetry:

The beginning of modern poetry can be seen in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period marked by social and cultural upheaval. The Industrial Revolution brought about significant changes to society, including urbanization, mass migration, and technological advancements. These changes led to a sense of alienation and disorientation among many individuals, which is reflected in the poetry of the time.

The growing dissatisfaction with conventional forms and methods was one of the main elements that contributed to the creation of modern poetry. Many poets began to reject the strict rhyme and meter of previous eras, in favour of more free-form styles. This was partly due to the influence of Walt Whitman, who wrote in free verse and celebrated the individual and the common person in his poetry.

Another important factor was the influence of Symbolism and the Romantic movement. Symbolist poets, such as Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé, emphasized the use of symbols and imagery to convey deeper meanings. They also sought to break down the barriers between different art forms, such as poetry and music, and to create a new kind of poetry that was more dreamlike and symbolic.

The rise of modernism in art and literature also played a role in the development of modern poetry. Modernists sought to capture the chaos and complexity of the modern world, and they used new techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, collage, and fragmentation to do so. They also experimented with new forms and themes, such as the long poem and the urban

landscape. During this period, the role of the poet was transformed as well. The traditional role of the poet as a detached observer was replaced by a new role of the poet as a participant in the world. Poets like T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and W.H. Auden sought to express the inner thoughts and feelings of the individual, rather than focusing on grand themes or epic stories.

Another important development was the emergence of new literary movements, such as Imagism, which was in stark contrast to the often vague and abstract language of traditional poetry.

Impact of World War on Modern Poetry:

The impact of World War I on modern poetry was significant and far-reaching, both in terms of the themes and styles of the poetry, as well as in the way in which poetry was received and understood by the public. The war had a profound effect on the poets of the time, many of whom were directly involved in the conflict, and their experiences and observations of war shaped their poetry in significant ways.

One of the most notable impacts of the war on modern poetry was the shift in tone and themes. Prior to the war, poetry was often characterized by romantic and pastoral themes. However, the war brought with it a new sense of disillusionment and despair, which was reflected in the poetry of the time. Many poets wrote about the horrors of war and the futility of human existence. Wilfred Owen, for example, wrote poems that depicted the brutal realities of trench warfare and the suffering of soldiers. His poem "Dulce et Decorum est" is one of the most famous anti-war poems of the time. It is a powerful and evocative poem that describes the horrors of chemical warfare and the physical and psychological effects on soldiers. The poem is a stark contrast to the patriotic and jingoistic poetry that was popular before the war.

Another impact of the war on modern poetry was the development of new styles and forms. Poets began to experiment with new forms of expression, such as free verse, which allowed them to convey the chaos and confusion of war. This was a significant departure from traditional forms such as the sonnet, which had strict rules for rhyme and meter. Free verse, with its lack of formal structure, allowed poets to convey the disordered and fragmented nature of war. This was evident in the poetry of Ezra Pound, whose poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is a long modernist poem that uses a variety of imagery and symbols to depict the disillusionment of a generation after the war. The poem is a complex work that reflects the disordered nature of war and the disillusionment of those who experienced it.

The war also had a significant impact on the way in which poetry was received and understood by the public. Prior to the war, poetry was seen as a form of escapism, but the war

changed this perception. Poetry became a way for people to understand and cope with the reality of war. The impact of the war is evident in the poetic style as many of them were directly involved in the conflict, and their experiences and observations of war shaped their poetry in significant ways. The war brought with it a new sense of disillusionment and despair, which was reflected in the poetry of the time.

7.2.2 Movements in Modernism and its Impact on Modern Poetry:

The following movements shaped the unique and distinct style of modern poetry:

Imagism:

As an early 20th-century movement, Imagism focuses on precision and the economy of language. Imagist poets sought to capture the essence of a moment or image in a single line or phrase, and often used simple, everyday language to convey their ideas. Some of the most notable imagist poets include Ezra Pound, H.D., and Amy Lowell. The goal of imagist poetry is to re-create the physical experience of an object through words. Imagism was one of the first Modernist literary movements in the English language. It rejected the sentimental verse more typical of Romantic and Victorian poetry and instead focused on the economy of language, characterized by sharp, clear use of words. The imagist poets sought to use precise, concrete imagery to evoke a sensory experience in the reader, rather than relying on emotional or intellectual associations. They aimed to use language in a way that was direct and unadorned and focused on the visual aspect of the subject.

One of the key figures in the imagist movement was **Ezra Pound**, who is often considered the founder of imagism. Pound's poem "In a Station of the Metro" is a prime example of imagist poetry. In it, he describes a scene in the Paris Metro, in which the faces of the people seem like petals on a wet, black bough. By using this simile, Pound is able to create a powerful visual image that evokes the scene for the reader.

Another imagist poet is Hilda Doolittle whose poem "Oread" uses imagery to create a sense of the wild, untamed nature of the speaker. The speaker in the poem describes herself as an oread, a mountain nymph, and uses imagery of rocks, cliffs and the sea to create a sense of the wild and untamed nature of the speaker. Some of the most well-known Anglo-American poets and works of poetry in history emerged from the English language Imagist movement. Imagist writers and poets from the early 20th century include Amy Lowell, T.S. Eliot, F.S. Flint, Hilda Doolittle, James Joyce, William Carlos Williams, John Gould Fletcher, and Ford Madox Ford. Imagist poet F. S. Flint outlined the principles of imagist poetry in a manifesto, quoting Pound:

- a) Direct handling of the object, whether it be subjective or objective.
- b) Use only words that are necessary for the presentation; nothing else.
- c) With regard to rhythm, it is best to compose in the order of the musical phrase rather than the metronome.

Surrealism:

Surrealism has had a significant impact on modern poetry. The movement which began in the 1920s and was led by André Breton emphasizes the use of the irrational and the unconscious in art and literature. This aesthetic can be seen in the works of many contemporary poets writing in English, such as James Tate, John Ashbery, and Michael Palmer. The movement was founded by **André Breton**, who defined its aims in his Surrealist Manifesto (1924). Surrealism is characterized by the "supremacy of the disinterested play of thought and the omnipotence of dreams rather than reason and logic."

It is based on the idea that the subconscious mind holds greater truths and insights than the conscious mind and aims to tap into that realm through various techniques such as automatic writing, collage, and the use of unexpected juxtapositions. Breton defined surrealism as "Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought."

The movement has had a profound influence on modern poetry, as poets have used surrealist techniques to explore the depths of the subconscious mind and express their innermost thoughts and feelings. Surrealist poetry often features disjointed, dreamlike imagery and unexpected associations, which serve to challenge the reader's perceptions and stimulate the imagination.

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot written in 1915, is considered one of the earliest examples of surrealist poetry in the English language. It features a stream-of-consciousness narrative which uses surrealist technique to explore the subconscious mind and the irrationality of human thought.

The Beat Generation was another movement that emerged in the 1950s. This group of poets were characterized by their rejection of traditional forms and themes, and a focus on personal experience, spontaneity, and the use of everyday language. They were often associated with the counterculture of the time and their work often reflected their interest in jazz, Buddhism, and drug use. Some of the most notable beat poets include Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs.

One of the key characteristics of Beat Generation poetry is its emphasis on individuality and personal expression. The poets of the Beat Generation were not interested in traditional forms or themes and instead sought to break free from the constraints of traditional poetry. They were interested in expressing their own unique experiences and perspectives, and in doing so, they often used unconventional language, imagery, and structures.

An example of this can be seen in Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl," "This iconic poem is a long, free-form, stream-of-consciousness work that explores themes of sexuality, drugs, and the nature of existence. The language is raw and direct, and the imagery is often visceral and disturbing. The structure of the poem is also unconventional, with long lines and a lack of traditional rhyme or meter.

Another characteristic of Beat Generation poetry is its focus on the inner self. The poets of the Beat Generation were interested in exploring the depths of their own consciousness and the inner workings of their minds. They sought to express the raw, unfiltered thoughts and emotions that they experienced, and in doing so, they often used techniques such as stream-of-consciousness and automatic writing. The Beat Generation poets also often incorporated elements of jazz and improvisation into their work with an emphasis on spontaneity, improvisation, and free expression.

7.2.3 Style and Technique of Modern Poetry:

Modern poetry is characterized by a number of key features that distinguish it from traditional poetry. The techniques used in modern poetry reflect the diversity and experimentation that characterizes the genre. Poets use a variety of techniques to convey their ideas and emotions and to create new and innovative ways of expressing the human experience. These features include:

Free verse:

Many modern poets reject traditional metrical and rhyme schemes, and instead opt for free verse, which allows for more freedom and flexibility in the use of language. It is characterized by its lack of regular meter and rhyme and instead relies on the natural rhythms of speech. It is a technique that is commonly used in modern poetry and its structure is much more open and flexible, allowing poets to express themselves in a more natural and spontaneous way. Its use in modern poetry can be seen as a reaction to the formal constraints of traditional poetry, which is seen as restrictive and limiting.

One of the main advantages of free verse is that it allows poets to focus on the content and meaning of their work, rather than being constrained by formal rules. This technique gives poets greater freedom to experiment with language and explore new forms of expression. It also allows for a more conversational tone and a more personal style of poetry, which is in line with the focus on the individual and the self in modern poetry. Poets such as Walt Whitman, who wrote "Leaves of Grass," and Langston Hughes, who wrote "The Weary Blues," were some of the earliest adopters of free verse in the 19th century and set the stage for the development of free verse in the 20th century.

In the 20th century, poets such as E.E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, and Carl Sandburg further developed the technique of free verse. William Carlos Williams in his poem "The Red Wheelbarrow" used free verse to create a sense of intimacy and to focus on the small details of everyday life.

Collage:

This technique involves the use of multiple forms of text, such as newspaper articles, song lyrics, and photographs. Poets use this technique to create a sense of fragmentation and to reflect the complexity of modern society. Collage is a technique that is commonly used in modern poetry. It refers to the way in which poets combine different elements, such as images, words, and sounds, to create a new whole. This technique allows poets to create new meanings and associations by combining different elements in unexpected ways. One example of this technique can be seen in the work of the poet T.S. Eliot, who wrote "The Waste Land." In this poem, Eliot uses fragments of other texts, such as advertisements and popular songs, to create a collage-like effect. By combining these different elements, Eliot creates a new whole that reflects the modern experience.

In "anyone lived in a pretty how town." Cummings uses unconventional capitalization and punctuation to create a collage-like effect. By breaking the traditional rules of grammar and syntax, Cummings creates a new whole that reflects the modern experience. By combining different elements, poets are able to create new and innovative ways of expressing themselves and challenge the conventions of traditional poetry.

Experimentation with Language and Form:

Modern poets often experiment with language, using unconventional syntax, wordplay, and imagery to convey meaning. They also employ techniques such as stream of consciousness, fragmentation, and collage to reflect the complexity and fragmentation of the modern

world. Experimentation with form and language is a key technique that is often used in modern poetry. This technique is used to push the boundaries of traditional poetry and explore new forms of expression. Modern poets use this technique to challenge the conventions of traditional poetry and to create new and innovative ways of expressing themselves.

One example of this technique can be seen in the work of the poet Gertrude Stein, who wrote "Tender Buttons" and uses a stream-of-consciousness style and unconventional grammar to create a sense of confusion and disorientation. The poem is written in a series of short, disconnected phrases that do not follow traditional syntax or grammar. This experimentation with language and form creates a sense of disorientation and confusion that reflects the modern experience.

Another example of this technique can be seen in the work of the poet Ezra Pound, who wrote "The Cantos," which uses a wide range of literary and historical references to create a sense of fragmentation and disjunction. He also uses a collage-like technique, where he cuts and pastes different texts together to create a new and unique form.

Subjectivity:

Modern poetry often focuses on the inner experience and emotions of the poet, rather than on objective reality. This emphasis on subjectivity can be seen in the confessional poetry of Robert Lowell and Sylvia Plath, as well as in the imagist poetry of Ezra Pound and H.D. Subjectivity is a technique that is commonly used in modern poetry. It refers to the way in which poets use their own personal experiences, emotions, and perspectives to create a unique and individual voice in their work. This technique allows poets to create new meanings and associations by expressing their own personal experiences and emotions in their poetry.

Subjectivity in the form of psychological and personal details can be seen in the work of the poet Sylvia Plath, who wrote "Daddy." In this poem, Plath uses her own personal experiences of her father's death and her feelings of abandonment to create a powerful and emotional voice. By expressing her own personal experiences and emotions, Plath creates a new confessional style of poetry. Another example of this technique can be seen in the work of the poet Langston Hughes, who wrote "The Weary Blues" where he uses his own personal experiences of growing up in Harlem to create a unique and individual voice.

Intertextuality:

Modern poetry often makes reference to other texts, whether they be literary, cultural or historical. Poets like T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden make frequent allusions to other literary works,

while poets like Langston Hughes refer to historical and cultural contexts. Intertextuality is another technique that is commonly used in modern poetry. It refers to the way in which poets draw upon, reference, or allude to other texts in their work. This technique allows poets to create new meanings and associations by connecting their work to other texts, be it literary, historical, cultural, or personal.

Intertextuality can be seen in the work of the poet T.S. Eliot, who wrote "The Waste Land." In this poem, Eliot references a wide range of literary and historical texts, including the Bible, Shakespeare, and classical mythology. He also uses fragments of other texts, such as advertisements and popular songs, to create a collage-like effect. By referencing these other texts, Eliot creates new meanings and associations that reflect the modern experience. Margaret Atwood also uses intertextuality, in her poem "Siren Song," she references the myth of the sirens from Homer's Odyssey to explore themes of seduction and temptation. By referencing this myth, Atwood creates new meanings and associations that are relevant to her own experiences and to the modern experience.

7.2.4 Themes of Modern Poetry:

Modern poetry is characterized by a focus on individual experience and free expression, which has led to a wide range of themes and subjects. Some of the key themes found in modern poetry include:

The Search for Self:

Many modern poets have explored the theme of the search for self, both in terms of the individual's place in the world and in terms of their own identity. This theme can be seen in the work of poets such as W.B. Yeats, who wrote about the search for a sense of self in the midst of political and social upheaval, and T.S. Eliot, whose poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" explores the speaker's feelings of inadequacy and fear of rejection. The theme of the search for self is a prominent one in modern poetry, reflecting the individualistic and introspective nature of the modern era. Many poets wrote about their own personal experiences, exploring the themes of identity, self-discovery, and personal growth.

W.B. Yeats: Yeats's poetry is characterized by a deep exploration of the self and the search for personal identity. In poems such as "The Second Coming" and "Sailing to Byzantium," Yeats explores the theme of self-discovery, capturing the sense of uncertainty and confusion that characterized the search for self in the modern era.

T.S. Eliot's poetry is defined by a deep exploration of the self and the search for personal identity. In poems such as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and "The Waste Land," Sylvia Plath's poems such as "Lady Lazarus" and "Daddy," the search for 'self' is problematised through conflicting personal relationships. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", T.S. Eliot uses vivid imagery and a stream-of-consciousness style in a struggle to understand his own identity and place in the world. Uncertainty and inaction remain the hallmark of "self".

Disillusionment and the Collapse of Traditional Values:

Disillusionment is a prominent theme in modern poetry, reflecting the disillusionment and scepticism that many poets felt towards traditional values and societal norms during the early 20th century. Poets such as T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, W.B. Yeats, E.E. Cummings, and Langston Hughes were some of the poets who explored this theme in their work. Their poems depicted the sense of hopelessness, despair, loss of innocence, and uncertainty that characterized the era. The disillusionment theme can be seen in the work of many modern poets.

The poem "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot is a potent representation of the sadness and disillusionment that characterized the post-World War I era. The poem captures the sense of futility and despair that many people experienced in the years following the war through the use of vivid imagery and connections to mythology and literature. The issue of the demise of conventional values, the loss of innocence, as well as the sense of despair and hopelessness that many people felt in the face of the war, are all explored in Auden's poem "September 1, 1939." Another potent portrayal of the disillusionment and ambiguity that characterized the post-World War I era is found in W.B. Yeats' poem "The Second Coming."

The Urban Experience:

The rise of industrialization and urbanization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had a profound impact on modern poetry. Poets such as T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden wrote about the experience of living in the city, depicting the alienation and loneliness that often accompanied urban life. They also wrote about the hustle and bustle of city life, and the feeling of being lost in a crowd. The urban experience is a prominent theme in modern poetry, reflecting the changing nature of city life in the early 20th century. Many poets wrote about their experiences in the city, capturing the sights, sounds, and feelings of urban life. Carl Sandburg's poem "Chicago" is a powerful portrayal of the city of Chicago. Through the use of vivid imagery and a colloquial style, the poem captures the gritty, industrial nature of the city, as well as the sense of energy and vitality that characterized it.

Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem (A Dream Deferred)" is a reflection on the experience of African Americans in the city of New York during the 1920s and 30s. The poem explores the theme of urban life, capturing the sense of frustration and disappointment that many African Americans felt in the face of discrimination and racial inequality.

"Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" by Wallace Stevens is a reflection on the experience of living in the city. In a meditative style, the poem captures the feeling of alienation and isolation of city life.

War and conflict:

The two World Wars of the 20th century had a profound impact on the world and on modern poetry. Poets such as Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon wrote about their experiences of war, depicting the horror and inhumanity of conflict. Other poets, such as W.H. Auden, wrote about the political and social upheaval caused by war and the impact it had on individuals and society as a whole. War and conflict have been recurring themes in modern poetry, reflecting the political and social upheaval of the modern era. Many poets have used their work to comment on the devastating effects of war and conflict on individuals and society, as well as to critique the political and social systems that led to these conflicts.

Wilfred Owen is considered one of the greatest war poets of the 20th century, and his poetry is known for its powerful and moving descriptions of the horrors of war. His poems such as "Dulce et Decorum Est" and "Anthem for Doomed Youth" depict a disturbing portrayal of the brutality of the First World War and the tragic loss of life. Derek Walcott's poetry reflects the impact of war and conflict on the colonial and postcolonial world. His poem "Omeros" is an epic poem in which he explores the trauma of war and the search for identity and reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict.

Nature and the Environment:

Many modern poets have written about the relationship between humans and nature, depicting the ways in which the natural world is affected by human actions. Poets such as Robert Frost and W.B. Yeats wrote about the beauty and majesty of nature, while others, such as D.H. Lawrence, wrote about the destructive impact of industrialization on the environment. Nature and the environment have been recurring themes in modern poetry, reflecting the growing awareness of the impact of human activity on the natural world. Many poets have used their work to comment on the beauty and fragility of the natural world, as well as to critique the destructive effects of human activity on the environment.

Margaret Atwood is a Canadian poet and novelist, her poetry reflects the relationship between humans and nature. Her poems such as "The Moment" and "The City Planners" is a powerful and moving portrayal of the destructive effects of human activity on the environment, capturing the loss of natural beauty and the disconnection between humans and nature.

7.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have been able to

- analyse and interpret the themes, style, form and language of the modern poetry
- understand and compare the literary and cultural context of modern poetry
- exposed to diverse perspectives and avant-garde approaches to poetry
- develop critical thinking skills through the interpretation and analysis of poetry

7.4 Glossary

Avant-garde: A term used to describe the experimental and innovative elements of the modernist movement.

Alienation: The feeling of being separated or disconnected from one's surroundings and society.

Collage: A technique of modern poetry that uses a variety of texts, often from different sources, to create a new meaning.

Concrete poetry: A form of poetry that uses typography and layout to create visual effects and meaning.

Free verse: A form of poetry that does not adhere to traditional rules of rhyme or meter.

Fragmentation: The breaking up of traditional narrative and structural forms in modernist literature and art.

Imagism: A modernist movement in poetry characterized by its emphasis on clear, precise language and visual imagery.

Intertextuality: The relationship between texts, where one text refers to or alludes to another text.

Modernism: A literary and artistic movement that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, characterized by its rejection of traditional forms and its experimentation with new forms of expression.

Subjectivity: The use of personal experience and perspective in a literary work.

Stream of consciousness: A literary technique that aims to capture the unedited thoughts and feelings of a character.

Surrealism: A modernist movement in poetry characterized by its use of dream-like imagery, symbolism, and the manipulation of reality.

7.5 Sample Questions

7.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What is the main characteristic of free verse poetry?
 - (a) Adherence to traditional rules of rhyme and meter
 - (b) Use of stream of consciousness
 - (c) Lack of adherence to traditional rules of rhyme and meter
 - (d) Use of collage
2. Imagism in poetry comprises can be best described as?
 - (a) Use of dream-like imagery
 - (b) Use of symbolism
 - (c) Emphasis on clear, precise language and visual imagery
 - (d) Use of objective, rather than subjective, experience
3. What is the main characteristic of surrealism in poetry?
 - (a) Use of dream-like imagery
 - (b) Use of symbolism
 - (c) Emphasis on clear, precise language and visual imagery
 - (d) Use of objective, rather than subjective, experience
4. Which literary technique is used to capture the unedited thoughts and feelings of a character?
 - (a) Free verse
 - (b) Stream of consciousness
 - (c) Imagism

- (d) Surrealism
5. What is intertextuality in poetry?
- (a) The relationship between texts
 - (b) Meant to be performed
 - (c) Use of symbolism
 - (d) Use of objective, rather than subjective, experience
6. How is collage created in poetry?
- (a) Use of a variety of texts, often from different sources, to create a new meaning
 - (b) Meant to be performed
 - (c) Use of symbolism
 - (d) Use of objective, rather than subjective, experience
7. How is subjectivity achieved in poetry?
- (a) Use of personal experience and perspective
 - (b) Meant to be performed
 - (c) Use of symbolism
 - (d) Use of objective, rather than subjective, experience
8. What is the main theme of W.H. Auden's "September 1, 1939"?
- (a) Love and relationships
 - (b) War and conflict
 - (c) Disillusionment and despair
 - (d) Nature and the environment
9. Who is considered the father of the "Imagist" movement in modern poetry?
- (a) T.S. Eliot
 - (b) W.B. Yeats
 - (c) Ezra Pound
 - (d) Robert Frost
10. What is the main theme of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"?
- (a) Love and relationships
 - (b) War and conflict
 - (c) Disillusionment and despair
 - (d) Nature and the environment

7.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How did the modernist movement in poetry challenge traditional forms and structures?
2. How does the use of stream of consciousness and fragmentation in modern poetry affect the reader's understanding of the text?
3. What are some of the key characteristics of modern poetry, and how do they differ from traditional forms of poetry?
4. How did the political and social changes of the early 20th century influence the development of modern poetry?
5. Explain the role of experimentation and innovation in modern poetry, and give some examples of poets or movements that exemplify these qualities?

7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the impact of the world war on modern poetry.
2. Discuss the concept of alienation is central to the modernist movement and can be seen in the work of many modernist poets with reference to TS Eliot.
3. Critically analyse the predominant themes of modern poetry.

7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Hamilton, Ian, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry in English*. Oxford University Press, 1994.
2. Herd, David and Alex Davis, eds. *A New History of Modern Poetry*. Harvard University Press, 2017.
3. Marcus, Laura, ed. *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.
4. Nicholls, Peter, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Modernist Poetry*. Blackwell Publishing, 2010.
5. Saint-Amour, Paul, ed. *Modernist Poetry, Modernist Poetics*. Oxford University Press, 2011.

Unit – 8: Sylvia Plath: The Moon and the Yew Tree

Structure

8.0 Introduction

8.1 Objectives

8.2 *The Moon and the Yew Tree*

8.2.1 Introduction to *The Moon and the Yew Tree*

8.2.2 Themes

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8.2.4 Symbols and Images

8.2.5 Poetic Technique

8.3 Learning Outcomes

8.4 Glossary

8.5 Sample Questions

8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

8.0 Introduction

Sylvia Plath was born in 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts. As an American poet and novelist, she is hailed for perfecting the genre of Confessional Poetry. Known for her collection of poems *The Colossus and other poems* (1960) and *Ariel* (1965), Plath also wrote a semi-autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar* which came out in 1963. It traces Plath's life and her descent into clinical depression. The novel is seen as a *roman de clef* as it mirrors the journey of Sylvia Plath. She spent her early life in Winthrop, Massachusetts where she exhibited extraordinary talent and wrote extensively for many magazines. She studied at Smith College where she won numerous prizes, edited the young women's magazine *mademoiselle* and later on joined The Newham College at Cambridge. She was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1982, posthumously. Plath married Ted Hughes in 1951 but the marriage was fraught with abuses which she has expressed uninhibitedly in her journals and poems.

While *The Colossus* and *The Bell Jar* had established Sylvia Plath as a formidable writer, it was her collection of poems *Aerial* that catapulted her into instant fame. The images used by Sylvia Plath transmogrify household objects into terrifying symbols that inhabit and haunt her everyday life. The looming image of death and darkness in Plath's works takes a final shape in

her suicide in 1963. She was survived by her husband and two children. The short but tumultuous life of Sylvia Plath is marked by creative outbursts on one side and a sad, lonely and fragmented self on the other whose desperate attempt to make sense of the world around her fails.

Recent interest in Sylvia Plath has moved beyond the suicidal impulse and discovered other attributes of her poetry.

8.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- understand modern confessional poetry
- explore the autobiographical elements of Sylvia Plath's *The Moon and the Yew Tree*.
- analyse the images and symbols used in Sylvia Plath's *The Moon and the Yew Tree*
- compare Sylvia Plath's *The Moon and the Yew Tree* with her other poems
- comprehend Sylvia Plath's poetic technique

8.2 *The Moon and the Yew Tree*

This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary
The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue.
The grasses unload their griefs on my feet as if I were God
Prickling my ankles and murmuring of their humility
Fumy, spiritous mists inhabit this place.
Separated from my house by a row of headstones.
I simply cannot see where there is to get to.

The moon is no door. It is a face in its own right,
White as a knuckle and terribly upset.
It drags the sea after it like a dark crime; it is quiet
With the O-gape of complete despair. I live here.
Twice on Sunday, the bells startle the sky ----
Eight great tongues affirming the Resurrection

At the end, they soberly bong out their names.

The yew tree points up, it has a Gothic shape.

The eyes lift after it and find the moon.

The moon is my mother. She is not sweet like Mary.

Her blue garments unloose small bats and owls.

How I would like to believe in tenderness ----

The face of the effigy, gentled by candles,

Bending, on me in particular, its mild eyes.

I have fallen a long way. Clouds are flowering

Blue and mystical over the face of the stars

Inside the church, the saints will all be blue,

Floating on their delicate feet over the cold pews,

Their hands and faces stiff with holiness.

The moon sees nothing of this. She is bald and wild.

And the message of the yew tree is blackness -- blackness and silence

8.2.1 Introduction to *The Moon and the Yew Tree*:

“The Moon and the Yew Tree” was published posthumously in 1965 in the collection of poems called *Ariel*. The poem is widely interpreted as a personal idiom of what is often labeled as a dysfunctional family. As with most of her work, the poem is autobiographical in nature lamenting the loss of her father and a fractured relationship with her mother. The poem is the portrayal of loss, despair, dejection and loneliness. The poem also carries elements of gothic horror and Christian images of spiritual hollowness.

Written at the behest of Ted Hughes, the poem according to him was “a statement from the powers in control of our life”. Plath was asked to describe the setting of a full moon behind a large yew tree in the churchyard which resulted in “The Moon and the Yew Tree”. It was originally written shortly before her death in 1961, the time when Sylvia Plath was under tremendous mental and physical exhaustion of domestic drudgery and deteriorating marriage. Despite the challenging marital situation and failing health, this period is also marked by her creative outburst that resulted in many of her finest works.

The poem is set in North Tawton, in South-West of England where Sylvia Plath had lived. The moon is symbolic of Sylvia Plath's mother and the Yew tree stands for her father. Neither of them provides her with any comfort or consolation. The calamity of the death of her father at an early age coupled with a lack of maternal bond made a permanent scar that continued to fester in her poetry. "The Moon and the Yew Tree" is in a series of many such poems of personal grief bordering on neurosis. The poems in *Ariel* have generally considered in a pattern as a movement affirmed in Plath's creative work as a fall.

In poems like "Lady Lazarus" or "Daddy", one can see how Sylvia Plath deploys personal predicaments into horrors that prevail the society. In equating "Daddy" with Nazi symbols, personal resentment and trauma is elevated into gigantic proportions of brutal force against her puny self. "The Moon and the Yew Tree" also traverse into the personal symbols of affliction and abuse. The poem is bleak as most of *Ariel* poem foreboding Sylvia Plath's impending and sensational suicide.

8.2.2 Themes:

The themes of "The Moon and the Yew Tree" require an understanding of the biographical details of Sylvia Plath especially her lifelong influence of her father and a complex love and hate relationship with her mother. Plath's love for Ted Hughes and subsequent separation from him acted as the final nail in the coffin. "The Moon and the Yew Tree" written on Ted Hughes's suggestion to describe the moon behind the yew tree as could be seen from her window, however, became a metaphor of death and despair much to Hughes's dislike. Three broad themes are discussed below that constitute most of Plath's work and hence become seminal to our understanding of "The Moon and the Yew Tree."

Confessional Poem:

M.L Rosenthal was the first critic to use the term confessional poems critically. He also classifies Sylvia Plath's work as confessional because she places herself at the centre in a manner that her "psychological vulnerability and shame becomes an embodiment of *her* civilisation".

Confessional poetry emerged in America in 1959 with the publication of Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*. Apart from Sylvia Plath, Alan Ginsberg, John Barryman, Ann Sexton, and Robert Lowell are considered major exponents of confessional poetry. Despite so many confessional poets making their mark, Sylvia Plath remained one of its kind by directing confessional poetry into new facets of expression. The innate subjectivity of her poetry along with personal images made her creative output largely autobiographical. On the *World Socialist* website, Margaret

Rees observed, “Whether Plath wrote about nature, or about the social restrictions on individuals, she stripped away the polite veneer. She let her writing express elemental forces and primeval fears. In doing so, she laid bare the contradictions that tore apart appearance and hinted at some of the tensions hovering just beneath the surface of the American way of life in the post-war period.” Devoid of any constraint, Plath’s uninhibited expression of self, full of pain, shame, and agony in a broken and wounded self is characteristic of any confessional poet. Sylvia Plath’s complex relationship with her father prefigures in her poetry as an Electra complex of obsessive love and hate.

“The Moon and the Yew Tree” is deeply personal in tone. “The moon is my mother. She is not sweet like Mary/Her blue garments unloose small bats and owls”. Here the poet recalls her strained and troubled relationship with her mother. She is like a moon which is cold and distant. Plath’s mother Aurelia is seen as narcissistic and fails to connect with her daughter. Her commanding ways did not allow her to grow confidently. She is made to feel like a ‘dark crime’, shamed and guilt-ridden. As she yearns for her mother’s love, ‘tenderness’, ‘gentled’, bending’ and ‘mild eyes’, the sadness grows into deep despair. The poem is Psychobiographical as it unravels the hidden recess of her mind in tracing her alienated self. Plath does not find any comforting spot between the Yew tree and the Moon. Detached from her mother, Plath floats in the space of dejection and insecurities, seeking approval by communicating her tortured mind to the readers.

The poem ends in silence and darkness denoting a combined effect of her parental influence. The untimely death of her father resulted in infinite silence and darkness exemplifies the influence of her mother as a moon that shines in the dark. “The moon and the Yew Tree” thus become a confession of her deeply disturbing childhood where with no anchor for support and succour, she is lost and directionless as she states “I simply cannot see where there is to get to.”

Relationship with the Parents:

Sylva Plath shared a troubled relationship with her parents. According to Butscher, Sylvia always felt that her father wanted a boy instead of a girl and thus worked hard to impress him. She was unhappy when her brother was born because she felt she won't remain the central focus of her parents. She even memorised all the Latin names of insects to gain his father’s attention and also succeeded in it. Her precocity was admired by her father and she continued to impress her father to get his attention and love. In suppressing her feelings and going out of the way for her father’s undiluted attention, Plath’s childhood was mired with emotional void and

psychological instability. Plath resented her mother as often saw her as a rival vying for her father's love. Thus Otto Plath's untimely death due to diabetes and amputation of his leg left an eight-year-old Sylvia Plath shattered and directionless. The love of her father was one of the major driving forces in her life, in its absence, Plath resorted to seeking attention outside. In seeking public approval for her lost love, Plath laid bare her soul without any hesitation. Her attempted suicide in 1953 is termed by many as a bid for public attention where she was found and treated in the hospital.

Sylvia Plath's father's fixation also led to an unhealthy relationship with her mother. In her journals and diaries, she openly criticizes her mother.

My mother turned from a foggy log into a slumbering, middle-aged woman, her mouth slightly open and a snore ravelling from her throat. The piggish noise irritated me and for a while, it seemed to me that the only way to stop it would be to take the column of skin and sinew from which it rose and twist it to silence between my hands. (Plath, 1991, pp. 137- 138).

It is rightly believed that Plath's work carries the burden of her unhappy childhood. According to Schwartz, Plath's relationship with her father became a defining quality of her poetry. In her poem "Daddy", Plath uses Nazi symbols for her father. Despite her father's death long back, she is unable to free herself from his 'God-like, authorial command. "Daddy" was an attempt to free herself of her father's influence and to kill his memory. Plath wrote "Medusa" with her mother Aurelia in mind where a daughter tries to escape through her mother's attachment and control. She used the image of Medusa to describe her mother's characteristics. The mother-daughter relationship is like drudgery as "Old barnacled umbilicus, Atlantic cable, Keeping itself, it seems, in a state of miraculous repair". The abhorrence is seen as "Green as eunuchs, your wishes, Hiss at my sins. Off, off, eely tentacle! There is nothing between us". Written before "Daddy", Medusa is an effort to flee the biological cord which she finds impossible to be liberated from, the exhaustion and fatigue are clear in her inability to claim her "self".

Both "Daddy" and "Medusa" then become a metaphor for Sylvia Plath's deeply troubled and disturbing childhood leading to her neurosis and eventual suicide. If "Daddy" was a release from her father's strong grip, "Medusa" was a rejection of her mother's dominance.

“The Moon and the Yew Tree” is in keeping with the childhood pain and angst of drifting apart. While the Yew tree finds the moon as it hides behind it, “I “ as the poet persona, is drifted apart with no anchor for support.

Sylvia Plath puts it best in a radio on BBC:

Here is a poem spoken by a girl with an Electra complex. Her father died while she thought he was God. Her case is complicated by that fact that her father was also a Nazi and her mother very possibly part Jewish. In the daughter the two strains marry and paralyse each other – she has to act out the awful little allegory once over before she is free of it.

Death and Darkness:

Death and Darkness are some of the predominant themes of Sylvia Plath’s poems. Much like Emily Dickenson, Sylvia Plath's poetry delves into the mind’s deep recess. Mostly confessional, her work speaks of her depression and gloominess. She describes her struggle as a ‘fig tree’ in *The Bell Jar* with all its fruits rotting away. Death has been one of her morbid obsessions and fascinations which is reflected in most of her work. With the vocabulary of doom and nihilism, Plath weaves a despotic world where death becomes a release from its tyranny.

Sylvia Plath could never really recover from her father’s early death, she was often torn between the girl who was driven and striving endlessly to achieve perfection on the one hand disconnected and isolated from the same society where she wants to be an overachiever on the other hand. The split selves of Plath were diagnosed by her general practitioner John Horder as “ill” and “out of her mind”. Sylvia Plath notes down her dark moods in her diary as “Very depressed today, unable to write a thing. Menacing Gods. I feel outcast on a cold star, unable to feel anything but an awful helpless numbness” (3rd October 1959)

Plath evokes death not only in her poems but in her real life with two suicide attempts as she maintains in her poems “I know the bottom, she says. I know it with my great tap root: It is what you fear”. The easy familiarity with death creates an artistic longing of a ‘transformed identity’ and is nowhere accompanied by fear or mystery. In *Elm*, she describes death as

“I am terrified by this dark thing
That sleeps in me;
All day I feel its soft, feathery turnings, its malignity”.

Death becomes soft and comforting for Sylvia Plath, and the poem ends with “

That kill, that kill, that kill.” (*Elm*), which has been invariably interpreted by many critics as her ‘death drive’ to which she eventually succumbs.

Death also figures in her poetry as a repetitive performance, an act that requires skill and perfection. And being a perfectionist herself, Plath will rehearse till she masters her death “I am only thirty. And like the cat I have nine times to die.” (*Lady Lazarus*) In the same poem, she continues,

Dying
Is an art, like everything else.
I do it exceptionally well.
I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I’ve a call. (*Lady Lazarus*)

Death for Plath is a creative escape into self-discovery where she can find/lose herself. It’s the therapy for the violent death of her soul that she experiences every day. Plath expresses her alienation from her body in the poem *Tulip* written shortly before her death.

I am nobody; i have nothing to do with explosions
I have given my name and the day clothes to the nurses
And my history to the anesthetist and body to the surgeons.

Her wilful resignation and quiet submission to “statis” and limbo is her desire to embrace death and leave the emptiness of her body. In “*The Moon and the Yew Tree*”, death is symbolized through the image of the Yew Tree which remains in primordial “blackness and silence”. The Yew Tree as a gigantic but muted image of her dead father is a haunting inescapable figure and Plath’s morbid obsession with death. The setting of the poem is a graveyard of the church surrounded by a “row of headstones” erected on the dead. The church exists in ghostly figures of saints who are “cold” and “stiff” akin to a corpse. The image of the moon as indifferent, cold and distant is white and lifeless. Death is also evoked through womb-like darkness ‘O-gape of complete despair’ in the form of the strangulating presence of Sylvia Plath’s mother in her life.

8.2.3 Setting of the Poem:

“*The Moon and the Yew Tree*” is a first person account. The poet uses “I” as an expression of self and hence like in many other poems, the thin line between the poet and persona is dissolved making the poem a window into the poet’s deep dark mind. The

poet/speaker is in the church graveyard on the full moon night. The house is not far away yet the poet feels lost, abandoned and homeless. The predominant mood of the poem is ominous silence and the stillness of the night described through trees which are not green but shrouded in grief and appear 'black'. The only other colour that accompanies blackness is the 'cold' and 'planetary' blue which is also the light and hence opposite of blackness. Traversing between light and darkness, Sylvia Plath sketches the sight of Moon meeting the Yew Tree through the flashes of her traumatic memory. Hence the moon becomes her mother and the Yew Tree her father. The symbolic meeting of the mother and father is dark, foreboding, and gloomy and is a 'crime' that has trapped the poet "i live here" with utter despair. In the second stanza, the setting of the poem moves to the church which does not seem to provide any comfort or relief to her torn soul. "I have fallen a long way", the poet affirms her fall without any hope or salvation. The absence of emotional stability from the parents and home is replicated through the 'stiff', 'cold' holiness of the church. If the mother is the blank and the impenetrable white face of 'moon' then the saints are the unreachable, cold 'stars'. The huge and imposing Yew Tree stands with a bleak message of 'silence'. The conspicuous absence of Yew Tree even in its presence as a messenger of 'silence' is the reflection of the lingering and looming presence of Plath's father and its shadowy presence in her life long after his death. Thus metaphorically, the setting of the poem is the mind and memories of the poet through which she sketches the images of the Moon and the Yew Tree.

8.2.4 Symbols and Images:

"The Moon and the Yew Tree" follows the unique pattern of Sylvia Plath's myth-making much like W.B. Yeats. The world of Sylvia Plath is housed with objects and mundane things that are associated with her traumatic childhood and repressed feelings.

The Moon:

The Moon is one of the most recurring images in Plath's poem. In this poem, Moon questions the attributes of motherhood. The conventional Christian notions of motherhood as loving, warm, selfless, nurturing and kindness is all subverted to an inescapable, torturous and all-consuming possession of the 'self'.

Sylvia Plath's relationship with her mother Aurelia has been an important aspect of understanding her work. In her letters to her mother, one can see a cheerful and 'eager to please' Sylvia trying her best to impress her mother while the entries in her journal and diaries reveal hatred and rejection of her mother

I may hate her, but that's not all. I . . . love her too. 'After all, as the story goes, she's my mother.' 'She can't encroach unless you're encroachable on.' So my hate and fear derive from my own insecurity. Which is? And how to combat it? (26 December 1958) WHAT DO I EXPECT BY 'LOVE' FROM HER? WHAT IS IT I DON'T GET THAT MAKES ME CRY? I think I have always felt she uses me as an extension of herself; that when I commit suicide, or try to, it is a 'shame' to her, an accusation: which it was, of course. (27 December 1958)

The Bell-Jar is also read as a novel of Plath's conflict with her mother. The character Esther Greenwood's anger and resentment against her mother is primarily because her obsession with perfection which she wanted to live vicariously through her daughter. Many critics have pointed out that Sylvia Plath's early suicide attempts were fueled by the pursuit of greatness and perfection steered by her mother. However as Adrienne Rich maintains in her book *Of Women Born* where she discusses the mother-daughter relationship, it is pointed out that Aurelia Plath's expectations from her daughter were part of the growing-up experiences of many women of that time. The poem describes the moon in the second stanza as 'no door', 'white as a knuckle' and 'terribly upset' indicating the impenetrable and formidable exterior without any warmth or love. In the third stanza, the moon is directly compared to her mother. 'The moon is my mother. She is not sweet like Mary'. Plath declares her longing for maternal affection and care by invoking the image of Mary 'bending' on her 'its mild eyes'. On the contrary, Aurelia 'drags the sea' like a 'dark crime' with her firm and inevitable grip, she wishes to escape and be liberated.

The moon appears in many of her other poems like in the "Elm" it echoes a similar image

The moon, also, is merciless: she would drag me Cruelly, being barren.

Her radiance scathes me. Or perhaps I have caught her.

while in "The Munich Mannequins" and "The Rival", the moon symbolizes female anatomy and its mensuration cycle. Judith Kroll in *Mythology: The Poetry of Sylvia Plath*, reveals that moon has been one of the most recurring symbols in Plath's poetry and is used as a source of poetic inspiration. The moon goddess with her three phases of female existence is depicted in three colours white, red and black. The colours that predominate Sylvia's poetic expression.

The Yew Tree:

The Yew Tree in the poem symbolically refers to Otto Plath, Sylvia Plath's father who died due an infection in his legs that became gangrene owing to his diabetes and his persistent

refusal to seek timely medical help. Born to German and Polish parents, Otto Emil Plath was a Professor at the University of Boston. Otto Plath married his student, Aurelia. His demanding and domineering presence in the house had a great impact on the young Sylvia who worked hard to be worthy in her father's eyes. It was not easy to impress Otto Plath with his superior intellect and Sylvia remained in the shadow to achieve greatness like him.

Otto Plath's early death left eight-year-old Sylvia lost and directionless and her poetry becomes a resurrection of her father. Her inability to accept her father's death led to various bouts of clinical depression and suicide attempts. The image of the death of his father prefigures in many ways. In "The Moon and the Yew tree" it assumes the image of the "Yew Tree" that stand tall, still but has no message to give. The disturbing 'silence' and 'blackness' of the Yew Tree with its 'gothic shape' just after the 'row of headstones in the church graveyard is as if the Yew tree has grown on her father's grave like a ghost continues to haunt her.

Sylvia Plath's relationship with her father is noted in 'Electra on Azalea Path, written in March 1959 where she recounts her visit to her father's grave.

Biblical Images:

The poem is set in the church graveyard and hence the biblical images are used extensively throughout the poem. The first stanza begins by equating the I with God, 'as if i were God' but unlike God, the I/ poet/speaker is lost, hopeless and in utter despair. While 'the grass unfolds their grief' as the poet walks through the night, she sketches a universe without love, mercy and kindness hence without God. The absence of God in the first stanza is followed by 'dark crime' and 'despair' in the second stanza. The bells of the church are not the celebration of Christ's resurrection but 'startle' the sky. It appears as disturbing the primordial silence and darkness. The biblical allegories fail to dispel the darkness of the poem. The third stanza shows the 'face of the effigy' but the poet's mother is not like Mary. Instead of 'mild eyes' there are 'bats and owls' that can be seen in the moonlit night. As bats and owls accompany the Moon, there is an oblique reference to the diabolical portrayal of the devil.

The last stanza is the affirmation of the final 'fall'. ' I have fallen a long way is a reference to the fall from grace with no hope for salvation. The saints inside the church are also 'floating'.

'Floating on their delicate feet over the cold pews, Their hands and faces stiff with holiness.

The distant statuesque stillness and coldness make the church and with all, it's bearing a place devoid of any true meaning and thus incapable of providing any salvation. The poem

despite its phase of the declared fallen state nowhere assumes a lament for the loss of salvation. The moon remains indifferent to it and the tree has nothing to say. The unresponsiveness of the moon and the stubborn stillness of the tree predominates biblical allusion as they are woven into Sylvia Plath's universe.

8.2.5 Poetic Technique:

Sylvia Plath's poetry is always considered as deeply personal and autobiographical as she observes In *London Magazine*, 1962, she states:

My poems do not turn out to be about Hiroshima, but about a child forming itself finger by finger in the dark. They are not about the terrors of mass extinction, but about the bleakness of the moon over a yew tree in a neighbouring graveyard. Not about the testaments of tortured Algerians, but about the night thoughts of a tired surgeon.”¹⁰

Writing for Sylvia Plath is like a religious act that keeps on evolving. Every poem is “relearning, “reforming” and “revolving of people”. However, despite being overtly personal, Plath uses the events of the day and the current affairs in her images to communicate her deeply felt personal distress. The political is made personal and that becomes her unique poetic technique. In one of her interviews, she maintains that personal pain needs to be correlated on a larger scale.

“I think that personal experience is very important, but certainly it shouldn't be a kind of shut-box and mirror-looking, narcissistic experience. I believe it should be relevant to the larger things, the bigger things such as Hiroshima and Dachau and so on”

Sylvia Plath's attention to the meticulous details of mundane things that often remain either unnoticeable or taken for granted acquires new layers of meanings and are often repeated so much that it becomes part of her myth-making world. Recording minute details of her life have been not just Sylvia Plath's routine but also the process of her writing. Remembering and Recording thus become very crucial to creative output. Her journals and diary entries are thus very important in understanding her poetry.

Another striking feature is Plath's use of the first person in all her work as not only suggestive of her autobiographical accounts but as she mentions in one of her journals as “My one salvation is to enter into other characters in stories: the only three stories I am prepared to see published are all told in the first person. The thing is, to develop other first persons”.

Her poetry is not just about biographical incidents but the images like Moon, tree, quest, death, foetus, motherhood, war and myths that are reinterpreted circulate in her work creating an alternate universe for Plath. “The Moon and the Yew Tree” from her collection of *Ariel* poems is one of her more mature poems where Plath has perfected her technique and skill of creating a kaleidoscope of thoughts filtered through memory. The intersection of memories with present events creates a unique metaphor for comprehending the changing realities of our lives.

It is a 28-line poem with seven-line stanzas with no formal rhyming scheme. The poem is full of images; personal, Christian and pagan. Despite a linear progression, the poem revolves like a moon in circularity. The first and the last stanza show the circular nature of the poem. It starts with the ‘light of the mind’ and “cannot see where there is to get to” in the first stanza while the last stanza ends with “Blackness and Silence” affirming that there is nowhere to go. The second and third focus on mother and father respectively. The moon moves from being “it” to “she” in its fluidity and different phases of femininity while the Yew Tree stand upright as a phallic symbol of egotism and “find the moon”. Thus poem structure in terms of the images and symbols is organized despite uncontrolled and fleeting thoughts that inhabit Sylvia Plath’s world. The Masculine and the Feminine fail to be productive just like the ‘cold pews’, “effigy” and “stiff” saints of the church.

The poem is replete with metaphors like “The moon is no door” indicating her mother’s unresponsive nature. “I have fallen a long way” suggesting the poet’s fall from grace and despair invoking biblical salvation by its absence. “Their hands and faces stiff with holiness” making holiness a physical condition of stiffness which is devoid of any spiritual guidance. The poem also uses many similes like “as if i were God” where the bending grass on the poet’s foot is imagined as outpouring their grief. “white as knuckle” shows fear and terror of the moon that “drags the sea” “like a crime”. Here the lunar tidal effect is reimagined as a burden and crime, again things that are associated with darkness like the “bats and the owls”.

The use of alliteration like “hands and faces stiff with holiness”, “the moon is my mother” and “Sunday, the bells startle the sky” adds the musical rhythm to the poem. Assonance is also used to organize a distinct sound pattern like “eight great”, “blue pews” and “light of the mind”

The stanzas are deliberately closed and not flowing into each other to convey the feeling of entrapment and inability to escape which is also reinforced by the frequent use of small sentences like “The light is blue”, “The moon is no door”, “ I live here” and “She is bald and

wild”. The poems also maintain the uniformity of colour. Although the light is blue yet it can only see the blackness. The blue moon is shrouded by the tall and imposing black tree.

8.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have been able to:

- understand the nature and characteristics of confessional poetry.
- develop a deep insight into the life and important incidents of Sylvia Plath’s life through her Journals and Diary entries to comprehend her poetry
- appreciate the unique poetic technique and the skilful use of images and symbols used in Sylvia Plath’s poetry
- critically examine and compare “The Moon and the Yew Tree” with the other poems in *Ariel* and *The Colossus*

8.4 Glossary

Confessional Poetry: It is used to refer to poets who use intense psychological experiences and childhood memories openly discuss mental illness and breakdown. It was first used by the critic M.L.Rosental in his review of Robert Lowell’s *Life Studies*

Gothic: It refers to mystery and horror. It is manifested in literature and architecture:

Headstones: refers to the stones that are used to mark the grave in the church graveyard.

Moon: Moon is a recurring image in Sylvia Plath’s poetry. It represents femininity. In the poem, it is used to describe her mother Aurelia with whom Sylvia shared a complex and burdensome relationship.

O -gape: It refers to the open space and emptiness. This term is invented by Sylvia Plath and is also used to describe the round and unresponsive moon.

Planetary: It refers to anything related to planets.

Spiritous: It is archaic English, it is related to alcohol and spirit, it refers to pure, distilled.

Yew Tree: Yew Tree in the poem is representative of the looming and lingering presence of her father whose untimely death left a void in her life.

8.5 Sample Questions

8.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When did Sylvia Plath receive the Pulitzer Prize?

- (a) 1955
- (b) 1965
- (c) 1982
- (d) 1963

2. “The Moon and the Yew Tree” is part of _____.

- (a) *The Colossus*
- (b) *The Bell Jar*
- (c) *Ariel*
- (d) *The Birthday Letters*

3. “The Moon and the Yew Tree” is about _____.

- (a) World war
- (b) Lack of maternal bond
- (c) Memories of childhood
- (d) Dreams

4. The moon stands for _____.

- (a) Aurelia Plath
- (b) Sylvia Plath
- (c) Otto Plath
- (d) Death

5. The predominant theme of the poem is _____.

- (a) Hope after despair
- (b) Death and darkness
- (c) Unity
- (d) Redemption and salvation

6. The immobility of the yew tree is symbolic of _____.

- (a) The nature of the tree
- (b) Fixity of life
- (c) Death of Sylvia Plath’s father

- (d) Silence
7. Which of the following is not used to describe the moon?
- (a) Planetary
(b) White as knuckle
(c) Bald and wild
(d) Upset
8. What are the biblical images in the poem?
- (a) Pews
(b) Dark crime
(c) Blue garments
(d) Both a and c
9. What is the message of the Yew Tree?
- (a) Hope and faith
(b) Terror and agony
(c) Peace
(d) Silence and darkness
10. O-gape refers to _____.
- (a) The shape of the moon like an open mouth
(b) Darkness of the sea
(c) Emptiness
(d) Universe

8.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the setting and tone of the poem “The Moon and the Yew Tree” by Sylvia Plath?
2. What are the dominant colours that are used to convey the mood of the poem and why?
3. Why is the Yew tree gothic in shape?
4. Write a short note on the symbol of Yew tree in the poem “The Moon and the Yew Tree”.
5. How is the moon described in the poem?

8.2.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the important themes of the poem “The Moon and the Yew Tree” by Sylvia Plath.
2. Sylvia Plath is a confessional poet. Critically comment by analyzing the poem “The Moon and the Yew Tree”.

3. Explain the images and symbols used in the poem “The Moon and the Yew Tree” and what they signify and represent.

8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Bassnett, Susan. *Sylvia Plath: An Introduction to the Poetry*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
2. Bronfen, Elizabeth, *Sylvia Plath* (Plymouth, Northcote House, 1998).
3. Gill, Jo. *The Cambridge Introduction to Sylvia Plath*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2008.
4. Wagner-Martin, Linda. *Sylvia Plath: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge, 1997.



Unit – 9: Introduction to Latin American Writing

Structure

9.0 Introduction

9.1 Objectives

9.2 Introduction to Latin American Writing

9.2.1 Latin America

9.2.2 Romance languages and their Connection with Latin-America

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9.3 Learning Outcomes

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9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

9.0 Introduction

Latin American literature has a rich history starting with the Pre-Colombian period and working all the way up to the modern day. With each period of Latin American history, came a genre that dominated the literary field. In this lesson, we will look at the main periods of Latin American literature, the genres that fueled those periods, and the significant authors of this literature. Before moving further, it is significant to understand what constitutes Latin America and how the authors of varied cultures come under this category of Latin American literature.

9.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce you to Latin American literature and remove your doubts or misconceptions if any
- give you a glance of Latin American history along with literary history and movements

9.2 Introduction to Latin American Writing

9.2.1 Latin America:

Latin America geographically consists of the southern region of America along with Mexico, Central America, and the Islands of the Caribbean. It is the Romance languages that bind the people of these regions together.

9.2.2 Romance Languages and their Connection with Latin America:

The connection dates back to the Roman Empire. People of the Empire used to speak and write in two different versions of Latin. It is not something novel for us to understand that when it comes to the developed forms of languages there are almost always two versions of the same language. One version of it is used in everyday life by commoners in carrying out their routine activities while the other version is used by the literates to produce literature. Nevertheless, the simplified version of Latin that they used in their day-to-day communication is known as Vulgar Latin. ‘Vulgar’ here does not denote the meaning of the English word rather it is the adjectival form of the Latin word that means ‘crowd’. In other words, the term Vulgar Latin denotes the language of the crowd or common people.

Romance languages originated from vulgar Latin which is the spoken form of Latin. It is the soldiers of the Roman Empire whose interaction with other native language users or invaders gave birth to Romance languages. There are twenty different cultural countries that fall under Latin America. For instance, Spain, Portugal, France, etc. It was not from the beginning the region was identified as Latin America. It happened only after it freed itself from Spanish and Portuguese rule. Spain dominated the region for more than three centuries.

“Latin America” is a name that appeared after independence, and its referent is spatial, cultural, and linguistically historical, alluding to the common origin of the Romance vernaculars, the language of imperial Rome. Anticipated by Ranke, Hegel, and Tocqueville, the concept “Latin America” was formulated by a young French intellectual, Michel Chevalier, and the

explicit term was coined by South Americans living abroad in exile.” (Introduction to Latin American Literature, 2-3)

Jose Maria Torres Caicedo once in 1875 said that exiled members of the Spanish American community including himself called Spanish- speaking America Latin America. The purpose was to acknowledge the presence of the varied cultural communities, not just the Spanish language and cultural heritage. (Introduction to Latin American Literature, 3-4)

When it comes to the beginning of its literature then the credit goes to the “Courtly humanist scholars, tonsured friars, conquistador captains, ordinary foot soldiers, colonial functionaries from Spain, indigenous Americans for whom Spanish was not the first language, learned nuns, exiled Jesuits, and erudite promoters of political and cultural independence created this heterogeneous literary tradition.” (Introduction to Latin American Literature, 3-4)

However, the history of Latin American literature is very huge and rich. It dates back to the Pre-Colombian times. Further, like in any other literature of the world in Latin American literature too, different genres came into the limelight and dominated in different literary periods.

9.2.3 Pre-Colombian Period:

Christopher Columbus's ships crossed the horizon on 12th October 1492 and found the New land. The people of this land had their own expressive and artistic verbal expressions in the form of prayers, hymns, and myths. But they did not discover the writing form yet. Thus, their literature was only in oral form and preserved by the community members more specifically by the bards as they are one of the traditional bearers of oral literature of communities. However, the oral literature was preserved later on by the friars, nuns, priests, chroniclers, and native historians who also made an effort to save it who were men of letters. Later on gradually the themes and topics and so on of this oral literature interested the writers as well and they began to incorporate it in their writings as well.

Before Christopher Columbus discovered this New Land. People of this land, Mesoamerican civilization like Olmec, Aztec, etc, had their own oral tradition. The dominant themes of their oral literature were agriculture, religion, mythology, history, and so on and so forth. Though the literature of this civilization was mostly oral in nature, some of the communities like Aztecs and Mayans had codices wherein they recorded their socio-cultural life.

9.2.4 Colonial Period:

This period is significant for two things (1) the Spanish colonized the region and (2) it was the beginning of Latin America’s written tradition. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish

reached the lands and began to colonize the regions. The period of colonization is significant because it was during this period their written literature began. It consists of European explorers' personal experiences of the land, recordings of priests, and documents by natives who preserved in writing the changes the land has seen after it was colonized. However, gradually, the literature began to form.

Like in any other work of literature in the world, Latin American literature's journey too began with poetry. Initially, it was poetry that followed the rhyme schemes, meters, themes, and so on of the Italian Renaissance began to appear. It was basically written in the regions like the capitals of the viceroyalties of Mexico and Peru. These places of America were the centers where European culture thrived. During this time, the viceroyalty of New Spain existed in the regions like Mexico, some parts of the southwestern United States, and Central America. It also existed in Peru. These places were similar or equivalent to European royal courts, all the literary, cultural, and theatre gatherings and recitations used to take place here.

The arrival of the printing press in the 15th century made the Spanish empire dependent on it. In everyday life specifically in court's daily activities. It became very significant as they began to rely on written records more specifically in matters of law and religion. Further, the need to create an educated elite who can imitate the western culture to ease the matters of the empire various universities and colleges were established. For instance, in 1536 a college was established in Mexico, during the same time, in 1538, a university was also established in Hispaniola, and in 1551 in Lima and in Mexico.

During this period, in Mexico the poets like Sevillian Gutierre de Cetina and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, the Spanish-born poet along with them there was Mateo Alemán, the novel/prose writer, also lived in Mexico. They were already recognized for their art in Spain. The first Mexican poet was Francisco de Terrazas who composed the Petrarchan style of sonnets.

9.2.5 Sixteenth Century Literature:

The first Mexican-born poet to attain renown was Francisco de Terrazas, who composed fine sonnets in the Petrarchan style, probably during the last half of the **16th century**. Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga is one of the significant poets of Spanish and Latin American literature. His *La Araucana* (The Araucaniad) is an epic poem of Renaissance style. Similarly, an epic poem of the same tradition is *Espejo de Paciencia* (Model of Patience) by Canarian Silvestre de Balboa y Troya de Quesada, a Caribbean poet.

The significant writings of this period, the 16th century, is about the discovery of new lands and conquest of them. It is specifically the writings of Columbus, letters, reports, legal documents, and so on and so forth that constitute a major source of this literature. The earliest account of it was written by Peter Martyr d' Anghiera entitled *De Orbe Novo decades (De Orbe Novo: The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr d'Anghiera)*. Another significant work *Cartas de relación (Letters from Mexico)* is by Hernan Cortes. In this work, he talks about the fall of the Aztec empire at the hands of Spaniards. Later, one of his soldiers, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, also wrote a detailed account of it in *The Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España (The True History of the Conquest of Mexico)*

Bartolome de Las Casas, a Spaniard, was dismayed seeing the treatment of the natives at the hands of Spaniards. He penned *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias (A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies)*. Later in 1526, his work *Historia de las Indias* (selections appear in *History of the Indies*), a detailed account of the conquest of the New Lands. This work was published posthumously but during his life, he published a summary of it. He was hoping to bring a positive change in the conditions of the natives and it turned out to be fruitful. According to his expectation, it did have a great impact as it resulted in the issuance of New Laws.

9.2.6 Seventeenth Century Literature:

By the 17th century, the whole of America had been discovered and conquered. The literature of this period is all about these stories. The Spanish crown appointed historians to cover this entire picture. Some of the writers of this period are Las Casas, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas etc., These writers continued the work of Peter Martyr. The most significant writers of this time were Garcilaso de la Vega and El Inca. His father was a Spanish conquistador and his mother was an Inca woman. He shares a combined heritage of Peru and Spain. He spent his early life in Peru and his adult life in Spain. He was truly the first Latin American writer. Some of his significant contributions are *Los comentarios reales de los Incas (Royal Commentaries of the Incas)*, and its second part was *Historia general del Perú (General History of Peru)*. This work is about the Inca empire and various aspects of its culture. This is considered an authentic account of the Spanish conquest and the civil war as it uses oral and written narratives of the community members. More importantly, all the histories that were written before were by men who did not know the language of the community.

9.2.7 Baroque de Indies Movement:

During this time a native literary movement began specifically in the viceroyalties of Peru and Mexico. It was a distinct style of the Baroque art form. It has come to be known as the Barroco de Indians or Baroque of the Indies. The initial reflection of it was seen in the works of Luis de Gongora y Argote who later came to be known as the great Spanish poet of Baroque poetry. He brought watershed changes in the poetic language. His poem was filled with mythological allusions, metaphors, and complex language. Among the poets, he is the most admired and imitated poet. Soon he began to attract the attention of the viceroyalties.

Poetry is majorly known for its satire. Gongora was highly critical of his fellow writers. The form of poetry grew majorly also because of the viceroyalties who gave scope for the poets to employ satire in their works. Like Balbuena's *Grandeza mexicana* (1604) praised Mexico City, Mateo Rosas de Oquendo's *Sátira hecha por Mateo Rosas de Oquendo a las cosas que pasan en el Pirú año de 1598* (1598; "Satire Written by Mateo Rosas de Oquendo About Things Happening in Peru in the Year 1598") satirized Peru.

Juan del Valle y Caviedes, a Spanish-born, was the best satirical poet of the Barroco de Indias movement. His works predominantly focus on the human body. One of his significant works includes *Diente del Parnaso* ("The Tooth of Parnassus"), a collection of 47 poems.

Another significant poet of this time was Hernando Domínguez Camargo, a Jesuit born in Bogota. He wrote *Poema heroico de San Ignacio de Loyola* (Heroic Poem in Praise of St. Ignatius Loyola) but he is mostly remembered for "A un salto por donde se despeña el arroyo de Chillo" ("To a Waterfall Where the Chillo Brook Crashes"), a short ballad.

Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz was a great poet of the Spanish language. She took the movement to its great heights. Her life was very dramatic. Nevertheless, she rose to fame and died while taking care of the victims of the epidemic. Nevertheless, she was a versatile writer. Some of her important works are: *Primero sueño* (1692; "First Dream," Eng. trans. *Sor Juana's Dream*), "The Respuesta a Sor Filotea" (written 1691; "Answer to Sor Filotea," included in *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Poems*, 1985)

In the eighteenth century when the Spanish colonization ended, Latin American literature trod on the path of progress and saw its first novel. The novel was *El Periquillo Sarniento* by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi published in 1816. Similarly, many other writers began to explore this new genre and wrote on the themes of independence from Spanish and Portuguese. Further, during this period many essays and poems were also produced.

9.2.8 Nineteenth Century Literature:

During the 19th century, Latin American literature was under the sway of Romanticism. During this period one will observe that some of the writers were though under the influence of Neoclassical poetic forms but still produced literature that was Romantic in spirit. For example the poets like Jose Maria de Heredia and Andres Bello.

There were writers whose works were fully charged with Romantic spirit like Esteban Echeverria. He was from Argentine. Though he was a prolific writer he is primarily known for his poem “La Cautiva” (The Captive) and the short story “El matadero” (The Slaughterhouse). The most significant writer of the Romantic period of Argentine and Latin-American literature is Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. His great contribution is the *Civilizacion y barbarie: Vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga (Life in the Argentine Republic in the Age of the Tyrants)*.

The themes of Romanticism were seen in the epic poems like *Tabaré (Tabare: An Indian Legend of Uruguay)* by Juan Zorrilla de San Martin, Jose Hernandez in the gaucho epic *Martin Fierro (Martin Fierro: An Epic of the Argentine, also translated as The Gaucho Martin Fierro)*, the comical *Fausto (Faust)* by Estanislao del Campo and so on. In the genre of novel specifically in Cuban literature, the Movement was seen reflecting anti-slavery novels like *Sab (Sab: An Autobiography)* by Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda who was a lyric poet. *Francisco (1839)* by Anselmo Suarez y Romero, Cirilo Villaverde’s *Cecilia Valdes (Cecilia Valdes; or, Angel’s Hill: A Novel of Cuban Customs)* Jorge Isaacs’s *Maria (Maria: A South American Romance)*, and *Amalia (Amalia: A Romance of the Argentine)*, by Jose Marmol.

Essays:

During this time a new genre came into the light, that is, Essays. These essays were high in Romantic spirit simultaneously reflecting the touch of Realism. They were called the *cuadro de costumbres*, or “sketch of local customs”. Ricardo Palma wrote the Peruvian version of these essays and called them *tradiciones (Tradiciones Peruanas)*.

9.2.9 Modernismo Movement:

In the early 19th century Latin American literature was dominated by Romanticism and in the middle of the century, it was swept away by the Modernismo movement. Further, during this time the writers were also resisting colonialism. There was also a change in the production of writing in terms of gender. During this time a large number of females began to write. The male writers were resisting colonialism whereas women writers were busy resisting patriarchy like Clorinda Matto de Turner, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Gabriela Mistral, and Juana Manuela Gorriti.

The Modernismo movement began in the middle of the 19th century and was also there in the 20th century. It was majorly a movement in poetry. The movement began with Ruben Dario's *Azul*, published in 1888. However, it was the Cuban poet Jose Marti who is considered the Father of the Modernismo movement. He was sent into exile many times.

He was one of the great Spanish poets. His poem *Azul* was significant in Latin American and Spanish literature. Dario was greatly influenced by the French Symbolist movement and took Rimbaud's words seriously when he said that "one must be absolutely modern". Under this influence, he chose to name the movement "Modernism" which means writing poetry of aesthetics and beauty by discarding the sentimentality and Rhetoric of Romanticism. Dario wanted to create a musical language in his works, so he experimented with verse, meter, rhythm, and stanzas. He explored various themes like eroticism, decadence, and with oriental subjects. The title of his works was daring and misleading like *Prosas profanas* ("Lay Prose," Eng. trans. in *Prosas Profanas and Other Poems*). His other works include *Cantos de vida y esperanza* ("Songs of Life and Hope") and "Oda a Roosevelt" a significant poem.

Other significant writers of this movement are: Jose Marti and Julián del Casal from Cuba, Jose Asuncion Silva, the Colombian, Manuel Gutierrez, and Nájera and Amado Nervo, the Mexicans.

Unfortunately, all these great poets died young and this led to the closure of the movement. However, Jose Marti was not a great poet of Dario's stature but he was a great journalist and orator. Nevertheless, his active political activities like the organization of the Cuban war of Independence and his death during the war have brought him to the stature of Dario.

His other writings include sketches of American life, articles for periodicals, edited his own newspaper called *Patria*. His works like *Versos sencillos* ("Simple Verses,") and *Versos libres* ("Free Verses") were published posthumously. He also wrote an essay expressing his favor for Latin American culture and independence.

9.2.10 Twentieth Century Literature and Avant-garde (Vanguardia) Movement:

However, Modernismo did not give much scope for the poets to explore and experiment with new techniques or methods. It remained within the folds of traditional norms. Thus, soon the poets too began to look for innovative themes and techniques. During this time emerged the **avant-garde (Vanguardia) movement**. This was a huge movement that left a great impact not only on literature but also on other art forms like painting.

Among all the genres of literature, it was poetry that was quick to accept this change. Luckily, 20th century had also seen poets of excellent caliber like Gabriela Mistral, Vicente Huidobro, Nicanor Parra, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, Nicolás Guillén and José Lezama Lima; Puerto Rican Luis Palés Matos; Jorge Luis Borges and Oliverio Girondo; and Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal. Some of them also received Noble Prize as well. The most significant poets of this movement were Neruda Paz, Borges, and Lima.

The vanguard movement was first seen in poetry but it was seen later in the novel. The genre of the novel, however, needed to be renewed as per the 19th-century Realist form to be modern. The first modern novels were based on or about the Mexican Revolution, which took place from 1910-1920. These novels had tightly woven structures and plots, devoid of emotions or harshness, filled with cruelty, and full of action. One of the best novels of this period was *Los de abajo* (1915; *The Underdogs*), by Mariano Azuela. This went on for a good part of the 20th century. However, in other Latin American literature there appeared a new genre of a novel called *novelas de la tierra*, or *novela criollista*. They are called regional or local novels because of their regional context. For instance: *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926; *Don Segundo Sombra*) by the Argentine Ricardo Güiraldes, *Doña Bárbara* (1929; *Doña Bárbara*) by the Venezuelan Rómulo Gallegos, and *La vorágine* (1924; *The Vortex*) by the Colombian José Eustasio Rivera.

Similar to this, novels in Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay were based on rebellious issues or themes. The pioneer of it was Jorge Luis Borges. His version of Latin American reality was influenced by the Western tradition, one that does not come from reality but it is bookish. His first short story collection was *Historia universal de la infamia* (*A Universal History of Infamy*). Some of his classic stories like “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius,” “La muerte y la brújula” (“Death and the Compass”), and “Pierre Menard, autor del *Quijote*” (“Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quijote*”) published in the collection called *Ficciones* (1944; English trans. *Ficciones*).

However, the trend of the regional novels seems to have ended by 1944, and Avant-garde forms of narratives were seen to be drawn from Indian and African cultures. The primary purpose of this form of art form or the movement was to incorporate African and indigenous art forms into Latin American literature. The best example of it can be found in paintings wherein this incorporation led to the Mexican mural paintings. On the other hand in literature, the idea was to retell the stories in Spanish or make them part of a larger narrative.

Example of such narrative forms are: The Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias published in Paris his *Leyendas de Guatemala* (“Legends of Guatemala”), The Cuban Lydia Cabrera’s

Cuentos negros de Cuba (“African Stories from Cuba”). The Ecuadorean Jorge Icaza’s *Huasipungo* (1934; *Huasipungo: The Villagers*).

The regional and Avant-garde movement was merged very successfully into the two novels that gave birth to the new forms of the genre of fiction, that is, magic realism. They are: Asturias’s *El señor presidente* (1946; *The President*) and Alejo Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* (1949; *The Kingdom of This World*). Carpentier published some more influential works like *Guerra del tiempo* (*War of Time*). Another significant writer was Juan Rulfo, Mexican. Some of his significant works are *El llano en llamas* (“The Plain in Flames,” Eng. trans. in *The Burning Plain and Other Stories*) and *Pedro Páramo* (Eng. trans. *Pedro Páramo*), a novel.

The next half of the century was dominated by the poets like Pablo Neruda (Chile) and Octavio Paz (Mexico) and the novelists Miguel Angel Asturias (Guatemala) and Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia) and who also received the Noble Prize. Other writers were also recognized internationally like Cuba’s Alejo Carpentier, Joao Guimaraes Rosa (Brazil), and most importantly Argentine Jorge Luis Borges, Juan Rulfo (Mexico) became the modern classic.

9.2.11 The Boom Novels:

The meaning of the word ‘Boom’ is significant for us to understand the Movement of Boom in Latin American literature. The moment one hears the word ‘boom’ it reminds us of a loud sound which is in fact one of the meanings of the word. Apart from this, there are other meanings of this word ‘boom’ as given in the Mariam Webster dictionary, like “to increase in importance, popularity, or esteem (b): to experience a sudden rapid growth and expansion usually with an increase in prices...(c): to develop rapidly in population and importance (d): to increase greatly in size or number...” The meaning we are concerned about here is of increase in popularity and number.

During the second half of the twentieth century, there was a sudden increase in novels as well as in popularity. This increase in the number and popularity of the novels led to the increase in the popularity of the authors of Latin America. Significant authors of this movement are: Julio Cortázar, from Argentina, García Márquez from Colombia, Carlos Fuentes from Mexico, Juan Carlos Onetti from Uruguayan, Mario Vargas Llosa from the Peruvian, José Lezama Lima and Guillermo Cabrera Infante from Cuba, and finally Jose Donoso from Chile.

It is difficult to generalize and bring all the novels under one category. However, the novels written under this movement shared these features like they adopted the style and techniques of American or modern European novels. They were inspired by the writers like

Ernest Hemmingway, Franz Kafka, William Faulkner, James Joyce, Jhon Dos Passos, Marcel Proust, and the like.

They employed the technique of Stream of consciousness technique with fragmented plots and multiple or unreliable narrators. Further, their stories were interwoven, with many other modern techniques along with the influence of cinema. This gave a new life to their writings.

9.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have learned about the concept of Latin America, its brief history, its origin, and its connection with the Romance language. Further, this Unit should have also helped you to understand the various literary movements the literature has seen along with the significant authors and their works.

9.4 Glossary

Magic realism: Magical realism is one of the literary genres specifically fiction. In a work of fiction that is based in the real world but within it fantastical elements are normal. For example, some of the pioneers of this genre are Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Toni Morrison, and Aimee Bender.

Oral literature: Oral literature is the literature that is sung or performed. There are various genres of oral literature like myth, legend, songs, rituals, and so on and so forth.

Chronicle: Chronicle is a written record or account of any significant event.

Avant-garde: Avant-garde is basically a movement in art, culture, and politics. In general anyone or any piece of work that is unorthodox or radical or experimental in nature is considered avant-garde.

Regional: anything that has specific characteristics of a region or area

9.5 Sample Questions

9.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following is a Romance language?
 - (a) French
 - (b) Urdu
 - (c) Tamil
 - (d) Gurmukhi
2. The root of Romance languages is _____.
 - (a) Vulgar
 - (b) Vulgar Latin
 - (c) Latin
 - (d) Latin America
3. The pioneer writer of Magic Realism is _____.
 - (a) Sylvia Plath
 - (b) Hanief Kureshi
 - (c) Gabriel Garcio Marquez
 - (d) Sadat Hasan Manto
4. When did Columbus discover America?
 - (a) 15th August 1492
 - (b) 12th October 1492
 - (c) 12th January 1492
 - (d) 12th October 1492
5. Latin America geographically consists of _____.
 - (a) The southern region of America along with Mexico, Central America, and the Islands of the Caribbean.
 - (b) Mexico and Central America
 - (c) Central America and the Caribbean
 - (d) The Southern region of America only
6. Legends of Guatemala is written by _____.
 - (a) Miguel Ángel Asturias
 - (b) Lydia Cabrera
 - (c) Jorge Icaza
 - (d) Sherlock Holmes
7. The vanguard movement was first seen in _____.

- (a) Novel
- (b) Poetry
- (c) Drama
- (d) Cinema
- (d) Essay

8. An anti-slavery novel written by Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda is _____.

- (a) Untouchable
- (b) *Sab (Sab: An Autobiography)*
- (c) Jhootan
- (d) Roots

9. Who is the most significant writer of the Romantic period of Argentine and Latin-American literature?

- (a) Robert Frost
- (b) Wordsworth
- (c) Domingo Faustino Sarmiento
- (d) S.T. Coleridge

10. Ricardo Eliecer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto whose adopted pseudonym was Neruda became a significant international poet through _____.

- (a) *Residencia en la tierra*
- (b) *España en el corazon*
- (c) *Tercera residencia*
- (d) Las Furias y las penas

9.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. When did the Spanish Civil War take place?
2. Name the poets of the Avant-Garde movement.
3. Name the two poets of the Modernismo Movement.
4. What are the 16th-century writings?
5. When did Columbus discover the New Lands?

9.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Define Romance language and its relation with Latin American literature.
2. What is Romanticism? Explain its effects on Latin American literature.

3. Define any two movements of Latin American literature except Romanticism and name the authors and their works.

9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Gonzalez, Anibal. Journalism and the Development of Spanish American Narrative (1993).
2. Gonzalez Echevarria, Roberto. Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative (1990, reissued 1998).
3. Login Jrade, Cathy. Modernismo, Modernity, and the Development of Spanish American Literature (1998).
4. Luis, William. Literary Bondage: Slavery in Cuban Narrative (1990).
5. Sommer, Doris. Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America (1991, reprinted 1993).



Unit - 10: Life and Works of Gabriel García Marquez

Structure

10.0 Introduction

10.1 Objectives

10.2 Life and Works of Gabriel García Márquez

10.2.1 Gabriel García Márquez: A Brief Life Sketch

10.2.2 Notable Works and Awards

10.2.3 Writing Style of Gabriel García Márquez

10.2.4 Themes in Gabriel García Márquez's Works

10.2.5 Gabriel García Márquez as Journalist

10.2.6 Conclusion

10.3 Learning Outcomes

10.4 Glossary

10.5 Sample Questions

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

10.0 Introduction

Gabriel García Márquez was a great Columbian novelist, short story writer, journalist, and screenwriter. He is one of the well-known writers of Spanish language awarded with numerous awards including Neustadt International Prize for Literature and the Nobel Prize in Literature. He gave a new height to the literary style termed as 'magic realism' and mostly dealt with the theme of solitude. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* attained appreciation from all corner of the globe. It is a masterpiece that narrated the life cycle of a family that lived in Macondo, his mythical town. In addition to magic realism the themes of solitude, incest, elitism, and fluidity of time are worth mentioning. The story revolves around the conflict between need for love and desire for solitude and enriched with imaginative prose. Originally, it was written in Spanish in 1967 and was translated into English in 1970. It was his masterpiece which had stirred the literary world. It was followed by others literary success by him which ultimately nominated him for Nobel Prize in 1982. This piece became a classic in literary horizon and turned him as one of the most influential literary figures of 20th century.

He was the greatest Columbian writer who ever lived. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) influenced many other writers to follow the same line as that of magic realism. He was politically active besides being a writer and journalist though he never joined the party of his choice. He spent most of his active life in exile because he was strongly against the violence that was going on in Columbia. He was a social activist all through his life. He had a personal links and ties with the communist party of Columbia though he never joined it as a member. He was not even being awarded with tourist visa because of his leftist affiliation. Political activists in his own native land criticized him for not partaking actively in communist party and its activities. However, his first trip to USA took place due to the invitation that was given to him by Bill Clinton, the president of America, to Martha's Vineyard.

He published *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* in 1981 which was the narration of a horrifying murder of his childhood friend. In 1986, a romantic narrative titled *Love in the Time of Cholera* was published by him. It was about two lovers who met but were unable to connect for 50 years. In 1999, he was diagnosed with lymphoma but he continued his writing journey until 2004. It was the year when *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* came out which was banned in Iran. After that he was slowly sinking towards dementia and later on died on 17th of April 2014 in Mexican city. In addition to his literary and journalist contribution, he had also set up International Film School near Havana, and a school of journalism on the Caribbean coast.

His literary skills and universal appeal in general and the popularity of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in particular established his literary stature as a literary giant of 20th century. He was awarded with world most prestigious award Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. Though the backdrop of his fiction is Latin American landscapes yet his appeal and message were universal. He was acknowledged by Swedish Academy of Letter in Nobel Prize awarding ceremony as "Each new work of his is received by expectant critics and readers as an event of world importance."

Check your progress:

1. Where was Gabriel García Márquez born?

2. Which year did he receive Nobel Prize for Literature?

10.1 Objectives

The objectives of the Unit are to:

- know the biography of the writer, Gabriel García Márquez in brief.
- realize the socio-political scenario of his time.
- understand the literary style of the author and his contribution in Spanish literature.
- appreciate the author's understanding and contribution in the field of journalism.
- know the influence of Gabriel García Márquez on his contemporary writers and successors.

10.2 Life and Works of Gabriel García Márquez

10.2.1 Gabriel Garcia Marquez: A Brief Life Sketch:

Gabriel José de la Concordia García Marquez known as Gabo affectionately by Latin Americans was born on 6th of March 1927 in Aracataca, Colombia. He was the eldest son of his parents. When he was 8 years old, he was left with grandparents to be brought up. His grandfather was a liberal activist while his grandmother was attracted towards magic, supernatural world, and exaggeration. She was the one who filled the ideas of magic, ghosts, folk tales and superstition into the head of her grandson which later turned into his attachment with magic realism as a novelist. He himself believed that he had been a writer since his youth. Hence, all the elements of his childhood and youth had contributed in shaping his elements of fiction. He studied at Jesuit College and later studied law at Bogota University.

Though he studied law but he was of the view that law has nothing to do with justice. In the meanwhile, due to the civil war that broke up he had to discontinue his studied and joined the profession as a journalist. In between 1950 to 1955 he wrote column with the name “The Giraffe” for *El Heraldo*. His initial tone of writing was replete with irony and humour that later on set the tone of his fictional writing. Due to civil war he had not only to discontinue his study but had also to shift to Barranquilla. Here he had association with newsmen and journalists. He also joined journalistic tutorial over there which polished his skills and abilities as a journalist.

Till 1954 he worked there as a columnist then moved back to Bogota as a film critic and news reporter in *El Espectador* which was a Columbian newspaper.

As he was brought up by his grandparents, the influence of his grandmother stories was far reaching in shaping the persona of his fictional depiction and style. The folk tales and exaggerated tales of his grandmother played an important role for the development of his magic realistic notion as a novelist and short story writer. He himself admitted the influence of these factors as contributor towards his literary nourishment as “the most decisive literary influence for me. After the death of my grandfather [when García Márquez was eight years old], nothing really happened to me anymore.” When a reporter once asked him where he got his rich, yet pungent style, he replied: “It’s the style of my grandmother.” The influence of his grandfather was also eminent in his novels and short stories. The reference towards the real village Aracataca and Macondo is also highly autobiographical in his writing.

In 1959, García Márquez got married to Mercedes Barcha, his childhood girlfriend and he had two kids. Rodrigo, his first kid, was born in 1959 and currently is a well-known US TV and film director. Gonzalo was born to him in 1962 and is a graphic designer now. His most celebrated and illustrious work *One Hundred Years of Solitude* got published in 1967. The first edition of the book in Spanish sold out in a single week and in the next 30 years more than 25 million copies of the book had been sold. It had been translated into as many as 30 languages of the world. It was so influential that Robert Keily in 1970 in a review published in The New York Times talked about it as “so filled with humor, rich detail and startling distortion that it brings to mind the best of [William] Faulkner and Günter Grass.”

Check your progress:

1. Who has written *One Hundred Years of Solitude*?

2. Which year *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was published?

10.2.2 Notable Works and Awards:

His first collection of short stories titled *Eyes of a Blue Dog* published in a liberal magazine named *Espectador*. The initial success was diminished due to the incident that suddenly took place. The president of Columbia Jorge Eliecer Gaitan was assassinated. He left everything during civil war and became a journalist as an Investigating reporter. In 1954, he published a story about a sailor who just managed to survive in a shipwreck of Columbian Navy.

This news later turned into a scandal and Márquez was exiled to Europe where he continued his journey as a journalist and magazine writer. In addition, he also continued to write short stories. In 1955, he published his first novel titled *Leaf Storm*. It was written much earlier but he could not find publisher before.

His notable works included novels such as *Edit in Evil Hour* (1962), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), *The General in His Labyrinth* (1989), *Of Love and Other Demons* (1994); Novellas such as *Edit Leaf Storm* (1955), *No One Writes to the Colonel* (1961), *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981), *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* (2004); Short story collections titled *Edit Eyes of a Blue Dog* (1947), *Big Mama's Funeral* (1962), *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother* (1972), *Collected Stories* (1984), *Strange Pilgrims* (1993), *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (1968) and non-fiction included *Edit the Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* (1970), *The Solitude of Latin America* (1982), *The Fragrance of Guava* (1982), *Clandestine in Chile* (1986), *Changing the History of Africa: Angola and Namibia* (1991), *News of a Kidnapping* (1996), *A Country for Children* (1998), *Living to Tell the Tale* (2002), and *The Scandal of the Century: Selected Journalistic Writings, 1950–1984* (2019).

As he was one of the most well-known literary figures of the 20th century so he was awarded with numerous awards other than Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. Few of the other awards and distinctions that Garcia Marquez received included “Novel Award for La Mala Hora” (1961), “Doctor Honoris Causa of the Columbia University in New York” (1971), “Romulo Gallegos Award” for *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1972), “Medal of the Legion of Honor of France in Paris” (1981), “Aztec Eagle Award in Mexico” (1982), and The Bank of the Republic of Colombia announced a new series of tickets (nomination of 50,000 pesos). On this ticket his image was inscribed and it began its circulation in 2016.

10.2.3 Writing Style of Gabriel Garcia Marquez:

Garcia Marquez inherited the traditions of tales from his grandmother who used to relate exaggerated tales in such a manner that these tales looked real. He adopted such a narrative style that juxtaposed unusual and unnatural events in such a way that these looked natural and real. For that reason, he is deemed to be the founder and pioneer of the genre magical realism. In addition, he used the language that was mostly derived from folklore and culture of the place and people of Arcata. Another Significant aspect is that he wrote about the events happened in

Colombia mixing them with supernatural events in such a way that these events of his fictional work looked real.

It was obvious that he never boasted off as the pioneer of magical realism, he merely hinted out that such elements existed in Latin American Literature. But none can deny the fact that no one prior to him had used this genre with such masterful manner and depictional power. It was he who later inspired other writers to try their hands in magic realism. He was of the view that reality is also the myth that existed in the mind of common people.

Besides using magical realism there are numerous other techniques that had added flair in his writing and appeal. He implied the techniques of intertextuality and suspense also widely in his writing. Being an influential artist, he had combined space, time and behaviour with the concept of suspense to maximize the impact of suspense. One thing be noted about his style that he adopted no specific style for his writing. He did not devise any style rather it was adopted as per the demands of the situation and context. His fictional techniques were matchless and inspired other writers. It was these stylistic aspects that made him a writer of high caliber.

With regard to his style he was best known for his ability to create engaging, highly creative, interwoven, and tightly knitted plots in both in his short stories and novels. He had the capacity to project the complex themes and matters in a flawless easy manner in fictional as well as in non-fictional works. Utilization of literary tools like irony, humor, metaphor, and simile were also frequent in his work. Most of his fiction was set in the background of Columbia where medieval and modern beliefs and traditions clashed with each other. These projection at one hand had realistic touch and historical on the other hand. The autobiographical hints were also recurrent features of Garcia Marquez's fictional style. This made him not only a rarest novelist but also a highly skillful crafter of short stories. All these stylistics qualities of Garcia Marquez had established him not only the greatest Columbian novelist but also one of the greatest novelists of the 20th century. Due to his superb craftsmanship he has not only attained fame among his readers but also received much appreciation from literary critics.

10.2.4 Themes in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's Works:

There are numerous ideas that reoccurred time and again in Garcia Marquez's fiction. One of the chiefs among them is the use of solitude. He used it in individual characters as well as in overall development of themes. At time he incorporated the technique of interior monologue to further intensify the theme of solitude. Through monologue he also projected the actual dialogues between the characters. Through them he showed that people are least concerned about

the lives of others, they are just concerned about themselves. To him, solitude is something that cannot be disintegrated from human lives. In one way or the other one has to suffer from it in any stage of one's life. It is the language, culture, and social background that assist in responding to the situation termed as solitude.

Another recurrent idea in his work was the frequent use of violence. It mainly came from the civil war between political parties of Columbia. Even his own study and life got disturbed because of that civil war. Time and again he had depicted the impact of violence and he was of the opinion that it had done more of bad than of any good in the lives of the people. Although, he never talked about the actual events but there was a message and hints towards those events of violence. The war between conservative and liberal of Columbia of 1960s resulted in slaying of hundreds and thousands of people and it was natural to have hints of those events in his writing. Situation of curfew, censorship of press and underground press are clear cut hints towards those events that were associated with war, killing, and violence. While talking about violence Garcia Marquez himself commented as “fragmented portrayal of social disintegration by the violence.”

Macondo, a fictional town, is another recurrent idea in many of his fictional writing. He had used the history, cultural, and geographical setting in abundance in general sense, not in a specific term. He clarified the use of Macondo as “Macondo is not so much a place as a state of mind, which allows you to see what you want, and how you want to see it.” Hence, this literary and fictional town had attained much significance in his writing. In the words of Stevens about Macondo, “its geography and inhabitants constantly invoked by teachers, politicians, and tour depicts agents...” made it “... hard to believe it is a sheer fabrication.” His most renowned novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* took place in the same imaginary town and delineated about the town from its foundation to its doom.

10.2.5 Gabriel Garcia Marquez as Journalist:

Apart from a writer he was also a journalist. He used the journalistic tools to achieve more impactful and authentic piece of fiction. His investigating character assisted him a great deal in exploring the true sense of his characters. Most of his personal experiences as a journalist and his topics as a columnist later turned out to be the subject matters of his fictional works. Standard journalistic tools such as chronicling can be seen in *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. In *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* reporting techniques of witness and sources can also be traced. His narrators often made use of quotes and commentary just like the tone of a reporter or

investigator. Like a journalist he was of the view that the opinion of a writer is never biased or prejudiced but there is no denying that in few cases it is there in the form of narrators.

He began his journalistic career in 1947 with *Universal* as a reporter. He worked till 1952 for *El Herald*, for *El Espectador* till 1955, worked for *Momento* Magazine in 1958 and 1959. He formed Prensa News agency, worked as correspondent and reporter in Cuba, New York and Havana. He had also honorary membership of “American Academy of Arts and Letters.” During his journalistic career he contributed columns, reports, news stories, short stories, and essays. He also contributed as film critics and investigating reporter. He used this forum for the projection of his political ideology. He expressed his opinion on current issues. He did editorial and advertising-based projects other than screen plays and films. He tried his luck in production but did not receive much prominence in this field. Through journalistic medium he worked for social justice which was duly recognized by Swedish Academy while bestowing him Nobel Prize for Literature.

There is a fascinating combination of literary and journalistic flair in his works. His journalistic exposure had undoubtedly influenced his literary career. He made use of literary expressions like metaphor, similes and adjectives in his journalistic writings. He was of the opinion that journalist can learn from writers and writers from journalists. General and common tools can be adopted from either field and can be used by either journalist or by a writer. Politically he was always an ardent supporter of left wings. He had support and personal link with Columbian communist party though he never joined it as a member. He also offered financial support to Venezuelan political party. It was due to these political affiliations he was denied the visa of United States of America. Throughout his literary career he projected political ideology though sometime unintentionally.

Check your progress:

1. When did he start his journalistic career?

2. Did he use literary expressions in his journalistic writings?

10.2.6 Conclusion:

Garcia Marquez was an outstanding figure and a matter of great pride for Columbia. He won Nobel Prize for Literature which painted Columbia on the map of literary height. He also outdid other contemporaries. In addition to his literary and journalistic talent he had great

admiration and support for film and cinema. Though most of his works had been adopted for film but none of them got much fame and admiration on film screen. He was undoubtedly the greatest Spanish language writer and one of the most influential exercisers of magical realism. In addition, he was the greatest Columbian who ever lived on the map of the world. He was a novelist, short story writer, journalist, and screenwriter. He was the first Columbian who had won Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982. Before it he was awarded “Neustadt International Prize for Literature” in 1972. Though he studied law but he preferred to become a journalist and a fictionist. He told to Associated Press News Agency, “I’m a journalist. I’ve always been a journalist; my books couldn’t have been written if I weren’t a journalist because all the material was taken from reality.” His first novel *Leaf Storm* got published in 1955 when he was mere 27 years of age.

He was loved by the readers because of his fictional and narrational style. He matchlessly blended magic with reality which became popular genre among the readers. His work was not only famous among readers but also attained appreciation from literary critics. He studied law because his parents wished him to be a lawyer but during the study, he realized that he was meant for writing and journalism. He initially started his writing career as a journalist but he was equally good in fictional and non fictional writing. Though he had fusion of magic and supernatural elements in his writing but mostly his themes were based on realities of life. It was these qualities as an artist that made him endeared to readers and critics as well. He was awarded numerous awards “for his novels and short stories, in which the fantastic and the realistic are combined in a richly composed world of imagination, reflecting a continent's life and conflicts.”

Keeping in view the literary services and stature of Garcia Marquez it is hard to imagine how the world of literature would have been without him. He was not only the greatest artist of Columbia but also one of the renowned names of literary horizon of all Times. His fame and repute were not limited to his own country or region rather it had changed the entire face of literature. He was known as “Gabo” in his native land and in all the other parts of the world as the pioneer of magic realism and fabulous novelist, short story writer, and journalist. Due to his contribution in magic realism his work had attained wide range of viewership, exceptional commercial success, and considerable appreciation from critics and readers. Numerous writers including Isabel Allende and Salman Rushdie were influenced by Marquez. He was a political and social activist as he thought that a writer must speak the view of the public. He was having

leftist view. He was also emotionally attached with the tragic political upheaval in his own native country.

Check your progress:

1. Which was the first novel published by Marquez?

3. Name one writer who is influenced by the magic realism style of Marquez.

10.3 Learning Outcomes

After going through the Unit, you should have been able to:

- know the life sketch and socio-political scenario of Gabriel García Márquez, the Columbian author.
- comprehend the writing style of the author.
- understand different themes used by Gabriel García Márquez in his writings.
- know the author's contribution in journalism and literature.

10.4 Glossary

Magic realism: A literary style or genre that combines naturalistic details and narrative with surreal or dreamlike elements.

Screenwriter: One who writes for the screen, who writes drama for film or television; especially a professional who knows the conventions appropriate to such works.

Neustadt International Prize: A biennial award for literature sponsored by the University of Oklahoma and its international literary publication, *World Literature Today*. It is considered one of the more prestigious international literary prizes, often compared with the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Nobel Prize: It is five separate prizes that, according to Sir Alfred Nobel's will of 1895, are awarded to "those who, during the preceding year, have conferred the greatest benefit to humankind." Nobel Prizes are awarded in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or

Medicine, Literature, and Peace (Nobel characterized the Peace Prize as “to the person who has done the most or best to advance fellowship among nations, the abolition or reduction of standing armies, and the establishment and promotion of peace congresses”).

Macondo: A fictional town described in Gabriel García Márquez’s novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Lymphoma: Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system, which is part of the body's germ-fighting network

Supernatural: Ghostly, paranormal

Prestigious: Prominent, esteemed

Intertextuality: The relationship between texts, especially literary ones

Stylistics: The study of literary style, and how it changes within different contexts

10.5 Sample Questions

10.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1982? _____
(a) T.S. Eliot (b) D.H. Lawrence
(c) Garcia Marquez (d) Ezra Pound
2. Gabriel Garcia Marquez received Neustadt International Prize for literature in _____.
(a) 1882 (b) 1872
(c) 1972 (d) 1982
3. Gabriel García Márquez was a/an _____ writer.
(a) English (b) American
(c) Irish (d) Columbian
4. Gabriel García Márquez was born in _____.
(a) 1827 (b) 1927
(c) 1972 (d) 1900
5. Who penned the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*? _____
(a) Shakespeare (b) J.M. Synge
(c) G.B. Shaw (d) Gabriel Garcia Marquez
6. Macondo is a mythical town created by _____.

- (a) Thomas Hardy (b) R.K. Narayan
(c) William Faulkner (d) Gabriel Garcia Marquez
7. Who is affectionately known as Gabo by Latin Americans? _____
(a) Garcia Marquez (b) Robert Frost
(c) William Faulkner (d) May Angelou
8. *Eyes of a Blue Dog* is a collection of _____ by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.
(a) Poems (b) Short Stories
(c) Letters (d) Essays
9. Which is the first novel by Gabriel Garcia Marquez? _____
(a) *Leaf Storm* (b) *Marriage and Family*
(c) *Fame* (d) *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
10. What is the mother tongue of Gabriel Garcia Marquez? _____
(a) English (b) Spanish
(c) French (d) Arabic

10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Which is most celebrated text of Gabriel Garcia Marquez? Why?
2. What is magic realism?
3. Mention few notable works and achievements of Garcia Marquez.
4. Write a short note about Garcia Marquez as a journalist.
5. Why was Garcia Marquez exiled to Europe?

10.5.3. Long Answer Questions:

1. Give a biographical sketch of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.
2. Discuss important themes in the writing of Garcia Marquez.
3. Comment on the writing style of Garcia Marquez.

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Aghaei, M. B. (2015). Gabriel Garcia Marquez; The Significant Message of His Literary Discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 4(2), 185-188.
2. Bell-Villada, G. H. (2010). *Garcia Marquez: The man and his work*. University of North, Carolina Press.
3. Janes, R. (2013). Stephen M. Hart. Gabriel Garcia Marquez. *Studies in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Literature*, 37(2), 171-174.
4. Ospovata, L. (1980). Gabriel Garcia Marquez on Literature, Himself, and His Work. *Soviet Studies in Literature*, 16(4), 46-77.



Unit – 11: Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*

Structure

11.0 Introduction

11.1 Objectives

11.2 *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*

11.2.1 Plot of the Story

11.2.2 Characters in the Story

11.2.3 Class Conflict in the story

11.2.4 Pretense and Dissimulation

11.2.5 Description of Cage

11.3 Learning Outcomes

11.4 Glossary

11.5 Sample Questions

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

11.0 Introduction

Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born in Aracataca, Colombia on 6th March 1927. He is a Spanish novelist, short story writer, screenwriter and journalist. He is popular with his nickname, 'Gabo' or 'Gabito' in countries of Latin America. He is considered as one of the most influential writers in Spanish Literature and one of the significant writers of 20th century in world literature because of wide range of translations of his works in various languages which has made his writing accessible for non-Spanish readers around the world and which has contributed in spreading his fame around the globe. He is the recipient of the prestigious Nobel Prize for literature on 10th December 1982. He was the first Columbian and fourth Latin American to receive this award. Before that he won the Neustadt International Prize for Literature in 1972. In his early days of life, he left law school and opted for a career in Journalism. Though a journalist, he wrote many acclaimed non-fiction books and short story collections but he gained global fame with his novels; *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981) and *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985). These novels and his other works were very successful both critically as well as commercially.

He is credited with popularizing magic realism; a literary style which combines magical elements with realistic situations. Being inspired by his birthplace, Aracataca, he has set some of his works in the fictional village of Macondo. Garcia Marquez has experienced solitude in his childhood because his parents were away from him and he grew up with his grandparents so he presents the theme of solitude in his works very oftenly. He was highly influenced by his grandparents who shaped his personality in his early days. From his grandfather, he learnt to resist any atrocities and from his grandmother he learnt the unique way of storytelling, which many years later he used in his masterpiece novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He published his first poems in a school magazine when he was studying in the Colegio Jesuita San Jose during the 1940s. Reading the translation of *Metamorphosis* in his early days he became influenced by Franz Kafka. His first published work was "La tercera resignacion" in newspapers, *El Espectador* in the edition of 13 September 1947.

In 1948, he joined Universidad de Cartagena after the bloody disturbance on 9th April. Unfortunately, he never finished his higher studies but many Universities, including Columbia University, New York have honoured him with doctorate degrees. During 1948-49, he joined Barranquilla Group which helped in the development of his literary career. There he started working with Ramon Vinyes and read works of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner. He was also able to go deep in the Caribbean culture. In 1957, he joined the *Momento* magazine but left in 1958 because of differences in opinion with the owner. Being a leftist since his early days because of his grandfather's inspiration, he started writing against imperialism from the beginning of his writing career. His anti-imperial writing includes: *Changing the History of Africa* in 1991 and had friendly terms with Fidel Castro. Being a socialist and anti-imperialist, he hated the domination of the United States in the world. This led to visa denial by the US immigration authorities as he was banned by the US government which was lifted by Bill Clinton. In 1992, he founded QAP newscast which aired till 1997 which had advocated free journalism. Being an influential person globally, he acted as mediator in many negotiations between the Colombian government and the guerrillas fighters

Being a film critic of international repute, he worked in many Latin American countries and wrote several screenplays. He was also elected as a Head of the Latin American Film Foundation. His writings have inspired writers and directors around the world who have adapted several films based on his writings mainly in Mexico, Italy, UK, Costa Rica and Hungary. In 1999, he started writing his memoir and three years later he published the first volume of his

trilogy, *Living to Tell the Tale* (*Vivir para Contarla*). He died on 17th April 2014, at the age of 87. In his obituary of Garcia Marquez, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos called him "the greatest Columbian who ever lived".

In terms of writing style, his stories were mainly based on his native place, Columbia, focussing on reality. In some of his work he experimented basically with less approaches to reality. Being an expert on magic realism, his works are not only a reflection of his native country's culture and history but of the entire continent and hence he is considered as a master storyteller. Credit goes to him for making Columbian literature famous all over the world.

His works include six novels: *Evil Hour* (1962), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975), *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), *The General in His Labyrinth* (1989) and *Of Love and Other Demons* (1994), four novellas, *Leaf Storm* (1955), *No One Writes to the Colonel* (1961), *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1981), *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* (2004) and 6 Short stories collections, *Eyes of a Blue Dog* (1947), *Big Mama's Funeral* (1962), *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother* (1972), *Collected stories* (1984), *Strange Pilgrims* (1993), and *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings* (1968). He has also published 9 non-fiction books of critical acclaim.

11.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- make your acquaintance with Gabriel Garcia Marquez
- make you familiar with Garcia's writing style
- understand the plot structure and theme of the story
- analyze Garcia's *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon* as an example of class conflict
- explain *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon* as story of pride versus humility

11.2 *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*

11.2.1 Plot of the Story:

Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon is a story by Gabriel Garcia Marquez which was published in 1962. It is unique in a sense that it can be interpreted in two ways; either it is simple

or it is ambiguous. Individuals can interpret it in two ways. Either it can be interpreted reading in a plain way or one can find a deeper meaning which seems hidden and it is necessary to have a close study of the text. The story, Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon is basically written in Spanish and has been translated from Spanish to English and thus it has reached audiences making Garcia Marquez an iconic figure in the history of Literature. Surprisingly, the name of the Balthazar's which has been taken from the Bible. Though it is not clear whether it is intentional or coincidental.

The plot of the story is set in a small town and the protagonist. Balthazar is a thirty year old, poor carpenter who is struggling with basic needs because of his low income. He doesn't have any privilege and recognition in his locality. For two weeks he has been making a bird-cage with outstanding beauty and quality. In making the cage, he completely lost himself so much that he didn't care about himself and because of his appearance, Ursula called him Capuchin because. He put all his efforts into making it because he believed that though momentarily it could break the social barrier which segregated him from the rich people of his area. He wished to rise to fame with it. It came out to be something which was a fine example of art and highly desirable. One of the rich Doctors of his area wished to buy it for his wife but he denied selling it to him. This reflects his high expectations associated with the creation. So he went to the house of Chepe Montiel, one of the wealthiest men of the city but miser in temperament who doesn't like to spend a penny on any art's piece. This is somewhat a daring attempt on his part because otherwise there are no other chances of him being invited to his mansion. Seeing him in the house, Chepe Montiel got agitated and started yelling at him, though his son, Pepe, was highly impressed by the bird-cage and wanted it. In order to humiliate Chepe Montiel, he replies that his son has contacted him and he is giving it as a gift to him. He has visited them in order to sell it.

Though he was not able to sell his hard work to one of the wealthiest men as he wished, he felt content because he was able to hurt the ego of one of the richest men of his town. His wife, Ursula, is unaware of all these happenings. She has a notion that he might have sold it and received a fair amount. Though Balthazar didn't receive any money, he felt himself a winner and celebrated his victory in the bar with a crowd buying drinks for them with no money in his pocket. He lies to the people that he extracted money for the cage. In his drunk state, he also declares that he is about to begin a large enterprise to create "million cages" and suggests the crowd to work quickly before all the rich die as the rich can't even get angry anymore. The title of the story is his celebration in the bar which resulted in a marvelous afternoon because he

acquired enough recognition for selling the cage which he didn't sell. Ursula was waiting for him at night with a good dinner. She didn't believe it when someone told her that Balthazer is drunk and buying beers for everyone in the hall, but she didn't believe it because he never used to drink.

Later Balthazer ended up in the Brothel, excessively drunk but immensely happy for the first time in his entire life. He gave his watch as a pawn to secure payment for the bill to take it the next day. He then spent his night on the street unaware of the fact that his shoes were being stolen and in the morning, the ladies passing by who were going to the Church thought him to be dead.

In the story, the writer has depicted the cage as a symbol to represent the attitude of rich and poor towards art and creativity; while Chepe Montiel is indifferent towards cage which is a piece of art, for Balthazar it is so valuable that he spends his two week in making it and afterwards presents it to an innocent child because for him his art piece is valuable and should be given to a pure soul.

Check your Progress

1. When did Balthazar's *Marvelous Afternoon* get published?

2. Did Balthazar sell his cage?

3. Was Balthazar really happy?

11.2.2 Characters in the Story:

1. Balthazar

Balthazar is the central character of the story, *Balthazer's Marvelous Afternoon*. He is a common carpenter who supports art and works relentlessly whatever he makes. He has been accustomed to making cages since childhood because of his circumstances as life has been very hard for him. Consequently, for two weeks he worked untiringly to make the wooden cage which came out very beautiful. He is a very talented and hard working carpenter who has full confidence in his work and never cares about the result. He is an expert in his work but he doesn't care about it. Some people in his area believed that the cage which he had made is the most beautiful cage present on this earth but he seems to be ignorant about it. He is simple by heart and does not believe in outward appearance. Though being poor, he is full of pride and

never bows down in any situation. He worked very hard on the cage but gave it for free to Chepe Montiel's son out of generosity and pride.

2. Ursula

Ursula is the lady who has been living with Balthazar for four years. They are neither married, nor have children. But she looks after him as his wife and does all the household chores. She is always concerned about him and worries about his health and work. She pursues him to demand more money on the artistic pieces which he makes. She praises his work and encourages him always to do more creative work. Sometimes, she seems to be critical of Balthazar's behaviour just for his betterment. The most relevant thing is that she trusts Balthazar so much that she didn't believe it when people told her Balthazar had drunk.

3. Chepe Montiel

Chepe Montiel is one of the wealthiest men of the town. But though having immense wealth, he is a miser to the very extent that he doesn't like to spend any money on art pieces no matter how valuable it may be. He is an arrogant man and does not allow people of lower section of society to enter his house. He is widely disliked by his town people because of his attitude. They think that it is very difficult to extract money from him. So when they get the idea that Balthazar has sold his cage to him, they are very surprised. In response to him, Doctor Octavio Giraldo is one of the respected men of the city. He is a rich and good-hearted man. He wanted to buy the cage from Balthazar for his wife but he didn't sell it to him and tell him that it has been sold though it was all lies. Balthazar wanted to rise to fame so he went to Chepe Montiel's house. He got angry, seeing Balthazar in his house and when he came to know that his son had placed the order, he started behaving in a maniacal way. He asked Balthazar to sell it to somebody else but seeing the whimsical situation, Balthazar had to say that he had brought it as a gift for his son.

4. Narrator

There is a third person narrator in the story who seems to be omniscient in his attitude and in the dialogue delivery. The simplicity of the narration, the dialogic discourse between characters of different levels make it very interesting for the readers. He has described the characters in the story in such a way that the readers are able to explore the thinking of each and every character. Large sections of the story are mostly told in dialogues between characters. He has made direct comments about all the characters. The narrator has told the story in the most simple and lucid way so that it is easily understandable for the readers.

Check your progress

1. Why did Balthazar not sell his cage to Doctor Octavo?

2. Why did Balthazar give the cage as a present to Pepe?

3. Why was Balthazar happy?

11.2.3 Class Conflict in the Story:

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is one of the best voices in Latin American literature who is famous for his socialist and Marxist ideals which he reflected in his writings. *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon* is one such fine example in which he has tried to expose some of the ideals of Marxism in a simple way without any political discourse which are the accomplishments of one of the greatest writers. Marxist writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez have the notion that capitalism exploits workers leading to class and economic conflict creating rifts among people. We can clearly see this in the story, 'Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon' where the economic difference creates class conflict in people.

In the setting of the story there is a clear indication of class conflict as the characters are described on the basis of economic condition in the social structure. The story is set in a small town, where everybody knows each other and are aware of the financial condition of people living around them. They even know their profession & creativity and are aware of everyday happenings in their lives. When Balthazar makes a cage, the people living in his locality come to see it. They feel happy to see the beauty of the cage and are excited to know whom he will sell and what price.

Marquez has portrayed Chepe Montiel, the rich man of the town as a symbol of capitalism who is arrogant and has the tendency to exploit others. He is not interested in any art piece or creativity. He showed no interest in the masterpiece made by Balthazar in the form of a cage. When Balthazar tells him that his son has ordered the cage, he gets agitated and behaves like a maniac. He doesn't want to spend a single penny on the cage but Balthazar tells everybody that he has paid 60 pesos for the cage. This is a fine example of Balthazar giving into capitalism; a Marxist concept when an individual coming to power believes in respect which his town's people give him. This is like shifting in power from capitalist forces to working class as Balthazar brings down a wealthy and powerful man, Chepe Montiel who is extremely greedy.

Gifted of the cage instead of selling is an act which is symbolically an illusion of freedom. This results in his celebration which is termed a marvelous afternoon. Though just for one day he lived like a rich man. Before this incident, he was a simple human being but Montiel's house episode had dehumanized him and he changed his attitude. This is an example of how money and power changes a person's attitude from simplicity to ambiguity. It diverts a person's attitude from creative expressions towards enjoyment. Balthazar goes to the bar, drinks excessively, buys drinks for the crowd and goes to the brothel. This is an unexpected behavior on his part. In the morning, he is found on the street lying dead which is somewhat a punishment for his dehumanized behavior and his lies about selling a cage. Earlier, he was a famous carpenter who was very much liked by his town people because of his artistic skill especially because of making a beautiful cage.

The most beautiful cage made by Balthazar is also a symbolic figure. It represents the work of an art as well as the working class and the way the capitalistic society keeps it confined only for the rich people to buy it and appreciate it. Poor people can only see it from a distance. It evokes amazement and pleasure to all. But for rich people like Chepe Montiel, it is nothing or in the words of Doctor Octavio, "This is a flight of imagination".

Check your progress

1. Is Marxist element present in *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*?

2. Is the portrayal of Chepe Montiel, a symbol of capitalism?

3. Is gifting of a cage, symbolically an allusion of freedom?

11.2.4 Pretense and Dissimulation:

Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon* has provided space for many critics to explore myriads' themes which are complex in nature. The writer has used varied techniques and diverse characterization in telling the story. The plot of the story focuses on Balthazar, the protagonist who is a common man, a carpenter by profession. He is so skilled that whatever he makes becomes a piece of art. The story opens with him making a cage untiringly for two weeks. He was so engrossed in making it that he forgot himself. Ursula, the love of his love and the people of his town highly respects him because of his talents and always encourages him. The main incident of the plot is the Balthazar's visit to Chepe Montiel's house with the

purpose of selling the cage but on the contrary he gifts it to his son, Pepe as Chepe is not interested in buying the cage which is very much liked by the people of his town, even by his wife and son. This clearly reflects his disinterested attitude towards art and talent.

In *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*, there are many incidents from beginning till end, and the actions in the story are very impressive; one by one each action arouses interest in readers to read the story till the end. The story is a fine example of pretense and dissimulation. We see that different characters in the story show pretense and dissimulation when they are caught up in tight corners situations. The way they escape from the hard reality with pretense is an interesting thing to read. It is a simple and highly emotional story but it seems complex as it blends experience with emotions.

The story is interesting with lively major and minor characters and location making it very fascinating. Though interesting and lively, it is also poignant in nature as we see the struggle of Balthazar from beginning till the end. He works very hard for two weeks to make the cage but in the end he doesn't receive any money for it. He even didn't care about his outward appearance and, like a genuine and dedicated artist, he put his strength into making the cage. Ursula and his town people had very high expectations regarding the sale of the cage so he had to pretend that he sold at a high rate to the wealthy yet miser of his town, Chepe Montiel. This also reflects hypocrisy on his part, instead of telling about his humility and generous act of gifting the cage to Pepe Montiel to the people he conceals it from them. This is very ironic as the rich person like Chepe Montiel is not paying the money and the poor like Balthazar is gifting his hard work and a means of livelihood to the rich man. On the other hand, Chepe Montiel in not buying the cage which is very much admired by his wife and son is an act of pretense as though being rich in terms of money he behaves worse than poor. The omniscient narrator of the story who speaks in third person makes it simple to understand by his lucid style and the interesting description of characters.

Check your progress

1. What is the main incident of the story?

2. Is Chepe Montiel a hypocrite?

3. Was it a pretense on Balthazar's part to hide the gifting of the cage?

11.2.5 Description of Cage:

Balthazar worked very hard on the cage for two weeks and the outcome was that his followers were considering it to be the best work of his life. Ursula was very amazed with the cage and believed that it was the biggest cage which he had ever seen in his life. Though he was unaware of the fact, cage-making was something which he was accustomed to since childhood. There was a crowd in front of his house to see the cage. As the narrator describes, so many people came to see it that a crowd formed in front of the house and Balthazar had to take it down and close the shop'. This act also reflects that as a carpenter, he was very famous in his town because of his craftsmanship. Everyone in his area was eager to see what amount he would receive by selling the cage and to whom he would sell it.

Narrator has vividly described the cage in a variety of words. The appearance of the cage was majestic with 'its enormous dome of wire', 'three stories inside', 'passageways and compartments'. 'It seemed like a small-scale model of a gigantic ice factory'. One of the admirers of the cage who was an esteemed personality of the city was an old Physician, Doctor Octavio Giraldo who wanted to buy it as a present for his wife but he was not successful in his attempt. He appreciated the cage in the following words; 'This is a flight of imagination' and 'It would be enough to hang it in the trees so it could sing by itself,' 'It's very pretty,' 'Extremely pretty.'

Chepe Montiel's wife also praised the cage and said, 'What a marvelous thing.', 'I've never seen anything like it in my life.' But the artistic beauty of the cage and the immense praise couldn't move the miser Chepe Montiel who doesn't want to spend any money on it though his child, Pepe liked it a lot. Balthazar, considering it as a matter of pride and also as an act of generosity, presented it to Pepe. Though by doing so he didn't receive any monetary gain but still he was immensely happy that he had let down the richest man of his town by his act of kindness.

11.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you should have been able to understand:

- Gabriel Garcia Marquez's writing
- Class-conflict in the story
- Everyday struggle of a common man

11.4 Glossary

- Capuchin:** A cloak and the hood formerly worn by women
- Bristly:** Having a stiff and prickly texture
- Hammock:** A bed made of strong cloth (canvas) or rope, which is hung up between two trees or poles.
- Muttering:** To speak in a low, quiet and often angry voice that is difficult to hear
- Incoherencies:** The quality of being illogical, inconsistent or unclear
- Stifling:** Making one feel constrained or oppressed
- Cicada:** A large homopterous insect with long transparent wings, found chiefly in warm countries
- Troupial:** A gregarious songbird of the American oriole family, typically having orange and black plumage and yellow eyes.
- Resonant:** Deep, clear and continuous sound
- Specifications:** An act of identifying something precisely or of stating a precise requirement
- Shrugged:** Dismissed something as unimportant
- Templated:** A shaped piece of rigid material used as a pattern for processes such as cutting out, shaping or drilling
- Crammed:** Completely filled to the point of overflowing
- Obsession:** An idea or thought that continually preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind
- Siesta:** An afternoon rest or nap, especially one taken during the hottest hours of the day in a hot climate
- Clamour:** A loud and confused noise, especially that of people shouting
- Decorous:** Polite and restrained
- Candor:** The quality of open and being honest; frankness
- Grandstand:** The main stand, usually roofed, commanding the best view for spectators at racecourses or sports grounds.
- Surgical:** Done with great precision, especially with reference to a swift and highly accurate military attack from the air
- Perplexedly:** Surprisingly
- Serenity:** Calm, peaceful and serene

- Emitted:** Produce and discharge
- Guttural:** Produced in the throat; harsh sounding
- Pacify:** Put an end to anger, agitation or excitement
- Jukebox:** A machine that automatically plays a selected musical recording when a coin is inserted
- Toasted:** Cooked or brown by exposure to a grill fire or other source of radiant heat
- Delirious:** In an acutely disturbed state of mind characterized by restlessness, illusions and incoherence; affected by delirium
- Rouge:** A red powder or cream used as a cosmetic for coloring the cheeks or lips
- Pawn:** To use something as collateral when you're borrowing money
- Spread-eagled:** Lying or standing with arms and legs outstretched.

11.5 Sample Questions

11.5.1 Objective Questions:

- Gabriel Garcia Marquez was born on 6th March 1927 in _____.
 - Peru
 - Columbia
 - Chile
 - Dominican Republic
- Balthazar's *Marvelous Afternoon* was basically translated from _____ to English.
 - French
 - Italian
 - German
 - Spanish
- Garcia Marquez received the Nobel prize for literature in December _____.
 - 1980
 - 1982
 - 1985
 - 1983
- Garcia Marquez gained global fame with which novel? _____
 - One Hundred Years of Solitude

- (b) Chronicle of a Death Foretold
- (c) Love in the time of Cholera
- (d) In Evil Hours

5. Which US President lifted the ban on him?

- (a) Barack Obama
- (b) George Bush
- (c) Bill Clinton
- (d) Donald Trump

6. _____ called Balthazar as Capuchin.

- (a) Ursula
- (b) Octavio Giraldo
- (c) Pepe Montiel
- (d) Chepe Montiel

7. In February, Balthazar had been _____ years old.

- (a) Thirty one
- (b) Thirty five
- (c) Thirty
- (d) Thirty three

8. Chepe Montiel's son's name was _____.

- (a) Peter
- (b) Pepe
- (c) Petey
- (d) Pip

9. Chepe Montiel was _____ in terms of money.

- (a) Miser
- (b) Generous
- (c) Kind
- (d) Spendthrift

10. Balthazar pawns his _____.

- (a) House
- (b) Chain
- (c) Ring



(d) Watch

11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the message of the story in *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*?
2. What is the symbolic significance of the cage in *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*?
3. Is *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon* about magical realism?
4. Is *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon* an escape from existing realities?
5. Explain the moral dilemma in *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*.

11.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain class conflict in *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*.
2. Explain Balthazar as a fine example of pride and generosity in *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon*.
3. Is *Balthazar's Marvelous Afternoon* a complex saga of human emotions and experience?

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Bell-Villada, Gene H. *García Márquez: The Man and His Work*, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
2. Bhalla, Alok, ed. *García Márquez and Latin America*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1987.
3. Bloom, Harold, ed. *Gabriel García Márquez*, New York: Chelsea House, 2007.
4. Williams, Raymond L. *Gabriel García Márquez*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984.

Unit - 12: *The Portrait in the Rock*

Structure

12.0 Introduction

12.1 Objectives

12.2 *The Portrait in the Rock*

12.2.1 Pablo Neruda as a Poet: An Introduction

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12.0 Introduction

Latin American literature is an interesting combination of styles and influences that demonstrates a hybrid literary tradition comprising Spanish, African and the Indigenous cultures. The endeavor to create national and continental identity after independence, its relation with the dominant US and the old continent have given paths to many literary movements in Latin American Literature, most importantly in poetry. Initially, Latin American poetry was more of an imitation of the European style in its political, religious, social, and artistic fervor. The first Latin American autochthonous poetic movement, *Modernismo* and later many avant-garde movements produced as an aftermath of revolutions, e.g., Mexican Revolution, and later the interaction of Spanish and Latin American literature during the Civil war of Spain, anti-colonial struggle in the Global South, and marxist movements across the globe brought broader perspectives in Latin American literature, specifically in the field of poetry. Also, various revolutions that took place all over Latin America helped to produce great writings and many prolific writers.

Latin American writers like Jose Martí, Ruben Dario, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, Nicolas Guillen, Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas

Llosa, Julio Cortazar and Cesar Vallejo caught the world's attention by their undeniable greatness. Poets like Ruben Dario, Pablo Neruda, Cesar Vallejo, Gabriela Mistral, Octavio Paz and the like have had an everlasting impact on Latin American Literature. Their works addressed socio-political, as well as universal questions. The Latin American writers, who won the Nobel Prize like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Octavia Paz, Gabriela Mistral, Miguel Angel Asturias and Pablo Neruda, Mario Vargas Llosa established the reputation of Latin American Literature outside the realms of the Spanish speaking world and helped achieve its due place in the world republic of letters.

Latin American poetry characterizes the political and social concerns more than any other theme as poets take their inspiration from the chaotic and suppressive colonial history as well as from the revolutions that have taken place over years in almost all the Latin American countries. Latin American poetry talks about the problems and dilemmas of common people and vociferation for their rights. Latin American poetry is a mass voice of suppressed and indigenous people in Latin America and reunites the public in their pain. Latin American writers and poets have emphasized on their indigenous identity and tried to establish at the global stage, and that's the reason that their works discuss the problems of indigenous identity at individual level and nation's identity at global level.

Latin American poetry has been the mechanism to express the changes happening in Latin America since the rebellious commencements against Spanish colonialism and tells the saga of the political freedom fighting; and irrespective of being diverse, the fundamental characteristics are the same in the poetry written in any part of Latin America. Latin American poetry has developed inordinately during all these years in its diverse themes, forms, styles, and creative idioms beginning from the ballads and romances in the Middle Ages, epic form to celebrate the renaissance spirit, barroco form of poetry with its satirical tone, historiographic descriptions about colonial past and revolutions in poetry, lyrical and spiritual poetries, and the modernist poetry describing the uncompromising aesthetic beauty. 20th century Latin American poetry has been a period of vanguardist and surrealist poems that freed itself from the traditional constraints and portrayal of sublime beauty. 20th century produced innumerable talented poets: Octavio Paz, Nicolás Guillén, Gabriela Mistral, Vicente Huidobro, Pablo Neruda, José Lezama Lima, Nicanor Parra, Luis Palés Matos, Jorge Luis Borges, Oliverio Girondo, and Ernesto Cardenal. Latin America also produced three Nobel laureate poets: Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, and Octavio Paz. Pablo Neruda was like the pole star of Latin American literature who

gained respect all over the world. He was a major vanguard poet, and he focused his poetry on social and political issues to raise the voices of his time, e.g., communist struggle, anti-colonial struggle, the Spanish Civil war and revolutionary events in Latin America. Neruda was a versatile poet who not only wrote poetry on political problems of his time, but his poetry collections also contain love and sensual poems.

12.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- read and understand the poem ‘The Portrait in the Rock’ by Pablo Neruda
- appreciate and enjoy the poem
- understand the thought and imagination contained in the poem
- acquaint the reader with the structure of the poem
- develop aesthetic sense in the reader to have pleasure from reading
- enhance love of reading and understanding poetry

12.2 *The Portrait in the Rock*

12.2.1 Pablo Neruda as a Poet: An Introduction

Pablo Neruda was one of the versatile poets Latin America has given to the world and who established Latin American poetry not only in the Spanish speaking world but the whole world. In the words of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Neruda was the greatest poet of the 20th century in any language. Mark Eisner in his biography *Neruda: The Poet's Calling*, mentioned him as: “The men haven’t discovered that in him exists / the poet who as a child was not childish.” Neruda wrote poems of love, erotic and sensual, dealing with everyday life and problems of individuals in society and most importantly political and social causes. His poetry is like a historical memorandum of his critical and political views for social change.

Nobel laureate, international diplomat, political activist and a poet with a great imaginative power, Pablo Neruda was born on July 12, 1904, in Parral, Chile. Pablo Neruda was his pen name that he adopted in 1920, taken from the then well-known Czech writer Jan Neruda. His original name was Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto, and he was brought up in a modest,

family. Neruda was born to José del Carmen Reyes, a railway worker, and Rosa Basoalto, a schoolteacher. He became motherless just after two months of his birth and afterwards his family moved to Temuco, a small town in south of Chile, where his father remarried. His father was a common man who could only think about bread and butter and to have any traditional work accepted in society to fulfill the basic needs, so he was never in the favour of poetry writing and he could never support Neruda for his career as a poet. This could have been one reason that Neruda as a young poet started to write and publish his poems under the pseudonym Pablo Neruda. Later in 1946 he legally adopted this name and is popularly known today with the same name.

Neruda was a voracious book lover, and the principal of his school in Temuco encouraged him a lot to read and write, when he entered the Temuco Boys' School in 1910 and finished his secondary schooling there in 1920. His principal was none other than the Nobel laureate poet, Gabriela Mistral who encouraged Neruda and led the young poet onto his journey of being a great poet. Neruda started his poetic career with publication of his poems in local newspapers and magazines. His first published book of poems *Crepusculario (Twilight)* came in 1923, followed by his second book *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* in 1924, that brought him success and established him among great poets in Chile and later he became the national poet of Chile: and this book remained one of the most popular books of Neruda. It is believed to be the most published book in the lifetime of Neruda.

Pablo Neruda started his literary career by writing in local newspapers and magazines, and the first work was an essay titled "Enthusiasm and Perseverance" in *La Mañana*, a local newspaper. At his early stage of career, he wrote about love, romance, and nature.

In the later part of his career as a poet, he made his writings as a tool to fight against fascism and imperialism. When Neruda was just 23 years old, he was offered a position of Honorary Consul to Rangoon and later he got the position of consular in Burma. He lived and worked in many places as consul, e.g., Rangoon, Ceylon, Buenos Aires, Singapore, Batavia, Spain etc. Neruda was very much influenced by Indian culture and life and Rabindra Nath Tagore, and he visited India four times in his lifetime. His writings became politically motivated, and he constantly wrote for social equality and justice. He wrote about the injustices done by the Global North that has tried to dominate and threaten, as well always have misused the rich natural resources of the Global South. Neruda raised the voices of common people, farmers, workers, and indigenous people in his poems.

His political writings and career have been debatable in some terms, but the whole world and specifically the western world cannot deny his due place in the western canons. He became clearer with his political views and joined the communist party after the Spanish Civil War and wrote various politically motivated poems during this period. During the Spanish Civil war time Neruda encountered many literary figures like Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Miguel Hernández, Vicente Aleixandre, and others that marked a remarkable turn in his political and literary works. His famous works comprise of: *Residence on Earth*, *A Few Things Explained*, *Spain in the Heart*, *The Third Residence* and many more. Neruda suffered at the hands of the state, and was accused of treason and lived in exile due to his staunch political beliefs. His book, *Canto General*, demonstrates his strong views about the history of America and its challenges.

His writing style was not limited to love and political poems only, but he also wrote surrealist poems, historical epics, explicit political manifesto, prose, and autobiography etc.

While Neruda was working in Batavia he met a Dutch lady, Marijke Antonietta Hagenaar Vogelzand known as Maruca and married her on 6th December 1930. But in 1943, he left his wife and started living with Delia del Carril in France and later he married her. The same year Neruda visited the ruins of the Inca Empire in Machu Picchu, Peru and he penned down his experience in his well-known poem: *The Heights of Machu Picchu* in 1945. However, the later poems of Neruda were filled with erotic, sensual and sexual views and tried to universalize the intimate emotions. However, lately his poems have been debated for gender issues.

Pablo Neruda was surrounded with controversies throughout his life due to his vocal sexuality in his poems, his political views, and his rebellion against the injustices in society. Yet the world admitted him as a great poet, and he was awarded with the Nobel prize in 1971 for his poetic contributions and “for a poetry that with the action of an elemental force brings alive a continent's destiny and dreams”. Neruda was suffering with prostate cancer, and he died on 23 September 1973. However, his driver claimed that his death was not due to any illness or natural but due to poison given by Pinchot's Junta which feared the poet's political agenda. It is still uncertain, and the panel of investigators is still in the search of the real cause of his death. Neruda remained a master of the Spanish language throughout his life as described by René de Costa “central to almost every important development in twentieth-century Spanish and Spanish American poetry”.

Check your progress:

1. Where does the poet come from?

2. Who supported the poet in the beginning of his poetic career?

3. How did the poet die?

12.2.2 A Brief Summary of the Poem:

The poem *The Portrait in the Rock* is a tale of a man known to the poet and he was falsely accused of a crime. The first line in the poem declares very clearly, “Oh yes I knew him...” that the poet was very closely connected with the person in the poem. Though it is believed that the man in the poem is the Peruvian poet César Abraham Vallejo Mendoza who became a victim of the dictatorship of the state. The poet narrates the story of the man that has left his family in Paraguay and ran to Europe. However, he was caught up by the police later and was tried by the police in a humiliating manner. The police mistreated him and beat him up till he spat blood and this blood stain can be seen through France, Denmark, Spain, and Italy until the man is dead. It was so terrifying that the poet stopped looking at the face of the man. But later, the poet figured out the face of his friend formed in stone which symbolizes the immortality of his existence in the portrait and in his own land. Though his friend suffered exile in his lifetime from his country, he has now become immortal in the form of the portrait in the country.

Pablo Neruda describes the story in the poem in a very simple manner using the words of daily common life that helps to connect the story and subject matter very well with the readers. The poem portrays the sufferings and pain of his friend at the hand of state, which any common man can easily identify with the tyranny. Neruda has connected the death of his friend with the social, political and emotional decay.

He personalizes the poem with the first line, when he says, “Oh yes I knew him, and I spent years with him.” The poem moves further with more detailed description of his friend and his very common life, his family, his relations, his house chores and almost his whole life. The poet goes deeper into his observation of tiny details, “his house, his chickens, and some half-opened books.” The poet paints the daily busy life of the person busy earning a livelihood. Then the life of his friend takes a different turn when the police called him and beat him up till he spat blood. The poet made the suffering universal, “they beat him up so much that he spat blood in France, in Denmark, in Spain, in Italy...”.

The poem becomes painful, depicting the death of his friend and how the poet stops experiencing the presence of his friend “...seeing stopped seeing his face, stopped hearing his profound silence...” in real life. The poem moves further with scenic description of nature and sensing the absence of his friend all around, but one stormy night, somewhere at a distant land in the mountains he could see the face of his friend framed on the stones. The face has all suffering intact on the frame of stone defying the bad and cold weather of the mountains, and the wind entering the nose is making the sound of moaning after his persecution. The harshness of cold weather has been submerged with the pain suffered by his friend during the exile and his brutal treatment by the police till they drag him to his death.

Finally, the poet describes how the frame on the stone has immortalized the stay in the country and nature is now making fun of the exile of his friend by the state. He is here, in the country and he will stay in his land forever. No one would be able to take or remove that from the country and neither anyone can forbid the poet to see him. His soul is going to dwell there in the country forever, the place where he belonged and spent his life. The poem ends with this note, “Changed into stone, he lives in his own country.”, which marked his presence forever to the place he belonged.

Check your progress:

1. Whose portrait does the poet see in the rock and what does it symbolize?

2. What political issue does the poem talk about?

12.2.3 Thematic Analysis of the Poem:

The poem *The Portrait in the Rock* expresses tense social and political issues through the death of his friend. Poetry of Pablo Neruda has a great impact on the society and politics of his time and his poetry cannot be separated from his political point of view. Neruda always spoke the truth without fear and that’s the reason his poetry inspires all the generations.

The poem talks about the social and political situations of the poet’s lifetime and demonstrates how the life of the public depends on the state. The state takes his friend, and he becomes a victim of police brutality. The state and the government bodies are powerful, and they behave the way they like with their citizens; and the state violates and disrespects the human value and human rights whenever it feels the citizens are diverting from the state benefits. The state enforces its ideals on its citizens to control them and the people going against them are

oppressed, disappeared, or ultimately die in the hands of police or government authorities. The poem represents the same social political confrontation by the poet, and he is raising his voice for the death of his friend who died because of the brutality of state and police. This is his voice for the common people and their rights as citizens against the oppression of the state and government.

The poem is also an anecdote of a poet's experience of his loss at the personal level. He overlooks the face of his friend, and he is not able to forget the face of his friend that later appeared on the stone. The face on the rock reminds him of his friend and his sorrow becomes more intense and deeper. Though the poet feels rejuvenated after seeing the face on the rock because now his friend is not out of the country anymore, but back to his own motherland; and he will remain there on the stones of his motherland forever. No authorities, no power of state or any kind of humiliation is going to drag his friend down from that place.

The poem deals with the theme of death which is not natural death but has been planned and brought by the powerful people in the state. The citizens are supposed to believe in the state for their security and safety, but the poem displays the other side of the picture. The state wants to have strong hold on the thought and beliefs of the citizens and is not ready to listen confronting voices of the citizens, and tortures them or murders them. The disrespectful death of his friend brings sorrow and pain to the poet. He is not able to see his face in the country anymore, but his friend has suffered exile and the brutality of his own country is more painful. The death of his friend is also a symbol of the death of human rights and social justice.

Nature also plays an important role in painting the exile, death, and sad tone of the poem. The visual imagery from nature creates a deep impact on the minds of the reader to understand the agony and suffering of his friend and the disturbed mental state of the poet when he loses his friend. The “golden and stony substance,” “night of storms”, “smooth cloak on the mountains”, “wild weather”, and “in his nose the wind was muffling, the moaning of the persecuted” -all these natural images help to portray the intensity of the death, the sufferings, the state dominance and the emergence of the idea in the form of his friend’s face on the stone.

Finally, the poem is a symbol of the fight against the oppression and injustice faced under the dictatorship rules in the Latin-American countries in the lifetime of the poet. The poet talks fiercely against the oppression of state dominance and social transgression faced by the citizens in the hands of powerful politicians and suppressive authorities of state.

Check your progress:

1. What are the political and social themes the poet is highlighting in the poem?

2. The poem is a symbol of the fight against _____ and injustice.

12.2.4 Critical Analysis of the Poem:

Pablo Neruda has written 'The Portrait in the Rock' about Cesar Vallejo who suffered the state dictatorship but he was determined to fight back and raise his voice as fiercely as he could. It is his dedication towards his strong attitude. The poem contains one stanza made up with 26 lines. It is written in blank verse that shows no rhyme scheme. The lines of the poem have implied trochaic tetrameter in it. The title of the poem, '*The Portrait in the Rock*' is a symbolic of the tale of a person who is firm as rock in his deeds and actions. It has a subjective tone from the very first line. As the poet says:

Oh yes I knew him, I spent years with him,

The poet has specified firmly that he is familiar with the person whom he is talking about in the poem. The poet has used lexical repetition with the use of 'him', 'his', from the very first line. He has used anaphora as we see the repetitions of 'his' in many lines. There are many punctuation marks used by the poet in the poem.

The poet has used many images like "rock", "golden", "stony", "half-opened books", "profound silence", "night of storms", "snow spreading", "smooth cloak", "mountains", "horseback", "formed in stone", "wild weather", "wind" and "ground" etc to convey his idea of loss, death and pain. The word 'rock' symbolizes the firmness of thought, 'golden' seems to show the clear and right path, 'stony' means strong and hard, 'half-opened books' may refer to incomplete works, 'profound silence' means death, 'night of storms' can be interpreted as difficult days for common people, 'snow spreading' refers to the spread of authoritarian regime, 'smooth cloak' refers to the rule of dictator, 'mountains' means state/nation, 'horseback' can be interpreted as emerging idea against tyranny, 'formed in stone' seems to be the victory of strong beliefs, 'wild weather' refers to adverse situation, 'wind' means change, 'ground' means holding roots etc. There are various natural images in some lines of the poem like:

then once, on a night of storms,
with snow spreading
a smooth cloak on the mountains,
on horseback, there, far off,

But these images are not similar to Wordsworth's concept of nature, rather they seem like Coleridge's 'The Rime of Ancient Mariner'.

It is an elegy because the poet is talking about his friend who has died after resisting the state's dictatorship. There is a message in the poem, that "you can kill a person but not his ideology". Though the poet has shown the tyrannical state power and a poet struggling against it who dies fighting against the state's dictatorship. But in the end, there is an optimistic attitude that the ideology of the martyred has inspired many people to rise against tyrannical rule. As the last line indicates:

Changed into stone, he lives in his own country.

Check your progress:

1. What does the title of the poem symbolize?

2. Is the poem subjective in tone?

12.2.5 The Poet and the Poem: Relationship

Pablo Neruda, a Nobel laureate poet from Chile, spoke courageously against the political and social dilemmas of his nation and dictatorial regimes in Latin-America. He started to raise his voice against social injustice from the early days of his life for example, when he was just a student, he wrote an article in the newspaper against the lower wage of the employees and their exploitation in the hands of employers. He wrote *Explaining Some Things* inspired by the death of his friend Garcia Lorca and the oppressions of the Spanish Civil War. Neruda was a communist and always criticized the tyrannies of the dictatorial government.

This poem is also written in the memory of his friend, the Peruvian poet Cesar Vallejo who faced the despotism in the hands of state and was tortured by the police that brought him to death. Neruda always wrote against the social and political injustices because he himself faced such tyrannies in the hands of his country.

The poem talks about the exile of his friend which is a very personal experience of the poet and that's the reason he could feel it so closely. Neruda himself lived in exile for many years like his friend, and when he returned to his motherland, in 1973 he was hunted by the military of his country which caused his death. He never stopped raising his voice through his writings for the problems and suppression of the common people. This connects with the life of a common man who lives and works for his family and his death leaves many works incomplete

and his own people deprived of his love, affection, and support. The poem relates all these experiences of the poet and his friend.

12.3 Learning Outcomes

The reading of the poem gives strong insight into the Latin-American reality under the dictatorships that once ravaged the continent. The students will understand the histories of suppression, struggles and all types of injustices faced by the citizens in the time of dictators in Latin America. The citizens facing brutality and deaths are very vulnerable and very pessimistic for the future. However, there have always been some people who were courageous to raise their voice against the powerful dominance and fight for the social and political injustices.

Latin America shares a similar colonial history with India, and the struggle for the freedom that took innumerable sacrifices. Furthermore, there is a constant fight of the people against the suppression and tyrannies of the post independent regimes as well. The common people anywhere go through similar pain and suffering when they raise their voices against the power and the authorities. In this poem, the poet makes it universal with the death of his friend fighting and dying for his ideas and the vision of social justice.

You also see Neruda as a strong advocate of social justice and a fighter against dictatorship of not only his country but anywhere in Latin-American.

We can also notice that, nature is always an important part of Neruda's poetry, and this poem too contains lots of natural symbols and images. The symbolic language, the sad tone and imagery of the poem deepens the sadness of the loss of his friend. The mourning takes different forms of nature and finally his friend becomes immortal in the form of a stone that cannot be removed from the motherland any further.

You become part of the experience of his friend's life and suffering as the poet has portrayed the common and simple life of his friend. The readers also witness the deep connection of the grief over the personal loss of someone close and dear to the poet. On one side, the poem arouses empathy among the readers and on the other side it arouses agony and rage against the universal suffering of common people in the hands of powerful people who are the advocates of the political benefits only and go to dreadful extents to achieve that. The students can have group discussion strategies to attain essential possible understanding of the poem as it has a historical connection to fight against suppression.

Check your progress:

1. Is the poem an elegy?

2. Is Neruda an advocate of social justice?

3. Does nature mourn the death of the poet's friend?

12.4 Glossary

Stony substance: Covered with stones, or containing stones

Spat: Forcibly eject food or liquid from one's mouth

Profound: Very great or intense

Cloak: A sleeveless outdoor garment that hangs loosely from the shoulders

Defied: Openly resist or refuse to obey, impossible nature

Muffling: Wrap or cover for warmth

Persecuted: Subject to hostility and ill-treatment (especially for racial, political, or religious beliefs)

Moaning: Lament

Exile: Barred from one's own country

12.5 Sample Questions

12.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who is the person the poem refers to?

- (a) Lover of the poet (b) A martyr
(c) The poet's friend (d) An artist

2. Which country does the poet's friend belongs to?

- (a) France (b) Chile
(c) Peru (d) Spain

3. Whom did the police call on the door?

- (a) The poet (b) Poet's friend
 (c) A man who helped his friend (d) Family of his friend
4. Whose face did the poet stop seeing?
 (a) His wife (b) His friend
 (c) His beloved (d) His master
5. Who is covered with the smooth cloak?
 (a) His friend (b) The river
 (c) The house (d) The mountains
6. Where does the poet see the face of his friend after his death?
 (a) On the riverbed (b) In the garden
 (c) On the mountains (d) In the stone
7. Where is the wind muffling?
 (a) Mountains (b) Flowers
 (c) Eyes (d) Nose
8. Who is changed into stone?
 (a) The half-opened book (b) The friend
 (c) The nose (d) The poet
9. What remains half open behind the exile of the poet's friend?
 (a) The door (b) The mouth of his friend
 (c) The book (d) The door at police station
10. Whose profound silence the poet stops hearing?
 (a) The wind (b) The snow
 (c) His friend (d) Of his country

12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How does Neruda manipulate the language in the poem to show his political distaste?
2. How is the poem subjective in theme?
3. What is the role of nature in the poem?
4. About whom the poem is talking about?
5. Who has been in exile and suffered in the poem?

12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Elaborate the theme of injustice and oppression in Latin-America through the poem? Give examples to support your answer.

2. How is Neruda relevant in today's context and how does this poem establish it? Elaborate your points in comparison with worldwide situations.
3. How the nature and imagery used in the poem are symbolic of social and political problems? Compare and contrast the situation from the poem with the real situations with the poet and his friend's life?

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Tarn, Nathaniel, Ed (1975). *Pablo Neruda: Selected Poems*. Penguin.
2. Wyman, Eva Goldschmidt; Zurita, Magdalena Fuentes (2002). *The Poets and the General: Chile's Voices of Dissent under Augusto Pinochet 1973–1989* (1st ed.). Santiago de Chile. p. 18.



Unit-13: Introduction to African Writing (Short Story)

Structure

13.0 Introduction

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13.0 Introduction

African literature is a corpus of creative and artistic writing produced by native people of African continent. It incorporates literature in various indigenous languages as well as literary productions in many colonial languages viz English, French and Portuguese. Like literatures of all other formerly big colonized countries — India, Canada and Australia, African writing has its own background in the form of oral and recorded literatures extant in multiple endemic languages. Such literature manifest the growth of Africa with all its traditional values and cultural nuances in terms of changing political scenario, religious ethos, economic challenges, social reality and psychological motivation of the native people. The literature provides the record of overall existence in a renewed manner and thereby reflects the shifting realities of Africa. As literatures of other countries, it is segmented into various categories based on the time periods, thematic concerns, and literary developments and movements. Moreover, this literature is found in almost all big recognized genres like poetry, drama, novel, short story and non-fiction prose tracts and essays.

African literature has started to gain artistic recognition and critical acclaim at the global level. Though the Africans in the beginning have written literature in their native languages, they have also produced resistant literature against colonial hegemony. Since the beginnings of the 20th century, African literature has experienced many innovations and developments. The Negritude Movement from 1930s onwards launched by Leopold Sedar Senghar, Leon Damas and Aime Cesaire, has served a vehicle for the nascent nationalist aspiration in Africa. After World War II, Africans have augmented the intensity of struggle for freedom. This is reflected in Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Ben Okri and Ngugi Wa Thiongo in the form of poetry, novels, plays, short stories and critical essays. This literature in European languages demonstrates the conflict and difference between African and colonial cultures and sensibilities. It shows the African pride, their future prospect and the rejection of illegal subjugation. In South Africa, apartheid has remained an omnipresent theme in the writings of Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee and Dennis Brutus. The contemporary African literature displays disillusionment with the existing developments. *Before the Birth of the Moon* (1989) by V.Y. Mudimbe projects the doomed love affair in a society ravaged with corruption and hypocrisy. In this way, African literature covers all precolonial, colonial, postcolonial and contemporary socio-cultural, political, economic and ethical dimensions of the concerned society in a very realistic and striking manner.

13.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- develop an overall consciousness about African literary tradition.
- familiarize you with the concept of short story and its inherent components.
- introduce you to the temporal development of African short story and its various dimensions of style and subject.
- highlight the main themes of African short story and its shifting scenario.
- show you the innovative styles of some established writers to create an exact compatibility with the substance they portray.
- make known the great landmarks in African short story and their acceptance and acclamation at world level.

13.2 Introduction to African Writing (Short Story)

13.2.1 Concept of Short Story and Its Beginning:

A short story may be defined as a short work of fiction and most of the constituent elements of bigger genre novel are applicable to it as well. Like novel, it presents the action, thought and dialogue of its characters in an aesthetic and artistic pattern of a plot. As other forms of literature, the tone of the short story may be comic, tragic, romantic, historic or satiric and so on. As in novel also, the plot of a short story can be narrated from one of the multiple available points of view. The short story may be written in the mode of realism, naturalism, fantasy as can be seen in the field of novel also. The short story differs from the bigger sister novel in the size that Aristotle named 'amplitude'. The limitation of length in short story does not permit the writer to have an elaborated tale with as many characters and details as the novel generally does. Edgar Allan Poe, the American writer who is considered the inaugurator of short story as an established literary form, is also its first critical theorist. He describes it as 'the prose tale' which can be read in one sitting ranging from half an hour to two hours. He adds that the short story is restricted to a certain singular effect to which every detail is subsidiary. Keeping in view the limited magnitude of plot, the restricted number of characters and their little space for sustained growth and development, the writer often starts the story close to, even on the verge of the climax and minimizes prior exposition and description of setting, and gears up denouement swiftly in a few sentences. The scanty narration of a nicely handed story often provides the artistry a higher visibility than the artistry in the more roomy and expansive structured novel.

The roots of the short story may be traced back to the Hebrew Biblical tales in the form of Jonah, Ruth, and Esther. Certain examples of short narratives preceding the modern concept of short story are the fable, the exemplum, the tableau, and the parable. These narratives are available in prose as well as in poetry. The present day concept of the short story originated in the beginning of 19th century. The forerunners and early practisers of the genre are: Washington Irving, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne in America; Sir Walter Scott and Mary Shelley in England; E.T.A. Hoffmann in Germany; Balzac in France; and Pushkin, Gogol and Turgenev in Russia. The literary form has truly found its fertile soil in America. Frank O'Connor has called it 'the national art form'. Besides all the short story writers, almost all the major novelists across the globe have written very profound short stories. The constituent elements of short story may be enumerated as under:

- Plot: It refers to ‘what’, the main story being told either by invented character or by the author himself in the form of first person narrator.
- Character: It denotes ‘who’, the central character and their association with other characters and the world they live in. The relationship between plot and character is that of subject (character) and object (plot).
- Setting: It implies ‘where’, the background, the scene, and the environment of the characters. It may also be defined as context of the text (plot) being described by the characters. The relation among characters, plot and setting is – who says what and where.
- Point of View: It signifies ‘how’ a story gets narrated. It manifests mood through which readers are presented with characters, story and setting that constitute the overall work.
- Conflict: It refers to the problem the writer poses to resolve at the end. The characters particularly protagonist is to be challenged in some ways otherwise the plot will not develop with suspense and surprise at all. These conflicts may be seen as: man versus man, man versus nature, man versus himself, man versus society and the things like that.
- Theme: It denotes ‘intention’ or message, substance that the author wants to present before readers to know it at the end. It is the overall controlling substance of the work.

13.2.2 Nature and Thematic Domains of African Short Story:

The genre of short story in African literature has been growing with ripeness and new experiments both in the form and content since 1950. Although some critics give scant attention to the authenticity and genuine creativity of the native short story by rejecting it as not possessing literary and critical value. They are of the opinion that such stories have been published usually in magazines, journals and newspapers rather than being published by established publishing houses independently. They add that these works lack wider artistic appeal and literary flavour. So they are just productions of apprentices in the field. Moreover, these writers have been taunted for bringing out too much derivatives from the European form and substance rather than drawing their plots on indigenous social reality and human psyche. Yet the potential and talent displayed by these writers especially English speaking ones in Africa have succeeded in gaining the critical acclaim and appreciation. Their stories have found the space in major public houses, in highly reviewed anthologies, and in globally recognized educational institutions and universities including America and European nations.

Chinua Achebe, a lovable fiction writer of Nigeria, and others point out that there do exist a distinction between African short story and its counterpart in Europe and America in

terms of form and content. They add that novel and short story in Africa have derived their inspiration and sources from a common oral literary heritage. Yet Stephen Gray does not attempt to separate the short story, the myth, the fable and the legend. He emphasises that such classifications are mutually inclusive. He looks upon them as one whole – interdependent and overlapping and the writers have access to them always. Gary Spackey writes that “the contact between oral literature and short story has been and must remain minimal”. It implies that despite sharing certain traits and components of nature and structure, the African oral literature and newly emerged short story have distinctive identities and are independent entities. It is also pertinent to differentiate between the tale and short story in African literature in order to have clarity of concepts in mind. The tale is described as a loosely, fragmented story with an ostensible didactic purpose. It deliberates more on incidents and episodes by bringing them together without showing the complexities of the characters and their changing temperaments. Such creations adhere closely to the tradition of oral literature. On the other side, the proper short story designs characters and contents on social reality and human psychology without giving undue space to moral teachings. It develops plot with conflict and maintains conflict throughout in a complex manner. It follows the law of probability and necessity in spirit and does not compromise the requirements of art and aesthetics. There is a compact temporal and spatial unity and also a correspondence between form and content. In Africa artless tales have been held very high and crafty short stories looked down upon in the past for a very long time. The priority has not changed even now. The art of short story is now very popular and acclaimed one (there seems a contradiction. please see and resolve it). The motifs in African short story are commonly seen in the form of needs, aspirations and anxieties. The tradition and modernity are at loggerheads and are never reconciled and compromised. According to Ulli Beier: “by far the greatest number of African writers is interested in depicting present day situations and problems. The past traditions held little interest to them”. Generally tradition is seen in relation with modernity in the writings from other parts of the world. But in African short story, the two concepts are poles apart and in perpetual clash. Therefore, they cannot be bridged and made one. Besides, these recurrent motifs and tradition-modern conflict, the omnipresent themes and concerns in African short story may be identified as: colonialism and its ramifications; war and its consequences; religion and witchcraft; political high handedness and corruption; the urban and rural life; hunger and privation; love, treachery and many like subjects.

13.2.3 Apartheid: Contact and Dichotomy between Black and White People

Apartheid— literally means ‘separateness’ or ‘apart-hood’. Apartheid was an institutionalized or legalized system of racial segregation and social discrimination that remained in practice in South Africa and South West Africa (now called Namibia) from 1948 to early 1990s. It was characterized by the totalitarian political culture which guaranteed that South Africa would be controlled politically, economically and socially by the nation’s minority population. In this system of social hierarchy, white citizens had the highest status and top most position followed by Asians, coloureds and then marginalized black Africans.

One of the main concerns of African short stories written by English knowing writers is the identification of the contact between black and white people. This has been demonstrated in diverse ways with the involved implications. The stories highlight the barriers between the people of different colours. These hurdles create a tension in the social life and weaken the efforts to establish sociable and cordial contacts based on mutual equality, dignity and harmony. It is due to the ever mounting tension and widening hiatus that the hopelessness and sadness arise in the short stories. Alan Patan’s story “A Drink in the Passage” projects this racial tension and segregation. There are two characters — a black and white tied together out of their mutual gumption for art and beauty. The white Van Rensburg having deep impression and regard for the black Simelane, invites him for drink. But due to the taboo of not eating and drinking together, Van Rensburg summons his companion at his home. But even within walls, the drink is consumed hurriedly in a cold passage. This shows the stigma of the society where the relation between the two races is at the first place- prohibited, and secondly it is considered below dignity to treat other one humanly. Though the story treats both the characters uniformly and with homogeneity, which is very rare, yet the psychological reality of the characters gets revealed. Alan Patan usually in his writing inducts the expressions and sentences of moral implication, yet reserves his moral judgement. Through the characterization of Simelane and Van Rensburg, the writer refers to the circumstances which do not allow the two fellows to touch each other in spite of the mutual affection or fellow-feeling. The same can be witnessed in Don Jacobson’s “The Box”. A young white boy in the story pulls apart the handiwork of their black servant. The pigeon box painstakingly made by the black servant is absolutely redundant for the white boy. At this when Jan, the black servant, cries, the narrator comes to pacify him by asserting: “Stop crying, Jan. You can make another box”. He adds that he could not touch him and put his arms around him due to Jan’s black colour. As in Patan’s story, the two characters in “The Box”

cannot share their mutual feelings and thereby comfort each other due to their colour difference. The white character conceives it in a queer manner: “He was still black”.

One of the unique responses of white South Africans to their black country fellows is of fear. The rationale of this feeling of fear is complex and it is rooted in historical consciousness of white settlers who have displaced people with dark complexion. The subject is well expressed in Jan Rabie’s Afrikaan’s story “Droogte”. Moreover, the suppression and violence springing from the truncation of contact between black and white people is the main thrust of “Chasm” written by Macphail. Here the young British woman Elizabeth Ross is raped by a black man called Izak. Basically, the white woman is not familiar with the contemptuous behaviour shown by whites to black people. So when Izak is wounded during the work at her home, she treats him humanly and compassionately which the black worker misunderstands for love. When Izak is asked in court by the judge about the circumstances of the rape incident, he replies: “It was the fault of the white woman. She encouraged me. She made overtures at me. She took my hand in her hand. She played with my fingers. She wanted me”. The implications of this plainly brute story are comprehensible and understandable for all having an eye on African social reality. It is a reminder of the encounter between the young white woman and black man in Gordimer’s story “Is There Nowhere else Where We can Meet”. Macphail’s title metaphorically refers to the gap being identified between the characters of opposite colour. The stunning impact of the denouement of the story is that Izak seems right in justifying the wrong deed, yet his violent behaviour in the bedroom is also unpardonable. To conclude, it is evident that there are plots in South African stories where black and white people communicate and contact with each other and the result is the reciprocal benefit and goodness. But Macphail’s “Chasm” projects the usual if not necessarily a violent pattern of black and white encounter in the country. All such cited illustrations and the like situations are behind the dichotomy between the two races which impede the process of establishing a close contact and rapport between them.

13.2.4 Diversity in African Short Story:

The characteristic feature of white South African writers’ fiction is the diversity and variety of subject-matters as well as in use of techniques and devices. The diversity of characters, situations, settings and modes are also there in the short stories of black writers and Afrikaners. The stories of white writers display a wide range of fictional methods from naturalism and realism to fantasy and fable. Basically, these writers have derived such diverse modes and situations from European and American writers. By doing so, they do not restrict themselves to a

temporal and spatial reality. This free approach helps them to look 'before and after' and thereby to produce the fiction of 'plenitude' abound in people, plot-situations, subjects, backgrounds, techniques, styles, and methods. As mentioned earlier that realism and naturalism are common modes of fiction, yet the writers like Alan Patan, Dan Jacobson and Jack Cope have yielded to form of fabular or fable like writing. The quintessential examples of such transition can be experienced in stories like "A Drink in the Passage", "The Hero of Currie Road", "Another Day" and "The Heart of the Daybreak". Moreover, the writers viz Barney Simon, Peter Wilhelm and Christopher Hope do seem more motivated for parable like and fable like writings also. "Seth and Sam", "The Problem with Staff" and "Learning to Fly" are illustrious pieces of this kind. Christopher Hope's "Learning to Fly" beautifully brings together the humorous and the pathetic. It is pertinent to cite Peter Wilhelm's experimental story "Pyro Protram". It assumes the form and tone of science fiction. The last man on the planet is trapped in monstrous creatures and dreadful hallucinations from the bygone times. It evinces clearly that though realism is a dominant mode of fiction writing, yet some writers are rapidly shifting towards alternative modes of fable and science fiction. It may be relevant to add that many works of Nadine Gordimer such as "A soldier's Embrace", "Oral History" and "Something out There" are journalistic in nature and presentation. The subjects of these stories are bush-wars, urban terrorism, and infringement of the Immoral Act. These are usually the domains of journalism.

Sheila Roberts writes that "the very ambience of South Africa causes people, who begin challenging the overall unfairness and injustice to start examining other situations where similar injustices exist. It think it must be impossible to be critical of the situation and not all that criticism to ripple out in other areas of one's life". One of the domains into which female writers such as Sheila Roberts, Nadine Gordimer and Bessie Head have let 'criticism to ripple out' is that of the plight that women are undergoing in South Africa. Sheila Roberts in "Knobs and Nikes: A Tale of Revenge" does something singular in African fiction. She reveals a nexus between the cruel treatment of a man to his wife and his adherence to African nationalism. The story suggests a connection between the man's political preferences and his macho notion of himself as a master in bed. Ruff is very negligent and languid lover. After gratifying his sexual thirst, his wife the narrator of the story tells how much reprehensible and remiss Ruff is in fulfilling his part of the bargain: "I don't mind doing this for him after I have been taken care of, so to speak. But more and more these days, geysers first and then his whole body begins to exude a sweat of self righteous doing my duty labour. He cannot rise up like a helium-balloon twice...".

The stories like this dealing with sexual harassment and sexual injustice faced by women add a new dimension to African short story. The woman writers such as Roberts, Head and Gordimer explore such concerns of urgently required correction.

13.2.5 Violence as a Ubiquitous Subject in African Short Story:

When African literature in English started its onward journey, the writers have tremendously borrowed ideas, themes, techniques, know-how of using settings and exploiting characterization from European and American literatures. After learning the art of writing the fictional literature from foreigners, the African writers began to concentrate seriously on native issues and concerns and have incorporated local events, situations, and personages in order to accomplish the objective of national literature. This endemic projection can nowhere be discerned more comprehensively and closely than in the treatment of the subject—violence. The violence existing in African domestic and social environments has been mirrored right from the very inception, yet the short stories of 1970 onwards are replete with it. The writers have fictionalized it in different ways as per their sensibilities and potential.

Although at the official level the presence of violence in Africa has been denied, yet the literature has provided the big platform for its exposition and presentation. The writers show urgency for its instant eradication from the familial and social life. They present the appalling impact of violence in a very stark and striking manner before public. One form of this violence is associated with World War II which is reflected mostly through foreign settings. Such examples can be seen in the works of Robie's *21*, Bretenbach's *Katastropes* and De Vrier's *Dobbeldoor and Vliegog*. These works do not point out violence of a particular location, but show it in broader perspective in relation to mankind at the international level. Therefore, these collections of short stories satirize human beings taking recourse to violence in order to satisfy the urge of power by subduing others.

The impact of literary works describing a specific and localized violence cannot be dissociated from the political power structures which lie wholly behind such outrageous acts. It has been realized that violent acts and political system are in a hand and glove relation and there is a cause-effect equation between them. Sometimes this violence is projected by the writers out of sympathy, rather empathy, for the victims of the abuse. The solid examples of this are Alan Patan's stories about the black children in the reformatory from his book *Debbie Go Home* and Piet Haasbrock's story "Aardrykskundeles" ("Geography Lesson"), dealing with the murder of a black school teacher in the bush wars. Welma Odendaal's "Freedom Figher" and her trilogy of

stories — “LM”, “Baker” (“Dry Nurse”) and “Grens) (“Border”) are all stories saturated with distress and death of people in the guerrilla wars in South Africa. Moreover, certain writers do protest about violence by underlying the tyranny of its perpetrators. Among the established English stories demonstrating violence and cruelty of people are Jack Cope’s “The Bastards”; Peter Wilhem’s “All the Days of My Death”; Mtutuzeli Matshoba’s “A Glimpse of Slavery”; Alex La Guma’s “Out of Darkness”; and James Mathew’s “Crucifixion”. In Afrikaan’s fiction of 1970s and 1980s, a prominent example of this sort is Haasbrock’s “Anatomieles” (“Anatomy Lesson”) which describes the white soldier’s brutal mutilation of a black corpse. Rabie’s “Dies Irae” exposes how wealthy white Afrikaners inhumanly appropriate the homes of dispossessed black people. All these citations and identifications of violence in African short stories and the writers’ response to the same to educate the people are eye openers for a reader so as to understand its causes and the dreadful consequences for domestic and social fabric.

13.2.6 Style and Substance Coordination:

As it is true with other New Literatures written in former European colonies, the African English writers also have utilized English language very judiciously and skilfully to create a balance between form and matter, and style and substance. It has helped them to achieve the purpose of expressing native sensibility in the foreign language. The African writers have tamed English as per local demands of social reality, human psyche and overall cultural ethics. By doing so, they have been able to overpower the barriers of apartheid and tribalism. The English language has been employed just like their mother tongue with all literary devices such as metaphors and imagery. One of the omnipresent themes in African short story is violence and it has been presented in the same phrases and words denoting hostility and aggression. In La Guma’s “A Walk in the Night”, the characters speak the language exuding the emotions of anger and fear. At the very outset, the readers are told that Michael Adonis is “nursing a little growth of anger the way one caresses the beginnings of a toothache with the tip of the tongue”. Afterwards in the story when he is targeted by the police, his mind is disclosed in like manner: “deep down inside him the feelings of rage, frustration and violence swelled like a boil, knotted with pain”. In this way the writer produces compatibility between content and words. Similarly “Waiting for Leila” evokes the social trouble and unrest with exact imagery of violence and turbulence. The jack hammers used for breaking down buildings are matched with crows picking at a person’s guts, and the hearts of the people left in “District Six” are likened with empty shop windows. This type of fictional prose loaded with dense imagery is a peculiar feature of black

African writers. Moreover, Themba, another black writer, plunges into highly poetic language and creates literary echoes with exciting imagery. In “Crepuscle” Themba reflects the sophistication of his age and of the social ambiance of the place before the government destroys it. As reminiscence of Dickens’ opening passage in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Themba’s prose is poetically hyperbolic and full of contrasts:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the season of light, it was the season of darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; we had everything before us, we had nothing before us; we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way- in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on it being received for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

The African short story in English has witnessed multiple experiments and innovations in terms of form, style and narrative techniques. The language has been exploited to manifest the indigenous socio-cultural values, beliefs, institutions and human psychological complexities in the comprehensive manner possible in second language. The texts have been created to match the contexts. The crude local life has been dressed in cultured lingual apparel.

13.3 Learning Outcomes

Through this unit, an effort has been made to cover the maximum facets of African short story in terms of themes, techniques, form, characterization and content in order to enable the students to be familiar with this form of literature in general. The reading of this chapter would enlighten the concerned students with temporal shifts of African short story as it has undergone rapidly to keep pace with changing circumstances. The concepts have been explained with textual illustrations and references with a view to give it the scholarly touch and thereby make it a reliable source for students. Overall, this piece of writing incorporates all the necessary descriptions prerequisite to adequate information about African short story.

13.4 Glossary

Ambiance: A unique mood or atmosphere of an environment or surrounding influence.

Amplitude: Largeness, magnitude; size in terms of width and breadth.

Anthology: A collection of literary works, such as poems or short stories, especially a collection from different writers.

Apartheid: The policy of racial separation and social segregation used by South Africa from 1948 to 1990.

Apprentice: A trainee, especially in a skilled trade or profession.

Augment: To increase; to grow; to make larger or supplement.

Colonialism: The colonial domination policy. A colonial system, a colonial word, phrase, concept, or habit.

Denouement: The end, conclusion or resolution of a plot.

Dichotomy: A separation, fission or division into two; a distinction that results in such a division.

Endemic: Indigenous, native to a particular area or culture; originating where it occurs.

Exemplum: An example; a story communicating a moral point; a parable.

Hallucination: A sensory perception of something that does not exist, often arising from disorder of the nervous system; a delusion.

Homogeneity: Uniformity; similarity; the quality of being alike.

Harassment: Persistent attacks causing worry and distress; Excessive intimidation.

Imagery: The work presenting images or visible representation of objects; vivid descriptions suggesting images of sensible objects; figures in discourse.

Indigenous: Born or originating in, native to a land or region or country.

Landmark: A recognizable natural or man-made thing; marker; a notable location with historical, cultural, or geographical significance; monument.

Metaphor: The use of a word or expression to refer to something that it is not, invoking a direct similarity between the word or phrase used and the thing described.

Mutilation: An act of physical harm or destruction beyond recognition.

Naturalism: In arts, a movement in theatre, film, and literature that seeks to replicate a believable everyday reality, as opposed to such movements as romanticism or surrealism, in which subjects may receive highly symbolic or idealistic treatment.

Nationalism: The idea of supporting one's country, people or culture, patriotism.

Negritude: The movement launched in Africa based on the fact of being black African descent, especially a conscious pride in the values, cultural identity of African heritage; blackness.

Overlap: To share an area, range, character or function; co-exist.

Perpetrator: One who deceives, perpetrates; especially, one who commits an offence or crime.

Queer: Weird, odd or strange.

Quintessential: Being perfect example; ultimate; prototype.

Ramification: Offshoot, consequences, or result, outcome.

Redundant: Superfluous; insignificant.

Realism: A literary or artistic representation of reality as it is.

Segment: Section, part, organ, incomplete.

Spatial: Pertaining to space or place.

Tableau: A candid and vivid representation; a picture; a vivid graphic scene of a group of people arranged as in a painting or bas-relief sculpture.

Temporal: Pertaining to time; transient.

13.5 Sample Questions

13.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which one of the following constituent elements does not belong to Short Story?
 - (a) Character
 - (b) Conflict
 - (c) Song
 - (d) Plot
2. Who among the following American writers does call Short Story “a national art form”?
 - (a) Frank O’Connor
 - (b) Edgar Allen Poe
 - (c) Washington Irving
 - (d) Nathaniel Hawthorne
3. Identify the meaning of word ‘Apartheid’:
 - (a) Sadness
 - (b) Hopelessness

- (c) Darkness
(d) Separateness
4. Who among the following female writers does not belong to the fold of African literature?
(a) Nadine Gordimer
(b) Sheila Roberts
(c) Bapsi Sidhwa
(d) Bessie Head
5. The short story “A Drink in the Passage” is written by:
(a) Allan Patan
(b) Dan Jacobson
(c) Jack Cope
(d) Peter Wilhelm
6. Who does not belong to Negritude Movement?
(a) Léopold Sedar Senghar
(b) Lean Damas
(c) Aime Cesaire
(d) Dennis Brutus
7. The book *Before the Birth of the Moon* is written by:
(a) V.Y. Mudimbe
(b) Nadine Godimer
(c) J.M. Coetzee
(d) Chinua Achebe
8. Choose the odd one:
(a) Fable
(b) Drama
(c) Exemplum
(d) Parable
9. The expression: “the contact between oral literature and short story has been and must remain minimal” is given by:
(a) Gary Spackey
(b) Ulli Beier
(c) Stephen Gray



(d) Alan Patan

10. The story “Is there Nowhere else Where We can Meet” is written by:

(a) Jan Rabie

(b) Jack Cope

(c) Christopher Hope

(d) Nadine Gordimer

13.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Describe the concept of short story.
2. Define the terms ‘plot’ and ‘character’ as used in fiction.
3. What do you mean by the idea of ‘apartheid’?
4. What does ‘conflict’ mean in short story or novel?
5. Distinguish between Novel and Short Story as two forms of fiction.

13.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Elaborate the nature and thematic domains of African short story.
2. Explain in detail the concept of short story and its constituent elements.
3. Critically describe the theme of violence in African short story.

13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Achebe, Chinua, and C.L. Innes, eds. *African Short Stories*. London: Heinemann, 1985.
2. Beier, Ulli, ed. *Black Orpheus: An Anthology of African and Afro-American Prose*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Longman, 1964.
3. Balogun, F. Odun. *Tradition and Modernity in the African Short Story: An Introduction to Literature in Search of Critics*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991.
4. deGrandaigne, J., ed. *African Short Stories in English: An Anthology*. London: Publishers, 1985.

Unit- 14: Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: Decolonising the Mind; The Politics of Language in African Literature

Structure

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14.0 Introduction

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is one of the most prolific writers and is considered the most promising figure of African literature. He is a fiction writer, essayist, playwright, and literary and social critic. He has also contributed to children's literature. He was born in Kenya, a country in the east of Africa and brought up during the days of the Kenyan struggle for independence. His

first four novels are in English. Later, he chose his mother tongue *Gikuyu* for creative writing. With the publication of the book *Decolonising the Mind*, he bade farewell to the English language forever for any kind of writing and continued in Gikuyu. *Decolonising the Mind* is a social critique of colonialism and its deep-rooted impact on African literature, culture and young African minds. It explores some key conflicting issues emerging from the imposition of the use of a foreign language in Kenya. Ngugi discusses at length on colonial alienation, the Eurocentric experience of history, neo-colonial forces, colonial imposition of foreign language and so on. The author tries to rediscover the lost spirit of Africa and aspires to bring it back to its full bloom by locating African language and culture at the centre of the world in the mind of an African child. He has found ways of achieving the lost spirit. According to him, giving recognition to regional languages of Africa, studies in African languages and literatures in schools, colleges and universities and encouraging native writers to write in their mother tongues are the ways to bring back the spirit of Africa to its pristine glory.

This Unit is divided into three sections. The first section gives details about the author, his works and his contribution. The second section presents factual information about Kenya's political history, demography and languages. The first two sections give you the background information required to follow the arguments given by the author in the book. The third section discusses the book *Decolonising the Mind*. This section is further divided into four parts that discuss the four chapters of the book.

14.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to help you to:

- know the political struggle of Kenya against British imperialism.
- understand the impact of colonialism and neo-colonialism on the literature of Kenya in particular and Africa in general.
- figure out that Ngugi's argument is in favour of dismissing English and reviving regional languages of Africa.
- comprehend the role of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o in reviving African theatre.
- understand the relevance of African literature in African society.

14.2 Decolonising the Mind; The Politics of Language in African Literature

Africa is one of the richest continents on earth in terms of languages, cultures, biodiversity and ethnicities. Africa is the largest landmass after Asia and is a cluster of 54 sovereign states surrounded by sea. Anthropologists considered Africa as the oldest human habitation. It was also an abode of one of the earliest civilizations that raised massive structures like the Pyramids of Egypt. African literature has a rich oral tradition and it exists in many vernacular tongues.

Africa has a rich tradition of oral literature sustained in many languages through stories and songs that are religious as well as secular. The African literature can be broadly divided into the following categories; Pre-Colonial literature, Colonial literature, Post-Colonial literature and Contemporary literature. *Book of Kings* is the pre-colonial text that dates back to the 4th century AD. This work is written in Ge'ez, a native tongue of Ethiopia. *The Story of Tambuks* is the most renowned work in Swahili, a language spoken on the East African coast and its neighbouring islands. The colonial period marks the emergence of slave narratives. The most important slave narrative of this period is *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, written in English in 1789. The colonial interaction spread the use of English for creative writing, and different genres of literature like play, novel, autobiography and travel writings emerged. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, a writer from Kenya wrote the first English play titled *The Black Hermit* which was published in 1963. Chinua Achebe's English novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) brought the attention of literature lovers from all over the world to the African continent. In the post-colonial period, more and more writers have started experimenting in Western languages (such as French, English and Portuguese) as well as in indigenous languages of Africa. Among several other Nobel laureates from different parts of Africa, Wole Soyinka from Nigeria won the Nobel Prize in literature.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o was born on 5th January, 1938 in the Kiambu district of Kenya in a peasant family. He was born into a Bantu ethnic group called Kikuyu, native to central Kenya. This is the largest ethnic group in Kenya. He and his family members witnessed and bore the brunt of the Mau-Mau movement (1952-1960), the political uprising in Kenya.

Ngugi received his school education at Alliance High School in the Kiambu district of Kenya. For graduation, he went to Makerere University College in Kampala, Uganda. He won a

scholarship to study Masters at the University of Leeds. At the age of 29, in 1967, he joined the University of Nairobi as a professor of English literature.

The Black Hermit was the first play written by Ngugi in 1963. The other plays written by him are *This Time Tomorrow* (1970) and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1976). The first novel written by Ngugi was *Weep Not, Child* (1964). Other novels are *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1980), *Matigari* (1986), *Wizard of the Crow* (2004) and the latest one in 2020 with the title *The Perfect Nine: The Epic of Gikuyu and Mumbi. Caitani Mutharaba* was his first novel written in Gikuyu and translated in English as *Devil on the Cross* (1980). His first Gikuyu play was in collaboration was *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)* in 1977. The Kenyan government put him under detention for one year after the performance of this play as it criticized the new-colonial form of government that was corrupt, authoritative and supported big corporate houses. His prose works focus on politics, literature and culture of Kenya and include the following books: *Homecoming* (1972), *Writers in Politics* (1981), *Barrel of a Pen* (1983), *Moving the Centre* (1993), *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams* (1998). His book *Dreams in the Time of War* (2010) is a memoir of his childhood days. As a prolific writer, Ngugi has many other books to his credit.

We shall be looking at the contribution of Ngugi through the writers and authors who have written about Ngugi in their works. The following are a few reflections on Ngugi's contribution as a writer, academician, scholar, social activist and literary critic:

“Ngugi's approach to literature is one firmly rooted in the historical experience of the writer and his or her people, in an understanding of society as it is and a vision of society as it might be. The dictum “art for art's sake” is alien to his thinking (11).”²

“A review of Ngugi's literary career is a mapping of the diverse and complex ways in which nationalism in Africa has taken place since the 1930s, for this novelist's life and his literary products have been closely shaped by the politics of nationalism, its initial promise and eventful failure (148).”³

“Ngugi Wa Thiong'o is among the African scholars who have interpreted Kenya's history and social processes from the two perspectives: the non-Marxist and the Marxist. However, he has done so not as a historian or political scientist but as a creative writer. In the process of his

explanation, he has helped shape the perception of Kenyan society within the two models from which other scholars have drawn inspiration. There is abundant evidence to demonstrate these trends in his writings since the early 1960s. The trends have reflected the demands and aspirations of each generation (151).”⁴

“His view was that in order to qualify for membership in African literature, a literary piece of writing not only to be rooted in African art, tradition and culture but how to be originally expressed in an African language (51).”⁵

14.2.1 Kenya:

In the African continent, Kenya is situated on the eastern side sharing land border with countries like Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania. The Indian Ocean is on the eastern side.

According to the archaeologists, the Kenyan site of Olorgesailie is believed to be one of the earliest human habitations that date back to approximately three lakhs years ago. Like Harappan, the earliest communities which established city-states in Kenya are collectively known as Azania, who practised hunting, farming and fishing. Bantu speakers have contributed significantly to the development of Kenya.

Like India, Kenya has a young population and diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. The major ethnic group is Bantu in which Gikuyu or Kikuyu speaking people form the largest linguistic group. The major ethnic groups of Kenya are; Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo, Kamba, Somali, Kisli, Mijikenda, Meru, Maasai, Turkana and so on. ‘Swahili’ along with English are the two official languages of the state. English has attained the same status as that in most of the colonial countries like India. More than fifty languages are spoken in Kenya. These languages are broadly classified into two groups; Bantu (60%) and Nilotes (30%). Bantu comprises sixty per cent of the population whereas Nilotes, the half of the major group. The minor groups include Arab ethnic minorities and speakers from Indo-European families. The majority of the population practices Christianity, approximately eighty per cent of the population. The second most populous religion is Islam with around ten per cent population.

The Arab merchants were early traders in coastal Kenya. A part of coastal Kenya came under the Portuguese from 16th to 18th century. The British East Africa Company made their presence in Kenya in 1888. They built railways and brought many Indian workers as skilled manpower for construction. Like in India and other colonies, the colonial master was on the

civilising mission. Kenya also bore the brunt of the world wars as a colony of Britain. There was direct economic, political, and social impact during and after the world wars. The colonial masters introduced many types of taxes resulting in forced labour and many legislations curtailing their rights and establishing the political and economic supremacy of the masters. In 1913, a land bill was passed which gave the colonial master the right to use land for the next 999 years. They exploited land and encouraged labour to subordinate agriculture to their homeland. Kenya became the first African country where black political consciousness emerged.

It was a war between the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), also known as the Mau Mau and the British Authorities in Kenya. It is also known as Mau Mau Revolt or the Kenya Emergency. The Colonial rulers used the divide and rule policy that divided the Kenyans between pro-Movement and pro-Britishers. The KLFA comprised of different ethnic groups of Kenya including Kikuyu, Meru, Embu, Maasai, Kamba and so on. There were many other revolts before the Mau-Mau uprising but this movement stretched for long and involved violence at a large scale. In the initial stage, the conflict was about the disproportionate sharing of land between the 'settler societies' and the natives, which led the latter to become wage labourers. Settler societies were all British habitations. This conflict later transformed into a struggle for independence. The Mau-Mau movement used the guerilla strategy which was brutally crushed by the British authorities. The violent resistance from the natives set the stage for Kenya's independence in 1963.

The language communities of Kenya can be broadly classified into two groups; Bantu and Nilotic. The major languages of Bantu group are Kikuyu, Kamba, Luhaya, Gusii, Meru and Mijikenda whereas, the major languages of the Nilotic group are Dholuo, Kalenjin, Maasai and Turkana. There are other minor languages spoken by the ethnic minorities: Borana, Orma and Rendille from the Cushitic group, Arabic from the Semitic group, Hindustani from the Indo-Aryan group, and Swahili from the Bantu group.

14.2.2 Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature

The book, *Decolonising the Mind*, by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o was first published in 1986. Ngugi dedicated this book to those who write in African languages. It is divided into four chapters with a *Preface*, *Introduction* and a section titled *A Statement*. The four chapters are as follows: *The Language of African Literature*, *The Language of African Theatre*, *The Language of African Fiction* and *The Quest of Relevance*. In the following sections, we shall be discussing the main points raised in the four chapters of the book. In the preface of the book, he states: "The

very word we use is a product of a collective history (x-xi).” So he owes this piece of work to the people of Africa. In the preface, he clearly mentions the purpose of writing this book i.e., to critically examine the language practice of African writers. The author also identifies the neo-colonial forces which are clandestinely stealing African minds and enriching their languages and culture.

In the section “A Statement”, Ngugi makes an interesting announcement of bidding farewell to the English language for any kind of writing. In 1977, he discontinued English for his creative works like novels, plays and short stories and started writing in Gikuyu and Kiswahili. Gikuyu is also known by Kikuyu.

14.2.2.1 The Language of African Literature:

The central question this chapter addresses is the use of language in defining the self to their natural and social environment. Ngugi argues that language plays a very vital role in defining the self. The self relates with the surroundings; the natural and the social. The colonial and neo-colonial imperialism of the European countries in Africa controlled the economy, politics and culture of the Africans. They distorted the relation of the self with the surroundings. Ngugi examines this situation in which English creates a chasm between a native African and his nativity.

Ngugi criticises the colonial tendency of deciding the future of the nation: the colonial powers rule without considering their concerns and nativity. He refers to the round table conference of 1884 in which the future of Africa was carved out and Africa was categorised into European language-speaking communities. What bothers Ngugi more was the attitude of African writers who identify themselves with the imperialism imposed on the tongues. A similar kind of event happened in 1962. A conference in Africa about African writers barred those writers from participating who have been writing in African languages like Kiswahili, Zulu, Amharic and Yoruba. Instead, it only included those African writers who write in English. This intrigued the author (Ngugi) to ponder upon an inescapable question, “What is African Literature?” He raises this question from varying standpoints. He asks:

“Was it literature about Africa or about the African experiences? Was it literature written by Africans? What about a non-African who wrote about Africa: did his work qualify as African literature? What if an African set his work in Greenland: did that qualify as African literature? Or were African languages the criteria? (6)”

His exploration of these questions concludes with the statement that language questions were actually never really asked. But the important point he makes here is that if great European writers like Balzac and Tolstoy did not write in African languages then why the Africans are enriching the language and literature of the colonial masters by using English, French and Portuguese in their creative writings. Ngugi critically examines the imperial policy of subjugation through ‘bullets and blackboard.’ He says, “In my view language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. The language was the means of spiritual subjugation (9).” To make his point more clear, Ngugi draws examples from his own experiences of language use and the study of English literature. He first explains the language harmony of the native people and then tells the readers about how this harmony was broken.

Ngugi introduces readers to African folk literature. Folk tales are inalienably related to the culture they represent. The people of Africa, as in other parts of the world, form their worldviews based on these tales. The folk elements of language become part of one’s existence and the world around. The use of language in different spheres of life; home, field, playground, work, gatherings is ‘one.’ Ngugi recalls those experiences of his early life when language harmony had started distorting.

He experienced the first threat to the mother tongue when he joined a school. In the school, using mother tongue (*Gikuyu*) for communication was treated with corporal punishment. On the other hand, English was highly rewarded. The English rhymes in primary schools replaced orature (oral literature). English writers like Charles Dickens and his novels like *Oliver Twist* replaced the lion and tiger of their immediate surroundings. The characters of folk tales were lost, no more part of their imaginative world.

In this chapter, Ngugi also presents his views on language. He defines the ‘dual character of language,’ primarily as a means of communication and a carrier of culture. He further tells that language as communication/culture has three elements.

Language as communication:

1. Language of labour process i.e., production is communication
2. Speech i.e., communication in production
3. Written signs

Language as culture:

1. Product of human interaction in the labour process.

2. An agent which enters into our mind and creates a perception of self and the relation of self with the other.
3. Culture mediates through spoken and written words to correspond to the reality of the world.

According to the above characterisation of language, the author brings our attention to the relationship between the following: language & labour process, language & the interactions of the labour process, and language & the product of labour process. It also draws our attention to the importance of language in shaping culture and the role of culture in understanding the reality of the world around us. There stands the importance of the mother tongue, which mediates between the self and the other. Thus, the author seems to be worried about the future of Africa because this harmony is broken. The relationship between the self and the surroundings is distorted and blurred. The author held that the policies of the British rule in Africa were responsible for this distortion. They imposed English and restricted the use of local tongues. Their policies snatched the power of imagination and the faculty to relate with the life around them. The grave situation of the “colonial imposition of foreign language,” has brought with it grave consequences in the mind of the African child.

Ngugi outlines some concerns here. The deliberate undervaluing of their culture, art, dance, religion, history, orature and so on, has a deep-rooted impact. The imperial power imposed English and sidelined the native languages. Therefore, it broke the harmony with the outside reality. This resulted in the objective view of the world and mechanised learning. He says, “Learning for a colonial child, became a cerebral activity and not an emotionally felt experience (17).” The act of looking at our own world from the borrowed tongue resulted in ‘colonial alienation.’ He describes colonial alienation as the disassociation of the sensibility of the native child from his immediate environment i.e., nature and society. This alienation is one of the dire outcomes of colonization.

In the same chapter, he extends this critical approach to the use of language in Africa. He shifts his focus on the use of language from school to literary writings. Here he analyzes the use of language by writers in their creative work. He argues that “the literature it produced in European languages was given the identity of African literature as if there had never been literature in African languages (22).” Here the author indirectly refers to the work of those native African writers who have been writing in English and their work is categorised by Western scholars as African literature. You must know that there are three most prominent writers from Africa whose works are classified as ‘modern classics.’ They are Wole Soyinka,

Chinua Achebe and the author of this book (Ngugi Wa Thiong'o). The first two are Nigerian writers and have written in English. Wole Soyinka is a recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature. Ngugi's point here is that literature in English by African writers receives recognition as African literature ignoring and undermining the centuries-old oral folk tradition. It becomes quite evident that Western scholarship ignores the folk traditions of Africa. On the one hand, the African peasantry and the other working classes, who have kept the native languages alive, are ignored. But on the other hand, the literature in the English language was "Africanised." This act of ignorance deepens the sense of alienation among conscious minds like Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

Making a strong criticism on the use of English by African writers, Ngugi draws a parallel between African politicians and African writers. He asks: "What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages (26)." This is a critique of the neo-colonial form of governance in the post-independence period in which the submission to European supremacy was a voluntary act.

The author of the book *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) himself has been writing in English for such a long period of time and has earned fame for his work *A Grain of Wheat* (1967). In this chapter, he justifies his act of making a shift from English to *Gikuyu*. He justifies his action in the following words, "I believe that my writing in *Gikuyu* language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples (28)." This shift can be understood more as a political act of resistance rather than cultural. We will read in the next Unit about the author's first *Gikuyu* play. The performance of the play invited strict measures from the government which put a ban on such performances and the immediate imprisonment of the author without any trial. The government in 1977 used the strategy of the colonial masters; crushed the voice of dissent with coercion. The author reacts to this coercion and renounces English. After this book, *Decolonising the Mind*, he continued writing in *Gikuyu*. This act of resistance continues till date. Once disowned, he never looked back at English except in translation.

On language issues, he also examines the status of language in his own society. He scratches the act of labeling a language as high or low and the association of many negative connotations with the language of lower status. He further explains how in schools and universities, the languages of Kenya were associated with "backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation and Punishment." This association of native language with negative connotations is

very much prevalent in India as well. The supremacy of English and its implications at the grass-root level is very well underlined by the writer. He describes two interlinked forms that have emerged as a consequence of “colonial alienation” in Africa. The first form is “an active (or passive) distancing of oneself from the reality around” and the other is the active/ passive identification with something “which is most external to one's environment.” He also brings out attention to the dire consequences of this kind of situation which ends up “producing a society of bodiless heads and headless bodies.” The metaphor of ‘bodiless heads and headless bodies’ signifies the absence of a bond between the body and the mind, the loss of harmony between the body and the spirit. The language issue is addressed from many standpoints and talked about again and again in this book.

To conclude, we can say that Ngugi emphasized the importance of the mother tongue in one's life. Language becomes a medium of communication between the self and the surroundings. Disassociation with the native language creates a sense of alienation. Ngugi wants to restore the pre-colonial status of languages where there was harmony between a person and his immediate environment. Therefore, he wants the literature of Kenya's regional languages to reflect the harmony that was disturbed with the imposition of foreign languages. He wants the children of Africa to connect with their immediate environment, their language, their society and their culture. This book not only educates African children about the importance of one's language but also spreads a universal message of linguistic harmony as a prerequisite for one's existence in the social and natural environment.

14.2.2.2 The Language of African Theatre:

In this chapter, Ngugi rediscovers and reenacts the traditional theatre of Africa called *Ituika* in Kamiriithu village. *Ituika* was a traditional ceremony held every twenty-five years. It marks the handing over of power from one generation to the other. *Ituika* involves fasting, dancing and singing that lasts for six months. According to the author, “Drama in pre-colonial Kenya was not, then, an isolated event: it was part and parcel of the rhythm of daily and seasonal life of the community (37).” Ngugi informs that *Ituika* is a kind of a theatre in which the community participates. Therefore, it is a people's festival. This collective action of criticising the government through performance is countered by the neo-colonial forces of independent Kenya with acts of repression.

In the beginning of this chapter, Ngugi informs the readers how British colonialism has destroyed their tradition; the tradition of theatre in empty space. The colonial master had banned

Ituika and introduced a licence for gathering in the village. The administration and Christian missionaries destroyed the concept of ‘empty space’ enjoyed by the local population. The months-long *Ituika* was organised in empty space. During colonial rule, these empty spaces were confined in modern structures. The confinement of ‘empty spaces’ continued even after the independence of Kenya. The colonial master took many initiatives to introduce the Western drama in confined spaces to entertain and divert the attention from the Mau Mau uprising. They also controlled the Kenyan national theatre, which was the symbol of imperialism and a colonial tradition.

During the colonial period, the theatre in colleges and universities progressed with the efforts of university students travelling to the rural and urban spaces. Ngugi sees this progress with a more critical lens. In his words: “The real language of African theatre could only be found among the people — the peasantry in particular — in their life, history and struggles (41).” Ngugi locates traditional theatre as a people’s event that should take place in an empty space. He rejects the modern theatre introduced by the British rule which unacknowledges and undermines the traditional one.

Ngugi also describes his own homecoming; connecting with the roots, a shift from English to mother tongue in his writing. Instead of using English as a medium of creative expression, he shifts to the *Gikuyu*, his mother tongue. This homecoming takes place in the village *Kamiruthu* where he performs his first *Gikuyu* play *Ngahika Ndeenda*. This play was designed, organised, coordinated and enacted by the community on the pattern of *Ituika*, the traditional theatre of Kenya which also involves songs, dance and music.

Ngugi's effort in reviving *Ituika* changed the question of language used in his plays. In all of his earlier writings, English was the medium of expression. But in *Ngahika Ndeenda* (translated as *I will Marry when I Want*), for the first time, he used *Gikuyu*. The play draws its content from the political uprising in Kenya as part of the freedom struggle movement. The play also examines the political shift in Kenya from the colonial to neo-colonial system. The condition of factory workers in an independent nation reflects the Marxist perspective. The preparation for the *Ngahika Ndeenda* invited and involved the people from all walks of life. The community gathers during the day and holds long discussion on the script of the play, its content, its form and even its language. Therefore, *Gikuyu* becomes the medium and the ‘empty space’ becomes the stage. The question of form was central to the discussion. After frequent discussions

on the form, song and dance were incorporated. Song and dance are part and parcel of the everyday life including rituals of the folks.

Ngugi, in this chapter, introduces the readers to the section of the play which includes dialogues and songs. The reader gets a primary experience of the play. He further explains the historical, political and social relevance of the performance. The most interesting description about the play is the background of the participants. Their role in real life corresponds with their role in the play. Ngugi writes:

They would compare their own actual experiences, whether it was in making guns in the forest, in stealing arms from the British enemy, in carrying bullets through the enemy lines, or in the various strategies for survival. Land and freedom. Economic and political independence. Those were the aims of their struggle and they did not want *Ngahika Ndeenda* to distort them (53-54).

The above description explains how theatre engages with real life and real-life characters. The characters of the play were heroes of real life struggle. The rehearsal of the play took nine months in the year 1977. The revival of traditional theatre, an experiment at *Kamiruthu* theatre was a great success. In the words of Ngugi, "Theatre became what it had always been: part of a collective festival (57)." The whole act of connecting with the roots in *Kamiruthu* theatre gave Kenyan theatre a language of its own. But in the same year in 1977, the Kenyan government banned the performance of *Ngahika Ndeenda* and reinstated the ban on public gatherings and the author was also imprisoned. The struggle for revival did not stop here but continued for several years.

To conclude, we can say that the author has put a lot of effort in reviving the traditional theatre of Kenya. This process of rediscovering theatre involved the *Kamiruthu* village community in the performance of his play *Ngahika Ndeenda* in the same way the traditional *Ituika* festival was performed. The community participation in the performance of the play was a great success because people from all walks of life made their presence felt. Since the play was political and criticised the neo-colonial attitude of the government, the author had to bear the brunt of his actions. This episode of Ngugi's public life marks his commitment as a writer, who wants to connect to his roots not at an individual level but at the community level and restored the language of African theatre.

14.2.2.3 The Language of African Fiction:

In the opening of this chapter, Ngugi underlines that he is going to discuss his experience of writing *Caitani Mutharabaini* (1980), a novel written in Gikuyu. This novel was later translated into English as *Devil on the Cross*. He maps the outline of the succeeding discussions on the issues and problems of the origin and development of the African novel.

As a whole, the discussion in this chapter goes around why write a novel in Gikuyu? Gikuyu is one of the regional languages of Kenya. You need to know that the four novels that Ngugi had written earlier were in English: *Weep Not Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) and *Petals of Blood* (1977).

According to him, the novel which has landed on African soil is of 'Bourgeois origin,' which means the novel is a product of the industrial revolution that had taken place in Europe. When Europeans came to Africa towards the end of the nineteenth century, their hometown was industrialised. But, at the same time, the story of Kenya was entirely different. To make his point clear, Ngugi takes his readers to pre-colonial Kenya.

Pre-colonial Kenya was dominated by faith, worship and dedication to nature and natural forces. Like other African countries, nature was central in the life of Kenyans as well. Rituals, magic and divination held a central stage around which the life cycle revolved. Human interaction with nature and natural forces was never individual but a 'collective response'. Since nature was extremely 'incomprehensible and unpredictable' for the folks. They faced the extremes through 'cohesive social order.' Social unity became their strength for survival.

A continued and constant struggle of the people with nature goes on. This struggle gets reflected even in the literature. The animal kingdom, nature, and the natural forces find their place in folk literature; intersecting, intermingling and at times coexisting with one another. These folk narratives describe the heroic deeds of the kings and the tribal chiefs in the form of animal characters, half-man and half-beast characters. According to the author, this everyday struggle with nature and the animal kingdom was progressing in its own natural and organic way. The progression was hindered by capitalist tendencies of imperialism which turns the native population into slaves. Ngugi made strong criticism of capitalism, he says:

Imperialism has introduced mass poverty and cross-regional underdevelopment. Capitalism introduced plenty and possibilities of the conquest of hunger: capitalism ensured poverty and mass starvation on a scale unknown before. Capitalism and the development of science and technology introduced the possibilities of the conquest of nature: capitalism by its

uncontrolled use and exploitation of natural resources ensured the virtual dominance of nature over man by way of droughts and desertification (66).

Ngugi completely negates the capitalist model of development adopted by the European countries. This model is based on the exploitation and hunger of the masses. He also criticises the development of science and technology that takes place in Europe. The colonial powers of Europe used new inventions in exploiting nature for profit. Therefore, their struggles are different. One is struggling with nature for survival and the other for profit. If our struggles are different, so are our experiences.

As we progress in the reading of this chapter, Ngugi comes to the question of the African novel. He offers some background information to the readers before the main point. In this chapter, he also relates the introduction of the printing press in Africa to the censorship involved by the government laws to keep track of the rebel activities. The role of the African language in the publication was minimal. It was limited to the translation of the Bible. Like India, the first generation of novelists was more exposed to *The Pilgrim's Progress* than to the classics of Balzac and Tolstoy. The school libraries were also under surveillance. The early African novels were influenced by Biblical themes. In the fifties, the opening of the overseas colleges of the University of London in different regions of Africa like Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana worsened the situation. These universities exposed young minds to the work of James Joyce, Joseph Conrad and others.

The writings of Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Kofi Awoonor created an “Afro-European novel” instead of implanting an African novel in its roots. You must know that these three African writers have written in English. Ngugi confesses that he was also part and parcel of this process of Afro-European novel and a product too. His earliest writings both short stories and novels, were in English. But his rediscovery of *Kamiruthu* theatre changed the choice of language for creative expression. It took him long to decide the language of his own for his creative outpourings. He says, “I would reconnect myself not to the Afro-European novel of my previous practice but to the African novel of my new commitment (71).” Ngugi has used English as a medium for his creative expression in novels like *A Wheat of Grain*, *Petals of Blood* and others. While writing, he was conscious and in a state of crisis. His only worry was what can be called a writer’s integrity. Characters who become the content of his writing are never going to read these novels. Then comes the situation, he says, “I have reached a point of crisis. I don’t know whether it is worth any longer writing in English (72).” Throughout this work, he explores

the relationship between mother tongues and the dynamics of the imperial imposition of the English language.

Ngugi critically examines the importance of teaching and studying African languages and their role in cultural resistance. Unveiling the inner dynamics of the imperialistic tendencies in imposing English also lowers the status of native regional languages and vice versa. The act of acknowledging the higher status of an imposed tongue creates alienation from one's own tongue. There arises the crisis of language, identity, belongingness, harmony, and the self. In introspection, he adds: "It seems to me that in a country where ninety per cent speak African languages, it is very unwise not to teach these in schools and colleges. We need to develop a national language, but not at the dire expense of the regional languages (72-73)." The important point in this statement needs further elaboration. He emphasises that in schools and colleges of Africa, the local languages must be taught. He also introduced the reader to fact that there is a need to develop a national language but that national language should not harm the regional languages in the same way as English has harmed the world. In his 1977 lecture, based on his experiment in theatre at *Kamiruthu* village, he called upon Kenyan writers to 'return to their roots.' While under prosecution, in 1978, he concluded with the call: "Kenyan writers have no alternative but to return to the roots, return to the sources of their being in the rhythms of life and speech and languages of the Kenyan masses if they are to rise to the great challenge of recreating, in their poems, plays, and novels, the epic grandeur of their history (73)." He alarms the writers' fraternity about their loss of sense of belonging and rootlessness. He invites them to get one with the rhythm of life, with the speech of the common Kenyan man. Here, the author becomes the harbinger of awakening and the torch bearer of realisation of the self. He himself had already initiated the process of writing his first-ever creative work in Gikuyu, which was a novel, with the title *Caitani Mutharabaini*, while in prison. In the prison, in the absence of a notebook, he used toilet paper for writing. Such was the commitment of Ngugi as a writer.

Ngugi also tells his readers that writing in Gikuyu was a challenge. There was no tradition of creative writing in Gikuyu, especially novels. The issue of orthography which does not represent tone is a chief feature of Gikuyu. He further extended this exploration with the challenge of looking at the 'fictional language,' the language of novel and short stories. In addition, the assumption that there will be a shift of readership from English to Gikuyu, was also a point of consideration. To cope up with the challenge of 'fictional language,' Ngugi borrowed from oral traditions. He tried to keep the plot simple so as to manage it well in time and space.

Ngugi's first novel in Gikuyu *Caitani Mutharabaini*, (Devil on the Cross in English), received an enthusiastic response from the members of the community. They read novels in the family, in get-togethers, at work places, in buses, in taxis and in public bars. His efforts started the new era of fiction writing in the regional languages of Africa. The success of the novel reflects in its translations in English, Swedish, Norwegian, and German. But for Ngugi, the struggle does not end here. He wanted to establish a communication between the various African languages. Therefore, the translation of *Caitani Mutharabaini* into Swahili was equally important for him. According to him, "Indeed I see this kind of communication among African languages as forming the real foundation of a genuinely African novel (84)." He wants regional literature in the regional languages to reflect the 'African sensibility' in its true sense which will also enrich the 'art of translation.' Envisioning the future of the African novel, according to Ngugi, will depend on the writers' preference for native language, publishers' preference for regional literature, the state patronage to national literature and finally on the promising reader.

In a nutshell, we can say that the author wants the African writers to write in African languages and there should be a continuous interaction between different African languages. African writers who write in European languages must connect with their roots and reflect African sensibility in its true essence.

14.2.2.4 The Quest of Relevance:

This chapter starts with an explanation of why the discussion on poetry was not included in this book. Ngugi's stand was "the existence and the continuing growth of poetry in African languages, clearly and unequivocally so in orature, makes it manifestly absurd to talk of African poetry in English, French or Portuguese (87)." This explanation shows the richness of the tradition of poetry in African languages. Ngugi informs the reader about Hassan, the great poet of Somalia. You must know that the state of Somalia shares a land border with Kenya. In the discussion on poetry, Ngugi makes a comparison of Hassan's poetry with the poetry in the European languages. According to him, Hassan was very much popular among the rural folks of Somalia. The peasant of Somalia learns his poetry by heart. In comparison, not even a single line of English poetry can be learnt by the same folks. The reason for this connection of poetry with heart is the intrinsic feature of poetry; rhythm, music, fluidity and so on. Thus, the author did not consider it important to discuss poetry.

A large part of this chapter revolves around the 'the great Nairobi literature debate.' The 1968 debate was about the teaching of African literature in universities and schools. Ngugi

broadly classifies the literature available to the African student into three categories. The first category is European classic literature. The second category is of “liberal European who often had Africa as the subject of their imaginative explorations.” The third category comprises racist literature which categorizes African as ‘good and the bad.’ His categorization outlines how African children experience the world through the lens of the ‘Eurocentric experience of history.’ The first category includes Tolstoy, Balzac, Dickens, Chekhov, Dostoevsky and so on. The second category perhaps includes writers like Joseph Conrad; the author of *Heart of Darkness*. The category of writing gives value judgment on Africa. Therefore, he wanted to place ‘Kenya, East Africa and then Africa at the centre,’ of the world.

Regarding this, he and other like-minded people wanted to establish oral literature of Africa at the centre and include it in the syllabi of schools, colleges and universities. In 1974, an important conference was held in a Nairobi school on the *Teaching of African literature in Kenyan schools*. The conference was organised to examine the role of literature in society and its relevance. The fruitful outcome of this conference was the seventy-three pages document which “argued that a sound education policy was one which enables students to study the culture and the environment of their society first, then set it in relation to the culture and environment of other societies...” The author wants that the African consciousness should not be divided into northern Africa, Eastern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, he wants the Kenyan child to be exposed to world literature and the democratic traditions in world literature. But, the same child should be rooted in his tradition first. He should experience the world from his own sensibilities, not with the borrowed tongues. He wants the child to be exposed in correct order; vernacular literature first, foreign literature later.

14.2.2.5 Conclusion:

There is a strong will in Ngugi’s writings to break away from neo-colonialism which subjugated the African mind. He deals with the issue of language that is intricate and entangled in the politics of colonial and the new governments. He himself struggled to shun English as his medium of creative expression and finally succeeded writing in Gikuyu. He wants the African child to be taught in his/her mother language. He expects the writers of Africa to write in their regional languages. He played a vital role in reviving the language of theatre in its traditional form. He places African sensibility and African worldview at the centre of the African child which can be done only by decolonising the mind. The decolonisation of the mind creates a

harmony of the self with the natural and social environment. It creates a sense of pride in owning one's language and one's culture.

Check your progress:

1. Explain the dual character of the language defined by Ngugi in the first chapter *The Language of African Literature*.

2. According to Ngugi what should be the language of an African novel and why?

3. Discuss the components of traditional African theatre?

4. According to Ngugi, why it is important for an African child to study African literature?

14.3 Learning Outcomes

Students of this course now have understood the politics of language in Africa during the colonial and neo-colonial periods. You are now familiar with the critical approach of the author in dismissing English and his own homecoming. You are aware of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o role and the participation of the village community in reviving African traditional theatre *Ituika*. You are also well acquainted with Ngugi's rejection of the Eurocentric worldview and his analysis of the role of mother tongue in framing worldview in the mind of an African child. The unnecessary imposition of the English language and the necessity of teaching and reading African literature written in African languages are clearly delineated. You are familiar with the author's emphasis on writing literature in African languages and its translation in regional languages of Africa. This Unit also gives an understanding of the need for decolonising the mind so as to restore the true spirit of Africa. At the end of this Unit, you should have gained an understanding of why Ngugi gave importance to the regional languages of Africa and the relevance of his work, *Decolonising the Mind* in educating his people about shunning the English language and the European literature.

14.4 Glossary

Alienation: A state of mind when the sense of belonging is lost; loss of identity

Capitalism: An economic system, controlled and owned by private persons for profit

Colonialism: When a nation is being ruled, subjugated or controlled by another nation for economic interest. Most of the nations of Europe in 19th century and 20th century have colonies in Asia and Africa for economic interest

Bantu: Language group of Africa

Eurocentric: When the centre of the world lies in Europe

Gikuyu: Language of Kenya

Imperialism: When a country expands its rule in another nation without expanding boundaries to extend the power and influence for economic interest

Kamiruthu: Village in Kenya

Neo-Colonialism: A political system in which the economic policies of a nation is being controlled by another nation

Swahili: Language of Africa

14.5 Sample Questions

14.5.1 Objective Questions:

A. Read the sentences and choose the appropriate option:

1. What is the mother tongue of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o?
 - (a) Swahili
 - (b) Bantu
 - (c) Gikuyu
 - (d) African
2. Ngugi's experiment in *Kamiruthu* village revived which one of the following tradition?
 - (a) African Novel
 - (b) African Theatre
 - (c) African oral literature
 - (d) African poetry
3. What was the nationality of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o?
 - (a) Egyptian African

- (b) Kenyan African
- (c) Uganda
- (d) Somalia

4. Which group of languages does Ngugi wants to be at the centre of the world of an African child?

- (a) Indo-Aryan
- (b) Indo-European
- (c) African
- (d) Baltic

5. From which imperial nation did Kenya attain freedom?

- (a) Portugal
- (b) Spain
- (c) Britain
- (d) French

B. In the following statements, mark true or false:

1. Ngugi was an Afro-American writer.

- (a) True
- (b) False

2. The Mau Mau revolt was against British imperialism.

- (a) True
- (b) False

3. The first novel of Ngugi was in Gukuyi.

- (a) True
- (b) False

4. Ngugi was a professor of English literature.

- (a) True
- (b) False

5. English is one of the languages of the Bantu group.

- (a) True
- (b) False

14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is Ngugi's contribution to African literature?



2. What is Ngugi's opposition to the Eurocentric view of the world?
3. Explain Ngugi Wa Thiong'o critique of colonialism and neo-colonialism.
4. In what ways did the imposition of English language impact Kenya?
5. According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, how should African children experience the world?

14.5.3 Long Answers Questions:

1. Describe the collective effort of the *Kamiruthu* village community in reviving *Ituika*, the traditional theatre of Africa.
2. Explain Ngugi's opposition to the colonial imposition of English language in Kenya.
3. According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, why is there a need to decolonise the mind?

14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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2. Gikandi, Simon. "On Culture and the State: The Writings of Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 1, [Taylor & Francis, Ltd., Third World Quarterly], 1989, pp. 148–56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3992225>.
3. Kasanga, Luanga A., and Mambo Kalume. "The Use of Indigenized Forms of English in Ngũgĩ's Devil on the Cross: A Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Analysis." *African Languages and Cultures*, vol. 9, no. 1, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 1996, pp. 43–69, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1771792>.
4. Ochwada, Hannington. "MEN OF LITERATURE AND KENYA'S HISTORIOGRAPHY: AN APPRAISAL OF THE WRITINGS OF NGUGI-WA-THIONG'O." *Transafrican Journal of History*, vol. 24, Gideon Were Publications, 1995, pp. 151–61, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24328660>.
5. Thiong'o Ngugi Wa. *Decolonising the Mind; The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Oxford: James Curry, 1986.

Unit-15: Indian Short Story

Structure

15.0 Introduction

15.1 Objectives

15.2 The Genre of Short Story

15.2.1 Indian Short Story: An Overview

15.2.2 Indian Short Story and Women Writers

15.2.3 Let us Sum Up

15.3 Learning Outcomes

15.4 Glossary

15.5 Sample Questions

15.5 Suggested Learning Resources

15.0 Introduction

In the current age, people feel impatient to read the long narratives and instead try to satiate their aesthetic appetite in a minimum possible time span. Thus, short story proves to be a time saving genre for them. The evolution of the short story began before human beings' capability to write. Short story has been the most liked genre by most of the writers and there are many short stories in the Book of Genesis (the Bible) also. Writers like Geoffrey Chaucer and Giovanni Boccaccio have written some wonderful tales in their magnum opus like *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Decameron*. The Roman and Greek writers like Homer and Virgil also contributed a lot to the genre of short story in the form of works like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. *The Arabian Nights* is also an important work of the same genre. The real beginning of short stories is believed to have taken place with Thomas Deloney's work *Gentle Craft* in 1586. As a genre, short story received relatively little critical attention through the middle of the nineteenth century. After a slight halt in the writing of this genre we saw a tremendous come back in the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century not only in England but France, Russia, America etc. The possible reason was the tremendous increase in the advancement of science and technology due to which we saw an incredible increase in the publishing of magazines, newspapers, periodicals etc. Besides all this, the literacy rate saw a rapid rise, thereby increased

the number of readers as well. Some of the well-known short story writers who took the responsibility of taking this genre forward include Rabindranath Tagore, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Philip K. Dick, William Faulkner, Ray Bradbury, J D Salinger, Charles Bukowski, Anton Chekhov, Nathaniel Hawthorne, O. Henry, Guy de Maupassant, James Joyce, Ruskin Bond etc.

15.1 Objectives

You will read in this Unit the comprehensive portrayal about introduction to Indian short story.

The careful reading of the Unit will help you to understand:

- the detailed description about the term short story
- the rise and development of short story as a genre in India
- Indian short story and the various women writers

15.2 The Genre of Short Story

The first important thing about a work of fiction which comes to our mind is the ‘story’ element, that how good story it is. So ‘story’ is something that plays an important role while defining the merit of any work of fiction. The story part is followed by the level of fantasy or imagination involved in it. Then comes the different techniques, themes, structure etc. So, all these elements work together for the successful accomplishment of the purpose behind writing a work of fiction. Thus, a short story can be defined as a brief work of literature usually written in narrative prose fiction which is complete in itself and where, by the dint of imagination and intellect, the series of events and incidents which are related to central situation are presented.

Curiosity in narrating and listening to short stories is deep rooted in human beings right from the commencement of human civilization. The evolution of the short story began before human being’s capability to write. Short story has been one of the most liked genres by most of the writers after drama, novel and poetry. Short story as compared to these genres did not receive serious attention. Writers like Katherine Mansfield were apologetic about writing short stories while prominent short story writers like Edgar Allan Poe considered short story superior to novel. So let us now start talking about the various characteristics of a short story.

A short story has a pattern or sequence of events and situations to achieve a specific purpose. It needs to have a series of interrelated action that progresses through a struggle of opposing forces known as conflict to a climax and a denouement. For the successful and smooth functioning of plot, the creation of a living person through means of action, speech, thoughts and physical appearance of an imaginary character which we call characterization is also necessary. The other essential elements that play an important role to the final effect of the story include point of view, style and technique.

Both novel and short story share much similarity with each other and short story in comparison to novel is short. Moreover, a short story is different from an anecdote, tale and a fable. A short story has a plot, resonance and other dynamic components to a far greater degree than an anecdote. An anecdote can simply be defined as a short and amusing but serious account which may depict a real or imaginative incident or character. So anecdote can be humorous but there is a note of seriousness in it. A short story is also different from a tale. A tale is a detailed narration of some real or imaginary events or incidents by a narrator. The word ‘tale’ is derived from an old English word for speech. Thus, a tale is primarily an oral form. This oral form of storytelling still exists in many parts of India even in today’s technological world.

Similarly, there is a difference between a fable and a short story. A fable is a short, simple story in verse or poem, usually with animals as characters, who finally convey a moral lesson. The moral is usually delivered in the form of an epigram. Fables with only animals as principal characters are also some times called as beast fables. It is a very old form of storytelling, related to folklore and proverbs.

Check your progress

1. What is a short story?

2. How different is short story from a novel?

15.2.1 Indian Short Story: An Overview

The history of Indian English fiction runs back to the twentieth century and it is believed that Indian English short story also began during the same era; however Indian English short story kept a low profile during the first half of the twentieth century. But it flourished and emerged as a popular literary genre during the mid-eighties. It began with the publication of a

short story collection *Stories from Indian Christian Life* by Kamala Sathianadan in the year 1898. The short story writers like A.S.P. Ayyer, K.S. Venkatramani, and K. Nagarjan who were social reformers focused on the burning issues of India in their stories.

The short story in Indian writing in English may be referred to as an outgrowth of the Indo-Anglian novel. Right from the writers like Raja Rao to Arun Joshi, every Indo-Anglian novelist, has contributed to this genre in one way or the other by writing at least one if not more, collection of short stories. The two towering literary figures, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan, who are equally prolific within the realms of the short story and the novel, have contributed abundantly to the emergence of the short story in English with their amazing style. The short story evolved into a full-fledged mode of creative expression within the palms of these two masters who took a keen and stern interest in it as an art form from the past four decades. The significant output of Manjeri S. Isvaran, Khushwant Singh, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, and others in the form of short stories monitor their determination to its improvement. Today, the Indian short story in English has very well served as a commanding vehicle of social consciousness and a tool to portray the Indian social scene.

However the early writers took us back to the ancient classics like ‘Panchatantra’, ‘Jataka Tales’, ‘Brihatkatha’, ‘Yoga-Vashistha’, the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharata* and took them as a source of inspiration. Later on, a tremendous influence of foreign short story writers was seen on the Indian literary writers and thus influenced them to portray social scenes realistically. The platform for them was set in the shape of different journals and magazines. Thus, it would be apt to say that the Indian short story in English prospered under the influence of foreign writers of this literary genre.

Writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Bankim Chandra Chatterji and others had a great influence of foreign writers like Walter Scott on their writings. Besides this, the Indian fiction written in other regional languages like Hindi, Tamil, and Urdu etc was highly influenced by the foreign literary giants like Maupassant, Tolstoy, O’ Henry etc.

Though the Indian short story writers primarily wrote under the influence of foreign writers, the content and subject matter was itself sufficient to suffice the need. They tried to present the real portrait of India through the genre. They highlighted both the rural and urban way of life – its lifestyle, religion, superstitious beliefs etc. Man’s amities, aspirations and a true picture of human nature were portrayed.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote short stories in Bengali. His short stories were translated from Bengali to English by many publishers. Manjeri S. Isvaran tries to get at the vital truths and values that oversee human affairs. His “By Way of Preface” in his collection entitled *A Madras Admiral*, is indeed an essay on the nature and function of the short story as an art form. He believes that a short story writer must try to place before the readers some problem and its determination, through the creative treatment of an incident. In his choice of themes and his treatment of them, he is typically Indian. A.S.P Ayyar also tries to focus the attention of his readers on certain major social problems of the day. The moralistic tone in his short stories is too loud to be missed. But his short stories are largely conversational and in the matter of creation has little of the firmness one generally associates with a good short story. Mulk Raj Anand attacks the insincerity of the people. He published seven volumes of short stories. They include *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934), *The Barber’s Trade Union and Other Stories* (1942), *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories* (1947), *Reflections on the Golden Bed and Other Stories* (1954), *Selected Stories* (1954), *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories* (1959), and *Lajwanti and Other Stories* (1966).

In his short stories, Anand empathizes with the underdogs of society and reveals their quandary due to social unfairness and strong biases of the fortunate people towards them. His enthusiasm for alteration through experience and irony gets its full expression in his long short story “Lament on the Death of a Master of Arts.” This story gives us a panoramic view of modern India and provides the author unlimited scope for his comments, mocking or otherwise, on the hundred-odd things which have fraught progress all around in India. However, satire does not give to Anand’s short stories its true power. He is, on the other hand, more effective, when he is simply deducing life as it is. This is especially true when he portrays women and children. In a nutshell, the power and strength of Anand’s realistic portrayal give his short stories an incredible resounding look.

In sharp contrast to Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan approaches the Indian scene with not much subtlety. In this respect, he stands in parallel to Isvaran that he has an eerie eye for detail – both of them create outstanding stories from casual roadside events and characters. While Isvaran attempts to see in a casual event some deeper meaning and significance, Narayan is usually satisfied in skimming lightly on the surface of life without preaching anything. He takes life for whatever its merit is, writes about those familiar scenes which amuse or delight him,

hardly ever bothering to touch its deeper and darker aspects. Aesthetic satisfaction is the sole aim of all his writings.

Though the earlier writers of the genre like Kamla Sattianandan, Nagarajan, S K Chettur etc set the platform but the true artistic fervor emerged during mid thirties of the Twentieth Century through the writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R K Narayan who displayed their great literary genius and creative bent of mind through their literary pieces. Through the foreign medium and foreign influence they brought that Indianness in it and molded the language and techniques as per the interest of Indians. Along with these three prominent Indian writers the names of the writers like G D Khosla, Ruskin Bond, K. A. Abbas, Khushwat Singh, Manjeri Isvaran, Bhabani, Bhattacharya in handling this form can not be ignored. They, through their works, presented a picture of what they saw through their creative eyes and presented Indian culture and thoughts to the global readers. The writers deliberately have chosen the English (global language) as a medium of writing to bring Indian culture, tradition, religious beliefs, caste system, corruption, social injustice, hypocrisy etc to the global platform. That is why they dealt with a variety of themes.

The earlier Indian short story writers were primarily reformers. They tried to highlight certain burning issues of the day and laid their focus to educate the illiterate masses. Their writing was thus didactic in nature. Thus the genre of satire and humor was excessively used by the Indian short story writers.

The age was the age of Mahatma Gandhi and the Gandhian philosophy of independence had a predominant influence upon the writers of that time. Thus, the freedom movement also became a dominant theme of the writers like A.S.P. Ayer, K.S. Venkatramani, and K. Nagarjan at that time. They didn't restrict the stories to the above mentioned themes only but also experimented with some other themes like themes of horror and provided pure and healthy entertainment through their amusing and humorous short stories.

From the last three decades a sea of change can be seen both in Indian life and Indian literature in English as well. The country has tremendously progressed in the field of science and technology and has showed its remarkable progress in communication, defense, trade, commerce etc. Vast changes can also be seen in the field of politics. India holds the position of largest democracy in the world.

But along with these achievements a rapid increase can be seen in unemployment, population explosion, illiteracy, poor and detrimental condition of women as compared to their

male counterparts. All these issues became the dominant themes of the writers of the age. The writers of different genres felt a strong urge to highlight it through their works, since poetry was not a better platform to suffice the need, that is why some poets like Jayanta Mahapatra, K N Daruwalla etc started trying their hands at the short story as well. Jayanta Mahapatra along with the short story writers like Randhir Khare, Jug Suraiya etc explored the psychological dimensions of the characters. Besides this, the theme of sexuality was openly dealt by the Indian English short story writers.

Check your progress

Q. 1. What was the influence of foreign writers upon the Indian short story writers?

Q. 2. What was the primary focus of Mulk Raj Anand's short stories?

15.2.2 Indian Short Story and Women Writers:

It is undoubtedly true that Indian English literature is mostly dominated by male writers and the literature produced by them in different genres outweighs the creative output of female writers. But Indian women too displayed their creativity through different forms of writing especially in short stories. Attiah Hussain, Nargis Dalal, Cornelia Sorabji, Ela Sen, Anita Desai, Sunita Jain, Dina Mehta, Anita Mehta etc are some of the women writers who gave vent to their emotions through this genre. This is also to be accepted that in the pre-independence phase the number of women writers writing in English was very few, but after independence we saw a rapid rise in the number of women writers because of the socio-political and socio-economic developments in India. Though the women writers were comparatively less and primarily emerged as novelists but the contribution made by them to the Indian short story can not be ignored. The contemporary women writers are exploring different subjects besides laying stress on man-woman relationship in domestic life and stressing the equal status that women should be given in different strata of society. They highlighted how women have always been regarded as the marginalized figures and, what in post colonial terminology is called as, the 'Other'. They believed that despite this universally acknowledged fact that women perform equally with men physically and mentally, they have been denied their rights to express their thoughts, feelings and anguish. That is why the women short story writers of India tried through their works to go deep

into the female psyche and explore the minds, the sensibility and the angry heart of the forlorn and trapped woman.

Some women short story writers of India presented their women as bold, chivalrous, powerful, energetic and who spoke against their male counterparts with grit and courage. Their female protagonists can be seen boldly and fearlessly challenging the masculine social setups. Some important collections of short stories by female writers which deepened the bulk of Indian english short stories are as follows: Attiah Hussain's *Phoenix Fled and Other Stories* (1953), Rajkumari Singh's *A Garland of Stories* (1960), Usha John's *The Unknown Lover and Stories* (1960), Margaret Chatterji's *At The Homeopath's and Other Stories* (1973), Juliet Banerjee's *The Boy-friend* (1978), Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *How I Became a Holy Mother*, Shashi Deshpande's *The Legacy* (1978), and Dina Mehta's *The Other Woman and Other Stories* (1981).

15.2.3 Let us Sum Up:

Though Indian short story as a genre does not have that old historical background, its emergence left a great impression upon the various Indian writers to give vent to their creative expressions through it. The advent of the short story can be traced to the early 19th century. The history of Indian short story can mainly be divided into two phases; pre-independence and post-independence. The success of the genre from pre-independence to post-independence through a plethora of writers is distinctly evident. Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao represented the first flowering of this genre followed by numerous other writers, who were the products of their age. As readership increased, Indian short stories tended to get translated into foreign languages and have thus today achieved a permanent place in the field of world literature.

15.3 Learning Outcomes

After reading this Unit, it is expected that you shall be in a position to comprehend the genre of short story and its difference from other literary genres like novel, anecdote etc. You shall be able to learn about the detailed historical background of the Indian short story. It shall also help you to be acquainted with the various Indian short story writers who through their writing not only flourished this genre but brought it to the global level with their magnum opus. Moreover, after reading this Unit you shall also be in a position to know about the contribution made by the various women writers to Indian short stories.

15.4 Glossary

Portrayal: The act of portraying

Fiction: Literary type using invented or imaginative writing, instead of real facts, usually written as prose.

Apologetic: Defending by words or arguments; said or written in defence

Climax: The decisive moment in any story

Denouement: The final resolution of the main complication of a literary or dramatic work

Anecdote: Short account of an incident (especially a biographical one)

Narration: An Act of narrating events in a literary work

Folklore: The unwritten lore (stories and proverbs and riddles and songs) of a culture

Proverb: A condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people

Panoramic: A bird's eye survey

Satire: A literary device of writing or art which ridicules its subject with an intention to reform

Didactic: Intended to teach or demonstrate, especially with regard to morality

Forlorn: Something that is abandoned or left deserted

Magnum opus: A piece of work that has been given much critical praise, especially one that is considered the greatest work of a person's career

15.5 Sample Questions

15.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What differentiates a short story from a novel?

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| (a) Length | (b) Characters |
| (c) Theme | (d) Title |

2. What plays the most important role while defining the merit of any work of fiction?

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| (a) Length | (b) Story |
| (c) Structure | (d) All the three |

3. With which work of Thomas Deloney the real beginning of short stories is believed to have taken place in 1586?

- (a) *Gentle Craft* (b) *The Canterbury Tales*
(c) *The Decameron* (d) *The Arabian Nights*

4. In which language did Rabindranath Tagore write his short stories?

- (a) Tamil (b) Punjabi
(c) Bengali (d) Urdu

5. Take the odd one out:

- (a) *The Lost Child and Other Stories*
(b) *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories*
(c) *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and Other Stories*
(d) *A Madras Admiral*

6. In which of the writers did the freedom movement become one of the dominant themes?

- (a) Jayanta Mahapatra (b) A.S.P. Ayyer
(c) G D Khosla (d) Ruskin Bond

7. Which of the following Indian short story writers has written the collection of short stories *The Boyfriend*?

- (a) Shashi Deshpandi (b) Attiah Hussain
(c) Rajkumari Singh (d) Juliet Banerjee

8. Which one of the following is Rajkumari Singh's famous collection of short story?

- (a) *A Garland of Stories*
(b) *The Unknown Lover and Stories*
(c) *At The Homeopath's and Other Stories*
(d) *The Boy-friend*

9. Who among the following was primarily a poet?

- (a) K N Daruwalla (b) Ruth Praver
(c) R K Narayan (d) All of the above

10. Indian English short story flourished and emerged as a popular literary genre during the mid-eighties with the publication of _____.

- (a) *Stories from Indian Christian Life*
(b) *Phoenix Fled and other Stories*
(c) *The Unknown Lover and Stories*

(d) Margaret Chatterji's *At The Homeopath's and Other Stories*

15.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Manjeri S. Isvaran stands in parallel to R K Narayan. Comment.
2. What was the influence of Gandhian philosophy upon the Indian short story writers?
3. Indian women short story writers primarily stressed on man-woman relationship. Explain.
4. Write any five collections of short stories by five different women writers of India?
5. Why was English language deliberately chosen by various Indian prominent short story writers as a medium of writing?

15.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Comment on the evolution of Indian short stories.
2. What was the contribution of Indian women writers to Indian short stories?
3. Comment on the different themes of Indian short story writers.

15.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms: Seventh Edition*, Thomson Heinle,
2. Sharma, Amrita. *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Sterling Publishers, 1998
3. Iyengar, K R Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*, Sterling Publishers. 2018
4. Fallon, Erin et al., editors. *A Reader's Companion to the Short Story in English*, Routledge, 2001.
5. Dev, Anjana, Neira et al., editors. *Indian Literature: An Introduction*, Pearson Publishers, 2006.

Unit - 16: Vaikom Muhammad Basheer: The World Renowned Nose

Structure

16.0 Introduction

16.1 Objectives

16.2 The World Renowned Nose

16.2.1 About the Author

16.2.2 Basheer as a Writer

16.2.3 Style and Language

16.2.4 'The World Renowned Nose'

16.2.4.1 Summary

16.2.4.2 Critical Analysis

16.2.4.3 Satire, Humour and Pathos

16.2.4.4 Satire

16.2.4.5 Humour

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16.3 Learning Outcomes

16.4 Glossary

16.5 Sample Questions

16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

16.0 Introduction

'The World Renowned Nose' is an ironical, satirical story of a 24 year old man who lives with his mother. The man works as a cook to make both his ends meet. The unsophisticated man can neither read nor write and remains mostly confined to the kitchen where he works. The 24th year of his life turns out to be ominous for him as his nose starts to grow unusually, reaching his chin first, and then it grows to his navel. He returns home, stays with his mother in their hut where people continue to throng for getting a glimpse of his nose. He has nothing to survive on and no visitor ever asks him if he needs anything, despite knowing that he has been fired from his job. Fed up with this, he requests his mother not to let anybody in to see his nose. People, on the other hand, acting differently, start bribing his mother for venturing in. The mother takes the currency notes delightfully and lets the people in to see the nose of the 'Long Nosed One'. This practice changes their fortune. The man becomes rich. The hut turns into a big guest house. His

popularity grows. The poets sing about him, biographers write his biography, and film-makers give him roles in movies. He soon becomes a celebrity with lots of prospects.

This man now employs two beautiful female secretaries, besides managing all affairs very cleverly and tactfully as both of them love him. His popularity grows to such an extent that the government starts taking him seriously. The President honours him with the title “Chief of the Long-nosed one”, and also presents a gold medal to him. The political parties also try to garner support from his fame. One political party comes up with the name ‘the party of the Long-nosed one’. The other party becomes the opposite one and tries to tarnish the image and fame of the Long-nosed one.

The opposition party makes one of his secretaries issue a statement regarding his nose being unnatural. This ploy makes the President furious and he sends the department to arrest him. Then doctors from 48 countries are summoned and they start examination of the nose of the man in front of the ministers. After a thorough examination the team unanimously declares that his long nose is utterly genuine. The long-Nosed man is then given berth in the Parliament. The government continues to face criticism from the opposition parties over this decision. An ordinary man thus becomes a celebrity first and then a law-maker of the country.

16.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- (a) make you acquainted with the author and Malayalam literature
- (b) make you understand the genre of satire and its various aspects
- (c) help you to analyse the story ‘The World Renowned Nose’
- (d) guide you to appreciate the underlying meaning of the text.
- (e) help you critically assess the use of different techniques such as pathos and humour to highlight the social and political follies

16.2 The World Renowned Nose

16.2.1 About the Author:

Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, also known as Beypore Sultan, was an activist who fought for Indian independence. He wrote in Malayalam highlighting the follies that had crept into various spheres of life. Born on 21 January, 1908, he was the eldest of the six children of Kaji Abdur Rahman and Kunchachumma. His father was a prosperous timber merchant. He was first admitted in a local primary school and then to the Vaikhom English School. He also learnt Arabic from a tutor.

Basheer was in his teens when Gandhi visited Vaikhom in 1924. He was very much impressed by Gandhiji's ideology which completely transformed his thought process. His leaving home to reach Calicut was a turning point in his life. Calicut was the hub of nationalistic activities. Basheer also participated in the freedom struggle and also took part in Salt Satyagraha on the Calicut beaches. He was arrested with other freedom fighters and was sent to Cannanore Central Jail.

In the jail, Basheer experienced tortures and atrocities at the hands of colonizers' forces. The inhuman behaviour he met with, in the jail brought radical changes in him. He did away with the Gandhian philosophy of Ahimsa and embraced the extremism of Sardar Bhagat Singh and Raj Guru whom he considered his role models for fighting against the imperialists (the Britishers). After the government issued a second arrest warrant against him, he went into hiding. The police started searching for him. To evade arrest he travelled all over India for the next seven years. In his sojourns he reached as far as the shores of Arabia.

He resorted to several disguises viz; palmist, astrologer, magician's assistant, private tutor only to prevent himself from being recognized. Besides these, he worked as a waiter and also took several other jobs.

Basheer was once again on police radar for criticizing the Dewan of Travancore. He had started a weekly publication, *Pauranadam* (a platform for his satirical writings) which was banned. He was arrested and put behind the bars in the Kollam Kasba police station lock-up. The period he spent in the prison proved fruitful for him. He penned some popular stories there: 'Tiger', 'Itiyan Panikker', 'Mathilukal' are a few of them. He wrote 'Premlaknum' at the request of some prisoners who were fed up with the reading of religious scriptures like the Ramayana and the Bible.

In 1947 when India got freedom Basheer pulled himself from the active politics and tried to do away with his grave experiences through his writings. That is why his works that were written in post-independence era are not bitter and grave in tone. But he was dispirited to see

things not going the way he had expected. He was socially and politically conscious, thus wanted to portray society realistically and truthfully.

Basheer passed away on 5th July, 1994, leaving behind his wife Fabi, daughter Shaheena and son Anees. However, he is immortalized by his works that continue to strike peoples' minds.

16.2.2 Basheer as a Writer:

Life and Times

Basheer started his writing career with writing short stories for a newspaper Jayakeseri. His first story '*Ente Thankham*' (My Thankness) was published sometime between 1937 - 1941. This story had a great impact on Malayalam literary scene because it broke the traditional concepts of romantic fiction. In it Basheer introduced unusual characters like dark complexioned heroine, instead of a fair, slim, beautiful one. A clear difference is also marked in Basheer's writings as he did away with the traditional subjects and themes in Malayalam literary convention.

Basheer went to Madras where he wrote extensively for *Jayakevlam*. His career as a writer and journalist witnessed a strong boost. He came back to Ernakulam where he opened a small book store which began as a circle book house. This was later renamed as Basheer's Book Stall.

Basheer's literary pursuits were guided by a teacher and literary critic, M.P. Paul who proved to be his true mentor as well. It was on his advice Basheer devoted more time to his writing. He also reviewed his novel *Balyakalasakhi* (Childhood Friend) which was published in 1944.

16.2.3 Style and Language:

Basheer's works started making an impact in Malayalam literature in the period when Progressive Writers Movement in Malayalam literature had already begun. Writers were writing on the socialist themes like poverty, hunger, unemployment and so on. Basheer being socially conscious also dealt with these subjects but with his own flavour and experience. He had experienced and savoured all such things himself. His adventurous life provided him ample material for his stories. Having much experience of life and its different aspects to deal with, his stories enjoy uniqueness in Malayalam literature. He experimented with his own style by using rustic language of common parlance. His use of language enabled him to portray social fabric in its real costume. Unconventionally, he portrayed the rogues, the prostitutes, the eunuchs, the

pickpockets, the wicked as well as the innocents with same colour scheme and ironic humour. His treatment of his characters showcases the suffering of marginalized population of the society. His unconventional use of language is still widely discussed in the literary circles of the country. His use of colloquial language differentiated him from his contemporaries. He never cared for refined and grand style of language instead he used the language spoken by the commoners. At times he scolded his editors for transcribing his writings into standardized Malayalam. His brother once objected him for not following the elements of Malayalam grammar (aakhyas and aakhyaada). Basheer very furiously reacted and told his brother not to look for his stupid aakhya and aakhyaada in his works. He was always contemptuous towards caring for grammatical correctness. His language is marked with freshness, natural flow and originality. Basheer, through his use of language, makes his readers reach the society and examine his characters in the real sense. He delves deep into their minds and makes readers read their behaviour in a given situation.

16.2.4 ‘The World Renowned Nose’:

16.2.4.1 Summary:

The story ‘The World Renowned Nose’ begins with something which the author calls very startling. He calls it a true story and wants to give a detailed account of the story to his readers.

The story is of a young man who was in his early twenties. The man was ignorant, never had been to school, could not read and write and was devoid of any special attribute. The ordinary man worked as a cook and the kitchen where he worked was his entire world. He would live working satisfactorily in his own world and was unconcerned about the happenings in the outside world. He was rather a follower of Horace’s injunction of ‘carpe diem’. He would eat to his satisfaction and confine himself to the routine activities of his job. The man was so naïve and devoid of intelligence that he did not know the names of months of the year. He did not know the numbers and different techniques of calculating them. That is why at the end of the month his mother would come to receive his salary. His life was full of satisfaction and he enjoyed it until he reached twenty four years of his age.

In the 24th year of his life his nose started to grow in length. It did not make him feel uncomfortable as he could breathe in a normal manner. However, he faced embarrassing situations as people would visit him to see his unusually grown nose. This irritated his master who fired him from the job. In this way his grown up nose cost him his job. The poor man

returned to his home where he stayed with his mother. No one extended a helping hand to the duo. No political party came forward to condemn his dismissal, no philanthropist turned to their way, no lover of humanity remembered them. They starved in their hut. They faced all sorts of miseries and lived a lowly life. However, people continued to visit them to have a glimpse of his nose. Photographers, news reporters and others would throng their hut, but no one ever asked them if they had taken anything. They had no penny in their pockets. The long nosed man was convinced that his nose had acquired great publicity. The long nosed man was fed up with the prevailing conditions and told his mother to keep these people out from his room. He had felt very much irritated.

The mother got them out and closed the door. The people were very curious to see his nose. Barring them was very disgusting for them, as they would come a long way to have darshan of his nose. They started bribing his mother who accepted that readily. This opened a door of prosperity for the mother and son. They started amassing wealth and their life improved very swiftly. Some people protested against that brazen corruption but no one paid any heed to their concerns. The government also was a mute spectator to this. It invited harsh criticism from various quarters and several people joined the revolutionary parties to topple the government for its silence over this brazen corruption.

The long-nosed one's riches grew manifold and he became a millionaire only in six years. The transformation of the long-nosed one from an ordinary cook to a millionaire was not unnoticed. People from different professional fields started approaching him and offered him roles in their fields of activity. He made his presence in three films, one of them 'The Human Submarine', a technicolour film received large number of audience and was declared a grand success. In addition, six poets wrote epic poems, eulogizing his noble attributes. Nine biographers wrote biography of the long-nosed one and earned fame and name besides money. The long-nosed one's small hut was transformed into a large mansion where doors were always open for all and anyone could get a free meal.

The long-nosed man employed two beautiful secretaries who also loved him and cared about him besides managing all his affairs professionally. But, taking care of two beautiful women simultaneously was as hard as putting two swords in one sheath. Later on, one among them invited a lot trouble for him. On the other hand, other people also liked him very much. The long-nosed one's nose had reached to his navel and it was seen as a sign of greatness. He became a celebrity. His comments and opinions on important national or international events were

received delightfully and warmly. The newspapers also published his views even on sensitive issues. People would wait for the long-nosed one's comments with regard to different subjects. Anything about which the long-nosed one had not commented would be thought insignificant. The long-nosed one reached the zenith of fame and prosperity.

Meanwhile, several people had started hatching conspiracies to capture the long-nosed one. In the first place, the government played a confidence-trick to garner the support of the long-nosed one. They, (the government) awarded him the title of 'The Chief of the Long-nosed One's' and gave him a gold medal as well. The President himself tied the medal round his neck and tweaked the tip of his nose instead of shaking hands with him. The newsreel cameramen recorded the whole event and later on it was played in all theatres. The political parties, on the other hand, enthusiastically came forward to the long-nosed one, and insisted him to join their political party. How could he join various parties? He sought advice from one of his secretaries regarding the issue. The secretary advised him that he should not join any of the parties. But to his surprise one of the parties came up with the slogan that 'Our party is the long-nosed one's party' and 'the long-nosed one's party is the peoples' party'. The slogan became the cause of trouble for the long-nosed one. The members of the other parties persuaded one of his secretaries to announce a caustic comment against him. The secretary issued a statement against him by saying that the long-nosed one had cheated people, deceived them, was a fraudster, and had made her a partner in that fraud. She further said that the nose of the long-nosed one was not genuine but made of rubber, and thus spoiled his reputation.

The news about the nose, of the long-nosed one, being made of rubber hit the headlines of all newspapers and people were awestruck to read it. The news was definitely going to invite harsh reaction from the masses. They were not going to stand it. Using all means of communication, they tried to seek clarification from the President regarding the issue. There were protests everywhere against the long-nose party and the government. The crowds would not allow the President to take rest. Judging the situation, the long-nose party made the other secretary issue her statement in favour of the long-nosed one and against the other parties. She readily issued a statement by saying that the countrymen; the citizens must not pay heed to the lies of the other secretary whose brother was in the opposition party. She further said that she was the faithful secretary of comrade long-nosed one and she was sure his nose was as genuine as her own heart. She asked people to support the long-nosed one and the long-nose party. The contradictory statements of the two secretaries put the masses in confusion. The opposition party

members started finding faults of the government. They relentlessly criticized the President and his government for deceiving people. They even said that the betrayal of the President was a threat to national interest and demanded the execution of the long-nosed one.

One morning the President, reacting very angrily, sent the army who besieged his mansion and arrested him and took him away. Afterwards, there was complete lull there and the people forgot all about the long-nosed one as if confirming the saying 'out of sight is out of mind'. After the long lull, news with the magnitude of an explosion, hit the front pages of the newspapers, about the continuing trial of the Chief of the long nosed one's. The news revealed that on 9th of March a team of expert doctors, representatives of 48 countries would examine the nose of the long-nosed one. The papers further revealed that news channels of the world would be allowed to film the event. People were advised to maintain peace and wait for the findings.

The common masses did not pay any heed to the President's advice. They assembled in the metropolis in large crowds and resorted to violence. They invaded hotels, burnt public conveyance and police stations, and destroyed government offices. March 9 dawned, people gathered near the President's palace in large numbers, waiting for the news. The announcements were made through loud speakers, making people aware that the examination had started and insisting them to observe peace and maintain discipline.

The doctors formed a circle around the long-nosed one. The cabinet ministers and the President was present there. The long-nosed one's nose was examined first by blocking his nostrils; he opened his mouth to inhale. The other doctor pricked the tip of his nose which revealed a drop of blood. The doctors, in the presence of all the dignitaries, issued a unanimous statement regarding the nose of the long-nosed one. They said that his nose was natural and genuine. The doctors' verdict was really a good news for one of the secretaries, for long-nose party and the government. The secretary kissed the tip of his nose shouting the slogans 'Long live comrade long-nose', 'Long live the Progressive Peoples' Party of the long-nosed one' etc. As the shouting ended, the President came up with another scheme and nominated the long-nosed one as one of the members of the Parliament.

On the other hand, the opposite parties joined their hands under one banner 'The United Front' and incessantly demanded the resignation of the ministry. That is how an ordinary cook reached the Parliament and became a lawmaker despite not being worthy of the post.

16.2.4.2 Critical Analysis:

The story 'The World Renowned Nose' has been written to highlight the follies prevailing in the Indian societal setup. The author used myriad techniques to satirize the social, political as well as the behavioural patterns of Indian community. It has been written in first person considering the tradition of historical writing, the narrator begins from the beginning i.e., from the age of 24th year of the hero, Mukoon.

In the 24th year, the nose of the hero started growing unusually. This unusual and abnormal growth of a body part lead to his dismissal from the job. He was made to pack his bags for none of his own fault. The author mocks at the behavioural pattern of the people who never accept their fellow beings with the slightest of their abnormalities. He uses ironic and sarcastic tone to mock at the historical personages, history and historical writings.

He says that in the 24th year of one's age some crucial changes occur and this phenomenon of change has been left unnoticed so far by the historical writers who could have observed much more if they had properly deliberated upon it.

Mukoon, the hero, an ordinary cook, knew nothing about the outside world and even depended on his mother to receive his salary. He lived in his own world with a mundane routine like Sisyphus and was quite happy and content with his lot. Then something extraordinary happened in the 24th year of his age when his nose began to grow unusually, resulting in his dismissal from the job. He returned home, faced a tough time and experienced stomach churning starvation. People continued to visit him, but none of them bothered to ask him if they had something to eat. The author brings home the point that people are only concerned with their own interests and relish even at the cost of others' lives. The miseries and woes of the unprivileged continue to remain unaddressed.

The story tells us that the nose of the man reached to his naval and he got very disturbed by visitors and their indifferent attitude. Although, he was satisfied that his nose had become much popular. The author employed the techniques of hyperbole, exaggeration, and fantasy in order to bring out humour as well as pathos from what seemed to be an ordinary stuff. The hero plunged into deep despair for a period of time and then the gloom started to dispel. His mother readily accepted bribe from the visitors. This was the turning point of their life. This provided them a chance to better their lot. They kept taking bribe from the visitors, and this practice allowed them to transform radically. The days of poverty and misery ended, prosperity and happiness knocked their door. On the other hand, several conscious people voiced their concern

for this deceitful dealing but they neither had an answer from any quarter of the society nor from government.

Mukoon employed secretaries, built a new house and became a popular man. Several professionals offered him roles in movies, biographers wrote books on him and earned money. The ordinary and ignorant man becoming a celebrity in a short span of time reflects the sheer foolishness and stupidity of masses that make an ordinary unworthy person to reach the apex, where the person is not seen as ignorant but a god to be worshipped. Mukoon's opinion on different issues was sought by people like T.V. channels, news reporters, philanthropists, intellectuals and philosophers. The jotting down of Mukoon's words very eagerly by different media groups is a portrayal of mean display of their intellect, a burlesque.

The government awarded him on being 'the chief of the long-nosed one's' to the society. The President presented a gold medal to him and tweaked the tip of his long nose. This is quite ironical as the governments play confidence tricks to garner the support of those who have themselves resorted to deceitful practices and unlawful activities for achieving success. Mukoon was made leader of the people's struggle. They approached him and announced that their party was the long-nosed one's party and the long-nosed one's party was the peoples' party. On the other hand, other parties hatched a well designed conspiracy. They projected his nose as being made of rubber and made one of his secretaries to issue a statement regarding the same. This gave rise to conflicts, but the long-nosed one continued to grow in reputation. He won the admiration, adoration, and fame, became a law-maker of which he was not worthy.

The author wants us to appreciate that in Indian society people act foolishly and unreasonably. He also takes a dig at those poor intellects who, without using common sense, follow the influence of those who have gained recognition even by false means. The story is a scathing criticism of the politicians and officials who are unworthy and never do anything special for their community but are shrewd enough to exploit the common masses and take advantage of their foolishness. They make ordinary people, like Mukoon, a celebrity in order to get themselves going and soar high.

16.2.4.3 Satire, Humour and Pathos:

Satire:

Satire is one of the oldest literary forms. It is an instrument of attack with which the writer or the speaker equips himself/herself in order to set right the situations that they think are undesirable.

The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary states that satire is a way of criticizing a person, an idea or an institution in which you use humour to show their faults or weaknesses. This can be employed directly as in the form of taunts or jibes or indirectly using irony. While employing this technique, the writer often describes a completely different situation and references to the things we know, so that we realize what it is that the writer is intending to criticize. It is used to highlight or ridicule the weaknesses, evils, follies, faults of a man, group community, or setup: social, political in nature. The aim of satire is to correct the unethical conduct by mocking at them, using criticism and wit with humour and sarcasm or preventing people from going astray.

Humour:

In its common usage, the word humour means what creates or causes laughter, but it also means mood or character. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary explains that humour is the quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech, a mood or state of mind, each of the four. It can be summed up as to ridicule or to make fun of someone, his statement, dress, or attitude. It is like a sugar coating which makes the criticism easier and lighter to take.

Pathos:

Pathos is the most powerful and strongest tools that a writer or the speaker has to persuade his readers or listeners. A writer employs this tool to appeal to the readers' emotions because it is all about emotions or heart and we are often swayed by our emotions. While reading a work of art we pity or sympathize with those characters who are the worst sufferers or who go through troubles and tribulations. This empathetic attitude or feeling sad about the victim is what we call pathos. Using this technique the writer convinces his readers to go by emotions and not by logic as pathos is about hearts not heads.

16.3 Learning Outcomes

The possible learning outcomes of the essay “The World-Renowned Nose” by Bashir Ahmad could include:

- **Appreciation for Artistic Interpretation:** Readers will gain an understanding of the diverse ways in which artists can interpret and convey complex themes through their artwork. They will learn to appreciate the depth and symbolism embedded in artistic creations.
- **Critical Analysis Skills:** The essay encourages readers to engage in critical analysis by examining the physical aspects, symbolic significance, and emotional impact of the artwork. Readers will develop skills in interpreting and evaluating art, enhancing their ability to analyze and appreciate artistic expressions.
- **Cultural and Historical Awareness:** Through exploring the social, cultural, or political issues addressed by "The World-Renowned Nose," readers will gain insight into the wider context in which the artwork was created. This fosters a greater understanding of the interplay between art and society and promotes cultural and historical awareness.
- **Creative Thinking and Expression:** By studying the artistic techniques employed by Bashir Ahmad to communicate his message, readers may be inspired to think creatively and explore different ways of expressing their own ideas and emotions through art or other forms of creative expression.

Lastly, the essay presents opportunities for readers to expand their knowledge and understanding of art, develop critical thinking skills, and cultivate a deeper appreciation for the power of artistic expression.

16.4 Glossary

Unsophisticated:	Not sophisticated; lacking education or enlightenment
Ominous:	That which gives indication of coming ill
Prospects:	Coming of potential things in one's way, especially favourable
Tarnish:	Blacken; disgrace or dishonor
Parlance:	A particular way of speaking or using words
Costume:	Appearance of characteristics of a particular period
Eunuch:	Castrated human male; an ineffectual person
Injunction:	An order, especially a court order, requiring a person to do or stop doing a specific action
Darshan:	An opportunity to see a holy person or the image of a deity

Technicolor: A process of colour cinematography using synchronized monochrome films, each of a different colour, to produce a colour print; brightly coloured

Unanimous: Uniform; fully in agreement

Follies: Faults; thoughtless action resulting in tragic consequences

Sarcastic: Containing sarcasm; mocking (often using irony)

Philanthropist: Lover of mankind; kind; very generous person

Mundane: Ordinary; commonplace

Naïve: Showing a lack of experience, wisdom or judgment

16.5 Sample Questions

16.5.1 Objective Questions:

- The nose of the long-nosed one started to grow unusually at the age of _____.
 - 24
 - 21
 - 25
 - 20
- The man was thrown out of his job because _____.
 - He was not a good cook.
 - He was ignorant.
 - The visitors disturbed the peace of his master.
 - His mother would receive his salary.
- Long-nosed one spent his life _____ after his return to his home.
 - Peacefully
 - Delightfully
 - Miserably
 - Proudly
- What did the people do when they were not allowed to see the long-nosed one?
 - Donated money to help them live a better life
 - They used force to have a glimpse of his nose
 - They resorted to violence

- (d) They bribed his mother and got the permission
5. Whom did the long-nosed one consult when he was offered a place in politics?
- (a) His mother
 - (b) The President
 - (c) His Secretary
 - (d) None of these
6. One of the secretaries put an egg on the long-nosed one's face. How?
- (a) By calling him a fool
 - (b) By saying that his nose was unreal
 - (c) By charging him for taking bribe
 - (d) By labeling him an agent of the government
7. The title the long-nosed one received from the government was _____.
- (a) The chief among the long-nosed ones
 - (b) The cleverest man in the world
 - (c) The most generous to the entire populace
 - (d) The peace-loving and caring man
8. The long-nosed one became the cause of much destruction and violence. This reflects that the masses do not use their _____.
- (a) Strength
 - (b) Money
 - (c) Reason
 - (d) Tools
9. How was long-nosed man's nose tested for ascertaining its genuineness?
- (a) He was taken to a super specialty hospital for the test.
 - (b) He was sent outside the country to get examined by expert doctors.
 - (c) Doctors from 48 countries were summoned and they tested his nose in the presence of the president and the ministers.
 - (d) The tip of his nose was cut.
10. In the story the author uses several devices to satirize the social setup. To achieve his goals he mostly makes use of _____.
- (a) Irony-sarcasm-exaggeration-humour-pathos
 - (b) Metaphor- imagery-simile-sarcasm

(c) Alliteration-pun-hyperbole-simile

(d) Imagery-personification-mimicry-metaphor

16.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Why was the man (Mukoon) thrown out of his job?
2. How far was his mother responsible for his becoming a popular man?
3. How was his nose tested?
4. What did the extra-long nose bring to the man?
5. How did the controversies arise in the story?

16.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. The man's decision to keep the visitors away from him proved helpful to him. How do you know?
2. What does the story tell us about the psychology of the masses?
3. There was great confusion in the minds of people about the nose of the man. How was the confusion created in their minds?

16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Basheer, Vaikhom Mohammad, *Me Grandad 'ad an elephant!': Three Stories of Muslim life in South India*, trans. R. E. Asher etc,al., Edinburgh University of Edinburgh Press 1980 and 'New Delhi'; Penguin India, 1992.
2. Ravindran Vanajam ed., *Vaikhom Mohammad Basheer: Short Stories*, New Delhi: Katha, Rupa, 1996.

Unit - 17: A Brief Survey of Indian English Drama

Structures

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17.0 Introduction

Drama as we know is one of the literary forms that evolved from the ancient theatre and theatrical performances. Looking into the history of the development of drama in ancient Greece, Rome, India, England, we come to know that it has always been an integral part of culture, representing the moral choices, cultural conventions, religious beliefs, social, political and philosophical approaches and attitudes and their changing status from time to time. Drama as we see is the combination of fact and fiction, and serves the function of representing the society in totality and simultaneously endeavours to bring about some desired changes in society for better in 'art for life's sake' stance. As Horace put it, drama was designed 'to delight and instruct.'

In ancient India drama was considered as the 'Fifth Veda.' A.B Keith remarks, "Indian tradition preserved in the *Natyashastra* the oldest of the texts of the theory of the drama, claims for the drama a divine origin, and a close connection with the sacred Vedas themselves." Its journey started with classical Sanskrit plays, using both Sanskrit and prakrit languages. Some of the ancient classical dramas are Kalidasa's *Malavikagnimitram*, *Vikramorvasiyam*, and *Abhijnanasakuntalam*; Bhavabhuti's *Malati-Madhava*, *Mahaviracharita* and

Uttararamacharita; Emperor Harsha's comedy *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarsika* and a Buddhist drama *Nagananda*.

The origin and development of the Indian English drama is linked to the arrival of the British and the subsequent phenomenon of colonisation of the Indian subcontinent. Indian English drama is a unique corpus created by Indian writers in English or the translated plays into English from other regional languages of India, either by the dramatists themselves or by the translators. Pioneers of Indian English drama tried their hand at showing diverse Indian socio-cultural customs, conventions, and traditions in a non-native language. Moreover, it was natural for the dramatists to find it difficult to get connected to the masses who spoke their own regional languages. Nevertheless, English speaking classes emerged within Indian society over time due to the long exposure to colonisation, and the English drama started becoming relevant in Indian society after the English language permeated in the society. Also, it is a fact that Indian English drama did not succeed in the manner in which Indian English novel and poetry succeeded for several reasons (mentioned in the subsequent sections).

We have a period of Pre-Independence Indian English drama and a Post-Independence Indian English drama showing varied colours and themes of their socio-political circumstances. Moreover, women writers have also contributed to the corpus of Indian English drama. Several plays have been recognized nationally and internationally for their form and content.

17.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are:

- to familiarize you with the idea of the origin of ancient Indian drama in general and Indian English drama in particular
- to familiarize you with the various aspects of the journey and development of Indian English drama
- to acquaint you with the notion of the contribution of Indian dramatists in the Pre-Independence period and Post-Independence period
- to acquaint you with the sense of the contribution of women playwrights in the Pre-Independence period and Post-Independence period

- to acquaint you with the sense of challenges faced by Indian English drama in its development compared to Indian English novel and poetry.

17.2 A Brief Survey of Indian English Drama

17.2.1 Origin of Ancient Indian Drama:

Theatre is life. There is no art, no craft, no learning, no yoga, no action, which cannot be seen in it.

--Bharata's Natyashastra

Let us start with what Natyashastra says about the origin of drama. In our Indian tradition, we have varied sources of information regarding ancient literature and other cultural performances. As there is a notion of the divine origin of language in Judaeo-Christian tradition, so is there a notion of divine origin in Indian tradition about the origin of drama. As it is said, Brahma created everything so he created drama as well. A long time ago, it so happened that people had resorted to uncivilized ways during Vedic times, were ruled by greed and lust, had developed anger and jealousy, and the earth was swarmed over by gods, demons, evil spirits and yaksas. Indra and other gods seeing this requested Brahma to give people a toy (*kridaniya*) which could not just be seen but heard as well, which would act as a diversion, and people could thereby give up bad behaviour. This request did not move Brahma, as he had already given the Vedas, possessing all forms of knowledge for bettering the life on earth, so it was the fault of people who were neglecting the Vedas and taking to bad ways. Indra explained to Brahma that it is true that people benefited from Vedas, but Sudras were not allowed to learn and listen to the Vedas and requested that under the circumstances, there was a dire need for the fifth Veda and all four castes be allowed to learn and use it.

So the credit goes to Indra for requesting Brahma to create a Natyaveda. The treatise created by four-faced Brahma was read to other gods by Indra, who were not able to understand it as it was tough and too voluminous to practice. So Indra reported to Brahma that "they were incapable of any dramatic activity" (I, 22) and proposed that an appropriate person be searched among the sages as they were industrious. Thus, Bharata was selected and charged with the work. Brahma said to Bharata, "you have got a hundred sons and, therefore, you be the producer" (I, 24). So in this way, Bharata got the *Natyaveda* from Brahma.

Before Bharata there was drama in Indian culture but it deteriorated and had fallen from the standard and was given to *gramya dharma* depicting only elemental passions like anger, jealousy, greed, lust etc. Before Bharata there was no nataka but *rupaka* dealing with low *srngara*, so there was the need to refine the public taste and the way to achieve this was by employing the drama as it was already a popular cultural practice.

The account of drama in the first chapter of *Natyashastra* goes like this:

Bharata obeying Brahma accepted the task and guided his 100 sons to perform different roles. While rehearsing words, movements and actions (3 *vrttis*) Brahma suggested the inclusion of dance and music (*kaisiki vrtti*). Bharata agreed on a condition that women players be allowed voluntarily as it was not possible for males to perform female emotions. So Brahma created *apsaras* who were women in form. After rehearsals, when Bharata got ready to perform, it turned out to be an unsuccessful attempt, as it depicted the victory of gods over demons causing Virupaksa the leader of the demons to disrupt the performances and thereby stopping it and deciding not to allow the second show. Brahma, in order to protect the performances from the disturbing demons, ordered Maya to construct a theatre house and a stage. Before the show Brahma explained to gods and demons the nature of the play, that it is not against anyone and no one needs to feel hurt. Its objective and purpose is to entertain first and then instruct. "A play shows your actions and emotions. Neither gods nor demons are depicted as always good or always evil. Actually, the ways of the world are represented here. It gives you good advice; it gives you enlightenment and also entertainment. It provides peace of mind to those who are afflicted with miseries, sorrow, grief or fatigue" (I, 106-7,112-14). After this, Bharata was not troubled by demons and he carried on with his task of presenting dramas.

From this account, one can infer three main points. First, there was the need for the theatre house and stage to avoid disturbances. This necessity of theatre houses and a stage for the audience and actors would help the performances to be conducted smoothly. Second, there was the mention of the female artists, and it was acknowledged that certain roles are better performed by female actors. Third, in reply to the protests by the demons who alleged that Bharata's play "is an insult to us and complimentary to gods", Brahma advises that drama should not be judged from a personal point of view, as it does not represent a particular individual but the ways of the world in general. The dramatists advise good through entertainment, bringing peace of mind, not chaos.

17.2.2 History of Indian English Drama:

As we are informed that the history of drama in English in India is very much linked to British colonialism, Indians started using theatre as an instrument of protest against the British Empire. To curb this artistic protest via theatrical activities British Government had to impose the Dramatic Performances Act in 1876. The easiest categorisation of Indian English drama is as follows:

- 1) Indian English Drama before Independence.
- 2) Indian English dramas after Independence.

17.2.3 Indian English Drama before Independence:

The Prosecuted or Dramatic Scenes illustrative of the present state of- Hindoo Society in Calcutta, by Krishna Mohan Banerji is taken to be the origin of Indian English Drama in 1831. Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilization?* is one of the first significant plays to appear on the literary horizon in 1871. Rabinder Nath Tagore primarily wrote in Bengali, but almost all his plays are available in English translation. He himself translated many of his plays along with other translators. His plays are *The Post Office*, *Sacrifice*, *Chandalika*, *Red Oleanders*, *Mukhtadhara*, *Natir Puja*, *The king of the Dark Chamber*, *The Cycle of Spring*, *Sanyasi* and *The Mother's Prayer*. Though the plays he wrote are grounded in Indian ethos and tradition in their themes and characters, he also experimented a lot with his plays and assimilated Bengali, Sanskrit and western features of drama and was successful in doing so. He employed French symbolic techniques to make his plays suggestive and more meaningful.

In his article 'Sri Aurobindo' published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (July 8, 1944), D. L Murray remarked that Sri Aurobindo is, "a new type of thinker, one who combined in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the east."

His play *The Viziers of Bassora* is romantic, *Rodogune* is tragic, *Perseus the Deliverer* is mythological, *Eric* is heroic, *Vasavadutta* is legendary. All these plays are five-act plays. We can see a perpetual conflict between good and evil in varied forms in his plays. Sri Aurobindo imbibed much from the Elizabethan drama and, more specifically, the use of blank verse. Nevertheless, he is not unaware of the Sanskrit playwrights like Kalidas, Bhasa and Bhavabhuti. As Dr. K.R.S Iyengar writes:

"...all five plays are steeped in poetry and romance, recalling the spirit and flavour of the distinctive dramatic type exemplified in different

ways by Bhasa, Kalidas and Bhavabhutti. Though, of course, all have Aurobindonian Undertones."

Six of his incomplete plays are *Prince of Edur*, *The Birth of Sin*, *The House of Brut*, *The Maid and the Mill*, *Achab and Esarhaddon* and *The Witch of Ilni*.

Harindranath Chattopadhyay also contributed to the growth of Indian English Drama. Socialistic concerns are depicted in various forms in his plays. In his collection *Five Plays* (1929), the first play *The Window* is about the exploitation of textile labourers of Bombay by the industrialists. In *Parrot* he shows a woman's urge to set herself free from an undesirable husband's marriage bond. *The Sentry's Lantern* expresses the sentiments of three victims, and *The Coffin* shows the destruction of a bourgeois family.

There are various other playwrights who also deserve to be mentioned for their contribution to the growth of Indian English Drama. V. V Srinivasa Aiyangar wrote *Blessed in a Wife* (1915), *Wait for the Stroke* (1915), *The Bricks Between* (1918) and *Ram Rajya* in 1952. A.P.S Ayyar also wrote several plays, like *In the Clutch of the Devil* (1926), *Sita's Choice* (1935), *The Slave of Ideas* (1941) and *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* (1942). D.A Krishnaswamy wrote a verse play, *The Flute of Krishna*, which earned him the fame.

Considered the father of modern Kannada drama T.P Kailasam also wrote in English. There is a blend of both Indian and western traditions in his plays. His English plays are *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfilment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Karma* (1964), a play which has significant similarities with Sophocles's tragedy *Oedipus the King*. A modern woman playwright Bharati Sarabhai wrote *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952). The former play depicts the impact of the Gandhian view of life and social order, and the latter is a realistic play and explores the personal world of a sensitive person.

17.2.4 Indian English Drama after Independence:

There was not much difference between the pre and post-independence scenario of Indian English Drama. Although little effort was exerted on the performing arts, nonetheless, the National School of Drama and other state academies were established. However, the stress was on other Indian languages rather than drama in English. Among the dramatists of post-independent India, Asif Currimbhoy wrote more than thirty plays on the themes of history, politics, society, religion, art and metaphysics. His well known plays are *The Doldrums* (1960), a play about Anglo-Indians and hippie culture, *The Dumb Dancer* (1961), about a Kathakali dancer, *The Captives* (1963), about China-India conflict, *Goa* (1964), about the

liberation of Goa, *Monsoon* (1965), regarding colonisation, *An Experiment with Truth* (1969), about Mahatma Gandhi and the freedom struggle, *Inquilab* (1970), depicting the Naxalite movement, and *Om Mane Padme Hum* (1972), depicting Tibet under China's occupation and Dalai Lama's exit to India from Tibet.

G.V Desani wrote *Hali* (1950) about human longing and fulfillment. It is a poem play without visible actors on stage; only voices are presented on the stage. Pratap Sharma's *A Touch of Brightness* (1968) was banned in Mumbai for some time owing to its showing the goings-on of a brothel in a straightforward way in a Red-Light district of Bombay. *The Professor has a War Cry* (1970) is another play by Pratab Sharma. It is also important to mention Nissim Ezekiel who wrote three plays in 1969 namely *Marriage Poem: A Tragi Comedy*, *Nalini: A Comedy* and *The Sleep Walkers: An Indo-American Farce*, and *Don't call it Suicide* in 1994. Gurcharan Das's *Larins Sahib* (1970), a three-act play, shows the life of Henry Lawrence as a Britisher in the court of Dalip Singh in Punjab in 1846-47. The play has lively dialogue, well-constructed plot and historical subject matter.

Contemporary Indian drama is experimental and innovative in themes and technicalities, a deviation from European and classical models, depicting contemporary socio-political issues. The dramatists in the background of this new emerging dramatic tradition are Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sirkar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad. Karnad, a writer, director and actor, wrote *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1962), *Hayavadana* (1970), and *Nagmandala* (1972). He used history, myths, and old legends in a very symbolic way to establish their relevance in contemporary socio-political conditions. In Girish Karnad, we see a blending of traditional forms of Indian theatre with new ones but only to show contemporary issues. Vijay Tendulkar has the theme of isolation of the individual and the conflict of the individual with its hostile ambience. He does not consider human violence a loathsome thing. He says:

Unlike the communists I do not think violence can be eliminated in a classless society, or for that matter, in any society. The spirit of aggression is something that a human being is born with. Not that it is bad. Without violence, man might have turned into a vegetable.

He depicts violence on stage as raw and natural without dressing it up to make it palatable. He wrote *Chimanicha Ghor Hote Menache* (1960), *Kalojanchi Shalvai* (1968), *Ek Hoti Mugli* (1967), showing the idea of exploitation of individuals and his concern with authority. The theme of oppression is dominant in his *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1968) and *Ghasiram*

Kotwal(1972). Both *Kamala* (1982) and *Kanyadaan* (1982) are written in the naturalistic tradition. The former is about exploitation and marriage, while the latter is about a family's emotional and cultural upheavals.

Badal Sircar started his dramatic career with a humorous play *Solution X*. He wrote *Evam Inderjit* (1962), *That other History* (1964), and *There is no End* (1971). His plays represent social, psychological, political and existential problems. His plays *Procession*, *Bhoma* and *Stale News* are premised on the idea of the Third Theatre.

Mohan Rakesh wrote in Hindi, but his plays have been translated in English for their exceptional relevance. His plays are *Ashadh ka Ek Din* (1958), *Leharon Ke Rajhansa* (1963) and *Adhe Adhure* (1969). They show the unfriendly surroundings of the contemporary man and the constant threat to human relationships.

Mahesh Dattani is "one of India's best and most serious contemporary playwrights writing in English", as observed by *The International Herald Tribune*. He founded a theatre group known as "Playpen". He is an actor, director, playwright and producer in one. He highlights the contemporary Indian urban issues like the tension between tradition and modernity, the marginalized minorities, women, gays, hijras. He was influenced by Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Strindberg. Technically he is compared to Ibsen. There is the depiction of violence in our private thoughts and our hypocritical conduct concerning public morals in his plays.

Dattani dedicated his life to theatre, and in 1998 he set up his theatre studio to train new talented aspirants in directing, stage writing and acting. He won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1998 for his collection *Final Solution and Other Plays* becoming the first to receive it as a playwright. Penguin Books India brought out an anthology under the title of 'Collected Plays' in 2000 containing Dattani's eight plays, namely *Seven Steps Around the Fire*, *On a Muggy Night at Mumbai*, *Do the Needful*, *Final Solutions*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *Tara*, *Dance Like a Man* and *Where There is a Will*. In 2021 he wrote *30 Days in September*, dealing with the sexual abuse of a child and the consequential harmful effect on the man-woman relationship.

17.2.5 Indian English Women Playwrights:

Fiction and poetry by Indian women writers have been aptly acknowledged and recognised nationally and globally and probably is at par with the acknowledgment and recognition received by male writers. But drama by women writers has not received that much recognition and acknowledgment either at national or global level. The reason for women writers

outdoing or equaling the men writers in writing fiction might be as G.H Lewes has said: "Of all the departments of literature, Fiction is the one to which, by nature and circumstances women are best adapted ... the domestic experiences which form the bulk of women's knowledge find an appropriate form in novels". Women seem to have shied away from dramatic and performance art for some socio-economic reasons. One of the reasons, as Tutun Mukherjee says, is that, "the audience expects the writers to articulate the public and radical voice of dissent and to provide scope for social comment, satire and criticism" and these are considered to be public and male activities, a sphere denied to women. Nevertheless, a number of women writers have tried their hands on this dramatic art and have achieved success at different national and international levels. In the pre-independence period, the first significant woman playwright was Bharati Sarabhai, who wrote *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952). The former play depicts the impact of Gandhian socio-political principles through an old woman who digs a well for Harijans with the money she had saved for pilgrimage to Haridwar, preferring the basic need of the people over her religious need, whereas the latter play shows the inherent religious ambition in Indian womanhood. *Krishna* (1937) by Nalini Moha shows the demoralized India under the British rule. *Deluge*(1941) by Shanti Javari is a satire on modern life and its delusion. A verse play *Captive Soil* (1945) by Mrinalini Sarabhai is about the freedom movement.

In the post-independence phase, Shrimati K.B Thakur who wrote *Mother and Child* (1960), a tragic story about Karna, is considered the first significant playwright. Ketaki, another woman playwright, wrote *Radha and Krishna: the Reunion* (1948) and *Bheeshma and Drona* (1951). *Gandharee and Kaikayee* by Kamala Subramaniam is a dialogue between two female characters from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

Except for Bharati Sarabhai, all other woman playwrights seem to have written plays with the themes based on popular Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. From the sixties, in the post-independence period, the woman playwrights seem to have moved towards showing the contemporary situations rather than mythical stories. Mrs. J.M Billomoria wrote *My Sons* (1963), with the Indo-Pak war in the backdrop and communal riots. Mrs. Dina Mehta's *The Myth Makers* (1969) shows the conflict between Maharashtrians and non-Maharashtrians and exposes the interests of the selfish politicians. Shri Devi Singh's *The Purple Braided People* (1970), and Mahesh Elkunchwar's recent play, *The Old Stone Mansion*, has the theme of the falling status of aristocracy in a new socio-political set-up. In 1971 Kamala Das also wrote *A Mini Trilogy*.

Bengali writer Mahasweta Devi, winner of Jnanpith and Magsaysay awards, wrote a number of plays. She makes use of Indian history and myths and treats them as assets to Indian literature. Her plays are *Jal* (Water), *Bayan* (Witch), *Aajir* (Slave) and *Mother of 1084*. She depicts the plight of the untouchables and the marginalized groups. Usha Ganguly, a contemporary playwright, shows the struggle of the ordinary average people in daily life, their anxieties, and indignation in a realistic way rather than of historical and mythological personages. Her theatre company Rangkarmee is there to "create meaningful theatre for the masses". Her play *Rudaali* shows the predicament of Indian women. Tripurari Sharma, like Badal Sircar, performs her plays in the streets. At the request of UNICEF, she wrote and performed a highly discussed play *The Wooden Cart*.

PALI (Performing Arts and Literatures of India) was founded by Uma Parameswaran in Canada to spread Indian culture and literature among the Winnipeg children. The plays she wrote are *Sons Must Die* (1960), *Meera* (1971), *Sita's Promise* (1981), *Dear Didi and My Sister* (1989) and *Rootless but Green are the Boulevard Trees* (1998). Manjula Padmanabhan shot into fame as a dramatist via her play *Harvest*. The play won the prize out of 1470 plays from 76 countries in 1997 at the first Onassis International Cultural Competition. The play depicts the destitute youth of Mumbai selling out their body parts for money. *Her Lights Out* shows the tragic events of the day to day rape of the prostitutes and the disinterested attitude of citizens towards this social evil.

There is a belief that the plays written by women in English deal with the issues of the urban upper educated middle class only. But when we look at the plays written by women in the regional languages, we come to know that there is a variety in terms of issues and themes representing the common masses. It is highly recommended that a survey be done to explore the drama written in regional languages by women and the issues and themes they have dealt with.

17.2.6 Indian English Drama: Some Challenges

One of the major challenges to Indian English drama is that English is not the language of the masses that speak their regional languages. English is usually spoken in some offices and academic institutions. So it is difficult for the dramatist to create a convincing theatre for the masses that are not well versed in the English language. The dramatist has to write lively dialogues that go well with the characters being represented. As Girish Karnad puts it, "you write spoken dialogue- you just don't write dialogues." The dialogues should sound lively and natural in the given circumstances of the characters without a bit of artificiality. Mahesh Dattani also

says that the biggest challenge "is to reflect the language the way she is spoken and not harp on the correct form."

Further, English is seen as the language of the elite, and sponsors keep in view the audience and invest accordingly. Also, there is a lack of trained performers in English who would perform the dialogues as fitting to the characters in the Indian socio-cultural settings. There is yet to evolve an accepted Indian English, which is suitable for dramatic dialogues of characters in Indian settings and circumstances compared to Indian English novel, which has evolved to a greater degree. The Indianisation of dramatic form has yet to take place to show the Indian sensibilities, temperaments and ethos. Although some dramatists like Girish Karnad have tried to Indianise the drama using conventions of Indian classical drama and folk theatre, the degree of success is not such as that of the Indian English novel. Also, there is a dearth of plays that are staged. As Rama Sharma, in his preface to his *Collected Plays* says, "Any play written in India in English has an inherent disadvantage in the sense that it is not very often staged. Stage worthiness being a basic test for a play... most of the plays written in English do not fulfil this requirement." Rama Sharma further observes: "However these can be read and enjoyed for their thought content and for the relevance they have, to the perennial problems of life." The following points are summed up as the challenges to the Indian English drama:

1. The most crucial inhibiting factor is language. English is not our mother tongue. It is a learnt second language, and when characters utter dialogues in English, it sounds artificial, not natural.
2. The masses are not well versed in English. It is considered as the language of the elite.
3. There is a dearth of well-trained actors in English.
4. There is not yet an accepted Indian English which writers could use with confidence in the Indian context.
5. Compared to cinema halls and multiplexes, there is a dearth of theatres where the actual theatrical performances can be carried out.

Until English in India percolates to that level where masses use English as easily as their regional languages, there has to be a process of translating regional plays into English and vice versa. The playwright has to make characters speak naturally. The playwright has to write in a language that is recognisably Indian and depicts the social context as it is lived. As Raja Rao expressed in the preface to his novel *Kanthapura* 'to convey in a language not one's own, the spirit that is one's own'. To convey the spirit, there has to be the development of a language for

Indian English drama that suits the Indian character in Indian settings, the way Indian English novelists have achieved global recognition.

17.3 Learning Outcomes

This Unit on “A Brief Survey of Indian English Drama” should have helped you to have a thorough understanding of the origin, growth and development of Indian English drama along with some idea of ancient Indian theatre. You should have gained information on Indian English dramatists and their works apart from some idea of the contribution of Indian dramatists in this yet evolving corpus of Indian English drama in the pre and post-independence period. At the end of this Unit, you should have also get acquainted with the challenges Indian English drama is facing.

17.4 Glossary

- Drama:** A play for the theatre, television, or radio.
- Theatre:** A place, building, room where people watch the plays and performances of the actors
- Vedas:** Ancient sacred writings that are important part of the Hindu religion
- Natyashastra:** A treatise on drama and dramatics and the allied subjects
- Colonisation:** The process of taking control of another country by going to live there or sending people to live there
- Corpus:** A collection of writings having some specific characteristic features
- Permeate:** The spread of some something into something else
- Bharata or Bharatamuni:** A sage who is credited with having written the Natyashastra
- Yaksas:** A kind of spirit can be malevolent or benevolent
- Indra:** The head of gods, god of rain and thunder.
- Sudras:** Lowest of the four Hindu castes, the working class.
- Natyaveda:** The Veda created by Brahma out of the four basic Vedas for all the four Hindu castes.
- Brahma:** The creator in the Hindu religion, also known as Svayambhu- the self born.

Industrious: Hard working, energetic.

Gramya Dharma: Uncivilized conduct.

Shringara: Low humour

Apsaras: Celestial water nymphs in Hinduism created by Brahma, used as singers and dancers

Perpetual: Continuing, happening often

Blank Verse: Iambic pentameter unrhymed verse

Bourgeois: Middle class people and their ways

Third Theatre: Street plays with actors in the attire of audiences

Haridwar: An important pilgrimage place for Hindus in Uttarakhand state in India.

Elite: Small group of educated, influential and powerful people.

17.5 Sample Questions

17.5.1 Objective Questions:

- Which of the following was considered the Fifth Veda in ancient India?
(a) Novel (b) Drama
(c) Poetry (d) Dance
- In which of the following do we find the exhaustive theorization of drama?
(a) Mahabharata (b) Ramayana
(c) Natyashastra (d) Rigveda
- Who requested Brahma for creating drama?
(a) Maya (b) Bharta
(c) Indira (d) Sarasvati
- When was the Dramatic Performances Act imposed by the British government in India?
(a) 1876 (b) 1877
(c) 1878 (d) 1879
- Who wrote *Is This Called Civilization*?
(a) Krishna Mohan Banerji (b) Michael Madhu Sudan Dutt
(c) Rabinder Nath Tagore (d) Sri Aurobindo
- Which of the following plays show Indo-China conflict?
(a) Doldrummers (b) The Captives

- (c) Monsoon (d) The Dumb Dancer
7. Who is associated with the Third Theatre?
(a) Asif Curimmbhoy (b) Rabinder Nath Tagore
(c) Girish Karnad (d) Badal Sirkar
8. Who founded the Playpen theatre group?
(a) Mahesh Dattani (b) Badal Sirkar
(c) G. V Desani (d) Pratap Sharma
9. Where is PALI(Performing Arts and Literatures in India)?
(a) India (b) USA
(c) Canada (d) England
10. Who is the first to receive Sahitya Akademi award for writing plays in English?
(a) Girish Karnad (b) Mahesh Dattani
(c) Uma Parameshwaran (d) Manjula Padmanabhan

17.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How is dramatic form different from that of the novel?
2. What is Natyashastra?
3. Name some pre-independence Indian English playwrights and their plays.
4. Briefly comment on the contribution of Indian English women playwrights.
5. What, according to you, is the significance of Indian English drama?

17.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Elaborate in detail on the origin of Indian drama as preserved in Indian tradition.
2. Give a survey of post-independence Indian English dramatists and their plays.
3. What are the various challenges to Indian English theatre?

17.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Reddy, P. Bayappa, *Studies in Indian Writing in English with a focus on Indian English Drama*, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1990.
2. Iyengar, K. R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*, Bombay: India Publishing House, 1962.
3. King, Ehce (ed.). *Post-Colonial English Drama - commonwealth Drama since 1960*, London: Macmillan, 1992.
4. Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982.
5. Bhatta, S. Krishna. *Indian English Drama: A Critical Study*, New Delhi: Sterling, 1987.
6. K.R.S. Iyengar. *Indian Writing in English*, New Delhi, Sterling, 1995, 732.



Unit- 18: Life and Works of Vijay Tendulkar

Structure

18.0 Introduction

18.1 Objectives

18.2 Life and Works of Vijay Tendulkar

18.2.1 Vijay Tendulkar: His Life

18.2.2 Vijay Tendulkar and his works

18.2.3 List of Important Works

18.2.4 Awards and Honours

18.2.5 Lets Sum Up

18.3 Learning Outcomes

18.4 Glossary

18.5 Sample Questions

18.6 Suggested Learning Resources

18.0 Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar was born in a Brahmin family on 7 January, 1928. He was brought up in Kandevali. It was a lower-middle-class belt, where there were mostly male shopkeepers and clerks. He lived in a typical house with one room, kitchen, and a shared toilet. Hence his upbringing in the lower middle class allowed him to observe this section of the society minutely. Perhaps that is why he portrayed different shades of this class on the stage.

His father Dandopant Tendulkar was a clerk in a British publishing firm called Longmans Green Company. His mother Susheela Tendulkar was a housewife. His father was a director of amateur Marathi plays. He did not choose a career in the theatre as it was not considered respectable then. Tendulkar was four when he would go with his father to see the rehearsals of plays, and that is how he developed the love for theatre. Tendulkar would consider these rehearsals 'magic shows' because he saw human beings changing into characters. He was surprised that a male actor performed a female role by changing voice and movements. Tendulkar had no theatre exposure except what his father staged. Tendulkar had another brother

named Raghunath and a sister named Leela. His two elder sisters had died in infancy. He had two younger brothers but Tendulkar was the favourite of his parents. He was a sickly child and often suffered from cough and asthmatic wheezing. Therefore, his parents would extra care of him for fear of losing him if he was not protected. For this reason, he was called by a pet name 'Papia' and was also known as 'mother's child'.

Apart from his father's influence, his brother Raghunath had a formative influence on his life. His brother believed in Gandhian Philosophy and would attend Congress meetings. His father wanted him to study but he was not interested. Raghunath wanted to marry the woman of his choice, Hansa Wadekar. But this was unacceptable to the idealist father, hence, the family broke ties with Raghunath. The family moved to Kholapur. The later childhood of Tendulkar was spent in Kholapur in Maharashtra where he earned a name for himself. He distinguished himself by reciting English poems. He was just 11 years old when he wrote, directed, and acted in a play called *Maya Bazaar*. In this way began the journey of this veteran writer. Tendulkar acted as a male child artist in two Marathi films.

When he was a teenager, the family moved to Pune, where he attended a new school again. He felt he might have completed his matriculation. However, the Quit India Movement had gained momentum those days, and as noted earlier he followed the Gandhian principle by obeying the call to boycott schools. He would generally attend the meetings and campaigns against Britishers without informing his parents. When he was arrested at the age of 14, his family became aware of his activism in the freedom fight. He would quite often miss his classes and spend his monthly school fees on watching English movies. They had a significant impact on him. This exposure helped him to be one of the great dramatists of Indian theatre. In an interview, Vijay Tendulkar said:

As a schoolboy I had watched the Hollywood films playing in my hometown, not once, but each one over and over again. I still remember the visuals, not the dialogues which I didn't understand. A more conscious education in what the visual could do came when I worked with the Rangayan Theatre group in Bombay, but watching Marcel Marceau from the last seat in the last row was an enthralling experience. Not a single word was uttered, but so much was expressed. After that, I wrote mimes for quite a while. I felt the visual had unlimited possibilities, the word was useless. But I am a playwright, words are my tools, I had to use them.

At Pune, Dinakar Balkrishan Mokashi, a radio mechanic, influenced him greatly. He became a role model for Tendulkar. His simple lifestyle left a great impression on the mind of Tendulkar. He was also influenced by Vinayak Bokil a teacher and a writer. Tendulkar was impressed by his exuberant style. He remembers one of the incidents about Vinayak Bokil when he told his students to look at the names of students' rank holders and look where they were. Does anybody know them? He advised students to pass exams as their parent pay their fees. However, he also mentioned that securing good marks in the exam is not everything. Instead, they should focus on creativity and develop their personality in other directions. This inspired Tendulkar to look for other prospects in life. Later Tendulkar dedicated one of his books to Vinayak Bokil.

Check your progress:

1. When and where was Vijay Tendulkar born?

2. Name the two people who influenced Vijay Tendulkar in his life.

18.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- familiarize you with the life of Vijay Tendulkar
- highlight the important works of Vijay Tendulkar
- appreciate his literary contribution to Indian Writing in English
- recognize Vijay Tendulkar as one of the great dramatists
- identify the various themes that Vijay Tendulkar has employed in his works

18.2 Life and Works of Vijay Tendulkar

18.2.1 Vijay Tendulkar: His Life

At the age of 16, Tendulkar left school for good. He did not have any friends and no one to communicate with. He wanted to talk but with whom? All he could do was to talk to himself. He would often put his dialogues on paper in various forms, poems, short stories, scripts, and this infused a conscious motivation of writing. At the age of 22, he wrote his full-length original play. *Gruhastha*, however, did not do well and Tendulkar thereafter decided not to contribute or write any play. However, surprisingly he has written 28 full original plays and has been associated with the theatre world for the last 45 years.

Tendulkar started his writing career at a young age. He wrote his first work while he was studying in school. Since his father was a director, creativity was inborn in him. Much unpublished stuff of his father was thoroughly read by Vijay Tendulkar. Not only this, he studied some great writers because of the literary environment and atmosphere at home. The seed for literature was already sown and it was just shaping now in the form of a huge tree. He had never imagined himself to be a writer. As a child, he wanted to be an engine driver or an acrobat in a circus to astonish people with his daredevil acts. Later he worked as an apprentice in a bookshop. He also studied journalism and was an assistant editor of some daily newspapers of Marathwada like *Navbharat*, *Martha*, and *Loksatta*. Tendulkar has contributed to Indian writing through his plays, short stories, features, and some Hindi television serials. He has received many prestigious awards. Among the notable ones are Padma Bhushan, Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, Kalidas Samman Award, etc.

Vijay Tendulkar has always fought for cultural freedom. Freedom is presently at stake and stifled by many forces. Tendulkar has changed the form and pattern of Indian drama by unfollowing the traditional three-act play structure of drama and creating new models. He is recognised distinctively for his criticism of the trend of hypocrisy, promiscuity, dishonesty, and many other vices that are prevalent in our society. He is one of the leading playwrights of Indian drama writing in English. He is often noted as a screen and television writer, journalist, literary essayist, and social commentator for his bold and daring expressionism.

Vijay Tendulkar has written nearly thirty full-length plays and twenty-three one-act plays, and several of his plays have left a long last impression on the minds of the readers and viewers. Tendulkar's contribution in Marathi includes eleven plays for children, four short story collections, one novel, and five literary essay collections, which have transformed the modern landscape of Maharashtra in particular, and India in general, to a remarkable extent. He is an important translator in Marathi. Tendulkar has translated nine novels, five plays, and two

biographies into the Marathi language. He translated Mohan Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure* (Hindi), Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* and Tennessee Williams's *A Street Car Named Desire*. He has written the script for eight Marathi films. Some of the popular ones are, *Samana*, (Confrontation 1975), *Simhasan* (Throne 1979), and *Umbartha* (The Threshold 1981). *Umbartha* was a groundbreaking feature film on women's activism in India.

During the 1970s to 80s, Tendulkar also contributed to and wrote the script for eleven Hindi movies in Bollywood. Scripts for films like *Akrosh*, *Manthan*, *Nishant* and, *Ardhya Satya*, etc gained from the expertise of Tendulkar. His contribution to Marathi theatre and service in Indian Cinema has earned him recognition and brought him the Maharashtra State Government Award and Filmfare award for the best screenplay for *Akrosh* in 1980 and *Ardhya Satya* in 1983. His lifetime achievements in different domains of life were recognised and he was conferred with *Padma Bhushan* by the Government of India in 1984.

With the establishment of *Sahitya Akademi* in 1954, Dr. S. Radhkrishnan made it clear that the prime objective of the *Akademi* should be the promotion of the unity of Indian Literature irrespective of its political, social, geographical, or linguistic diversities. He gave a slogan that Indian Literature is one although written in many languages. In this context, plays of Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, Badal Sircar in Bengali, Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, or Girish Karnad in Kannada hold a unique place in Indian Literature. Arundhati Banerjee says:

In the 1960s four dramatists from different regions of India writing in their regional languages were said to have ushered modernity into the sphere of Indian drama and theatre. They were Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, Badal Sircar in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, and Girish Karnad in Kannada. Rakesh's untimely death left his life's work incomplete, and Karnad has written only intermittently. Sircar, of course, has been almost as active as Tendulkar though his plays that can be divided into three distinct periods. Tendulkar, however, has not only been the most productive but has also introduced the greatest variations in his dramatic creations.

V.B Deshpande opines:

Since the Independence – since 1950, to be precise – the name of Vijay Tendulkar has been at the forefront of the Marathi drama and stage. His personality both as a man and writer is multifaceted. It has often been puzzling and curious with a big question mark on it. In the last 55 years, he has written stories, novels, one-act plays, plays for children and for adults. Similarly, he has done script writing and newspaper columns as well. And in

all these fields he has created an image of his own. Thus he is a creative writer with a fine sensibility and at the same time a contemplative and controversial dramatist. He has made a mark in the field of journalism also. Because of his highly individual viewpoint and vision of life and because of his style of writing he has made a powerful impression in the field of literature and drama and has given the post-independence Marathi drama a new idiom. He has put Marathi drama on the national and international map by doing this.

Vijay Tendulkar is a versatile writer and can easily fit himself into any role. During his struggling years, he did ghostwriting knowing that his name would not appear and become known to readers. He considered it as a role for his character. He changed to suit the personality of the character. Along with his job in a newspaper, he took to ghostwriting for additional income.

Check your progress:

1. Which prestigious award was given to Vijay Tendulkar?

2. Which play of Vijay Tendulkar deals with women's activism?

The disturbance, violence, and oppression he witnessed in society made him impatient. He was mentally agitated as well. Though Journalism did not offer any viable solutions for him, it did shape his dramatic career. Being a sensible, reasonable, and sensitive citizen, he could not quieten his conscience with journalistic fervor. Therefore, he left journalism after receiving Nehru fellowship. During this period he travelled to most parts of India and witnessed various kinds of violence directly. In this connection Gowri Ramnarayan points out: “With his exposure to Marathi theatre from childhood, and journalistic background Vijay Tendulkar turned contemporary socio-political situations into explosive drama.”

Tendulkar does not necessarily subscribe to any ideology but he is politically conscious. He believes these ideologies including Marxism do not understand any complexity of the human situation and do not offer any solution for these problems. He was himself a director and actor but did not find acting and direction as exciting as he found writing. He believes, he acts as he writes and emotes the lives of the characters. His writing is not just words but the spontaneous expression and personality of the character. In his early life, he developed a curiosity and would often note people's speech, habits, and mannerisms. This is clearly expressed through many

characters of his plays. It must be admitted that most of his characters are an example of certain living persons.

Tendulkar learned a lot from films since films necessarily must have a structure. He was also fond of classical music concerts, although he was unaware of its strict grammar and regulations. Since he was a rigorous reader of poetry, it also helped him understand the knowledge of the compact form and structure. His frequent visit to art galleries offered him a thorough knowledge of the form, structure, and rhythm of good paintings. Interestingly, Peter Brook's book *Master Craftsman in the Art of Theatre* taught him the foremost principles, that all visual art, including the art of theatre, have one thing similar and common: space, and it is entirely upto the dramatist how skillfully and creatively he fills this space.

The most important work that set Tendulkar different from his previous generation Marathi playwrights was *Manus Navache Bel (An Island Called Man 1955)*. His dramatic genius was a cutout for the newly emerging Marathi theatre. His frequent interaction and meetings with some great theatre personalities like Vijay Mehta, Sulaba Deshpande etc. encouraged and fused fuel in his creative faculties. Hence the play *Manus Navache Bel* was followed by many other plays. *Madhya Bhinti* (The Walls Between), *Chimnicha Ghar Hota Menacha* (Nest of wax) (1958), *Mee Jinklo Mee Harlo* (I Won, I Lost) (1963), *Kavlanchi Shala* (School for Crows) (1963), and *Sari Ga Sari* (Rain o Rain) (1964).

18.2.2 Vijay Tendulkar and his Works:

Most of Tendulkar's plays are of naturalistic setting. It may be noted that his play *Ghasihiram Kotwal* (1972) has a folk tradition form, while the other two plays *Niyatiyoa Bailala* (*To Hell with Destiny*) and *Safar* (*The Tour*) employ fantasy. He became the centre of controversy because of his play *Silence! The Court is in Session*. He was considered the angry man of Marathi theatre. He rebelled against the established norms of society. *Encounter in Umbugland* (1974) is a political allegory. *The Vultures* surprised the fundamentalist section of Marathi people with its bold themes like sex, violence, etc. *Sakharam Binder* is probably one of the most naturalistic plays that gave a serious shock to the conservative section of Maratha people. It is considered more appealing and surprising than *The Vultures*. In *Gashiram Kotwal*, he explains the power dynamics and power structure predominant in Indian politics. *Kamala* is a depiction of a real-life incident that Ashwin Sarin reported in *The Indian Express* newspaper. *Kanayadan* is equally considered a controversial play and often branded as anti-Dalit play. This play subtly explains and shows how our romantic idealism fails. He wrote in Marathi first, later

influenced it, and then guided it. He was able to create an impression on other regional languages and that is why most of the plays were translated into other languages as well. He perceived the realities of society without any prejudice bent of mind or notion. He reacted to these realities like a truly sensitive and reasonable person and would realistically project them through his plays. He never wrote to win awards or prizes, and he never compromised with his subject matter. In this connection, Vijay Tendulkar can be quoted as:

“I have written about my own experience and about what I have seen in others around me. I have been true to all this and have not cheated my generation. I did not attempt to simplify matters and issues for the audience when presenting my plays, though that would have been an easier occupation. Sometimes my plays jolted society out of its stupor and I was punished. I faced this without regrets. It is an old habit with me to do what I am told not to do. My plays could not have been anything else. They contain my perceptions of society and its value and I cannot write what I do not perceive”.

Vijay Tendulkar's plays often deal with gender inequality, social imbalance, power structure or power politics, self-alienation, sex, and violence. His characters are real-life projections, and they are neither too bad to hate nor too good to believe. He challenged the tyranny of Marathi conventional theatre and liberated it by adding some political and social satire purely for entertainment purposes. Vijay Tendulkar portrays a picture of contemporary times and man's dilemma by focusing specifically on morbidity in his plays. His plays have touched almost all aspects of life in the modern world and display modern intellectuals' disillusionment by primarily focusing on gender, power, and violence.

18.2.3 List of Important Works:

One Act

Thief Police

Ratra Ani Itar Ekankika (1957)

Chitragupta, Aho Chitragupta (1958)

Ajgar Ani Gandharv (1966)

Bhekad Ani Itar Ekankika (1969)

Ekekacha

Andher Nagari

Collection of Stories

Kaachpatre (1957)

Dwandwa (1961)

Gane (1966)

Phulpakharu (1970)

Novels:

Kadambari

Katha Eka Vyathechi : Henry James

Nave Ghar : Nave Ayushya : Grace Jordan

Prempatre : Henry James

Aage Barho : G L Letham (1958)

Gele Te Divas (1958)

Essays:

Kovil Unhe (1971)

Rat Rani (1971)

Phuge Savanache (1974)

Ram Prakar (1994)

Plays:

Gruhastha (Householder) (1947)

Shrimant (The Rich) (1956)

Mānoos Nāwāche Bet (An Island Named 'Man') (1958)

Thief! Police!

Bāle Miltāt (1960)

Gidhāde (The Vultures) (1961)

Pātlāchyā Poriche Lagin (Marriage of a Village Mayor's Daughter) (1965)

Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe (Hindi: Khāmosh! Adālat Jāri Hai) (Silence! The Court is in Session) (1967)

Ajgar Ani Gandharwa (A Boa Constrictor and "Gandharwa")

Sakharam Binder (Sakhārām, the Book-Binder) (1972)

Kamalā ("Kamala") (1981)

Mādi [in Hindi]

Kanyādān (Giving Away of a Daughter in Marriage) (1983)

Anji

Dāmbadwichā Mukābalā (Encounter in Umbugland)



Ashi Pākhare Yeti (Hindi: Panchi Aise Aate Hain) (Thus Arrive the Birds)

Kutte

Safar/Cyclewallah (The Cyclist) (1991)

The Masseur (2001)

Pāhije Jātiche (It Has to Be in One's Blood)

Jāt Hi Poochho Sādhu Ki (Ask a Fakir's Lineage)

Mājhi Bahin (My Sister)

Jhālā Ananta Hanumanta ("Infinite" Turned "Hanumanta")

Footpāyrichā Samrāt (Sidewalk Emperor)

Mitrāchi Goshta (A Friend's Story) (2001)

Anand Owari [A play based on a novel by D. B. Mokashi]

Bhāu MurārRāo

Bhalyākākā

Mee Jinkalo Mee Haralo (I won, I Lost)

His Fifth Woman [in English] (2004)

Bebi

Mita ki kahani "(Mita's Story)

18.2.4 Awards and Honours:

All through his life Vijay Tendulkar was associated with theatre and devoted his life to the same. He received the following awards in his life.

1. The Maharashtra State Government Award (1956, 1969, and 1973)
2. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1971)
3. The Filmfare Award (scriptwriter) (1980, 1983)
4. The Padmabhushan (1984)
5. The Saraswati Samman (1993)
6. The Kalidas Samman (1999)
7. The Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1999)
8. The Jansthan Award (1999)
9. Katha Chudamani Award (2001)

This legendary theatre actor, director, and playwright passed away on 19 May 2008. He died in a private hospital, where he was admitted in April 2008. He was suffering from a neuromuscular disease called Myasthenia Gravis. His last rites were performed at the Vaikanth

electric crematorium according to his wish. Prominent theatre and film personalities including Mohan Agashe, Satish Alekar, Haider Ali, Amruta Subhash, Amol Palekar, and Atul Pethe, University of Pune Vice-chancellor Narendra Jadhav paid their last tributes to Tendulkar at the crematorium.

18.2.5 Let us Sum Up:

There is no doubt that Vijay Tendulkar is one of the great playwrights of all time. His contribution to Indian theatre in general and Marathi theatre, in particular, is significant. The diversity of themes that were employed by Vijay Tendulkar in his work earned him the reputation of a great social thinker. Reconstruction of society in all aspects, whether through women empowerment or any such other issue, remained a constant concern for Tendulkar. He will be remembered through his invaluable works for the years and ages to come by.

18.3 Learning Outcomes

After the completion of this Unit, you should be able to:

- know the life history of Vijay Tendulkar
- recognise the contribution of Tendulkar to Indian theatre through his plays
- identify the variety of themes that Tendulkar employed in his works
- understand the variety of genres that he has contributed.
- appreciate Tendulkar for all the awards and honours that were conferred on him

18.4 Glossary

Familiarise:	To give the knowledge of something
Recognise:	Identify something
Enthralling:	Fascinating or attractive
Hypocrisy:	The practice of claiming to have moral beliefs or standards
Promiscuity:	The state of being a promiscuous
Dishonesty:	Not reliable or honest
Acrobat:	A person who performs gymnastic feats
Associated:	To be in connection with something or some organisation

18.5 Sample Questions

18.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When was Vijay Tendulkar born?
(a) 1929 (b) 1928
(c) 1930 (d) 1939
2. Where was Tendulkar born?
(a) Calcutta (b) Bombay
(c) Hyderabad (d) None
3. The play *Gruhastha* was published in the year _____.
(a) 1947 (b) 1984
(c) 1952 (d) 1949
4. In which language was *Silence! The Court is Session* originally written?
(a) Bengali (b) Marathi
(c) Gujrati (d) None
5. Who directed the play *Maya Bazar* at the age of 11?
(a) Kamla Das (b) Girish Karnad
(c) Vijay Tendulkar (d) None
6. When did Vijay Tendulkar receive the Padma Bhushan award?
(a) 1984 (b) 1982
(c) 1985 (d) 1990
7. Vijay Tendulkar received the Kalidas Sammaan award in the year _____.
(a) 1999 (b) 1909
(c) 1990 (d) None
8. *Silence! The Court is Session* was published in the year _____.
(a) 1976 (b) 1967
(c) 1969 (d) 1979
9. Which of the following film script was written by Vijay Tendulkar?
(a) *Aakrosh* (b) *Ghumund*
(c) *Sholay* (d) None
10. "Raat Rani" by Vijay Tendulkar is a _____.
(a) Novel (b) Essay

(c) Play

(d) None

18.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a brief note on the life of Vijay Tendulkar.
2. Mention any five plays written by Vijay Tendulkar.
3. Discuss Tendulkar's contribution to women's activism.
4. Name any three films whose script was written by Vijay Tendulkar.
5. Discuss the various influences that helped Vijay Tendulkar to become a dramatist.

18.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss Vijay Tendulkar as a dramatist.
2. Vijay Tendulkar's plays were a mirror of society. Discuss
3. Critically comment on the recurrent themes in the works of Vijay Tendulkar.

18.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. *Vijay Tendulkar*. New Delhi, Katha, 2001. ISBN 81-87649-17-8.
2. *Vijay Tendulkar's Ghashiram Kotwal: a Reader's Companion*. M. Sarat Babu, Asia Book Club, 2003. ISBN 81-7851-008-1
3. *Vijay Tendulkar's Plays: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. V M Madge, 2007, Pencraft International. ISBN 81-85753-79-2.

UNIT - 19: *Silence! The Court is in Session*

Structure

19.0 Introduction

19.1 Objectives

19.2 *Silence! The Court is in Session*

19.2.1 Inner World of the Play *Silence! The Court is in Session*

19.2.2 Act wise summary of the Play

19.2.3 Satire on Middle Class and its Pettiness

19.2.4 Symbols, Allegory and Motifs in the Play

19.2.5 Structure of the Play

19.3 Learning Outcomes

19.4 Glossary

19.5 Sample Questions

19.6 Suggested Learning Resources

19.0 Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar was a modern Marathi playwright and scriptwriter for television and cinema. For more than five decades, till his death on 19th May, 2008, he contributed as a political journalist and social commentator. Most of his plays which he wrote primarily in Marathi are harsh in terms of their unconventional topics and delivery. He took many of the topics from real-life happenings shedding light on harsh realities around. He wrote many plays, but the most popular is *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* translated in English as *Silence! The Court is in Session*, which was written in 1963 for 'Rangayan', a Mumbai based active theatre group (organization) in Marathi but came late into light on stage in 1967. Along with English, it is also translated into fifteen other languages. BBC screened its English version filmed by Satyadev Dubey a famous Indian theatre director. The play was directed by Arvind Deshpande and Sulabha Deshpande as the main lead in Marathi and by Om Shivapuri in Hindi. Having attracted such legendary artistes of the time, this play has created history across India. That Tendulkar's way of writing changed the storyline of modern Marathi theatre is the opinion of many critics and writers then, and even now is very much true when we watch/read this play after almost six decades.

The play, *Silence! The Court is in Session*, is based on Tendulkar's own experience of a conversation by a group of actors he had overheard while travelling in a local train to Mumbai for acting in a mock trial. Apart from this, there is one more source that the playwright could have had as his inspiration: he must have based the plot of this very popular play on a Swiss playwright Fredrich Durrenmatt's novel *Die Panne* (1956) and its English translation entitled *Traps*. This play was well received by the audience and the playwright was also felicitated with prestigious awards in 1970 from Sangeet Natak Akademi and Karmaladevi Chattopadhyaya Award for drama that same year. It has the distinction of being one of those plays in Maharashtra having been staged for more than 6000 times till date. This data about the play confirms the popularity and its relevance to our times. It was adapted into a movie in 1971, which proved to be a great success on the big screen earning new opportunities for the playwright and huge coverage to the play reaching every corner of the society.

Check your progress:

1. What is the original title of the play in Marathi?

2. From which novel did Tendulkar get the basic idea of this play?

3. When was the play adapted into a movie?

19.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce a modern playwright and his famous play *Silence! The Court is in Session*
- read and understand the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* by Vijay Tendulkar
- appreciate the play; its idea, vision, form and approach
- understand the form, idiom, mood and tone in the play
- develop aesthetic sense so as to have pleasure from reading and watching
- sensitise the issue of women in the light of the discussions in the play
- understand the approach and concern of educated people towards the condition of women in the country and abroad across castes and classes.

19.2 *Silence! The Court is in Session*

19.2.1 Inner World of the Play *Silence! The Court is in Session*:

The play *Silence! The Court is in Session*, as we have already discussed, is a modern play written in three acts. We have an unconventional woman in this play as its protagonist named Miss Leena Benare. Her experiences in her life and the choices she made in a way threatened the moral code and conduct of the society she was a part of. Further, her very existence becomes a problem and she is silenced in the course of action in the play. The play is about ordinary people in a town from different backgrounds. They are actually the members of an organization called "The Sonar Moti Tenements Progressive Association (Bombay)." This organization works for spreading information and awareness about various important issues affecting society. They gather to present a courtroom scene, to enact a mock-trial protesting against President Johnson's production of atomic weapons.

The idea of a mock trial has been used very skilfully by the dramatist so as to keep the audience spell-bound while it is enacted. For that, the playwright chooses the ideal institution wherein the institutional values enshrine and safeguard the individual rights. In the mock trial, the playwright shows that the same principle is violated and ridiculed by the characters. While reading the play, you need to check through comparison whether the court in the play maintains and upholds the sanctity of the institution in reality or not. Even the place chosen is a hall. The only hall that we see in the play is used for all kinds of activities in the village. All three acts we see are enacted at the same place. While reading we need to enquire whether the place helps in some way or the other in keeping the action going smooth. Only a careful reading will help know many hidden things that help in tracing the continuity of action in the play.

Thus, the inner world of the play reflects the outer world that we live in. Some people behave badly but try to show they did not behave badly. The pettiness of the middle-class people is exposed by the playwright.

19.2.2 Act Wise Summary of the Play:

The play is divided into three acts. The reader is informed by the playwright through his notes provided in the text. The reader needs to keep pace with this very important aspect of the play in the absence of its performance in reality. It gives information and creates background for the action that follows, connecting characters, events and their inter-relations. In the beginning of the play, the playwright, through notes, describes an old small hall in the village and the use of

this only hall for multiple purposes; social, cultural and group activities like *bhajans*, dramatic performances etc.

ACT-I

The setting in Act-I is an empty hall with a little stage kind of platform, a few chairs and portraits of national leaders on the wall and a picture of Lord Ganesha on the door. Samant opens the hall unlocking the door, holding a book and toy parrot in hand. He welcomes Miss Benare into the hall and tells her that the hall is cleaned for the performance today. While opening the door, Miss Benare gets her finger caught in the bolt. Samant advises her to suck the hurt finger to feel better. Miss Benare thanks him and says that she is feeling very good today. She also says it was good that they rushed ahead of them all. She likes Samant, whom she considers very pure by heart and a good person. Samant is a bit hesitant initially. While exploring the hall she speaks well about the place, Samant also narrates how the hall is used for multiple purposes.

Miss Benare, in the course of the talk enquires whether Mrs. Samant comes to the place joining the *Bhajan* group. Mr. Samant clarifies by telling that he is unmarried and the toy parrot is for his nephew. He also adds that he never misses the programmes in the hall. In the meantime, when Miss Benare steps close to him while talking, he gets disturbed. Miss Benare then wonders where the other members are. She says, as a teacher she is very prompt in her work and never lags behind in her lessons as well. This scene in the play raises many doubts regarding the behaviour of both Miss Benare and Mr. Samant.

Further, when Miss Benare keeps talking, she adds how she is a punctual teacher and she would be doing that work till the last moment of her life, honestly. But she again questions herself regarding the enquiry and the threat of being thrown out of her job by the school. Others do not know what is going on. She sometimes puts her hand on her womb and signals something is not good in her life. This sows the seeds of doubt for the trial that begins in the next act. Miss Benare then starts singing a song that too in English. When she stops, she asks Samant what they are going to do today. Samant replies, it is a Mock-Law court. Actually Samant has no idea about the same, so Miss Benare explains to him about the make-believe court they are going to perform. Samant is informed about the program and its intention of spreading awareness about the issues of social importance and enlightenment. Through Miss Benare's and Samant's discussion we come to know about other characters like Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, their childless life and having so called adopted son Balu Rokde. They educated him and have almost made a slave out of him,

according to Miss Benare. Thus, Benare brings the characters on stage through discussion before they physically arrive with their professional details.

Samant has no idea about the trial. Miss Benare tells him that the trial is of President Johnson, and he is accused of producing atomic weapons. Samant is shocked, learning about the topic of Mock-Law court they are going to practice. Miss Benare and Samant hide themselves after listening to the noise of others coming. They jump all of a sudden, and Sukhatme another member of the group gets frightened. He alleges Miss Benare of not being mature even at this age. Benare defends herself by saying she is very serious in a classroom but could not maintain the same tempo here. In the meantime, Punkshe another member arrives. Sukhatme comments on him that he appears very impressive on stage though we do not know that he had to appear twice for his Inter-Science and works as a clerk in a Telegraph Office. Punkshe is annoyed with this remark and reminds all that at least he has not cheated on his father's money like others did. Thus, the cold war gets heated even before they turn to their work, and we get to know about the characters and their interests.

Amid this discussion arrives Karnik, an experimental theatre activist. He fails to understand the topic of their discussion. Sukhatme appreciates Benare for her song. Benare enquires about Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar with Karnik. Karnik reveals that Mr. Kashikar was to purchase *veni* (garland) for his wife. When they arrive, Mrs Kashikar reveals that she was planning to buy one *veni* for Miss Benare as well. Benare refuses by saying that she does not like *veni*. She is independent and if at all she wishes, she can buy *veni* for herself. She has been teaching in a school for the last eight years. She says she does her work honestly and enjoys the same. She also hints about slander and maybe her job will be snatched from her. In between, she puts her hand on her stomach, an unusual gesture.

Balu Rokde is another character who runs errands for the Kashikars. He is quiet often daunted by the Kashikars. We also learn in this part through conversation among the characters that the Kashikars represent the middle-aged couples in the sixties and seventies where women were not allowed to have education. Girls are married off after getting trained in household chores. Mr. Kashikar's act of buying a garland for Mrs. Kashikar exemplifies the patriarchal practice of men following the ideals of courtship during the period. Miss Benare through her rejection of flowers and declaration of economic independence, refers to the changed time and changed choices of women.

Finally, when all characters have gathered, they come to know that Damle is absent and one more person from their group named Rawte will also be absent for the mock-trial performance. Miss. Benare appears a bit uneasy when she hears the name Damle and pretends as if she is busy in conversation with Punkshe. Mr. Kashikar gives Mr. Rawte's role to Samant. Balu Rokde is interested in that role, but as usual, Mr. Kashikar neglects him and takes the act further. Mr. Samant has no experience of acting; neither had he any idea of the court room. He expresses his inability before all. All the members decide to play the mock-trial for Samant so that he will have an idea of the court-room.

Thus, by the end of Act-I, we come to know about the undercurrents among the characters. Every character has his/her irritation. Miss Benare mocks at all. Balu Rokde is often looked down upon by Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar first and by others thereafter. Finally Karnik reveals the news that Rokde has told him to tell Punkshe about Miss Benare. Mr. Kashikar also readily accepts this trial of a different kind. Perhaps, Tendulkar here underlines the fact that when there is a woman to be taken for scrutiny, then things come differently. Several irrational, illogical enquiries and prejudices appear on the scene serially. Miss Benare has been accused of the crime of infanticide. The most confident and happy Benare at the beginning of this act, changes by the end of this same act. The command and control of the situation is lost by Benare and this happens as a result of a conspiracy. All the other characters except Samant get involved in this act of conspiracy.

ACT-II

Unlike in Act-I, Miss Benare is found in trouble in Act-II. She is the one who introduces us to many other characters in the beginning. Now she is an accused. She is on trial by the other characters in the mock-trial. Miss Benare is traumatized and amazed by the allegations against her by other members. She denies the charge of infanticide during the trial. Mr. Sukhatme continues with his argument based on the glorification of motherhood in the Indian context. Mr. Kashikar adds to it, quoting from Sanskrit, and establishes the high status of mother and motherhood in the Indian context. The same exalted status of women they try to relate through its contribution to India's freedom struggle as well. This part of the play, through trial and discussion, awakens the audience in the light of enquiry of whether we have such mothers within the limits of the play. There is no mother actually except the reference of Samant's sister-in-law in the play. Miss Benare considers this glorification of woman and motherhood under the pretext of this trial as meaningless.

The court during the trial finally concludes that the status of a mother is sacred and decides to cross-examine Miss Benare for the charges imposed upon her. Samant has no idea of what infanticide meant. Hence, when others help him understand the meaning of the word, he relates another incident of a widow from his village, who was charged with the same a few years back. Thus, the history of women's plight in Maharashtra is opened through this event during the trial. As we go ahead in this act, we hear that the responses by other characters against Miss Benare are full of hatred, and they all wish and aim at trying her. Without any concrete evidence, she has been accused of the crime of infanticide. Almost all in the courtroom are involved in the debate over the things from Miss Benare's personal life. The reader experiences this shift in the court-room from a discussion over the issue of infanticide to Miss Benare's personal life and her relationship with Damle.

Right from Samant, who appears to be the most simple and straightforward person, all contribute to declaring Benare as a characterless, immoral woman who plays with all men who come in contact with her. All those present take a great deal of vicarious pleasure in troubling her. Mr. Kashikar, who is playing the role of a judge, intervenes and suggests, "Benare's personal life should not be discussed in the court-room." Sukhatme, who is playing the role of a counsel, overrules him. We see further that Kashikar also enjoys and takes an interest in the trial. The personal secret unveiled in Act-II is the output of the play we watch. The dramatist as per his awareness relates the problem of anguish to the theme of violence. He simply exposes the innate nature of human violence visible in one form or the other. Every male character in the play indicts Miss Benare as a criminal and Mr. Kashikar allows them to do it. Benare leaves the hall bursting into tears. Kashikar and others discuss the soiled fabric of society. When Benare returns to take her bag and purse to leave the hall permanently, she finds the door shut from outside. The only way to go out is closed, symbolising the agony of a woman surrounded by arch enemies. She had no other way than being there, listening to the foul play of words against her till the end of Act-II.

ACT-III

Act-III in the play, *Silence...! The Court is in Session* is lengthier and more serious than the first two acts. When Miss Benare finds the door closed from outside and no way out, she stands still. She does not pay any heed to the words and the court orders she hears of bringing her into the witness box. Miss Kashikar literally drags her to the witness box. Miss Benare is taken on trial relentlessly in this act. The cross-examination continuously leaves her disturbed even

without answering the questions on her part. Though the other characters time and again refer to the cross-examination as mock-trial, nobody cares to stop it and console Miss. Benare who was their friend and companion. Rather, the audience is forced to pay attention to the cross-examination. The other characters have turned insensitive and Benare's silence is translated into contempt of court. No one else other than Samant who was not an active member of the court room, speaks in her favour. He has never been a part of the game. Only some of his earlier remarks and references that he spoke spontaneously proved to be a sort of evidence that other characters exploited in framing Miss Benare as a culprit.

All such questions are put to Benare under the guise of seeking truth in this part of the play. Her name, age and even why she is unmarried are enquired through the mock trial, which is intentionally planned and helps them in framing her. Only trivial prejudices and the hide-bound opportunities women are buried under in our society we see in this enquiry of Miss Benare. No solid evidence is found. Rather, they know it very well, so they keep beating around the bush about morals and codes of conduct prescribed for women in our society. The playwright actually exhibits and poses a challenge before us all to examine the mindset of the society in the double standard. It is different for women and men. How the powerful use the authority over the helpless we see through Benare's character in the play.

Further, in this same act, we learn that Benare has tried to contact many men in search of a husband. She wanted to marry for the child she was bearing. Perhaps, she is in search of a father for her child to be born. She is trying to defend her child from being called illegitimate. Her being unmarried has been looked down upon as troublesome. In fact, she is not attempting infanticide; on the contrary, she is protecting her child both physically and morally by attempting to give him/her a name in this myopic society. The men she has approached to join hands with her are not right or simply they are not equally bold as Benare is in these matters. They only make fun of it and contribute to overstated gossip about her. Whether it is Miss Benare's maternal uncle who exploited her while she was just 14 year old, or the recent culprit behind her pregnancy Prof. Damle, who is a professor and father of five kids, or the president of her school, who has come to know about her present state, all have shown their hypocrisy when it comes to supporting and helping a woman in trouble. Even other men like Sukhatme, Ponshe and Mr. Kashikar who keep singing about the sacrifices of a mother, act like a prey-bird eyeing their innocent prey for their petty prejudices and egos. Miss Benare is on the complete back foot at this point in the play.

Miss Benare has almost lost her battle during the mock trial. Her say, whether through the soliloquy or even otherwise, is not heard by others. They deliberately avoid listening to her. Deaf and dumb people with their frozen hearts, her own companions isolate her and take interest in exposing her motherhood. Finally, when the mock trial ends with Mr. Kashikar's verdict declaring Miss Benare guilty, she breaks down, putting her head on the table. She records her firm decision taking the safety of her child into consideration right here. The door that was bolted from outside is opened now. All the other characters are making a move so as to prepare for the show in the evening. All of them pretend to be consoling her by calling it just a mock-trial and nothing beyond that. Benare remains frozen there in the hall, being crumpled by the antagonism and inhumanity of her own peers. She struggles to move but in vain. No one is there to support her. She loses her job, reputation as a teacher and, most importantly, respect in society as an individual. Samant arrives there and leaves the toy parrot he was carrying for his nephew on the table for Miss Benare. Both the toy-bird and Miss Benare are motionless and still. The play comes to an end, leaving it for the speculation of the audience whether Benare will survive and will continue to be there in her role. Whether the society needs Benare or not is a serious question that is posed before the audience in the end.

19.2.3 Satire on Middle Class and its Pettiness:

The play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a play intentionally written to expose, criticise and mock at the prevailing traditions, customs and self-declared notions of the male-dominated society. Right from the title of the play, the satire begins. "Silence" is no silence in reality. There are noises, screams, exchange of hot words, sobs and tears. This silence is an imposed silence on Miss Benare and on other characters as well. Miss Benare and Mrs. Kashikar are the representatives of the feminine world in the play of the modern and the traditional types respectively.

The play satirises the middle classes through various examples. Women are considered animals caught in a dock and silenced forcibly. Women have no voice, and even if they have one, they are not allowed to express as we see in the case of Mrs. Kashikar in the play. The *Veni* episode and Miss Benare's response to the same make it very clear. Tendulkar, through Mrs Kashikar, satirises the male chauvinistic attitude of people in the case of women.

How the middle class moralities are born, nourished and nurtured in our society, we see through the example of Miss Benare. This society allows no immoral behaviour by women only. While Prof. Damle is equally responsible for Miss Benare's pregnancy, the mock-trial and all

other characters target only Miss Benare. The snobbish behaviour of male and female characters from the middle class is exposed here. The fact that they take interest in troubling individuals by isolating them, has been taken to task by Tendulkar. Thus, the play uses all tools cum routines of the middle classes and relates them to their inhuman and irrational behaviour and satirises them in the play.

19.2.4 Symbols, Allegory and Motifs in the Play:

Symbols, allegory and motifs are the tools at the hand of the playwright. Using these tools, the dramatist exhibits his skills of dramatizing the situations and presenting his views and visions through situations. Following are some of the important symbols and motifs that occur in the course of the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session*. These symbols and motifs play a very important role in delivering the message and in making the idea flow continuously.

The Locked Door

This is one of the early symbols in the play. Before the mock-trial begins changing fictional things into real about Miss Benare's life, this door is the only hope of coming in and going out. When the situation is out of her control and unbearable on her part, and she wishes to flee from it, she finds the door closed from the outside, and she has got no way out. It is symbolic. She is caught in a mesh, and she is unable to open it. Here Miss Benare is a symbol representing the new, modern woman free from the past, but that is not the truth we experience in the play.

The Sparrow and her Nest

This is another symbol in the play that symbolizes the importance of a nest in the life of a sparrow. The nest symbolizes safety, security, and stability, and, through safety, a continuity of life. Birds keep flying back to the nest; they lay eggs and nurture them into chicks. Miss Benare also dreams of safety for her child. But that safety is not assured. It is stolen by the society through exposition in the mock-trial. She has also been sentenced to forced abortion.

The Parrot

The toy parrot that Mr. Samant carries with him has an important role to play in the play. This parrot symbolizes the situation that human beings are reduced to. When Mr. Samant places that parrot before Miss Benare standing still, disturbed but immobile, she represents that parrot. She has no ability to have her own words, ideas and desires. She can just imitate the decisions, orders and suggestions of others.

Silence as a Motif

The use of this word right in the title is not a mere trick, but it is a command. It suggests silence, which is all-pervasive throughout the play. During the mock-trial also, Mr. Kashikar, the judge cautions Miss Benare to be silent again and again. The same power to make Mrs. Kashikar silent we see used by her husband, stopping her from expressing her opinions. The play ends with Benare standing silent when others leave the place to prepare for the evening.

Uniform and its Power

During the mock-trial we see Mr. Kashikar and Sukhatme wear their gown and wigs. When they wear their uniform, they appear more confident, comfortable and powerful. Uniform in general differentiates individuals and cuts them off from the rest of all in civil dress as it brings those wearing on equal scale. Ordinary people are awed at the invincibility of power of the office that it represents.

19.2.5 Structure of the Play:

Silence! The Court is in Session is technically a bit different but a perfect play. The play is a play within a play running in three acts. A group of amateur theatre actors assemble to practice a mock-trial on some important social topic so as to spread awareness among people. They keep waiting for other members of the group. In the course of their discussion and training a new member, they begin with a mock-trial. But, instead of presenting the earlier decided mock-trial, they decide to invent one of their member Miss. Leena Benare as an accused of infanticide. Through this mock-trial performance, the secret of her pregnancy is revealed. Contrary to what a court of law in real life follows, this play-acted court becomes a means to harass and embarrass Miss Leena Benare. The members of the group cannot speak openly about Benare's personal affair and her secret pregnancy; they take refuge behind the theatrical performance to dig into Benare's personal life.

The play uses some innovative tools to express certain very personal emotions of the characters like poems and songs quite often recited by Miss Benare. She recites the same to her class as a part of her profession. Through the songs, we come to know about the secret affair that Benare had as a young girl and her search for a husband so as to have a father for her child and preventing her from being an unmarried mother. Another song that we have in the play is about the sparrow. She expresses her sorrow through this bird whose nest is stolen by somebody. Thus, these recitations in the play are the tools for the characters to express their emotions and feelings, and for the dramatist to reveal certain secrets and hidden truths to the audience.

The play has often been called a game. This gaming spirit in the play is very skilfully used by the playwright. When Benare becomes emotional when her personal life is made public, others remind her of the game through the mock-trial they are playing. The exercise they do in the name of a mock-trial proves to be equally demoralizing and annoying as any real trial in the life of the accused. The play through its acts is an attack on the central character through her life and choices without attacking her physically under the pretext of a game by other characters. Thus, the game play makes this play structurally a real game played by the so called civil society members on a helpless woman who is tried, harassed and embarrassed systematically.

19.3 Learning Outcomes

After reading this Unit, you will get introduced to Vijay Tendulkar, one of the major playwrights in our time. Tendulkar's contribution to the society through his handling the harsh realities on stage will be better known to you. You should be able to read the play, *Silence the Court is in Session*, and understand and appreciate the same for its eloquent articulation through dialogues, brilliant vision through which the playwright exposes the unspoken and satirises aptly. Finally, you should also be oriented in the topic of women; their condition, status and plight in our society. You should be able to think about the injustices our society has been doing in every possible way to the women.

19.4 Glossary

Abortion:	A deliberate termination of human pregnancy
Bhajan:	To any devotional song
Farce:	An empty or ridiculous act
Infanticide:	Killing a baby (before its birth)
Insolence:	Impudence. Contemptuous or bold
Keen:	To be sensitive, alert or aware
Melodramatic:	Extravagant, appealing to the emotions
Mock-trial:	An act or imitation trial, it is similar to moot-court

Modern: Relating to the present or recent times as opposed to the remote past in all walks of life

Paan: A masticatory of beetle nut, lime and paan

Playwright: A person who writes plays/dramas

Promiscuity: Close intermingling of men and women; a state of having multiple sexual partners

Reprimand: To chastise

Sahib: Sir or master (a polite title to address a man) used by native inhabitants of colonial India

Symposium: An official gathering to discuss a topic in academia

Veni: A garland used by women to decorate their hair on special occasions

19.5 Sample Questions

19.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The setting of the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* is _____.
 - (a) A Church
 - (b) A School
 - (c) An empty hall
 - (d) The courtroom
2. In the play Miss Benare hurts her _____.
 - (a) Leg
 - (b) Hand
 - (c) Finger
 - (d) Toe
3. Benare tells Mr. Samant that he is a “ _____ ” person.
 - (a) Winsome
 - (b) Handsome
 - (c) Good
 - (d) Brilliant
4. What does Samant call Miss Benare that offends her?
 - (a) Spinster

- (b) Trollop
- (c) Crone
- (d) Schoolmarm

5. Benare considers herself as a _____ teacher.

- (a) Brilliant
- (b) Strict
- (c) Indifferent
- (d) Mesmerising

6. Which toy does Samant carry with him?

- (a) Teddy Bear
- (b) Toy Train
- (c) Toy Parrot
- (d) Toy Truck

7. Benare mocks at Mrs. Kashikar for being _____.

- (a) Old
- (b) Childless
- (c) Ugly
- (d) Uneducated

8. Who raised Balu Rokde?

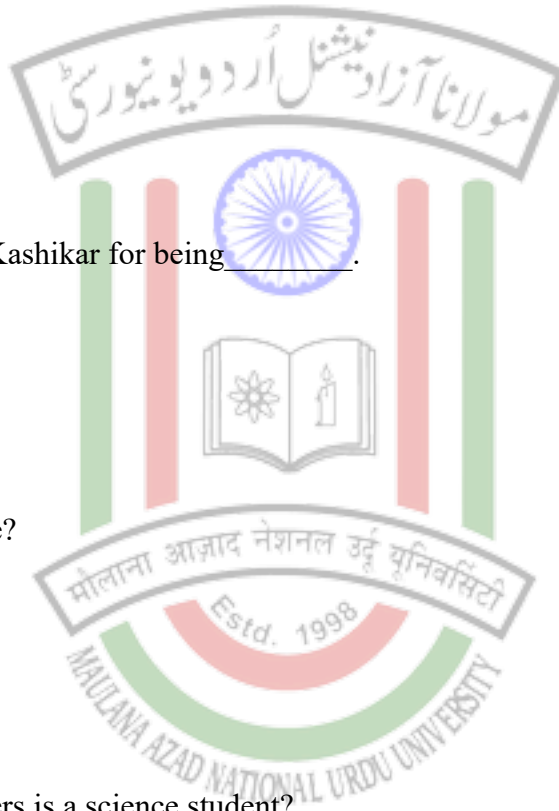
- (a) Sukhatme
- (b) Karnik
- (c) Ponkshe
- (d) Kashikars

9. Who among the members is a science student?

- (a) Sukhatme
- (b) Karnik
- (c) Ponkshe
- (d) Kashikar

10. The mock-trial concerns _____.

- (a) The Holocaust
- (b) The Environment
- (c) Indian Independence



(d) Atomic Weapons

19.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the symbolic meaning of the title, *Silence! The Court is in Session*?
2. Why did Benare slap Rokde?
3. What is the broader significance of the paan-spitting scene in the play?
4. What is the prime objective of the program in the play?
5. What is the mock-trial intended at?

19.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss Tendulkar's art of characterisation in the play, *Silence the Court is in Session*?
2. How do the male characters glorify motherhood in the courtroom for their own purpose? Discuss.
3. Discuss *Silence! the Court is in Session* as a social satire?

19.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Das, Veena Noble. *Women Characters in Vijay Tendulkar's Plays*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1994.
2. Gokhale, Shanta. *Playwright At The Centre : Marathi Drama from 1843 to the Present*. Seagull: Calcutta 2000.
3. Madge, V.N. *Vijay Tendulkar's Plays: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. Pen craft International: New Delhi.. 2007.
4. Mehta, Kunal. "*Silence ! The Court Is In Session : A Strong Social Commentary*."
5. O'Hanlon, Rosalind. *A Comparison Between Women and Men: Tarabai Shinde and the Critique of Gender Relations in Colonial India*. Oxford University Press, 1994.
6. Tendulkar, Vijay. *Collected Plays in Translation*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Unit - 20: *Silence! The Court is in Session*: Themes, Characters and Style

Structure

20.0 Introduction

20.1 Objectives

20.2 *Silence! The Court is in Session*: Themes, Characters and Style

20.2.1 Themes in the Play

20.2.2 Thematic Analysis of the Play

20.2.3 Characters in the Play

20.2.4 Art of Characterization in the Play

20.2.5 Depiction of Motive through Characters

20.2.6 Stylistic Analysis of the Play

20.3 Learning Outcomes

20.4 Glossary

20.5 Sample Questions

20.6 Suggested Learning Resources

20.0 Introduction

Vijay Tendulkar was born on 6th January, 1928 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra in colonial India. He was a major Marathi playwright and script writer for television and cinema. For more than five decades, till his death on 19th May, 2008 he also contributed as a political journalist and social commentator. Most of his plays are based on real life incidents which he wrote primarily in Marathi and are harsh in terms of their unconventional topics and delivery. He wrote many plays, and one of the most popular is *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* translated into English as *Silence! The Court is in Session*. It was written in 1963 first in Marathi but performed late in 1967. Tendulkar had his early training of literature at home itself. His father was a clerk in British Publishing House and later he started his own firm. Tendulkar could find books in plenty at an early age in his home. On Sundays and holidays, his father used to take him to the book shops of his friends and motivate young Tendulkar to read books of all kinds. Tendulkar could not have free time to spend in merry-making as a child. Due to the illness of his father he had to work at various publishing houses as a proof-reader very early in his life. His teachers also

motivated and helped him improve his writing during school and later. When he started working for press, he came in contact with the stalwarts in Marathi literature like Acharya Atre, whose influence on Tendulkar remained forever. All these activities both at home and at work place helped him enormously in understanding human nature and subsequently helped him in using this knowledge in passionately writing about the same. Thus, the early sowing of literary seeds was done systematically and we see the crop grown in abundance through his contributions in the later part of his life.

As in all his other plays, in this play also Vijay Tendulkar dealt with a very important topic pertaining to women in our society. Through the technique of ‘play within the play’ and all other tools that he uses in the play, the playwright creates an atmosphere of fear and guilt on the stage. Miss Leela Benare is found guilty in the mock-trial. The trial works very effectively as per the schemes of the characters who want to take this opportunity to defame and cast Miss Benare as an immoral woman and mother of an illegitimate child, which is not acceptable in society. In this Unit, we shall see in detail the various themes this play displays and the several characters, how they co-operate and deliver the pre-decided themes. We shall also discuss the technicalities of the play so as to understand the structure of the play.

Check your progress:

1. Where was Vijay Tendulkar born and brought up?

2. Whose influence on Tendulkar remained forever?

3. What dramatic technique has been used by Tendulkar in this play?

20.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- comprehend the themes in the play
- know the characters in the play and identify them through their roles
- appreciate the art of characterization in the play by the playwright
- study and comprehend the form, idiom, mood and tone in the play

- relate with the issues raised in the play through characters and themes employed and to appreciate how far the drama contributes in resolving the same
- sensitise oneself on the issues of women in the light of the mock-trial and discussions in the play
- understand the approach and concerns of the so called educated people towards women in the country with the help of the play

20.2 *Silence! The Court is in Session: Themes, Characters and Style*

The play, *Silence! the Court is in Session*, as stated earlier, deals with its theme through the technique of ‘play within a play’. It is very thoroughly planned round the central character named Leela Benare. During the mock-trial, Miss Benare has been accused of infanticide. All other characters on stage and those present in the hall turn her foe and she stands alone on the other side in the play. The dramatic action soon reveals the reality in the form of Benare’s pregnancy and the fact that she is unmarried. Her illegitimate child and her attempt to find a man to get married to is exposed before all during the trial. In fact, the playwright portrays her as a victim of a patriarchal society. She is denied the right even to even express her ideas and views. She has been continuously exploited by men right from her childhood. First her maternal uncle exploits her at the age of fifteen. Then it is Prof. Damle who harasses her and her friends in the *mandal* and now the management is throwing her out of her job for no fault of hers as a teacher. Finally, she is declared guilty of immoral behaviour and a sentence passed against her. She has been advised abortion but she wanted to nourish, nurture and give birth to her child. The play poses a challenge before the audience of introspecting and deciding who is right and wrong. The trial and allegations levelled against her, expose the reality that an individual voice never rises the high enough that the mob could listen to and do justice.

20.2.1 Themes in the Play:

Vijay Tendulkar’s play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* speaks of many issues from the contemporary society, and it voices two major concerns here and they are broadly the middle class hypocrisy and patriarchy, and exploitation of women in our society. These are universal issues of concern for the human society all over the world, but the playwright’s relating it to the conservative middle class in the Indian context makes it more appealing in the play. The play,

written in the sixties, exhibits the approach, attitude and societal behaviour of its time towards women. However, there are other themes as well in the play. Let us discuss some of them here.

20.2.2 Thematic Analysis of the Play:

Middle Class Morality and Hypocrisy

Tendulkar in this play exposes the deeply rooted fake ethical and moral codes of conduct by the middle class people in the society through the characters and their expressions in the play. The hypocritical nature of men especially towards women in the Indian society, has been exposed and taken to task by the playwright during Miss Benare's mock-trial. A very simple desire of a single woman to have her child without getting into any relationship through marriage has been looked down upon as immoral by the so called educated members of the society. The entire system of judiciary has been deployed to declare her guilty. The playwright has used the dramatic tool of mock-trial in the play.

Through the trial the playwright shows how men and even women fail to understand life in reality. When they fail to understand, they put forth the meaningless moral and ethical codes of behaviour. Using them they brand an individual as moral or immoral. This branding is again in no way standard. There are different rules for different persons based on their status. For example, Mr. Kashikar is the judge who will decide whether Miss Benare is guilty of the act or not in the court room, but this judicial duty is in no way a hindrance to him when he rules over his wife at home and even at workplace. So, if you listen to the talk of worship of womanhood and its greatness, it is nothing more than a double standard show on the part of the lawyer and the judge in the courtroom during the mock-trial.

When the trial begins with the straight question by Mr. Kashikar to Miss Benare, "whether you accept or not that you are an accused of the crime of infanticide?" Miss Benare actually is in a confused state. She had no idea that anything of this sort will be there during the rehearsal. So, she is astonished. Every character present in the courtroom contributes antagonistically in the case of Miss Benare and in a way enjoys the trial. They have a common feeling of her being an arrogant and immoral lady under the guise of being independent and straight forward woman. She has shown her character by interfering in the married life of Mr. Damle. Prof. Damle, according to them, is in no way responsible or guilty of the crime that they have committed together, if at all it is a crime to have child even without getting married.

The members in the courtroom show very casual attitude before and even during the mock-trial. Spitting of paan quite often, ear picking and smoking done ceremoniously, is shown

aptly by the playwright to expose their approach towards the issues of women in the society. Members and even the prosecutor are interested in observing Miss Benare's expressions during the trial. They are found very much interested in her personal issues getting publicized and turning very enthusiastic and happy every time it happened during the trial. This is a typical middle class attitude in our society.

All these very keen observers of the middle class morality in the play are seen giving speeches about the importance of motherhood in our society, and soon after they plan and execute that plan through the decision of killing an unborn child charging Miss Benare of infanticide in the play. Even the female characters in this part of the play participate in making patriarchy and its norms sustain through their acts of help to male counterparts against Miss Benare. Mrs. Kashikar who is an elderly lady but jealous of Miss Benare, especially of her independent nature, lifestyle and superiority complex hurts her and she never misses to comment, taunt or damage Miss Benare through conversations. During the mock-trial also, it is Mrs. Kashikar herself who forcibly brings her to the dock and participates in insulting and framing her as an immoral figure who deserves punishment. Thus, the faces that we see exposed through a series of events one after the other in the play teach us a lesson about the hypocritical nature of the Indian middle class that needs no outsider to belittle them as a society or an individual we see in the play.

Gender as a Theme

Silence! The Court is in Session by Vijay Tendulkar is a woman-centric play throughout. In all possible ways the play opens up and discusses issues related to women. Their status in the family, society and at work place is brought under scrutiny through its characters. Mrs. Kashikar is married for more than 25 years but she has got no voice of her own. As and when she speaks, she is targeted and thrashed by her husband. The playwright, through the incidents that happen to Miss Leela Benare, expresses the atrocities perpetrated on women by the male-dominated society. Miss Benare is deliberately trapped by the members of the society into the dock so as to hunt, ridicule and make her silent. The entire episode of closing the door, dragging her to the dock by a woman and the frequent use of the word 'game' makes it clear how women are trapped, isolated and victimized in the society.

Miss Benare by nature and practice is an independent woman. She says, "My life is my own. I have not sold it to anyone for a job. My will is my own. My wishes are my own. No one can kill those, no one. I will do what I like with myself and my life. I'll decide." But the society

does not allow women to think and remain free. Finally Miss Benare has to give up and face the trouble from her male counterparts. Men have created and taken charge of the system and through system they very methodically control the life of women. Mr Kashikar creates an atmosphere of great tradition and culture so as to frame Miss Benare in it as a sinner and then declares: “Marriage is the very foundation of our society’s stability. Motherhood must be sacred and pure. This court takes a serious view of your attempt to dynamite all this.” Finally under the guise of purity and piety, men take over women and systematically win the battle using the judicial platform and by replacing individual rights by moral and ethical notions.

The mock-trial also opens up publicly some bold and blatant personal opinions about gender differences. Sukhatme says, “Woman is not fit for independence.” Even Kashikar’s statement, “Our society should revive the old custom of child marriage” suggests many issues from the point of view of gender differences in this play. Sukhatme perhaps suggests that women need support at all levels. Even married women and those who work cannot decide how to spend or manage things. Hence, they need a man. Kashikar, while talking about the revival of child marriage in the society, taunts Miss Benare (who is unmarried) about her affair and pregnancy. Finally, Miss Benare’s monologue also brings many things in our society under scrutiny. She says, “Their lips are full of lovely worn-out phrases! And their bellies are full of unsatisfied desires.” Based on her experiences, women according to her are just objects of lust. Men like Prof. Damle exploit these women and leave them to their fate. Thus, the man and woman controversy has been handled well by the playwright making gender difference as one of the major themes in the play.

Other Important Themes in the Play

With the major themes discussed above, Tendulkar also handles the theme of relationships in a brilliant manner in his play. We have many relationships in the play. These relationships also play an important role in making the action go ahead softly. We have husbands and their wives; we have a group of people actually from different backgrounds but committed to the cause of social awareness. We have employers and their employees. Under what circumstances these employees work in private schools we see through the example of Miss Benare. Nanasaheb, the management member of the school, represents majority of school managements in our society.

The theme of orthodoxy has also been taken to task by Tendulkar in this play. Orthodoxy plays a major role in creating an atmosphere that favours men to suppress, oppress and exploit

women as we see in this play. Mrs. Kashikar does not have a child and such women are not respected in the Hindu society, but still, Mrs. Kashikar does every possible thing to uphold the customs and traditions of this same society, which is beyond one's understanding. Thus orthodoxy plays fantastically in keeping society bound by its rules and regulations.

With these themes, the play also sheds light on the theme of authority which is an important aspect in the family as well as the professional life. Patriarchy, as we have discussed earlier, allows no sharing of authority. Men will be the highest authority and women have to follow them blindly. At work place also, people, especially men, have the authority, and even if the woman has a role to play, men working under them never easily accept their authority. In most cases whether in family or at work places, men or women in authority never ever bother to listen to the other person as we see in the play. Balu Rokde has no right to speak and express his concern. Mr. Kashikar takes him for granted and never allows him to speak. Miss. Benare wants to express her opinion and convince the others in her case but she is not allowed by the male and female counterparts. Even the school management refuses to listen to her plight. The play ends with the defeat and personal loss of a woman.

Check your progress:

1. Which is the dominant theme in the play?
2. Which class according to the play and playwright has all responsibility of ethics and moral values?
3. What is the crucial theme that Tendulkar has taken for discussion after the issue of middle class and their moral and ethical codes of behaviour?

20.2.3 Characters in the Play:

The play has both major and minor characters. Given below is the list of these characters. Reading about them, we will get to understand them better.

Raghu Samant

Raghu Samant is an unmarried man, who appears on stage first with a lock, key, a book and a toy parrot in his hand. Samant lives with his brother, sister-in-law and his nephew. He is a very helpful and kind person by nature. He arranges for the performance and looks after the needs of all the members of the group. As one of the members is absent, Samant is given the role of that person but he has no idea of the court proceedings. A mock-trial is arranged so as to make him understand how it works. Mr. Samant appears to be sympathetic towards Miss Leela Benare throughout the mock-trial and even before we can gather anything through their discussion.

Leela Benare

Leela Benare is an unmarried woman and the protagonist in the play. She is a school teacher and has been teaching in a school for the last eight years. Benare is jolly, energetic, independent and modern woman by nature. She pays no heed to the age old customs and traditions in the society. She is mindful and very straightforward by nature and at the same time has a good sense of humour. Her understanding of the situations and persons is very accurate. In short, Leela Benare is the central figure and representative of the entire feminine clan.

Mr. Kashikar

Mr. Kashikar is the husband of Mrs. Kashikar. He is a very dominant character and a self-proclaimed social reformer. He comes late for the mock-trial because he stops to purchase a *veni* for his wife to put into her hair. He sees himself as the chairman of the group of artists. During the mock-trial he plays the role of the judge. During the prosecution, we can see his prejudices against women. He considers himself important and superior to all others.

Mrs. Kashikar

Mrs. Kashikar is an uneducated, middle aged, married woman and the wife of Mr. Kashikar. Mrs. Kashikar has no child but they have in a way brought up Bali Rokde. She has been introduced by Miss Benare in the beginning of the play as, "Mrs. Hand that rocks the cradle". She is a traditional woman and has all the dreams, desires and prejudices of a middle class woman. She is completely controlled by her husband Mr. Kashikar.

Sukhatme

Sukhatme is one of the major characters in the play. He arrives on the stage with Karnik, Ponshe and Balu Rokde who symbolise the orthodox middle class society in the play. Sukhatme is a showy expert of law matters and plays a lawyer in the mock-trial. He is in the habit of smoking *beedi*.

Ponshe

Ponshe, like Sukhatme and Balu Rokde, is a symbol of orthodox middle class man. In the play he is shown as an intermediate-failed science student who thinks of himself as a scientist. At present he works as a clerk in the Central Telegraph Office. He too is in the habit of smoking pipe. He has attempted his inter exam recently for the second time.

Karnik

Karnik has been shown as an experimental theatre artist in the play. He too enters with the other members in the group carrying suitcases, bags and battery operated microphone set etc. needed for the mock-trial.

Servant

Servant is possibly the porter hired from the railway station to carry the luggage. He appears on stage carrying two wooden enclosures- the dock and the witness box.

Apart from these characters we have some local residents gathered out of curiosity. They have no role to play but their presence adds liveliness to the mock-trial of Miss Benare.

20.2.4 Art of Characterization in the Play:

As discussed earlier, the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a problem play. Vijay Tendulkar is known for his unusual social themes in his plays and his very different experimental approach through stage shows. In this play also, the playwright creates a microcosm of the orthodox middle class society within the limits of a stage. For the playwright, the subject and its delivery is important. So we have characters chosen by the playwright. We meet Miss Benare who is the central character in the play who arrives first. Mr. Samant accompanies her. Samant is a novice, has got no role to play but becomes the reason for the mock-trial. Thus through the art of characterization, the playwright creates a situation and the play goes ahead with its course of action. An entire play is performed so as to make Samant understand what the court proceedings are like and how they are carried out in the court-room. The playwright has a set of characters. They are not die-hard artistes but they practice theatre. Some of them cannot make it out on the day of the mock-trial but they manage and make ready substitute role players in no time.

The playwright, through the characters, also creates a society kind of atmosphere. Through their comments, discussions, taunts and gossips, they play orthodox middle class role players. They are very much interested in the personal matters of others than their own. They take pleasure in gossiping about the relationships of their fellow men and women. A few of them are good at something but others never appreciate their virtues as do the people in real life situations. They represent their orthodox middle class roles in the play and help the dramatist pose his questions about marriage, orthodoxy, morality, ethicality and overall do's and don'ts in the society aptly.

20.2.5 Depiction of Motive through Characters:

The playwright has a strong motive of exposing the middle class through its unlawful set notions of morality and ethical practices with double standards. Among the characters, male

characters throughout show their opportunist nature of exploiting the situation and the female characters, be it Mrs. Kashikar or Miss. Benare. Mr. Kashikar who is the husband of Mrs. Kashikar neither grants her liberty to express herself nor does he allow Miss Benare to put forth her views about her own self during the mock-trial. The playwright has chosen these male characters and framed them in the role of the dramatis personae so skilfully that the motive automatically gets charged with curiosity and that enthusiasm and zeal to expose, intervene, interfere in the life of others anyhow. Hence, we see a sort of agreement among Mr. Kashikar, Sukhatme, Karnik, Balu Rokde, Mrs. Kashikar and Ponkshe during the mock-trial to dig deep into the situation and expose Miss Benare's personal matters under the guise of maintaining traditions, culture and moral code and conduct of the society.

Tendulkar creates a strong, logical, trained and lively character of Miss Benare who represents the modern woman and to counter her, a team of orthodox middle class members has also been made. There is a continuous conflict among the characters, as if they have no other work to do than indulging in conspiracy, game playing and teasing one another. The play gets shaped through these individual and societal games played on the stage by the characters. To stop and make Miss Benare listen to the court proceedings, Mrs. Kashikar is deployed. She drags Miss Benare to the dock and makes her a part of the trial forcibly. Mrs. Kashikar's motive is much of what we call prejudices against Miss. Benare for her straightforward, outspoken, bold and free behaviour. Her independent nature also provokes Mrs Kashikar's envy to contribute in her defamation through the court trial in the play. Tendulkar as usual creates bold scenes on the stage to drive home the message. All male characters except Mr. Samant keep eyeing Miss Benare. Either they wish her bad or they want to spoil her in some way. Their motive is to create an issue exposing her personal matters in public. So they attack her as a group. Finally, they win, leaving Miss Benare motionless. This silence on stage screams, sobs and wails from within without making any noise. The spectators are left with many more questions of their own to answer for themselves. They become one with the character of Benare and fight their lost battle individually.

20.2.6 Stylistic Analysis of the Play:

Vijay Tendulkar has experimented with both the traditional and modern tools and techniques in the making of this play to deliver his message directly and effectively. Plot, the most crucial aspect of a play, is well designed by the playwright. Tendulkar used the technique of play within a play in this drama. A group of amateur artistes rehearse for a dramatic

performance for creating awareness among the people. One of the members unfortunately is absent. Mr. Samant who is the resident of the same town was to help them in the role of that minor character absent that day but he had no idea of the court proceedings. To solve this problem, they decide and go for a mock-trial in the play and we have a brilliant drama exhibiting innumerable issues persisting in our own society. Interpersonal relations, family, work, personal problems like jealousy, hatred, feelings of insecurity, lust, sex, complexes (both; superiority and inferiority), orthodoxy, authority, game-playing weave the structural fabric of the play.

Tendulkar is known for his problem plays and this particular play is famous for flagging some social issues. Structurally or thematically speaking, the play does not have a conventional romantic storyline as many other plays normally have. The action in this play happens in a single evening. Young men and women participate in this play. All of them, belonging to the middle class, assemble to perform a mock-trial on an issue that concerns them. Other than Mr. and Mrs. Kashikar, who are husband and wife, and Balu Rokde who has been brought up by them, the characters in the play are unrelated and differ in their age, gender, class, education and profession. Their coming together to perform the mock-trial is the device the playwright has chosen. This technique was breaking new ground at the time of writing and performance of the play. The play prominently addresses the issue of collective psychology through ordinary incidents and aims at shaping individual responses. It is really interesting and sad at the same time to see that we have no answer to the questions raised by the play. The playwright leaves the task of seeking answers to the problems to the audience, which is stylistically successful.

20.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit on themes, characters and style in the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* by Vijay Tendulkar, you should have gained a clear understanding of the major and minor themes the playwright has dealt with. You should also be able to understand the persistent societal problems discussed within the limits of the stage in the play. You should have gained an understanding of patriarchy in the society and the exploitation of women at all levels through different means and measures. In short, you should have gained an understanding of the theme, characterisation and style in the play.

20.4 Glossary

Agarkar: Was an Indian social reformer born in Maharashtra

Dicky-bird: A child's word for a bird (any)

Dhondo Keshav Karve: He was a social reformer from Maharashtra popularly known as *Maharshi* Karve. He worked for the welfare of women, remarriages of widows and women's education throughout his life.

Schoolmarm: A female teacher

Slander: A false statement made to damage reputation of someone

Slave: A person who is the legal property of the owner and has no voice

Tukaram: A 17th century Marathi poet, a Hindu saint and a great devotee of Lord Vitthal of Pandharpur (Bhakti cult figure)

Milord: Used to address or refer to an English nobleman

Motherhood: The state of being a mother

Nobility: The quality of being noble/virtuous/ good/generous/ kind in character

Pious/Piously: Marked by conspicuous religiosity

Puberty: The period during which adolescents reach sexual maturity and became capable of reproduction

Promiscuity: Having a lot of different sexual partners or sexual relationships

20.5 Sample Questions

20.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following characters played the role of a lawyer in the mock-trial?

- (a) Mr. Kashikar
- (b) Sukhatme
- (c) Ponshe
- (d) Samant

2. Who played the role of the judge during the mock-trial?

- (a) Mr. Kashikar
- (b) Sukhatme

- (c) Ponkshe
(d) Samant
3. Mr. Samant was an experimental theatre artist.
(a) True
(b) False
4. Ponkshe is the resident of the village where the performance takes place.
(a) True
(b) False
5. Which of the following is not a theme in the play, *Silence! The Court is in Session*?
(a) Hypocrisy
(b) Middle class moralities
(c) Romance and love
(d) Gender discrimination
6. Miss Benare in the play is charged guilty of _____.
(a) her being a thief
(b) her pregnancy without being married
(c) her bold and independent nature
(d) her comments on other male companions
7. The play uses a technique called _____.
(a) Narration
(b) Play within the play
(c) Reversal of fortune
(d) Mixing of tragic and comic scenes
8. *Silence! The Court is in Session* is a _____.
(a) Tragedy
(b) Comedy
(c) Tragi-comedy
(d) Problem play
9. Miss Benare calls _____ by the name 'prime objective'.
(a) Mr. Kashikar
(b) Sukhatme
(c) Ponkshe

(d) Samant

10. Whom does Miss Benare refer to as a complete housewife in the play?

(a) Mr. Kashikar

(b) Mrs. Kashikar

(c) Irawati Karve

(d) Savitribai Fule

20.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the thematic importance of middle class in the play *Silence!.....?*

2. Enlist the characters with their role in brief from the play *Silence!.....*

3. What is the broader significance of the toy-parrot in the play?

4. Write a short note on the character of Miss Leela Benare.

5. Compare and contrast the characters Miss. Leela Benare and Mrs. Kashikar.

20.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the play *Silence! The Court is in Session* as a satire on the orthodoxy and hypocrisy of the society.

2. How do you relate the play, *Silence the Court is in Session* through its theme/s with contemporary situation?

3. Describe the mock-trial in the play that casts Miss Leela Benare as an immoral woman.

20.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Das, Veena Noble. *Women Characters in Vijay Tendulkar's Plays*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1994.

2. Gokhale, Shanta. *Playwright At The Centre : Marathi Drama from 1843 to the Present*. Seagull: Calcutta 2000.

3. Madge, V.N. *Vijay Tendulkar's Plays: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. Pen craft International: New Delhi.. 2007.

4. Mehta, Kunal. "*Silence ! The Court Is In Session : A Strong Social Commentary*."

Unit - 21: A Brief History of Indian English Novel

Structure

21.0 Introduction

21.1 Objectives

21.2 A Brief History of Indian English Novel

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21.0 Introduction

Of all the popular genres of Indian English Literature like poetry, drama and short story, novel has flourished with leaps and bounds within no time. It has produced a galaxy of talented writers of global acclaim. Though the novel is not an indigenous form of writing in India, it has found a fertile soil and provided a vast and suitably adapted platform for the expression and representation of miscellaneous issues and aspects of Indian socio-cultural setup. In Indian English fiction, writers manifested the native sensibility that reflected the rich cultural heritage with diverse colours. Through the novel, writers have significantly contributed to spreading awareness among the common masses regarding various domestic, social, political and economic matters. As a natural form of expression, the novel inspires literary figures to look into these various dimensions of reality with critical insight and thereby conceive measures to resolve them. Pertaining to this scope of the novel, H.M. Williamson asserts: “It is undoubtedly the most popular vehicle for the transmission of Indian ideas to the wider English speaking world”. The novel truly serves multiple purposes simultaneously. It not only educates people about the internal and external qualities of man, full of potential and meaning for life, but also equips

them to channelize means for better living. The English novel in India took birth at the critical juncture when the nation was undergoing rigorous freedom struggle against colonialism. Therefore, it has a vital role to play in galvanizing the spirit of nationalism and patriotic fervour in the hearts of common people to stand against the illegal occupation and exploitation of the foreign yoke. After independence, it has also provided an appropriate forum for the writers to resist the false claims and misconceptions created by the English world about India and thereby to rectify them with an adequate discourse. It is also in this genre that Indian English writers excel the native English novelists in terms of execution and technique of writing. They have won laurels by grabbing international awards and prizes including Nobel Prize, Man Booker Prize and American Pulitzer Prize. Today it is seen that this Indian English literature is read, taught and researched across the globe. It is made part of the curriculum of well reputed institutions and universities in Europe and America. Thus, it can be said with assurance that the Indian English Literature has succeeded in satisfying the intellectual sense of a global reader due to its universal appeal and multiple meanings. The corpus of Indian novel has both quantity and quality.

to the

21.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- develop an overall literary consciousness in you
- familiarize you with the concept of novel and its inherent components
- introduce you to the temporal development of Indian English novel and its various stages
- highlight the main themes of Indian novel and its shifting scenario
- show you the innovative styles of great novelists that are compatible with the substance they portray
- make known the great landmarks in Indian English novel and their acceptance and acclamation at world level.

21.2 A Brief History of Indian English Novel

21.2.1 Concept of Novel and Its Origin:

The term novel has its roots in the Italian word '*Novella*' which literally means 'a little new thing.' In literature, the concept is used to denote a variety of literary writings that share the common characteristics of being extended works of fiction produced in prose. As a fictional work, novel is differentiated from short story and from the work of fiction of moderate length called the '*Novella*.' Moreover, as genres of literature, the novel and the drama have many commonalities and uniformities. These similar features of the two can be seen in the form of plot, characters, background or setting, conflict and diction. The big distinction between these two major forms of literature is that the novel is narrative in presentation and the drama is performative. One is called a 'telling' art and the other is known as 'showing' art. The magnitude of both the genres allows a writer to have a huge variety of personages, to develop a complexity of plots, to include a vast milieu and to display a sustained social and psychological exploration of characters. Novels are of many categories based on their backgrounds and substance they project. These types may be named as: epistolary novel, picaresque novel, gothic novel, realistic novel, historical novel and social novel. There are also some recently emerged narratives like regional novel, non-fiction novel, anti-novel, new novel, documentary novel, involuted novel and so on. The constituent elements of the novel may be identified with the help of the following terms:

- Plot: It refers to 'what', the main story being told either by invented character or by the author himself/herself in the form of first person narrator.
- Character: It denotes 'who', the central character and their association with other characters and the world they live. The relationship between plot and character is that of subject (character) and object (plot).
- Setting: It implies 'where', the background, the scene, and the environment of the characters. It may be also defined as context of the text (plot) being described by the character. The relation among character, plot and setting is- who says what and where.
- Point of View: It signifies 'how' a story gets narrated. It manifests mood through which readers are presented with characters, story and setting that constitute the overall work.
- Conflict: It refers to the problem the writer proposes to resolve at the end. The characters, particularly the protagonist, are to be challenged in some ways, or plot will not develop with suspense and surprise at all. These conflicts may be seen as: man versus man, man versus nature, man versus himself, man versus society and like things.

- Theme: It denotes 'intention' or message, substance that the author wants to present before the readers. It is the overall controlling substance of the work.

21.2.2 Birth and Background of the Indian English Novel:

The Indian English novel has significantly grown in stature since its first production and publication in the form of *Rajmohan's Wife* written by Bankimchandra Chatterjee in 1864. The genre has flourished tremendously in magnitude, diversity and maturity. From a short small plant, it has become a towering tree disseminating its boughs in different directions. The study of its progress shows its initial stage of imitation to the ripe experimental stage of realism and psychological revelation. The early period evinces that the Indian English novel has been influenced by the discourse of Henry Derozio, the spiritual writings of Robindranath Tagore and pacific and non-violent philosophy preached and practised by Mahatma Gandhi. With the advent of Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao, the tone of novel has been set artistically and judiciously towards its endless journey still going on.

Like poetry, the novels written in the early stages, during the colonial era, are patriotic and nationalistic in nature. But after independence as India begins its onward journey towards prosperity and well-being, Indian English novel also manifests positive changes by incorporating bigger issues facing humanity at the universal level. With the passing of time, it has embraced diversity and universality in terms of both style and substance. Today Indian diaspora in different parts of the world is very powerful in the writing and publishing industry. They speak a global language free from the shackles of a particular socio-cultural ethos. This type of novel presents the native Indian individual in relation to international environment and their ability of adjustment and negotiation in a foreign setting. The Indian immigrants demystified the romantic and mythical fantasies that used to be part of domestic affairs of rural India. The trailblazing novelist Salman Rushdie amuses the readers with his concept of '*chutnification*' of history and language. He has opened a new chapter for a number of writers in perceiving the life with a fresh critical insight. Amitav Ghosh deliberates on the postcolonial phenomenon. Vikram Seth amalgamates prose and poetry with a tingle of English Victorian sophistication. Moreover, Pica Iyer effortlessly and tirelessly walks the map in his literature, while Rohinton Mistry unravels the reality of Parsi existence before readers.

There are also many prominent female writers who resist the women suppression and show urgency for their emancipation and empowerment in the rapidly changing life. Among them Kamala Markandaya and Shashi Deshpande depict women's predicament in India and

portray personages with their own complacency for their poor status and deteriorated conditions. Arundhati Roy adds a colourful spectacle to Indian English novel by creating multi-layered meanings in fictional works. Bharti Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri project the bitter-sweet world of Indian diaspora residing in Europe and America. These aforementioned and other female novelists have achieved a critical appreciation and acclamation in the English knowing world due to their spectacular literary craft.

Indian English literature has received its real recognition and genuine attention from the European world with the Nobel Prize for Tagore. Its stature has been further amplified when Indian origin novelist V.S. Naipaul bagged the prize in 2001. Naipaul is also among many well established writers who have been awarded the Booker Prize, an equivalent to American Pulitzer Prize.

21.2.3 Grand Trio of Indian English Novel:

During the immediate pre-independence, Indian English novel was considerably influenced by social and political circumstances. It is at this juncture that the real beginning of the genre starts. The talented trio, viz., Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao made entry on the literary scene and projected the socio-political situations with photographic reality without distorting it. Their works are philosophical and reformative in nature. They display utmost concern for the deteriorated conditions of Indian masses. William Walsh calls this big trio as ‘the founding fathers’, ‘the genuine novelists’, and ‘inaugurators of the form’. These novelists appeared almost simultaneously in the 1930s, with the publication of *Untouchable* (1935), *Swami and Friends* (1935), and *Kanthapura* (1938). Thus they laid the foundation of Indian English novel on solid rocks by creating these masterpieces.

Mulk Raj Anand is a humanist-novelist par excellence. He is a writer with a well defined purpose. He has kept pace with the shifting scenario having a profound eye on his surroundings. His analysis of Indian socio-cultural ethos is valid and meaningful. He hardly leaves any issue and challenge unaddressed. While dealing with these affairs of life, he makes good use of his understanding and experience. There is an accurate correspondence between social reality and psychological response in his works. He is of the opinion that the novel is “ the creative weapon for attaining humanness- it is the weapon of humanism.” He is the champion of the lower class and marginalized ones in society. He is the Indian Dickens. He also shows a tremendous influence of the Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, in form as well as in characterization. Like all world’s great realists, his novels are projections of social contest and protest. His philosophy of

writing reflects a combination of ideologies of western Marxism and Indian Gandhism. Therefore, he has a universal appeal. His main domains of fiction may be identified as: class system, imperialism, demonstration against social and industrial evils, the plight of women and like issues. According to G.S. Balarama Gupta: “The moot point to be noted about Anand is that he has firmly believed in the role of a writer as essentially a crusader in the cause of humanity; no hotchpotch of Vedantas; no hazy mysticism, but inalienable faith in man” (1977). All his initial novels like *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) justify such statements in spirit as the novelist has represented lower class and poor people in these works. These people can be identified in the form of characters as scavengers, coolies, leather workers and dalits. His masterpiece *Untouchable* is a supreme work of art in its substance and technique. It reflects a day from morning to evening in the life of Bakha, a sweeper boy who is described by E.M. Forster as: “a real individual, a lovable thwarted, sometimes grand, sometimes weak and thoroughly Indian” (198).

R.K. Narayan is a representative of middle class sensibility and their aspirations. He is a genuine artist and a magical story teller. From *Swami and Friends* (1935) to *The Painter of Signs* (1976), his art of narration is a continuous reminder of globally acknowledged writers like Anton Chekov, Tolstoy, and Walt Disney. His works *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1938) and *The English Teacher* (1945) are all brilliant descriptions of South Indian life. William Walsh looks upon Narayan as “a distinctive blend of western technique and Eastern material”. The imaginary world of R.K. Narayan is *Malgudi*, a South Indian town. It is just like Thomas Hardy’s Wessex and William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha. Regarding the genius of Narayan, K.R. Srinivas Iyengar asserts:

“He is one of the few writers in India who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection. There is a norm of excellence below which Narayan cannot possibly lower himself. (359)”

R.K. Narayan is extremely lucid and straightforward in the manner of language and narration. His tongue has been admired as plain English. Like Raja Rao, he is part of a process aiming at ‘Indianisation’ of English.

Raja Rao is an indispensable part of this grand trio. Though he is not as prolific a writer as Anand and Narayan, he shows a keen interest in philosophy and mythology which distinguishes him from the other two in the fold. He has produced a landmark in Indian fiction

in the form of his debut novel *Kanthapura*. The book delineates the village life and the Indian rural sensibility. It is the incarnation of Gandhian ideology and thought. R.K. Srivastava states:

“Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura* is a garrulous account of primitivistic, religious, political and social activities of rural people. The novel is not a two-dimensional picture of villagers but a colourful audio-visual presentation ...characterizing the entire country Kanthapura is India in miniature.”

Regarding the difficulty of writing in English Language, Raja Rao explicitly explains it in the ‘Forward’ to *Kanthapura*: “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.” He further adds in this connection that English is: “the language of our intellectual make up.... but not of our emotional make up”.

Thus bearing these illustrations and analysis in mind, it becomes evident that this talented grand trio has a considerable hand in making Indian English novel a powerful instrument to express the native sensibility and social reality in a detailed way. They have shown other writers how this novel can be used as a literary form to depict different types of subjects by exploiting diverse styles. They have widened the scope and range of novel in India. They have created matching correspondence between foreign language and native content, and social reality and individual psyche. They provide a holistic view of life full of diversity in a unified manner.

21.2.4 Indo-Anglian Novel in Post-Independence Era:

In the immediate post freedom literary scene, G.V. Desani’s novel *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) has revolutionized Indian English fiction with its innovative technique and style. It is a remarkable piece of literary art. The novelist’s real genius lies in his mastery of using English language in an experimental way. The narrative technique and English away from actual Englishness are unique accomplishments in the history of Indo-Anglian novel. After 1950’s, the novelists displayed their interest in moving away from external social facts towards the internal psychological mystery to unravel the complexity of human nature. The immaterial ‘inner man’ has been preferred to a larger material world. There is a quest for the essence of human existence. Writers like Anita Desai, Arun Joshi and Nayantara Sehgal have reshaped the Indian English Novel and thereby set the tone for future developments and experiments. Anita Desai delves deep into the inner consciousness and demonstrates its impact on the outer behaviour of the characters. She explores the psychological aspects and touches a new landscape of sensibility in her novels. Arun Joshi’s experimentation with new narrative techniques is his hallmark.

Nayantara Sehgal through her work *Rich Like Us* (1985) displayed a great mastery of story telling. The other writers in this genre, including Kamala Markandaya, Manohar Malgoankar and others, have also been acclaimed and appreciated not only in India but also at the global level. Kamala Markandaya depicts the rustic and urban life with a photographic realism. She projects a South Indian village whose life has visibly shown no change at all for centuries. Ruth Prasad is noted for her engaging comedy manifested through the characters from North Indian urban middle class. Proceeding ahead in time in the evolution of Indian novel, it is Amitav Ghosh whose artistic genius has left a deep imprint on the canvas of Indian literature. His duo- *The Circle of Life* (1986) and *The Shadow Lines* (1988) established Ghosh as one of the finest writers born out of the post *Midnight's Children* literary scenario. At this point of time, Vikram Seth has also gained critical attention and a wider circulation with the publication of two inspiring novels- *The Golden Gate* (1986) and *A Suitable Boy* (1993). *A Suitable Boy* has amused the literary world by its extended length and in this aspect it may be compared with Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* and Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. *English August* (1988) is a novel by Upamanyu Chatterjee which has also contributed to this tradition of writing in India. It satirizes the foibles of Indian bureaucracy. The work is also interesting in terms of its Indianised English. The contemporary Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* (1989) is also a big achievement in Indian English fiction. Rohinton Mistry may be included here due to his well crafted fiction. His *Such a Long Journey* (1991) is the maiden work in this field of literature showing the plight of contemporary life.

21.2.5 Existing Scenario of Indian English Novel:

It may not be hyperbolic to say that Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* is a magnum opus not only in the writer's repertoire, but in all of Indian English fiction. It has modified the world view towards Indian writing in English from dilettante to cognoscente. It is truly a trailblazing creation in all aspects – narrative technique, language and the subject. It has inspired and guided all Indian novelists there onwards to make new experiments in the field of writing. In the novel, Rushdie conceives a new generation of Indians born at the stroke of the midnight of 15th August 1947. He describes this moment of history as follows:

What made the event noteworthy... was the nature of these children, every one of whom was, through some freak of biology or perhaps owing to some preternatural power of the moment, or just conceivably by sheer coincidence... endowed with features, talents or faculties which can only be described as miraculous. It was as though ... history,

arriving at a point of the highest significance and promise, had chosen to sow, in that instant, the seeds of a future which would genuinely differ from anything the world has seen up to that time. (195)

What makes the difference here onwards in Indian English Literature is the manifestation of natural talent and inherent genius in this type of writing. The writers have made an indelible mark on the world literary scene. Among these gifted ones is Arundhati Roy whose fiction displays a profound psychological understanding *vis-a-vis* the first hand knowledge of native culture and history. Her *The God of Small Things* is a multi-dimensional work which has attracted a critical response from the world over and bagged the coveted Booker Prize as its predecessor *Midnight's Children*. While reading Roy's novel, one feels that she has overcome all traditional shackles of writing conforming to social norms and writing methodology. She does experiments of new types both in terms of content and form. Along with Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai explores unexplored subjects in the shape of postcolonial reality and the cultural incompatibility between the East and the West in her novels. Her maiden novel *Hallobaloo in the Guava Orchard* is written in a satiric tone exposing society. Her masterpiece *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) demonstrates a cultural conflict between English life style and the Indian one. The novel won her the Booker Prize. The narrative technique, innovative use of language and unique execution of plot put her among the towering writers in Indo-Anglian literature. The publication of *The White Tiger* (2008) created one of the unforgettable novelists in Indian English Novel. It is a new type of work in its own way. Though the epistolary technique is conventional one, the language is absolutely absorbing in its lucidity and journalistic colour. In the novel, Arvind Adiga mirrors the whole Indian life with colourful presentation. Indian traditional practices, social reality, politics, faulty education system, poor medical facilities all come under his satirical radar. His subject matter and the lingual use are all engaging. The novel has made the writer so popular and successful that it got for him the Booker Prize. In this world of writing, Amish Tripathi has also gained the attention from the literary circle. His *Immortals of Meluha* deals with the origin of Lord Shiva. Besides, Pratab Sharma, Boman Desai, Gopal Gandhi and others have also contributed to this 'new novel' and have enriched its realm with innovative experiences and experiments. This whole journey of Indian English novel with its inventions and novel practices is beautifully described by K.R.S. Iyengar: "[novel is] a living and evolving literary genre, and is trying, in the hands of its practitioners, a

fusion of form, substance and expression that is recognizably Indian yet also bearing the marks of universality.”

21.2.5 Lingual Innovation in Indian English Novel:

The Indo-Anglian novel has not only undergone innovations and experiments in terms of style, narrative technique and themes, but also witnessed a considerable newness in the form of English language being exploited for native Indian characters and content. The writers have tried their utmost to create likeness between matter and form in order to project the ambiance with realistic tone and timbre. The language has been used to provide an exact text to the context. In this process of providing Indian English speech to their fictional characters with realism, these writers have even coined many new words. There are novelists who concentrate on issues like poverty, class difference, gender discrimination and religious dogma. They have been recognized and acclaimed by the western readership. There are also many writers who are sometimes called ‘global Indians’. They are born Indians, but live elsewhere in the world. They perceive Indian reality and existence objectively at a distance. They display their mastery in handling the English language with their native like competence and creativity. They use English as per the demands of literary art and subject matter. They have created a type of matching resemblance between Indian ethos shown by characters and English flair striking from their tongue. Such novelists employ the foreign language with dexterity. Their new coinages and neologisms have created a unique flavour in the domain of English fiction. The tone of this different Indian variant of English language has been set by Raja Rao at the very birth of Indian English novel in the ‘Foreword’ of *Kanthapura* published in 1938, as quoted earlier.

21.3 Learning Outcomes

The Indian English fiction has physically grown into a large body with multiple facets of Indian social existence and individual essence. The reading of this Unit should have enlightened you in tracing the developmental journey of the genre and to know how it changes its colours to reflect the shifting reality of life. You should have learned about the various diversions and digressions the novelists have adopted to keep pace with the realism of human psyche and social structure. You should have been educated with distinctive segments of timeline of Indian English fiction. On the whole, at the end of this Unit, you should have gained an elaborate

glimpse of Indian English novel with situational and historical background, and the changing priorities of the writers in terms of form and content.

21.4 Glossary

Ambiance: A unique mood or atmosphere of an environment or surrounding influence

Accomplishment: The act of completion and fulfillment

Amalgamate: To merge, to combine, or to join

Cognoscente: A person possessing superior or specialized knowledge in a particular field; a connoisseur

Coin: To make or fabricate, invent, originate

Colonialism: The colonial domination policy or strategy. A colonial set up

Complacency: A feeling or sense of contented self-satisfaction, especially when unaware of upcoming trouble

Corpus: A collection of writings, often on a specific topic, of a specific genre, for a particular writer

Craft: Intellectual power; skill; art

Crusader: A fighter in the medieval Crusades; a person involving in crusade; one who fights for a cause

Diction: A particular choice and use of words, especially with regard to effective communication

Didactic: Instructive, educative and reformative in nature

Digression: An act of straying from the main topic in speech or writing, particularly for rhetorical effect

Dilettante: Amateur, someone who dabbles in a particular field out of casual interest rather than as a profession or serious interest

Discourse: Representation either in speech or writing; an exchange in words

Disseminate: To sow and spread principles, ideas, opinions, or concrete things, for growth and promotion, like seeds

Epistolary: Relating to letters, or the writing of letters

Ethos: The character or core values of a person, people, culture, or movement

Emancipation: The act of setting free from the power of another, as from slavery, subjection, dependence

Essence: The true or inherent nature of a thing or idea or person

Foible: Feeble, weak or idiosyncrasy

Freak: A sudden change in thought, unpredictable, or enthusiast

Galvanize: Electrify; to shock, inspire or stimulate into sudden activity, as if by electric shock

Garrulous: Excessively chatty or talkative

Genre: A form, kind; a stylistic category, especially of literature or other artworks

Gothic: Relating to the style of fictional writing associated with the Gothic revival, emphasizing violent or macabre events in a mysterious, desolate background

Hallmark: A distinguishing feature

Hyperbolic: Relating to hyperbole, overstatement, or exaggeration

Hotchpotch: Blend, mishmash, mangle

Immaterial: Without matter or substance

Magnum Opus: The best, most popular, or most renowned work or piece of art of an author or artist

Marginalized: Alienate, limit something to margin. Socially curtail one's role or importance

Moot point: Any issue that is subject to, or open for, discussion or debate, to which no satisfactory answer is found

Mirage: An illusion or an optical phenomenon in which light is refracted through a layer of hot air close to the ground

Neologism: A word or phrase which has newly been made or coined; a new word or phrase

Negotiate: To reach an agreement or adjustment

Pacific: Peaceful, calm and avoid violence

Podium: Platform or pulpit

Preternatural: Above or beyond natural, or not adhering to natural or normal course

Protagonist: A central character in a novel, drama or movie

Realism: A literary or artistic representation of reality as it is

Revelation: Disclosure or manifestation of something

Rustic: Rural, crude, rough, pastoral

Satire: A literary device of literature or art which ridicules its subject often as an intended means of provoking or preventing change. Humour, irony, and exaggeration are often used to execute this effectively.

Shackle: A restraint or chain that binds or hinders progress

Segment: A portion or piece of something bigger

Spatial: Relating to space

Technique: Ability, method, skill or a practical aspect to accomplish something.

Temporal: Relating to time.

Trailblazing: Innovative, pioneering or experimenting.

Yoke: A bar or frame of wood by which two oxen or other draught animals are joined at the heads or necks making them to pull a plough or carriage. A burden or something oppresses or restrains something.

21.5 Sample Questions

21.5.1 Objective Questions:

I. When was the first novel *Rajmohan's Wife* by Bankimchandra Chatterjee published?

- (a) 1854
- (b) 1864
- (c) 1868
- (d) 1858

II. The word 'Novella' for English 'Novel' is _____.

- (a) German in origin
- (b) English word
- (c) Turkish in root
- (d) Italian in derivation

III. Who coined the word '*Chutnification*'?

- (a) Salman Rushdie
- (b) Arundhati Roy
- (c) Amitav Ghosh
- (d) Anita Desai

IV. Who is a Nobel Laureate among the following?

- (a) Arvind Adiga
- (b) V.S. Naipaul
- (c) R.K. Narayan
- (d) Bharti Mukherjee

V. Which one of the following constituent elements does not belong to Novel?

- (a) Character
- (b) Conflict
- (c) Song
- (d) Setting

21.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Define the concept of Novel.
2. Write a short note on Raja Rao's idea of using English language in Indian English literature.
3. What type of novel *The White Tiger* is and what are its main themes?
4. What is the main domain of R.K. Narayan's novels?
5. What is the historical and literary significance of *Midnight's Children* in Indian English novel?

21.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What do you mean by the term 'novel'? Explain its constituents elements.
2. Who are the 'grand trio' in Indian English novel? What is their contribution in its development?
3. Write a detailed note on the immediate post-independence Indian English novel.

21.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Iyengar, K. R. S. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi : Sterling Publication, 1985.
2. Mehrotra, A. K. *An Illustrated History of Indian English Literature*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.
3. Mehrotra, Arvind. *Encyclopaedia of Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: India Ink, 1990.
4. Naik, M.K. *A History of Indian English Literature*, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1982.
5. Ramamurti, K.S. *Rise of the Indian Novel in English*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1987.

Unit-22: Life and Works of Rohinton Mistry

Structure

22.0 Introduction

22.1 Objectives

22.2 Life and Works of Rohinton Mistry

22.2.1 Rohinton Mistry - Life

22.2.2 Rohinton Mistry - Works

22.2.3 *Tales from Firozsha Baag*

22.2.4 *Such a Long Journey*

22.2.5 *A Fine Balance*

22.2.6 *Family Matters*

22.2.7 Theme of Humanism in the Works of Rohinton Mistry

22.2.8 Let Us Sum Up

22.3 Learning Outcomes

22.4 Glossary

22.5 Sample Questions

22.6 Suggested Learning Resources

22.0 Introduction

Dear Students, in this Unit we will discuss the life and works of Rohinton Mistry. There is no denying the fact that Rohinton Mistry has positioned himself among the distinguished writers and created a niche in diaspora literature in particular and Indian literature in general. It must be admitted that his works contain grace and caliber that places him alongside some of the great novelists of all times. No wonder, he has often been compared with writers like Charles Dickens for his compassionate treatment of many social issues. Additionally, for his command over language and apt imagery, he is considered a scholarly writer. Therefore, in the light of all these things, we will look at the various achievements of Rohinton Mistry in his life and academic career.

22.1 Objectives

This Unit aims to fulfill the following objectives for you:

- know about the life of Rohinton Mistry.
- familiarize you with the important works of Rohinton Mistry.
- identify Rohinton Mistry as a distinctive novelist.
- recognise Mistry's contribution to the body of Indian writing in English.
- appreciate the diversity of themes Rohinton Mistry has employed in his works.

22.2 Life and Works of Rohinton Mistry

22.2.1 Rohinton Mistry: Life

We shall now discuss the life of Rohinton Mistry. He was born in Bombay (which is now known as Mumbai) in the year 1952. Rohinton Mistry graduated with a degree in Mathematics from the University of Bombay. In the year 1974, he shifted to Canada, the next year he settled in Toronto. In Toronto, he worked as a bank clerk and later studied English and Philosophy part-time at University of Toronto. This is how he got his second degree from the University of Toronto.

Mistry was awarded first place in the Canadian Hart House Literary Festival in 1983 for his short tale "One Sunday." Intriguingly, he received the same award the following year for "Auspicious Occasion," another short story. In 1985, he won the Canadian Fiction Magazine's Annual Contributors' Award and with the help of a Canada Council grant, he quit his work to pursue his dream of being a full time writer.

He published several short stories in several Canadian magazines. He also published a short story collection entitled *Tales from Firozsha Baag* in Canada in the year 1987. He published novels like *Such a Long Journey* (1991), the story of a bank clerk who is involved in a political fraud committed by top officials. His next novel, *A Fine Balance*, was published in the year 1996. This novel is set during the emergency period of India around 1970. *Family Matters* (2002) narrates the story of a Parsi widower living along with his stepchildren. Both the novels *Such a Long Journey* and *A Fine Balance* got shortlisted for Man Booker Prize for Fiction. The novel *Family Matters* was also nominated for Man Booker Prize for the year 2002.

Mistry took the subject matter of his works from the streets of Bombay, the city which he had left twenty-three years ago and shifted to Canada. *Imaginary Homelands* has led him to be

compared with the likes of Salman Rushdie. The differences between the two writers are more apparent than their similarities. As we know that both *Midnight's Children* and *A Fine Balance* are set in Bombay during the tenure of Indira Gandhi's administration and the state of emergency. It is observed that Rushdie's novel focuses on the Muslim middle class while Mistry's work emphasizes more on the Parsi community and poor people in general. Apart from such differences, both novels have the ability to identify the distinction between the public and private world. Both works have used a lot of similar literary devices and imagery. Both novels have received a good deal of critical appreciation and were commercially successful.

The fictional world of Rohinton Mistry in both the works, *Tales from Firozsha Baag* and *Such a Long Journey*, deals with the lower-middle-class segment of the Parsi community of metropolitan Bombay. The world of Khodadad that this novel creates is actually an extension of Firozsha Baag. Either of these two fictional locations forms a microcosm in itself with all its diverse cast of characters and their normal human struggles and their extraordinary range of eccentricities. The world of Khodadad is suffused with the contemporary breath of Bombay city as we find in *Midnight Children* of Salman Rushdie or Nissim Ezekiel's Poetry.

Check your progress:

1. For which short story did Rohinton Mistry won the prize in the year 1983?

2. When did Rohinton Mistry publish his short story collection entitled *Tales from Firozsha Baag*?

22.2.2 Rohinton Mistry: Works

Dear Students, let us now discuss some of his works: You will study in detail about of the novel *Such a Long Journey* as prescribed in your syllabus in the following units. You will study about the themes, characterization narrative technique of Rohinton Mistry in the subsequent units of this of this block.

22.2.3 *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987):

The first short story collection by Rohinton Mistry marked the beginning of a phenomenal talent. The collection was published as *Swimming Lessons* in the US and contained eleven interrelated stories. It narrates the day-to-day tale of the residents of a broken-down apartment building called Firozsha Baag in Bombay. Mistry, through his love, passion and thumbnail sketches is able to depict the lives of close-fisted Rustomji, the deranged Jaakaylee

and Pesi. Mistry has presented the weak and strong areas of relationship among the Firozsha Baag locals in a unique way. It is worth noting that the underlying realism leaves room for subtle tenderness. It is a straightforward analysis of the Parsi community in the neighbourhood and in the diaspora. It deals with the lives of Parsi people who happen to live lonely life. One can say that the problem that beset Parsees together or individually has been studied from a sociological point of view.

22.2.4 *Such a Long Journey* (1991):

The first novel by Mistry won him many literary prizes. It was adapted into a film with the same name. The novel is set in 1970 during the Indo-Pakistan war. The main character (Gustad Noble) of the novel is not a conventional hero. He is a bank clerk who is vulnerable and his world is haunted by the India-China war in the year 1962. The fate of Gustad and his family is closely knitted with the subcontinent during times of emergency and mayhem. We as readers empathise with his son's refusal to go to college and his daughter's burial. When Gustad collects a parcel and appeal to pilfer money for an old friend, the event's consequences are at once personal and political. Hereafter start exertions of this simple and, as the name suggests, noble-at-heart unheroic hero, who shockingly emerges unharmed and with his vital goodness intact, like the true hero of traditional classics. The plot tells us about (Gustad) who lives in a Parsi compound with his family. He is greatly loved by Tehmul Langaara, a lame man who also resides in the same compound. Dinshwaji and Gustad being close friends meet at regular intervals. Gustad is also disturbed by the absence of his former close friend, Jimmy Bilimoria. He is a part of a national conspiracy with political ramifications. When Gustad visits him, he is arrested and imprisoned; he patiently listens to the dying man's story and confesses that he, too, has been used.

22.2.5 *A Fine Balance* (1995):

This is considered one of the most successful works of Rohinton Mistry. This novel narrates the story of four characters (Maneck, Ishvar, Dina and Omprakash) and the effect of the ill-famed emergency on them. This work is considered a carefully crafted prose: "The morning train jam-packed with passengers slowed to a crawl, and then lurched forward suddenly, as though to resume full speed. The train's brief deception jolted its riders. The bulge of humans hanging out of the doorway distended perilously, like a soap bubble at its limit." This opening paragraph is indicative of *A Fine Balance's* exact style, and it helps the novel move on through one of the most unforgettable images of post-independence India ever written. It is the story of

the hardships of ordinary people. As always happens, the influential people and people having links with higher officials win the day while the poor remain poorer. The novel has a clear message that in the deeply rooted contentment, the Indian psyche is unique whether one appreciates it or not but that is how things work here. This book is clearly an indictment on the functioning of Indian leaders. It has a justified strong reaction to the state of affairs.

The homelessness of Ishvar and Omprakash in the city has made them the victims of central government beautification projects endorsed by the people of the middle class such as Nusswan Sharief and Gupta (The Manager) who have no idea about the miseries of the poor. Initially, the relationship of Dina with the two tailors was that of distrust and tyrannical, she would force them to work for long hours. She does not know that they work for long hours without food.

She even stopped Maneck, a nice Parsi boy, from being friends with them. However, all these boundaries and barriers soon disappear as they get to know each other. On the other hand, Dina Dalal becomes a martyr and a servant to her brother's family and is left to fend for herself. A strong bond develops among the four of them. However, this bond is to end very soon.

22.2.6 *Family Matters* (2002):

This novel is also set in Bombay like the first two novels of Rohinton Mistry. While the first two novels were set in 1970 and are considered historical fiction, this novel, on the other hand, depicts the contemporary Bombay and is set in 1990. At the centre of the book is an elderly man, a Parsi with Parkinson's disease (a disorder of central nerves that affects the movement). Nariman Vakeel is an academician whose illness brings new troubles to the family. The professor compares himself with King Lear at times. The novel transits through the three generations of the same family. In the novel, readers can observe the convergence of the public and the private worlds. The epilogue of the novel leaves the reader wanting more.

Mistry also published a novella *The Screaming*. It is a single storybook of Mistry and perhaps the shortest of all his works. The story is set in a Mumbai based apartment and is narrated by a man who is unhappy at the mess of old age, his isolation from family and the world which does not understand and recognise his problems and concerns. He rails and rants in such a way that is hilarious as well as moving and touches us. This story reminds readers about the novel *Family Matters* by Rohinton Mistry in which Prof. Nariman Vakeel conforms to this description. Therefore, it may be said that this work is steeped in the humanistic colours of Mistry.

Check your progress:

1. What is the name of the protagonist in the novel *Such a Long Journey*?

2. Where is the novel *Family Matters* set?

List of important works and awards of Rohinton Mistry are mentioned below:

Novels:

1. *Such a Long Journey* (1991)
2. *A Fine Balance* (1995)
3. *Family Matters* (2002)

Short stories:

1. *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987), also published as *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories from Firozsha Baag* (1989)
2. *Searching for Stevenson* (1994)
3. *The Scream* (2006)

Awards:

- 1983 – Hart House Literary Contest, "One Sunday"
- 1984 – Hart House Literary Contest, "Auspicious Occasion"
- 1985 – Annual Contributors' Prize, Canadian Fiction Magazine
- 1991 – Booker Prize, shortlist, *Such a Long Journey* 1991 – Governor General's Award, *Such a Long Journey*
- 1991 – Commonwealth Writers Prize, *Such a Long Journey*
- 1991 – W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award, *Such a Long Journey*
- 1991 – Trillium Award, *Such a Long Journey*
- 1995 – Giller Prize, *A Fine Balance*
- 1995 – Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Fiction, *A Fine Balance*
- 1996 – Commonwealth Writers Prize, *A Fine Balance*
- 1996 – Booker Prize, shortlist, *A Fine Balance*
- 2002 – Booker Prize, shortlist, *Family Matters*
- 2002 – James Tait Black Memorial Prize, shortlist *Family Matters*

22.2.7 Theme of Humanism in the works of Rohinton Mistry:

Chambers Dictionary describes 'humanism' as a "system of thought which puts human interest and the mind of man paramount, rejecting the supernatural beliefs in god etc". This movement is also associated with the cultural and literary drive that spread through western Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

A common thread that predominates all Mistry's works is the relationship between individuals and society. Despite the limitations of the artist, Mistry highlights the shortfalls and weaknesses of political and sociological disorder. He lampoons all the evil influences that affect the individual directly. He believes that an individual is the worst hit by these evil influences. This thematic aspect present in his works shows that Mistry has lent a humanistic touch to all the sensitive issues that influence society in general and individuals in particular. It is because of this reason that he is compared to Charles Dickens for his humanistic treatment of the subject.

His works create a vision that encompasses both the Parsis' community-centered living and their broader national work. His books are about the Parsi experience in India. Mistry recounts the Parsi community's and his country's history in the post-independence period. The awareness of apprehensions and ambitions, risks and problems, challenges and prospects, and problems of individual existence, communal, and national issues can be seen in the re-telling of history. Mistry has successfully exploited some post-independence historical problems in this way, attempting to re-think and re-narrate about his society through different narratives woven throughout the novel.

In all of Rohinton Mistry's writings, politics is a major sub-theme. *Such a Long Journey*, in which Mistry addresses the Bangladesh-Pakistan war, brings this obsession closer to modern issues. In *A Fine Balance*, Mistry discusses Indira Gandhi's proclamation of state emergency, which has an impact on the livelihood of the tailors. Finally, he considers the impact of Hindu fundamentalist agitation and post-Babri Masjid violence on the lives of ordinary Indians.

It is true that portions of national history, particularly as they pertain to the plight of the Parsi community in pre- and post-independence India, are inextricably linked to our understanding of the characters in *Tales from Firozshah Baag's* "One Sunday." Mistry brings national issues to the forefront in his novel *Such a Long Journey*, weaving them into the text's main plot. His profound worries regarding the many stages of national politics and the fate of the person are presented in *A Fine Balance*. *Such a Long Journey* is set in the 1970s, amid the backdrop of the Bangladesh-Pakistan war. This novel shows how public events have a direct

impact on ordinary people's lives. We can easily identify multiple themes in the works of Mistry. The themes of nationalism, politics, alienation, oppression, human relationship, fear, temptation etc. are recurrent in his works. The theme of communitarianism is one of the fine reflections about the human dimensions of the emergency in the works of Mistry. Mistry could have taken tailors from urban cities who suffer from such torture but bringing people from villages allowed him to project new vistas of social reality, poverty, prejudice and oppression in the villages.

The political motif of *Family Matters* is voiced through the figures of Yezad and his employer - the idealistic Mr Kapur - and their lives. Mr Kapur dreams of restructuring the city, making it safer for the people. Right from the time of his first presentation, he talks about Municipal elections, ways to deal with chaos and acts as a buffer against the fundamentalist Hindutva plan of Shiv Sena defenders.

Nostalgia is one of the recurrent themes in the works of Rohinton Mistry. This nostalgia is for the past life. It is the manifestation of religious rituals which are considered as a medium to save the disintegration of the family and community. This develops the process of reminiscing childhood. The same sense of reminiscence presented through different characters in the short stories and novels of Mistry is attributed to the changed situation of the Parsi community following the independence. Hence, this political and cultural nostalgia aids to generate a sense of loss regarding the transformed circumstances in domestic as well as public spheres.

Check your progress:

1. Write briefly about the theme of nostalgia in the works of Mistry.

2. What are some of the main themes that predominate the works of Rohinton Mistry?

22.2.8 Let Us Sum Up:

Rohinton Mistry is an incomparable writer, apart from being a prestigious member of the Indian diaspora. He is acknowledged worldwide by literary fraternity. Subtle sensibilities predominate his works. He has received appreciation for his exclusive realism.

His works deal with Indian sensibilities. His realism and transparent style are always appreciated. It must be admitted that thematically, Mistry has shifted from family in works like *Tales from Firoz Shah Bagh* to a larger audience of Parsi community in works like *Such a Long Journey* and to the national tapestry in *A Fine Balance*. Mistry again moves back to the theme of family in *Family Matters* by utilizing the narrative strategies he had used in *A Fine*

Balance to strengthen the plot, the human interest and the logic so that characters are rooted in their present.

22.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon the completion of the Unit, you should be able to:

- familiarise yourself with the life of Rohinton Mistry
- know about the academic credentials of Rohinton Mistry
- identify the variety of themes that are found in the works of Rohinton Mistry
- understand the plot of some important works by Mistry
- appreciate the academic and literary achievements of Rohinton Mistry
- distinguish Rohinton Mistry as a novelist
- appreciate his contribution to the body of Indian writing in English

22.4 Glossary

Niche: A suitable position in life or employment

Distinguish: Treat someone as different

Recognise: Identify

Appreciate: Understand or praise the worth of something or someone

Compassionate: Loving, caring, Sympathetic

Caliber: The power or ability to do something

Compel: Force someone to do a thing

Emphasis: Stress, energetic

Distrust: The feeling that someone cannot be relied upon.

Tyrannical: Exercising power in a cruel or wrong way

Reject: Refuse, neglect

Motif: A recurring image or an important aspect that is frequently repeated in a text

Narrative: A spoken or written account of an event or a story

Supernatural: Pertaining to heavenly creatures

Communal: Shared by a community

Traditional: Conventional, based on old beliefs

Reminiscing: Recalling or evoking

22.5 Sample Questions

22.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When was Rohinton Mistry born?

- (a) 1954 (b) 1952
(c) 1963 (d) 1949

2. In the year 1974 Rohinton Mistry migrated to _____.

- (a) Japan (b) Canada
(c) Norway (d) Denmark

3. Mistry won the first prize in the Canadian Hart House Literary Festival for his short story entitled _____.

- (a) One Sunday (b) Late Evenings
(c) Dust Fumes (d) None of the above

4. In which novel of Mistry is Gustad is one of the main characters?

- (a) *A Fine Balance* (b) *Family Matters*
(c) *Such a long Journey* (d) None

5. Dina and Omprakash are characters of the novel _____.

- (a) *A Fine Balance*
(b) *Family Matters*
(c) *Such a long Journey*
(d) None

6. How many interrelated stories does the collection *Swimming Lessons* contain?

- (a) Eleven (b) Twelve
(c) Ten (d) Fifteen

7. The Short story “The Screams” was published in the year _____.

- (a) 2006 (b) 2008
(c) 2009 (d) 2020

8. The novel *Family Matters* is set in the year _____.

- (a) 1980 (b) 1990

(c) 1970 (d) None

9. Which work of Rohinton Mistry was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in the year 1991?

- (a) *Such a long Journey* (b) *Family Matters*
(c) *A Fine Balance* (d) All of the above

10. Which community is at the center of Rohinton Mistry works?

- (a) Muslims (b) Hindus
(c) Sikhs (d) Parsi

22.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Throw some light on the life of Rohinton Mistry.
2. Discuss the various academic achievements of Rohinton Mistry.
3. Summarise the theme of the novel *Such a long Journey*.
4. Name any five literary works of Rohinton Mistry.
5. Discuss Rohinton Mistry's contribution to the body of Indian writing in English.

22.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss Rohinton Mistry as a novelist.
2. Critically examine the theme of *Tales from Firoz Shah Bagh*.
3. Comment on the variety of themes that Rohinton Mistry has employed in his works.

22.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Luhrmann, T.M., *The Good Parsi: The Fate of a Colonial Elite in a Postcolonial Society*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1996.
2. Mistry, Rohinton. *Family Matters*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002.
3. _____. *Tales from Firozsha Baag*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India Ltd, 1994.
4. _____. *Such a Long Journey*. London: Faber & Faber, 1991.
5. _____. *A Fine Balance*. London: Faber and Faber, 1995.
6. Singh, A.K. *Contemporary Indian Fiction in English*. New Delhi: Creative Books, 1993
<https://www.englitmail.com/2019/08/life-and-works-of-rohinton-mistry.html>

Unit -23: *Such a Long Journey*

Structure

23.0 Introduction

23.1 Objectives

23.2 *Such a Long Journey*

23.2.1 Introduction to the Author

23.2.2 Summary

23.2.3 Plot

23.2.4 Characters

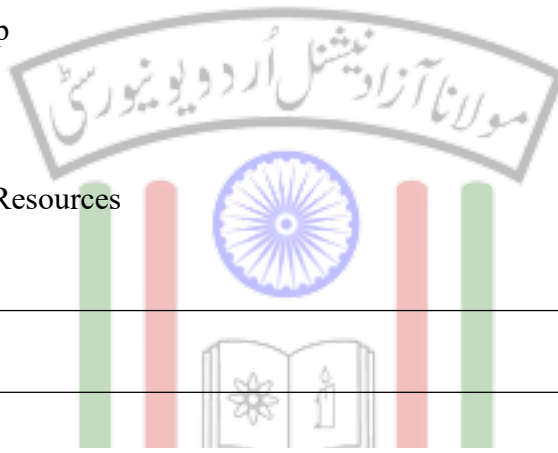
23.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

23.3 Learning Outcomes

23.4 Glossary

23.5 Sample Questions

23.6 Suggested Learning Resources



23.0 Introduction

Indian Writing in English has produced numerous creative Indian geniuses who have quenched the thirst of readers throughout the world. English was introduced as the second language in the nineteenth century to serve the functioning of the British rule in India. It thrived by leaps and bounds post-independence, acquired a rare honour and popularity among Postcolonial writers and made its mark in the realm of English literature worldwide. The distinctive quality of Indian Writing in English lies in the fact, as remarked by Raja Rao in his preface to *Kanthapura*, that, “English is the language of our intellectual makeup...not our emotional make-up.” Therefore, the contemporary Indian English writers impeccably blend the intellect and emotions to give expression to the modern predicaments endured by Indians. Indian Writing in English has enriched the world literature with its social, political and cultural themes and raised Indian thoughts and sensibilities with a distinctive Indian style internationally. This Unit aims to understand the grandeur of one of the contemporary Indian English writings i.e., *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry which is a paragon of Indian sensibility.

23.1 Objectives

The following objectives will be achieved in this Unit:

- introduction to the novel, *Such A Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry.
- introduction to Rohinton Mistry as an important Indian writer in English.
- analysis, summary and explanation of the novel.
- attempt examination based questions without any difficulty.

23.2 *Such a Long Journey*

23.2.1 Introduction to the Author:

Rohinton Mistry is one of the renowned writers in Indian English writing. He was born in 1952 in a Parsi family in Bombay. He moved to Canada in 1975. He studied at the University of Toronto and worked in a bank. He once said that his decision to move to Canada was partially due to the expectations of his peers and the times of his generation. He says:

“After finishing college in Bombay or elsewhere in India, one had to go abroad for higher studies. If possible, one had to find a job after finishing a Masters or a Ph.D. in the States or in England, find a job and settle in the country. That's how success is defined by Indians. So that is why I say that coming to Canada was in some ways decided for me [Quoted in Mehfil, November 1996].”

Later, he became a full-time writer and authored many books, out of which three were shortlisted for the prestigious Booker Prize. His maiden book was an anthology of eleven short stories titled *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1987) that was also published as *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories from Firozsha Baag* (1989). He wrote *Such a Long Journey* (1991) which was his first writing to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize. This was followed by books acclaimed worldwide, *A Fine Balance* (1996), and *Family Matters* (2002) that earned him tremendous critical appreciation. Both these writings were also shortlisted for the Booker Prize. *Searching for Stevenson* (1994) and *The Scream* (2006) are the other works by the author.

Rohinton Mistry's work has been translated in over twenty-five languages in the world. His writings have won him numerous accolades. He bagged the commonwealth writers prize for the best book twice for *Such a Long Journey*. In addition he has been awarded The Los Angeles

Times Award, The Giller Prize, The Governor-General's Award, and the Royal Society Of Literature's Winifred Holtby Award to name a few.

Mistry has gained immense recognition as a historical fiction writer which is culturally significant. In his writings he evoked/ recreated post- independence India during the Emergency. His stories are substantially set in Bombay where he has foregrounded the wider issues of politics and nation through the lives of common people in India. In his novels he explores the relationship of an individual with the community, places (ethnic enclosures to transcultural spaces) and his own identity. Mistry through his writings delves deep into the socio-political condition of India. He is well versed with the undercurrents of Indian society and politics like corruption, political decisions, common man's suffering, discrimination on the basis of caste etc. through which he has carved a niche for himself even though he left India in 1975. Nilufer Bharucha says:

“As an Indian who now lives in and writes from Canada, Rohinton Mistry is a writer of the Indian Diaspora. However Mistry is also a Parsi Zoroastrian and as a person whose ancestors were forced into exile by the Islamic conquest of Iran, he was in Diaspora even in India. Like other Parsi writers, his writing is informed by this experience of double displacement.”

Mistry's novels contain, in abundance, the anxieties felt by any diasporic community. He has made an attempt to safeguard the ethnic identity of Parsi community through his fiction and how their fate is bound with the fate of the social and political happenings in India.

Rohinton Mistry is a diasporic Indian writer who has secured his place among writers like V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, M.G. Vassanji, Bharati Mukherjee who are among the pioneers of diasporic Indian writers in English. His texts imbibe “contradictory features of ethnicity and transculturalism with such ease” that it appeals to the pan-universal nature of human action and its consequence shared by the community. The consequence of human action delineated in all his works is so much, as Ashley Myle writes, “that it serves as a window of ‘human possibility’ with particular reference to forgotten microscopic community” (78-79).

The first book by the author is a collection of short-stories *Tales From Firozsha Baag* published in 1987. The book contains eleven interwoven stories based on the lives of Parsi community residing in an apartment complex in Bombay. These stories are realistic, compassionate yet funny mosaic of everyday life of common people living in the building. Mistry portrayed a wide range of eccentric characters like Jaakaylee, which is a wrong

pronunciation of Jacqueline and the one who narrates her hassels with ghosts, Tar Gully who makes fun of her for seeing ghosts, there is Najami, who owns the refrigerator in Firozsha Baag, there is another Rustomji, the Curmudgeon and his wife Mehroo who belong to the Parsi community, and Kersi is a young boy who moves to Canada and narrates the final story. The collection is filled with humour, fears and betrayal among human beings that makes it a microcosm of residents living in crowded apartments in Bombay.

The first novel by Mistry was published in 1991 titled *Such A Long Journey* that we will study in detail in the next section. Mistry's second novel *A Fine Balance* published in 1995 was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. It is the most critically acclaimed novels of Rohinton Mistry. It is set in the backdrop of social, political and historical development in India between the year 1975 and 1985. It is a story about four unfortunate people, Dina Dalal, Ishvar Darji, Omprakash Darji and Maneck Kohlah – who develop a bond during the time when the government declares a “State of Internal Emergency.” The novel is a critique of the bleak realities of such a political turmoil and their impact on common people as addressed by Mistry through his characters. Nilufer Bharucha commenting on the novel writes, “There is also the motif of ‘balance’- a fine balance. It is this fine balance which the persons concerned learn to master that helps them to lead a relatively peaceful, happy life, if they fail, it tips them over into the abyss” (30). The novel starts with the prologue set in 1975 and ends with an epilogue set in 1984.

Family Matters published in 2002 was another novel to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize. The novel is about the hardships of a Parsi family living in Bombay. The protagonist Nariman Vakeel is a seventy-nine year old Parsi man. He retires as a Professor of English and lives with his step children Coomy and Jal. After his beloved wife's death, he feels isolated and develops Parkinson's disease due to neglect by his step children. His sufferings seem never ending as he breaks his ankle after a fall. His family is unable to take proper care of him as they run low on money. He eventually takes retreat in Zoroastrianism.

In his novels, Mistry expresses his relish for Bombay which is a home for the Parsi community and writes about the daily entanglements in Parsi community with socio-political changes as a backdrop for the setting of his novels. He expresses his fear about the declining condition of the Parsi community through his writings.

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

23.2.2 Summary:

This section will provide a detailed summary of the novel *Such a Long Journey* written by Rohinton Mistry. *Such a Long Journey* was the first novel written by Indian born Canadian writer Rohinton Mistry published in 1991. It was the first novel to win the Governor General's award for fiction in 1991 and Mistry's first novel to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

The preface in the novel opens with three epigraphs from Firdausi's *Shah-Nama*, T.S. Eliot's *Journey of the Magi*, and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*. These epigraphs evoke the experience of multiple displacements or some mystical quest of Parsis' for their roots. The lines from *Shah Nama* recall the Persian imperial past of the Zoroastrian Parsi community to which Mistry belongs. The other two quotations focus on the motif of journeying, which is central to the identitarian consciousness of that diasporic community.

There are twenty two chapters in the novel that tell us about the tribulations in the life of Gustad Noble, the protagonist in the novel who is no conventional hero, rather he is a vulnerable figure. At the outset, at six in the morning, Gustad offers prayers to Ahura Mazda. The morning chores and clatter of pots and pans begin to be felt in the Khodadad Building apartment complex with the arrival of the little milk man who dispenses milk into the vessels of housewives. Miss Kutpitia complains about the milkman for adulterating the milk. The children residing in the building call her a witch due to her idiosyncrasies. Dilnavaz, Gustad's wife, is a homemaker and a superstitious lady who is the only friend of Miss Kutpitia.

Gustad returns from the Crawford Market with a live chicken to celebrate Roshan's birthday and Sohrab's selection at IIT. Gustad hates the Crawford Market place as he finds it a den of thieves and filth. Gustad plans to invite Dinshawji and other friends for the celebration. Gustad and Dinshawji work together in a bank and know each other for 24 years. Dinshawji started working at the bank six years before Gustad. Dinshawji refers to his wife, Alamai, as the "Domestic Vulture". Miss Kutpitia observes an evil omen in a lizard's wriggling tail. He suffers from periodic halitosis which gets worsened by stress and Gustad asks him to see the miraculous Madhiwalla Bonesetter whose prescription Dinshawji discontinues after spraining a jaw muscle.

Due to Sohrab's misconduct the dinner party gets spoiled and Dinshawji leaves the party. Sohrab tells that he is not willing to join the IIT. Gustad is furious to know this and decides to teach Sohrab a lesson. Dilnavaz interferes between father and son upon which she is repeatedly hit by Gustad with a belt. Gustad yells at Miss Kutpitia as she asks them to stop making noise and let her sleep. Gustad wants his son Sohrab to apologize or else he will consider him dead to

him. Bilimoria leaves a letter for Gustad. Major Jimmy Bilimoria is an old friend who has disappeared for many years. Gustad loves Jimmy immensely like a brother and feels betrayed by him. Gustad reads a hidden letter from Jimmy, who works for RAW, asking him for a favour. Gustad agrees to help Jimmy as he is a trusted friend and he had once helped him recover from a broken hip.

Dilnavaz is extremely worried about the tense situation between Sohrab and Gustad. This also disturbs Miss Kutpitia as Sohrab resembles his nephew Farad whom she lost 35 years ago in a bus accident at the age of 15. Since then she has locked herself in the apartment without anyone knowing about her details. Dilnavaz approaches Miss Kutpitia to resolve the trouble between Sohrab and Gustad. Miss Kutpitia offers a magical recipe to do away with the spell of black magic cast on the family that Dilnavaz practices throughout the novel. Roshan wins a doll in the school raffle and a disabled man named Tehmul falls in love with the doll because of its light skin and blue eyes.

Dilnavaz is worried that the lime spell by Miss Kutpitia did not work on Sohrab, so Miss Kutpitia makes certain alterations so that it works. Ghulam Mohammed, Jimmy's associate, gives Gustad a package containing one million rupees. Gustad feels betrayed and trapped by Bilimoria as he is asked to launder money in a fake bank account for an old friend. Gustad decides to seek Dinshawji's help and they decide to deposit money in stacks. Gustad takes away one bundle of bills and decides that if he deposits ten thousand rupees a day it will take 100 days to deposit the whole amount that will not be suspicious. He understands that the police has no say over RAW. The ramifications of such a demand connect the fate of Gustad family with the political turmoil happening in the country.

Gustad is disturbed and perplexed because of the conditions around him. He feels that he has been betrayed by his son, he is not getting any response from Bilimoria, his daughter's continuous illness, and the stench, because of constant urination, from the wall that is built to separate their building from the rest of the tall buildings. He asks a police officer Sherlock Bamji to use his authority to stop people from urinating to which Bamji laughs and instead asks Gustad about the money he is hiding. Gustad laughs it off as some kind of nonsense by Tehmul and decides to warn Tehmul about his secret. Mrs. Pastakia congratulates him on winning a lottery as she assumes.

Khodadad building does not seem a happy place as one finds a lot of opposition from Hindu majority towards Parsi religious practices. Ghulam Mohammed arranges Gustad's

communication with Bilimoria. Sohrab does not like being treated as a child which further accelerates problems between the father and the son. The arrival of monsoon creates trouble for the East Pakistani refugees. The situation in the Indian subcontinent becomes grave as there is a possibility of open war between India and Pakistan. Due to overtly sexual overtones by Dinshawji in addressing Laurie, Gustad fears if he might get fired which will pose a threat to his depositing scheme. Gustad, on one occasion, convinces the sidewalk artist to cover the black wall with holy pictures of all gods worshipped in India. It works for him and even the mosquitoes disappear from there.

In chapter 13 of the novel, Dinshawji shows Gustad the news of Jimmy Bilimoria's arrest. It reports that Jimmy carried out a fraud impersonating the Prime Minister and got 60 million rupees released to aid the guerrillas in East Pakistan. The editorials in the newspaper question the power of Mrs. Indira Gandhi for doing such things. Gustad and Dinshawji are stupefied to know about the incident. Dinshawji is sick and his tumor is visible beneath his shirt. The debates about hospitals benefiting because of dying people is not a good sign. Gustad visits the health centre so that he gets a medicine that can cure his daughter.

Gustad and Dinshawji meet Ghulam in a whorehouse to know about things happening in Bombay and about Bilimoria's arrest. Ghulam informs them about the false confession made by Bilimoria to save his friends and that he is being tortured. Dinshawji withdraws the money five days ahead of schedule. He becomes severely ill and is hospitalised. The painted wall becomes the place of sectarian division. Tehmul's sexual frustrations rise as the story progresses and he is still obsessed with Roshan's doll.

Gustad undergoes spiritual crisis as he does not find peace anywhere. After meeting his old friend Malcolm he visits the Christian shrine where Mary is said to heal people of all religions. Gustad feels helpless as he cannot find any logical solution to situations around him.

Gustad feels ashamed at leaving his friend Dinshawji at the hospital. Dinshawji dies. Gustad returns to Parsi religious practices as he finds no miracle occurred following Catholic rituals. After attending Dinshawji's Parsi funeral rituals, he goes to Delhi on a crowded train.

Gustad meets his friend Bilimoria in a prison hospital in Delhi and learns about Bilimoria's arrest and the truth behind the money. He learns about the ongoing corruption in Mrs. Gandhi's government. He learns about the downfall of Bilimoria for helping his friend, who thinks they (war heroes) deserve a piece of the proverbial pie. In Bombay, Dilnavaz along with

Mrs Kutpitia cures Roshan with the spell and now they cast one more spell to bring Sohrab back. The Prime Minister announces that the country is now at war with Pakistan.

Gustad returns to Bombay and is extremely joyful to see the holy images painted on the walls are finished. He believes that since the war has begun more devotees will come here for the offerings. Miss Kutpitia's apartment catches fire and it burns old artifacts which liberates her of the old memories, transforming her into a more happy being. Due to war, the government asks for strict blackout measures. Gustad discovers the truth about Roshan's doll. He learns that Tehmul stole the doll to satisfy his sexual desires. He prays for restoration of Tehmul's mental condition. Bilimoria dies in the prison. Gustad is the only one mourning his death. And there is a tense situation due to war.

The working class people prepare to carry out public marches for their problems. Upon reaching the painted wall they pray for success. They get to know that the municipality has ordered to demolish the sacred site, which leads to a skirmish, fatally wounding the childish Tehmul on the street. His last words make it clear that his mind is cleared of all the confusion. The sidewalk artist realises the temporariness of things. Tehmul dies a woeful death. One can find that Gustad is a changed person after such a long journey and he removes the blackout paper for light to enter.

23.2.3 Plot:

Such a Long Journey examines the life of the Parsi community living in Bombay in early 1970s. The novel tells us about the day-to-day life of people residing in Khodadad building. The building is full of eccentric and intriguing characters portrayed by Mistry. The protagonist, Gustad Noble is one of the residents in the building. He lives with his wife and children. He works in a bank. Gustad wants his son Sohrab to join the IIT and make a good career that he could not possibly accomplish but Sohrab has no will to join. This leads to a clash between both of them. Gustad's daughter Roshan is severely ill throughout the novel. His wife, Dilnavaz, is a home maker who is superstitious and practices black magic as advised by Mrs Kutpitia. Gustad is seen swirling in the ocean of a crisis when he receives a hidden letter from a war hero friend named Major Jimmy Bilimoria, who disappears after the party thrown by Gustad on Roshan's birthday and Sohrab's selection at the prestigious IIT.

In the letter Bilimoria asks him to follow instructions and meet Ghulam. He receives a large amount of money, one million rupees, that he has to deposit in a fake bank account. Gustad takes the help of his colleague Dinshawji. Though, due to some reason they have to withdraw it

which indicates Gustad's dealing with the guerrillas. Dinshawji's death brings out the deeper emotional crisis Gustad is going through as he contemplates over death and miseries in life.

Gustad visits Jimmy Bilimoria in a prison hospital in Delhi to know the truth behind the money laundering. After his return he is informed by the shadowy lieutenant about Bilimoria's death. The novel ends with many things falling in place for Gustad as his daughter Roshan becomes healthy once again. A major protest is carried out against the municipality by people in the neighbourhood demanding basic services in the buildings. They take a pause near the wall painted with gods of all the religions of India that the municipality has ordered to demolish to widen the road. The protest turns violent which leads to the tragic death of Tehmul, who is obsessed with Roshan's doll throughout the novel. Gustad also finds peace as he prays over the dead body. Sohrab and Gustad come to good terms with each other, the sacred wall is demolished and so are the harsh realities of the past.

23.2.4 Characters:

In *Such a Long Journey*, Mistry has portrayed a world with great inequalities through his 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 to community and nation.

4. **Gustad Noble:** Gustad Noble is the protagonist in the novel. He is a tall man in his fifties having broad physique, grey hair and thick black moustache. Gustad comes from a Parsi community who practices his religious ritual daily early in the morning. He lives in the Khodadad building with his wife Dilnavaz and three children. He works at a bank as a clerk with a salary just enough to meet their needs. He is caring towards Dinshawji when the latter is in the hospital and Tehmul who is a disabled man residing in the building. Gustad has some bitter experiences of the past including himself and the family. He is proud of his lineage but the sufferings they had gone through make him sad. He wants his son Sohrab to join the IIT and make a successful career that he has not been able to do in his life. He is admired in the society and people seek his advice in various matters. He is good at hiding important matters as is evident when he carries out money laundering for his friend Bilimoria with utmost secrecy. He is greatly moved by the death of his friends and he reflects upon the futility of life, which ultimately leads to change in Gustad's behaviour towards his son and he embraces his son at last.

5. **Dilnavaz Noble:** She is the wife of Gustad Noble. She is a home maker who carries out all the household chores herself without getting any help from her husband or sons. She is a superstitious lady, mocked by her husband for having such beliefs. She seeks Miss Kutpitia's help to resolve the worsening situation in her family.
6. **Miss Kutpitia:** She is an elderly neighbour in her 70s, who is loud and complains at the milkman for adulterating the milk. She mostly stays inside her apartment without many people knowing about her details. Due to her idiosyncrasies children call her a witch. Dilnavaz approaches Miss Kutpitia, to resolve the growing tension between Sohrab and Gustad, as the latter has an interest in magic and spells. She declines going to Gustad's party after an evil omen of a wriggling lizard's tail. She locks herself in the apartment after Farad's death for 35 years. It is only after a fire breaks out in her apartment that consumes all her memories, she became a free and a happy spirit again.
7. **Major Bilimoria:** He is a close friend of Gustad Noble. He disappears without saying anything and keeps a hidden letter for Gustad that defines the course of events in the novel. Bilimoria is a war hero in India's freedom struggle in 1948 and wars that followed where he saves the life of his comrade Ghulam Mohammed. He requests Gustad to launder money in a false bank account. He is arrested by the government and dies in the prison hospital.
8. **Dinshawji:** He is Gustad's friend and a coworker at the bank. He suffers from halitosis that worsens with stress. He refers to his wife as "Domestic Vulture." He calls himself Indian Tennyson and likes reciting poems to himself. He makes sexual innuendoes towards Laurie Coutino at the office and passes lewd comments. He is Gustad's accomplice in laudering money into a secret bank account. Dinshawji dies in the hospital alone and his funeral is attended by many people before he is consigned to the Tower of Silence according to Parsi funeral rites.
9. **Ghulam Mohammed:** He works as a RAW undercover agent and poses himself to be a taxi driver. He is an assistant to Bilimoria who saved his life in a war in 1948, after which he becomes his devotee. He delivers Bilimoria's package to Gustad. He asks Gustad to visit Bilimoria in Delhi prison hospital to know about their friend's arrest and money laundering. He finally admits his connection with anti-social activities.
10. **Tehmul-Lungraa:** He is a disabled childish resident of Khodadad building. He is nearly thirty years of age and speaks so rapidly that no one can comprehend him. Gustad is among the few people who can understand his speech. He scratches himself in the public. He

collects rats for the municipality from the building but the residents stop providing him rats as they learn that he tortures them if they are alive. Tehmul becomes obsessed with Roshan's doll and uses it to satisfy his sexual desires as he is refused for services at the House of Cages. Gustad discovers his dark side in the end. Tehmul dies a horrible death in a street fight and as he dies he is freed from his speech impairment. Gustad weeps after Tehmul's death and becomes a changed person.

23.2.5 Let Us Sum Up:

Such a Long Journey establishes Mistry as an important diaspora writer. The novel is a significant text in Indian writing in English as it brings to surface the harsh realities of common people living in post-independence India. It is difficult to pigeon hole such a piece of writing that represents the difficulties faced by the Parsi community in quintessential Bombay. Through the gloomy story of Gustad and other characters, Mistry confronts history, politics and presents the hardships faced by the common people. In the words of Pramod K. Nayar, "It serves the primary purpose of literary writing – which is not *only* about being politically correct, 'socially aware', or ideologically vituperative – and that is to tell a good story for people to read."

23.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you are expected to get acquainted with Indian writing in English. You should have learned about the contribution of Rohinton Mistry to Indian writing in English with a special focus on his novel *Such a Long Journey* which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. You must have a good idea about the novel through the summary and characters discussed in detail. You must have also learned about the structures of inequality that exist in the society as represented in Mistry's work.

23.4 Glossary

Quenched: To satisfy thirst with a drink or to cool desires by obtaining that thing

Impeccably: Without any flaw

Realm: A particular field of interest

Predicaments: An unpleasant situation

Grandeur:	Magnificent
Paragon:	A good example, an epitome
Evoked:	To bring out a particular feeling, memory or emotion
Foregrounded:	To make something important
Transcultural:	Involving more than one or two cultures
Delves:	Search deep into something
Niche:	An ideal position
Epigraphs:	An inscription on a something or a small quotation at the start of a book
Eccentric:	Unconventional
Entanglements:	Complicated situations
Ahura Mazda:	A supreme god in Zoroastrianism
Idiosyncrasies:	A peculiar behaviour of a person
Halitosis:	Bad breath due to growth of bacteria in the mouth
Ramifications:	Outcome of an action
Guerrillas:	Underground fighters
Wriggling:	Twist and turn in a quick manner

23.5 Sample Questions

23.5.1 Objective Questions:

- Which one of the novels is not written by Rohinton Mistry?
 - A Fine Balance*
 - The Shadow Lines*
 - Family Matters*
 - Such A Long Journey*
- Who is the protagonist in the novel *Such A Long Journey*?
 - Sohrab Noble
 - Gustad Noble
 - Roshan Noble
 - Darius Noble
- Such A Long Journey* was published in the year _____.
 - 1985

- (b) 1992
- (c) 1993
- (d) 1991

4. Which city is at the backdrop of the novel *Such A Long Journey*?

- (a) Madras
- (b) Goa
- (c) Bombay
- (d) Ferozshah Baag

5. Which of the three novels by Rohinton Mistry were shortlisted for Booker Prize?

- (a) *A Fine Balance*
- (b) *Such A Long Journey*
- (c) *Family Matters*
- (d) All of the above

6. Which one of the epigraphs is part of the preface to the novel *Such A Long Journey*?

- (a) Firdausi's *Shah Nama*
- (b) T.S. Eliot's *Journey of the Magi*
- (c) Tagore's *Geetanjali*
- (d) All of the above

7. Who was selected for admission at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology in the novel *Such A Long Journey*?

- (a) Sohrab
- (b) Gustad
- (c) Darius
- (d) Roshan

8. Which character from the novel *Such A Long Journey* was missing from Khodad building for many years?

- (a) Dilnavaz
- (b) Gustad
- (c) Major Billimoria
- (d) Michael Saldhana

9. What was Lame Tehmul's job in the building?

- (a) Cleaning drains

- (b) Rat-catching
- (c) gardening
- (d) blowing whistles

10. Who sends the mysterious letter to Gustad?

- (a) Madhiwalla Bonesetter
- (b) Dilnavaz
- (c) Major Billimoria
- (d) Dinashawji

23.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Give a detailed character sketch of the character Gustad.
2. Why was there a tension between Gustad and his son Sohrab?
3. Why did Miss Kutpitia lock herself in the apartment?
4. What is the importance of the painted wall in the text?
5. Why was Gustad anxious after receiving the letter?

23.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Comment on the title of the novel “Such A Long Journey” by Rohinton Mistry.
2. How is the novel *Such a Long Journey* a microcosm of the Parsi community residing in Bombay?
3. How is the novel *Such a Long Journey* a political and personal novel?

23.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Bharucha, Nilufer E. *Writers of the Indian Diaspora Rohinton Mistry Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. Rawat Publications, 2003.
2. Bharucha, Nilufer. “Articulating Silences: Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*” *Critical Practice*, Vol. V., No.1. Prestige books, 1998.
3. Chakravorty, Sujata. *Critical Insights Into The Novels of Rohinton Mistry*. Discovery Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 2014.
4. Dodiya, Jaydipsinh K. *The Novels of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*. Sarup and Sons, 2004.

Unit -24: *Such a Long Journey*: Themes, Characters and Narrative Style

Structure

24.0 Introduction

24.1 Objectives

24.2 *Such a Long Journey*: Themes, Characters and Narrative Style

24.2.1 Diaspora Literature in Indian English Writing

24.2.2 Rohinton Mistry as a Diaspora Writer

24.2.3 Themes

24.2.4 Structure

24.2.5 Narration

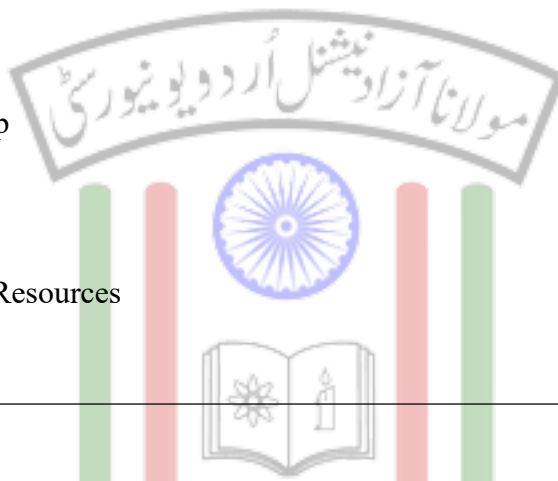
24.2.6 Let Us Sum Up

24.3 Learning Outcomes

24.4 Glossary

24.5 Sample Questions

24.6 Suggested Learning Resources



24.0 Introduction

Diaspora writers have contributed immensely to Indian Writing in English. They have dealt with multitudinous themes and subject to bring across the socio-political and psychological perils that exist in Indian society. In the previous chapter, you learned about Rohinton Mistry as an important Indian writer in English. Mistry gained his reputation as a writer after the publication of *Such a Long Journey* that was critically acclaimed all over the world. He portrayed a realistic picture of the Parsi community in post-independent India that he experienced during his stay in Bombay. In this Unit, you will learn about various themes intertwined within the plot that makes it an absorbing text for the readers.

24.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce Diaspora Literature in Indian English Writing

- introduce Rohinton Mistry as a diaspora writer
- understand the complexities, issues and themes in the novel, *Such a Long Journey*
- help you attempt examination based questions without any difficulty

24.2 *Such a Long Journey*: Themes, Characters and Narrative Style

24.2.1 Diaspora Literature in Indian English Writing:

The term ‘diaspora’ has its root in the Greek word *diaspeirō*, meaning “a scattering of seeds.” In English it refers to the movement of any group of people from their place of birth to any other geographical location. These groups share a common ethnic identity, were either forced to leave or left their motherland on their own will to settle in far off lands. In the contemporary times, the word diaspora is often used for people who identify themselves with their ‘homelands’ but live outside.

The word ‘diaspora’ was first mentioned as a result of exile in the Bible in Deuteronomy 28:25 "thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth." The first diaspora community in the world is said to be the Jewish community who were exiled by the Babylonians from Israel in 607 BC. The forced dislocation of Africans by Europeans from their homelands as slaves contributed to the formation of African diaspora in various European colonies. During 1950s, people migrated voluntarily to settle in foreign countries and became diaspora communities there. Today, the Indian diaspora is the largest diaspora community followed by Mexican and Chinese communities. The Indian diaspora can be broadly classified according to their movement during the colonial period and the postcolonial period. The first is set in the colonial period when Indians were transported as indentured labourers to the European West Indian colonies. The second phase of diasporic community can be contextualized when Indians went to supplement the Britain’s war-depleted work force. In the third phase it refers to the movement of students from India to the universities in the West, mainly in the USA, for education and employment. Lastly, there is the petroleum diaspora, “petrodollars”, where Indians went to the oil-producing gulf countries. The diaspora seeking employment in these regions included skilled, semi-skilled labourers and professionals. The diaspora that started in the previous century is now nearly a hundred and fifty years old. The Indian diaspora have adapted to the new environment and experienced both identification with and alienation from their old and new homelands.

The diaspora enjoy ethnic identity as they remain a close knit community through the practice of their culture, religion, literature and language. The displacement, alienation and identification experienced by these people gives diasporic writings their peculiar qualities of loss and nostalgia. These writers present a fragmented view of their old and new homelands as they are uprooted from their old homelands and not really planted in the new ones. Thus, the writings produced by diasporic people came to be known as Diaspora/ Diasporic Literature.

The earlier generation of diasporic Indian writers included men like V.S. Naipaul, the Nobel Laureate, who shared a stormy relationship with the land of his ancestors. The more recent among the Indian writers in diaspora are Salman Rushdie, M.G. Vassanji, Bharati Mukherjee and Rohinton Mistry among many others. They too alternately lauded and reviled their ancestral homeland. This marks not only the ambivalent relationship these writers have with the motherland but also the feelings of acceptance and rejection manifested towards them by India herself. This is not surprising as prodigal sons or daughters are as frequently begrudged for their betrayal of the parental home- for having left it – as they are loved for occasionally returning to it or displaying a continuing attachment to it in spite of the thousands of kilometres that stretch between the new home and the old.

24.2.2 Rohinton Mistry as a Diaspora Writer:

Rohinton Mistry is an Indo-Canadian writer. Among the diasporic Indian writers, Rohinton Mistry had to struggle with not just one displacement but multiple displacements. A Parsi Zoroastrian, Mistry immigrated to Canada from Bombay, but in racial terms this was not his first diasporic experience. His people had first become diasporic when they left Iran around the time of the Islamic conquest of the Persian Empire and arriving with their sacred fires had sought refuge in India - a refuge that had seen the highs and lows of the Islamic incursions into Gujarat, the subsequent acceptance during the reign of the eclectic Akbar, the coming out of agricultural spaces into those of commerce and industry during the British colonisation of India, the moving back with the feeling of unease into ethnic enclosures as a minority community during the blood-bath of the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent. According to T.M. Luhrmann, the Parsis were influential players during the British Raj. They viewed the issue of independence with mixed feelings since many of them identified with Western culture. There was regret for the passing of an old way of life (during the Raj) and they linked their changed social fortunes to the departure of the British (14).

Rohinton Mistry became a notable figure in the contemporary times with the publication of his first novel, *Such a Long Journey*. Through his writings he explored various social, political and cultural changes during post-independence India in the early sixties and seventies. As a Parsi writer, he presents the difficulties faced by the community at various levels in politics, as a minority, in human relationships, suffering homelessness etc. He is an important diaspora writer who has touched upon the core issues in India i.e., matters of discrimination, construction of religion and racial boundaries, hatred, greed, aversion, love, and the value of family ties.

Jasbir Jain writes that:

Rohinton Mistry's work raises a whole lot of other questions specifically related to the 'homeland' and political memory. Neither nostalgia nor memory in itself can account for this rootedness and preoccupation with the homeland and the environment boundaries of the city of birth (qtd in Dhodiya 42).

Mistry has meticulously written his texts by portraying the feelings and insecurities of Parsi community living in the postcolonial spaces.

24.2.3 Themes:

Such A Long Journey contains a wide range of themes that makes it an engrossing text. The novel offers a quintessential picture of life of people in post-independence Bombay. Let us now discuss some major themes in the novel through which you will understand the location of Mistry's work in Parsi history, Indian Postcoloniality and diasporic reality. Such a discussion allows the reader to explore the nuances of this fiction that make it an enriching experience for the readers and move further into the direction of defining diasporic studies anew.

Politics

Such a Long Journey is set against the backdrop of turbulent times in post-independence India during the nineteen sixties and seventies when India was at war with Pakistan. In the novel, international, national and local political events are shown to have direct repercussions on the life of the ordinary citizens. Mistry has portrayed the realistic picture of conditions and political history of the Indian society especially the life of the Parsi community living in Bombay before and after independence. The series of events suggest that the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is corrupt and incompetent to handle the national and international affairs. The protagonist, Gustad, gets caught up in the vicious cycle of corrupt bureaucracy that almost jolts him from inside. Much of the novel is preoccupied with series of events where Gustad is asked to launder the money for his friend Billimoria to fund the guerrillas in Bangladesh. However, in the end it is

revealed that frustrated war heroes were trying to get their share of the pie which backfired. Mani Meitei notes that:

“[T]hough Mistry is highly imbued with an original writer’s imagination in the development of a flawless story in *Such a Long Journey*, his awareness of the contemporary social and political situation of India, particularly the period of the 1971 Indo-Pak war, is extremely exciting. As a realist, he wields the weapon of satire, which makes him a ruthless artist, a harsh political satirist and a devout critic of war(9).”

Due to political uprisings in Bombay, Gustad feels, “No future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense. It was going to be like the black people in America—twice as good as the white man to get half as much.” (*SLJ* 7) The political conflicts hit the minority hard as they feel insecure and the writer compares it to the rotten tissue that must be removed. Dr. Paymaster says:

“Our beloved country is a patient with disease at an advanced stage. Dressing the wound or sprinkling rose-water over it to hide the smell of decaying tissue is useless. Fine words and promises will not cure the patient. The decaying part must be removed. You see, the municipal corruption is merely the bad smell, which will disappear as soon as the decaying government at the Centre is removed (*SLJ* 313).”

The above quote describes the political condition of India at the national and the local level. The government seems to be the root cause of all the troubles and problems which occur in India. At the local level, one can find that the Municipal officials order the extension of a road by breaking a wall, which is opposed by the residents. Thus, the never ending politics affect the common people in all spheres and continue to exploit them.

Religion

Religion in *Such A Long Journey* is intricately woven by Mistry through consistent and sincere daily Parsi rituals practiced by the protagonist, Gustad. The community's parochialism is brought out in the funerals that are described in the novel. Mistry deals with the ongoing divided opinion of the Parsis whether or not to update some of their millennia-old practices. The widening schism is partly due to modern repulsion at something as unpalatable as allowing vultures to consume their dead and the exclusion of non-believers from communal gathering especially as mourners.

Due to the rise of Shiv Sena, a major political party, in Bombay, the radical Hindus demand control over secular Indian society. The Shiv Sena party was despised by the Parsi community as they are referred to as “Parsi crow-eaters” by them. This leads to increase in violence against the minorities including beating, robbing, intimidating them with threats and not providing them any community support. Parsis fear they might become “second-class citizens” in the future. Gustad says, “No future for minorities, with all these fascist Shiv Sena politics and Marathi language nonsense. It was going to be like the black people in America-twice as good as the white man to get half as much” (*SLJ* 7). The protestors are seen urinating regularly on the Khodadad building wall. The protagonist requests the sidewalk artist who is a student of comparative religions to paint the wall with the notable deities from all the religions followed in India. The rich iconography on the wall redeems religion from the schismatic role it plays in the life of human beings. Gustad tries to restore the unity among all the communities but his efforts go in vain and he is deeply hurt when the building collapses. Nilufer Bharucha says that “the wall both includes and excludes. It is protective as well as reductive. It protects the Parsee community from the ingress of the engulfing Indian world. However, it also makes this world isolationist” (123).

Mistry portrays the agony of marginalized minority community during the reign of Indira Gandhi in India. The Parsi community’s sense of displacement is perfectly portrayed by Mistry, “Tell me what happens to my life, Rubbed out, just like that? Tell me” (*SLJ* 74). The whole Parsi community which lives in the Khodadad building suffers. Gustad undergoes a spiritual crisis due to unexpected situations in his life, whether it is the disappearance of his friend Billimoria, his daughter’s illness, Sohrab’s refusal to join IIT, or the deaths of Dinshawji, Billimoria and Tehmul. Mistry writes describing Gustad’s state of mind, “it was becoming too much to bear, Roshan’s sickness, Jimmy’s treachery, Dinshawji stupidity, Sohrab’s betrayal, nothing but worry and sorrow and disappointment piling up around him, walling him in, and threatening to crush him. He moved his massaging hand from the forehead to his nape and closed his eyes” (*SLJ* 177). Gustad takes refuge in Christianity to get away from the vicissitudes of life but restores his faith in Zoroastrianism at last.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is a recurrent theme in all of Mistry’s fictions. In the novel *Such A Long Journey*, nostalgia is reflected through the members of the Parsi community who long for a past way of life, for a home that no longer exists. The characters try to preserve the past through the

idealization of religious rituals that help family and community to experience the lived experiences of the past as one. “*Gustad has kept many family heirlooms from his childhood. In moments of stress, he is pulled into reveries of bittersweet nostalgia that reinforce his adherence to tradition*” (SLJ 61). Communities maintain an identity of their own through religious practices related to birth and death. Due to socio-political changes nostalgia for the privileges they enjoyed before Independence grows among the Parsi community as they feel intimidated by Shiv Sena’s control over Bombay. The characters in the novel experience nostalgia in personal and public spheres.

Animals

The presence of animals is prominent throughout *Such a Long Journey*. The sparrows are heard chirping around the building as Gustad rises in the morning for prayers. The birds and animals in the novel are used as signals for undertaking risky activities by the protagonist. Gustad’s son entertains and educates himself with tropical fish, songbirds, and butterflies. The division among the communities is shown by the consumption of cattle by the minorities and worshipping of cattle by Hindus. Miss Kutpitia uses lizard as an ominous symbol that foretells the unfortunate future events to follow. She uses mouse and spider to perform magical rituals to help Dilnavaz to fix her family problems. The most prominent symbol used by the writer in the novel is vulture. Vultures are sacred to the rituals of the Parsi community as they strip the flesh from the deceased Parsis in the Tower of Silence. It is through the symbol of a vulture that Mistry questions the age old traditions of the Parsi community.

Journey

Another significant theme of this text is of ‘journeying’, which is predominant in most diasporic writing. The three epigraphs set the tone of journey in the novel from glorious Iranian past and its downfall through Firdausi’s Iranian epic *Shah Nama*. The journey undertaken by Parsis from Iran to India after its Islamic conquest is represented through T.S. Eliot’s *Journey of the Magi*. The final epigraph from *Gitanjali* by Tagore sums up the way Parsis have adapted themselves to the changing places and conditions. Mistry portrays a similar journey of the protagonist of the novel who is a Parsi and who prays daily to the supreme God Ahura Mazda. He undergoes a similar journey of tribulations like the members of his community in the past. He feels uprooted due to such situations that take a toll on him personally, physically and spiritually. At the end, he restores his faith in Zoroastrianism and accepts the changing situations around him.

24.2.4 Structure:

The novel *Such A Long Journey* consists of twenty two chapters that are untitled and not divided into sections. Mistry seamlessly blends the sub-plots with the main plot that makes the novel intriguing. The main plot focuses on events in the life of Gustad Noble and the sub-plot is woven around Kutpitia-Dilnavaz episodes to make things work in Dilnavaz's family. The novel moves in a chronological order to unfold the events that follow in the life of Gustad. The backdrop of post-independence is revealed after a brief introduction to Gustad's life and his deep rooted sensibilities in the Parsi culture. The history of Parsi community and their longing for the lost past pulsates time and again with the main plot that revolves around money laundering by Gustad. The linear structure of the novel opens into events that change the course of Gustad's life that was formally concentrated to doing his job at the bank and being a devotee of Ahura Mazda. The events that build the linear structure of the novel follow a sequence, one event leads to another and yet interrelated. Each event in the novel is followed by a graver event than the previous one till the end of the novel where Gustad takes a leap of hope with the changed situations. The cards of the main plot unfold with Sohrab refusing to enrol himself at the IIT, followed by Billimoria's unannounced disappearance and a letter for Gustad, Roshan's illness, money laundering for Billimoria and the final jolt came with the death of Billimoria, Dinshawji and Tehmul.

The sequential development of plot is assisted by the sub-plot based on the development of events by Miss Kutpitia and Mrs. Dilnavaz in the novel *Such A Long Journey*. Interestingly, both the female characters have their own superstitious ways of looking at the events happening around. M.Mani Metei writes:

“The novel, while representing this larger rhythm with universal significance, tries to bring in other smaller rhythms within its fold. One notices alongside the main plot there runs a sub-plot to effect the return of Sohrab and cure the illness of Roshan through magico-religious rites performed by Mrs. Dilnavaz following the advice of Miss Kutpitia. Miss Kutpitia is a person who “wanted to offer help and advice on matters unexplainable by the laws of nature. She claimed to know about curses and spells: both to cast and remove: about magic, black and white; about omens and auguries; about dreams and their interpretation. Most important of all ...was the ability to understand the hidden meaning of mundane events and

chance occurrences; and her fanciful, fantastical imagination could be entertaining at times” (4).

Dilnavaz becomes so unnerved when her husband and Sohrab carry on fighting, abusing each other very frequently, as her son loses interest in IIT, till at last he leaves her house in violent protest against his father’s anger and threat unleashed against him. Equally disturbing is the illness of her daughter, Roshan, that goes on worsening day by day (24).

Another critic Uma Parmaeshwaran opines that the sub-plots of *Such A Long Journey* enhance the effect of the main plot as these are better constructed. These sub-plots have varying shades of affairs that add to the main plot and making the story interesting and gripping. The conflict between the father and the son that runs in the background which also initiates the actions of the main plot is resolved when the sub-plots interweave into each other before the climax.

24.2.5 Narration:

Rohinton Mistry makes use of a delightful narrative technique wherein he weaves facts into his fiction which comes naturally to him as a realistic writer. Mistry uses the third person narratives to unfurl the events. There are constant flashbacks to Gustad’s childhood which largely defines his choice of actions in the novel. The main story in *Such A Long Journey* is supported by several other narratives like Peerbhoy Panwalla, Malcom Saldhana, Nagarwala episode etc. The use of devices such as irony, humour, pun, intertextuality, and metaphors makes the narrative effective. The language used by Mistry in the novel is a unique Parsi gentleman language with typical Parsi idioms and obscene words which adds to linguistic hybridity in English language.

The effect of the historical event of Indo-Pak war is discussed through characters from different sections of the society. Mistry has artistically managed to shift the narratives from scenes inside the building to the outside, from bank to market, from a brothel to a Christian shrine without readers having any difficulty in following the storyline that makes it a compelling book to read.

24.2.6 Let Us Sum Up:

Such a Long Journey as a diasporic text is an enriching experiencing for the learners. Diaspora literature addresses various themes like homelessness, alienation, nostalgia, memory etc. which are predominant in the text. Mistry is doubly displaced which is reflected in his work. Mistry portrays a realistic picture of quintessential Bombay during the tumultuous years of war,

post-independence India through his novel. The major themes woven in the text are typical of the diasporic literature. The narrative style and structure of the novel entail countless journeys of the characters that are interwoven threads of socio-political life symbolising the mature vision of the writer.

24.3 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Unit, you are expected to get acquainted with diaspora literature in English. You should have learned about the contribution of diaspora writers in Indian Writing in English with a special focus on Rohinton Mistry's writings as he is the only Indian male writer to be shortlisted thrice for his three novels. By now you must have got a good hold on the novel *Such a Long Journey* discussed in detail after reading about various themes, structure and plot of the novel.

24.4 Glossary

Peril: Danger or risk

Ethnic: Related to a particular cultural group

Indentured: Bonded

Trajectory: A track in a projectile motion

Manifested: To show or appear

Begrudged: To feel bitter about something

Prodigal: To use resources freely in a wasteful manner

Eclectic: To derive taste and style from wide range of sources

Quintessential: A classic model of something

Nuances: A subtle difference in meaning

Jolted: Shake something roughly to make them change

Parochialism: A narrow outlook focussed on a smaller area/locality

Schism: Division caused by difference in opinion

Unpalatable: Not in good taste

Heirlooms: A valuable thing that belongs to a family for several generations

- Reveries:** To be lost in one's pleasant thoughts
Ominous: Inauspicious, something bad
Unfurl: To open something, spread out
Tumultuous: Turbulent, ear-shattering loud noise
Entail: Require
-

24.5 Sample Questions

24.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What is the name of the tower where Parsi community leave the dead bodies?
 - (a) Tower of death
 - (b) Tower of happiness
 - (c) Tower of Silence
 - (d) Tower of last rites
2. Who was a co-worker with Gustad?
 - (a) Malcolm
 - (b) Dinshawji
 - (c) Major Jimmy
 - (d) Gustad Mohammad
3. Who among the following was obsessed with Roshan's doll?
 - (a) Tehmul
 - (b) Mr. Rabadi
 - (c) Peerbhoy Paanwalla
 - (d) Malcolm
4. Who was being pursued by Dinshawji?
 - (a) Dilnavaz
 - (b) Laurie
 - (c) Nusli
 - (d) Mrs Pastakia
5. Who was helping Dilnavaz to resolve her family matter with spells?
 - (a) Ghulam Mohammad
 - (b) Laurie Coutino

- (c) Female psychologist
(d) Miss Kutpitia
6. Miss Kutpitia locked herself in the apartment because _____.
- (a) She is a private person
(b) She was sad after Farad's death
(c) She is physically disabled
(d) She is not allowed to voice herself
7. Who was saved by Major Jimmy Billimoria in a war?
- (a) Gustad
(b) Ghulam Mohammad
(c) Dilshawji
(d) Tehmul
8. Why was Gustad throwing a party?
- (a) To celebrate new year's eve
(b) To celebrate Roshan's birthday and Sohrab's selection at IIT
(c) To celebrate Sohrab's selection at IIT
(d) To have a reunion
9. Who was suffering from cancer in the novel?
- (a) Dilnavaz
(b) Gustad
(c) Dinshawji
(d) Major Billimoria
10. What was painted by the sidewalk artist on the wall?
- (a) Parsi God
(b) A forest
(c) Images of all Gods worshipped in India
(d) A beautiful garden depicting the residents of Khodadad

24.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is the importance of 'Tower of Silence' for Parsi community in India?
2. What is the significance of painting the wall in the novel?
3. Why did Gustad feel betrayed by his friend Major Jimmy Billimoria?
4. Justify Dilnavaz's and Kutpitia's spell on Tehmul with respect to their superstitious believes.

5. How is the oppression against the minorities reflected in the novel at national and local level?

24.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the major themes in the novel *Such a Long Journey*.
2. Discuss the impact of socio-political condition on the lives of common people in the novel.
3. Discuss *Such a Long Journey* as a satire the on corruption prevalent in post-independent India.

24.6 Suggested Learning Resources

1. Bharucha, Nilufer E. *Writers of the Indian Diaspora Rohinton Mistry Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. Rawat Publications, 2003.
2. ---“Articulating Silences: Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*.” *CriticalPractice*, Vol. V., No.1. Prestige books, 1998.
3. --- *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. Rawat Publications, 2003.
4. Chakravorty, Sujata. *Critical Insights Into The Novels of Rohinton Mistry*. Discovery Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, 2014.



Maulana Azad National Urdu University

BA IV Semester Examination, June 2021

BAEN401CCT - Literary Cross Currents

Time: 3 Hours

Maximum Marks: 70

Note: This question paper consists of two parts: Part-A and Part-B. Number of words to answer each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.

Part-A: contains **10** questions of which students are supposed to answer **08** questions. Answer each question in approximately 100 words. Each question carries 05 marks. **(8x5= 40 marks)**

Part-B: contains **05** questions of which students are supposed to answer **03** questions. Answer each question in approximately 250 words. Each question carries 10 marks. **(3x10= 30 marks)**

Part – A

1. With reference to context explain the following lines –
Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive.
2. What are the chief characteristics of Renaissance poetry?
3. Write a note on the theme of *From Decolonizing the Mind* by NgugiwaThiong'o
4. Attempt a short note on the development of short story writing in India.
5. How is 'silence' related to the central theme of the play *Silence the Court is in Session*?
6. Present the central theme of *The Portrait in the Rock* by Pablo Neruda.
7. "And that one talent which is death to hide"
What does Milton refer to by 'Talent' in the above given line?
8. Write a short note on the life and works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez.
9. Attempt a short character sketch of Gustad Noble.
10. How is autumn personified by John Keats in the poem. "*The Autumn*"?

Part – B

11. Discuss the features of Victorian poetry with special reference to the poet prescribed in your course.
12. Write a detailed note on the plot construction of *Such a Long Journey* by Rohinton Mistry.
13. Attempt a critical appreciation of Sylvia Plath's *The Moon and the Yew Tree*
14. Analyze the character of Miss Leena Benre as the protagonist of the play '*Silence the Court is in Session*'.
15. State the features which make the "Modern Poetry" different from "Victorian Poetry".

Notes



Notes



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