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M.A. PART - I
PAPER - I
INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE
(FROM 1820 ONWARD)

(Under Distance Education Council Grant)

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M.A. PART- I

PAPER- I

PAPER I : INDIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH (1820S ONWARDS)

Background Themes and Issues

- a. **The Beginnings and Nationalism:** The beginning of English Studies in India; Macaulay's Minute; Anglicist- Orientalist Debate; Impact on early Poetry and the novel; from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Toru Dutt, Derozio to Aurobindo and Sajorini Naidu; Early Indian Drama in English; Early literary criticism; Tagore's essays on aesthetics and literary criticism.
- b. **The rise of Nationalism and the partitioning of India:** Gandhi and Nehru's vision of India; Critiques of Gandhi and other Indian nationalists by thinkers such as Nirad Chaudhari, M. N. Roy, Savarkar and B. R. Ambedkar; impact of Western ideologies; Two- Nation Theory and the partition on India; Impact of these political and intellectual movements on Indian writing in English.
- c. **Post-Independence India:** Impact on literature of Language Policies; the role of English; Nehruvian idealism and loss of Nehruvian Dream; Poer politics; Emergency Period; Rise of Fundamentalisms; Criminalisation of politics and society; Rise of Dalit Power; Gender Reforms; Globalisation and Liberalisation of the Indian Economy and society; Neo-Colonialism
- d. **Contemporary Literary Scenario:** Debates on concepts of 'Indianness' – Prescriptive descriptive; nativism versus cosmopolitanism; multiculturalism in diasporic Indian English writing; gender issues and their impact on Indian literature in English; Attempts to modify / Indinise standard British English; Use of history; myth, magical realism, epic, minimalism, folk and Scherezadic traditions and their impact on the novel, poetry and drama written in English in India.

Prescribed Texts

Pre-Independence:

Novels and Poetry:

1. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee: Rajmohan's Wife
2. Colonial Poetry: Poems from Early Indian poetry in English, an anthology 1829-1947, edited by Eunice De Souza, Oxford University Press, 2006.

II

3. R. K. Narayan, Swami and Friends.

Post-Independence:

Novels

4. Shashi Deshpande: a Matter of Time
5. Amitav Ghosh: the Calcutta Chromosome

Poetry:

6. Selections of poems written by Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes, Keki Daruwala, Ramanujan, Vikram Seth, Kamala Das, Eunice De Souza, Imtaz Dharker, Gieve Patel, Meena Alexander, Arun Kolatkar

(Reader to be prepared by the University Department of English, Comprise to 5 poems of each of the prescribed poets)

Drama

7. Pratap Sharma : A Touch of Brightness
8. Mahesh Dattani: Dance Like a Man

Secondary Reading:

1. Macaulay's Minute, 1835
2. Behram Malabari, The Indian Eye on English Life, 1885.
3. Cornelia Sorabji, The Sun Babies, 1904.
4. Bapsi Sidhwa, Ice Candy Man, 1988.
5. Muhammad Umar Menon, ed. An Epic Unwritten, The Penguin Book of Partition St.
6. R. K. Narayan, Waiting for the Mahatma, 1955.
7. Nayantara Saghil, Rich Like Us, 1985.
8. Kiran Nagarkar, Cuckold, 1997.
9. Mulk Raj Anand, Unchouchable, 1935.
10. Amitav Ghosh, the Shadow Lines, 1988.
11. Amitav Chaudhary, Afternoon raag.
12. Gieve Patel, Mr. Behram, 1988.
13. Rohinton Mistry : A Fine Balance, 1991.
14. Girish Karnad, Fire and the Rain, 1998.
15. Raja Rao, Kanthapura.
16. Nirad C. Chaudhari's The Autobiography of An Unknown Indian, 1951.
17. Rabindranath Tagore, A Centenary Volume, 1961.
18. V.D. Savarkar, Hindu Rashtra Darshan, 1949.

III

19. B. R. Ambedkar, What Congress and Gandhi have done to the Untouchables
20. M. N. Roy, New Humanism: a Manifesto. 1947.
21. M. K. Gandhi, The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. III, The Basic
22. Dadabhai Naoroji, Speeches, from Political Thinkers of Modern India, Vol.
23. Jawaharlal Nehru, Nehru on Society, Education and Culture, 1965.
24. Shashi Deshpande, That Long Silence.
25. Monica Ali, Brick Lane

(These texts should be drawn upon background teaching/examination and for practical work, any)

Recommended Reading

1. K. R. S. Iyenger, Indian Writing in English, Bombay, 1962.
2. M. K. Naik, A History of Indian English Literature, Sathiya Akademi, Delhi, 1982.
3. M. K. Naik, Aspects of Indian Writing in English, Macmillan, Delhi, 1979.
4. Vasant Shahane and Shivaram Krishnan (eds.), Indian Poetry in English : a Critical assessment, Macmillan, Madras, 1982.
5. Paul C. Varghese, Essays on Indian Writing in English, N. V. Pubs., New Delhi, 1975.
6. William Walsh, Indo-Anglian Literature 1800-1970: A survey, Orient Longman, Madras, 1976.
7. Bruce King, Modern Indian poetry in English, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1987.
8. E. N. Lal, The poetry of Encounter: Dom Moraes, A. K. Ramanujan and Nissim Ezekiel New Delhi, 1983.
9. Viney Kirpal, The New Indian Novel in English, Allied publishers, Delhi, 1990.
10. John Oliver Perry, Absent Authority; Issues in contemporary Indian English criticism Sterling, New Delhi, 1992.
11. Rangrao Bhangle (ed.), The Inside View; Native Responses to Contemporary Indian English Novel, Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, Delhi, 2003.
12. Viney Kripal (ed.), The Postmodern Indian English Novel, Allied publishers, 1996.

IV

13. Nilufer E. Bharucha and Vilas Sarang (eds.), *Indian English Fiction 1980-90: An Assessment*, B. R. Publishers, Delhi. 1994.
14. Jasbir Jain and Amina Amin (eds.) *Margins of Erasure: Purdah in the Subcontinent Novel in English*, Sterling, Delhi, 1995.
15. Nilufer E. Bharucha and Vrinda Nabar (eds.), *Mapping Cultural Spaces: Postcolonial Indian Literature in English*, Essays in Honour of Nissim Ezekiel, Vision Books, Delhi,
16. Malashri Lal, *The Law of the Threshold, Women Writers in Indian English*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1995.
17. Meenakshi Mukherjee, *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1985.
18. G. N. Devy, *After Amnesia: Tradition and Change in Indian Literary Criticism*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1993.
19. Makarand Paranjape (ed), *Nativisms: Essays in Criticism*, Sahitya Akademi, Delhi,
20. Gauri Vishwanathan, *Masks of Conquest: Literary History and British India*, Oxford University Press, 1990.
21. Rajeshwari Sunder Rajan (ed.), *The Lie of the Land: English Literary Studies* Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983.
22. Ashis Nandy, *The intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983.
23. N. Krishnaswamy and Archana S. Burde, *The Politics of Indian's English: Linguistic Colonialism and the Expanding English Empire*, Oxford University Press, Delhi.
24. Vinay Kripal, *The Third World Novel of Expatriation*, Sterling, Delhi, 1989.
25. Ashis Nandy, S. Trivedy, S. Mayaram and A. Yagnik, *Creating a nationality*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995.
26. Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*.
27. Sunil Khinani, *The Idea of India*, New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1997
28. Tabish Khair, *Alienation in contemporary Indian English Novels*, Oxford University Press, India, 2005.
29. Zaheer Sajjad & Amina Azfar, *The Light: A History of the Movement for Literacy in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent*, Oxford University Press, India, 2006 .
30. Bharucha Nilufer E. (ed.), *World Literatures: Contemporary Postcolonial Post-Imperial Literatures*, Prestige, New Delhi, 2007.

Examination Pattern:

Theory Paper of 100 Marks

- Q1. on the Background Themes and Issues with three internal options. Answers to with reference to appropriate texts, other than those prescribed.
- Q2,3,4 on the Prescribed Texts with three internal options each and combination

As per UGC norms each theory paper has been assigned one hour of tutorial and the same is reflected in the time of the Department.



SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND TO PRE-INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Unit Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction of English in Indian Educational System – Macaulay's Minutes
- 1.2 Rise of Nationalism and its impact on Indian English Literature
 - 1.2.1 Orientalism
 - 1.2.2 Anglicist – Orientalist Debate
- 1.3 Two-Nation Theory and Partition of India.
- 1.4 Conclusion
- 1.5 Questions / Exercise

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to acquaint students with socio-political history of the early period of British rule in India and the impact it cast on the Indian life and Literature. This background study will help the students a great deal in their understanding of Indian Literature written in English during those days.

1.1 INTRODUCTION OF ENGLISH IN INDIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM – MACAULAY'S MINUTES

Introduction of English in India has reasons other than literary. India was known for its riches, the natural resources and vast oceans. There are references in famous British writings to India's fabulous wealth, e.g. in the 16th century Christopher Marlowe's Dr. Faustus refers to this when he utters the words.

I'll make them fly to India for gold,
Ransack the ocean for oriental pearl".

It was this intention which led to the adventure of East India Company when they landed on the Indian soil under the royal charter. They had to face their European rivals the French, the Portuguese, the Dutch and outdid them all before they could prepare themselves to face the native rulers. This they found easier because India has always lacked coherence of a nation and was divided in the small states often at odds with each other. Therefore the Britishers followed success continuously till they defeated the last Moghul emperor Shaha Alam in 1765 and established their right and power over Bangal, Bihar and Orissa. A powerful Moghul empire was thus sold to a trading Company and the emperor himself were soon taken under the company's guardianship tutelage. The progress of English language and education fluctuated with the political situation and position of East Indian Company. The battle against the Marathas was over in 1784. Hyder Ali was dead though his son Tipu continued the struggle till he ultimately perished. After Tipu's defeat Lord Hestings, the then in-charge of the affairs in India, breathed a sigh of relief. The company's power was more firmly established in Bengal, Calcutta became the centre of all activities. It was at this time that the issue of introduction of English to Indian Education system came up. The purpose behind it was obvious: consolidation of the British Raj! The influential men began to think in this direction – Charles Grant, William and Lord Macaulay. They were powerful members of the British parliament and were in position to influence the political affairs of the time, both in India and in England. Charles Grant prepared the first formula blue print of language and education for India in 1792. It was called **Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic subjects of Great Britain, Particularly with Respect to Moral and other Means of Improving it**. Grant had made two concrete suggestions

1. English be introduced in India as the medium of instruction in a Western system of Education.
2. English be adopted as a official language; of the government for easy communication between the black and whites, the ruled and the rulers. Grant had also mentioned three objectives of his suggestions.
 - 1) Commercial
 - 2) Political
 - 3) Religious

of the three the first was of much value for the ultimate goal of the East India Company. The last two, however, assumed more importance because they were convenient to consolidate the British Raj.

The original intention with which the Britishers initiated their voyage to India was trade and commerce. Therefore, they wanted it to flourish more than anything else. The political purpose was to bring the natives close to the authority through English education. The teaching of Gospel would ensure that the natives remain loyal to their masters. (It was feared that the education can make the Indians aware of their rights and make them rise in protest). Grant dismissed this fear and asserted that even if this is risky the risk was worth taking. Grant's blue print had created such an impact and his personal confidence was so over-whelming that no British thinker, not even Macaulay, could improve upon it. This blue print covered all the major aspects of Imperial education: religious, cultural, commercial and political. In 1793, it was resolved in the British Parliament that English be gradually introduced to the Indians for their own improvement. It was also resolved that a sufficient number of skilled and suitable persons be sent to India as school teachers and missionaries. Necessary financial arrangement was also made. In 1835 Lord Macaulay took over as a Cultural-in Charge of India. Besides being a powerful politician Macaulay was also a profound scholar and an educationalist. He took immense pride in the British values and was keen on imposing them on the Indian subjects. He asserted in one of his famous speeches that a handful of adventurers from an Island are in a position to rule over a land geographically vast and rich in natural resources but divided by race, castes, languages, manners, morals and religions. This was something the world had never known before. Macaulay exposed to the world an ugly fact of Indian society which compelled the thinkers of the world to think it necessary that English was an effective means to bring about social reforms in India. Macaulay, of course, did not forget the commercial interest of the Empire. A famous utterance by him is always quoted in this regard *To trade with the civilized men is definitely more profitable than to govern savages.*

The British believed that India was going to remain under their rule for ever. J.S. Mill, the famous social philosopher, on being asked whether India should have a representative Government had replied : *Utterly out of question. But she may have the next best thing, the English education and the impartial disposition.*

Permanent political subjugation of the natives was on the top priority in the introduction of English. Charles Traveleyan, Macaulay's brother-in-law had cited a famous example from history of his own country. The Romans had ruled over Britain for several centuries and they have introduced their language and cultural values to the British ethos. As a result, Latin remained a compulsory language in British education almost till the end of 19th century. Similar thing happened in India. English is an inevitable

part of Indian education even after 65 years of independence. At least one purpose of the English education as envisaged by Grant and Macaulay had thus come true. Macaulay was more than clear in matter of efficiency and power of English language. He had a clear perception that English education can convert the stagnant native mind in to dynamic one. It would create an elite class which would help their masters to rule better. He wrote a powerful argument in support of English education in India in which he painted Sanskrit as the darkest and English as the brightest of the languages. His affirmation in this regard is always quoted. *A single shelf of a good European library is worth the whole literature of India and Arabia.*

Sanskrit, he said, raised a breed of scholars who found their scholarship as encumbrance and blemish because it renders them jobless and allows them to starve. At the most Sanskrit makes them permanently psychopant. Of the religious texts, it creates only pundits who are unable to use brains. Of English he said that it is a language of the ruling class spoken by a higher class of natives. A language which brought commerce to the east, the language two great European communities which are rising in the south of Africa and Australia-communities, which are becoming more important every year and are closely connected with the British empire. He further said that if we look at the intrinsic value of European literature we shall see the strongest reason why of all the languages of Europe English is suitable to the Indian subjects. With all these arguments Macaulay presented his proposal to the committee to examine the situation. But half of the members of the committee opposed the plan. He then presented it to the Governor General with the pressure of his casting vote and threatened that he would resign the Chairmanship of the committee if the proposal was not accepted. Lord Bentik gave in to the pressure of Macaulay who was more powerful intellectually than Lord Bentik. The proposal was thus accepted on 7th March 1835.

Thus, the purpose of English language and education in India was clearly politically motivated. Added to this motivation were the commercial benefits. India was supposed to prosper economically, but within the colonial and capitalist framework as a supplier of raw material and a consumer market of the British goods. English thus became the official language of Indian education in 1835. In 1837 it received the government's seal and Lord Hestings issued an ordinance in 1844, that only those will be accepted in government jobs who have received education in English. This made English a language necessary for good and respectable job as envisaged by the British rulers. The expected results were visible within 30 years, Macaulay's stipulated time for imperial dose. It created a separate class of English scholars and the so-called civilized men who always look down upon their fellow

countrymen and whose loyalties would always remain with the imperial values of Britain. Thus Imperial Macaulay's vision had come true.

1.2 RISE OF NATIONALISM AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

English Education in India is said to be chiefly responsible to create a new awakening among the educated youths. This new awakening turned out to be patriotic nationalism. The introduction of English inculcated a sense of human dignity and a national identity among the young minds of the day. If, on the one hand, English has helped to eradicate social evils like *sati* in west Bengal and the revival of widow remarriage in Maharashtra, on the other hand, it also produced a strong sense of nationalism. (The concept of nationalism evolved the glorious tradition of the Hindus centered around great ancient cities. The ancient classics in Sanskrit like Vedas and Upanishadas were called forth and their relevance to the new times was emphasized.

Raja Ram Mohan Ray established an organization called *Brahmno Samaj*. Dayanand Saraswati established *Arya Samaj* and Justice Ranade in Maharashtra established *Prathana Samaj*. All these efforts by the English educated scholars created a feeling of shame and disgust for the political slavery. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who was an erudite scholar wrote his famous book *The Arctic home of the Vedas* and propagated the universality of the Hindu thought and its relevance to the modern times. The fact that a nation like India which has such a glorious tradition and a storehouse of knowledge and wisdom is under the foreign rule has stressed upon the need of new awakening. This was the beginning of new awakening, the rise of nationalism on the Indian horizon. It is somewhat ironical that English had to be the effective means to arouse the feelings of hatred and disgust against those to whom the language belonged. The rise of nationalism with its new awakening made the educated elite think of national freedom. It is interesting to note that the earlier efforts to overthrow the British rule were made by the privileged elite class, mostly the Brahmins, because they had received education through English which enabled to see them the evils of political slavery, probably for the first time in the history of the nation. The formation of the National Congress was mainly due to the efforts of these newly educated youths from different parts of the country. Men like Tilak, Bipin Chandra pal from Bengal, Lala Lajpat Rai from Punjab were learned men who had good fortune to receive education through English. Lala Lajpat Rai during his stay in America, operated the Home Rule League movement which was joined by several Indian youths who had gone to America for higher education. The famous

trio known as Lal-Bal-Pal could arouse nationalistic feelings through their fiery speeches and powerful writings. They were the extremists who could not mind the arms struggle against the Britishers. It is interesting to know, again that such great poets like Aurobindo were among the earlier extremists who had participated in the guerilla warfare against the British. Men like Subhash Chandra Bose who apposed the moderate efforts of Gokhale and Gandhi, was an English educated man whose patriotic nationalism demanded action against the unjust British rule. English education had created Renaissance like atmosphere in India towards the end of 19th Century, wherein several studies of Indian classical texts and propagation of ancient values became evident everywhere. This had created a sense of national pride, particularly among the educated youths, which ultimately led to the evocation of spirit of nationalism.

1.2.1 ORIENTALISM

One of the major impacts the Nationalist Spirit produced was the involvement of the Western thinkers in Indian scholarship. The English translation of the ancient Sanskrit Texts and the Hindu scriptures like *Vedas* and *Upanishads* attracted a number of European thinkers who also sought to explore the philosophical and religious regions of other Asian countries like China, Persia etc. These efforts to know, understand and appreciate the Oriental past and its glory - the religion and philosophy in particular, was known as Orientalism. It was a movement that drew several men and women from Europe towards Indian arts, literature and culture as a whole.

Orientalism brought in many sympathizers and friends to Indian National movement. Macaulay's infamous minutes had declared the ancient Indian language and literature as capable of producing only "medicants", having no capacity to produce pragmatic men who could lead the nation. The Orientalists, on the other hand, supported the cause of reviving classical Indian language and literature. A great debate on the issue followed in the British parliament. This is known as Anglicist - Orientalist Debate.

1.2.2 ANGLICIST – ORIENTALIST DEBATE

Anglicists like Macaulay, J. S. Mill and others insisted that the money earmarked for the preparation of English language and education in India be spent exclusively for that. The Orientalists like Wilson, David Roberts, William Holman Hunt and others suggested that sufficient amount of money also be made available for the revival of ancient Indian languages like Sanskrit and Arabic and the literature therein. The issue was resolved when Governor-General Bentinck, influenced by Macaulay and Charles Grant's policies, dismissed the idea of reviving classical literature and learning in

India as it was “worthless” and worthy of attention “not even of children”. Nevertheless, that debate proved to be of significance to the cause of Nationalist spirit in India.

The rise of nationalism affected the creative minds of the day. Regional languages produced great writers like Bankimchandra Chatterjee in Bengali whose *Anandmath* had inspired a spate of nationalist activities not only in Bengal but all over the nation. Dr. Mohammad Iqbal wrote inspiring poetry in Urdu whose poem “Saaren Jahanse Ascha Hindustan Hamara” is sung with patriotic enthusiasm even today. Subramania Bharati produced remarkable patriotic poetry in Tamil. English in India was yet to produce a literary genius as the language was used mostly for the socio-political arguments. However, English translation of the regional literature by Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote out of a profound sense of patriotism, was available at this time itself. Sarojini Naidu did not write nationalist poetry despite her active involvement in the national movement. Nevertheless, she dug up the ancient past and myths and made them the subjects of her poetry.

Thus, the rise of nationalism towards the end of 19th century and at the beginning of 20th century marks an important era in the history of India’s socio political and cultural events.

1.3 TWO-NATION THEORY AND PARTITION OF INDIA

After a long struggle of about a century, India got freedom in 1947. The freedom was obtained at the heavy cost of partition of the nation. India has a long history of communal harmony and ethnic configuration which goes back to the middle Ages. Therefore, it is difficult to mark a point of time in history when division first appeared in the Indian consciousness. The earlier conflicts among the different ethnic groups were for political dominance. After that, however, people of different communal groups lived happily together. Why, then, the United Nation called Hindustan was suddenly divided into two geographical regions called India and Pakistan?

Two-Nation Theory is often cited as an immediate cause of the partition. The creation of Pakistan is viewed as the fulfillment of the long cherished dream of Indian Muslims. The Muslims, however, blamed it on the Hindu orthodox in the Indian National Congress. Several points of disagreement among the leaders of the two communities laid the foundation of the two-nation theory which advocated that Hindus and Muslims are two incompatible ethnic groups and need to be divided into two different regions. The British

rulers, who always adopted the policy of divide and rule in India, pampered the leaders on this issues and instigated them against each other.

A brief survey of the circumstances that created hostile atmosphere between the two communities is necessary.

The rise of Indian nationalism towards the end of 19th century and at the beginning of 20th century was, in fact, a step towards communal divide. Indian nationalism emerged more or less as the Hindu nationalism: For example, Ganpati the elephant-headed God was the object of small domestic worship in the household of Brahmins in Maharashtra. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, converted this practice into a public festival wherein Hindu myths and tradition were glorified and insisted upon as exclusive honor of the nation. This created a sense of alienation among the Muslims who were already isolated by the riots of 1890s. In Punjab many congressmen were associated with the Arya Samaj which had initiated the movement of the revival of Hinduism barring the religious aspects of Islam and Christianity. Militantly anti-Muslims, the Arya Samaj inculcated visions of Hindu nation among its members. Congressmen like Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya, Raj Gopalachari, were closely associated with Shuddhi Sabha, the cow-protection movement and the Hindu Maha Sabha. Thus, nationalism was equated more or less with Hinduism. Even Gandhi, the greatest advocate of peace and Hindu-Muslim harmony always employed the language of Hindu religiosity. His free use of Hindu myths, symbols, idioms and imagery created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion among the Muslims. The fact that the Muslims were the rulers in India immediately preceding the English, did not go well with the Hindu nationalists. Therefore, they always tries to suppress the Muslims ethos and its propagation. As a result, the Muslims leaders like Jinnah, Sayyad Ahmad Khan and even poet Iqbal who earlier sang the glories of united Hindustan in his poem like "Saare Jahanse Accha" insisted upon the creation of a separate nation for the Muslims. The British rulers did little to prevent the partition. It was announced and implemented in a way that proved to be a disaster for both the communities.

With the announcement of partition people of both the communities began to dread. They realized for the first time that they were strangers in their own homelands. Panic-stricken, they began to move aimlessly. There were no proper arrangements to commute the people to their desired places; there was no security accorded to them. Anti-social elements broke out and were let loose. Properties were looted, women were raped, innocent children butchered. This happened on such a large scale that atrocities in wars were said to be less in number and less severe.

Partition affected the creative writings in India a great deal. While a number of novels, short stories, poems were written in regional languages, in Indian English remarkable novels were written exposing the evils associated with the event. Notable among them are Khuswant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan*, Chaman Nahal's *Azadi*, A.K. Abbas's *Inquilab*, etc. These were the novels written immediately after the partition, later writers like Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's children*), Amitave Ghosh (*Shadow Lines*) Attia Hussain (*Sunlight on a Broken Column*) Bapsi Sidhwa (*The Icecandy man*, *Cracking India*) and others dealt mainly with the memories of the horrors associated with Partition.

The fact that partition continues to appeal creative sensibility even today, some 64 years after the event took place, is indication of its impact on the Indian ethos.

1.4 CONCLUSION

English was introduced in Indian Education System to consolidate the grip on the natives. It, however, served as a boon in disguise as many English educated young men were inspired to free nation from the cultural and political bondage of the colonial masters. It gave rise to nationalist spirit.

India was partitioned after Independence which was a major calamity in the history of modern India. However, the partition offered a source of creativity to many Indian writers several remarkable novels were written on the theme of partition.

2.1 QUESTION / EXERCISE

1. Discuss the view that the introduction of English in Indian Education system proved to be a boon in disguise.
2. Bring out the important features of Indian Nationalism broke out towards the end of 19th and at the beginning of 20th century.
3. Discuss the concept of Orientalism and its relevance to the rise of nationalism spirit during the Indian struggle for independence.
4. Partition was one of the most tragic events in the history of modern India. Discuss
5. What is Two-Nation Theory? How was it responsible for partition of United India after Independence?
6. Bring out the effects of partition on Indian Life and Literature. Relate your answer to important texts that deal with partition as their subject matter.



SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND TO POST INDEPENDENCE INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Unit Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Gandhi: Life mission
- 2.2 Gandhi's Vision of India
Gandhi and His critique
- 2.3 Independence and After: The Nehruvian Era of free India.
- 2.4 Contemporary Literacy scenario
 - 2.4.1 The prevalent socio-cultural Trends
 - 2.4.2 An Literary achievement in Indian English
- 2.5 Conclusion
- 2.6 Questions / Exercise

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are to acquaint the students with contemporary India and its socio-cultural history. This will enable them know various trends and tendencies in Indian society today and their impact on contemporary Indian English Literature

2.1 GANDHI : LIFE AND MISSION

De di Tune azadi bina khadga, bina dhal
Sabarmati ke sant tune kar diya kamal.

This is how Gandhiji – popularly known as Bapu – is revered by the Indian masses. He was perhaps the only person in modern times to lead a nation en-mass, and to achieve the ultimate destination without resorting to the destructive means. He has attained the unattainable – something which looked like a distant dream – with the divine strength he had developed within and with the conviction that was unshakable.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on 2nd October, 1869 in Porbandar, in a region of Gujrat state now known as Saurashtra. The community he was born in, was known for trade and

commerce not for the spiritual achievements of Mahatma Gandhi. He was educated in Rajkot, and received his law degree from London University. His stay in England offered him several opportunities for experiments in vegetarianism, ascetism, and in Western music which he ultimately gave up. At this time Gandhi read *Bhagwadgeeta*, *Bible* and Ruskin's *Unto the Last*. These three texts were to create lifelong impact on the life and mission of Gandhi. The degree in law could not help him much, as he was shy and lacked the courage and boldness to plead a case in the court. He therefore went to South Africa with the hope of earning livelihood. South Africa, at that time, was ruled over by the white Europeans and the native blacks were discriminated against. They were the victim of *apartheid*, the official policy of racial discrimination. Gandhiji, a non-white, non-residential in South Africa, had several unjust and discriminatory experiences, including the one in train when he was thrown out of the first-class compartment even though he had the legitimate ticket. These experiences brought him a new conviction – to fight against injustice and political discrimination wherever they exist in the world. He decided to help the Indians in South Africa to fight for their rights and justice. It was here that Gandhi read Tolstoy, Thoreau's *Walden*, Plato's ideal philosophy, Edward Carpenter, and Mazzini, the Italian dictator who laid his life for the sake of conviction.

Gandhiji returned to India not as a lawyer, but as a well-experienced organizer in the cause of social justice and equality. He traveled the nation, acquainting himself with the miserable plight of the masses. He also became acquainted with leaders like Gokhale, Tilak, and Ranade who had studied the political conditions prevalent in India at that time. It was in 1917 that Gandhiji launched first Satyagraha at Chaparan in Bihar where the peasants were compelled by the landlords to cultivate indigo on 15 percent of their lands and part with the whole crop for rent. Gandhiji skillfully tackled the problem in a non-violent way. The government appointed a committee of which Gandhi was a member himself. On recommendations of the committee, a Bill was passed in favour of the peasant – farmers. Thus, the success of his first Satyagraha was registered.

Gandhiji carried out several other Satyagrahas successfully. He worked for peaceful co-existence of the Hindus and Muslims in India. He founded a periodical called **Young India** which published thoughtful articles on national issues including the British rule. By now, Gandhi's name was on the lips of every thinking Indian. National Congress, struggling for independence, found a great leader in the form of Gandhi, and he became an unequivocal leader of the Congress. With Gandhi as its leader, the Congress party launched various revolutionary programmes. It adopted devices like

non-cooperation, non-violent resistance to the unjust rule, and what resulted was a phenomenal turn out of the masses, including women from all sections of the society. the Congress now put forth its demand of total 'Swaraj', and launched the Quit India movement in 1942.

As the nation was approaching the day of emancipation, the relationship between the Hindus and Muslims in India had started becoming strained. The Muslims League, with Barrister Jinnah as its leader, pressed the demand of a separate nation. The League decided to observe 16 August, 1946 as the Direct Action Day. It witnessed a powerful outbreak of communal riots. Gandhiji was deeply shocked. He felt his dream of 'Swaraj' was dwindling. The worse happened after the nation got independence as it was partitioned. Thousands were killed in the post partition riots, many innocent women and children were lost, a large devastation of lives and property took place. Gandhiji worked ardently for the Hindu-Muslim unity – but he was misunderstood. A Hindu fanatic – Nathuram Godse – killed Gandhi on 30th January 1948. The sad news of Gandhi's assassination was conveyed to the country by Jawaharlal Nehru on All India Radio. Nehru said – "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. Our beloved leader, Bapu, as we call him the father of our nation, is no more". Tributary messages poured in from every corner – one of the messages said – "Gandhi was the spokesman for the conscience of all mankind".

Gandhi holds an important position in the history of India, next only to Buddha. Gandhi struggled throughout his life and sacrificed his life for the sake of his countrymen. The grateful nation called him 'father of nation'. He was above the ordinary human soul – 'mahatma', as he was known to the whole world. Mahatma Gandhi was an enlightened person, well-read in the Western thought and true to the Oriental spirit. An orthodox Hindu, he detested the idea of using religion for political gains. He grasped the Buddhist concept of 'Karuna' – compassion for humanity and formulated his own *ahimsa* – non – violence. It was an unprecedented political device to use against the hostile opponent. Ahimsa does not mean cowardice – it is the inner strength which compels the enemy to give up hostility and adopt peaceful means to sort out differences. This was the unique gift of Mahatma Gandhi to the world. Gandhi's method of non-violent demonstration was adopted by many countries – the most memorable being the one by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Gandhi never claimed that he has an ideology to follow. Rather, he said, he is learning to live by making experiments in life. He would try everything, and learn from its feasibility - thus would emerge a theory-an ideology of his own. He called his

autobiography – **My Experiments with Truth**. Gandhism – as we know it now – is not an easy path to follow. It requires self-sacrifice and willingness to suffer for the sake of others. It requires tolerance and inner strength. Let us hope that humanity and the world today is led by the light of Gandhism.

2.2 GANDHI'S VISION OF INDIA

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi – better known to Indians as Mahatma Gandhi – was one of the great personalities the modern times have produced. Though generally acknowledged as the main spirit behind the massive struggle for independence from the British rule – Gandhi is often misunderstood, misrepresented and assumes the image of a controversial personality because of constant changes in his attitude towards the contemporary Indian reality. He often improved upon his earlier statements and world justify it by stressing upon the need to see the reality – or Truth, as he claimed, was his content search. A man well read in the Indian and the Western classics, would hold up superstitious belief. In the name of his personal conviction as when in March 1934, there was a severe earthquake in Bihar, he had ascribed this great calamity to the Divine wrath provoked by the sin of untouchability. It was Gandhi and his congress who had decided to support the British Government in the World War II, while men like Subhash Chandra Bose were nearly successful in his bold & conrageous attempt to overthrow the British rule with the help of the Japnese. It was Gandhi who had aborted Dr. Ambedkar's successful effort to win Separate Electorates for the untouchables in India, beliving instinctively that the Hindus will realize their mistakes and give up untouchability on their own. It was Gandhi, again an incorrigible optimist, rebuffed by the Viceoy's refusal to see him to discuss the demand for the separate nation by the Muslim League, failed to see Jinhan's personal ambition and discussed that issue with him on several occasions, inviting the accusation from his own disciples that he pampered Jinha's pride. It was Gandhi again, whose role came under bitter criticism by both the Hindus and the Muslims after the bloody riots that broke out immediately after the partition of a united nation into two countries – India and Pakistan.

Several of Gandhi's decisions – and he was in a position to impose his personal decision on the entire nation – have proved to be wrong – The British did not think it necessary to fulfill the promises it had given to the Congress after it emerged victorious with the Allies in the World War II, on the other hand, Churchill – the than Prime Minister of the Great Britain – spent Cripps – the Socialist thinker – to play around with the sentiments of the Indians. To oppose Dr. Ambedkar's demand for the separate Electorate for the untouchable – Gandhi had put his life at slake, by going on the indefinite strike with the hope that the Hindus will give up the

practice of untouchability – but today even after sixty four three years of independence – the plight of the erstwhile untouchables, particularly in the North-West region – is hardly hopeful. Gandhi is often considered as a villain by the militant Hindu organizations, who think that he has done more damage to the nation than good. It is necessary, therefore, to see precisely and evaluate Gandhi's role and contribution to the growth and development of modern India

Gandhi, despite his shortcomings as a politician, was a great man. He did not think that politics is a game of scoundrels; as most of his contemporaries did. He considered politics as any other activity of a man which should be carried out with moral integration and with religious sanctity. And religion for him was a personal 'dharma' necessary for the inner strength of an individual. He made several efforts to find out Truth and called his autobiography. **My Experiments with Truth**. He did not preach or hold any ideology and had warned his disciples against adhering to Gandhism, because he said, he is always adopting different methods for the improvement of his own self and for the liberation of his motherland from the slavery of the foreign rule. It was out this 'constant search' that he had learnt from such various sources as Bhagvadgeeta, Tolstoy and from the American transcendentalist Thoreau. He was a Karmyogi – the man who believed in action without hoping for its benefits. He had learnt from Tolstoy the principle of simple living and high thinking-and from Thoreau – he had adopted the principle of non-co-operation to the unjust government. Gandhi's principle of non-violence-Ahimsa has its origin in the Buddhist and Jain scriptures. Non-violence does not mean cowardice; it is not inaction. On the other hand, it means complete trust in one's own strength and love and sympathy for the wrong doer. Non-violence includes love for the entire humanly. It is well demonstrated by the Greek word agape which means God's love for every living creature, for every living being.

Like Thoreau, Gandhi believed in self-reliance. He wanted every Indian village as a stronghold of self-reliant economy. He believed that such a system would paralyse the ruling authority, whether foreign or native, if it goes against the wishes of the people. Self-reliance is also necessary to remain happy and independent as long as one lives. It is wrong to expect that others should toil for you, obey your order, and you, for yourself, do nothing. The real happiness lies in making other happy not in self-gratification. Although Gandhi's ideas were never static, and were constantly evolving, the underlying base remained the same. The base was Self-help. Individual and communities develop fully and best to the extent they draw their strength from their native sources.

Gandhism, though Gandhi himself refused to believe in any such *ism* needs more patience, more faith and more courage than

his people were prepared for. So, its effectiveness was never fully demonstrated. It had remained, so far, a mere dream.

Gandhi's was born at a time when the British rule had been firmly established in India. The uprising of 1857, variously called the Sepoy Mutiny, The Great Rebellion, or The First War of independence had merely served to consolidate a commercial adventure into an empire. The subjection was not only political. It was so effectively reinforced by intellectual and cultural domination that the new generation of the educated Indians were eager to subject themselves into its "civilizing mission". No subjection is so absolute as that which is willingly accepted. No chains bind so hard as those which are hugged. So complete was the tutelage and so surville the surrender that it seemed the British Empire was divinely ordained, and that it had come to stay for ever. It is against this background that Gandhi's efforts to liberate India and his concern for his follow-countrymen are commonly acknowledged as miraculous. It was Gandhi, who alone was the architect and the engineer of that historic phenomenon called India's struggle for Freedom. It is not for nothing that his grateful countrymen have called him the Father of the Nation. Gandhi's greatness rests on his ardent love for his country and his dynamic leadership in a successful political struggle. That, however, does not explain why the rest of the world should honour his memory or find stimulus in his words. There is no dearth of Fathers of Nations – some of them the world could well have done without – but this dark, frail man in the loin-cloth was much more than the Father of Nation. He not only brough India freedom, but also glory – and in such a way that it became the harbinger of freedom to many countries of South-East Asia and Africa.

When Gandhi died, it was a free Nation that India mourned the loss. The dispossessed had recorded lost heritage and the dumb had found the voice. Those who had shrunk in fear could not held their heads high. The disarmed had forged a weapon against which British bayonet was powerless. It was a weapon unique in the world's armoury. It could won without killing.

2.3 INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER : THE NEHRUIAN ERA OF FREE INDIA

Jawarharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of independent India. There was a famous tradition of sacrifice of the Nehru family for the struggle of independence, Nehru himself, a staunch follower of Gandhi, had actively participated in the struggle, and was one of the honourable members of the Indian National Congress. Nehru's as the first Prime Minister of the free India was on unanimous choice because, he being highly educated

statesman, was, at the same time, an extremely popular leader of the masses.

When Nehru assumed office of the Prime Minister there was an uphill task ahead of him. The nation was still wreathing from the riots unleashed after the partition. India as a nation, lacked coherent socio-political policy, and there was no planning as such as far as the national economy was concerned. The percentage of illiteracy was as high as 92% of the total population. Poverty prevailed everywhere, and the modern science which had transformed the Western society, was yet to touch upon the Indian land. To lead the nation out of this chaos was indeed, an uphill task. India became a sovereign independent state with the national constitution as a guiding principle. The first parliament had adopted the five year plan programme for the economic growth as development, while stress was laid upon the exploration of native sources of wealth such, as coal, energy, agriculture etc. The constitution makers had made provisions for the upliftment of the socially underprivileged communities, with an appeal to the privileged castes to sacrifice for the cause of social justice. Special efforts were made to spread education, by establishing schools in remote villages. Farmers were provided with modern equipments at a lower cost, electricity, better sanitary provisions better living facilities, which the Indian masses had never experienced before, were gradually initiated with the constitution as a sole ruling and principle factor, India, which was scattered in different castes and communities, in different religious faiths-was thus launched as a Nation for the first time.

Since Nehru's contribution to the formation of national policies of a newly free nation was remarkable, it will not be unwarranted to see Nehru as a man and a statesman.

Nehru was educated mostly in England, at home he was trained by tutors who were mainly British. As a young man he had spent years at Harrow, Cambridge and London – This helped him formulate the secular vision for a nation which he was to lead after independence. He has studied the history of India, and wrote scholarly books like *The Discovery of India* highlighting glorious ages in the Indian history. The letters he wrote to his daughter from prison reveal the cultural tastes of a man who loved his nation and its glorious heritage. The letters also reveal the sensitive father, who could spend little time for his family and for the lovely daughter. Nehru's participation in the freedom struggle and his close acquaintance with Gandhi helped him view the Indian society in a realistic manner. That is why, instead of being influenced either by Hindu forces of the time, or by the Marxist Communists – he decided to adopt the socialistic pattern for the Indian society. The socialistic pattern was associated with the secular vision – where

both the Hindu and the Muslim could coexist peacefully. The Nehru-Indira correspondence before the partition reveal Nehru's strong desire to maintain India as a united nation, where the Hindus and the Muslims, inspite of several difference, co-existed peacefully. He was of the view that the religious problems should be settled amicably - and religion, as a personal faith, should not disturb the communal or national harmony. He was more interested in science and believed it as 'a delivering factor' for a society which is pested with superstitions. As a Prime-Minister Nehru envisaged India as an ideal society based on the socialistic pattern where social differences will drop out and a nation bound by the sense of the welfare of all will prevail. Nehru, being imbued with the spirit of idealism also visualized the necessity of establishing a new world order with a new civilization based on rationalism, mutual tolerance, friendliness and cooperation among the nations of the world. With this objectives in mind he had formulated the theory of *Panchsheel* - five principles i) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty ii) non-aggression iii) non-interference in each other's internal affairs iv) equality and mutual benefit v) peaceful co-existence for the regulation of international behavior. These five principles or the Panchsheel are based, more or less on the charters of the United Nations – The Panchsheel was formed out of the anxiety or fear of China's possible attack on the Indian territory, because of China's keen desire to grab Tibet – As feared China flouted and outraged' the five principles and invaded India in 1962, the war in which India was defeated, because it was practically unprepared for war. Nehru was much criticized for his idealism – and his inability to judge the Chinese foul intention.

The war had broken the nation's already weak economy. Stricter measures were compelled to be initiated. It resulted into inflation of the prices of necessary commodities. Nehru and his cabinet saw to its best that the national prosperity is ensured; social justice prevailed and at the same time India as a nation, has an important role to play in the international politics. After the Second World War the world was divided into two groups headed by the United States of America and the USSR (Union of the Soviet Socialist Russia). Nehru had adopted the policy of non-alignment – that is, not be associated with any of the super powers. With the similar-minded leaders Nehru was successful in establishing a Third Front – which, with the disintegration of the Soviet Russia – crumbled down.

Indian society witnessed several changes during 1960s. If India had lost the war of 1962 it won next war – this time with Pakistan in 1965 – something which added to the National pride. 1960s was the decade in which several charges took place in other parts of the world – Blacks were granted civil rights in America, women's movement became a power to reckon with all over the

world, it was during this decade (1969) that the man had landed on the moon. In India – the spread of education had created a new social class, the underprivileged now were in a position to assert themselves. The movement of Dalit Literature sprang up during this decade. The nation was newly formed on the basis of languages spoken – (the linguistic states were formed). Land ceiling Act was passed in the parliament – consequently, excessive lands from feudal landlords were taken away and given to the poor tillers. It was the beginning of the new era. The poor labourers who had toiled ceaselessly for the rich landlords – were now the proud owners of the land – Their children had started going to schools – and a new generation of educated young men and women from the less privileged classes appeared soon after.

Of course, what Nehru and his ruling party had done to the nation, their contribution is undeniable – but there have also been serious lapses. The reservation policy for education to the Backward classes was never fully and honestly implemented. As a result, a heavy backlog remained unfulfilled. As time went on, the Reservation began to be used as a political device to attract the votes by almost all political parties – In a secular social set up all religions are allowed to follow their own practices – This resulted into mutual misunderstanding and distrust among different communities. The Nehru era has one thing to boast of – theirs was a generation which had certain ideals before them and had sacrificed a great deal for the sake of the nation. Nehru's generation could command honour and respect from the masses. Though Nehru was much criticized for his failure to assess the Chinese intention – and his government's working policies – Nevertheless, Nehru and his cabinet did utmost to steer the nation out of the prevailing chaos.

The Nehruvian era is effectively reflected in literature of the time. A famous play by Girish Karmad – *Tughlaq* is often considered as a portrayal of the Nehru era in India, with protagonist having much the same traits of personality as the then Prime Minister of India. Several popular Hindi movies were made – on the war of 1962 – the most famous among them, – *Haqeeqat* by Chetan Anand. The Nehru Government's Three Language Acquisition Theory made English compulsory in schools. Consequently in sixties several Indian writers writing in English published their works. Women, benefited by the new democratic norms and now in a position to gain education, began to assert their identity. The feminist movement in India came of age during 1960s. the movement of Little Magazines in regional languages which had opposed the old conventional literature norms became prominent during these days. The Nehruvian era, in fact, had opened up the floodgates of enlightenment which became visible everywhere in the Indian society.

2.4 CONTEMPORARY LITERARY SCENARIO

After Independence the socio-cultural scenario in India changed thoroughly. While the percentage of literacy increased, the number of English medium schools also went up. English had served as a link-language among the Indian patriots and intellectuals during the freedom struggle. Now, after Independence, it could not have been scraped. English not only remained in India after the colonial masters had left, but also became a compulsory language to be taught in Indian schools and colleges. Consequently, it occupied considerable space in news-papers and magazines. Poems, short stories even documentary presentations were written in English. Though occasional cries of “Angreji Hatao” were heard, they, however, were diminished in due course of time. Recently, English has acquired status of the global language playing a pivotal role in international politics, economic interactions and scientific advancement. This has helped the Indians a great deal to accomplish various roles successfully on the global scenario, as English has become the first language to most of them.

The history of Indian writers writing in English goes back to 19th century, when literary efforts were prompted by a desire to come closer to the ruling masters and to show off one’s knowledge of the West. This attitude changed as the time went by, and today Indian English literature has become not only a genre in itself but also but a well-pursued discipline in all the major universities of the world. Recent Indian English literature consists of poetry, fiction, drama, short story and each one of these forms has obtained remarkable heights. Poets like Nissim Ezekiel, R. K. Ramanujan, K. K. daruwalla, Kamala Das, Jayant Mahapatra, Arun Kolatkar, Adil Jussawala, Gieve Patel; novellists like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Amita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Rohinton Mistry; playwrights like Mahesh Dattani, Pratap Sharma and several others have produced a large gamut of Indian English literature that has been appreciated everywhere in the world. Indian English Novel, in particular, has acclaimed global attention with novalists like Salman Rusdie, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and others winning the Booker Prize, the highest literary award in England.

Indian English literature today has become an important ingredient of New literature in English-a movement from among the ex-colonies of the Empire, which aims at casting off the colonial hangover, and concentrates upon the native myths, history and culture. Though the mediam of literary creativity is the same-English – it ceases to be the language of the Empire, rather it accommodates local hues and connotations. So, there are lots of linguistic and lexical innovations and experimentations. The writers resist the Euro-centric devices of narration and adopt native

narrative techniques. In doing so, Indian English writing, novel in particular, reaches out to the global audience which is eager to come out of the colonial perspectives.

Indian English novel contains almost all the major issues that are discussed on the global social, political and literary platforms. Multiculturalism, Women's Cause, Diaspora Cosmopolitanism etc. have been effectively dealt with by contemporary Indian English writers whose creative efforts are lauded internationally.

A question always asked about Indian English literature is the concept of "Indianness" it upholds. Nativists complain that Indian English literature does not depict native realities – India – its culture, customs, and the ethos in general. But India is full of diversity and to pin down something exclusively as Indian is problematic. Nativism itself is strewn with paradoxes. Besides, Indian English writers today have resorted to the native myths and history. Therefore, the question of "Indianness" becomes irrelevant in contemporary literary scenario.

2.5 CONCLUSION

M. K. Gandhi was a leading force to the struggle for freedom. He, however, was more than a mere politician. Gandhi's concept of Ahinsa, non-cooperation and The Gandhian ideology as a whole cast immense impact on Indian English writing of the time. Nehru's influence on the national scenario was equally remarkable.

2.6 QUESTIONS

1. Evaluate Gandhian ideology and its impact on Indian life and Literature.
2. M. K. Gandhi, the unequivocal leader of the Indian messes, also had ferocious critiques who opposed his plans on several occasions. Discuss with reference to B. R. Ambedkar and Sawarkar as opponents of the Gandhian Ideology.
3. Evaluate Nehru's contribution to the formation of India as a modern nation.
4. Discuss the trends and tendencies in contemporary Indian English Literature.
5. Comment on the concept of "Indianness" and bring out its relevance to contemporary Indian English Literature.
6. Discuss the version narrative strategies adopted by contemporary Indian English novelist.



BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJEE'S RAJMOHAN'S WIFE

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Literary History of the Time
- 3.3 The Age & its Ethos
- 3.4 Bankim C. Chatterjee's Life & Influences
- 3.5 Bankim E. C.'s Literary Career
- 3.6 Introduction & Story Line of **Rajmohan's Wife**
- 3.7 Theme of Marriage
- 3.8 Social Structures in the Novel
- 3.9 Conclusion
- 3.10 Exercise/Questions

3.0 OBJECTIVES

To understand a writer and appreciate his literary creations is very necessary to have a foreknowledge of all that goes into shaping and developing the sensibility, creativity and concerns of the writer. Every writer is necessarily affected by the age in which he lives – social, political, cultural and religious factors. This unit will therefore first deal with such influencing elements which moulded Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's life and literary career. We will then proceed to the novel **Rajmohan's Wife** – its important themes and three major characters, leading then to the realistic social milieu as projected in the novel.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The intellectual movement in Bengal in the first half of 19th century – the Bengal Renaissance gathered impetus due to the rise

and emergence of the new middle class and new elite which emerged in Calcutta and produced new learning and new literature. However nebulous the origin of the novel, the early forays in this genre can be traced to certain worker by promising and important writers of this period. Bankim's works are important because of their pioneering efforts at realistic narratives, accomplished and confident in the Bangla language. All his novels centre around issues like middle class life of the 19th century, moral and social conflicts, the portrayal of women in a patriarchal set up, nobility and goodness confronted with greed and evil.

Rajmohan's Wife was Bankim's first and only novel written in English in 1864. He followed this with 14 novels written in Bangla, all of which were widely read and appreciated, and established him as a great writer in the genre of the novel. **Rajmohan's Wife** remained for a long period inaccessible and almost forgotten. Though not an evolved work or by any means a great literary work, it remains a fascinating and intriguing work for various reasons – linguistic, cultural, feminist issues and as a site for colonial discourse.

The first part of this unit traces the social, religious, literary history of the times and provides insights into Bankim Chandra's evolution as a writer. We will then deal with the novel itself – a detailed textual analysis focusing on the central figures of Matangini, Madhav, Rajmohan and Madhav Ghosh. This unit discusses some important issues and themes in the novel which were at the heart of all his narratives.

3.2 LITERARY HISTORY OF THE TIME

The period of the literary Renaissance in Bengal saw the rise of the great thinkers, writers, reformers and scholars. It was the age of Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1827-73), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-98) and Raja Ram Mohan Ray (1772-1835) social reforms, educationist and founder of the Brahmo Samaj. Raja Ram Mohan Ray was judicious blend of the modern and the ancient. On the one hand he turned to ancient Indian literature, religious texts and philosophy for the spiritual basis of the religious reforms, which created an awareness and, respect for Sanskrit and the intellectual achievements of the past among the educated classes. At the same time he believed that Western science and literature could enthuse intellectual activity in the country.

The intellectual movement was strengthened by the establishment of four important institutions:-

1. The Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784) founded by Sir William Jones. The work of the European Indologists helped to receive interest in ancient Indian literature and philosophy.

2. Fort William College founded in Calcutta in 1800. This became a centre for linguistic and literary studies. Indian and European scholars together brought out textbooks in Bengali and grammatical and lexicographical works.
3. The Hindu College, established in Calcutta in 1817. Henry Vivian Derozio (1809-1931) was a part of this college. The college created the young leaders of the new intellectual movement. Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Debendranath Tagore were both products of this college.
4. Calcutta University, established in 1857. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was one of its first two graduates.

The early writers of prose fictions in Bengali were educated members of prominent families of Calcutta. They were deeply influenced by English learning. Bhudev Mukherji (1825-94) started writing historical fiction in Bengali. His Aitihasilk Upanyasa (1862) contains Angurivinimay which tells the story of Shivaji's love for Aurangzeb's daughter.

Peary Chand Mitra (1814-83) initiated social realism for the first time in the Bengali novel. His novel, **Alaler Gharer Dulal** (1858) is the story of the spoilt child of the distinguished family. It was, published episodically between 1855-57. Though didactic and far from perfect, Mitra created a lively style and unforgettable characters in his novels. Mitra also ran a monthly magazine for women. The popularity of such cheap magazines helped promote fiction, moulded literary tastes and led to the development of more accessible and easy styles of language.

Mitra's novel inspired Kaliprasanna Simha's (1840-76) **Hulon Pyachar Naksha** (1862) containing humorous and satirical sketches of the new such and the hypocrisies of social life in Calcutta, written in a colloquial style.

Both Mitra's and Simha's works were ordered in scenes with very thin continuity but they did convey a lively sense of fun.

3.3 THE AGE AND ITS ETHOS

Calcutta was in this period a centre of government, trade and education and this fact reflects in the depth and extent of social change, the development of Bengali culture and literature. Brand and early educational development changed the taste of the educated Bengali who was widely read and exposed him to European literature. This was the time when the formation of the English educated middle class was nearly complete, its strength and its weakness beginning to be apparent.

As early as 1856, Calcutta was no provincial town but a slowly, blooming metropolis. As Sisir Kumar Das points out: "Unlike the other big cities of India, Calcutta has no lineage with either in Hindu or Muslim past. It was a British made town, its houses built by British architect, its streets designed by British town planners. The people who controlled, its social life belonged to the new class of landlords who flourished room after the permanent settlement of 1793." (10)

Das, Sisir Kumar, 1984. *"The Artist in Chains : The life of Bankimchandra Chatterjee"*. (New Statesman Publishing Company: New Delhi)

The Sipahi Revolt in 1857 marks the beginning of historical consciousness among the Bengali intelligentsia. This was the first time in contemporary memory that a large historical event became palpable to educated Bengalis in all its heat and blaze. Indirectly it excited imagination and aroused an appreciative curiosity about past bravely. In the novels of Bankimchandra, Romeshchandra Dutt (1848-1909) and Haraprasad Shastri (1853-1931), we hear echoes of action – packed heroic deeds across waves of time, which not only affect visions of the past but offer their response to present experience as well. During the post 1857 era the India of nationalism began to take shape rapidly and the word "freedom" started acquiring explosive overtones. In 1841, Saradaprasad Ghosh, a follower a Derozio, Wrote in the **Bengal Harkara**: "The real reason of our abjectness and decline is the absence of political freedom". English education fostered the right kind of liberal and patriotic sentiments.

The Santhal rebellion and the resistance to Indigo planters were taking place at the grass root level but as yet had very little impact on Bengali middle – class consciousness. The Hindu College and Sanskrit College were denied permission to hold meetings of the Gynananveshini Sabha (the society for the search of knowledge) because it was seen to be instigating treason. Past Derozians came together to form the British Indian association.

Abolition of "Sati" legalizing of widow- marriage and other reforms were creating upheavals in a society which itself was new to the Bengali people. Thus the age in which Bankim lived was a period of transition for Indian society – from the medieval to the modern. Many accepted beliefs and values were exposed to questioning. There was an ambivalent attitude seen in those who has benefited from English education and those who had not. While there was an admiration for the running race, there was also contrarily a sense of revolt in these who suffered from discrimination and slavery under a foreign rule.

Saraj Bandopadhyay's paper in Bangla, translated by Sujit Mukherjee entitled "The Novel in Bangla: The First Steps" gives us important insights into the rise of the novel in the nineteenth century. He points that one of the basic conditions for creating a reading public was the gradual advancement of the Bengali "bhadralok" or middle class gentleman through "..... Religious rebellions, social reform, evolution of a new education and above all, through the strong, studies taken by journalism. "The connotations of the term "bhadralok" include. "..... A self- reflective, knowledge-seeking progressive group..... The label for a consciousness that longed for freedom, but was fragmented nevertheless by pressures of colonialism."

To quote Bandopadhyay further : "the people identified with this group centered around Calcutta, and applying to their lives the education received in this city they ushered in a hitherto unknown world view. Some of them had been attracted to Calcutta from villages and small towns, and the city provided a new momentum to their lives. Driven by the dynamics of new inquiries; they forged new modes of creative expression. This is how, compelled by the force of unprecedented experience. The young man from Sagardari [Michale Madhusudan Dutt] formulated a new epic rhythm the young wanderer from Medinipur [Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar], in his impulse of Traveling forward, fashioned a new literary prase in Bangla, the well read youth from Kanthalpara [Bankim Chandra] in his attempts to find solutions to life's puzzles, created the most significant literary form of the century. The novel." (*Early Novels in India ed. Meenakshi Mukherjee: Sahitya academi, 2002*)

3.4 BANKIM'S LIFE & INFLUENCES

Bankim's Chandra Chatterjee (27 June 1838 – 8 April, 1898) wrote, during the period of the Bengal Renaissances and was considered a key literary figure who inspired and motivated many writers all over India. He was a poet, novelist, essayist and journalist and is today more famously known for his inspiring patriotic song Vende Mataram, declared later as the National Song of India. Te name "Vende Mataram" was later adopted by Bipin Chandra Pal for his patriotic journal (Aug. 1906). Lala Lajpatrai too published a journal bearing the same name.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was born in the village Kanthalpara, in the district of Naihati of the 24 pargana district of Bengal in an orthodox Brahmin family. He was the youngest of three brothers. His father, Yadav Chandra Chttopadhyaya was a government official and later becomes the Deputy Collector of Midnapur. His mother, Durgadevi, was a pious and affectionate lady.

Bankim's early education was completed at Midnapur. He was throughout a brilliant student and his teacher marveled at his exceptional intelligence. He later studied for six years at Mohsin College at Hooghly and in 1856 he joined the Presidency College in Calcutta. He was one of the first two graduates to pass out of President College. He was then appointed Deputy Collector by the Lieutenant Governor by Calcutta. In 1869 he obtained a degree in law.

Throughout his student days he always remained an avid reader in Bengali, English and Sanskrit. He read Goldsmith, Addison, the poems of Pope and the Romantics, as well as Shakespeare. Much of his sensibilities as a creative writer were shaped by this serious study of the Sanskrit classics (influence seen in **Rajmohan's Wife** as well as his Bengali novels). The impact of John Stuart Mill and his theory of utilitarianism is clearly evident in his powerful essay. "Bangadesher Krishak" (Vividha Prahandha, Bankim Rachanabali, II)

During his career as a Deputy Magistrate, (from which he retired in 1891, in order to devote himself to writing). There were many incidents that brought him into conflict with his officers, who were mostly Englishmen. Though he worked conscientiously, with integrity and sincerity, he never gave in or caved down before the arrogance and imperialistic attitude of his superior. He never sacrificed justice or self-respect and hence had to face a lot of harassment during service.

As regards his personal life, Bankim was married when he was Eleven and his wife was 5 years old. This was not surprising, considering the fact that his upbringing was largely representative of the provincial Bengali life of his time and class and his family, being traditional still practiced child marriage. However, he lost his first wife when he was 22. The death of his young and beautiful wife made him unhappy. After sometime he married again, this time he chose to marry an older woman, because he looked for a companion and partner and he was not clearly in favour of child marriages. His second wife was Rajlakshmi Debi and they had 3 daughters.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was well acquainted with Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekanand (or Narendranath, as he was known then). An off-repeated favorite anecdote between Sri Ramakrishna and Bankim goes as follows:

While the word "Bankim Chandra" means in Bengali, "the moon on the second day of the bright fortnight, the word "Bankim" also means – "that which is bent ". Sri Ramakrishna once jestingly

asked Bankim “What is it that has bent you?” Bankim wittingly retorted : “The kick of the English man’s shoe”.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s literary career began with writing poetry quite early. Most of these youthful compositions were composed when he worked for Ishwar Gupta’s edited journal *Sambad Prabhakara* in 1853. In 1858, he published a volume of poems named *Latita U. Manas*. However he soon diverted his talents fiction. His first fiction to appear in print was **Rajmohan’s Wife**, written in English. He then went on to write 14 novels in the Bengali language and later ventured into writing on politics, philosophy and religion. He also, worked in the field of journalism and brought out the first issue of the periodical “Bangadarshan” in April 1872. In due course he emerged as one of the foremost writers of Bengali and soon his fame spread outside Bengal, as his novels some to be translated into many Indian languages.

3.5 BANKIM’S LITERARY CAREER

Bankim Chandra’s first published novel “**Rajmohan’s Wife**” did not receive much recognition or success and perhaps his own unease with the use of the English language made him choose Bengali as his medium of expression. It was first serialized in 1864 in short-lived journal. “The Indian Field”, edited by Kishorichand Mitra. It was published as a book only in 1935.

Bankim’s first novel, a romance in Bengali, **Durgeshnandini** also first appeared serially in newspapers and was published in 1865. it features a Rajput hero and a Bengali heroine. In the words of the philosopher Devendranath Tagore, it took “the Bengali heart by storm.”

Kapalakundala (1866) is a famous novel set in Dariapur, in the contain subdivision. The heroine is named after, the mendicant woman in Bhavabhuti’s **Malatimadhava**. Critics surmise that the heroine is modeled partly after Kalidasa’s Shakuntala and partly Shakespeare’s Miranda. In spite of the use of melodrama and dual story, the theme grips the imagination and the plot is skillfully executed. It is a love story set against a gruesome background of tantric rites.

Mrinalini (1869) is a love romance set against a larger historical context. Set at the time of the first Muslim invasion, this novel seems amateurish and confused. From this point in his career we see a change in mission as a writer, with the aim of stimulating the intellect of the Bengali speaking people and bringing about a cultural renaissance of Bengali literature, he started publishing a monthly, literary, magazine, the epoch- making

Bangodarshan. The first issue came out in April 1872 and was almost completely composed of Bankim Chandra's works. During the four years of its circulation, it carried serialized novels, stories, humorous sketches, historical and miscellaneous essays, informative articles, religious discourses, literary criticisms and reviews. **Vishabriksha** (The Poison Tree, 1873) was Bankim's first novel to be serialized in this journal. **Bangodarshan** thus offered a variety of reading material and its articles on modern science stimulated thinking. It awakened interest in the problems of the progress of society and the country, fostered love of the Bengali language in the educated classes and helped to share knowledge through the language. Rabindranath Tagore said that **Bangodarshan** was like the first rains of the month of Ashad (June-July) which invigorates and rejuvenates nature, it immensely popular and not only did it provide scope for publication of a variety of writings but paved the way for later journals. **Bangodarshan** was later revived by Bankim Chandra's elder brother, Sanjeeb Chandra Chatterjee (1834-89), himself, a story-teller, and he edited the magazine during the later years from their ancestral village home at Kamthalpada.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's next major novel was **Chadrashekhar** (1877), set in the 18th century, with two largely unrelated parallel plots. The next novel, **Rajani**, (1877) has an autobiographical plot with a blind girl in the title role. This novel is reminiscent of Wilkie Collins' "A Woman in White" and Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Nydia in "The Last Days of Pompeii".

Krishnakanter Uil (Krishnakanta's will, 1878) contained a complex plot, similar to western novels in the fact that some amount of feeling is aligned to imagination. **Rajsimha** (1881, rewritten and enlarged in 1893) is considered to be truly historical fiction.

Anandamath (The Abbey of Bliss or The Mission House of the Anandas, 1882) is a patriotic tale of the revolt of the sannyasis against the Muslim forces of the East India Company in 1773. The idea for **Anandamath** came from his Brother Sanjiv C. Chatterjee's novel called **Kanthamala** (The Necklace, 1877). One of the chapters of this novel that delineates a model of philanthropic society gave Bankim the idea for **Anandamath**. The characters are depicted as patriots influenced by the message of the **Gutva**. Though considered one of his weaker novels, **Anandamath** is historically significant because it expresses the antagonism and dissatisfaction of the people of the country with British rule and foregrounds the powerful nationalist sentiments which were to soon accelerate. **Anandamath** is well known for its patriotic song **Vande Mataram** which gained popularity during the Swadeshi Movement and later, the national freedom struggle. But Hindu nationalism was

not the only characteristic quality of this great literary giant, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. The novel calls for the rise of Hindu nationalism to uproot the foreign Turko-Afghan Muslim rule of Bengal and is only loosely based on historical facts. In the actual rebellion, Hindu, ascetics and Muslim fakirs, both rebelled against the British East India Company. Anandamath too was serialized in the monthly journal Bangodarshan. It was dedicated to the memory of his dear friend, Dinabandhu Mitra.

While Bankim's novels are very often found lacking in technical skills and structural soundness, his achievements as a pioneer, a path-breaker, far outweigh these imperfections. A super story teller, a master of romance, he brought in imagination, intimacy and informality in his style, breaking the shackles of mere verbosity and monotony. In a sense, he brought in successfully realist narratives in his novels. His role as an ardent nationalist, a votary for Hinduism and his contribution towards the cultural revival in Bengal place him in a unique, unrivalled position.

In the words of Sisir Kumar Das, "when he died in 1894, at the age of 56, he had made Bengali prose a supple instrument of expression, built the structure of the Bengali novel on firm foundations and inspired the growth of the novel in many Indian languages. Whether his influence was totally beneficial or not can be debated, but his role in giving a new direction to Indian literature is not a matter of opinion it is a historical fact." (Das, ix)

3.6 INTRODUCTION & STORY LINE OF THE RAJMOHAN'S WIFE

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's debut novel in English, "**Rajmohan's Wife**", considered the first Anglophone novel, was first serialized in 1864 in the weekly periodical, the long-defunct Indian Field edited by Kishori Chandra Mitra. For a long period of time, the novel was unobtainable and it was felt, even by Mr. Sachish Chandra Chatterjee (his biographer and nephew) that the novel was incomplete. However, by a happy coincidence, Mr. Barjendra Nath Banerjee, while going through the files of the Indian paper the **Hindu Patriot** (1864) found issues of the Indian Field in which he could retrieve the entire novel except the first three chapters. He added therefore to the original text an English rendering of Bankim Chandra's Fragmentary Bengali version of the novel (later completed by Mr. S. C. Chatterjee entitled Vari-Vahini). The novel was published in book form for the first time in 1935.

The novel opens on an old fashioned rural landscape. Matangini, the heroine of the novel, and her companion, Kanakmayee leave the house with pitchers to fetch water from the

river. Matangini is unwilling to accompany her as she has been forbidden by her husband to do so. When a strong gust of wind blows away her veil, she is seen by Madhav and the villainous Mathur. Her, unhappiness and tragic married life is very soon revealed. Trapped in an incompatible marriage to the cruel, possessive and jealous Rajmohan, she is in love with Madhav who is later married to her sister Hemagini. She overhears her husband plotting with the dacoits, an attack on Madhav's house. He offers to hide the loot and find out the will for one-fourth value of the loot in cash. Aghast and shaken at the villainy of the unscrupulous Rajmohan, she risks her life and her husband's wrath and undertakes a night journey to forewarn Madhav about the impending disaster. She is propelled by a desire, not sanctioned by society and braves darkness and danger alone in a stormy night. In many of the early novels of this period, women characters are very often projected as strong, brave, individualistic and transgressive while societal values and norms held up submissiveness and patience as positive virtues.

The robbery plan is thwarted by Madhav and his men (being forewarned) and Matangini returns home to face the wrath and rage of her husband. He is about to kill her when the dacoit Bhiku and Sardar arrive. In the agreements that ensue, Matangini escapes and takes shelter in Mathur Ghosh's house. In a sudden turn of events she disappears when she is on her way home at the request of her husband. Madhav too is kidnapped by dacoits and held captive in Mathur's dungeon. Mathur's elder wife, Jara, suspects that her husband holds some quality secret and observing his restlessness and uneasy behaviour, she secures the keys of the godown. With great presence of mind and courage she free Madhav. Hearing the cries of someone in distress they open the doors to a well-hidden ante-room upstairs and find Mathngini pale and emaciated held captive by Mathur. While his overtures are spurned by Matangini, he keeps her starved so that she would surrender; Jara and Madhav carry away Matangini to an apartment where she slowly recovers her strength. Meanwhile, Bhiku is caught and he confesses to the magistrate. Mathur finally hangs himself. Rajmohan is banished while Matangini returns to her father's house and we are told she dies an early death.

Meenakshi Mukherjee's comment on the final chapter of the novel is note worthy here;

"The convention of closure as found in the Victorian novel, where all the characters are neatly served with their just desserts and the loose ends tied up, is faithfully repeated in novel after, Indian novels, the brief concluding chapter of Rajmohan's Wife begins thus :

“And now, good reader, I have brought my story to a close. Lest, however, you fall to censuring me for leaving your curiosity unsatisfied, I will tell you what happened to the other person who figured in this tale.” (*A concise Hist. of Indian Litt. In English education* Arvind Krishna Mahrotra. Palarave, Macmillan 1988. Pg. 112)

Rajmohan's Wife appeared at a time when romance was the accepted convention in narrative literature in different Indian languages and therefore sets a trend in its realistic representation of the domestic and social spheres of the 19th century rural Bengal. There is a simultaneous existence of a number of disparate influence and narrative convention at work: the Victorian English novel tradition, indigenous Sanskrit Literature and Gethic elements – Depicting middle class domestic life in an East Bengal agrarian feudal set up. Indian novelists in the 19th century were influenced by the realism depicted in Victorian models for art and literature. They faced major challenges in such realistic modes of representation because they were caught in the dilemma of transformation and change while at the same time they remained engaged with the complex concern of their historical moment and cultural memory.

The novel contains vivid descriptions and rich details of cotemporary life, chronicled precisely – the inner world and its spaces and the external world of greed, plotting, avarice, property rights and imperial rule. It skillfully juxtaposes levels of transition and the tensions that underlie them – between a new urban culture informed by an English education and the rural agrarian culture, the struggle of the emergent English educated middle class (bhadralok) to wrest the leadership of society from the hands of the landowners, and changes in the domestic sphere and familial relations when women become a central concern in the contestation between established social norms and values and notions of modernity.

3.7 THEME OF MARRIAGE

The novel basically is about the conventional concept of marriage and its consequences. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee suggests that such are exceptionally failures and do not always succeed. The novel offers a valid point as a threat to marriage as a social institution. In the novel, Matangini reinforces the unhappy lot of women in arranged marriages. In such marriages, man-woman relationship comes to be based upon mere convenience and love is always threatened by collapse. This eventually results into extra-marital relations as mutual distrust.

Madhav's affection towards Matangini, however, cannot be justified on the basis of above mentioned distrust. His wife, Hemangini is a loving and caring woman. Therefore, Madhav has no reason to be attracted to Matangini. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee seems to point out that love needs that love needs no rationalization as saying is:

On the threshold of my heart
I wrote— "No thoroughfare."
Love came laughing by and said—
"I enter everywhere."

Precisely the similar situation prevails in the relationship between Madhav and Matangini.

3.8 SOCIAL STRUCTURES IN THE NOVEL

The novel is about the conventional Hindu orthodox family in 19th century Bengal. The novelist is concerned about the drawbacks that are associated with such social institution like family and marriage and their impact on the individual's fate. In such situation the social institutions are often threatened by the unconventional and nonconformist behavior of the person which results into unhappiness of all concerned. The novel, Rajmohan's Wife delineates this social aspect in a very vivid manner. It moves into social, psychological and ethical levels simultaneously. Thus the novelist weaves the social institutions into an artistic pattern resulting into a readable novel with literary merits.

3.9 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded, then, that Bankimchandra Chattarjee lived and wrote at a time when the nation witnessed intellectual awakening a kind of renaissance - which changed the conventional structure of Indian society. he was a prolific writer who wrote in Bengali as well as in English, though his English writings was obscured and overshadowed by the Bengali output which was enormous.

(Rajmohan's Wife) was the only English novel by Bankim Chandra which was published in a book form in 1935. The novel offers a realistic account of the life in 19th century Bengal. It depicts the bold outfits of Matangini, who, in the course of action, emerges as a woman of substance. Today, the novel is acclaimed for the depiction of a brave woman who is a prototype of a new woman in our time.

3.10 EXERCISE / QUESTIONS

1. Discuss in brief the socio-cultural trends prevalent in the late 19th century Indian society.
2. Comment on Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's contribution to Indian Literature.
3. Write in brief the story and plot structure of Rajmohan's wife.
4. Evaluate the character of Matangini as the heroine of the novel.
5. Bring out the elements of realism in (Rajmohan's Wife).



COLONIAL POETRY

POEMS FROM EARLY INDIAN POETS IN ENGLISH

Unit Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Survey & Analysis of the early Indian Poets
 - 4.2.1 Henry Derozio
 - 4.2.2 Michael Madhusadan Dutt
 - 4.2.3 Toru Dutt
 - 4.2.4 Sarojini Naidu
 - 4.2.5 Rabindranath Tagore
 - 4.2.6 Aurobindo Ghosh
- 4.3 Conclusion
- 4.4 Questions / Exercise

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to acquaint students with the early poets in Indian English. This was the beginning of the era which now has culminated into an age of Indian English literature. Therefore, the study of this period has historical importance as well as significance of an understanding of a new literature.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

One of the aims of introducing English in Indian Educational system was to enslave the natives culturally. Charles Grant, Macaulay and other dignitaries of East India Company had repeatedly declared that one shelf of books in English is worth all the libraries in Asia. Besides, this was the time when the natives were trying to come closer to the ruling masters by studying their language. Efforts were also made to produce literature, not out of authentic creative urge, but simply to show off one's mastery over the newly learnt language and to please the masters, if possible. No wonder then, that most of the writings that is available now is imitative, stale and uninspiring.

Nevertheless, out of these uninspiring writings emerged the works of a few poets whose efforts appear sincere and reveal their poetic sensibility.

4.2 SURVEY & ANALYSIS OF THE EARLY INDIAN POETS

Here is a brief survey and analysis of their works

4.2.1 HENRY DEROZIO

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was an Anglo-India whose ancestors seem to have come from the French origin. He was a teacher of Hindu college in Calcutta who gathered a large number of students from upper caste Indians who were deeply drawn towards the Western Culture. Considering his influence as dangerous Derozio was forced to resign from his post in the college. The Hindu orthodox feared that the rationalism and free-thinking might take away their young wards and lead them to question the decadent Hindu tradition. Nevertheless, Derozio continued to influence the young students even after his removal from the college. He produced remarkable poems in English and inspired other to do so.

Those were the days when the Great Romantics of England were considered as the greatest writers the world has ever produced. The Anglo-Indian poets of these days therefore followed the Romantic tradition and wrote in Romantic diction. Old forms like sonnet, lyric, ballad etc. were taken up right in earnest though what resulted was mere imitation. Derozio, for example, brought out a book of poems entitled *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale* which is a collection of poems modelled on *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Derozio, however, chose Indian themes offering comments on social evils like sati, widow-marriage, etc. Derozio's forte lies in short poems like *The Harp of India*, *In my country / In Thy Day of Glory Past* and other. These poems again, are filled with images and symbols drawn from the European ethos. Despite Derozio's immediate concern for India, there is little that is Indian in these poems, excepts, perhaps, the superficial references to customs and tradition.

Derozio's life and works, however, is more appealing than that of his contemporaries. Though an Anglo-Indian-a member of the community which showed more affinity towards colonial masters and their culture, Derozio remained a liberal throughout his life and concerned himself intellectually to the Indian cause.

4.2.2 MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DUTT

Madhusudan Dutt was a member of Derozio group at Hindu college, Calcutta, but his immediate inspiration was Professor David Richardson whose pedagogy was praised by no less a man than Macaulay himself. Madhusudan was so deeply influenced by the European values that he advised his father to get converted into christianity. So they did. Madhusudan Dutt became Michael Madhusudan Dutt. He wrote mostly in Bengali, his mother tongue, and introduced the Western notions of literature and forms to the native language. His English poems are imitative, therefore inconsequential in terms of literary merit.

Like most of his contemporaries, Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote poems on the legendary heroes of India. *King Porus* is one such poem which is unfortunately unfinished. *Visions of India* is another fragment recalling the glories of the Indian past. *The Captain Ladie* is about the Rajput monarch, Prithviraj Chauhan and his love affair with Sanjogita, the daughter of a Kanauj King. He also attempted a verse drama called *Razia, the Empress of India* in the manner of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* which of course is a failed attempt.

4.2.3 TORU DUTT

Tolulata Dutt belongs to the illustrious Dutt family of Bengal. Her father, Govin Chunder Dutt was a prominent personality in Bengali state of Affairs politically as well as culturally. On an advice of a friend he sent his daughter – the young Toru – to study in France instead of in England because French culture was said to be superior to the British. Toru studied French as well as English, she wrote poems mostly in French and also in English. But her English poems are more noteworthy and relevant to our study as contribution to Anglo-Indian poetry of the late 19th century.

A lone Indian among the white girls of Europe, Toru felt alienated. She confined herself to writing poems recalling the childhood memories. This resulted into an authentic delineation of Indian realities. At a time when the entire Anglo-Indian poetry concerned itself either with myth or history and reproduced those old, often-heard stories in romantic fashion, Toru's evocation of native spirit was certainly more remarkable. That makes her poetry relevant today. That also gives her the credit of being first significant poet in Indian English. This however is for those few scattered pieces which deal with Indian realities. The rest of her work, like that of her contemporaries, is imitative and drenched in 19th century European Romantic spirit. Nevertheless, her poetic sincerity and commitment to the craft is unequivocally superb.

4.2.4 SAROJINI NAIDU

With Sarojini Naidu the poetic scenario in Indian English gets shifted to 20th century. Also with her, poetry written in English by the Indians assumes the coherent form, a genre. Sarojini Naidu was more than a poet. She was one of the most illustrious personalities of her time and contributed to the cultural, political and social advancement of early 20th century India. Sarojini Naidu published three volumes of poetry – *The Golden threshold*, *The Bird of Time* and *The Broken Wing*. The poems included in these volumes are remarkable for their Indian tenor and tone. Her poetry again, another illustration of Romantic Imagination, are intensely personal and passionate. These poems are simple, sweet and appealing though moulded into the Romantic tradition of West.

One thing which the readers of Indian English poetry have to bear in mind constantly is that the poetry and the entire literature produced in English by the Indians at this time was modelled on the works of great masters of English literature. Indian literature, confined mainly to Sanskrit, had no cultural link with an average Indian. Those who could now have an access to English education were drawn naturally to West. No wonder, then that the writers writing in English at this time had to follow the Western cultural norms. This made their work imitative and shallow, besides lacking miserably in what later came to be known as “Indianness” even though the immediate theme of their works was Indian myth and history.

Sarojini Naidu writes on a variety of subjects, most of them drawn from the Indian milieu. Her themes are familiar, even insignificant; they nevertheless, are representative of Indian ethos. Indian dancers, wandering singers, fishermen, palanquin bearers, bangle-sellers, snake-charmers etc. abound in her poetry making it a complete picture of Indian social life. One of the important features of Sarojini Naidu’s poetry is its lyricism – the quality that makes her poem worthy of singing. And they abound in emotional appeal. That is why perhaps Mahatma Gandhi described Sarojini Naidu as “Nightingale of India”.

4.2.5 RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Rabindranath Tagore has enjoyed the reputation and honour of being one of the greatest poets India has produced. His reputation as poet rests mainly on the collection of devotional poems called *Geetanjali* for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913. Since then Tagore has almost been deified in the realm of Indian poetry. He wrote most of his poems in Bengali, his first language and translated them himself into English. Therefore, Tagore today is considered more as an Indian poet than the one

belonging to the Indian English tradition. Nevertheless, few poems that he wrote in English are indicative of his creative genius and larger human understanding.

4.2.6 AUROBINDO GHOSH

Aurobindo Ghosh was a freedom fighter who participated in India's struggle for freedom. He was the one who believed in violent means to fight against colonialism. He however, gave up politics for poetry later in life and settled down in Pondichary where he set up an ashram and devoted himself to spiritual pursuits. He believed in meditation as one of the means to reach out to spirituality which is clubbed with creative writing and pursued it at the same time. He wrote several poems mainly on spiritual themes, but the most significant is the one long narrative poem in the epic form called *Savitri*. The poem recalls the myth from *Mahabharata* where women called Savitri wins over death out of love for and devotion to her husband. Aurobindo's *Savitri* however, is more allegorical than a real character.

4.3 CONCLUSION

Thus, pre-Independence Indian English poetry tends to be Romantic in theme and diction. Though, most of them outmoded, these poets are important historically they denote the beginning of a genre which culminated during post-Independence era.

4.4 QUESTIONS / EXERCISE

1. Discuss the various themes in pre-Independence Indian English poetry.
2. Evaluate the contribution of Toru Dutt, and Sarojini Naidu towards Pre-Independence Indian English poetry.
3. The early efforts in Indian English poetry were imitative, dull and uninspiring. Do you agree with this statement. Elaborate your answer.



R. K. NARAYAN'S SWAMI AND FRIENDS PART I

Unit structure:

- 5.0 Objective
- 5.1 A Brief Biographical sketch: An Introduction
- 5.2 R. K. Narayan as an Indian English Novelist
- 5.3 Socio-cultural Background
- 5.4 Indian English Novel: A Short Historical Survey
- 5.5 Postcolonialism
- 5.6 Postmodernism
- 5.7 Multiculturalism
- 5.8 Diasporic writings
- 5.9 Conclusion
- 5.10 Questions / Exercise

5.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to acquaint students with life and works of R. K. Narayan, who is one of the pioneering novelists in Indian English. The unit also offers socio- cultural back ground of the time and a short historical survey of Indian English novel. This will help the students to understand the novelist and the prescribed text better.

5.1 A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH : AN INTRODUCTION

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan was born in 1906 in Madras where his family was migrated from its original place called Rasipuram in Salem district. Soon after his birth R. K. Narayan's father got a teacher's job in Mysore where the family was shifted. The child Narayan, however, was left to the care of his grandmother in Madras where he spent a considerable time of his childhood. He joined his family in Mysore later and settled down there permanently.

Narayanswami (the full form of Narayan) was bright student neither at school nor in college. He failed his examinations several times. The failure made him shy and introvert. He graduated from Maharaja college, Mysore in 1930 and was compelled to take a job, as his father's income as a school teacher was never sufficient to run the large family. The jobs he undertook, however, did not suit his temperament. Hence he left the job and decided to spend all his time in writing. The idea of professional writer was not well accepted in Indian society of those day. Therefore, his father tried to dissuade him from spending all his time in writing and take up something that would fetch money. He however, had made up his mind to become a writer in Indian English, the language which he had learnt and mastered through education.

R. K. Narayan's first novel append in 1935. it was called *Swami and Friends*. Next novels to follow were *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937) and *The Dark Room* (1938). He did not publish novels till 1945, but three volumes of short stories *Malgudi Days*, *Dodu and Other Stories* and *Cyclone and Other Stories* appeared in between the years. His next novel *The English Teacher* was published in 1945 and since then the published novels at regular intervals. Some of his famous novels are – *The Financial expert* (1952), *Waiting For the Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1960) etc.

R. K. Narayan has received Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960, and Padma Bhushan in 1964. University of Leeds conferred on him the Honorary Degree of D. Litt in 1967. His name has been included in the *Writers and Their Works* series being published by the British Council. He visited U.S.A. on an invitation from Rockefeller Foundation. Many of his stories have been broadcast by the B.B.C. He enjoys a rare distinction of being one of the eminent writers in Indian English today.

R. K. Narayan passed away on May 13, 2001. at the age of 94.

5.2 R. K. NARAYAN AS AN INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELIST

R. K. Narayan is one of the pioneering writers of Indian English Novel – a genre which was initiated before independence by the famous trio – Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan. Each one of these novelists has chosen a separate theme for himself and an independent style. Raja Rao is more interested in metaphysical issues and man's spiritual yearning as is evident in his novels like *The Serpent and the Rope*. Mulk Raj Anand, influenced by Marxist ideology and Gandhism, writes about social issues in novels like *Untouchable*, *Coolie* etc. R. K. Narayan confined his art to a limited scope, and wrote mostly about an imaginary town call Malgudi where almost all his novels are set.

This imaginary province serves as a background to all his major characters. He chose to write about people he knew most: the middle class south Indian high caste Brahmins engaged in life's daily routine and responding to the demands of the situation. He depicts the tension and conflicts, stress and strain, joys and sorrow, ups and down in the lives of these people. His depiction of human relationship forms the core of his arts. In novels like *The Dark Room*, *The Guide* Mr. Sampat etc. The complexity of relationship between the characters makes these books most readable. He depicts human being in relation with each other rather than with supernatural or divine beings. It is this earthly portrayal of humanity that marks his novels most. His characters are ordinary men and women, and there are no great transformations in their personalities. But, responding to the ordinary situations in life, they change accordingly. Savitri in *The Dark Room*, Raju in *The Guide* are some of the examples.

R. K. Narayan began writing at a time when the nation was ruled over by the colonial forces. He chose to write in the colonial language because it came naturally to him. He, however, refused to be carried away by the linguistic complexity of the tongue. Instead, he wrote in simple, Indianized version of English, popularly known during those days as "babu English". This became his strength. His novels were read all over the nation with unsurpassed delight. R. K. Narayan became a household name among the English reading public of India.

5.3 SOCIO – CULTURAL BACKGROUND

An important characteristic of Narayan's fiction is its genial humour. It is free from the satiric spirit of condemnation and moves on the innocent level of human behaviour. This is evident in his early novels like *Swami and Friends* where the incongruities in the situations and the child – like pranks of the protagonist evoke gentle laughter. From this 'gentle' humour of early novels he moves on to serious comedy in novels like *The Guide* where the innocent strategies of Raju, the Guide turn out to be serious lapses later on.

R. K. Narayan published his first novel in 1935. This was the time when the entire nation was plunged into the struggle for freedom. It was the time, again, when several new theories from the west were gaining ground on the Indian soil. The rise of nationalism had swept across the nation. Writers like Mulk Raj Anand showed a remarkable sense of commitment to social theories, Raja Rao contributed to the nationalist spirit, by writing about Indian metaphysics. Several writers in regional languages were influenced by Gandhian ideology. Every intellectual in the

nation was stirred by the surrounding atmosphere. It is surprising to find R. K. Narayan totally untouched by the general milieu of the time. He created an imaginary world for himself, called it Malgudi and raised people that lived within the vicinity of his own imagination and understanding. This is the strength and weakness of his art at the same time. There is a group of critics who consider Narayan great because he concentrated fully on his art, disregarding the world outside. There are others who blame him for being unconcerned with the burning issues of the time and produced novels that are parochial, imaginary and short, sighted. He wrote novels like *Waiting for the Mahatma*, but the book stands nowhere in comparison with those that bear the marks of his talent novels like *The Guide*, *A Bachelor of Arts* and *The Financial Expert*. Maybe, R. K. Narayan is one of those writers who find their personal world more inspiring than the world outside.

5.4 INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL: A SHORT HISTORICAL SURVEY

The introduction of English in Indian education system produced many good things. In literature, it inaugurated a new genre – novel. Though Ban Bhatta's *Kadambari* in Sanskrit had something similar to offer, but novel as a well knit form came in Indian languages only after the English novel of Eighteenth and Nineteenth century became known to the Indian writers. As a result, writers like Bankimchandra Chatterjee wrote *Rajmohan's Wife*, probably the first novel in Indian English towards the end of 19th century. Krupa Bai Satyanadan's *Saguna* was another successful effort as Indian English novel. In Twentieth century, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan produced remarkable novels. They have the credit of inaugurating a new era in Indian English novel. After that, Indian English novel became a regular feature and a major form of Indian English literature. After Independence, several writers attempted the novel form in Indian English – Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal, A. K. Abbas wrote novels about partition depicting the atrocities and irregularities associated with partition. Manohar Mulgaonkar, Bhashani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandeya depicted several issues in independent India. Their creative efforts received critical appraisal and popular responses alike.

Contemporary Indian English novel has attained the heights of artistic merit and carved out a place for itself in world literature today. Writers like Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Allan Sealy, Shashi Deshpande and several others have produced novels that have contributed to contemporary world literature.

Major issues associated with contemporary Indian English novel are - postcolonialism, postmodernism, multiculturalism, Diaspora and of course, women's issues. These issues have been dealt with elaborately by these novelists in their works. Contemporary Indian English novel form an important aspect of the global literary movement called new literatures in English – which is a movement carried out by writers belonging to ex-colonies of the British Empire after its disintegration. The writers who belong to Asia, Africa, Australia, Canada and Latin America have rebelled against the Euro- Centric literary criteria; are engaged in dismantling the by evoking the native spirit in theme and technique adopted to the art of fiction writing. Salman Rushie's *Midnight's Children and Shame*. Amitav Ghosh's *Shadow Lines*, Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel*, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* etc. are some of the examples of contemporary Indian English novel that have made the genre globally remarkable and famous.

5.5 POST COLONIALISM

Postcolonialism is a term used to described the issues and problems dealt with by the writers from the ex-colonies of the empire. The term had replaced “Commonwealth Literature” where was the name given earlier to these writings. The postcolonial writer generally tired to get rid of the colonial hangover that lingered on in the form of culture, including language. The term however, is discarded in favour on ‘New Literatures in English’. The term currently used to discuss the literary works of those writers belonging to the nations now free, but once ruled over by the British Empire. English no longer is the language of the Empire, but one of the common languages use by the natives in these countries. Therefore, it is a different language in structure, lexicography, vocabulary even in meaning it grammar is typically native, often running parallel to that of native languages. The new writer writing in English is keen on disregarding the western ethos, instead he uses local myths legends and history. His narrative strategies aim at creating the native sense of creativity so that there is no need of looking for Euro-centric values.

These writers come form Asia, Africa, Australia, Canada, and Latin America and contribute immensely to the movement now known as New Literatures in English. They have made New Literatures in English as a global phenomenon.

5.6 POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is a term which encompasses within its range every walk of life in contemporary society. It is used in such

disciplines like architecture, painting, economics, music, arts and literature. It is said to be an extension of modernism that pervaded the western culture during the early decades of 20th century, and at the same time, a great divide from it. Philosophically, postmodernism denotes new modes of perceiving truth, socially it means revelation of unknown facets of social reality, culturally it tends to subvert and dismantle the old canons.

Postmodernism is always placed along post-structuralism which was a step ahead of with conventional thinking. While its immediate concern was language as a basic tenet of human civilization, the interpretation and analysis it offered shook the old order. Such thinkers like Derrida, Barthes and Foucault exposed the canonical norms and conventional thinking as lopsided, disregarding a large humanity because it fell out of the civilized chalk-circle. Criminals, lunatics, slaves, races that were considered as inferior, women, untouchables – were all marginalized and had no share in the social structure. Post- structuralist thinkers not only exposed the “Universal lies”, but also encouraged a general discontent against the system based on the unitary norms. Consequently, the marginalized groups, benefited by the changed socio-political climate. Began to assert their identities. Their entry and participation in the areas that had never been their due, and reserved exclusively for the privilege few, worked out a new system to follow.

Postmodernism, thus, is a step a head from and an anti thesis to the modernist concept of life and literature.

5.7 MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is yet another factor which has affected contemporary Indian English novel. The term has recent social and political connotations to accommodate diverse cultural groups. It became political need of the time as migration and setting down in the alien countries have become widespread. Multiculturalism, as a social event in the world today has received serious attention by thinkers and philosophers.

The term “multi-cultural society” suggests the existence of more than one culture in a geographical area. culture incorporates within itself factors like language religion, beliefs, moral values, dress codes, food habits, social institutions etc. of one ethnic community. Today several communities have been staying together in one geographical region and each of these communities in trying to retain and preserve its culture. Thus, what is observed is the “multi-ethnic” society or “plural” society, particularly in the west where Asiam, Africans, and other nationalists have come to stay

together. After the process of globalization and liberalization was unleashed in the west, countries like USA, Canada, Australia, UK became centers of multicultural communities. This gave rise to multicultural societies. Known sometimes also as “polytechnic” cities.

The term “multiculturalism” was founded eventually by Charles Taylor (1994) to recognize the differences springing from a universally shared attachment of importance to culture and to an implicit acknowledgement of equality of all cultures. In a multicultural society each ethnic group retains its cultural values and, at the same times, respects those of others. This was the origin of diversity in Britain and in America which is often referred to as the “Salas bowl”. In a salad bowl each of the constituents retain its flavour and form, yet is known as a dish. This is what precisely a multi-cultural society is.

5.8 DIASPORA

Several Indian writers left their country and settled down in the west. Parsi writers, like Rohinton Mistry, Firdaus Kanga, Farooq Dhondi, women writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, even celebrated writers like Salman Rushdie have been affected by this sense of Diaspora. Diaspora, in fact, has religious connotations with its roots in the Old Testament. Today, it came to mean migration of a group of people from one country to another. Thus, it refers to a number of people (writers included) staying away abroad and the cultural difficulties they face. Diaspora is always considered a part of multicultural experience. Such traits like alienation, isolation of the characters abound in diasporic writing. Indian English novel has been a witness to these experiences.

5.9 CONCLUSION

Thus, Indian English novel is set against a variety of factors. They include socio-political background of the pre-Independence days and complicated issues of contemporary global scenario. These issues like Postcolonialism, Postmodernism, Multiculturalism, Diaspora etc. enrich the Indian English novel, as, by adopting it. The genre touches the global heights and obtains international reputation.

It is against this background and setting that R. K. Narayan’s **Swami and Friends** is to be studied.

5.10 QUESTIONS / EXERCISE

1. Write a short note on R. K. Narayan's life and works
2. Discuss socio-cultural elements prevalent when R. K. Narayan produced his best works.
3. Write a brief historical note on Indian English novel.
4. Discuss various themes in contemporary Indian English novel.
5. Write notes on
 1. Postcolonialism
 2. Postmodernism
 3. Multiculturalism
 4. Diaspora Writings.



R. K. NARAYAN SWAMI AND FRIENDS PART II

Unit Structure :

- 6.0 Objective
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Plot and Technique
- 6.3 Theme
- 6.4 Characters
- 6.5 Humour in the Novel
- 6.6 Life in Malgudi
- 6.7 General Assessment of the Novel
- 6.8 Conclusion
- 6.9 Questions / Exercise

6.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to offer study material on R. K. Narayan's novel **Swami and Friends**. While important guidelines are offered in this unit, the students are advised to read the text and other critical material in order to prepare themselves thoroughly for the examination.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Swami and Friends is the first novel by R. K. Narayan published in 1935. The book was received well as the maiden effort by the young writer. British critics and authors like Graham Greene and Crompton Mackenzie praised the book as the realistic presentation of Indian society before Independence and recommended the book for general readers of English all over the world. As a result, R. K. Narayan became famous as a writer of fiction in Indian English – or an 'Indo- Anglian' writer as it was known during those days.

The novel is openly autobiographical. There are references to the facts and personages in Narayan's personal life. Swami's experiences at Albert mission school are based on Narayan's own experiences as a school boy. Swami in fact, is the second half of Narayan's original name – "Narayanaswami", and the characters that surround him in the novel are the ones that were present in Narayan's life as a school boy. Narayan's treatment of his childhood days is authentic. Like most of the creative geniuses, Narayan seems to be at his best while portraying his childhood. It is a time when life is joyous, carefree and full of hopes for future. We all carry the scenes of these days so vividly that they appear authentic throughout the rest of life. Swami is not a good student and often plays truant in school. Narayan's biographer have portrayed similar boy Narayan in school in Mysore's English Medium School.

It is basically a story of Swami and his adventures and misadventures. The book opens when Swami is ten years old and a student of Albert mission school in Malgudi. His father is a lawyer who is anxious about his son's future. At home, there are other members: mother, grandmother who are equally concerned about Swami's education. Swami, on the other hand, is least interested in school. He finds his homework difficult and avoids, it very often. His greatest passion is M.C. C. – Malgudi Cricket Club which he has founded himself along with his friends. He eagerly waits for examinations to be over – and, as soon as they are over – rushes to the cricket ground and spend time in revelry and cheerful riotousness. The innocent and impulsive Swami lands himself in trouble when he participates in the political upheavals of 1930. the boys resist against the British tyranny by shouting slogans against the British rule within the school premises. Consequently, he is expelled from school. He is admitted in another school called Board High School where too much of home-work burdened the boy heavily. His involvement in the game of cricket and in other activities compelled him to remain absent in drill classes. The circumstances lead to the boy's second expulsion from school. The boy does not return home, instead, wanders ways from home and falls unconscious in the darkness of night. He is brought home the next day.

The novel ends with a note of pathos. Swami's friend Rajan leaves Malgudi as his father is transferred to another town. Swami is heart- broken. He is left alone with Mani, as the train takes away Rajan away from the boys's joyous circle.

6.2 PLOT AND TECHNIQUE

The plot of the novel is rather loose, not well wrought. It contains a series of events which further the story that ends inconclusively. The action is not concentrated on the world of the boys alone. It moves from school to home to playground. The world of the grown-ups is also brought in which dilutes the total effect of the novel.

Indirect references to freedom struggle, even to Gandhi and his followers produces the blurred effect. Except for Swami, all other characters are drawn by shadow lines who refuse to appear in flesh and blood. Nevertheless, Narayan's intention is to draw the inner world of the child, his inner responses to the outer situations. The novelist makes use of stream of consciousness technique at times in order to bring out the world inhabited by Swami and the boys of his age.

6.3 THEME

Swami and Friends does not have a definite theme obviously because the novelist is more interested in laying open the inner world of a ten-years old boy, his innocence and activities rather than establishing a well defined theme or subject matter. Nevertheless, one can trace Swami's efforts to grow up through experiences and attain maturity – a search for identity for a ten-years old boy of in Malgudi. In fact, this has been as favorite theme of Narayan's most of his protagonists, Chandan in **The Bachelor of Arts**, Srinivasan in **Mr. Sampat**, Raju in **The Guide** strive to have identities of their own. Similarly, the boy in **Swami and Friends** struggle to have his own identity. However, as stated earlier, Swami's struggle is not deliberate, rather a natural process of an innocent child who learn through trial and error. The novel, unfortunately, does not take the story to natural conclusion. Swami is left alone to learn further through life as his friend leaves for another town. This is one of the artistic achievements of the novel, as it leaves enough scope for speculation.

6.4 CHARACTERS

There are a number of characters in the novel, but they all are secondary to the main character of Swami, who is the protagonist of the novel. Swami is the central figure and the entire action rotates around him. The entire action is perceived through his point of view. Swami's friends include Somu, Shankar, the pea, and Mani – Rajam joins the group later. At home there are Swami's mother, grandmother, father and the newly born brother. In the

background stand such minor figures as Rajam's father, the superintendent of police, the forest officer, a coachman and his son, Ranga the cartman, servants, cooks, the players of Young Men's Cricket Team, other school boys who have not been named. However, the entire story is focused on Swami; other characters events, incidents, episodes are relevant as far as they serve the purpose of projecting Swami, the protagonist. Malgudi, the imaginary small town, which has been associated with R. K. Narayan's art of fiction, plays an important role in the lives of the people who inhabit it. Thomas Hardy, the 19th century English novelist, is known for similar imaginary province which shapes, formulates and directs the lives of the people who inhabit it. Thomas Hardy's vision of life was pessimistic, so almost all his characters suffer. The provincial elements play a very important role in their tragic fate. In the case of Narayan's Malgudi, reverse is the case. Here the people grow, in their search for themselves they find them and mould themselves according to the demand of the situation. Savitri in **The Dark Room** suffers initially because of her husband's infidelity, but comes back home knowing that her place is where she belongs to. Raju in **The Guide** recalls his days at Malgudi and identifies himself with the poor peasants who suffer from famine. Though away from Malgudi, Raju carries with him the impression he gathered at Malgudi. This imaginary town is the guiding principle in the lives of the people who inhabit it. It is one of the major characters that helps the story move ahead. In **Swami and Friends** Malgudi's role is equally remarkable. The novelist realistically depicts the cultural climate of the town. It is this culture of the town that finally moulds the character of the protagonist. Narayan, as a writer, believes in religion and the superstitions associated with it. Swami's granny tells him stories about the Hindu Gods and Goddesses. There are rituals, festivals minutely observed in the family. They form the character of Swami as he has learnt to imbibe every detail associated with them.

6.5 HUMOUR IN THE NOVEL

Swami and Friends is remarkable for its comic presentation of the situation. In fact, greatness of Narayan's art line in his humorous depiction of day-to-day reality. It varies from farcical humour of satire from jokes to repartees. His humor often mingles with pathos and the readers often smile through tears.

Narayan's vision, as a novelist, is essentially comic. It can be traced everywhere in **Swami and Friends**. In the very beginning of the novel Swami stands face to face with his teacher, examines his face closely, criticizes it. This situation is highly comic as it reveals the inner working of the boy's mind. Ironically, the teacher throws the book on Swami's face with a remark "very bad". The

preparations for the examination of Swami and his Friends, which consists of elaborate listing of their needs is equally amusing. The school scenes are rollickingly funny. When the boys quarrel, the diplomatic ways they adopt is hilarious. Their preparation for the cricket match and the taken they deliver are full of humour. Comedy in the novel arises out of incongruities between the world of the children and the outer world. Swami fails to understand why his father wants him to read books when the examination is over. The conversation between the father and son on the topic is pleasantly humorous. There is obviously a gap between the perception of the grown ups and the perception of a child. This often has been a source of comedy exploited fully by several authors. Like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and others. However, Narayan's humour arises out of ordinary situations in the life of an ordinary Indian. That is the reason why Narayan's novel have retained their popularity during the last three decades or so.

Humour, thus, occupies a central place in **Swami and Friends**. This humour blended with pathos makes it one of the most readable novels of R. K. Narayan.

6.6 LIFE IN MALGUDI

In **Swami and Friends** the imaginary town Malgudi is a modest size town. It is neither village nor a city. Malgudi is situated on the bank of the river Sarayu which offers many a pleasant occasion to the simple folk living in Malgudi. It is a typically south Indian town presented vividly and realistically. Even its past history is given which keeps on changing from novel to novel. All the ten novels and several short stories are set in Malgudi. Therefore, though the town is the same, it appears differently in different novel. Critics are puzzled over the exact location which might have inspired the depiction of Malgudi. Srinivas Iyengar speculates that it might be Lalgudi on the bank of Kaveri, or Yadavgi in Mysore. Others are of the opinion that Narayan's Malgudi is coimbatore which has several things common to the imaginary town in Narayan's novel. But all efforts to identify Malgudi are futile for it is a pure "country of the mind".

Malgudi in **Swami and Friends** is a typical Indian town in pre-Independence India which combines the Indian and British features. Indian struggle for freedom forms a part of narration though it is not described vividly. There are references to Gandhi and other leaders engaged in the freedom struggle. There are public speeches, bonfires of foreign goods, agitations, strikes, processions, slogan shouting lathi charges – things which were commonly deserved in British India. As was the case with other Indian towns before Independence, Malgudi combines two

civilization – Indian and British. The details suggest a blend of the Oriental and Edwardian mixture – sweet mangoes and whisky, a wedding with horoscope and gold- edged, elegantly printed invitation card, betel leaves, snuff and English biscuits, the casuarind and post –office saving Bank, the shaved heads and the volumes of Milton and Carlyle etc. Even the names of the street enhances this mystery Kabir street and Lawley extention, Nallappa's Grove and Albert College, Mill Street and Bombay Anand Bhavan etc.

6.7 GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE NOVEL

Swami and Friends is regarded as one of the meritorious works of R. K. Narayan. The maiden attempt by an young writer, the novel contains seeds of a blossoming talent that bloomed into such great works as **The Guide** etc. Narayan has successfully portrayed the inner world of a ten – years old boy from a middle-class in Tamilnadu – his aspirations and responses to the outer world. It was at this time that Mulk Raj Anand had concerned himself with the boy of about the same age in his novel **Untouchable**. However, two boys are placed in two different conditions. Narayan's Swami belongs to a high caste Brahmin family whose inner world is centered around the canonical values, whereas Anand's Bakha – the protagonist in **Untouchable** – struggles against the odds in the caste – ridden Indian society. Both the writers used stream of consciousness as a technique to lay open the inner world of the young protagonists, both the writers refuse to reach a definite conclusion. Both the novels end with a vast scope of speculation for the readers. It appears as if they were influenced by the modernist novelists in England and had chosen their subjects being inspired by Charles Dickens's **David Copperfield**.

R. K. Narayan's **Swami and Friends** stands apart for its details of the children's world – Swami is more a child than a ten-year boy. All his action, hopes, fears, joys etc. reveal the child –like innocence clubbed with delight and pleasure imparted to the readers. Swami, obviously, is not a "hero" rather his actions lead to the notion of "anti – hero" who is often at the mercy of outer events. The novel offers a panoramic view of middle – class Indian life with all its customs and rituals that make the novel deeply rooted in the Indian soil. The novel, of course, is basically concerned with the life in south, and thus becomes a remarkable piece of regional literature. It abounds in humor, irony and satire bringing out incongruities between the world of a ten-year old boy and his outer surrounding. It is one of the immensely readable novels produced by Indian English novelists.

6.8 CONCLUSION

R. K. Narayan's **Swami and Friends** is one of the most remarkable novels written by Indian writers in English. It offers a realistic picture of life in British India. Swami, a Ten years old boy as the protagonist of the novel, makes the reading experience most enjoyable. The book is prescribed in schools as well as in colleges in India, where its reading and study have been of immense utility. The study of the novel showed also is equally fruitful experience at the university level.

6.9 QUESTION / EXERCISE

1. Discuss the events in school in **Swami and Friends** as entertaining and rewarding at the same time.
2. Bring out the various traits in Swami's personality as a school going boy of ten years
3. Bring out the elements of humour in certain situations in **Swami and Friends**
4. Consider **Swami and Friends** as a regional novel.
5. Write short notes on the following
6. Give a brief account of Swami's adventures as he ran away from home. How did it all come to an end?
 1. The Cricket match
 2. Swami's Grandmother
 3. Rajam and Mani
7. Discuss in brief "The political activities" of Swami
8. R. K. Narayan uses "Stream of Consciousness" technique to bring out the inner world of Swami. Acquaint yourself with this technique and show its relevance in this novel.



CRITICAL STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *MATTER OF TIME* PART I

Unit Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 The Initiation of Indian English Novel
- 7.2 Marching towards independence – Novels and Novelists
- 7.3 Independence and After
- 7.4 The Women Novelists
- 7.5 Conclusion
- 7.6 Questions / Exercise

7.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to acquaint students with life and works of Shashi Deshpande with which-cultural background against her novels are set. A special emphasis is given on the text with details thematic analysis.

7.1 THE INITIATION OF INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL

Although in comparison to epics, lyrics, dramas, short stories fables and, novels are comparatively a novel phenomenon in the literary history of India, they have made the most significant position in the contemporary world of writing. The real emergence of Indian English Novel started with Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's ***Rajmohan's Wife*** published in 1864. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was very much influenced with the English novelists, especially Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens and ***Rajmohan's Wife***, like most of his Bengali novels, deals with social issues of the time. The main theme of the novel is about the consequences of a bad marriage and the sufferings of the woman protagonist. It was the time of social reform and so it is not surprising that the first Indian English novel is a social novel instead of a historical romance.

The second noteworthy Indian English novel, ***Govinda Samanta, or the History of a Bengali Raivat***, is also by a Bengali, Lal Behari Dey, and was published in 1874. Set in the Burdwan District in the mid 19th century, the novel is a family saga, relating the life and times of Govinda Samanta, from his birth till death. The

novel is said to have received a prize in 1871 for the best novel in Bengali or English exemplifying the 'Social and Domestic life of the Rural Population and Working Classes of Bengal'. Lal Behari Dey was aware of the challenges of portraying Indian reality in English language and so he makes his peasants speak in 'good' English.

Though Toru Dutt is better known as a poet, she may very well be considered to be the first woman novelist in Indian English, and perhaps the first Indian novelist in French! Published in Calcutta in 1878, her unfinished novel ***Bianca or the Young Spanish Maiden*** is a romantic love story set in England. Malashri Lal considers that Toru Dutt couldn't finish the novel because it was very much autobiographical and "it mirrored the turbulence of her young life" and she was also immersed in being a critique of the people close to her in the novel. But many critics feel that had the novel been completed it would not only have been a wonderful work of fiction but also would have been a model for the Indian writers of English fiction.

Krupabai Satyanadan was another earliest women writer who has contributed two novels – ***Kamala: A Story of Hindu Life*** (1894) and ***Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life*** (1895) – and both are autobiographical in nature. *Saguna* is about her early years and portrays the conversion of a Hindu Brahmin family into a Christian household. *Kamala* was written after the loss of her child and is about her conflicts and heartaches.

While considering women novelists, Shevantibai Nikambe, the social reformer and educationist, should not be ignored. Her short novel ***Ratnabai: A Sketch of a Bombay High Caste Hindu Wife*** (1895) brings forth the ideal of a companionate marriage. A young married girl, whose husband is away in England, is sent to school against the oppositions of her father. Although she suffers a lot in the hands of her in-laws, her husband returns to find a wife capable enough for conversing and so this story serves as a larger discourse of reform and the treatment of women in Hindu society.

There are many other women novelists who are mentioned in the History of Indian English Fiction. Rajalakshmi Devi's novel in verse form, ***The Hindoo Wife or the Enchanted Fruit*** was published in 1876 and Cornelia Sorabji's three collections of short stories came out in the first half of the 20th century. Rabindranath Tagore's sister, Swarnakumari Ghosal wrote three novels – ***The Fatal Garland*** (1910), ***An Indian Love Story*** (1910) and ***An Unfinished Song*** (1913). The first is a historical romance and the last is a novel of sensibility that shows the influence of novelists like George Eliot.

Many of the novelists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries wrote historical romances. And some of them written during this time are: Chakravarti Khetrapal's ***Sarala and Hingana*** (1895), T. Ramakrishna Pillai's ***Pamini: An Indian Romance*** (1903) and ***The Dive for Death: An Indian Romance*** (1911), S.M. Mitra's Hindupore: ***A Peep Behind the Indian Unrest – An Anglo-Indian Romance*** (1909) and Balkrishna's ***The Love of Kusuma: An Eastern Love Story*** (1910). Shoshee Chunder Dutt's ***Shunkur: A Tale of Indian Mutiny 1857 and The Young Zamindar*** (1883) both depict the greatness of cultural heritage of Indian freedom. H. Dutt wrote adventure fiction and is mainly known for his two novels, ***Bijay Chand: An Indian Tale*** (1888) and ***Lieut. Suresh Biswas: His Life and Adventures*** (1900).

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

The two Tamil writers who had contributed to the growth of Indian English Fiction at the early times were Rajam Iyer and A. Madhaviah. Rajam Iyer wrote only one incomplete religious novel in English, ***True Greatness of Vasudeva Sastri***. A. Madhaviah wrote quite a few novels in English among which ***Thillai Govindan*** is one of the most popular. The novel is about a contemporary Tamil Brahmin youth and the brunt of western education on his life, finally ending with his rediscovery of faith in Hinduism. Another of his novel, ***Clarinda***, is a historical romance about a woman who was converted into Christianity in Tanjore. Madhaviah very deftly portrays the middle class India of his times with magnificent felicity and simplicity.

7.2 MARCHING TOWARDS INDEPENDENCE – NOVELS AND NOVELISTS

When the Gandhian tornado struck India, a change was visualized in mostly all directions, including the novel. There was intensification in the sense of nationalism as well as endeavors to construct the idea of a modern India. There was a great modification in the social dimension and this affected the trend of novel writing. A patriotic theme came into existence and K. S. Venkatramani's two novels, ***Murugan, the Tiller*** (1927) and ***Kandan, the Patriot: A Novel of New India in the Making*** (1932)

proved the essence of the time. The first novel contrasts the life of two friends, one a materialist and the other a Gandhian, and finally a Gandhian colony is established and the two friends settle down there. The second novel is set during the period of the Civil Disobedience Movement where Knadan, an ICS officer educated in England, resigns from government service and joins the freedom movement and is killed at last. K. Nagarajan is another novelist who was influenced by the Gandhian principles and sets his doctrines in ***Athavar House*** (1937). The novel is a family saga that depicts a Maharashtrian Vaishnava Brahmin joint family and explores the impact of modernity and Gandhism on the family.

The trinity of R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao has not only shown stamina and stern consistency of purpose but has revealed the fortitude of talent and potentiality in their writings. R. K. Narayan 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. His first novel ***Swami and Friends*** (1935) created the famous 'Malgudi' – the town that seeped into the heart of every Indian. Many more novels followed like ***Bachelor of Arts*** (1936), ***The Dark Room*** (1938), ***The English Teacher*** (1945) and many more. Behind all their unpretentious simplicity and triviality, Narayan's novels conveyed a sublime philosophy of life. Lives of ordinary people, like that of Swami, are 'full of incident without accomplishment' but they are still full of happiness, inspiring and enlightening. Narayan's greatest achievement was making India reachable to the outside world through his literature. Regarded as one of the leading Indian English fiction writers, he was capable of bringing small-town India to his audience in a manner that was both authentic as well as experimental.

Mulk Raj Anand is another prolific writer whose first literary efforts were a chronicle to the lives of the under-privileged. ***Untouchable*** (1935) is about a sweeper, ***Coolie*** (1936) illustrates the lives of displaced labourers who are exploited by all kinds of economic forces including colonialism and ***Two Leaves and a Bud*** (1937) exposes the state of plantation life in British India. Thus, when Anand started writing fiction, he decided that he would have a preference for the common to the imaginary, that he would keep away from the thoroughfares of romance and sophistication but discover the tapered lanes of the outcastes and the peasants, the down trodden and the working class.

Raja Rao, who makes a remarkable triad with the other two writers, is affiliated with them in time and at times in the choice of themes but not in his art as a novelist or in his enchanting prose style. ***Kanthapura***, (1938) the only novel written by him before independence, clearly reveals a writer pondering over and depicting

the transformations that were taking place in the making of the modern nation. Though the main idea of the novel can be summed up as 'Gandhi and our village' but the style of narration makes the book more a 'Gandhi Purana' than a piece of simple fiction. Gandhi is the invisible God and Moorthy, the visible 'avatar' and the characters are sharply divided into two camps – the Rulers and their supporters on the one hand and the Satyagrahis and their sympathizers on the other. It is through the foreword of the novel, which is one of the most important documents of Indian English literature that Raja Rao sets out the agenda for Indian English writers – their targets and the challenges they have to comprehend. There were some other writers and novels that have marked their contribution to the spirit of the time and one of them is the ***Twilight in Delhi*** (1940) by Ahmed Ali. The novelist depicts the middle class Muslim life in the early 20th century Delhi and endeavors to capture the decay of ethnicity. Though Ahmed Ali became a Pakistani citizen after Partition, his novel remains a landmark in Indian English fiction. Another such novel is Iqbalunnisa Hussain's ***Purdah the Polygamy: Life in an Indian Muslim Household*** (1944) which conveys what it promises through the title – an intimate depiction of a mode of life. Another writer who deserves mention at this juncture is K. A. Abbas whose novel ***Tomorrow is Ours: A Novel of the India of Today*** (1943) tries to accumulate an India with a responsibility to participate in worldly interactions. There were many more novelists who wrote on the freedom struggle and its impact on the Indian subcontinent and its inhabitants.

7.3 INDEPENDENCE AND AFTER

The trinity of R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao continued their long and illustrious career even in the post-Independence era and many of their novels have contributed to the enrichment of Indian writing in English. In his last group of novels, ***Mr. Sampath*** (1949), ***The Financial Expert*** (1952), ***Waiting for Mahatma*** (1955), ***The Guide*** (1958), ***The Man Eater of Malgudi*** (1961), ***The Sweet Vendor*** (1967) and ***The World of Nagraj*** (1991) Anand makes his readers enter into an exotic world of half-headed or half-hearted dreamers, artists, financiers, adventurers, eccentrics, cinema stars, sannyasis and many others, several of them not from Malgudi but imported from outside. Innocence has given place to experience: the shades of humanity add incredible colour to the strokes of ingenuity. There are no 'good' and no 'bad' characters in Narayan's novels. Human nature is presented veraciously, fascinatingly and remarkably and there is no obvious denunciation or admiration. Srinivas, the scenario-writer in ***Mr. Sampath*** imaginatively passes in review the possible history of Malgudi since Puranic times. ***The Financial Expert*** is clearly and sparkingly written; it is placidly satirical, uninterestingly appealing

and amusing and its characters are little better than caricatures. ***Waiting for Mahatma*** is exceptional in two respects – the action strays out of Malgudi, going as far as Delhi; and the two central characters, Bharati and Sriram, are existentially 'engaged' in politics. ***The Guide*** is one of Narayan's most critically acclaimed novels and it describes the transformation of the protagonist, Raju, from a tour guide to a spiritual guide. ***The Man Eater of Malgudi*** Vasu, the taxidermist, trespasses his own destiny trying to interfere into others. In ***The Sweet Vendor*** Jagan not only sells sweet profitably but sells philosophy too; on the contrary evil takes possession of his son, Mali, and uses him as a medium for stinking the sanctities of home and marriage, even the sovereignty of the artistic imagination. In his ***The World of Nagraj*** Narayan reinterprets the popular legend of the sage Narada. In Narayan's novels, there is usually an escape, a displacement, a disturbance of order, followed by a return, a renewal, a restoration of normalcy.

In 1951, Anand published ***Seven Summers***, the first of a series of seven novels which Anand planned to write as a kind of autobiography in seven parts, corresponding to the seven stages of a man's life as described by Shakespeare in his play *As You Like It*. Anand's ***Private Life of an Indian Prince*** (1953) had a certain topical appeal, whereas his later novels, ***The Old Woman and the Cow*** (1960) and ***The Road*** (1961), Anand reveals more of his humanity and empathy and less of his aversion and antagonism with the existing reality. But it was actually his earlier works, the novels before independence that had made a mark in the history of fiction writing, while his later ones just added themselves as attachments to his literary genius.

Raja Rao's ***The Serpent and the Rope*** (1960) and ***The Cat and Shakespeare*** (1965) materialized after independence. The former novel is an ambitious and commendable attempt at accomplishing an entire projection of India in stunning fictional requisites, and perhaps it is one of the most impressive novels by an Indian in English. K.R. Srinivas Iyengar rightly comments that "If there are glimpses of Inferno's circles and Purgatory slopes in ***The Serpent and the Rope***, ***The Cat and Shakespeare*** is whirled by winged words and shown the 'death of death' and the efflorescence of the perfect perfection of Love, Truth and Harmony."

Dr. Bhabani Bhattacharya's five novels – ***So Many Hungers*** (1947), ***Music for Mohini*** (1952), ***He Who Rides a Tiger*** (1954), ***A Goddess Named Gold*** (1960) and ***Shadow from Ladakh*** (1966) – form an impressive achievement. Bhattacharya's slashing descriptions would be inartistic where they are not stroked by the touch of compassion, and it is to his credit that his writing intimates throughout the pity of it all. According to him the follies of the

people are greater than their crimes and crime is committed by us because we are blind.

Manohar Malgonkar has published four novels in quick succession and there is a certain maturity in plot as well as theme of the novels. The first ***Distant Drum*** (1960) presents the aspects of army life in India during the period of transition from the last years of the British regime to the first years of the Congress rule.

His second novel ***Combat of Shadows*** (1962) carries this epigraph from the Gita: "Desire and Aversion are opposite shadows" He has merged numerous rudiments in the story to compelling outcome, and the novel thrives as much by the cautious plotting and the internal edging as by the supremacy of the writing to evoke situation and atmosphere alike. In ***The Princes*** (1963) Malgonkar tries to tell the story of an Indian prince – a prince who is an appealing character as well as a convincing representative of a class. It is very rightly put in by K.R.S.Iyengar that "In all his novels Malgonkar is fascinated by the impact of Hitler's war on men and institutions and attitudes. Moving from peace to war in 1939, and again from war to peace in 1945, things have been subjected to a double shift of change and transformation." In his fourth novel ***A Bend in the Ganges*** (1964), once again the role of the Second World War in effecting fundamental transforms in the affairs of men and nations is profoundly emphasized. The ignominy and the agony of the partition, the glory and the defeat of the hour of freedom: the "tryst with destiny", the horror and the mortification, the shock and the sympathy – are all the theme of Malgonkar's novel.

G.V.Desani's ***All About H.Hatter*** (1948) is a book that exhibits great comic skill and is anticipated by many as a post-modernist novel in form and style. Desani's language has the flexibility that is accepted and appreciated and an authority that demands success and eminence. Khushwant Singh's ***Train to Pakistan*** (1956), his most famous novel, is the story of the impact of Partition on a village in the western border and how the peaceful life of two communities is rent asunder by forces that they cannot understand. In ***I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*** (1959), Singh portrays a Sikh family and all that it goes through the freedom movement during the 1940s.

The 1980's observed efflorescent materialization of new Indian fiction in English indicating a new epoch of transformation in its tone, theme and substance. Many of the new writers of the time produced their maiden works and transported new conviction and maturity in Indian fiction in English. There was a willingness among the rising middle class of India to know about their country in English and there was also the nostalgia of the immigrants who were curious to identify their cultures and roots – and all these

factors provided catalysis to the innovative writing. It was Salman Rushdie who altered the perception of Indian writing in English and made unbelievable imprints on the world literary sphere with his ***Midnight's Children*** (1981) and later ***Shame*** (1983) by illustrating the Indian reality with a fantastical touch and transfusing history, myth and autobiography elegantly. And then it was the ***Satanic Verses*** (1988) that set the world on fire and was branded a 'blasphemous book'. In the wake of Salman Rushdie's writings in the 1980's there emerged a striking group of young novelists like Amitabh Ghosh, Arun Joshi, Shashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth, Upamanyu Chatterjee and many more who held on the torch of literary achievement in Indian English fiction with decorum and dignity.

Amitabh Ghosh's ***Circle of Reason*** (1986), an imaginative fiction elongating from rural Bengal to the modern Mediterranean ports, has been acknowledged for his ceremonial novelty, delicate use of imagery and idiom; and his mastery of narration was re-affirmed in ***Shadow Lines*** (1988). *Fires of Bengal*, that fetched him the Medici Prize of France, is one of the latest accounts of Indian veracity. In his novels there is an anthropological pursuit that seizes him beyond a fastened territory and it affords a global canvas to his expedition but it does not deny his novels of the Indianness evident in its non-mythologized affluence.

From a book of poems, ***Mapping***, to a travelogue, ***From Heaven Lake***, Vikram Seth finally turned into fiction writing to re-assert the Indian writer's claim on the English language. His ***The Golden Gate*** (1986), a novel written in smooth sonnets, is an unparalleled accomplishment which facilitated Indian novel in English traverse another edge of structure which overcame all impediments pertaining to content.

Upamanyu Chatterjee's ***English, August: An Indian Story*** (1988) is an incisive, thinly masked autobiography of a sensitive administrative officer posted in a rural town in West Bengal. It is the tale of August, as the hero of the story Agastya is called, who braves mosquitoes, monotony and dreariness by writing letters to his friend and relatives and thus preserving his sanity. He suffers from a feeling of physical isolation, mental detachment and cultural dislocation; and his rootlessness and subjugation in life is anticipated to be observed by an IAS probationary official. The novelist's supremacy and potentiality may be seen in his vibrant and authentic depiction of August's alienation and coercion from this inevitable strangulating situation, without upsetting the art to be contaminated by any of them.

Arun Joshi's ***Strange Case of Billy Biswas*** (1971) is a wonderful introduction to the post-Independence Indian English

fiction. An extremely well paced book, it tells the story of an Indian who returns from the west and where his search for identity takes him in a new nation. Even his first book, ***The Foreigner*** (1968), was on the same theme of alienation. He has also achieved recognition for his novels ***The Apprentice*** (1974) in which the life of an idealistic youth is delineated and ***The Last Labyrinth*** (1981) which has won him the Sahitya Academy Award. His another novel, ***The City and the River*** (1990), is a political allegory that shows the cynical nature of human greed and deceit.

Shashi Tharoor joined the band of novelists with his sprawling work ***The Great Indian Novel*** (1990) in which he retells the political history of 20th century India through a fictional re-casting of procedures, occurrences and characters from the epic 'The Mahabharata'. He suited parable and canonical fiction in diverse tone, form and scansion with copious parenthesis and interpolations all steeped in impertinence and thus attempted to inculcate his fiction with the enormity of India as in the Mahabharata, a vastness that emerges from the synthesis of its traditions with the objectives of its history.

Jaya Ganga by Vijay Singh brings to the forefront the diverse characteristics of India – communal harmony, religious fanaticism, casteism, hypocrisy, superstitions and also the pilgrimage of the novelist's persona, Nishant. The novel is set in the post-Mrs. Gandhi assassination in 1984 and the tremendous chaos and vehement fretfulness during the time. The novelist's intense observation pertaining to social and political situation has been exposed in a chain of vanishing virtues which he saw during his voyage in exploration of the river goddess.

Trying to Grow (1990) by Firdaus Kanga presents the middle class Parsis with all their interesting eccentricities. The novel, in fact, is a portrayal of a young Parsi artist who tries to develop into an enormous talent from his handicapped stature. Farrukh Dhondy produced his maiden novel ***Bombay Duck*** (1990) which was written on some extremely pertinent contemporary issues such as communal fundamentalism, small-mindedness and prejudice of some Indian minds which presume precarious proportions. Even the title is very symbolic as though it refers to the foul smell of the Bombay duck drying on the sand, it is indicative of some deeper and larger corruption that extends beyond a certain city or country. The Parsi genius struck again with Rohinton Mistry's ***Such a Long Journey*** (1991) where the novelist has shown his skill of characterization with his various characters vibrant with life.

Arvind Adiga's ***The White Tiger*** was praised for highlighting the poverty and injustices present in the rapidly changing India when it won the Man Booker Prize in 2008. The novel ascertains a

strong contrast between India's rise as a modern global economy and the lead character, Balram, who belongs to the class of the crushing rural poverty. The novel is in the form of a series of letters written by its protagonist, who calls himself the white tiger, to the Chinese premiere, Wen Jiabao. His letters, apart from relating his rise from a lowly origin to his current position as an entrepreneur also contain an unappealing portrait of India as a society raked by corruption and servitude, as well as his views on caste system and political corruption. The artistic technique lies in the way Adiga has managed to blend in the narrator's story and the sharp criticism into one, there by sustaining subtleness and bringing out the dark humor. His second book ***Between the Assassinations*** (2008) refers to the period between the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and her son Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.

Novels have kept on appearing at a steadily increasing pace and undoubtedly the future of Indian English fiction is full of hope and promise. There has been an ample indication of vivacity, variety, humanity and artistic integrity that have ornamented the Indian English fiction throughout and assures to do so forever.

7.4 THE WOMEN NOVELISTS

It has been very rightly said that women are natural storyteller and the Indian women writers have proved this saying true with their fabulous narration and fantastic characterization. Starting from Toru Dutt who has written a French and an English novel before she died at the age of twenty one in 1877, women writers have moved ahead with their sure and striding steps to reach out for the ultimate. Among the other early novels by women writers may be mentioned Raj Lakshmi Debi's ***The Hindu Wife, or The Enchanted Fruit*** (1876) and Mrs. Krupabai Sathianadhan's Kamala, ***A Story of Hindu Life*** (1894) and *Sugana, A Story of Native Christian Life* (1895). There were many other writers who wrote in their mother tongue and got their stories translated into English.

It is, however, after the Second World War that women novelists of quality started enriching Indian fiction in English. Kamala Markandaya and Ruth Prawar Jhabvala started the trend and their novels are unquestionably outstanding. Most of Kamala Markandaya's novels persistently present the picture of India struggling against odds and trying to surmount them. She confronts a tradition-oriented society and learns to live under the twin forces of heritage and modernity. Her first novel ***Nectar in a sieve*** (1954) takes the readers to the heart of a South Indian village where life has apparently not changed for a thousand years; and then how the invasion of industry and modern technology issue sinister consequences in the passive village. Markandaya writes that fear,

hunger and despair are the constant companions of the peasant – “fear of the dark future; fear of the sharpness of hunger; fear of the blackness of death.” in ***Some Inner Fury*** (1957) Markandaya’s thematic concern is the encounter between the tradition-loving East and the fast changing world of the West. In ***A Silence of Desire*** (1961), she leaves politics and economics at the rear and invades into the imponderable dominion of spiritual realism. It is a novel that confronts the invisible and even at times illustrates intricate suggestions that almost bridges the arroyo between substance and spirit, qualm and faith. In *Possession* it is a voyage from India to England and then to America and again back to India – thus unleashing the passion and the confusion. K.R.S. Iyengar has rightly commented that “Kamala Markandaya neither repeats herself, nor turns her fiction into a formula.”

In her six novels and two collections of short stories, Ruth Praver Jhabvala has communicated her experiences during and after the years of independence in India. Living in Delhi after the years of freedom, Jhabvala had the opportunity to closely observe the changes from local to cosmopolitanism, from traditional to the contemporary, from naïve to the refined. It is the double event of independence and partition that has given Delhi a character that would otherwise had not taken shape and this is what Jhabvala had tried to capture in her writings. Jhabvala’s first novel, ***To Whom She Will***, is filled with the relish of eating and in the later novels it is the cocktail parties that exchange the traditional eating parties. It is such parties that provide the suitable background, sometimes for the counterfeiting of fleeting emotional ties and sometimes for the opening of diplomatic marriage negotiations. K.R.S. Iyengar puts in “Mrs. Jhabvala is no sentimentalist, and hence doesn’t falsify or merely idealize life. But she is human enough to feel the heart-ache at the heart of humanity, and it is this that finally defines the quality of her engagingly entertaining art as the consummate portraitist of social life in Delhi.”

Apart from these two distinctive novelists, there were many others with their unique talent and individual style and among them Attia Hosain, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal had made their remarkable prominence felt with their effective and influential writing. Attia Hosain’s novel ***Sunlight on a Broken Column*** (1961) and her collection of short stories, ***Phoenix Fled*** (1953), provided a clear evidence of her talent and sensitive observation. “Life is placid enough, human beings are prosaic enough, yet now and then there is a spark, a touch of poetry, a cry of pain, and these are the inspiration behind Attia Hosain’s short stories.” (K.R.S. Iyengar) in her novel there is precious social and political credentials and she writes passionately with an exceptional sensitivity for places, events and words.

Anita Desai has added novel aspect to the accomplishment of Indian women writers in English fiction. According to K.R.S. Iyengar "in Prawer Jhabvala's work the social background is rather more important than the characters who enact the various comedies, tragic-comedies and farces; in Kamala Markandaya's, the accent is as much on the principal characters as on the diverse backgrounds, economic, political, cultural, social; but in Anita Desai's first two novels, the inner climate, the climate of sensibility that hours or clears or rumbles like thunder or suddenly blazes forth like lightning, is more compelling than the outer weather, the physical geography or the visible action." Desai deals mainly with the exploration of sensibility which is, in fact, very Indian in attitude. The necessary thoughts, feelings and emotions are very well reflected in her language, syntax and imagery. A concerned social thinker, she is an enthusiastic observer of the society and the position of women in the present-day society draws her attention. Her novels are noted for the profound probing into the inner lives and feelings of women and the novels are also an exploration of the family problems which is most probably the main cause of the estrangement of the women from their family. The author's characters are often Anglicized Indians who are fed-up of their everyday life and the lack of warmth in their marital relationships and so they are ultimately forced to escape from the ties of the holy institution of marriage. In her first novel, ***Cry, the Peacock***, (1963) it is the story of a lady whose world of passion and obsession collides with her husband's practical world thus leading to dejection and loneliness resulting in murder. The voices of the middle class intellectuals in the backdrop of contemporary Calcutta weave the story of ***Voices in the City*** (1965) where Monish lives out a servile existence within the rigid confines of a traditional Hindu life and unable to adjust finally takes away her own life. Desai's work is a part of the new style of writing that was not a part of the traditional conservative India. In her later novels Desai has dealt with such themes as German anti-Semitism, the downfall of traditions, and the Western orthodox views of India.

The daughter of Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nayantara Sahgal, has written novels like, ***A Time to be Happy, This Time of Morning and Storm in Chandigarh*** as well as a non-fiction, ***Prison and chocolate Cake, From Fear Set Free***. In ***A Time to be Happy*** (1957) there are references to Congress activities and the events of 1942 whereas in ***This Time of Morning*** (1965) Sahgal liberally draws upon her knowledge of what happens in the corridors of power and in the drawing rooms of the politically influential people. ***Storm in Chandigarh*** (1969) sets the scene in the exotic city of Chandigarh, the capital of part of the Indian partitioned Punjab. It is Sahgal's feeling for politics and her command over English that has been impressive in her writings.

Bharati Mukherjee, another woman voice post-independence, writes stories revolving around the culture clash experienced by Indians who have immigrated to America but still have difficulty in adjusting in the changed circumstances. Mukherjee's most successful and popular work of fiction, ***Jasmine*** (1989), is a story in which a young Indian woman becomes an illegal immigrant to the United States and accommodates herself there by taking on a series of different identities, and ends up as the mother in a patchwork family.

Mukherjee's works focus on the "phenomenon of migration, the status of new immigrants, and the feeling of alienation often experienced by expatriates" as well as on Indian women and their struggle. ***The Tiger's Daughter*** is a story about a young girl named Tara who ventures back to India after many years of being away only to return to poverty and turmoil. Even in her later works like ***The Holder of the World*** (1993) and ***Leave It To Me*** (1997) her focus continues to be on the immigrant women and their freedom from relationships to become separate individuals.

Among the other women writers of the time mention should be made of Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy, Chitra Divakaruni, Kiran Desai and Manju Kapoor as these writers have contributed not only in the world of women writing but also aroused the sense of responsibility and affection towards women through their means of writing. Jhumpa Lahiri's writing is distinguished by her 'plain' language and her characters are often Indian immigrants to America who are forced to navigate between the cultural values of their birthplace and their later adopted home. She examines her characters' struggles, apprehensions and prejudices to account the tinges and facts of immigrant psychology and behavior. Her novel, ***The Namesake*** (2003), describes the great efforts and hardships of a Bengali couple who immigrate to the United States to form a life outside everything they are accustomed to in their homeland. Arundhati Roy's ***The God of Small Things*** (1996) is semi-autobiographical and a major part of the book captures the author's childhood experiences. The book is a commentary of how the small things in existence affect people's behavior and their lives. Chitra Divakaruni Banerjee tries to heal the distress and strives to explore the complicated identities of diasporic communities in her novels. In her writings she focuses on women from India caught between the two worlds. A feministic tradition is strongly apparent in Manju Kapoor's novels and the search for control over one's destiny is the key theme. Her debut novel ***Difficult Daughters*** (1998) is set around the time of Partition and it is the story of a woman torn between family duty and the desire for education and illicit love. She enters into a scandalous relationship which also parallels India's battle for freedom. Manju Kapur's novels present the shifting image of women moving away from traditional portrayals of

enduring, self sacrificing women towards self assured confident and determined women making society conscious of their demands and in this way providing a medium for self expression.

Shashi Deshpande also belongs to this genre of women writers and her novels like ***The Dark Holds No Terrors***, ***That Long Silence***, ***The Binding Vine*** and ***A Matter of Time*** have created ripples in the minds of the readers and her writing has the power and the passion to ensure the changes that are required for the benefit of the society. The position and problem of women in the social order has been her concern, values and ethics in family has been her priority and the analysis and justification of both has been her force in her writings.

7.5 CONCLUSION

Indian English novel had began almost with the Introduction of English in Indian Education System, though earlier efforts by Indian writers were overshadowed by those in regional languages. In the early decades of 20th century writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao produced remarkable novels while post-Independence novelists like Khushwant Singh, Bhaani bhattacharya, Manohar Mulgaonkar etc. wrote novels of remarkable literary merit.

Contemporary Indian English novel has assumed global significance at the hands of such writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande and others. It forms an important feature of a global literary movement called New Literatures in English.

7.6 QUESTIONS / EXERCISE

1. Comment on the socio-cultural and political factors that led the Indian writers to writing novels in Indian English.
2. Evaluate the contribution of the early twentieth century writers to Indian English novel.
3. Who are the major writers of contemporary Indian English novel? Comment on a few novels you have read.



CRITICAL STUDY OF SHASHI DESHPANDE'S *MATTER OF TIME* PART II

Unit Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Shashi Deshpande – Life and Career
- 8.2 Deshpande's major Themes and style of writing
- 8.3 Theme of a matter of time
- 8.4 Character analysis Kalyani
- 8.5 Minor Characters
- 8.6 Feminism in *a Matter of Time*
- 8.7 Narrative Technique in *a Matter of Time*
- 8.8 Conclusion
- 8.9 Questions / Exercise

8.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to acquaint student with life and works of Shashi Deshpande as a novelist. The unit focuses upon the detailed study of Deshpande's novel *Matter of Time*.

8.1 SHASHI DESHPANDE – LIFE AND CAREER

Shashi Deshpande, (born in 1938 in Dharwad, Karnataka, India), is an award-winning Indian novelist. The second daughter of the famous Kannada dramatist and writer Sriranga, she was educated in Mumbai and Bangalore. She has attained degrees in Economics and Law. She even did a course on journalism at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and worked for a couple of months as a journalist for the magazine 'Onlooker' when she was staying in Mumbai.

Her first collection of short stories was published in 1978 and her first novel, ***The Dark Holds No Terrors*** came out in 1980. She was honoured with the Sahitya Academy Award for her novel ***That Long Silence*** in 1990 and the Padma Shri Award in 2009.

She has written nine novels, four children's book, and a number of short stories, besides several perspective essays which are now available in a volume entitled ***Writing from the Margin and Other Essays***. Her novels include ***The Dark Holds No Terrors*** (1980), ***If I Die Today*** (1982), ***Come Up and Be Dead*** (1983), ***That Long Silence*** (1989), ***The Intrusion and Other Stories*** (1993), ***Small Remedies*** (2000), ***A Matter of Time*** (2001), ***The Binding Vine*** (2002), ***Moving On*** (2004) and ***In the Country of Deceit*** (2008).

Children's books include ***A Summer Adventure***, ***The Hidden Treasure***, ***The Only Witness*** and ***The Narayanpur Incident***.

8.2 DESHPANDE'S MAJOR THEMES AND STYLE OF WRITING

Shashi Deshpande has dealt very minutely and delicately with the problems of middle-class educated women. Initially her mind was pre-occupied with people from the real life in India, but as she proceeded with her writing, women became her center of attention. She is uniquely Indian and her use of Marathi words like *Kaka*, *Kaki*, *Atya*, *Dada*, etc. evidently present the customs and traditions of the people belonging to Maharashtra. But she cares more for literary qualities of her creative works than for language as such. The most striking thing in her language is its transparency. Neither does it draw attention to itself nor does it come in the way and it becomes very obvious that her writing is not for the foreign readers but for the Indian booklovers.

Though Deshpande writes for women, presents their problems, lets the world know the predicaments that women of today are facing, yet she cannot be categorized among feminist writers as she has made it clear that "hers is not the strident and militant kind of feminism which sees the male as the cause of all trouble." Instead her writing deals mainly with the inner mind of the women and has projected the sufferance and submission of women with greater compassion and inherent understanding. Being born, brought up and educated in the Indian soil, her capability of indulging herself into the Indian tradition and culture is more authentic, plausible and pragmatic.

Shashi Deshpande believes that a writer presents the mirror image of the society in his/her writing and this is what she has also tried to do in most of her novels. Deshpande has not tried to make her women characters stronger than they are in real life; rather she has exposed their submissiveness, fretfulness and bewilderment. It is not that she has intentionally made women the spotlight in all her

novels. She, in fact, wanted to represent the society as a whole in her writings, but, somehow, as the characters took shape, the women characters turned out to be the main protagonists. Maybe herself being a woman, she understood the mundane reality of the women characters better and also comprehended satisfactorily the man-woman relationship; but she believes that everyone should live within the periphery of relationships.

The main themes that have found expression in Shashi Deshpande's novels are the inner conflict and search of identity, child-parent relationship, and the perception of marriage and sex. There is also a major theme of 'silence' rooted in the complex relationship between man and woman that has held a great fascination for the writer. The central theme around which the plots rotate is the middle-class educated women caught between the modern trends and the traditional practices. Her first novel ***The Dark Holds No Terror***, she scrutinizes the intricate relationship between a thriving doctor, Sarita, and her professionally frustrated and agitated husband. The tension in the family is obvious as the wife is more successful than the husband and this leads to the ultimate separation between them. In ***Roots and Shadows***, Indu, the young ambitious girl working for a women's magazine is perplexed about her impression of love, marriage and career that often strokes her life. Though she finally marries for love, she is not sure whether it is true love or just an attempt to prove her decision to be correct in the eyes of the elders. In ***That Long Silence***, Jaya, the protagonist, is so confused about everything that happens around her that she finds no other way but to adhere on to silence as her only means of communication.

Another factor that can be observed in her novels is that the woman presented is not complete in herself unless there is someone to shelter her – a father, brother or husband. "This is my real sorrow, that I can never be complete in myself." (p. 34) says Indu in ***Roots and Shadows***. And this is the cause of the continuous inner dilemma because she is always in two minds – whether to revolt against the social set-up or to submit to the traditional concept, whether to justify her intellect or surrender to her emotions, whether to accept the world of freedom and knowledge or to agree with the structure of dependence and darkness. Even in ***That Long Silence*** Jaya is not sure of her own identity and also accepts the ultimate humiliation of name change from Jaya to Suhashini after her marriage and becoming a property of her husband. She becomes submissive and longs to be an ideal wife and uses the weapons of 'silence' and 'surrender' because she understands that this is the only way of survival.

The type of society that is portrayed in the novels is patriarchal and male-dominant where usually the wives are afraid of

their husbands and cannot converse freely and frankly to anyone in the family or even the society. The author has also tried to see and define what an Indian marriage is and how getting the daughters married is a kind of achievement for the parents. Marriage makes women dependent upon their husbands not just economically but emotionally as well and so Deshpande highlights the lack of emotion and spiritual oneness between the husband and the wife in her novels. Marriage cannot bring happiness unless the spouses surrender to their ego and amalgamate into the comfort of each other and this is what Shashi Deshpande tries to bring forth through her characters.

Her men characters are not very expressive and the reason behind maybe the authors desire to emphasize the problems of women more than the unchanged attitude of the dominant sex. The narration, in most of her novels, shifts from the present to the past, thus covering the complete life span of the protagonists. There is always an optimistic end with the hope of some positive achievement in the future. Thus the writer perhaps tries to convey, with the help of her novels, that the need of the hour of this transitional phase is not an overall rebellion but a gradual change in the society and for that everyone has to put in some effort to bridge the gap between the old and the new.

Shashi Deshpande's foremost concern is to portray the torment and conflict of the modern educated Indian women trapped between patriarchy and convention on the one hand, and self-expression, individualism and self-determination of the women on the other. Her novels survey the search of the women to accomplish herself as a human being – independent of her traditional role as daughter, wife and mother.

In the shifting set-up of post colonial Indian society that has observed crosscurrents of traditional ethics and also the lately introduced ones, Shashi Deshpande was weighed down with the task of giving the then women characters the precise roles that would fit in the socio-cultural methods and morals of the altering society. As a consequence a new generation of women came into view, accepting the changing principles in which women have a voice of their own – a voice that had been suppressed for centuries. Usually these women are poverty stricken, meticulous, sincere and silent who have throughout lived like animals, embracing intolerable sufferings for survival and yet hoping for a better future only to be crest fallen at the end. Nothing happens in their life except a series of disappointments along with humiliation, torture and repeated nightmares. A voice of protest against the marginalized condition of women as a class is also audible in her works.

In Shashi Deshpande's novels, we can find the variety of characters too. In her literary world there are characters taken from almost all the sections of the society. They are medical practitioners and writers, educated housewives, uneducated ones and maidservants. Besides poverty, bereavement and such other common adversities, there are some causes of suffering exclusively for the female. In *Roots and Shadows*, Indu, the protagonist endures great mental trauma in her childhood as well as after marriage because of her husband Jayant's double standards. Jayant, though presumably learned and liberal, is intolerant about any deviation on Indu's part from the conventional role of a wife. Even the predicament of Indu's *kakis* and *atyas* are exposed through Indu's eyes – the heart-rending description of Akka's child marriage reveals the despondent condition Indian women of the older generation had to live in. ***The Dark Holds No Terrors*** is a significant illustration of men who are prejudiced about playing a second role in marriage, and how their manhood gets injured when their wives achieve a superior position in society. Though it is Manu who is uncomfortable and insecure with the growing status of his wife Saru and the familial problem starts with that, Deshpande has made society equally accountable for their worsening affairs. In ***That Long Silence***, Jaya's quandary in marriage shoots from her husband's narrow-mindedness towards any divergence from her task of a submissive wife. When her husband walks out of the house, Jaya is very perplexed and depressed as she had all along followed her Vanita Mami's opinion that a husband is like a 'sheltering tree' which must be kept alive at any cost for without it the family becomes desolate and vulnerable; but in doing so she becomes conscious of the fact that she and her children are becoming more exposed and insecure. In ***The Binding Vine***, Shashi Deshpande raises the topic of the hitherto untouched concern of marital rape. Women like Mira, Urmi's mother-in-law, have to tolerate the nightly sexual assault by their husbands mutely. Other women like Shakutai, her sister Sulu, Kalpana and her sister, have their own remorseful anecdotes. Shakutai's husband is a drunkard and a useless fellow who absconds from his wife and children for another woman. Kalpana is viciously raped by Prabhakar, Sullu's husband. ***A Matter of Time*** is yet another novel wherein the husband walks out from his family that encompasses of his wife and three daughters. His desertion is a source for great mortification and mental trauma for her as it's not only an issue of immense disgrace and disrepute but a bitter consciousness of being unwanted. She is self-respecting and takes up a job for the sake of her daughters as well as her own individuality. Though Gopal, her husband, comes back, she is then a new Sumi who has coped with the disaster with incredible stoicism. In *Small Remedies* Shashi Deshpande has recounted the awful saga of Savitribai Indorekar, doyenne of the Gwalior Gahrana. She leads the most exceptional of lives, but endures immense psychological shock

because of the twofold principles practiced in society. Right from her childhood she had sensed the sickening gender discrimination in the society that had one set of laws for men and another for women.

Deshpande's feminism does not uproot the woman from her background but tries to expose the different ideological elements that shape her. These include religious and cultural elements like myths, legends, rituals and ceremonies, and social and psychological factors like woman's subordinate position in the family and her restricted sexuality. Their search for freedom and self-identity within marriage is a recurring theme. All her protagonists, whether it is Indu, Saru or Jaya, are initially shown to be in a state of confusion. Slowly as the novel unfolds, they go through a process of introspection, self-analysis and self-realization and, at the end, they emerge as more confident, more in control of themselves, and considerably more optimistic.

8.3 THEME OF A MATTER OF TIME

The novel *A Matter of Time* revolves around the consequences of an absurd situation when the mentor of the family, Gopal, the husband of Sumi and the father of three daughters, suddenly decides to leave the family on a pretext that is difficult to understand by others. One fine morning he just discloses his decision of leaving the family forever at a time when Sumi, in her casual mood is watching a circus programme on the television. The resolution by Gopal is so sudden and unexpected that Sumi fails to adhere on to herself as she is lost in her own secluded world of muteness and motionlessness. Long years of togetherness have given her the ability to identify Gopal's feelings and thoughts and this knowledge gives her the idea that no one can move Gopal from the decision he has taken. In fact she understands that it is not worth to request him to change his verdict but rather it is advisable for her to face the uncompromising situation with a brave heart. To her Gopal's judgment announces his detachment and she reacts not in terms of a deserted wife but as a confident lady capable of handling the unwanted circumstances.

The decision of Gopal's moving out shatters the daughters especially Aru who is unable to comprehend the sudden change of situations and is quite at a loss regarding her father's uncompromising attitude. The pronouncement comes as a blow to her and initially she is totally against her mother's decision of moving to the 'Big House' as she has a feeling that their own house will somehow mend their declining relationships and things will be better again. She is hesitant in her approach and this result in her losing consciousness when she reaches her grandparents' house. The pain of the disintegration of the family troubles Aru who

considers herself responsible for her father's action and tries her best to undo it.

Sumi, along with her daughters, return to their ancestral house where her mother Kalyani had been living in an oppressive and strange silence, striving to make sense of her relation with her husband who hasn't spoken to her for years. It is in this stifling atmosphere that the characters progress and come to a newer perceptive of their lives. Kalyani gives vent to her long suppressed feelings as her relation with her daughter and granddaughters extend, opening up the gates of her memories through which the family legacy pours out. Sumi finds consolation in taking up her dream career, and Aru starts making sense of her mother's indifference and her father's desertion.

Wrath, role of destiny, gender differences are some of many themes around which Deshpande weaves her tale. If for Gopal it is something as weird as existential fury that drives him away from his family, for Shripati it is the inner fury of loss and longing. Throughout the novel Gopal himself is at loss of any convincing explanation for his action and his effort at understanding the fury that torments him is brilliantly rendered with the help of various insinuations from Upanishads to Camus and then to Joan of Arc.

Gopal's desertion is not just a tragedy for Sumi and their daughters, but a shame and a disgrace. They know that they now have to bear the social stigma for no fault of theirs and this enhances a heavy weight on them. Aru tries to become the man of the family by taking care of her mother that also includes her insistence on taking her to the dentist as well. For a while Aru and Kalyani do not get along well but very soon a strange relationship grows up between them. Aru is also puzzled about her grandfather's behavior but Sumi tries to persuade her to ignore it as she even tries her daughter to forget what Gopal has done.

It is obvious that Kalyani is not happy with Sumi's separation, in fact no mother would be, and she has no idea what the future would be of her daughter. To set things right Kalyani even approaches Gopal and pleads to him for she is apprehensive of the tragedy that has happened to her should not be repeated to her daughter. She even tries to take all the blame on herself, thinking that her daughter might be at fault and so protecting her from the difficult eventualities that have cropped up. Between her and her husband, Shripati, silence stands still. Her husband had stopped talking to her and has secluded himself to the up stair room of the house after the tragic incident of losing their son on the railway platform. He had considered Kalyani responsible for the episode and had blamed her always for the irresponsibility. And as a punishment he had isolated himself forever creating a vast

crevice between them which is filled only with the affliction of silence. Kalyani has never complained; she has borne the brunt with fortitude. She knows that she has to move on, though separately. Unlike Sumi, she had always accepted her fortune humbly and had never thought of walking alone. The presence of her husband in the house speaks of her existence as a wife and she has accustomed herself to this traditional survival. So naturally Sumi's arrival in the house astonishes her as it is an act that she would possibly not have the courage to take.

Even Aru has no idea about her father's behavior; at the outset she has even the apprehension of his being no more. The desertion of Gopal has touched Aru very harshly and it is very difficult for her to come to terms with it. When she visits Gopal, she wants to know the reason of his abnormal behavior but when Gopal talks in his philosophical manner Aru is confused and she feels humiliated even by her father's action. When she had gone to meet him, she had the confidence that Gopal will listen to her and she was determined of bringing him back. But when the visit yielded no fruit she is shattered from the core of her heart. It is then that she decides that Sumi should go for a divorce. Sumi does not like the idea but Aru is too decisive to be moved. She even makes arrangement for her lawyer to meet her father which results in a very successful meeting.

Sumi visits Gopal after she comes to know of his residing place but her call is much different from that of her mother's or her daughter's; neither is she the first one to visit him – she goes only after Kalyani and Aru have waded the path. As for Kalyani it was a desperate pleading, for Aru it was remorseful resentment but for Sumi it was gracious compliance. She knows that there is no use asking the inevitable question 'why' to Gopal because it is in no way the solution. Finally Sumi leaves everyone and goes – not a temporary departure but a permanent one – leaving her daughters in the custody of her mother and husband. She forces her father to be a pillion rider on her scooter, trying to fill up the gap of having a son; throughout her life she had been conscious of her father's affiliation for the son whom they had lost at a very young age. Though a little mentally charged, the son had paved a determinant position in the heart of their father and his getting lost had affected the family a lot. Sumi throughout had been an observant of the tragic circumstances and has realized, maybe, her father's silence and her mother's anguish. To justify her role and her concern she offers a scooter ride to her father which he accepts after great persuasion. In her yearning to prove herself a responsible daughter she forgets to challenge fate and meets with a tragic accident that takes away the lives of both. It was a sudden distraction on her part – her father pronounces a name which she somehow feels is of her lost brother's – and everything is lost forever.

A Matter of Time explores the intricate relationships within an extended family, encircling three generations. Images from Hindu religion, myth, and local history interlace dexterously with descriptions of contemporary India as the women face and accept the changes that have suddenly become part of their lives. As the women's secrets and strengths are exposed, so are the impediments of family and culture, catching each in turn in the cycles of love, loss, and renewal that become essential to her identity.

8.4 CHARACTER ANALYSIS KALYANI

Kalyani – the epitome of silence, the lady who has shut herself away from the life of her husband – holds a prominent place in Shashi Deshpande's enchanting novel. Born in a family where sons are given preference, she adheres to the compulsions of the society without any squabble. She is the perfect motherly figure who fears the problems of the worst for her tormented daughter and so believes in compliance and acceptance. She is shocked when Sumi comes with her daughters to the 'Big House' – it is not that she hates their coming, it is she hates to accept her daughter's distress. She knows the suffering of a lady from the core of her heart as she has undergone trauma and distress all through her life: "But Kalyani, standing in the doorway, looks petrified, she doesn't move, she scarcely hears Devaki." (32). The fainting of Aru, as soon as their arrival astounds Kalyani very much that her condition becomes pitiable but there is some deeper thoughts in her mind that creates the tension and the silence in her: "But it isn't Aru's fainting that has got Kalyani into this state, it is something else none of them has noticed: her rush towards Aru when she fell, her realization, an almost instinctive one, that she was next to Shripati, his abrupt walking away from her. Now she sits unusually silent, frozen into an immobility, unable to shake off the paralysis of fear." (32) it was after years she had stood close to her husband and this has gripped not with happiness but fear – the unknown fear of the unwanted.

Between her and her husband, Shripati, silence stands still. Her husband had stopped talking to her and has secluded himself to the up stair room of the house after the tragic incident of losing their son on the railway platform. He had considered Kalyani responsible for the episode and had blamed her always for the irresponsibility. And as a punishment he had isolated himself forever creating a vast crevice between them which is filled only with the affliction of silence. Kalyani has never complained; she has borne the brunt with fortitude. She knows that she has to move on, though separately. Unlike Sumi, she had always accepted her fortune humbly and had never thought of walking alone. The presence of her husband in the house speaks of her existence as a

wife and she has accustomed herself to this traditional survival. So naturally Sumi's arrival in the house astonishes her as it is an act that she would possibly not have the courage to take.

The 'Big House' where Kalyani lives under the illusory shadow of her husband belonged to her father and this has inculcated enormous pride in her. Along with Shripati it is the house that has given her identity and enormity. Though the coming of Sumi's family distracts her, she behaves like a modest host and arranges everything appropriately for her daughter and her granddaughters. But she maintains her composure and does not interfere much into the personal life of Sumi and even when her other daughter, Prema, pays them a visit after hearing the separation of Sumi and Gopal, Kalyani listens to everything with composure, never letting out her own comments or suggestion and when once she does everyone is taken by surprise: "But Kalyani has been surprisingly silent, especially this last hour, and entirely still, except for the ceaseless movement of her hands stroking her tiny feet as if they hurt her. She has made her presence felt only by her loud yawns at regular intervals. And now suddenly she says 'Fate'. And just as abruptly walks out, leaving the word lingering among them." (17)

It is obvious that Kalyani is not happy with Sumi's separation, in fact no mother would be, and she has no idea what the future would be of her daughter. Her worry for her daughter is clearly visible even in minor experiments like learning to ride the scooter by Sumi – "Kalyani goes in and out with a nervousness she cannot conceal". (34)

Though initially there is a kind of strain in the relationship of Kalyani and Aru as each of them is apprehensive of the snatched space of their lives, still the tender touch is visible which, with time, becomes a bond beyond severance. When Aru suffers from high fever, Kalyani is so nervous that Sumi has to support her with words of consolation – "She'll be all right, Amma. Sumi replies, not to Kalyani's reproach, but to the fear in Kalyani's voice, the fear in her own self." (37)

To set things right Kalyani even approaches Gopal and pleads to him for she is apprehensive of the tragedy that has happened to her should not be repeated to her daughter – "What have you done to my daughter, Gopala, don't do this, don't let it happen to my daughter, what happened to me." (46) It is a mother's desperate wish to see her daughter secured and settled and for that she doesn't mind her own humiliation even. She even tries to take all the blame on herself, thinking that her daughter might be at fault and so protecting her from the difficult eventualities that have cropped up – "I know she was careless, she says, I know she didn't

bother too much about her home, but Gopala", and now she hesitates, "how could she have known what being a good wife means when she never saw her mother being one? I taught her nothing, it's my fault Gopala, forgive me and don't punish her for it." And when Gopal affirms that Sumi is not responsible, Kalyani immediately moves on to the other possibilities that might have led to the separation, but when she does not get any clear reason she knows that she will fail in her duty of convincing him. When she understands that nothing will affect him, anger grips her and she leaves him in a hurry with no conviction at all.

A part of the novel also deals with Kalyani's historical background that was unveiled to Gopal after his confirmation of marrying her daughter Sumi. The documents of the past spoke of the courage and fearlessness of the male members of the family but hardly spoke about the women, as if "they are only an absence, still waiting to be discovered." (95) Kalyani and her sister, Goda, often talk about the past, especially their mother, Manorama, and when they speak of the past it seems "they are playing a cat's cradle, skillfully transferring the thread from hand to hand, from finger to finger, creating a design between them, a design that allows certain facts to slip through." (121)

Kalyani's marriage to her uncle Shripati is also a part of that past which stems up in their memories without fail but would have been considered better had it slipped off through the crevices – "And yet Kalyani was not allowed to complete her schooling. She was taken out of school and married off by Manorama to her own brother Shripati. Perhaps, after this, Manorama felt secure. The property would remain in the family now. Her family." (129)

No one understands the predicament that Kalyani has been facing throughout her life; her husband Shripathi and even Aru, at the beginning when she comes to know about the tragedy, considers her responsible for the lost son. Before that she was held responsible by her mother for the death of her father – "Manorama refused to accept this. No, Kalyani was wrong, that wasn't what he was saying. And she wasn't going to allow them to move him from the bed. The fact was she was terrified, she wouldn't let him go, she refused to understand that Vithalrao wanted to die, that he was straining after death. Kalyani, unable to bear her father's agonized pleas, had him removed from the bed and placed on the floor when Manorama was away. She was rewarded by the peaceful look on his face. He died in a short while and to Manorama, it was as if Kalyani had killed him." (153). It was only after the death of Kalyani's father that Manorama and requested her brother to come and stay with them, and Kalyani had to accept her husband's physical presence after years of emotional estrangement.

An extraordinary indestructible bond develops between Kalyani and her granddaughter Aru. She even decides to distribute her ancestral ornamental property among her three granddaughters and when Aru asks the reason why she wants to make her so special Kalyani has a very suggestive response that touches the hearts of all – “This time Kalyani understands her. ‘I think – I hope – my mother would have been proud of you. I was a great disappointment to her. Not only because I was a girl, but because – because – oh, maybe because I was none of those things she would have liked her daughter to be. I was not beautiful, not smart” (226)

After the scooter accident that takes the lives of her husband and her daughter, Kalyani is shattered. Like a bewildered entity, her presence surrounded by her grieving granddaughters is so pathetic that the readers are carried away by the terrific wretchedness of fate and its fall on innocent individuals. Kalyani, who has suffered the ignominy of chance all through her life, stands again on the verge of the vulnerable crossroads to be engulfed into the obscurity of destiny.

SUMI

Sumi, the woman who suffers silently her husband’s sudden abandonment, is one of the central characters in the novel *A Matter of Time*. A lady who is at peace and at home with her husband, Gopal, and her three daughters, Aur, Charu and Seema, suddenly finds herself at the threshold of tragedy. The shock comes abruptly and unawares at a time when she is relaxingly watching television and at the background of the song ‘*jeena yahan, marna yahan*’ Gopal utters the ultimate. Sumi absorbs the final verdict with serenity and sobriety – this reflects not her composure but her uncertainty at the turn of events. Petite and regular attacks make one strong enough to face the critical challenges but an unsuspecting violent blow is very difficult to digest. Sumi is strong enough not to succumb to the difficult situation and initially unbelievably and later steadfastly she adjusts herself to the changing circumstances.

The night Gopal informs and leaves her she stays awake for long, ‘her mind slides from one interpretation to another, over and over again’, trying to make out some sense from the gibberish confession of Gopal. The morning after his departure she maintains her tranquility as she performs her daily routine and informs her daughters. “Her mind is crystal clear, she knows what has happened, she sees the picture with a detachment that will not be hers, not for a very long while.” (9) Sumi knows that she has to take an immediate decision and the first step she takes is of discarding the house they lived and move on to the house of her parents the ‘Big House’ as everyone calls it. Her father, Sripathy, who hardly

talks to anyone, comes to take them and they move into first as temporary intruders and then as permanent inhabitants.

Sumi's relationship with Gopal becomes vulnerable enough to be commented and criticized by friends and relatives and she bears every brunt with poise and patience. Neither is she shy of accepting the incorrigible truth nor does she have any intention to hide the incongruous fact: "Say it, Ramesh, say he's missing, say he's walked out on his wife and children. It's got to come out some time, how long are we going to hide it from the world? And do you think people don't know? I'm sure they do and frankly I don't care." (21) She knows that Gopal's decision has deeply affected her children, especially Aru who has taken in a negative feeling for men and marriage. Even after undergoing so many traumas Sumi tries to make Aru understand the obligation of marriage.

Sumi visits Gopal after she comes to know of his residing place but her call is much different from that of her mother's or her daughter's; neither is she the first one to visit him – she goes only after Kalyani and Aru have waded the path. As for Kalyani it was a desperate pleading, for Aru it was remorseful resentment but for Sumi it was gracious compliance. She knows that there is no use asking the inevitable question 'why' to Gopal because it is in no way the solution. But still she has one question that she wants to ask Gopal: "And yet, she thinks, if I meet Gopal I will ask him one question no one has thought of. What is it Gopal, I will ask him, that makes a man in this age of acquisition and possession walk out on his family and all that he owns? Because, and I remember this so clearly, it was you who said that we are shaped by the age we live in, by the society we are part of. How, then, in this age, a part of this society, turn your back to everything in your life? Will you be able to give an answer to this?" (27) And it is only when she meets Gopal that in a flash she realizes that Gopal and she must move on alone and she reconciles herself to their separation: "We can never be together again. All these days I have been thinking of him as if he has been suspended in space, in nothingness, since he left us. But he has gone on living. His life has moved on, it will go on without me. So has mine. Our lives have diverged. They now move more separately, two different streams." (85)

Sumi even tries to persuade Aru to ignore the queer relationship between her grandparents just as she tries to make her forget what Gopal has done: "Do you want to punish him, Aru? I'm not interested. I just want to get on with my life. Let him go Aru, just let him go. This is not good for you." (61). But gradually when she sees the proximity between her mother and her daughter she feels happy to find the gap filled in and there is a sense of relief in her attitude. A perfect mother, she tries to stand by each of her daughter in times of crisis and though her exterior self looks less

concerned, she is soft and fretful from within. This gentleness of hers is visible when Aru meets with a scooter accident and she becomes desperate for her daughter.

Sumi even tries to come out of the stamp of feminism by learning to ride the scooter and deciding to join a job even away from the family. She wants to come out of the chains of familial bondage that she had till then carefully held together. But Gopal's going away from her life has taught her the lesson of individuality and seclusion. She is happy to disclose her decision to Gopal and their last meeting confirms not just her final seeing off but also a reminder of the past that has slipped off from their lives. When she reveals her resolution to the rest of the family it is accepted in a sad note from her elder daughters but her mother gives her the assurance and courage to adhere to her decision.

Finally Sumi leaves everyone and goes – not a temporary departure but a permanent one – leaving her daughters in the custody of her mother and husband. She forces her father to be a pillion rider on her scooter, trying to fill up the gap of having a son; throughout her life she had been conscious of her father's affiliation for the son whom they had lost at a very young age. Though a little mentally charged, the son had paved a determinant position in the heart of their father and his getting lost had affected the family a lot. Sumi throughout had been an observant of the tragic circumstances and has realized, maybe, her father's silence and her mother's anguish. To justify her role and her concern she offers a scooter ride to her father which he accepts after great persuasion. In her yearning to prove herself a responsible daughter she forgets to challenge fate and meets with a tragic accident that takes away the lives of both. It was a sudden distraction on her part – her father pronounces a name which she somehow feels is of her lost brother's – and everything is lost forever.

Sumi, the replica of patience and courage, finally submits in the hands of destiny. Her struggle with fate is a long one but finally, it seems, she loses the battle. Her seeking farewell of all, though it was considered for a transitory phase, assured its permanent mark. There had been a suicidal tendency in her – "She has seen the fan coming down on her body, crushing it, she has seen her body hanging from the fan, the ghastly shape slowly spinning and twirling." (190) So was her accident a known fact to her? Has she planned it before hand? Or it should be considered just as any other accident is – a mere chance!

ARU

Aru, the eldest daughter of Sumi and Gopal, the teenager girl who is affected the most by her father's abandonment of them, is very sensitive and somber in attitude. It is really very difficult for

her to grasp the consequences – “And so it is that Aru, a few days before her seventeenth birthday, wakes up to the knowledge that her father has walked out of them.” (10) The behavior of Sumi, her mother, forces her to comprehend that Sumi will not yield to the intricacies of the circumstances though she listens and justifies with patience and composure to the exclamations of her daughters. When Sumi decides to leave their house and accommodate themselves in the ‘Big House’, Aru is reluctant but she has no other option but to adhere to the resolution. When they reach the house of her grandparents Sumi bursts out for the first time and Aru is immature enough to understand the uncontrollable. She fails to realize the motherly contact that can compel a lady with such a strong mindset as Sumi’s to collapse such effortlessly – “Aru is overcome by a sense of unreality; she finds herself unable to connect herself to her surroundings, to these people around her and their distress. My God, what’s happening to us and what am I doing, lying here on the floor like a refugee?” (12)

Unable to adjust herself in the new surrounding she continuously tries to protect her own misgivings by assuming that the change in their status is just a temporary one and within a few days things will be alright. Aru is a disciplinarian and there is orderliness in everything she does and so even her provisional place of residing gets a tidy touch. Initially she is not in good terms with her grandmother, for she finds it difficult to intervene into her state of affairs. But with time assumptions change and strong unbreakable bond develops between the two.

Aru has no idea about her father’s behavior; at the outset she has even the apprehension of his being no more. She is even confused about her own action at such circumstances and when her younger sister, Charu, thinks that something indeed should be done by them, her reaction is quite obvious – “What do we do? Put an ad in the paper saying – ‘Come home, Papa, Sumi ill, all forgiven.’ Or do we stick him among the missing persons on TV?” (13) And then she has a sudden realization, she feels that she hardly knows her father and even a greater consciousness is that she they are trapped into inactivity by the greatest fear of all – the fear of losing face as Gopal’s desertion is not just a tragedy but it is both a shame and a disgrace. Aru sees in Sumi the hope of Gopal’s coming back though she never expresses it in any way and as a daughter she understands the pain and the pathos lying deep in Sumi’s heart. Aru even calls for her aunt Premi for help but seeing the disapproval in Sumi’s approach and the non-submission in Gopal’s attitude, her hope gradually fades away.

The desertion of Gopal has touched Aru very harshly and it is very difficult for her to come to terms with it. The issue becomes so sensitive that she, at times, even over-reacts to words and

comments to such an extent that her insecurity and timidity are exposed incongruently – ‘You don’t care?’ aru’s reaction to her mother’s words is violent and sharp. ‘That’s wonderful. You don’t care about his having gone, you don’t care where he is, you don’t care what people think – but I care, yes I do, I care about Papa having left us, I care about not having our own house. I don’t want to live like this, as if we’re sitting on a railway platform. I want my home back, I want my father back’ (21) Aru’s has a strong sense of belongingness with regard to their house as well and she is very against their vacating because in some corner of her heart she has a feeling that if the house is there Gopal will inevitably come back to them. but Sumi is decisive in her action and Aru knows that she cannot challenge her and later when Sumi comes out fresh after her bath Aru has a sudden lift of spirits and she feels that perhaps things will work out in a better way. But however hard she tries to make her senses realize the uncompromising situation, there is a sensation of negation in her attitude when she comes to her grandparents’ house and this is the reason maybe that takes away her spirit and she faints as she enters.

Aru is concerned about her mother’s plight but when she finds her working in the kitchen she analyses that Sumi is all right and has the capability of meeting to the demands of the forced situation. She is also anxious about her mother’s learning to ride the scooter and though she justifies her grandmother by logical suggestions, her own nervousness is revealed by her gestures. Aru has the habit of taking care of their youngest sister, Seema, spoiling her habits which Charu is very against. It seems Aru suffers from a kind of inferiority complex as she considers herself not as beautiful as the other members of the family. She tries to be the ‘man’ of the family by insisting on taking her mother to the dentist. It is only when Aru falls ill that the closeness of her near and dear ones becomes the strength that stand by her throughout.

Aru is also very desperate to know the detachment between her grandparents; she has various queries regarding their relationship – “Why doesn’t Baba come down? Why doesn’t he have his meals here with the rest of us? Why doesn’t he ever speak to Kalyani? She is his wife, isn’t she? And why is she so frightened of him? He rings the bell and she responds, he controls her from a distance. What has Amma done to make him behave this way towards her?” (39) Though Sumi does not want Aru to be involved in her grandparents’ affairs, Aru comes to know about the tragedy of the lost child from her aunt and she is shocked at the turn of events.

When she visits Gopal, she wants to know the reason of his abnormal behavior but when Gopal talks in his philosophical manner Aru is confused and she feels humiliated even by her

father's action. When she had gone to meet him, she had the confidence that Gopal will listen to her and she was determined of bringing him back. But when the visit yielded no fruit she is shattered from the core of her heart. It is then that she decides that Sumi should go for a divorce. Sumi does not like the idea but Aru is too decisive to be moved. She even makes arrangement for her lawyer to meet her father which results in a very successful meeting.

Aru meets with a scooter accident and this incident shakes Sumi very much. Sumi is even stunned more by Aru's disapproval of marriage and she tries to bring some rationale into it but Aru is resolute. There is a bond that gradually unites Kalyani and Aru – a connection so special that the readers are capable of analyzing its depth – “Kalyani plunging into the past with her granddaughter Aru, will try to refashion her family history out of carefully chosen material, leaving out everything that is dark and discomfoting.” (100) when Sumi discloses about her getting a job and moving away from them, Aru feels devastated for she senses that everything has come to an end; nothing can be rectified any more – “It's over. Our family life. When Papa went I thought, I hoped, we would get it back some day, it was still possible, I could dream of it, but now – I don't know....”(230) And then Sumi goes away forever taking their grandfather as well to that final journey and Aru knows that she cannot fight with fate. Always she had the wish of living together – pleaded with Gopal, argued with Sumi, distanced herself from Kalyani, disagreed with Charu – everything for the sake of a united happy family. But then she knew that with destiny she can do nothing but to accept its verdict. Aru knows that the death of her grandfather and her mother has left her grandmother forlorn and depressed and so she stands by her shielding her from the cloud of sorrow and anguish – “I'm your daughter, Amma, I'm your son.” (244) like her grandmother she even does not stop Gopal from his departure and tells him confidently that they will be able to manage by themselves and Gopal need not worry about them. It is only after the death of Sumi that Aru understands that why her mother was not desperate like her to bring their father back though in her heart the wish of his return was so strong. Aru desperately wishes her father to be with them but she knows that she can't stop the tide and there is no success in requesting. To go with the tide is the best way of survival and the mature Aru recognizes this after losing a lot in life. But then onwards she wants to prove her confidence and capability and so her confirming statement to her grandmother indicates her self-assurance and self-reliance.

GOPAL

Gopal, the husband of Sumi and the father of three daughters, is the person on whose sudden uncompromising

decision the story revolves. It is on a calm and peaceful ambiance that Gopal abruptly but straightforwardly discloses to Sumi that he would no longer continue to be with them. The shock is intense, especially on the part of his daughters, but he does not deviate himself from the decision he has taken. Only Sumi knows that Gopal can never be persuaded to change his mind, only she knows that no one can interfere between his thought and his action. This shows his adamant nature and his ruthless behavior.

After leaving his family Gopal has no intention of making his whereabouts a mystery; rather he starts staying just a few miles away with one of his old students. It is a room above the printing press and many would consider it an odd place to reside but Gopal has no problem with the unsophisticated surrounding. Gopal has great faith on Sumi and he feels that she will be the one who will understand his conduct though he is guilty of his behavior towards her. Often he remembers the past with Sumi by his side and this creates in him a nostalgic effect which he tries desperately to come out from. It is the sense of spirituality that Gopal is actually attracted with and the words keep buzzing in his ears: *'We are searching for the truth; you, O bee, have found it.'*

Gopal expects Sumi to visit him first and he is quite taken aback when he finds that the first visitor is his mother-in-law accompanied by his second daughter, Charu. He tries to explain Kalyani's queries, does his best to make her understand that neither Sumi nor money is responsible for his departure, and also gives her a hint that he will never yield to any kind of compelling circumstance. On the other hand he is also touched by Charu's presence and has a desiring instinct of helping her out with the small problems she comprehends. The next person he confronts is his eldest daughter Aru who is hostile and sharp-edged, ready for the war. Aru wants to know the reason, breaks down hysterically, but Gopal is silent and unmoved. Though Aru insists he has no explanation for her and thus he makes Aru's coming an attempt to failure.

Gopal is very nervous in facing Aru and her intriguing questions: "Her questions are like the Yaksha's questions; a wrong answer will cost my life. At one moment I almost blurted out what is perhaps the only thing I can say to her: I was frightened, Aru, frightened of the emptiness within me, I was frightened of what I could do to us, to all of you, with that emptiness inside me. That is the real reason why I walked away from Sumi, from you and your sisters." (50) Gopal's thought suggests that fear is the main reason of his walking out of the lives of his family members and it is an excuse too illogical to be forgiven. Gopal has his own philosophy though – "We bury our fears deep, we stamp hard on the earth, we build our lives on this solid, hard foundation, but suddenly the fear

comes to life, and the earth shakes with their struggle to surface.” (51) Even when Premi visits him, he is theoretical in his thoughts and his justification is very suggestive – “You remember the YAksha’s question to Yudhishtira: what is the greatest wonder in this world? And what Yudhishtira’s answer was? We see people die and yet we go on as if we are going to live forever. Yes, it’s true, that is the greatest marvel this world holds, it’s the miracle. In fact, it’s the secret of life itself. We know it’s all there, the pain and suffering, old age, loneliness and death, but we think, somehow we believe that it’s not for us. The day we stop believing in this untruth, the day we face truth that we too are mortal, that this is our fate as well, it will become difficult, almost impossible to go on. And if it happens to all of us, the human race will become extinct. It happened to me. I stopped believing. The miracle failed for me and there was nothing left. You’ve got to be the Buddha for that emptiness to be filled with compassion for the world. For me there was just emptiness.” (134) Gopal replies to Prem’s questions in such a way that it seems that he has left his family for the sake of his wife and daughters only; suggesting that they would not have been happy in his company and so the best way to give them happiness was by leaving them forever.

Gopal is often preoccupied with the memories of the past, especially the consequences that led to his marriage with Sumi and the long years of uninterrupted togetherness. Even at times unawares he keeps recollecting the past and finds himself totally engaged in Sumi’s presence – “He can see her now, sitting before the mirror, looking earnestly at herself, drawing the lipstick carefully across her lips, pursing them together, a thoughtful look on her face.” (106) So engrossed is he in her imaginary presence that it becomes really difficult to believe that a man so intently close to the family can take such a desperate action. Sumi and Gopal meet twice later and it was a very peaceful meeting. In the first meeting it seemed that both have understood each other so well that there was no reason for mush talk, and in the latter it was the final farewell for Sumi where she has a feeling that they will never meet again. On both the occasions Gopal’s silence has said a lot through his overpowering silence and Sumi had consumed the toxic demeanor.

Finally when Sumi and her father meet with a fatal accident, Gopal stands by the family. But still his mind is in search of something else and he decides to move away from the remaining members of the family. It is quite unrealistic on his part, at this juncture of tragic moments that he decides to go away from his teen aged daughters who, at the loss of their mother, might have the need of their father. But Gopal’s understanding is beyond such emotions and he discloses his desire to leave. Neither Kalyani, nor the daughters stop him for they know that it is futile. Though he

assures Kalyani of his return, they know his ways and so Aru convinces him of their being fine without him. When Gopal holds Aru close, consoling her, he wants to tell the world why he had decided to keep himself away – “Holding the thin quivering body, listening to the piteous heart-rending cries, Gopal is invaded by a piercing pain. This is what I wanted to avoid, this is what I hoped to escape.” (246) there is no farewell at his departure, he looks back at the two women, the old and the young, and he knows that it is this picture that will be with him wherever he goes. Gopal, the family man from the core of his heart, desperately tries to shed every attachment for the fear of losing them forever.

8.5 MINOR CHARACTERS

SHRIPATI

The father of Sumi and Premi, Shripati is the icon of silence, the man who has failed to forgive his wife after years of tragedy in which his son lost and for which he holds his wife responsible. Leaving his family on the railway platform, he had gone on some errand and after returning he had found his wife with their two daughters but the son was never to be found. He had searched for him day and night for quite a number of days and then had given away hope secluding himself from the world as well. An isolated man, he lost all faith in family and relationship and started maintaining this estranged relationship with care. He too, like Gopal, had walked away from his family and it was only after the death of his father-in-law and the instance of his sister (he was married to his sister's daughter) he had come back to the house providing it a kind of protection.

He had distanced himself from Kalyani so much that his presence in the same house gives her a sense of fear. Though a room has been made upstairs for him to stay aloof from the other family members, still the aura of his presence moves Kalyani too much. It is he who brings Sumi and her daughters to the ‘Big House’ when Gopal leaves them and even when Aru is down with high fever she has a feeling that her grandfather had come by her side, still everyone feels that he is the person who should not be included in any of the family affairs. The distance that had actually started with Kalyani had gradually spread and everyone feels it safe to maintain the space that had unmindfully generated between them. To Kalyani he never talks, to the others very rarely – he is just an enigmatic charisma controlling the family from a distance.

Yet his death, that comes abruptly, shocks Kalyani and when the others mourn over the death of Sumi, Kalyani's heart secretly flies off to the person who was, after all, her husband. Though Shripati had no wish, Sumi forces him to accompany her on the

scooter, trying to prove maybe to her father that she is no less than a son, and this ride becomes the final ride for both. Shripati's presence has been critical in the eyes of all – having forsaken his wife, segregating him from the rest of the family, failing to ignore the past and forgetting to respond to the present that is more demanding, and many such issues. But his sudden death, and that too as a pillion rider, catches sympathy. The man of silence dies after making a hoarse sound seeing the approaching truck and this is the farce that the author tries to project in the character who is very rarely present in the novel but his presence is always felt, especially in the 'Big House'.

PREMI

Premi, the sister of Sumi, has a very little role to play in the novel which preoccupies mostly the tragic separation of Sumi and Gopal. She is the one on whom the children of Sumi and Gopal, especially Aru, really rely when the unexpected catastrophe takes place. She comes instantly to the rescue of all and finds herself an unwanted guest in the eyes of Sumi. But she feels determined to help Aru at this crucial period. She does not even hesitate in questioning the daughters some of the most intricate queries.

When Premi visits the 'Big House' for the sake of Sumi and her children, she becomes nostalgic, trying to hold on to the scattered elements and seem to slip out of control. She remembers the past – "Sumi and I, we were never like this. She was ahead of me and I was forever trailing behind, never able to catch up with her. And it makes no difference that I am now a successful professional, mother of a seven-year-old son, wife of a prosperous lawyer. The moment I come home, all this dwindles into nothing and I can feel myself sliding back into adolescence, getting once again under the skin of that frightened child Premi who's always waiting here for me." (17)

It is very difficult for Premi to accept the truth that Gopal has moved out from the life of Sumi, she can think of no valid reason behind the act, she cannot even believe how Gopal could have been exhausted of Sumi. She even visits Gopal with a volley of questions but initially Gopal's silence makes her falter. Later when Gopal becomes philosophical, Premi tries to balance it with the expected responsibility. Gopal logically tries to prove himself and Premi is carried away by some other revelation as she feels that for the first time in her life Gopal is addressing her as a person and not as Sumi's kid sister. She, in her teens, had a different feeling for Gopal, whether it was love she did not know but she was sure it was a special longing - "He never saw me and in a way I liked it for it made me invisible and I could watch him easily. I was a little in love with him then. A little? No, as much as a girl of thirteen can be. I was awake the night Sumi went to his room, I knew she had gone

and where, I had seen them look at each other. I slept on her bed that night as if it would make me Sumi – I remember that. In love? I don't know, but Gopal was the man against whom I measured all other men." (134)

Premi's visit to Gopal also turns out to be futile and leaves Sumi with her agony and the children with their desperateness, realizing absolutely that she will in no way be able to discard any of their miseries and traumas.

8.6 FEMMINISM IN *A MATTER OF TIME*

Shashi Deshpande deals with the inner world of the Indian women in most of her novels and she portrays her heroines in a very realistic manner. A woman is the centre of her fictional world and she writes about their situations and ultimate failures in the fast changing socio-economic backdrop of India. Even in *A Matter of Time* she has explored into a woman's inner life which is emotionally isolated from her family. The story revolves around the absence of the principal character, Gopal, as he steps out of Sumi's life. The collapse of Sumi's marriage leaves her in an unanticipated situation as Gopal's absence leaves her in a state of vast emptiness. Desperately she feels: "I can't find my bearings, there are no markers any more to show me which way I should go." Still from the depth of her dejection she tries to transform her emptiness into meaning in order to redefine her identity. No longer does she remain just a passive mother; instead she changes herself into an active agent. Though Sumi, like her mother, Kalyani, is a distressed, demoralized and a victimized woman, yet she does not question the man, her tormenter.

What is most striking, in the very beginning of the novel, is the manner in which Sumi reacts to Gopal's desertion. There is no typical ranting and raving, rather a proud and defiant Sumi who does not expect anyone's pity. She realizes the fact that life must go on and so she must be strong enough to sustain for the sake of her daughters and so she is restated throughout the novel. Even Aru who had thought that her mother was indifferent to Gopal's departure comprehends after Sumi's death: "I thought she didn't care about what Papa did, I thought she was uncaring, indifferent, I said angry words to her but I know now that was not true."

Sumi's daughter, Aru, is a rebel and she revolts against her father. It is not with the expectation of sympathy that she approaches Gopal but for the sake of justice to his wife and the three daughters. She wants to unravel the strange behavior of her father. Her query to Gopal is very authentic: "why did you get married at all, why did you have children?" her searching question shakes Gopal and forces him to re-examine his intentions in

escaping from his family. The tragedy of her grandmother and her mother upsets Aru so much that she declares with frustration that she will never marry: "I'm never going to get matted". She holds strong views against patriarchy and is concerned about how women, in general, are consequently victimized by the dominating stronger sex. Aru is so critical of Gopal that she does not want him to be without any punishment. She even meets a staunch feminist, Surekha, who is a lawyer by profession; but she fails to justify it as a case of usual marital discord.

This narration is set against the backdrop of the sad story of Kalyani and Shripati in the 'Big House' – the house to which Sumi returns with her three daughters, Aru, Charu and Seema, when Gopal leaves them. Gopal's absence creates inimitable tension in the different characters as each one of them tries to analyze the reason of his departure in their own special way. The lack of communication between Kalyani and Sripathy encroaches on the wider issues of patriarchy that influences the consecutive generations as history repeats itself in the life of Sumi. But on both the occasions, whether it is Kalyani or Sumi, they remain silent. Kalyani's fears are based on patriarchal subjugation that denounces women to the precincts of silence. She has been made to realize that the loss of her son, a male heir, has abandoned her motherhood forever and forsaken her from the place of a wife lifelong. She has to adhere to the punishment by bearing this intuitive wound throughout. And thus for nearly thirty five years she remains a passive silent sufferer. As Kalyani's mother had blamed her in her childhood for not being a son, she retorts the notion by maintaining distance and preserving silence.

Kalyani fears about her daughter, Sumi, as a vacuum has been generated in her life because of the desertion of Gopal. In her attempt to find out the clues to the probable motives, Sumi tries to recollect Gopal's previous acts and utterances. She remembers how Gopal has once explained *Sa-hridaya* and has regarded it in the sense of oneness and has also considered it as an impossible concept and in this way she hunts for reasons of falling apart rather than taking any other determining decision.

Shashi Deshpande tries to flare some light on the cause of women's education and liberation. The entire novel is dedicated to the unvoiced brooding women, discontented yet vivacious, though living in their present desperately trying to cling on to their past. The novel revolves around four generations of women – Manorama, who is now dead but whose absent presence can be felt through her portrait, Kalyani, Sumi and Aru. After being deserted by Gopal, Sumi comes with her daughters to her parent's house – the 'Big House' where her parents Kalyani and Sripathi live in a peculiarly oppressive silence. But at least they are in the same house and so

are not under the critical scrutiny of the society. Whereas, for Sumi and her daughters, it is not just tragedy but the trauma of shame and disgrace as well. Sumi understands that she has to come out of the misfortune and though she is completely shaken from the core of her heart, she maintains a bright and normal exterior. Aru too tries to be 'the man of the family' and even insists on taking her mother to the dentist to 'fill the blank Gopal has left'. For sometime Aru and Kalyani do not get along well but gradually Aru realizes that there is some strangeness in the relationship of her grandparents: "Why does Baba never come down? Why doesn't he ever speak to Kalyani. She is his wife, isn't she? And why is she so frightened of him? Poor Amma, Sumi says. But why?" Sumi tries to persuade Aru to overlook the perplexing relationship between her grandparents just as she tries her best to make her forget the act of Gopal. Sumi's question to Aru explains her way of acceptance of the inevitable: "Do you want to punish him Aru? I don't. I'm not interested. I just want to get on with my life. Let him go Aru, just let him go. This is not good for you." It is only when Sumi meets Gopal again that she comprehends that she must remain alone and for the first time she reconciles to the separation.

For Kalyani it is a pathetic story of profound patience and potency and also the eternal capability to tolerate pain. It is Kalyani who carries the sense of history – the Big House is more than just a house to her as it carries her traumatic past as well. Her mother, Manorama, had always wanted a son and Kalyani's birth had become an invisible symbol of her failure to have a son. Manorama emerges as a malicious and insecure woman and ironically enough it is she who is the main victim of the novel. Kalyani survives victimization and emerges as a complete and scrupulous woman. Sumi establishes her identity and finds a meaningful existence before she dies. And it is Aru who articulates the feminist voice in the novel. It is she who questions the injustices against women. Sumi doesn't want Aru to view every man-woman relationship with suspicion, but hesitant queries keep haunting her mind. Aru even becomes closer to her grandmother and their grows peculiar kind of partnership between them – the strength with which they face suffering thus providing a note of hope at the conclusion of the novel.

8.7 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN A MATTER OF TIME

Shashi Deshpande has made it clear in one of the seminars that she does not regard herself as a feminist, writing only about middle-class women, rather she is very much fascinated in the exploration of human relationships. But as her involvement does not exist in isolation and is steeped in the values and ideology of the ubiquitous society, Deshpande is drawn into stripping the restrained progressions of subjugation and gender differentiation

operative within the institution of the family and the male-centred Indian society at large. However, in her novel ***A Matter of Time***, Deshpande explores these questions from the larger framework of existentialism by dwelling on the nature of identity, destiny, human will and the significance and reason of existence.

Technically, Deshpande uses an alternating first person/third person voice to present what she calls a 'double perspective': the past and the present in continuous interplaying and overlapping each other. Deshpande places the failed marriage of Sumi and Gopal determinedly at the centre of the novel and it is juxtaposed with other marriages – Kalyani and Shripati, Manorama and Vithalrao, Goda and Satyanarayan, Premi and Anil, Devaki and Vasudev Murthy, Ramesh and Chitra and also Sudha and PK. This juxtaposition is possible mainly because of the double perspective that she presents thus, exploring the simultaneity of the past and the present, thematically as well as structurally. Usually it is seen that in most of her novels, the past is presented in the first person, usually by the heroine, and the present is in the third person. In this novel the first person voice is actually of Gopal, even though both Sumi and Gopal have imaginary and agonized pondering in their own minds, with each other, throughout the novel.

The all-pervasive grasp of the patriarchal world order is made apparent exactly in the beginning of the novel in the depiction of the ancestral house and this house, 'Vishwas' or the 'Big House' as it is proudly called, is a living presence in the novel. The name of the house is not derived from the abstract quality of trust but from an ancestor, the man who came down South with the Peshwa's invading army and established the family there and the house still asserts the meaning of its name by its very firmness. This sturdiness also makes it evident that it has been built by a man not just for himself, but for his sons and his son's sons. The omniscient narrator takes the readers on a tour of the exterior of the house – the front yard is bare and nothing it seems can ever grow there; the family entrance is at the side of the house where the outhouse is situated; the back garden is full of towering, giant trees, while on the fourth side of the house everything grows wild and untamed. The "schizophrenic" exterior of the house is mirrored in its interior. "A long passage running along the length of the house bisects it with an almost mathematical accuracy, marking out clearly the two parts of its divided personality."

In the novel, Gopal abandons his wife and children and this action prompts her father, Shripati to take Sumi and her daughters back to her parental home. Aru and the other family members endeavor to find out the reason behind Gopal's mysterious decision only to realize that they do not really know him. When Kalyani comes to know about it she cries like an animal in pain, "No, my

God, not again” for she knows the suffering and the ache. Though Gopal’s desertion is of a different type from that of Shripati but still it has the same anguish and sufferance. Shripati, her husband, has cut himself off completely from her and has not spoken to her for more than thirty years and she fears that the nightmare is being revisited on her daughter, Sumi.

The novel opens with an epigraph drawn from the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad: “Maitreyi, said Yajnavalkya, ‘verily I am about to go forth from this state (of householder).’” Ironically it seems that both Shripati and Gopal have taken ‘sanyas’ of a peculiar type; both of them have abandoned familial ties much before the prescribed time and much before they have fulfilled their duties. Sumi remembers Gopal telling her that it is never possible to disclaim the past and in her mother’s house again, she finds herself inclined to agree with him. “Gopal was right. Kalyani’s past, which she has contained within herself, careful never to let it spill out has nevertheless entered into us...it has stained our bones.” Sumi reflects that the probability of walking out on her was always there in Gopal. Once, while in dispute about the word ‘*Sahridaya*’, Gopal had stressed that there is no word in English that can fit the concept because it is a practical language; it has no words for the impossible.

Although Sumi manages to keep her feelings on a tight leash, it is Aru who finds it difficult to come to terms with the situation. Sumi understands what Aru’s intention is – she is trying to retrieve, not her father, but a situation of which he was a part. Aru is soon to realize something else – that they are trapped into indolence by that greatest of fears – the fear of losing face. Gopal’s desertion is not just a tragedy; it is both a shame and a disgrace. According to Deshpande there is a sharp difference between a man’s world and a woman’s world still exists.

The mother-daughter relationship has also occupied an important position in Deshpande’s fiction. She does not give much credibility to the mother as an angel or a goddess who is audacious in Indian culture. Instead, she presents us with diverse facades of the mother-daughter relationship as she is acutely aware that the established patriarchal ideology makes it difficult for women to accept the fact that their daughters should be given the liberty to comply with their own desires. This is evident in Manorama’s treatment of Kalyani – Manorama wanted a son; instead there was Kalyani. For Manorama she became the visible symbol of their failure to have a son. Moreover, she satisfied none of the dreams Manorama had for her. And when it was clear that Manorama could have no more children, she became afraid that Vithalrao might adopt a son or marry again. Kalyani was good at Maths and wanted to be an engineer but Manorama did not allow her to complete her

schooling and instead married her off to her own brother, Shripati. This is the fate that mothers forcefully knit for their daughters on the name of tradition and culture and this is the destiny that daughters mutely accept in the fear of hurting and disregarding their mother's decision. According to the narrator, the hero and heroine do not matter so much in the story of an arranged marriage; it is actually the parents. The truth of this statement is borne out in Manorama's marriage to Vithalrao – Manorama was the daughter of a poor village Brahmin while Vithalrao was an educated son of a well to do man from Bangalore. Vithalrao's father did not hesitate to do what could have damned him in the society he lived in: make an offer to a girl's father for his son. Also, it was Manorama's mother who had sent her daughter to Yamunabai's school at a time when schooling for a girl was something that could come in the way of her marriage prospects. And she did this in spite of the fact that Yamunabai and most her students were not Brahmins. Moreover, Manorama's mother had induced her husband to write a letter to Vithalrao's father about the disaster that struck, just a month before the wedding was to take place – Manorama had 'grew up.'

When Kalyani at last gave birth to a son he had turned out to be mentally retarded. While coming to Bangalore for the vacations, the four year old child somehow got lost at VT station. Premi tells Aru, "Baba had gone to check the reservations, leaving Amma with the children, when he returned the boy wasn't there." It is clear that Shripati alleged Kalyani of intentionally losing the mentally retarded child whom she found difficult to manage. Kalyani and her daughters did not see Shripati for nearly two months as he went on searching around the city like a madman for his lost son. Even though he was hysterical and frenzied for his son, it was an act of public desertion as he left Kalyani and her daughters on the platform, surrounded by inquisitive strangers. After this, Kalyani, like Sumi later, went with her daughters to the ancestral home. After being forced by Manorama on her deathbed, Shripati returned back to Kalyani, however, he stayed in his room and never spoke to her again.

The husband-wife relationship does not exist in seclusion; it gets affected by innumerable issues. To Manorama the disgrace of her daughter's coming back home as a rejected wife is very difficult to comprehend and this negatively affects her relationship with Vithalrao and the rift between them is never mended. Kalyani's silence is a form of confrontation which is highly persuasive because it does not allow anyone even a glimpse of her feelings or thought process.

However, Kalyani has come to terms with the past and she tries throughout to adjust herself to the demanding present. After Shripati's death, they find in his will he has left the house to

'Kalyani, daughter of Vithalrao and Manorama.' Goda, the siwster of Kalyani, had looked anxiously at Kalyani when Anil read the will, but for Kalyani, evidently, there was no sting in the words that took away her marital status. "On the contrary, it is as if the words have given her something more than the house, restored something she had lost; they seem, in fact, to have strengthened her." (245) The words have given her back her identity.

Sumi, who had begun to retrieve herself by indulging in gardening, learning the scooter, becoming economically independent and by writing plays is suddenly killed in an accident along with Shripati. It is remarkable that the accident takes place when they have just mentioned Madhav, the lost son. In fact Sumi takes a while to realize that Shripati is referring to the lost boy. She is surprised that he is taking about the child to her and as she turns around she sees a look of brooding softness on his face. It is the only time that father and daughter utter his name and both die with it on their lips.

Ever since Aru had heard Kalyani's story from Premi, after preliminary commotion, she had been left with two images: a woman, her two daughters by her side, frozen into an image of endurance and desperation; and a man, moving all over a city, tirelessly searching for his lost son. And even when Kalyani learns about Sumi's death and cries out "I lost my child Goda"(244), Aru couldn't help speculating whether it was a declaration of innocence when it was too late and did not matter anymore or was she referring to Sumi. But when she sees Goda envelop her in the folds of her love and compassion she realizes that it does not matter as forgiveness has no place in this relationship, acceptance is everything.

Gopal, had stayed aloof and remained in the background so that it seemed that Sumi had been mourned as a daughter, a mother, a sister and friend—but not as a wife. While mourning for her in private he thinks, "Whether our lives are long or short, we leave our marks on the world. Like the war memorial to the Vietnam dead, our names are inscribed on it, visible to those who look for them. Nothing is lost, each moment remains, encapsulated in time." (238)

Although fully aware of Albert Camus's belief "we carry our places of exile within us" (217), at the end of the novel, Gopal sets out in the hope of banishing the ghosts of his past. Aru has taken her promise of being Kalyani's daughter....her son seriously. It is almost as if at the end of the novel she has taken upon the responsibilities of the householder upon herself as she declares finally to Gopal, "Yes, Papa, you go. We'll be alright, we'll be quite alright, don't worry about us." (246)

8.8 CONCLUSION

Matter of Time is one of the major and significant novels written by Indian woman novelists recently. It deals with issues that are relevant to contemporary middle-class Indian society. It has helped Shashi Deshpande's reputation to grow as an important novelist writing in Indian English today.

8.9 QUESTIONS / EXERCISE

1. Discuss the major thematic issues Shashi Deshpande's Matter of Time.
2. Draw Character-sketches of Sumi and Kalyani.
3. Do you think Matter of Time is concerned exclusively with issues of women in India? Justify your answer.



AMITAV GHOSH'S THE CALCUTTA CHROMOSOME PART I

Unit Structure :

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Amitav Ghosh : Life and works
- 9.2 Science Fiction : A Genre
- 9.3 Postmodernism Thriller : A concept
- 9.4 Contemporary Indian English Novel : A Brief Survey
- 9.5 Conclusion
- 9.6 Exercise/ Questions for discussion

9.0 OBJECTIVES

The Objectives of this unit is to offer sufficient background information about the author, his life and works and the recent trends in fiction in Indian English. The unit also introduces science fiction as a genre and the concept of postmodern thriller to be studied in the context of Amitav Ghosh's **The Calcutta Chromosome**.

9.1 AMITAV GHOSH : LIFE AND WORKS

Amitav Ghosh was born in 1956 in Calcutta (now Kolkata). He has been raised and educated at different places like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Egypt, Indian and the United Kingdom. He completed his higher studies in England where he was awarded Ph.D. degree in social anthropology from Oxford University. After completing his Ph.D. he decided to take up writing as a career which he accomplished successfully.

Amitav Ghosh's career as a writer extends from a creative writer to a social anthropologist, to a journalist, to a novelist of postmodern thriller. His long list of books include **The Circle of Reason, The Shadow Lines, In an antique Land, Dancing in Combodia, The Glass Palace, The Hungry Tide** and **The Calcutta Chromosome**. Ghosh has won France's Prix Medici Etranger, Award India's prestigious Salritya Academy Award the Arthur C. Clerk award, and the Pushcars Prize for his write

The works of Amitav Ghosh is marked by the extreme themes that go side by side with post-colonialism. It is difficult to label his works as it is varied and deals with different themes together. His themes are unique and personal. The appeal of Amitav's works lies in his ability to weave "Indo-nostalgic" elements into a more serious, heavier themes. Amitav Ghosh was awarded the prestigious title of *Padma-Bhushan* by the Government of India. He is considered as an eminent writer of Indian English with remarkable contribution to Indian English novel as a genre.

9.2 SCIENCE FICTION : A GENRE

Science fiction is a literary genre dealing with imaginary but more or less plausible content such as future setting, futuristic science and technology, space travel, aliens and paranormal abilities. Exploring the consequences of scientific innovations is one purpose of science fiction, making it a literature of ideas.

The settings of science fiction are often contrary to known realities, but it relies mostly on a considerable degree of "suspension of disbelief" which is facilitated in the reader's mind by potential scientific explanations or solutions to various fictional elements.

Scientific elements in fiction have always fascinated the creative writers. Mark Twain's famous statement - "There is something fascinating about science. One gets such wholesale returns of conjecture out of such a trifling investment of fact" - is an evidence. Scientific fiction, better known as SF or "Sci-fi", is an important part in modern literature all over the world. There has been much thinking about new scientific marvels and their treatment in literary works in fictionalized form. It can be said about science fiction that it is realistic and predictive in nature. However, to relegate science fiction to the role of predicting and foretelling is to miss many other functions it serves.

The term science fiction (SF) is used to refer to any literary fantasy that includes a scientific factor as an essential orienting component. It is said about SF that it is a less genre, a body or mode of writing in which one can expect certain plot elements and specific tropes - than on ongoing discussion. The reader's expectation of SF are governed less by what happens than how that happening is described, and by the critical tools with which the reader is expected to approach the text. In short, SF is an imaginative fiction in which the writer's endeavour is to deal with the ideas beyond the bounds of possibility and credibility.

Various definitions of SF are available. Darko Suvin defines SF as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions

are the presence and interpretation of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment." For Robert Heinlein, SF is "realistic speculation about possible future events based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world...through understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method." These definitions make it clear that science fiction is scientific fictionalizing - something that science has ruled out of the court as literally impossible. The most important thing about the "science" part of SF is that it is a discourse built on certain logical principles; that it is rational rather than emotional or instinctual. Therefore, SF often tends to be plausible. But it should be noted that "science" in SF does not give the text a particular and privileged access to truth. It is, indeed, a combination of facts and fantasies based on scientific probabilities. What George Orwell wrote in his famous SF **1984** some fifty years before came true to a considerable extent. In short, science is a discipline which is governed by "trial and error" principle. If the experiment is successful new invention is possible, if it fails, the procedure is rendered as fiction. Creative writers have, in fact, were always fascinated by fantasies combined with sub-human elements. Fanciers Bacon wrote **The New Atlantis** in 1627 which is romance tamely told. Thomas More's **Utopia** published in 1516 is very nearly a science fiction. The French writer Voltaire's **Micromegas** is set in space and describes the alien culture. The wife of the poet Shelley-Mary Wollstonecraft wrote a novel which now has become a classic. **Frankenstein** is considered today as an expression of female fantasy pioneering the modern scientific thriller.

The 19th century American poet and short story writer Edgar Allan Poe wrote remarkable horror-tales which became a source of inspiration to later writers who attempted the similar genre in modern times. In France, Jules Verne wrote a scientific fiction of remarkable repute. **Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea** describes the adventures of Captain Nemo which are scientifically marvelous and thrilling. His next novel **Around the world in Eighty Days** is equally amazing.

In 20th century, such writers like H. G. Wells, (**The Time Machine**), Aldous Huxley (**Brave New World**), George Orwell (**Nineteen Eighty Four**) and others attempted novels that came closer to science fiction. Recently this became a regular feature at the hands of such creative writers like George Egan (**Schild's Ladder**), Kim Stanley Robinson (**The Years of Rice and Salt**), Nalo Hopkinson (**Midnight Robber**), Mary Gentle (**Ash**), Michael Swarnwick (**Vacuum Flowers**) Michael Crichton (**Jurassic Park**) etc.

Science fiction, as a literary genre, has gained much popularity all over the world. The novels are often adopted into

movies. There is a long list of movies based on best-seller science fiction. Some of these movies are **Alien** (1992) **Deep Blue Sea** (1999) **Godzilla** (1998), **Apollo** (1996), **Jurassic Park**, (1993) **Men in Black**, (1997), **Predator** (1987) **Spiderman** (2004), **Terminator** (1991), **Tremors** (1989), **Universal Soldier** (1992) etc.

9.3 POSTMODERN THRILLER

Postmodern Thriller is a recent phenomenon which has close affinity with science fiction. Advancement of science and technology which has pervaded the human civilization today can not remain aloof from the creative efforts. Consequently, scientific facts and fantasies have dominated contemporary literature. Salman Rushdie's **Marguis's Children**, John Fowls's **French Lieutenant's woman**, Gabriel Margnes's **Love in the Time of Cholera** are some of the famous postmodern thrillers which have appealed the reader immensely.

Combination of facts with fantasies is one of the narrative techniques adopted by the postmodern fiction. Its use is being widely acknowledged as effective and entertaining in the art of fiction writing. Amitav Ghosh's **The Calcutta Chromosome** is an outstanding novel in the genre.

9.4 CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH NOVEL : A BRIEF SURVEY

Contemporary Indian English novel stands apart from the rest of its counterparts mainly on the ground of its narrative strategies. Such novelists like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Gita Hariharan, Arundhati Roy, Shashi Tharoor and other have brought Indian novel out of the Euro-centric literary values. They combine a fine blend of native and cosmopolitan values in their creative efforts and what results is Indian English novel as a unique genre.

Contemporary Indian English novel represents all the major trends in world literature today. Writers like Salman Rushdie have been acclaimed universally for their general artistic awareness and retaining native values. **Midnight's Children** is unanimously considered as a postmodern classic which includes within its epic range all the major tendencies of contemporary writing. Salman Rushdie was a model artist for the writers of younger generation like Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy etc. whose contribution to contemporary Indian English novel is equally remarkable. The contribution of these writers added up to the development of "New Literature in English" which has become a global literary movement today. The writers associated with this movement adopt new strategies of narrative techniques borrowing material mostly from

the native tradition. This is an attempt to defy Euro-centric norms of criticism. They also use language different from the language of the Empire-combing native vocabulary, syntax, phrases etc. This brings contemporary Indian English novel within the framework of Nativism which is another important mark of the genre.

9.5 CONCLUSION

Amitav Ghosh **The Calcutta Chromosome** needs to be studied within the context of the issues discussed above. The novel falls into the category of science fiction and postmodern thriller which are introduced for the first time in the realm of Indian English novel. Therefore, it is necessary to know the various aspects of Science fiction as a genre and the concept of postmodern thriller. They are discussed above in brief and form a suitable background to study Amitav Ghosh's novel in detail.

Further, important aspects of contemporary Indian English novel which have made it a globally acknowledged genre are discussed. They would certainly help to understand Amitav Ghosh's novel better.

9.6 EXERCISE / QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Write a short note on the life and works of Amitav Ghosh.
2. comment on the salient features of science fiction as a literary genre.
3. Discuss the concept of postmodern thriller within the context of 'postmodernism' as a contemporary literary theory.
4. Discuss in brief the major trends in contemporary Indian English novel.
5. Relate the above issues with Amitav Ghosh's novel **The Calcutta Chromosome**.



AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE CALCUTTA CHROMOSOME*

Unit Structure :

- 10.0 Introduction
- 10.1 Story
- 10.2 Theme
- 10.3 Characters
- 10.4 The Novel as a Science fiction
- 10.5 The Novel as a Postmodern Thriller
- 10.6 General Assessment of the novel.
- 10.7 Conclusion
- 10.8 Exercise / Questions

10.0 INTRODUCTION

The Calcutta Chromosome, a novel by Amitav Ghosh, was published in 1995. It won the Arthur C. Clerk award in 1997. The book for the most part set in Calcutta at some unspecified time in future, is a medical thriller that dramatizes the adventures of apparently disconnected people who are brought together by a mysterious events. The book is loosely based on the life and times of Sir Ronald Ross, the noble prize winning scientist who achieved a breakthrough in Malaria research in 1898. The book has been described as the novel of fevers, derilium and discovery for its unexpected turns and twists and the strange atmosphere that pervades it.

10.1 STORY

The novel begins with Antar, an employee in Life Watch Organization, who while browsing on his computer screen, comes across a mutilated Identity card that belongs to L. Murugan, an ex-employee of the Life watch Organzalia, who has mysteriously disappeared. Antar decides to track Murugan's disappearance in Calcutta many years back. Murugan has asked for his transfer to Calcutta of his fascination with the life of Ronald Ross who is credited with the invention of the vaccine on malaria, a deadly disease in 19th century, colonial India. Murugan's curiosity blended

with respect for the scientist grows when he comes to know that he was given the prestigious Nobel Prize for his invaluable contribution to the field of medicine. The New York of Antar and Calcutta of Murugan are separated by the stretch of time, as Murugan's story belongs to 19th century and Antar lives in America today. Through his research into old and lost documents and other devices Antar finds out that Murugan had systematically unearthed an underground scientific movement claiming to provide eternal life to humanity. This movement, carried out mostly by the native Indians aims at transferring the individual chromosome into another human being, and take over that person, who, in turn, will pass it on to other. Thus, the chain of chromosome inhabiting humanity will continue for ever. No disease, or accidental death could destroy this chain. It worked through mysteries and miracles typical of Indian life of 19th century. It was at this time that the British Scientist Ronal Ross was working on a medical project on malarial parasites which has killed many native Indians of the time. Murugan discovers that what Ronald Ross claimed to be his medical achievement, was, in fact, a fraud. He did not discover the mysteries of the malaria parasite; rather made use of the already existing findings of the natives and passed them on as his own. What exactly happened in the process is never known. Ghosh employs a factual framework for the invented events, drawing upon Ross's "Memoirs" published in 1923. Thus, there is a combination of facts - the deadly disease killing the poor Indians in 19th century and fantasies associated with the character of Ross, his memoirs and Murugan's chase.

10.2 THEME

It is not easy to locate the precise theme of the novel. In fact, all postmodern novels are open-ended. It is left to the readers to conclude according to their own capacity and understanding. **The Calcutta Chromosome** is a postmodern piece of writing, accordingly it contains all that is associated with postmodern. Critics have pointed out that "Silence" is the recurring theme of the novel. Nothing is said about the major events - the way the spiritual movement works is never stated fully. Ronald Ross's association with the members of the movement is a secret. Where the story ultimately leads and ends- is a mystery. Silence in the novel represents the kind of unattainable experience that transcends the level of language, or knowing. It is this enigma that the novel leaves behind as an abiding theme. The reader is forced to keep thinking about it much after turning the last page.

What is suggested as a general rule, that the readers, or the students of the text-should not look for the traditional theme - as perhaps, in the other novels they have read or studied. **The Calcutta Chromosome** is an unconventional novel with no

chronological story, systematically designed plot or clearly indicated theme. Even characters do not seem to be living human beings. They seem often projection of fantasy, or mere allegories.

10.3 CHARACTERS

The Calcutta Chromosome abounds in characters. There are about ten main characters supported by several minor or less significant ones. The readers find Antar working on his computer initially engaged in tracing the disappearance of Murugan. But Antar is not a protagonist. As the scene shifts from present to past it is Murugan who appears most busy and involved in the occurrences in the novel. Murugan seems to have played a major role in the course of action. But even he is blurred against the activities carried out by the British Scientist - Ronald Ross. At a time, Ross dominates considerable of action. Much of his research is spoken about. As he is awarded the coveted Nobel Prize, several pages are devoted in his praise which turns out to be defamation later. Ronald Ross conducts his experiment on a native called Lutchman or Laxman who lives in a small village in Bengal and whose entire family has been wiped out by the deadly epidemic resembling modern malaria. He claimed that he was a “dhooley bearer” or a cleaner. Later in the novel it is revealed that his real name is Laakhan and he changed his name at every village to sound like a local.

There are women character too but they appear to be less vital or important as the novel does not delineate a love story or a family drama. Mangala, an old woman, a cleaner at Doctor Cunningham’s laboratory, is a miracle person. She is, in reality, a demi God who possesses strange power to treat sexual diseases like syphilis and has medical knowledge to treat malarial parasite. She also possesses spiritual power to keep human being alive through transferring spiritual chromosome from person to person. Ronal Ross is suspected to have stolen (not borrowed) the knowledge to treat malaria from this strange woman. Taking advantage of her gullibility and innocence the British scientist has hijacked her spiritual capacity to his scientific achievement. There are other women characters - Sonali, a writer and journalist and Urmila a Journalist of the same publication. These two woman, however, appear as shadows of Mangala who treats them for her transformation and incarnation. Lutchman reappears as Romen Holder later in the novel.

10.4 THE NOVEL AS A SCIENCE - FICTION

The Calcutta Chromosome is obviously about medical science. It deals with medical achievement and its impact on

humanity. Malaria was a fatal disease in 19th century. Its spread was assigned to the parasites caused by mosquitoes. A vaccine to treat these parasites was the need of the time. Amitav Ghosh has placed Ronald Ross as a contemporary of Louise Paster in France who was engaged in similar efforts to find vaccine on rabies. The book deals not only with medical science, but also with scientific and miraculous concepts like invisible man, strange interludes etc. it has elements of horror and mystery. The novel depicts the story of the discovery of the malarial parasites by Ronald Ross who is a mysterious person himself and is engaged in a business which appears shadowy and suspicious. The action drifts in and out of time, the events appear insubstantial. There are mysterious characters like Mangala and Lutchman who can take on any avatar they desire. These characters surface again and again in different time and in different situations. Antar, a man living in future meets Murugan who has traveled in the past. They come to the present and meet beautiful women like Sonali Das, ex-actress and Urmila, the journalist. As Murugan seeks to find the logic in this seemingly chaotic scenario, Antar follows in his enthusiastic wake till events shift back to New York.

The concept of time plays a vital role in the novel. At one level all events seem to take place simultaneously. At another, systematic chronology appears operating. Like all good science fiction **The Calcutta Chromosome** makes us think about time. What is the nature of time? Can souls transmigrate through genetic tampering? Can the history of humanity be transferred at will? The book offers a fascinating blending of myth and science. It takes us from Victorian India to near future New York on a wondrous journey through time.

The book abounds in scientific terminology. Words like *acculturation*, *genetic engineering*, *infections diseases*, *memory time*, *technology* occurred profusely.

10.5 THE NOVEL AS A POSTMODERN THRILLER

Combination of facts and fantasies is one of the important features of Postmodern fiction. It often demands on part of the readers to suspend disbelief. The readers are expected to get themselves involved in incredible actions. **The Calcutta Chromosome** abounds in such events. The novel often assumes the form of a detective tale and springs surprises at every turn. Murugan's discovery of Ross's dubious experiments, Mangala's role in the successful eradication of the epidemic, Lutchman's ability to transform himself according to the demand of the situation the presence of Sonali Das and Urmila within the Victorian climate all these are not only incredible events, but also thrilling experiences. Postmodernism allows free play of imagination that

often turn into fantasies. Men and women in the past stride along before the evidence of present. They often are shown using modern devices like telephone, revolver etc. And they often become a part of future. Amitav Ghosh uses all these strategies effectively, so that **The Calcutta Chromosome** emerges as a successful postmodern thrillers.

10.6 GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE NOVEL

The Calcutta Chromosome offers not only a pleasant reading experience, but also a very good text to be studied at postgraduate level. Students should acquaint themselves with postmodernism as a literary theory, its various implications and its effects on contemporary literary creativity. Amitav Ghosh has written successful novels like **The Shadow Lines** earlier, this novel follows the similar lines of creativity and goes a step further to embrace postmodernist strategies of narration. It has been praised for its narrative devices and creative sensibility.

10.7 CONCLUSION

The Calcutta Chromosome is thus a science fiction and postmodern thriller with a subtitle : a novel of fever, derilium and discovery". It is different from conventional novels, therefore a perfect model to be studied at post-graduate level. Its story, theme, plot, characters etc. are all amazing, because they are part of that contemporary phase of history generally known as postmodernism.

10.8 EXERCISE / QUESTIONS

1. **The Calcutta Chromosome** has an unconventional story to narrate. What are the features that make the story unconventional?
2. Draw brief character sketches of the following
 - i. L. Murugan
 - ii. Ronald Ross
 - iii. Mangala, the cleaner woman
3. What is postmodernism? Define the term with as much lucidity as possible.
4. Consider **The Calcutta Chromosome** as a science fiction acquainting yourself with various features of science fiction as a literary genre.
5. Consider **The Calcutta Chromosome** as a Postmodern Thriller.



CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF POST- INDEPENDENCE POETRY PART I

Unit Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Indian English Poetry – a brief backdrop
- 11.2 Nissim Ezekiel
- 11.3 Dom Moraes
- 11.4 Keki N Daruwalla
- 11.5 A. K. Ramanujan
- 11.6 Vikram Seth
- 11.7 Conclusion
- 11.8 Questions / Exercise

11.0 OBJECTIVES

The Objective of this unit is to acquaint students with various trends and tendencies in contemporary Indian English poetry. The unit also deals with life and works of poet prescribed for study. Some of the poems are analysed in detail

11.1 INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY – A BRIEF BACKDROP

THE EXPANSION

There is a great confusion and ambiguity over the identity and scope of Indian English Poetry, especially when its evolution is considered historically. The earliest of the poems were considered as curiosities and usually listed in the collection of verse by the Anglo-Indians. In fact the earliest collection of Indian English poems is to be found in a remarkable anthology called *Selections from the British Poets from the Time of Chaucer to the Present Day with Bibliographical and Critical Notes* edited by David Lester Richardson and published by the Committee of Public Instruction, Calcutta, in 1840. Though the term 'Anglo-Indian' continued, Richardson was perceptive enough to differentiate between Britishers and Indians who wrote in English and so he has used the term 'British Indian'. Gradually the phrase Indo-Anglian came into

existence and though the tune was not considered elegant, it was popularized by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar who observed that it has the advantage of being regarded both as a noun and as an adjective. The term still persists though many other terms like Indian Writing in English, Indian English, etc. have come up.

The history of Indo-Anglian poetry began with Derozio, who published his collection of *Poems* in 1827 in Calcutta. But Indians had indeed begun to learn the foreign language very earnestly at least twenty-five years prior to that and some had even begun to write in it. Even Derozio inspired a number of young Indians with a love of the English language and the first quarter of the 19th century was the period of incubation for the Indo-Anglian poetry with Derozio as the moving spirit. The publication of Indo-Anglian poems by Indian poets like Kashiprasad Ghose, Guru Charan Dutt, Raj Narain Dutt, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Shoshee Chander Dutt assumed prominence during the second half of the 19th century.

Indian English poetry was born under a Romantic star. It learned to lisp in the manner of Byron and Scott in the verse of Derozio, M.M. Dutt and others. It began with verse romances and lyrics written in the romantic vein. The deeper tone of accents of romanticism was caught by the poets who came later. Govin Dutt was the first to introduce the introspective veins in poems like *Romance of Wordsworth*. The process of assimilating romanticism in all its aspects was continued throughout the century and even later.

Genuine lyric poetry and lyrical narrative poetry came into existence in the last quarter of 19th century with the generation of Toru Dutt. Poets like Manmohan Ghose, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore and even Swami Vivekananda initiated the flame of poetry writing during this period. The last quarter of 19th century, on the whole, proved to be the golden period of Indo-Anglian Poetry. Another image was also projected during the last quarter of this century – the image of Indo-Anglian humanism; religion or spirituality being kept in the background. Humanism was, at times, accompanied by laughter at crudeness and superstition. Fearless thinking and social criticism are a motive in Indian writing and they are a direct legacy of the Indian Renaissance.

The early 20th century produced a number of poets who continued to write in the Romantic and the Victorian manner. Poets like Meherjee, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Ananda Acharya and many others exploited the oriental thought and legend and wrote in the typical Indian manner. But the later part of the century saw further strengthening of modernist as well as neo-symbolist trends. Modern poets like A.K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel

and many others have revealed significant developments on modernist lines in Indo-Anglian Poetry.

SOCIO-CULTURAL MILIEU

India is a land of ancient civilization, with cities and villages, cultivated fields, and great works of art dating back 4,000 years. India's high population density and variety of social, economic, and cultural configurations are the products of a long process of regional expansion. In the last decade of the twentieth century, such expansion has led to the rapid erosion of India's forest and wilderness areas in the face of ever-increasing demands for resources and gigantic population pressures. Such problems are a relatively recent phenomenon. Historical records and literature of earlier periods reveal the existence of the forest everywhere. Stories of merchant caravans typically included travel through long stretches of jungle inhabited by wild beasts and strange people; royal adventures usually included a hunting expedition and meetings with unusual beings. In the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, early epics that reflect life in India before 1000 B.C. and 500 B.C., respectively, the forest begins at the edge of the city, and the heroes regularly spend periods of exile wandering far from civilization before returning to rid the world of evil. The formulaic rituals of the Vedas also reflect attempts to create a regulated, geometric space from the raw products of nature. As literature basically depends on the existing social order, forest had played a very vital role earlier but is lacking its prominence in recent literature.

The country's past serves as a reminder that India today, with its overcrowding and scramble for material gain, its poverty and outstanding intellectual accomplishments, is a society in constant change. By the twentieth century, even most tribal groups, although constituting a substantial minority within India, lived in restricted areas under severe pressure from the caste-based agricultural and trading societies pressing from the plains. Because this evolution took place more than forty centuries ago and encompassed a wide range of ecological niches and people, the resulting social pattern is extremely complicated and alters constantly.

Modernization and urbanization have led to a decline in the outward display of caste exclusiveness, so that issues of caste may never emerge directly on public transit or in the workplace. Entire castes have changed their status, claiming higher positions as they shed their traditional occupations or accumulate money and power. In many villages, however, the segregation of castes by neighborhood and through daily behavior still exists at the end of the twentieth century. In the cities, segregation takes more subtle

forms, emerging directly at times of marriage but existing more often as an undercurrent of discrimination in educational opportunities, hiring, and promotion. Religion, caste, and regional diversity exist in India against a background of poverty. After independence in 1947. The British left India in a terrible condition. The country emerged from World War II with a rudimentary scientific and industrial base and a rapidly expanding population that lived primarily in villages and was divided by gross inequalities in status and wealth. But gradually, India addressed its economic crisis through a combination of socialist planning and free enterprise. During the 1950s and 1960s, large government investments made India into one of the most industrialized nations in the world. Considerable expenditure on irrigation facilities and fertilizer plants, combined with the introduction of high-yield variety seeds in the 1960s, allowed the Green Revolution to banish famine. Building on the education system bequeathed by the British, India established an infrastructure of universities, basic research institutes, and applied research facilities that trained one of the world's largest scientific and technical establishments.

Government-owned firms controlled iron and steel, mining, electronics, cement, chemicals, and other major industries. Telecommunications media, railroads, and eventually the banking industry were nationalized. Import-substitution policies, designed to encourage Indian firms and push out multinational corporations, included strict and time-consuming procedures for obtaining licenses and laws that prohibited firms from operating in India without majority ownership by Indian citizens or corporations. Indian-style socialism was probably necessary in the years after independence to protect the nation from foreign economic domination, but its biggest problem was that it did not eliminate poverty. The vast majority of India's population continued to live in small agricultural villages with few public amenities. A significant minority of the population in the 1990s live below the Indian definition of the poverty line, surviving at subsistence level, unemployed or underemployed, with little education or opportunity for training, and suffering from a variety of curable health problems. The big social story of India in the 1980s and the 1990s is the emergence of the middle class. This group includes members of prosperous farming families, as well as the primarily urban-based professional, administrative, and business elites who benefited from forty years of government protection and training. By the mid-1990s, the drive toward modernization had transformed nearly 25% percent of the country into urban areas, where, amid masses of impoverished citizens, a sizable class of consumers has arisen. The result of these processes over the course of fifty years is a dynamic, modernizing India with major class cleavages.

The political system responsible for these gigantic successes and failures has been democratic; India has called itself "the world's largest democracy." The Indian political system has proven to be flexible and durable, but major internal conflicts have threatened the constitution. One of the most serious challenges to India's internal security and democratic traditions has come from communal disorders, or riots, based on ethnic cleavages.

India is a complex geographic, historical, religious, social, economic, and political entity. India is one of the oldest human civilizations and yet displays no cultural features common to all its members. It is one of the richest nations in history, but most of its people are among the poorest in the world. Its ideology rests on some of the most sublime concepts of humanism and nonviolence, but deep-seated discrimination and violent responses are daily news. It has one of the world's most stable political structures, but that structure is constantly in crisis. The nation is seeking a type of great power status, but no one is sure what that involves.

The ethos of the post-independence phase of Indian English literature is radically different from that of the previous colonial or pre-independence period. Independence brought in a new spirit of challenges and changes in Indian life and living. During the first twenty-five years of independence the nation underwent such traumatic experiences that can very easily shatter any country that possesses lesser inner strength and power of flexibility. But India, having already faced a number of challenges from outside aggression was tough enough to handle such confronts with proximity.

On the political side the foundations of democracy have been firmly laid down and on the economic side there has been a considerable progress though the ever-crisis need for economic reform. These changes in the political and economic spheres have transformed the social scene. Social inequalities have been sought to be removed through legislation and this has improved the conditions of the backward castes and classes as well as that of the women. Literacy rate has increased drastically and scientific and technological progress has led to urbanization. The new deity of power and money has overthrown the idol of selfless service and reasonable commitment. So the era of hope and aspiration is replaced by the era of pitiless curiosity and ironic exposure. So while Indian writing in English in the colonial period was imitative, romantic and nationalistic, it later became realistic as it presented the socio-economic and political situations of the period.

POST INDEPENDENCE POETRY

Post-Independence Indian English poetry is both a break with the past and a continuation with it as well. Modernity in recent Indian English poetry, which essentially means a rupture with the past, has three identifiable manifestations: one – a past-oriented vision which is associated with a sense of loss and desperation and a sort of cultural pessimism; two – a future-oriented apparition, connected with a yearning to remake the world; three – a present-oriented attitude that is unethical, unbiased, stoic, ironic, ambivalent and absurdist. This modernity has two modes of ‘expression’ – one, it might result in one’s reflecting inward, trying to catch the voyage within, and, two, it might result in an ironic observation of reality resulting in outer expedition.

Post-Independence Indian English poetry is genuine because it is deeply felt and addressed to the whole community. Indian situations form a vital part of it. Most of the Indian poets writing in English in the Post-independence era stick to no specific form or genre of poetry. They adopt his/her own form, structure and syntactic patterns and reveal variation in visual shape, size, movement, sentence structure and line arrangement in their poems. Nissim Ezekiel, the harbinger of modernism in Indian English Poetry, shows great ingenuity and variety. The superstition and folk-belief that exist in Indian society turn out to be a favourite theme of recent poetry. Nissim Ezekiel handles such a theme with superb irony and subdued mockery in *Night of the Scorpion*. The mother is stung, the nationalist and skeptical father tries, “every curse and blessing/powder, mixture, herb and hybrid,” as the peasants swarm in to console her, offering advice of a strongly ritualistic and faith healing band. The mother’s reaction to her own suffering, “Thank God, the scorpion picked on me / and spared my children”, ironically rejects both the responses. Ramanujan in his much anthologized poem, *A River*, does not present the traditional hymns in praise of the river but records instead, the details about the twins, which the women would have borne, bringing the experience to its simple and painful humanity. India’s present day ills, like brain-drain, has attracted the attention of our recent poets. O. P. Bhatnagar examines the implication of the exodus of the Indian intellectuals to foreign lands and makes a fervent appeal to them to return home. These intellectuals are worse than migrating birds, for the birds, who flyaway in winter because of trenchant cold, return home at the turn of the season. But our intellectuals fail to escape the lure of gold and glamour and stay back. Thus in a poem called *Look Homeward Angel*, Bhatnagar ironically calls them “angels”.

Besides the contemporary problems, there is another vital problem – the problem of creating an Indian English idiom which haunts our poets without end. R. Parthasarathy rightly observes:

That language is a tree
loses colour
under another sky.

Some of our poets have tried to evoke the sense of “Indianness” both in content and language in their poetry. Ezekiel’s *Every Indian poem in Indian English, Good-bye party for Miss Pushpa*, Keki N. Daruwalla’s *The Professor Condoles* and R. Parthasarathy’s *Incident at Ahmedpore Station* bring out such Indian observations very acutely.

Nissim Ezekiel, Keki N. Daruwalla, Margaret Chatterjee and Lila Ray, who are unable to share the indigenous tradition, take a different attitude – amoral, impartial, stoic and sarcastic. O. P. Bhatnagar joins them in making pointed, objective and thought-provoking observations on the reality around us. Post-Independence Indian English poets have attempted and succeeded, although to a limited extent, in evolving new Indo-English idioms. Though Indian English poetry has outgrown Victorian taboos and our poets have achieved new positions, the quest for cultural moorings seems to be a major pre-occupation with them, a trait they unwittingly share with Madhusudan Dutt, the earlier Indian English poet of repute. But the persistent presence of this conscious “Indianness”, without any trace of romantic nostalgia or exotic quaintness, sets contemporary Indian English poetry apart from the imitative mediocrity of poetry in the pre-Independence period.

The Post-Independence Indian English poets are much more authentic in being ‘Indian’ than their Pre-Independence forerunners. Unlike their predecessors the recent poets have carved their own diction which is allied to the contemporary speech idiom and the rhythms are fluent and conversational; the language, thus, becomes both precise and suggestive. The territory of Indian English Poetry is much larger and more varied today than it was ever before. The new poets have found appropriate techniques for their perception of reality. The range, variety, themes and voices of Indian English Poetry have made great strides in recent decades.

11.2 NISSIM EZEKIEL

THE POET

Nissim Ezekiel (14 December 1924 – 9 January 2004) is an Indian English poet, playwright, editor and art critic. He comes from

the small community, the Bene-Israelis, of the Jewish family. Having completed his graduation and Post Graduation from Wilson College, Mumbai, he went on to read philosophy at Birbeck College, University of London. Subsequent to his return to India he served as an editor to several journals which included *Quest*, *Poetry-India*, *The Indian P.E.N* and *The Illustrated Weekly*. After experiencing short spells in journalism, advertising and broadcasting, he taught several years, initially at Mithibai College, Bombay and then at the Department of English in Bombay University. His first collection of poems, ***A Time to Change*** was published in London in 1952. He has various other volumes of poems like ***The Unfinished Man*** (1960), ***The Exact Name*** (1965), ***Hymns in Darkness*** and many more. He has won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1983 for his collection ***Latter-Day Psalms*** and has also been honoured with the title of Padma Shri in 1988.

Nissim Ezekiel is often called the 'poet's poet' for his ability to instill new thoughts in the post- modern poets and writers of English. He is also addressed as 'the father of modern Indian English poetry'. Though he calls himself a modern, he does not wish to restrict his ideas to the current concepts only. Many of his poems are written using the traditional verse forms and also in free verse. The fundamental themes of his poetry are tradition, personal amalgamation, the Indian contemporary panorama, modern urban life and spiritual ethics. He has also written a number of very Indian poems in English and is the only one, after John Furtado, to use Indian English for poetic effect. Though some of these poems are in the form of satires, they also focus on the poet's compassion towards the objects of sarcasm.

FEATURES OF HIS POETRY

Ezekiel's poetry is centered on a study of his conscious craftsmanship, his mastery of rhythm and diction and his treatment of modern urban life and the existential questions it generates. Many of Ezekiel's poems express his view that poetry can be built in resolving the tension between two opposite forces and trying to maintain an equipoise. His major themes are the Indian contemporary scene, modern urban life and pious principles but essentially his poetry is something that cultivates out of his own life and experiences. Though Ezekiel is considered to be a poet of the city, his poems, like ***Night of the Scorpion***, gives an existing, candid rural depiction. The scene of a mother stung by a scorpion on a rainy night in the village brings in its swirl the two contradictory worlds of superstition and scientific disposition. The neighbours swarming like flies and trying to lessen the pain of the mother by innumerable methods divulge the spirit of community life which is usually lost in the humdrum of urban existence. The father demonstrates the cynic, rational approach so that he can come to terms with rationality and fallacy in the best possible way –

*My father, sceptic, rationalist,
trying every curse and blessing,
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.
He even poured a little paraffin
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.*

The crisis is very well expressed and the rural backdrop generates a strong sense of incredible India – an India where human values are given preference to farcical living, where simplicity reigns over false pretention, where quandaries are healed with love and affection and not by artificial suggestion. The neighbours' concern for a prompt recovery is articulated through lines that are poignant in effect. At a time when compassion and consideration are lost to selfishness and subjugation, the poem stands high for its unique blissful approach. A significant effect is accomplished in the final lines when the pain finally subsides and the mother heaves a sigh of relief at the thought of her children being spared from the excruciating pain –

*My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion picked on me
and spared my children.*

Indian family and the traditional mother are very well anticipated. Love and concern, fear and unison are entwined in such a way that they generate a sense of belongingness and sacrifice. The countryside ambience is so well presented that the scene creates the authentic and honest picture that it targets to present. Ezekiel's poetry has the power to carry the readers closer to the panorama with such delicate ease that the readers are not only enthralled with the transfer but also captivated with the transformation. The poet stimulates an experience which is received with tenderness and affiliation.

In ***Enterprise*** Nissim Ezekiel's commitment to certain poetic standards like promptness, regulation of structure, transparency of thought and precision of diction are clearly visible. The poem is about the disenchantment which summons the finale of any splendid 'enterprise'. The analysis of the poem hinges on the implication of the word 'enterprise' and it seems that the word has a very huge symbolic prospective. It could be as vast as the freedom of India or the critique of quixotic romanticism. There is an enduring progression of disposition in the poem, from optimism to near despair at the conclusion. But what gives the poem both consistency and potency is the isolated pragmatism of the speaker's tone. As a spectator and narrator, he preserves a dismal commitment to the accuracy of the moment, never allowing himself to slither into wrath or self-pity.

The poem illustrates an allegorical voyage towards a specific goal. The travelers begin their journey and argue among themselves about how to navigate the challenging landscape. The enthusiasm gradually fades away with overpowering fatigue and stress. The initial motivation of the travelers is lost to aimless observations. Finally, though they reach their destination, the travelers conclude that their expedition had neither been original nor outstanding as there were others who have undertaken this voyage before them. The poet concludes that this kind of expedition is not a commendable mission and staying 'at home' with internal contentment is the utmost accomplishment in life –

Home is where we have to earn our grace.

Poet, Lover, Birdwatcher is another popular poem that attracts attention mainly because it delineates a type of poetic doctrine. The message of the poem is very clear: 'The best poets wait for words: the best poets start writing poetry only when they are truly inspired or when they experience a moment of enlightenment or when they have the right words to fit in their poetry. But this waiting is not simple as the poet cannot while away his time but rather, like a birdwatcher, has to remain vigilant throughout. To stay calm and attentive at moments of tension is what Ezekiel recommends to the poets. The entire meaning is enhanced and elaborated through intricate and extensive comparison with bird watching.

There is another element associated as well, that of wooing. Courtship, poetry and bird watching are all, thus, connected as in each case the approach recommended should be of inert attentiveness instead of apprehension or aggression. To anticipate a favourable reaction from his beloved one has to wait till she is no longer just 'flesh and bone' but they become one in soul. Similarly a poet must progress with immense determination for his poetic perception to comply with himself. Ezekiel makes use of two very suitable metaphors, the first a bird for the 'flight of imagination' and, second of the ladylove as 'a source of inspiration'.

The poem exposes Nissim's love for poetry which renders a special knowledge, wisdom and transcendence. Poetry, then, like love and bird watch, is ultimately a different way of perceiving reality – of considering, inquiring and understanding it differently.

Background, Casually is significant because of its autobiographical approach and the indication to the 'official view of life'. Ezekiel's main tendency in this poem is to be more communicative than imagistic and the ironic tone swings between the whipping self and the society. The poem is divided into three sections – childhood, adulthood and old age – and they present a

chronology of significant experiences and reflections. The first two stanzas persistently initiate a major string of this poem's thematic uniqueness. The challenge to articulate configuration of identity is indicated here as related to the amalgamation of customs that are not devoid of prejudice towards one another.

Basically the poem portrays the poet's perturbed relationship with India, his abode. And then it moves on to his inevitable expedition overseas with the three 'Ps' for companionship: Philosophy, Poverty and Poetry. Not making much success in his academic career abroad, he returns home, and the lasting question, 'how to feel it home, was the point', haunts the author incessantly and lingers in the mind of the readers continuously. It is a question of identity that is lost unknowingly and a sense of disgust creeps in automatically. Progressively, a sense of reason unfurls and the poet begins to sense his position in the design of things, trying to apprehend logically where he comes from and where he heads for. Though he retrieves the reminiscences of his ancestors, he finds meaning in the dreams of words that frame his poetry. Responsibility attaches itself with the concept of 'home' and Ezekiel asserts the figure of 'homely critic' who is capable of maintaining a distance as well as affirming the value of home. Finally precision materializes:

*I have made my commitments now.
This is one: to stay where I am,
As others choose to give themselves
In some remote and backward place.
My backward place is where I am.*

Though the poet's attitude towards his home, India, does not change as he still considers it a backward place, but a consciousness that he belongs to it consequently takes shape in him. And this awareness gives him the peace that he has been seeking for throughout the years of dilemma.

The poems written by Ezekiel in Indian English can be seen as a part of an responsiveness that can confuse thought and speech; the slogans and talk of traditions in these poems contribute to the dictating poverty of the masses and their exploitation. His ***Very Indian Poems in English*** are a very appealing group, in which is seen the poet's ardent observation of the speech habits and mannerisms of Indians communicating in the English language. Ezekiel has tried to present the Indian characters who speak English in an un-English way with a native accent.

*You are going?
But you will visit again
Any times any day [Patriot]*

There are common errors among Indians when they frame questions in English and Ezekiel has tried to project that deficiency in the most effective poetic manner. Moreover Ezekiel is fond of using paradoxical language in poetry for greater poetic effect –

The closer you come the further you move. [Distance]

Ezekiel puts in that the new generation is going after 'fashion and foreign things.' The India of yester years is no longer to be seen as modernization and industrialization have speeded up the process of change. The most regrettable thing in the modern world is the act of violence and anti –social elements confirming the nuisance. Still the positive aspects like rejuvenation, recompense and contraception could be thought of as a way out from the present chaos.

SUMMATION

In Ezekiel's poetry we find a number of Indian words such as 'Guru', 'Indrabhen', 'Rama Rajya', 'ashram', 'chapati', 'pan', 'mantras' and so on. Ezekiel, the Indian, is constantly conscious of the contemporary problems that India faces and these problems find a mention in his poems, specially the poems branded to be Indian. Ezekiel's clarity of thought, clinical precision of words and phrases and employment of imagery often makes his poetry distinctly Indian. The poet in Nissim Ezekiel is too self-conscious about artistic excellence while the man in him strives to explore the real meaning of existence through art. Poetry does not merely extenuate the pains of living in the poet but much more than that, his search for the real idiom as expressed therein. Relying on this spirit Ezekiel brings in a sense of discipline, self-criticism and mastery to Indian English poetry. He is one of the first Indian poets to have such a professional attitude in writing poetry.

Ezekiel is a poet of self-exploration. He has the competence to transform the most intimate feelings into rich practices, thus making it universal. His poems exhibit diligent self-scrutiny – from the early poems written in traditional meters to the latter ones written with an experimental approach – his philosophical theme spreads persistently. In his poetry there is the truth of acknowledging what is felt and experienced in its complexity, contradictions, pleasures, fears and disillusionments without preconceived ideas of what poetry should say about the poet and life. In fact his poetry records an expansion from the primarily peripheral world of 'flesh and bone' to 'myths of light'. There is a further expansion of the heart's mystery to a reflective and fruitful knowledge which is beyond significance and understanding. In dexterity and language also there is a progress from clarity, creativity and pleasing sensuality to restricted truthfulness and perfect diction. His later poetry specially shows the creative involvement of man's intellect with language and seeks the

essence of expressions. He is at ease with the ironic mode as it intensifies his understanding of reality and enables him to achieve a degree of objectivity. Ezekiel's poetry presents an array of styles and themes, but his strength clearly lies in the contemplative, sarcastic and somewhat amusing poems of self-exploration and self-creation.

11.3 DOM MORAES

THE POET

Dom Moraes (19 July 1938 – 2 June 2004) was a Goan writer who has produced poetry and prose that revealed his ambiguity about his place in the world. Born in Bombay, he was educated at Jesus College, Oxford. His first book of poems, **A Beginning** (1957) was published when he was only nineteen years old and it won him the Hawthornden Prize in 1958, the most coveted literary award in England at that time. His second verse, **Poems** (1960) became the Autumn Choice of the Poetry Book Society. He has published nine other volumes of poems and twenty three books of prose, along with biographies and travelogues. His autobiography, **My Son's Father** (1968) had won him great acclaim. Moraes's journalistic assignments have taken him to many countries; he has also covered wars in Algeria, Vietnam and Israel.

The themes of nonexistence, disappearance, displacement, invasion, banishment and failure recur in his poems. There is always a pain that runs in his insecure and vulnerable self, which was never totally at-home in this world. There is also a sense of another romantic element in his poetry – the death worship. He is one of the major Indian English poets whose poetry best manifest the fine distinctions and intricacies of the post-colonial literature.

FEATURES OF HIS POETRY

Moraes's burden, especially in his early poetry, is depression: the loss on growing up and of boyhood visions. He, with the stubbornness of a child, keeps running back to his imaginary kingdom. In the poem **Key**, the memory of a child with brown eyes and hair and chocolate spread all over is very beautifully described. Re-lived momentarily as the 'key' to the Victorian lock is turned and the poet gains access to the 'seven mossed stairs' and the 'badly kept garden'. The child, whom he had met earlier, re-appears fifteen years later, not as a grown up kid or a child frozen out with time, but just like a 'letter' asking the poet for his father. The irony lies in the statement that the father no longer possesses anything of any considerable value –

*Asking me for his father who now possesses
No garden, no home, not even any key.*

The 'key' is the metaphor – the 'key' to the memories of the past; the 'key' to childhood.

Moraes has a sharp eye for unusual details in ordinary scenes and a lyrical authority that transforms the common occurrences into myth and metaphor. The poem **Autobiography** illustrates all these qualities of his and, thus, becomes a confessional lyrical poem. The enigmatic past haunts the poet and he cherishes to remember the episodes that had taken place so long back and still are retained so fresh in memory. He remembers his grandparents and many others who had touched his self at one time of his life and thus moves backward in memory and is also desperate for love. After the passing of so many years, the poet, as he has grown older has become lonelier in life and his only companion is the old illusions, which come to him at times in the form of dreams that he had carefully preserved in the remote corner of his heart. There is pathos, there is pain; there is desire, there is detachment. The dictating past is handled under the docile present and this gives a charisma to the poem –

*I have grown up, I think, to live alone,
To keep my old illusions, sometimes dream
Glumly that I am unloved and forlorn*

It seems that the poet is always worried about his growing up and miserable about leaving his childhood in the past. The more he ages, the more desperate he becomes. His poem **Prophet** is also on the same track where he talks about his going around like a prophet for the last thirty years. Bearing the desert sun, with just a loin across his waist, feeding on whatever he found, resting wherever he could, he ultimately could gain no satisfaction. Moving around nature as a prophet ushered no pleasure on him. On the contrary, nature's beauty had enchanted him and kept him happy when he was a child. Nature looks beautiful to the vision of a child but with age even nature ages off. It is difficult to seek pleasure out of it then. The final line: 'I have aged' signifies the poet's frustration and powerlessness. The feeling that the poet has lost everything with the passing of days is very obvious and the misery is very aptly interwoven with the sensation of vacancy in life.

In **Words to a Boy** also the poet takes the same theme that has kept him captivated in most of his poems throughout his life. The poem is in the form of a suggestion to a boy asking him to take the vital decision of following the lonely dancer to whichever places he goes to perform his art. The decision might be a very crucial one but he should not delay in taking it because otherwise there is a chance of losing the dancer forever. The poet also makes it clear to the boy that with every postponement of decision and the rolling of years, the boy will lose the magnitude of his uttering. The poet is

fearful of that stage when words are no more heard by the general public because they have lost their importance with the passing of days –

*When you cry out to them they will not listen
Because you are ugly and no longer young.*

Dom Moraes is very critical of old age and his coarse words are a definite proof of his admonition and hatred. To him life ends with youth and hope shatters with every step forward.

SUMMATION

The lyricism of Dom Moraes's poems is captivating and the imagery intriguing. The poet, at times, has used the visual-dynamic images to transmit the back and forth movement of the poet's mind with the changes in time. The lyrical splendor and the technical genius, which are the trademarks of his poetry, have enchanted the readers by drawing them into the mesmerizing world of obsession, romance, horror, anguish, death and rejuvenation. Distinguished by a graceful and hypnotized imagery, the dreamlike textures of his poems intertwine together an assortment of contradictory themes – love and conflict, friendship and isolation, myth and religion, besides many more. He uses a distinctive western style in tone and temperament and this makes his poetry special in its own essence. Moraes has throughout been acutely preoccupied with recurrently inexplicable intricacies of human existence. He has both authority and compassion. He can ascend to a bravura fusion of the flesh and the spirit, of spiritual intensity and human concern.

11.4 KEKI N DARUWALLA

THE POET

Keki Nasserwanji Daruwalla (born 1937) is not only a compelling voice in Indian English poetry and short story but also forms a 'Parsi Quartet' with Gieve Patel, K.D Katrak and Adil Jussawalla. Having spent his childhood at various places, Daruwalla went to college in Ludhiana and attained the degree of Masters from there. He later joined the Indian Police Service and served the Government of India through his various positions and postings till his retirement. He has over twelve books to his credit in English language which include several volumes of poetry like ***Under Orion*** (1970), ***Appreciation in April*** (1971), ***Crossing of Rivers*** (1976) and many more. Though he had established himself as a poet long back, his first novel ***For Pepper and Christ***, was published only in 2009. He was honored with the Sahitya Academy Award in 1984 for his poetry collection ***The Keeper of the Dead***.

The significance, relevance and influence of his poetry emerge from an interaction between his individual reactions and the bigger framework that includes both myth and authenticity. His early poems are carved out of his experiences as a police officer and so there is closeness of observation and uniqueness of expression, but they lack the range of awareness which is born out of a large and reflective vision. Gradually, with maturity, there is a thematic introduction in his poetry as well as in his imagery and expression and this reveals his steady development.

FEATURES OF HIS POETRY

Daruwalla is primarily a poet of action and his poems expose his enthrallment for authority and supremacy. His poetry has a narrative energy which touches the readers emotionally and creates a vibrant picture in their mind permanently. **Hawk** reveals the greedy appetite and professional fondness with such proficiency that the desperateness of the poet to attain the best is clearly visible. 'Hawk' is a powerful representation of ferocity, violence, arrogance, tyranny and devastation. The image of the 'hawk' is very well developed in the first two stanzas of the poem, referring to all its aggressive and vigorous activities, only to be identified with the poet in the last segment.

*But he was lost
in the momentum of his own gyre
a frustrated parricide on the kill.*

The description very well suits the policeman on duty in his unattractive uniform. In the midst of the beautiful and the sweet singing birds, the hawk is 'a rapist in the harem of the sky'. The second part describes the hunt of the trained hawk. He is 'momentarily blinded' and only 'morsels of vision are fed to his eyes'. So confident and so perfect is his chase for prey that an artistic angle is created against the backdrop of the deadly act –

*Hawking is turned to a ritual, the predator's
passion honed to an art*

The emergency and the accuracy of the hawk in his mission is an exact representation of the trained policemen of the nation whose act of bravery and determination deserves a salute from their fellow countrymen. The readers get a notion of Daruwalla's relations with his country and countrymen which is brought out here in stunning and confessional terms.

The third section describes how a hare, filled with innocence, is chased and killed by the duty-bound disciplined hawk:

*His blood writes stories on the scuffed grass!
His movements are a scribble on the page of death.*

The fourth and final part of the poem is in first person and it becomes unmistakably clear that the poet is talking about himself. He is aware of his close resemblance to the hawk but still he feels that there is a vast gap between him and the hawk:

*But I am learning how to spot the ones
Crying for the right to dream, the right to flesh,
The right to sleep with their own wives –
I have placed them. I am sniffing
The air currents, deciding when to pounce.*

The poet deals with the burning problem of the increasingly growing exploitation of the meek and the innocent and the 'hawk' stands as a symbol of revolt in the poem.

Daruwalla writes with a vision and this apparition follows him like a shadow. His outlook of the world is clearly perceptible in his contemplative poems like **Ruminations** where the poet augments the glimpses of the factual natural world which is filled with violence and hatred. The poet is sad to note that man cannot move away from these evils, however hard he might try, as they keep haunting his mind throughout. And since brutality and abhorrence reign everywhere the consequence is always a death-wish:

*Death I am looking
for that bald bone-head of yours!*

Violence is compared to a perched cobra, hood swaying, fangs revealed. It seems as if the speaker is in search of an enemy, trying to track down death itself. But death is so gruesome, so abominable! As life drifts out of the body the flesh becomes vulnerable to decomposition. Neither rose water, nor incense sticks, nor flowers can drown the smell of death –

*The drift as it comes to us now
is aroma / stench / nausea
jostling each other!*

The poem then takes a turn and there is another stray instance of brutality: a woman with her nose sliced off maybe for cheating her husband. The poem also suggests the ways of disposing the dead – cremation, burial or the Parsi tower of silence. Death reigns supreme in the poem, creating a sense of disgust and distress, fear and aggression. The essence of sin sticks on to man and he fails to come out of it with a clean look as nature can, after the rains. Offense is attached so deep that even the refined man is incapable of attaining redemption –

*I have misplaced it somewhere
in the caverns of my past.*

This theme of sin and salvation is further elaborated in his poem ***The Death of a Bird***. The poem has the same motif as Dostoevsky's novel Crime and Punishment – man has to compensate exceedingly for committing sins on harmless birds and animals. The victim in the poem is a king monal that was engaged in love-making with its mate. Though the world of nature and the human world are brought together there is a great crevice between the two: love and companionship endorses the first whereas blood and death overpowers the other. The offender and his female companion cannot get away with the offense and this realization begets bizarre thoughts and sensations in them. The 'glazed eyes' and the 'throbbing heart' of the dying monal fill the sinners with anxiety and fear. The dead male monal becomes a part of the guilty conscience of the spectator –

*"Just watch its eyes!" for though the bird
was near dead
its eyes flared terror like bits of dripping meat!*

Death and nature's cruelty, the two preferable themes of Daruwalla, form the focus of ***The Ghaghra in Spate***. The poem is an impressionistic footage of the river Ghaghra when it alters its course yearly. It wraps its wrath, its nightmares and its chaos both in its surge and retreat through diverse images that fittingly configure the multitude moods of the river. The river 'is a grey smudge', 'over stewed coffee', 'a red weal' and 'bitchy' by turns. The poem is filled with unsympathetic imagery, the persistent spirit of death and terminologies connoting damage and destruction. The river's persistent fury and man's disparate struggle for survival are brought out very well –

*If only the voices could light lamps!
If only limbs could turn to rafted bamboo!*

What baffles the poet is man's indifference to the tragedy that befalls on other creatures, even human beings. Some suffer whereas for some it is the time for celebration. Women come in chauffeur-driven car to collect driftwood to decorate their drawing rooms whereas on the other side fishes in the fields are choked to death through an unholy agreement between the sun and the mud. An appalling picture of Ghaghra is painted by the poet. The world portrayed is not a pleasing one; it is a solemn world where man is a slave to his relentless desires.

The connotation of death is further evoked in ***The Professor Condoles*** where experience and knowledge combine to encompass the ultimate. It is a Professor's response to the death of an eleven year old boy in an accident. His address to the child's brother discerns between pathos and tragedy. An accident is

undoubtedly without design, it is intolerable and unaesthetic. On the other hand, a tragedy has a definite ethnicity and it includes sin, guilt and hamartia. The poem spells out this difference between the perception of tragedy in the past and its happening in the contemporary context. From its universal array it has narrowed down to a personal, restricted occurrence –

*Tragedy today is private, insular:
a depraved enzyme
in the belly of chance.*

The world has turned incongruous; accidents have become the order of the day and they may structure the milieu of tragedy. The poem betrays a complexity of fictitious conceptions and ends on a note of sarcasm rather than catharsis.

SUMMATION

Daruwalla's poetry has a dramatic illustration and his language is brilliantly conversational. The expressions in the poems are so realistic that they generate a feeling of remorse and retrospection. His poetry has voyaged a long way and it preserves certain strong unique characteristics: an ironic attitude, an aura of the multi-layered conflicting authenticities of Indian life, an obsession with various artistic and historic landscapes, sinuous imagism and a capability to coalesce an epic canvas with a miniaturists eye for detail. Violence and death linger in most of his poems, thus creating an aura of disgust and faithlessness that finally results in either revolt or submission. His poems are not based just on a progression of ideas; there is a sequence of images as well which convey a peculiar sensation among the readers.

11.5 A.K.RAMANUJAN

THE POET

A.K. Ramanujan (1929-1993) was a scholar of Indian literature who had contributed his writings both in English and in Kannad. A brilliant poet, essayist and translator, his academic research ranged across five languages: Tamil, Kannad, Telegu, Sanskrit and English. He had always argued strongly for giving local, non-standard language their appropriate due. Born in an Iyengar family in Mysore, he received his PhD in Linguistics from Indiana University. He moved to USA in 1959 and taught mostly in the South Asian Studies Programme at the University of Chicago. Ramanujan was awarded the Padma Shri in 1976, MacArthur Prize Fellowship in 1983 and was also elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

FEATURES OF HIS POETRY

His poems are generally distinguished for concerning Indian sensibilities to American culture. *Death and the Good Citizen*, an influential and uncompromising poem, for instance, starkly contrasts Indian and American attitudes to death. He has written of the cultural background: “English and my disciplines give me my ‘outer’ forms – linguistics, logical and other such ways of shaping experience; and my first thirty years in India, Tamil, and the classics and folklore give me my substance, my ‘inner’ forms, images and symbols.” As an Indo-American writer, Ramanujan had the experience of the native as well as the foreign surroundings. His poems, like the *Conventions of Despair*, reflect his views on the cultures and conventions of the east and the west.

Ramanujan’s *Elements of Composition* is a poem that relates to the elements of composition and talks about the Hindu ideas of the five elements – ‘*the pancha bhutas*’ – the earth, the fire, the wind, the water and the sky. This is one aspect and the other list being the hundred odd elements that the chemistry book talks about. The poet feels that he too, like the elements in any of the catalogs, is composed in some form or the other. The poem starts with composition and ends with decomposition: ‘the caterpillars on a leaf, eating and being eaten’. In the poem, it seems, that all the elements like gold, magnesium, calcium, etc. are gathered into a gossiping self, knotted in love and work. The constancy of things can only be seen by constantly moving the eyes, and this is indeed a very beautiful and overpowering thought

*Capable of eyes that can see
Only by moving constantly
The constancy of things.*

The physical eyes can see the beauty of nature or a magnificent work of art only by moving them constantly but one should watch over a period of time to grasp the inherent beauty of nature and art. A lovely recollection of the poet about his uncle’s adroitness is used by projecting the eleven fingers to create the mesmerizing images of kings and cats and the sounds like hissing and the transformation of the shadows to fingers again. Then the sister’s fear of an approaching tragedy just prior to her wedding is also expressed vehemently followed by the horrific existence of the mutilated lepers of Madurai against the exquisitely ornate stone sculptures of goddesses in their dancing posture in the majestic Meenakshi Temple. All these are the various elements that everyone and everything is composed of. They pass through the poet as he passes through them. It is, on the whole, a captivating poem pertaining to what everyone is composed of, the diverse forms in which the elements combine, the impact of time on composition and finally death and destruction.

The River is a beautiful piece of contemptuous criticism intended at poets who force themselves to look only at the attractive things of life and involuntarily imitate the same lines quoted by the poets of the past. On the other hand, they also tend to overlook the obnoxious facets of life, unless perhaps it is such an enormous disaster that has killed thousands of people. No one has the inclination to write about 'one pregnant woman or a couple of cows'. The city of Madurai, located in the southern part of India, is one of the most ancient cities of the country. Thousands of poetries have been composed here, dating back to centuries past, and since then it has a unique and rich tradition of art and culture. 'The river' depicts the picture of River Vaikai flowing through the town of Madurai throughout the seasons. During the summer the river shrinks and becomes small in size but during the floods it expands beyond imagination, creating chaos and confusion. During the summer the Watergates are even clogged with broken hair and dry straw and there is tranquility and harmony all around. The poet is sad to note that the previous poet's have only seen and written about the beautiful scenic description of the river and have not bothered to mirror the horror and devastation caused by the same river during the monsoon. In the last section he even ironically points out to the new poets, who have followed their ancestral footmarks, and have limited their writings to only partial images.

Ramanujan uses his South Indian Brahmin background in multifaceted ways, weaving in his poetry the security as well as the proximity in Indian families. The liberated mind might work, at times, to break the chains of protection and propinquity, only to realize the mistake and go back to the family. Parents are sacred and revered and their influences enduring and cherished. This is the main gist of his poem **Obituary** where he has also set a vein of melancholy in the portraits of the father and the mother. The family is such a system where no human is considered alien; it is the tissue that initiates human feelings and instills the thread of human bond.

In **Small Scale Reflections on a Great House**, he recognizes the immense fascinating influence of Hinduism by relating a distinctive Hindu family. Despite a slight ironic tone that is in work throughout the poem, the concluding impression is one of high esteem mounting precariously in over-romantic admiration. The 'great house' stands for the primeval house of Hinduism – a house which is a motto of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam – has immersed from time to time various sects, traditions and races to produce one of the utmost paradigms of amalgamation in all human history. When Ramanujan contemplates over his cultural philosophy, he evaluates its strengths and limitations. He is conscious of the shortcomings, especially the superstitions and the blind-beliefs. He is also aware of the powerlessness of Hinduism to

convince the typical modern mind, as it falls short to judiciously clarify the element of immorality in life. But this does not make him alter his faith; he does not see any suitable motive to switch over from one type of despondency to another. The Indian ethos undoubtedly permeates in his poem but his predicament – the quest for individual identity – is universal.

A Plant is another such poem which is rich in sensation and appearance. It is an emotional counterpart to the internal apprehensions in the consciousness of the poet. It also presents the poet's restrained afflictions stimulated by his traumatic experience of living in an uncivilized era without the roots of his own. The words and phrases, the images and symbols, are highly evocative and expressive. With cacophonic and polysyllabic words the poet's impatience and anxieties are wonderfully captured –

*A multi foliate
restlessness is held by a root's
simple inversion
fed by its own mirror-image
outlining under the opaque earth
its skyward antlered pride.*

The images of the 'caterpillar' and the 'cacti' are very beautifully presented. As the caterpillar nourishes on dry leaves and develops into a moth or a butterfly, similarly the poet feeds on an unfamiliar arid and barren soil that is devoid of lushness and liveliness. The image of the 'cacti' is equally suggestive. These thick fleshy plants, with no leaves, are covered with spikes and grow in deserts and the poet compares these plants with his Chicago life – a life rooted in the desert, without leaves, yearning to be a beautiful and fragrant flower. He despises his loneliness in the desert land and desperately tries to come out of it.

SUMMATION

The nervousness of exile and the continuous search for native roots knit the threads of most of the poems of Ramanujan. Ramanujan's unique modernist style includes an almost vociferous realism and hints at a kind of confessional approach. He seeks his poetic inspiration from the dead past and turns it into vibrant poetry. His poetry refracts the indispensable Indian responsiveness merged creatively with the temper of modernity. He comes out of his imaginative dilemma to a state of inspired freedom by means of enlightening an exclusively personal idiom. It is within this thematic and linguistic scaffold that his poetry projects a self-assuming figure of personalities in moment, depicting the eminence of transparency. It is his relentless quest for the individual self in tradition as well as contemporary poetry and also his wonderful adaptation of poetic idiom that confirms him a poet beyond excellence.

Ramanujan illustrates in his poetry a historical susceptibility which is spiky and severe. In many of his poems he associates his household occurrences with his historical perception and with his dedicated apparition he is able to evoke inveterate prototypes of historical catastrophe and individual suffering. Usually his poetry does not convey the nostalgia of an individual for the things and the times past but the collective reminiscence of the whole nation which looks back often with an attitude mingled with love and hatred. Thus by linking the familial to the historical, he has been able to sketch an outline of stability in the turbulence of individual experience. His poems are augmenting and attractive, receptive and restricted, calm and impressive.

11.6 VIKRAM SETH

THE POET

Vikram Seth (born June 20, 1952) is a famous Indian English poet and novelist as well as a travel and children writer. He studied at Oxford, Stanford and Nanjing Universities, and has spent two years in China doing research on economic demography. He has travelled widely and lived in Britain, California, India and China. His first novel, ***The Golden Gate: A Novel in Verse*** (1986), describes the experiences of a group of friends living in California. His acclaimed epic of Indian life, ***A Suitable Boy*** (1993), won the WH Smith Literary Award as well as the Commonwealth Writers Prize. Set in India in the early 1950s, it is the story of a young girl, Lata, and her search for a husband. Vikram Seth is also the author of a travel book, ***From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet*** (1983), an account of a journey through Tibet, China and Nepal and this travelogue won him the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award.

Along with being a novelist, Seth is also a good poet. ***Mappings*** (1980) was Seth's first volume of poetry, a little known collection, it includes translations of work by Chinese, German and Hindi poets. This was followed by ***Heaven Lake: Travels through Sinkiang and Tibet*** (1983), a popular and compelling autobiographical tale of the author's journey from Nepal to India and the many varied people he meets on the way. Travel reigned even in the next two volumes: ***The Humble Administrator's Garden*** (1985) and ***All You Who Sleep Tonight*** (1990). The first is a witty collection of nature poems structured around plants and places and the second combines the sharp humour that characterizes Seth's writing with the darker subjects like the problems in Hiroshima. In his next volume ***Beastly Tales from Here and There*** (1991) located around the classic tension between good and evil, Seth displays his capacity for wit. ***Three Chinese Poets*** (1992) is his most ambitious and daring translation till date.

FEATURES OF HIS POETRY

Sex with a stranger does not have to be a cold and secondary thing, and Seth expresses it beautifully in his poem ***Unclaimed***. Seth has worked on something that the traditional mindset will definitely regard as contemptible and turn away from; but he has converted it into something achingly exquisite – a touchstone yearning unchained of all other obligations. Composed in five-foot couplets the poem illustrates Seth's rational Hedonism [hedonism in Greek Philosophy considers pleasure as the ultimate goal of life]; it is rational because he is in favour of the emotional and romantic encounters with a stranger in order to free himself from the attachment to deeper relationships. These deep emotional involvements, if in danger of betrayal, result in immense frustrations and even a death-like existence. Seth, therefore, advocates the search of pleasure without any emotional attachment –

*To make love with a stranger is the best.
There is no riddle and there is no test. –*

The message of the importance of self-confidence and moral courage is delivered through his poem ***The Frog and The Nightingale***. It is the story of a frog who croaked throughout with his loud unpleasant voice, insensitive of the disturbance he caused to the others. Once a nightingale appears near the swamp, where the frog resided, and catches the attention of all the creatures with her sweet and melodious voice. The shrewd pitiless frog somehow convinces the nightingale that she is not a very good singer and definitely needs a training that only he can provide. The nightingale lacks confidence and so she agrees to whatever the frog suggests and even starts flattering him. The frog even asks for a moderate fee for the lessons he would impart to her and the nightingale accepts. The nightingale soon becomes famous with her singing and the frog grows richer, earning more and more with every concert. The concerts are also attended by eminent personalities and the frog sits watching with mixed feelings of happiness and bitterness: he is happy because he is earning and jealous because it is the nightingale that is receiving attention. Meanwhile he even makes the nightingale work hard on her performance, abusing her throughout and assuring her that she is a broken spirit. Misusing her voice thus throughout, she loses its sweetness and gradually no one further comes to her to listen. Morose and depressed she finally dies leaving the swamp in the custody of the frog and his relentless awful singing. Vikram Seth's allegorical poem wonderfully conveys that it is not just talent that can ensure success but it is self-confidence that can assure the abilities that one has.

Through his poem ***The Accountant's House***, Vikram Seth tries to present a life filled with conscious superficialities and

attempts to keep himself away from any kind of psychological probing and analysis. It is the persona of the poet along with his companion, 'a barefooted doctor', who visits the accountant's house in the late evening. The road leading to the house is dark and muddy and 'fireflies flick silver' and 'the ash flicked off' is gold. By using these two expressions the poet proves his refined artistry through his use of alliteration and antithesis. Their purpose of visiting the accountant is to acquire some explanations regarding income and expenditure. As they reach the house they are greeted by the bereaved family of the accountant, a family still in shock of their young son's premature death – *Their son died last Spring Festival*.

Spring is the season of pleasure and vivacity and by bringing sadness into it the poet tries to show the extreme contrast in the natural world and the human world. Nature looks charming only when the heart and the mind are in an encouraging state; if sorrow creeps in, the beauty of nature is lost forever. But the poet is surprised to find that the family does not either grieve or mourn but rather talk on practical issues like 'electricity fees'. The tragic death of the son is mentioned as a brief reference in between the official matters. Through the poem the poet tries to project the absurdities in relationships that at times are overlooked under the strong pressure of practical involvement. Satiric is his tone when he says 'yet they laugh, yet they laugh, these lovely people'.

Round and Round is another small poem that attracts for its simplicity and sublimity. It is the description of how as simple and familiar a thing as a bag induce a wave of emotions emanating from a network of memories and all these memories are tied up to some attachments in the past. Coping with the present it is often felt that the past is totally done away with; yet at times some simple incident triggers an overwhelming sense forcing us to re-live those moments that have touched the heart in some way or the other. Credit goes to the human mind that has the outstanding capability to preserve the emotional contents of events long forgotten. There is a tremendous sense of expectation raised by the poet to ensure the ability of the human mind that protects the incidents of the past carefully in the depth of the mind.

What, after all, is earth's creation? is a satire on man who considers himself as the lord of the universe but is filled with the poison of inhumanity. The poem is a sequence of sonnets from *The Golden Gate* and it registers the poet's sense of bewilderment at man's abnormal behavior. The poet comments that man is reduced to a virus whose identification is not very easy. He believes that it is man's central interest in space technology that has in fact, shrunk him to a virus, polluting the space. In his satirical tone, the poet calls man the 'strange irradiated beast'. Man has spread on

the earth the venom of inhumanity and thus is harming its own habitat. Seth has throughout used the word 'virus': man the paragon of God's creation on earth is reduced to being 'a virus in the morgue of space', 'brain-sick', 'rabid with virulence, irradiated beast, vomiting filth upon its bed of inhumanity'.

SUMMATION

Vikram Seth is glorified for his versatility and he has exceptional creations to his credit. Most of his works are praiseworthy for his wit and humour and also his ability to evoke a sagacity of cultures. His poems are simple, enjoyable and easy to understand. He plays with words and this provides ecstasy and exclusivity to his poetry. In his poetry he has mocked the experimental literature and also the romantic and extreme attitudes towards life. To him literature and life should be pleasurable and worldly. He differs from the other modern poets by bringing in older literary models and pretending to be old-fashioned in approach. An extremely daring artist, drawing on older artistic styles, he can be termed as one of the greatest post-modern poets.

Regarding his poetic technique it can be said that his assertion on the straightforwardness of expression and his harnessing of razor-sharp images as a means to accomplish consistency and rationality makes his style exceptionally perceptive. His concerns range from introspection and self-analysis to recollected personal emotions, from expressions of social involvement to extreme isolations. A thematic study of Seth's poetry seems to propose that love posited in friendship is a more durable bedrock of human life, as compared to the 'high joy or pain' that true love brings. Seth's poetry is the poetry of personal association and, therefore, it is more concerned with the individual rather than the general character.

11.7 CONCLUSION

Post- Independence Indian English poetry contains a variety of moods and techniques. Though these poets are highly – individualistic in their attitudes and approach, they are uniformly guided by modernist poetic sensibility which is evident in the works of each one of them. Their contribution together make the genre rich and variable.

11.8 QUESTIONS / EXERCISE

1. Bring out the various trends and tendencies in post – Independence Indian English poetry.
2. Discuss the themes and techniques adopted by Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes and Keki Daruwala. Relate your answer to the poems you have studied.
3. Write critical appreciation of the following poems
 1. *Poet, lover and Birdwatcher* by Nissim Ezekiel
 2. *The Death of a Bird* by Keki Daruwala
 3. *Obituary* by A. K. Ramanujan



CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF POST- INDEPENDENCE POETRY PART II

Unit Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Kamala Das
- 12.2 Eunice De Souza
- 12.3 Imtiaz Dharker
- 12.4 Dilip Chitre
- 12.5 Gieve Patel
- 12.6 Meena Alexander
- 12.7 Arun Kolatkar
- 12.8 Conclusion
- 12.9 Question / Exercise

12.0 OBJECTIVES

The Objectives of this unit is to acquaint students with life and works of the poets prescribed for the study. The unit also offers detailed study of some of the poems prescribed in the syllabus.

12.1 KAMALA DAS

THE POET

Kamala Das (31 March 1934 – 31 May 2009) started writing poetry while in school but before contributing to Indian poetry in English she had won acclaim as a Malayalam writer. She spent several years in Calcutta where she went to Catholic schools. As she was married quite early, before she could finish her college, she is perhaps the only leading Indian English poet without a degree attached to her name. After marriage when she showed an inclination towards writing, her husband supported her decision as it would supplement the family income. At times she would often wait till nightfall, when her family had gone off to sleep and would write till early morning: "There was only the kitchen table where I

would cut vegetables, and after all the plates and things were cleared, I would sit there and start typing". In 1963 she won the PEN's Asian Poetry Prize. Her first volume, ***Summer in Calcutta*** was published in 1965 followed by ***Descendants*** in 1967. ***The Old Playhouse and Other Poems***, which appeared in 1973, brought her wide fame and appreciation. The first volume of her ***Collected Poems***, published in 1984, won her the Sahitya Academy Award in 1985. Besides poetry she has also written a few short stories and novels. Her controversial autobiography, ***My Story***, was published in 1974. She converted herself into Islam in 1999 at the age of 65 and changed her name to Kamala Suraiyya. Her conversion was somewhat controversial among the social and literary circles of society and later she seems to have realized that 'it was not worth it to change one's religion'.

Kamala Das frankly and honestly conversed and wrote about sexual desires of Indian women, which made her an iconoclast of her generation. Writing chiefly about love and its betrayal she portrayed the consequent anguish which naturally crept into her mind and flowed out with force from the tip of her pen. She has been classified as a confessional poet as well and there is no doubt that her poems are versions of intensely personal occurrences. But more than the confessional aspect, it is her atrocious openness of verse that stunned as well as fascinated the readers. She dealt on issues like sexual frustration and longing, of suffocation in an arranged, emotion-less marriage, of innumerable affairs, of the embarrassment and regret resulting because of the inability to find love after repetitive efforts, of the futility of desire, of the solitude and obsession that usually pursues women. She has often been considered as a gimmick in sex and femininity but in truth her poetic corpus configures an inner voyage, a consciousness beyond skin's indolent hungers to the hidden soul. Her poetry endorses her quest – an exploration into her personality and a search of her identity.

FEATURES OF HER POETRY

An Introduction is Kamala Das's most famous poem in the confessional mode. She starts the poem with self-declaration. The poet claims that though she is not interested in politics she seems to know the names of all those who are in power. She states that these issues are involuntarily embedded in her and she even is confident of taking the challenge of repeating these names in the correct sequence like replicating the days of the month or the months of the year. Very satirically does the poet point out that these politicians are trapped in the repetitive cycle of time, irrespective of any self-identity. Then she comes down to her roots and declares that she is, by default, an Indian. She declares that though she is born in Malabar, she does not belong to the place.

She tries to protect herself from regional prejudices and defines herself firstly in terms of nationality and secondly in terms of colour.

I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar.

She goes on to articulate that 'she speaks in three languages, write in two, dream in one'. By suggesting so Kamala Das wants to justify that medium is not the prerequisite to writing; the main requirement is one's essence of thinking capacity. Kamala Das reflects the main theme of Girish Karnard's *Broken Images* – the clash between writing in one's own language and making use of a foreign one. The language she speaks is essentially her's, the prime ideas are not just an expression but an individual consciousness. Then she narrates her development, from a child to adulthood; revolting against the feminine changes of her physical self and trying desperately to retune her corporal existence. But she has no other option but to accept her situation and she slowly confronts with her state-of-affairs. Later her crave for love and affection is mistakenly understood by others as voracious sexual yearning. She explains her encounter with a man and to prove his universality refers him as 'every man'; and on his behalf the man classifies himself as 'I', exposing the supreme male ego.

The poem is a plea for more creative liberty or for expression in Indian English. There is an obsession in the request which comes as insolence against those who wish to silence the poet. Though the poem begins with a dilemma of language it concludes with an assertion of identity. It explores the crust of the poet's self who is not just an individual woman but refers to the women fraternity throughout the ages. The poem is candidly confessional, frighteningly genuine and absolutely a coherent voice of the feminine sensibility –

*I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys which are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.*

The lamentation of injustice where the voice of a woman is crushed forever under the dominating stronger sex is portrayed very aptly in **The Stone Age**. In the Indian concept, a husband is considered as the supreme authority and the wife has no voice of her own. The power to do whatever he wishes to is in the hands of the over-powering male and the poor girl has no right to comment or even lament. Her husband can keep her in any shabby way he wants, can ill-treat her, can do whatever he feels like with her lifeless body, but no one will question him. The poet feels that people should question about her husband's conduct; they should ask her that whether it is out of love or out of compulsion that she

has accepted her fortune. But it is really tragic that no one ever inquires and this produces pain and apathy in her. Her desire is to justify her life as she knows that it is short and she is also stunned at the realization that love is shorter still as it lasts only for a very short span. She wants everyone to ask her the definition of 'bliss' and what 'price' one has to pay to achieve it. And then with dots she lets the readers imagine the price of bliss as she knows that it is unattainable –

*Ask me why life is short and love is
Shorter still, ask me what is bliss and what its price*

With a clear voice and powerful language Kamala Das opens her heart out. There is anguish and pain, lament and repentance. It is not pity that she wants; it is revolt that she exposes. Das is always critical of the convention of a society where women are chained with too many do's and don'ts. She wants the society to reconsider the pitiable condition of women and wishes women to defy the definitions men have thrust on them.

My Grandmother's House is a poem that takes the poet back to the days of her childhood. The house that is in Malabar not only signifies protection and integrity but also imagination and adolescence. In the house the poet has the liberty to dream her own fantasies and try to achieve them, though explicitly, her wishes are connected to a more fascinating world. The sense of security in her grandmother's house gives the poet the liberty to attain some sort of self integrity. The main characteristic of the house is that the poet receives love there and when she talks about 'love' she ascertains that it is selfless and unconditional. With the death of her grandmother, the house ceases to be occupied and gradually becomes an isolated and secluded entity. When she visits the deserted house later the air seems frozen in contrast to the warmth that she had earlier received in the same place when her grandmother was alive.

The final part of the poem can be considered to be an address to the poet's husband. She claims that her quest for love has become errant – she who is now thirst of genuine love had in fact received absolute love from her grandmother who is more. Ironically she addresses her husband as 'darling' and speaks vehemently of the lack of love in her life. Her pursuit of love has driven her to the doors of strangers to receive love at least in the form of 'a tip'. Earlier she was 'proud', as she did not have to compromise on her self-respect. But at present she has to move in the labyrinth of male monopolistic chauvinism, and beg for love in the form of change –

*Can you, that I lived in such a house and
Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change?*

The Sunshine Cat also is in the same track as it talks about the decline and collapse of a woman. The protagonist seems to have suffered from a nervous breakdown. She is battered, locked up in a room and finally reduced to being “a cold and /Half-dead woman, now of no use at all to men”. The poet rages over the disappointment in her longing for love and who so ever has taken advantage of her emotional instability, she has termed them as ‘men’ in general. This so-called community included her husband as well, as he had turned out to be a sheer objective spectator without any emotional attachment. Throughout he has been selfish and has never exhibited the slightest display of love that she had so intently longed for.

The men who come her way are incapable of loving her, but can, at best, offer her some compassion and in this procedure she gulps down peg after peg of wisdom. A powerful image of the speaker is created – howling, insomniac and absolutely vulnerable. The poem closes with the poet’s confinement, just a silver line of hope – a yellow cat – to keep her company –

*Her husband shut her
In, every morning, locked her in a room of books
With a streak of sunshine lying near the door, like
A yellow cat, to keep her company.*

But with the advent of evening even the cat disappears leaving her alone, freezing and half-dead. The poem is a silent registration of the powerless resentment at the humiliation of woman in a male-dominated world where no one cares for her identity, aspiration and the want for emotional accomplishment. To the outer world, she is a sunshine cat appearing to be always contented with all corporeal comforts. In reality she is a yellow cat, a deceased cat. The denial of freedom and fulfillment has taken away all her splendor, youth and charisma.

Her poem **The Dance of the Eunuchs** is a persuasive expression of barrenness in Kamala Das’s loveless life which is symbolic of the spiritual infertility of her being. To assert her unproductiveness she uses the eunuchs, who are the emblem of sterility, as her symbol. The poem starts with a climatic change which is not a matter of concern for the eunuchs as they are subjected to any kind of extreme weather. Without caring for the conditions and the situations around, their anklets keep jingling throughout, not considering even to the non-rhythmic note it produces –

*It was hot, so hot, before the eunuchs came
To dance, wide skirts going round and round, cymbals
Richly clashing, and anklets jingling, jingling, Jingling ...*

They wail and 'writhe' in vacant ecstasy as they reflect the vacuum of their life and the hollowness of their existence. Their song is melancholic – some beat the drums and others beat their breasts – and mourn. Much like a *Tantrik* at work, Das makes no effort to conceal the sensuality of the human form; her work seems to commemorate its blissful prospective while recognizing its concomitant menace.

SUMMATION

Kamala Das writes her poetry brandishing it as a weapon to battle against a conventional, conservative society. She has, therefore, more to say about the suffering of a woman emerging from a submissive role to the summit of ascertaining and emphasizing her individual emancipation and freedom. The tone of resentment and indignation in some of her poems undoubtedly confirms her sagacity of justice against the ill-founded societal system. She is precisely portrayed as a vigorous and vehement feminist because in a conservative society where women are hardly expected to have wishes and desires, let alone to voice them, she is not only eloquent but critical of the void that engulfs the sacred institution of marriage. Das has ventured into areas unclaimed by society and she has also transcended the role of a poet and has just cuddled herself into the role of a love-seeking sincere woman.

12.2 EUNICE DE SOUZA

THE POET

Eunice De Souza (born 1940) is a contemporary Indian English poet, literary critic and novelist. She belongs to a Roman Catholic family originally from Goa. Having attained Post Graduation from Marquette University, Wisconsin, she received her Ph.D Degree from Bombay University in 1969. She taught English at St. Xavier's College Mumbai and was the Head of the Department until her retirement. She has written quite a number of poems and among her notable books of poetry is ***Women in Dutch Painting*** (1968). She received great fame with her volume of poems *Fix* which was published in 1980. These poems, written in snapshots about the poet's family, are in the confessional mode following the trend of the American poets of the sixties like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. She opened her account in novel writing with ***Dangerlok*** in 2001. She has also written a number of children's books.

FEATURES OF HER POETRY

Eunice De Souza's poems have the conciseness, the abruptness and the urgency that captivate the stunned readers with bewilderment. Her abrupt short poem ***Sweet Sixteen*** adopts a dramatic mode as it presents the dialogue between two sweet sixteen Goan girls. One of them is Phoebe and the other one is the poet herself and they discuss about the dos and donts that are imposed upon them by their parents and the Church. The girls have attained puberty and they have a number of queries relating to their biological growth and sex. But the rigid code of morality, imposed upon them, takes them towards wrong ideas and their vulnerable minds are stuffed with imaginative thoughts and offensive feelings. The persona of the poet satirizes the mothers, Nuns and Fathers of the Goan community who fail to respond to the sensitivity of young girls in need of certain information regarding their biological and psychological development. The conversation between Phoebe and the poet in character is endowed with irony in the second stanza. Phoebe's query that while dancing with a partner in a dancing hall would she get pregnant and the poet person's assuring that there might be a possibility indicates how innocence and immaturity can be the foundation behind wrong judgments. It is their ignorance that squeezes out the sweetness of youth from their life by their unsubstantiated fears. From a poet De Souza emerges as a critic of the Goan Catholic community. She uses a very strong language that expresses the fears and feelings of the sweet sixteen's in a very significant way.

In ***Miss Louise***, another poem of hers, the middle-aged Goan Christian comes to term with romantic illusions. The sensitive Miss Louise, who has failed to be happily married, tries to uphold her self-respect and identity by surrendering herself to such imaginative fantasies. De Souza has exposed the consciousness of Miss Louisa in a very dramatic manner. She has made the innocent lady convey her romantic dreams and sensibilities which are pitilessly mocked at by the people in her community. De Souza presents the character of Miss Louise sympathetically and makes the Goan Catholic community the target of her satire in this poem as well.

With an astonishingly piercing sarcasm and a sharp eye for the 'marriage market' of traditional conservative India where brides are examined like cattle brought to the market, De Souza's, ***Marriages are Made*** is a satire on the conventional modes of the society where the identity and respect of women are crushed forever. It is a plain tale told without conceits and superfluities and the hard-hitting words speak for themselves the miseries that lie underneath –

*My cousin Elena
is to be married
The formalities
have been completed:*

She and I is also a poem in the confessional tone where she is the mother and I the daughter. The poem is about the daughter's becoming a rival to her mother for the sake of her father's love. There is an autobiographical touch in the poem as De Souza had lost her father in her childhood and had been deprived of the fatherly love that she had longed for. The daughter in the poem is shocked at her mother's frank and unrestrained communication with her at the age of seventy-eight, giving free expression to the love she had for her husband, recalling every detail carefully and intensely. The daughter's internal monologue, set off by the unexpected transformation she perceives in the mother, accounts to the confessional attitude of the daughter and it discloses the mind-set that have tormented the psyche of both the mother and the daughter –

*I am afraid
for her, for myself,
but can say nothing.*

De Souza's short lyrics are an expression of her feminine sensibility. ***Meeting Points*** is one such poem where the poet's criticism of the slipshod manifestations of the other poets who have disappointed her and hurt her womanly susceptibility. De Souza, herself a poet, had expected poets to be the mystique creators of imagination but was disappointed to find that they had no aesthetic sense either in dress or in manners. A poem of high hopes and frustrated feelings, it clearly attributes to the poets sense of sophistication not only in attire but also in etiquette.

SUMMATION

Eunice De Souza's poetry, though ruthless and biting, is likewise pleasing. Most of her poems have a strong sense of individuality and feminism and many of them take the readers on an expedition around her Goan Catholic Community. Convincing and concise, her poems deal on the themes of love, relationships and family. Through her poems De Souza explores the reliance of lovers and the burdened affiliation between the parents and their children. Her hard-hitting well-chosen words bring forth her clear imagery.

De Souza uses various figures of speech like metaphors, personification and alliterations to bring out her emotions and true feelings into her poetry. Very much modern in approach, she talks

freely about her sexuality and her sexual preferences. She uses poetry as a medium to express herself to the world. Oppression of women, undoubtedly, is one of the main themes in her poetry as she often feels that women are manipulated by marriage for the sake of their security and stability but, in fact, it is a wrong perception. There is a peculiar rhythm and tone in her poems that expresses a lot and touches the heart of all. Totally devoid of any indicating mood or emotion, the poems are as expression of the subjugated emotions that the poet has tried to give vent to in the most authentic way.

12.3 IMTIAZ DHARKER

THE POET

Imtiaz Dharker (born 1954) is a poet, artist and documentary film-maker. Born in Lahore to Pakistani parents, she was brought up in Glasgow. She has written five books on poetry. Her main themes include home, freedom, journeys, geographical and cultural displacements, communal conflicts and gender politics. She was one of the judges in the panel for the 2008 Manchester Poetry Prize. To many she is regarded as one of the Britain's most inspirational contemporary poets. She is also a documentary film-maker having scripted and directed over a hundred films and audio visuals centering on education, reproductive health and shelter for women and children. She was awarded a Silver Lotus for a short film in 1980.

FEATURES OF HER POETRY

The poetry of Imtiaz Dharker has journeyed an appealing path – from the trauma of cultural exile and estrangement to a commemoration of unsettlement as settlement, from a tormented condemnation of **Purdah** where 'the body finds a place to hide' to the rebellious elimination of the 'black veil of faith / that made me faithless to myself and the 'lacy things / that feed dictator dreams'. What makes the poetic route mesmerizing is the shifting stylistic and tonal texture of her work. **Purdah** (1989), Dharker's first book, surveyed a somewhat internal politics by probing the numerous resonances of the veil. The result was a work loaded in stratum and obliquity – it spoke of doors "opening inward and again inward", of the restrained interchange of progress and withdrawal across "the borderline of skin". **Postcards from God** (1994), her second book, is about the misery at a metropolis devastated by fanaticism and fundamentalist bigotry articulated itself in an idiom that was dreary, brusque, modest, less imagistic – and in contrast to the earlier work – more unveiled.

Set in a village of Pakistan **Blessing** opens with a simile: 'The skin cracks like a pod' that immediately gives an impression of

acute shortage of water. By the second stanza the crisis becomes even more severe and the desperateness of the villagers is very well expressed. Dharkar involves the readers also in the emergency situation by asking them 'to imagine the drip of it', focusing on the meager quantity as well as the drop of water resounding in the tin mug. God is mentioned as the provider of water and every drop received is taken with kind gesture. And then there is a sudden catastrophe – the bursting of the municipal pipe is an accidental occurrence and the poet describes the value of water with metaphors like 'the sudden rush / of fortune' and 'silver crashes to the ground'. People rush out of their houses to collect water and everyone in the surrounding is eager to get their share of the spilled water. The ecstasy among the villagers is highlighted by the poet through the use of various phrases and metaphors that add meaning and relevance to the poem. The word 'blessing' continues the religious thread running through the poem. The conclusion is a very placid one where the poet focuses on the children who are overwhelmed with enthusiasm at the sudden accidental benevolence of something that is scarcely available. It is a wonderfully descriptive poem that uses imagery and a setting so authentic that it adds empathy for the villagers and magnitude to the recourse that we hardly bother about and can understand its importance only in crisis.

The initial stanza of Dharkar's poem ***The Room*** creates an impression of a quest for freedom – the room 'breaking out' of its confines and seeking 'space, light, empty air'. All the negative notions are left behind with illustrations like the chairs moving out from their usual 'dark corners' and 'crash through the clouds'. Gradually, after ruling out the negativity, a positive tone is set: 'this is the time and place / to be alive'. The improbable arrives and the routine has to be broken. A special event takes place and the description of sounds and movements of kitchen utensils is very beautifully depicted: 'bang together / in celebration, clang'. The personified garlic, onions and spices follow the chairs skyward and there is an atmosphere of celebration from where no one wants to be left out. And finally the poet uses first person –

*I'm wondering where
I've left my feet.*

The atmosphere is of excitement which is added with the fact that the poet is literally confused about where the physical body is. But the delight is concluded with a solitary line as it describes the narrator's hands 'outside, clapping' which, in turn, emphasize the jubilation. An extraordinarily straightforward poem, it describes the occasional daily routine broken away and left behind in the past. The intriguing expression of an idea is very well articulated.

The Right word is set against the sensitive 9/11 backdrop of political and religious tension. Initially it seems that it is a contradictory description against the virtuous title of the poem. The use of questions as well as the alternative ways of describing someone suggests that the poem is full of hesitation and suspicion –

*Is that the wrong description?
Outside the door,
Taking shelter in the shadows
Is a freedom fighter.*

A terrorist, a freedom fighter, a hostile militant, a guerilla warrior, a martyr – the poet is utterly confused. Throughout the poem there is this feeling of uncertainty, panic and distrust. The poem finally dramatizes with the search to know one's own mind, the process of moving from uncertainty to certainty. It is only when it moves from considering the problem at the political level to the personal level that the fear and the doubt are removed –

*No words can help me now
Just outside the door,
Lost in shadows,
Is a child who looks like mine.*

Imtiaz Dharkar feels that man is unfairly suffering when God and devil are affianced in violent struggle to ascertain their superiority and autonomy. She suggests that it should be a war of influence and fortitude, politics and diplomacy, brains and bangs, between God and devil only. Let God's angels and Devil's diplomats hold council to evade disagreement at any level because they have their own provinces to rule. Why should man be battered or branded, trampled or trodden in this perpetual antagonism? The poetess tells God and Devil in direct terms in the poem **Lines of Control** to resolve their scores once and for all and settle on their own kingdoms without making man a prey to their battle of intellects. She says:

*"If you wanted to start a fight
couldn't you just have got on with it,
the two of you, god and devil
in deadly combat
tearing at each other.....
but of all the battlegrounds
you could have chosen
why did you pick on me?"*

It is an extremely emblematic poem crammed with vast enormities. This short lyric brings out the maddening dilemma of man as he remains torn and tense all his life between what is good and what is bad, what is moral and what is immoral. All schools of

thought have failed to help him in determining this momentous existential issue. So with all the sparkle and shadow, delight and desolation, splendor and scarcity, requests and scorns, irrationality is the final conclusion. In such a vulnerably inconsistent circumstance, there is only the radiant optimism that rears cheerfulness all around: should not even think of doing evil to oneself and to those who are connected with us.

In her poem **Outline**, Imtiaz Dharkar seems to describe her own poetics and both the parts of the poem deal with the artist and his/her work of art. In the first part the artist consciously stops when the work of art is still hiding its secrets and in the second part, the artist, driven with the subconscious, continues to complete the work. The highly technical achievement of the poem describes the transition from tradition to freedom and self-assertion. The first stanza allows only a hesitation, a 'trembling' whereas the second stanza gives the permission of 'floating free' and opens the mind with clarity. This opposition of tradition and freedom, subject and intellect is crucial in many of Dharkar's poems –

*A solid figure struggles out of rock.
The sculptor's chisel
chose to stop
at just this moment, leaving
the body locked
in a great struggle, trembling
on the fine edge between
being trapped, and being free.*

*The artist tries, time after time,
to trap the human body
in a fine outline;
and finds himself, instead, cut loose,
floating free through the spaces
of the wheeling mind.*

SUMMATION

Imtiaz Dharkar's poetry has been described by Bruce King as: "consciously feministic, consciously political, consciously that of a multiple outsider, someone who knows her own mind rather than someone full of doubt and liberal ironies." The recurrent themes of her poems remain gender politics, social injustice, geographical and cultural displacement, political violence, etc. In her poetry there is a common concern about the confining, often haunting impact of tradition and religion on the development of the self and the society. Many of her poems, especially in the collection **Purdah**, point at the failure of not introducing girls into society and also not preparing them as mothers and wives. These poems denounce sexual

violence against women and make the readers react to the victim's fate. In other poems, the emphasis shifts from the external world to the psychology of the self and delicate relationships. There are also poems about failure, about the sting that pursues revolution and the frustration of freedom. Concerned with social injustice, Imtiaz Dharker develops a slight and sensitive awareness of the learning process required to understand the various experiences of the physically poor and the mentally tortured.

Imtiaz Dharker belongs to that generation of post-independence women poets who have given a convincing assurance that Indian English Poetry matches the best anywhere. The poetry of Imtiaz has an incomparable stroke of simplicity and spontaneity in all their profundity. This effortlessly adds force to her thought and emotion and her deliberate message creates an atmosphere of purity, freshness and innocence. The poet has often expressed her disgust for the prescriptive religion which has snatched away the humanity from the humans. Freely, frankly and fearlessly she expresses whatever she considers incorrect in the society. Her gentle mock and subtle irony hits the entire mankind who are dehumanized by the socio-religious practices.

12.4 DILIP CHITRE

THE POET

Dilip Chitre (17 September, 1938 – 10 December, 2009) was one of the foremost writers and critics to emerge in the post-Independent India. Having graduated from Bombay University in 1959 he went to Ethiopia for a few years to teach in schools. He was one of the earliest and most important influences behind the famous 'little magazine movement' in the 1960s in Marathi. He was associated with the magazine *Quest* in the late sixties and seventies and has contributed a number of critical essays and poems in Marathi in various journals and books. He was also a well-known and prolific translator and one of his famous translations was the devotional writings of the 17th century poet, Tukaram. Apart from being an excellent writer he was also a painter and a film maker. He has been honoured in several ways for his excellent contribution in the field of literature.

FEATURES OF HIS POETRY

Travelling in a Cage is his only contribution to poetry in English and it is written when Chitre felt exiled in America during his teaching assignment from 1975-77. The collection has three parts and though its twenty one mostly unpunctuated sections are in free verse, it employs several poetic and rhetorical devices like assonance and alliteration, refrain and parallelism. The poems

express the sense of exile and isolation and also the frenzied search for his cultural moorings. ***Pushing a Cart*** is one of the seventeen short unrhymed lyrics that appeared in the sequence and it expresses Chitre's feelings of being an expatriate in the materialistically advanced American society. His injured sentiment as a stranger is communicated through the narration of some striking situations. He tries to relive the moment by visiting the super-market but the availability of consumer items in abundance brings to the mind of the poet the hungry millions in India. He himself stacks his refrigerator with eateries and is unable to decide what to select and what to reject –

*Pushing a cart through the brilliant
Interior of an American supermarket
It occurs to me that my private but hired refrigerator
Cannot contain all the hunger of India.*

When his attention is diverted to the women he finds that they are mostly mothers pushing their infants in their prams and also the cart with groceries loaded on it. The poet is sad to note the attitude of arrogance in these mothers who belong to a country of 'affluence and freedom' and hardly bother to greet 'a man temporarily exiled'. The poet feels envious of the thriving women and is also critical of the sexy physique that they demonstrate without any embarrassment. The poet is in search of an identity in an alien land amidst unfamiliar culture. His mind moves rapidly through various stages of incidents and with the help of clichés and idioms he reveals his multifaceted susceptibility.

In ***Father Returning Home*** Chitre focuses on all that passes through his father's as well as his own conscious mind. Chitre uses the present tense in the poem firstly to indicate that whatever he tells about his father is a part of his routine life and secondly he wants to re-live his past in the present. His father has to manage the suburban overcrowded train every evening and becomes a part of the 'silent' commuters who are worn out after their day's heavy schedule. The 'unseeing eyes' of his father conveys the extent of fatigue and weariness and also his withdrawal syndrome. With his eye-sight weak because of his advancing age, the poet's father has also to bear with the unrelenting monsoon. The poet describes his father's eagerness to reach home every evening, making his way through adversities and convolutions, finally to gain nothing special but a cup of tea and a stale chapati. Finally after the food he reposes but his relaxation is snatched away by his reflection of his family's cold behavior towards him. A touch of regret and pathos prevails in the poem, emphasizing on the crucial touch of existence and the pity of being terminated from it.

Felling of the Banyan Tree is a very relevant poem in this modern world of environmental crisis as it talks about the poet's apprehension of the trees being cut down. Recalling his childhood incident that has left a deep impression in his mind, he becomes restless and remorse. At the instruction of his father the structures surrounding his house were removed first followed by the felling of trees including the banyan tree that was three times taller than his house. The poet seems to be emotionally besieged as he narrates the way the giant tree was cut down. The unique childhood nostalgia is very well narrated by Dilip Chitre and it becomes really poignant when the poet becomes fascinated towards his grandmother's saying that it is a heinous crime to cut trees as they are the dwelling place of the spirits. In Chitre there is an amalgamation of mythological beliefs and scientific progress, thus making his poetry a blend of tradition and modernity.

In poems like ***Panhala***, though he has used the historical background, he very clearly indicates that it is the garden that appeals to him more than the historicity of the fort which is a witness to an inspiring episode in the national history involving Shivaji, the Great. That is the reason that the cliffs of the fort appear faceless and that is why

*..... This is about the elaborate garden
Inside the fort walls.*

Chitre has the capability of appreciating nature beyond the historical background and this gives the touch of romanticism to his descriptive narration.

SUMMATION

Almost all the poems written by Chitre are autobiographical in nature and a diversity of moods range from lyrical and meditative to the incantatory; it reflects a continuous crisis of the inner life. Chitre, in his poems, has created a huge passionate world from his emotions especially his obsessions with sex, madness and death. His poems express a broad range of sensitive intense perception often in opposition and conflict. Chitre's poetry expresses an intimately subjective, inner world which ignores the physical and social world except as a source of imagination.

Chitre can be termed as a romantic as his poetry originates from his individual experiences. He presents an interaction of sensations and actions, bringing to attention his sense of isolation and a search for identity in a world which is governed by modernization and materialism. His poems aim at discovering his individual self thus realizing the strong feeling of seclusion and estrangement. And this search for one's self also categorizes as a

romantic. But Chitre's romanticism is typically Indian as Bhakti Poetry is its main feature, though Chitre himself asserts that his poetry is not prophetic poetry but it only highlights the ethical and aesthetic aspects of life.

12.5 GIEVE PATEL

THE POET

Gieve Patel (born 1940) is an important presence in the history of modern Indian poetry in English. A poet, playwright and painter, he is a doctor by profession. Educated at Saint Xavier's and Grand Medical College in Mumbai, he worked as a Medical Officer in rural Gujarat but returned to Mumbai to set up his own clinic. His first collection of poems was published in 1966 under the title ***Poems***. A second collection of his poems, ***How Do You Withstand, Body***, was published in 1977.

Though Patel's output as a poet is very small, his voice is original and convincing. The themes in his poetry are mainly related to the excruciating experience of becoming and being a man in an unfocused society and so many of his poems are like meditative comments on the Indian panorama and practices. Several of his poems are also reactions to human disregard and affliction as he encounters the pressing environment.

FEATURES OF HIS POETRY

The continuing concerns of Patel's poetry are the plagued landscape of the human body – its infirmity, irrationality and impermanency; the offensive social discriminations of caste and class that continue to assault post-independent India; the daily catalogue of aggression, conflict and pain; etc. In his ***Poem***, the poet talks about the destruction intrinsic in human condition, the unavailability of love and degeneration leading to death and destruction. Love prevails for a very short span, maybe after wars and domestic violence – born of the power games of nations and homes.

His poem ***On Killing a Tree*** is very symbolic. The poet takes the images of diseases, pain and operation which are very natural to the profession of the poet. On the denotative surface, the poem deals with the act of the felling of a tree. But on the connotative part the poet wants to share that just to diagnose the disease is not sufficient; in order to be completely free from the disease, the root cause should be eradicated and for that operation is essential as it provides permanent relief to the patient. Patel describes the tree being pulled out of the 'anchoring earth' with sarcastic objectivity and the sluggish procedure of murdering the

tree suggest the apathetic treatment of humans towards their environment. Through this poem the poet also specifies that life, with all its components like birth, growth, reproduction, ageing, suffering etc. is the same for every living thing –

*..... so hack and chop
But this alone won't do it.
Not so much pain will do it.
The bleeding bark will heal
And from the close to the ground
Will rise curled, green twigs,
Miniature boughs
Which if unchecked will expand again
To former size
No
The root is to be pulled out –
Out of the anchoring earth.*

Patel deals with the darker, gloomier and the unforgiving aspects of the world and of human life as well. His poem **Servants** deals with the dirty and deplorable condition of the servants in India whose skin is dark and the fingers are hard. Very realistically does the poet observe –

*They sit without thought
Mouth slightly open recovering
From the day, and the eyes
Globe into the dim.*

Further the poet comments that most of the servants have no practical experience – they serve their duties mechanically. Ill-informed and ill-treated they are just kept in the houses like animals, always ready to serve their masters and never demanding anything, not even their own existence –

*The old flame reflected in their eyes
Large beads that though protruding
Actually rest
Behind the regular grind
Of the jaws.*

The poem **Nargol** exposes the problem of begging in India. Through this poem the poet tries to convey how begging affects the consciousness of our people. The pragmatic representation of the beggars and their means of begging undoubtedly create a shocking wave in the minds of the readers. The poet describes a beggar woman who follows the narrator persistently and, thus, makes his life miserable on the bus stand. Though disgusting it is a very common Indian scene where beggars keep pestering the commuters for some money –

*.....I have no money
 Meet me later
 My fingernail rasping a coin
 She'll have her money but
 Cannot be allowed to bully –
 Let her follow, let her drone
 Sooner or later she will give up,
 Stop in the centre of the lane
 Let herself recede.*

Thus Gieve Patel's poems show the ache and the anguish of the destitute of the society. Though he presents a particular beggar at a particular place, his individual description is so powerful that it assumes a universal depiction. He goes beyond the constraints of time and place and sets himself in worldwide fame. His beggar woman is not an individual, she represents a category – the class that is seen everywhere, especially in India.

In ***Naryal Purnima*** he expresses resentment upon human complacency and apathy by showing devotees offering coconuts to sea-god on Naryal Purnima Day regardless of the hungry urchins around them –

*The urchin strip to plunge
 The oily ones are startled. The men
 Look frustrated, imperiously order them
 Away; the women squat in their stay:
 As coconuts are tossed and touch water
 My present identities dive, snatch libations
 From under god's nose.
 The rains may truly fail this year
 Our prayers may go unheard.*

In ***How Do You Withstand, Body*** Patel articulates his wonder at the amount of pain a body can endure without complaining and that even when the body is subjected to such brutality, it proffers only love in return to its exploiters –

*Destruction repeatedly
 Aimed at you? Minutes,
 Seconds, like gun reports,
 Tattoo you with holes,
 You area of five
 By one is not
 Room enough for
 The first, the blows;
 And instruments itch
 To make a hedgehog
 Of your hide.*

There is freshness, boldness and remarkable evocative power in the poem. Patel's imagery is very violent which in times becomes revolutionary as he discredits the notion of decorum by using extremely unpleasant imagery. The striking aspect of the poem is that Patel makes a woman, by virtue of her gender, a metaphor for the victimized body. And this also brings in another of Patel's concern and that is the violence committed by both men and women on women alone. This image of violence is reiterated by Patel in order to focus on the human pain, conflict, desolation, physical death, irrationality and, above all, human crime on human beings.

Some of his poems, like *Naryal Purnima*, *Commerce*, *O My Very Own Cadaver*, etc, deal with the various themes of social problems, bringing in some wonderful connotations. It is the peculiarity of Gieve Patel that he never expresses his ideas in a desiccated and straightforward way; rather he knits his stuff of contemplation into the colourful fabric of art and beauty.

SUMMATION

Patel's poems are embedded in matter-of-fact language and he avoids intricate imagery and symbols. He scrutinizes every occurrence with clinical meticulousness and detachment, with a touch of irony. Patel believes that an apparent, reasonable and accurate poem changes not only the readers but even the poet himself. In his mature poetry Patel is alarmed about the human situation of hostility and agony. His is compassionate with the exploited, with anyone who is deprived of the right to live. The subdued wrath against the human condition finds an exit in his poetry in the form of extravagance in images of violence against the human body. Poems like ***Post-Mortem***, ***How do you Withstand, Body*** and ***0, My very Own Cadaver*** are examples of this preoccupation with the shadows of violence.

An existential dimension to the world of reality is provided by Gieve Patel as he emphasizes upon the darker areas of human pain, desolation, destruction and physical afflictions around him. Patel is goaded with the desire of knowledge, knowledge both of himself and of the things around him, and that is why his poetry has an obvious meditative, self-reflective and inquisitive nature.

12.6 MEENA ALEXANDER

THE POET

Meena Alexander (born 1951) is an acclaimed poet, scholar and writer. Born in Allahabad into a Syrian Christian family and having raised in India and Sudan she presently lives in New

York City and works as a Professor in Hunter College. She is the author of numerous collections of poetry, essays, literary memoirs, works of fiction and literary criticism. She was enrolled in Khartoum University when she was just thirteen. There she studied English and French literature and also wrote her first poems which were translated into Arabic and published in local newspapers. After completing her graduation she moved on to England and began doctoral study from Nottingham University. She earned a PhD in English in 1973, at the age of twenty-two, with a dissertation in Romantic Literature. She has moved to different places and has taught in several universities and at present continues to teach in the PhD Programme at the Graduate Centre and the MFA Programme at the Hunter College. Over the years she has also taught poetry in the Writing Division in the School of Arts at Columbia University. Since moving to New York, Alexander has been a prolific author with extensive publications in various fields of writing. Alexander's works have been highly anthologized and translated into several languages including Malayalam, Arabic, Spanish, French, Italian, Macedonian and Swedish. Her poetry collection *Illiterate Heart* (2002) won the PEN Open Book Award and her memoir *Fault Lines* (1993) was chosen as one of *Publishers Weekly's* Best Books of 1993.

FEATURES OF HER POETRY

Alexander is known for lyrical writing that deals with migration, its impact on the subjectivity of the writer and the sometimes violent events that compel people to cross borders. Though confronting such austere and complex issues, her writing is sensual, linguist and maintains a generous spirit. Her poems frequently confront the difficult issues of exile and identity but preserve a liberal fortitude. Hong Kingston has rightly said about her – "Meena Alexander sings of countries, foreign and familiar, places where the heart and spirit live, and places for which one needs no passport and visas. Her voice guides us far away and back home. The reader sees her visions and remembers and is uplifted."

Marked by the processes of mediation between and meditation on different literary and cultural traditions, Alexander's imagistic and somewhat romantic poetry attempts to create a sense of identity for the poet and represents a type of psychoanalysis through which different aspects of her personality approach some sort of order. Alexander's early poetry depends on the interstices of memory, history, and ontology; for example, *The Bird's Bright Ring* juxtaposes images of blood, salt, and native flora and fauna with fragmented commentary on the sociopolitical effects of British rule in India. Although Alexander's verse generally favors Indian themes and imagery, feminist issues comprise the majority of her

work, including her scholarly studies, and female narrators and characters dominate both her poetry and fiction. *I Root My Name*, for instance, intimates the painful experiences of women, while *A Mirror's Grace*, a poem appearing in *Without Place*, recounts Cleopatra's struggle to resist slipping into the margins of patriarchal linguistics. *House of a Thousand Doors* centers on memories and dreams of Alexander's grandmother, whom the poet has described as "a power permitting me to speak in an alien landscape." *The Storm* contemplates the feminist ideal of recreating and rewriting a "pure" female self-identity from fragmentary matrilineal memories. In *Night-Scene, the Garden*, mothers, grandmothers, aunts, and sisters figure prominently in the narrator's memory, which symbolizes a kind of "mother tongue" that encourages the poet to create a "new" self. The poetry of *River and Bridge* explores similar personal and feminist themes, focusing primarily on coping with cultural displacement, but other poems address myriad forms of violence and protest bondage of all sorts, ranging from racial and sexual to economic and religious.

Fault Lines is Alexander's autobiography – not only a disentanglement of her past, the book also highlights themes that occur in Alexander's poetry. As a result of her family's relocations as a youth, Alexander struggles in *Fault Lines* to counterfeit a sense of identity, despite a past full of moves and changes. Thus, this work revolves around the theme of establishing one's self, an identity independent of one's surroundings. In her autobiography she writes: "I am, a woman cracked by multiple migrations". Uprooted so many times, she fails to connect anything with anything else. In fact, the title itself suggests a questioning of lines, boundaries and definitions of one's 'self'. Alexander herself searches for her own identity and self-creation amidst a world that strives to define, identify, and label people. These definitions of race and nationality prove difficult to defy and that becomes the theme of her poetry.

The tension surrounding self-identification emerges in a scene where Alexander's son, Adam, encounters a man who asks him: "What are you?" Adam, of mixed heritage, chooses to identify himself as neither American nor Indian, but, rather, a Jedi knight. Alexander asks: "What did my first-born wish for himself? Some nothingness, some transitory zone where dreams roamed, a border country without passport or language?". Even choosing a cultural identification has its boundaries and borders by which to abide and this is really tragic.

Early in her youth, Alexander's mother tells her she must never take a job; that her work is to raise her children. Alexander's choices obviously took her in a direction different from that which her mother had taught her, choosing both a career and a family.

Thus, the process of self-creation for Alexander has numerous facets – creating an identity despite a crazy-quilt past; fighting against definitions demanded by the larger society; and, also, fighting against traditions and definitions imposed within the community.

In her poem **Blue Lotus** the poet explores the burdened question of belonging and locates a spiritual abode where the red soil of the Pamba River in Kerala can meet the ash trees of a New York river bank; where a reputed individuality can be healed by the ancient magic of language; where a piecemeal and wrecked relationship, with all its attendant complications ‘tribe, tribute, tribulation’, can be restored to a completeness that is more than the sum of its parts. It is a place in the heart that is cordial enough to accommodate a host of trans-cultural and trans-historical literary mentors like Wordsworth, Tagore, Milosz, Mirabai, Akhmatova and Rich. It is actually language that makes this resolution possible. It is language that offers refuge and it is language that offers strategy – a way to cajole life out of rock, a way to make stones chant. Language in Alexander’s poem liberates, empowers and eventually becomes a place in which to live. And thus ‘a short incantation’ ends up becoming a ‘long way home’.

In **Illiterate Heart** she weaves letters of the English alphabet seamlessly into Malayalam letters and words. By recreating the process of introduction to both languages, Malayalam, her mother tongue, and English, the language of her creative expression, Alexander offers us an insight into her amalgam literary ancestry, which is accountable for an innovative poetic form that juxtaposes words from two of her most intimate languages. However, as the poetic passage develops, it is obvious that this hybrid poetic form and this innovation exist intimately with the alienation produced by the colonial experience of loss of a native language and culture and a violent imposition of an alien language:

*How did I come to this script?
 Amma taught me from the Reading Made Easy
 books, steps 1 & 2 pointed out Tom and Bess
 little English children
 sweet vowels of flesh they mouthed to perfection:
 aa ee ii oo uu a (apple) b (bat) c (cat) d (dat).
 Dat? I could not get, so keen the rhymes made
 me,
 sense overthrown. [...]
 aa l ii uu au um aha ka kh
 ga gha nga cha chha ja ja nja*

Alexander expresses in these lines her uncertain association with her mother tongue Malayalam, her denial to be

trained in formal script, even when the music of her poetry in English is ineradicably marked by the rhythms of the oral Malayalam traditions that she grew up amidst. Her relationship with the English language is also obvious by a reflective sense of racial and cultural estrangement that she feels as a child when introduced to the other characters. However, even though she feels an uncomfortable tension between the languages and cultural traditions that colonial and postcolonial realities expose her to, in the lyric poem, Alexander is able to transform the existing authenticity of alienation and conflict, the uneasy relationship between the colonial pedagogy that she is forced to experience and the tradition of formal classical Malayalam that she rejects, into an innovative and moving poetic form. And while expressing her personal autobiographical experience, she also becomes symbolic of a whole assortment of similar experiences of postcolonial subjects, which in the stir of global migrations are placed at the borders of discrete cultural precincts.

Meena Alexander describes the poems in *Quickly Changing River* as “much more interior”. ***Torn Grass*** begins with a sense of nostalgia for childhood, important because it brings back recollections of “amma”, her mother. There are references to the Chaganacheri Fair, of eating spiced pomfret, of enjoying delicious mangoes, of things that are associated with the past, with childhood. The moment the grandfather’s image surges up, there is a change in mood. The pleasantness associated with childhood suddenly disappears as there is a sense of violence in the next image used – “*Clouds swelled the mirror, broke its rosewood frame*”. In the revised edition of her memoir, *Fault Lines*, Alexander does refer to her sexual abuse at the hands of her grandfather, a fact that she had kept under wraps for a long time. However, the reference to the grandmother and her reminiscences of nice times spent with her mother mark a return to the nostalgic mood of the opening lines of the poem. “Torn Grass” ends with a reference to a poem by Whitman “*A child said what is about grass*”, vague memories of it being a poem about a child tearing up grass and giving them to her mother.

Dark Door once again harks back to unpleasant memories associated with her grandfather.

*A child went through a dark door into her grandfather’s library
The door was cut in jackfruit wood,
Varnished the color of burnt leaf.
Breath stops when I think of that door*

The poem talks about her great urge to tell her mother, but she is unable to do so – “I held on to the kitchen door, / Amma! I cried, no sounds came out of my mouth”. She longs for the

mother's comforting, protective touch – "I want to kneel inside your red sari, / Let the pleats swallow me".

House of a Thousand Doors: Poems and Prose Pieces is a collection of fifty-nine poems and prose pieces. Meena Alexander's poetry reflects her multicultural heritage and the tension it creates. The title poem of ***House of a Thousand Doors*** uses the title metaphor to describe the variety of forces that operate on the persona: gender, heritage, language, experience, ideology, and the search for meaning. A complex array of images embodies these forces in the book, reflecting the author's sensitivity to their influence. Alexander uses her writing to integrate the diversity of her experience. Dominating the persona's early life is the figure of her grandmother, a powerful member of the family who learned to exercise some control over the many lines of force that affected her life. The mature awareness of the persona is imposed on the re-created memory of herself as a girl watching the figure of the grandmother kneel in turn before each of the thousand doors on a never-ending pilgrimage, "a poor forked thing" praying for the favor of her ancestors. The grandmother becomes a figure of myth and a symbol of tradition serving as the focus of many of the poems in the collection. Conciliation and unity with the culture and solidity of the past are central to *House of a Thousand Doors*.

SUMMATION

Alexander's poetry and fiction replicate the experiences of her multicultural life among diverse ethnic and religious communities. Generally concerned with the roles of place, memory, and language in identity formation, Alexander's works examine the disparate elements of her heritage and her cultural displacement, concentrating particularly on her status as an educated woman of the South Asian diaspora living and writing in the West. Alexander's search for psychic wholeness through language – a prevalent theme of her poetry – also articulates the concerns facing many postcolonial writers silenced by the dominant literary traditions of the imperial past. Alexander has remarked: "While I do not think I consciously write as a woman, I have little doubt that some of my deepest emotions and insights spring from having been born into a female body, learning to grow up as a woman in both a traditional Indian culture – South Indian, Syrian Christian, Malayalam speaking – and as part of the complex, shifting South Asian diaspora."

However, Alexander's literary output does not just record the enduring burden of colonial epistemic aggression; it charts a creative renovation of the experiences of isolation and disintegration of languages and cultural legacies into a unique artistic fusion that combines the intellectual, linguistic, and cultural

traditions of both her colonial education and the aboriginal traditions of her Indian and particularly Kerala roots.

Alexander's poetry often makes use of the lyric and gives voice to personal experiences summoned up through the mechanism of memory. Yet, this extremely personal exploration also encroaches on many very public and political apprehensions. Thus, Alexander's poetic work illustrates the refashioning of the lyric as a genre which, while it cuddles the profoundly personal experiences, functions as a structure in the public sphere.

12.7 ARUN KOLATKAR

THE POET

Arun Kolatkar (born 1932) had his education at Kolhapur and at Pune before attaining diploma in painting from J. J. School of Art in Mumbai. Having spent most of his life earning a living in advertising, he has achieved recognition as a bilingual poet writing both in Marathi and in English. Though his poems have kept appearing from time to time in various journals, he has published only one book in English, *Jejuri* (1976) and one in Marathi, *Arun Kolatkarchya Kavita* (1976). *Jejuri*, a collection of thirty one poems, has won the acclaimed Commonwealth Prize. The poems, though separately written, are an exploration on a common theme – the description of a journey to Jejuri, the temple town near Pune. Jejuri is considered as a primeval centre of pilgrimage in Maharashtra and the popular deity, Khandoba, presides over the place and is worshipped by the shepherd community residing there.

Jejuri has provoked a considerable amount of discussion because of its religious approach. Kolatkar presents in a surrealistic manner the temple town as well as the old temples that are in ruins – the modern practices toppling the conventional devotional pilgrimage. This attitude has infuriated some controversial issues but Kolatkar has ignored the irreverence. The poet has created the characters of Manohar and his friend Makrand who go together to Jejuri not as pilgrims but just as visitors. Manohar's sensibility is very much wounded by the ugliness, poverty, decay, ignorance and materialism that are widespread in the temple town and among the temple priests. Manohar discovers that religious rituals have lost all sanctity and the legends associated with the temple are all forgotten. On the contrary, an ordinary natural sight of hens and the cocks, away from the temples, enlightens Manohar and he comprehends the omnipresent force – the competent source of life that inundates the cosmos.

FEATURES OF HIS POETRY

The Bus is the first poem in the sequence of poems *Jejuri* and it is rightly so as it describes the journey to the temple town. So conscious and careful is the poet about his observations that it seems he is approaching something very special and significant. It is a State Transport Bus and the windows have tarpaulin curtains that flap with the force of the wind. All the passengers in the bus are pilgrims and it is only Manohar, the alter-ego of Kolatkar, who boards the bus as a tourist. It is a night journey and waiting for day-break suggests Manohar's quest for enlightenment. Very little is visible and the narrator waits for dawn, yearning to see things clearly. Gradually with the advent of the morn the countryside becomes subjectively clear. Manohar then concentrates his attention on a pilgrim, with a caste mark on his forehead and spectacles on his nose, seated on the opposite seat. Manohar's image is reflected by the two lens's of the pilgrims spectacles and he becomes conscious of the 'split image' of his own self. The realization is very powerful – in the end you see what you allow yourself to see or you see what the limitations allow you to see – vision is both subjective and objective.

As the bus moves, Manohar is happy to be closer to his destination but his vision is caught by the caste-mark on the pilgrim's forehead. Manohar's visit to Jejuri is not like a pilgrim and this takes the poem beyond caste and beyond traditions, thus giving it a thematic expression. Then the sun rises, shoots its beams into the bus, touches the driver's temple, the bus changes direction and the bumpy ride comes to an end; all indicating that Jejuri is near. The sun seems to be split into two; the speaker's own face appearing on either side of the bus as he alights from it. Throughout the journey the destination has been mapped on the old man's face through the reflection of the countryside on his glasses; when the bus actually arrives, the poet's face is divided thus breaking the optical illusion –

*At the end of the bumpy ride
With your own face on either side
When you get off the bus
You don't step inside the old man's head.*

A Low Temple epitomizes the so-called 'impertinence' of the speaker as the negative connotation cannot be over-looked. By what standards is the temple 'low'? It seems that the speaker's response is like a typical modern person used to the modern architecture and critical of the ancient forms of construction. But when a devout person enters a temple he undoubtedly bows before the deities, absorbed more on the Divine relationship than the physical background. But Kolatkar's poem brings out just the

contrary image – the darkness inside the temple persuades him to assert that the gods themselves are in the dark. The poet actually means to say that he cannot see the gods clearly because of the darkness inside the temple, but he states it in an ironic way. Then he hints at the literal enlightenment – only when the matches are lit, the gods ‘come to light’. The illusion that is then created is not out of devotion but sheer amazement. It is as if the duration of the matchstick that creates and destructs the image of the gods –

*For a moment the length of the matchstick
Gesture after gesture revives and dies.*

Even darkness doesn’t delude the speaker from counting the number of hands of the deity and when he questions in surprise, the priest is defiant to submit. The traditional priest is stronger in belief than the skeptic speaker. The final two sentences, the speaker coming out from the low and dark temple, lighting a cigarette and joking about the children playing on the twenty foot tortoise, enhances the clash between tradition and modernity. The conflict between these two sensibilities are very well apprehended and anticipated by the poet.

Ajamil and the Tigers is in the form of a fable in his sequence *Jejuri* and is about the shepherd Ajamil and his relations with the tiger king and the tiger population. Through the fable the poet wants to suggest that the physically weak and innocent can win over the strong and arrogant through their wisdom and experience. It also teaches the lesson of harmony in the universe. The treaty of friendship emphasizes the principle of harmony. Ajamil is a wise man; he defeats the tiger but sees to it that the tigers don’t starve for want of sheep. Thus he not only preserves nature’s balance but also brings in harmony and sympathy, awareness and alliance. The poet tries to bring out the qualities that are hardly attributed in the modern times, thus making it clear, through the poem, the importance of these traits.

Through small poems like **Chaitanya** also the poet tries to convey some important message concerning morals and values. A great Vaishnavite of the 15th century, Chaitanya hailed from Bengal but travelled all over India spreading the sect of the sublime devotion towards Lord Krishna. On the other hand, the meaning of ‘chaitanya’ signifies stimulated consciousness. The poet, it seems, is not only enthralled by Chaitanya’s personality but is also embellished in the significance of his name. The poem is about associational sanctity – how a place becomes sacred and blessed through the connection of a saintly person. The poet even goes to the extent of saying that a shrine might come into existence even at the place where Chaitanya spat. A healthy secularism runs through such mythological poems of the temple town.

In poems, apart from the *Jejuri* collection, Arun Kolatkar uses symbolic representations to create an idealistic approach in this world of superficiality and malice. In the poem **Crabs**, the poet uses the diagrammatic image of crabs to convey a sensation of scariness and the condition of instability that the human perception experiences. The poet speaks of two crabs waiting to pounce on you to eat your eyes the moment you give them a chance is undoubtedly a scary imagination. But Kolatkar also points out that the crabs emerge out of one's own head, the psychological analysis of human consciousness that erupts in the form of ego. He wants to suggest that human perception undergoes a change when the human mind is cleansed of all subjugations and restraints. The speaker's monologue is endowed with sarcastic humour as he illustrates, in the manner of a naturalist, the substantial authenticity of the crabs, their manifestation and intrinsic character.

Each stanza conveys an idea and creates a psychosis as the poet transmits the intention of the crabs into the mind of his companion. The crabs are there to eat his eyes but when they will do so is uncertain as they are in no hurry and they can even sustain themselves without food for a long time. The speaker then asks his companion to look at the crabs without turning his head, just moving the eyeballs. By doing so he will first be able to see just a portion of the crab and only gradually will the whole crab be visible to him. The poet is also praiseworthy of the crab's playing a game of patience. The speaker finally exposes to his companion that the crabs are, in fact, a part of his own personality – it is his own individual rationality and racial beliefs that have created the super-ego in the form of crabs. The physical reality stands in danger of being influenced by individual unconscious and racial unconscious and thus the understanding of the physical reality fail to give one a proper perspective of human existence –

*big fat crabs.
They've been playing a waiting game
ever since they emerged
from your head.*

SUMMATION

Arun Kolatkar's poetry, specifically *Jejuri*, incites an argument in the perspective of the spiritual experiences of a modern pilgrim. As a modernist, Kolatkar does not abandon the traditional concepts but brings forth a new revelation, trying to rationalize the modern trend of existence. By exploiting the bizarre procedure to recommend the conceptual through the tangible and by adopting a non-committal tone, Kolatkar turns the ordinary occurrences into an aesthetic experience. His commitment to poetry is profound and serious and his voice echoes clarity and

loyalty. His poetic technique reveals his unique visualization and his imagery has powerful instinct.

Kolatkār's poetry is thus a blissful synthesis of contemplation and imagery, matter and method. He is of the idea, and he affirms it through his poems, that art is created by an artist and not by reality. He never allows reality to become familiar; rather turns the familiar into art. Sometimes he is dramatic, sometimes conversational; and at times ironical and meditative. He uses a colloquial style and expresses whatever he visualizes keeping his intent focus on the object he reports.

12.8 CONCLUSION

Post-Independence Indian English poetry contains various modes and voices. The genre has been made rich and significant by women poets dealing with feminist issues and by bi-lingual poets like Dilip Chitre, Arun Kolatkār and others whose poetic sensibility is rooted down to the Indian ethos. It is, indeed an important ingredient of contemporary Indian English Literature.

12.9 QUESTIONS / EXERCISE

1. Evaluate the contribution of women poets to Post-Independence Indian English poetry.
2. Do you think that bi-lingual poets writing in Indian English and regional languages are better placed as "Indian poets" than those who write exclusively in Indian English? Justify your answer.
3. Write critical appreciation of the following poems –
 1. The Dance of the Eunuchs by Kamala Das
 2. Purdha by Imtiaz Dharkar
 3. Jejuri by Arun Kolatkār



PRATAP SHARMA'S A TOUCH OF BRIGHTNESS PART I

Unit Structure:

- 13.0 Objective
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Indian English Drama
- 13.3 Indian Theater Today
- 13.4 Conclusion
- 13.5 Questions / Exercise

13.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to acquaint students with the life and works of Pratap Sharma. The unit also offers a brief historical survey of Indian Drama in English.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Pratap Sharma was born on December 12, 1939 in Lahore (now in Pakistan) and was educated in Delhi. He has been actively involved in cultural activities on the national level. A versatile personality, Pratap Sharma has a reputation of a playwright, novelist, actor documentary film maker and author of children's book. He has lent his voice to several documentary productions and is often regarded as "The golden voice" of India. His reading of Shakespearean plays like *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, *Merchant of Venice* etc. was recorded and played for a variety of audience which proved to be spell-binding.

The film actress Tara Sharma is Pratap's daughter.

Pratap Sharma has played an important role in *Shakespearewallah* and was a leading actor in Hindi movies like *Phir Bhi* (1971), *Andolan* (1975), *Tyag Patra* (1980), *Pahala Kadam*

(1980), *Nehru, The Jewel of India* (1989) and *Bundug Sonata* (2002). He has also been a prolific writer and has produced about right books so far. They include: 1. *The Surangini Tales* 2. *Dog Detective Ranjha* 3. *The Little Master of Elephant*, 4. *Top Dog* , 5. *Days of the Turban*, 6. *A Touch of Brightness* 7. *Zen Katha*, 8. *sammy!*

Drama distinguishes itself from other literary genres on the basis of its stagability. Drama is basically meant for performance. One can read a poem, a novel or a short story and enjoy it. But one may not necessarily enjoy a play by reading the script or the text. *Merchant of Venice* begins with tragic events like sinking of ships etc. but ends with hilarious comedy when rings are exchanged between the couples. The happenings can be enjoyed many fold when the spectators witness them taking place on the stage. King Lear's tragedy can be grasped in the totality when witnessed on the stage when he carries the corpse of his daughter exclaiming.....

Why should a dog, and thou no breath at all horse and rat have life.

A play is written to be acted, to be seen, and to be felt by the audience. The audience as a vital role to play in the theatre as the actors on the stage. A critic has pointed out – “the vital scenes of the play are played as much by the audience, I suppose, as by the actors on the stage”. This literary form is difficult as it requires, beside creative urge and sensibility, a special knowledge of the stagecraft and performance. That is why, perhaps, the history of literature does not have consistence phases of drama. Every age has produced poets great and minor – but very few ages have produced playwrights. Shakespeare, who was a great poet, could write great dramas because he was an actor and associated with theater companies. In America, the first great dramatist of the nation was the son of an actor who had spent his early childhood days in the theater watching his father acting the Count of Monte Cristo. While, on the other hand, the great romantic poets of 19th century England and the Victorians – each one of them attempted plays – but they ended up in great pieces of poetry, not plays.

13.2 INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA

Something similar is true about the Indian Drama in English. While novel and poetry in Indian English flourished in both pre-Independence and post-Independence era, drama as a literary form remained unattempted. Solitary efforts by poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Gieve Patel etc. did not come off obviously because these plays were never staged, or staged only for a selected audience. These performances, however, remained equally “private” and lacked larger accessibility.

Another important factor that comes up in the context of Indian Drama in English is that of language. When other literary forms in Indian English were doing well during the early years after independence, Drama in Indian English could not take off because Indian English Theater was not ready for that. Theater requires audience, or spectators, to be precise – the spectators who can understand the language and its nuances well used on the stage. English in India till recently was the language of the privileged few. This class could not contribute to the requirements of stage – financial provisions necessary for property, lights, transportation, the actors etc. A performance at a time requires a huge amount of money. Even if the privileged class could have afforded amount, there was no point in performing for the same audience again and again. That was one reason why the Indian writer writing in English could not attempt a play.

It is only recently, after the process of globalization and liberalization set in, that the use of English in India and in other developing countries, became commonplace. Though the language left behind by the colonial master was a compulsory subject taught at Indian schools and colleges, its usage till recently, was a matter of academic concern. Today, however, English is used in India for a variety of purpose, and in many families it has replaced the mother tongue and become “first language”.

This has created favorable climate for Indian English Theatre. Consequently a number of playwrights have come up showing off their dramatic talent in Indian English. In cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai amateur Theater groups are staging plays in Indian English. Prithvi Theater, N.C.P.A. in Mumbai, National theater Academi in Delhi and similar organization in other parts of the nation regularly perform plays in Indian English.

A major playwright who has left mark on recent Indian English Drama is Mahesh Dattani (A separate chapter on Mahesh Dattani and his contribution to Indian English Theatre is a part of that Study Material.)

13.3 INDIAN THEATER TODAY

Indian theater in regional languages, however, is as rich an experience as watching Shakespeare, Shaw or Samuel Becket on the stage. India has a long tradition of theatrical performances. Classical Drama in Sanskrit has produced such great geniuses like **Kalidasa**. **Natyashastra** by Bharat Muni, the ancient treatise on the performing arts, is as esteemed as Aristotle's **Poetics**. Parallel to Classic Drama ran the folk- theatre in every part of India, be it

North or South, East or West. Such famous folk performances as *Tamasha* in Marathi, *Nautanki* in Hindi, *Kathakali* in Malyalam, *Jhootan* in Gujrati, *Yakshagana* in Kannad, *Jatra* in Bengali have caught minds of the masses since centuries forgather. Folk theater, as the name suggests, was the art performed by the common masses who were illiterate and ignorant about civilized ways of the world. Therefore, their arts was always looked down upon as uncivilized, rude and vulgar. That was and continues to be so the most spontaneous, and appealing art which has entertained the people everywhere in India. Recently, the folk theater has come up with freshrig our and enthusiasm, and while classical performances have become rare, folk performances are being performed everywhere. They have become an important performing ingredient of the main stream dram in India today.

In India today, three playwrights have crossed the boundaries of regionalism and have attained the status of national playwrights. Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, Girish Karnad in Kannada and Badal Sircar in Bengali. The words of these playwrights is translated in all the major regional languages including English and are performed everywhere. Mohan Rakesh, Habib Tanvir, Satyadeo Dubay and Others have immensely contributed to the growth and development of contemporary Indian Theater. Such playwrights in Marathi like Satish Alekar, Mahesh Elkuncewar and Premanand Gajwi are the prominent names in theater groups.

13.4 CONCLUSION

Pratap Sharma's **A Touch of Brightness** is a significant play because it was written and staged at a time when Indian English Drama practically did not exist. It is remarkable also for its bold theme and a strong sense of social commitment on part of the playwright. Indian English drama, as a genre, has to wait till English in India became a language used widely for academic purpose as well as for day-to-day activities. Though there were writers attempting plays in India. English, they did not receive enough encouragement for reasons that can be attributed to drama as a performing art. However, when the obstacles were removed Indian English drama became a lively theatrical activity.

Indian theater, in general, has rich tradition. Sanskrit plays in ancient times and folk theatrical performances have always entertained the elite and the masses in India. Regional languages like Marathi, Kannada, Hindi, Bengali, Malyalam, etc. have their own regional theaters which is rich and entertaining in all aspects. There regions are wellknown for their folk arts and theater. Such regional playwrights like Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Girish Karnad have crossed the boundaries of regionalism and have

assumed national status. Thus, contemporary Indian Theater offers a delightful experience.

It is against this theatrical setting that Pratap Sharma's (A) **Touch of Brightness** is to be studied.

13.5 QUESTIONS / EXERCISE

1. How does drama, as a literary form, distinguish itself from other literary forms?
2. Comment on the factors that did not allow Indian English Drama to flourish initially.
3. What is the difference between classical theater and performance? Bring out salient features of the two.
4. Have you ever seen the folk theatrical performance in your region? Narrate your experience in brief.
5. Offer a brief comment on Indian Theater today.
6. Name a few playwrights and their languages whose works are translated in all the major Indian languages and who have attained the status of national playwrights.



PRATAP SHARMA'S A TOUCH OF BRIGHTNESS PART II

Unit Structure

- 14.0 Objective
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Theme
- 14.3 Story Theme
- 14.4 Presentation Technique
- 14.5 Significance of the Title
- 14.6 General Assessment of the Play
- 14.7 Conclusion
- 14.8 Question / Exercise

14.0 OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to offer general outline of the play to the students and to acquaint them with the various aspects of it. Students are advised to read the play and formulate their own views on the basis of the outlines given below.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

A Touch of Brightness was first published in 1965 by Grove Press Inc, New York and Gambit, Calder and Boyars Ltd. London. It is a one-Act play divided into seven scenes, the performance of which would take about one and half hour. The play records unusual events in the red-light area of Mumbai, then Bombay; a theme which was never handled by any of the Indian writers except perhaps the Dalit Poet, Namdev Dhasal in his celebrated collection of poems called *Golpeetha*. Pratap Sharma's play, however, was published earlier and at a time when the canonical literary standards considered the treatment of such subject as taboo. That is why *A touch of Brightness* was banned on 17th February, 1966 with the explanation that the play "is set in one of the most infamous localities of Bombay city", and that it deals with "matters

which is highly undesirable to show on the stage". The play was selected for performance at the first commonwealth Arts Festival in England in 1965 from among 150 entries. But the artists were not allowed to go as their passports were impounded by the authorities. There were protests against the play after its local performance in Mumbai. The protesters contended that the social problem dealt with in the play should not be presented before the international audience as it speaks ill of the Indian society. The playwright filed a writ petition in Bombay High Court challenging the ban on *A Touch of Brightness*. In February 1972 the High Court lifted the ban declaring that "the censors had exceeded its jurisdiction".

14.2 THEME

The theme of the play, as stated earlier, is unusual, something which has never been within the range of literary activities. It is the story of prostitutes in Mumbai, the circumstances which lead them to that profession and their ultimate fate. The play also depicts the life on footpath and the nexus between the two. The playwright, in his straightforward treatment of these issues, underlines the fact that these people, thwarted by the so-called civilized society, are sensitive human beings, and at times, can rise above the average humanity through internal sufferings and understanding of each other.

14.3 STORY

It is the story of the flesh-trading community set in the red-light area in Mumbai, the then Bombay. A beggar girl called Prema, renamed as Rukamani, is forced to join the trade run by an elderly prostitute called Bhabhi Rani. Other girls called Basanti, Vatsala and Suraksha are a part of this "cage" but Rukhmani is different because she is the daughter of a Devdasi, acquainted with the Hindu scriptures and believes in God an creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. It was the time when prostitutes and other sex-workers often suffered from such deadly diseases like syphilis and gonorrhea – equivalents of today's HIV and AIDS, though these diseases today are passed on to the general public. In due course of time Rukhmani suffers from these diseases and, in a state of pregnancy, dies.

The play depicts a parallel story of footpath dwellers called Benarsi Baba and Pidku, an urchin of about ten years, who, by the time the play ends, turns adolescent. Benarsi Baba has occupied a space on the footpath and considers himself as its sole owner. Therefore, he does not allow trespassers. He disapproves of Pidku's relationship with Prema, the beggar girl, who has tied him rakhi. For Benarsi Baba the Rakhi is no better than a "piece of

stringe” tied by a woman to grab money from the man whom she calls brother. His annoyance with tradition and with the civilized ways of the world is explicit at every stage. He is immensely interested in the game of chess and wants Pidku to learn it because, he believes, with the knowledge of the game, one can develop skill to deal with the hostile social forces. Pidku, however, is not interested in the game and spends his time in begging and stealing.

The two stories are linked together by Pidku’s affection for Prema, now Rukhmani, who has become a prostitute. He loves the girl so much that he wants to pay four hundred fifty rupees to Bhabhi rani, and get back the girl who is sold out for that amount. In the mean time, he is arrested and sent to juvenile prison. On his release and return to cage, he finds Rukhmani dead.

Besides these main characters, there are others who help develop the story. Dariwalla, the doctor, Shri Bhartendra, an ex-sadhu and quack and a number of incidental men and women. The story of the play resembles a movie by Meera Nair called Salaam Bombay. But Pratap Sharma makes it clear that his play was written and published twenty years prior to the release of the movie and leaves it to readers to decide who copied whom.

14.4 PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

A Touch of Brightness is different from the mainstream drama. It is set in the street of Mumbai, and in the red-light area where prostitution as profession thrives. Therefore, the play has to be presented in a way that would retain its social authenticity and artistic merit at the same time. Pratap Sharma’s sense of social commitment and the artist in him become evident in the opening scene itself. The play opens with the vices that appear like chorus in the ancient Greek drama.

“.....Ghostly figures from Bombay’s red-light district appear on the pavement and begin to strut and stiffen mechanically.....

Voice I : This is a road with nowhere to go a road that no one claims ; this is where we have come to be free by walking about in our chains.

This is a road for a wandering whore a road that has no name; but come to see and you’ll agree we dwell in houses of fame.

Voice II : Ah, but look -

Voice III : I show you sahib –

Voice IV : On every side there is filth.....

Voice III : Sindhi, Panjabi, Bengali, Gujarathi, Mysor,,
Marathi,.....

This opening foretells the theme of the play. It is like chorus in the ancient Greek play, or like the familiar narrator in the folk-theater Indian languages. The playwright offers elaborate instructions for stagecraft and for action involved within the scene. This reminds us of Ibsen and Shaw whose social themes required such elaborate instruction for the direction to carry out. This is necessary because the playwright does not want ever a single nuance to be missed. That would defeat his social purpose. The playwright has also introduced the technique of “pause” at times made popular by much playwrights like Chekhov and Tennessee Williams in plays like *The Glass Menagerie* as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the technique which the Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar has adopted in his play *silence, The court is in session*. The setting is elaborated with minute details – the pavement of the auditorium in the opening scene, for example, or the cage in scene two. The story unfolds itself into scenes one after another. There is an intermission after scene IV and a strict warning by the playwright –

“On no account during a production should the intermission be sifted from this point of drama”

Instruction like these reveal the playwright’s perfect command over the stuff he handles.

14.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE

A Touch of Brightness depicts a grim story and situation in the lives of prostitutes in Mumbai. It offers a sad story of their sufferings. This is a story which rarely gets narration, is often suppressed rather the evoked. Pratap Sharma points out that such situations always appeal the creative artists. They will always find someone who will dig out the truth that underlies them. The playwright, in fact, has borrowed the little from a poem by Wen Yi-Tuo called “Dead Water”. Here is the poem:

So this ditch of dead and hopeless water
May boast a touch of brightness
If the toads cannot endure the deadly silence
The water may burst out singing.

“The touch of brightness” in the play is the love and affection that pervades the grim climate in it. Pidku’s affection for Prema and Bhartendra’s love for her when she turns a prostitute. The touch of brightness can also be discerned in the spiritual yearning of the girl, in her innocent and imaginary world of happiness.

14.6 GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PLAY

A Touch of Brightness is a bold attempt to depict a social reality that rarely receives attention from literary artists. The time when the play was written and published was, in fact, favorable to new ideas and new genres. 1960s witnessed new literary movements all over the world. In India, it was the time for women's writings, the movement of Little Magazines, the movement of Dalit Literature etc. But the elite class that nourished western culture seemed to be apathetic to the issues of prostitutes and pavement dwellers. The government officials, hailing mostly, from the so-called "cultured" class were equally indifferent to these questions. That was the reason for Pratap Sharma's annoyance and embarrassment at the production of *A Touch of Brightness* which he has elaborately stated in the Playwright's Note.

A Touch of Brightness has been praised by the British actor and playwright Emlyn Williams as "having breadth of vision of Zola and the depth of feeling of Gorky". The Nigerian poet and playwright Wole Soyinka remarked that he developed interest in Indian philosophy after having read *A Touch of Brightness*. Pratap Sharma's social vision and understanding are compared with those of Ibsen, Chekov and Strindberg. Praises like these are the evidence of the play's literary merits and its social relevance today.

14.7 CONCLUSION

Pratap Sharma's **A Touch of Brightness** was written and staged at a time when its theme was considered as taboo. The writers' badness to handle this theme reveals his progressive attitude, some things IPTA had intuited and made popular. However, Sharma was never a part of that movement and wrote independently. The play was an experiment in itself, both in its theme and technique. Other playwrights wrote about such social themes like poverty, unemployment etc. but Pratap Sharma's direct access to the theme of prostitution and life on the streets in Mumbai (then Bombay) sent strong shocking waves in literary and cultural world. The play was termed as "inappropriate" for staging performance and banned till the writer won the case in the court of law and the ban was lifted.

It is a matter of consideration that despite the bold theme of the play, the action of the play is never objectionable. Neither the characters are shown engaged in lewd acts. The play rotates around human relationship and spiritual yearning of the men and women who have been dubbed as "outcasts". Pratap Sharma's bold attempt to deal with this theme should be applauded and appreciated at the same time.

14.8 QUESTION / EXERCISE

1. Comment on the theme of **A Touch of Brightness**. Do you think the play deals with a subject-matter that is “inappropriate”?
2. Discuss the nature of relationship between Pidku and Rrema/Rakhmani.
3. The ‘cage’ as the playwright named it, reveals the life of unfortunate women engaged in the profession of prostitution. These women, however, invite our sympathy rather than apathy or aversion. Comment.
4. Draw a character-sketch of Benarasi Baba as a pavement dweller.
5. Discuss the title of the play and its relevance to the theme.
6. A play is meant for performance. Can **A Touch be performed** within your group? Try.



CRITICAL STUDY OF MAHESH DATTANI'S DANCE LIKE A MAN PART I

Unit Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Background to the Indian English Plays.
- 15.2 Background to Mahesh Dattani
- 15.3 Introduction to Dance Like a Man
- 15.4 Conclusion
- 15.5 Questions

15.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit intends to make the students aware of the historical background of Indian drama in general and Indian English drama in particular. It also helps students to know about Mahesh Dattani as a successful Indian English dramatist for his novelty in writing and performance, for quintessential features of his plays to make him a nationally and internationally known personality in the dramatic sphere.

15.1 BACKGROUND TO THE INDIAN ENGLISH PLAYS.

Drama per se has a rich tradition in India in which the Sanskrit literature is as old as the European Greek Plays in both theories of drama and production of drama. Later other languages in Indian literature have developed and brought out the canon of their own though they are influenced by European and Indian tradition of drama.

Indian English Literature is the youngest phenomenon in the stream of Indian Literature—all the languages producing literature in all the forms of literature like drama. Indian English Drama, as compared to Indian English poetry and novel, lags behind. Not only Indian English poetry and novels but also the dramas in other Indian languages like Hindi, Sanskrit, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati etc. flourished considerably to vie with the other world literature.

The Indian English Drama critics have pointed out as to why Indian English Plays lag behind? Though there are many dramas written and published in English, they failed on the stage because the condition is not well for the theatre and lacked interest in the theatre goers. The critics say that Indian English drama has 'inbuilt inhibiting factors': The language confined to the elite class, small number of English theatre goers who sustain the plays, theatres centered at metropolis, and lack of trained actors in English to name a few. They have also come up with solutions to this problem: one, the dialogue should, Girish Karnad puts, be written as it is spoken in given situation by a given character. It should be free from stilted and bookish language; two, Mahesh Dattani says, the challenge 'is to reflect the language the way she is spoken and not harp on the correct form'. Since the English language in India is a city-based, its reach is limited. The only way to spread it is to 'make the language content more accessible.' One of the solutions for successful survivals of Indian theatre is to translate plays into other Indian languages for productions. Even if the Indian English plays have been suffering from the problems of its own, it has developed its theatre history. It started from pre-independence period. Let's have a look at it.

English and Italian dramatic troupes performed many English plays in cities like Bombay and Madras. The Portuguese troupes brought a dance drama in India. The first modern drama was performed in Calcutta at the end of 18th century. For the first time two comedies, *Disguise* and *Love is the Best Doctor* were translated from English into Bengali, and they were produced in Kolkata. The first Bengali theatre 'The Hindu Theatre' was established by Prasannakumar Tagore in 1831. And subsequently, some of the English plays and other translations also were staged. The dawn of Indian English Play didn't cease here, it began extending its branches towards writing the plays in English.

The first Indian English drama, *The Persecuted*, was written by Krishna Mohan Banerjee in 1813. In the mid 19th century, the theatre in India was influenced by the British theatrical tradition, modern drama and theatre in Kolkata. Theatre in Kolkata was for the enjoyment of the British officers. Their world of Indian performance tradition was confined to the 'nautch' girls. The local Bengali intellectuals and aristocracy were not allowed to visit the theatre and, therefore, they become the members of such clubs which were formed by the Britishers for procreation. Furthermore, in other languages, however, dramatists created modern drama on the model of indigenous forms. For instance, in Hindi, Bharatendu Harishchandra was the first dramatist who wrote plays on the model of the traditional forms like Rasalila. In Maharashtra, Vishnudas Bhave wrote first modern Marathi play *Sita Swayamvar*

in 1843. In Kolkata, the first Proscenium theatre was built in 1860. This totally changed the aesthetics a theatrical performance.

In 1871, Michael Madhusudhan Dutt wrote *Is This Called Civilization?* Ram Kinoo Dutt wrote *Manipur Tragedy* in 1893. In Mumbai C. S. Nazir came up with *The First Parsi Baronet* (1866) and D. M. Wadia attempted *The Indian Heroine* (1877) are the available examples of Indian English Drama.

In the beginning, Indian English Drama took the form of translations and adaptations from Sanskrit and English Drama. Kalidasa and Shakespeare were translated into a few regional languages. Williams Jones has translated *Sakuntalam* into English. Dramas of Shakespeare were translated into other Indian languages like Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, Kannada, Marathi and what not.

The earlier Indian dramatists, with the Western influence, experimented with different forms like romances, opera, comedy, farce, tragedy, melodrama and historical play with 'puranic'. By 1920, almost all the Indian languages witnessed a new drama which was thriving and reflecting influences of Marxism, psychoanalysis and the symbolist and surrealist movements.

The playwrights, Sri Aurobindo, Kailasam, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Bharati Sarabhai, picked up the themes from legend and epics, from history and the problems from the contemporary society. Sri Aurobindo is a major English playwright and an accomplished craftsman in verse. His writing blends Eastern and Western thoughts; constructed on the Elizabethan model, his plays in English are *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Vasavadutta*, *Rodogune*, *The Viziers of Bassora*, and *Eric the King of Norway*. His play *Vikramorvasie* or *Hero and the Nymph* is a blank verse rendering of Kalidas's Sanskrit play *Vikramorvasiyam*. In addition, there are some unfinished plays, two playlets and a collection of five dramatic dialogues at his credit. There is the romantic impulse in his themes and he tries to view the contemporary problem of slavery and foreign rule against that setting. Though his plays display a great exuberance of thought and language and have an appeal to the scholar, they cannot fully meet the demands of the stage and are at best closet drama.

His plays are mostly constructed on the Elizabethan model; and, here and there, they show some flavour of Sanskrit drama though all have Aurobindonian overtones.

T. P. Kailasam (1885 - 1946) was another worth considering dramatic voice who was regarded as 'the Father of Modern Kannada Drama' with a technical excellence. Kailasam's published

plays and playlets are: *The Burden* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Fulfillment* (1933), *The Curse or Karna* (1964), *Keechaka* (1947) and *A Monologue* (1943). It is learnt that some thirteen English playlets were composed by him and recited extempore to his friend, but none of these have been published. The playlet, *The Burden* is perhaps an indirect attempt at modification of Bhasa's Sanskrit work *Pratima-natakam* (The Statue Play) with the theme from *The Ramayana*. His play *The Purpose* in two acts is one of the main contributions made by him to Indian English Drama, which is based on the theme of *The Mahabharata*. Kailasam's next playlet *The Fulfillment* is a natural sequel to *The Purpose*. As regards models and techniques, Kailasam shows his inclination towards the Elizabethan drama, like Sri Aurobindo, though to a lesser degree. In spite of deep reverence for the great values of our rich past, he, too, seems to ignore the ancient Indian dramatic tradition. Kailasam sometimes uses prose in dialogue, for instance in *The Purpose*, sometimes blank verse and sometimes mixture of both, for instance in *The Curse*. His language often rises to true poetic heights. He is often rhetorical and his language is not as refined as that of Aurobindo.

Another playwright, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya has to his credit a number of plays and playlets – social, historical and devotional. His *Five Plays* (1937), a collection of plays reveal his socialistic approach towards life. His first play, *The Widow*, deals with the exploitation of textile workers of Mumbai by the big industrialists who are curbing their rights ruthlessly. They want to seal their children's mouths and tax even their songs, sobs and laughter. *The Parrot* is a tragedy dedicated to 'All those whose morality is not a parrot cage'. The theme of the play is man's inner urge for freedom from the bondage created by himself in the form of customs like marriage. *The Sentry's Lantern* brings to light the evils of Imperialism as can be seen in his significant dedication itself: 'To all the victims of Imperialist Gallows.' Here is an expression of sentiments and thoughts by three victims, namely, a merchant, a bourgeois poet and a worker just before they are hanged. *The Coffin* depicts the crumbling of the bourgeois family. *The Evening Lamp*, the last play in the collection, is a poetic evocation of life, and the picture presented is that of a young man who queerly observes his own shadows. It is dedicated 'to those who may be able to light it towards the new dawn of realism.' These playlets with their message are the products of the 'Progressive Writer's Movement' of those days. So far as models and techniques are concerned, Chattopadhyaya seems to have been less influenced by Western Drama in depicting the lives of saints than in his social plays. And in *Siddhartha*, Chattopadhyaya seems to be over-enthusiastic in his use of various Western techniques like the Prologue and the Epilogue, the commentary and the chorus, voices and lights and sound techniques.

Women playwright in the Pre-Independence phase, Bharati Sarabhai, is the modern woman playwright during the colonial era of Indian English Drama. She is the author of two plays: *The Well of the People* (1943) and *Two Women* (1952). The former is symbolic, poetic and is besides, a significant contribution to the Gandhian social order, while the latter is realistic, written in prose, and probes the private world of a sensitive individual. *The Well of the People* is not, of course, a drama in the conventional sense. There are no formal changes of scene, and the stage witnesses continuous action. The theme of *The Well of the People* presents a beautiful synthesis of religion and social service, and shows how suffering and sacrifice can lead to a better life. Moved by a story published in *Harijan*, Bharati Sarabhai wrote this play. An old woman fails to achieve her ambition to go on a pilgrimage to Kashi and Haridwar, and decides to please God by building a well for 'the untouchables' in her village with her savings.

The same concept that God is within, is presented in *Two Women* in another way. The westernised Kanakaraya comes into conflict with his wife, Anuradha, who is very much inclined to go to the Himalayas in her quest for spiritual peace. At last, he gives up his rigid stand; but at the same time Anuradha gradually comes to find little meaning in her desire as she can see the Himalayas everywhere. However, the sudden death of Kanakaraya renders the new found realization useless to the couple.

Like Kailasam and other major playwrights, some more authors in the Pre-Independence phase were attracted toward the themes from *The Upanishads*, the two epics, *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* and the popular puranas like *The Bhagavata*.

Two dramatists, Nalini Mohan Chatterjee and Swami Shivananda have been influenced by *The Bhagavata* in their plays *Krishna* (1937) and *Radha's Prem* (1945) respectively. Chatterjee's play deals with the miracles believed to have been performed by Krishna, the legendary incarnation of God. However, neither of the two playwrights handles the theme in such a way as to satisfy the need of the stage.

K. S. Ramaswami Sastri draws his theme from *The Mahabharata*. The story in the epic is presented in his *Droupadi* (1939), a verse-play in five acts. He dramatises the important incidents connected with the life of Droupadi. T. K. N. Trivikram attempts to glorify the life and teachings of Jesus Christ in his *Zero B. C. or Christopanishad* (1947). Annayya's three-act play *The Bride of God* (1931), A. S. P. Ayyar's *A Mother's Sacrifice* (1941), V. V. Srinivasa Aiyangar's *Blessed in a Wife* (1911), *The Point of View* (1915), Mrinalini Sarabhai's *Captive Soil* (1945) a verse play in two acts, N. R. Deobhankar's *The Absconders* (1947), A. C.

Krishnaswami's playlet *The Twice-Born* (1914), Niranjan Pal's *The Goddess* (1924), V. Narayan's four playlets in his collection *Where God is Not and Other playlets* (1933), D. M. Borgaonkar's three-act problem play *Image-Breakers* (1938), Balwant Gargi's *The Vulture and Other Plays* (1941), Khwaja Ahmed Abbas' *Invitation to Immortality* (1944), J. M. Lobo Prabhu's *Mother of New India* (1944), Ajaoy Chunder Dutt's *Milly* (1945), Purushottam Tricumdas' *Sauce for the Goose* (1946), Rangnath's *A Star is Born* (1947), Svarnakumari Devi Ghosal's *Princess Kalyani* (1930), M. S. Gopal's playlet *The Eastern Farce* (1931), P. A. Krishnaswami's *Kailash* (1944), are worth mentioning creations of the Pre-Independence Phase.

J. M. Lobo Prabhu was the last great name in Pre-Independence Indian English Drama. He has written over a dozen plays but only *Mother of New India: A Play of the Indian Village in Three Acts* (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945) appear before Independence. A. S. P. Ayyar's plays deal with contemporary problems like blind beliefs and superstitions, widow marriage, caste system, and gross materialism.

Our country had a number of kingdoms in the past and which was subjected to one foreign regime or the other has a long history of her own. The minor playwrights in the Pre-Independence Phase have tried to use the rich sources of our great epics and legends of saints' life but the output is disappointing both in quality and in quantity. Many Indian English playwrights were fascinated by different kinds of political intrigues and incidents of the past. Considering the Pre-Independence Phase, the plays with political and historical themes also, do not appear to have been very successful. The Indian English playwrights of the era vie with one another to use the innumerable conflicts arising out of social problems. Many playwrights are attracted towards the social themes with great enthusiasm. However, except for a few playwrights like V. V. S. Aiyangar, Narayana and A. S. P. Ayyar show some seriousness in exposing the evils of the contemporary society. To a lesser degree, even allegory too, has a role to play in the Pre-Independence Phase.

To conclude, the Pre-Independence Phase presents a host of playwrights most of whom wrote short plays. So far as the themes are concerned, the plays, dealing with social themes occupy the first place in output, those on legendary and historical themes come only next to them; and allegory plays a small role in the phase. Among the few who draw their themes from ancient myths and legends, Sri Aurobindo is unique in interpreting them in terms of a contemporary problem as in *Perseus*. Bharati Sarabhai and Krishna Swami make only small experiments in this direction. However, playwrights like Kailasam and Ramaswami Sastri show

their interest either in highlighting the greatness of epic heroes and heroines or giving importance to neglected characters. Romantic impulse appears to be a strong undercurrent in the plays. A few authors like Swami Sivananda employ the dramatic medium more for didactic discussions than for construction of their plot. Regarding social themes, many playwrights like Chattopadhyaya, Ayyar and Narayanan appear to be fully seized of some burning problems of contemporary society whereas V. V. S. Aiyangar, Borgaonkar and others are content with a farcical or melodramatic presentation of some problems.

The names of a few more playwrights may be taken into account though they have made not substantial contribution to Indian English Drama, but they are great names in Indian English literature. Some of the important writers who have tried their hand at drama are Sudhindra Nath Ghose (*Colours of a Great City*), R. K. Narayan (*The Watchman of the Lake*), K. R. S. Iyengar (*The Storm in a Tea-cup*) and (*The Battle of the Optionals*); Balwant Gargi (*The Vulture and other Plays*) and Mrinalini Sarabhai (*The Captive Soil*).

History and current politics draw the attention of only a few like A. S. P. Ayyar, Annayya and Mrinalini Sarabhai, who achieve some success in presenting their themes. Language poses a big problem to almost all the playwrights of the phase. Of course, starting from Sri Aurobindo with his mastery of the romantic idiom up to Gopal with his raw style, they do attempt to overcome the problem in their own way, but without much success. Although the Pre-Independence English drama is notable for its poetic excellence, thematic variety, technical virtue, virtuosity, symbolic significance and its commitment to human and moral values, it was by and large not geared for actual stage production. S. Krishna Bhatt rightly observes: 'On the whole, most of the playwrights of the phase do not seem to write with a distinct awareness of the question of the staging of their plays. Their plays appear to be primarily meant to be read.'

Post Independence Indian English Drama

The condition of Indian English Drama even after independence remained same. However, India's first Five Year Plan gave hope for its betterment by giving priority to the performing arts, and National School of Drama (NSD). At the same time, various state academies were set up to promote the theatres in other regional languages in India. During this phase, some of the Indian playwrights have been successfully staged abroad. The prominent Indian English playwright after independence is Asif Currimbhoy who wrote more than 30 plays. Other noteworthy playwrights are G. V. Desani, Pratap Sharma, Nissim Ezekiel,

Gurucharan Das, Dina Mehta, Cyrus Mistry, Majula Padmanabhan, Abhijat Joshi and Mahesh Dattani to name few. Apart from the Indian English playwrights, there is a group of Indian dramatists in other regional languages who are extensively translated into English and staged. These writers are Vijay Tendulkar from Marathi, Badal Sircar from Bengali, Girish Karnad from Kannad, and Rakesh Mohan from Hindi. Let's look at these important dramatists and their works in short.

G. V. Desani is both a novelist and playwright. His *All about H. Hatter* is a hilarious novel, and *Hali* is a noteworthy play that was produced in England. *Hali* is an abstract play in which there is no character on the stage. It is sometimes described as a 'poem play' and 'allegorical play'. Thus, he has contributed a 'great stylistic innovation to Indian theatre.'

Pratap Sharma's *Touch of Brightness*, one of your prescribed plays, was first performed in England after being banned in Mumbai due to its theme. The play, set in red-light area, is bold in its theme and language; and it presents the happenings in the brothels. His other play, *The Professor Has a Warcry*, is equally well in stagecraft and dialogue which depicts a young man, an illegitimate child of a mother. His mother is deserted by her lover the professor and later she is raped by a Muslim and an Englishman. At the end, both the Hindu professor and the illegitimate child kill each other.

Asif Currimbhoy's plays too were banned in Mumbai but successfully staged abroad; almost all his plays deal with contemporary political and social issues. He has written more than 30 plays among which the following deserve to be introduced: *The Doldrummers* is about hippie culture and Anglo-Indian. His *Captives* is about Sino-Indian conflicts. *Goa* is about the liberation of Goa by India. *An Experiments with Truth* deals with freedom struggle and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. And his *Inquilab* is about the nexalite Movement in India. Currimbhoy is a prolific dramatist in Indian English Drama. His career is crumbled down by the 'lack of Indian English theatre'. His are the plays that are more read than are performed.

Nissim Ezekiel, better known for Indian English Poetry, also wrote plays. His plays *Marriage Poem: A tragic-comedy*, *Nalini: A Comedy*, *The Sleepwalkers: An Indo-American Farce*, and *Don't Call It Suicide*. He is not so successful as he was a poet. The critics point out that he 'falls short in handling of plot or dramatic structure.' though he has a 'feel for spoken language' that is very much requisite in dramatic works.

Gurucharan Das' *Larins Sahib*, Dina Mehta's *Myth-makers* and Cyrus Mistry's *Doongaji House* have won the Sultan Padamsee Award for playwriting. Gurucharan Das' *Larins Sahib* is a historical three-act play which has been much acclaimed, and which has been one of the successful stage-plays in Indian English Drama. It's better remembered for its 'lively dialogue, its plot construction, and historical subject matter.' Dina Mehta's both *The Myth Makers*, a stage play, and *Brides Are not for Burning*, a radio play are award-winning plays; the later was chosen as the best play in worldwide completion held by BBC.

Cyrus Mistry's *Doongaji House* is about the plight of Parsi community in India, the nation which is divided on the basis of languages and religions, and where the communal divide is seen between Hindu and Muslim.

Manjula Padmanabhan, an illustrator, cartoonist, and short fiction writer, with her five plays, has won the Onassis International Cultural Competition for theatrical play for her play, *Harvest*. Her other important plays are *Lights Out* and *Gaslights* which are successfully staged. Her *Harvest*, bitter and dark comedy, is set in future, and it deals with the situation when citizens of developed world shop for body parts in the third world.

Abhijat Joshi, a screenplay writer, known for his screenplays *Lage Raho Munnabhai*, and *3 idiots*, wrote *A Shaft of Sunlight* which explores the Hindu-Muslim conflicts after the riots in India. This play has been staged by Tamasha theatrical company based in England.

These are some of the playwrights; there are many other published playwrights who are never staged due to the lack of English stage in India. Let's look into Mahesh Dattani in the following section.

15.2 BACKGROUND TO MAHESH DATTANI

Mahesh Dattani, the first Indian English playwright winning Sahitya Akademi Award, is a successful dramatist in the list of Indian English playwrights. His are the plays meant for both the 'stage' and the 'page': the former for performance and later for reading. It is because, perhaps, he writes the plays, directs the plays and acts in the plays. Taking inspiration from Marathi playwright, Vijay Tendulkar, he started his dramatic career divorcing himself from marketing and copywriting firm. Dattani writes on the contemporary serious issues unlike Girish Karnad whose writings are based on Indian history, Indian myth and Indian scriptures.

The prime themes of Dattani's plays varies from feminine identity, religious and communal tension, sexuality, paedophilia, problems of eunuchs and what not. 'What one loves in his plays is the fascinating way in which he presents the dynamics of personal and moral choices while focusing on human relationships,' observes Bijay Kumar Das. Sahitya Akademi Award citation accorded for his *Final Solution* in 1998 reads: 'Dattani's works probes entangled attitudes in contemporary India towards communal differences, consumerism and gender... a brilliant contribution to Indian Drama in English.'

Aloof from writing, directing, acting, he has been keenly interested in academics, for he teaches theatre courses at Portland State University, Oregon, USA; regularly conducts workshops for the young theatre artists; and he writes Radio plays for BBC Radio 4. He established a theatre academy, PLAYPEN in 1984.

The total corpus of his plays— Radio plays, Screen plays, and Stage plays—amount to sixteen. They are: *Where There Is a Will*, *Final Solution*, *Dance Like a Man*, *Do the Needful*, *30 Days in Septembers*, *Sever Circles around the Fire*, and *Tara*. Dattani's plays, Bijay Kumar Das points out, bear following prominent hallmarks: His plays address the 'invisible issues' of contemporary Indian society. By invisible issues, Dattani means homosexuality, lesbian, gay, paedophilia etc. His plays dive into human heart and create characters true to life situation. His plays deal with the families whose inmates are bound together or broken apart through mutual disgust and suspicion. Extramarital relations, religious fundamentalism, communal tension, political subjects, crimes of the society, and failure of law and order are other noteworthy themes of his plays. His plays are not meant to be read but to be staged; hence texts of his plays are replete with stage directions. Reality and objectivity, observes Bijay Kumar Das, are hallmarks of his plays. The technique he has employed in his plays varies.

15.3 INTRODUCTION TO DANCE LIKE A MAN

"I wrote the play," said Mahesh Dattani in one of his interviews about the inspiration of the theme of *Dance Like a Man*, "when I was learning Bharatnatyam in my mid twenties... a play about a young man wanting to be a dancer, growing up in a world that believes dance is for women...(Ayyar, 2004)" (as quoted in Mahesh Dattani *An Introduction* by Asha Kuthari Chaudhari, Foundation Books, New Delhi, 2005.)

Though *Dance Like a Man* is originally inspired by a struggle of a young man desperately wanting to be a dancer as confessed by Dattani, it deals not merely with the tragic story of a young man

but a couple who struggle in their dancing career. And consequently they, especially wife, realize her nourished dreams through the success of their daughter. Ratna takes credit of her daughter's success because she thinks that Lata succeeded due to her mother's efforts in both the preparation for the competition and in manipulating the final result. In all this, Dattani's central character, Jairaj falls a prey to his father's view about the dance when his father and his wife hatch a ploy to prevent him from dancing. *Dance Like a Man* is being remembered for its themes, and its techniques.

15.4 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have studied the background to Indian English Plays. For the convenience, Indian English Drama is categorized into Pre independence Indian English Drama and post independence Indian English Drama, and the brief survey of the major playwrights of both the phases and their works are taken so as to locate the locus standi of Mahesh Dattani in the tradition of Indian English Drama. The last section of the unit speaks of the genesis and inspiration of Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*.

15.5 QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the Indian English drama.
2. What makes Mahesh Dattani a unique playwright?
3. What are the basic themes and techniques of Mahesh Dattani's plays?
4. Write a critical note on Mahesh Dattani as a successful playwright.
5. Write an introductory note on Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*.



CRITICAL STUDY OF MAHESH DATTANI'S DANCE LIKE A MAN PART II

Unit Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Summary of Dance Like a Man
 - 16.1.1 Act – I
 - 16.1.2 Act – II
- 16.2 Characters
 - 16.2.1 Jairaj
 - 16.2.2 Ratna
 - 16.2.3 Lata
 - 16.2.4 Viswas
 - 16.2.5 Amritlal
- 16.3 Aspects of Dance Like a Man
- 16.4 Conclusion
- 16.5 Questions

16.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit aims at making the students aware with the detailed summary of the play, Dance Like a Man. It is followed by the character portrayals and various themes of the play.

16.1. SUMMARY OF DANCE LIKE A MAN

16.1.1 ACT – I

The Play, Dance Like a Man, opens with a conversation between Lata, a dancer daughter of the dancer parents who are failure as dancers in their dancing career, and Viswas, a fiancée of Lata, and a son of sweetmeat seller on Commercial Street. Viswas' father owns half the buildings on the road; Lata is also a single child of her parents, thus she is a sole heir of her parental bequeathment, 'quite old-fashioned' house inherited from Amritlal, Jairaj's father. Viswas comes to Lata's house to ask for her hands in marriage. Lata's parents, Jairaj and Ratna, are not at home. The

scene is set in the evening at Jairaj's house which stands on the right centre of the town, and which a Marwari builder has offered 90 lakhs for building shopping complex.

Both Lata and Viswas are playfully and humorously chatting on the details of their prospective wedding and life after marriage. Jairaj and Ratna have gone out to see one of their musicians in the hospital who has tripped on his dhoti, fell down, and broken his leg. Lata's parents are supposed to get back home till 7.00pm.

Lata tells him that her parents won't allow them marry unless he, after their marriage, lets her dancing because her parents are 'different', unlike the other parents who don't care about the career of their daughters after marriage. She leads him to the dancing hall and switches the lights on so as to show the place once her parents used to dance. There lie 'most of the furniture of Amritlal', musical instruments and dancing bells. It reminded Viswas of 'Antique shop... at least forty or fifty years old', though everything in living room is new. Only dancers and musicians are allowed to enter here. Lata has grown from childhood watching her parents dancing in the same hall. She still expects from Viswas to let her visit the same hall. Though she prefers one or two children to adopting other's, she expects not to bear children as soon as they marry because she thinks that she herself was born when her parents crossed their forties.

Then Lata goes to living room to Muthia, their flutist so as to find out where her parents are, while Viswas, intrigued by a large ornate cupboard which contains old yellow-turned books and brocade shawl. The brocade shawl, Viswas humorously asks for as dowry, has been presented to Amritlal from Mysore maharajah during Dusserah; the shawl along with was her grandfather's 'most prized possession'. Amritlal was the first among the elite to shun the western suits and wore the kurtas and shawls on the formal occasion.

They don't make tea in their house, so she goes to prepare coffee because she knows, after call, that her parents are on the way and they may turn up any moment of time. Viswas wanders around the room; meanwhile there rings a phone, and, so Lata tells him to receive the call. It was a call for Jairaj from one Chhaganlal Chandani who has offered 90 lakhs for the property. Viswas answers the phone call saying that Jairaj is reluctant to sell his house, so, humorously he offers Chhaganlal to call after ten years when the same house would be of his. When Lata asks him whereabouts of the call, he replies that it has been from a butler inquiring about the vacancy in their house.

Then going near the cupboard, he takes off the shawl, wears it and struts. In the new outfit of Amritlal, mimics his late grandfather-in-law: in the gait of terror, dominant, conservative father of Jairaj shunning his son from being a dancer, and bragging of his achievement and respects he had received. Jairaj and Ratna, meanwhile, enter; Viswas, unnoticed by their presence, continues mocking Amritlal in his shawl: 'Where will you go being a dancer? Nowhere! What will you get being a dancer? Nothing! People will point at you on the streets and laugh and ask, 'Who is he?' 'He is a dancer.' 'What does he do?' 'He is a dancer.'" As soon as catches sight of his would be parents in laws, he is embarrassed; and tries to justify that the dance is equally important. Jairaj only manages to respond him to replace the shawl and goes in while Ratna collects the shawl and puts it back.

Lata serves them coffee and stepped inside. Jairaj and Ratna are talking seriously about the crisis or problem they are facing. And Viswas takes himself as a problem because he hasn't made 'a very good first impression' on the couple. Their real problem is that the performance, 'a performance that will make her career', Lata is going to give before the guests like the President of India. They have only ten day to prepare, and a mridangist, S. V. Srinivas, who is supposed to play for Lata, tripped on his dhoti and broke his arm. They could have done without violinist or flutist, but without mridangist is impossible to dance. Other mridangists are already booked. The only artist left except Lata's mridangist, is Seshadri who is rehearsing with Chandra Kala, another competitor of Lata. (Seshadri, a 'pot-bellied lech', sleeps with Chandra Kala. Ratna witnessed their relation ten years ago in Moscow, while she was going in search of Jairaj who had a drinking party with a gang of Yakshagana on the same night.) Lata's parents are happy as he infers their exact problems from their talk. Lata comes back again thinking that they might have talked on their marriage issue: approval of their marriage. She asks her parents whether or not they have selected Viswas as their son-in-law. Her parents say that they have not thought of him as of now. Ratna is tensed so she takes pills like Novalgin and Aspro; Jairaj says to her to stop it which will kill her. She replies that she prefers pills to tension. Ratna doesn't like to finish Lata's career overnight like hers. She thinks that it happens due to Amritlal's curse. Lata's parents bicker on their past failure life. Lata interfere with them. Viswas wants to make a move but he is stopped by her father. Jairaj asks Viswas whether he drinks. Viswas replies that he drinks sometimes with his friends but not before the elders. Instantly Jairaj goes to the cupboard and opens a wine bottle. On their behalf, Lata apologises her fiancé and tells him to come other time. Jairaj tells Lata to sleep with her mother tonight because Ratna is in 'one of her moods' in which she recounts 'the miseries of her life' and Jairaj has been fed up with it because he 'has lived through them'. Lata too hates her

mother for it. She says: '...That's one thing I'll never do. Bore my children talking about the failures in my life.' Then Lata leaves them and joins her mother.

Jairaj and Viswas drink neat wine together. Inebriated, they talk on their fathers' properties: Viswas' father made money by selling mithai in a building and Jairaj's by investing in realty estate. The similarity in their fathers is that neither Jairaj's nor Viswas' father loan his son if wanted. Amritlal didn't give money to Jairaj because he never liked the dance of woman practiced by man. Yet Jairaj learned it because he is 'steadfast' and 'brave' but he did not succeed in it. Viswas asks him about his respect towards Amritlal, Jairaj has no respect. He hasn't maintained his father's house out of respect but he changed it. He asks him about his father's shawl which Jairaj is ready to give his son in law as a gift after their marriage. Thus Jairaj approves his marriage with Lata and tells Viswas to send his father for further procedures. With the approval, Viswas leaves him.

With the matrimonial consent, Viswas leaves and Ratna joins Jairaj who is closing his drink in the cupboard. Lata has consoled her mother and slept so Ratna comes out. Ratna thinks that Lata has consoled her after Jairaj's wish to do so. Jairaj has been drinking wine which has been diluted by Ratna because she thinks that he drinks 'neat wine'. Jairaj warns her that she should not dilute the wine for since next time when they need the same intensity of kick, it needs more amount of wine. Ratna doesn't want more wine rather she drinks a little bit whenever she wants to settle her nerves down. Soon Jairaj invites her to drink because she addresses him 'jai' after a long time. Therefore he wants to celebrate the jubilant moment and in drinking they would be 'more honest with each other'. So they drink.

Inebriated Ratna announces at once that she has decided to call 'Chandra Kala to lend Seshadri as a favour, she may need our help some day, so she is bound to oblige.' With Jairaj's subsequent consent to her decision, they agreed to call her in the morning.

Abruptly, digressing from their present problem, Jairaj harks back to their past: the incident showing their defeat. Jairaj asks her, 'Do you think, we would have been happier, if we hadn't come back?' When Amritlal didn't allow them to dance, in a huff, the couple left his house and threatened not to come back home. But unfortunately, they had to return within ten days. Ratna doesn't like to recall that awful moment in their life which happened forty years ago. Defeated they returned to Amritlal, and Ratna tries to blame Jairaj alone for the defeat and surrender to his father; she, then, thinks that he stopped being a man for her because they couldn't survive on their own. Jairaj recalls why they had returned. Jairaj

says: 'While your uncle asked you to go to bed with him? Would I have been a man then? Giving my wife to her own uncle because he was offering us food and shelter? Would you have preferred that? Do you think you uncle made such interesting proposals to all his nieces?... But you are different. You were meant for entertainment.... So what was wrong with going back to my father? At least my father didn't make...' Changing their topic, Ratna urges him not to mind about what she said when she is 'upset' and when she is 'drunk'. She is, she tells him, anxious about Lata's ensuing performance. They will have to manage and manipulate the right ministers and arranging foreign tours for Lata, because if she succeeds she'll be a national figure. She wishes their daughter should not be in the same difficulties.

Jairaj resumes their past defeat saying that theirs was an 'an impulsive decision' to leave. We were both to blame' for the incident. Jairaj wants to share blames, forgive each other and forget everything including what Ratna had done to Shankar, their first son, who died because of carelessness of Ratna.

During the successful days of Ratna's dancing career, ayahs, babysitter, looked after their son in the absence of Ratna. They has, Jairaj regrets, paid and sacrificed a lot for their dancing career; he is afraid that the same should not repeat with Lata. On the other hand, Ratna holds that Lata is 'talented and can become famous' and 'times have changed and things will be easier for her'. Lata, therefore, should receive 'more fame than' they have had for which they will 'have to push her a bit' with their experiences behind and with the manipulation of critics so that Lata would, within ten days, earn her name in the field of dancing.

Then Jairaj broaches the issue of Lata's marriage. Though Lata's parents find Viswas a " bit strange', they choose him as a suitable husband because he 'is well off' and 'he will let her dance'. They, therefore, tentatively, plan to fix her marriage ceremony after Navaratri festival.

As they are about to move to their bedroom, Jairaj spots the shawl, his father's 'last memory', lying over there. He picks it up and wants to get rid of it very soon by offering it to Viswas. It reminds of his father wearing it and walking around in that room. Suddenly the scene changes from present to the past during 1940s.

Whole day their guruji has been teaching them a dance item. Jairaj wears dancing bells around his ankle. Amritlal wants their guruji leave at the earliest and vacate the room because his guests are about to turn up there. Jairaj complains that they are not allowed to have a 'decent rehearsal' in their own house. Amritlal

hates 'to convert the library into a practice hall'. Rather, if Jairaj wanted, Amritlal thinks, he could have made a cricket pitch on the lawn, but his interest in dance annoys his father. He is afraid his son's interest would turn into an obsession. Jairaj argues that if his father is involved into fighting for freedom as an obsession, he must also be allowed for his. Amritlal alerts him that dancing wouldn't help him for his bread and butter. He suspects that his son must be dancing because of his wife or his wife must be forcing him to dance. They must have not been granted permission to marry them, he regrets. He allowed his son marrying with a girl outside their community in order to show his liberalism. Amritlal also doubts Ratna's Monday routine when she goes to visit her guru for learning a rare and neglected dance form. Jairaj questions his father's doubt and retaliates his father that his father's progressive mind has turned to be a conservative and prudish like people (Britishers with whom they fought for freedom) 'ruling over us.' Jairaj says: 'You didn't fight to gain independence. You fought for power in your hand.' Their goal of freedom fighting, Amritlal rebuts, was to 'eradicate certain unwanted and ugly practices which are shame to our society'. Even they have built ashrams for women for educating and reforming them. Jairaj questions his father that if he wished so, he could have allowed the artists to practice their arts. Amritlal doesn't want to 'encourage prostitution' by allowing them dance, because he holds that most of the artists 'have given up their arts ... and have taken to selling their bodies'. Amritlal doesn't want such art to be continued at the cost of turning the dance practice to prostitution, on the contrary, Jairaj doesn't want his 'art run down by a handful of stubborn narrow-minded individuals with fancy pretentious ideals' of people like his father. His father doesn't have objections to the revival of art but to the people associated with the art—people like Jairaj's guru, not like sadhus but 'normal' man, who has grown his hair so long. Their argument is interrupted by Ratna's arrival with a tray of coffee. Jairaj takes away the tray and goes away to their guruji to serve him, while Ratna and Amritlal remain on the stage.

They speak on Jairaj's plan to grow his hair long to enhance *abhinaya*; it is the suggestion of their guruji to do so. It annoys Amritlal, so he angrily warns Ratna to preclude her husband to grow hair or else he 'will shave his head and throw him on the road.' Frightened Ratna wants to rush away, when Amritlal enquires about where she has been going on every Monday under the pretext of going to temple— Shiva Temple. Amritlal has been sneaked on her by his friend, Mr. Patel as to where she goes. He could have allowed her to go to films but Patel alerted him to save his family name from being spoiled by the doings of Ratna. She assures him that she hasn't done anything that would tarnish their names. She confesses that she has been going to learn 'the art of *abhinaya*' from Chenni Amma, the oldest living exponent of Mysore

school. Chenni Amma during her childhood trained herself but she had no freedom to express her art. Today, at 75, dying, she has been selling flowers near temple. She is willing to impart her knowledge of 'art of *abhinaya*' and 'old dance compositions to some worthy of it'. So Ratna is learning from her. Amritlal is told that Ratna dances in the courtyard of 'prostitute' and all the passersby peep over the sound of dancing bells. Ratna has been permitted by her husband who is aware of all this. Jairaj's permission, Amritlal puts clearly, doesn't matter because both Jairaj and his wife are under his care. Therefore, it is his permission that needs to be begged for doing anything. Ratna gives other option that she would call Chenni Amma to their house for teaching her if he has objection with Ratna's dancing in her courtyard. Amritlal discards her wish without assigning any reason; and Ratna is determined to learn that art. Announcing this as his final verdict, Amritlal tells her to send her guru away before his own guests would arrive there. Jairaj then returns after serving coffees and asks for four *annas* to pay their musicians. Amritlal gives him four rupees as the last gift to their guru and musicians and strictly warns them to send their guru out permanently. Amritlal, long ago, promised his son to continue his interest in dance as his hobby, yet, now, he wants his son grow like a man, and he offended him by insulting his guru, though he wants to apologize to his guru later by writing a regret letter. Breaking the argument, he instructs his friend, Patel on phone to give a favour to Chenni Amma by sending a doctor and five hundred rupees for her as a 'compensation of depriving her of her only student'. As his guru is insulted and sent away, Jairaj is humiliated and hurt. In wrath, Jairaj packs up clothes and saris of his wife and the couple set out. As they exit the scene turns from past to present. Ratna anxiously recounts her mistake of choosing Seshadri for Lata. She says: '... I don't think it is such a good idea asking Chandra Kala to lend Seshadri. They might plot to sabotage Lata's dance. He might give her wrong *tala*. People can't make out whose mistake it is and they always blame the dancer.' With Ratna's premonition, the first act of the play ends leaving the question open ended: Are they helping their opponent to win over Lata easily in the competition?

16.1.2 ACT – II

The second Act begins with the setting in the past: two days later Jairaj and Ratna had left Amritlal's home. After two days, they returned because they were defeated and they didn't keep the words that they permanently had left Amritlal. Amritlal censured them while they were silently listening to his sarcastic talk. On the contrary, Amritlal didn't enjoy a sadistic pleasure in their defeat, he said. They came back 'more out of necessity than of their real intention of patching up' what they had done. Amritlal allowed them to dance, and he would be 'very happy', if they earned their bread and butter from dancing. Even if, now on, they asked for money, he

would give them but he would be disappointed because he liked to invest his money 'in the right place'. They should not think, Amritlal held, they have right over his entire wealth. Again, thereafter, Amritlal permitted them to use the library as a practice hall, and their guruji was also allowed to come twice a week to their home in the morning. In return, Jairaj was precluded from growing his hair long; and Ratna from going to Chennai Amma for learning dance.

The happiness of a man, Amritlal advised Ratna, lies in 'being a man'; even the wife of a dancer wants her husband to be a man. On the contrary, she as an artist retorted that she married Jairaj only because he was a dancer and because he would allow her to continue dancing. Amritlal agreed to let Ratna dancing but not his son because he thinks, 'A woman in men's world may be considered as being progressive. But a man in women's world is pathetic.' Moreover, Ratna is more brilliant than Jairaj is; he won't be 'famous' as Ratna 'might become famous'. It is, therefore, a waste of time. Amritlal sought Ratna's help in making Jairaj an 'adult', and 'help him grow up'. If she does, he promised her to continue dancing. After preventing Jairaj from dancing, Amritlal wanted his son to make worthy of his daughter-in-law.

With this deal or rather a ploy woven by Amritlal and Ratna against Jairaj, the scene shifts again from past to present. Last night there was the programme. Lata is tired and she is still sleeping in the morning. The scene opens with the next morning when Lata is sleeping. There rings a phone call from Dr. Gowda who has already sent a congratulatory flowers for Lata. Ratna on Lata's behalf thanks him for his compliment. Dr. Gowda, a minister busy in organizing Indian Festival in Canada, is flattered by Ratna saying that though he is a minister he is a knowledgeable about dance and 'known to be so critical'. Lata receive a good rave reviews about her last night's performance; even the president of India gave a standing ovation. The reactions, appraisals and compliments on her performance, Ratna says, would make Lata thrilled when she read in the newspapers.

Curiously, Ratna asks Dr Gowda about the selection committee members for selecting the dancers for Indian Festival in Canada. She is shocked to know that Chandrakala, twenty years ago she was a good dancer, is one of the members of the selection Committee. Though her daughter, Mala, is one of the participants in the completion, she can't be partial because she will have to follow ethics, and Dr. Devraj Gowda will have 'final say' in the committee, Ratna believes.

When Ratna replaces phone, Jairaj tells his wife not to push his daughter. She replies that she is not pushing her daughter as much as Chandrakala does for hers: she might be sitting on the lap

of minister. Then she calls up Lata to look at the reviews. All the newspapers published 'rave reviews', and because Ratna has manipulated and managed the critics, the reviews published on the next day which rarely happens. Meanwhile, the phone rings once again. It is Seshadri who calls for apologizing for the wrong tala in the beginning of the performance, but he managed well after the guidance of Ratna. Ratna informs him of the selection committee formed for the selection of the dancers to be sent to Canada. She promises him to send him too to Canada. Then she disconnects the phone and makes for kitchen to prepare breakfast.

As Jairaj folds papers to put down on table, Viswas enters with two newspapers: Times and Herald. Both turns one newspaper each excitedly reads the headlines:

'Lata Parekh—Star of the Festival'

'Lata Excels!'

'Lata Leaves Rest Behind!'

'A Shining Star in the Sky of Bharatnatyam!'

'A Discovery of the Decade!'

'... Truly Lata Parekh, with perseverance and dedication will find her place among legendary artists like Balasaraswati and Rukhmini Devi.' When Lata joins them, they read newspapers for her and congratulate her for being 'geniuses' and talented. When they are discussing on the performance, only Viswas is ignorant of the art of dancing. Lata's rendering of ashtapadi from Geeta Govindam, they discuss, appealed to the audience. During the performance her expressions and her heaving of bosom were remarkable which being 'too erotic' Viswas dislikes. Whereas when Jairaj confesses that his wife, thirty years ago, performed the same item; and he rudely says that he himself performed the erotic items in the costume of women on the demand of army. They want to say that Viswas should not stop Lata dancing in future. He agrees to continue her dancing. Then after meeting Ratna in the kitchen, Viswas exits because he has to go his shop in the absence of his father. His father has been busy in 'chasing government officials to sanction a plan', therefore, Viswas has to supervise making of jalebis.

Both Lata and Jairaj join Ratna who is weeping in the kitchen. She has changed her mood. She wants to talk on some suitable topic save the talks on gender, Lata's dancing career, and loss of Shankar, their first son. Because Ratna thinks that Lata would be famous now thanks to her own efforts; and her daughter would succeed in future only if she 'will have to practice very hard and take her career very seriously'. When Jairaj asks her to read reviews on Lata's performance, she answers that she has overheard them and she has already known what sort of reviews would be published. The success is hers, she brags, not of Lata.

She says: 'I deserved it. Spending sleepless nights arranging things. Sweet-talking the critics. My hard work has paid off, hasn't it?' Ratna, therefore, wants to paste the reviews in her own album, rather than making the new album for Lata. On the contrary, Jairaj counsels her that the reviews should not be pasted on her album because they 'don't belong there... these critics gave her good reviews because she deserved them.' Without heeding attention to Jairaj's advice, Ratna clutching the newspapers heads towards their bedroom, when Lata calls them for breakfast. Jairaj finally says to her, 'At least you have a daughter to be jealous of.'

Again the scene changes from present to the past. Jairaj being in the fit of drinking has worn an ordinary kurta-pyjama suit and Ratna is in Bharatnatyam costume. Amritlal is out of the house to receive an award for serving the nation. Their son, Shankar, is sleeping fast. Ratna goes towards her son while Jairaj follows her. Ratna usually goes for her dancing performance, Jairaj stays at home drinking, and Amritlal looks after his grandson, though they have employed a babysitter. Jairaj frowningly expresses his wish: 'when he (Shankar) grows up, I'll teach him how to dance—the dance of Shiva. The dance of man. And when he is ready, I'll bring him to his grandfather and make him dance on his head—tandava nritya.... The lord of dance, beating his drum and trampling on the demon.' Ratna comes back from her child. She finds that the babysitter has been sleeping on the floor near the baby. Jairaj wishes that Ratna should look after the baby; she should not be dependent on the babysitter. Jairaj humiliates her at every point.

Ever since the plot of preventing Jairaj from dancing succeeded, Jairaj became drunkard and Ratna is being humiliated and insulted in front of other people. Jairaj reminds her of what she has done to him: instead of dancing, he has to choreograph items for her or playing flutes for her. Gradually only Ratna is being invited alone. On the contrary, Jairaj had, for one year, declined the offers because he didn't like to dance alone. Ratna is, he rants, responsible for losing his self-esteem: 'Bit by bit. You took it when you insisted on top billing in all our programmes. You took it when you made me dance my weakest item. You took it when you arranged the lighting so that I was literally dancing in your shadow.'

Spoiling the career of Jairaj, Ratna doesn't even allow him to sleep on the same bed whenever he is inebriated the reason she assigns is that he stinks of country liquor. Ratna wears, Jairaj thinks, rich costumes, adds her beauty and dances so that she will 'have men admire' her assets. Ratna retorts that men want to see her dancing. In fact, Jairaj knows that Ratna with Amritlal hatched the ploy for depriving him of dancing. Amritlal knew that he was unable to stop Ratna dancing but he realized that he could stop Jairaj through Ratna. Jairaj alleged that his father preferred

watching him turn into a drunkard to seeing him a dancer. Ratna alone being a dancer and being busy in her schedule shirk out her familial duties, and she stopped playing the role of 'devoted mother'. Consequently, their son, Shankar is being looked after by the baby sitter who in Ratna's absence during dance show gives opium to put him to sleep. Ratna is shocked to know it.

The scene shifts past to future when Lata is married and her son utters the first word. Their house is not theirs now, and it has been given to Lata and Viswas. The house is being demolished and renovated. Both Jairaj and Ratna have moved to a posh flat. Chandrakala and Ratna are now good friends. Jairaj and Ratna are in dancing costume and they seem to be happy. They dance in perfect unison and laugh at their past mistakes. They finally agree: 'We are only human. We lacked the grace. We lacked the brilliance. We lacked the magic to dance like God.' They are in the position to dance.

16.2 CHARACTERS

16.2.1 JAIRAJ

Jairaj, Lata's father and Ratna's husband, is a central victimized character of the play. He is a loving father ethically correct man. He is very liberal when it comes to allowing her wife and daughter's erotic dancing. He seems to be a 'pliable husband'; he seems to revolt against his conservative father for continuing dance. His dancing career is spoiled by the plot woven by his wife and his so-called liberal father—the plot to prevent him from dancing and trying to make him 'a man' in the society.

Jairaj did an inter-caste marriage with Ratna, an ambitious dancer; and his father allows portraying himself as a liberal social reformer. Ratna also wants to marry him because she would be allowed to continue her dancing after marriage. Jairaj is interested in dance but he is mediocre dancer as compared to his wife. He is looked upon as 'nothing but a spineless boy who couldn't leave his father's house for more than forty-eight hours'. He is an economically and socially dependent man so he is unable to feed his wife of his own. They have to live on the property of his father.

Lata told Viswas that her father respected her dominant and conservative grandfather because he kept his house unaltered almost like 'a shrine in memory of him'. Jairaj, on the contrary, is uncertain about reverence to his father. Jairaj says: '...This was my world. I kept it the same because it's mine. This is where I spent my childhood. I removed his memories...He had plenty of spare time. He used to do a lot of gardening. A rose garden. Creepers climbing on the walls. When he died I have everything removed. Pulled it all

out from the roots.' Jairaj has extended the front of the same house when Ratna and Jairaj made money from their dance school and performances abroad. He says they had many visitors. They made name abroad but it made them local celebrities.

Jairaj is sketched an easily vulnerable character. He fails to keep his words given to his father; and he fails to fight back his father and wife hatching a plot against his dancing career.

He is morally and ethically correct man. When Lata wins a dancing competition, and next day, the leading newspapers publish her success news, Ratna cuts the news and wants to paste the clippings in her own album, Jairaj says to her not to do it. It's not fair; it's Lata's success not hers, hence, the clippings should be fixed in Lata's album.

Jairaj's character holds the attentions of the viewers and readers because he becomes prey, a tragic character, and wins the sympathies of the readers. He becomes a frustrated drunkard and his life is crumbled down by his own people.

16.2.2 RATNA

Ratna is Lata's mother and Jairaj's dancer wife. She is an ambitious dancer. She (South Indian) marries Jairaj (Gujrati) only because he would allow her continue dancing even after their marriage. She is a committed dancer. She failed to shine in the field of dancing so she wants to see her success in the win of her daughter, Lata. Lata wins the competition. She does manipulate the judges and the journalists. That's why she wants to paste the newspaper clippings of Lata into her own album.

Ratna goes at any extreme to be for being a devoted dancer. She goes to Chennai Amma to learn the dance from the 75 year old lady who had learnt the dance when she was young. The rare dance form, Ratna thinks, would be vanished with her death. But the old woman is named and defamed by the society. When objected by her father-in-law, she compels him to bring Chennai Amma to their house for learning dance if he has objection to Ratna's going to Chennai Amma's house.

Ratna for the sake of her dance won't care of dancing career of Jairaj; she helps Amritlal in preventing Jairaj from dancing. She has lost her first son neglecting her familial responsibilities. Ratna is portrayed as an ambitious dancer who kept everything over her dancing: she made Jairaj's career as a scapegoat; engrossed in her dancing, she lost her child; she married out of her caste etc. Whenever anything goes against her wishes, she turns into frustration and depression.

16.2.3 LATA

Lata's a child of a Gujrati father and south Indian mother. She is only child of a dancer parents thus she is sole inheritor of her parents' properties. She is a lover of Viswas whom she marries after her competition. She keeps balance between her dancing and her relationship. She softens her mother whenever Ratna becomes depressed.

16.2.4 VISHWAS

Viswas is Lata's fiancée whom she marries. He even permits her to continue dancing after their marriage. He is also only child of his parents therefore he is also Mithaiwalah's sole heir. He doesn't have interest in dancing but business yet he grants permission of dancing. Nevertheless, he feels jealous of his wife dancing in erotic poses. Viswas, as he doesn't have basic knowledge of dancing, seems to be a humorous and comic character whenever he happens to be involved in the topic of discussion on dancing.

16.2.5 AMRITLAL

Amritlal is Jairaj's father. Amritlal is really portrayed as a conservative man who turns an opposition to the dancing career of his son and daughter in law. He claims to be a freedom fighter in independence movement of India still he fights with his son on the issue of Jairaj's dancing. Thus he appears to be conservative Indian man in 1940s India. He was a staunch social reformer and freedom fighter during a British Raj. He used to have clandestine meetings in his house.

Amritlal bought houses and bungalows by cheap prices. When the British left, there was real demand for those bungalows he made a lot of money and became one of the richest in town. He was 'shetji of the city'. Lastly he spent his property in reconstructing India. Thus he seems to be a patriotic. At the same time he is also gullible because he gave out a lot of personal loans to his friends and relatives.

Amritlal becomes a stumbling block in the dancing career of Jairaj and Ratna. He plots against Jairaj and prevents him from dancing for he believes that dancing cannot earn bread and butter for them, dancing is the domain only of woman, and dance will bring anonymity to his name. Even he doesn't like his daughter in law defame their family name by going to other's house. Therefore he manages to arrange the coaching in his own house. He died when Lata was just a child.

16.3 ASPECTS OF DANCE LIKE A MAN

16.3.1 Human Relationships: filial battles and spousal relationship

Dance Like a Man can be viewed as the study of human relationship framed by the filial bickering and squabble. It is a battle between Amritlal, a conservative patriarchal father and Jairaj, the ambitious mediocre dancer. Their argument is for the issue of whether or not Jairaj should continue dancing in the context where the Indian society in 1940s was very much stringent and stern about the 'dogma of being a man', and man taking dance as a career was a disgrace to his family. Dance was attributed and confined only to the women in general and prostitute or slut in particular. The minor character, Chenni Amma, is the perfect paragon of the custodian of the traditional dance form. She learned it in her youth; and when she is unable to win bread and butter by her arts, she, at the age of 75, sells flowers in the vicinity of the temple. Upon Ratna's interest in the dance, she wants to pass on the dance to next generation through disciple like Ratna. When Ratna secretly with her husband's permission attends Chenni Amma's coaching, it is sneaked out to Amritlal that his daughter-in-law dances in the yard of prostitute and the passersby peeped her dancing. To save the family name from ignominy, Amritlal manages Chenni Amma to bring to his house. This is how the dance is ascribed to the women and how the dance practitioners were treated.

Jairaj wants to dance at any cost; Amritlal craves for his son leaving it and being a man. If he continues dancing, Amritlal feels, it will bring disrespect to their family which has earned a great respect and honour due to Amritlal's being freedom fighter and social reformer. Though he allows his son marrying a girl out of their caste to show off his being liberalist, he prevents both the dancers from interests. Finally, incapable of dissuading his stubborn daughter-in-law, he allows her when, in return, she helps Amritlal preventing Jairaj from dancing and making him a man. Jairaj cannot win over his opposition allies of his father and his wife plotting against him. He succumbs to the drinking. In this filial battle, Dattani made both father and son lose. Though Amritlal succeeds in turning him to be a man but not the man he expected to be, rather he turns to be a drunkard. Nor does Jairaj achieve his aspired goal to be a dancer, even if he goes against his father's

wish to continue dancing. Thus the filial battle is one of the prime aspects of the play.

Another strand of human relationship woven by Dattani in *Dance Like a Man* is the spousal relations, the relationship between husband and wife. There are two couples thoroughly developed in the play: Jairaj and Ratna; and Viswas and Lata. The relationship of the former couple intrigues the attention of the audience for both the spouses do harm enough to each other so much so that not only their relations but also they themselves fall apart. And their daughter, Lata is sandwiched between her parents' expectations emanating from their ambitions and her own wish. At the end of the play, they realize that their capacity to dance fall short to achieve their overambitious goals. They agree that they are unable to dance the magic dance like gods.

16.3.2 Dramatic Innovations and techniques in *Dance Like a Man*

Dance Like a Man is also acclaimed by the theatre critics for its dramatic techniques and innovations employed by the playwright. Dattani's are the realistic plays including *Dance Like a Man*. All the 'invisible issues' of his plays, Dattani uses the technique of presentation.

In *Dance Like a Man* Dattani blends the times of past and present brilliantly by shifting the roles, settings, properties on the stage. For instance to show the present and past, 'garden' represents past and living room shows present.

He also employs ,Dattani critic, Yadav Raju points out, 'split-scene', in that two different scenes staged at two corners of the stage alternately, 'hidden rooms', and 'use of flashback'. The technique of multiple roles and 'role switching' is an unique technique personalized by Dattani in *Dance Like a Man*. On four actors play roles of seven characters in the play: one, male actor in his early twenties plays roles of young Jairaj in the past and young Viswas in the present; two, female actor in her early twenties plays roles of Lata in the present and Ratna in the past; three, the old male actor plays roles of old Jairaj in the present and Amritlal in the past; and finally, the old female actor plays role of Ratna in the present. While studying gender studies in Dattani, Asha Kuthari Chaudhari comments on the technique of role changing as: "The minimal use of the characters maximizes the staged impact of

stereotypes through time". The changing role changes the sense of time and it also changes the frustrated patriarch Amritlal into a frustrated alcoholic, Jairaj.

16.4 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have studied *Dance Like a Man* thoroughly. The detailed actions of both the acts are summarized so as to understand the original plays critically. The major characters are briefly introduced; they may be sketched after studying text and study material. The important aspects of the plays are introduced to the students based on which they would substantiate the aspects by citing the incidents, important quotations from the text to establish the points. Apart from the above, the students may also come up with different aspects of the play.

16.5 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss *Dance Like a Man* is a study of human relations framed by the filial battle.
2. *Dance Like a Man* is about the "dogma of being a man" in the nineteen forties of Indian society. Discuss. Or Man taking dance as a career which was attributed to women in general and low caste prostitute in particular. Discuss.
3. The spousal relationship in *Dance Like a Man* is torn apart and both husband and wife have done enough harm to each other. Substantiate.
4. In *Dance Like a Man* both Jairaj and Ratna meet their respective dooms because they "lacked the brilliance and magic to dance like gods." Elucidate.
5. Explain how Lata, in *Dance Like a Man*, attempts to balance her parents ambitions with her own needs and desires.
6. Write an essay on the dramatic innovations and techniques are employed by Mahesh Dattani in *Dance Like a Man*.



**M.A. PART - I, Paper - I, Indian Literature In English
October / November 2011**

(REVISED COURSE)

(3 Hours)

[Total Marks : 100]

Note : 1. All questions must be attempted
2. All questions carry equal marks.

- Q.1 A)** The novel in India was the true child of British colonialism and was deeply impacted by the 19th Century British novel. Comment.

OR

- B)** Consider the impact of Nehruvian idealism on Indian Literature in English illustrate your answer with reference to appropriate non-detailed texts.

OR

- C)** Discuss the aspect of multiculturalism in the literature of the Indian diaspora with reference to non-prescribed diasporic texts.

- Q.2 A)** The abrupt end to Rajmohan's Wife is considered to be one of the major literary mysteries of Indian Literature in English. Discuss.

OR

- B)** Colonial Indian Poetry in English displayed signs of patriotism from its very beginning. Discuss with reference to any two of the prescribed poets.

OR

- C)** Consider the friendship of Swami and Rajam in R. K. Narayan's Swami and Friends as an instance of childhood bonding with political undertones in a colonised society.

- Q.3 A)** Although Shashi Deshpande does not have an overt feminist agenda women are at the centre of her texts. Discuss A Matter of Time in the light of this statement.

OR

- B)** Consider *The Calcutta Chromosome* which unfolds across three time settings and in two counties as a unique tale which defies categorical definitions.

OR

- C)** Postcolonial Indian poetry in English was influenced by Modernism and rejected the early romantic voice of the colonial poets. Discuss with reference to the poetry of any two of the prescribed post-independence poets.

- Q.4 A)** *Dance Like a Man* has taken up the issue of classical Indian dance and the intolerance of conservative Indian society towards the male dancer. Comment.

OR

- B)** Consider the relationship between Rukmini and Pidku in *A Touch of Brightness* as that between two social marginals.
- C)** Compare the manner in which *Dance Like a Man* and *A Touch of Brightness* have dealt with Indian society's hypocrisy and double-standards vis a vis prostitution.



**M.A. PART - I, Paper - I, Indian Literature In English
April 2011**

(3 Hours)

[Total Marks : 100]

Note : 1. All questions must be attempted
2. All questions carry equal marks.

- Q.1 A)** Discuss the importance of the Anglicist-Orientalist debate during the colonial period and the impact it had on the future of English in India.

OR

- B)** What is the difference between the Gandhian and Nahruvian vision for India? Do you find reflections of these visions in Indian Literature in English? Answer with reference to appropriate non prescribed texts.

OR

- C)** During the nationalist period and after independence, Indian society has experienced the rise to Dalit consciousness. How is this reflected in literature? Answer with reference to relevant texts not prescribed for detailed study.

- Q.2 A)** Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novels have strong female characters. Justify with reference to Rajmohan's Wife.

OR

- B)** Consider the element of experimentation with language, theme, and form in colonial Indian poetry in English, Illustrate your answer with reference to the prescribed poems.

- C)** R.K. Narayan's Swami and Friends is at one level a story about idyllic childhood but at another level it is a text that subtly critiques British colonialism. Justify.

- Q.3 A)** In A Matter of Time, Shashi Deshpande has taken the themes of silence, gender differences, passive suffering and familial relationships into much deeper realms and laid bare a story which excites Aristotlean pity and fear-pity for those whom we see suffer and fear. Justify.

OR

- B)** “With its dazzling and haunting mix of science fiction, the history of malaria research, thriller, ghost story and postcolonial allegory, Amitav Ghosh’s [Calcutta Chromosome] is -- like his previous work wonderfully clever as well as a good read.” Justify.

OR

- C)** Post-independence Indian poetry in English is marked by its fascination with modernism. Discuss with reference to the poems of any two of the prescribed post-independence poets.

- Q.4 A)** Mahesh Dattani has explored through Dance Like a Man two key aspects; the general inhibitions to a man taking dance as a career and the relationship between a husband and wife. Discuss.

OR

- B)** Rukmini in A Touch of Brightness mesmerizes Pidku with her visionary stories of the Gods and her dreams of a married life. Even in a brothel, her extravagant optimism never ceases but only deepens. Discuss.

OR

- C)** Compare and contrast the dramatic techniques used by Mahesh Dattani and Partap Sharma in Dance Like a Man and A Touch of Brightness.



Con. 2814-13.

GS-3519

(3 Hours)

[Total Marks : 100]

- N.B. :** (1) All questions are **compulsory**.
(2) All questions carry **equal** marks.

1. (a) Discuss the importance of the Anglicist-Orientalist debate during the colonial period and the impact it had on the future of English in India.
- (b) The partitioning of India had resulted in immense trauma to the psyche. Show how this is reflected in literature on the partition with illustrations from appropriate non-prescribed texts.

OR

- (c) The review of contemporary Indian English Literature is incomplete without a due mention of the increasing voices of women writers in it.
Assess the truth of this statement in the context of Indian English fiction today.

2. (a) Examine the view that *Rajmohan's Wife* is the first novel in Indian English literature that makes a very promising start but fails to keep it till the end.

OR

- (b) Critically examine the various themes in pre-independent Indian English poetry.

OR

- (c) Consider the friendship of Swami and Rajam in R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* as an instance of childhood bonding with political undertones in a colonised society.

3. (a) Although Shashi Deshpande does not have an overt Feminist agenda, women are at the centre of her texts. Discuss *A Matter of Time* in the light of the above statement.

OR

- (b) Amitav Ghosh in *The Calcutta Chromosome* transgresses the conventional boundaries between fact and fiction. Discuss.
- (c) Post-independent Indian poetry in English is marked by its Fascination with modernism. Discuss with reference to the poems of any two of the prescribed post-independent poets.

4. (a) Mahesh Dattani has explored through *Dance Like a Man* two key aspects : the general inhibitions to a man taking dance as a career and the relationship between a husband and wife. Discuss.

OR

- (b) Consider the relationship between Rukmini and Pidku in *A Touch of Brightness* as that between two marginals in society.
- (c) Compare and contrast the dramatic techniques used by Mahesh Dattani and Pratap Sharma in *Dance Like a Man* and *A Touch of Brightness*.

(3 Hours)

[Total Marks : 100

- N.B.** (1) All questions must be **attempted**.
(2) All questions carry **equal** marks.

1. (a) Discuss the view that the introduction of English in Indian education system proved to be a boon in disguise.

OR

- (b) Evaluate Nehru's contribution to the formation of India as a modern nation.

OR

- (c) During the nationalist period and after independence, Indian society has experienced the rise of Dalit consciousness. How is this reflected in literature? Answer with reference to relevant texts not prescribed for your study.

2. (a) Critically examine the realistic elements in Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Rajmohan's Wife*.

OR

- (b) What are the various themes of pre-independent Indian English Poetry ?

OR

- (c) 'R.K. Narayan presents world of the school boys in his novel *Swami and Friends*.' Discuss.

3. (a) Do you think that *A Matter of Time* is concerned exclusively with the issues of women in India ? Justify your answer.

OR

- (b) Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* has an unconventional story to narrate. What are the features that make the story unconventional ?

OR

- (c) Do you think that bi-lingual poets writing in Indian English and regional languages are better placed as "Indian poets" than those who write exclusively in Indian English ? Justify your answer.

4. (a) *Dance Like a Man* is a sensitive exploration of man-woman relationship. Substantiate your answer.

OR

- (b) 'The 'Cage' as the playwright named it, reveals the life of unfortunate women engaged in the profession of prostitution. These women, however, invite our sympathy rather than apathy.' Comment on the above statement with special reference to *A Touch of Brightness*.

OR

- (c) Critically examine the plot construction of Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man* and Pratap Sharma's *A Touch of Brightness*.

QP Code : 07628

(2 Hours)

[Total Marks : 100

- N.B. : (1) All questions are compulsory.
(2) All questions carry equal marks.

1. (a) The early efforts of Indian English Poets were more imitative than expressions of a genuine poetic urge. Comment.

OR

- (b) Bring out the impact of colonial rule on Indian life and literature with reference to appropriate non-prescribed texts.

OR

- (c) Partition was one of the most tragic events in the history of modern India. Discuss.

2. (a) Critically examine the element of realism in Rajmohan's wife

OR

- (b) Comment on the themes and modes of expression in late 19th century Indian English poetry.

OR

- (c) Comment on R.K. Narayan's use of "Stream of consciousness" technique in Swami and Friends

3. (a) Critically evaluate the major thematic issues in Shashi Deshpande's A Matter of Time

OR

- (b) Consider The Calcutta Chromosome as a science fiction acquainting yourself with various features of Science fiction.

OR

- (c) Comment on the use of language and modes of expression in the poetry of Kamala Das, A.K. Ramanujan and Arun Kolatkar.

4. (a) Analyse Mahesh Dattani's Dance Like a Man as a representative of the politics of gender and intergenerational Conflict within the family.

OR

- (b) Critically examine the relationship between Rukmini and Pidku in Pratap Sharma's A Touch of Brightness.

OR

- (c) Comment on the art of plot-construction in Mahesh Dattani's Dance Like A Man and Pratap Sharma's A Touch of Brightness.

QP Code : 16541

(2 Hours)

[Total Marks : 100]

- N.B. :** (1) All questions are compulsory.
(2) All questions carry equal marks.

1. (a) Discuss the view that the introduction of English in Indian education system proved to be a boon in disguise.

OR

- (b) Bring out the effects of partition on Indian life and literature. Relate your answer to important texts that deal with partition as their subject-matter.

OR

- (c) Critically evaluate Gandhian ideology and its impact on Indian life and literature.

2. (a) Evaluate the character of Matangini as the modern heroine of Rajmohan's wife.

OR

- (b) Discuss the various themes in pre-independent Indian English poetry..

OR

- (c) Bring out the various traits in Swami's personality as a school going boy of ten years. in R.K. Narayan's Swami and Friends.

3. (a) Although Shashi Deshpande does not have an overt feminist agenda women are at the centre of her texts. Discuss A Matter of Time in the light of this statement.

OR

- (b) Critically examine the view that The Calcutta Chromosome has an unconventional story to narrate.

OR

- (c) Post-colonial Indian poetry in English was influenced by modernism and rejected the early Romantic voice of the colonial poets. Discuss with reference to the poetry any two of the prescribed post -independence poets.

4. (a) Comment on the dramatic innovations and techniques used by Mahesh Dattani in his Dance Like a man

OR

- (b) Comment on the theme of Pratap Sharma's A Touch of Brightness

OR

- (c) Analyse the distinctive theatrical elements of Mahesh Dattani's Dance Like a Man and Pratap Sharma's A Touch of Brightness.

Q.P. Code : 17286

(3 Hours)

[Total Marks : 100

- N.B. :** (1) All questions are compulsory.
(2) All questions carry equal marks.
(3) Figures to the right indicate full marks.

1. (a) What do you know about Anglicist-Orientalist debate? Discuss its importance in cultural context of India. 25
OR
(b) Critically examine Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to the growth and development of Indian English Literature.
OR
(c) What do you mean by the term 'dalit consciousness'? Illustrate your answer with reference to the dalit writers you have studied.
2. (a) Chatterjee's 'Rajmohan's Wife' has the motifs of feminine anguish and rebellion. Substantiate your answer, illustrating from the text. 25
OR
(b) What are the characteristic features of pre independence English poetry? Give examples from the poets you have studied.
OR
(c) Comment on the elements of humour, irony and satire in 'Swami and Friends.'
3. (a) Bring out how Shashi Deshpande takes the themes of silence, gender difference and passive suffering and familial relationship as leitmotifs in 'A Matter of Time.' 25
OR
(b) Comment on the blend of fact and fiction in Amitav Ghosh's 'The Calcutta Chromosome.'
OR
(c) Critically examine the emergence of feminist perspectives in recent Indian English women poets.
4. (a) Bring out the elements of humor in Mahesh Dattani's 'Dance Like a Man'. 25
OR
(b) "'A Touch of Brightness' is a play about a heroine whose extravagant optimism never ceases but only deepens even in a brothel." Discuss.
OR
(c) Critically examine the dramatic techniques used by Dattani in 'Dance Like a Man' and 'Sharma in 'A Touch of Brightness.'

**M.A. (PART- I)
ENGLISH
Indian Literature in English
(1820s onwards)
(Paper – I) April 2016**

QP Code : 20937

(3. Hours)

[Total Marks : 100

- N.B. : (1) All questions are compulsory.
(2) All questions carry equal marks.
(3) Figures to the right indicate full marks.

1. (a) Critically examine the significance of Macaulay's Minutes in promoting the passion for English language and literature in Indian youths. 25

OR

- (b) Partition literature is characterized by sexual outrages, communal violence, killing and massacre, traumatic memories and holocaust. Discuss.

OR

- (c) Critically examine the impact of Dr B. R Ambedkar's writings on Indian literature with regard to caste inequality and necessity of social reforms.

2. (a) Bankim Chatterjee portrays the contemporary life in 'Rajmohan's Wife' in which the heroine sets out to challenge the established codes and ethics. Illustrate with the suitable examples. 25

OR

- (b) "The pre-independence poets writing in English have expressed Indian themes in the Romantic and Victorian modes and strictly conform to their forms and prosody." Elucidate.

OR

- (c) "Unlike many colonial and post-colonial writers, Narayan does not directly attack the colonial system, although elements of gentle criticism and irony directed towards the colonial system are scattered throughout 'Swami and Friends.' Elucidate.

3. (a) In 'A Matter of Time' Deshpande has portrayed male characters as irresponsible and weak. Do you agree with this statement? Explain. 25

OR

- (b) Is 'The Calcutta Chromosome' a science fiction with Postcolonial undertones? Justify your answer.

OR

- (c) "Poetry of Indian women poets in post-colonial times has tried to respond to the Indian situation by raising questions related to self, identity, patriarchy, political and social consciousness." Elucidate.

QP Code : 20937

2

4. (a) Explain how 'Dattani's 'Dance Like a Man' questions the dominant gender roles in Indian society. 25

OR

- (b) "Rukhmini and Pidku search for touch of brightness in the dark world of flesh market." Discuss Pratap Sharma's 'A Touch of Brightness' in the light of this statement.

OR

- (c) Compare and contrast the male characters in Dattani's 'Dance Like a Man' and those in Sharma's 'A Touch of Brightness.'
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