

# Diploma in Comparative Literature

## Semester - 1

### DCL 01

## Comparative Literature, Relevance and Definitions and Concepts of Historical Development



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**Vice Chancellor**

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**Ahmedabad**

**Comparative Literature: Relevance, Definitions, Concepts and Historical Developments**

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*Diploma in Comparative Literature*

*Paper- DCL 01*

*Comparative Literature, Relevance and Definitions and Concepts of Historical Development*

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit will provide

- a. The pedagogic and academic basis for the teaching, learning and practice of comparative literature through “reading” or interpretation of language.
- b. The ethical impule underlying the teaching and practise of comparative literature in a plural society like ours.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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### **The Relevance of Comparative Literature:**

Comparative Literature is a subject within the Humanities, aiming to understand and engage with difference as a condition of our lives, by studying the work of language in literature and literary systems, as well as in the other arts.

Language is the medium of our intersubjectivity. Subjectivity is the perception or experience of reality from within one’s own perspective and necessarily limited by the boundary or horizon of one’s own worldview. Intersubjectivity is the interchange of thoughts and feelings between two persons or “subjects,” (e.g. two persons or entities like persons who have agency), facilitated by empathy. Language is the medium through which this interchange between two subjects occurs. Our relation to the world is also established through language, which includes the language of our senses. Thus not only verbal language, but visual, aural and sensible languages, as well as a combination of these, come within the purview of comparative practice and method. As a humanistic discipline, Comparative Literature aims to provide, in the words of Edward Said, “a useable praxis” for intellectuals and academics, by introducing the ideas and principles of critical humanism as useful principles for living with the diversity and difference that they encounter in the world in which they live. (Said 6). So, Comparative Literature has been called an ethics rather than aesthetics.

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## 1.2 HUMANITIES, HUMANISM, AND CRITICAL HUMANISM

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**Humanities** is the name for a certain type of content, and for a certain type of relationship to knowledge. Humanitas (Latin) is closely related to the Greek paideia, and means culture, education, civilization. In Renaissance Europe, **humanism** was a revival in the

study of classical antiquity, including grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy.

“The term *umanista* was used in fifteenth-century Italian academic slang to describe a teacher or student of classical literature and the arts associated with it, including that of rhetoric. The English equivalent ‘humanist’ makes its appearance in the late sixteenth century with a similar meaning. Only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, however and probably for the first time in Germany in 1809, is the attribute transformed into a substantive: *humanism*, standing for devotion to the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, and the humane values that may be derived from them”

In 1878 Emil Littré defined the Humanities as "letters" ie what was taught in high school after students have been taught grammar and before they were taught philosophy. In 1883, Dilthey used the term *Geisteswissenschaft*, the science of the spirit, which was translated into French in 1942 as an introduction to the ‘Sciences Humaines’. Unlike the humanities, the "**human sciences**" are based on a distinction between object and subject of knowledge. The human being becomes an object of knowledge so that "human sciences" are opposed to "exact sciences" just as— the sciences of nature — are opposed to the sciences of the spirit. Here knowledge seems to be divided into two parts: one having natural laws as an object, the other examining the human mind. The traditional opposition between culture and science comes from the assumptions implicit in this definition.

**Critical humanism** questions a simple unitary view of the human, given the diversity of the human race and the conditions in which it lives. It criticises the claim that human beings can be understood ‘transcendentally’ and taken out of the contexts of time (history) and space (geography) of which they are always a part. For critical humanists, our ‘human being’ is most emphatically not a free-floating universal individual: rather ‘it’ is always stuffed full of the culture and the historical moment, always in process and changing. Human beings ‘nest’ themselves in webs of contexts, relationships. To talk otherwise is to engage in the ‘myth of the universal man’ (Franco, 2013).

In this context, we interpret Said’s idea of a “usable praxis” as comprising

- the act of comparison as an approach to or a way of reading literature, and
- situating this approach in our way of living with the difference and diversity that characterises human societies across the world, including, of course, our own.

Comparative Literature as an activity provides, through an engagement with literature and the arts, the elements of “a usable praxis” because it helps us to find ways of knowing and understanding the other, so that we can respond to the crises of understanding difference in an increasingly “inhumane” and “genocidal” world (Said, *ibid*). This is the relevance of Comparative Literature as a discipline in the Humanities. In the rest of this unit, we will discuss the concepts that help us to understand the relevance of our discipline by relating them to our teaching, learning and living our lives in the world with *others*.

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### 1.3 THE ACT OF COMPARISON AND PHILOSOPHIES OF PLURALITY

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Knowing is a mental or a cognitive act: we know and understand the world by connecting to it through our minds. But the way in which a human being understands the world is not limited to her knowing (cognition) separate from her feelings (emotion). Understanding comes from the interaction between or the integration of both these capacities of cognition and emotion. In Comparative Literature, our aim is to understand difference located in the world through our engagement with literature and the arts. Comparative literature is thus not an epistemology, i.e. a theory of knowledge but a hermeneutics, i.e. a way of understanding through interpretation.

Comparison is a particular kind of cognitive activity, in which

- the existence of difference is part of our seeing and thinking about the world.
- we look at something *in relation to* some other, different entities, persons or things

In the act of comparison, we bring two or more entities or objects together within a frame that is created by our perspective, located in our situation. In literary studies, this approach comprises

- i. “reading” or interpretation of two or more texts together, using literary or experiential categories (see 1.2 below).
- ii. locating a literary text within the structure of feeling (See Unit 2.4.1) in which it is produced, in order to understand the textual practices of writing and reading (See 1.5 below)
- iii. locating myself, as the reader, within my structure of feeling, thus making a responsible relation between reader and text, which is simultaneous with the process of reading.
- iv. also “reading”(see i and ii above) together, i.e. establishing a relation between, two or more art works in different media .

These are all practices of comparison.

### ❖ Check Your Progress 1

I. Choose the correct answer

1). Difference between humanism and critical humanism is

1. The former does not imagine the human as a uniform homogenous category
2. The latter thinks of the human being as situated, while the former generalises the historical situation in which the idea of the human became current.
3. Critical humanism is criticism of the idea of elevating the human to divine status.
4. Humanism favours the status quo or a return to the status quo.

Ans : 1

2). “Useable praxis” refers to the study of ----- in order to----- by-----

1. Literature, create a humane world, engaging with difference
2. Humanities, live in a humane world, reading literature
3. Ethics, read literature, engage with difference.
4. Practices, understand ethics, reading literature

Ans : 1

3). Intersubjectivity is

1. Relation between two ideas
2. Any relation through the medium of language
3. Relation between two subjects with agency
4. The relation between subject and object through language.

Ans : 3

4). Comparison is a ----- and not a ----- . Comparative Literature is not a/an----- but a/an -----, which through the study of ----- helps us to ----- .

- |                   |                |                 |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| i.Hermeneutic,    | iv.understand, | vi.practice,    |
| ii.theory,        | v.literature,  | vii.difference. |
| iii.epistemology, |                |                 |

Ans : vi, ii, iii, i, v, iv, vii

5). Select two assumptions foundational to Comparative Literature practice

1. The universe is pluralistic
2. Truth is conditioned, ie located and hence from many perspectives.

3. There is no truth
4. The multiplicity of the universe can be reduced to a single all encompassing system.

Ans: 1 and 2

6). Comparative Literature is called an ethics because

1. It teaches us how to live a moral life
2. It shows us what is moral through literature
3. It is founded on engaging with difference and alterity
4. It teaches literary texts that give us an ethical lesson.

Ans: 3

### 1.3.1 Plurality and Pluralism in Belief Systems:

Plurality is the basic assumption on which the comparative approach is based. In this section we will introduce some philosophical grounds for belief in plurality and relate this belief to the practice of comparison outlined in the previous section. William James describes the universe as “pluralistic”, questioning the view that there may be a single “all-form” in which, according to him, “the substance of reality may never get totally collected”. Instead he advocates “a distributive form of reality, the *each-form*”, which he says is “logically as acceptable and empirically as probable as the all-form commonly acquiesced in as so obviously the self-evident thing” (21). This is because “There is nothing in our universe that can be considered definitive *a priori*, neither in our scientific knowledge, nor in our social bonds or identitarian relations. The pluralist suggests that reality is not a complete unity, all connected and perfect, but there is always something escaping from our knowledge: something “not yet considered.” This resonates with the ideas of location, perspective and responsibility outlined among the “practices” of comparison outlined in 1.4 above.

A pluralistic worldview is based on the assumptions that,

- a. There are many beings and entities in the world. There is more than one kind of being or entity, ie, the each form, which questions the idea of a single all-form, and establishes the uniqueness of “each” form, thereby introducing the idea of difference. Hence, the very act of comparison acknowledges plurality.
- b. Plurality also assumes difference, i.e. not only that there is more than one thing, but also that there is more than one *kind* of thing, i.e. plurality does not mean quantity only; it is also plurality of

kinds. One entity or object is different from another, and one cannot be reduced to the other. Without these assumptions, “comparison” as a cognitive act is impossible. To this idea of a pluralistic universe are added “Pragmatist anti-essentialism and humanism. These assert that the nature of the world is not pre-given ready-made and absolute. James calls for “another image of human relations where ideas don’t fall down from above, but human beings are *“real causes in nature.”* Thus human agency and responsibility are foregrounded.

### **1.3.2 Ethical Implications:**

The ethical implications of a pluralist theory of being or ontology can be traced to the Jain philosophy of *anekantavad* *anek* (many) and *anta* (qualities, attributes or ends) - which explains the complex and multiple nature of reality, as the name suggests. This philosophy is derived from the conversations of Mahavira on the nature of *jiva* (the soul) and the *ajiva* (matter), collected in the *Bhagvati Sutra*. Though the term *anekantavad* was not used by Mahavira, these conversations show Mahavira’s belief that the simple binary of “either/or” cannot encapsulate or express the complex and multiple nature of reality. Mahavira emphasised the complex nature of truth, its qualification according to perspective, i.e. the existence of a multiplicity of perspectives rather than a dogmatic absolutism and the impossibility of expressing it completely through language.

### **1.1.3 Plurality in Practice and Belief:**

Siddhasena Divakara introduced the term “*anekantvad*” or non-absolutism as a theory of knowledge, or epistemology, to remove the dogmatism of *ekantavad*. *Ekantika* or one-sidedness of a single perspective is established as dogmatic. The nature of reality is *anekantik*, ie plural, and the quest for this is possible only through dialogue with various standpoints and reconciliation of various points of view. If perceived from a combination of standpoints, we perceive an object as it really is. For example, *anekantvad* rejects the view that truth is either single and constant or that it is manifold and constantly changing – both these are one-sided views and hence only partially true. If these views are combined, then the truth of each point of view is preserved and enables us to understand the whole.

*Nayavad* and *Syadvad* are the epistemological theories, or theories of knowledge, that underlie the philosophy of *anekantavad*, which itself is the ground for *ahimsa*, the highest moral goal of Jainism. *Nayavada*, or the epistemological theory of viewpoints professes the partial expression of truth from any particular viewpoint, and enables us to understand reality part by part. According to Siddhasena, a thing becomes the subject of a *naya* when it is conceived from a particular

standpoint.. To illustrate, a gold necklace exists both as substance (gold) and as a mode of existence taken on by the substance (necklace). Each point of view expresses the truth partially – taken together, they can give us a complete account of reality. Nayavada also encourages the investigator to assume other perspectives, especially the perspective of the other as a constantly changing, yet persisting point of view which demands the same respect and bears the same right to happiness as oneself. This is seen as the root of the ethical imperative of ahimsa pronounced in Mahavira's philosophy.

The theory of viewpoints works through Syadvada, or the theory of qualified predication. The Sanskrit word "syat" means "maybe" – neither a yes, nor a no. Its use transforms a categorical statement into a conditional statement. But in the philosophy of Jainism, this conditional term has a specific purpose : to indicate the many-sided nature of a proposition. "Syat" in this usage, indicates the conditions that qualify any statement : thus the truth value of a categorical statement is determined by the conditions under which it is really the case. Syadvad thus recognises not only what is, ie being, and what is not yet, ie what will become, but also the process from one to another which is inexpressible and combines both.

James' ideas of progressive anti-essentialism and pragmatism, mentioned above, have elements of similarity with the views of the Jain philosophers. For example, Essentialism is the view that every object and entity has an "essence" or an inherent, unchangeable, already given core, without which it would lose its identity, ie it would not be what it is. Thus, it limits all objects and entities to their pre-determined essence, without scope for change. IN rejecting this, James' anti-essentialism takes the position similar to anekantavad : he rejects a dogmatic, single truth/ end /attribute which anekantavad criticised as partial and one-sided. James advocates pragmatism, which is the broad philosophical view that our knowledge of the world is never free from our agency within it – there is nothing pre-given or essential. This too can be epistemologically grounded in the theory of viewpoints Nayavad and of qualified predication, Syadvad, which also reject any essential view of reality and instead recognise the truth value of a categorical statement as determined by the conditions under which it is held.

### **1.3.3 Critique of Pluralist Standpoint**

Is the pluralist point of view ethical and epistemological relativism ? By this we mean, does pluralism force us to accept that since all views are located or qualified, and all truths are conditional, hence, all views and all truths are equal ? This would lead to a contradiction in the Jain worldview itself – how could ahimsa be upheld as a non-negotiable

truth and an ethical standard, if himsa, according to the pluralist view espoused by anekantavad, is equally true and ethical?

Apart from moral relativism, pluralism has also been criticised as a logical impossibility, i.e. we cannot hold that a view of the world and another opposite view contradicting it, are both equally true, just as we cannot dispense with the idea of falsehood because pluralism teaches us to believe that all truth is conditional.

This leads to pluralism being as exclusivist as any dogmatic belief: since our views are conditioned, like all truths, our holding a particular view must exclude those who do not hold it, thereby undercutting the very idea of multi-perspectives and many views/ends/attributes as proposed by anekantavad. In the next section, we will engage with these criticisms by pointing out how the pluralist view of the world underlies the engagement and understanding of difference offered by multiple perspectives, which is the task of comparative literature.

### **1.3.4 Plurality, Difference and Ethics**

In the preceding sections of this unit, we have elucidated different streams of philosophical thinking that provide an alternative to a dogmatic, essentialist view of the world and discussed how such pluralist views of the world and their application underlie the idea and practice of comparative literature. In this concluding section, we will connect these two aspects together to form an ethical framework for the teaching and practice of comparative literature, thus underlining its relevance both as a subject of study and scholarship within the Humanities, and as an “usable praxis”, i.e. a way of living in a plural, diverse society.

Among the criticisms levelled at pluralism is one of epistemological and moral relativism, which claims that the outcome of multi-perspectivalism is that all views are true and all standpoints are good. This criticism overlooks the dialogic character of anekantavad, as well as its non-absolutist character. It also ignores the anti-essentialist nature of James’ idea of a pluralistic universe. A multi-perspectival view does not absolutise or essentialise any single point of view, including the pluralist perspective. Hence, pluralism is a way to counter the mistaken dogmatic idea of a single absolute view and the violence that results from imposing that uniformity upon difference.

Pluralism has been criticised as a neutral view, i.e. all views are equal because they are equally good; It has also been criticised as exclusivist, i.e. we are bound by our own perspective alone and therefore, only our view exists for us. This exclusivist view is often

also criticised as ethnocentric, ie we are bound by the situation in a particular culture and tradition consequent upon our ethnicity.

However, both of these criticisms offer an abstract understanding of it as philosophy, whereas it is actually an ethical idea regulating our interactions with difference and with “others” who are different from us or hold other views. Pluralism insists that just as we hold our views to be rational, so must we admit that other views exist which are held as rational by others. This is the teaching of nayavad – that there are many nayas from which reality can be fully grasped only through the admitting of more than one perspective. This does not stop us from holding our views nor does it prevent us from respecting the existence of multiple perspectives and other views. Neither does it sanction us to impose our views upon the others. All views are equal not because they are all equally good or true, but because they are all qualified by the conditions in which they are held, as syadvad points out. Hence no single view or dogma has the monopoly of truth – and the ascent to truth comes through an encounter with the multiple perspectives while accepting that each is conditioned by circumstances, just as our own view is qualified by ours.

Thus, an encounter with other views and perspectives is mandated within Anekantavad – that by using the insight that every human view is conditioned and partial, it proposes that engagement with the other is the only way to get beyond nayas, or individual or partisan positions, and reach pramana, or truth. It thus mandates an encounter with the other from an ethical position which enables us to see the “other” on its own terms, rather than as merely opposed to us. In this crucial way, it reinforces the ethical impulse of comparison, which we have earlier noted is the impulse to reach across difference towards understanding alterity, or otherness.

### ❖ Check Your Progress 2

1. Match the words in Set A with the meanings in Set B

SET A

SET B

- |              |                                               |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| “1.monistic  | i unlimited centralised authority             |
| 2.dogmatic   | ii unified                                    |
| 3.all-form   | iii based on pre-given rules to be followed), |
| 4.absolutism | iv. unity of origin of all things             |

Ans : 1-iv 2-iii 3-ii 4-i

2. The antonym of pluralism is

1.Monism

2. Essentialism

3.Dogmatism

4.Humanism

Ans : 1

3. The Jain philosophy of anekantvad and the non-essentialist pragmatist philosophy of James share

1.Multiperspectivalism

2.Anti-essentialism

3.Belief in ahimsa

4.Belief in a single source for every being

Ans : 1 and 2

4. Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the choices below.

Nayavad and Syadvad are both -----theories; the former is theory of-----, the latter is of----- . Anekantavad uses these theories to prove the belief of -----, codified by -----that due to the -----of the universe, all views are ---- and----. It proposes that we can hold ----- views while accepting that ----may have -----views. This is the ----- basis of ahimsa, the highest -----goal of Jainism.

i.viewpoints

ii others

iii.predication

iv.Divakara

v.different

vi.epistemological

vii conditioned

viii.one-sided

ixMahavira

x.ethical

xi.multiplicity

xii. our own

xiii.moral

xiv.partial

Ans : vi, iii, i, ix, iv, xi, vii, viii, xii, ii, v, x, xiii

Match Critique with response

Set 1

1. Pluralism is relativist.

2. Anekantvad forbids us to hold any views about the truth

3. Pluralism essentialises the pluralist perspective

4. Pluralism is exclusivist, ie only our views exist for us.

5. Anekantavad holds that all views are equal because they are all true.

## Set 2

6. The pluralist perspective is one amongst many perspectives in the view of the pluralist
7. Pluralism asserts that all views are conditioned by situation, including our own. and we have the freedom to decide which view we must take.
8. All views of truth come from a perspective, so my view cannot be the only view as mine is not the only perspective.
9. All views are equal because they are all conditioned by the situation
10. WE hold the view of truth from our perspective as do others; we may disagree with their view, but the existence of others' views different from ours, cannot be denied, just as the conditioned nature of our view cannot be denied.

Ans : 1- 5, 2- 9, 3- 8, 4- 10, 5-9

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### 1.4 DIFFERENCE AND THE PRACTICE OF COMPARISON

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Comparison presupposes difference, but this difference is not necessarily revealed across geographical and ethnic borders/boundaries only. Difference may be physical or imagined or geopolitical or social. We speak of difference in empirical terms, as though it is a contrast between two things; a way in which a thing, A, is *not like* another thing, B. This requires that A and B each has its own self-contained *nature*, articulated on its own, apart from any other thing. The essentialist tradition, in contrast to this attempts to locate the identity of any given thing in some essential properties or self-contained identities. Anti-essentialism, based on difference argues that the *identity* of any given thing is constituted on the basis of the ever-changing network of relations in which it is found. So identity is a *secondary* determination, while *difference*, or the constitutive relations that make up identities, is primary.

Comparison is the act of setting up a relation between different entities and objects. To compare is to *do* something – to bring together two (or more) different entities and understand them in relation to each other, by locating each in its context .The anti-essentialist pluralist stance is inherent in comparison as an activity. Hence Dinoyz Durisin calls the practice of comparison “literary comparatistics”, and argues that “contactual relations” are the subject matter of comparative practice. Durisin limits the idea of contactual relations to the contact between two national literatures only. But it must be noted, especially from our experience of Indian literature, that

“contact” is not necessarily always between two geopolitically divided nation-states – as in the case of India, a single nation has a number of “official” languages and literatures (see 5.2 below) which have a shared history, shared sources and common “inherited texts” as Sisir Kumar Das ( See U5 below) puts it.

“Difference”, whether it is across or within national borders is a concept foundational to comparative literature (See U5.2 below;). As discussed in the first part of this unit, pluralism enables us to think beyond homogenisation which limits us to a single perspective. This privileges a single, often majoritarian culture, language or worldview instead of taking cognisance of the immense diversity that characterises our world. If we reject this limited view, it will be clear that difference is a condition of our lives and negotiating that difference underlies our daily life practices. The human being’s life involves her meeting with the world. Through our daily encounters we realise that we share the world with “others” who are “different” from us. Difference makes each of us unique even while we share universal characteristics that make us human. Our relations with others depend on our ability to understand, accept and negotiate the difference that we encounter, whether it is through practical/physical or literary/imaginative contact. This is the ethical focus of the comparative approach, equipping us to understand, negotiate and appreciate difference in our relations with the world of people and things.

#### **1.4.1 Literary Studies, Difference and Ethics:**

Literature cannot be fitted into any single theoretical frame; neither can there be a single correct or sacrosanct reading of any literary text (see U1.2 below). Therefore, a *comparative reading* introduces us to difference by accepting a multiperspectival, plural view of the world as the basis of our engagement with the other. It thus opens us to the possibility of plurality, which is the condition of our existence . A comparative approach helps us to appreciate the difficulty of acknowledging and living with difference. These are the basics of a humanist approach and underlie the ethics of comparative literature as a scholarly and academic practice. This ethics informs reading and interpretation as well as the work and place of literature and art in human lives

Reading, writing and interpretation are processes of textualisation which turn the “work” into a “text” . The practice of comparative literature considers these processes in themselves. These can be studied through the literary categories of theme, genre and repertoires of signification. The timeframe of such a study may be

1. synchronic ie, using texts from different language-literatures which are extant simultaneously,
2. diachronic ie, using texts which have a chronological relation to one another, from within the same language- literary tradition or between different language literary traditions.
3. panchronic, ie a combination of both these.

The study of reading, writing and interpretation as processes of textualisation, or processes which create literature through the production of a literary text, may be termed "literariness"..

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## 1.5 LITERARINESS

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Roman Jakobson described the object of study in literary science as the "literariness" of a work, Jan Mukarovsky emphasized that literariness is a capacity of the linguistic medium, hence Russian Formalism insisted on the "form" of the literary work. Form is required to identify art – any work that is "made" has a medium. This medium has to be shaped different ways or "modes" of which according to Aristotle there are 3 – lyrics, dramatic and narrative. According to Rene Wellek, "literariness" is the focus of the study of literature as subject distinct from other activities and procedures of man. He distinguishes the literary features as "intrinsic" to literature, while the context and influence of other discourses upon literature are termed "extrinsic". Hence, he says, "we must face the problem of 'literariness,' the central issue of aesthetics, the nature of art and literature" (293).

Literature defamiliarises the familiar by "showing" us something in a different way. All literary devices, like metaphor, symbol, alliteration to name only a very few, are "ways of seeing" or showing the world around us. Viktor Shklovsky proposed this idea of art as the technique of seeing things differently. Shklovsky also insists that art should be difficult, but it is difficult to sustain this argument – it could apply to some forms of art, or to some viewers with respect to some forms of art. Hence Mukarovsky emphasises linguistic form and Viktor Shklovsky shows how to foreground the "making" or poesis by estranging or defamiliarizing, through the medium. Defamiliarisation is a process of transformation where language asserts its power to affect our perception. In literature language reconstructs the world that we perceive, and renews the readers' lost capacity for fresh sensation.

Dionyz Durisin in his *Theory of Interliterary Process* (1989), characterizes literariness as the "basic and essential quality" (21) of all literature embodying all relations within the literature, their intensity, amount, and manner of their conditionality within the framework of

various individual literatures. When this intensity, variability, mutual relations, or affinities transcend the boundaries of individual literatures, Marian Galic names this “interliterariness”: “literariness” transforms itself automatically into “interliterariness.” Thus, interliterariness is the basic and essential quality of literature in an international and inter-ethnic context and ontological determination. This determination and its framework comprise all possible relations and affinities, individual literatures, supra-ethnic, and supra-national (See Unit 2 below) entities of various kinds, and the highest embodiment of interliterariness, world literature. The most important features of interliterariness is its implied or implicit processual character, a system(at)ic series of related literary facts within the ethnic or national framework presupposing the temporal and spatial changes in the course of their literary development.

The most relevant example is Indian literature itself, which has a common literary and political history though it is written in different languages. For this reason, Amiya Dev calls Indian literature an “interliterary condition” (see U5.1, 5.2).

### **1.5.1 Language and Literature:**

The Russian Formalists emphasised the form and the technique that distinguished poetic language from everyday language. Obviously this form was the result of a fresh construction in language by a writer – a different way of seeing. For example, metaphors make us look at a familiar thing in a totally new light. The world of prose fiction or drama is not the real world but a world made of language by a writer. It comes into existence when we read – but until then there are just marks on the page between the covers. These marks are the written/graphic signifier. The graphic refers to two things and joins them together – an object and the idea which is its name. The object and the concept/idea that refers to it together form the sign. Language attaches a concept i.e. a word, to the referent, i.e. object in the world, whether present or imaginary. The word in which the referent and the concept are united is the sign. Learning a language means that we have acquired the ability to link a concept (idea) to a referent (e.g. an object in the world) through a sign, i.e. a word. We are learning to use the conceptual resources of language.

But the referential function is not the only use of language. The concept refers to the general idea, hence even if you are thinking of a blue cup and I of a stone one, we both know without the presence of the object referred to that we both are referring to something we can drink out of. “Extra-conceptual” resources refer to the work of language beyond the referential function. It is the ability of language to bring to mind what is not there, to make us see/show us what

cannot be seen in the physical world. The unicorn for e.g. is a mythical animal- there is a word for it, but the referent itself i.e. the object or the entity, lives only in our imagination. This shows that a world can be made in and of language, without referential correspondence to the physical world. Thus, the use of language in literature does not entail a separate literary language but a unique use of language which marks literature. Literary devices are part of this literary use (see above)

As an example, a realist novel claims to present reality objectively – but it is language use and not a separate language that distinguishes it from other kinds of novels. We see a world through language. Wittgenstein introduces the concept of “language game” to mark a particular kind of language use. The rules or grammar that make language intelligible are made by convention and trial by users themselves because they have to make themselves understood to others. Sharing rules and vocabulary means sharing the same language, i.e. being able to understand each other. Every literary text is open to multiple interpretations, because as we have seen before, literature comes into being in language through the events first of writing and then of reading.

---

## 1.6 TEXTUALITY

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The “frames” of textualisation that according to Barthes turns the work into a text are put in place by the reader in order to turn the marks on the page into words that require “reading” (Barthes 1989) . In a comparative reading, the frame is both *intercultural* (taking into consideration relations between cultures) and *intersubjective* (the relations between subjects/ agents). The frame enables us to locate each text we are studying in a *context* (i.e. the conjunction of language, culture specific literary conventions, time, place), and then bring two texts into contact by studying them together.

Sometimes, contact between language cultures which the texts are nested in leads to their impact upon one another. Thus the “travel” of literary texts across the confines of a geographical entity, ie across states or regions, also become a part of comparative literary studies, as do the various kinds of “travel” possible – from travel through translation to travel through movement of people, forced or voluntary. Colonisation, diaspora, exile, pilgrimage, trade, exploration are all movements of human beings that result in contact and hence encounters, between different cultures, entailing the study of difference in encounter. Thus, the practice of comparative literature leads to and is dependent upon our understanding of difference through *a relation of engagement* with *other* literary and language cultures, whether across or within territorial boundaries. This makes it

an “ethical” practice , because this act acknowledges and preserves plurality and diversity in a “globalised” world.

### ❖ Check Your Progress 3

1. Comparison is a-----act,in which different entities and object are brought together in----- within a----- . The-----of the reader plays a role in making the -----into a----, as the---- of the reader frames the work.

i.work

iv.location

vi.text

ii.Perspective,

v.relation

vi.framework

iii.cognitive

Ans : iii, v, vi, iv,i, vi, ii

2. Choose the correct answers from the options given

1. Extra conceptual resources of language refer to the ability of ----to attach a ----to a ----- and create a new -----

A. i.Human ii. Language

B. i. Signifier ii. Sign

C. i.referent ii. Signified

D. i. Sign ii. Signifier

Ans : Ai Bi Cii Di

2. The conceptual resources of language refer to the----relation between -----and----. The names of objects are----which include the---- characteristics of-----member of the group named by the concept.

A. i. Conventional ii.personal

B. i.signified ii.signifier iii.sign

C. i.object ii.referent iii.sign

D. i.signs ii.concepts

E. i. General ii.specific

F. i.all ii.each

Ans : Ai Bii Cii Di Ei Fi

3. The-----function of language enable us to create metaphors, while the-----function of language allow us to identify an object even when it is not present before us.

A. i.Referential ii.extra conceptual

B. i.referential ii.extra conceptual

Ans : Aii Bi

4. An interrogation of ----- means taking-----rather than----- into account.

A. i. essentialism ii. Anti-essentailism

B. i. Identity ii. Difference

C. i. Identity ii. difference

Ans : Ai Bii Ci

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## 1.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this chapter we have understood the relevance of comparative literature in context of comparison as a hermeneutics practice. We have also seen the concept of plurality from various dimensions such as ethics, belief and practice.

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## 1.8 KEY WORDS

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Comparison:

Ethics:

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## 1.9 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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### Answers:

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1 - 1
- 2 - 1
- 3 - 3
- 4 - vi, ii, iii, i, v, iv, vii
- 5 - 1 and 2
- 6 - 3

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1 - 1-iv 2-iii 3-ii 4-i
- 2 -1
- 3 - 1 and 2
- 4 - vi, iii, i, ix, iv, xi, vii, viii, xii, ii, v, x, xiii

Match Critique with response

- 1- 5, 2- 9, 3- 8, 4- 10, 5-9

#### Check Your Progress 3

- 1 - iii, v, vi, iv, i, vi, ii
- 2 Choose the correct answers from the options given
  - 1) Ai Bi Cii Di
  - 2) Ai Bii Cii Di Ei Fi
  - 3) Aii Bi
  - 4) Ai Bii Ci

**:: STRUCTURE ::**

**2.0 Objectives**

**2.1 How to Define Comparative Literature**

**2.1.1 A History of Definitions: Europe**

**2.1.2 French School**

**2.1.3 Other European Schools**

**2.1.4 The American School**

**2.1.5 Schools and Hours**

**2.2 The Crises in Comparative Literature**

**2.2.1 Why Crises?**

**2.2.2 Locating and Negotiating Crises I**

**2.2.3 Locating and Negotiating Crises II**

**2.3 Beyond crises**

**2.3.1 Polysystem Theory**

**2.3.2 Planetaryity**

**2.4 Introducing the Reader: Receptionaesthetik**

**2.4.1 Structure of Feeling**

**2.5 Let Us Sum Up**

**2.6 Key Words**

**2.7 Books Suggested**

**Answers**

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## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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This Unit will provide,

- The understanding on how the question “what is comparative literature”, has been answered by different practitioners of this discipline across Europe, the United States and the world, not in any particular order but often acting in connection with one another .

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## 2.1 HOW TO DEFINE COMPARATIVE LITERATURE?

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The student will notice that “history” and “definitions” are taken together in this section. This is because “history”, i.e. the concerns and events of the geopolitical areas in which the theorists were located, influenced the definitions of comparative literature to a great extent. The divergences of opinion on *what* comparative literature is and *how* it must be done, relate to the difference of opinion amongst practitioners coming from varied literary traditions, political and social histories and geographical locations. Thus the different definitions of comparative literature and the different methods utilise different categories of understanding or conceptual tools in teaching and research. As we have earlier seen, the engagement with difference because of the ethical commitment to pluralism, remains constant - but the change and reorientation of both definition and practice, have made the many famous “crises” a part of the history of comparative literature. The common impulse of all the pronounced “crises” in academic practice of comparative literature is the tendency of the teaching and scholarship at a particular time and place to impose itself upon the practice of the discipline everywhere and make a pronouncement on behalf of everyone, regardless of the limitations of its context and ideology : the early crises identified by Wellek and Etiemble, foregrounded humanism and questioned Eurocentrism in the practice of the discipline (See 2.1 and 2.2 below). The crises returned to the impulse behind the discipline: *comparison as a cognitive act begins with the acceptance of plurality and is ethically grounded in identifying, locating and engaging with difference*. All comparative reading derives from this understanding, and any category we use to understand literature and arts, must take this into cognisance: it is the irreducible element in “doing” comparative literature.

### 2.1.1 A History of Definitions: Europe:

The different names of the discipline at the turn of the 19th century show the ideas of literature, ethics and the Humanities that the

definitions spring from 'Comparative Literatures' used by Matthew Arnold 1848. In French 'Cours de littérature comparée' or Course of Literatures Compared dated to the early 1820s-30s. But it became official nomenclature after Joseph Texte's work on cosmopolitanism; earlier than that though St. Beuve had spoken of literature comparee, the French called it "littérature étrangère." Moriz Carrier called it 'Vergleichende Literaturgeschichte' in German, in 1854. Transylvanian Hungarian Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz', the founding editor of the first journal of Comparative Literature named it *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* (1877). Irish scholar H.M. Posnett named his book *Comparative Literature* (1886). These divergent views crystallised into practice in academia, and were known in pedagogy and scholarship as the French School and the American School. The schools differed in their views about scope and nature of the discipline and debated the method of its practice. Comparing these would show that both method and definition of Comparative Literature as an academic discipline are situational ie located in time and place. A situated study of definitions of the discipline therefore, helps us to understand that the comparative approach is a contextual engagement with difference. Here we will only focus on the central discussions regarding conceptualisation and understanding of difference that made each school distinct from the others. The Schools and their histories will be dealt with in detail in a separate Unit.

### **2.1.2 French School**

Until 1945, i.e. the end of the second "world" war which involved the European powers and perforce, the areas they colonised,, comparative literature in France was known as the study of *littérature étrangère*, or foreign literature, and characterised by an empiricist and positivist, rather than pluralist approach. This was termed the "French School". Hippolyte Taine (21 April 1828 – 5 March 1893), proposed "race, milieu, moment" as the basis of study of foreign literature. These categories were taken literally as single frames by scholars like Paul Van Tieghem (1871-1959) who undertook a forensic examination, looking for evidence of "origins" and "influences" between works from different nations. This approach is termed "rapport des faits". An example of this approach is an attempt to trace how a particular literary idea or motif travelled between nations (synchronically) over time (diachronically) (See Unit 1 for synchrony and diachrony). Paul Hazard shows for example, in *La Crise de la Conscience européenne, 1680-1715*, the French world is opened to the ideas, political and artistic, of its neighbours. The circulation of ideas led to continuous comparison between England, France, Italy, Denmark, Netherlands and Russia. This signalled the appearance of a new human, with

curiosity about the exterior world and sceptical about his own. Also, according to Baldensperger, the editor of the first journal on comparative literature, the introduction of “minor” writers in the journal, signalled the dawn of a New Humanism.

### 2.1.3 Other European Schools

Alexander Veselovsky (1838-1906) worked in European literature in Russia, and emphasised what was known as “genetic” approach, or source study; he also studied the travel of many narrative devices and motifs from the “orient” to the west through Byzantium. He was discredited by the Communist regime, and his followers condemned for their clinging to “influences” and “kowtowing to the western bourgeois idea of society. However, his idea of “historical poetics” was dependent on erudition capable of identifying patterns and similarities across literature in different languages and across space and time. He is widely regarded as Russia’s most distinguished and influential literary theorist before the formation of Opozitsiya (the “Society for the Study of Poetic Language”), whose members – Viktor Shklovsky (1893-1984), Boris Eikhenbaum (1886-1959), Yuri Tynianov (1894 – 1943), Roman Jakobson (1896 – 1982), and others – developed the approach generally referred to as “Russian Formalism.” The Formalists (See Unit 1.4) were themselves divided in their idea of where literariness was to be located. Unlike Roman Jakobson, who located it at the micro-level of language alone, Viktor Shklovsky located it on the level of composition and style as well. Thus the techniques of defamiliarisation would differ in order to achieve various effects. Veselovsky’s historical poetics concurred with Shklovsky in not limiting the novel in particular, to aestheticism and psychologism though. In *Theory of Prose* (1925), Veselovsky is also an object of Shklovsky’s polemic – as a representative of the “ethnographical method”.

Mikhail Bakhtin’s study *The Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel: Notes towards a Historical Poetics* (1937-8, publ. in 1975), is another testimony to Veselovsky’s influence. So is the concluding paragraph of Vladimir Propp’s pathbreaking *Morphology of the Folktale*, where according to Propp his propositions were “intuitively foreseen”. He ends his study with an extensive quote from Veselovsky’s “Poetics of plot” (Propp 115-116). These theorists though widely divergent in their final positions, form part of the “Russian” school of Comparative Literature influenced by Veselovsky.

German Comparative Literature has its origins in the late 19th century, developing in the post-war period owing to Peter Szondi (1929–1971), a Hungarian. Szondi’s work in “General and

Comparative Literary Studies" included the genre of drama, lyric poetry, and hermeneutics. The application of this method to reading and interpretation have been discussed below (See 2.4).

Receptionsaesthetik or Reception Studies also developed from the basis in hermeneutics. It historicised the rapports de faits approach of Influence Studies. This approach and its application have also been discussed below (See 2.4). Here we only indicate the difference between the Reader Response theory and Reception Theory, the two major theories which introduced the reader into literary study. The proponents were Wolfgang Iser and Hans George Jauss, respectively. They were both concerned with a reconstitution of literary theory by drawing attention away from the author and the text and refocusing it on the text-reader relationship. Jauss's turn toward reception was connected with his effort to revitalize literary history, while Iser has been concerned primarily with the phenomenology of reading, which can be developed along empirical loines, (See Unit 4.7)

#### **2.1.4 The American School**

The first congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA) held at Venice in September 1955 had no participation from the United States (Wellek, "Comparative Literature Today", 325). The second congress of the ICLA was held at Chapel Hill, North Carolina in 1958. The practice of comparative literature in Europe came under scrutiny through René Wellek's famous 1958 lecture, "The Crisis in Comparative Literature". According to Wellek himself, his uncompromising critique of the practice of Comparative Literature in Europe, was misunderstood as a "manifesto for an American school of Comparative Literature and as an attack on the French school". Thus we see that the idea of "crisis" was closely related to the history of comparative literature and the conditions in which it was practised.

The ideas of Wellek supposed founder of the school, have been enunciated above. They formed the core of the American school, extended by Remak's definition:

"Comparative Literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country and the study of relationships between literature on one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the (fine) arts, philosophy, history, the social sciences, the sciences, religion, etc. on the other. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with another or others, and the comparison of literature with other spheres of human expression (5)."

### 2.1.5 Schools and Hours

The practice and definition of comparative literature is *location-specific*; there is no overarching definition accepted by all practitioners, except *the general consensus that the practice is driven by the sense of plurality and the need to engage with difference through literary and language cultures*. History, definition and practice are thus interlinked. Claudio Guillen uses the formulation of “hour” rather than “school” to describe the different approaches to the discipline, indicating that these orientations towards literature are not institutionalised as “schools”, but temporally and spatially located practices, grounded in different ways of understanding and engaging with difference. Thus an “ethical” aspect of comparative literature is linked to the aesthetic by indicating the “juxtaposition” of texts, what Barthes would call a frame, which must be performed by the reader , thus making the reading a cognitive and an affective act which relates us to difference, i.e. a new/another world :

“the mutual illumination of several texts, or series of texts, considered side by side; the greater understanding we derive from juxtaposing a number of (frequently very different) works, authors and literary traditions” (Praver 144). This understanding of comparison includes the location of the inquirer (See U1)

#### ❖ Check Your Progress 1

##### 1. Match the following

- |               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| A. Meltzl :   | i. Theory of prose       |
| B. Jakobson   | ii. Genetic approach     |
| C. Shklovsky  | iii. OPOYAZ              |
| D. Veselovsky | iv. literature etrangere |

##### 2.

- |                |                          |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| A. Wellek :    | i. planetarite           |
| B. Etiemble :  | ii. general literature   |
| C. Van Tieghem | iii. race, milieu moment |
| D. Taine       | iv. rapports de fait     |

##### 3.

- |                  |                             |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| A. Wolfgang Iser | i. Classification of themes |
| B. H R Jauss     | ii. Reader response theory  |
| C. Propp         | iii. dialogism              |
| D. Bakhtin       | iv. Reception theory        |

4.Group the following ideas into the French, Russian and American schools of Comparative Literature

i. other arts, ii.influence,

iii.history of ideas,

iv.genetic approach, v.source study, vi.positivism, vii.dialogism

---

## **2.2 THE “CRISES” IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE:**

---

Different answers to the question “what is comparative literature?”(subject matter for study), on which depends the answer to the question “How is it done?”(method of such study) are, as we have seen, quite common in the history of the discipline. This is because these questions are asked and answered in specific spatio-temporal contexts and attempt to meet the basic demand for recognising and engaging with difference in a plural world. Whenever these questions have been raised anew, scholars have described the discipline as being in “crisis”.

### **2.2.1 Why “Crises” ?**

All scholars of the humanities share feelings of anxiety or uncertainties surrounding the issues of methodology or usable ways of doing things that can be called academic practice in their discipline. For example, what can be the larger “real-world implications” of reading novels from every corner of the world and trying to understand human nature and human lives ? Liberal Humanism would claim that there is only a single standard, the human standard, that will decide what is human – for the native of Kenyan Highlands, where homo sapiens first appeared and for a citizen of New York City, there is a single standard of right and wrong. But if we have to address the contexts of these two individuals and trace their experience of the world they inhabit, ie if we *locate* them , we will see that there are vast differences between them despite their common humanity. We have moved, therefore, from liberal to critical humanism (See Unit 1.1) which will address the plurality and difference as comparative literature is called upon to do. Then we cannot insist upon a single method or theory; neither can we pre-fix the frame of reference that we have earlier said is the basis of comparison (U1.2, 1.3). It is the necessity for such open-endedness, and the methods that might ensure it, that result in the notion of a “crisis” in the humanities. Crisis comes from the understanding that in the Humanities, there are no hypothetical answers because of the nature of the problems – they are all human experiences and specific to time and place. There is no single paradigmatic “solution” or “answer” to questions or problems raised by the plurality of experience.

## 2.2.2 Locating and Negotiating “Crises”- 1:

The “crises” in comparative literature diagnosed by different practitioners, in the context of their different views of the problem of what (content) and how(method), and their prescriptions for solving them. Clarification regarding the critique of method, is central to Wellek’s thesis in “The Crisis of Comparative Literature”( see 2’1 above). Wellek identifies Comparative Literature as a “mode of literary study” as early as 1942 in *Theory of Literature*; a work that he co-authored with Austin Warren (Wellek and Warren, 46). Even here, he does not identify a single approach or field of inquiry that can be definitively qualified as Comparative Literature, per se (ibid.). He enumerates the different senses in which the term has been used, ranging from the study of “folklore” and oral narratives, to the more structured approach of the French model of “rapports de fait” (ibid. 47). This is the foundation for Wellek’s criticisms of the French model in “The Crisis of Comparative Literature”. His criticisms are contextualized within a larger Western context of the state of the humanities and literary scholarship therein, at the turn of the 20th century and the onset of the First World War (Wellek, “The Crisis of Comparative Literature”, 162). Wellek ascribes the “crisis” to Comparative Literature’s failures in defining: “a distinct subject matter and a specific methodology” (162). The two problems; “subject matter” and “methodology”, for the most part, in Wellek’s understanding, are inseparable. This interrelatedness of these two questions becomes most apparent in his criticism of the French model, and the ways in which it sought to distinguish the practice of Comparative Literature, from the study of “national literatures” (163).

The next person to announce a crisis in Comparative Literature was Rene Etiemble, who wrote in 1963 “Comparison n’est pas raison : La Crise de la litteratur Comparee” literally translated as “Comparison has not reason : the crisis in comparative literature”. The crisis arose according to Etiemble, a scholar of Chinese and Japanese literature, because comparison was limited to canonical Eurocentrism and narrow nationalism and historicism in the faculty of Letters. His solution was a new internationalist idea of comparative literature which he defined as an “inoculation against language chauvinism, religious fanaticism and racist perversities”. In order to achieve this, he advocated as a professional ideal, rather than as a definitional dogma, the knowledge of languages and literatures outside western Europe, notably from the east European block of nations and what is still known as the “far” East. The solution lay in a discipline which could train the student as citizens of a human world in which “the black African, the yellow Chinese, the Spanish American and the Arab can speak to us”. Though there is a generous expansiveness,

leading to humanism and in Etiemble's words "universal literature", the centre is still Europe, interacting with a colour-coded world.

### **2.2.3 Locating and Negotiating the Crisis: 2:**

In this section we will trace the history of the discipline with reference to the American Comparative Literature Association's decennial reports known as The State of the Discipline reports. These have been commissioned by the American Comparative Literature association since 1974, to reflect upon the state of the discipline in American academia. They are generally known by the names of the authors of the reports : Levin Report ( 1974), the Greene Report (1984), Bernheimer report (1994), Saussy report (2004). Details of these reports will be found in a later module of this course. The 2014 report edited by Ursula Heike was initiated at the Pennsylvania State University. Preparations for the next report began at the 2021 annual congress of the American Comparative Literature Association with a panel on the Geopolitics of Comparison.

These reports, though US centred until 2014, provide a history of the change and orientation of the idea and approach of comparative literary studies beginning from the second half of the twentieth century. They form the context for understanding what scholars based in Anglophone academia have described as crises in comparative literature, and the responses from the international community of comparative literature scholars.

In the introduction to *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (1995), which contains the State of the Discipline report of 1994 and responses to it, Charles Bernheimer stated "comparative literature is anxiogenic". He meant that given the located nature of both subject and method, and the ever expanding area of difference and ways of engaging with it, which we have attempted to explain above (2.1), a student or scholar was expected to satisfy multiple requirements , opening her to accusations of dilettantism because of a lack of specialization in one field. Perhaps confusing the special nature of comparative literature with other unchanging institutionalised disciplines, he felt that the student was besieged by anxiety and a sense of impending crisis and diffused uncertainty peculiar to the very field of Comparative Literature : hence the coinage "anxiogenic". In order to assuage this anxiety, Bernheimer pointed to the need for expansion of comparative literature beyond Eurocentrism and comparison between single homogenous national cultures, taking cognisance of multiculturalism and transculturality in the "global world" of the 1990s. The subject matter and the method had to be located, and inflected by the basic ideas of difference and plurality, wherever it was practised in the

world. This would again bring up the question basic to Humanities – Given the plurality of the world is there a single paradigm to understand human lives across the world, as they are manifested in literature ? The narrative of crisis in the discourse of the discipline in the west, seems to be the result of attempting to subsume difference and plurality within a single paradigm – for example Susan Bassnett’s *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Bassnett invokes René Wellek and Harry Levin, who according to her, call for a revisioning of the discipline by abandoning ossified modes of thinking (30). Exploring the history and practice of Comparative Literature “Beyond the Frontiers of Europe”(which for her is limited to the “American School”) she stated that “Comparative Literature, today, was in one sense dead” (46). However, “comparative *practice* is alive and well and thriving under other nomenclature” (Bassnett 138). She interprets such a death, as the demise of older modes of thinking of national literatures in comparative terms (47) and seeks a future of comparative literary studies beyond the confines of Euro-American and Western cultural models, already proposed by Etiemble in the French School. Thus she turns to the need for a comparative approach in the shared colonial experience of African societies and the subsequent marginalization of African literature (sic) through the discourses of colonization and colonial structures of literacy and education (73). However, she does not consider the many languages and cultures in the continent of Africa, which clearly contradicts the idea of a single homogenous “African literature”. The similarity she identifies to justify her categorisation of African literature in the singular, is colonisation – all the colonised nations are now “post”colonial and hence “similar” or “comparable”. Bassnett makes similar claims vis-à-vis the study of Native American Literature and Chicano Literature and the need for a comparative approach in both these contexts. But this need for comparison is not related to their internal diversities, as she takes no cognisance of the “local” pluralities. These cultures are homogenised as “postcolonial”, or “African” and their interactions with each other and with hegemonic and still homogenised “western cultures”, remain Eurocentric. Though Bassnett holds Eurocentrism responsible for the crisis in comparative literature, her solution ends up exacerbating it. Her prescription for a way out of the crisis is the folding of Comparative Literature into Translation Studies : but does getting rid of the name solve the crisis of a Eurocentric focus in the practice of the discipline ?

Another “crisis” narrative comes from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose Wellek Lectures are titled *Death of a Discipline* – here too, crisis is diagnosed as death. Starting by envisioning Bernheimer’s Introduction to *Comparative Literature in the Age of*

*Multiculturalism*, in the light of a present-day version of “the Quarrels of the Ancients and the Moderns”, Spivak locates the three major disciplines she brings together in this book, Area Studies, Comparative Literature and Post-Colonial Studies, as academic responses of Humanities to three major historical processes in the United States (Spivak 2). She locates Area Studies in the Cold War context of US paranoia over “foreign threats”. The rise of Comparative Literature in America is seen in the light of European intellectuals fleeing “totalitarian” regimes in war-torn Europe. Lastly Post-Colonial Studies is contextualized in the immigration boom in 1970s America following the immigration reforms of 1965. Based on these historical processes and their subsequent effects on scholarship, Spivak postulates: “Whatever our view of what we do, we are made by the forces of people moving about the world” (3). The scope of one’s scholarly endeavors and the comparisons one makes, are bound to be determined, at least in part, by location. The question of a uniform field of inquiry for all comparatists alike is, according to her, shortsighted. Why then is Comparative Literature, which thrives on diversity, dead ?

### ❖ Check Your Progress 2

**Choose the correct answer.**

1. The crisis in Comparative Literature is due to -----

- A. Imposition of a universal paradigm upon all literatures
- B. Eurocentrism
- C. Lack of knowledge of language and culture
- D. Lack of a universal standard for literature

Match set A with Set B

- |                  |                                                              |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Bassnett      | i. the method and the object of study must be delineated     |
| B. Wolfgang Iser | ii. comparison is not rational                               |
| C. Remak         | iii. translation studies will replace comparative literature |
| D. Etiemble      | v. Phenomenology of reading                                  |
|                  |                                                              |
| A. Wellek        | i. comparative Literature is anxiogenic                      |
| B. Etiemble      | ii. postcolonialism is a universal category                  |
| C. Bassnett      | iii. crisis was due to Eurocentrism                          |
| D. Bernheimer    | iv. Comparative literature is literary foreign trade         |

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## 2.3 BEYOND “CRISES”

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We noted that these crises, though projected as systemically shared in a larger global context, are focalized through an Anglophone Euro-American perspective. Existing paradigms of comparative literature in Europe and the US have been subject to these crises, but comparatists elsewhere in the world have conceptualised their own practice in the light of their own literary cultures. In this section we turn to some interventions that expose and question this limited perspective and attempt to locate the practice of comparative literature.

### 2.3.1 Polysystem Theory:

Bassnett fails to address either of the two axes identified in Wellek's essay as part of the crisis of Comparative Literature. She only addresses the question of what is read and where, almost completely ignoring the textual hermeneutics, i.e. the process of reading, writing and interpretation. Her diagnosis of the death of comparative literature and its transformation into other disciplines exclusively focuses on Itamar Even Zohar's essay on translation theory. But this ignores how Even Zohar himself views translation within the larger context of a *systemic approach* to the study of literature and culture. He proposes that not texts or products, but dynamic cultural models determining concrete cultural projects should be the objects of study in the future. In "The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem", Even Zohar posits that translated texts work *between* the systems of source and target literary cultures; translation is a negotiation between guest and host language-literary systems, and translated works reveal crucial aspects of the receiving culture in the logic of their selection (Even Zohar 241). He also poses the possibility of translated literatures as possessing "a repertoire" of their own within a literary culture (241).

### 2.3.2 Planetarity:

*Literary Research/ Recherche Littéraire*, the journal of the International Comparative Literature Association/ Association Internationale de Literatur Comparee carried a forum on Spivak's book in 2004, in which Didier Coste pointed out that Spivak eschewed universal concepts as a practitioner of deconstruction, and that the hegemonic languages would undercut the principles of universalism through the modalities of globalisation. She proposed substituting planetarity (See Unit 3.2.1 for the use of the concept by Etienne) which is anchored in the reality of languages and their diversity but without a foot in alterity. Planetarity questions the existing comparativism and proposes to identify the other and include this difference as part of one's thinking. Languages and

cultures known as subaltern, a term popularised by Gramsci, are included in Spivak's scheme under the principle of planetarity. Thus they are reterritorialised, and the effects of minoritisation undone. It appears that she is proposing alternative post colonialism against Eurocentric comparative literature – however, as Coste points out, all comparative literature done according to the postcolonial model instrumentalises literature and is culturalist (See Unit 3.5.1). Literature is not logically determined by culture. It can be separated completely from its linguistic, national and cultural milieu, and yet retain the universalising name of literature. This does not reduce its diversity, its situatedness, or its relation with the context. But it extends, according to Coste, into the idea of the other as irreducibly different and hence finally untranslatable, as Emily Apter proposes. According to her, comparative literature allows the other to exist without forcing upon us the duty of understanding or translating her.

Spivak claims that disciplines or practices like Comparative Literature have become redundant, because they have failed to respond to the “forces of people moving about the world”. In the forum referred to above, Chanda wonders how Comparative Literature has survived this long, if it really is elitist, Eurocentric and divorced from the realities of the day and age, as Spivak describes it to be. Citing the plurality of Indian literatures and the necessity of the comparative approach in reading them, she claims that comparative literature is less likely to die of a crisis in epistemology, ie its “theory” and “method”, than from malnourishment, ie the inability, especially in an Anglophone postcolony, to convince academic institutions of its relevance and the necessity to keep it alive. This underlines the problematic idea of a uniform method or theory for literary reading and emphasises the relation of location to definition and practice of comparative literature. Since this critique is based in Indian literature(s), we will address it in detail in Unit 5

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## 2.4 INTRODUCING THE READER

### RECEPTION/AESTHETIK

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The scholars associated with the University of Constance and with the Poetik and Hermeneutik research group, contributed to reception theory which drew on Russian formalism, Prague structuralism, Ingarden's phenomenology, Gadamer's hermeneutics, and “the sociology of literature”. Hans Robert Jauss sought the middle ground between an interpretation of a literary text that ignores history and an interpretation which lets the text be a culmination, illustration or demonstration of historical events and social theory. Jauss criticises two extremes – Formalism which does not consider time, place or context and structuralist Marxism which treats the text as an

illustration of social theory, claiming that the literary work, like all other art, is the cultural superstructure erected on and regulated by an economic base. Jauss introduces the Reader and so contrasts radically with the New Historicists or biographical critics who argue that textual meaning will dramatically alter depending on the time and place of the *Author* who wrote the work. Drawing upon Gadamer's idea of the horizon, Jauss introduces the concept of the "horizon of expectation" which a reader living in any time or place has formed due to his socio-cultural context. Gadamer describes the "horizon" thus:

Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of "horizon." The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. ... A person who has no horizon is a man who does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him. On the other hand, "to have an horizon" means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. ... [W]orking out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.

What Gadamer refers to as "tradition" can include both extrinsic and intrinsic factors (See 2.1), i.e. the world view or structure of feeling of the time as well as the literary conventions that he is aware of as a reader of literature. These together form the horizon of expectation. Giving the example of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Jauss points out that at the time it was written, it failed to answer the expectations of readers – they preferred to read romances, while Flaubert showed the effects of reading and believing "romantic" literature on the life of the protagonist. This was considered obscene in contemporary times and Flaubert was put on trial. However, as Jauss points out, the novel survived as a classic, while the popular romances of the time have fallen into obscurity. The "reception" of the text is dependent on time place and structure of feeling of the reading community, but not confined by it – literature reaches beyond these expectations, and so a pre-determined literary theory always falls short of grasping the possibilities opened by the text. Unlike the Reader Response theorists, Reception theory does not posit the text as a work (see Unit 1), to be responded to by the reader. Jauss, influenced by Gadamer's hermeneutical approach, stands against the notion of a pre-determined true meaning of the text, and holds that the activity of reading that constructs the text. This makes literature an event of meeting between the text and the reader. (See Unit 1 above) This way

of reading serves both the ethical and the aesthetic concerns of a comparative approach.

#### **2.4.1 Structure of Feeling:**

As we have seen above, the definition and practice of comparative literature arises from the views regarding literature, human relations and the world view of the time. The interaction between these factors construct what Raymond Williams calls the “structure of feeling” of a period . According to Williams, structure of feeling is

...concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and relations between these and formal systemic beliefs are in practice variable (including historically variable) over a range from formal assent to private dissent to the more nuanced interaction between selected and interested beliefs and acted and justified experiences.

Williams thinks experience could have been a substitute wider in scope than feelings, but uses the word feelings because experience has a clear intonation of the past, whereas Williams’ objective is to understand the present : in fact “the past tense is the most important obstacle to recognition of the area of social experience which is being defined” .

Williams includes “elements of impulse, restraint and tone” affective elements of consciousness and relationships, not feeling against thought but thought as felt, “practical consciousness of a present kind in a living and inter-relating continuity” : these are the elements of the structure of feelings. This idea can be used to understand what we have called “location”: this comprises the spatio-temporal context and the structure of feeling within which humans live their lives, in and outside literature. Williams’ concept helps us to identify the different aspects of location - everything that makes up the living environment and so draws us into a social economy, an organisation .

#### **❖ Check Your Progress 3**

1. In Spivak’s view the----of literature led to the-----of -----literatures and languages

i. marginalisation      ii. subaltern      iii. globalisation

2. Jauss used the idea of -----, which is a concept in ----- proposed by -----to understand the-----of the reader to the-----

i. Gadamer, ii. receptivity, iii. hermeneutics, iv. text, v. Horizon

3.The contemporary reader of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* showed the effect of----- on Emma Bovary, but this did not fit into the reader's - ----- as the ----- of the time tended to take the-----at face value.

i.Reading, ii. romance, iii.horizon of expectation, iv. structure of feeling.

4.Spivak's idea of planetarity is aimed to include----- -, instead of using-----to----- the other from consideration.

i.Alterity, ii.exclude, iii.difference,

Complete the following by choosing the correct option

4.*Madame Bovary* was not popular in its time according to Jauss because

A. IT was obscene

B. It was ahead of its time

C. It was badly written

D. It did not fulfil the contemporary reader's expectations from a romance.

5. In writing *Madame Bovary*, according to Jauss, Flaubert

A.Created a new horizon of expectation for the reader

B.Extended the existing horizon of expectation

C.Created a new genre of romance

D.Criticised the romance as a genre.

6. The Polystsem theory

A. treats literature as a system

B. treats literature as a system related to other systems that make up society

C. is a theory advocating many systems

D. is a mode of translation.

7. According to Jauss, the meaning of the text

A. is pre-determined

B. is a representation of an already existing truth

C. is made by the reader in the act of reading

D. forms a horizon

---

## 2.5 LET US SUM UP

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We have understood in this unit various definitions of comparative literature and what's the history of these definitions in various schools such as French School, American School and other European Schools. The unit also incorporated the crisis in comparative literature and provide the perspective beyond the crisis.

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## 2.6 KEY WORDS

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poly system, reception study, hermeneutics

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## 2.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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## **Answers:**

### **❖ Check Your Progress 1**

1. - A-iv, B-iii, C-i, D-ii
2. A-ii, B-i, C-iv, D-iii
3. A-ii, B-iv, C-i, D-ii
4. French School : ii, vi, iii

American School : i

Russian School : iv, vii

### **❖ Check Your Progress 2**

Q.1 -1

Q.2

1 - A-iii B- iv C-i, D-ii

2 - A-iv B-iii C-ii D-i

### **❖ Check Your Progress 3**

1 - iii, i, ii

2 - v, iii, i, ii, iv.

3 - i, iii, iv, ii

4 - i, iii, ii

Complete the following by choosing the correct option

4 – D

5- B

6- B

7 -C

**UNIT : 3**

**LITERATURE, GENERAL LITERATURE,  
NATIONAL LITERATURE AND  
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

**:: STRUCTURE ::**

**0.3 Objectives**

**3.1 Categories of Understanding and Frames of Reading**

**3.2 Comparative and General Literature**

**3.2.1 “Litteratures Universelles” and “Planetaire”**

**3.3 Comparative Literature, National Literature and World Literature**

**3.4 Case Study: Third world literature as national allegory**

**3.5 Supranation, Local and Universal**

**3.6 Comparative Literature and the cosmopolis**

**3.6.1 Humanities and Comparative Literature: Secular Criticism**

**3.7 Comparative Culture and/or Literature?**

**3.7.1 Literary Invariants**

**3.7.2 Comparative Poetics**

**3.8 The Systems Theory models**

**3.8.1 Empirical Study of Literature**

**3.8.2 Theory of Constants**

**3.9 Let Us Sum Up**

**3.10 Key Words**

**3.11 Books Suggested**

**Answers**

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit will provide

- Understanding of the historical contexts for the definitions of categories like “general”, “national” and “world” literature. These are not absolute categories for thinking about literature, but are ways of classifying the object of literary study. If we fix any of these categories by defining them according to a particular perspective, e.g. Eurocentric or Oriental we run the risk of reducing the study of literature to a system. The use of these labels is meaningful only when they are located in time and place and within larger discussions about the practice and ethics of comparative literature, as we have pointed out in Unit 2 above.

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### 3.1 CATEGORIES OF UNDERSTANDING AND FRAMES OF READING

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The attempt to understand difference through classification using a scientific paradigm is made by the German philosopher F.W. Schlegel (1772–1829). Schlegel founded the *Revue Europa* (Frankfurt, 1803) envisaging a “European literary science” presenting Occidental literature as a totality and European literature as a coherent whole in lectures in Paris (1803 and 4) and in Vienna (1812). Goethe refers to the common idea of *weltliteratur* in speaking of Europe and the universe: "If we have dared to proclaim a European literature, indeed a universal world literature, then we have hardly done so simply to point out that different nations acknowledge each other and their respective creations, for in this sense it has existed for a long time and continues more or less to flourish" (1975, 295)

Schlegel’s scientific approach to the history of literature was modelled on the comparative anatomy of George Cuvier and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. Proceeding by comparison, systematization and historical classification, following the romanticist philosophy of Nature, Schlegel presumed a unifying principle at work in nature, in language(s), and in literature.

In contrast to this unifying principle, the study of interliterariness (See U1) often means the use of cross-cultural, supra-national (See 3.5.2 below) interpretative frames like “developing world”, “third world”, “postcolonial”, “South-South” and “global south”. But in order to qualify as conceptual tools for the practice of comparative literature, these spatial and temporal frames can be used to understand similarity and difference in colonial cultural policy, precolonial realities and anti-colonial struggles *only* by locating each in its specific region and/or language culture. They can thus help to

understand the *historical episode* of colonisation as *a particular form of cultural encounter specific to location*. What are the implications of this for literature?

This question is addressed in sections 4, 5 and 6 of this unit, where we analyse the difficulties of understanding difference in different cultural contexts by applying spatio-temporal categories for understanding literature. In Section 7 and 8, we use literary categories to understand what “interliterariness” means in situations of transcultural and intercultural contact.

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### 3.2 COMPARATIVE AND GENERAL LITERATURE

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According to Van Tieghem, the difference between “comparative” literature and “general” literature was that the former exclusively focused on the interrelations between two national literatures, while the latter was more concerned with “movements and fashions which swept through several literatures” (162). Guyard, Carré and Baldensperger, sought to include national perceptions of *other* national literatures within the scope of Comparative Literature, eg *Goethe en France: Essai de littérature comparée* (1904, Fernand Baldensperger ) and *Goethe en Angleterre: Étude de littérature comparée* (1920, Jean-Marie Carré). This engagement with difference could be a threat to the status-quo: Mme de Stael’s (1766-1817) *De l’Allemagne* (1810), on German literature and thought influenced the Romantic Movement in literature across Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was banned and destroyed by Napoleon for introducing ideas and thoughts which questioned the prevailing neoclassicism in Napoleonic France. It was reprinted in English and French in London in 1813.

It could also be an exercise in humanism. Introducing the first volume of the first journal of Comparative Literature, *Revue de littérature comparée*, in 1921, editors Paul Hazard and Fernand Baldensperger tried to broaden the scope of the discipline through a focus on “minor writers”. Baldensperger felt that this would lead to a re-evaluation of the canon and the foundation of a “Neo Humanism” providing “dislocated humanity” with “a less uncertain core of common values”.

According to Wellek (See 2.1.4) the ‘rapports de faits’ approach of the French school focuses on a historiography of verifiable literary transactions (ibid). He criticised this as literary foreign trade and felt it narrowed the humanist scope of comparative literature. To him, “general literature” meant “Poetics and literary theory”, while world literature was “obviously a translation” of Goethe’s idea of *weltliteratur*, which he illustrates with Carlyle’s 1829 dream of the benefits of “literatures of all countries harmonised into one World Literature” (Wellek 1948, See 2.1). However, “comparative literature

must be differently conceived, as the study of the totality of literature, as the synthesis of literary scholarship.” So comparative literature is “identical with what is sometimes called general literature or world literature”, but the term comparative literature is “preferable and less equivocal than its two practical alternatives” (ibid).

Despite attempting to separate world, general and comparative literature, in 1948, diagnosing the “crisis” in comparative literature in 1969, Wellek had the courage to repudiate the distinctions earlier made: “An artificial demarcation of subject matter and methodology, a mechanistic concept of sources and influences, a motivation by cultural nationalism however generous” (Wellek 1969) seemed to him to be the cause of the crisis in comparative literature.

Wellek too advocates the “science of literature” – but it cannot be a “neutral scientism, an indifferent relativism and historicism”. He claims “true objectivity” for comparative literature, distinguishing it from conventional science, because it entails a “confrontation with the objects in their essence: a dispassionate but intense contemplation which will lead to analysis and finally to judgments of value”. We see that in the idea of “literary invariants” Etiemble (See Unit 2.1.2 and 3.2.1 below) is suggesting a conceptual tool while Wellek’s emphasis is on the intention of the reader, though both are advocating a method of engaging with difference. Wellek predicts the vanishing of national vanities in the face of art and poetry when “Literary scholarship becomes an act of the imagination, like art itself, and thus a preserver and creator of the highest values of mankind.” (1969:171).

### **3.2.1 “Litteratures Universelles” and “Planetaire”**

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in French academia, the term used for non-French literature was la littérature étrangère, Foreign Literature sometimes in the plural but more often in the singular. The first chair of Litterature Comparee was established in 1921 at Sorbonne. Etiemble (1909-2002) also criticised the French school’s idea of comparative literature and the notion of weltliteratur coined by Goethe, proposing “general” and “universal” literature (See Unit 2).

In 1971 was published the translation of Wellek and Warren’s *Theory of Literature* (1948) where distinctions were drawn between general, national and comparative literature. Etiemble took umbrage at the limited scope of the book which confined itself to European literatures, and also demarcated national, general and comparative literature. In Etiemble’s view, the “technical quarrel” that divided the conception of literature, “played havoc with the future of humanity” (ibid 61). He asks how it is possible to have a literary theory that neglects Arabic and Indian (sic) rhetoric and the literatures of China and Japan (Etiemble 1988 61-2). He effected “openings” (ouvertures;

Etiemble 1988) of the narrow confines of literature to include the planet: *planetaire* or planetary signifies to him the entirety of the world. Etiemble's militant planetary humanism (see Unit 1), espousing truth, justice, liberty led to his proposing "litteratures universelles" to contest Goethe's idea of *weltliterature*.

Comparative Literature is to him the last chance for humanity to survive, because it can create citizens of a truly open world. (ibid 61-2) His ethical, ideological and intellectual project is a correction of Eurocentricity, enlarging the field to include other languages and cultures, synchronically and diachronically; reconfiguring it to balance the excessive importance of 'grand' Indo-European language literatures. As the literary planet is not driven by a single impulse, his idea of "general literature" does not envisage a totalising literary history or totalitarian literary movements. He suggests the construction of a theory of forms and genres that can account for literatures in all languages. To this end, he introduced the idea of the "literary invariant" which Andre Marino, takes forward. This is an example of a non-spatial or non-temporal category, a conceptual idea related to form and genre, which must be located in time, place and structure of feeling. Space and time are the context in which these formal devices may be arranged by the writer and read by us. Here, a concept applicable to the textual process, instead of geopolitical boundaries (national), larger temporal and spatial units (postcolonialism, globalisation) or supranational spatial units (South South, East-West), can be used as a counter to homogenisation or/and reduction to single paradigms or dogmas.

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### **3.3 COMPARATIVE LITERATURE , NATIONAL LITERATURE AND WORLD LITERATURE**

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The relation between the nation and literature is defined by situating a language and its speakers within a geo-political entity called nation. The idea that a nation is defined by one language and a uniform culture is questioned by comparatists in practice, yet accommodated by them in theory. Especially in a state like India, most students reading this may speak one language at home, read two more in school and go to work in an area that speaks a fourth. Plurality, on which comparative literature, its ethics and aesthetic are based, characterises our understanding of Indian literature as well.

In Hans Robert Jauss' essay on reception theory, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory", the author criticises nationalist literary historiography as a *telos*, i.e. end (see 2.4 above). Such an idea makes the writing of literary history a symbol of the formation and establishment of a nation. This is the 19th century European idea of the nation, formed through unification and synthesis of the cultures of

the people speaking one language, though politically from individual principalities and baronetcies. As Indian readers, we know that speaking the same language is not the sole criterion for a “nation” – a fact that we will address in detail in the next section. Here, the challenge of a different idea of nation must be noted, in which there exists more than a single language and a uniform culture or religion. An untenable end-driven or teleological view of literature or history reach their peak with the formation of a nation, and a literature in the language identified with it. Goethe’s and Tagore’s formulations of “world” literature as opposed to “national” literature are discussed in U 4 and 5.

### ❖ Check Your Progress 1

Q.1 Match Set A with Set B

| SET- A                                           | Set B                     |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Conceptual tool to study universal literature | a. literary foreign trade |
| 2. Wellek’s critique of the French School        | b. rapports de faits      |
| 3. Etiemble’s critique of the French School      | c. literary invariants    |
| 4. The focus of the French School                | d. Eurocentrism           |

Q2.According to Etiemble, general literature was

- A.The inclusion of all literatures in the world
- B.Totalising all literary movements
- C.Including Japanese and Chinese literature

Q3.According to Baldensperger, a new humanism would be introduced through

- A.Rapports de faits
- B.Introduction of minor literatures
- C. Introduction of Asian literature

Q4. The crisis according to both Wellek and Etiemble involved

- A.Inadequate clarity about method and subject
- B.Eurocentrism
- C.distinction between studying literature and literature itself

Q.5.Choose the correct answer

1. Baldensperger defined comparative literature as the interrelations between national literatures. This definition assumes
  - A. Literature is a national good
  - B. Nations are homogenous

- C. Every nation has a single language and culture
- D. Literature is an exportable good.

2. The science of literature was an idea proposed by -----

- A.Goethe
- B.Tagore
- C.Taine
- D.Schlegel

3. Scientism implies

- A. Everything can be proved with scientific experiments
- B. The methods of natural science can be applied to all branches of knowledge
- C. Only science can give knowledge
- D. All knowledge is subjective

Q.6 Fill in the gaps.

i.----- takes the ii----- stance from Positivism because the iii----- argues that experience is quantifiable while the iv -----holds that v --- methods cannot be used for understanding history.

- A. scientific
- B. latter
- C. former
- D. historicism
- E. opposite

Q.7. Give a single word for

- A. Making history the single and final explanation for literature
  - B. An object exists, independent of an individual's ability to perceive it
  - C. We cannot know anything beyond our experience
  - D. Our perception is perspectival
- i. subjectivity
- ii.objectivity
- iii.historicism
- iv.empiricism

---

### 3.4. CASE STUDY : THIRD WORLD LITERATURE AS NATIONAL ALLEGORY

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The following case is cited here as an example of the application of a “comparative method”, which uses all the literary categories popular in comparative practice – nation, “third world”, “postcolonialism” – but remains trapped in reduction and homogenisation of the field of literature.

In “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” Fredric Jameson states, “Third-World texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic — necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*” (1986, 69; italics in original). Jameson had earlier identified national allegory in his *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, or, the Modernist as Fascist* (1979) through his project of “cognitive mapping”. In his view this is the political vocation of postmodern art (“Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” ), associated also with realism in *The Political Unconscious*. To him, narrative is a means by which individual experience and a broader social totality may be somehow represented and reconciled, if only through a kind of figuration. Hence, realist narrative is “traditionally in one form or another the central model of Marxist aesthetics as a narrative discourse which unites the experience of daily life with a properly cognitive, mapping, or well-nigh ‘scientific’ perspective” (Jameson 1981, 104). . That a white, male, privileged American critic would be making such categorical statements about the “Third World” was itself considered odious and dismissed by scholars of postcolonial studies like Arif Dirlik and Aijaz Ahmad. The problem with this “method” which seems sufficiently comparative, is objected to on two principal grounds (Ahmad 1987) : the universalism of Jameson’s assertion is disputed, since any hypothesis which claims to encompass *all* “Third-World texts” necessarily overlooks the specificity of languages and cultures. There is no single “third world” discourse : using Etienne’s concept, “third world” cannot be a literary invariant, because it is a geographical and temporal marker, not a literary one. Besides, Jameson’s label “Third World” is essentialist, “.. polemical..., with no theoretical status whatsoever,”(Ahmad, *ibid*) and, by extension, so is the idea of a cognizable “First World” - “there is no such thing as a ‘Third World Literature’ which can be constructed as an internally coherent object of theoretical knowledge” (1992, 96–97).

So here “third world” or “postcolonial” are generalised spatio-temporal categories, into which literary forms must fit – for example, all fiction written in the “third world” is a “national allegory”. Instead, the comparative approach of locating the texts may be used to deconstruct such essentialisms, showing how plurality and difference characterise “world” literatures, the diversity of which cannot be reduced to pre-fixed paradigms.

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### 3.5 SUPRANATION, LOCAL AND UNIVERSAL

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Claudio Guillén in *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, defines the discipline as “a branch of literary investigation that involves the systematic study of *supranational assemblages*” (Guillén 3) : “the point of departure” represented by Comparative Literature as a discipline is realized **neither** “in national literatures, **nor** in the interrelations between them” (3). Stressing the “dynamic or contentious aspect” of comparative literature, he too points to a “process of determination”. A “systematic study” is advocated. Treating literature as a system means to relate different aspects of literature in human society as human endeavour; these are all contingent on time and place, on history as it is mediated by the text and constructed by the reader. Comparative literature makes it necessary for us to see that the world about and in which the enquiry is based, is not defined by the inquirer’s position or the writer’s position alone (3), because the event of literature involves an interaction between them through the textual practice of reading. Guillén calls this a “process of determination”, which is located in time and place, not a final or absolute determination of meaning. So, the comparative approach is the “awareness of certain tensions between the “local and the universal”. “Local” means:

“... locale, place and not nation – nationality, country, region, city – because...these conceptual extremes ...encompass a series of general opposites applicable to different situations: between the specific circumstance and the world, between the present and the absent, the experience and its sense, that I and whatever is alien to it, the perceived and the longed for, what is an what should be, what exists today and what is eternal” (6)

Both work and reading are “located”, i.e. locating the text is a part of the reading or interpretation process. In a similar way, we can trace the use of concepts that help to understand the idea of difference and plurality, connected to the idea of “world literature”, required for a comparative reading.

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### 3.6 COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND THE COSMOPOLIS

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Universal and world literature is connected to the ideas of 'cosmopolis' and the 'international'. Didier Coste, Nicoletta Pireddu et al point out that all kinds of cosmopolitanism are basically concerned with cross-cultural human relationships rather than with the mere temporary or permanent occupation of a natural space. Cosmopolitanism does not necessarily describe a condition of mobility, rootlessness or hybridity; it is a way of inhabiting the world that entails constant self-interrogation, creative interaction with other peoples, cultures, and languages, and a political sense of a justice always to come. It is not only a utopian drive, but rather the sense of responsibility for the expansion of democracy, for a new inclusionary politics embracing minority claims, be they ethnic, racial, social, sexual or gender-related. are as firmly directed towards the respect of non-European cultures and against the destruction of indigenous people. It is a struggle for a universal human citizenship of the Earth – as a concept it participates in the ethical impulse of comparative literature, but is not a literary category to interpret textual practices.

#### 3.6.1 Humanities and Comparative Literature: Secular Criticism

In the book *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Edward Said critiques the Eurocentric Humanities (See U 1) practised and taught in the American academy, by envisioning the possibility of a "different kind" of "cosmopolitan" humanism. Said rejects humanism that is limited to "extolling patriotically the virtues of our culture, our language, our monuments". Humanism demands inclusive structures and apparatuses of scholarship and for an opening up of the canon of "humanist study and practice" (28-29). How are these standards to be applied to understand and engage with the existing and ever increasing ethnic, racial and linguistic diversity in the citizenry of a nation? Said's understanding of the cosmopolitan is not inclusion of a distant or absentee foreign other. Citizenship, citizen's rights and territoriality are directly linked to the ethos of time place, culture and history, in the way a plural society engages with difference and the way its polity includes difference in the allocation of power and resources. In the quest for understanding difference that makes for linguistic and cultural diversity, he advocates close reading, philology and a *secular criticism*, ie the kind of literary scholarship that does not set up any gods of theory. In other words he proposes the same "open itinerary" as Guillen for comparative literature. This openness to difference makes comparative literature a cosmopolitan practice, not housed in the narrow confines of a "national" literature but located "*supranationally*". This argument can also be posed against the idea

of a “world literature” struggling to identify itself through content (what is and is not world literature) and circulation (what gets translated and published).

Returning to philology is the academic path suggested by Auerbach, in different circumstances, and taken up by Said in American academia. Said (2004) championed in the last years of his life a revitalization of the most militant aspects of the discipline, which have always existed beyond its purely academic outlines : convinced that scholarly humanism had to add a noticeable presence as an "ongoing practice" to its status as a "theoretical territory" (ibid 6), he proposed that comparatists insist on contributing to "a different kind of humanism that was cosmopolitan and text-and-language-bound in ways that absorbed the great lessons of the past" (ibid 11). He advocates "the return to philology" as a necessary route for the strengthening the "idea of humanistic culture as coexistence and sharing" (xvi). Hence, as Etiemble had claimed, translation as a cultural practice is both indispensable and an object of research for comparatists . Also, “reading for meaning” (70) remains fundamental and it can be learned and taught. The ethical impulse is the source of comparison: how do we see difference in the contact between cultures ? How do we engage with the other? According to Villaneuva, in the present moment, Said reminds us of “an unrenounceable humanist engagement to which comparative literature has much to contribute: teaching how to read well, which in our times means being a member of one's own literary tradition while remaining an eager visitor to the culture of the Other.”

### ❖ Check Your Progress 2

1. Identify the error in the claim that Third World literature is national allegory

- A. Postcolonial literature is a homogenous category
- B. Every comparatist must know 10 designated languages
- C. Literature is an objective science
- D. Nations are literary communities

2. Choose the correct words from the options given to complete the following

The nation is a (i)-----category while language and literature travel across (ii)-----and hence the unit of study for comparative literature is a/an (iii)----- . The (iv) ----- and (v) ----- are markers of place, and despite being opposite each other, connect the (vi) -----and the particular.

- |                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Supranational assemblage | 4. geopolitical |
| 2. Global                   | 5. general      |
| 3. Local                    | 6. Boundaries   |

### 3. Cosmopolitanism

- A. Means rootlessness and hybridity
- B. Means responsibility for the other
- C. Is the result of exile
- D. Implies that the person is more than the citizen of a single state

4. By "secular criticism" Said means

- A. There is no place for religion in criticism
- B. Literature cannot be religious
- C. The meaning of a literary text cannot be predetermined by theory
- D. The critic cannot bring his religious ideas to literature.

Ans : C

### 5. Match Set A with Set B

| SET A       | SET B                     |
|-------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Said     | i. locale                 |
| 2. Auerbach | ii. General literature    |
| 3. Guillen  | iii. contrapuntal reading |
| 4. Etienne  | iv. return to philology   |

---

## 3.7 COMPARATIVE CULTURE AND/OR LITERATURE ?

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In "Comparative Literature and the Crisis of the Humanities ", Guillén shows his concern for the politicization of the humanities and the increased impact of cultural studies and postcolonial studies which have acquired prominence to the detriment of literary studies. Guillen's complaint is that Cultural Studies blurs the distinction between the popular and the refined or between the high manifestations of human creativity and other expressions less illustrious on an aesthetic scale valued for millennia. So he falls into the high/low literature trap, which is actually the discomfort with adjusting one's ideas of art with the change in medium, and the introduction of virtuality in the nineties. Guillen comments: "We live in plural worlds and our great enemy is simplification. No vision has complete hegemony on the space it considers. No culture is monolithic. None of us are only one thing" (Guillen 23).

Said (2004) held the position that postcolonialism, cultural studies, and other similar fields ended up side-tracking "the humanities from

its rightful concern with the critical investigation of values, history, and freedom, turning it, it would seem, into a whole factory of word-spinning and insouciant specialities, many of them identity-based, that in their jargon and special pleading address only like-minded people, acolytes, and other academics" (14). Additionally, he was convinced that "those varieties of deconstructive Derridean readings" end "in undecidability and uncertainty" (66). We should not be surprised, therefore, by the only solution Said proposes, namely "a return to a philological-interpretative model that is older and more widely based than the one that has prevailed in America since the introduction of humanistic study in the American university 150 years ago" (34; see also Holquist). To this end, he introduces "contrapuntal" reading, that focuses on the event character of literature:

a musical form... employing numerous voices in usually strict imitation of each other, a form, in other words, expressing motion, playfulness, discovery, and, in the rhetorical sense, invention. Viewed this way, the texts of the canonical humanities, far from being a rigid tablet of fixed rules and monuments bullying us from the past... will always remain open to changing combinations of sense and signification; every reading and interpretation of a canonical works re-animates it in the present, furnishes an occasion for rereading broad historical field whose usefulness is that it shows us history as an agonistic process still being made, rather than finished and settled once and for all. (ibid 25).

### **3.7.1 Literary Invariants:**

If the object of literary study is literariness, then the phenomenon and the event of literature must be the subject of reflection. And if spatio-temporal categories are suspect, what will be the literary categories that will study literature, without limiting it by conceptualising it through time and space ?

The theoretical assumption underlying comparison in the 19th century is the horizontal comparison between equals, but some literatures, categorized as primitive, receive less value than others, which are considered to be of universal importance. This inequity is rooted in Herder's idea of the "soul of the people" (Volksgeist), intended to promote equality and mutual respect among nations. Herder believed that there is only one class in the nation, the "volk" or people characterised by the "people's spirit", representing nations as embodiments of unique sets of cultural characteristics in explicit opposition to attempts to define nations politically. Underlying this spirit are emotions and ideas go beyond the historical accident and vicissitude and are founded in a common humanity. Herder intended also to grade civilisations according to their maturity – from the

innocence of the ancients, to the corruption of decadence, that Herder saw as the result of the changing economic order. However, we are arguing that comparative literature is a literary activity and the categories we use to understand and practice it will have to be literary

Etiemble's (1963) solution to the crisis in comparative literature was to propose general characteristics that were universal to literature – this was his rejoinder to “world” literature (See Unit 2). These general characteristics were according to him “invariants”. Thus, Etiemble moves from the *rapports de faits* approach, and the spatial and temporal categorisation of literature, ie the “national/world” approach, to a new type of comparatism, where cultural contact or even contextualization of any kind yield to “what we might call synthetic, synchronic-typological and theoretical” (Etiemble 1963 56) relations.

Đurišin replaced the French School's insistence on influence with techniques as diverse as reminiscence, impulse, filiation, literary correspondence, and so on (158-62) as elements that could travel across space, time and language. This does not exclude contact with the opposite, and is not limited to it. In this context, intertextuality was theorised by Julia Kristeva as both a criticism of and a solution to the strict genetic causality sought by influence studies and *rapports de fait*. In her view, the notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity when we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, “codes” imparted to the writer and reader by other texts. Even the concordance, a concept proposed in 1968 by theorist Paul Cornea to integrate the reception context within the comparison, without hierarchical systematization, involves the analogy between at least two given cultural contexts, considered in *praesentia*. (Ursa 2014: 155)

### 3.7.2 Comparative Poetics

Comparative poetics is an application of the double approach of Etiemble (1963) which combines typology with theory, advancing “towards an objective definition of literature”, by moving from particular to general. The final result is a general theory where literature as an entirety has been assimilated. Etiemble calls this “literature without any adjective” (ibid 61), ie not limited by or thought through, spatial or temporal boundaries.

The Romanian comparatist Adrian Marino answers Wellek's criticism of the French School, by claiming that comparative literature has a precise and autonomous object, and a specific method (Marino, 1982: 5). Before Đurišin theorised world literature as interliterary processes, Marino advocated a transnational perspective to overcome the ‘crisis’

of comparative literature in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. At this time, emphasis on scientificity, following the positivist model of Van Tieghem, often led to the overestimation of specific methods and concepts. Seeking to precisely define comparative literature as a perfectly legitimate scientific discipline with exclusive authority over a methodological field, Marino overestimates the value of methodological generalization in conceiving comparative literature as a comparative poetics and makes great efforts to outline the differences between the practitioner of comparative poetics and the mere poetician (who he feels is not qualified to operate beyond close reading). Marino attempts to configure a domain that is specific to comparative literature and also realised from a fundamental character of literature, i.e. literariness. He follows Etienne in the assertion that literature is universal, and studying or reading it means engaging with contextualised difference. Thus a “literary invariant” can be used to understand literary changes and reception across time and place.

Later theorists of comparative poetics like James Liu and Earl Miner were not caught up in the “literary science” paradigm and saw poetics as an investigation of the distinct and autonomous nature of literature as manifested in literary works. Poiesis is the art of making something that did not exist before, and what is made, is poetry – the art of making poetry, is the object of study of Poetics. According to Liu, “comparisons of what writers and critics belonging to different cultural traditions have thought about literature may reveal what critical conceptions are universal, what cultural concepts are confined to some cultural traditions and what conceptions are unique to a particular tradition”(ibid). The idea of the general literary characteristics being universal, traced back to Etienne, is here applied and qualified, as is Etienne’s idea of the literary invariant, which is shown to be identifiable, but varied in expression across time and place.

### ❖ Check Your Progress 3

1. Contrapuntal reading requires

- A. Conflicts between ancient and modern literatures
- B. Acknowledging that difference is a condition in our existence
- C. Bringing unlike entities together
- D. Monolithic culture.

2. Culture Studies and postcolonial theory both (i)----- literature; according to Guillen, the former makes no (ii)----- between (iii)----- and (iv)----- literature, and in the words of Coste and Pireddu, they (v) ----- literature to a (vi) ----- document

- 1. reduce            4. low
- 2. high             5. social
- 3. distinction    6. instrumentalise

3. Literary invariants as a concept

- A. Helps to understand literary change
- B. Helps to discern similarities both synchronically and diachronically
- C. Enhances literary foreign trade
- D. helps to understand universal literature

4. Intertextuality

- A. Helps to map literary change
- B. Shows the exchanges between contemporary and inherited texts
- C. Is a tool to understand literary influence
- D. Questions the idea that there is strict genetic causality in literature

5. Etiemble's double approach of typology plus theory is a conceptual tool for comparison because

- A. it does not refer to personal readings
- B. it does not depend on subjective readings
- C. it refers to the phenomenon of literature and not to a token event
- D. it arrives at a general statement about literariness through the located reading of relations between specific texts

6. Match Set A with Set B

Set A

Set B

- |                          |                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Comparative poetics   | a. Susan Bassnett |
| 2. Universal literature  | b. Durisin        |
| 3. Interliterary process | c. Etiemble       |
| 4. d. Marino             |                   |

---

### 3.8 THE SYSTEMS THEORY MODELS

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In this section we look at what Villaneuva (2011) calls “the contextual frameworks” of interpretation, like Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, Juri Lotman's semiotics of culture, Pierre Bourdieu's *champ littéraire*, Niklas Luhmann's notion of social systems, Durisin's concept of the interliterary process, used for the "empirical," study of literature. Villaneuva defends this empiricism as a concept that is not positivist or neo-positivist, the objectives being theoricity, and applicability.

#### 3.8.1 Empirical Study of Literature

In Schmidt's *Empirische Literaturwissenschaft* literature is considered in the context of communicative and thus social actions, which include the production of texts and their mediation texts undergo in distribution, their reception by the reading public or theater or film audience, and finally, also the transformative reading that is carried out in the form of criticism and scholarship, interpretation, commentary, parody, summary, adaptation, paraphrase, film, theater or television versions, etc.

The Empirical study of literature practised and theorised by Schmidt, and Steven Totosy de Zepetnek, attempted to raise the interest of literary scholars in empirical questions, dissociate empiricity from materialism and positivism and enter the research domain which traditionally had been outsourced to literary sociology and psychology as a marginal aspect, separate from interpretation, the core of literary studies. This task required a concept of empirical research centered on the notion of methodical constructions of facts distinguished from data. The empirical study of literature was simultaneous with deconstruction in the United States universities. In Europe the foundations of thinking about literature were based in a broad theoretical tradition that included the Marxist sociology of literature, the Frankfurt School, as well as the semiology of Tartu School, the Konstanz School, and the functionalism of the Prague School. The empirical school stressed interdisciplinarity and plurality of critical theories and methods, combining the author's perspective, the text's perspective, and the reader's perspective as outlined in Totosy's "The Systemic and Empirical Approach to Literature and Culture."

#### 3.8.2 Theory of Constants

The Systems and Empirical approaches attempt to address much of the criticism levelled against liberal humanist ideas of

universalism and the confusions created by spatio-temporal categories of understanding literature. The theory of constants, an application of the systems approach to the literary invariants, was proposed by Munteanu (1957 and 1967). He affirms the importance of a systematic study of the “reality of constants” in the dialectical, synthetic and heuristic sense. in *Constantes en littérature et en histoire dialectiques*. Here the stress is on the relation between self and world – nothing exists in itself but as a contradiction, antinomy, tension etc. Synthesis evolves through the dialectic, all products like literature and arts are the result of contacts and exchanges between the Hegelian thesis and antithesis, so they display a series of structural dialectical constants. Munteanu defines two types of invariants, which he calls “dialectic constants”: structural ones, which are fixed and ahistorical, and “variable constants, at the same time fixed and supple” – *Constantes* 131). He designs a grid of constants, accounting for their oscillation and dialectical transformations over a given duration, in which they are subjected to certain developments. He defends theoretical systems, and explains that “any synthesis manages to create a system or more, not only rigid but also provisional and therefore theoretical. This is its reward and coronation.” (24) Marino<sup>1</sup> criticises his “entirely historicist prudence” that makes Munteanu a partisan of the history of ideas (*Comparatisme* 71), while the goal should be – in Marino’s view – to surpass all historicism.

#### ❖ Check Your Progress 4

1. Systems theories of literature treat literature as

- A. a sociological document
- B. an event
- C. a means of communication
- D. an instrument

2. A systems approach means

- A. Integrating literature with social systems
  - B. Treating the literary system as one which regulates human life
  - C. treating literature as a system related to the other systems that regulate human life
  - D. a scientific study of literature
-

3. An empirical study of literature according to its practitioners is
  - A. Positivistic because it is neutral
  - B. Cannot be positivistic because it is based on experience
  - C. A model of communication
  - D. Cannot be a theory because experience cannot be generalised
4. The theory of constants applies
  - A. The empirical approach to literature
  - B. The systems approach to literary theory
  - C. The concept of literary invariants to social phenomena
  - D. The positivist approach to social theory
5. Though Munteanu's theory is of 'constants', his approach is
  - A. Literary
  - B. Universal
  - C. Dialectical
  - D. historical
6. Munteanu identifies a pair of constants : the (A) ----- constants are fixed and the (B)----- are (C)----- and responsive to context.
  - A. i. Structural, ii. dialectical, iii. variable
  - B. i. Dialectical, ii. structural, iii. variable
  - C. i. Variable, ii. dialectical, iii. Structural

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### 3.9 LET US SUM UP

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In this chapter we have understood various categories such as general literature, national literature, world literature in context of comparative literature. We have also tried to relocate the concepts such as comparative literature and /or culture etc. We also studied the theory models towards the ending of the chapter.

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### 3.10 KEY WORDS

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**Culture** Metaphorically, a cultivation (*agri-cultura*); the cultivation of values; by extension, a body of values cultivated, See Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (1959) and *The Long Revolution* (1961). More recently, sociologists and anthropologists have employed the term to denote the totality of customs and institutions of a human group.

**Comparative Literature** Comparative literature aims to enhance awareness of the qualities of one work by using the products of another linguistic culture as an illuminating context; or studying some broad topic or theme as it is realized (transformed) in the literatures of different languages.

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### 3.11 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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- Cesar Dominguez "Dionyz Durisin and a Systemic Theory of World literature"  
<[https://www.academia.edu/1146429/Dion%C3%BDz\\_%C4%8Eu ri%C5%A1in\\_and\\_a\\_Systemic\\_Theory\\_of\\_World\\_Literature](https://www.academia.edu/1146429/Dion%C3%BDz_%C4%8Eu ri%C5%A1in_and_a_Systemic_Theory_of_World_Literature)>
- Rene Etiemble "Should we revise our idea of World Literature ?" in *World Literature Reader* eds Theo D'Haen, Cesar Dominguez, et al 2012 p93-102 Translation available at  
<[https://www.academia.edu/1137839/World\\_Literature\\_Reader](https://www.academia.edu/1137839/World_Literature_Reader)>
- Claudio Guillen *The Challenge of Comparative Literature* Harvard Stuides in Comparative Literature 1993
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<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280000313>
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<https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweblibrary/empiricalstudyofliterature>

## ANSWERS:

### ❖ Check Your Progress 1

Q.1 - 1 c 2 a 3 d 4 b

Q.2 – A

Q.3 – B

Q.4 – B

Q.5 -1 – C, 2 –D, 3- B,

Q.6 I D ii E iii B iv C v A

Q.7 A iii B ii C iv D i

### ❖ Check Your Progress 2

1 – A

2 - i 4 ii 6 iii 1 iv 2 v 3 vi 5

3 – D

4 – C

5 - 1 iii 2 iv 3 i 4. Ii

### ❖ Check Your Progress 3

1 – B

2 - i-6 ii-3 iii- 2 iv- 4 v-1 vi-5

3 – B

4 – D

5 – D

6 – 1-d    2-c    3-b    4-a

**❖ Check Your Progress 4**

1 – C

2 – C

3 – B

4 – B

5 – C

6 - A-i   B-i   C-i

**:: STRUCTURE ::****4.0 Objective****4.1 The Relation Between World Literature and  
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**4.0 OBJECTIVE**

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This unit will attempt to understand the academic and philosophical roots of the category World Literature by taking a comparative perspective, through a located reading of statements, research and pedagogic practices. We relate the ideas of World Literature to changing academic practices, especially in the US and a changing view of difference, to analyse the implications of this line of thinking by comparative literature scholars .

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## 4.1 THE RELATION BETWEEN WORLD LITERATURE AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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### The Relation Between World Literature and Comparative Literature

In the terminological history of “comparative literature” Merian-Genast (4) lists three different meanings of the concept of world literature :

- the “cosmopolitan” understanding as in Goethe’s concept of supranational literature (described as *Weltliteratur*).
- the canonical understanding, referring to those works whose effect last beyond their time or place of origin, realizing what Boileau calls “universal consent”.
- the sum of all poetic products of humankind.

Durisin also proposes a “trinomial” perspective (Gálik 2), where three different meanings of the concept function alternatively: 1) literature of the entire world (or literary history categorized according to national history and language of circulation),

2) a selection of the best creations (classical literature, the world canon) and

3) product of all individual literatures. Just as we have seen for the definitions of comparative literature, here too we understand that the meaning of this concept is not free of history and divorced from the world view of whoever uses the term.

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## 4.2 A LITERARY PRE-HISTORY OF “WORLD LITERATURE”

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Although literary works in our globalized world should be conflated neither with literature-universal, nor with a kind of geographic cohesion of literatures, in today's context, globalization partially explains the revival of the notion of world literature. In the time it was conceptualised, *weltliteratur* was in opposition to the *rapports de faits* approach . According to Jean Bessiere for the former, a literature can be the distinct counterpart of another literature, whatever relations connect these two literatures. For the latter, the other literature, translated, displaced, is simultaneously a surprise and what can be inserted in his own world and literature, then augmented, modified; this alliance of the Same and the Other is the first condition for the development of *Weltliteratur*. This early opposition between Ampère and Goethe together with the difference between comparative literature as a way of reading and world literature claimed to be a set of texts, leads to a fundamental question: can we bring to any large

unification of literatures the same kind of understanding brought to bear on the acts and works of individuals—writers, readers—or limited writers' or readers' groups, or broader ensembles—nations and, eventually, regions? It remains as we have seen earlier, a question of categories. Is world literature an adequate category to read literature produced and consumed in situations marked by plurality, which is certainly a fundamental characteristic of the “world” ?

Goethe pointed out that world literature was emerging presently, that is, contemporaneous to him. From 1827 on Goethe asserts that "such a world literature will soon come into being, as is inevitable given the ever-increasing rapidity of human interaction" (WA I, 42.2, 502); similarly in a letter to Adolph Friedrich Carl Streckfuß, 27 January 1827 [WA IV, 42, 28] and in *Maximen und Reflexionen* [WA I, 42.2, 202]), he compares his situation to that of the sorcerer's apprentice, with the advancing world literature "streaming towards him as if to engulf him (Goethe to Carl Friedrich Zelter, 21 May 1828 [WA IV, 44, 101]). This earlier and more famous imperative that the process of world literature be accelerated is distinct from the globalist dimensions of Marx's famous proclamation in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*. Goethe envisioned world literature mainly as a dialogue of national literatures, not as competition, nor as foreign trade. He states "like all things of supreme value, [art] belongs to the whole world and can only be promoted by a free and general interaction among contemporaries" (WA I, 48, 23). Naturally, a discourse of this kind must "always remain attentive to what has been inherited from the past," as we read in the famous stanza from the *West-Eastern Divan*: "He who cannot be farsighted / Nor three thousand years assay, / Inexperienced stays benighted / Let him live from day to day (1994, 59).

Goethe represents just the opposite of the now- normative concept of world literature in the famous conversation with Eckermann on 31 January 1827, where he proclaims the "epoch of world literature" with the following observation: "I see increasingly that poetry is a common property of mankind and that it emerges in all places and at all times from many hundreds of people. Some are a little better at it than others and stay on top a little longer, that is all there is to it ... everyone must realize that the gift of poetry is not so rare a thing, and that nobody has reason to let it go to his head if he produces a good poem" . Speaking of specificity of location, he says, "We must view everything else historically and, as far as possible, learn from the good in it" (Eckermann 198).

Goethe questioned both the supremacy of literary nationalism and asserted the universality of literature through the idea of “weltliterature”. Etienne questioned the idea on the basis of counter-proposals to the Eurocentric reading-lists that make up the “world” – though Goethe never once implied in word or deed that he was limited by Europe. Etienne however has a list of choices which he designates as literature. Instead of looking to define classics and canons, Goethe talks of literature, what people read -- as “world literature”. For Goethe, this is the phenomenon of literature, across the world: “If such a world literature will soon come into being, as is inevitable given the ever increasing rapidity of human interaction, then we may not expect anything more or different from [this literature] than what it can and does achieve ... whatever pleases the masses will expand without limit and, as we are already witnessing, find approval in all areas and regions”. He calls for “advancing world literature ... even if the general cause suffers” (Goethe to Zelter, 4 March 1829 [WA IV, 45, 187]; see also Auerbach 303-04]) for “those who have devoted themselves to higher things, to what is fruitful on a higher level, will get to know each other all the more quickly and closely” to “resist the everyday deluge” and work together toward a world literature that would promote the “true progress of mankind” (WA I, 42.2, 503).

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### 4.3 CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

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Goethe’s idea of “world” literature was against establishing and worshipping of uniform culture and language within territorial boundaries secured by the hegemonic ruling class. If we fought over literary nationality as we fight over borders, literature will always defeat theorisation. Hence Goethe posits world literature against uniformity and in favour of difference, in his contemporary milieu.

Marx proclaimed in the 1848 Communist manifesto that “The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature” In the later 19<sup>th</sup> century and up to the end of the second great war, Europe's nations withdrew into a sort of solipsistic intellectual isolation, breeding political xenophobia and cultural chauvinism. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels imagined a new international system, which would break this cultural chauvinism by bringing to birth the international culture of the working class. In their view, world literature would emerge as transcending the national boundaries and moving towards an internationalism. With Marx, world literature enters the realm of

political capital and no longer remains literary phenomena, which the writers Goethe and Tagore, were trying to preserve it as .

When Tagore was asked in 1905 by the National Council of Education of Calcutta to speak about Comparative Literature, he titled his lecture "World Literature", saying that literature was too large to be contained by the notions of "his field and my field", ie territorial boundaries. As a subject of the British empire, Tagore was a bitter critic of the homogenous single-religion nation of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. As an Indian, Tagore understood *desh* in opposition to nation, and believed the former as a marker of diversity and plurality

Goethe proposes a globalised culture in which the arts and literature were human in the literal sense of the word, and transcended spatial and temporal boundaries. Gadamer claims "normative significance" ("normativer Sinn") for "world literature" (167), but Goethe is not creating a canon or making prescriptions. Rather, he is talking about relations between people. We have noted the context in which "nation" as opposed to "world" or "universe" emerges – "nation" is a spatio-temporal idea while "world" implies that humanity is universal but includes the difference and uniqueness of the individual. One of Goethe's last essays, entitled "Epochs of Social Education" ("Epochen geselliger Bildung"), leads one to the conclusion that Goethe directed his hopes away from the seclusion and intimacy of life in what he called the "idyllic epoch," to its gradual convergence and fusion, and finally to the point where it is wholly united with the "universal epoch." There are four stages of literary education ("Bildung") in Goethe's thinking : in the first, one sings only of the beloved and "prefers to head toward one's mother tongue" ; in the second and third, "one does not resist the influence of foreign languages"; and in the fourth, one is "convinced of the necessity of informing oneself about the present course of world events, in their real as well as ideal sense. All foreign literatures, together with our native literature, become part of the same phenomenon, and we are not left behind by world events....the people think, act and feel almost exactly as we do" (Eckermann 196). So, Goethe does not propose the submergence of the particular in "humanity in general" , but to "mediation and mutual recognition" . According to Goethe, "One must get to know the peculiarities of each nation to then see past them and establish a relationship with the nation; for the characteristics of a nation are like its language and its coins, they facilitate dealings with it, in fact they make such dealings possible in the first place" (ibid) . This view of world literature as pointed out earlier, is based on a relation between the different literatures and cultures across the world, in other words, a relation between people, rather than on a spatio-temporal categories.

But in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this model is in question after the wars that have involved not only Europe but its colonies across the world. As Auerbach notes, in exile in Turkey during the second great war, the process of cultural "conciliation" ("Ausgleichsprozeß") that Goethe regards with some optimism is increasingly eroding every distinctive tradition, with the result that ultimately, "in a uniformly organized world, only one single literary culture -- indeed, in a relatively short time, only a few literary languages, soon perhaps only one -- will remain alive. And with this, the idea of world literature would be at once realized and destroyed". And in a similar sense T.S. Eliot proposes "that a world culture which was simply a uniform culture would be no culture at all. We should have a humanity de-humanised. It would be a nightmare. But on the other hand, we cannot resign the idea of world-culture altogether" (62) while Lévi-Strauss suggests that "It is cultural difference that makes our encounters fruitful". He talks of the gradual abolishment of certain cultural traits because of uniformisation, and then entropy and "melange" or mixing. This loss of identity disturbs Etiemble as well, when he says, "It is at the precise moment when World Literature becomes possible, that it becomes at once, impossible"

### ❖ Check Your Progress

1. Match the idea with the assumptions

- |                                     |                                                    |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| A. Canon                            | i cosmopolitanism                                  |
| B. common poetic                    | ii World is an additive concept                    |
| C. literatures of the entire world  | iii selective principle to define world literature |
| D. literature not bounded by nation | iv human expression shares common elements         |

Ans : Aiii Biv Cii Di

2. Goethe and Marx both believed that world literature

- A. will give everyone equal power
- B. It will open the markets
- C. It will destroy national narrow-mindedness
- D. It will enhance the feeling of common humanity

Ans : C

3. According to Goethe, world literature is

- A. a set of canonical works
- B. a very rare phenomenon, difficult to find
- C. a process, emerging in the contemporary
- D. the sum total of all literary works in the world

Ans : C

4. According to Goethe, there are four stages of “bildung” ranging from
- A. Inclination towards world literature to appreciation of one’s own literature
  - B. Mediation and mutual recognition to singing of the beloved
  - C. Appreciation of one’s own literature to submergence in the general
  - D. Appreciation of one’s own literature to mediation and mutual recognition of the literatures of others

Ans : D

5. According to Auerbach, world literature would be realised when
- A. There was one dominant literature across the world
  - B. When all the literatures were in conciliation
  - C. The great war ended
  - D. One or two literatures survived the war

Ans : A

6. Auerbach’s proclamation that world literature would be created and destroyed at once means

- A. A single dominant literature would destroy all other literatures
- B. Cultural conciliation would make all literatures uniform
- C. There would be no world literature if all literatures were considered uniform
- D. Cultural conciliation would result in a diverse “world” being replaced by a uniform one.

Ans : D

7. Both Auerbach and Etienne feared that
- A. The concept of World literature would reduce diversity to uniformity
  - B. At the moment when perfect universality was achieved, diversity would die
  - C. World literature as a concept promoted diversity
  - D. World literature as a concept promoted unity.

Ans : B

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## 4.4 ABOUT WORLD LITERATURE

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### 4.4.1 World Literature as Discipline : Auerbach and philology

Erich Auerbach's idea of world literature rests on humanity and human relationships rather than canons and classics : "'World literature' refers not simply to what is common and human as such, but rather to this as the mutual fertilisation of the manifold. It presupposes the *felix culpa* of mankind's division into a whole host of cultures".

Auerbach wrote during the disintegration of colonial empires, the accompanying expansion of the global system of nation-state, in the wake of the war in Europe and elsewhere, and the aftermath of the Holocaust. Another thinker, writing in a different language, discipline, and sensibility – namely, Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, makes the postcolonial postwar European subject, ie himself, the investigator of mankind's difference. As ethnographer, and critic of Western ethnocentrism, Levi Strauss takes a position opposite to Auerbach's role of philological humanist, a critic of the narrowness of attachments to the viewpoint of "national" language and literature. In both texts, we might say, the question is how to refashion the western subject to look outside Europe for knowledge, when it is obvious that the globe is connected by markets and cultural difference exists. Clifford (1988) calls this the new "predicament of culture" : the rejection of the centrality of Europe and Europeans. This transformed field of culture, considered in "Philology and Weltliteratur" consists of three main sections. One locates the text, outlining the difference between the Goethean idea of weltliteratur and the changed conditions in which Auerbach is writing. The second examines the "practical" problems and difficulties raised by this new conception. And the third offers synthesis as a possible approach to these methodological questions. As Said clarifies in the introduction to Auerbach's "Philology and Weltliteratur," the task of philology is to "study of all, or most, of human verbal activity" (1), but not for eternal truths, but for "contingent, historical truths at their basic level: it conceives of man dialectically, not statically" (2). Although both philosophy and philology engage with the "truth," philological "truth" is more subject to historical change. Based on Vico's conception of philology, however, Auerbach asserts that this philological truth — that which Vico calls 'certum' (the certain or established) — is not inseparable from philosophical truth — what Vico calls 'verum' — in that the latter is actualized in every historical moment, and the philosophical truth can be known "only through a knowledge of history as a whole" (Said, "Introduction" 16). Therefore, for Auerbach it is philology that

makes it possible to have access to philosophical "truth" whose wholeness is impossible to achieve by just looking at an individual historical period. Although philology investigates what people believed truthfully at each cultural age and the "truth" might be a product of their limited perspective, philology makes it possible to know the systematic context of human history and this "philological philosophy or philosophical philology is concerned with only one thing — mankind" ("Introduction" 16). In other words, philology tries to discover "truth" in the totality of historical facts, but its task entails not just the overt discovery of materials and the development of methods of research, but "beyond that their penetration and evaluation so that an inner history of mankind—which thereby created a conception of man unified in his multiplicity — could be written" (Auerbach, "Philology" 4).

#### **4.4.2 Humanism and Universal Literature**

For Goethe, literature and culture in general cannot be considered pure and hermetic entities : the forms and ideas circulate endlessly since always all within a cultural universe without any obvious connection between them, and that circulation is creative; in which there is also the contrary sense; he has here shown how the sterile poetics and aesthetics of symbolism made for new thrills in Chinese and Japanese literature, like oriental forms like haiku and pantomime inspired the Europeans though they had very erroneous ideas of it. He felt the grand category of poetics were not limited by national boundaries, and needed an approach as much universal as possible .

Etiemble wrote in "Comparison n'est pas raison" : In 1950, it is true that this discipline was affirmed as a literary science rather than as a form of literary criticism. The passage from one ambition to the next shows the movement from the first part of the 20th century to the second, opening a tomorrow which is as yet uncertain . In 1964, questioned Goethe's idea of Weltliteratur – asking that the notion be revised, he proposed thereafter, universal literature which expresses "humanitat" : which is literature's ultimate purpose – the concert of literatures linking man to man.

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### **4.5 WORLD LITERATURE AS CURRICULUM**

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Thus, the rise of "world literature" as a course of study within comparative literature, answered present-day pedagogical requirements for a "culturally diverse" education in the "1st world". The fulfilling of such requirements by comparative literature makes for a strong case for existence and fiscal support within western

university systems. And therefore, the skills one acquires through a training in Comparative Literature certainly provide a competitive edge in teaching generalist curricula like "World Literature." In Tagore's and Goethe's ideas of "world literature", the emphasis is not on literature that is accessible to the world, as Damrosch defines it (Damrosch 2003), not on a canon or a discrete or infinite collection of works, but literature as a universal mode of relating to the world through language, despite the difference in language cultures, literary conventions time and place. This literariness (see U 1) is emphasised by both the writers in their own contexts and in their own languages.

One route suggested by Edward Said, is inspired by Auerbach's call to return to philology. Said describes philology as the "detailed, patient scrutiny of and a lifelong attentiveness to the words and rhetoric by which language is used by human beings who exist in history" (2004: 61), he is arguing for the restoration of the integrity of scholarship through fidelity to human history. For Said, philology connects readers of a certain text with an author and the historical world in which both the author and the text are situated thus making it possible for readers to encounter the text's resistance to reality: "fundamentally an act of perhaps modest human emancipation and enlightenment that changes and enhances one's knowledge for purposes other than reductiveness, cynicism, or fruitless standing aside" (ibid 66). In this sense, philological "truth" is always historical and humanist and Auerbach's "historical humanism" (ibid 4) and the seemingly impossible task of studying every human verbal activity is founded on the belief that history is the one which makes us advance to a consciousness of the human condition and to the realization of humankind's potential.

James Clifford's (1988) comments that Said is "the anthropologist as outsider and participant-observer (existential shorthand for the hermeneutical circle) is a familiar modern topos" (263-64). Clifford's remark highlights what an anthropological vision can actualize: an awareness of a simultaneous dimension, or an awareness, in Said's words, of the "contrapuntal" (186). As Clifford notices, Said's emphasis on the anthropological participant-observer's immersion in distant cultures is the logical result of his literary reflection. I believe that what attracted Said was the possibility of achieving originality of vision by seeing the entire world as a "foreign" land and hence the importance of exiles for whom the plurality of vision is given as the condition of their existence. I argue that Said criticized the narrowness of a vision limited to the nation. Impressed by Adorno who once argued that everything one says or thinks, as well as every object one possesses, is ultimately a mere commodity, Said considered it our intellectual mission to extricate ourselves from this state of affairs. A

life of exile is the manifestation of this outlook, a "life led outside habitual order" (Said 186).

There is a movement among comparativists to re-focus the discipline away from the nation-based approach with which it has previously been associated towards a cross-cultural approach that pays no heed to national borders. Works of this nature include Alamgir Hashmi's *The Commonwealth, Comparative Literature and the World*, David Damrosch's *What is World Literature?*, and Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*. In his essay on third world literature (See 3 above), Jameson advocates the reinvention of Culture Studies in the context of third world literatures, placing what Goethe called "world literature" in a new context, as according to him any engagement with world literature demands engagement with third world literature.

David Damrosch examines the object World Literature along three principle axes, namely circulation, translation and production, citing in his introduction the conversations between Goethe and Eckermann, wherein the doyen of Weimar Classicism had expounded on his ideas on *Weltliteratur*. However, Goethe's vision seems somewhat at cross-purposes with Damrosch's contextualizing the impetus for *Weltliteratur* in "the dramatic acceleration of globalization" (Damrosch 4). Damrosch extends Guillén's reading of Goethe's idea of World Literature as the "sum total of all national literatures", to mean "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (4.). He sums up his endeavour thus:

"My claim is that world literature is not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a

mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike. This book is intended to explore this mode of circulation and to clarify the ways in which works of world literature can be best read. It is important from the onset to realize that just as there has never been a single set canon of world literature, so too no single way of reading can be appropriate to all texts, or to any one text at all times." (5)

This has been contested, as Damrosch himself admits in a lecture titled; "What isn't World Literature", delivered in 2016 at the sixth meeting of Institute for World Literature at Harvard University. Here he addresses the major responses to and criticisms of his postulations and practices of world literature since the publication of "What is World Literature?" in 2003. He divides his responses in line with the

three sources of criticisms he recognizes from within the scholarly academic community; namely national philologies or national literature scholarship, Comparative Literature Departments and Postcolonial Studies. All the concerns that Damrosch lists such as, a lack of grounding in language and historio-cultural context, the seeming absence of a “theoretical” rigor and the lack of a political edge, are all legitimate concerns that he himself acknowledges need to be addressed.

#### **4.5.1 Distant Reading**

We turn now to conceptual tools suggested by different scholars, which they claim will help us to read “world” literature.

##### **Distant Reading**

Franco Moretti in *Conjectures on World Literature* proposed a mode of reading which included works outside of established literary canons, which he variously termed "the great unread" and, elsewhere, "the Slaughterhouse of Literature". He questioned the idea of close reading, which he said limited us to a few canonical works on which to base our ideas about literature. Instead, he turned to quantitative methods and empirical studies, employed samples, statistics, paratexts, and other features not often considered within the ambit of literary analysis. In this context, his idea of “distant reading” is required in order to establish a deep contextual field. Moretti’s extreme prediction is : "[literary history] will become 'second-hand': a patchwork of other people's research, without a single direct textual reading". Since it is possible thanks to computers, to work with a large data base, Distant reading often shares with the Annales school a focus on the analysis of long-term histories and trends through 'operationalizing' which Moretti says is "absolutely central to the new field of computational criticism"[8] that includes distant reading. Operationalisation for Moretti, consists of "building a bridge from concepts to measurement, and then to the world" (104) thus introducing computational analysis of primary literary sources. The cancellation of reading as an event and the reduction of the singularity of the text to a set of structural elements, characteristic of this method has been criticised by scholars like Gayatri Spivak and Stanley Fish.

#### 4.5.2 Literary Space and the World Republic of Letters

##### Literary space and the World Republic of Letters

Pascale Casanova conceptualises literature as a “world” raising three questions :

Is it possible to re-establish the lost bond between literature, history and the world, while still maintaining a full sense of the irreducible singularity of literary texts? Second, can literature itself be conceived as a world? And if so, might an exploration of its territory help us to answer question number one? (ibid 70)

Distinguishing between world literature and the international literary space, she poses the World Republic of Letters. It is not an attempt to describe the total international literary space nor to develop a new corpus or to enlarge the problematic of comparative literature, but to add another dimension to the fabric, creating another world, “whose divisions and frontiers are relatively independent of political and linguistic borders. And with its own laws, its own history, its specific revolts and revolutions; a market where non-market values are traded, within a non-economic economy; and measured, as we shall see, by an aesthetic scale of time. This World of Letters functions invisibly for the most part, save to those most distant from its great centres or most deprived of its resources, who can see more clearly than others the forms of violence and domination that operate within it. “ (ibid 72). She identifies “a set of interconnected positions, which must be thought and described in relational terms. At stake are not the modalities of analysing literature on a world scale, but the conceptual means for thinking literature as a world”. Her conceptual tool is space. These forms , colours, patterns, variations, relations all reveal themselves only from a distance, like the pattern of a Persian carpet. Casanova says that “world literary space is not a sphere that is set above all the others, reserved exclusively for international writers, editors, critics—for literary actors manoeuvring in a supposedly de-nationalized world. It is not the sole preserve of great novelists, hugely successful authors, editorial produce devised for global sales. It is formed by all the inhabitants of the Republic of Letters, each of them differentially situated within their own national literary space. At the same time, each writer’s position must necessarily be a double one, twice defined: each writer is situated once according to the position he or she occupies in a national space, and then once again according to the place that this occupies within the world space” (ibid).

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## 4.6 THE “FUTURE” OF “WORLD” LITERATURE

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What is the result of introducing comparative approach to the idea of world literature ?

In *Rethinking Comparativism* Spivak (2009) equates reading and translating as textual and political practices. Spivak emphasises on “the irreducibility of idiom” which contributes to the special nature of translation “as an active rather than a prosthetic practice”, an “intimate act of reading”. However, though comparatists “are prepared to undertake a serious and continuous undoing of nationalist or national language-based reading”, this does not move us too far from the regionalist impulse of the initial vision of European Comparative Literature. Spivak solves this problem by insisting on comparison as an act, just as translation and reading are conscious acts. She names this the performativity of comparativism, and gives the reader/scholar /comparatist “the task of undoing historical injustice toward languages associated with peoples who were not successfully competitive within capitalism—with the added proviso that these languages attempt to establish an interconnection among themselves through our disciplinary and institutional help”.

World Literature as conceptualised by Damrosch however has been extended into several research programs, in which the “world” is made more inclusive and the interrogation of a “common humanity” by political exigencies of stratification are addressed.

1. The theory of Uneven Development (proposed by the Warwick Research Collective) traces Marx’s relation of “world” literature to “world market”, and indicates that literature is a commodity. The uneven development of markets influence the circulation of commodities, literature being no exception.

2. Francesca Orsini’s research program acknowledges that World Literature would look different in different parts of the world, addressing the problem of an insularity of vision, and decentring the Eurocentric nature of “world” in Damrosch’s formulation. She begins by questioning “the geographical categories used to underpin current theoretical and methodological approaches to “world literature,” which end up making nine-tenths of the world, and of literature produced in the world, drop off the world map or appear “peripheral” but her program remains limited to an additive and distant view of multilingualism, rather than an enquiry into pluralism as a category of understanding.

3. In Damrosch's<sup>2</sup> more recent configurations of "Minor and "Ultra-minor" literatures, presented at the 21st congress of the ICLA held at the University of Vienna in the summer of 2016, are in the final analysis based on the earlier discussed logic of "circulation" : a person who is a very popular writer in one region of India and well known in other regions, is a very minor writer if judged by the non-Indian readers' acquaintance with him. This may tell us about the translation, printing and circulation of literary works, even extended to the world of digital publishing. The thinkers who proposed the idea of world literature were striking against the commodification of literature as propaganda material for the nation-state. The concerns of scholars of World Literature at present are a different kind of world, and perhaps not literature but books as commodities.

How do we create a workable concept of "world "literature in the time of globalisation ? We must reconsider the idea that the minimum unit in which we imagine the world is the monocultural, monolingual "nation" .This questions Damrosch's assumptions in crafting the idea of "world" based on national entities as in most postcolonial nations, and now with the movement of labour across the world, in most "developed" nations as well, a monolingual, monocultural nation is no longer a reality.

This reality is the context for our own practice of engaging with literary cultures and their relation to the arts, in Indian universities. As we have argued above, this needs a different conceptualisation of both world and literature within the frames of difference, relation and plurality, leading to the discourse of Comparative Literature in India.

### ❖ Check Your Progress

1. Etiemble and Wellek's theories of comparative literature were aspects of

- A.the "predicament of culture"
- B.Positivism
- C.Rapports de faits
- D.Influence studies

Ans : A

2. the predicament of culture was manifested in

- A.Rejection of Eurocentrism
- B.Interest in alien cultures
- C.Rejection of rapports de faits
- D.Interest in the other arts

Ans : A

3.Said's claim that philology enables us to consider man "dialectically, not statically" is a

- A. Positivist view
- B relational view
- C. Crosscultural view
- D. subjective view

Ans : B

4. Auerbach and Said emphasise philology as a method for studying world literature : this means

- A. the study of literatures in their original languages
- B. knowledge of languages
- C. a study of human verbal activity which entails a knowledge of language which is the medium of such activity
- D. a knowledge of linguistics

Ans : C

5.For Etienne , universal literature was

- A. An additive whole consisting of national literatures as hermetic units
- B. A harmonious whole as if created by many instruments in concert
- C. A synthesis of many hermetic units
- D. An unity of diverse entities

Ans : B

6.In Damrosch's conceptualisation, world literature is

- A all literatures written everywhere in the world
- B. a set of canonical texts
- C. a mode of circulation
- D. a set of translated texts from all literatures in the world

Ans : C

7.Distant reading is

- A.Placing the text in a historical context
- B.Taking into account the deep structure
- C.Measuring the occurrence of concepts
- D.Computing the frequency of the occurrence of certain concepts

Ans : A

8. According to Moretti, Computing the occurrence of literary sources or concepts across texts, and using the frequency or absence of certain concepts to construct a world view of the time is called

- A. Distant reading
- B. Operationalisation
- C. Computational criticism
- D. Empirical literature

Ans : B

9. For Damrosch, world literature is ----- of canonical and non-canonical texts, while Moretti proposes that ----- will be abolished in favour of ----- if world literature is to be studied

- A. close reading, distant reading, a way of reading
- B. Distant reading, a way of reading, textual reading
- C. Textual reading, operationalisation, a way of reading
- D. A way of reading, close reading, distant reading.

Ans : D

10. Match challenges to world literature by the theorist who identified them:

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A. Rabindranath Tagore | i. nationalist philologies    |
| B. Franco Moretti      | ii. homogenisation of culture |
| C. David Damrosch      | iii. the great unread         |
| D. Eric Auerbach       | iv. territorial nationalism   |

Ans : A-iv, B-iii, C-i, D- ii

11. The World Republic of Letters identified by Pascale Casanova

- A. is not bound by linguistic or political boundaries
- B. is a conceptual category for thinking about literature
- C. is inhabited by cosmopolitan citizens
- D. Is a method of literary history

Ans : A and B

12. By “each writer is doubly situated”, Casanova means

- A. a writer is situated in time and space
- B. a writer is situated in her local milieu and in the global milieu
- C. the writer is both a writer and a reader
- D. the writer is a citizen of the physical and the literary world

Ans : B

13. By insisting on the performativity of translation and reading, Spivak emphasises

A. That comparative literature is a theory

B. That comparative literature is an activity

C. That comparativism comprises intimate or close reading

D. That comparative literature requires the knowledge of languages

Ans : B and D

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#### 4.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we have studied the concept of world literature in detail. We have also learnt the relationship between world literature and comparative literature.

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#### 4.8 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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**:: STRUCTURE ::****5.0 Objectives****5.1 The Comparative Approach To Indian Literature****5.2 Vishwa Sahitya : Pre-History of Comparative Literature  
In India****5.3 “Indian” Languages****5.4 Formation of Modern Indian Languages****5.5 Common Elements In Formation of Modern Indian  
Languages****5.6 Colonialism and Language Policy****5.7 Pluralism and Indian Literature****5.8 References**

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**5.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit, our objective is to demonstrate how the comparative approach can be used to study and understand Indian language literatures, regardless of the language in question. We are proposing the comparative approach as a general way of approaching Indian language literatures, and as discussed in the other courses in this program , creative work in other mediums of expression.

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**5.1 THE COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO INDIAN  
LITERATURE**

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Our idea of India is that it is a plural society and a plural nation. To understand and analyse this plural entity it is required that

- we conceptualise it as a dynamic network of many interacting language-cultures
- we fashion categories of literary understanding that help us to grasp the formation of individual Indian language literatures as part of these interactions.

Why do we propose the comparative approach for this purpose ?

As we saw in Unit 1 comparison is a particular kind of cognitive activity, in which

- the existence of difference is part of our seeing and thinking about the world.
- we look at something *in relation to* other, different entities, persons or things

Both these ideas, difference and relationality, are necessary to understand India as a plural entity. Hence , in Humanities education, the comparative approach , conceptually, practically and ethically, helps us understand plurality that characterises the very idea of India, so we can reflect upon practices and means to preserve it . The history of comparative literature as a discipline in India are discussed in detail in another course in this program. Our objective here is to answer the philosophical and the practical questions asked above : why do we propose a comparative approach to understand Indian language literatures and other forms of creative expression ? Our answer is, the comparative approach provides an ethics and a “useful praxis” in our plurilingual, pluricultural secular nation. This unit will outline how that claim is concretised in the scholarship and pedagogy of literature in Indian languages.

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## **5.2 VISHWA SAHITYA : PRE-HISTORY OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE IN INDIA**

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Tagore was asked by the National Council of Education to speak about Comparative Literature as early as 1907 , nearly five decades before the first department of comparative literature was officially established in the country. This perhaps indicates that the nationalists and anti-imperialists in India at the time saw some value or potential in this field as a means to undercut the sovereignty of British literature and culture over the young Western-educated minds of colonial India. Tagore himself advocated vishwa sahitya, world literature, as a counter to the narrowness of national literature (See Unit 3.4.1).

The discipline was introduced at Jadavpur University in 1956. Writing about the state of the discipline in India for the 1959 issue of the Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature, Buddhadeva Bose (1908–1974), founder of the first comparative literature department in India, and a poet, novelist, literary theorist and translator, acknowledged an indebtedness to Tagore’s idea of Vishwa Sahitya .Bose harks back to Tagore’s lecture at the NCE , wherein Tagore hailed “Literature” as a shared universal expression of all humankind, and stated therefore that any contemplation of the literary would only be complete through a contemplation of “World Literature” (Bose 3).

Such a call to recognise the universality of the human spirit becomes the context of a definition of comparative literature in India.

Tagore's lecture was given in the backdrop of the first partition of Bengal along overly communal lines into East and West Bengal, the former predominantly populated by Muslims and the latter predominantly Hindu. The partition came into effect on the 16th of October 1905 under Viceroy Curzon, exacerbating communal tensions in Bengal and elsewhere. Against this backdrop of identity based violence, at several points in his lecture on *Viswa Sahitya* (World Literature), Tagore urged his audience to think beyond the immediate, the individual and the local (ibid.). He was addressing the very real and immediate crisis of growing communal disharmony in the country, countering it with the realization of harmony in the expression of the universal human spirit and rejecting disputes between individual interest groups and local discords by relating them to the parochial idea of nation reduced to "territorial sovereignty". This harmony could begin in a contemplation of the "World" in the literary (ibid.). Tagore compares literature to an ongoing work, a construction in which every great builder from all over the world makes his contribution: some parts are built anew by each age, while some parts survive. Bose reads into Tagore's vision of a "World Literature" a philosophy and an aesthetic comparable to Goethe's call for *Weltliteratur* (2), juxtaposing differences with the unifying quality of humanity.

In his 1959 report Bose stated that Comparative Literature in India responded to a "very real need" (4), using the comparison to Goethe as relatable point of reference to the rise of Comparative Literature in Europe and America. He saw it as the only means of counteracting the "virtually exclusive" esteem that English literature continued to be held in within the Indian academy (4). Bose quotes Tagore as identifying the dawn of the modern era in India as a "world-hunger" (10), and submits that this is a call to broaden the Indian literary horizon, serving as a means to counteract the hegemony of a colonial Anglo-centric modernity (ibid. 5). Bringing the world, and particularly other modern European literatures, to the Indian literary consciousness, Bose emphasized that there was more to Europe than one could access through British culture, as evidenced by his translations of Baudelaire, Rilke and Hölderlin in Bengali (ibid.). This set the stage for the inception in India of the discipline of Comparative Literature.

### ❖ Check Your Progress

1. India is a plural entity. This means

- A. There are many languages and cultures
- B. Each language has its associated culture
- C. Each language and associated culture shares some common elements with at least one other, whether neighbouring or remote
- D. No language or associated culture forms a whole.

Ans : C

2. Tagore replaced the term Comparative Literature with World Literature because

- A. He wanted to show that comparative literature was non-existent
- B. He wanted the idea of comparison to be replaced by an idea of universality
- C. He interpreted comparative literature to mean literature not confined to national or other territorial boundaries.
- D. He felt that national literature should be superseded by world literature.

Ans : C

3. For Tagore and Goethe, the idea of world literature was

- A. An addition of all national literatures
- B. A canon of great works
- C. A way to transcend the parochialism of national literatures
- D. A way to use literature in the service of humanity

Ans : C

4. Which of the following characterise a plurilingual society

- A. A single national language
- B. Firm boundaries between languages
- C. Exchange between languages is easy
- D. Every language is a fixed and complete whole

Ans : C

5. The difference between a plurilingual society and a multilingual society is

- A. In the former a set of languages are inter-related while in the latter each language exists independently
- B. In the latter a person can know more than one language while in the former no one knows any single language.
- C. In the former there are no boundaries between languages while in the latter each language exists independently

D. In the latter each language exists independently while in the former there is no single language

Ans : A

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### 5.3 “INDIAN” LANGUAGES

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In this section, we will see how the idea of “Indian” literature emerged, by understanding both linguistic and juridical aspects of the history of the formation of “modern Indian” languages. For this we will use the conceptual tools comprising the comparative approach to understand the plural culture of “Indian” society in which Indian language literatures are located. Though coming from a completely different structure of feeling than Tagore’s, Raymond Williams’ ideas of “residual, emergent and dominant”, (See Unit 6) , or Etiemble’s “literary invariants”, or Jauss’ idea of the “horizon of expectation” provide a frame for understanding these “survivals” and “changes” across literatures, regardless of national boundaries.

To call India a *plural* entity has the following implications for Indian language literatures:

1. the historical formation and common usages of each language-culture are intricately linked to those of other neighbouring language-cultures – sometimes, to remote ones as well.
2. As a single geopolitical entity, all parts of the country with their diversities great or small, are accessible to all. Ongoing cultural contact and exchange between languages and cultures can easily occur without crossing ‘national’ boundaries.
3. Indian literature, as Amiya Dev points out, is an “interliterary condition” : Understanding Indian language literatures from a plural perspective means to take account of the interrelations between the different languages and cultures both historically and in their present interactions.

From this we may conclude that the concepts and categories used to study “national” literatures only have a reductive effect of covering differences when applied to a plural society like India. Linguistically, plurality is the result of both synchronic and diachronic contact. (See Unit 1 and Unit 6) between languages, ie people, in diverse circumstances, ranging from trade to marriage. Every “modern” Indian language, has been influenced by certain factors coming from cultures other than the one in which the language has been formed.

Hence, the comparative approach which takes into account difference, relationality and the ethics of engagement with difference, is an

adequate approach to study Indian language literatures. The history of the formation of “modern” Indian languages will show the different kinds of contact and exchange between people across the country. Such contacts influence their languages, customs and beliefs, leading to the formation of a plural culture. In the rest of this unit, we will consider the different aspects and implications of the idea of a plural nation, for the study, understanding and enjoyment of literature and the other arts, with India as the example.

### 5.3.1 India as a “linguistic region”

M.B. Emeneau characterized the Indian sub-continent as a “Sprachbund” or linguistic area, a term for a geographically contiguous area, which is characterized by the existence of common linguistic features shared by genetically non-related language. Hence a Linguistic Area is marked by the “convergence” of linguistic features of various languages spoken in a particular region, regardless of the fact that these languages may belong to different families. Hence, “languages belonging to more than one family show traits in common which do not belong to the other members of (at least) one of the families”. Emeneau calls the process “Indianization” of the Indo-European (IE) component in the Indic linguistic scene (1956: 7). The mechanism which creates these shared features is extensive bilingualism, resulting from the interaction and intermarriage between communities indigenous and migrant. This means borrowing of certain lexemic, phonological and structural elements between pre-existent and incoming languages.

In Emeneau’s definition of Sprachbund with respect to South Asia, the common traits belong to the Indo-Aryan languages (OI, MI, New Indo-Aryan), Munda and Dravidian but are not shared by Indo-Aryan’s closest cousin, Iranian (**Emeneau 1978**). India represents a classic example of linguistic area. The languages of mainland India belong to four different language families i.e. India represents five language families altogether, all very distinct from one another. These are: 1) Indo-Aryan 2) Dravidian 3) Tibeto-Burman 4) Austro-Asiatic 5) Andamanese.

Emeneau also proposed the term “Areal Linguistics”, not as a substitute but complementary to historical linguistics, to explain what is not explainable by “genetic” historical linguistics. It is the “diffusion” that constitutes the body of the study to explain linguistic similarities across distinct language families.

❖ **Check Your Progress:1**

1.The interliterary condition means

- A.Literature in any language does not exist in isolation
- B.Literature is influenced by contact between people
- C.Literature is an event of reading within a context
- D.Literature exists along with other systems

Ans : A

2.Indian literature is an interliterary condition. This means

- A.Indian languages are inter-related
- B.Indian languages share an overlapping history of formation and literatures written in it share a common history by being part of “india”.
- C.Indian literatures are connected by contact
- D.There is no “Indian” literature

Ans : B

3.A linguistic region is one in which

- A.A single language is spoken
- B.The region is demarcated by the languages spoken there
- C.All the languages belong to the same language family
- D.The features of different languages of the region converge, even if they belong to different language families

Ans : D

4.Indian language literature is best studied through a comparative method because

- A.It is multilingual
- B.The histories of language formation and usage are linked
- C.There is constant contact between languages
- D.There are no boundaries between languages.

Ans : B

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## **5.4 FORMATION OF MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES**

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The formation of modern Indian Languages is the synthesis of two aspects – the language policies of the state and the history of language use across the area designated as India. The histories of modern Indian languages are inextricably linked, and this is a feature of the plurilinguistic situation in which Indian literature is described as an interliterary condition, rather than a substantive category, ie an approach to literary studies, a way of reading, rather set of texts.

Applying the idea of organic plurality of languages (See Unit 1 and 6), we can discern the common elements in all modern Indian languages. Historically, the idea of India entails recognition of diversity and the refusal to either give in to majoritarianism or to splinter into separate bodies, ie the desire to stay together as a geopolitical singularity in a federation in order to maintain linguistic and cultural plurality. The secular state attempts to ensure equality of difference especially focusing on the interrelated nature of the literatures and cultures. Legislation in post independence or modern India espoused this plurality at least in name and in policy. Hence, state policy regarding plurilinguality and multilinguality are factors in the literary discourse of modern Indian language literatures – and the discussion is centred around the policy failures as well as the borrowing of categories of understanding alien to Indian reality – like the idea of a monocultural nation, for example.

Hence, the comparative approach to Indian literature would be to trace the genesis of this p[lurality that is the ground for all modern Indian language literatures, and formulate the categories of thought that will help us understand it.

#### **5.4.1 Language Planning**

In India, language status planning occurred through “officialization” ie recognition as a scheduled language, in a special section of the Constitution, the 8th Schedule . At the time the Constitution was adopted, inclusion in this list meant that the language was entitled to representation on the Official Language Commission. The list has since acquired further significance. The Government of India is now under an obligation to take measures for the development of these languages, such that “they grow rapidly in richness and become effective means of communicating modern knowledge”, ie the states will foster and support state run educational institutions, and all India public services examinations can be taken in that language. As per the 2011 census, there are a total of 121 languages and 270 mother tongues. The 23 languages included in the Eighth Schedule account for the mother tongue of 96.72 percent Indians as per the 2011 census.

The condition of socio-linguistic and cultural plurality is the culmination of the co-existence of many cultures and languages in relation with one another . Indian languages share literary , semantic, syntactic and pragmatic influences from many sources like Sanskrit, classical Tamil, the local Prakrits (see Section 5.6 below), Persian or Arabic, English and some other European languages, like Portuguese. The formation of every “modern” Indian language, has undergone many similar stages, but not simultaneously. The idea of early and late formations, prophane and metaphane respectively, theorised by

Sisir Kumar Das (see Unit 6 below), is useful to study such developments. This is mentioned here to show that plurality is the fundamental characteristic of “India” as a linguistic entity as well as a geopolitical entity. The existence of a multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual entity like India questions the very idea of a monocultural, monolingual nation where everyone has the same culture, religion and language. The conceptual framework that may be used to study the literatures and cultures of such a nation will not be adequate to study the plural culture of India.

#### **5.4.2 State Policies on Language**

Here we consider some of the important policies of the colonial and the national governments to manage plurilinguality, to show that these policies had their effect upon the literatures of modern Indian languages. These are included here to demonstrate the link between policy, language and life and literacy in a plural society.

The emphasis on vernacular education dates to the 1840's, when the General Committee of Public Instruction (GCPI) at Calcutta began to review its policy of diffusing English education among the Indians. On 25th April 1840, the secretary to the Education Committee forwarded the minutes of this meeting advocating vernacular education, to all the local committees. The response was a demand for English education from among Indians like Raja Ram Mohun Roy, especially in the sciences.

The States Reorganisation Commission was preceded by the Linguistic Provinces Commission (aka Dhar Commission), set up in June 1948. It rejected language as a parameter for dividing states. Later, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru appointed the States Reorganisation Commission in December 1953, with the remit to reorganise the Indian states. The States Reorganisation Commission submitted a report on September 30, 1955, with recommendations for the reorganisation of India's states, which was then debated by the Indian parliament. Subsequently, bills were passed to make changes to the constitution and to administer the reorganisation of the states

#### **5.4.3 Minority languages**

Minority languages are typically those that carry a relatively lower or marginal functional load and transparency. The concept of “functional load” in this context refers to the ability of languages to successfully function in one or more social domains. The load is considered to be higher or lower on the basis of the number of domains it covers. The higher the number of domains, the higher the functional load. For example, in India English covers almost all major public domains such as media, business, education, national and international

communication, science and technology. In contrast, the tribal languages control only one (rapidly diminishing) domain, that of home, whereas regional languages cover at least four domains: home, education, public administration and to some extent media and interstate communication.

#### **5.4.4 Linguistic Minorities**

The Indian Constitution recognizes the concept of linguistic minorities, but is silent regarding the definition of the term. Hence the judiciary had to define it for the purpose applying Article 30 of the Constitution: “A linguistic minority for the purposes of Article 30 (1) is one which must at least have a separate spoken language. It is not necessary that the language should also have distinct script for those who speak it to be a linguistic minority. There are in this country some languages which have no script of their own, but nonetheless those sections of the people who speak that language will be a linguistic minority entitled to the protection of Article 30 (1).”

This Article gives linguistic minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutes of their choice. Article 350 A requires that every state must provide primary education in a mother tongue and according to Article 350 B, appoint a ‘Special Officer’ for linguistic minorities .

#### **5.4.5 Linguistic Surveys**

The Linguistic Survey was first proposed by George Abraham Grierson, a member of the Indian Civil Service, it was approved in 1891 and formally begun only in 1894 and the survey continued for thirty years with the last of the results being published in 1928.

the People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) under the auspices of an NGO called the Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, and with Ganesh N. Devy as Chairperson. The People's Linguistic Survey has led to an interrogation of the categories of understanding we apply to our plurilinguality. Apart from reflecting the social hierarchies of caste, class, gender and race, the policies made for Indian languages assume the existence of stable, standardised uniform language practices within a cast-iron boundary – if at all they envisage exchange, it is between such (non-existent) entities. However, the survey findings show that for Indian languages, this is not the case. Devy criticised the idea of “closed” categories of understanding in his first book *Of Many Heroes*, where he raised the question of concepts that regulate the imagining and writing of history. This is discussed in detail in Unit 6 below. Here we cite it to indicate that for the plural society of India, the very elements of the discourse of literature must

be reimagined, because the existing categories of understanding are limited by their monolingual, monocultural fixities.

He also criticised language hegemony and the imposition of a monocultural model of development and education through languages of power. The findings of the survey make us think about the results of the language policies applied to the plurilingual societies. One of the results is logocide or the destruction of languages that are not thus standardised or given weightage and institutional patronage, but assimilated into larger groups.

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## 5.5 COMMON ELEMENTS IN FORMATION OF MODERN INDIAN LANGUAGES

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Distinct divisions between languages and cultures not only treats them in isolation, but skews the living transactions between people to a single rather than a singular perspective. The comparative approach begins with the assumption of the co-existence of and relation between more than one entity. It demands an understanding and acknowledgement of the condition of being in relation, of being in-between. The pluralist perspective emphasizes the relation between the different languages and cultures, a condition which Dev has called interliterary, rather than legislating for fixed boundaries to be maintained in the service of identity politics.

### 5.5.1 What makes an “Indian” language ?

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The language sources and formations that contribute to most of the “modern” ie, post- 1956 Indian languages are discussed below. We briefly note the salient features of the languages which substantiate the notion of plurilinguality with respect to india. There is much material on the history and formation of these languages. Our purpose here is not to reprise this material but to indicate that multiple sources interact to form a plurilingual situation and give the reader an idea of their variety. This shared history of interaction forms the basis of the modern Indian languages.

### 5.5.2 Evoution of Sanskrit

Sanskrit belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European languages, arising in South Asia after its predecessor languages had diffused there from the northwest. Sheldon Pollock refers to a Sanskrit cosmopolis, because Sanskrit acted as a link language in ancient and medieval South Asia, and was also the vehicle of transmission of Hindu and Buddhist culture to Southeast Asia, East Asia and Central Asia in the early medieval era, it became a language of religion and high culture. It had a lasting impact on the languages of South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia, especially in their formal

and learned vocabularies. Sanskrit was a heterogenous language, distinguished by period and use.

- The Rig Vedic hymns are composed and orally transmitted in a version of Sanskrit called Vedic Sanskrit, in which the archaic syntax and morphology of the common ancestor language Proto-Indo-European are preserved. They resemble the Avestan gathas, the most archaic poems of the Iranian and Greek language families, Homer's *Iliad*. Sanskrit has been written in various Brahmic scripts, and in the modern era in nagri. Vedic Sanskrit interacted with the pre-existing ancient languages of the subcontinent known as Prkrts, absorbing names of newly encountered plants and animals; in addition, the Dravidian languages influenced Sanskrit's phonology and syntax.
- Classical Sanskrit, codified in the Aṣṭādhyāyī ("Eight chapters") of Pāṇini, emerged as a refined and standardized grammatical form in the mid-1st millennium BCE. The Aṣṭādhyāyī is the foundation of Vyākaraṇa, one of the Vedic ancillary fields (Vedāṅgas). A distinction is made between speech forms considered to be correct or standard (referred to as *śabda*) and those that are considered incorrect or nonstandard (*apaśabda*). Forms called *śabda* are described by Pāṇini as language components that are said to be adorned or purified (*saṃskṛta*) by adhering to particular grammatical principles. Because of these purifications, and the establishment of fixed principles, Sanskrit is described as *daivī vāk* 'the speech of the gods' by Dandin (6th–7th century) in the *Kāvyādarśa*.
- Epic Sanskrit in which, the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana, were composed, comprised a range of oral registers used in northern India between 400 BCE and 300 CE, and roughly contemporary with classical Sanskrit.

### 5.5.3 Prakrits and the interaction with Sanskrit

Of the two major views concerning the way in which Sanskrit and Prakrit are associated as languages, one by Nami Sadhu (11th century CE) in his commentary on Rudrata's *Kāvyāṅkārā* holds that the original matter in question is the speech of the common people, unadorned by grammar, and that *prākṛta* thus refers to localised usage in contrast to the elevated register of Sanskrit usage. It is also the usual explanation accepted by Western linguists. In contrast, the view most commonly held by Prakrit grammarians is that the Prakrit languages arose from Sanskrit.

Like Sanskrit and other ancient languages Prakrit was spoken and written much before a grammar was made for it. The Vedas do not

follow the Panini's Sanskrit grammar which is now the basis for all Sanskrit grammar. Similarly, the Agamas, and texts like Satkhandagama do not follow the modern prakrit grammar. Prakrit or *prākṛta* in Sanskrit, is derived from the Sanskrit *prakṛti* 'original matter, source.' Prakrit, refers to the local language – the name of the Prakrit follows the name of the region in which it is spoken. Dandin's Kavya-darsha (c. 700) mentions four kinds of literary languages: Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhramsha, and mixed (Ollett 2017). For example, the Maharashtri Prakrit, was prevalent in the Maharashtra region in which poems such as *Ravana-vaho* were composed. Bhoja's Sarasvati-Kanthabharana (11th century) lists Prakrit among the few languages suitable for composition of literature.<sup>[21]</sup> Some modern scholars include all Middle Indo-Aryan languages under the rubric of 'Prakrits', while others emphasize the independent development of these languages, often separated from the history of Sanskrit by wide divisions of caste, religion, and geography. The broadest definition uses the term "Prakrit" to describe any Middle Indo-Aryan language that deviates from Sanskrit in any manner. Ollett points out that this unsatisfactory definition makes "Prakrit" a cover term for languages that were not actually called Prakrit where they were spoken.<sup>[21]</sup> Mirza Khan's Tuhfat al-hind (1676) names Prakrit among the three kinds of literary languages native to India, the other two being Sanskrit and the local languages. It describes Prakrit as a mixture of Sanskrit and local languages. The Ardhamagadhi (or simply Magadhi) Prakrit, which was used extensively to write the scriptures of Jainism, is often considered to be the definitive form of Prakrit, while others are considered variants of it. The types of Prakrit are also divided by area and use. The phrase "Dramatic Prakrits" often refers to three most prominent ones, Shauraseni, Magadhi Prakrit, and Maharashtri Prakrit. There was a strict structure to the use of these different Prakrits in dramas. Characters each spoke a different Prakrit based on their role and background. It is significant that Prakrits, in the plural, form the bedrock of modern Indian languages.

### Apabhramsa

The Middle Indo-Aryan languages are differentiated from Old Indo-Aryan—the Classical Sanskrit used in the *Vedas*—by changes in phonology and morphology. Grammarians like Patanjali branded all such departures as *apabhramsha* ("deviance"), for instance, Prakrit words such as *gavi* and *goni* are *apabhramsha* of the Sanskrit word *go* (cow). These features show a marked departure from the synthetic nature of the Old Indo-Aryan languages, which had still been lingering in the early phases of the Middle Indo-Aryan, and paved the way for the advent of the New Indo-Aryan languages.

#### 5.5.4 Pali

The word 'Pali' is used as a name for the language of the Theravada Buddhist canon and refers to the line of original text quoted. It was distinguished from the commentary or translation that followed it in the manuscript.<sup>[3]</sup> K. R. Norman suggests that its emergence was based on a misunderstanding of the compound *pāli-bhāsa*, with *pāli* being interpreted as the name of a particular language.<sup>[3]</sup> The name Pali does not appear in the canonical literature, and in commentary literature is sometimes substituted with *tanti*, meaning a string or lineage.<sup>[3]:1</sup> This name seems to have emerged in Sri Lanka early in the second millennium CE during a resurgence in the use of Pali as a courtly and literary language. As recorded in chronicles like the Mahavamsa, the *Tipitaka* was first committed to writing during the first century BCE.<sup>[3]:5</sup> This was a move away from the previous tradition of oral preservation. By this point in its history, scholars consider it likely that Pali had already undergone some initial assimilation with Sanskrit, such as the conversion of the Middle-Indic *bamhana* to the more familiar Sanskrit *brāhmaṇa*. Grammarians of Pali operate simply with Pali terms and do not derive these from Sanskrit. This is consonant with the Buddhistic tradition, which does not accord the Vedas and Sanskrit exalted status

#### 5.5.5 Contact with West Asia

The Persian cosmopolis is a textually constituted entity based on the shared Persian literary system. The residual ideas (See unit 6) from the inherited texts of this tradition, like the *Shah Namah*, emerge (See Unit 6) in texts written in different “modern” Indian languages. India had long been part of the Persian cosmopolis – which is demonstrated by the similarity in the curriculum taught in the realms of the early-modern Mughals, Ottomans and Safavids largely derived from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Central Asia and Iran. The Deccan kingdoms of Bahamani and Golconda rulers, were patrons of Dakkhni, which turned the Persian poetry written around Delhi into the literary language that we know as Urdu today. The Gazette of 1865 identified Dakkhni as a “form of old Hindi speech”. Grierson, who agreed, also linked it to religion, saying that it is the form of Hindustani spoken by Muslims in the South. During the Khilji and Tughlaq excursions to the South, and the establishment of Muslim rule there, people from Delhi, took the kharhiboli they spoke with them to the Deccan. Poets of the Southern part of India wrote in a mixture of the local language and Persian ie – Dakkhni, which according to historians of Hindi provides the first examples of the confluence between three streams : local languages of south and

central India, the kharhiboli of the area around Delhi and Haryana, and Persian (Panchal 2008 p 18-19). The journey of Wali Dakhni to Delhi in 1700, in fact returned the kharhiboli mixed with Persian and local vocabulary and idiom, to the capital as a literary language patronised by the Muslim rulers of the southern kingdoms. Wali's arrival in Delhi changed the poetry there from the baroque "Sabk-i-Hindi" style of Persian to what came to be known as Urdu. Wali is hence known as the father of Urdu poetry. These interrelations between languages with fuzzy boundaries characterize the phenomenon of organic language plurality that Khubchandani has mentioned.

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## **5.6 COLONIALISM AND LANGUAGE POLICY**

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The impact of colonial education led to the institutionalisation of English through the infamous Minute on Education that was composed by Macaulay (1835). Standardization occurred in the history of all Indian languages through the intervention of the colonial administration. Those sent out into the vast land to govern needed to know the language of the governed, and the Fort William College, set up in Calcutta, capital of the empire, in 1800 where they were sent to learn the languages of the ruled. Most of the first grammars of Indian languages were written in this institution for the purpose of training the administrators recruited into the Indian Civil Service. They passed into the history and the usage of the language as documents, and authoritatively organized each language into a single unified mainstream of "correct" usage. This also resulted in the division of language registers into dialects and the standard and began a process of linguistic separation that transformed into linguistic nationalism and culminated in the linguistic division of states. The reactions against Anglicisation were in favour of the local language, known as "vernacular". The establishment of a nationalist discourse also encouraged local languages as well as the access to English for furthering the study of science, acquisition of modern knowledge and expression of the nationalist spirit and philosophy to the world.

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## **5.7 MULTICULTURALISM AND INDIAN LITERATURE**

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In a plurilingual pluricultural society, as DevSen argues in the case of India, regional identity co-exists with the national as a subset and the two are not necessarily viewed as conflicting (99-100). Hence Swapna Majumdar critiques the growing "fad" of multicultural studies in India around the early 2000s the borrowing of the logic of American multiculturalism lock, stock and barrel; Majumdar finds the

redoing of Comparative Literature to make it more “multicultural” as absurd as “whitewashing Makrana or Alabama marble” (Majumdar 140). In his understanding Comparative Literature, since its inception as an attempt to study literature across the boundaries of nation and/or language, has of necessity been an intercultural endeavour (140). Majumdar further goes on to differentiate between what he describes as “natural” and “forced” multiculturalisms (142). The latter for Majumdar has to do with how multiculturalism is adapted to the discourse of globalization (142). Multiculturalism in its present avatar, argues Majumdar, is no more than a diversity management strategy that functions to serve the interests of Global and Multinational capital (142) – much like world literature (See U 4 above).

A parallel can be seen in *Otherwise Occupied* (Figueira 22), where Stanley Fish’s distinction between “boutique multiculturalism” and “strong multiculturalism” is used to delineate the conceptual incoherence in the study of multiculturalism in the US academy. Neither addresses the issue of difference, though their failures are, as Figueira states, “asymmetrical” (22). While the former preaches tolerance on the most superficial level, the latter, in according “deep respect” to difference, but by refusing to dialogue with difference, inevitably ends up suppressing it (23).

Likewise, the foundational flaw in “the salad bowl” or the “melting pot” theories of multiculturalism are based on the assumptions of an essential and shared core of “cultural values” that bind a diverse citizenry into a united or unified nation and national character (Figueira 19). Therefore, the discourse of American multiculturalism while recognizing difference and its significance, still continues to operate on the assimilationist notion of a “common culture” that unites diverse populations as American—albeit hyphenated (19).

This makes it different from the Indian nation, which, we have been demonstrating, is predicated on plurality and the engagement with difference, rather than reducing the nation to a single identity or culture. And to return to Majumdar’s thesis, Comparative Literature is perforce and naturally multicultural in its ability to negotiate pluralities (Majumdar 140-141). Pluralities and dialogue across pluralities, might be, as Majumdar states, radically alien for those who have spent their academic lives (and careers) in the service of monolingual and monoliterary studies of homogenous “national” or “regional” literatures, but not for those who seek to assert their relevance in the dawn of a new epoch of the plural (141). Comparative Literature is an intercultural enterprise, because from its inception it strove to work beyond the narrow confines of the

categories of nation, language and the hegemonic discourses of high vs. low culture. The impulse to study literary phenomena across the imagined boundaries of languages and cultures, whether national or regional is, therefore, foundational to the practice of this discipline. Ethics involves understanding that these boundaries are hierarchised by humans, and sometimes, as in the case of majoritarian, monocultural nationalism, imposed by some humans to manipulate others. “Literature” in these circumstances, as Tagore or Goethe would opine, breaks these narrow confines of identity by pointing to our common humanity.

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## 5.8 PLURALISM AND INDIAN LITERATURE

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But this is only one part of the story and it represents the conflation of “world” literature with “comparative” literature, a substantive with an adjective that describes an activity. The relevance of comparative literature in India is based upon the fact that it is an activity that begins with an ethics of difference. In a plural situation, a willingness to enter into conversation appears to be the adequate mode for understanding one’s existence in relation to others. Instead of dialogue, and in a plurilingual situation, a conversation, Conflict would lead to destruction; submission to oppression, neither of which would be practical or ethical. This simple rationale is drawn from the history of “India” as an idea that we have here discussed, through the formation, institutional and substantive, of modern Indian languages, because our object of study are Indian language literatures. We have discussed above the ideas of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism which posit a particular relation, albeit of equality, between difference. We have also indicated that the comparative approach by allowing the material at hand to dictate the categorisation, rather than approaching it with already decided categories or “closed concepts”(Devy 1983) is what Amiya Dev calls “comparative literature from below”. This is echoed by Said’s call for “secular criticism”, which does not make a religion of any given theory. Pluralism as an ethos and as a category of understanding characterises the comparative approach.

### ❖ Check Your Progress

- 1.A factor in the formation of modern Indian languages was
  - A. Contact between people using different languages
  - B. The linguistic reorganisation of states
  - C. Standardisation by the colonisers
  - D. Language policy of the central government

Ans : A

2.Match the sections of the Constitution with its substance

- |                   |      |                                                         |
|-------------------|------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| A. VIII Schedule  | i.   | Protection of linguistic minorities                     |
| B. Article 30 (1) | ii.  | ii.Providing for primary education in the mother tongue |
| C. Article 350 A  | iii. | Appointing a linguistic officer for minority languages  |
| D. Article 350 B  | iv.  | Listing the recognised languages                        |

3.Match the dates with the events

- |                                                                                |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| A.Macaulay's Minute on Education                                               | i.1840   |
| B.First linguistic survey of India                                             | ii. 1948 |
| C.Setting up of the Linguistic Provinces Commission                            | iii.1894 |
| D.General Committee of public Education Minute advocating vernacular education | iv.1835  |

A-iv B-iii C-ii D-i

4.Logocide means ----- and its victims are -----

- A.Birth of a language, minority languages
- B.Death of a language, languages with a low functional load
- C.Development of a language, marginalised languages
- D.Death of a language, languages that are dead.

Ans : B

5.Sanskrit is called "daivi vak" by ----- in -----because it is -----

- A. Patanjali, Ashtadhyayi, a language of the gods
- B. Panini, Mahabhashya, the language of the Vedas
- C.Dandin, Kavyadarsa, purified by adhering to certain grammatical principles laid down by grammarians
- D. Rudrata, Kavyalankara, not a living language

Ans : C

6.According to Dandin the literary languages are

- A. Magadhi, Sanskrit, Pisachi, Sauraseni
- B. Prakrit, Sanskrit, "mixed" , Apabhramsa
- C. Vaidarbhi, Maharashtri, Sanskrit, Apabhramsa
- D. Jaina Prakrit, Sanskrit, "Mixed", Apabhramsa

Ans : B

7. Apabhramsa was defined by ----- as -----

- A. Patanjali, Deviation from Sanskrit
- B. Dandin, the language of Kavya
- C. Panini, derivation from Sanskrit
- D. Nami Sadhu, preceding Sanskrit

Ans : A

8. Which of these languages was used in the Sanskrit drama

- A. Ardhamagadhi
- B. Sauraseni Prakrit
- C. Persian
- D. None of the above

Ans : B

9. Match the language with the works

- |                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| A. Ardhamagadhi | i. Tipitika          |
| B. Sanskrit     | ii. Shahnamah        |
| C. Pali         | iii. Jain scriptures |
| D. Persian      | iv. Kavyalankara     |

Ans : A-iii B-iv C-i D-ii

10. Dakkhini is

- A. A plural language comprising words and syntax from local Indian languages and languages from West Asia.
- B. A language of the Deccan
- C. A derivative of Urdu
- D. A language that came from Delhi to the Deccan due to the policies of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq

Ans : A

11. Match the idea with the theorist

- |                      |                                                                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A. Swapan Majumdar   | i. Many periods existing simultaneously characterise "Indian" literature |
| B. Amiya Dev         | ii. The natural plurality of India demands the comparative approach      |
| C. Nabaneeta Dev Sen | iii. Integration is the method of writing Indian literary history        |
| D. Sisir Kumar Das   | iv. Literary history from below                                          |

Ans : A-ii B-iv C-i D-iii

12. Sabk-i-Hindi was a literary style in the ----- literary system

- A. Sanskrit
- B. Hindustani
- C. Persian
- D. Prakrit

Ans : C

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**:: STRUCTURE ::**

- 6.0 Objectives**
- 6.1 Linguistic Plurality**
- 6.2 Studying the “interliterary” condition**
- 6.3 Comparative Approach To Literary History**
- 6.4 Field, Habitus**
- 6.5 Chronotope , Intertextuality, Dialogism**
- 6.6 Repertoire of Signification**
- 6.7 Generic Markers**
- 6.8 Literary Space and Literary Period**
- 6.9 References**

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**6.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit we will

- identify and define concepts that will help us to study literature in plurilinguistic interliterary conditions . Those concepts already discussed in the rest of this course will be mentioned in a list at the end of this unit.
- We will illustrate the use of these concepts with examples from Indian language literatures (See 6.8) as we have already argued in the previous unit that the comparative approach is adequate to study these literatures. But these concepts are not themselves fixed in time and space. They can be used to frame a comparative approach to texts from any temporal and spatial location and applied to understand the experience of alterity and relations across difference.
- We must reiterate that there is no pre-given and fixed method for a comparative reading (See Unit 1) . It is a “secular” (Said 1983) approach “from below” (Dev 1987). Therefore, we provide no predetermined methodology for comparative literature. Our aim is to designate concepts that enable us to ethically engage with difference, and frame the categories of understanding in relation to our own location, and the literary and historical contextualisation of the texts.

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## 6.1 LINGUISTIC PLURALITY

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Linguistic plurality is of two types - structural and organic. Taking India as an example, Lachman Khubchandani describes organic plurality as having these characteristics :

(i) fuzziness of language boundaries; (ii) fluidity in language identity; (iii) identity claims vs language communications; and (iv) complementarity of intra-group and inter-group communications. This phenomenon is identified as a case of *organic* pluralism, in contrast with the *structural* pluralism that prevail in many multilingual countries of Europe.

According to Parekh, "Individuals in a plural society belong to different identity groups clustered around cultural, linguistic and social traits (such as nationality, religion, caste, language/dialect) and share only a core of experience crisscrossing in more than one manner, hardly coterminating within the same boundary. Each of these differences may be important in that it would operate to distinguish one group from another in all its traits" (8 ). Language plurality implies that neither socio-linguistic nor socio-cultural boundaries are clearly marked (ibid) . The situation in which we live can thus be described as plurilingual.

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## 6.2 STUDYING THE "INTERLITERARY" CONDITION

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The plurilingual condition of Indian languages is the reason for Amiya Dev's description of Indian literature *an "interliterary condition"* ( See Galik , U1, for interliterariness). We have discussed the formation of Indian languages in detail since language is the medium of literature. The implications of this are the following :

1. A single language is difficult to define; there is a history of naming the language : the PLSI research found that people call the same language by different names. Also a single language, standardised by the writing of a formal grammar, often in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, contains vocabulary and grammatical elements from many languages , characteristic of the fuzzy boundaries between organically plural languages.
2. The contactual relations between languages are decided by the movement of human beings across time and space – languages are not confined to geopolitical or any other man-made boundaries. Hence the lives of languages, like the lives of the speakers, is dynamic. Each Indian language literature exists in relation to others, in its immediate vicinity as well as in its heritage. A literary work in composition and reception, is the inheritor of an "Indian" tradition, and located in an Indian context – these have

commonalities amongst them in various degrees, and are inflected by time and space.

By definition the interliterary condition is ephemeral – it is not carved in stone. The relations between difference, or contactual relations, influence a literary system and the discourse attributed to it. Some forms of contactual relations have been delineated by scholars, to provide conceptual tools to understand the change that elements of theme and form undergo as they move across time and space. Thus, the history of the definition of this discipline in India also varied according to the local conditions within which the practice of comparative literature flourished. The focus on Europe and the heterogeneities within European modernisms, changed into the move beyond Europe and expanded the study of Indian literatures to a focus on the heterogeneities and pluralities of modern Indian language literatures.

The labels “vernacular” and “regional” are still applied to Indian languages. This assumes a multilingual situation but within a hierarchy, ie that there is a central or mainstream “national” or “recognised” language, in respect of which the “local vernacular” and/or the “regional” language is defined. Such a distinction was instituted in colonial times, creating a hierarchy between English, the world and/or mainstream language, and the Indian languages which were vernaculars or regional languages. However, the Indian constitution recognises 24 Indian languages all of which have the status of national recognition. Hence, “Indian languages” is a more fitting term to replace both “vernacular” and “regional”.

How these factors act in our literary reading is explained in 6.3 below.

#### ❖ Check Your Progress

1. The existence of words from one language in another is an example of
  - A. Dialects in a language
  - B. Different registers of a language
  - C. The fuzzy boundaries between languages
  - D. None of the aboveAns : C
2. The difference between structural and organic plurality is
  - A. The former conceptualises language as having fixed boundaries, the latter does not
  - B. In a condition of organic plurality, identity is fixed
  - C. In a condition of structural plurality, multilingualism exists
  - D. The latter conceptualises language as related to identity

Ans : A

3. Group the following characteristics under “organic”(B) or “structural”(A) plurality

1. Identity is not language related only
2. Contactual relations between languages decide the nature of literature
3. There are many languages but each is distinct from the other
4. Identity claims determine the language boundaries.
5. Both synchronic and diachronic relations influence the language formation
6. Language is a fixed abstract entity to which usage must conform.
7. Usage and contact with other languages and cultures forms the language.

A (Structural Plurality) : 3, 4, 6

B (Organic Plurality): 1,2 ,5, 7

4. The idea of “regional” languages assumes that
- A. There is a national language
  - B. There are many national languages
  - C. There are many dialects of the national language
  - D. Every language is spoken in one region alone.

Ans : A

5. The “vernacular” assumes that
- A. There is a mainstream language
  - B. The official language of the state and the language of the people is not the same
  - C. There is a hierarchy between languages
  - D. None of the above.

Ans : C

### 6.2.1 Conceptual Tools

*‘Prophane’* and *‘metaphane’* are terms to explain the earlier or later influence of the same source on two different language-literatures , resulting from difference in the time and circumstances of contact between cultures. These words mean “early appearance” and “late appearance” respectively – phane being the Greek word for appearance. The terms are coined by Sisir Kumar Das and elucidated in detail by Majumdar. Das envisages them as delineating a relation – it is clear that both “early” and “late” assume other entities in relation to which the elements being considered are defined as early or late. Hence, the concepts help us to understand the changes in the horizon of expectation (See Unit 2) through contact, ie the interliterary relation, and the impact of reception upon the literature of a language as well as its literary discourse.

An example can be the encounter of a poet like Tagore with the poetry, poetics, aesthetics and philosophy of 19<sup>th</sup> century European Romanticism, especially German Idealism and English Romantic poetry. Tagore's translations, critical essays and poetry exhibited this interest. His status as a poet and as the first winner of the Nobel prize for literature from Asia, deeply influenced writers of many Indian languages. They too adopted the vocabulary and the philosophy that Tagore had imbibed from the European discourses. So in terms of Das' formulation, Tagore's reception of European Romanticism is the phenomenon that occurred first in time, ie it may be called "prophane". In contrast, we can term as "metaphane" or late appearance, the influence of European Romanticism upon the writers of other Indian languages, like Suryakant Tripathi Nirala, one of the pioneers of Chayavaad or modernism in Hindi, or Ismail, the writer of anubhuti kavita or experiential poetry in Telugu, or Subramaniam Bharati who wrote in Tamil. All these writers are credited with bringing what is known in the discourse of Indian literature as "modernism" to their language-literatures. This modernism had a different name in each language in which it appeared, but one of the causes behind its formation was the acquaintance with Tagore's work and thinking, which in turn was underpinned by Tagore's reception of European Romanticism in the context of his own philosophical and literary tradition. The concepts of synchrony, diachrony and panchrony (see Unit 1.3.1) are useful here to understand the different moments of "appearance" of the literary element across different language literatures.

### **6.2.1 Residual Emergent and Dominant**

Raymond Williams uses these three concepts, in order to understand historical change in and through literary elements. In his view, literary elements are not constant – in this, Etienne's "literary invariants" (See unit 4) theory is upturned. Williams says that literary elements do not change or oscillate between two extremes. The change is visible in the new or emergent form – this form is the result of a synthesis between what is "residual" ie unchanged, and the changes wrought by the dominant modes of thinking and expression. The emergent is made possible by this effect of the present circumstances upon the existing form. What remains identifiable in the emergent is "residual". The forces exerting the pressure of the present are dominant and the result is the emergent. This reformulates the ideas of invariant and constant (See Unit 4) both referring to entities which are recognisable across time and space, but remain neither constant nor invariant. The act of reception, therefore is highlighted in these concepts, which together form a dynamic explanation of change.

An example is the story of Rama – elements in this story remain constant or residual in all the Rama stories in different Indian languages, but the focus often changes according to the dominant worldview or the belief of the writer. For example, in the Ramayana by Valmiki, Rama is an epic hero; in the *Ramcharitmanas* and the *Kamba Ramayana*, the focus is on him as the avatar of Vishnu, as both poets are devotees of Rama as god. The heroic characteristics are given the status of divinity, even though Kamban's Ramayana is written by a court poet to signify the devotion of the Vaishnavite king and his court, while Tulsi's text takes the form of devotion itself – reading it is a devotional practice. So in each case, the residual elements of the story are shaped by the different dominant elements present at the time and place and a new text emerges. The matter of Rama is identifiable by the residual elements, but transformed by interaction with dominant elements

### 6.2.2 Inherited text and Contemporary text

The Rama matter, and Valmiki's Ramayana, or Vyasa's Mahabharata, are "inherited" texts for Indian languages literatures, as they are part of the histories of language formation – the first text in the "vernacular", ie in the nascent modern Indian language, is often a version of the Rama matter, inspired by Valmiki and by the other representations of Rama's story, but in the writer's own language. Writing the "inherited" texts in one's own language is an exercise that prepares the language for literary composition, while the spiritual hunger of those who cannot read the scriptures or the mahakavya in the original is fulfilled. The "inherited" texts may come from all the different language traditions that contributed to the plurilingual situation in India – Pali, Sanskrit, Tamil Persian, Arabic (see Unit 5) . They form a repository of themes and literary devices available across modern Indian languages.

#### ❖ Check Your Progress

1. The influence of English Romantic poetry came first to the poets of Bengali, and then to those of Tamil. The first is an instance of - ----- influence and the second, -----.

- A. Metaphane, Prophane
- B. Inherited text, residual
- C. Prophane, Metaphane
- D. Residual, dominant

Ans : C

2. Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Meghnadavad Kavya* is based on the Rama matter. In this case the Ramayan is
  - A. An inherited text

- B. A metaphane influence
- C. A residual text
- D. A structure of feeling

Ans : A

3. Rama as the avatar of Vishnu is a/an ----- while the Ramayana is a/an -----

Inherited text, residual element

- A. Residual element, inherited text
- B. Prophane element, metaphane element
- C. Literary invariant, residual element
- D. Metaphane element, dominant element

Ans : A

4. For the modern Indian language literatures, the Shah Namah is
- A. A prophane influence
  - B. A metaphane influence
  - C. An inherited text
  - D. A residual element

Ans : C

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### 6.3 COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO LITERARY HISTORY

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#### 6.3.1 Using Plurality as a conceptual frame

The comparative method is an effective way to study Indian language literatures, due to the plurality of their nature, and the plural ethos that underlies the method itself. Refiguring the Sahitya Akademi slogan “Indian literature is one though it is written in many languages”, Ayappa Panikkar Malayalee poet and critic, submitted that “Indian literature is one because it is written in many languages”. Panikkar was drawing attention to the plural nature of the singular entity named India. The challenge before the literary discourse in India – scholarship, research, polemic, pedagogy related to Indian language literatures, whether these are carried out in Indian languages or non-Indian languages – is, how to conceptualise this plurality in terms of literature, such that we are able to understand the ethos and the values that plurality brings. This is crucial to the maintenance of plurality even while living within a single unit.

How the narrative of literary history is constructed may be an example of this. Devy criticises the borrowed close ended concepts which European historians of Indian language literatures and some of their early followers in India introduced into our imagination of history, as

witnessed in the narratives constructed about Indian language literatures. He cautions against a ““master narrative employed to construct histories” (Devy 1998 :2) of different languages. This is a well-founded fear, as the “ sense of history institutionalized in modern literary historiography is mainly of western origin” (ibid :3).The “sense of history” imported from the west recognizes only a ‘national’ literary history, where a single language is identified with a single nation.The political and ideological aim of such a narrative is, as Devy says, “translating social domination to the field of aesthetic creation “(Ibid:3). A literary history that narrativises interconnections within the plural Indian literary field, cannot overlook the plurality at the source of most Indian languages. For the same reason, we have to take into account what Devy calls the “varying sociologies”(ibid) of each language contexted in the differentials of power that characterize the society of its users.

Plurality does not imply the stability of borders but locationality which eschews categories like centre and margin. A plural frame is useful to imagine a single entity as both constituting the context for and acting as the interlocutor of the other entity. The interaction between genres, themes and sign-systems forms the structure of the historical narrative of any Indian language literature. This may occur within the literature of one language across time or between different language-cultures in contact with one another.

Following our idea that India is both a multilingual and a plurilingual entity , instead of thinking of Indian literature as an additive or homogenous whole, it is more realistic to think of it as the common name given to a set of literatures drawing from a common fund of literary phenomena of various types, unfolding against the background of both a specific language culture and a within a larger ‘Indian ’ culture (See examples in 6.8.) This “Indian” culture is characterized by diversity of language, religion, location and worldview, but these in turn are located in the context of the commonly held experience of history and the common inheritance of literary resources. This complex literary field can only be approached through pluralism

Different narrative strategies using various categories, literary and non-literary have been studied, and comparative approaches have been proposed for the writing of a history of “Indian” literature, which must comprise histories of many inter-related languages and literary cultures, sharing a set of inherited texts to various degrees.

### **6.3.2 Integrative History and the Interliterary Condition**

Through the History of Indian Literature Project of the Sahitya Akademi, undertaken under his leadership Sisir Kumar Das proposed

an “integrated” history of Indian literature, keeping literature in the singular. He was pointing to the necessity for looking at the commonalities which coexist with the obvious differences between one Indian language and another, and groups of languages and neighbouring groups – and the literature composed in them . The indefinite article “A” and “An” and the singular ‘Indian literature’ which have occasioned so much debate are, as Amiya Dev (2002:117; 2003-4:8-10) suggests, the indication of a proposed method. Dev points out that by not using the definite article Das has left the discussion open to plural views, as it were. Historical narratives from different perspectives and with varying focus are made possible using the factual material regarding publication, births and deaths, meetings and addresses all related to language and literature, collected in the three volumes of *A History of Indian Literature* published by the national academy of letters under Das’ editorship. This material may be used to study movements of theme and generic conceptions in Indian language literatures, across time and space, the reception of one language in another region through translation and adaptation, the results of various kinds of contact between language cultures. (See 6.8. See also Chanda 2003; Chanda 2006)

That we will necessarily infer the plurality of Indian language literatures from this material cannot be guaranteed. But the panchronic arrangement of the material itself offers the possibility of *an integrated view* as it demarcates the outlines of *a plural literary – as distinct from linguistic - field*. Das named this literary field Indian. He conceptualised it as an interliterary condition shared by all Indian language literatures. Indian literature, in the singular, is an ethical impetus as much as a literary one : to keep India’s plurality intact, there must be a way to understand difference and live with it, within a single unit. Das’ idea of “an” Indian literature written in many languages results from the integration of the literary system of each language into the “Indian” literary field, making this field plural in nature. This integration is achieved through investigating and elucidating the interliterary connections within the larger framework of cultural contact and exchange. Interliterary relations thus form the core of the history of ‘Indian’ literature, and it is impossible to study ‘Indian’ literature without acknowledging a plurality of sources and values characteristic of the literary field.

Dev’s (2002) statement that Indian literature is an “interliterary condition” helps us conceptualise the subject of our study, namely Indian literature and answer the question : what are we writing about ? The history of Indian literature, singular or plural, is not the history of a single unified entity but the narrative of the making, and transformation of a set of relations between several entities. I identify

them in the singular because I conceptualise them as specifically literary relations , located within the literary field that we have just defined as plural.

❖ **Check Your Progress**

1. The integrated approach to Indian literary history is

- A. A spatial approach
- B. A relational approach
- C. A temporal approach
- D. A nationalist approach

Ans : B

2. The interliterary condition is

- A. Dynamic and context specific
- B. Unstable and undefinable
- C. Dependent on fixed language boundaries
- D. Dependent on language identity

Ans : A

3. The kshetra is an interliterary field. This means that it is not a ----- category, but a-----one. It places the text within a ----- which is \_\_\_\_\_

- A. Literary, spatial, field, dynamic
- B. Residual, invariant, habitus, static
- C. Spatial, residual, field, emergent
- D. Spatial, literary, habitus, relational

Ans : D

4. According to Devy, a nationalist history does not

- A. Reduce the plurality of language and the diversity of Indian society
- B. Take a single language-culture as constituting the nation
- C. Recognise the interaction and contact between language-cliteratures
- D. Divide the language landscape into centre and region.

Ans : C

5. The Indian literary field is plural. This means

- A. There are plural languages
- B. It is a result of the contact between literary languages and cultures
- C. There is more than one language in India
- D. A language and its literature are related to each other.

Ans : B

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## 6.4 FIELD, HABITUS

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The idea of “field” is attributed to Pierre Bourdieu, who understood the social world as being divided into a variety of distinct arenas or “fields” of practice like art, education, religion, law, etc., each with their own unique set of rules, knowledges, and forms of capital. The Systems Theory approaches argue along similar lines (Unit 3). *Fields* can overlap —Bourdieu sees each field as having its own set of positions and practices, and power relations operating within it. So each field is according to him relatively autonomous. However, the horizon of expectation operating in literature is not entirely exhausted by the literary field. The forces operating within a literary field cannot exclude the reader-text relation which is ultimately a personal and unique one.

Bourdieu’s larger idea of habitus, in which a field is located, seems more suited to literature, because it is a state of being in relation to the world, the dynamic state of being within a field in which forces from within and outside the field operate in varying degrees. Thus the response or experience of the recipient/audience/reader, can be seen as an active factor in the establishment of a situation of reading. As Bourdieu defines it, a habitus is

... a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception: and the objective coordination of practices and the sharing of a world-view could be founded on the perfect impersonality and interchangeability of singular practices and views. (Bourdieu 1972|1977: 86).

What Etiemble terms “literary invariants”( See Unit 2) or Marino calls “constants”(See Unit 3) are here taken as objective elements like singular practices and collective world views. However, Bourdieu’s theory is made to apply to sociological facts and data – in the case of a “literary” field and habitus, the objective elements form the ground for the reader’s singular experience of the text, which cannot be fixed and is necessarily subjective.

As an example we may say that modern Indian language-cultures and the literatures created in them, emerge out of a common literary tradition (habitus) with which the literature written in each language engages. It seems more realistic to take this common literary horizon as an integrative principle rather than as a given fact. This principle gives coherence to the historical narrative of formation of each Indian language literature, which we have considered in Unit 5. So, rather than look for unity or homogeneity among all Indian language

literatures which come from different geographical regions, language-cultures, religions and economic denominations, we are looking for

1. the interaction between the field of literary production in each language with the larger habitus of Indian language literatures and
2. interaction between two literary systems within the larger habitus – each of their relations with this habitus and with the other literary system within it. This may be called an “interliterary field”.

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## **6.5 CHRONOTOPE , INTERTEXTUALITY, DIALOGISM**

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Mikhail Bakhtin is associated with concept of the chronotope and dialogism, and Julia Kristeva with the concept of intertextuality. These ideas show the relational, dialogic and situated nature of the literary text, deriving from the event character of literature.

Bakhtin considers “writing as reading of the anterior literary corpus” and the Text as “the absorption and response to another text”. The responsive nature of literary textual practices makes a text “dialogical”, an event of interaction between writer and context, and/or text, context and reader.

According to Julia Kristeva(1980), Bakhtin “replaces the static viewing of texts with a model where literary structure... is generated in relation to another structure.....his conception of the literary word (is) an intersection of literary surfaces rather than as a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings : that of the writer, addressee and the contemporary or earlier cultural context...”. Kristeva herself replaces Bakhtin’s term “literary word” with “text” and bringing together the horizontal axes of the subject/addressee and the vertical axes of the text/context, states “ each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read”(ibid p66).

The chronotope is similar to the literary invariant or constant, or the repertoire of signification (See 6.6) . Bakhtin(1981) uses the concept to explain how the narrative, the novel in particular, presents time and space. It is a feature of narrative, combining both time and space as a marker of a specific culture or structure of feeling. According to Bakhtin, every culture has certain textual practices to construct a chronotope ie express space and time features connected to a world view. In the literary device of the chronotope, time and space intersect – the chronotope thus “stands as a symbol of the community as forces operating to shape its members image of themselves”. AS a combination of temporal and spatial aspects symbolic of a worldview, it is part of the horizon of expectation.

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## 6.6 REPERTOIRE OF SIGNIFICATION

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Jacques Ranciere defines a regime thus :

a specific type of connection between ways of producing works of art or developing practices, forms of visibility that disclose them, and ways of conceptualizing the former and the latter.

Ranciere identifies different regimes of signification related to different periods. His aim is to reject interpretations that frame artistic practices in linear, monocausal historical narratives. These “regimes” can be seen as operating within the horizon of expectation, shaping it and thereby influencing reception.

We replace “regime” with “repertoire” in the plurilingual context. Ranciere’s interlinking of conceptualisation, execution and reception of an artwork provides a frame for reading but cannot dictate readings themselves. In a plural culture such as India’s, elements from these “regimes” are found across languages and literary cultures that have their own peculiar traditions and simultaneously interact with these received images and beliefs from the literary habitus. They are a common resource for many language-cultures, a repertoire of literary elements of form and content which are available to artists to use, unlike “regime” which is a set of rules and codes fixed by legislation and convention, and may be unchanging across time and space. In the plural literary field, the multiplicity and plurality of Indian language literatures makes it difficult to impose a “regime” upon a set of texts; hence regime can be replaced by “repertoire of signification” , implying a literary element like a metaphor shared across languages and cultures, available to the poet or artist within the literary system.

As an example we may take the interweaving of concepts, forms and images that create the world of Bhakti in various Indian language literatures across time and space, including the pre-colonial contact between the languages and cultures of the subcontinent and the traders, saints and rulers from the world of Islam. The plurality of sources create different harmonies out of the contact between these different cultures and belief systems. Every modern Indian language came into being through the oral and written compositions of Bhakt, Sant and Sufi poets and thinkers, mixing the idiom and poetics of two or more cultures and languages. Commonalities of theme and repetition of images arose from the shared belief in the equality of all before god, and the availability of god’s grace or mercy or love for all his creatures, regardless of class, caste, religion or language. The concepts outlined (6.5 and 6.6) help us to study relational and plural nature of Bhakti literature, in different languages.

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## 6.7 GENERIC MARKERS

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Generic markers are elements of form and content that can be used to identify a genre. To give an example, the generic markers of the epic may be an invocation at the start, the intervention of the divine in the action, and the length of the text. If we come across all three characteristics in any literary mode, we may recognise the text as an epic. But they will not be identical, for each marker will be used according to the structure of feeling of the time. To use the idea of “literary invariant” (Etiemble), these are universal to the epic – they are invariant as categories, but their concrete realisation by the writer is situational. The invocation in Homer’s *Odyssey* and *Iliad* point to a society different from the one of Virgil’s *Aeneid*; in the latter it is “arms and the man” that is invoked, while in the former, the Muses are the subject of the invocation. Virgil has a specific purpose – to signal the death of the Greek civilisation symbolised by the fall of Troy and the establishment of Rome by Aeneas who rescues from the war and takes with him the gods of Troy, his father, symbolising the past and his son, symbolising the future.

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## 6.8 LITERARY SPACE AND LITERARY PERIOD

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In this section, we give examples of the a relational rather than an absolute periodization of Indian language literature based upon the historical fact of plurality and the phenomenon of contact .

Sisir Kumar Das forged conceptual tools for a relational, comparative periodization of literary phenomena in Indian language literatures by proposing the concepts of *Prophane* and *Metaphane*, and *Inherited* and *Contemporary* texts. Nabaneeta DevSen’s essay “The Concept of Indian Literature: Today” chastises non-western comparatists for adopting “western” practices of Comparative Literature (DevSen 98) and raises questions of nomenclature and categories of understanding : are the ideas prevalent to understand monocultural European nations, applicable to plural societies ? Identifying the difficulty of transposing a comparative methodology originating in Europe to the study of modern Indian language literatures, DevSen outlines in her essay, the commonly held misconception of a structural similarity in the relation between the various Indian language literatures and cultures in India and the national literatures and cultures of Europe (100). Such an assumed parallelism is primarily unviable, because of the interculturality or plurality (See Unit 5 and 6.1 above) of India, which she defines in terms of the simultaneous or contemporaneous existence of multiple temporal and spatial locations simultaneously available and interacting with each other (101):

“In India we have 12 modern literatures no less than 500 years old and 6 aged over a thousand years. Where are we to place ourselves? What does ‘today’ mean in India? It is an incredible timespan within which the modern Indian consciousness functions. We live with the ancient, medieval and the ultra-modern all within the reach of one another. Value-wise, in an urban middle-class ordinary family, often the English medium educated father belongs to the 19th century, the uneducated mother and the domestic help to the medieval world, and the Hollywood-educated son is a twenty-first century specimen. Amidst such contradictory forces all working at once, where the formidable time-lag is not of generations but of centuries, it may not seem easy to find a common denominator in literature. But what miracles can the ardent comparatist not achieve? ...Only ‘the context of criticism’ in this case must be interliterary as well as interdisciplinary.” (101)

DevSen’s essay marks the shift in the practice of Comparative Literature in India. She turns the gaze inward to explore the study of Comparative Literature as scholarship on a diverse body of literatures and oratures contained within the Indian sub-continent. Borrowing from Remak’s comment on Comparative Literature providing a “viable international perspective” in understanding national constructions of literature and culture, DevSen proposes an extension of such an approach to studying Indian language literatures under a national and international lens (ibid. 99).

### **6.8.1 Interliterary Field : Reception and “Plural” Language**

IN this section, we use the concepts outlined above to understand literary phenomena that characterise a plural literary field. Here we take the example of Hindustani as a plural language, and see how the interliterary condition is composed of interactions with other texts diachronically and synchronically within a larger habitus.

Given the plurilingual habitus of Indian language literatures, Khubchandani (1996) proposes the *kshetra* which he translates as region, in place of the nation as a category of literary or linguistic analysis. However, we have already seen the difficulty in thinking of Indian languages and their literatures as “regional”. Thus, we redefine *Kshetra* eschewing territorial or spatial reference of any and define it as an interliterary field. We may illustrate this from Indian literature. Using the chronological lists in Das’ histories, we can construct the context of literary events, whether within a single language-literature field or across language-cultures. Whether we are writing the history of a movement or a period, the Indian language literatures are situated within a common plural habitus, and the interliterary condition thus created both directs the writing of a literary history and

plays a role in it. The plural conception of the interliterary field gives rise to repertoires of signification (See 6.6 above) and a shared fund of literary conventions and generic markers across languages and cultures, perhaps as residual elements from inherited texts or through contact with other literary systems through translation or literary reception.

WE take the example of Hindustani : it is not a language with fixed boundaries, but a set of characteristics resulting from the overlaps in semantic, syntactic and morphological elements shared by languages that stretch across the central part of India, including the Deccan. Any language that belongs to the broad category Hindustani, is composed of the following elements : presence of elements of “kharhiboli” of Northern India mixed with the local language and idiom, Persian literary discourse and idiom, Sanskrit poetics, Vaishnav and Sufi aesthetics and philosophy of love. These languages for example Purvi, Awadhi, Braj, Gujri, Dakkhni were formed through the movement of people and troops and religious mendicants across the breadth of the country. Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, poetic conventions from Sanskrit, are in dialogue with the conventions and idioms of the oral compositions in local languages and the Perso-Arabic tradition.<sup>i</sup> What Khusrau wrote in the 13<sup>th</sup> century about Northern India we find remains extant until the 19<sup>th</sup> as well in the words of Azad -

Look at the nature of Bhasha--what a friendly temperament it has, for mixing with every single language! Cast your eye attentively over its poetry and prose. It not only cleared out a space for its guest among the words, but also adopted many words and thoughts that were specific to the native lands of Arabic and Persian. Thus it gave the realm of heroism to [the Persian *Shāhnāmāh* heroes] Rustam and Sām, although here it belonged to [the *Mahābhārat* heroes] Bhīm and Arjun.<sup>ii</sup>

As far as vocabulary is concerned, Bhikharidas, in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, records, in the ritigranth *Kavyanirṇay* that the pleasing (ruchira) language, Brajbhasha, is made of a mixture of Sanskrit and “paarasayu”, Persian, where each is “pragat” or clear, in its own right (See Busch in Orsini 2010, p86) As Busch (2010) has pointed out, Muslim rulers in all parts of India were connected to the Persian cosmopolis, and were simultaneously also patrons of the local languages. The Persian influence encompassed idiom and vocabulary, regardless of a poet’s own religion. In the lines by Nagaridas quoted above, the words “mazhab” (faith), “ilm” (knowledge) and “ishk” (love) are part of the idiom of Brajbhasha poetry as much as “swad”, taste, which evokes the fundamental premise of “rasa” poetics derived

from Bharata's *Natyashastra* . The confluence of cultures is thus visible in the poetry of Hindu and Muslim poets alike :these conventions are followed by Rasleen, who praises the creator of the universe, in an idiom borrowed from the worship of an incarnation of god in human form , to whom the devotee could relate as to a human being. His *Ras Prabodh* begins with an invocation to Allah

The name of Allah conjures up an image in the mind of those without shelter and protection,

Displayed there resplendent like the crown on the forehead of a king.

### ❖ Check Your Progress

1. Match the theorist with the concept

- |                         |                              |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| A. Julia Kristeva       | i. kshetra                   |
| B. Jacques Ranciere     | ii. dialogism                |
| C. Mikhail Bakhtin      | iii. regime of signification |
| D. Lachman Khubchandani | iv. intertextuality          |

ANS: A-iv B-iii C-ii D-i

2. A chronotope is

- A. A feature of narrative
- B. A combination of time and place symbolic of a world view
- C. Rules for representation of time and place
- D. An element of theme

Ans : B

3. Intertextuality is

- A. The relation between text, author and reader
- B. The relation between texts
- C. Meaning of one literary structure in relation to another
- D. The difference between texts

Ans : C

4. A literary field

- A. Comprises textual practices and the situations within which they operate
- B. Is a set of positions and practices, and power relations operating within it
- C. An autonomous space with rules, forms and conventions
- D. None of the above

Ans : A

5. A habitus is
- A. An intersection of fields
  - B. A set of conventions
  - C. A set of objective conventions and rules and the located subjective use of them
  - D. A literary tradition

Ans : C

Dialogism is

The relation between texts within a particular field

Reading traces of one text in another.

A conversation with anterior literary texts

The production and reception of texts within a context

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યુનિવર્સિટી ગીત

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

શિક્ષણ, સંસ્કૃતિ, સદ્ભાવ, દિવ્યબોધનું ધામ  
ડૉ. બાબાસાહેબ આંબેડકર ઓપન યુનિવર્સિટી નામ;  
સૌને સૌની પાંખ મળે, ને સૌને સૌનું આભ,  
દશે દિશામાં સ્મિત વહે હો દશે દિશે શુભ-લાભ.

અભણ રહી અજ્ઞાનના શાને, અંધકારને પીવો ?  
કહે બુદ્ધ આંબેડકર કહે, તું થા તારો દીવો;  
શારદીય અજવાળા પહોંચ્યાં ગુર્જર ગામે ગામ  
ધ્રુવ તારકની જેમ ઝળહળે એકલવ્યની શાન.

સરસ્વતીના મયૂર તમારે ફળિયે આવી ગહેકે  
અંધકારને હડસેલીને ઉજાસના ફૂલ મહેકે;  
બંધન નહીં કો સ્થાન સમયના જવું ન ઘરથી દૂર  
ઘર આવી મા હરે શારદા દૈન્ય તિમિરના પૂર.

સંસ્કારોની સુગંધ મહેકે, મન મંદિરને ધામે  
સુખની ટપાલ પહોંચે સૌને પોતાને સરનામે;  
સમાજ કેરે દરિયે હાંકી શિક્ષણ કેરું વહાણ,  
આવો કરીયે આપણ સૌ  
ભવ્ય રાષ્ટ્ર નિર્માણ...  
દિવ્ય રાષ્ટ્ર નિર્માણ...  
ભવ્ય રાષ્ટ્ર નિર્માણ

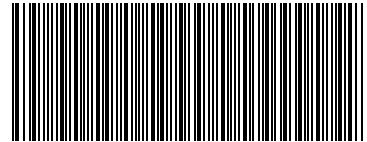
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