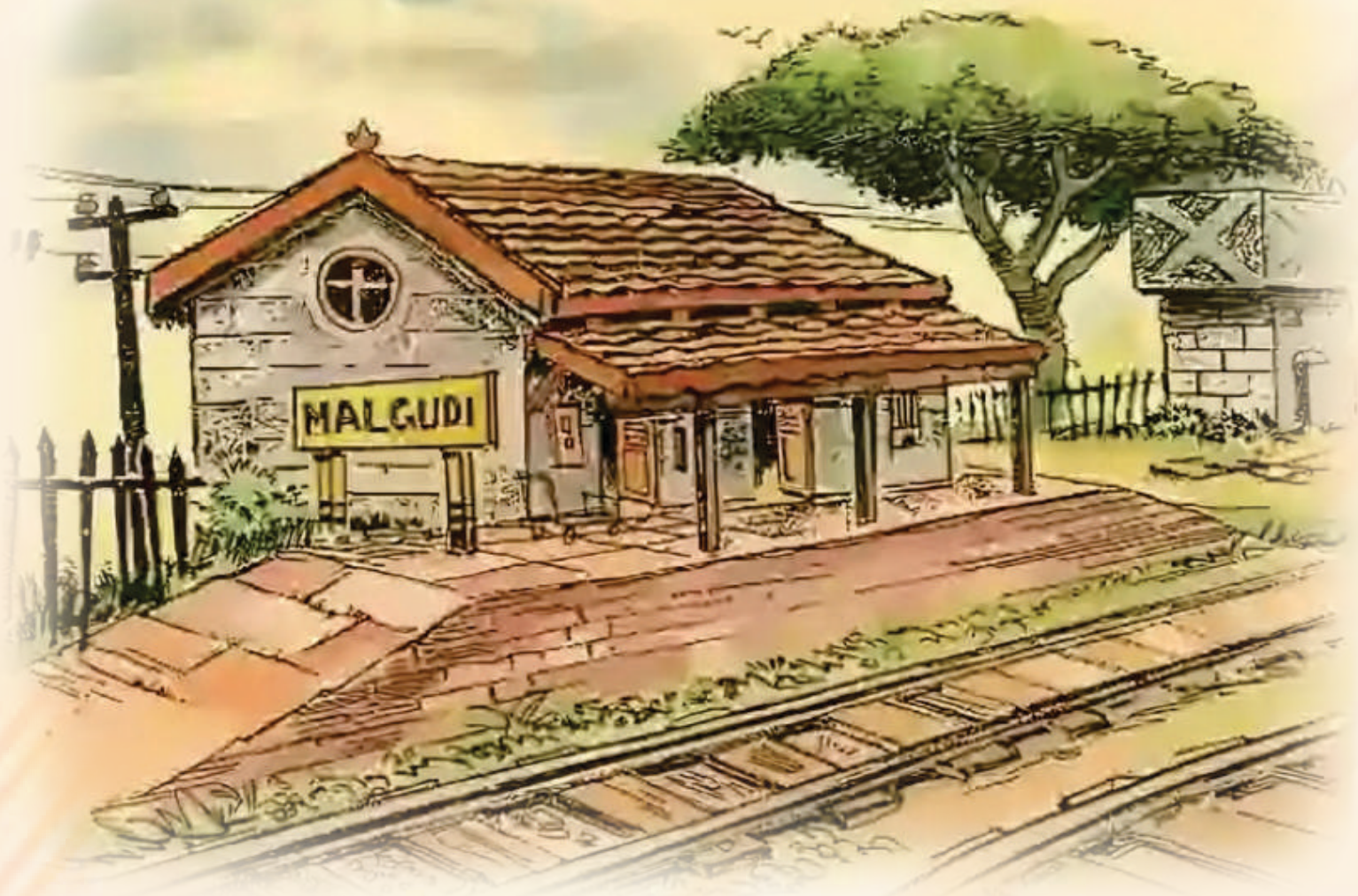


**M.A. English  
Semester-1  
MEG-101**

**Indian Writing in English**



### Message for Students

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The University offers more than 70 programmes, including Certificate, Diploma, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, and Doctoral degrees, with the objective of strengthening higher education across the state. On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Government of Gujarat allotted a serene location and constructed a modern campus equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, named 'Jyotirmay' Parisar.

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In this context, one is reminded of the educational philosophy of Swami Vivekananda, who rightly stated:

*"We want the education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet."*

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**MEG 101**  
**INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH**

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## **Unit 1**

## **Introduction to K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's Indian Writing in English**

### **1.1 Unit Overview**

### **1.2 Objectives**

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### **1.4 Introduction**

### **1.5 Brief Background of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar**

### **1.6 Importance of Indian Writing in English**

### **1.7 The Complexity of Identity in Indian Writing in English**

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### **1.9 The Role of Indian Writing in English in Shaping Identity**

### **1.10 Colonialism and Its Influence on Indian Writing in English**

### **1.11 English as a Tool of Colonization**

### **1.12 Pros and Cons of the English Language in Indian Writing**

### **1.13 The Unique Incorporation of Indian Culture in English**

### **1.14 The Language Barrier and Cross-Cultural Influence**

### **1.15 The Use of Traditional Indian Words and Themes**

### **1.16 The Balance of Indian and English Styles of Writing**

### **1.17 The Patriarchal Society in India**

### **1.18 Literary Representation of Women in Indian Writing in English**

### **1.19 Different Approaches of Male and Female Writers**

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- **Key Points for Revision**
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### **1.1 Unit Overview**

This unit explores the fascinating world of Indian Writing in English through the work of one of its most influential critics, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. The evolution of Indian Writing in English has been a remarkable journey of self-expression and a reflection of India's changing socio-political landscape. Among the many contributors to this field, Iyengar stands out as a key figure who significantly shaped its critical discourse.

Iyengar's writings, noted for their introspection and vivid engagement with Indian life and values, offer a rich resource for understanding the distinctive traits of

Indian Writing in English. This unit provides an introductory survey of Iyengar's life and work and outlines the broader contours of Indian Writing in English. It also highlights the major arguments presented in *Indian Writing in English*.

## 1.2 Objectives

The key objectives of this unit are to:

1. Familiarize students with the literary and critical contributions of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar to Indian Writing in English.
2. Understand the historical and cultural contexts that influenced the emergence and growth of Indian Writing in English.
3. Analyse Iyengar's critical approach and style, and comprehend his role in shaping Indian English literary studies.

## 1.3 Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Recognize the role of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar in the development and study of Indian Writing in English.
2. Describe the context and conditions under which Indian Writing in English emerged and evolved.
3. Interpret the key themes, concerns, and critical perspectives found in Iyengar's work.
4. Identify the major characteristics that distinguish Indian Writing in English from other literary traditions.

## 1.4 Introduction

In *Indian Writing in English*, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar examines the continuity of Indian culture and the challenges faced by Indian writers in adapting to Western literary forms and the English language since the advent of British colonial rule. His work offers a critical examination of how the Indian literary tradition has interacted with English literary traditions, resulting in a unique fusion of culture, language, and creativity.

## 1.5 Brief Background of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar (1908–1999) was a pioneering Indian literary critic who contributed significantly to the study of Indian Writing in English. Born in 1908 in Tanjore (Thanjavur) in Tamil Nadu, he pursued higher education in English literature and later became a distinguished teacher and scholar. He served for many years as a professor of English in Madras and was closely associated with the growth of English studies in India.

Iyengar wrote extensively on Indian literature in English and in Tamil, authoring several influential books and articles. His major works include *Indian Writing in English*, which is central to this unit. He is widely respected for his erudition, critical insight, and for championing the cause of Indian literature written in English. Through his analysis and commentary, Iyengar helped establish the importance and richness of Indian literature within the wider English-speaking world and contributed to its global recognition.



### **1.6 Importance of Indian Writing in English**

Indian Writing in English has played a vital role in shaping national consciousness and articulating Indian identity. It has also become a powerful medium for presenting Indian culture, tradition, and history to a global audience. Works such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies* provide international readers with access to Indian narratives and perspectives, offering valuable insights into the complexities and nuances of Indian society and its historical experiences.

This exposure helps break down cultural barriers and misconceptions, fostering greater understanding and appreciation of Indian culture and people. Indian writers in English have expanded the cultural and linguistic boundaries of English literature, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive literary landscape that reflects a wider range of human experiences.

Iyengar argues that Indian writers who write in English are, in a certain sense, indebted to the English language. English, he suggests, has become part of India's cultural and linguistic heritage, having been used in the country for over two centuries. Indian writers bring a unique perspective to English, using it to convey their own experiences and cultural legacies. They often create a hybrid language by incorporating Indian words and phrases. This hybrid expression allows them to project a distinct cultural lens while writing in English. For Iyengar, Indian Writing in English has become an important part of India's literary landscape and deserves recognition and celebration.

### **1.7 The Complexity of Identity in Indian Writing in English**

The complexity of identity in Indian Writing in English arises from the subcontinent's historical and cultural context. As Iyengar notes, Indian literature was traditionally written in various vernacular languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, and others. The emergence of Indian Writing in English as a significant literary tradition in the twentieth century therefore raises crucial questions about language as a marker of identity.

Iyengar views Indian Writing in English as a reflection of the hybrid cultural identity of its authors—writers who are deeply rooted in Indian traditions yet influenced by Western literary canons. This hybridity is what makes Indian Writing in English distinctive: it reflects the layered process of identity formation in India and demonstrates how colonial domination and cultural interaction shape an author's style and thematic concerns.

### **1.8 Conflicting Identities in Indian Society**

Iyengar also points out that Indian society itself is marked by conflicting identities. The variety of regions, religions, languages, and castes has produced a complex cultural tapestry that can sometimes generate tension and conflict. These tensions are mirrored in debates about Indian Writing in English. Some argue that writing in English dilutes the authenticity of Indian culture and distances writers from the masses, while others contend that English can be an effective tool for articulating the diversity of Indian identities and reaching wider audiences.

Iyengar notes that such conflicts are not unique to India; similar struggles over language and cultural identity can be observed in other formerly colonized



societies. Nevertheless, he suggests that Indian literature in English has the potential to navigate these complexities and contribute to a more unified and inclusive vision of Indian society.

### **1.9 The Role of Indian Writing in English in Shaping Identity**

The role of Indian Writing in English in shaping identity is both crucial and significant. Through their works, Indian writers in English have provided the Western and global world with insights into the cultural and historical contexts of India. They have highlighted the diversity and richness of Indian customs, traditions, and values, enabling readers to understand and appreciate the complexities of Indian life.

Indian Writing in English has also created space for marginalized voices—women, Dalits, religious minorities, and other subaltern groups—allowing them to assert their identities and share their experiences with a broader readership. This has helped redefine traditional notions of identity, challenge stereotypes, and support the growth of a more pluralistic and inclusive society. Thus, Indian Writing in English has played an instrumental role in shaping Indian identity both within and beyond the country.

Iyengar further argues that Indian Writing in English has been shaped by three major cultural influences: Indian, British, and American. The Indian influence stems from ancient traditions and indigenous literary forms, which are re-imagined and reinterpreted in English. The British influence includes the legacy of colonial rule and the formal conventions of English literature. The American influence arises from the global reach of American culture and literature, particularly in the twentieth century. According to Iyengar, these cross-currents have produced a distinctive form of Indian Writing in English, marked by its own aesthetic and thematic sensibility. His analysis highlights the complex interplay between tradition and innovation that characterizes this vibrant literary field.

### **1.10 Colonialism and Its Influence on Indian Writing in English**

Iyengar argues that Indian writers in English have been profoundly influenced by colonialism. Colonial rule was responsible for introducing English to India and for creating what he terms “Indo-Anglian” writing—a critical label for Indian literature composed in English. This development allowed Indian writers to experiment with the language and fashion a unique style that reflects their cultural roots.

The impact of colonialism is visible not only in language but also in the themes and subjects of many works. Writers often address issues such as the effects of colonialism on Indian society, cultural clashes, the freedom struggle, and the trauma of partition. In this sense, colonialism played a significant role in shaping Indian Writing in English, influencing both the medium of expression and the range of topics explored.

### **1.11 English as a Tool of Colonization**

Another significant argument Iyengar makes is that English functioned as a tool of colonization. English was brought to India by the British as part of their

administrative and educational policies and was used to maintain imperial control. It became the language of power, privilege, and opportunity, and the primary means of access to this power was through the colonial education system. Mastery of English often implied acceptance, at least in part, of British cultural values and norms, thereby deepening the colonial grip on Indian society. This produced a class of English-educated Indians who, to varying degrees, internalized Western ideals while sometimes distancing themselves from their own traditions. Iyengar suggests that this process threatened indigenous cultural identities and continues to have implications even today.

### **1.12 Pros and Cons of the English Language in Indian Writing**

Iyengar highlights both the advantages and disadvantages of using English as a literary medium. On the positive side, English has enabled Indian writers to engage with a global readership and gain international recognition. It has facilitated the formation of a distinct Indian English literary tradition that has earned critical acclaim worldwide.

On the negative side, writing in English can lead to cultural alienation and a sense of distance from local languages and audiences. English often carries traces of a colonial mentality, and Indian literature in English may sometimes be evaluated by Western critical standards rather than indigenous ones. Iyengar also warns that the dominance of English in education and public life can diminish the status and richness of regional languages and literatures.

Despite these limitations, Iyengar insists that it remains important for Indian writers to continue using English creatively. In his view, doing so ensures that India's cultural diversity and traditions are communicated to the world and that Indian voices participate actively in global literary conversations.

### **1.13 The Unique Incorporation of Indian Culture in English**

In Indian Writing in English, writers face the challenge of capturing not only the nuances of the English language but also the diverse cultural landscape of India. Many authors embrace Indian culture through references to mythology, rituals, customs, festivals, and everyday experiences. These are blended with their command of English, resulting in a distinctive incorporation of Indian culture into an English-language framework.

This fusion allows Indian writers to bridge Eastern and Western cultural worlds and to present India's rich traditions and values in a form accessible to international readers. It is this unique combination that gives Indian Writing in English its particular charm and marks it off as a recognisable literary tradition.

### **1.14 The Language Barrier and Cross-Cultural Influence**

Another important factor in the rise of Indian Writing in English is the language barrier. While English enabled Indian writers to communicate with a wider, often international, audience, it also posed serious challenges. Many writers had to reconcile their deeply rooted cultural identities with the Westernized language and literary forms they employed.

This cross-cultural interaction is visible in the frequent use of Indian words, phrases, proverbs, and concepts within English texts, as well as in the adaptation of Western narrative forms to Indian settings. The work of R. K. Narayan, for instance, blends Indian themes and imagery with a simple, colloquial English style. Thus, the “language barrier” becomes both an obstacle and a creative opportunity in Indian Writing in English.

### **1.15 The Use of Traditional Indian Words and Themes**

Iyengar observes that Indian writers in English are influenced not only by Western literary traditions but also, and crucially, by their own cultural heritage. They consciously incorporate traditional Indian words, expressions, images, and themes into their writing. This usage gives the language a distinctive flavour and reflects the country’s cultural diversity. It also lends authenticity to their representations of Indian life.

Themes drawn from religion, mythology, folklore, and history are woven into modern narratives, providing readers with a window into the complexities of Indian society. In this way, the use of traditional Indian words and themes in English has contributed to the emergence of a distinctive and engaging literary genre that has attracted recognition across the world.

### **1.16 The Balance of Indian and English Styles of Writing**

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar argues for a balanced relationship between Indian and English stylistic elements. He suggests that Indian writers should draw upon their own cultural background and focus on themes related to Indian life while also mastering the technical aspects of the English language. For example, he encourages writers to incorporate Indian rhythms, idioms, and patterns of thought into their English prose and poetry, rather than merely imitating Western models. According to Iyengar, such a balance will produce richer and more authentic literature that reflects a distinctive Indian identity yet remains accessible to international readers. In this context, he introduces the idea of a “double vision”: Indian writers in English can view their country and culture simultaneously from an insider’s and an outsider’s perspective. This double vision enables them to see the complexities and contradictions of Indian society with both intimacy and critical distance. It is, for Iyengar, a defining feature of Indian Writing in English.

### **1.17 The Patriarchal Society in India**

Iyengar also draws attention to the patriarchal structure of Indian society and its reflection in literature. Historically, male authors have dominated the literary scene, and their works often reinforce traditional gender roles and patriarchal values. Women writers have faced considerable difficulties in getting published and gaining recognition; their writing has frequently been dismissed as overly emotional or confined to domestic concerns.

Such attitudes, Iyengar suggests, hamper the development of a more diverse and inclusive literary culture. He calls for greater acknowledgement of women’s

writing and for critical approaches that challenge rather than reproduce patriarchal assumptions.

### **1.18 Literary Representation of Women in Indian Writing in English**

Another important theme in Iyengar's discussion is the literary representation of women. The portrayal of women in Indian Writing in English is shaped by the socio-cultural values and historical circumstances of Indian society. Women are often depicted as victims of patriarchal oppression but also as agents struggling for autonomy and self-definition.

Women writers, in particular, have played a central role in questioning patriarchal norms and fixed gender roles. They have explored themes such as identity, sexuality, marriage, tradition, and modernity, and have contributed to the development of a feminist discourse in Indian literature. Iyengar's analysis highlights the complex position of women in Indian society and their struggle for emancipation.

### **1.19 Different Approaches of Male and Female Writers**

Iyengar notes that male and female writers often approach literature from different angles. Male writers traditionally tend to focus more on the public and political spheres, while female writers, constrained historically to the domestic and private spheres, frequently explore personal experiences, emotions, and family relationships.

Women's writing often engages with themes of repression, resistance, and liberation, especially in relation to women's roles in society. Iyengar emphasizes that these differences in focus are not essential or fixed but have been shaped by historical and social circumstances. Recognizing these varied approaches enriches our understanding of Indian Writing in English.

### **1.20 The Role of Indian Writing in English in Modern Society**

The contribution of Indian Writing in English to modern society is widely acknowledged. For Iyengar, this body of work represents a meeting point between East and West, bringing Indian culture and values into conversation with the English language. Indian Writing in English has also helped sustain and transform English itself, as Indian writers introduce new idioms, metaphors, and experiences into the language.

From the fiction of R. K. Narayan to the poetry of Kamala Das and many others, Indian Writing in English provides a distinctive voice that has shaped both modern literature and public discourse. It serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity, making visible the tensions and negotiations of a society in rapid transition.

### **1.21 The Social and Political Power of Indian Writers**

Iyengar underlines the social and political power wielded by Indian writers. Many have stood at the forefront of social reform and political change, using literature to expose injustices and imagine more equitable futures. Writers such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and Kamala Markandaya have depicted poverty, caste

discrimination, exploitation, and the effects of colonial rule, contributing to debates on nationalism, democracy, and social justice.

Indian writers have played an important role in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism by asserting Indian identity and challenging colonial ideologies through their works. For Iyengar, writers hold a unique position as they both represent and shape the consciousness of their society.

### **1.22 Literary Hybridity**

A further argument advanced by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar concerns literary hybridity. Because many Indian writers in English are bi-cultural or bilingual, their writing often reflects a blend of Indian and Western literary traditions. This hybridity produces new forms, styles, and narrative strategies that offer fresh perspectives on universal themes such as love, freedom, exile, and belonging.

Iyengar insists that Indian English literature is not merely derivative of Western models; instead, it marks a “breakthrough of the Indian consciousness into a new medium.” By embracing hybridity and experimenting with English, Indian writers articulate their experiences and identities in ways that are both authentically Indian and globally relevant.

### **1.23 Conclusion**

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar’s *Indian Writing in English* is a comprehensive study of the evolution and development of Indian literature written in English. He shows that Indian Writing in English has progressed from its tentative beginnings to become a distinct and respected literary tradition. Through detailed discussion of major authors and texts, Iyengar demonstrates the richness of this tradition and the diversity of its voices.

His explanations of the cultural, social, and political contexts in which Indian Writing in English emerged provide readers with a deeper understanding of the field. The book also draws attention to the challenges and opportunities faced by Indian writers in English and to their significant contribution to the global literary canon. Iyengar’s work remains a valuable and engaging resource for anyone interested in literature and in the cultural landscape of modern India.

---

### **Key Points for Revision**

- K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar’s *Indian Writing in English* examines the interaction and fusion of Indian and English literary traditions.
- Indian Writing in English has become an essential part of India’s cultural and linguistic heritage over the last two centuries.
- Indian writers who write in English have a unique perspective on the language, using it to convey their experiences and cultural legacies.
- Many Indian writers create a hybrid language that incorporates Indian words and phrases, enabling them to express their cultural lens while still writing in English.
- Indian Writing in English is now an important and recognized component of India’s literary landscape and should be celebrated as such.

- It plays a crucial role in disseminating Indian culture, tradition, and history to a global audience, thereby helping to break down cultural barriers and misconceptions.
  - Indian writers in English have expanded the cultural and linguistic boundaries of English literature, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive global literary scene.
- 

## Assessment

### Short Questions

1. What is the main focus of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English*?
2. What is the significance of Indian Writing in English?
3. How do Indian writers incorporate their cultural identity into their writing in English?
4. How does Indian Writing in English contribute to a more diverse and inclusive literary landscape?
5. What is K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's contribution to the study of Indian Writing in English?

### Suggested Answers

1. The main focus of *Indian Writing in English* is to examine the development and characteristics of Indian literature written in English, especially the fusion of Indian and English literary traditions.
2. Indian Writing in English is significant because it has become an essential part of India's cultural and linguistic heritage and a major medium for expressing Indian experiences to the world.
3. Indian writers incorporate their cultural identity by creating a hybrid language that includes Indian words, phrases, idioms, and by drawing on Indian themes, myths, and social realities.
4. Indian Writing in English contributes to a more diverse and inclusive literary landscape by expanding the cultural and linguistic boundaries of English literature and bringing new voices and perspectives into global discourse.
5. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's contribution lies in his systematic critical analysis and commentary, which helped to establish the importance, richness, and distinctiveness of Indian literature in English in the wider English-speaking world.

### Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs)

1. What is the focus of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English*?
  - a) Indian politics
  - b) The fusion of Indian and English literary traditions
  - c) The history of India's independence
  - d) The rise of Bollywood cinema
2. How do Indian writers incorporate their cultural identity into their writing in English?
  - a) By using only English words

- b) By creating a hybrid language that includes Indian words and phrases
  - c) By avoiding any reference to their cultural identity
  - d) By using only their native language
3. What is the significance of Indian Writing in English?
    - a) It has become an essential part of India's cultural and linguistic heritage
    - b) It has no significance
    - c) It has contributed to a less diverse and inclusive literary landscape
    - d) It has not been recognized globally
  4. How has Indian Writing in English contributed to a more diverse and inclusive literary landscape?
    - a) By limiting the cultural and linguistic boundaries of English literature
    - b) By avoiding any reference to cultural identity
    - c) By not incorporating any Indian words or phrases
    - d) By expanding the cultural and linguistic boundaries of English literature
  5. What is K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's contribution to the study of Indian Writing in English?
    - a) He provided critical analysis and commentary
    - b) He did not contribute anything significant
    - c) He discouraged the study of Indian Writing in English
    - d) He did not believe that Indian Writing in English was important
  6. Which type of language do many Indian writers use to express their unique cultural lens?
    - a) Only Hindi
    - b) Only Tamil
    - c) A hybrid language that includes Indian words and phrases
    - d) Only standard English
  7. What role does Indian Writing in English play in disseminating Indian culture, tradition, and history?
    - a) It does not play any role
    - b) It helps break down cultural barriers and misconceptions
    - c) It limits the dissemination of Indian culture, tradition, and history
    - d) It does not reflect the complexities of Indian society
  8. What is the unique perspective that Indian writers who write in English have on the language?
    - a) They have no unique perspective
    - b) They use it to convey their experiences and cultural legacies
    - c) They avoid using it altogether
    - d) They only use it to write about Western culture
  9. What is the significance of K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's work on Indian Writing in English?
    - a) It has no significance
    - b) It helped establish the importance and richness of Indian literature in an English-speaking world
    - c) It discouraged the study of Indian Writing in English
    - d) It did not contribute anything significant
  10. How has Indian Writing in English impacted global literary traditions?
    - a) It has had no impact



- b) It has limited the diversity of global literary traditions
- c) It has expanded the diversity of global literary traditions
- d) It has only impacted Western literary traditions

**Answer**

**Key**

1 – b, 2 – b, 3 – a, 4 – d, 5 – a, 6 – c, 7 – b, 8 – b, 9 – b, 10 – c

**Try Yourself (Long-Answer Questions)**

1. Who is K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, and what is his contribution to the study of Indian Writing in English?
2. What is the significance of Indian Writing in English in the context of Indian culture and history?
3. How do Indian writers incorporate their cultural identity into their writing in English? Illustrate with suitable examples.
4. What is the role of Indian Writing in English in disseminating Indian culture and tradition to a global audience?
5. How has Indian Writing in English contributed to the expansion of the cultural and linguistic boundaries of English literature?
6. Why is it important to study Indian Writing in English in a global context?
7. What are some of the challenges faced by Indian writers in adapting Western literary forms while maintaining their cultural identity?
8. Discuss how Indian Writing in English has shaped Indian identity both within and outside the country.
9. Name some major Indian writers in English and briefly describe their contributions.
10. Trace the evolution of Indian Writing in English and identify some key trends and themes that have emerged over time.

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## Unit 2

## The Renaissance in India from K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's *Indian Writing in English*

### 2.1 Introduction

### 2.2 Brief History of the Renaissance in India

### 2.3 Social Reform

### 2.4 The Renaissance in India: Historical Context

### 2.5 Socio-Political and Cultural Factors Leading to the Indian Renaissance

### 2.6 Impact of British Rule on the Indian Renaissance

### 2.7 Rise and Influence of Indian Intellectuals During the Renaissance Period

### 2.8 Indian Writing During the Renaissance

### 2.9 Emergence of Indian Literature During the Renaissance Period

### 2.10 Role of the English Language in Indian Writing During the Renaissance

### 2.11 Major Literary Works and Trends Associated with the Indian Renaissance

### 2.12 Significance of the Renaissance in India

### 2.13 Influence of the Indian Renaissance on Indian Society and Culture

### 2.14 Impact of the Indian Renaissance on Global Literature

### 2.15 Legacy of the Indian Renaissance in Contemporary Indian Literature

### 2.16 Relevance of Iyengar's Literary Perspective

### 2.17 Conclusion

### Key Points for Revision

### Assessment

### MCQs

### Try Yourself

### Works Cited

### 2.1 Introduction

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, in his book *Indian Writing in English*, discusses the Indian Renaissance as a period of cultural, intellectual, and social awakening. The Renaissance in India is generally associated with the nineteenth century and continues into the early twentieth century. This period played an important role in shaping modern Indian society and literature. It helped create an atmosphere where new ideas about reform, education, and identity could develop.

Iyengar explains that the Indian Renaissance influenced the growth of Indian writing in English. Indian writers began to respond to colonial rule, social customs, and cultural questions. They also learned new literary forms and styles through Western education. As a result, Indian literature gradually developed modern themes and modern forms.

### 2.2 Brief History of the Renaissance in India

The Indian Renaissance refers to the cultural and intellectual awakening that took place mainly during the nineteenth century. It is often linked with reform movements in different parts of India, especially Bengal, Maharashtra, and South India. The Renaissance encouraged people to think critically about social customs, religion, and education. It promoted new learning, scientific thinking, and humanistic values.

During this period, Indian writers and thinkers began to look at Indian traditions from a new perspective. They tried to remove harmful practices and promote social improvement. The Renaissance also created conditions for the development of modern Indian literature in many Indian languages. Later, Indian writing in English also developed more strongly, especially in the early twentieth century.

### 2.3 Social Reform

One of the major aspects of the Indian Renaissance was social reform. Many reformers and intellectuals worked to change harmful customs and improve society. They supported education, especially for women, and raised their voice against social injustice.

Literature played an important role in spreading reformist ideas. Writers used novels, essays, poems, and plays to highlight social problems and create awareness. For example, Premchand's novel *Godan* shows rural exploitation and social inequality. Rabindranath Tagore's works often discuss social issues and human values. Such writings encouraged people to think about change and improvement in society. The Renaissance contributed to reform and criticism of caste oppression, but it did not abolish the caste system.

### 2.4 The Renaissance in India: Historical Context

The Indian Renaissance developed in the background of British colonial rule. The introduction of English education, modern institutions, and print culture played an important role in spreading new ideas. Schools, colleges, newspapers, and journals helped educated Indians to learn about Western philosophy, political ideas, and modern science.

At the same time, Indians began to question colonial rule and its effects. Many thinkers used modern education to criticize injustice and support the idea of national development. The Renaissance therefore became connected with both social reform and the rise of nationalism.

### 2.5 Socio-Political and Cultural Factors Leading to the Indian Renaissance

Several factors contributed to the Indian Renaissance:

- **Western Education:** English education introduced Indians to modern ideas, science, and literature. It encouraged critical thinking and new ways of learning.
- **Social Reform Movements:** Reformers tried to improve society by challenging harmful customs and promoting equality and education.
- **Print Culture:** Newspapers, journals, and books helped spread ideas to more people and created public discussion.

- **Cultural Awakening:** People began to study Indian history and culture with a new interest and tried to revive pride in Indian traditions in a modern way.
- **Rise of Nationalism:** Social and cultural reforms slowly contributed to political awareness and the development of national consciousness.

## 2.6 Impact of British Rule on the Indian Renaissance

British rule influenced the Indian Renaissance in both positive and negative ways. On one side, it brought English education, modern printing, and exposure to Western literary forms. These helped Indians learn new methods of writing and thinking.

On the other side, colonial rule also created cultural and economic exploitation. It often placed Western culture above Indian culture and created a sense of inferiority among Indians. Missionary activities and colonial attitudes sometimes pressured traditional practices. However, Indians responded by reforming society and developing new cultural confidence. This period also laid the foundation for modern Indian literature and intellectual life.

## 2.7 Rise and Influence of Indian Intellectuals During the Renaissance Period

Many Indian intellectuals and reformers became important during the Renaissance period. Figures such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Rabindranath Tagore played major roles in social reform, education, and cultural thinking.

These intellectuals promoted rational ideas and questioned blind traditions. They worked for women's education, social equality, and a new understanding of Indian identity. Their contributions created a new intellectual environment which influenced literature, social life, and political awareness.

## 2.8 Indian Writing During the Renaissance

During the Renaissance and its later phase, Indian writers began to deal with modern themes such as nationalism, identity, colonialism, and social injustice. Literature was not limited to old religious or mythological themes; writers also focused on contemporary life and social realities.

Indian writing in English became more visible in the early twentieth century. Writers like R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao created novels that presented Indian society and culture in English. For example, Anand wrote about caste and class problems, Narayan depicted ordinary life, and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is closely connected with the freedom struggle and Gandhian ideas.

## 2.9 Emergence of Indian Literature During the Renaissance Period

The Renaissance supported the development of modern Indian literature in many Indian languages. Writers experimented with new forms like the novel, short story, modern drama, and essays. They wrote about social reform, national identity, and human values.

English became an important additional language for some Indian writers, but Indian languages continued to remain central in literature. The Renaissance

therefore contributed to the growth of a modern literary culture in India across many languages.

### **2.10 Role of the English Language in Indian Writing During the Renaissance**

English played an important role in Indian writing because:

- It gave access to Western literary forms and modern education.
- It provided a medium for Indians to communicate their ideas to wider audiences, including international readers.
- It helped Indian writers express modern themes like nationalism, reform, and cultural identity.

However, English also created debates about identity and authenticity, because it was introduced through colonial rule. Iyengar shows that Indian writers gradually adapted English and made it suitable to express Indian experiences and Indian culture.

### **2.11 Major Literary Works and Trends Associated with the Indian Renaissance**

Some major works and trends related to this period and its influence include:

- Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* (1913), which reflects spiritual and human values.
- Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Anandamath*, important for nationalistic ideas.
- Reformist writings of intellectuals such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who contributed greatly to Renaissance thinking (mainly as a reformer and writer, not as a creative writer).
- The rise of Indian writing in English in the early twentieth century through Narayan, Anand, and Raja Rao.

The period encouraged writers to combine Indian themes with modern literary forms.

### **2.12 Significance of the Renaissance in India**

The Renaissance in India was significant because it brought:

- Social reform and new awareness about equality and education
- Cultural awakening and new interest in Indian history and identity
- Growth of modern literary forms and modern themes
- Development of national consciousness

It helped Indian society move towards modern thinking and encouraged literature to address real social issues.

### **2.13 Influence of the Indian Renaissance on Indian Society and Culture**

The Renaissance influenced Indian society by encouraging education, reform, and public discussion. It improved awareness about women's education and social justice. It also strengthened nationalist ideas, which later contributed to the freedom movement.

Culturally, it encouraged new developments in literature, art, and social thought. It created a link between tradition and modernity by reforming old ideas and accepting useful new influences.

### **2.14 Impact of the Indian Renaissance on Global Literature**

The Indian Renaissance and later Indian writing in English contributed to global literature by presenting Indian experiences and ideas to the world. Indian writers began to use English and modern literary forms to describe Indian life, social problems, and cultural identity.

In later years, Indian writing became an important part of world literature and contributed to postcolonial discussions on colonialism, identity, and nationalism.

### **2.15 Legacy of the Indian Renaissance in Contemporary Indian Literature**

The legacy of the Indian Renaissance continues in contemporary Indian literature. Modern writers still address themes like identity, social inequality, politics, gender, and cultural conflict. Indian writing in English has grown strongly and gained global recognition.

Writers such as Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, and Jhumpa Lahiri have explored Indian history, society, and global issues using modern narrative methods. They also use English in an Indian way, adding Indian expressions and cultural references.

### **2.16 Relevance of Iyengar's Literary Perspective**

Iyengar's literary perspective is important because he links literature with history and culture. He shows how Indian writing in English developed from the social and cultural changes of the Renaissance period and colonial influence. He also explains how Indian writers reshaped English to express Indian themes.

Iyengar's discussion helps learners understand how Indian writing in English became a distinct tradition and how it reflects Indian identity in a modern context.

### **2.17 Conclusion**

The Renaissance in India was a major cultural and intellectual awakening, mainly in the nineteenth century, which influenced Indian society and literature. It encouraged reform movements, modern education, and new literary forms. It also provided the background for the growth of Indian writing in English.

Iyengar's discussion shows that English, though introduced during colonial rule, later became a medium through which Indian writers expressed Indian social realities, reformist ideas, and national identity.

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### **Key Points for Revision**

- The Indian Renaissance was mainly a nineteenth-century cultural and intellectual awakening.
- Social reform, education, and cultural awakening were major features.
- British rule introduced English education and print culture but also created cultural pressure and inequality.
- Modern Indian literature developed across many Indian languages, and English became an additional medium.
- Indian writing in English became more visible in the early twentieth century through Narayan, Anand, and Raja Rao.
- The Renaissance influenced nationalism, modern identity, and later Indian literature.

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### Assessment (Answer in Brief)

1. Explain the concept of the Renaissance in India as discussed by Iyengar.
2. Discuss the influence of the Renaissance on Indian literature.
3. How did social reform contribute to the Renaissance in India?
4. What was the impact of British rule on the Indian Renaissance?
5. Name some important intellectuals associated with the Renaissance period.
6. How did the Renaissance influence Indian writing in English?
7. Mention major literary works and trends associated with the Renaissance.
8. Explain briefly the impact of the Indian Renaissance on global literature.
9. How did the Renaissance contribute to shaping modern India?
10. Why is Iyengar's perspective important for understanding Indian writing in English?

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### MCQs

1. The Indian Renaissance mainly refers to:
  - a) A period of cultural and intellectual awakening
  - b) A period of decline in literature
  - c) A period with only religious writing
  - d) A period without social reform
2. The Indian Renaissance is generally associated with:
  - a) The nineteenth century and early twentieth century
  - b) Only the medieval period
  - c) Only the eighteenth century
  - d) Only the post-2000 period
3. Social reform during the Renaissance focused on:
  - a) Education and social improvement
  - b) Rejecting education
  - c) Ending all writing
  - d) Removing newspapers
4. Indian writing in English became more visible in the early twentieth century through:
  - a) Narayan, Anand, and Raja Rao
  - b) Only Shakespeare
  - c) Only ancient poets
  - d) Only British writers
5. The Renaissance influenced global literature mainly by:
  - a) Presenting Indian experiences in modern literary forms
  - b) Ending modern writing
  - c) Removing Indian identity
  - d) Limiting literature to one language



**Answer Key:** 1-a, 2-a, 3-a, 4-a, 5-a

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**Try Yourself**

1. What factors led to the Indian Renaissance?
  2. Write a short note on social reform during the Renaissance.
  3. Mention any two writers associated with Indian writing in English in the early twentieth century.
  4. How did English help Indian writers during the Renaissance and later period?
  5. Explain in a few lines why the Renaissance is important for modern Indian literature.
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## **Unit 3**

## **Gandhi Literature from K. R. Srinivasa Iyenger**

### **3.0 Objectives**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

#### **3.2 Gandhi Literature - Definitions**

#### **3.3 Life of Mahatma Gandhi (His Autobiography)**

#### **3.4. Major Works of Gandhiji**

##### **3.4.1 Influence of thinkers, writers, spiritual leaders, books etc. on Gandhiji**

##### **3.4.2 Freedom struggle by Gandhiji**

##### **3.4.3 Gandhian ideology of truth, non-violence and Swaraj struggle by Gandhiji**

##### **3.4.4 Gandhiji on rural development**

##### **3.4.5 Gandhi's economic views**

##### **3.4.6 Gandhiji on equality, untouchability and women**

##### **3.4.7 Gandhiji's views on education**

##### **3.4.8 Check Your Progress-1 (MCQS)**

#### **3.5 Influence of Gandhiji on literature**

##### **3.5.1 Indian English Literature**

##### **3.5.2 Influence of Gandhiji on Regional Literature in India**

##### **3.5.3 Regional literatures**

##### **3.5.4 Major themes of Gandhian literature**

##### **3.5.5 Characteristics of Gandhian literature**

##### **3.5.6 Impact of Gandhian ideology on thinkers, leaders and writers across the world.**

#### **3.6 Let us sum up**

#### **Check you progress-II (Detailed questions / short notes)**

#### **3.7 Key words**

#### **3.8 Suggested Reading**

#### **3.9 Answer (MCQ (Check your progress))**

### **3.0 Objectives**

In this unit, our objectives are as follows:

- Defining Gandhi and Gandhian Literature
- Introduction to Gandhiji and Gandhi Literature
- Explaining Gandhiji's life
- Explaining major works of Gandhiji
- Understanding influence of writers, thinkers, leaders etc. on Gandhiji
- Understanding Gandhian ideology
- Understanding Gandhiji's views on various topics
- Understanding major theme of Gandhian Literature and characteristics of

Gandhian literature

- Gandhiji's relevance and impact on modern world.

### 3.1 Introduction:

Mahatma Gandhi was a Gujarati bania (Merchant) who was born in Porbandar on October 2, 1869. He died on January 30, 1948, one year after India became independent on August 15, 1947. Gandhi became a great leader and prophet of truth and non-violence. He grew up in a religious background and learned from his parents. He studied in Rajkot and Bhavnagar during childhood and youth. Then he went to England from 1888 to 1891. After that, he moved to South Africa to work as a lawyer.

In South Africa, the British rulers discriminated against Indians and treated them unjustly. Gandhi fought against racial discrimination fearlessly and advocated for Indians.

In 1906, he started satyagraha (insistence on truth). It proved a unique way of struggling against British rule. In 1915, he returned to India and became a nationwide leader. By 1920, he commanded influence through his nationalism and concentration on truth and non-violence. He believed in equality and human dignity. He focused on people's awareness for freedom and started a long journey of freedom struggle.

In 1947, India became independent, and India was divided into India and Pakistan. Partition created violence and bloodshed between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhiji was deeply disappointed, as he had worked for Hindu-Muslim unity. The next year, in 1948, he was assassinated by Nathuram Godse.

The word "Mahatma" was used by great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore for Gandhiji. He remarked that Gandhiji was an incomparable politician, organizer, leader, and moral reformer. He propagated love for humanity across India. He experimented with truth and non-violence like a human scientist and gave the message of love, liberty, and brotherhood. Albert Einstein wrote, "Generations to come, it may be will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon the earth." Gandhiji was an altruist revolutionary. For him, freedom was a source of human growth. For him, truth was God. He became a fearless leader who used the weapon of non-violence for freedom struggle. He also used the concept of satyagraha and Swaraj in freedom struggle. He believed that human beings are social animals but they are individuals—independent and interdependent.

Gandhiji's influence is universal. For him, there should be harmony in thinking, speech, and actions. One should speak as one thinks, and one should act as one speaks. He influenced Indian English literature and other regional literatures. This influenced literature is called Gandhi or Gandhian literature. Gandhi literature also includes the works of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhian literature is inspired by Gandhian ideology and depicts historical perspectives of the Gandhian era and Indian freedom movement.

The characteristics of Gandhian literature are as follows:

1. Impact of Gandhian ideology on literature.
2. Impact of freedom struggle in India on literature.
3. Satyagraha, Swaraj and non-violence.

4. Depiction of rural life and simple ordinary characters.
5. Writing in English and regional language.
6. Simple and often non-literary language.

### **3.2 Gandhi Literature – Definitions:**

Gandhiji was a great nationalist but he was a genuine humanist. He wrote in Gujarati and English both. He rejected inequalities and discrimination. Gandhiji was not a literary writer but he was a writer who dealt with many subjects. Like Tolstoy, he focused on ethics, morality and humanity. He did not stress creative writing.

Gandhiji was a journalist who published some weeklies like “Young India” and “Harijan”. He wrote on various topics like truth, non-violence, satyagraha, Swaraj, etc. Gandhi literature can be defined as writing by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhian literature refers to literature influenced by Gandhiji and his ideology. Gandhi literature was written in many regional languages.

Gandhian impact on contemporary Indian literature has multiple results. Gandhiji was the supporter of mother tongue and therefore regional literature also progressed a lot. Village life and ordinary characters are usually part of Gandhian literature. In several literary works, there are themes of freedom movement, Swaraj, satyagraha and Gandhian concepts of education, social work and ethical concerns.

In Gandhian literature, there are many biographies of Mahatma Gandhi. Even today, literary writings on Gandhiji’s life and ideology are written. Romain Rolland, Louis Fischer, Pyarelal, J. B. Kriplani, K. G. Mashruwala, Gunnar Myrdal, Ramchandra Guha, etc. wrote about Gandhian views. Many political thinkers and economists were impacted by Gandhiji and Gandhian literature. The message of truth, non-violence, humanity, equality and peace has spread across India and the world.

### **3.3 Life of Mahatma Gandhi (His autobiography) :**

Gandhiji wrote his autobiography, “The Story of My Experiments with Truth”. He discussed his life in detail from his childhood to his political struggle in South Africa. Gandhiji was born in Porbandar, Gujarat, on October 2, 1869. His parents were moral and religious by nature. As a boy, Gandhi was highly fearful but later he became fearless. He believed that fear is a great evil. Truth and non-violence are the opposite of fear.

Mohandas Gandhi studied in Rajkot and Bhavnagar. Afterwards, he went to England and earned the degree of barrister. Then he worked as a barrister in South Africa. He had to fight against racism in South Africa. He developed the concept of satyagraha, a non-violent way of protesting against injustice and exploitation. After returning to India, he adopted satyagraha to make India free from British rule.

India became free on 15th August, 1947 and Gandhiji was shot dead by Nathuram Godse on January 30, 1948. Gandhiji propagated Hindu–Muslim unity and fought against untouchability. During Partition, millions of Hindus and Muslims walked to India and Pakistan. Thousands were killed, and many people died from illness, violence and starvation. Millions of people were uprooted from their homes.

Gandhiji decided to fast unto death to stop violence. Representatives of Hindu and Muslim communities visited the Mahatma and promised peace. On January 30, 1948, at the age of 78, Gandhiji was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic.

The legacy of Gandhiji was unique. He influenced Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and several other leaders by his concept of satyagraha. In modern times, his lessons are highly relevant. He left his thoughts to posterity which is relevant in modern time if they are practiced sincerely.

### **3.4. Major works of Mahatma Gandhi:**

Literature written by Gandhiji was not literary but thought-provoking and moralistic. He regarded life as a source of experiments. He experimented on various aspects of life—spirituality, morality, truth, non-violence, humanity, equality and vegetarianism. He also propagated brahmacharya (celibacy) as a foundation of spiritual power. He stressed self-reliance, manual labour, cleanliness and the importance of rural life.

Gandhi's major works are as follows:

1. Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule
2. The Essence of Hinduism
3. Ramanama
4. Ethical Religion
5. Key to Health
6. My Religion
7. India of My Dreams
8. Village Swaraj
9. Panchayat Raj
10. Pathway to God
11. Truth is God
12. Discourses on the Gita
13. Trusteeship
14. Satyagraha in South Africa
15. Unto This Last (John Ruskin)

#### **3.4.1 Influence of Thinkers, writers, spiritual leaders and books on Gandhiji:**

Gandhiji was influenced by some great thinkers, writers, spiritual leaders and books. Gandhi was influenced by Leo Tolstoy, a great Russian writer. He regarded love as the law of life. Gandhi was impacted by Tolstoy's ideas. Tolstoy's book "The Kingdom of God Is Within You" influenced Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi founded an ashram in South Africa and named it "Tolstoy Farm". Thoreau was a famous American writer and thinker. He influenced Mahatma Gandhi through his essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" and his idea of simple, natural life.

Gandhiji was influenced by the play "Harishchandra" in his childhood, which emphasized truth. He also liked Socrates' speech "Apology". "Apology" means defence in classical Greek. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was a liberal Indian leader who influenced Gandhiji. In his autobiography, Gandhiji referred to him as his political guru. When Gandhiji was a young man, he was in touch with Shrimad Rajchandra, a spiritual thinker, and he was influenced by him.

Mahatma Gandhi's economic views were influenced by John Ruskin's famous book "Unto This Last". Gandhiji also valued "The Bhagavad Gita" and "The Bible" and was spiritually impacted by these books.

### **3.4.2 Freedom struggle by Gandhiji:**

Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa in 1915 and started the freedom struggle in India. He asked the British rulers to quit India. He inspired millions of people. In the freedom movement, Gandhi's contribution was unforgettable.

During World War I, he was invited by Lord Chelmsford to participate in a war conference. He wrote to the Viceroy that he would not like to kill or injure anyone.

The Champaran agitation took place in Bihar, and Gandhi actively helped and guided the movement. Kheda is a region in Gujarat that was affected by floods and distress. Gandhiji supported the farmers and helped them in their struggle for relief.

Gandhiji always tried to help Muslims, and in the Khilafat movement he supported them. He became a popular national leader.

The Non-cooperation movement became powerful for Swaraj or self-governance. The Salt March (Dandi March) is a pivotal event in Indian freedom movement. In March 1930, he marched from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi with thousands of people. It was a non-violent protest against the British rule.

During World War II, Gandhiji asked the British rulers to quit India. It was a powerful anti-colonial movement that led to independence on 15th August 1947.

### **3.4.3 Gandhian ideology of truth, non-violence, Swaraj, Sarvodaya and Satyagraha:**

Gandhiji was a great thinker. He believed that there should be harmony in thoughts, speech and actions. For Gandhiji, the major concept was truth. For him, truth was God and God was truth. He believed that truth is the only justification for human existence. He said truth is absolute, not relative, and one must be loyal to oneself. The word "Satya" derives from "Sat", which means "Being". He claimed that truth by nature is self-evident. It becomes clear when ignorance is removed.

Satyagraha is related to satya. It can be called insistence on truth. Truth and non-violence are the two pillars of Gandhian thought. He used them as tools for freedom struggle. Non-violence implies selflessness. Non-violence is a positive aspect of truth. Satyagraha is devotion to truth. According to Gandhiji, a satyagrahi must live a pure life with love for mankind and all living beings.

Violence is destructive and destroys human life through fights, battles and wars; therefore love for peace is the source of non-violence. He also said that if he had to choose between violence and cowardice, he would choose violence. Without fearlessness, there is no truth or non-violence.

Gandhiji said that Swaraj means self-rule. When Swaraj is achieved, everyone becomes his or her own ruler. One rules oneself without imposing power on others. When we learn to rule ourselves, Swaraj takes place. Gandhiji discussed these views in Hind Swaraj. "Sarvodaya" means the upliftment of all people. This concept was derived by Gandhiji from Ruskin's "Unto This Last". He believed firmly that all people should be happy and independent.

#### **3.4.4 Gandhiji on Rural Development:**

India is a country of villages. If there is no development of villages, there would be no development of India. If the village perishes, India will also perish. The development of villages is possible only when there is no exploitation of rural people. Gandhi believed that industrialization can lead to exploitation.

Gandhiji said that villages should be focused on by the government and people. Villages should be self-dependent and self-sufficient. According to Mahatma Gandhi, Indian villages should function like republics in spirit. Therefore, he wanted village reconstruction without village exploitation. He stated that his idea of village Swaraj was a perfect republic. He also believed that village people should be swadeshi, equal and honest. Simple village living keeps people happy and free from excessive urban and industrial atmosphere. In village life, dignity of labour is important. Rural life symbolizes truth and non-violence.

#### **3.4.5 Gandhiji's Economic Views:**

Gandhiji's economic views are moralistic and humanistic. He believed that human beings should be at the centre of the economy instead of capital, industries, profit, trade, etc. Major features of Gandhian economics are non-violent economy, decentralization, cottage industries, village development, trusteeship doctrine, khadi industry and manual labour. According to Gandhiji, there should be social harmony and moral advancement in society.

Economy should focus on equality, absence of exploitation, non-violence and decentralization. In his concept of sarvodaya, he said that all people should progress in an ideal state or society.

#### **3.4.6 Gandhiji and equality untouchability and women:**

Gandhiji believed in equality. He said that all people should be treated as equal irrespective of caste, religion, creed, language and gender. Equality is a great virtue in human life. People are different, but they should be treated as equal. Equality is not sameness but unity in diversity.

Gandhiji opposed untouchability. He believed that no human being is high or low by birth and that untouchability is an oppressive custom. He said that he would like to be reborn among the oppressed so that he might share their miseries and humiliation. Gandhiji liked the famous bhajan by Narsinh Mehta: "Vaishnava Jan to Tene Kahiye Je Peed Parayi Jaane Re" (a true devotee understands and shares the suffering of others).

Gandhiji respected women and believed that women should have equal rights. Sons and daughters should be treated equally. According to Gandhiji, women are embodiments of care, love, peace and non-violence. He said that if a husband is unjust to his wife, she should live separately. Women should not suffer silently; they should be strong and rebellious if necessary. From a modern point of view, some of Gandhi's ideas can be called supportive of women's dignity and rights.

#### **3.4.7 Gandhiji views on Education:**

Education is the key to understanding, knowledge and disciplined life. Educated citizens keep the country well managed. Education does not mean mere literacy. Gandhiji said that education applies to all people, not only children. One should learn all the time. Real education draws out the best from boys and girls.



Gandhiji also said that national education must be national with deep concern for the nation. Gandhiji focused on buniyadi education and Nayi Talim. Nayi Talim aimed at full development of a person. Gandhiji stated:

“By education, I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man—body, mind and spirit.”

“By spiritual training, I mean education of the heart.”

Gandhiji’s views on education stress ethical vocation, skill development, manual labour, liberal thinking, honesty and sincerity. Students should learn cooperation, harmony, and simple living. Gandhiji insisted on equality and focus on mother tongue and regional languages.

Gandhiji’s ideals were utopian and he wanted to bring Ram Rajya in social life. He believed students should develop vocational skills like agriculture, spinning, weaving, etc. For him, spiritual life was the goal of education, including tolerance, equality, liberty, discipline and social concern.

### 3.4.8 Check your progress-1 (MCQS)

Choose correct option.

- Gandhi \_\_\_\_\_ belonged \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ caste.  
(A) Brahmin (B) Bania (C) Goldsmith (D) Kshatriya
- Gandhiji \_\_\_\_\_ started \_\_\_\_\_ satyagraha \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) 1920 (B) 1906 (C) 1915 (D) 1940
- The word Mahatma was used by \_\_\_\_\_ for Gandhiji.  
(A) Tagore (B) Jawahar Nehra (C) Lokmaya Tilak (D) C. F. Andrews
- Gandhian Literature is inspired by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Politics (B) Religion (C) Freedom Struggle (D) Gandhian Ideology
- Gandhiji wrote autobiography with \_\_\_\_\_ truth.  
(A) My life (B) My story (C) A story of my experiments with truth (D) Experiment of life
- Gandhiji returned to India from \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) England (B) South Africa (C) France (D) Germany
- Gandhiji believed that \_\_\_\_\_ is God.  
(A) Truth (B) Non-violence (C) Morality (D) Humanity
- Gandhiji was influenced by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) John Ruskin’s UNTO THIS LAST (B) Shakespeare (C) Upanishads (D) Romain Rolland
- Swaraj \_\_\_\_\_ means \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Self-rule (B) Insistence of truth (C) Non-violence (D) Self-dependence
- Gandhiji believed that India can progress if \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Cities (B) Indentation (C) Poor people (D) Villages
- Gandhiji \_\_\_\_\_ rejected \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Caste system (B) Superstitions (C) Untouchability (D) Capitalists
- “Vaishnavs Jan” is a poem by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Dayaram (B) Mirabal (C) Tagore (D) Narsinh Mehta

### 3.5 Influences of Gandhiji on literature:

Literature is criticism of life. It deals with human life and universal aspects. Literature is influenced by political, economic and social issues. History always affects literature. French critic Taine said that literature is influenced by race, time

and surroundings (milieu). In Indian literature, Mahatma Gandhi's influence is remarkable.

Gandhi was a unique leader, spiritual man and fearless thinker. He studied law in England and worked as a barrister in South Africa. He had bitter experience of racism in South Africa. He fought against racism and colour-bar with a new concept of satyagraha. After he returned to India, he started freedom movement against the British rule. Gandhiji used truth and non-violence as weapons to fight against colonialism. India became free on 15th August, 1947 and India was divided into two countries—India and Pakistan. In 1948, Gandhiji was assassinated by Nathuram Godse.

Gandhiji's ideology was highly virtuous. He experimented with truth. He was against inequality, poverty, industrialization and urbanization. His views on education were also moralistic. He focused on ethical life rather than mere knowledge, professionalism and desire for wealth. During his life, Partition and violence took place, so literature was influenced by such historical incidents. Indian English writers like Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan wrote novels that dealt with Gandhian ideology and historical perspectives. In regional languages like Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi and Bengali also, there are literary works that were affected by the life and actions of Mahatma Gandhi.

#### **3.5.1 Indian English Literature:**

Indian English literature was influenced by Gandhian ideology. Highly educated scholars respected Gandhian thoughts on politics, truth, non-violence, economy and the concept of Swaraj and satyagraha. The famous Indian English writers who were influenced by Gandhian thoughts include K.S. Venkataramani, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Bhabani Bhattacharya.

Indian writing in English expressed both harmony and disharmony between Eastern and Western cultures. Several writers criticized Indian social evils like caste system, untouchability and gender bias. Gandhiji studied under the Western education system, but later he rejected it and introduced Nai Talim and buniyadi education. Many anglicized people did not agree with Gandhian views of education, economy and rural life.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay published the novel "Rajmohan's Wife". The Gandhian era became prominent after Gandhi returned to India and started freedom struggle through non-violence. Gandhiji inspired common people and made them aware of colonial domination. Many novelists wrote novels on social themes and Gandhian thoughts. Gandhi changed the scenario of literature with themes like Swaraj, simplicity, equality, satyagraha and rural development. The writers focused on social problems and political awareness for freedom and nationalism. Gandhi's autobiography also influenced many Indian English writers, making them aware of Gandhi's social, political, ethical and educational thought.

Khushwant Singh's novel "Train to Pakistan" presents the background of post-Partition days in India and Pakistan. It depicts communal violence and human suffering.

R.K. Narayan's novel "Waiting for the Mahatma" deals with Gandhian thoughts and the love story between Sriram and Bharati. The setting of the novel is Malgudi. Sriram is influenced by Gandhi's speech and becomes closer to

Gandhian philosophy of peace, non-violence, satyagraha and Swaraj. The novel ends with the death of the Mahatma. Narayan presents Gandhiji realistically and humbly and avoids hero-worship.

### **3.5.2 Influence of Gandhiji on Regional Literature in India**

Mulk Raj Anand's novel "Untouchable" (1935) deals with the humiliation of a young sweeper, Bakha. The novel portrays the sufferings of the oppressed. Gandhiji's concern for untouchability and the upliftment of the marginalized is reflected in the broader Gandhian atmosphere that influenced such writings.

Raja Rao's "Kanthapura" reflects Gandhian ideology of non-violence and satyagraha. It depicts a village awakening under Gandhian influence, including participation of women and the struggle against colonial oppression.

Bhabani Bhattacharya was a social realist writer. His novels include "So Many Hungers!", "He Who Rides a Tiger", "The Golden Boat", "Music for Mohini", and "Shadow from Ladakh". His works reflect social awareness and show Gandhian influence in themes of freedom struggle, moral values and rural concerns.

### **3.5.3 Regional literatures**

Gandhiji influenced Gujarati writers and thinkers. Many Gujarati writers were inspired by Gandhian ideology and wrote about social reform, rural upliftment, education and ethical life. Gandhiji stressed buniyadi education and Nayi Talim. He also believed literature should teach ethical life, not only entertain.

Mahadev Desai, as Gandhi's secretary, wrote important journalistic works. Zhaverchand Meghani also wrote works influenced by Gandhiji, including poems addressed to him.

Thus, the influence of Gandhian ideology was highly effective on Gujarati thinkers, freedom fighters and writers.

### **3.5.4 Major themes of Gandhian literature**

Gandhian philosophy contains truth, non-violence, simplicity, equality, humanity, Swaraj, satyagraha, rural upliftment, rejection of untouchability and peace.

Major themes of Gandhian literature are as follows:

1. Practical idealism
2. Truth
3. Non-violence
4. Satyagraha
5. Swaraj
6. Sarvodaya
7. Swadeshi
8. Rural upliftment
9. Trusteeship
10. Simplicity
11. Cleanliness
12. Rejection of untouchability
13. Self-dependence (Atmanirbhar)
14. Equality
15. Manual labour (Shram)

16. New concept of education (Nayi Talim)

17. Brahmacharya (Celibacy)

### **3.5.5 Characteristics of Gandhian literature**

Gandhiji believed literature should be moralistic and socially concerned. Gandhian literature reflects these values.

Characteristics of Gandhian literature are as follows:

1. Influence of Gandhian ideology
2. Impact of freedom struggle in India
3. Depiction of village life
4. Simple, honest and moralistic characters
5. Themes of simplicity, equality and brotherhood
6. Focus on truth, non-violence and fearlessness
7. Struggle against colonialism
8. Gandhian literature in Indian English literature and regional literatures
9. Presentation of Swaraj, satyagraha and Gandhian concept of economy
10. Rejection of casteism and untouchability

### **3.5.6 Impact of Gandhian ideology on thinkers, leaders and writers across the world.**

Gandhiji influenced not only Indian people but also poets, writers, thinkers and political leaders across the world. In India, he inspired leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Vinoba Bhave. Tagore respected him though they differed on some views.

Gandhiji influenced several foreign leaders and thinkers such as Martin Luther King, Romain Rolland, C.F. Andrews, Nelson Mandela, Albert Einstein, Ho Chi Minh, Toynbee and others. Many scholars and historians also wrote about Gandhi and his ideology. Many thinkers still believe that Gandhi's ideology and social concerns are relevant in modern times.

### **3.6 Let us sum up**

In this unit, we discussed the life of Gandhiji and his views on truth, non-violence, Swaraj, etc. He introduced the concept of satyagraha as a unique method of struggle against injustice. About education, he believed there should be development of head (intelligence), heart (values) and hands (skill and labour) in students.

We also discussed the influence of Gandhian ideology on the literary works of Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya and many regional writers. As a seeker of truth, Gandhiji was influenced by Tolstoy, Shrimad Rajchandra and John Ruskin. John Ruskin's "Unto This Last" inspired him to develop the concepts of Sarvodaya and Antyodaya.

### **Check your progress-II (Detailed Questions/Short notes)**

1. Describe Gandhiji birth and family.
2. Write a brief note on Gandhiji's education.
3. Write a brief note on works (books) of Mahatma Gandhi.
4. Write a short note on Influence of writers, thinkers, books on Gandhiji.
5. Write a brief note on Gandhiji's struggle in South Africa.
6. Write a brief note on Satyagraha according to Mahatma Gandhi.
7. Write a brief note on Gandhiji Economic Views.

8. What is Gandhi Literature? Explain in brief.
9. Discuss influence of Gandhian ideology on Raja Rao's "Kanthapura".
10. Write a note on Gandhi's influence on R.K. Narayan's "Waiting for the Mahatma".
11. Write a brief note on influence of Gandhiji on Gujarati literature.
12. What are the impacts of Gandhian ideology on thinkers, leaders and writers across the world?
13. What are the major themes of Gandhian literature?
14. Discuss the characteristics of Gandhian literature.

### 3.7 Key words

Gandhi literature, Gandhian literature, Satyagraha, Swaraj, Non-violence, Trusteeship, Antyodaya, Gandhian ideology, Untouchability, Equality, Simplicity, Cleanliness, Impact of Gandhian Thoughts on different aspects of life.

### 3.8 Suggested Reading

M. K. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj  
 R. K. Narayan, Waiting for Mahatma  
 Mulk Raj Anand, Untouchable  
 Raja Rao, Kanthapura  
 Bhabani Bhattacharya, So Many Hungers!  
 Bhabani Bhattacharya, Shadow from Ladakh  
 M. A. Abbas, Inquilab  
 M. K. Gandhi, The Story of My Experiments with Truth (Autobiography)  
 Bhabani Bhattacharya, Gandhi, the Writer (1970)  
 J. B. Kriplani, Gandhi, His Life and Thought (1970)  
 Ramchandra Guha, India after Gandhi (2007)  
 K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, Indian Writing in English (First edition - 1962)

### 3.9 Answer (MCQ (Check your progress-I))

- (1) – (B)
- (2) – (B)
- (3) – (A)
- (4) – (D)
- (5) – (C)
- (6) – (B)
- (7) – (A)
- (8) – (A)
- (9) – (A)
- (10) – (D)
- (11) – (C)
- (12) – (D)

## Unit 4

## Toru Dutt: *Our Casuarina Tree* & *Sita*

- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Overview
- 4.4 Toru Dutt
- 4.5 Our Casuarina Tree
- 4.6 Our Casuarina Tree (Contd.)
- 4.7 Sita
- 4.8 Sita (contd.)
- 4.9 Let's Sum up
- 4.10 Key words
- 4.11 Suggested Reading

### Answers

#### 4.1 Objectives:

In this Unit, we shall

- look at two of the poems of Toru Dutt
- define and explain the figures of speech dealt with in these poems
- explain the meaning and basic structure of each poem

On completing this Unit, you should be able to,

- summarize the poems
- explain the figures of speech

#### 4.2 Introduction:

In this section, you will be looking at two of the important poems of Toru Dutt, one of the earliest poets in Indian Writing in English. The earliest poets of this period belonged to Bengal and were educated in English. The choice of English as the language for their creative efforts came to them for different reasons. Some of them imitated the British poets they were familiar with, while some wanted to write on Indian themes and attempted to create an Indian idiom in the English language

#### 4.3 Overview:

Indian Writing in English is here to stay, after the early beginnings were made in the second half of the 19th century. Earlier it was called Indo-Anglian literature, but that name was changed as there was the danger of it being confused with Anglo-Indian, which referred to people of mixed descent (of British and Indian). This period also witnessed travel narratives, like *The Travels of Dean Mahomet*, and novels like *Rajmohan's Wife* and *Saguna*. There was also non-fiction writing consisting of speeches, letters, diaries, articles, etc. Among the earliest poets were the Dutt sisters, Derozio, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, etc.

The earliest poets began writing in English either because they wanted to reach a wider audience or were more comfortable in English. Some of them tried writing in both English and an Indian language. The period has been called the Indian Renaissance because there was a social awakening and many social evils were eradicated. There was a visible beginning of a spirit of Indian Nationalism. Some of these poets imitated the British Romantic poets, but their themes were Indian. Many of these poets died young but wrote great poetry during their short lives. The poets were comfortable with the English language and probably believed that writing in English would give them a wider audience.

#### **Check your progress 4.**

State whether True or False:

1. Writers chose English because it would give them a wider audience.
2. The poets wrote only on Non-Indian themes.
3. All these poets lived up to a ripe-old age.
4. Indian Writing in English began in the twentieth century.
5. Indian Writing in English was earlier called Indo-Anglian writing.

#### **4.4 Toru Dutt**

Toru Dutt (1856—1877) or Tarulatha Dutt is one of the earliest Indian poets writing in English. Born into a well-known family, she had the advantage of having a linguist father who had published some poems. Her mother loved Hindu mythology and had translated *The Blood of Christ* into Bengali. She also wrote in French and translated too.

Influenced by the presence of Christian missionaries in Bengal then, the family converted to Christianity when Toru was six years old. As a result of their conversion, the family had to face social boycott, and because of the father's government job, the family lived in many places. They were three siblings and all of them died young.

The family lived in France and later in England for a few years. Toru was proficient in English, French, Bengali and Sanskrit. Her fascination with French language and culture lasted all through her life. The beauty of nature in Europe as well as her family's country estates led to a fascination with the natural world.

Toru started publishing at the age of 18. In 1876, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* was published, which had her French poems translated into English. Her other works were: *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, as well as two novels published posthumously. Her first novel was written in French. Interestingly, both her novels were set outside India and had non-Indian protagonists. Though she began her literary career with prose, she is better remembered for her poetry.

Edmund Gosse writes of Toru Dutt: "She brought with her from Europe a store of knowledge that would have sufficed to make an English or French girl seem learned, but which in her case was simply miraculous".

A biography of Toru Dutt was published in 1921, *Life and Letters of Toru Dutt* by Harihar Das. Dutt is remembered as an example of combining East and West—Indian themes with European forms.

## Check your progress 2

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words/phrases:

1. A biography of Toru Dutt was written by \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Toru Dutt translated \_\_\_\_\_ poems into English.
3. The family converted to \_\_\_\_\_ when Toru Dutt was very young.
4. Toru Dutt began her career with \_\_\_\_\_.
5. The family lived in \_\_\_\_\_ and England.

## 4.5 Our Casuarina Tree

Though European by education and training, Toru was essentially an Indian at heart, as we can see from her poems like *Sita*, *Lakshman*, *Buttoo*, etc.

*Our Casuarina Tree* (1881) is from *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. The title itself is significant because “our” in the title suggests that it is not any Casuarina tree but one that is an integral part of her childhood. It describes a grand tree that she could see from her window, and then she gradually moves on to reminiscing about her childhood days that she spent with her siblings “who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose”.

It seems as if she does not want to be writing under the shadow of Wordsworth, as the influence of her favourite childhood tree is much more lasting. The description in the first stanza draws our attention to the size and age of the tree: “the rugged trunk... very summit near the stars” and the huge creeper like a python. The size is immense with “the giant wears the scarf” and the beauty of the flowers in “crimson clusters”. The tree is a source of life, filled with bees and birds.

The description of the baboon creates a beautiful image: “on its crest/ a grey baboon sits statue-like alone”, “while on the lower boughs/ his puny offspring leap about and play”. Like the life of the poet, the tree too experiences various parts of the day and changing seasons. Even as it seems a purely descriptive stanza, it seems to lead us on to the meditative mood of the young poet.

And very soon, in the third stanza, she moves to the memories associated with the tree: “But not because of its magnificence/ Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:”. The tree is a part of her childhood for “beneath it we have played” and it is where she had enjoyed the time spent with her siblings who are now dead: “In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!”

Is it possible that the tree joins her in lamenting the loss, for it now ushers forth “an eerie speech”? The fourth and fifth stanzas move away from a pure description of nature to memories of the days spent in a foreign land, “far away/ in distant lands, by many a sheltered bay”. Even when she lived abroad, she could still see, in her mental eye, the tree “in my own loved native clime”. Later, she moves on to a desire to immortalize the tree: “Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay/ Unto thy honour”. Also because, to her, the tree should never fade into “Oblivion’s curse”.

## Check your progress 3

Answer in short:

1. Why is the Casuarina Tree dear to her?



2. What could she see in her mental eye?
3. What is the importance of the word “our” in the title?
4. Where are her siblings now?
5. Where is the baboon sitting?

#### 4.6 Our Casuarina Tree (Contd.)

The poem has an unusual structure of 55 lines, divided into five stanzas of 11 lines each, ending with a tercet and not the usual couplet. This has an effect of overflow or transcendence, which mirrors the feelings of the poet. The poem is full of vivid imagery and a number of similes and metaphors. The main themes of the poem are memory and solitude filled with nostalgia.

The figures of speech are metaphors like “the giant wears the scarf”, “trembling hope”, “time the shadow”, etc. There are many similes like “baboon sits statue-like”, “the water-lilies spring, like snow enmeshed”, etc.

The poem begins with a personification: “thy form”, “earth lay tranced in a dreamless swoon”, and an apostrophe in the direct address, “O tree”. We see allusion in the reference to the yew trees that were immortalized because Wordsworth had written about them. The major symbol is the tree, which represents the speaker’s childhood, her homeland, and also helps recollect pleasant memories of her country as well as her childhood. She beautifully combines the themes as well as poetic styles of the West and India.

#### Check your Progress 4

Point out the lines for each of the following figures of speech:

1. Tree as symbol
2. Personification
3. Apostrophe
4. Metaphor
5. Simile

#### 4.7 Sita

The poem *Sita* was published in *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882). The poem has been a favourite with all ages. Toru Dutt uses the ancient Indian art of story-telling in this poem. Mythology has always been popular as bedtime stories.

The poem is a seemingly simple poem of a mother and her three happy children in a darkened room. “Darkened room” suggests that it is night and therefore the story is at bedtime. The children are eager-eyed, with “wide-open eyes”, also hinting at the ability of the mother to hold the attention of the listening children. Touched by the sad story of Sita, by the end of the poem “tears from three pairs of young eyes” shows the change in mood. The three children are probably Toru and her two siblings Aru and Abju.

The poet begins with a description of the forest. Toru Dutt has nature at the centre in almost all her poems. The trees grow so densely that sun rays cannot penetrate, and even in the morning it seems dark: “A dense, dense forest, where no sunbeam pries”. There are big, wild flowers on the creepers which have grown all around the trees: “There bloom/gigantic flowers on creepers that embrace/ tall trees”. The

beauty of the place is enhanced by the presence of the deer and the peacocks as well as the gliding swans on the “quiet, lucid lake”.

And it is in the midst of this peaceful atmosphere that the “poet-anchorite” lives. Though the name is not mentioned, it is obvious that it is Valmiki because it was to this ashram that Sita was sent in exile; or, as some critics suggest, the poet-anchorite may refer to the poet herself or to Sita.

The curiosity of the listening children as well as the reader is aroused when the mother asks, “But who is this fair lady?” It is obvious that the children already know the story of Sita and her second exile (where she later gives birth to the twin sons). Toru Dutt attempts to bridge the gap between the personal (mother and children) and the cultural (stories from the epics).

The poet seems to establish a parallel between the world of Sita, who has been abandoned by her husband, and the world of the mother and her children. The hush at the end of the poem may refer to the arrival of the father of the children.

As it is an old story, both the mother-narrator and the children-listeners know the events well. The poet leaves the reader to answer the details. The major themes are myth and childhood nostalgia. Probably, an autobiographical note is struck when the mother seems to be Sita who feels a sense of longing and seclusion.

The last lines of the poem have been interpreted variously: “‘Tis hushed at last” refers to the children falling asleep, or the arrival of the father makes the mother silent, or a natural ending to the story. Some suggest that it is a longing to be reunited with her siblings who are now dead, or probably even a premonition of her impending death.

In this poem, Toru Dutt draws our attention to the importance of story-telling, which has always occupied an important position in Indian tradition and culture.

### **Check your progress 5**

State whether True or False:

1. The narrator and the listeners already know the story.
2. The poet gives a realistic picture of the forest.
3. Mythology is the basis of the poem.
4. The kids are not saddened by the story.
5. There is a clear meaning to “hushed” at the end.

### **4.8 Sita (Contd.) :**

In structure, the poem consists of twenty-two lines with three quatrains and three couplets. It can loosely be termed as a ballad, even though there is less story and more of reaction to the story. The liberal use of exclamation marks and question marks gives the entire poem a conversational tone. It is written in a single stanza-like form without any fixed rhyme pattern.

This short poem uses a number of poetic devices like allusion while referring to the story from the *Ramayana*; metaphor in comparing Sita to the poet-anchorite; personification in the sun as prying: “where no sunbeam pries”, etc. An interesting figure of speech is palynology or repetition for emphasis like “dense, dense forest”, “an old, old story”.

### Check your progress 6

List 3 figures of speech used in this poem. Define them with examples from the poem.

### 4.9 Let's sum up:

In this unit you have learnt,

- main features of Toru Dutt as a poet
- themes and main ideas of two poems
- figures of speech in both poems

### 4.10 Key words:

Nature, homeland, memories, mythology, allusions, symbolism

### 4.11 Suggested reading

1. *Toru Dutt: A literary profile* by Harihar Das
2. *Toru Dutt: A literary profile* by A. N. Dwivedi

### Answers

#### Check your progress 1

1. i) True ii) False iii) False iv) False v) True

#### Check your progress 2

1. i) Harihar Das ii) French iii) Christianity iv) Prose v) France

#### Check your progress 3

1. i) because it reminds her of her past and siblings
2. ii) the tree in her own loved native clime
3. iii) not any tree but one that is an integral part of her childhood
4. iv) dead
5. v) on the topmost bough, the crest of the tree

#### Check your progress 4

1. i) childhood, homeland
2. ii) tree—"thy form", "earth lay entranced"
3. iii) direct address "O tree"
4. iv) "giant wears the scarf"
5. v) "statue-like"

#### Check your progress 5

1. i) True ii) True iii) True iv) False v) False

#### Check your progress 6

Allusion: to refer to something outside the present text—*Ramayana*

Palynology: repetition of a word for emphasis—"dense, dense forest", "old, old story"

Personification: non-human things given human attributes—"earth lay entranced"

Metaphor: comparison without words "like", "as"—"giant wears the scarf"

## Unit 5

### Henry Derozio: *To India, My Native Land & Aspirations*

#### 5.1 Objectives

#### 5.2 Introduction

#### 5.3 Renaissance

#### 5.4 The poet

#### 5.5 To India, my Native Land

#### 5.6 Aspirations

#### 5.7 Let us sum up

#### 5.8 Key words

#### 5.9 Suggested Reading

#### Answers

#### 5.1 Objectives

- To understand the importance of the Indian Renaissance in Indian Writing in English
- To analyse two poems by Derozio

#### 5.2 Introduction

Indian Writing in English passed through various names like Indo-Anglian Literature, Indian English Writing, etc. Writing in English by Indians is today referred to as IWE or Indian Writing in English.

When we look at the early Indian poets writing in English, it is important to have a glimpse into the period referred to as the Indian Renaissance. The word Renaissance means “resurrection” or “rebirth”, and most of you would relate the word to the European movement which swept away the regressive ideas of the medieval period.

In India, we use the term Renaissance for the cultural awakening that took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. Some historians also refer to it as the Bengal Renaissance, probably because Raja Rammohan Roy from Bengal was a pivotal figure in the movement. In many ways, the Renaissance in India ignited the anti-colonial struggle and served as a natural precursor to the beginnings of nationalism. This also led to influences in the literature of the period.

Also, English education may have caused Indian writers to begin writing in English. Some of them wrote in two languages too, before finally staying with one.

#### Check your progress 1

Answer in one word:

1. What is the meaning of Renaissance?
2. Who was the pivotal figure in the Indian Renaissance?
3. What was the Renaissance a precursor to?
4. Which region of India did Roy belong to?

5. In how many languages did some writers of the period write?

### 5.3 Renaissance in India

The Indian Renaissance is certainly not a carbon copy of the European Renaissance, which is considered to be the end of the Dark Ages. European art and architecture too developed during the period of the Renaissance, from the 14th to 16th centuries.

In India, in the second half of the 19th century—which we refer to as the Indian Renaissance—it was not merely “a revival of art and letters under the influence of classical models” but instead “a total change in man’s outlook on life which extended into philosophical, scientific, economic, technical and even literary fields”.

English education did open a new chapter in the history of India, but the Renaissance was a period which saw an intermingling of the best in East and West and proved that “the twain could meet”. Reinterpretations of ancient Indian texts were done, and attempts were made to address irregularities and malpractices in religious traditions and observances. There was an impact on the arts like music, dance, painting, etc.

Indians were now exposed to Western literature. The Indian Renaissance flowered in the literature of India, and one of its significant results was the birth of Indo-Anglian literature, now referred to as IWE. The poetry of this period has been able to capture the Indian ethos and, as Gosse calls Sarojini Naidu’s poetry, it is completely “autochthonous”, meaning of the people of the place—of natives and not settlers. The predominance of a secular outlook and patriotic fervour affected Indian literature both in English as well as the Indian languages.

#### Check your Progress II

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words/phrases:

1. Indian Renaissance is not a carbon copy of the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. European Renaissance brought the \_\_\_\_\_ to an end.
3. IWE was first called \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ means “of the people of the place”.
5. Intermingling of East and West proved that the \_\_\_\_\_.

### 5.4 The poet: Henry Louis Vivian Derozio

H. L. V. Derozio (1809—1831) is considered the first Indo-Anglian poet. Born of an Indian mother and a Portuguese father, Derozio was also a teacher who had a great influence on the thoughts and lives of his pupils. Born in 1809, he died in 1834.

As he attended the David Drummond Dharmatala Academy School, he learnt from Drummond that rationalism is a much greater treasure than old customs. He began publishing patriotic verses when he was hardly 17, and this brought him to the attention of the intellectual elite of Calcutta. He was an Assistant Headmaster of Hindu College (from 1826—1831) after being a teacher of English literature and history there.

He inspired his students to think freely and rationally, to question all authority and to worship truth. In 1828, along with his students, he founded a literary and debating club called the “Academic Association”.

Of course, there was a backlash within orthodox Hindu society during this period, and as a result, orthodox Hindus thought that because of his radical views Derozio was not a good influence on the students, and they exerted pressure on the college to remove him. He was forced to resign in 1834. He was also accused of encouraging his students to convert to Christianity.

Long after his untimely death of cholera, his influence is believed to have lived on among his former students, who came to be known as “Young Bengal” and became prominent in various fields. In 1838, a secondary group called “Society for Acquisition of General Knowledge” was formed with the primary aim of acquiring and disseminating knowledge about the present condition of the country.

Interestingly, Derozio was influenced by the French Revolution, and he signed up for the war-cry of liberty, fraternity and equality.

Derozio is accepted as the first national poet of modern India, as his poems are indeed significant landmarks in the history of patriotic poetry in India. In most of his poems, we notice the high note of patriotism and his pride in the heritage of his country and sorrow at the lost grandeur.

His works include:

- *Poems* (1827)
- *A Metrical Tale and Other Poems* (1828)

Important poems include: “The Harp of India”, “Song of the Hindustani Minstrel”, “The Fakeer of Jungheera”, “To India—My Native Land”.

Many critics like Makarand Paranjpe believe that Derozio has not received the credit that he deserves. Rosinka Chaudhuri too says that Derozio is “emphatically and unprecedentedly Indian in his mooring”. V. K. Gokak writes, “Indo-Anglian poetry was born under a Romantic star. It learned to lisp in the manner of Byron and Scott in the verse of Derozio, M. M. Dutt and others. It began with verse romances and lyrics written in the romantic vein... all of them are intensely romantic and have an air of nostalgia about them”.

### Check your Progress III

Match the words/phrases in Column A with appropriate ones in Column B:

A	B
a) Portuguese	father
b) Began publishing	1817
c) Learnt rationalism	Drummond
d) Literary Club	Academic Association
e) Resigned	1831

### 5.5 To India, My Native Land

Writing in the period of the Indian Renaissance, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio was, as mentioned earlier, half-Portuguese. He is considered to be one of the first Indian educators to disseminate Western learning and science. He was influenced

by English Romantic poets and read Keats, Shelley, Byron, etc. He was an intellectual and a rationalist too. He criticised the social and religious practices of orthodox Hindus, for which, as we already saw, he was forced to resign from his teaching post. However, Derozio extols patriotism in many of his writings.

This poem was published in 1828 in *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems*. Being a humanist, he brings a humanistic perspective to many of his poems. *The Poetical Works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio*, edited by B. B. Shah, was published in 1907. Writing in the same period were the Dutt sisters, of whom you have read earlier, particularly Toru Dutt.

“To India, My Native Land” is one of Derozio’s best-known poems. In this monologue, India is personified. He does not mention the gender, but we can assume that he considers the country as female, because one speaks of the motherland, and we refer to India as Bharatmata.

The poet talks about the glorious past of the country. He has just one wish: that the country should be able to return to its past days of glory. Unhappy with the present condition of being under British rule, “groveling in the lowly dust”, he recalls the past when she (India) had “a beauteous halo” and was “worshipped as a deity”. He feels that hopelessness, internal weakness and stagnation should be totally eradicated. It can be compared to another poem, “Harp of India”, written by him. The major theme of the poem is patriotism and a desire to revive the ancient glory of the country.

M. K. Naik considers Derozio’s poems to “have an unmistakable authenticity of patriotic utterance which stamps Derozio as an Indian English poet who is truly a son of the soil”. This is particularly praiseworthy because, as a Eurasian, it may have been easier for Derozio to identify himself with the white man for purely practical reasons.

Written as a sonnet in the Petrarchan tradition, it has an octave followed by a sestet. The unusual rhyme scheme is abab abcc dede cc (or ff) and brings to mind the rhyme scheme of Edmund Spenser’s *Amoretti*.

This poem begins with an apostrophe or direct address to the country, “India”, probably said with a sigh. India was a holy land and hence had a halo, while that is missing now. Hence, he asks, “Where is thy glory and reverence now?” In the second stanza, he laments that the eagle, which should be flying high, is now “chained” and “grovelling in the lowly dust”. Even poets fail to sing of her glory and can only mourn “the sad story of thy misery”.

He probably hopes to be recognised as a true patriotic poet by later generations when he talks about the minstrel trying to roll out “a few small fragments”. Proof of the earliest expressions of Indian nationalism, the poem contains hopes that this may be able to revive some of the ancient glory. He expresses both a sense of personal and collective loss. Melancholy and nostalgia set the tone of the poem.

Other figures of speech are the metaphor where India is compared to a deity (“worshipped as a deity”), “eagle pinion chained”, “minstrels have no wreaths”, etc. There is also personification in most of these metaphors.

We can see in this poem his deep love for his native land and his being conscious of the great cultural heritage. Certainly, his poetic talent went with a true reformist zeal which profoundly inspired a whole generation.

## Check your Progress IV

Define the following figures of speech and give examples from the poem:

1. Apostrophe
2. Metaphor
3. Personification

## 5.6 Aspirations

Derozio's first volume of poems may have been written to cater to the existing taste of people who had grown up on the British Romantic poets like Byron. Had he lived longer, he may have developed his own unique style. And yet, his short poetic career does not diminish the importance of his contribution. His poems are rooted in the time and space of the period he lived in and hence can be studied/read to give us an idea about the period. Moreover, Derozio's poems are simple in language, structure and style.

The poem "Aspirations" describes the dreams and hopes of individuals and suggests that they are often doomed to fail. The poet begins with a warning that if we have unrealistic hopes or dreams, they are likely to fall like broken wings: "they soar too far,/and then, with broken pinions fall to earth".

From the second stanza, he begins to describe his dreams, which are in many ways related to the world of nature around him. He wishes he could be a ray of light which can play with the waves on the surface of the sea and also go down into the seabed caves where mermaids live. The abandon with which he wants to move shows his unrealistic expectations: "Or down to dart with arrowy flight/ To the mermaid's coral cave".

The next stanza leads us to an even more unrealizable wish of becoming a dream and entering the brain of the poet: "I would I were a dream to glide/ Into a poet's brain", for then he would be able to travel to lands never seen as well as peaceful climes: "And flowers and stars that ne'er have been". Interestingly, he combines things that he has not seen with things that have never been. That indeed is the power of the poet's imagination, to fly as Keats would say, "Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards/ But on the viewless wings of poesy".

The next wish is to become the tune in a lover's lute so that he could be transported by the soft breeze to the ears of the lonely beloved in some distant land: "Of some beloved and lovely one,/ Her soft heart to salute".

If he could be a bright star in the night sky, lovers would look up towards him in the ecstasy of their love and he would feel blessed in being able to bless them. If he could be a tear on a woman's cheeks, he would become rapturous when, with passion, she welcomes her lover. The last is to be the hope that fires the young poet as he sings to his beloved: "While to his lady's ear he brings/ Strains, such as a seraph sings".

Each one of these hopes is doomed to finally sink to a resting place. Like Shelley's *Ode to a Skylark*, "Aspirations" too has a series of metaphors. The word aspiration means a deep desire or hope, and Derozio lists his desires.

The common figure of speech throughout the poem is a series of similes of what the poet hopes to be. The repeated use of the word "would" indicates the simile that is to follow.



### **Check your Progress 5**

Make a list of all the things the poet wishes to be.

### **5.7 Let us Sum Up**

In this unit you have studied about:

- The Bengal Renaissance
- Michael Madhusudan Dutt as a poet

Analysis of 2 of his sonnets

### **5.8 Key Words**

Bengal renaissance, Indo-Anglian poetry, sonnet, subjective poetry, metaphor, romantic poets

### **5.9 Suggested Reading:**

A. K. Mehrotra: *A Concise History of Indian Literature in English*

Jeet Thayil: *The Penguin Book of Indian Poets*

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar: *Indian Writing in English*

### **Answers**

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

1. Resurrection/Rebirth
2. Raja Rammohan Roy
3. Nationalism / Beginnings of Nationalism
4. Bengal
5. Two

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

1. European Renaissance
2. Dark Ages
3. Indo-Anglian Literature
4. Autochthonous
5. Twain could meet

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

a–father, b–1817, c–Drummond, d–Academic Association, e–1831

## Unit 6

## Michael Madhusudan Dutt: Sonnets

- 6.1 Objectives
  - 6.2 Introduction
  - 6.3 The period: Renaissance
  - 6.4 The poet
  - 6.5 Poems
  - 6.6 Let's Sum up
  - 6.7 Key words
  - 6.8 Recommended Reading
- Answers

### 6.1 Objectives:

In this unit you will study about the period of Indian Renaissance  
Two sonnets by Michael Madhusudan Dutt

### 6.2 Introduction

We need to place each writer in the period in which he lived. The characteristic features of the Age, social, political and cultural, have a great impact on the literature of the period. It is now being accepted that one needs to look at the writings of a given age in order to better understand even the historical happenings of the period. It is in this context that we begin with a short introduction to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Indo- Anglian writing began. Today, we refer to it as Indian Writing in English.

The second-half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought in the winds of change in India. Sweeping social changes and the beginnings of a growing nationalism and anti-colonialism as well as increase in English education are all reflected in the literature of the period. This age also witnessed the beginnings of English writing in India. It is in this period that you have already studied some poems of Toru Dutt and Derozio. All these three writers lived in the same age and hailed from Bengal.

### 6.3 The Period: Indian Renaissance

Indian Renaissance, often referred to as Bengal Renaissance, witnessed social, cultural, psychological and intellectual changes. The colonial metropolis of Calcutta had a lot of interaction between the Europeans and the English-educated Indians. Newspapers and periodicals as well as books were already being published in English in addition to Bangla. The native intelligentsia was conversant with events in Europe while being aware of its own historical heritage as well as progressively alert about its own future in the modern world. Simultaneously, in literature there was the modernization of the Bengali language and the birth of a new Bengali Literature. The new Bengali elite also boasted of a library in each home and it is this atmosphere that led to the earliest Indo-Anglian literature of which Michael Madhusudan Dutt was an important part.

## Check your Progress I

### State whether True or False

1. Indian Renaissance is also referred to as Bengal Renaissance.
2. Calcutta was then a colonial metropolis.
3. Newspapers were already being published in Bangla.
4. There was the birth of a new literature in Telugu.
5. Indians were not aware of events in Europe.

## 6.4 The Poet

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824—1873) was probably the first great poet of Bengali literature. He has been called a non-conformist and is remembered for ushering a renaissance in Bengali literature as well as introducing free verse and Byronic sonnets into Bengali literature. Son of a lawyer, born into an aristocratic family, he received his early education at home under the guidance of his mother. He also learnt Persian in a neighboring village. Later, he was educated at the Hindu College, Calcutta, and converted to Christianity in 1843. He was a gifted linguist who mastered several oriental and occidental languages. He was a self-proclaimed ambassador of English mannerisms and intellect. To escape a marriage fixed by his father, Dutt is supposed to have left home and converted to Christianity. He believed that it would have been better to have been born in the West: “Where man in all his truest glory lives, and nature’s face is exquisitely sweet; For those fair climes I heave impatient sigh, There let me live and there let me die”.

He began writing early and his early poems were published in literary magazines in India. Though he sent his poems to Blackwood’s Magazine and Bentley’s Miscellany, they were not published. Like most of the other Indian poets writing in English then, he greatly admired Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley. The life of Dutt seems to closely parallel the life of Lord Byron in many respects. Both were Romantics and spirited Bohemians. He worked as a journalist and translator. In 1849, he published his first poem, ‘Captive Lady and Visions of the Past’ in English. He translated Ramnarayan Tarkaratna’s ‘Ratnavali’ into English. In 1860, he wrote his first Bengali poem, ‘Tilottama Sambhava’. He was also a Bengali dramatist and is considered a pioneer of Bengali drama. He is best known for his tragic novel in Bengali, Meghnad Badh Kavya which centres around the heroic figure of Ravana’s son—Indrajit. Influenced by Milton’s Paradise Lost, it was written in nine cantos of blank verse. Homeresque and Dantesque in technique and style, it was fundamentally Indian in theme. Dutt wrote to a friend, “The poem is rising into splendid popularity. Some say it is better than Milton; many say it licks Kalidasa; I have no objection to that. I don’t think it impossible to equal Virgil, Kalidasa and Tasso”. Tagore called this epic, “a rare treasure in Bengali literature... through which the richness of Bengali literature has been proclaimed to the world”. His epic manifests his devotion to the classics but his love for European poetry is evident in his experimentation with metrics and with poetic forms too.

He also wrote poems as spoken by women about their sorrows and pains of love. He was greatly impressed by the British and wanting to be English he began by writing in English. In later life, he regretted his attraction for England and the Occident. He then wrote lovingly of his homeland. As his writings in English

were not very successful, he turned to writing in Bengali where he was much appreciated. It is believed that he was advised by John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune—a barrister and champion of women’s education—to write more in his mother tongue. He has also been hailed as the father of the Bengali sonnet and also credited with introducing blank verse (amitrakshar chhanda) in Bengali. His Hectar badh in 1871 was modeled after Homer’s Iliad. His last composition ‘Mayakanan’ was written in 1873. He also translated some sections of the Iliad from the Heroic Epistles as well as some fables from La Fontaine’s Fables. His main works were mostly written between 1858 and 1862, and include prose drama, long narrative poems and lyrics. Among his published works are: The Captive Lady (1849), Krishna Kumari (1861), Meghnad-Badh-Kabya (1861), Ratnavali (1858), Sermista (1859) etc.

## Check your Progress II

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words/phrases:

1. Meghnad Badh dealt with events from the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Dutt was hailed as the father of the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Dutt converted to \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Dutt’s Hectar badh was modeled after \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Dutt was influenced by the \_\_\_\_\_.

## 6.5 His poems:

Michael Madhusudan Dutt was attracted to the sonnet form probably because of its neatness of structure and compactness of form. His stay in Europe from 1862 to 1867 also gave him an opportunity to be acquainted with the great sonneteers of the period. Though he had begun writing sonnets even as a student in Calcutta, his 102 English sonnets are the fruits of his stay in Versailles and were published in 1866. He wrote sonnets both in English and Bengali. His first sonnet was dedicated to a friend, to whom he wrote: “... if cultivated by men of genius, our sonnet in time would rival the Italian”. When Dante’s sixth centenary was being celebrated, he composed a poem in honour of the poet, and translated it into French and Italian. He sent it to the King of Italy who responded saying that he was delighted to know that “the noble harmony of the Italian genius found an echo on the shores of the Ganges”.

Tagore believed that, “... love of imitation of the West runs to excess, pompously proud of its tawdriness and incongruity” and we can see how from these beginnings our literature sought its own features which Tagore describes: “... almost completely abandoning its earlier foreign bed, finding its natural channel in the mother tongue”. Dutt proves this when he chose to write in Bengali after his earliest attempts with English.

### Sonnet 1

The poems of Dutt constantly show his concerted efforts to use Indian imagery, express Indian sentiments, and tell an Indian story. This is evident in his sonnets too. In fact, it is often suggested that the writings of Dutt are more important from a historical perspective rather than because of its literary merit. The sonnet,

'I am not rich....' is a simple poem describing the condition of the poor. It seems as if the poet is describing his own condition but as the poem progresses we can see that he is talking about the poor in general. He is not heir to any wealth and hence no silver or gold can be found heaped on the floor of his house: "There is no marble blushing on my floor". He goes on to describe the interior of the house which does not have marbled floors "with thousand varied dies". Since he is not rich, there is no furniture brought from foreign lands: "no gilded chair/No cushions, carpets...". It is interesting that even a non- Indian would get a clear idea of the houses of the rich in India then. One cannot be sure about who the target reader was for such poetry. As we know, there was the English-educated Indian class which was rapidly growing. We do not find any mention of the readership of such literature. He goes on to list the luxurious style of rich houses and from where these gilded chairs and cushions as well as carpets would have been bought --- in Persia or Turkey. We realize that he is drawing a picture of rich houses but does not describe his own house or that of a poor person. And then he talks about the absence of servants to be at one's beck and call: "There is no menial waiting at my door/Attentive to the knell". Notice that there is the constant use of first person singular, 'me, my' etc. All the above-mentioned luxuries have been denied by Fate to the poor: "These are not things that by blind Fate have been/Allotted to the poor man's share". It is only here that the reader realises that this is a description of every poor man's living condition and not that of the poet's alone. The couplet at the end clearly states that the poor have only heard of these but have never ever seen them. Probably, the poet wants to draw our attention to the unbridgeable gulf that exists between the poor and the rich in our country. Beginning with the luxuries of the rich, it ends with a strong indictment of economic deprivation. The theme is Indian but at the same time gives us a picture of the poet's own sense of deprivation. The sonnet as a genre has always been considered an important kind of subjective poetry. Whether it is in the love sonnets of Shakespeare and Petrarch or of Sidney, sonnets have always revealed the innermost feelings and emotions of the poet. This seems to be the situation here too, in the sonnets of Michael Madhusudan Dutt.

You have already learnt about the two types of sonnets: Petrarchan and Shakespearean—both named after the most important proponents of each. Following the tradition of the Shakespearean sonnet, Dutt has four quatrains followed by a couplet. The couplet at the end turns away from the earlier 12 lines as did Shakespeare in all his sonnets. From a pure description of what his house does not have (as he is not rich) the couplet moves to the condition of the poor in general. The rhyme scheme begins with: abba but later not very well maintained. The common figure of speech is the simile and an occasional metaphor which is an implied comparison.

## Sonnet 2

The second sonnet 'But oh! I grieve not...' describes the beauties of nature beginning with the blue sky dotted with stars at night: "... for the azure sky/With all its host of stars that brightly shine". During the day the bright sunshine reveals the beauty of the green valleys and meadows and mountains dotted with colourful flowers: "The green-robed earth with all her flow'rs divine,/The verdant vales and every mountain high". The imagery is well presented in: "Those beauteous meads that now do glittering lie/ Clad in bright sunshine...". It seems as if all these are the poet's own for the asking. Why then is he pining, he

wonders. We can recall Tennyson's 'Tears, Idle Tears': "I know not what they mean". The various moods of nature from the gentle breeze to the furious gales, from the pleasant streams to the deep and dark sea can probably make him forget his sorrows. Can they "bring oblivion for my woes?" And then he concludes by saying that these are fleeting and transcendent: it can never make him forget his actual sorrow: "And all these have transcendent charms for me". It does seem like a poem of yearning for the beloved which even the beauties of nature cannot cure, cannot diminish. Dutt did not have a very happy life and this sonnet may be considered a reflection of that. He yearned for a life in the West, one of imitation of European culture. Later, he was ashamed of this. In order to avoid getting married to a girl of his father's choice, he ran away from home and converted to Christianity. He began by writing in English and then disappointed at the reception to his works shifted to writing In Bengali. He was not very successful in his profession as a barrister and finally died in penury. Hence, he concludes the sonnet with: "And all these have transcendent charms for me".

This sonnet too has the form of the Shakespearean sonnet with the couplet turning away from the earlier 12 lines, though it can also be divided into an octave and a sestet. Both the sonnets have the same structure and are quite simple. The rhyme scheme in this sonnet is abba abba cdcdcd.

### Check your progress 3

**Match the words/phrases in Column A with appropriate ones in Column B**

A		B	
i)	Sonnet as genre	a)	implied comparison
ii)	Shakespearean sonnet	b)	subjective
iii)	First sonnet by Dutt celebrated	c)	Sixth centenary
iv)	Dante	d)	ends with a couplet
v)	Metaphor	e)	dedicated to a friend

### 6.6 Let's Sum up:

In this unit you have studied about:

- The Bengal Renaissance
- Michael Madhusudan Dutt as a poet

### Analysis of 2 of his sonnets

### 6.7 Key words:

Bengal renaissance, Indo-Anglian poetry, sonnet, subjective poetry, metaphor, romantic poets

### 6.8 Recommended Reading:

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar: Indian Writing in English

**Answers :**

**Check your Progress I.**

- i. True      ii) True      iii) True      iv) False  
v) False

### Check your Progress II

- i. Ramayana      ii) Bengali sonnet      iii) Christianity      iv) Homer's Iliad  
v) Romantic poets

### Check your Progress III

A

- i) genre-sonnet  
ii) Shakespearean sonnet  
iii) Dutt's first sonnet  
iv) Dante celebrations  
v) metaphor

B

- a) subjective poetry  
b) ends in a couplet  
c) dedicated to a friend  
d) 6<sup>th</sup> centenary  
e) implied comparison

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## **Unit 7**

### **Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Letters: Abolition of Suttee (to Lord Bentick) & A Letter on English Education (to Lord Amherst)**

#### **7.0 Objectives**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

#### **7.2 Indian Renaissance**

#### **7.3 Raja Ram Mohan Roy as a social reformer**

#### **7.4 Raja Ram Mohan Roy as an educationist**

#### **7.5 Raja Ram Mohan Roy as a journalist and writer**

#### **7.6 Raja Ram Mohan Roy contribution of Indian Society**

#### **Check your progress-1**

#### **7.7 Raja Ram Mohan Roy's life and works.**

#### **7.8 Casteism in India**

#### **7.9 Suttee Pratha in India**

#### **7.10 Socio-political thoughts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy**

#### **7.11 Brahmosamaj**

#### **7.12 Widowhood in India and legalization of remarriage of Hindu Widows**

#### **Check your Progress - 2 (Answer the following questions briefly)**

#### **7.13 Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Letters**

#### **7.14 "Abolition of Suttee" (A letter to Lord Bentick by Raja Ram Mohan Roy)**

#### **7.15 "A Letter on English Education" (A letter by Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Lord Amherst)**

#### **7.16 Let us sum up**

#### **7.17 Key words**

#### **7.18 Suggested Reading**

#### **Answers**

#### **7.0 Objectives**

In this unit, our objectives are to discuss the Indian Renaissance that took place in Bengal through the social reforms of great thinkers and activists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. We shall also introduce Indian Writing in English, which played a major role in education, patriotism, liberalism and social reforms. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was impressed by Western thinking, and he was also a great admirer of the ancient philosophy of India and Indian culture. He was a staunch critic of superstitions and evil rituals like suttee pratha.

We shall discuss Raja Ram Mohan Roy's letters on the abolition of suttee to Lord Bentick and to Lord Amherst on English education. This letter to William Bentick admired the Governor-General William Bentick for declaring suttee pratha illegal and punishable by court on 4th December, 1829. He also wrote a letter to Lord Amherst to introduce English education in India. English education, according to Raja Mohan Roy, would provide practical right owners to the students in India.



## 7.1 Introduction

India was dominated by Western countries like England, France, and Spain, etc. The Christian missionaries converted many Indians into Christians who despised Hinduism. They were Westernized in various aspects like speech, manners and dress. Many Indians were influenced by Western culture. They turned into pro-British people. They did not see any flaws in Western culture. They believed that Western culture was rational and progressive.

Though they did not embrace Christianity, they rejected superstitions and fake rituals in Indian life and traditions. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a social reformer who was impacted by Western practices and beliefs. He loved ancient Hindu philosophy. He was also impressed by the Vedas and Upanishads with the concept of monotheism. He agreed to the idea that “All is Brahman.” Brahmosamaj was founded in 1828 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Brahma Samaj created Indian Renaissance in Bengal. During the 19th century, it played a great role in the cultural history of India.

Kesub Chandar Sen (1838–1884) believed that Christianity was compatible with the spirit of Hinduism. He stated that, “Let, then India learn from England to practise righteousness. Let England learn from India devotion, faith and prayer”.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was born on May 22, 1772 in Radhanagar, Bengal. He died on 27th September, 1833 in Bristol. He was born in British-ruled India in a prosperous Brahmin family. However, he challenged certain Indian traditional culture, indicating progress for Indian society under British rule. That is the reason why he is often called the father of modern India.

As a youth, he developed new religious ideas and learnt Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and English. He was a liberal thinker who travelled outside Bengal in those days. He also supported the British East India Company and, in 1805, he was employed by a company official named John Digby. Raja Ram Mohan Roy worked as Digby’s assistant and learnt about Western culture and literature. He focused on religious studies and advocated monotheistic Hinduism.

In 1815, he founded Atmiya Sabha to propagate the doctrines of monotheistic Hinduism. He was also interested in Christianity and studied the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. In 1826, he published the ethical teaching of Jesus Christ under the title “Precepts of Jesus Christ: the Guide to Peace and Happiness”.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a great supporter of freedom of speech and religion. He also denounced the caste system and the superstitions of traditional Hinduism. Brahmo Samaj was an organization of social reforms. His writings protested against satipratha and the British East India Governing Council banned it in 1829. In 1822, Roy founded Anglo-Hindu School and Vedanta College after four years. When the Bengal Government decided to set up a traditional Sanskrit college in 1823, Roy protested against it and proposed that English education would teach the youth of Bengal for modern life.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy visited England and propagated English education in Bengal and the abolition of ‘Sati Pratha’ in India. His visit to England had threefold objectives:

(1) Submission of a memorandum to the King of Britain on behalf of Akbar, the second, the Emperor of Delhi.

(2) Presenting the demand for abolition of 'Sati' in India to the House of Commons.

(3) Remaining present during the discussion in the House of Commons on the renewal of the East India Company's charter.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy remained rooted in Indian culture and Hinduism, with rational renovation and reforms. He admired rational attitudes in Islam, Christianity and other religions. He also promoted education, gender equality, India's autonomy, and the rejection of casteism and class-based privileges.

## **7.2 Indian Renaissance**

The word 'Renaissance' refers to rebirth, revival, or reawakening which took place during the Middle Ages in Europe. It happened in Italy during the 14th century after the end of the Middle Ages. Then, it spread over Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. There was a revival in literature, art, architecture, painting and sculpture. Major pioneers of the Renaissance were Machiavelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Galileo, Boccaccio, etc. There was intellectual transformation in Europe with the reawakening of classical art and geographical discoveries.

During the Renaissance, there was a rise of humanism which was initiated by secular scholars and writers. Humanism highlighted human dignity and the rebirth of lost human spirit and wisdom. Erasmus was a great humanist who epitomized the moral essence of humanism. During the Renaissance, artistic development was connected with humanism which focused on human dignity.

In the European context, Renaissance means the revival of classics, but in the Indian context, it is a new awakening. English education played a major role in Indian Renaissance which exposed people to rational thinking, new discoveries, scientific thoughts and liberal ideas. Ancient Indian scholarly works like the Vedas, Upanishads and epics were translated and revived by European scholars who came to India for trading. Later, anti-colonial struggle and progressive political and social ideology spread across India. Nationalism was conceptualized as a natural outcome of Indian Renaissance.

While the Renaissance took place in the 15th century in Europe, it took place in the 19th century in India. Reforms were introduced in Indian society after the advent of English education in India. Indian Renaissance thus refers to cultural change and a quest for knowledge and rationalism. Changes in art, literature, religion, society and culture took place in India after the advent of Indian Renaissance. Modernity in India is attributed to cultural and intellectual changes which were associated with Indian Renaissance.

Cultural creativity happened during this period in art, literature, political thinking, social life and liberalism. There were reforms in caste hierarchy, gender bias and economic development. There was an upsurge of nationalism in Bengal and other parts of the country. The rise of middle-class people led to changes in social and political movements.

There were three major phases of Indian Renaissance as follows:

1. Socio-religious movements with the impact of British liberalism
2. Anti-colonial politics and quest for modernity

3. Impact of Marxism after the end of colonial rule and the influence of communism, cultural and social equality on Indian society and people

There are the following characteristics of Renaissance:

1. Humanism and importance of human life
2. Extinction of superstitions and evil customs in Indian society
3. Adoration of natural beauty and social equality
4. Process of changing attitudes and social reforms
5. Development of economy and education in Indian society
6. Revival of positive ancient Indian philosophy and culture
7. Acceptance of rational and scientific lifestyle of Western people by educated Indians
8. Religious liberalism and universalism

### **7.3 Raja Ram Mohan Roy as social reformer**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a great social reformer. He played an important role as a pioneer social reformer during Indian Renaissance. Major reforms by Raja Ram Mohan Roy are the sources of social, political, educational and religious changes in Bengal and India. He was a staunch activist and thinker. As a journalist and writer, he propagated positive changes and opposed idolatry, the caste system, gender bias, child marriage, widowhood and inequality.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy raised his voice against the Sati system which was supported by Brahmins and other high-caste people. Ram Mohan Roy protested against Sati pratha vehemently. His efforts finally resulted in the abolition of sati by Lord William Bentick in 1829. This evil practice was uprooted by William Bentick, which was vehemently advocated by Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy also rejected idolatry. He championed the cause of monotheism. He also criticized the concept of trinity (God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit). He rejected polytheism, ritualism and idol worship. He supported rationalism and an intellectual attitude. He wrote a pamphlet, "An Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of the Precepts of Jesus".

Ram Mohan Roy was a powerful supporter of liberty and equality of women. He strongly advocated that women should be treated equally. He opposed the sati system and advocated widow remarriage. He said that daughters have their right over parental property. He raised his voice against child marriage and polygamy. He advocated women's education to provide them justice, liberty and equality. He strongly believed that all human beings are the children of God and therefore, they are equal. Ram Mohan Roy became an eyesore for the upper-class people of Indian society in those days.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was an ardent scholar of the Vedas, Upanishads, Quran and the Bible. He had profound knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and English. He supported the importance of the English language. He believed that progressive and scientific education was necessary in India. There was a controversy between orientalists and occidentalists, but he favoured the latter with the need for English education. He also admired science, physics, mathematics, chemistry and philosophy; however, he also loved Vedic philosophy and ancient Indian culture. He supported Lord Macaulay's wish to introduce the English system of education in India. However, he had died before Macaulay introduced it

in India. Raja Ram Mohan Roy had established an English school in 1816 and Vedanta College in 1825.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the father of Indian journalism. He strongly believed in the freedom of the press. He was an erudite editor of some newspapers and magazines. In his editorials, he discussed social, political and religious problems in effective English.

Ram Mohan Roy had liberal economic views. He believed that divided property should be protected by the state and ancestral property must be maintained. He also believed that peasants should be protected from the tyranny and exploitation of the landlords.

Ram Mohan Roy was an advocate of women's rights. He believed that women should have rights over parental property. He was concerned about the economic conditions of peasants, women and poor people. He opposed the exploitative behaviour of the zamindars.

Ram Mohan Roy also championed internationalism. He stood for universalism, synthesis of various cultures, end of imperialism and colonialism, and peaceful co-existence of nations. He propagated the idea of collaboration. He was a great social reformer who paved the way towards the modern age with the ideas of human dignity, brotherhood and economic development of the nation and people.

Ram Mohan Roy founded Brahmo Samaj in 1830, which brought about many socio-religious reforms. Brahmo Samaj stressed monotheism and equality of all human beings. It accepted the idea that God is the father of all human beings. It also opposed idolatry and ritualistic practices. It supported women's equality and freedom. Brahmo Samaj targeted evil practices like Sati, the caste system, child marriage, polygyny, etc. It created a milestone in the cultural heritage of India.

Ram Mohan Roy believed in universalism, but he also advocated nationalism and political freedom. He synthesized religion and morality. He believed that religion should focus on morality, forgiveness, human virtue, noble actions and human dignity. He was a great supporter of liberty, equality and constitutionalism. He rejected despotism, autocracy and the dominating attitude of nations, people and rulers.

Thus, Ram Mohan Roy crusaded against social evils, dogmatism, untouchability and casteism. In fact, Ram Mohan Roy acted as a bridge between the East and West. He proved to be the father of Indian Renaissance, who changed the scenario of India by removing many evil rituals, social customs and practices. He strongly believed that education was the real source of evolution and social revolution.

#### **7.4 Raja Ram Mohan Roy as an Educationist**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was an ardent social reformer. Social reforms take place through education only. Education is a key to social changes, economic development and cultural heritage. Ram Mohan Roy was a liberal reformer who accepted new ideas along with great ancient culture. He synthesized Eastern and Western knowledge, bridging spiritualism with material progress.

Ram Mohan Roy was a nationalist with deep faith in the cultural heritage of India. He knew several languages like Bengali, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Greek, Latin and Hebrew. He also learnt English and became a powerful writer and orator. He

made many reforms in education, highlighting ancient Vedic philosophy of India and Western philosophy of liberalism, universalism and material progress.

However, he believed that India needed English education. He tried to synthesize Western rationalism and Eastern idealism. He was a staunch supporter of English, and of science, physics, chemistry and mathematics, etc. In 1821, a great orientalist Mr. H. H. Wilson decided to establish a Sanskrit college in Calcutta, but Ram Mohan Roy opposed it and said that India needed English education rather than Sanskrit. He said that Sanskrit kept India in darkness with rituals and illogical thinking. He wrote a letter to Lord Amherst in 1823 rejecting the idea of establishing a Sanskrit college. Finally, the British Government introduced English education in India. Indian society became modernized and socially awakened. The Indian people began to reject evil customs and rituals, etc.

Ram Mohan Roy introduced India to England, propagating the great ancient culture of India. Though he was against the establishment of a Sanskrit college, he admired ancient wisdom and knowledge of India. In 1817, he established Hindu College. He established Anglo-Vedic School in 1822, followed by the Vedanta College in 1826. Despite his insistence on English education, Ram Mohan Roy respected ancient philosophy and culture of India. He believed that a combination of English education and Vedic knowledge was necessary for spiritual as well as scientific development.

### **7.5 Raja Ram Mohan Roy as a journalist and writer**

Ram Mohan Roy was a polyglot reformist, journalist and educationist. His journalistic writing was connected with social reforms and education. His letter to Lord Amherst played a very important role in introducing English education in India. He played a major role in abolishing social evils like the sati system and child marriage. In educational reforms too, he played a prominent role.

Ram Mohan's journalism attempted to bring social reforms and socio-religious changes. Ram Mohan Roy started the first weekly newspaper in the Bengali language. It was the first newspaper in an Indian language. Its name was 'Sambad Koumudi'. It was launched in 1824. He described several social issues and expressed the need for English education in India. In 1822, he published a Persian journal 'Mirat-ul-Akbar'.

Roy believed that the introduction of English education would propagate a liberal and enlightened system of instruction in India. He established Brahmo Samaj, a Hindu reformist organization, in 1828. In March 1835, Lord Bentick promoted English literature and science. Later, Macaulay introduced English, which was demanded by Ram Mohan Roy.

He was a remarkable writer who wrote several books, pamphlets, letters, etc. His important works are as follows:

1. Tunfat-ul-Muwahhidin (A Gift to Monotheists of 1804)
2. Vedanth Grantha (1815)
3. Kenopanishad (1816)
4. Ishopanishad (1816)
5. Kathopanishad (1817)
6. A Defense of Hindu Theism (1820)

7. The Precepts of Jesus – The Guide to Peace and Happiness (1820)
8. Bengali Grammar (1826)
9. The Universal Religion (1829)
10. History of Indian Philosophy (1829)
11. Gandiya Vyakaran (1833)
12. A Letter to Lord Amherst on English Education (1823)

Ram Mohan Roy wrote in Bengali, English and other languages. He had learnt Bengali, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, English and other languages. In his pamphlets and articles, he criticized superstitions and evil customs and rituals. He authored more than 60 tracts and pamphlets in English, Sanskrit and Bengali. He covered a wide range of subjects. He believed that Vedic traditions should be accessible to all. He was an effective translator. His Bengali was terse, simple and elegant.

Ram Mohan Roy impressed Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Rabindranath Tagore. He rejected polytheism and idolatry, but he always loved Hindu philosophy and culture. He published 'Brahmanical Magazine' in 1821 in English and Bengali.

### **7.6 Raja Ram Mohan Roy's contribution to Indian Society**

Ram Mohan Roy was the father of Indian Renaissance. Renaissance refers to revival, rebirth or reawakening. Indian Renaissance is different from European Renaissance as the Western Renaissance focused on the revival of classical literature and arts. In India, it was a period of dark age with many social evils like sati tradition, child marriage, polygamy, polytheism and gender bias. Ram Mohan Roy played a very important role in fighting against social, religious and educational evils.

Sati pratha was the worst Hindu custom in which a widow was forced to self-immolate when her husband died. The word sati referred to 'Sat' (truth). In upper-class Hinduism, sati pratha was regarded as a pious sacrifice of life to express love and dedication for her husband. Ram Mohan Roy rejected this evil practice and finally, William Bentinck turned it into a punishable act.

Ram Mohan Roy struggled a lot to fight against social evils like child marriage, widowhood, gender bias, polygamy, inequality, etc. In religious reforms, he followed ancient culture of India. He admired Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. He also found some defects in Hinduism, Christianity and other religions. He supported the Vedas and Upanishads as ideal lessons for a noble human life. He showed his reverence for great ancient wisdom of the Vedic period.

Ram Mohan Roy contributed to reforms in education in India. When the British Government established a Sanskrit college, Ram Mohan Roy criticized it and said that the introduction of English education was more advantageous than Sanskrit. He said that Sanskrit would keep the people of India in the dark world. He also started Anglo-Vedic School and Vedanta College. He believed that the students should be exposed to modern science and positive ancient culture. He acted as a bridge between Eastern and Western knowledge and wisdom. He introduced Brahmosamaj which propagated equality, liberalism, universalism and virtuous life.

Ram Mohan Roy's views about society, politics, religion, culture and education are relevant in modern times also. Social reforms are still necessary in Indian society.

### Check your Progress-1

Fill in the gaps in sentences with appropriate options.

1. Indian Renaissance took place in \_\_\_\_\_. (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ declared suttee pratha as punishable. (Hastings, Amherst, William Bentirick)
3. Ram Mohan Roy was a great \_\_\_\_\_. (Socialist, Social Reformer, Political thinker)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ believed that Christianity and Hinduism were compatible. (Vivekananda, Dayanand Swami, Kesub Chandra Sen)
5. Ram Mohan Roy was born in \_\_\_\_\_. (Radhanagar, Calcutta, Bangladesh)
6. Ram Mohan Roy was employed by \_\_\_\_\_. (John Digby, Maxmuller, William Jones)
7. In 1822, Ram Mohan Roy started \_\_\_\_\_. (Hindu College, Christian College, Vedanta College)
8. \_\_\_\_\_ introduced religious reforms in Hinduism. (Prathana Samaj, Angle-Hinduism, Brahmo Samaj)
9. Erasmus was a great \_\_\_\_\_. (Socialist, Humanist, educationist)
10. Renaissance refers to \_\_\_\_\_. (Reawakening, repetition of art, artistic development)
11. Idolatry was rejected by \_\_\_\_\_. (Kesub Chunder Sen, Vivekananda, Ram Mohan Roy)
12. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first newspaper in an Indian language. (Calcutta News, Brahmopratha, Sambad Koumadi)

### 7.7 Raja Ram Mohan Roy's life and works

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a prominent social reformer during British rule in India. He was also the founder of Brahmosamaj, the reformed Hinduism. Ram Mohan Roy was born on May 22, 1772 in Radhanagar village in Hoogly District in Bengal Presidency (presently, it is called West Bengal).

Ram Mohan Roy's parents were Ramakanta Roy and Tarini Devi. His father was a great scholar. Ram Mohan Roy married thrice, and his third wife's name was Uma Devi. He was an ardent scholar who learnt Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin and English. During 1809–1814, he served with the East India Company as Diwan. In 1815, he formed Atmiya Sabha and founded Hindu College in Calcutta in 1817. In 1821, he published a newspaper 'Sambad Koumudi' and started working as a journalist. He also contributed to literature, hymns and poetry. In 1827, he founded an English school and Vedanta College. He strongly believed that India needed English to remove irrational thinking and modernize Indian culture.

In 1828, he founded Brahmo Samaj with many religious reforms and liberalism. In 1829, he filed a petition against suttee pratha. He travelled to England in 1830 as an ambassador of the Mughal Empire to ensure the success of Sati Regulation in Bengal (1829).

Ram Mohan Roy died on September 27, 1833 in Bristol, England. He played a major role in Indian Renaissance and therefore he is called the father of Indian Renaissance. He was a strong opponent of the caste system, gender bias, idolatry, polytheism and inequality. He also protested against the colonial attitude of British rule. He believed that India needed English education and a modern curriculum to expose Indian youths to science and rational study. In Brahmo Samaj, he introduced universalism, unitarianism and other Christian elements in Hinduism. He rejected false rituals, evil customs and superstitions.

Ram Mohan Roy was also a scholarly journalist, writer and translator. He wrote many books, pamphlets, letters and articles. He always focused on socio-political and religious reforms. His reforms and thoughts are highly relevant even today.

### **7.8 Casteism in India**

In India, casteism is linked with hereditary and endogamous social groups. Hindus in India are strongly connected with casteism and varna pratha. Varna pratha is fourfold—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Brahmins were priests and teachers who guided and advised others. Kshatriyas were warriors who protected kingdoms and other people. Vaishyas were traders or merchants who focused on earning money. Shudras were the lowest varna. They worked to remove filth and dead animals. They were treated as untouchables.

Brahmins were called Dwij—twice-born. They dominated over Vaishyas and Shudras. Ancient Brahmins lived an ideal, spiritual life. They followed four cycles of life—Brahmacharyashram (period of learning), Grahasthashram (married life), Vanaprasthashram (retired life) and Sanyashram (renunciation of worldly life). Thus, Hindu tradition is called Varnashram Dharma.

Raja Mohan Roy rejected the caste system as it had many evils. The low-caste people were exploited and socially oppressed by upper-caste people. He believed that all people should be treated equally and respected as children of God.

### **7.9 Suttee Pratha in India**

Suttee pratha in India was one of the worst customs. It was the custom of a wife who immolated herself after the death of her husband. She burnt herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband. The word Suttee (Sati) refers to a good woman, chaste wife or virtuous woman. ‘Sati’ refers to truth and it was connected with the Hindu Goddess Sati (Parvati Devi).

In India, thousands of women died after their husbands’ death. There are numerous sati memorials in many parts of India. Rajput women followed the ‘sati’ tradition very strictly. After the death of warriors in battles, their wives died together. This practice was called ‘Jauhar’. Suttee pratha originated to save widows from sexual exploitation or rape. The miserable life widows had to endure was also a cause of suttee pratha. In Bengal, Brahmins regarded it as a system of law and morality.

During Mughal rule, Akbar and Humayun took steps to prohibit this evil system. Suttee became one of the major issues during British rule. Even after independence, suttee was sometimes committed voluntarily. In 1987, the sati case of Roop Kunwar took place in Rajasthan in India.



Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a staunch social reformer who fought against the ‘Sati’ system during the rule of the East India Company. William Bentinck banned it, making it a punishable crime.

### **7.10 Socio-Political Thoughts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy**

Ram Mohan Roy was a liberal social and political thinker. He had a huge impact on the modern history of India. He revived ethical principles of Vedanta philosophy. He preached about the oneness of God. He integrated Western culture with ancient Indian traditions. He was an educationist with modern liberal thoughts.

Ram Mohan Roy was a passionate supporter of liberty, equality, brotherhood and respect for all people and genders. He opposed the caste system and the unequal status of women.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a great social thinker and social reformer. He opposed orthodox and superstitious social customs like suttee pratha, casteism, widowhood and gender bias, etc. His religious views were impacted by the Islamic idea of monotheism. He founded Brahma Samaj with liberalism and unitarianism. He respected ancient Indian culture and Vedic ideology, but he strongly opposed evil social customs like ‘Sati pratha’.

Ram Mohan Roy favoured the Western style of education and the English language. He believed that English was necessary for the progress of science and social reforms. He also supported modern British administrative systems. However, he was against colonialism and the exploitation of colonized people by colonizers.

Ram Mohan Roy also believed that freedom of the press is necessary for a democratic system. He said that universalism and humanism are important for an ideal society, but nationalism is the love for the nation that helps the progress of a nation. Ram Mohan Roy brought religious changes in Hinduism by founding Brahmosamaj.

His liberal attitude reformed Indian religious thoughts. He started a campaign against evil acts and customs in Hindu society. He said that the sati system was like a crime. He rejected polygamy, the caste system, untouchability and the oppression of women.

Due to Ram Mohan Roy’s efforts, Sati Pratha was removed by William Bentinck as a punishable act. Sati Pratha was favoured by upper-caste Hindus like Brahmins, Kshatriyas (Rajputs), etc. It was quite dominant in Rajasthan. However, William Bentinck played an important role in banning this evil tradition.

### **7.11 Brahma Samaj**

Brahma Samaj was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal. It played a vital role in social and religious reforms. Brahma Samaj means the society of Brahma. It was a theistic movement in Hinduism. It was founded in Calcutta in 1828.

Brahma Samaj does not accept the authority of some ancient beliefs like avatars and karma’s effects in human life. It discarded Hindu rituals, adopting Christian and Islamic practices. It rejected polytheism and image-worship. It also rejected

the caste system, patriarchal domination over women and the superstitious attitude of Hindu society.

Debendranath Tagore and Keshab Chander Sen organized Brahmo Samaj of India in 1866. However, Ram Mohan Roy was the pioneer of this liberal religion. It had a high impact on social reforms in India.

### **7.12 Widowhood in India and legalization of remarriage of Hindu widows**

Hindu widows suffered a lot after their husbands' death. They were treated as social burdens. They often burnt themselves as sati, but it was banned in 1829 due to social reforms under British rule and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Child marriage was also opposed by social reformers and the British rulers. Hindu widows were treated as inauspicious women who suffered due to their sinful life.

However, during social reforms in Indian Renaissance, remarriage of Hindu widows was accepted and legalized. It was one of the major social reforms in India.

### **Check your Progress - 2**

(Answer the following questions briefly)

1. Give brief description of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's life.
2. Give brief introduction to Raja Ram Mohan Roy's family.
3. What is Indian Renaissance?
4. What is European Renaissance?
5. Describe characteristics of Renaissance.
6. Discuss Ram Mohan Roy as a social reformer.
7. Write a brief note on Brahmo Samaj.
8. How did Ram Mohan Roy fight against suttee pratha?
9. How did Ram Mohan Roy support English education?
10. Discuss briefly the contribution of Ram Mohan Roy to journalism and writing.
11. What is casteism in India?
12. Write a brief note on sati pratha (Suttee Pratha).

### **7.13 Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Letters**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a journalist, writer and great thinker. He was an ardent social reformer. He wrote articles, pamphlets and letters to British officials regarding English education and the removal of Suttee Pratha in India. He knew English, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and Bengali language. He wrote a letter to William Bentinck to end the sati system in India. He also wrote a letter to Lord Amherst in 1823 to introduce English instead of Sanskrit in Calcutta. William Bentinck finally decided to abolish suttee in India, and later English was introduced in India by Macaulay.

Ram Mohan Roy believed that English would help in the development of India through modern subjects like mathematics, science, physics, chemistry, etc. English would act as a key to modernization and a rational attitude, discarding social evils and superstitions.

#### **7.14 “Abolition of Suttee” (A letter to Lord Bentick by Raja Ram Mohan Roy)**

Ram Mohan Roy played a major role in the abolition of the Sati system. When his brother Jagmohana's wife Alakamanjari died, immolating herself as a 'Sati', Ram Mohan Roy was deeply despairing. He decided to fight against this evil custom. In those days, even Western people did not oppose this system. The British government was timid to take action against this evil custom. However, in the end, William Bentinck banned it as a punishable crime. Ram Mohan Roy further advocated women's equality and education.

When orthodox Hindus sent a petition against the abolition of suttee, Ram Mohan Roy submitted a counter-petition. He visited England and presented the interpretation of Hindu scriptures. He also pleaded before the British government to abolish suttee pratha in India. He met many British thinkers who supported his views. Raja Ram Mohan Roy's efforts played a very vital role in the removal of Sati Pratha in India. It made a major change in reformation in India by banning 'Suttee' as 'a culpable homicide'.

#### **7.15 “A Letter on English Education” (A letter by Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Lord Amherst)**

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was a highly educated scholar and social reformer who made many social reforms in India. He is known as the father of Indian Renaissance. He emerged as an advocate of educational reforms also.

In 1823, he came to know that the British Government wanted to establish a Sanskrit school in Calcutta. This school was to focus on Sanskrit texts and Hindu philosophy.

Ram Mohan Roy disagreed with the British plan of establishing a Sanskrit school. He wrote a letter to Lord Amherst, the Governor-General of India. In the letter, he said that it was not the right decision, because Sanskrit is an ancient language with many limitations. The nations of Europe had progressed in science, mathematics, anatomy and philosophy. The notions of England and modern Europe were glorious and progressive. Unfortunately, Sanskrit had no such attitude.

The Government established a Sanskrit school under the Hindu pandits who imparted past knowledge which was not relevant in modern times. Vedanta talked about spiritual doctrine which taught students that all visible things had no real existence. It regarded the world as an illusion, but in fact, the practical world is important in life. According to Ram Mohan Roy, the Sanskrit system of education would keep India in darkness.

India needed a liberal and enlightened system of instruction. Students must learn science, mathematics and natural philosophy. India also required a good library, instruments and modern facilities for education. Ram Mohan Roy requested Lord Amherst to introduce English education instead of Sanskrit to provide a liberal attitude, free thinking and modern ideas.

Ram Mohan Roy supported English education and European settlements in India. He believed that modern education would promote development in India from the backwardness of the country. Though he was a great Sanskrit scholar, he believed that Sanskrit education would not help in improving the condition of education in

India. His views about English education were quite relevant in these days. It proved that English education helped India to be liberal, secular and democratic.

### 7.16 Let us sum up

Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the father of Indian Renaissance. He advocated Western education which is relevant even today. He was a nationalist and loved Indian Vedic philosophy and ancient Indian culture. He also acted as a bridge between Indian culture and Western modernization. He opposed Hindu bigotry and the superstitious attitude of Hindus. He supported a Westernized outlook on life and rational thought. He admired English administrators for their rational attitude and legalized actions.

Ram Mohan Roy admired William Bentick for banning Suttee Pratha. He propagated equality, liberty, women's rights and freedom of the press. He also stood for religious tolerance and secularism. His views were highly liberal and logical. His legacy has played a very important role in the cultural and intellectual development of India. He was a multifaceted personality with honesty, sincerity and a vision of modernized India.

### 7.17 Key words

- Indian Renaissance: Revival in India.
- Liberalism: Liberal / unbiased thinking.
- Social reformer: One who makes changes in society.
- Suttee: A widow who immolates herself on the pyre of her husband.
- Superstition: Blind, irrational beliefs.
- Abolition: Removal, destruction.
- Legalization: Lawfulness / supported by law.
- Brahmo Samaj: Reformed Hinduism.
- Monotheism: Faith in one God.
- Polytheism: Faith in multiple gods.
- Colonialism: Practice of control of one people or power over other people and areas.
- Idolatry: Idol worship.
- Rationalism: Logical attitude.

### 7.18 Suggested Reading

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Soman, Priya. "Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Abolition of Sati system in India" (2018)

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“Raja Ram Mohon Roy” Amazon Prime Video (2022)

**Answers**

**Answer (MCQ) Check your progress-I)**

1. Bengal
2. William Bentinck
3. Social reformer
4. Kesub Chunder Sen
5. Radhanagar
6. John Digby
7. Hindu College
8. Brahmo Samaj
9. Humanist
10. Reawakening
11. Raja Ram Moham Roy
12. Sambad Koumudi

## Unit 8

### Swami Vivekananda's Talk: 'The Ideal of Universal Religion' Delivered at New York in 1896

#### 8.1 Objectives

#### 8.2 Introduction

#### 8.3 The life of Swami Vivekananda and his major works

#### 8.4 Swami Vivekananda as a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa

#### 8.5 Swami Vivekananda's visit to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago (USA)

#### 8.6 Check Your Progress – I (MCQs)

#### 8.7 The concept of Universal Religion

#### 8.8 Three aspects of religion

#### 8.9 Vivekananda's views on Eastern and Western life

#### 8.10 Characteristics of Universal Religion

#### 8.11 Swami Vivekananda's promotion of Universal Religion

#### 8.12 Check Your Progress – II (Answer in Brief)

#### 8.13 Swami Vivekananda's great quotes

#### 8.14 Let us Sum-up

#### 8.15 Key Words

#### 8.16 Suggested Reading

#### 8.1 Objectives

The objectives of this unit are to introduce Swami Vivekananda, who was a great spiritual leader of India. He was an inspiring spiritual teacher of the youth of India. He said that the power is within every person; one can do anything and everything. He was an ardent nationalist who loved Indian culture and Vedic philosophy. He encouraged the Indian people to serve their country. He also believed that there should be harmony between Eastern and Western life. One must learn to live with material progress and a spiritual attitude.

Another objective of the unit is to learn about Swami Vivekananda's life and works, legacy, and his views about God, universal religion, nationalism, and humanism. We shall discuss Swami Vivekananda's impact on Indian youth and Western people.

#### 8.2 Introduction

Swami Vivekananda was a great supporter of the ancient culture of India and Hinduism. His favourite philosophy was Advaita Vedanta. He was a young Hindu sanyasi. He was a great thinker, orator, and passionate lover of India. His Guru was Ramakrishna Paramhansa—a great mystic and spiritual teacher. Ramakrishna Paramhansa impressed him profoundly, and he became his disciple forever. He was an educated person who had deep knowledge of ancient Indian philosophy and Western thinking.

He was born on January 12, 1863. His name was Narendranath Dutta. He was one of the eight children of Vishwanath Dutta and Bhuvaneshwari Devi. Vishwanath Dutta was an attorney who had a reputation in society due to his expertise. Bhuvaneshwari Devi was an intelligent woman with a virtuous life. Her impact on Narendra was great. Narendra was an intellectual person right from childhood. In his young age, he studied at Presidency College in Calcutta. He was an avid learner and studied many subjects. He was also quite active in sports, gymnastics, and other games. He believed that a healthy body is a path towards spirituality.

Swami Vivekananda loved the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads but, at the same time, he studied Western philosophy of David Hume, Herbert Spencer, and other international philosophers. In his youth, he underwent a spiritual crisis. He turned towards agnosticism and questioned the existence of God. He asked many spiritualists whether they had seen God. He was not satisfied by their answers. Once he visited Dakshineswar and met Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He asked him if he had ever seen God. Ramakrishna Paramhansa answered, "Yes, I have. I see God as clearly as I see you." He was deeply impressed by Ramakrishna Paramhansa and became spiritually awakened. He became more conscious and renounced the material world.

Ramakrishna Paramhansa died of cancer in 1886. In 1887, he renounced attachment to worldly desires and became a true sanyasi. In 1893, he represented India in the World Parliament of Religions and became internationally famous. In 1897, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission for joint service and education.

### **8.3 The Life of Swami Vivekananda (His Life Story) and his Major Works**

Swami Vivekananda was a great Hindu monk. He was a great philosopher, thinker, and ascetic. He was the chief disciple of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He introduced Vedanta and Yoga to Western people. In 1893, he visited Chicago in the USA and participated in the World Parliament of Religions. In his speech, he addressed people as "brothers and sisters" instead of "ladies and gentlemen". This manner of addressing was a part of Indian culture which impressed the American people. An American newspaper described him as "an orator of divine right".

Swami Vivekananda delivered hundreds of lectures in the USA and Europe. In New York, he founded the Vedanta Society of New York. Later, it became a part of the Vedanta Societies in the West.

Swami Vivekananda was born in a Kayastha family in Calcutta. His original name was Narendranath Datta. He was born on January 12, 1863. It was a traditional family, and Narendra was one of the nine siblings. His father was an attorney in the Calcutta High Court. His name was Vishwanath Dutta. Narendra's mother was Bhuvaneshwari Devi, a devout housewife. His grandfather was also an erudite scholar. Thus, Narendra developed progressive thinking, a spiritual attitude, and an intellectual mind. As a young man, he was interested in meditation and Hinduism. He admired ancient Indian culture and Vedanta philosophy.

At the age of eight, Narendra studied in Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's educational institution. In his youth, he studied at Presidency College in Calcutta. As a student, he was a voracious reader with deep interest in philosophy, history, social science, art, and literature. He was an impressive orator. He was also interested in great Western thinkers and philosophers. He studied the works of David Hume, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, Comte, John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer. He often corresponded with Herbert Spencer, discussing education and philosophy. He had a powerful memory and remarkable talents.

In 1880, Narendra joined Keshab Chunder Sen's 'Nava Vidhan'. It was established by Sen after meeting Ramakrishna. It focused on reconversion from Christianity to Hinduism. Narendra joined it, and he also believed in the concept of Brahmo Samaj. However, Narendra had a question in his mind about the existence of God. Narendra met Ramakrishna and asked him if he had seen God. Ramakrishna answered that he saw God as he saw Narendra.

Narendra was influenced by Brahmo Samaj and Western esotericism. He met Ramakrishna after Professor William Hastie's recommendation that Narendra should meet Ramakrishna to understand the meaning of spiritual trance. While discussing William Wordsworth's poem 'Excursion', Prof. Hastie discussed Wordsworth's experience of spiritual trance.

After the death of Narendra's father, the Dutta family became bankrupt. Narendra found solace in Ramakrishna's philosophy of accepting sorrows in life. Soon, he became a true disciple of Ramakrishna. He renounced all material desires to realize God. Ramakrishna died in 1886, and his disciples founded Ramakrishna Math in Baranagar. Soon, Narendra adopted the name Swami Vivekananda. He travelled in India often by train and on foot. He met many scholars, kings, diwans, and other people, including Muslims, Christians, and low-caste people.

In Chicago, the Parliament of Religions was organized in 1893, and Swami Vivekananda decided to participate in it to introduce India and Indian culture to Western people. Swami Vivekananda delivered a speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions, addressing the audience as "brothers and sisters". He talked about India and Hinduism. Indian religion is called Sanatan Dharma, which is eternal and universal. He proved to be a great orator with a highly effective speech. The newspapers of America admired his lecture, and soon, he became quite famous as a spiritual leader. Then he gave lectures in the USA and the UK. He founded a Vedanta Society in New York. He attracted many thinkers and followers.

Swami Vivekananda returned to India and received a warm welcome from the people. He talked to the people about social issues like the caste system, gender discrimination, and superstitions. He also talked about nationalism, the role of youth, education, and spiritual ideology. In 1897, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta. He also founded two other monasteries in the Himalayas and Madras. He visited the West again from 1899 to 1902. He established Vedanta Societies in San Francisco and New York. He visited several countries and cities like Istanbul, Vienna, etc.



On 4th July, 1902, Swami Vivekananda died at the age of 39. He died while meditating.

His disciples believed that his death was Mahasamadhi. Swami Vivekananda spread Hindu thoughts of Yoga, Karma Yoga, social service, and monotheism. He advocated Advaita Vedanta philosophy. He said, “Each soul is potentially divine.” He linked morality with the human mind. Nationalism was one of the most prominent themes of Swami Vivekananda’s views. His legacy was highly effective. Neo-Vedanta was his most important lesson for spiritual seekers.

**Swami Vivekananda’s Major Works:**

1. Raja Yoga (1896)
2. Karma Yoga (1896)
3. Jnana Yoga (1899)
4. Lectures on Bhagavad Gita
5. My India: The India Eternal
6. My Master
7. Essentials of Hinduism
8. Women of India
9. The East and the West
10. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (9 volumes)

**8.4 Swami Vivekananda as a Disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa**

Swami Vivekananda was the disciple of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. The word ‘Paramhansa’ has a spiritual meaning. It refers to the highest level of spiritualism. He experiences oneness with the eternal power and glory of Paramatma. The word ‘hansa’ means swan, while Paramhansa means the loftiest swan. The swan is a bird that has the power of finding the truth.

Ramakrishna Paramhansa was a great spiritual Guru. He was not highly educated, but his spiritual knowledge was remarkable. He felt merged with the divine power. Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa was a great devotee of Goddess Kali. He revived Hinduism and attracted many educated people towards devotion from atheism.

Swami Vivekananda was an educated man who was impressed by Western philosophy and atheism. He believed in Hinduism, but he had different views about religion and spiritualism. Ramakrishna Paramhansa believed that there might be different paths in religions, but they lead to one God. When Narendra was a student in college, his English professor told him about Ramakrishna Paramhansa—that he was a mystic who experienced the presence of eternal power everywhere and in every person.

Narendra met Ramakrishna Paramhansa and asked him if he had seen God. Paramhansa replied that he could see God as he saw Narendra. Narendra was impressed by Ramakrishna and became his disciple. He learned many things from him. Later, Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission. The main goal of the Mission was to help people in achieving salvation. It was a non-profit organization.

Ramakrishna Paramhansa died in 1885, and Swami Vivekananda developed the Ramakrishna Mission and became a great monk of India. He propagated

Hinduism, nationalism, and humanism. Swami Vivekananda also died in 1902 at the age of 39, but his relationship with Ramakrishna made him a great spiritual leader of India. As a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramhansa, he spread his spiritual lessons all over the world. He was a devoted disciple of his Guru, and he made his Guru quite popular in India and abroad.

### **8.5 Swami Vivekananda's Visit to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago**

Swami Vivekananda was the first Indian spiritual monk who visited Chicago in the USA, where the Parliament of the World's Religions was organized. He had to struggle a lot to go there and gave a ground-breaking speech. He introduced Hinduism and showed the Americans that Hinduism is full of a secular attitude and tolerance. It is against fanaticism and bigotry. He also introduced Yoga and Vedanta philosophy in the USA and Western countries.

Swami Vivekananda's speech was unique as he addressed people as "brothers and sisters". He said, "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance." He further said, "We believe not only in universal tolerance, but we accept all religions as true."

India accepted refugees from other countries and protected them. They were also allowed to follow their religions. All nations of the world were treated with respect and equality by Indian people. He gave the example of the Zoroastrian people called Parsis. He referred to India's greatness, the wisdom of his Guru Ramakrishna Paramhansa, and the Bhagavad Gita. He propagated Hinduism as a spiritual and universal religion. Soon, he became quite famous in America and other Western countries.

### **8.6 Check Your Progress – I (MCQs)**

1. Vivekananda's famous philosophy was \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Dvaita (B) Advaita (C) Vedanta Advaita
2. \_\_\_\_\_ was Vivekananda's Guru.  
(A) Keshab Chunder Sen (B) Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (C) Ramakrishna Paramhansa
3. Ramakrishna Paramhansa was a great \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Mystic (B) Philosopher (C) Social Reformer
4. Vivekananda was born in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) 1860 (B) 1863 (C) 1970
5. The original name of Vivekananda was \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Narendranath (B) Viveknath (C) Dwarkesh
6. Narendra studied in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) English College (B) Hindu College (C) Presidency College
7. In 1893, Vivekananda participated in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Art Congress (B) Parliament of the USA  
(C) The Parliament of the World Religions at Chicago
8. Vivekananda belonged to the \_\_\_\_\_ family.  
(A) Brahmin (B) Merchant's (C) Kayastha
9. Vivekananda's mother was a \_\_\_\_\_ housewife.  
(A) Religious (B) Hard-working (C) Devout

10. 'Nava Vidhan' was founded by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Keshab Chunder Sen (B) Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar  
(C) Ramakrishna Paramhansa
11. In 1897, Vivekananda founded \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Ramakrishna Mission (B) Vedanta Society (C) Brahmo Samaj
12. Ramakrishna was a great devotee of Goddess \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Kali (B) Amba (C) Chamunda

### 8.7 The Concept of Universal Religion

Religion is an important part of human life and human culture. It plays a vital role in human culture and human life. Swami Vivekananda said that religion can create violence if it is not liberal and tolerant. The key concept of universal religion is love for human beings. Love for mankind is love for God. Religion is connected with existential issues like salvation, life, death, fear, sorrow, sacred and profane. Swami Vivekananda says that religion plays an ambivalent role in life and society. Religion promotes love, peace, equality, and brotherhood. Vivekananda believes that human beings face existential questions like life, death, salvation, soul, and God. In fact, each religion is a part of universal religion. Religions have diversity in certain beliefs and ideas, but the ultimate goal of religion is the same. All religions believe in love, peace, non-violence, truth, etc. Humanity is the basic foundation of all religions.

Swami Vivekananda gave equal importance to all religions. For example, brotherhood is the soul of Islam, which is necessary for social harmony. In Hinduism, spirituality is the basic ideal. In spirituality, love and service of mankind are the basic ideals. Acceptance of all other religions, people, and tolerance can be taken as important characteristics of universal religion.

Swami Vivekananda said that he worshipped all gods and visited temples, mosques, churches, etc. Realization of divinity is the basic goal of religion. He says that true religion should be free from dogmas, doctrines, and rituals. The end of all religions is the realization of God in the soul. God is not only outside but within the soul. In fact, God is everywhere. As blood is red in the human body, the religion of all people is the same.

People often say that their religion is the greatest. This is an evil. Bigotry is an evil that divides human beings. The followers of certain religions hate other people and religions.

### 8.8 Three Aspects of Religions

Vivekananda said that there are three aspects of 'great' and 'recognized' religions. They are different from each other, and these three parts are as follows:

1. Philosophy
2. Mythology
3. Rituals

Philosophy is 'Jnana Marga' that deals with all subjects related to religion like God, soul, life, death, etc. Mythology is legendary and supernatural. Rituals are formal practices that consist of ceremonies, worship, incense, etc. All

these aspects differ from religion to religion, and there is no universal philosophy, universal mythology, or universal rituals. Swami Vivekananda considered fanaticism practical. Many religions claim superiority of philosophy, mythology, or rituals. The core idea of God is a common element in all religions. Thus, unity lies in all religions. He believed that unity is the primary element of universal religion.

In the Indian concept of religion, there are four paths towards salvation:

1. **Jnana Marga:** It is philosophy that deals with profound ideas of God, soul, immortality, life, and death. In India, Vedanta philosophy was highly spiritual and metaphysical. In the Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita, there are philosophical discussions about the soul. In 'Kenopanishad', it is written that the ear is behind the ear. The physical ear hears, but the true listener is the eternal power called God. Atman is immortal, and Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that the soul does not die. It cannot be slain, it cannot be dried, and it remains deathless. The body dies, but the soul remains immortal.
2. **Karma Marga:** Lord Krishna said that actions in human life are important. They generate results—good or bad—according to the actions of an individual. Lord Krishna says that actions/deeds should be a part of one's duty. One must focus on 'karma' and not on results. Results are unknown, but deeds are in human hands.
3. **Bhakti Marga:** Bhakti Marga refers to devotion to God. It is ritual in nature. There are bhajans, kirtans, and poojan. It is more emotional and passionate. It is beyond casteism, gender discrimination, and inequality. That is the reason why many devotees belonged to low castes. It proves that true religion has no inequality or discrimination.
4. **Yoga Marga:** Swami Vivekananda had interest in Raja Yoga and Hatha Yoga. In India, the concept of Yoga meant harmony or merging of human beings with the divine. It has eight steps that lead to samadhi. It is a gradual movement from body, mind, and soul. Now it has been proved that yoga is rational and relevant to all human beings and leads to oneness with Paramatma.

### 8.9 Vivekananda's Views on Western and Eastern Life

Swami Vivekananda was influenced by ancient Indian culture and philosophy. He was also influenced by modern Western science, lifestyle, and rational attitude. The word 'East' refers to 'Oriental', which includes Asian countries. Western culture refers to Europe and the USA, etc. Western culture is more rational and positive. Indian culture and Eastern culture are philosophical, but often less rational and more emotional.

Indian culture is one of the most ancient cultures. Western culture is advanced and materially progressive. These two cultures were contradictory, but now they are moving towards a mix-up of both. Indian culture is often orthodox and conservative. In modern times, Western lifestyle is being adopted by the Eastern people—economy, food, clothes, modern amenities, etc. Religious practices, festivals, and lifestyle are parts of culture. Indian culture is

thousands of years old. In India, there is unity in diversity. There are different religions, practices, customs, and climates in India.

Diversity is a major characteristic of Indian culture. Western culture focuses on materialism, the body, and external aspects. It is a combination of customs, values, and lifestyle. Western culture has impacted Eastern culture during the last few centuries. There are positive as well as negative impacts of Western culture on Eastern people. For example, Indian people believed in joint families, but now it is decreasing. Western countries are urbanized, while in India there are lakhs of villages with a simple lifestyle and limited facilities. Today, people in Eastern countries have adopted individualism. There was a time when all family members lived together cooperatively. Old grandparents were provided service by their sons, daughters, and grandchildren. Now the scenario has changed. Now they regard their old grandparents as a burden on the family. The young generation wants to live alone and in an individual manner.

In Indian culture, guests were treated as God. They said, “Atithi Devo Bhava.” Social values of India are different from Western life. Guests were respected and loved. Relatives and friends were also deeply honoured. Interaction among people was simple and candid. Now, the new generation has become hypocritical and diplomatic. Politics has affected the life of all people and society.

Festivals have also changed. The festivals now are under Western impact. They are less religious and more pompous. In modern times, people celebrate birthdays in a luxurious way. Valentine’s Day is celebrated more happily than Diwali, Holi, or Rakshabandhan.

Marriage is an important part of human life. In Indian tradition, there are four ashrams (periods) of life: brahmacharya ashram, grihastha ashram, vanaprastha ashram, and sanyasa ashram. Grihastha ashram means the conjugal part of life. Now in India, marriages are changing from the traditional manner. In old times, parents took decisions about the marriage-choice of their sons and daughters. Now it is changing rapidly. The caste system was an inevitable part of marriage, but now it is also changing. Marriages are often now beyond caste. Ego often breaks marriages. These are the impacts of Western lifestyle on Indian people.

Food and clothing are highly impacted by Western life. Simple Indian food was nourishing, but now Western food is popular like bread, puffs, pizza, etc. In clothes also, pants, shirts, coats, and ties have become popular in India and other Eastern countries. Women also choose Western clothes like jeans, shirts, etc.

Indian people had multiple languages in different regions. There were national as well as local languages. After the impact of the English language, the national language and mother tongue are used in a limited manner. In education, law, and administration, English is used a lot. In business and corporates, English dominates other languages.

Swami Vivekananda loved and worshipped Christ and Christianity. He respected Indian culture, but he believed that the West should learn spiritualism from Indian people, and the East should be rational and scientific.

This lesson from the West is required by the people of India. Social concerns are a part of Western thinking which should be adopted by Indian people.

Swami Vivekananda said that the human being is not the body but the spirit living in the body. The idea of reincarnation agrees with science. He also believed in non-dualism, monotheism, and universal religion. Swamiji acted like a bridge between the East and the West. Thus, Swami Vivekananda can be called a spiritual scientist. Progress in India is spiritual, while progress in the West is material. Both are important in life. Very often Western people look upon the Eastern way of life as negative, depressive, and fanatic. They believed that Indian people are cowardly, self-isolated, and gloomy. Vivekananda said that both should learn from each other and change their lifestyle. However, spiritualism is the higher goal of human life.

### **8.10 Characteristics of Universal Religion**

Universal religion is a liberal concept of religion. It refers to the concept of a single world religion. Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam are regarded as universal religions. According to Swami Vivekananda, universal religion is human love, which is true love for God. Six major characteristics of universal religion are as follows:

1. Sacred / pious
2. Myth
3. Rituals
4. Community
5. Morality
6. Religious leaders

According to Swami Vivekananda, real religion is the realization of the divine within every soul. He cherished the world-view of Advaita Vedanta which propagates unity in diversity. He addressed the people in the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago and said that Indian culture is quite liberal, secular, and tolerant. He said: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance." Further he said: "We believe not only in universal tolerance but we accept all religions to be true."

Universal religion is not a new religion, but it is the acceptance of all religions equally. Diversity and plurality are parts of universal religion. It is not universal philosophy, mythology, or rituals. He did not consider universal religion as a universal church or universal scripture. The word 'universal' includes 'particular'. The gates of universal religion are open for all. It is beyond class, caste, gender, language, culture, etc. He firmly believed that harmony of all religions is a major characteristic of universal religion.

The following are the important characteristics of universal religion:

1. Universal religion is the true religion which is free from hypocrisy, narrow-mindedness, bigotry, superstitions, etc.
2. It is liberal, secular, and democratic. It respects all other religions, people, creeds, etc.

3. It is full of diversity, but there is unity in diversity.
4. It is not superstition or irrationality. It is intellectual and rational, but it is also sensitive.
5. There are rituals in religions, but these rituals in universal religion are sacred and pious. It is far from hatred, violence, and inhuman attitudes.
6. Science and religion are not opposites but complementary. Universal religion accepts both liberally.
7. Spiritualism is inner power, but materialism is external power. Materialism should be accepted and respected. Science provides many facilities that make human life comfortable. Money or wealth is not the aim of life, but it is a means for comfort and enjoyment.
8. Swami Vivekananda said that the human body is important in life. It should be powerful and healthy. That is why he said that youth should play games rather than only reading religious books like the Bhagavad Gita, etc. He also said that twenty powerful youths could make India free from British rule.
9. In the world, there are different religions, different cultures, and beliefs. All religions focus on virtuous life. It ultimately leads to God. Therefore, all religions should be treated as equal.
10. Vivekananda believed that education plays an important role in human development. It is a key to human progress in spiritual as well as material fields of life.
11. Equality, freedom, and human dignity should be part of the ideal universal religion. Poverty, ignorance, and social vices should be eradicated in the world. This is an important characteristic of universal religion.

### **8.11 Swami Vivekananda's Promotion of Universal Religion**

According to Swami Vivekananda, religion is the essence of human life. It contains philosophy, mythology, and rituals. However, philosophy is the most important aspect of religion. Religion without philosophy turns into superstition, and philosophy without religion often becomes atheism.

Some people insist that those who do not follow certain religions cannot achieve salvation. This is an evil which can be called fanaticism. Fanaticism is the most dangerous evil in religion.

Sometimes, certain philosophical views are presented through mythology. There are different mythologies in different religions. Very often people criticise and reject the mythology of other religions as superstition. Different religions focus on different elements. For example, Christianity emphasizes sacrifice, human love, and self-purification. Islam stresses brotherhood, and Hinduism is spiritual in nature. Their differences often create disharmony and conflict among religions. However, universal elements run through all religions of the world.

Swami Vivekananda says that unity in diversity is the essence of the human world and universe. God is one, and therefore all human beings are one. In universal religion, one doctrine must not be followed by all. Diversity is a reality, and it should be accepted by all people. Religion is a motivational

power which breeds peace, love, humanity, and tolerance. Vivekananda says that the inner essence of every religion cannot contradict each other.

Universal religion provides a common platform for all religions. It stresses equality and non-discrimination. According to Swami Vivekananda, Hinduism is a progressive religion, and it is the essence of Vedanta. He rejects the superiority of any religion. Vedanta focuses on Advaita (non-dualism). It is practical and rational. Behind all multiplicity, there is oneness (non-duality). Advaita Vedanta is the absolute reality. It believes that all things are one. Duality or plurality are external, but oneness exists in everything. For example, we divide everything into two like day and night, man and woman, life and death, etc. But in fact, they are one. Life is a journey towards death, and death is a part of life. They are all forms of Brahman. Advaita is an eternal religion.

Swami Vivekananda looked at the world as Advaita (non-dual). Vedanta philosophy is rational and scientific. Science and religion are not contradictory. Advaita is a strong foundation of equality, harmony, and morality. All religions accept the concept of oneness of God. God creates all living beings and nourishes them.

Vivekananda says that the spirit never dies. It is immortal. God is father, mother, and friend. Worship is not a ritual but love. Hinduism is not dogmatic. It believes in realization of universal reality. People often think that Hinduism believes in polytheism, but in fact, there is monotheism in Hinduism. As Narsinh Mehta says, “Akhand brahmand ma ek tu hari, Zuzave rupa anant bhas” (O Hari, you are only one in the universe, but you appear in different forms.)

Swami Vivekananda said that every person can achieve salvation not by renunciation but by love for mankind. One can live worldly life, performing duties and social service, and achieve salvation. If you do not believe in a personal God, you are not an atheist; but if you do not believe in yourself, you are an atheist. If you love others, you love yourself. If you hurt anyone, you hurt yourself. Vivekananda says that Hinduism never rejects other religions.

Vivekananda respected Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, but for him universal religion can be generated from Hinduism and Advaita Vedanta. Synthesis of different religions leads to universal religion. Ultimately, as Gandhiji recited a song in prayer: “Ishwar Allah Ek ja naam, sab ko sanmati de Bhagwan”.

### **8.12 Check Your Progress – II (Answer in Brief)**

1. Discuss the characteristics of universal religion in brief.
2. Write the major works of Swami Vivekananda.
3. Write a short note on Swami Vivekananda’s Guru Ramakrishna Paramhansa.
4. Write a short note on Swami Vivekananda’s speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago.
5. Discuss the concept of universal religion.
6. Discuss Eastern and Western life.
7. Explain three parts of religion.



8. What did Swami Vivekananda propagate? Discuss his views on Advaita Vedanta.

### 8.13 Swami Vivekananda's Quotes

- Take risks in your life.
- If you win, you can lead. If you lose, you can guide.
- Strength is life; weakness is death.
- Experience is the only teacher we have. We may talk and reason all our lives, but we shall not understand a word of truth until we experience it ourselves.
- If you think yourself strong, strong you will be.
- Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life; think of it, dream of it, live on that idea.
- Meditation can turn fools into sages, but unfortunately fools never meditate.
- In a conflict between the heart and brain, follow your heart.
- You cannot believe in God until you believe in yourself.
- You are the creator of your own destiny.
- Talk to yourself once in a day. Otherwise you may miss meeting an excellent person in the world.
- All power is within you: you can do anything and everything.
- We are what our thoughts have made us; so take care about what you think.
- Arise, awake, and stop not until the goal is achieved.
- The greatest sin is to think that you are weak.
- In one word, the ideal is that you are divine.
- Believe in yourself and the world will be at your feet.
- If superstition enters, the brain is gone.
- Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.

### 8.14 Let us Sum Up

In this unit, we have discussed the life and works of Swami Vivekananda. He was a great spiritual leader of India who introduced Indian culture, philosophy, and Vedanta to Western people. He had close association with his Guru Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He propagated Hinduism, love for the nation, and universal religion.

Swami Vivekananda believed that Indian culture was remarkable and rational. However, Indian spirituality needs to be attached to Western philosophy and a materialistic attitude. The entire world is one, and all people have the same divine power. God is one, the soul is immortal, and life is a spiritual journey. Vivekananda impacted Indian youth and other thinkers. He lived a short life of 39 years, but his legacy is highly lofty and unforgettable.

### 8.15 Key Words

Universal Religion: Commonness of all religions

Advaita: Non-dualism

Dvaita: Dualism

Liberalism: Liberal/open-minded views  
Polytheism: Faith in multiple gods  
Western ideology: The Western views on different topics  
Monotheism: Faith in one God  
Rational: Logical, intellectual  
Pious: Sacred/holy  
Rituals: Formal rites  
Superstition: Blind faith  
Salvation: Emancipation (Moksha)

#### **8.16 Suggested Reading**

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8. Bhagvandas, *Essential Unity of All Religions*.

## **Unit 9**

### **Sri Aurobindo's Essay Indian Culture and External Influence from The Renaissance in India and Other Essays.**

#### **9.0 Unit Overview**

#### **9.1 Objectives**

#### **9.2 Learning Outcomes**

#### **9.3 Introduction**

#### **9.4 Life and Works of Sri Aurobindo:**

#### **9.5 Sri Aurobindo's views on Indian culture and external influence:**

#### **9.6 Background information on The Renaissance in India and other Essays:**

#### **9.7 Significance of Indian culture:**

#### **9.8 The diversity of Indian culture:**

#### **9.9 It's contribution to spirituality, philosophy, and literature:**

#### **9.10 The need to preserve Indian culture:**

#### **9.11 External influence on Indian culture:**

#### **9.12 Historical accounts of foreign invasions and colonization in India:**

#### **9.13 The impact of Western education and modernization on Indian culture:**

#### **9.14 The potential threat of cultural imperialism:**

#### **9.15 Sri Aurobindo's perspective on Indian culture and external influence:**

#### **9.16 His belief in the evolution of Indian culture:**

#### **9.17 The need for selective borrowing and adaptation of Western ideas:**

#### **9.18 The importance of preserving traditional Indian values and beliefs**

#### **9.19 Application of Sri Aurobindo's views in modern India:**

#### **9.20 Challenges in maintaining the balance between tradition and modernization:**

#### **9.21 The role of education in preserving Indian culture:**

#### **9.22 The need for a holistic approach to development that promotes cultural diversity:**

#### **9.23 The relevance of Sri Aurobindo's essay in contemporary India:**

#### **9.24 Conclusion:**

**Key Points for Revision:**

**Assessment:**

**Multiple Choice Questions:**

**Answers :**

**Try yourself:**

**Work Cited:**

## 9.0 Unit Overview:

This unit explores Sri Aurobindo's profound insights on Indian culture and its encounter with external influences in his renowned essay, *Indian Culture and External Influence* from the collection *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays*. Through distance education materials, learners will engage in a comprehensive study of the essay, delving into its historical context, key themes, and Aurobindo's perspectives on the preservation and evolution of Indian culture. This unit aims to foster a deep appreciation for the richness of Indian culture and the significance of external influences in shaping its trajectory.

## 9.1 Objectives:

- Understand the historical context and significance of Sri Aurobindo's essay *Indian Culture and External Influence* within the collection *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays*.
- Analyse the key themes and arguments presented by Sri Aurobindo in the essay.
- Reflect on the role of external influences in shaping Indian culture and its encounter with colonialism and the Western Renaissance.
- Evaluate Sri Aurobindo's perspective on the preservation and evolution of Indian culture and the interplay between tradition and modernity.
- Develop a critical appreciation for the complexities and challenges of cultural preservation and evolution in contemporary Indian society.

## 9.2 Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- Gain an understanding of the historical context and importance of Sri Aurobindo's essay.
- Analyse the main themes and arguments that Sri Aurobindo presents in the essay.
- Reflect on how external factors have influenced the development of Indian culture.
- Evaluate Sri Aurobindo's views on how Indian culture should be maintained and allowed to evolve.
- Develop a critical understanding of how tradition and modernity interact in Indian society.

## 9.3 Introduction:

The concept of an introduction has been a fundamental part of literature and academia for a long time. An introduction serves as a preliminary explanation of a topic and aims to provide readers with a basic overview of the subject at hand. In the essay Sri Aurobindo's Essay *Indian Culture and External Influence* from *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays*, we are presented with the idea that Indian culture has faced many external influences over time. Through his writing, Sri Aurobindo argues that it is important to recognize these external influences and take measures to preserve Indian culture for

future generations. Sri Aurobindo's essay serves as a reminder that, despite the pressures of globalization and the homogenization of cultures, it is important to preserve the unique aspects of individual cultures to contribute to a more vibrant, diverse, and compassionate world.

#### **9.4 Life and Works of Sri Aurobindo:**

Sri Aurobindo was a prominent Indian philosopher, poet, and yogi who lived from 1872 to 1950. He was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in British India and received a Western-style education at Cambridge University in England. After returning to India, he became involved in the Indian independence movement and was a leader of a revolutionary group known as the Bengal Volunteers. He was imprisoned by the British authorities for his political activities but was eventually released and went into exile in Pondicherry, a French colony in southern India.

During his time in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo began to develop his unique approach to spirituality, which he called Integral Yoga. This approach emphasized the idea of spiritual evolution and the possibility of a higher consciousness beyond the ordinary human mind. Sri Aurobindo believed that the spiritual development of individuals and society was intimately connected with political and social change. He argued that true freedom and progress could only be achieved through a transformation of consciousness that would lead to a new way of being in the world.

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy drew on both Eastern and Western traditions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and modern science. He believed that all religions and cultures contained valuable insights into the nature of reality and that a synthesis of these different perspectives was necessary to achieve a more complete understanding of the world. In addition to his spiritual writings, Sri Aurobindo also wrote extensively on politics, culture, and literature. His works include *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and *The Future Poetry*. His ideas on culture and society were particularly influential in shaping the Indian nationalist movement and continue to be studied and debated today. Sri Aurobindo's life and work represent a unique synthesis of spirituality, politics, and culture that continues to inspire people around the world.

#### **9.5 Sri Aurobindo's views on Indian culture and external influence:**

Sri Aurobindo's views on Indian culture and external influence are heavily influenced by his belief in the uniqueness and superiority of Indian civilization. He argues that Indian culture has always been deeply rooted in spirituality and is consequently more profound and all-encompassing than other cultures. Moreover, he believes that the rich and diverse spiritual and philosophical traditions of India have endowed its people with a greater capacity for introspection and self-realization.

However, Sri Aurobindo also acknowledges that Indian culture has been subjected to various external influences throughout its history. He argues that while some of these influences have been beneficial, such as the introduction of Buddhism and Islam, others have been detrimental and have eroded the

purity and authenticity of Indian culture. Sri Aurobindo also recognizes that in modern times, Indian culture is increasingly influenced by the West, particularly in the areas of education, science, and technology. Nonetheless, he argues that India should not blindly adopt Western ways but should use its own unique cultural heritage as a foundation for the development of a new, more integrated global culture.

### **9.6 Background information on The Renaissance in India and other Essays:**

In addition to the impact of Western colonialism, the Renaissance in India was also a result of internal factors such as the intellectual awakening and cultural revival that emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sri Aurobindo's Essay *Indian Culture and External Influence*, which is part of the collection *The Renaissance in India and Other Essays*, offers deep insight into the relationship between Indian culture and external influences. According to Sri Aurobindo, the true Indian spirit is unconquerable and capable of sustaining the efflux of all foreign cultures. He believed that India's unique cultural heritage must be safeguarded against external influences, and that the task of the Indian intelligentsia was to rediscover and revitalize ancient Indian traditions.

Sri Aurobindo's ideas about cultural revival are significant, as they tend to reject the idea that colonialism had any positive impact on Indian society, culture, and tradition. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of self-reliance and cultural authenticity in the face of Western imperialism. Sri Aurobindo's essay is therefore an invaluable resource for scholars and students interested in understanding the relationship between external forces, cultural revival, and the role of intellectuals in shaping a nation's future.

Aurobindo argues that Indian culture is unique and complete, with all the necessary elements for spiritual elevation and social harmony. He believes that Indian culture is self-contained and self-sufficient, and therefore external influences can only dilute and corrupt its essence. According to him, the impact of foreign culture on India has been detrimental and has caused a loss of identity and ideals. He cites examples of how British colonization of India not only destroyed the political, economic, and social structures of India but also eroded indigenous culture. He also notes the pervasive influence of Western ideas and materials in India, which he believes has led to a distorted perspective on life and a loss of spiritual values.

Aurobindo stresses the importance of preserving and revitalizing Indian culture, not only for India but for the world, as he believes that it holds the key to lasting values and principles that can help humanity overcome the problems of the modern world. Overall, Aurobindo's essay underlines the significance of cultural preservation and autonomy, calling for a deeper understanding of India's rich heritage and its potential for spiritual evolution.

### **9.7 Significance of Indian culture:**

The significance of Indian culture is reflected in its focus on the spiritual and philosophical aspects of life, and in its impact on literature and the arts. India

has a rich history of kings and emperors who supported education and learning, leading to the creation of numerous universities across the country. The knowledge passed down from ancient times has embedded in it the belief in the existence of a higher power, the importance of meditation and self-reflection, and the ability to live in harmony with nature. It is this sense of spirituality that separates Indian culture from others and has led to its persistence and evolution despite the influence of foreign cultures.

This spiritual and philosophical perspective is evident in India's literature, such as the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and its art forms, including music, dance, and sculpture. Indian classical dance, for example, is rooted in the belief that art is a way to connect with the divine. The significance of Indian culture can therefore be seen through its impact on the world of art and literature, while also contributing to the global populace's general understanding of spirituality and philosophy.

### **9.8 The diversity of Indian culture:**

The diversity of Indian culture is awe-inspiring, from its various religions to its languages, art, music, food, and traditions. Each state, region, and city has its own unique set of customs, beliefs, and practices that form the intricate tapestry that is Indian culture. The impact of external influences, such as the British Empire and the Mughal civilization, has certainly shaped India's cultural landscape over the years. However, the essence of Indian culture remains intact and continues to evolve with time.

The significance of family ties, hospitality towards guests, and the value placed on education, knowledge, and spirituality are some of the fundamental aspects of Indian culture that have remained unchanged for centuries. The inclusion of a multitude of religions and their respective practices and festivals further showcases the diversity of Indian culture. The intricate and colorful clothing, jewelry, and artwork found across India also reflect the different regions' cultural influences. Overall, the diversity of Indian culture is a testament to the country's rich history and allows for the celebration of uniqueness and individuality while maintaining a strong sense of unity and community.

### **9.9 It's contribution to spirituality, philosophy, and literature:**

In addition to his political and social views, Sri Aurobindo also made significant contributions to spirituality, philosophy, and literature. In terms of spirituality, Sri Aurobindo introduced the concept of integral yoga, which emphasizes the importance of spiritual growth in all aspects of life and aims to bring together all aspects of human nature, including the physical, vital, and mental. This approach has greatly influenced spiritual practices and beliefs in India and around the world.

In philosophy, Sri Aurobindo promoted a synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophical traditions, which he believed would lead to a more comprehensive understanding of reality. This approach has influenced the work of many contemporary philosophers. Sri Aurobindo was also a prolific writer, producing works of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction that integrated his

spiritual and philosophical beliefs. His writings have been widely studied and admired for their insight and literary quality. Overall, Sri Aurobindo's contributions to spirituality, philosophy, and literature have had a profound impact on Indian culture and the world at large, inspiring generations of thinkers and writers.

#### **9.10 The need to preserve Indian culture:**

Preserving Indian culture is not only important for the nation's identity but also for global cultural diversity. India has a rich cultural heritage that spans over 5000 years, including art, music, literature, and philosophy. The country's culture has always been bound to its deep-rooted traditions and values that have shaped people's way of life and thinking.

With globalization and the influence of Western culture, there has been a gradual erosion of traditional Indian cultural values, customs, and practices. However, Sri Aurobindo stresses that Indian culture should not be viewed as backward or outdated, but rather as a living culture that has the potential to adapt and evolve in a world that is constantly changing. By preserving Indian culture, the nation can promote cultural diversity and help people worldwide appreciate the richness of a unique civilization. Preserving Indian culture is, therefore, not an act of nostalgia or sentimentalism, but a necessity to remain rooted in one's traditions while engaging with the rest of the world. It is an act of safeguarding one's identity and promoting a global cultural mosaic that is inclusive and respectful of diverse cultures.

Sri Aurobindo argues that Indian culture, despite external influences, retains its essential qualities and can adapt and evolve while maintaining its own unique identity. He asserts that the transformative and assimilative nature of Indian culture has allowed it to absorb foreign ideas and create new forms without losing its intrinsic value. Furthermore, he believes that Indian culture is not static, but has the potential for constant growth and development, which will enable it to face the challenges of the modern world.

Sri Aurobindo warns against a blind rejection of external influences but calls for a conscious assimilation of what is useful and compatible with the Indian spirit. He believes that by embracing the universal and rejecting what is harmful or incompatible, India can reclaim its beauty and power and become a leader in the world community. Sri Aurobindo's vision of India is both optimistic and realistic, and his insights into the nature of Indian culture are still relevant and inspiring today.

#### **9.11 External influence on Indian culture:**

The impacts of external influence on Indian culture have been immense and varied in nature. Whether it was the (often-debated) invasion of the Aryans, or the arrivals and incursions of the Greeks, the Turks, the Persians, the Portuguese, the Dutch, or the British, each of these groups left their mark on Indian culture, whether through religion, art, language, or social norms.

For example, the influence of Islam on Indian culture is widely evident in Mughal architecture, music, literature, and even cuisine. Similarly, British colonization of India impacted Indian society in numerous ways, including the



introduction of a new education system, legal system, and communication infrastructure. This external influence has resulted in a unique blend of different cultural traditions and practices that have evolved over time and continue to shape Indian culture today. However, there has also been significant push-back by Indian leaders, such as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, who believed that India needed to reclaim its cultural heritage and identity. Despite external influence, Indian culture remains vibrant and continues to evolve, with each generation adding new layers to this complex and rich cultural tapestry.

#### **9.12 Historical accounts of foreign invasions and colonization in India:**

India has witnessed numerous foreign invasions and colonization in its history. The Greeks, the Scythians, the Huns, the Turks, the Mughals, the Portuguese, the British, and others all invaded and colonized India at various times. The invasions and colonization had a profound impact on Indian culture and society. The foreign invaders and colonizers brought with them their own traditions, beliefs, customs, languages, and religions, which deeply influenced the Indian way of life.

India, however, did not passively accept foreign influences but rather strenuously resisted them, assimilated them, and transformed them into something uniquely Indian. The Indian response to foreign influence showed remarkable resilience, creativity, and adaptability. The invasions and colonization had both positive and negative consequences for India. The negative consequences, such as the destruction of Indian monuments and scriptures, the exploitation of resources, and the subjugation of the Indian people, are well documented. The positive consequences, such as the enrichment of Indian culture, the expansion of trade, and the rise of new dynasties, are often overlooked.

#### **9.13 The impact of Western education and modernization on Indian culture:**

The impact of Western education and modernization on Indian culture has been significant over the years. Sri Aurobindo notes that while it has brought positive changes in areas such as science and technology, it has also created a divide between traditional and modern worldviews. The adoption of Western education has led to the neglect of traditional knowledge and practices, causing a loss of Indian cultural heritage.

Furthermore, as he argues, this influence has also distorted the Indian sense of values, leading to the imposition of Western ideals and lifestyles on the Indian population. This has led to a disconnect in the Indian way of life, resulting in the rejection of traditional practices. While some may argue that modernization has brought economic gains, Sri Aurobindo highlights that it has resulted in a loss of moral and spiritual stability. Therefore, Aurobindo suggests that the solution is not to reject modernization or Western education, but to combine it with traditional Vedic knowledge that will lead to an integrated view of the world. This, he argues, will not only preserve but also enrich Indian culture in the face of external influence.

#### **9.14 The potential threat of cultural imperialism:**

The potential threat of cultural imperialism cannot be ignored. It is the responsibility of every nation to protect its unique culture from being influenced and dominated by external forces. As Sri Aurobindo points out, true progress and development can only be achieved by maintaining the integrity and authenticity of one's own culture. It is important to embrace diversity and learn from other cultures, but not at the cost of losing one's own identity.

The dominance of one culture over another breeds inequality and creates a power imbalance, which could ultimately lead to conflicts and tensions. Therefore, it is essential for all nations to safeguard their cultural heritage, while also promoting cultural exchange and understanding on equal footing. This requires a conscious effort to resist the homogenizing effects of globalization and maintain a balance between tradition and modernity. Ultimately, the preservation of cultural diversity is not only a matter of pride but also a matter of survival and sustainability.

The culture of India is unique and vast, and it has been preserved through centuries of external influence. In his essay, Sri Aurobindo argues that Indian culture has not only survived foreign conquests but has also absorbed external ideas and enriched itself. The intricate religious practices and rituals, the art forms, the clothing styles, and the languages spoken are all distinct to India and have remained so despite centuries of interaction with various cultures. Aurobindo believed that Indian culture was not static, and that it had the vitality to metamorphose and incorporate new ideas.

This acceptance of external influence was not passive; rather, it was a conscious assimilation that also enabled India to influence the cultures with which it interacted. However, this assimilation did not always come about with perfect ease. Aurobindo acknowledges that India has undergone a tumultuous history, but despite this, India has managed to preserve its culture. Furthermore, openness to new ideas and the ability to appreciate and assimilate them made Indian culture a thriving one. The cross-fertilization of ideas is evident in the historical development of the nation, and we can see the richness and diversity of Indian culture reflected in modern-day India and the Indian diaspora.

#### **9.15 Sri Aurobindo's perspective on Indian culture and external influence:**

In Sri Aurobindo's perspective, Indian culture is not a static entity, but rather a dynamic and constantly evolving system that has been influenced by both internal and external factors throughout its history. He believes that while external influences may have played a role in shaping Indian culture, the core values and traditions that make it distinct are rooted in its own historical and societal context.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the challenge for Indians is to keep these traditional values alive while also embracing new ideas and technologies from the outside world. He recognizes that Indian culture has the capacity to absorb

and assimilate external influences without losing its essence and argues that this is key to India's continued growth and development. Thus, his perspective on Indian culture and external influence is a progressive one that emphasizes the importance of adapting to changing circumstances while maintaining a strong sense of cultural identity and heritage.

#### **9.16 His belief in the evolution of Indian culture:**

Sri Aurobindo staunchly believed that Indian culture was not static but was a living and evolving entity. He viewed India as a civilization capable of absorbing external influences while retaining its unique identity and cultural heritage. In his essay *Indian Culture and External Influence*, Sri Aurobindo states that the "genius" of Indian culture is its ability to assimilate "foreign elements" without losing its own essence.

He believed that the encounter with external forces was an opportunity for India to renew and reinvigorate itself, rather than a threat to its identity. Sri Aurobindo believed India had always been a dynamic culture that had been constantly evolving and adapting itself over the centuries. He emphasized this view by pointing out that India had multiple foreign nations invade it, from the Huns to the British, yet despite this, it had always emerged stronger and more vibrant. According to Sri Aurobindo, the key to India's cultural evolution was its openness to new ideas and its ability to incorporate them into its own cultural fabric in a seamless way.

#### **9.17 The need for selective borrowing and adaptation of Western ideas:**

Aurobindo argues that the selective borrowing and adaptation of Western ideas is necessary for the preservation and growth of Indian culture. He contends that by blindly adopting Western ideals, values, and institutions, India risks losing its unique identity and cultural heritage. Instead, he suggests that India should critically evaluate and selectively adopt Western ideas that align with Indian values and traditions.

This selective borrowing and adaptation should not be limited to cultural aspects only, but should also extend to Western science and technology. Aurobindo believes that India can benefit greatly from Western scientific and technological advancements, but should approach these areas with caution and integrate them into indigenous knowledge systems. In this way, India can maintain its cultural roots while embracing the positive aspects of external influences. Therefore, Aurobindo emphasizes the need for a careful balance between internal and external influences, which will enable India to progress while safeguarding its unique cultural identity.

#### **9.18 The importance of preserving traditional Indian values and beliefs**

One of the primary issues facing modern India is the conflict between preserving traditional Indian values and beliefs and adopting Western values and cultural practices. Sri Aurobindo maintains that India must carefully navigate this issue in order to maintain its cultural identity and uniqueness. Aurobindo argues that the preservation of traditional Indian values and beliefs

is of utmost importance, as they are integral to the spiritual and cultural heritage of the nation.

He suggests that Western influence can undercut these values, leading to a loss of national identity and cultural coherence. Aurobindo emphasizes the importance of respecting this cultural legacy and building upon it, rather than discarding it in favor of Western values. He argues that this requires a deep understanding of the history and philosophy underlying traditional Indian values, as well as a willingness to incorporate new ideas and practices in a way that preserves and enhances the ancient cultural traditions of the country. Ultimately, Aurobindo sees the preservation of traditional Indian values as an essential ingredient in the development of a healthy, vibrant, and culturally rich society.

Sri Aurobindo argues that Indian culture has been transformed by external influences throughout its history but has remained intact because of its ability to absorb and integrate these influences. He believes that the essence of Indian culture lies in its spiritual and philosophical traditions, which have withstood the test of time and foreign invasions. Aurobindo argues that the impact of external influences, such as those of the Greeks, Huns, and Muslims, have brought significant changes to Indian culture, including in the realms of art, literature, and religion. However, these influences have also been assimilated into the Indian way of life, contributing to the diversity and richness of Indian cultural heritage.

Aurobindo asserts that India has always been open to external ideas and has continuously incorporated them into its ancient civilization, which is characterized by its inclusiveness and resilience. Thus, he concludes that while Indian culture has been shaped by external forces, it remains fundamentally Indian, and it is the Indian people themselves who have preserved and revitalized it over time.

### **9.19 Application of Sri Aurobindo's views in modern India:**

Sri Aurobindo's views have been applied in modern India in various ways. Perhaps the most significant of these is the incorporation of yoga and meditation into everyday life. Aurobindo believed that these practices could help individuals move towards a higher level of consciousness and connect more deeply with their inner selves. This belief has led to the proliferation of yoga studios and meditation centers across the country in recent years.

Additionally, Aurobindo's ideas about national unity and cultural pride have influenced many politicians and activists who seek to promote the preservation and celebration of India's unique identity in the face of globalization. Aurobindo's emphasis on the value of education and the importance of self-discovery has also had a significant impact on India's higher education system, inspiring many institutions to offer curricula that encourage students to explore their own identities and learn to think for themselves. While there is certainly still work to be done in fully realizing Aurobindo's vision for India, his ideas have had a lasting and positive impact on the country's cultural and intellectual landscape.

### **9.20 Challenges in maintaining the balance between tradition and modernization:**

One of the primary challenges in maintaining the balance between tradition and modernization is the fear of losing cultural identity. As societies and cultures evolve, younger generations often value modernization over preserving traditional practices. In such instances, older generations and traditionalists often feel that their values and beliefs are being challenged by new ways of life. This leads to a conflict between preserving cultural traditions and adapting to changing times in order to survive.

The challenge of balancing tradition and modernization is further compounded by external influences, such as invasion and colonization, which can drastically alter a society's traditional practices. In such situations, it becomes a daunting task to uphold the values and beliefs that have been the foundation of a culture for centuries. Thus, preserving tradition in a rapidly changing world requires a delicate balance between adapting to change and holding on to what is familiar. It is only through such a balance that a culture can maintain its identity, evolve with time, and still maintain its uniqueness.

### **9.21 The role of education in preserving Indian culture:**

Education plays a key role in preserving Indian culture, as it helps to ensure that future generations are aware of and connected to their unique heritage. According to Sri Aurobindo, Indian culture has been influenced by, or subjected to, external forces throughout its history, and as such, it is imperative to teach children the value of their culture to ensure that it is not lost.

Education can help to instill a sense of pride in one's heritage, as well as an understanding of its importance to the larger world. It can also help to foster a critical analysis of outside influences and how they may impact Indian culture, so that individuals can make informed decisions about how to engage with them. Additionally, education can facilitate the transmission of cultural practices and traditions from one generation to the next, ensuring that they are not lost or forgotten. By prioritizing education in the preservation of Indian culture, society can work to preserve and celebrate its rich history for years to come.

### **9.22 The need for a holistic approach to development that promotes cultural diversity:**

As demonstrated by Sri Aurobindo in his essay *Indian Culture and External Influence*, the need for a holistic approach to development that promotes cultural diversity is crucial in maintaining a thriving society. Cultural diversity not only allows for the preservation of traditions and unique perspectives but also fosters an environment for innovation and progress. However, this approach must be holistic, considering the interconnectedness of various aspects of society. Development cannot be solely focused on economic growth, but must consider social and environmental factors as well.

Additionally, cultural diversity cannot be achieved without addressing systemic issues such as inequality and discrimination. It is important to

recognize the value of all cultures, not just those that are dominant or have been historically privileged. This requires active efforts to promote cultural education, awareness, and acceptance. A holistic approach to development that promotes cultural diversity allows for a more inclusive and equitable society, ultimately leading to a stronger and more sustainable future.

Sri Aurobindo contends that India's cultural heritage is built on the foundations of spirituality and the pursuit of truth. He argues that this heritage has been severely undermined by the intrusion of external influences in the form of colonialism, Westernization, and modernization. He points out that these foreign influences have eroded the Indian people's traditional values, beliefs, and customs, which are rooted in the country's ancient spiritual and philosophical traditions. Consequently, Aurobindo believes that it is essential for India to reclaim its cultural heritage and revive its vibrant spiritual traditions.

He argues that this can only be achieved by rejecting Western influences and embracing traditional Indian values, which emphasize the importance of inner growth, self-discovery, and the cultivation of a higher consciousness. Overall, Aurobindo's essay highlights the critical need for India to cherish and preserve its cultural heritage, which is a testament to India's rich spiritual legacy and a source of inspiration for future generations.

### **9.23 The relevance of Sri Aurobindo's essay in contemporary India:**

In contemporary India, the ideas presented in Sri Aurobindo's essay regarding the preservation and revitalization of Indian culture hold great relevance. As India continues to rapidly modernize and globalize, maintaining a strong cultural identity becomes increasingly important. Sri Aurobindo's call for a return to traditional Indian values, coupled with an openness to new ideas and influences, provides a framework for a modern Indian society that is both firmly rooted in its past and able to adapt to the future.

Additionally, Sri Aurobindo's emphasis on individual spiritual development has particular resonance in contemporary India, where people are seeking deeper meanings and values beyond mere materialism. His ideas on the importance of education, science, and spirituality can guide the development of a sustainable and equitable society in India. Ultimately, Sri Aurobindo's essay reminds us that cultural identity is not something to be preserved in isolation, but rather something that can grow and thrive through engagement with the wider world, making it an essential text for contemporary India.

### **9.24 Conclusion:**

Sri Aurobindo provides a thorough analysis of the impact of external influences on Indian culture. He acknowledges multiple external influences, including Islamic, British, and American, that have affected Indian culture. However, he argues that despite these influences, Indian culture remains unique and has managed to preserve its inherent values.

Aurobindo's emphasis on India's ability to absorb and transform external influences into its own culture reflects his idea of the evolution of consciousness. He believes that Indian civilization has the potential to evolve

and flourish in the future. Aurobindo's arguments reflect his deep love and admiration for Indian culture. He recognizes that Indian civilization has had a profound impact on the world and has already played a significant role in shaping global spiritual consciousness. However, he also acknowledges that India has to overcome various challenges and obstacles to maintain its independence and protect its cultural identity. His insights into Indian culture and its relationship with external influences provide valuable perspectives for scholars, policymakers, and individuals interested in understanding India's unique cultural identity.

**Key Points for Revision:**

- Sri Aurobindo's essay discusses the external influences on Indian culture and the importance of preserving it.
  - He believed that spiritual development was connected to political and social changes.
  - His philosophy drew on Eastern and Western traditions and emphasized the need for synthesis.
  - India has experienced numerous foreign invasions and colonization throughout its history.
  - The invaders brought their own traditions, beliefs, customs, languages, and religions.
  - India resisted foreign influence but also assimilated and transformed it into something uniquely Indian.
  - The invasions and colonization had both positive and negative consequences for India.
  - Western education and modernization had a significant impact on Indian society.
  - The British introduced a new education system, legal system, and communication infrastructure.
  - This impact has resulted in a unique blend of different cultural traditions and practices that continue to shape Indian culture today.
- The impact of Western education and modernization had both positive and negative consequences for India.

**Assessment:**

Answer in brief:

1. What is the main argument of Sri Aurobindo's essay *Indian Culture and External Influence*?
2. According to Sri Aurobindo, what is the impact of external influences on Indian culture?
3. What is the role of the Western education system in shaping Indian culture, according to Sri Aurobindo?
4. How does Sri Aurobindo view the relationship between Indian culture and spirituality?
5. What is the significance of the "Renaissance in India," as described by Sri Aurobindo?

Answers:

1. Sri Aurobindo argues that Indian culture is unique and self-sufficient, and that external influences have historically been unable to significantly alter its essential character.
2. Sri Aurobindo contends that while external influences have had some impact on Indian culture, they have not fundamentally altered its underlying spiritual and philosophical foundations.
3. Sri Aurobindo criticizes the Western education system for promoting a materialistic worldview that is incompatible with traditional Indian values and spirituality.
4. Sri Aurobindo views Indian culture as inherently spiritual, with its philosophy and practices designed to lead individuals towards a higher consciousness and union with the divine.
5. The Renaissance in India represents a resurgence of interest in traditional Indian culture and spirituality, as well as a rejection of Western materialism and colonialism.

### Multiple Choice Questions:

1. What is the main argument of Sri Aurobindo's essay *Indian Culture and External Influence*?
  - A. Indian culture is inferior to Western culture
  - B. Indian culture is self-sufficient and unaffected by external influences
  - C. External influences have fundamentally altered Indian culture
  - D. Indian culture is only valuable insofar as it aligns with Western values
2. How does Sri Aurobindo view the relationship between Indian culture and spirituality?
  - A. He sees them as separate and distinct from one another
  - B. He views Indian culture as inherently spiritual
  - C. He believes that Indian culture has lost its spiritual foundation
  - D. He thinks that spirituality should be removed from Indian culture entirely
3. What is the role of the Western education system in shaping Indian culture, according to Sri Aurobindo?
  - A. It has helped to preserve traditional Indian values
  - B. It has had no impact on Indian culture
  - C. It has promoted a materialistic worldview that is incompatible with traditional Indian values and spirituality
  - D. It has encouraged a deeper exploration of Indian spirituality
4. What is the significance of the "Renaissance in India," as described by Sri Aurobindo?
  - A. It represents a rejection of traditional Indian culture
  - B. It marks the beginning of Western influence on India
  - C. It represents a resurgence of interest in traditional Indian culture and



spirituality

D. It has no significance

5. According to Sri Aurobindo, what is the impact of external influences on Indian culture?
  - A. They have fundamentally altered its underlying spiritual and philosophical foundations
  - B. They have had no impact on Indian culture
  - C. They have made Indian culture more materialistic
  - D. They have strengthened traditional Indian values
6. What is Sri Aurobindo's view on the relationship between Indian culture and external influence?
  - A. External influences have had a significant impact on Indian culture
  - B. Indian culture is self-sufficient and immune to external influence
  - C. External influences have only impacted superficial aspects of Indian culture
  - D. Indian culture is inferior to Western culture
7. How does Sri Aurobindo view the Western education system?
  - A. He believes it has helped to preserve traditional Indian values
  - B. He views it as fundamentally incompatible with traditional Indian values and spirituality
  - C. He thinks it has encouraged a deeper exploration of Indian spirituality
  - D. He sees it as having no impact on Indian culture
8. What is the main focus of the "Renaissance in India," according to Sri Aurobindo?
  - A. Rejection of traditional Indian culture
  - B. Embracing Western values and traditions
  - C. Rediscovering traditional Indian culture and spirituality
  - D. Promoting materialism in India
9. How does Sri Aurobindo view the spiritual foundation of Indian culture?
  - A. He believes it has been lost over time
  - B. He sees it as inherently spiritual, with practices designed to lead individuals towards a higher consciousness and union with the divine
  - C. He thinks it is incompatible with modern life
  - D. He believes it should be removed from Indian culture entirely
10. What is Sri Aurobindo's view on the impact of external influences on traditional Indian values?
  - A. They have strengthened traditional Indian values
  - B. They have had no impact on traditional Indian values
  - C. They have fundamentally altered traditional Indian values
  - D. They have only impacted superficial aspects of traditional Indian values

**Answers :**

1. B
2. B
3. C
4. C
5. C
6. A
7. D
8. B
9. A
10. D

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## Unit 10

## K. S. Venkataramani's 'Indumati'

### 10.0 Objectives

#### 10.1 Introduction

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### 10.0 Objectives:

Undertaking a study of this unit, you will be able to:

- Appreciate the contribution of K. S. Venkataramani to Indian English writing;
- Analyse the various influences on K. S. Venkataramani;
- Understand the important works and writing style of the author;
- Evaluate the story "Indumati";
- Understand the historical significance of the story "Indumati".

### 10.1 Introduction:

The rise and bloom of Indian Writing in English is accredited to the three pioneering legends, namely, R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Raja Rao. These created fiction using Gandhian ideologies and contributed to the popularity of Indian English fiction in the 1930s. This unit, however, intends to bring to light a writer who preceded the above-stated writers. He has been one of the earliest powerful voices emerging from South India, K. S. Venkataramani. Though references to K. S. Venkataramani in histories and literatures of Indian English are often brief, critics agree on his significance as one of the first novelists writing in English, combining the representation of southern village and Gandhian philosophy. K. S. Venkataramani was the second person in India to write a novel in English (the first one was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who wrote *Rajmohan's Wife* in 1864), says researcher Arvind Swaminathan.

Let us have a glimpse of K. S. Venkataramani's life and understand the influences of various personalities and ideologies in his life.

### **10.2 Life of K. S. Venkataramani:**

Kaveripattinam Siddhanatha Venkataramani (1891–1952) was born in Kaveripattinam town in Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu. Kaveripattinam is celebrated in classic Tamil literature as an ancient port. His father Siddhanatha Iyer was a well-to-do landlord in Tanjore district; his family had lived in the region for generations, and his ancestors had served as ministers in the court of the Tanjore Maratha kings. Venkataramani had his schooling at the National High School, Mayavaram, and graduated with English literature from the Madras Christian College. He then studied law at the Presidency College, Madras. In his early career, Venkataramani took an internship under the legal supremo Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer. He later settled in the suburb of Mylapore, where he built a profession as a lawyer.

K. S. Venkataramani was also a spiritual seeker. Inspired by Annie Besant's principles, he joined the Theosophical Society. Annie Besant also wrote the foreword to his book *Paper Boats*. Further, Paul Brunton, a British author known as one of the early popularizers of Neo-Hindu spiritualism, met with Venkataramani during his travels in India; and this incident finds mention in his well-received and most translated book *A Search in Secret India* (1934). Venkataramani met Rabindranath Tagore in 1928 at Shantiniketan, where the latter advised him to write in his mother tongue, as a result of which Venkataramani founded a magazine in Tamil, a weekly titled *Tamil Ulagu*.

Later, K. S. Venkataramani joined the Congress party to work as a Gandhian supporter. He was involved in Gandhi's rural development schemes. Venkataramani has rightly stated in his work *The Indian Village*: "The Indian village is a national asset, and it is the first duty of nascent India to revitalize the hundreds of Indian villages by reviving its old agencies which rendered the Indian village a little paradise on earth." He founded an ashram "Markandeya" in Thirukkadaiyur for the development of villages. Much of his life was dedicated to the upliftment of rural areas, as he worked as a Rural Development Adviser to the Maharaja of Alwar. It was during his tenure as a Rural Development Adviser that he contracted tuberculosis, and his health was affected throughout his life. Venkataramani succumbed to the disease in March 1952 at the age of 64.

Today, he is known as an Indian lawyer and an acclaimed Tamil writer in English, who wrote mainly on South Indian rural life and the Indian independence movement. N. S. Ramaswami, an established editor of *The Hindu*, *Mail*, and *Indian Express*, well-versed with subjects like history, social commentary, temple architecture, and sports, has written widely on the history and culture of Tanjore and Madras; and has also written a biography entitled *K. S. Venkataramani* (1988) celebrating the author.

With this backdrop of Venkataramani's life, we shall now proceed to know the oeuvre of his works.

### **10.3 Oeuvre of K. S. Venkataramani:**

K. S. Venkataramani is best known for his two novels, *Murugan the Tiller* (1927) and *Kandan the Patriot* (1932).

*Murugan the Tiller* is a seminal work because it is the first novel by an Indian writer in English to feature a Gandhi-like hero. While the hero of Premchand's Hindi novel *Premashram* (1922) originated the idea that social change could be achieved by individual sacrifice, *Murugan the Tiller* was the first novel to introduce a Gandhi-inspired figure to Indian English literature. This novel served as a precursor to R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and Mulk Raj Anand, who later discovered fictional possibilities of Gandhian thought. This novel is idealistic and provides a utopian vision, in which land is allotted to each farmer-tiller.

Venkataramani wrote the novel *Desabhakthan Kandan* and translated it into English himself, under the title *Kandan the Patriot* (1932). *Kandan the Patriot* was published during the Civil Disobedience Movement; it represents the ideas of Gandhi for a political movement. The titular hero, Kandan, embodies ideologies of Gandhi. He is a social activist who works among the village of Akkur, distributing spinning wheels and homespun cloth and trying to persuade the labourers to discard toddy. The novel ends with a rally in which ten thousand people have gathered between the Old Danish fort and the sea; the police open fire on the crowd, fatally wounding Kandan. All the main characters of the novel are jailed, but the mood is hopeful, as they have all converted to Gandhian thought. The novel ends with a hope of dawn for the young patriots.

Apart from these two prominent novels, Venkataramani's earliest book was *Paper Boats* (1921), a collection of prose poems depicting sketches of southern village life. His second book *Sand-Dunes* (1923) also portrays rural life. *A Day with Sambhu* (1929) focuses on the life of a schoolboy, thereby reflecting on the philosophy of tender boyhood. Among the stated ones, he has a few non-fiction works to his credit. His two-part work, *The Next Rung* (1928), discusses the issues of Swaraj India; it received excellent reviews from Tagore, regarding the originality of thought and expression.

At Madras Christian College hostel there was a group of friends consisting of Venkataramani known as "The Olympians". They were famous for philosophical discussions among themselves. There was a young boy named N. Raghunathan who later became an author and editor of *The Hindu*; he even wrote a foreword to *Jatadharan and Other Stories*. Venkataramani, during his years at Madras Christian College, wrote a series of sketches on village life and the Indian freedom movement; along with N. Raghunathan he got them published in newspapers, which was later published as an anthology entitled *Jatadharan and Other Stories* (1932).

Originally, *Jatadharan Mudhaliye Kadhaigal* (*Jatadharan and Other Stories*) is dedicated to Manjeri S. Isavaran. It consists of nine stories, namely: "Indumati", "Jatadharan, the Pial Teacher", "Jatadharan's Marriage", "In Quest of Power", "Collision", "Destiny", "The Bride Waits", "A Fractured Arm", and "Illumination". In the preface, Venkataramani states that some of the stories date from as early as 1915, first appearing in journals and newspapers like *The Hindu* and *The Madras Mail*.

Let us now proceed further to have a glance of K. S. Venkataramani's style of writing, evident in his anthology *Jatadharan and Other Stories*.

#### 10.4 Writing Style of K. S. Venkataramani:

In the foreword to *Jatadharan and Other Stories*, N. Raghunathan comments on the vivid style of Venkataramani's sketches emerging from his stories. Venkataramani belongs to the class of writers for whom themes of early youth have a consistent fascination, states Raghunathan. Venkataramani warns the reader that he has incorporated a didactic approach in all the tales and therefore claims in the preface: "these are sketches rather than short stories, more like wild creepers on jungle growth." The anthology celebrates the Gandhian creed of non-violence and his denunciation of modern civilization. The characters in this anthology are not stereotypical in nature, but individuals which are crafted with detail that fix in the readers' memory. Venkataramani's language is essentially lyrical; stylized dialogues, conventional situations, gentle humour, and sparkle of irony are all instances of verisimilitude. His similes reveal oneness of things, adding more to the story than just revealing the themes.

Some of the chance similes from this anthology are: "In those spacious days the Salt and Abkari departments went together like sisters on a festive occasion." Kittu, a character in one of the stories, viewed marriage "with a palpitating heart as a tiger would a torch-light in the deep glades of the forest." Of Jatadharan greeting his mother: "the boy stood erect with lowered eye-lids like a pilgrim in worship before the tribal shrine", or for instance, "she stood lovely, gazing at her father, like a pomegranate in its ripening hour". These similes are unique, as formal descriptions are illuminated with more earthy and natural elements. As an Indian writer writing of Indian scenes in English, he is balancing the native and alien milieu.

At this juncture, let us now understand the story "Indumati". Since the explanation or summary of this lesser known and discussed story of Venkataramani is not available, here, a detailed story-line is provided for your in-depth understanding of it.

#### 10.5 "Indumati" – Synopsis:

"Indumati", before it was included as one of the stories in the anthology *Jatadharan and Other Stories* (1932), first appeared in the Literary Journal. It was one of the early writings of Venkataramani, around the year 1915. The story is written in five sections.

The story "Indumati" is set in pre-independence India, in the backdrop of French and British invasions occurring in the South of India. It is monsoon season, a night of thunderstorm and torrents of incessant rain, in a town of Tamil Nadu named Wandiwash (Vandavasi). The town is enraptured in the beauty of nature. In the middle of this thick natural foliage is situated the historic Fort of Wandiwash. The Palar River is flowing with the magnificence of an ocean as a result of torrential rains. The flowing river, windstorm, lightning, incessant patter of rain, are only adding to the wildness of the place. In the ancient fort of Wandiwash, near a window, is a young girl Indumati, in a reverie of fear and hope. She sees a dream of an Englishman escaping the cavalry, approaches the fort and knocks at the gates to seek shelter in the fort.

At the same moment, she is awakened from her reverie, as she hears the real knock on the gates of the fort. She opens the door to a stranger, an Englishman “looking more like a messenger of the elements raging outside.” The encounter of the Englishman and Indumati is fairy-like, as both are caught in the sweet pleasure of witnessing a living soul in the most unlikely hour and place.

Upon several primary questions, the Englishman comes to know that the fort belongs to the dacoit-chief Kambli Naik, a notorious, cruel man, the one who is known to never spare the Britishers. Kambli Naik is on an expedition since a week, with his troop, in support of Tippu Sultan, to seize the brave ‘Blint’ Saheb (Lieutenant Colonel Flint) of British race. Indumati also shares with him that a dungeon is all set in the fort, to keep ‘Blint’ Saheb a captive for life. Lt. Col. Flint is regarded among Indians and the British as a brave and noble person of repute, and it is unfortunate that his life is at risk. Indumati prays that he must escape for his life.

Upon further prodding from the Englishman, Indumati reveals that she herself “belongs to the house just like a caged parrot belongs to the cage”. Years ago, Indumati’s father, Gopal Naik, supported Lt. Col. Flint in the wars. With the turn of events, her father was defeated and Indumati was captivated by Naik. Though the fort belongs to Indumati’s father, she is no more than a prisoner in the fort. Though she lives with Naik, a tyrant, a girl of strength and character, Indumati knows how “to keep the tyrant at bay”. Indumati has grown up listening to the stories of Lt. Col. Flint’s adventures, his daring exploits, and his benevolent, kind nature of helping his friends at all costs.

At this juncture, Indumati also reveals the dream she saw, how the knock in the dream and the real knock of the arrival of the Englishman are prophetic in nature. Indumati is joyous with the dream, anticipating meeting Lt. Col. Flint in person.

On the other hand, when Indumati asks about the Englishman, he states that he is an unhappy and homeless Englishman, “an adventurer who fought and failed”. Indumati further confesses that the fort of Wandiwash may soon be razed to the ground, as the Company has sent a troop to destroy this fort, which not only belongs to Kambli Naik who is Tippu Sultan’s supporter and an enemy of the British, but also because the fort is an obstacle on the highway to Wandiwash and Ginjee. At this juncture, with the revelations made by Indumati, the Englishman is overwhelmed with tears. Nervously, he proclaims to Indumati: “My life is in your hand. My honour I entrust to your scheming head. I must cross the river or fling myself into it . . . let it not be said of an Englishman that he was cornered and killed like a rat.”

The story progresses to an episode where the noble girl Indumati and the Englishman are on the brink of the mighty flowing river. She offers him a catamaran made of the light stems of the banana, and a plank of wood for an oar—she wishes the Englishman goodbye and godspeed. The Englishman retreats stating he will not leave Indumati behind, for she is the one who has saved his life. Indumati responds calmly: “Don’t be anxious on my account sir. The Lord above judges well. In the fullness of time my day of release will

come”. The Englishman is determined to save Indumati and refuses to go alone.

Meanwhile, as the Englishman hears the sudden crash of the fort’s gates, shouts and approaching footsteps of invaders, adding to the scenario are nature’s raging elements, due to which Indumati is slowly passing into a state of unconsciousness, he quickly carries Indumati on the catamaran and pushes the floater into the swift-flowing stream. They both escape in the darkness, floating in the magnificent river.

After three days’ complete absence of sunshine, at last came the twilight of dawn. To both Indumati and the Englishman it was also the twilight of their lives. They were accommodated in one of the small houses of the village of Amalapuram. It is at this juncture that the Englishman reveals his true identity to Indumati stating: “Indumati, your dream is indeed prophetic. I am ‘Blint’ Saheb”. In this moment of unspoken bond of respect and dignity, both the individuals consider the other as the saviour of their life.

Lt. Col. Flint, who is addressed by Indumati as ‘Blint’ Saheb, further reveals that he is indebted to her father Gopal Naik too, as “he lost his life fighting with me on the field of battle . . . and in his dying hour he committed you to my care”. Lt. Col. Flint searched for Indumati in vain but could not trace her, as her house was looted by Kambli Naik. Both Indumati and Lt. Col. Flint were amazed at the coincidence and their fates. Indumati further prays to Lt. Col. Flint, “restore me to my husband and God will requite you”. Lt. Col. Flint learns that she got married when she was a nine-year-old girl.

He was lost in thoughts for a long time, reawakening with a new zest and energy. Pacing to and fro, he states that if God grants him strength, he will kill Kambli Naik, the dacoit-chief, and he will restore Indumati to her husband as well. He confesses his love for Indumati stating: “But I can never live without you. You are a ministering angel unto me. I love you with the love of a brother, nay the love of a father.”

The story then progresses to a few days later, where these unfortunate events take a fortunate turn, when later that night a messenger arrives with news that Lt. Col. Flint was restored to his position along with his original possessions. Meanwhile, Indumati is reunited with her husband; they are restored in the Fort of Wandiwash, and she is beaming with joy. Her husband became the killedar of the Fort of Wandiwash. The story concludes with a bittersweet note: “Indumati’s descendants even today bear the honorary prefix of killedar to their names though the post is as much in ruins now as the ancient Fort of Wandiwash itself.”

Wandiwash’s raising of siege, Tippu Sultan’s retreat, and Kambli Naik’s death—all events are charted in the history of South India. “Indumati” is an expression of an intimate event between Lt. Colonel Flint and a young girl Indumati, from the vast and overarching canvas of South India’s battle for Wandiwash, now Vandavasi.

Let us now critically evaluate the story by understanding themes, characters, language, and historical importance of the same.



### 10.6 Themes and Characterization:

K. S. Venkataramani has woven several themes into this vignette of Indumati and Lt. Col. Flint. Nature emerges as an evident theme. Venkataramani's pageant for rural life and natural landscape is evident in the entire story. The story evolves with nature being the integral part, so much so that natural elements are a character in themselves. The Palar River is a mighty flowing river, beaming with water, and becomes the saviour—a route of escape for both Indumati and Lt. Col. Flint. The perennial rains, thundering clouds, and lightning set the atmosphere of wilderness at night; it sets the stage for apprehension with Indumati's reverie and the knock on the gates. When they both escape in the river, after three days of darkness there is a dawn of twilight. Their mental states are revealed in front of the readers such as: "The twilight . . . to Indumati it was the morning's promising a life's sunshine. To Flint it was the bright, red, sinking glory of the evening . . . indeed on the bosom of the sacred river it was a twilight of utmost beauty to all the three – Nature, Indumati and Lt. Col. Flint."

The concept of 'new womanhood' and that of virtuous Indian culture is one of the striking traits of Indumati. During the pre-independence years, when women in society were confined to domestic and marginal roles, Venkataramani portrays Indumati with utmost fierceness as a brave young girl. She was a young girl when her father died, she was married at the age of nine, and she was kept captive by the dacoit-chief Kambli Naik; yet her strength of character and chastity are not compromised. She has managed "to keep a tyrant at bay". She lets a strange Englishman into the fort, with a noble motive of providing shelter from the harsh weather outside the fort. Indumati does not deter from helping save the Englishman's life, even at the risk of her own life, even when she does not yet know that this Englishman is none other than Lt. Col. Flint whom she admired since childhood. She longs to be reunited with her husband, and is elated with joy. It is with her lineage and legacy that her husband is made a killedar of the magnificent and historic Fort of Wandiwash; and her descendants too are honoured with this post of significance.

The British courage and valour also emerge as one of the themes through the character of Lieutenant Colonel Flint. Lt. Col. Flint, in the story, is referred to as 'Blint' Saheb by Indumati and keeps his true identity hidden from her. He unknowingly seeks shelter in the house of Kambli Naik, who is in search of Flint so he can be killed. During his interaction with Indumati he learns of the details regarding the Naik family, Kambli Naik, and that Indumati is his friend's daughter. Lt. Col. Flint, a British warrior, has led a life of brave adventures; but in the later stage of his life he is unhappy, unfortunate, and lonely, as he claims: "my vast, varied and star-crossed life would hearten none to hear the whole of it". He is the one who is determined to save Indumati from prison and to take care of her. He loves her as her father and brother, and fulfils the promise that Indumati's dying father made unto him. He is shown as a man of character, shaped by unlikely events.

Tippu Sultan, Gopal Naik, and Kambli Naik are the three characters who provide a layer of history, Indian culture, and the legacy of the Naiks.

Moreover, the prophetic dream of Indumati and the fort of Wandiwash are symbols that situate the readers in the canvas of dream realization, French invasion, and India's pre-independence struggle.

### **10.7 Use of Language:**

Venkataramani's use of the English language in the story is refined with rich vocabulary. There is detailed description of natural elements; woven into the description are also psychological mazes of its characters. There is use of figurative language, and a blend of poetry and prose in "Indumati". A few examples of elevated personification are: "from the fortress issued a thin stream of light . . . an iridescent and aimless wanderer in that stormy night", "The restless wind seemed to throb in pain smiting trees in agony". The use of simile—"The flame rose from slumber like a serpent that was hit", "The Palar with ocean-like dignity was sweeping along in majestic beauty"—provides vivid imagery to the readers. It is noted by the researcher N. A. Suha that the manner in which Venkataramani synchronizes nature and man's condition in this story is remarkable; also the language used is succinct, yet it trembles on the border of poetry.

### **10.8 Historical Significance:**

In the early 18th century the South of India was the jewel in the eyes of the French and the British, with Indian forces attempting to thwart the enemies' attempt to invade it. Wandiwash was a town to the south-west of Madras and Chengalpatt. The Fort of Wandiwash (Vandavasi Fort) was a strategic landmark in Vandavasi, which witnessed the decisive Battle of Wandiwash. The following historic event is well-documented by Colonel G. B. Malleison in his account *The Decisive Battles of India from 1746 to 1849*. Haidar Ali was sensible of its value, and he had purchased its native commandant (killedar), who would deliver the fort up on the appearance of Haidar's army before it. The British were well aware that the occupation of Wandiwash by Haidar Ali would checkmate them; in order to prevent that occupation, the only way was to detach an officer, upon whom the British could depend, to replace the killedar in command. For this purpose, Lieutenant Flint was selected, an officer whose name betokened his resolute and daring character.

The British history sings laurels of Lieutenant Flint, as with his wit and determination he successfully countered Haidar Ali's scheme. Flint, accompanied by a hundred sipahis, made a rapid march across the paths and reached the vicinity of Wandiwash. He at once sent a message to the killedar announcing his approach, and demanding admission. The killedar, bought by Haidar Ali, denied Flint command. Flint, however, with his scheming wit, convinced the killedar to meet in person as he had to share a letter from the Nuwab, his master. The killedar, after some hesitation, agreed to receive the letter in the space between the gate and the barrier of the sortie at the fort. To this meeting, Flint admitted that he had no letter from the Nuwab, but an order from his own Government which directed him to assume command of the fort. The killedar, furious at being schemed, ordered Flint to return from where he came. As the killedar was in the act of rising to his feet, Flint suddenly seized

him, and declared that he would kill anyone who dared to oppose him. The commandants of the killedar could not deliver to the occasion, due to the suddenness of action, overwhelmed by the prestige of Flint. Before they could retaliate, the English admitted their comrades; the fort was won.

Lieutenant Flint not only seized the Fort of Wandiwash, but he solely held it for seventy-eight days during August 1780 – February 1781, against the army of Haidar Ali. The fort was in a ruinous state, indeed with many guns but with few carriages and little gunpowder. Lieutenant Flint's energy provided for every need: he repaired the works, constructed carriages, manufactured gunpowder, trained gunmen, raised a corps of cavalry, and also procured supplies and intelligence for the British army. Flint's act not only protected Fort of Wandiwash for the British, but it also became the shield which protected Madras for the British. Haidar Ali was rendered baffled and defeated with the gallantry of an Englishman. Haidar Ali's role was decisive in the fight to restore Madras from the English, but he was flawed by his son Tipu Sultan's passionate and narrow-minded bigotry.

Hence, from this deep-rooted history relating to the Fort of Wandiwash and Lt. Col. Flint, Venkataramani has created the slice-of-life story relating to the significance of the fort, Indumati, and Lt. Col. Flint.

### **10.9 Let Us Sum Up:**

In this unit we have understood the lesser-known but primary Indian English writer of Tamil origin, K. S. Venkataramani, who was the first author to write a novel on a Gandhian hero and Gandhian ideology. Further, the knowledge that K. S. Venkataramani was an upholder of Indian villages, Gandhian ideologies, and his interaction with idols like Rabindranath Tagore and Annie Besant, places him at a literary pedestal of early Indian English writers. The cursory view of his complete works adds to the understanding of *Jatadharan and Other Stories*. The story "Indumati" is explained in detail, with further analysis of its major themes, major and minor characters, language, and a historical event in which the story's subject matter is situated. Hence, this unit is a detailed reference to Indian English writer K. S. Venkataramani and his story "Indumati".

### **10.10 Key Words:**

1. Abkari – excise department
2. Anthology - a collection of poems, stories, essays, etc. that have been written and published collectively in a book
3. Betokened - to be a sign of something
4. Bigotry - the state of feeling, or the act of expressing, strong, unreasonable beliefs or opinions
5. Catamaran - a fast sailing boat with two hulls
6. Cavalry - the part of the army that fought on horses
7. Didactic - designed to teach people something, especially a moral lesson
8. Dungeon - a dark underground room used as a prison, especially in a castle
9. Gallantry - courage, especially in a battle

10. God-speed – a term used to express good wishes to a person starting on a journey
11. Killedar (Kiladar) – a title for the governor of a fort or large town in early-modern India
12. Nuwab (Nawab) - an Indian ruler during the Mogul Empire
13. Oeuvre - all the works of a writer, artist, etc.
14. Prophetic - correctly stating or showing what will happen in the future
15. Requite - to give something such as love, a favour, kind treatment, etc. in return for what somebody has given you
16. Reverie - a state of thinking about pleasant things, almost as though you are dreaming
17. Saheb – sir, master
18. Siege - a military operation in which an army tries to capture a town by surrounding it and stopping the supply of food, etc. to the people inside
19. Sipahi – soldier, constable
20. Sortie - an attack made by soldiers
21. Succinct - expressed clearly and in a few words
22. Verisimilitude - the quality of seeming to be true or real

### Check Your Progress

Choose an appropriate option:

1. Who among the following is not one of the early Indian English novelists?
  - a. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee
  - b. K. S. Venkataramani
  - c. Raja Rao
  - d. Aravind Adiga
2. K. S. Venkataramani was a member of which group at Madras Christian College hostel?
  - a. The Olympians
  - b. The Philosophers
  - c. The Gandhians
  - d. The Rebels
3. Which of the following is a non-fiction work by K. S. Venkataramani?
  - a. Paper Boats
  - b. Jatadharan and Other Stories
  - c. A Day with Sambhu
  - d. The Next Rung
4. K. S. Venkataramani was influenced by the spiritual ideologies of which of the following personality?
  - a. Annie Besant
  - b. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer
  - c. N. S. Ramaswami
  - d. Manjeri S. Isavaran
5. The story “Indumati” first appeared in \_\_\_\_\_ before its inclusion in an anthology *Jatadharan and Other Stories*.
  - a. The Mail
  - b. The Hindu

- c. Literary Journal
  - d. The Madras Mail
6. K. S. Venkataramani founded a weekly titled \_\_\_\_\_.
    - a. Thuglak
    - b. Puthiya Thalaimurai
    - c. Tamil Ulagu
    - d. Mangayar Malar
  7. Who translated K. S. Venkataramani's novel *Desabhakthan Kandan* to English *Kandan the Patriot*?
    - a. K. S. Venkataramani
    - b. R. K. Narayan
    - c. Paul Brunton
    - d. N. S. Ramaswami
  8. Who is described in the story "Indumati" as 'an adventurer who fought and failed'?
    - a. Kambli Naik
    - b. Gopal Naik
    - c. Tipu Sultan
    - d. Lt. Col. Flint
  9. What is the honorary title given to Indumati's husband with the acquittal of the Wandiwash Fort?
    - a. Subedar
    - b. Killedar
    - c. Sardar
    - d. Nuwab (Nawab)
  10. Which of the following characteristics of writing is not reflected in K. S. Venkataramani's works?
    - a. Lyrical prose
    - b. Social Satire
    - c. Gentle Humour
    - d. Rural Description

Answer the following questions in detail:

1. Write a note on the complete works of K. S. Venkataramani.
2. Explain the social, political, and spiritual influencing factors on K. S. Venkataramani.
3. Write a critical summary of the story "Indumati".
4. Comment on the themes and characterization in the story "Indumati".
5. Comment critically on the use of language in the story "Indumati".
6. Draw character sketches of Indumati and Lt. Col. Flint.
7. Comment on the historical significance of the story "Indumati".

#### Answers

1. Arvind Adiga
2. The Olympians
3. The Next Rung
4. Annie Besant
5. Literary Journal
6. Tamil Ulagu

7. K. S. Venkataramani
8. Lt. Col. Flint
9. Killedar
10. Social Satire

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## Unit 11

### Raja Rao's Short Story: Akkaya

#### 11.1 Objectives

#### 11.2 Raja Rao as a Short Story Writer

#### 11.3 About Akkaya

#### 11.4 Summary of the Story

#### 11.5 Character Analysis: Akkaya

#### 11.6 Critical Appreciation of the Story

#### 11.7 Themes and Symbolism

#### 11.8 Social, Cultural, and Ethical Concerns

#### Let Us Sum Up

#### Questions and Answers

#### 11.1 Objectives

After completing this unit, the learner should be able to:

- understand the narrative focus and social context of the short story Akkaya
- present a detailed and coherent summary of the story in examination answers
- analyse Akkaya as a central character representing silent endurance and social neglect
- critically appreciate the story using established critical perspectives
- identify and explain the major themes and symbolic elements of the story
- relate the text to broader social, cultural, and ethical concerns in Indian society

#### 11.2 Raja Rao as a Short Story Writer

Raja Rao was among the early Indian writers who made serious use of the short story form in English at a time when Indian English literature was still developing. Although he is more widely known for his novels such as *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, his short stories form an important part of his literary work. These stories were mainly written during the 1930s and 1940s and were later published together in collections like *The Cow of the Barricades*. Through his short fiction, Raja Rao showed that English could be effectively used to express Indian life, values, and ways of thinking.

Raja Rao's short stories are different from the works of many of his contemporaries who preferred the novel form. His short fiction focuses on social and moral issues within a limited narrative space. Stories such as *Akkaya* and *Javni* deal with the lives of ordinary people and highlight problems like emotional suffering, social neglect, and the influence of tradition on individual lives. These stories show how deeply social customs shape personal experience. By writing such stories, Raja Rao proved that English need not follow Western storytelling

models and could be adapted to suit Indian social reality and psychological depth. His early short stories also contain themes and concerns that he later explored in greater detail in his novels.

### **11.3 About Akkaya**

Akkaya is a short story that offers a quiet yet deeply disturbing portrayal of an elderly widow living within a traditional Indian family structure. The story does not revolve around dramatic incidents or sudden conflicts. Instead, it focuses on the gradual emotional erosion of a woman whose life has been shaped entirely by duty, service, and renunciation.

The title itself is meaningful. “Akkaya” means elder sister, and this relational term replaces the woman’s personal name. From the outset, the story suggests that the protagonist’s identity is defined not by individuality but by her function within the family. She exists as a role rather than as a self. This erasure of personal identity becomes central to the story’s emotional impact.

The narrative presents Akkaya’s life as ordinary and uneventful, yet this very ordinariness exposes the cruelty of social norms. Akkaya’s suffering is not the result of a single act of violence or betrayal. It emerges slowly, through neglect, indifference, and moral laziness. The story compels the reader to reflect on how society normalises such suffering.

Akkaya belongs to a realist tradition in Indian English fiction where social truth is conveyed through simple narrative methods and emotionally grounded characters. The story does not argue or moralise; it observes. In doing so, it reveals how deeply embedded social customs can quietly destroy individual lives.

### **11.4 Summary of the Story**

The story is narrated by a younger member of Akkaya’s extended family, who recalls her life with sympathy and regret. Akkaya is an elderly widow who has lived for decades in her sister’s household. Widowed at a very young age, she never remarried and had no children of her own. Her life, therefore, became devoted to serving her relatives.

From early adulthood, Akkaya assumes the role of a caretaker. She manages household chores, assists the women of the house, and plays a significant role in raising the children. She performs these duties silently and efficiently. Over time, her presence becomes habitual, almost invisible. She is valued for her usefulness rather than for her humanity.

As the years pass, Akkaya grows old and physically weak. Her health deteriorates, and she becomes dependent on the same family members she once supported. Instead of receiving care and affection, she is treated as an inconvenience. Family members avoid responsibility and show irritation rather than concern.

Akkaya’s emotional isolation deepens during her illness. Though she has lived her entire life among people, she faces suffering alone. Her occasional expressions of anger or despair reveal how deeply hurt she feels, but these moments are brief and dismissed by others.

The most tragic episode occurs after Akkaya’s death. None of the family members is willing to perform her funeral rites. Each person tries to avoid the



duty, treating it as a burden. Eventually, an outsider is hired to conduct the rituals. Akkaya's life ends in complete neglect, symbolising the moral failure of the family and the society it represents.

The narrator's recollection preserves Akkaya's dignity, even as it exposes the emotional emptiness surrounding her death.

### **11.5 Character Analysis: Akkaya**

Akkaya is one of the most quietly powerful characters in Indian English short fiction. She is portrayed as gentle, patient, and self-effacing. Her character is revealed through routine actions rather than dramatic gestures.

Widowed as a child, Akkaya accepts her fate without protest. Her acceptance, however, is not a sign of inner peace but of social conditioning. She has been taught that renunciation is her destiny. This belief shapes her behaviour and silences her desires.

Akkaya's surrogate motherhood is a key aspect of her character. Though childless, she devotes herself to raising her relatives' children. This gives her a sense of purpose, but it also highlights her emotional deprivation. She gives affection but receives little in return.

Her silence is significant. Akkaya rarely speaks about her suffering. This silence reflects both personal restraint and social expectation. As a widow, she is expected to endure without complaint. When she does express anger or despair, it shocks others, revealing how invisible her emotional life has been.

Akkaya's tragedy lies not only in her suffering but in its normalisation. She is not actively abused; she is simply forgotten. Yet she retains dignity even in neglect. Her endurance makes her a morally strong character, but it also exposes the injustice of the system that demands such endurance.

### **11.6 Critical Appreciation of the Story**

Akkaya is a short story that achieves its effect through simplicity and careful observation rather than dramatic action. The story does not depend on conflict, suspense, or sudden change. Instead, it presents a life shaped by routine, silence, and gradual neglect. This method suits the subject of the story. Akkaya's suffering is not loud or visible. It grows slowly, unnoticed by those around her. By choosing such a quiet narrative approach, the story reflects the real condition of many individuals whose pain becomes part of everyday life and therefore loses its urgency in the eyes of society.

The emotional strength of the story lies in its restraint. Akkaya experiences deep loneliness, physical decline, and emotional abandonment, yet these are not described in exaggerated terms. The narration remains calm and controlled. Akkaya is never shown weeping dramatically or accusing others openly. Her pain is suggested through small details—her weakening body, her dependence, her occasional expressions of irritation. This restraint gives the story credibility. The reader is not forced to feel sympathy; instead, sympathy arises naturally from understanding Akkaya's situation.

The narrative form also plays an important role in shaping the story's impact. The story is told through recollection by a younger family member. This reflective tone allows distance between the events and their narration. Because of this distance, the story does not feel immediate or sensational. It feels remembered, reconsidered, and quietly judged. The narrator's tone suggests regret rather than outrage. This approach suits the moral nature of the story. The ethical failure shown is not sudden cruelty but long-term indifference.

A key strength of the story lies in its portrayal of moral responsibility. Akkaya's family members are not shown as openly cruel people. They provide her shelter and allow her to live with them for many years. However, they do not offer emotional care. Their failure is not active harm but neglect. This distinction is important. The story shows how harm can result not only from violence but also from avoidance of responsibility. Akkaya is useful when she can work. Once she becomes weak, she becomes inconvenient. This change in attitude exposes a moral weakness that is deeply unsettling because it is so common.

The episode of Akkaya's funeral brings this moral weakness into sharp focus. The reluctance of family members to perform her last rites is not presented as a shocking betrayal but as a practical problem. Each person avoids responsibility. The solution—hiring someone else—reveals how duty has been reduced to a task rather than a moral obligation. This moment gives the story its ethical weight. It shows how ritual can replace care and how social respectability can exist without genuine human concern.

The character of Akkaya is central to the story's critical power. She is not portrayed as a rebel or a thinker who questions her position. She accepts her life as a widow because society has taught her that this is her fate. Her silence should not be understood as lack of awareness. It is a learned behaviour shaped by custom and fear of disruption. Akkaya's occasional anger shows that she understands her neglect, but she also understands that expressing it changes nothing. This awareness makes her silence more painful.

The absence of a personal name is another important element of the story. Akkaya is known only through a family role. This reflects how her individuality has been erased. She exists as a function rather than as a person. Her identity is tied to service. When that service ends, her social value disappears. The story makes this point without explanation. The reader understands it through the events themselves. This indirect method strengthens the story's realism.

The language of the story supports its critical purpose. The sentences are clear and direct. There is no attempt to beautify suffering through poetic language. This simplicity helps the story remain grounded. The style matches the world it represents. Ordinary language is used to describe ordinary lives, and this makes the moral questions more immediate. The lack of stylistic excess ensures that the focus remains on human relationships rather than on technique.

As a work of Indian English fiction, Akkaya stands out for its inward focus. The story does not engage with public events or political movements. Its concern is domestic and personal. Yet this limited setting allows the story to address large ethical issues. The family becomes a small model of society. Akkaya's treatment

reflects how societies often depend on the silent labour of individuals while refusing to acknowledge their humanity.

The story does not offer comfort or resolution. Akkaya's life does not improve, and her death does not bring change. This lack of closure is deliberate. It reflects the reality that such lives often end without recognition or justice. The story leaves the reader with unease rather than satisfaction. This unease is its achievement. It forces the reader to think about responsibility, gratitude, and compassion in everyday life.

Akkaya succeeds as a serious literary work. It does not argue, instruct, or accuse. It presents a life and allows the reader to confront its meaning. The story remains effective because it trusts observation over explanation and moral awareness over moral instruction.

## **11.7 Themes and Symbolism**

### **11.7.1 Sacrifice**

Sacrifice shapes Akkaya's entire life. From early youth to old age, she gives up personal happiness for the sake of family duty. She sacrifices marriage, companionship, and the possibility of motherhood. These sacrifices are not shown as voluntary acts of generosity. They are expected of her because of her position as a widow and dependent woman. Akkaya accepts these expectations without protest, believing them to be her fate. The story shows that sacrifice loses its moral value when it is taken for granted. Akkaya's continuous service to the household becomes routine rather than meaningful. Her devotion does not earn her care or respect in her later years. Through this theme, the story questions the belief that self-sacrifice is always virtuous. It shows how sacrifice, when imposed by social custom, can become a source of quiet injustice and emotional emptiness.

### **11.7.2 Silent Suffering**

Silent suffering is a central theme in Akkaya. Akkaya's pain is not expressed through open complaint or resistance. Widowed at a very young age, she accepts a life of loneliness, emotional deprivation, and dependence without questioning it. Her silence is not a sign of satisfaction but the result of long social conditioning. As a widow, she has learned that endurance is expected and that her feelings are of little importance. Because Akkaya does not voice her suffering, those around her assume that she is content. The story shows how such silence makes suffering invisible. Akkaya lives among family members and performs daily duties, yet her inner pain remains unnoticed. This theme highlights how society often ignores pain that is quietly endured. Through Akkaya's silence, the story suggests that suffering does not always appear dramatic, but it can still be deep and damaging.

### **11.7.3 Neglect and Breakdown of Moral Duty**

Neglect and moral failure operate quietly throughout the story. Akkaya is not openly mistreated, yet she receives little emotional care. Her needs and feelings are rarely considered. As long as she is physically able to work, she is tolerated. When she becomes weak and ill, she is treated as an inconvenience. This neglect reaches its peak after her death. None of her family members is willing to perform her funeral rites. Each person avoids responsibility, treating duty as a burden. The

decision to hire an outsider to complete the rituals shows the breakdown of moral responsibility. The story clearly distinguishes between following customs and showing compassion. It suggests that traditions lose their meaning when they are separated from human concern. Akkaya's fate exposes how indifference can destroy moral values without open cruelty.

#### **11.7.4 Loss of Identity**

Loss of identity is an important theme in Akkaya. The protagonist is never referred to by a personal name. She is known only as "Akkaya," meaning elder sister. This shows that her identity is defined entirely by her role within the family. She exists as a helper and caretaker, not as an individual with personal desires or ambitions. Her value depends on her usefulness. As long as she works and serves others, she is accepted. When she grows old and ill, her importance fades. This loss of identity becomes complete after her death, when even her funeral rites are treated as a burden. The story shows how society often recognises people only through their function. Akkaya's life reveals how individuality is erased when a person's existence is shaped only by duty and dependence.

#### **11.8 Let Us Sum Up**

Akkaya is a deeply moving short story that presents the quiet suffering of an elderly widow within the framework of everyday family life. The story does not rely on dramatic events or emotional excess. Instead, it uses restraint and simplicity to show how suffering becomes invisible when it is silently endured. Through Akkaya's life, the narrative exposes the realities of social neglect, emotional isolation, and the gradual loss of identity caused by rigid traditions and indifference. The realistic portrayal of Akkaya's daily existence allows readers to understand how ordinary behaviour can result in deep moral failure.

The character of Akkaya stands as a symbol of dignity in suffering. She does not rebel against her condition, yet her endurance raises serious ethical questions about responsibility, compassion, and gratitude within family and society. The story remains significant for its humanistic concern and truthful representation of Indian social life. By focusing on ordinary experiences and moral weakness rather than dramatic conflict, Akkaya continues to invite thoughtful reflection on the value of human relationships and social responsibility.

#### **11.9 Questions**

- 1. Discuss Akkaya as a story of silent suffering and sacrifice.**
- 2. Analyse the character of Akkaya with reference to her role within the family.**
- 3. Examine the themes of neglect and duty in the story Akkaya.**
- 4. Critically appreciate Akkaya as a realistic portrayal of Indian social life.**
- 5. How does Akkaya reflect social, cultural, and ethical concerns related to widowhood and family responsibility?**

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## \* Answers

### Answer to Question 1

Akkaya is a powerful portrayal of silent suffering and sacrifice. Akkaya's life is marked by continuous renunciation of personal happiness. Widowed at a young age, she accepts a life of service without protest. Her sacrifices are not recognised as heroic; instead, they are absorbed into daily routine. Raja Rao highlights how such suffering becomes normalised in society. Akkaya's silence reflects both endurance and oppression, revealing how women are conditioned to accept pain as destiny rather than injustice.

### Answer to Question 2

Akkaya is portrayed as a gentle, patient, and self-effacing woman. Her identity is shaped by duty rather than choice. She devotes herself to household work and the upbringing of children, performing a surrogate maternal role. Despite her emotional deprivation, she rarely expresses resentment. Her occasional emotional outbursts reveal suppressed pain rather than rebellion. Akkaya's dignity lies in her endurance, but her life also exposes the moral failure of a system that demands such endurance without compassion.

### Answer to Question 3

The themes of neglect and duty are central to Akkaya. While Akkaya performs her duties sincerely, her family fails to reciprocate with care. She is valued only when useful. As she grows old and ill, she becomes neglected rather than

supported. The refusal of family members to perform her funeral rites represents the complete collapse of moral responsibility. Raja Rao thus exposes how duty, when detached from empathy, becomes hollow and unethical.

#### **Answer to Question 4**

Akkaya is critically appreciated for its realism, emotional restraint, and ethical seriousness. Raja Rao avoids melodrama and allows situations to speak for themselves. Critics such as K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar and M. K. Naik have praised the author's portrayal of widows as emotionally complex figures rather than mere victims. The story succeeds as a social document that reveals injustice through lived experience rather than argument, making it a significant work in Indian English short fiction.

#### **Answer to Question 5**

The story reflects important social, cultural, and ethical concerns. It highlights the condition of widows in traditional Indian society, especially the consequences of child marriage and prohibition of remarriage. It also critiques the erosion of family values and moral responsibility. Ethically, the story questions gratitude, compassion, and human dignity. Through Akkaya's neglected life and death, Raja Rao exposes how rigid traditions and emotional indifference can coexist within respectable social structures.

#### **Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)**

##### **1. The title "Akkaya" primarily signifies:**

- A. The personal name of the protagonist
- B. A symbolic place in the village
- C. A relational identity within the family
- D. A religious designation

##### **2. Akkaya's identity in the story is mainly defined by her:**

- A. Education
- B. Wealth
- C. Marital status and family role
- D. Political influence

##### **3. Akkaya becomes a widow at:**

- A. Old age
- B. Middle age
- C. A very young age
- D. After having children

##### **4. Akkaya spends most of her life:**

- A. Living alone
- B. Serving her sister's family
- C. Travelling between villages
- D. Teaching children formally

**5. The story Akkaya mainly highlights which aspect of Indian society?**

- A. Political struggle
- B. Economic reform
- C. Social neglect of widows
- D. Urbanisation

**6. Akkaya's suffering is presented in the story as:**

- A. Dramatic and rebellious
- B. Loud and confrontational
- C. Silent and gradual
- D. Violent and tragic

**7. Which incident best reveals the moral failure of Akkaya's family?**

- A. Her illness
- B. Her anger
- C. Her daily routine
- D. The refusal to perform her funeral rites

**8. Akkaya's silence in the story mainly suggests:**

- A. Ignorance
- B. Contentment
- C. Social conditioning and endurance
- D. Intellectual weakness

**9. The narrative tone of the story can best be described as:**

- A. Satirical
- B. Aggressive
- C. Reflective and restrained
- D. Romantic

**10. The story Akkaya ends with:**

- A. Akkaya receiving justice
- B. Family reconciliation
- C. Moral reform of society
- D. Akkaya's death marked by neglect

**Answer Key (MCQs)**

- 1 - C**
- 2 - C**
- 3 - C**
- 4 - B**
- 5 - C**
- 6 - C**
- 7 - D**
- 8 - C**
- 9 - C**
- 10 - D**

**12.0 Objectives****12.1 Indian English Novel****12.2 About the Author****12.3 Plot of the Novel****12.4 Critical Evaluation of the Novel****12.5 Bakha's Character****12.6 Conclusion****Suggested Questions****Works Cited****12.0 Objectives**

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the background and development of the Indian English novel, especially in the pre-independence period;
- describe Mulk Raj Anand's life, major works, and his humanistic and progressive concerns;
- summarize the plot of *Untouchable* and relate the key incidents of Bakha's day to the theme of untouchability;
- analyze *Untouchable* as a social protest novel and explain its realism, technique, and Gandhian influence;
- critically examine Bakha's character as a representative yet individualized figure who experiences humiliation, conflict, and awakening;
- attempt short and long questions based on the unit for revision and examination.

**12.1 Indian English Novel**

Indian English writing, specifically Indian English novels, flourished substantially before Indian Independence. Under the influence of the British and with the establishment of colleges in Calcutta, Madras, and Mumbai, Indian writers wrote profusely in English. Thus, a new genre of Indian English literature began. Some important Indian English novelists of that time include Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Sarath Kumar Ghosh, Rabindranath Tagore, etc. It is important to note that as Calcutta was the capital of the colony, literary activities in English flourished much more there. Rama Jha comments:

“The emergence of the Indian novel in English was no doubt the product of the new cultural and national awakening which had its origin in the late nineteenth-century Bengal Renaissance.” (p. 163)



However, the Indian English novel witnessed an entirely different turn with the arrival of the trio of Indian English writers—Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao—on the national literary scenario. They grew up seeing the intense struggle for Indian independence, witnessed freedom, and thereafter saw the resultant change in the Indian polity. Hence, their approach was very different from their predecessors. These three tried to write in an idiom suited to the people of India, and hence their writing may safely be considered ‘Indian’, albeit in the English language. In other words, they made English, a foreign language, very much Indian, to be used by English-speaking Indians in their day-to-day lives.

What is clearly discernible in their writings is a striking paradox. On one hand is “an intense but understandable dislike of the British occupation of the country” (Narayana Rao, p. 296) and on the other, there is “an equally strong but puzzling sentimental attachment to the English language” (Narayana Rao, p. 296).

The novels written by them grew from simple storytelling to much more complex and sophisticated literature suited to “the Indian temper and pace of thinking and Indian rhythm of talking” (Narayana Rao, p. 301). However, narrating any local issue in an altogether foreign language—a language not one’s own—was very difficult. It was like translating a native experience into a foreign expression. Raja Rao writes about this problem in the preface to *Kanthapura*:

“The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word “alien,” yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up – like Sanskrit or Persian was before – but not of our emotional make-up. . . . We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians.” (Narayana Rao, pp. 301–302)

After the 1930s, Mahatma Gandhi’s influence on Indian English writers is seen very much. His doctrines of truth and non-violence, simplicity and purity in living, and his movement to uplift the downtrodden touched “the inherent idealism of the Indian thought” (Jha, p. 165). All these inspired creative writers and also provided much-needed stimulus and subject-matter for their creative musings. Noted critic C. D. Narasimhaiah does not hesitate in terming the works of the thirties and forties as the “Gandhi novel” (Jha, p. 168). One can clearly see Gandhian influence on Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, etc.

These writers found their Indianness through the Gandhian movement. Gandhi’s thoughts and ideals provided a new and fresh vision on the condition of people in Indian society. Gandhi’s man was not a member of a society or a tribe, but “a member of the entire human community sharing the sufferings and facing the predicament of modern society” (Jha, p. 165). It is through such vision that Indian English novelists found a sense of national identity. They now had themes to deal with: along with the national freedom struggle, there was a chance to participate in the freedom of the individual from many

compelling constraints—situations, traditions, orthodoxies, and societal norms.

Novels like K. S. Venkataramani's *Kandan the Patriot* (1934), Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) and *Coolie* (1936), Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938), Khwaja Ahmad Abbas's *Inqilab* (1955), etc., are written under Gandhi's influence.

## 12.2 About the Author

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the most respected Indian novelists writing in English. He was born in Peshawar in 1905 into a North Indian Hindu family and was educated at the universities of Lahore, London, and Cambridge. He lived in England for a few years. His main concern has always been for people living in the lower strata of society—the voiceless, the downtrodden, and the oppressed. The author's approach to this section of society has always remained full of humanism. His novels are read the world over and are translated into many languages.

His novels include *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black Waters* (1940), *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942), and *Private Life of an Indian Prince* (1953). His autobiographical novels, *Seven Summers* (1950) and *Morning Face* (1968), have been awarded the National Academy Award. Whereas his *Confession of a Lover* (1972) and *The Bubble* (1988) deal with his conflicts with the self and a journey to a possible higher self.

Mulk Raj Anand studied philosophy in England for six years, where he is believed to be one of the instruments toward the establishment of the Indian Progressive Writers' Movement. This movement was perhaps started in the 1930s by Indian students studying in London. Most of the members of this movement wanted to become creative writers and also wanted to create an important mark on the Indian literary canvas. Sujit S. Dulai argues:

“As a progressive writer, Anand firmly believed that literature had a social purpose. But he also believed with an equally sure feeling about the nature of literature that this purpose was achieved better by a faithful portrayal of authentic experience and by imaginative and esthetic integrity than by a bald enunciation of social theory thinly masked in fabricated stories.” (p. 188)

He returned to India to find himself and to seek answers to unanswered questions his education had taught him to raise. He became one of the leading Indian novelists writing in English during the 1930s and 1940s. Most of his celebrated novels appeared before 1947 and dealt with the intense social, political, and national struggle of that era. *Untouchable* appeared in 1935, *Coolie* in 1936, *Two Leaves and a Bud* in 1937, *The Village* in 1938, *Across the Black Waters* in 1939, *The Sword and the Sickle* in 1940–41, and *The Big Heart* in 1944.

Apart from being a novelist, Mulk Raj Anand is also known as a “renaissance man ... an essayist, a literary critic and a thinker” (Verma, p. 150). He strongly supported freedom and opposed social or other kinds of oppression. His novels loudly voice the human predicament. He is creatively influenced

by Gandhian thought. In a lecture, *The Humanism of M. K. Gandhi*, Mulk Raj Anand says:

“Whatever his own failings, he remains to us a human personality of the highest order not because of his strength but because of his recognition of his own and other people's weaknesses. Certainly he let loose a stream of consciousness which by its deeper and widespread sympathies released our people into a new kind of solidarity.” (Jha, p. 167)

### 12.3 Plot of the Novel

*Untouchable*, published in 1935, is the first novel authored by Mulk Raj Anand. The novel presents a creative argument for eradicating the caste system. The plot depicts one day in the life of a young boy, Bakha. This novel is often considered a social protest novel. Noted literary figure E. M. Forster wrote the preface to this novel. He writes: “This remarkable novel describes a day in [the] life of a sweeper in an Indian city with every realistic circumstance” (p. 5).

*Untouchable* presents a fictional North Indian cantonment town named Bulandshahr. This town seems very similar to Amritsar where Mulk Raj Anand spent his youth. The protagonist, Bakha, inherits the job of cleaning latrines and sweeping streets from his father, Lakha, who incidentally is the head of all the sweepers. Bakha is an 18-year-old sweeper and the protagonist of the novel. He is Lakha's son, Sohini and Rakha's elder brother, and a good friend of both Chota and Ram Charan.

For the entire day, Bakha encounters various major and minor incidents compelling him to question his social position. Through him, the novelist draws our attention to the inhuman, unjust, and oppressive system of untouchability. Bakha's day starts very early with the cleaning of latrines where people are queuing for their turn to empty their bowels. Impressed by Bakha's quickness and efficiency, a famous hockey player, Charat Singh, offers him a hockey stick as a gift.

Once his early morning duty is complete, he accompanies his sister Sohini to fetch water from the well. Pandit Kali Nath, the temple priest, obliges Sohini by giving her water and in turn asks her to clean the temple.

Thereafter, Bakha is sent to clean the streets in the town, which allows him to realize his hidden desire of relishing sweets and smoking cigarettes. Too occupied in relishing the taste of sweets, he accidentally, unknowingly, and unintentionally touches a high-caste man, which invites beatings, insults, and humiliation. Fortunately, a Muslim vendor saves him. Thinking about his social situation, he reaches the temple where he wants to see what happens inside the sanctum, but he is accused of polluting the temple.

Suddenly, he hears his sister Sohini's cries for help along with Pandit Kali Nath's shouts. Sohini accuses the priest of attempting to molest her. Bakha gets very angry and wants to confront the priest against such an injustice, but Sohini persuades him not to confront a high-caste person because the social system always supported the high-caste, however wrong he/she may be. He feels furious and wants to give the priest a piece of his mind. The author reveals Bakha's subconscious musings thus: “And yet, there was a futility

written on his face. ... So in the highest moment of his strength, the slave in him asserted itself, and he lapsed back, wild with torture, biting his lips, ruminating his grievances” (Anand, pp. 53–54).

Bakha sends Sohini home and starts cleaning the streets again. He is hungry and has to beg for food. He is distraught over his miserable and hopeless situation. However, through Bakha’s father, one learns that a few high-caste people are sympathetic to and also help them. Later on, Bakha’s experience with Charat Singh—who invites Bakha inside his house and even offers him tea, and then gives him a brand-new hockey stick—makes Bakha forget his earlier bad experiences.

Bakha enjoys the game of hockey and then meets a British Colonel Hutchinson who persuades him to visit church. He suddenly sees a lot of people running towards the train station where Mahatma Gandhi was to speak. The Mahatma speaks about the plight of untouchables and tries to sensitize people to end the oppressive and unjust system of untouchability.

Someone from the crowd comments on the progression of science and the invention of new toilets which won’t require anyone to clean. The novelist has cleverly connected Bakha’s experience of the day with the Mahatma’s speech and thus emphatically advocated for the eradication of untouchability. The day ends and Bakha runs home to tell his father about the Mahatma’s speech.

The plot of the novel is very compelling and real. It shows how societal discrimination oppresses a wonderful human being like Bakha. In D. Riemenschneider’s words: “The conflict between a low-caste boy and the traditional society has been analysed in *Untouchable* much more convincingly and comprehensively” (p. 47).

#### **12.4 Critical Evaluation of the Novel**

Mulk Raj Anand wrote the novel *Untouchable* in 1929 while he was in London, in one “breathless writing” (Jha, p. 167). Anand thought that he was successful in portraying “the squalor and dirt of the untouchables” (Jha, p. 167). Then one day he came across “an article in *Young India* by Gandhiji describing how he met Uka, a sweeper boy and finding him with torn clothes took him to the Ashram” (Jha, p. 167). Mulk Raj Anand writes: “This narrative was simple, austere and seemed to be more truthful than my artificially concocted novel *Untouchable*” (p. 167). He then decided to meet Mahatma Gandhi and thus arrived in India to meet him in 1929. He stayed in the Ahmedabad ashram, which proved to be a catalyst for him as a writer.

In its technique and structure, *Untouchable* is similar to other Indian novels. It presents interesting character sketches of people of various social strata. The novel changes from a simple-looking narrative into a more complex and sophisticated critique of Indian society. Moreover, this novel is also noteworthy for another feature, i.e., a peculiar linguistic expression suiting “Indian temper and pace of thinking and Indian rhythm of talking” (Rao, p. 301).

The novelist seems to present, through this novel, an individual’s self-realization. An Indian youth is set against a rigid and orthodox society and tries to find answers to questions about his existence and role. This is the

conflict presented in the novel. The novel was written for English-speaking educated Indians, but it is often considered propagandist in nature. Rama Jha opines that in *Untouchable*, as well as in other novels of Mulk Raj Anand, “Gandhian humanism helped decide the choice of his themes as well as protagonists and also his fictional technique of stark realism” (p. 168). Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, the novelist sympathizes with the downtrodden and oppressed.

### 12.5 Bakha's Character

Bakha is the main character in *Untouchable*. He is the son of a sweeper, Lakha. There is something extraordinary about this character. He has a burning desire for progression. He wants to learn to read and speak like British sahibs. He can also play hockey. Perhaps most importantly, he is not satisfied with his social position and hence constantly questions his predicament. This makes him different from ordinary people.

Bakha is full of love for life and feels happy at the kindness and attention of others towards him. He requests a young boy of a high caste to teach him English. When Havildar Charat Singh asks him to come into his house for a cup of coffee, he feels happy. Such incidents help him forget all the humiliations and insults he had to bear all day long. The novel indicates that Bakha's capacity to deal with society is very mature. He is strong enough to face the truth about his social position and maturely analyses any situation he is pitted in. The result is that his inner conflict and his efforts to find answers to questions pertaining to his position are much more intense.

Bakha is a person who doesn't easily accept his predicament. It looks as if he wants to revolt—against the unjust system, against his social position, against a hypocritical society, and so on. He even questions his father's unjust abuses and prefers to drift into angered silence. When he unintentionally pollutes a man in the streets who physically assaults him, Bakha's reaction to this incident is presented very interestingly by the author: “He stood aghast. Then his whole countenance lit with fire and his hands were no more joined. . . . The strength, the power of his giant body glistened with the desire for revenge in his eyes, while horror, rage, indignation swept over his frame. In a moment he had lost all his humility, and he would have lost his temper too, but the man who had struck him the blow had slipped beyond reach into the street.” (Anand, p. 42)

Bakha has a hidden desire to look like British sahibs. He even purchases clothes which give him the sahib look. In Mulk Raj Anand's words: “he (Bakha) had built up a new world which was commendable, if for nothing else, it represented a change from the old ossified order and the stagnating conventions of the life to which he was born.” (Riemenschneider, p. 32) Why does he emulate the British? Is this going to change his social position? Wishing to be like them, he wears second-hand army clothes and avoids Indian-style garments, even a quilt, to which he prefers an army blanket, “even though it does not keep him sufficiently warm.” (Dulai, p. 205)

D. Riemenschneider perhaps has an answer to this: “they (English clothes) are a device by which he tries to forget his low status. Critically aware of his position, the sweeper does not any more accept his status but is eager to make others and himself ignore it.” (p. 32)

What Bakha probably lacks is education. He is sensible enough to question so many things; he has the ability to understand the value of education; he has strong family bonds; he is dedicated and committed to his task, etc. Despite possessing all these virtues, his main drawback is that he does not seem to possess the intellectual insight—mainly due to lack of education—to guide himself to a position where he does not get affected by societal norms. On the contrary, in the words of K. D. Verma: “Bakha is a helpless victim of social and religious determinism and of a system from which he cannot escape. Nor can he rebel against the combined forces of religion and society” (p. 160).

The novel clearly shows that in the predicament Bakha is in, there is no alternative but to accept his situation. The Indian orthodox society doesn’t allow him any freedom, however extraordinary a human being he may be. Therefore, he starts liking the company of the British army man and even open-minded Indians within the British army. They treat Bakha with respect and love which should be accorded to every human being. They don’t feel polluted or defiled at Bakha’s presence. Such treatment allows Bakha to be aware of “his self-dignity as a human being” (Dulai, p. 205). It is obvious for persons like Bakha to respect the white people.

However, it is equally important to note that through Bakha’s influence of the British and white men’s influence over Indians, the author very consciously strikes a balance between his personal like or dislike of the white and an innocent, uneducated Indian youth’s impression of the colonizers. The novel does not become a document written under colonial influence. Rather, it shows a “young man’s innocent perspective” (Dulai, p. 205). This is the greatness of the novelist.

The author has very artistically presented the protagonist’s feelings and experiences. However, the author does not seem to advocate any single, fixed ideology; rather, his interest seems mainly to present the pitiable condition of a very good but untouchable young man’s life. Through this delineation, the author showcases the plight of untouchables, for which Mahatma Gandhi was campaigning. Sujit S. Dulai comments that the novel “focuses on a poignant portrayal of the conditions of Bakha’s life and in so doing inevitably calls for redress from these conditions and for an ideology that would bring about redress. Such is the achievement of Anand’s art and such the place of ideology in *Untouchable*.” (pp. 206–207)

In this sense, because Mulk Raj Anand sincerely attempts to advocate the plight of the downtrodden and oppressed, the novel can be read as a propaganda document.

Thus, one can argue that Mulk Raj Anand’s portrayal of the main character is at once static and dynamic. Bakha is sensible and full of love and compassion, but suffers because of a ruthless society. However, Bakha is dynamic at the same time, as he is not one who can easily accept and succumb to his social position. He constantly questions and ruminates over his plight.

## 12.6 Conclusion

*Untouchable* revolutionized the Indian English novel. An insignificant-looking young man unmistakably catches our attention. We cannot but like the character. The style and language of the novel set a path for Indians writing English novels.

### Suggested Questions:

#### Short Questions:

1. Write in brief about the background of the author Mulk Raj Anand.
2. How does Bakha's day begin?
3. Enumerate the three choices Bakha has in the novel.
4. Give brief details about the plot of the novel.
5. Prepare a brief note on Indian English novels.

#### Long Questions:

1. Write at length the character of Bakha.
2. Show how the influence of Gandhiji on Mulk Raj Anand percolates down in his novel *Untouchable*.
3. Write at length about pre-independence Indian novel writing in English.

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**13.0 Objectives****13.1 A Brief Bio-Sketch of Jayant Mohapatra****13.2 An Overview of His Works****13.3 “Hunger”****13.4 “Dawn at Puri”****13.5 Let Us Sum Up****Answers****Suggested Readings****13.0 Objectives:**

In this unit, we will first discuss the bio-sketch of Jayant Mohapatra and provide an overview of his notable works. We will then analyse his two poems, “Hunger” and “Dawn at Puri,” in detail, with close attention to the themes and poetic techniques used in these poems.

**13.1 A Brief Bio-Sketch of Jayant Mohapatra:**

Jayant Mohapatra, winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award (1981) and India’s fourth-highest civilian honour, the Padma Shri (2009), was born on 22 July 1928 in the historical city of Cuttack, Odisha, India, in a Christian (converted) family. His early education was completed at the reputed Stewart School in Cuttack. He completed higher studies with post-graduation in Physics from Ravenshaw College. He also earned a Bachelor’s degree in Law from Madhusudan Law College.

In the late 1960s, he emerged as a prominent literary figure in India, captivating audiences with verses that often explore the intricate tapestry of human relationships, socio-political dynamics, spirituality, and the inherent fragility of life. His poetry frequently carries a poignant and contemplative undertone, reflecting the nuanced realities and formidable challenges confronted by individuals in a world rapidly undergoing transformation.

His poetry is full of vivid imagery and symbolism. His poems possess the ability to transport readers to diverse landscapes, whether it is the tranquil waters of the Mahanadi River or the bustling, chaotic streets of urban life. He has a remarkable talent for evoking a wide range of emotions and for painting vivid mental pictures through the careful selection and arrangement of words, allowing readers to visualize and feel the essence of his poetry.

In a significant milestone of his career, Jayant Mohapatra is described as having won the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for the Asia region in 1984. Some of his notable works include *Relationship*, *A Father’s Hours*, *Burden of Waves and Fruit*, and *The False Start*. Through these works, he captures the



complex nature of familial bonds, the struggle for self-identity, and the deep interconnection of life and death.

Beyond his literary achievements, Mohapatra has dedicated a substantial portion of his life to the promotion of the arts, particularly by nurturing and mentoring aspiring poets. Over the years, he held academic roles that included teaching physics and working with literary institutions. Furthermore, he served as the editor of literary magazines, helping create a platform for emerging poets to showcase their talent.

Jayant Mohapatra's influence on Indian poetry is significant, and his distinctive voice continues to resonate within India and across the international literary landscape. His ability to blend the realms of science and art, combined with a sensitive portrayal of the human condition, has secured his position as a respected figure in literature.

### Check Your Progress 01: Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

Read each question carefully and choose the most appropriate option (a, b, c, or d) from the given options.

1. When was Jayant Mohapatra born?  
(A) 22nd July, 1928 (C) 11th November, 1935  
(B) 15th March, 1942 (D) 4th September, 1950
2. In which state was Jayant Mohapatra born?  
(A) Maharashtra (B) Odisha (C) West Bengal (D) Tamil Nadu
3. What was Jayant Mohapatra's primary field of study during his higher education?  
(A) Literature (B) Physics (C) Philosophy (D) History
4. Which prestigious award did Jayant Mohapatra become the first Indian to win in 1981?  
(A) Nobel Prize in Literature (B) Man Booker Prize  
(C) Commonwealth Poetry Prize (D) Pulitzer Prize for Poetry
5. Jayant Mohapatra's poetry often explores which of the following themes?  
(A) Astrology and Horoscopes (B) Human emotions and experiences  
(C) Automotive Engineering (D) Marine Biology
6. Which city in Odisha was Jayant Mohapatra's hometown?  
(A) Bhubaneswar (C) Puri  
(B) Cuttack (D) Rourkela
7. Which of the following is not a collection of Jayant Mohapatra's poems?  
(A) *A Father's Hours* (C) *The False Start*  
(B) *Burden of Waves and Fruit* (D) *Wings of Fire*
8. Jayant Mohapatra's poetry is often associated with which kind of imagery?  
(A) Abstract (B) Surreal (C) Vivid (D) Symbolic

9. In which decade did Jayant Mohapatra emerge as a prominent literary figure in India?  
(A) 1950s (B) 1960s (C) 1970s (D) 1980s

### 13.2 An Overview of His Works:

In his autobiography, *Pahini Rati (The Night Is Not Yet Over)*, Mohapatra discusses how he evolved as a poet from his experience of being a “mere teacher of physics”. He started writing poetry at the age of 38 when he was posted at B.J.B. College in Bhubaneswar. His short stories and poems were initially rejected by several publishers, but in the late sixties they began to be published in reputed literary periodicals across the world, such as *The Times Literary Supplement*, *Critical Quarterly*, *Poetry—Chicago*, and *The Sewanee Review*. He published four volumes of poems within a decade of starting his writing practice.

Nissim Ezekiel’s response was quite stoic when the first two of Mohapatra’s poetry volumes were published in 1974. Ezekiel had published one of Mohapatra’s early poems, “Girl by the Window”, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, which Ezekiel edited along with others. However, he wrote a review in the Weekly of Mohapatra’s collections, *Close the Sky*, *Ten by Ten* and *Swayamvara and Other Poems*.

Even after receiving such criticism, Mohapatra continued to write and publish on a regular basis, not only poems but also translations of poetic works from Odia. He published two new volumes in 1976 entitled *A Father’s Hours* and *A Rain of Rites*. His other volumes include *Waiting* (1979), *The False Start* (1980), *Life Signs* (1981), *Selected Poems* (1987), *Burden of Waves and Fruit* (1988), *Temple* (1989), *A Whiteness of Bone* (1992), *Collected Poems* (2017), and *Random Descent* (2021).

He wrote poetry in Odia and English and also regularly translated his own works. He translated the Bengali poems of Sakti Chattopadhyay into English in a volume published by Sahitya Akademi titled *I Can, But Why Should I Go*. His other translations into English include *Verticals of Life: Poems* (1996), *Tapaswini: A Poem* (1998), *Discovery and Other Poems* (2001), and *A Time of Rising* (2003). It has been rightly claimed of Mohapatra that “he wrote in English, he wrote in Odia, he also wrote from Odia into English through his translations.”

Prominent poems of Mohapatra include “Indian Summer,” “Hunger,” “Dawn at Puri,” “Retreat,” “Bare Face,” “Shadow Space,” and *Relationship*, for which he won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984. He has written a total of 27 books of poems, of which 20 are in English and the remaining 7 are in Odia. His prose works include *Green Gardener* (an anthology of short stories) and *Door of Paper: Essays and Memoirs*.

In an article published in *Frontline*, his friend Sachidananda Mohanty writes that Mohapatra’s poems carry ancestral memories tinged with pathos. His grandfather’s diary dating back to the Great Famine of Odisha (1866) remained his prized possession. Forced to convert to Christianity due to starvation, his grandfather left behind a document that was both history and memory—a “scroll of despair.” It prompted Mohapatra to write a poem titled

“Grand Father” that first appeared in *The Sewanee Review*. Its opening lines go: “The yellow diary’s notes whisper in vernacular/ They sound the forgotten posture/ The cramped cry that forces me to hear that voice/ Now I stumble in your black-paged wake.”

**Check Your Progress 02: Match the following:**

A (Work) B (Year of Publication)

1. A Rain of Rites A. 1980
2. Burden of Waves and Fruit B. 1992
3. A Whiteness of Bone C. 1989
4. Temple D. 1988
5. The False Start E. 1979
6. Waiting F. 1976

**Check Your Progress 03: Fill in the blanks**

Fill in the blank and write the correct answer in the given space.

1. Mohapatra has written a total of \_\_\_\_\_ books of poems.  
Answer: 27
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ diary’s notes whisper in vernacular/ They sound the forgotten posture.  
Answer: yellow
3. Mohapatra won the Sahitya Akademi Award in the year \_\_\_\_\_ for his poem titled \_\_\_\_\_.  
Answer: 1981, *Shadow Space and Relationship*
4. The poem “Grand Father” by Mohapatra first appeared in \_\_\_\_\_.  
Answer: *The Sewanee Review*
5. Mohapatra has written \_\_\_\_\_ books in the Odia language.  
Answer: 7

**13.3**

**“Hunger”:**

The poem “Hunger” is part of the volume *A Rain of Rites* published in 1976. The title denotes two kinds of hunger depicted in the poem: hunger for food and hunger for sex. It describes a personal experience of a narrator (most probably the poet himself) that he encountered with a fisherman’s daughter, where the fisherman brings the narrator to his hut to have sex with his daughter.

The poem has four stanzas, with each stanza of five lines except for the last stanza, which has one extra line. This twenty-one-line poem does not follow a strict rhyme scheme.

Stanza 1:

It was hard to believe the flesh was heavy on my back.  
The fisherman said: Will you have her, carelessly,

trailing his nets and his nerves, as though his words  
sanctified the purpose with which he faced himself.

I saw his white bone thrash his eyes.

The poem begins in a conversational tone, as if the persona (narrator) is speaking directly to the reader about his experience. It sets a tone of incredulity and suggests a physical and metaphorical weight the speaker is experiencing. The fisherman is introduced in the second line. He asks the speaker to have sex with his daughter: “Will you have her, carelessly”. The phrase “flesh was heavy on my back” implies a burdensome and possibly unexpected responsibility or duty.

The imagery of the fisherman “trailing his nets and his nerves” suggests his daily routine and also his emotional strain, reinforcing the duality of his situation. The phrase “as though his words / sanctified the purpose with which he faced himself” attempts to show how the fisherman tries to justify his action. The closing line—“I saw his white bone thrash his eyes”—suggests the fisherman’s inner struggle visible in his eyes.

A significant point here is that neither the speaker nor the reader learns whether the daughter’s consent was taken, or whether it mattered to her father.

Stanza 2:

I followed him across the sprawling sands,  
my mind thumping in the flesh's sling.  
Hope lay perhaps in burning the house I lived in.  
Silence gripped my sleeves; his body clawed at the froth  
his old nets had only dragged up from the seas.

The second stanza paints the speaker’s guilt and inner conflict about his sexual desire/hunger. The “sprawling sands” suggest a harsh, unforgiving environment and also signify a difficult inner journey. The phrase “my mind thumping in the flesh’s sling” depicts the narrator’s mental agitation.

The line “Hope lay perhaps in burning the house I lived in” can be read metaphorically as a desire to destroy or abandon an old self and seek transformation. The “house” may symbolize the speaker’s mind or moral world. “Silence gripped my sleeves” conveys isolation, while “his body clawed at the froth” evokes struggle and desperation. The final line may also imply that, like the fisherman’s nets that pull up only froth, the speaker fears that his own desire yields only emptiness or sin.

Stanza 3:

In the flickering dark his lean-to opened like a wound.  
The wind was I, and the days and nights before.  
Palm fronds scratched my skin. Inside the shack  
an oil lamp splayed the hours bunched to those walls.  
Over and over the sticky soot crossed the space of my mind.

This stanza highlights the poverty of the fisherman's family and the speaker's renewed mental struggle in response to it. The line "his lean-to opened like a wound" portrays the hut as a site of suffering. "The wind was I" suggests the speaker's mind becoming restless and unsettled. "Palm fronds scratched my skin" may suggest discomfort, resistance, or even conscience intervening. The imagery of the oil lamp—"splayed the hours bunched to those walls"—suggests time trapped, cramped, and stagnant inside the hut. "Sticky soot" crossing the speaker's mind conveys a sense of mental pollution, confusion, helplessness, or moral suffocation.

Stanza 4:

I heard him say: My daughter, she's just turned fifteen...

Feel her. I'll be back soon, your bus leaves at nine.

The sky fell on me, and a father's exhausted wile.

Long and lean, her years were cold as rubber.

She opened her wormy legs wide. I felt the hunger there,  
the other one, the fish slithering, turning inside

In the last stanza, the fisherman speaks as if he is bargaining, describing his daughter like merchandise: "she's just turned fifteen". Mentioning her age suggests youth and vulnerability. The line "your bus leaves at nine" adds urgency and a transactional tone. The metaphor "The sky fell on me" conveys the speaker's shock and emotional burden at the father's act.

The lines describing the girl—"Long and lean, her years were cold as rubber"—suggest malnourishment and emotional numbness, implying trauma and deprivation. The final image—"the fish slithering, turning inside"—suggests the bodily sensation of hunger from an empty stomach, contrasting with sexual hunger. The speaker recognizes a deeper hunger rooted in poverty and exploitation.

Check Your Progress 05:

Short Answer Questions

(Note: You can refer to model answers given below each question to strengthen the argument of your answer.)

1. What is the significance of the daughter turning fifteen in the poem "Hunger"?

Ans.: The daughter turning fifteen signifies a critical transition from childhood to adolescence, a phase marked by increased vulnerability. It helps foreground themes of exploitation and societal pressure.

2. How does the metaphor of the "sky falling" in the poem "Hunger" contribute to the emotional impact of the narrative?

Ans.: The metaphor creates a vivid image of overwhelming emotional

burden, emphasizing the gravity of the situation and the weight experienced by the narrator.

3. What does the phrase “her years were cold as rubber” reveal about the daughter's characterization in the poem “Hunger”?

Ans.: The phrase suggests emotional detachment and possibly the impact of trauma or mistreatment, offering insight into the girl's emotional condition.

4. Explain the symbolism of the phrase “wormy legs wide” in the poem “Hunger” and its impact on the reader.

Ans.: The phrase produces a disturbing image of violation and vulnerability. It intensifies the theme of exploitation and leaves a lasting impression on the reader.

5. How does the imagery of “fish slithering, turning inside” contribute to the overall theme and tone of the poem “Hunger”?

Ans.: The imagery intensifies discomfort and reinforces the poem's dark tone by shifting attention from sexual hunger to the deeper hunger of poverty and deprivation.

### 13.4 “Dawn at Puri”:

The poem “Dawn at Puri” is part of the volume *A Rain of Rites* published in 1976. From the title, readers can predict that the poem is set in the holy coastal city of Puri in Odisha. However, throughout the poem there is no explicit mention of the name “Puri.” The poem has 18 lines divided into six stanzas, each stanza having three lines. The structure resembles sea waves: the first three stanzas imitate rising waves, while the last three resemble falling waves. The metrical variety (a mixture of trochaic, iambic, and anapestic movement) contributes to the rhythm of the seashore.

Endless crow noises

A skull in the holy sands

tilts its empty country towards hunger.

The first stanza begins with “Endless crow noises.” The crows suggest ritual offerings associated with death rites and *shraddha*. The “skull” becomes a metaphor for poverty and hunger. The contrast is striking: ritual food is offered to crows for the salvation of the dead, while the living continue to suffer from hunger.

White-clad widowed women

past the centers of their lives

are waiting to enter the Great Temple

The second stanza presents pilgrims waiting to enter the Puri temple. The widowed women symbolize the social expectations imposed on widows who have lost their husbands and passed their youth—often expected to live in

austerity and devotion. “White-clad” suggests conventional associations with renunciation, chastity, and spiritual discipline.

Their austere eyes  
stare like those caught in a net  
hanging by the dawn's shining strands of faith.

The third stanza focuses on the widows’ “austere eyes,” comparing them to fish caught in a net. The image suggests entrapment, helplessness, and struggle, while “dawn’s shining strands of faith” represents their last sustaining hope.

The faint early light catches  
ruined, leprous shells leaning against one another,  
a mass of crouched faces without names,  
Here the poet uses “shells” to compare the widows’ lonely, damaged existence. Like shells piled on the shore, they gather together, stripped of individuality. “A mass of crouched faces without names” suggests anonymity, erasure, and collective suffering.  
and suddenly breaks out of my hide  
into the smoky blaze of a sullen solitary pyre  
that fills my aging mother:

This stanza introduces the image of the funeral pyre, suggesting mortality and the inevitable end of life. The pyre’s “smoky blaze” awakens the mother’s awareness of approaching death.

her last wish to be cremated here  
twisting uncertainly like light  
on the shifting sands

The final stanza shifts into a personal note. The mother’s wish to be cremated in Puri conveys her deep spiritual bond with the place. The image of light “twisting uncertainly” suggests the fragility of life and the uncertainty of the final moment, while “shifting sands” symbolize impermanence.

Check Your Progress 06: Essay-type questions:

(Note: You can refer to model answers given below each question to strengthen the argument of your answer.)

1. How does the poem “Dawn at Puri” explore themes of spirituality and nature?  
Ans.: “Dawn at Puri” intertwines the natural scene of dawn with spiritual reflection. Dawn symbolizes awakening, and nature becomes a medium through which spiritual consciousness is felt.
2. Discuss the role of imagery in conveying the essence of the poem “Dawn at Puri.”  
Ans.: Vivid imagery of crows, skull, widows, shells, and the sea creates a

sensory scene. It deepens the poem's contemplative tone and highlights spiritual and social realities.

3. How does the poet use symbolism to convey deeper meanings in "Dawn at Puri"?

Ans.: The Great Temple symbolizes devotion and transcendence, while the sea suggests cyclicity and eternity. Images like skulls and widows symbolize suffering amid sanctity.

4. Explore the significance of the setting in "Dawn at Puri" and its impact on the poem's tone and mood.

Ans.: The coastal sacred setting produces a reflective mood. It blends devotion with stark social images, creating a solemn and meditative tone.

5. Discuss the poet's relationship with nature as depicted in "Dawn at Puri."

Ans.: Nature is shown as both beautiful and revealing. It enables spiritual reflection and also mirrors human suffering and impermanence.

6. How does the poem "Dawn at Puri" encapsulate the concept of time and eternity?

Ans.: The rhythmic movement of sea-like stanzas and dawn imagery evokes cyclical time, while the sea suggests continuity and eternity.

7. Explore the emotional and spiritual transformation that occurs within the speaker in "Dawn at Puri."

Ans.: The speaker moves from observation of the outer world to an inward awareness of mortality and faith, suggesting a quiet spiritual transformation.

8. How does the poet use language and diction to create a contemplative atmosphere in "Dawn at Puri"?

Ans.: The poet uses restrained, evocative diction and symbolic images, encouraging meditation on faith, suffering, and death.

9. Discuss the influence of the temple spire on the overall meaning and structure of "Dawn at Puri."

Ans.: The temple functions as the spiritual centre of the setting, shaping the poem's devotional atmosphere and anchoring its symbols of transcendence.

10. Explore the spiritual awakening and renewal depicted in "Dawn at Puri" and its broader implications.

Ans.: Dawn becomes a metaphor for renewal, inviting introspection and spiritual awakening, while also confronting social suffering and human impermanence.

### 13.5 Let Us Sum Up:

In this unit, we discussed the life and literary contributions of Mohapatra as a post-Independence Indian English poet. Jayant Mohapatra (born in 1928) is



known for poetry that reflects the complexities of human existence and social concerns. His works explore spirituality, socio-economic realities, and the human condition.

We examined Mohapatra's background and the influences that shaped his poetic voice. His experiences in Odisha and his observation of socio-cultural changes in post-Independence India play a key role in shaping the themes in his poetry.

We also discussed two notable poems: "Hunger" and "Dawn at Puri." In "Hunger," Mohapatra offers a powerful critique of socio-economic disparity and exploitation, using the concept of hunger to symbolize deeper social problems. "Dawn at Puri" presents a sacred landscape at dawn while simultaneously exposing images of poverty, anonymity, and mortality. The poem blends spirituality with stark social realities, revealing Mohapatra's contemplative yet critical vision.

### **Essay Type Questions:**

1. Explore the life and literary contributions of Jayant Mahapatra. How has his background and experiences shaped his poetry?
2. Analyse the theme of spirituality and its manifestation in "Dawn at Puri." How does Mahapatra use poetic devices to convey the essence of the spiritual experience in this poem?
3. Examine the significance of the title "Dawn at Puri" in relation to the themes explored in the poem. How does the setting contribute to the overall meaning of the work?
4. Discuss the role of imagery in "Dawn at Puri." How does Mahapatra use vivid and sensory descriptions to create a distinct atmosphere within the poem?
5. In "Hunger," Jayant Mahapatra addresses socio-economic issues. Analyse the socio-political commentary present in the poem and its relevance to contemporary society.
6. Explore the symbolism of hunger in Mahapatra's poem. How does he use the concept of hunger as a metaphor to convey deeper meanings and societal critiques?
7. Discuss the use of language and style in "Hunger." How does Mahapatra employ literary techniques to engage the reader and enhance the impact of the poem's message?
8. Examine recurring themes in Jayant Mahapatra's poetry, drawing connections between "Dawn at Puri" and "Hunger." How do these themes reflect the poet's worldview and concerns?

9. Compare and contrast the tone and mood of “Dawn at Puri” and “Hunger.” How does Mahapatra employ different stylistic elements to convey distinct emotions in each poem?
10. Evaluate the cultural and historical contexts in which Jayant Mahapatra wrote “Dawn at Puri” and “Hunger.” How do these contexts influence the themes and messages conveyed in the poems?

**Answers:**

**Check Your Progress 01: Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)**

1. A. 22nd July, 1928
2. B. Odisha
3. B. Physics
4. C. Commonwealth Poetry Prize
5. B. Human emotions and experiences
6. B. Cuttack
7. D. *Wings of Fire*
8. C. Vivid
9. C. 1970s

**Check Your Progress 02: Match the following**

1. A Rain of Rites – F (1976)
2. Burden of Waves and Fruit – D (1988)
3. A Whiteness of Bone – B (1992)
4. Temple – C (1989)
5. The False Start – A (1980)
6. Waiting – E (1979)

**Check Your Progress 03: Fill in the blanks**

1. 27
2. yellow
3. 1981, *Shadow Space and Relationship*
4. *The Sewanee Review*
5. 7

**Suggested Readings:**

Jayanta Mahapatra. "The Voice in the Ink". *The Illustrated Weekly of India*. April 1990.

Mahapatra, Jayanta. *Life Signs*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983. Print.

Mahapatra, Jayanta. *A Rain of Rites*. Athens, Georgia, University of Georgia Press, 1976. Print.

Iyengar, K. R. S. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1962. Print.

Jayanta Mahapatra. "The Whorehouse in a Calcutta Street" anthologized in R. Parthasarathy (Ed.), *Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976.

## Unit 14

## Kamala Das: “Summer in Calcutta”, “An Introduction”

### 14.0 Objectives

#### 14.1 Introduction to Indian Writing in English (Poetry)

#### 14.2 Introduction to the Poet

#### 14.3 The Poem: “Summer in Calcutta”

#### 14.4 Let Us Sum Up

#### 14.5 Key Words

#### 14.6 Suggested Reading

#### Answers

### 14.0 Objectives:

In this unit you will learn:

- Some characteristics of Indian poetry in English, with examples of two women poets.
- About Kamala Das and her poetry.
- To understand the poem.
- To appreciate the style.
- To understand the figures of speech.

### 14.1 Introduction to Indian Writing in English (Poetry):

The early beginnings of Indian Writing in English (IWE) can be traced to the 1850s. The Romantic Age in English literature had already flourished, and it was the Victorian Age of English literature in Britain. The earlier arrival of the printing press and the introduction of English education in India contributed to the growth and development of IWE. India became a testing ground for the launch of English literature in the classroom, when British universities were still steeped in the study of Latin and Greek classics.

The earliest writings were scoffed at as “Matthew Arnold in a saree”, “Shakuntala in a mini-skirt”, etc. The earliest poets did imitate British poetry, as we see in the case of the Dutt sisters.

We can look at the first phase of Indian poetry in English as the period when the Dutt sisters, as well as Derozio and Madhusudan Dutt, wrote in imitation of British Romantic poetry. In the second phase, the poetry of writers like Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, and Sarojini Naidu was fraught with nationalism, spirituality, and mysticism.

(We shall now look at two important women poets of IWE, before moving on to Kamala Das.)

Toru Dutt was described by James Darmesteter as “a phenomenon without parallel... a daughter of Bengal, so admirably and so strangely gifted, Hindu by race and tradition, an Englishwoman by education, a Frenchwoman at

heart... who blended in herself three souls and three traditions, and died ... in the full bloom of her talent and on the eve of the awakening of her genius". This aptly sums up the importance and contribution of Toru Dutt, who died at the early age of 24. Having lived in Europe, the Dutt sisters were exposed to Western culture and sought to imitate it both in their style of living and in their writing. As she writes in 1874: "We all long to go to Europe again. We hope, if we go, to settle in England and not to return to India any more". Later, she felt an increasing colonial oppression and wrote: "India is my patrie (fatherland)", with the realization that Europe could not replace India as her true home. On her return to India, she went back to her study of Sanskrit.

Her published works are *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (published in 1876 without a preface or introduction), *Bianca or the Spanish Maiden* (serialized in *Bengal Magazine*), and *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (published posthumously). She also published translations of French poems and wrote two novels, in addition to numerous items in *The Bengal Magazine* and *The Calcutta Review*. Some of her poems like "Casuarina Tree", "Sita", and "The Lotus" are popular and are part of syllabi in schools and colleges in India even today.

It is during the same period that we have her elder sister Aru Dutt completing eight verse translations. (In this unit, we shall be looking only at the women poets of IWE.)

The next important woman poet of IWE is Sarojini Naidu (1879—1949). Hailed as the Nightingale of India and "one of India's finest luminaries", she was also a freedom fighter and an activist. She had an exceptional knowledge of Urdu, English, Telugu, Bengali, and Persian. She began writing at the young age of 12.

Her earliest poems were written in the tradition of British Romanticism and were lyrical in quality. Often called the "Indian Yeats", she published three volumes of poems during her lifetime: *The Golden Threshold*, *The Bird of Time*, and *The Broken Wing*. After her death, her unpublished poems were collected in *The Feather of Dawn*. Her poems exhibit vivid imagery and scenes from the Indian milieu and are filled with metaphors and similes. K. R. S. Iyengar writes of her: "From Tagore to Sarojini, the transition is as significant as that from lofty grandeur to rapturous loveliness, from the Vedantic idealism of the philosopher to the ecstatic fervor of a devotee of love".

The themes and background of her poetry were purely Indian, as she sang with ease of the occupations, festivals, and life of the Indian people. In "The Bazaars of Hyderabad", she creates the scene beautifully with merchants, vendors, goldsmiths, fruit-merchants, flower-girls, etc. The variety of similes can be seen in "The Palanquin Bearers" with "sways like a flower", "skims like a bird", "floats like a laugh", "hangs like a star", etc. The musical quality of the poem too is appreciable.

Another aspect of her poetry is mysticism, which is an integral part of the writings of poets like Sri Aurobindo and Tagore. A critic, Rajyalakshmi, observes: "She is goaded by a hunger for the eternal, the unknown and infinite, and seeks, poetically rather than metaphysically, to relate herself to

the universe”. In some of her poems, we find an ardent quest of the poetess to unite with the Infinite. Some poems are set in the archetypal love songs of Radha and Krishna, as in “Songs of Radha, the Milkmaid” or “The Flute Player of Brindaban”. As a devotee in search of the Infinite, she writes: “Still must I like a homeless bird/ Wander, forsaking all”.

The mystic bent in her poems bears the seal of the Vedic concept when she blended mysticism with Indian mythology. With emotional depth and intellectual vigour, the mystic experiences are further steeped in spirituality. In a poem like “Village Songs”, we see the interplay of the real, the mystical, the spiritual, and the mythical. Greatly influenced by Persian poetry, some of her poems are based on Islamic beliefs too, as we see in poems like “The Imam Bara”, “The Prayer of Islam”, etc.

### **Check Your Progress 1**

Fill in the blanks with appropriate words/phrases:

- i) IWE began in the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ii) Toru Dutt lived in \_\_\_\_\_ for a few years.
- iii) \_\_\_\_\_ is an important poem by Toru Dutt.
- iv) Sarojini Naidu was hailed as the \_\_\_\_\_ of India.
- vi) Influenced by \_\_\_\_\_ poetry, some of Sarojini Naidu’s poems are based on Islamic beliefs.

### **14.2 Kamala Das (1934—2009):**

Born into a high-status family, Kamala Das also wrote under the pen name Madhavikutty in Malayalam, while taking on the Muslim name Kamala Suraiya after her conversion to Islam. She has been both lauded and criticized for writing openly and frankly about female sexual desires and the experiences of being an Indian woman in a society steeped in patriarchal traditions. She belonged to that generation of writers whose writing was more about their internal world than the external world.

Receiving many literary awards, she wrote both in English and Malayalam. Her collections of poetry are *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967), and *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems* (1973). She also published a novel, *Alphabet of Lust* (1976), and short stories such as *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* (1977) and *Padmavati, the Harlot* (1992). Her autobiography in English, *My Story*, was published in 1976. It first appeared as a series of columns in the Malayalam weekly *Malayalanadu*. She has to her credit short stories as well as a memoir in Malayalam.

Her writings are generally classified under the genre of confessional poetry, which was not common for Indian women poets, though she has been compared to Anne Sexton. The poems deal with Indian society and its patriarchal norms, while also describing a woman’s yearnings. Some critics point out that there is a strong sense of spirituality running through many of her writings. When criticized for choosing to write in English, she says in her poem “An Introduction”:

“The language I speak/ Becomes mine, its distortions and its queernesses/ All mine, mine alone”.

Her autobiography could be called a voice of the Indian woman, as it deals with trials, tribulations, and burdens of expectation placed upon women in a society steeped in patriarchy. “The Old Playhouse” is infused with her feminine sensibility. She calls herself a freak who did not find love even in marriage:

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

Many of her poems reflect feminist ideals and an attitude of resistance to male control. She has an unconventional approach to marriage and views it as an oppressive game played by a spouse. Her own marriage, she suggests, robbed her of her freedom and brought her internal suffering. This note of rebelliousness is the hallmark of her poetry, as she writes in “The Old Playhouse”:

“You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her in the long summer/  
of your love so that/ She would forget/  
Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind, but/  
Also, her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless  
Pathways of the sky...”

As we look at the themes of Kamala Das’s poetry, we notice that her style is characterized by simplicity. With a natural command over the English language, she uses a wide range of vocabulary. One notices a disregard for punctuation marks or capitalization, as well as variation in the length of lines within a poem. This gives her poetry a conversational tone, but it may sometimes bewilder the reader.

Her images are drawn from the familiar and often reflect her own life. The male and female bodies are often used in stark contrast, with the male body an object of abhorrence and the female body becoming an image of sterility and barrenness, of pathos and loneliness. Symbolism, often unique, is the hallmark of her poetry. The symbols adequately convey her feelings and are usually suitable, significant, and suggestive. Some common ones are the sun, the sea, the moon, and sunshine. Imagery permeates most of her poems.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

Answer in one word/phrase:

- i) In which language did she first write her autobiography?
- ii) What is *My Story*?
- iii) What did poets like her write mainly about?
- iv) What do her symbols usually convey?
- v) What gives a conversational tone to Kamala Das’s poetry?

### **14.3 The Poem: “Summer in Calcutta”:**

This short poem was written in 1965. It describes a day that the poet spent in Calcutta. The season was summer. Being a confessional poet, she talks more about her feelings rather than the season or the world outside.

The poem seems simple on first reading, but a closer reading reveals layers of meaning and symbolism. Critics have referred to it as feminist and individualistic poetry too. Some have described it as “a temporary triumph over the defeat of love,” and others as “an Indian poet’s reaction to the torture of the Indian summer.”

The poem begins with a rhetorical question: “What is this drink?” We can interpret this in many ways. To begin with, not being a regular drinker, she probably cannot identify the drink. One might also interpret it as an attack on patriarchal norms, where women generally were not expected to drink. Whether it is the heat of the sun or the drink, we are left to decide.

“I sip the fire,” she says, and wonders if it can ever quench her thirst. The thirst here is not only bodily thirst which can be quenched with a drink; it is internal thirst and can be read as a reference to physical or sexual desires. The drink is hot as if the sun has been “squeezed like an orange” into her glass.

She is intoxicated but wants to continue:

“I sip the/ Fire, I drink and drink/ Again, I am drunk”.

There is a sense of blissful intoxication. The heat of summer is nothing compared to the heat within her. Kamala Das has never shied away from writing about female sexuality, and she does the same in this poem.

Now the same heat or sunlight becomes venom, though “a noble venom”:

“What noble/ venom, now flows through/ my veins and fills my/ mind with unhurried laughter?”

She experiences the heat within but cannot understand or explain the laughter within. Is it a sense of freedom or the ability to break away from taboos? The question is rhetorical, and the reader is left to respond.

The poem then turns to the thought of a person she loves, perhaps her husband. The “blur in memory” may refer to her past, when she was a bride. The bubbles are compared to “the bride’s nervous smile.” The image of a bride adds innocence and excitement, contrasting with the earlier description of being drunk. She was innocent then and perhaps nervous; hence the smile is like the small bubbles in her glass.

She feels the pleasure of a kiss on her lips as she enjoys a sensual pleasure in the present, forgetting her husband temporarily. In “An Introduction,” she also speaks of seeking sexual gratification outside marriage. Throughout this poem, there is a double meaning: the heat of the weather and thoughts of sexual gratification are intertwined. Here she finds a different pleasure in the heat of the Calcutta summer, and hence the “blur”.

The poem ends where it began, with the “juice of April suns” squeezed like oranges into a glass.

Kamala Das has been accused by some critics of being obsessed with sex and the body in her writings, and of being almost pornographic in some poems. She has admitted in her autobiography to being a rebel and a poet of female longings. This poem too differs from conventional Indian poetry in English: it questions gendered roles and allows her to relax in a “self-contained mood of sensuous luxury”.

The entire poem is written in a single verse, giving it an almost conversational tone of remembering. Hence, not much importance has been given to the



poem's conventional poetic features. The main figure of speech throughout is symbolism.

### Test Your Progress 3

State whether True or False:

- i) The poem was written in Malayalam.
- ii) The poem has only one layer of meaning.
- iii) There is no mention of a "bride" in the poem.
- iv) Kamala Das has been accused of being obsessed with sex.
- v) The poem is written in a conversational tone.

### 14.4 Let Us Sum Up:

In this unit you have read about:

- The beginnings of poetry in IWE.
- Two important women poets of IWE.
- Kamala Das.
- An analysis of "Summer in Calcutta".

### 14.5 Key Words:

Tradition, lyrical quality, Indian milieu, similes, imagery, confessionalism

### 14.6 Suggested Reading:

Indian Writing in English: Edited by K. A. Agrawal

Indian Writing in English by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

A History of Indian English Literature by M. K. Naik

*The Poetry of Kamala Das* by K. R. Ramachandran Nair

*Kamala Das and Her Poetry* by A. N. Dwivedi

### Answers

#### Check Your Progress 1

- i) 1850's ii) Europe iii) Casuarina Tree/Sita/The Lotus iv) Nightingale
- v) Persian

#### Check Your Progress 2

- i) Malayalam
- ii) Her autobiography
- iii) About internal feelings
- iv) Her feelings
- v) Lack of punctuation marks

#### Check Your Progress 3

- i) False ii) False iii) False iv) True v) True

## Unit 15

## Nissim Ezekiel: “Night of the Scorpion” and “The Patriot”

### 15.0 Objectives

#### 15.1 Introduction

#### 15.2 Literary Style and Technique of Nissim Ezekiel

#### 15.3 “Night of the Scorpion”: Text

#### 15.4 A Brief Summary of the Poem

#### 15.5 Stanza-wise Critical Analysis of the Poem

#### 15.6 Technical Devices Used in the Poem

#### 15.7 Main Themes of the Poem

#### 15.8 “The Patriot”: Text and Analysis

#### 15.9 Stanza-wise Critical Analysis of the Poem

#### 15.10 Technical Devices Used in the Poem

#### 15.11 Main Themes of the Poem

#### 15.12 Let Us Sum Up

#### 15.13 Key Words

#### Check Your Progress

#### Suggested Readings

#### Answers

### 15.0 Objectives:

In this unit, we shall:

- Analyse the poems’ themes, literary devices, and language usage to develop a deeper understanding of their messages.
- Discuss the cultural context of the poem(s) and develop communication skills through class discussions.
- Express personal responses to the poems through creative writing or critical analysis.
- Through discussing the mother’s plight in the poem, develop an understanding of different cultural practices and beliefs.
- Reflect on personal understanding of patriotism and its relevance to one’s life and society.

On completing this unit, you should be able to:

- Analyse the poems’ themes, literary devices, and language usage.
- Discuss the cultural context of the poem(s) and develop communication skills.
- Express personal responses to the poems through creative writing or critical analysis.

- Develop an understanding of different cultural practices and beliefs.
- Reflect on personal understanding of patriotism and its relevance to one's life and society.

### **15.1 Introduction:**

Nissim Ezekiel (24 December 1924 – 9 January 2004) was an Indian poet, playwright, editor, and art critic, widely regarded as one of the most influential figures in Indian English literature. He played a significant role in shaping the modern literary landscape in India and is often referred to as the “father of post-independence Indian verse in English.”

Ezekiel was born to Jewish parents in Mumbai. He pursued his education at Wilson College in Mumbai and later attended Brubeck College, University of London, where he studied philosophy. He also briefly worked as a lecturer in English literature at Mithibai College in Mumbai. Ezekiel's literary career began during the 1940s and 1950s when he emerged as one of the prominent figures of the “Bombay Group,” a collective of writers, artists, and intellectuals based in Mumbai. His early poetry explored themes of love, urban life, and the human condition.

His poetry is known for its wit, humour, and conversational style. He blended Indian sensibilities with Western poetics, and his work often addressed social and cultural issues with a distinct voice.

He founded and edited the literary journal *Quest* in 1953 and the poetry publishing imprint *Clearing House*. Through these platforms, Ezekiel provided opportunities for emerging Indian poets to publish their work. Some of his notable works include *A Time to Change* (1952), *The Exact Name* (1965), *Hymns in Darkness* (1976), and *Latter-Day Psalms* (1982). His poems “Night of the Scorpion” and “The Patriot” are among his most famous and frequently studied works.

Apart from poetry, Ezekiel also wrote plays and worked as an art critic, further showcasing his versatility and engagement with different forms of creative expression. Throughout his career, Ezekiel received numerous awards and honours for his contributions to literature, including the Sahitya Akademi Award (1983) and the Padma Shri (1988). His works continue to be celebrated for their accessibility, relevance, and humanistic approach.

### **15.2 Literary Style and Technique of Nissim Ezekiel:**

Ezekiel's poetry displays a range of techniques that contribute to its uniqueness and appeal. His literary style showcases a fusion of Indian and Western cultural elements. He weaves Indian imagery, metaphors, and references into English poetry, making it culturally rich and widely relatable.

One defining feature of Ezekiel's poetry is his use of humour and wit to address serious subjects. Through irony, satire, and clever wordplay, he brings a light-hearted yet incisive perspective to societal issues and human experiences. Ezekiel's poems are characterized by simplicity and clarity. He avoids obscure language and complex structures, opting for straightforward expression that makes his work accessible to a wide audience.

His poetry often adopts a conversational tone, making readers feel as if they are engaging in a friendly dialogue with the poet. Ezekiel employs vivid imagery and metaphorical language to convey complex emotions and ideas. Many of his poems also function as social commentary, observing and critiquing contemporary society, including traditions, cultural norms, and politics.

Themes of identity, belonging, and alienation appear frequently in his writing, shaped partly by his experience as an Indian Jew and his reflections on cultural identity. While known for accessibility, Ezekiel also experimented with forms such as free verse and modernist techniques. Love and human relationships recur across his work, as does his reflection on the role of the poet and the responsibility of art.

### **15.3 “Night of the Scorpion”: Text**

I remember the night my mother  
was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours  
of steady rain had driven him  
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.  
Parting with his poison - flash  
of diabolic tail in the dark room -  
he risked the rain again.  
The peasants came like swarms of flies  
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times  
to paralyze the Evil One.  
With candles and with lanterns  
throwing giant scorpion shadows  
on the mud-baked walls  
they searched for him: he was not found.  
They clicked their tongues.  
With every movement that the scorpion made his poison moved in Mother's  
blood, they said.  
May he sit still, they said  
May the sins of your previous birth  
be burned away tonight, they said.  
May your suffering decrease  
the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.  
May the sum of all evil  
balanced in this unreal world  
against the sum of good  
become diminished by your pain.  
May the poison purify your flesh

of desire, and your spirit of ambition,  
they said, and they sat around  
on the floor with my mother in the centre,  
the peace of understanding on each face.  
More candles, more lanterns, more neighbours,  
more insects, and the endless rain.  
My mother twisted through and through,  
groaning on a mat.  
My father, sceptic, rationalist,  
trying every curse and blessing,  
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.  
He even poured a little paraffin  
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.  
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.  
I watched the holy man perform his rites  
to tame the poison with an incantation.  
After twenty hours  
it lost its sting.  
My mother only said  
Thank God the scorpion picked on me  
And spared my children.

#### **15.4 A Brief Summary of the Poem:**

The poem “Night of the Scorpion” was first published in 1965. It is characterized by simplicity, accessibility, and cultural fusion. The poem uses free-verse narration without a fixed rhyme scheme or fixed metre, allowing the rhythm to adapt to the incident and emotions portrayed. Its straightforward language and conversational tone make it easy for readers to engage with the narrative.

The poem opens with the speaker recalling the night his mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours of steady rain had driven the scorpion to seek shelter beneath a sack of rice. After stinging the mother—its “diabolic tail” flashing in the dark—the scorpion disappears.

Villagers quickly gather, chanting God’s name to paralyze the “Evil One.” Candles and lanterns cast giant scorpion shadows on mud-baked walls as they search for the creature, but it is not found. The villagers believe the poison moves in the mother’s blood with every movement of the scorpion. They interpret the mother’s suffering through religious and karmic ideas, suggesting it will burn away past sins and reduce future misfortune.

Meanwhile, the mother twists in pain on a mat. The father—described as sceptic and rationalist—tries various remedies, including a drastic act of burning the bitten toe with paraffin and a match. A holy man also performs rites and incantations to tame the poison. After twenty hours, the sting loses its effect. The poem ends with the mother’s quiet gratitude: she thanks God

that the scorpion picked on her and spared her children, revealing her selfless love.

### **15.5 Stanza-wise Critical Analysis of the Poem:**

**Stanza1:**

The poem begins with a vivid recollection of the mother being stung. The rainy setting and the scorpion seeking shelter create an atmosphere of foreboding. The phrase “flash of diabolic tail” heightens the sinister impression and introduces the central incident.

**Stanza2:**

The villagers rush in and respond through communal ritual. Their repeated chanting, and the candle-lit search that throws “giant scorpion shadows,” produces an eerie, almost theatrical atmosphere. The stanza emphasizes collective faith and traditional responses to crisis.

**Stanza3:**

The villagers fail to find the scorpion and click their tongues in frustration. Their belief that poison moves with the scorpion’s movement reveals superstition and fear. The poem begins to show how suffering is interpreted as purification.

**Stanza4:**

The repeated “May...” blessings intensify the ritualistic mood and convey a karmic worldview: pain becomes a means of cleansing and spiritual accounting. The line “the peace of understanding on each face” suggests that shared belief offers comfort and certainty.

**Stanza5:**

The father is introduced as “sceptic, rationalist.” His remedies—curses, blessings, mixtures, and finally burning the toe—show desperation. The contrast between folk ritual and pragmatic intervention highlights the coexistence of belief systems.

**Stanza6:**

The poet-speaker watches, giving the poem an eyewitness quality. The mother’s twisting body and groans make suffering tangible. The image of flame “feeding” on the mother intensifies horror and empathy.

**Stanza7:**

The holy man’s rites and incantation represent religious healing practices. The poem does not mock faith outright; instead, it presents it as one part of the village’s response.

**Stanza8:**

After twenty hours, the poison loses its sting. The mother’s final statement becomes the moral centre of the poem: maternal love overrides fear, pain, and resentment. Her gratitude transforms the narrative into a meditation on sacrifice and compassion.

### **15.6 Technical Devices Used in the Poem:**

**Simile:**

“The peasants came like swarms of flies” — compares villagers to swarms of flies, emphasizing large numbers and urgency.

Metaphor:

“Flash of diabolic tail” — the scorpion’s tail is described as “diabolic,” implying evil.

Personification:

“They clicked their tongues” — foregrounds the villagers’ audible reaction as expressive social behaviour.

Alliteration:

“Parting with his poison” — repetition of the “p” sound draws attention to the act of poisoning.

Repetition:

“May...” — repeated throughout the villagers’ prayers, emphasizing their persistent pleas.

Symbolism:

The scorpion symbolizes danger, fear, and the sudden intrusion of suffering into ordinary life.

Irony:

The mother’s gratitude at the end is ironic because she suffered greatly, yet values her children’s safety above her own pain.

Imagery:

“giant scorpion shadows” and “mud-baked walls” create a vivid rural atmosphere and deepen the poem’s tension.

### **15.7 Main Themes of the Poem:**

Superstition and Rituals:

The villagers respond through prayer, chanting, and karma-based explanations, reflecting traditional belief structures.

Human Resilience:

The mother endures prolonged suffering, reflecting endurance in the face of pain.

Communal Support and Unity:

Villagers gather in solidarity, showing community involvement during crisis.

Mother’s Sacrificial Love:

The mother’s final words highlight selflessness and protective love.

Clash of Belief Systems:

Villagers’ superstition contrasts with the father’s sceptical, rational approach, showing tradition and modernity side by side.

Power of Nature and the Unknown:

The stormy night and the scorpion’s sudden appearance suggest the unpredictable force of nature and fear of the unknown.

### 15.8 “The Patriot”: Text

I am standing for peace and non-violence.  
Why world is fighting,  
Why all people of world  
Are not following Mahatma Gandhi,  
I am simply not understanding.  
Ancient Indian Wisdom is 100% correct,  
I should say even 200% correct,  
But modern generation is neglecting -  
Too much going for fashion and foreign thing.  
Other day I'm reading newspaper  
(Every day I'm reading Times of India  
To improve my English Language)  
How one goonda fellow  
Threw stone at Indirabehn.  
Must be student unrest fellow, I am thinking.  
Friends, Romans, Countrymen, I am saying (to myself)  
Lend me the ears.  
Everything is coming -  
Regeneration, Remuneration, Contraception.  
Be patiently, brothers and sisters.  
You want one glass lassi?  
Very good for digestion.  
With little salt, lovely drink,  
Better than wine;  
Not that I am ever tasting the wine.  
I'm the total teetotaler, completely total,  
But I say  
Wine is for the drunkards only.  
What you think of prospects of world peace?  
Pakistan behaving like this,  
China behaving like that,  
It is making me really sad, I am telling you.  
Really, most harassing me.  
All men are brothers, no?  
In India also  
Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Hindiwallahs  
All brothers -  
Though some are having funny habits.



Still, you tolerate me,  
I tolerate you,  
One day Ram Rajya is surely coming.  
You are going?  
But you will visit again  
Any time, any day,  
I am not believing in ceremony  
Always I am enjoying your company.

### 15.9 Stanza-wise Critical Analysis of the Poem:

“The Patriot” offers a satirical exploration of patriotism through a persona who speaks in Indian English idiom. The speaker claims to stand for peace and non-violence, invoking Gandhi, yet their speech reveals contradictions, clichés, and shallow moral certainty. The humour arises from the mismatch between earnest tone and the speaker’s limited grasp of complex realities.

The poem mocks hollow slogans (“All men are brothers, no?”), exaggerated claims (“100%... 200% correct”), and superficial ideas of national pride. The speaker’s daily reading of *The Times of India* “to improve my English Language” becomes comic because it reduces world events to personal self-improvement. The poem also critiques communal and regional divisions even while the speaker insists on unity.

The repeated friendliness—offering lassi, welcoming the visitor—shows a social warmth that coexists with naïve political commentary. The ending keeps the tone conversational and slightly absurd, underscoring Ezekiel’s satire of middle-class moral posturing and performative patriotism.

### 15.10 Technical Devices Used in the Poem:

Irony:

The speaker claims moral clarity, but their language and logic reveal confusion and contradiction.

Satire:

The poem mocks social attitudes, political clichés, and shallow nationalism through humour.

Allusion:

References to Mahatma Gandhi and “Friends, Romans, Countrymen” add cultural and literary layers.

Colloquial Language:

“goonda fellow,” “Indirabehn,” “Hindiwallahs” create authenticity and humour.

Symbolism:

“Ram Rajya” symbolizes an idealized vision of harmony, used here with naïve optimism.

Repetition:

Phrases like “Any time, any day” emphasize the speaker’s insistent friendliness.

Tone Shifts:

The poem moves between moral commentary and casual hospitality, creating comic effect.

Hyperbole:

“100%... 200% correct” exaggerates to highlight shallow certainty.

### **15.11 Main Themes of the Poem:**

Patriotism and National Identity:

The poem questions what patriotism means and exposes performative nationalism.

Violence and Non-violence:

Gandhian ideals are invoked, but the speaker cannot reconcile them with global realities.

Cultural and Generational Differences:

The speaker laments “fashion and foreign thing,” reflecting anxiety about modernity.

Unity and Disunity:

The poem highlights divisions even as it repeats slogans of brotherhood.

Irony and Satire:

Humour becomes the method of critique, revealing contradictions in social attitudes.

Optimism vs. Pessimism:

Despite frustrations, the speaker clings to hope (“Ram Rajya is surely coming”).

Cultural Synthesis/Hybridity:

The Indian English voice itself reflects mixed cultural and linguistic identity.

### **15.12 Let Us Sum Up:**

“Night of the Scorpion” presents a moving village incident where communal faith, superstition, and rational attempts at cure coexist. The poem finally centres on the mother’s sacrificial love, expressed through her gratitude that her children were spared.

“The Patriot” offers a satirical portrait of a self-proclaimed patriot whose language reveals clichés, contradictions, and shallow certainty. Through humour and irony, Ezekiel critiques performative patriotism, social divisions, and the uneasy negotiation between tradition and modernity.

### 15.13 Key Words:

“Night of the Scorpion”

Diabolic: devilish; sinister.

Sceptic (skeptical): one who doubts accepted beliefs.

Paraffin: a flammable oil used as fuel.

Incantation: ritual chanting believed to have spiritual power.

Stoic: enduring pain without complaint.

Resilience: ability to recover from hardship.

“The Patriot”

Patriotism: loyalty and attachment to one’s country.

Non-violence: peaceful resistance associated with Gandhi.

Ancient Indian wisdom: traditional cultural knowledge/values.

Foreign influences: modern trends from outside India.

Irony: contrast between what is said and what is meant.

Satire: humour used to criticize society.

Lassi: a traditional yogurt-based drink.

Prohibition: banning/restricting alcohol.

Ram Rajya: idealized rule of Rama; symbol of harmony.

Hybridity: mixture of cultural/linguistic influences.

### 15.14 Check Your Progress:

I. “Night of the Scorpion”

1. Fill in the Blanks:

- (a) The poet’s mother was stung by a \_\_\_\_\_.
- (b) The scorpion sought shelter under a sack of \_\_\_\_\_.
- (c) The villagers tried to ward off the scorpion’s evil influence through \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- (d) The father’s approach to treating the scorpion’s sting was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Multiple Choice Questions

- (a) The setting of the poem is a:
  - i. City
  - ii. Forest

iii. Village

iv. Desert

(b) The scorpion's tail is described as "diabolic," which means:

i. Poisonous

ii. Harmless

iii. Devilish

iv. Beautiful

(c) The mother's response to the scorpion sting is characterized by her:

i. Laughter

ii. Stoic composure

iii. Panic

iv. Fainting

(d) The father's actions to treat the scorpion sting include:

i. Using paraffin and a match

ii. Chanting prayers

iii. Dancing around the mother

iv. Ignoring the situation

3. Short Answer Questions:

(a) What is the central incident in the poem "Night of the Scorpion"?

(b) How do the villagers respond to the scorpion sting?

(c) What contrast is evident in the poem regarding the father's approach?

4. Long Answer Questions:

(a) Explain the significance of the mother's gratitude despite enduring the scorpion's sting.

(b) Discuss the poet's portrayal of the scorpion and its significance in the poem "Night of the Scorpion."

II. "The Patriot"

1. Fill in the blanks:

(a) In "The Patriot" by \_\_\_\_\_, the speaker's ambivalence toward national identity is marked by admiration for ancient Indian wisdom and frustration with modern foreign influences.

(b) The use of \_\_\_\_\_ in the poem, such as the humorous reference

to reading the newspaper for language improvement, underscores the satirical tone.

(c) Through the concept of “\_\_\_\_\_,” the poem symbolizes the speaker’s hope for a future marked by peace and unity.

(d) The poem employs \_\_\_\_\_ devices like irony, satire, and repetition to convey its themes.

## 2. Multiple Choice Questions

(a) What is the central theme of “The Patriot”?

- i. Romantic love
- ii. Nature’s beauty
- iii. Cultural diversity
- iv. Patriotism

(b) What literary device is prominently used to criticize societal behaviours in the poem?

- i. Simile
- ii. Metaphor
- iii. Irony
- iv. Hyperbole

(c) The patriot prefers which beverage over wine?

- i. Coffee
- ii. Tea
- iii. Lassi
- iv. Juice

(d) What is the significance of “Ram Rajya” in the poem?

- i. It symbolizes chaos and disorder.
- ii. It represents foreign influence.
- iii. It reflects the speaker’s optimism for a harmonious society.
- iv. It signifies modernization and progress.

## 3. Short Answer Questions:

(a) How does the speaker’s attitude towards patriotism change in the poem “The Patriot”?

- (b) How does irony contribute to the poem's tone?
- (c) What does "Ram Rajya" symbolize in the poem?

4. Long Answer Questions:

- (a) Discuss the role of irony and satire in "The Patriot" by Nissim Ezekiel, providing specific examples from the poem.
- (b) Explore the speaker's complex perspective on cultural identity and patriotism in "The Patriot," highlighting key moments of reflection and ambivalence.

**Suggested Readings:**

*Perspective on Nissim Ezekiel*, ed. by Suresh Chandra Dwivedi.

*Indo-Anglian Poetry* by A. N. Dwivedi.

*Indian Poetry in English*, ed. by Hari Mohan Prasad and Chakradhar Prasad Singh.

Ezekiel, Nissim. *Collected Poems: 1952–1988*. New Delhi: OUP, 1989.

King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*. Delhi: OUP, 1987.

**Answers:**

I. "Night of the Scorpion"

1. Fill in the Blanks:

- (a) scorpion
- (b) rice
- (c) prayers, rituals
- (d) rational, skeptical

2. Multiple Choice Questions:

- (a) iii. Village
- (b) iii. Devilish
- (c) ii. Stoic composure
- (d) i. Using paraffin and a match

3. Short Answer Questions:

- (a) The central incident is the scorpion's sting on the poet's mother during a rainy night in a village.
- (b) The villagers respond by gathering around the mother, chanting prayers, and performing rituals to counteract the venom.

(c) The contrast is between the villagers' superstitious beliefs and the father's rational and skeptical approach.

4. Long Answer Questions:

(a) The mother's gratitude reflects her selflessness and unconditional love. She values her children's safety above her own suffering, highlighting sacrifice and resilience.

(b) The scorpion symbolizes danger and the mysterious power of nature. Its "diabolic tail" and elusiveness intensify fear and trigger both superstition and rational intervention, highlighting tensions between belief systems.

II. "The Patriot"

1. Fill in the Blanks:

- (a) Nissim Ezekiel
- (b) irony
- (c) Ram Rajya
- (d) literary

2. Multiple Choice Questions:

- (a) iv. Patriotism
- (b) iii. Irony
- (c) iii. Lassi
- (d) iii. It reflects the speaker's optimism for a harmonious society.

3. Short Answer Questions:

(a) The speaker moves from idealistic claims about peace and Indian wisdom to frustration about society, ending in a casual, performative optimism about unity and "Ram Rajya."

(b) Irony creates humour by exposing the gap between the speaker's confident moral tone and the confused, clichéd, contradictory way they express it.

(c) “Ram Rajya” symbolizes an ideal of peace, unity, and a just social order.

4. Long Answer Questions:

(a) Irony and satire expose contradictions in the speaker’s patriotism—for example, the boastful “100%... 200% correct” and the humorous claim of reading the newspaper “to improve my English Language” while reporting social disorder. These devices mock shallow moral posturing and invite critical reflection on nationalism.

(b) The speaker admires Gandhi and ancient wisdom yet feels uneasy about foreign influence and internal divisions. The poem shows ambivalence through comic self-presentation, shifting from global peace talk to local details, and ending with friendly hospitality—capturing a hybrid, conflicted cultural identity.



## Unit 16

### J. Krishnamurthy: “Love” from *Education as Service* (Prose)

#### 16.0 Objectives of the Unit

##### 16.1 Introduction

##### 16.2 Life and Works of J. Krishnamurthy

##### 16.3 J. Krishnamurthy as a Great Mystic

##### 16.4 Impact of Lord Buddha on J. Krishnamurthy

##### 16.5 J. Krishnamurthy’s Views on Different Subjects

##### 16.6 J. Krishnamurthy on Education

##### 16.7 J. Krishnamurthy on Love

##### 16.8 J. Krishnamurthy’s Legacy

##### 16.9 J. Krishnamurthy’s Great Quotes

##### 16.10 Key Words

##### 16.11 Let Us Sum Up

##### Suggested Reading

##### Answers

#### 16.0 Objectives:

The objectives of this unit are to study the life, audience-oriented method, and philosophical thoughts of Jiddu Krishnamurthy. He was a great mystic and philosopher. He is often called a modern spiritual teacher. He was interested in Buddhism, mysticism, meditation, and psychology. He wanted to bring radical change in society. He rejected idolatry, religious rituals, and polytheism. The main objective of the unit is to study J. Krishnamurthy’s thoughts on various topics like religion, faith, thought, the impact of the past on the human mind, education, fearlessness, etc.

J. Krishnamurthy kept away from nationality, caste, religion, creed, and rigid dependence on scriptures. In this unit, we shall study his thoughts on love and education. When he spoke to audiences, he did not “teach” in a dogmatic way; rather, he analysed different kinds of thoughts. He called it a journey together, where the audience participates in the voyage of thinking, analysing, and discussing.

This unit will ultimately show that J. Krishnamurthy was a wise philosopher who spoke to audiences very effectively. He was influenced by great spiritual books, philosophers, and mystics like the Buddha, Kabir, the Upanishads, and the Vedas. He also influenced later thinkers and orators such as Osho and others.

#### 16.1 Introduction:

Jiddu Krishnamurthy was a globally known modern philosopher. He was born in Madanapalle on 11 May 1895 and died on 17 February 1986 in Ojai,

California. He was introduced to the Theosophical Society, and Annie Besant played a key role in his early life. Krishnamurthy met leading theosophists, including Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbeater. They wished to present him through the “Order of the Star in the East” as a World Teacher. However, Krishnamurthy did not accept this idea and rejected the role. He said he did not agree with the concepts of “guruwad,” nationality, religion, and creed.

He travelled to various countries and spoke before large and small groups. He often visited India and addressed audiences. He also established independent schools based on his views of education.

Krishnamurthy remained distant from the pressure of organizations and institutions. He did not subscribe to political or ideological systems. His teachings aimed to go beyond religion and ideology. He spoke not as a guru but as a co-traveller or friend. He looked at human problems intellectually and rationally and insisted that each individual must search for truth in their own manner. He wrote books, gave private interviews, and held discussions about psychology and science with thinkers and scientists.

His brother Nityananda died in 1925, and this loss made Krishnamurthy question faith and belief connected with the Theosophical Society. He dissolved the “Order of the Star in the East” and declared that he was neither a guru nor a follower of any guru. In 1984 and 1985, he was invited to the United Nations in New York. In 1986, he gave his final speech at Madras. He died of pancreatic cancer.

Krishnamurthy’s work continued through Krishnamurti-related foundations and schools. The impact of Krishnamurthy’s thought on modern spiritual seekers and thinkers has been significant.

### **16.2 Life and Works of J. Krishnamurthy:**

J. Krishnamurthy was born in Madanapalle in the Madras Presidency (now in Andhra Pradesh). He was born into a Telugu Brahmin family. His father, Jiddu Narayaniah, worked as an official under British administration and was connected with the Theosophical Society. Krishnamurthy’s mother, Sanjeevamma, died when he was about ten years old. His parents had eleven children, but only six survived childhood.

In 1903, the family settled in Kadapa, where Krishnamurthy suffered from malaria. He experienced dreaminess and vagueness, and later developed a close relationship with nature. In 1907, his father retired and got a job at the Theosophical Society headquarters at Adyar.

In 1909, Krishnamurthy met C. W. Leadbeater, who observed him on the beach near the Adyar River and believed he had a remarkable spiritual potential. Krishnamurthy and his brother Nityananda were taken under the care of the Theosophical Society. They were educated by Annie Besant and Leadbeater. Krishnamurthy learned English, became a good speaker, and was also educated in Europe. Annie Besant treated him like her son, and he regarded her as a mother figure.

Besant and Leadbeater wished to present Krishnamurthy as a World Teacher through the “Order of the Star.” However, Krishnamurthy disagreed, dissolved the Order, and separated himself from the Theosophical movement.

He declared: “Truth is a pathless land,” suggesting that truth cannot be organized, institutionalized, or approached through authority. He also stated he did not want to follow anyone, nor did he want others to follow him; he wanted people to be free.

The death of his brother Nityananda affected him deeply. He later spoke of death as not being an “end” in the usual sense and emphasized understanding life directly rather than through belief.

Krishnamurthy travelled widely and delivered lectures, becoming a well-known speaker in Europe and elsewhere. He interacted with scientists and thinkers such as David Bohm and others. He also met Indian leaders and intellectuals. Rajagopal was a close associate who managed publications of Krishnamurthy’s works. Krishnamurthy gave his final talk in Madras in 1986 and expressed concern for education, nature, and the future, while also stating that he had no “successor” to act as his spokesperson.

Krishnamurthy died of pancreatic cancer in 1986 at the age of 90. His ashes were divided into three parts for Ojai, India, and England. In India, they were immersed at places such as the River Ganga and the sea.

He founded schools in India, one in England, and one in California. His educational vision emphasized a global outlook, freedom with responsibility, a scientific attitude with a religious spirit, and concern for humanity and the environment.

Major works of J. Krishnamurthy include:

1. *Freedom from the Known*
2. *The Book of Life*
3. *The First and Last Freedom*
4. *Beyond Violence*
5. *Think on These Things*
6. *The Flight of the Eagle*
7. *Krishnamurti’s Journal*
8. *Commentaries on Living* (Vol. I, II, III)
9. *What Are You Doing with Your Life?* (for younger readers)
10. *Happy Is the One Who Is Nothing*
11. *What Are You Looking For?*
12. *The Ending of Time* (dialogues with David Bohm)
13. *Fire in the Mind* (dialogues with Pupul Jayakar)
14. *The Beginning of Learning*
15. *Education and the Significance of Life*
16. *Total Freedom*
17. *The Awakening of Intelligence*

### **16.3 J. Krishnamurthy as a Mystic:**

J. Krishnamurthy was a rare mystic who felt united with nature. He was deeply compassionate and spoke of “choiceless awareness.” He did not believe in idolatry, polytheism, and ritualism. He kept away from organized religion and rejected the concept of the guru. He never claimed to be a guru, even though many people loved and respected him.

To understand Krishnamurthy as a mystic, we must understand mysticism. Mysticism is a belief in union with the divine or ultimate reality through deep contemplation. Mystical experience often goes beyond rational or empirical explanation. William James described mystical experiences through features such as:

1. Transiency
2. Passivity
3. Noetic quality
4. Ineffability

The word mysticism comes from the Greek word *mystes*. Mysticism involves communion with divine power. A mystic experiences union with the divine through devotion, prayer, love, knowledge, or yoga. Such experience transcends beliefs, rituals, and systems and dissolves ego. A mystic may experience unity with God, the earth, and nature.

Krishnamurthy often spoke of non-duality: the observer and the observed are not separate. He emphasized living in the present moment rather than in the past or future. Choiceless awareness is an important quality of mystic perception. He also expressed love for animals and nature. A great mystic is sensitive, fearless, and compassionate.

### **16.4 Impact of Lord Buddha on J. Krishnamurthy:**

J. Krishnamurthy was deeply influenced by Lord Buddha. He believed that the Buddha represented illumination and enlightenment. He had great reverence for Buddha.

He read passages from the *Gospel of Buddha* during morning meditation. He honoured Buddha as one who was beyond attachment. When Krishnamurthy visited Bodh Gaya with Annie Besant, he reportedly spoke of remembering the place in connection with earlier spiritual impressions and experiences. He often felt the “vibrations” of Buddha’s presence.

Krishnamurthy wrote lines expressing reverence for Buddha’s gift to humanity. These lines suggest deep respect for Buddha’s compassion and enlightenment.

Krishnamurthy was influenced by Buddhist teaching that desire is a root cause of sorrow and that life is impermanent. Like Buddha, he did not support organized religion with fixed interpretations. He emphasized a mind free from fear, domination, and ritual. He stressed choiceless awareness as a way to discover inner peace and joy.

## Check your progress – I

Fill in the blanks with relevant options:

1. J. Krishnamurthy was a rare \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Teacher (B) Philosopher (C) Mystic (D) Scholar
2. J. Krishnamurthy was against \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) nationalism (B) patriotism (C) art (D) rituals
3. J. Krishnamurthy was impacted by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Hinduism (B) Buddha (C) Kabir (D) Christianity
4. J. Krishnamurthy's younger brother was \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Nityananda (B) Muktananda (C) Mokshananda (D) Leadbeater
5. \_\_\_\_\_ nurtured J. Krishnamurthy like her son.  
(A) Naidu (B) Radha (C) Annie Besant (D) Sattamma
6. J. Krishnamurthy dissolved \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Order of the Star in the West  
(B) Order of the Star in the Sky  
(C) Order of the Star in the East  
(D) Order of the Star in the North
7. J. Krishnamurthy founded \_\_\_\_\_ in 1928.  
(A) Theosophical Society  
(B) Krishnamurthy Schools  
(C) Krishnamurthy Foundation  
(D) Buddha foundation
8. J. Krishnamurthy was born in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Madras (B) Madanapalle (C) New York (D) California
9. J. Krishnamurthy died of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Pancreatic cancer (B) Brain tumour (C) Pneumonia (D) Heart attack
10. J. Krishnamurthy taught \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Choice of awareness (B) Choiceless awareness (C) Awareness (D) Meditation

### 16.5 J. Krishnamurthy's Views on Different Subjects/Topics:

J. Krishnamurthy was one of the greatest modern philosophers and spiritual speakers. He influenced many thinkers, writers, and orators. His works are remarkable and unique in spiritualism, mysticism, and philosophy. He spoke on many topics that are deeply psychological and philosophical, such as love, fear, loneliness, happiness, knowledge, thought, education, nature, sensitivity, and death. Some major topics are discussed briefly below:

1. Love:  
Love cleanses the heart and mind. Attachment denies love. Love is not found in suffering, jealousy, or possessiveness. Sensation and gratification

end, but love is inexhaustible. Fear is not love; dependence is not love; jealousy is not love. Without love and beauty, there is no virtue. If one knows how to love, one can solve many problems of life. Love is new, fresh, and alive, not “yesterday” or “tomorrow.”

2. Loneliness:

Human beings often run away from loneliness and depend on others for escape. There is a difference between loneliness and being alone.

Loneliness is self-isolation. True “aleness” comes when loneliness ends.

3. Fear:

The self is the root of fear. Dependence on people, things, and thoughts creates fear. Fear arises from lack of self-knowledge. Fear blocks communication and understanding. Fear is related to the past; “I, me, my” create fear.

4. Death:

People fear death and feel unsafe when they think about it. Krishnamurthy says we must come in contact with death, not merely the thought of death. The body will die through age, disease, or wear. Living and dying are linked; one must end what one has known. He does not accept fear-based belief systems about death. Fear of death arises from thought. Living fully in the present can free the mind from fear, desire, and sorrow.

5. God:

God is not a person but a divine reality. Mere belief does not mean understanding. One must not replace truth with comforting ideas.

6. Meditation:

Though he did not support mechanical “methods,” he valued deep attention and meditative awareness. Meditation is not pre-planned; it is without beginning and end.

7. Consciousness:

Consciousness carries the past—beliefs, anxieties, loneliness, and misery. It is shaped by conditioning.

8. Life:

Life is movement, like a river. Seeking permanency makes the mind stagnant. Nature teaches impermanence: leaves fall and return with seasons. Education should include understanding life, not merely information.

9. Religion:

Religion is not ritual, chanting, or worship. Reading scripture without transformation is not true religion. True religion is goodness in action. Belief and superstition are not religion; rejecting superstition can lead to real understanding.

10. Education:

Education should be liberating, cooperative, and humane. It should not merely train for career or conformity. The right kind of education helps the student understand the self and observe conditioning.

11. Intelligence:

Intelligence is creative and not merely the result of information, experience, or thought. It is not personal or limited to a culture.

12. Nationalism:

Nationalism can turn into hatred and conflict. It is a glorified tribalism and creates division and war.

**16.6 J. Krishnamurthy on Education:**

Krishnamurthy was deeply concerned about education. He believed philosophy and education are closely connected: a philosopher educates adults; a teacher educates students. A true teacher must be wise, not only knowledgeable, and must teach the art of living.

He believed the human mind is conditioned by thought. Thought divides human beings—rich/poor, educated/uneducated, and by religions and nations. Thought is rooted in the past and produces conflict. Truth is not the product of thought; it requires an empty, quiet mind. Therefore, education should not allow thought to dominate the whole of life.

He criticized education systems for creating ego, jealousy, ambition, fear, and conformity. Parents, teachers, and society often impose their expectations on children, creating walls between people and cultures. He called nationalism an evil similar to tribalism.

Modern education often encourages rote learning and competition. He argued that discipline can become forced conformity; true learning is not conformity or rebellion but understanding. Examinations, rewards, and punishment create fear. Competition destroys sensitivity and creativity. Right education should awaken natural intelligence, including the intelligence of the body, and cultivate a mind that is free, attentive, and compassionate.

He also emphasized love of nature—trees, hills, rivers, birds—as part of real education. To be truly religious is to be in tune with nature, beauty, and truth. His well-known idea “You are the world and the world is you” stresses responsibility and awareness. His educational vision remains relevant today.

**16.7 J. Krishnamurthy on Love:**

Krishnamurthy’s views on love are central to his teaching. He explored what love is and what love is not. Love is inexhaustible. It is a flame that cleanses the mind and heart. This flame is not created by the mind; it arises naturally. Love is not a matter of benefit, practice, ritual, prayer, worship, or compulsion.

He says: “Attachment denies love. Love is not to be found in suffering; though jealousy is strong. Sensation and its gratification come to an end; but love is inexhaustible.”

Love is not of the mind. For love, the heart must be empty of mental noise and self-centred activity. Fear is not love; dependence is not love; jealousy is not love. Possessiveness and domination are not love. Duty and responsibility alone are not love. Self-pity is not love. Love is not merely the opposite of hate.

He warns that without love, the world moves toward disaster. Love is essential for unity, peace, harmony, and happiness. In education, love for students is essential for right teaching. Love should not be reduced to lust, passion, or control. Love has its own action, and it cannot be manufactured by thought.

Krishnamurthy also critiques slogans such as “I love my country” or “I love my religion” when they become projections of identity and selfishness. Real love is not divisive. Seeking security in relationships creates fear and sorrow. When fear ends, love is. When jealousy exists, love is not. True love has no centre of “me” and therefore becomes pure, natural, and free.

### **16.8 J. Krishnamurthy’s Legacy:**

J. Krishnamurthy was one of the greatest philosophers and spiritual teachers of the modern world. His legacy is unique because he rejected “guruwad” and the idea of discipleship. He insisted that truth is a “pathless land.” He did not advise people as an authority; he invited them to enquire together.

In education, he opposed systems that treat children like blank slates to be written upon by society. Traditional schooling often measures children through tests and examinations and promotes conformity and homogeneity. Parents and institutions impose social, political, and religious commitments. Rebellious children are often labelled negatively.

Krishnamurthy saw the new generation as capable of positive change through concern for individual freedom, equality, environmental care, and social renewal. His influence on thinkers and spiritual speakers has been significant, and his educational ideas remain relevant.

Check your progress – II (Brief-answer questions)

1. What did J. Krishnamurthy say about truth?
2. What were the views of J. Krishnamurthy about religion?
3. Did J. Krishnamurthy believe in God? What did he think about God?
4. Discuss J. Krishnamurthy as a mystic.
5. Describe the impact of Lord Buddha on J. Krishnamurthy.
6. What did J. Krishnamurthy say about love?
7. What is thought according to J. Krishnamurthy?



8. What did J. Krishnamurthy say about death?
9. What is the cause of fear according to J. Krishnamurthy?
10. Why did J. Krishnamurthy reject nationalism?

A. Write short notes:

1. J. Krishnamurthy's views on education.
2. Discuss the views of J. Krishnamurthy on "Love".

### **16.9 J. Krishnamurthy's Great Quotes:**

- "When you call yourself an Indian, or a Muslim or Christian or a European, or anything else, you are violent."
- "When you separate yourself by belief, by nationality, by tradition, it breeds violence."
- "It is beautiful to be alone. To be alone is not to be lonely. It means the mind is not influenced and contaminated by society."
- "I don't mind what happens. That is the mystery of inner freedom. It is timeless spiritual truth."
- "It is no measure to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society."
- "Freedom and love go together. Love is not a reason. If I love you because you love me, that is not love."
- "The ability to observe without evaluating is the highest form of intelligence."
- "A lily or a rose never pretends, and the beauty is that it is what it is."
- "Throughout life... we are taught to compare ourselves with another, yet when I compare myself with another, I am destroying myself."
- "If we want to change existing conditions, we must first transform ourselves..."
- "There is hope in people, not in society, not in systems, but in you and me."
- "Happy is the man who is nothing."
- "It is only when the mind is free from the old that it meets everything anew..."
- "To understand yourself is the beginning of wisdom."
- "There is no end to education... the whole of life... is a process of learning."

### **16.10 Key Words:**

Mysticism, Theosophical Society, fear, education, love, conditioning, rejection of nationalism and stereotyped culture, freedom from the past, thought, conditioning.

### **16.11 Let Us Sum Up:**

J. Krishnamurthy was a great philosopher and mystic. He rejected nationalism and rigid traditions. He worked for awakening intelligence and creating inner

awareness. For him, thought is the source of fear, insecurity, and dissatisfaction. He believed purity of heart is more important than mere morality. He opposed idolatry, polytheism, ritualism, and organized religion. He did not prescribe a fixed path but strongly believed in freedom and choiceless awareness.

Krishnamurthy's views on life, love, fear, conditioning, thought, and education are based on critical enquiry. He rejected education that merely produces careerism, success, and domination. He wanted a society without fear, conflict, and materialistic violence. He saw competition as an evil that stresses students. He insisted on living in the present, avoiding comparison and dependence on the past. His legacy remains highly relevant, and it is important to read his works and engage with his talks.

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### Answers – Objective Questions:

1. (C)
2. (A)
3. (B)
4. (A)
5. (C)
6. (C)
7. (C)
8. (B)
9. (A)
10. (B)

**17.0 Objectives****17.1 Introduction****17.2 What is India?****17.3 History of India****17.4 Indian Culture****17.5 Characteristics of India****17.6 Vivekananda’s Vision of India****17.7 Tagore’s and Aurobindo’s Vision of India****Check Your Progress – I (Objective Questions)****17.8 Gandhiji and India****17.9 Gandhiji’s Dreams of India****17.10 Gandhiji’s Concept of Freedom****17.11 Gandhiji and Swaraj****17.12 Gandhiji’s Economic Views****Check Your Progress – II (Brief Answer Questions)****17.13 Relevance of Gandhiji’s Views in Present Time and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi****17.14 Key Words****17.15 Let Us Sum Up****17.16 Suggested Reading****Answers of MCQs / Objective Questions****17.0 Objectives of the Unit:**

The objectives of the unit is to discuss Gandhi’s dreams of India. Gandhiji was a great patriot who had a profound love and attachment for India. He also admired Hindu concept of religion, culture, and philosophy. He loved Indian scriptures, epics, and philosophical books of India like *The Ramacharit Manas*, *Bhagawad Gita*, some Upanishads, and Puranas. He was influenced by Satyavadi Harishchandra, and he focused on truth and non-violence and simplicity in his life in various aspects like economy, politics, ethics, religion, etc.

In this unit, we shall discuss briefly the vision of Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and Aurobindo about India. Gandhiji differed from Aurobindo, Vivekananda, and Tagore about his dreams of India. His focus was not only on political freedom but individual freedom and fearless, non-violent life. His economic views focused on simplicity, Sarvodaya, Antyodaya, and rural life. He rejected science, technology, and industrialization. He was also against urbanization and only economic development. In this unit, we shall discuss

Gandhiji's dreams about future India and relevance of his views on present time India.

### **17.1 Introduction**

India is one of the ancient countries in the world. It has an ancient culture, heritage, and history. India is famous for cultural diversity. It has a liberal and spiritual path with a great heritage of art, sculpture, architecture, literature, and philosophy. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are the famous religions that originated in India. Indian culture accepts all religions liberally. It is often connected with rituals, monotheism, polytheism, and mysticism.

Geographically, India is a rich country with mountains, forests, rivers, oceans, wild animals, countless temples, different types of attires, etc. The Himalayas are the highest mountain range in South Asia. India is regarded as a spiritual destination, meditation, yoga, and social harmony. However, Varna pratha was one of the social evils that is being removed now. Indian ceremonies, festivals, and traditions are based on religions, and traditional customs are rituals.

Indian history displays that India was ruled and dominated by Muslims, English, Dutch, or Spanish people. Politically, India became independent on 15th August, 1947. India became a democratic and republic country. India was a poor country but, with the passage of time, Indian economy has progressed. In spite of one of the largest populations, Indian economy is changing its scenario. India is a country with many states with diverse cultures, customs, environment, and heritage. In the past, there were certain problems related to castes, religions, social harmony, gender bias, etc., but now Indian life and thinking are rapidly changing with liberal attitude and tolerance. These were the dreams of leaders, and it has a liberal and spiritual path with a great heritage of art, sculpture, architecture, literature, and philosophy. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are the famous religions that originated in India. Indian culture accepts all religions liberally. It is often connected with rituals, monotheism, polytheism, and mysticism.

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tolerance. These were the dreams of Sri Aurobindo and Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi.]

Let us briefly discuss the dreams and vision of India by Gandhi, Tagore, Vivekananda, and Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo was a great spiritual leader. He was a revolutionary poet and thinker. He dreamt of free India from the British rule. He wanted India to be free from foreign domination. They had a dream that, in future, India will play a great role in waking humanity to new spirituality. Indian philosophy and spirituality has affected western, European countries. Sri Aurobindo's vision was about India's spiritual role in the world. Sri Aurobindo's five dreams were revolutionary movement that would create a free and united India, liberation and resurgence in Asia, unification of the human world, spiritual gift of India to the world, and rising of inner consciousness in all human beings. Swami Vivekananda was a unique orator and speaker who lived a short life of 39 years. He had a deep respect for Indian culture and Hinduism. However, he believed that India needs to learn several lessons from the Western people and the Western people need to learn spiritualism from India.

Mahatma Gandhi, as a great political leader and freedom fighter, had a dream about India that would be on a great legacy of truth and non-violence for the entire world. Gandhiji was concerned not only for India but for the entire mankind. He also introduced the concept of Swaraj (self-rule), Satyagraha, and Sarvodaya. He wanted people of India to live a simple life. Rabindranath Tagore was a great poet, liberal thinker, educationist, and humanist. For him, education should be liberal and creative. He wanted India to be free from narrow-mindedness, sentimental, and non-rational attitude. He was a nationalist but he differed from Mahatma Gandhi about rejection of foreign goods and materialistic thinking. He also loved creativity and humanism as a dream and vision of India in future.

## **17.2 What is India?**

India is one of the South Asian countries. It is the seventh largest country in the world. It is also the world's largest democracy with diverse population, climate, culture, language, and climate. India has a federal parliamentary republic. India is a peninsula surrounded by three sides of oceans.

India has had commercial and cultural wealth from ancient history. India was dominated by some foreign invaders like British and Portuguese, etc. Earlier, India was invaded by Mughal rulers. India became independent in 1947 under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. After independence, India was divided into two countries—India and Pakistan. India had Hinduism as its main religion. However, there were many other religions in India like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc. Still, sometimes, India faces certain disputes with Pakistan, China, etc. Today, India is coming out of poverty, inequality, and illiteracy which dominated India for hundreds of years before independence.

India has a pluralistic, multilingual, and multi-ethnic society. In the past, India had Harappa civilization which flourished in the Indus Valley. The word “Indian” is derived from Sindhu, a local name for Indus River. India has an ancient history with diverse religions and culture.

### 17.3 History of India

Repetition [India is one of the most ancient countries with rich culture. Its name is based on Indus River which is also called Sindhu River.] India is also known as Bharat which refers to a mythological king named Bharata (ભારત).

Bharat had conquered the whole sub-continent of India and ruled the land peacefully and harmoniously.

India is the birth place of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Ancient India also produced great Vedas, Puranas, Upanishads, and epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The Indus Valley Civilization dates to 7000 BCE. These past civilizations were spread in different parts of Bharat. There were multiple gods (polytheism) in Indian civilization. India had a great spiritual and philosophical heritage. Cultured, elite people in ancient India were Aryans, and they used Sanskrit as a scholarly language.

After Indus Valley civilization, Vedic period focused on nature, environment, and pastoral lifestyle. The caste system during this period became prominent, which was divided into four categories—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. At first, it was based on occupation but later it was interpreted on the base of birth. It became a social evil in India that created injustice, exploitation, and untouchability. Indian Vedic civilization generated Sanatan Dharma, the eternal and universal religion. Hinduism was impressed by the ancient civilization and culture. Sanatan Dharma was a polytheistic religion that consists of multiple gods. In fact, it was a monotheistic religion which believed that there was only one God despite multiple forms and names.

Narsinh Mehta, the famous Gujarati poet, said:

‘Akhand brahmand ma ek tu hari’

‘Juzve rupe ma en anant bhase’

(O Hari, you are the entire universe but you look into multiple forms.)

In 6th century BCE, there were religion reformers like Mahavir and Gautam Buddha. Mahavir rejected Vedas and Buddha also disagreed with Vedic ideology. During Buddhist period, there were many great kings like Chandragupta, Bindusara, and Ashoka. In the Gupta empire, philosophy, literature, and architecture flourished. After the decline of the Gupta empire, Islam conquered Northern India. Islamic sultanates also rose and spread in North west. Mughal Empire dominated India for a quite long time. Then, the Portuguese, the French, and the British colonized different parts of India. After freedom struggle for a long period under several leaders, India became independent in 1947. The British rule in India started with the British East India Company. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, India became independent. At the time of independence, partition between India and Pakistan took place. The British policy of “Divide and Rule” created violence between Hindus and Muslims. However, India progressed as a democratic country without hatred and intolerance for other countries or communities. Today, India has achieved fame in the entire world. Economic development has removed many problems in the present time. It is said that India will \_\_\_\_\_ establish itself as “Vishwa Guru” (global teacher).

### **17.4 Indian Culture**

India is a country of billions of people with diverse religions, cultures, languages, and geographical territories. It has incredible diversity of social stratifications and religious traditions. Despite diverse religions, languages, customs, etc., there are some common attitudes, beliefs, customs, and norms prevalent in diverse societies.

India has diverse geographical areas with different climates, weather, and geographical varieties like mountains, rivers, lakes, hills, forests, deserts, etc. India has a bigger coastal area with multiple islands, beaches, and so on. The Ganga is regarded as the Goddess in India, which is a holy river from ancient times.

In India, there is a large cultural tolerance. Still today, there are many families that live under one roof. India is also a country with thousands of villages. That is the reason why Mahatma Gandhi focused on Sewagram??? and rural life. India has no racial or ethnic categories. They have often different religious creeds, etc., but racially, they are united. Hinduism is the tolerant religion with equality and harmony. Casteism was also the part of Hindu culture but it was dominated by some elites like Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Ancient Indian religion did not promote caste system based on birth but based on karmas or occupations.

India has 22 major languages. Hindi is the national language but still, English is used as an official language. During the British rule, colonization divided Indian people politically, socially, and religiously. When India became free in 1947, there was partition of India into Hindustan and Pakistan. [Pakistan was full of violence and deaths related in Hindu, Muslim are such communities.] Due to casteism, there was also caste bias that impacted people on economy and society. Gender bias also prevailed in India since ancient times. Social structure was based on social stratification. Caste system also called “Varna Pratha,” which humiliate lower caste people. The small-scale caste system is known as “jati” system.

Indians focus on harmony and social interaction. People are expected to uphold their duties. Family members helped one another and provided financial support. In joint families, some people were protected and supported despite their incapacities and weaknesses. Core concepts of Indian culture are as follows:

- (1) Diversity of culture, religions, creeds, etc.
- (2) Caste system (Varna Prantha).
- (3) Multiple languages and literatures.
- (4) Social harmony and general equality.
- (5) The pride of ancient culture and the religion.
- (6) Hinduism as “Saharan Sanatan Dharma.”
- (7) Adaptability.
- (8) Joint family system.
- (9) Social stratifications.
- (10) Poverty and financial pressure.

### **17.5 Characteristics of India**

India is a unique country with unique culture and history. The characteristics of India are as follows:

(1) Continuity and change are the major features of India. India changes rapidly but also keeps rooted with ancient culture and history. There are several ancient cultures that continue even today. For example, rituals, customs, and religious beliefs have not changed. They are still maintained in India. Jainism and Buddhism propagated certain reform but still today, their traditions have not been removed. The philosophy of Indian culture has remained as the feature of Indian culture.

(2) Diversity and unity: India has a large number of languages and dialects. There is also a variety of culture but the unity is still maintained in India. Indian culture is reflected in arts, music, architecture, etc. In political forms also, unity in diversity is reflected.

(3) Secularism: India has been a secular country since ancient time. There is a right to freedom of religion. Different communities follow their own religions, cultures, and customs. Indian people believe that ultimately, all religions lead you to godliness and virtuous life.

(4) Universalism: India has always followed universalism. It believes that all people are similar and same. They need to be treated equally. There should be peace and harmony in any society. India has raised voice against racialism and colonialism. In modern time, the concept of globalization also resembles universalism.

(5) Spiritualistic and materialistic: India is well known as a country with spiritualistic history. Indian culture focused on spiritualism rather than materialism. Today, there is materialistic development in India but the people focus on spiritualistic life with peace, harmony, and equality.

(6) Indian arts and literature: India is a great treasure house of literature and arts. Ancient Indian culture depicts spiritualistic attitude of the people. Ancient literature and arts have rich diversity of genres, poetics theories, and humanistic approaches. India represents the world and the people with diversity and unity.

### **17.6 Vivekananda's Vision of India**

Swami Vivekananda was a great spiritual leader of India. He was also a great lover of India, Indian culture, and nationalism. He said, "Let New India Arise." He had a powerful vision about India. He believed that nationalism is an important passion for great religious leaders and saints. He was one of the passionate makers of New India. He was a dreamer, realist, and rationalist. He had a deep concern for the poor and oppressed people. He also called poor people "The Daridra Narayana." However, his vision was materialistic development along with spiritual attitude of the people. He strongly believed that hungry people should be provided food rather than making them pray to God. In fact, food is God. Shankaracharya had said, "Annam Brahman!" (Food Brahman).

Swami Vivekananda had predicted that India would be free in fifty years. He also predicted that the future of India would be greater politically as well as economically. Swami Vivekananda called India "Punya Bhoomi." It was a



land of purity, peace, and prosperity. It was his vision of India that our people should learn from the Western countries about materialistic development and the Western people should learn about spiritualism from India. He wanted India to be free from gender bias and caste system. He said that women should be treated equally and provided education. He had also a dream of individual India (Akhand Bharat). Swami Vivekananda dreamt that India should be free, fearless, talented, materialistically prosperous, and spiritually aware. India's greatest strength was spirituality. He strongly believed that differences should be removed and equality should be nurtured. He emphasized the role of education in future India. He also stressed the importance of energy rather than worshipping of God.

### **17.7 Tagore's and Aurobindo's Vision of India**

Rabindranath Tagore was a great poet who was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913. He was a great thinker, educationist, and literary artist. He was quite close friend of Mahatma Gandhi. They respected each other but they had different views about freedom, Satyagraha, Swaraj, and equality. Tagore was no more when India became independent in 1947. Like Gandhi, he had a distinct vision about India. His vision about India has been beautifully presented in his poem "Where the Mind Without Fear."

Tagore says that the people of India must be fearless, free, and proud. They should not be dominated by any authority or power. There is a dream of Tagore that India should be democratic and free from social inequality and stratification. Tagore also focuses on education for all. The people of India should be free from casteism, gender bias, and regionalism. People should also be free from undue rituals, customs, and superstitions. India should be strongly united despite diverse religions, cultures, and communities. At the end of the poem, Tagore prays to God to let his country get awakened in all these conditions.

Sri Aurobindo was a great spiritual leader of India. He was called the sage of the New Age. He was a revolutionary fighter for freedom. However, he turned towards spiritualism and he had a dream that India should provide spiritual guidance to the people of the world. He was a mystic who saw the future of India from mystical point of view. He was a great nationalist and anti-British revolutionary. He presented his prophetic vision about India. He hoped that India will play a great role as a global Guru. People of the world would learn spiritualism from India. He also affirmed unity and equality in India after independence. Thus, great leaders, thinkers, workers, and spiritual mentors presented their vision after free India. Gandhiji's views were quite rational and pragmatic.

### **Check Your Progress – I (Objective Questions)**

**Fill in the blanks with appropriate options.**

1. India is one of the \_\_\_\_\_ countries.  
(A) European  
(B) Asian

- (C) South-Asian
- (D) African
- 2. The culture of India is \_\_\_\_\_
  - (A) Elite
  - (B) Sophisticated
  - (C) Rural
  - (D) Ancient
- 3. In 1947, India was divided into \_\_\_\_\_
  - (A) India and Bangladesh
  - (B) India and China
  - (C) India and Sri Lanka
  - (D) India and Pakistan
- 4. India is the \_\_\_\_\_ largest country in the world.
  - (A) First
  - (B) Second
  - (C) Seventh
  - (D) Third
- 5. India was colonized by \_\_\_\_\_
  - (A) America
  - (B) China
  - (C) Britain
  - (D) France
- 6. Sri Aurobindo was a \_\_\_\_\_ poet.
  - (A) Revolutionary
  - (B) Powerful
  - (C) Rebellious
  - (D) Critical
- 7. The word Indian is derived from \_\_\_\_\_
  - (A) Ganga
  - (B) Sindhu
  - (C) Narmada
  - (D) Yamuna
- 8. Bharat was a \_\_\_\_\_ king in India.
  - (A) Mythological
  - (B) Hindu
  - (C) Warrior
  - (D) Intelligent
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_ civilization was ancient civilization of India.
  - (A) Harappa
  - (B) Indus

- (C) Aryan  
(D) Mughal
10. There were \_\_\_\_\_ gods in Indian culture.
- (A) A few  
(B) Multiple  
(C) Hundred  
(D) Numberless

### **17.8 Gandhiji and India**

Gandhiji was called “The Father of the Nation.” He was a simple, egoless political leader who provided independence to India from the British rule. He was a Hindu reformer and nationalistic leader. He was called Mahatma (the Great Soul) due to his spiritual attitude. He was born in Porbandar in Gujarat in a Bania (Vanik) family. His father was the Diwan in a native state. Mohandas studied in local school in Rajkot and he also studied in Shamaldas College in Bhavnagar. Then, at the age of 19, he went to London to study law and he became a barrister-at-law.

Gandhi returned to India and practiced law in Bombay High Court. In 1893, he went to South Africa and worked as a lawyer. He succeeded in his professional work but he faced humiliation by the white British people. He founded a colony named Tolstoy Farm in Durban. He was often imprisoned but he continued struggle against the British colonizers. After the First World War, he started Satyagraha in South Africa which spread rapidly throughout India. In 1929, he started non-violent non-cooperation movement in India to make India independent from the British rule.

For economic independence, Gandhi adopted charkha (spinning wheel) and manufacturing of khadi. He rejected foreign goods. In 1931, he attended the Round Table Conference in London. He often fasted to oppose the British rule. During the Second World War, he supported the British rule to fight against Nazis in Germany. At last, India became independent on 15th August, 1947. In 1948, he was assassinated by a fanatic person named Nathuram Godse. People all over the world experienced a great loss of a true leader who preached truth, non-violence, humanity, and equality.

India is a country of villages. There was a lot of poverty in rural areas in India. Today, Indian economy is improving quite rapidly. Gandhiji did not focus on economic growth but simple life with minimalism. He said that needs can be fulfilled but wants are endless. Gandhi also supported diversity of culture, religions, geographical territories, and multiple views about society and life style. His dream of independent India was with religious pluralism and social harmony. He was also against untouchability and inequality. For him, non-violence and truth were the positive weapons to fight against colonialism, racialism, and inequality. Gandhi's legacy inspires social activists in modern time. Martin Luther King was inspired by Gandhi's ideology of civil rights movement. Mandela also followed Gandhian concept of Satyagraha. In India and other countries, Gandhian ideology resonates again and it is highly

relevant in present-day world. Gandhi was not only an Indian leader but he belonged to the entire world who accepted global harmony and equality.

Gandhi was a great champion of human rights. He applied the principle of non-violence to remove social disharmony, poverty, etc. He struggled all his life for social justice. He developed the concept of Satyagraha in South Africa in 1893. Then, in India, he used Satyagraha, non-violence, boycott, and civil disobedience against the British rule. He demanded immediate withdrawal of the British rule from India and in 1947, India became independent.

Three great values of Gandhian ideology are truth, non-violence, and compassion for all. Gandhiji wanted India to be free from intolerance where all people are treated equally. The message of Mahatma Gandhi was to fight against the British rule non-violently. He strongly believed that there should be fearlessness in Indian people but without hatred towards anyone. Gandhiji's concept of Swaraj was unique. He wanted India free from British rule but he focused not only on political freedom but individual freedom. Gandhiji's dreams about independent India were highly thought provoking and relevant.

### **17.9 Gandhiji's Dreams of India**

R. K. Prabhu wrote a book titled *India of My Dreams* by Mahatma Gandhi. India has a rich heritage and tolerant culture. Gandhi stressed Hindu-Muslim unity after independence. According to him, Vox Populi must be the voice of honesty, bravery, gentleness, humility, and complete sacrifice. Gandhiji believed that there is nothing static as human nature keep changing. India will present a lesson to the world—a lesson of peace, harmony, and equality. India will be the unquestioned leader of the whole world. It will emerge as a global (Vishwa) Guru.

About New India, Gandhi said that India will be a robust India that will learn from all countries of the world the lessons that are learnable for India. He wanted India to be free from violence, wars, and inequality. India would become a “Paradise on Earth” where there would be no beggars, starving, unemployed people [word expedited castes and dominated female gender]. He wanted Indians to treat all women like sisters or mothers with respect.

Gandhiji respected the cows and want them to be protected like “Gaumata.” He said, “I worship it and I shall defend its worship against the whole world.” In Hinduism, cow protection is very important aspect. The cow gave milk and helped Indian agriculture through oxen and bulls. Gandhiji rejected cow slaughter rebelliously. It can be stopped by knowledge, education, and love towards cows. Cow protection is the protection of human life. Gauseva (service of the cows) is not merely Hindu concept but for the entire mankind.

Gandhiji also focused on co-operative cattle farming. Collective efforts can remove selfishness and inhumanity. Gandhiji believed in the development of the villages. India is the country of villages that live simple close to nature. He preferred nature cure rather than medical remedies. He said that proper diet, purity, and natural, herbal medicines can remove many diseases and illness. He also emphasized on Upavas (fasting). Nature care refers to ideal mode of life. Natural treatment is the cheapest and the simplest. Right and balanced

diet is necessary for healthy life. In villages, milk, fruits, and vegetables are essential part of food. Hygiene and sanitation are also important part of nature cure and natural life. Diseases generate when people live unnatural life. In present scenario, natural, herbal, and organic foods and medicines are becoming popular all across the world. Gandhiji said that his nature cure was designed solely for villages and villagers.

Gandhiji also propagated communal harmony after independence in India. For him, unity and harmony are the important dreams of independent India. He said that love is the basis of the religion. All religions emphasis on social and religious harmony. It is said in ancient Indian culture that “Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam” (the entire world is a family). Communal riots are the evils of many countries. In fact, no religion supports violence or riots but many fanatics and fundamentals leaders provoke people for communal riots. Hooligan elements should be controlled to eradicate communal violence. All religions should be respected. Gandhiji trusted Hinduism and he believed that tolerance and secularism are the key aspects of Hinduism. Even “Islam” refers to peace and faith. Religious conversion is an evil that is propagated by Islam and Christianity. In fact, in Quran, there is no reference to force for religious conversion.

Gandhiji believed that there should be equal citizenship and no majority should dominate minority. Hindus in India should treat Muslims as equal citizens. Gandhiji’s economic views are relevant in modern time. He said that people should live minimalist and simple life. He supported spinning wheel and rejected big industries. He said that industrialism causes exploitation of the workers, unemployment, pollution, and economic inequality. He wrote that charkha is a symbol of commercial peace, simplicity, and labour. Gandhi stressed return to simplicity, protection of nature and environment. He said that rural, cottage, small-scale industries should be promoted. Khadi, for Mahatma Gandhi, was the symbol of unity of Indian humanity, economic freedom, and equality. It also refers to decentralization of production and distribution. Village industries and handicrafts should be the rural activities in independent India. Agricultural products provide food to the people and save them from starvation.

The concept of Swadeshi was one of the major dreams of Mahatma Gandhi for independent India. Gandhiji stressed Swadeshi products. He said that in India after independence, the people of India should be Swadeshi by nature. They should use only those products which are grown or made in their country. Sewagram was another concept in which the village should be independent, using the product made or grown in the village only. Gandhiji said that one should avoid foreign products as they would exploit the people who use foreign products. Western countries often dominated India and impoverished Indian people.

Gandhiji said that we should follow our own culture and civilization. Western civilization is not suitable for Indian people. It is a colonial culture with multiple evils. Western civilization focus on materialism but India is a spiritual country that focuses on simple living and high thinking. Western culture is exploitative while Indian culture is liberal, secular, and tolerant. It

rejects exploitation and never exploits anyone. India has universal mission and it has also eternal dream. Gandhiji believed that India is not merely geographical territory but cultural entity. India is not Bhogabhumi (land of enjoyment) but Karmabhoomi.

Gandhiji expressed his dream about India that he would like to see India strong, free, and liberal. India's freedom must revolutionize the world's outlook upon peace and war. Gandhiji was a patriotic person but for him patriotism was not so important as religion.

Swaraj was a sacred word. It refers to self-rule and self-restraint. Self-government depends upon internal strength. Swaraj means the government by many. If the majority of the people are immoral or selfish, their government would turn into anarchy. Swaraj was one of the major dreams of Gandhiji. It recognizes no race or religions distinctions. It is the rule of the people and it is for all, rich or poor. It is also the rule of justice. Poorna Swaraj is the self-rule of the rich landowner or landless tiller. Gandhiji said that Swaraj was his dream and it was for the poor, landless people. In Poorna Swaraj, there should be peace, equality, and harmony. It is complete independence. It must be based on non-violence, human rights, and duties. Gandhiji was true lover of democracy and Sarvodaya. He strongly propagated the concept of the welfare of all. He said that the concept of trusteeship refers to the role of the rich people to serve the poor people. This was Gandhiji's dream of Sarvodaya or Antyodaya.

Gandhiji propagated village welfare, sanitation, self-dependence, and rural development in free India. Regarding education, Gandhiji stressed Nayi Talim. It focuses on three H's growth of head, heart, and hands (intelligence, sensitivity, and manual labour). Basic education (Buniyadi shikshan) should focus on Indian (regional) languages, manual labour (shram), environment protection, and skill development. Students should learn their mother tongue first and it must be the medium of instruction. Mere literacy is not the end of education but it is the part of education. Good education should transform society and inspire students to be free, fearless, and truthful. The object of education should be physical, intellectual, and moral development of students and children. It should focus on inner development of students who can live an ideal life. Gandhiji's views about vision of India is unique and they are relevant in independent India.

### **17.10 Gandhiji's Concept of Freedom**

For Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom of the individual is important. It was his goal that India should be independent, not only politically but individually. People should be mentally independent and fearless. Complete liberty was the first and the last goal of Mahatma Gandhi. He said, "Real Swaraj will come, not by the acquisition of authority by a few, but by the acquisition of the capacity of all to resist authority when abused."

Gandhiji said that non-violent fighters of freedom do not strive for power but for the independence of India. He preached non-violence against the British colonial power to achieve freedom of India. Addressing the youth of India, he said, "Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words.

Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny.”

Gandhiji said that our duties are very important as citizens of an independent country. He said that real Swaraj refers to self-rule and self-control. Gandhiji's concept of freedom is relevant all over the world now. He believed that India would be politically free but until freedom reaches the doorstep of the poorer village people, there cannot be true freedom. Political freedom only changed the capital of London to New Delhi. Gandhiji said that he was not interested in freeing India only from the English yoke but freeing India from all yokes. He envisaged that there will be equal freedom for all. He believed that individual must be in the centre of free India. This was the dream of India for Mahatma Gandhi.

### **17.11 Gandhiji and Swaraj**

Gandhiji's concept of Swaraj was highly thought-provoking. It was not merely self-rule but human dignity. It is defined as a model code of conduct which points men on the path of duty. It also implies the elevation of moral being to limit indulgences. He said that he did not only want India to be politically free but dreamt of individual freedom and human dignity.

Swaraj refers to self-rule but Gandhi wanted people to live simple life with no greed for wealth or power. He believed that if people chased after materialistic attitude, there would be no intellectual life. He wanted people to follow the sustainable ecosystem in agriculture and live independently. Gandhiji divided Swaraj into following ways:

- (1) National independence.
- (2) Political freedom.
- (3) Individual freedom.
- (4) Human dignity.
- (5) Economic freedom.
- (6) Spiritual freedom.
- (7) Maintain ecosystem and nature.

Swaraj for Mahatma Gandhi was the idea of cultural and moral independence. Swaraj keeps the door of learning open. People of the country should remain active in nation building. Self-government means continuous effort to be independent of government control whether it is foreign government or national government. Swaraj exemplifies the vision of democracy. In democracy, people elect not only their representatives but check their weaknesses and abuse of authority. In Swaraj, education plays an important role in making people aware and control authority. Economic Swaraj promotes economic equality and social justice.

### **17.12 Gandhiji's Economic Views**

Gandhiji's economic views were quite different from general economic views. He was influenced primarily by John Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. He believed that simplicity, independence, and economic equality are more important than capital, wealth, and materialistic development. He said that economy should

be moralistic, truthful, non-violent, and socially harmonious. Economic problems are generally created by human beings only. The laws of nature should be followed by people which are not merely geographical but universal. Major economic views of Mahatma Gandhi are as follows:

1. Non-violent economy.
2. Village industries and cottage industry.
3. Decentralization.
4. No competition in economy.
5. More focus on wealth/capital.
6. Importance of manual labour (shram).
7. Khadi industry.
8. Ban on import of foreign cloth and other products.
9. Simplicity in life of the people.
10. Trusteeship ideology (rich people should act like trustees helping other people).
11. Machines are great sins as they dominate/exploit human beings, and large-scale production created profits for the rich people and unemployment for the poor people.
12. Village Sarvodaya with cleanliness, social harmony, facilities for health, length, and education.
13. Rejection of private business profiteering and ownership of private properties.
14. Production should be as per needs, not wants.

### **Check Your Progress – II (Brief Answer Questions)**

**Answer the following questions in brief:**

1. What are the diversities in India?
2. What kind of society live in India?
3. Describe ancient history of India in brief.
4. Describe caste system in India?
5. How is India polytheist?
6. What are the core concepts of Indian culture?
7. What are the characteristics of India?
8. What was Swami Vivekananda's vision of India?
9. What was Tagore's vision of independent India?
10. Describe Sri Aurobindo's vision of independent India.
11. Write a note on Gandhiji's dreams of India (in some details).
12. Write a note on Gandhiji's views on Swaraj.
13. Write a note on Gandhiji's dreams of independent India.
14. Discuss Gandhiji's concept of freedom.
15. Write short note on Gandhiji's economic views.



### **17.13 Relevance of Gandhiji's Views in Present Time and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi**

Gandhiji was a great leader with spiritual attitude. His views on freedom, economy, Swaraj, etc., are relevant in current times. His legacy is truly universal and global. For him, ideal citizens create ideal society and nation. He emphasized truth, equality, non-violence, and simplicity. He promoted rural life with its simplicity, Panchayati Raj, Swaraj, and independent economy. Gandhiji impacted many thinkers and political leaders.

### **17.14 Key Words**

Diversity—Indian culture—Polytheism, trusteeship, village industries—vision of independent India—Swaraj—Satyagraha—non-cooperation movement—concept of freedom—legacy of Mahatma Gandhi—relevance of his dreams of India.

### **17.15 Let Us Sum Up**

This unit discussed the vision of independent India by Tagore, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's dreams of India are highly relevant in independent India. Gandhi always focused on truth, non-violence, simplicity, equality, and social harmony. Gandhiji's economic views are also relevant in present world. India too needs to follow Gandhiji's economic views and vision of India.

### **17.16 Suggested Reading**

M. K. Gandhi, *India of My Dreams*, compiled and edited by R. K. Prabhu.  
Damis Dalten, *Gandhi of Freedom, Rights and Responsibility*.  
D. G. Tendulkar, *Gandhiji: His Life and Works*.  
S. Ganesan, *Gandhiji in Indian Villages* by Mahader Desai (1927).  
*Swaraj through Charkha* by Kanu Gandhi (1945).

## **Answers**

### **MCQs / Objective Questions**

1. C
2. D
3. D
4. C
5. C
6. A

## Unit 18

**Dr. B. R. Ambedkarji: “Castes in India” from Dr. B. Ambedkar Writings and Speeches, Vol. I**

### **18.0 Objectives**

#### **18.1 Introduction**

#### **18.2 Life of Dr. Ambedkar**

#### **18.3 Dr. Ambedkar’s Education**

#### **18.4 Dr. Ambedkar’s Works (Books)**

#### **18.5 Reforms by Dr. Ambedkar**

#### **18.6 Dr. Ambedkar’s Views on “Castes in India”**

#### **Check Your Progress–I (MCQs)**

#### **18.7 What is Casteism? (Jati, Varna and Caste)**

#### **18.8 Evils of Casteism in India**

#### **18.9 History of Casteism in India**

#### **18.10 Dr. Ambedkar’s Efforts to Remove Caste System from India**

#### **Check Your Progress–II (Questions with Brief Answers)**

#### **18.11 Impact of Dr. Ambedkar on Indian Culture and Indian Thoughts**

#### **18.12 Let Us Sum Up**

#### **18.13 Key Words**

#### **18.14 Suggested Reading**

#### **Answers (MCQs)**

### **18.0 Objectives**

The objectives of the unit are to provide details about the life and works of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar belonged to Mahar family of Maharashtra. In India, the worst evil was caste system, which exploited and humiliated the low-caste people. Dr. Ambedkar was a highly intelligent thinker whose thoughts were most effective for Indian problems of casteism. He was a great scholar who studied in various universities in India and abroad. He achieved many degrees in foreign universities. He studied sociology, economics, law, and political science. Dr. Ambedkar was a constitution expert who constructed an ideal constitution of democratic and republic India. He was a champion of reforms for which he struggled in his life all the time.

The objective of this unit is to discuss Indian caste system and its negative impact on our culture and life style. Even today, Indian politics is based on casteism and therefore the idea of equality remains fake both in politics and religion. Dr. Ambedkar was a jurist, social reformer, educationist, and visionary thinker. He always worked for the welfare of the down-trodden people and women. He differed from Mahatma Gandhi on various ideas like Varna Pratha, gender equality, economy, and simplicity. He struggled to achieve the equality and rights for Dalits. His efforts have made a major

change in Indian culture. Today, Dalits have also progressed in education, economy, and other aspects of life due to Dr. Ambedkar only.

### **18.1 Introduction**

Dr. Ambedkar hailed from a poor, untouchable Mahar family in India. Actually, he was a Hindu but his community suffered a lot due to the evil of casteism which regarded them as untouchables. Untouchables were called by different names in different parts of the country, like outcastes, pariahs, Shudra, Atishudra, Avarnas, etc. In modern time, a new word “Dalit” emerged which refers to humiliated, oppressed people. They were forbidden to live similar life like others. They were not allowed to get food, water, etc. from the same sources like other higher-caste people. They wore dirty clothes and cleaned the entire village streets and human faces (or excreta). They were considered polluted people. They were not allowed to study in schools. They were forced to drag dead cattle and eat their meat.

Indian culture is regarded as spiritual but the caste system is the worst evil that disgraces it from modern, liberal views. The caste system has four categories: Brahman (Brahmin), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaishya (traders), and Shudra (the lowest people/servants) from historical perspectives. Aryans were racists who tried to dominate and exploit local original people, called “Dravid.” This happened almost 2500 years ago. Manu was regarded as an erudite scholar and rishi but his views about untouchables were very immoral and exploitive. The origin of untouchability is quite perplexed from modern point of view. As blood is red in all bodies, how can a person be taken as low-caste or untouchable?

During the medieval period, Bhakti system propagated equality and removal of untouchability. There were great saints like Ramanujacharya and Ramanandacharya who accepted untouchables as their disciples. In Maharashtra, Eknath, Tukaram, Jnaneshwar, Ravidas, and Chokhamela succeeded to establish equality in Bhakti cult.

During the British rule, the Britishers also opposed caste system but they were also colonizers who exploited colonized people. They humiliated Africans and Indians as low-class and low-race people. High-caste Hindus realized for the first time that inequality is the worst evil of any country or society. Christian missionaries converted low-caste people into Christians by providing them education, etc. However, their basic nature was imperialist and intolerant. After independence in India, great leaders, liberal thinkers, and educated people struggled a lot to remove untouchability and caste bias. Dr. Ambedkar was a great thinker and activist who fought against casteism and untouchability. He constructed the constitution of India after independence and passed several laws to remove untouchability and domination of upper-caste people in India. However, still, there are problems in several parts of India where the low-caste people still suffer and they are treated as untouchables.

### **18.2 Life of Dr. Ambedkar**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar is regarded as the father of the constitution in India. He was a remarkable jurist, social reformer, educationist, economist, and political thinker. He struggled to reform the social structure in India. He served India with profound love for the country. He worked for the welfare of the down-trodden people and women.

Dr. Ambedkar was born in a low-caste family called Mahar. Mahars were treated as untouchable people in Maharashtra. Dr. Ambedkar was born on April 14, 1891, in a village near military barracks near Mhow in M.P. His father Ramji was a subedar and his mother Bhimabai was a good-natured housewife. Babasaheb was the fourteenth child of his parents. His ancestral village Ambawade was in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra. In Maharashtra, upper-caste people treated Mahars as untouchable caste. Babasaheb, as a child, experienced the domination and humiliation of the lower caste by the upper-caste people. He studied in Army school run by the British government. However, even in this school, he had suffered as a lower-caste student. In 1908, Ambedkar studied in Elphinstone College, Mumbai. He received a scholarship from Gayakwad ruler of Baroda, Sayaji Rao. He got a graduation degree in political science and economics from Bombay University in 1912. Then he went to the USA for further studies. After he returned from the USA, he was appointed as a Defence Secretary to the King of Baroda. Even at Baroda, he was humiliated as an untouchable person. He was not provided a house on rent by other upper-caste people and he had to spend some time outside. He had received a doctorate degree from Columbia University but there was no difference in caste discrimination. Then he decided to fight against it by making the untouchables aware and alert of their problems. He told them that it is necessary for them to get education, organize, and unite to fight against inequality and social domination. He rejected ancient history of caste system. He strongly believed that education is a key to create awareness and strengthen people to fight against injustice.

### **18.3 Dr. Ambedkar's Education**

Dr. Ambedkar was a great thinker and social reformer. He studied political science, economics, and law. He drafted the constitution of India after independence. He was also a liberal thinker, democratic person with profound love for India. He was the Law and Justice Minister in the first cabinet of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India.

Dr. Ambedkar believed that untouchability and caste system are the evils of Hinduism. Therefore, he renounced Hinduism and adopted Buddhism. He strongly believed that education alone is the source of understanding, knowledge, and rejection of social evils. Dr. Ambedkar studied in primary school in Satara, Maharashtra. He matriculated from Elphinstone High School, Bombay. Then he studied in Elphinstone College, Bombay and graduated in political science and economics. He did his M.A. with economics, sociology, history, philosophy, and anthropology. He obtained Ph.D. degree from Columbia University. He did his M.Sc. in London School of Economics and became barrister-at-law in London. He also obtained D.Sc. (doctorate) in London School of Economics. He got L.L.D. and D. Lit. Thus,

he got four doctorate degrees. Dr. Ambedkar was an intellectual and liberal philosopher. As a political leader in India, he is a unique person who had achieved many degrees. He proved that he was far more educated than pandits and upper-caste people.

#### **18.4 Dr. Ambedkar's Works (Books)**

Dr. Ambedkar was an erudite writer. He was a great orator, writer, and thinker. His major works are thought-provoking and effective. These major works are as follows:

1. *Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development* (1916).
2. *Mook Nayak* (1920).
3. *The Annihilation of Caste* (1936).
4. *Federation versus Freedom* (1936).
5. *Thoughts on Pakistan* (1940).
6. *Ranade, Gandhi and Jinnah* (1943).
7. *Mr. Gandhi and Emancipation of Untouchables* (1993).
8. *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables?* (1945).
9. *Pakistan or Partition of India?* (1945).
10. *State and Minorities* (1947).
11. *Manu and Shudras*.
12. *State and Minorities* (1947).
13. *The Untouchables* (1949).
14. *Buddha or Karl Marx* (1956).
15. *The Buddha and His Dharma* (1957).

#### **18.5 Reforms by Dr. Ambedkar**

Dr. Ambedkar worked all his life for the upliftment of the oppressed and poor people. He also made a lot of efforts for social reforms. He was a great advocate of equality and liberty. He is regarded as the true champion of betterment of the Dalits in Indian constitution. His major social reforms are as follows:

##### **1. Struggle for Dalit rights:**

Dr. Ambedkar was the leader of Mahar community. He launched Satyagraha against inequality and casteism. His aim was to secure basic rights for the Dalit community. He published weekly papers titled *Mook Nayak* and wrote articles to make the oppressed people fight against exploitation. He organized several sabha (meetings) and made the Dalits aware about their problems. To fight against untouchability, he made them alert. He focused on education as a source of awareness and rebel.

##### **2. Education as a key to freedom and progress:**

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar believed that education alone can change the social scenario. Educated people reject exploitation, inequality, and discrimination. He said that education would emancipate people from

enslavement and exploitation. He said: “Educate, agitate, organize.” With the support of people, he started many schools, colleges, and hostels. These educational institutions made people aware and inspired them to fight against high-caste people. They began to reject upper-caste people and their exploitative attitude. He wanted to uplift the underprivileged people.

3. **Society based on equality:**

Dr. Ambedkar wanted not only upliftment of the Dalits but social equality. He wanted to reconstruct society uprooting the social evils of inequality, caste system, exploitation, and untouchability. He was inspired by the slogan of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity. He strongly believed that Indian society was dominated by upper-caste people and the worst evil of the Indian culture was caste system.

4. **Political upliftment of the oppressed people:**

In Indian society before independence, there was cruel domination of high-caste people over the oppressed people. They had no right to get education, treatment of social equality, etc. They were exploited for hundreds of years in all parts of India. Dr. Ambedkar fought to provide these people political rights to vote and participate in social programmes as equal members. He visited London to participate in Round Table Conference and demanded a separate electorate for the Dalit people. As a chairman of the drafting committee of new constitution of India, he demanded reservations for the welfare of the backward community. He wanted all community of India to merge with main stream of the society.

5. **Land reforms and economic reforms:**

Dr. Ambedkar knew that in India, the upper communities were the landowners and the poor/oppressed people worked as labourers. They were exploited by the landowners or landlords cruelly as they had no land, no house, or other basic facilities. They lived in muddy huts outside the villages or towns. He supported the land reforms to provide land to the workers of agriculture. He wanted agricultural system as equitable for the landless people. He believed that agricultural land should be in the hands of the agricultural workers rather than landlords. Like Karl Marx, he believed that workers are the points of power rather than capitalists. However, he believed that the state should play an important role in generating social equality. Dr. Ambedkar also believed that the elected representation of the state should create economic transformation. The poor workers should be able to earn well and live happily. He favored nationalization of land and industries.

Dr. Ambedkar was a brave fighter for human rights and equality. His reforms played a very important role in social transformation in India. The Government of India is also trying to create social equality irrespective of caste, community, religion, or creed.

### **18.6 Dr. Ambedkar’s Views on “Castes in India”**

Dr. Ambedkar was a staunch advocate of human dignity and equality. He was born in a Mahar family which was treated as untouchables. In December,

1935, he was asked to speak about ill-effects of caste system on Hindu society but he sent his speech in written form titled “Annihilation of Caste.” It created some controversies and the committee members asked him to delete certain paragraphs. However, he said that he would not even change a comma. The committee decided not to invite him but Dr. Ambedkar published the essay. This essay is one of the most powerful writings by Dr. Ambedkar on caste system in India.

Dr. Ambedkar said that it was a great pity that even in modern time there were many defenders of caste system. Many people argued that caste system in India was not an evil but it was a division of labour. They believed that caste system was not wrong as it was a division of labour which every society needs. In fact, Dr. Ambedkar argued that it was not a division of labour but division of labourers. There is a hierarchy in Indian caste system where labourers are graded lower. In other countries, labourers are not graded. Division of labour is not spontaneous in Indian caste system; in fact, it is based on unequal attitudes. In Indian society, labourers are degraded due to their filthy or arduous work.

Now new occupations are not linked with castes. For example, even sweepers may belong to other than lower castes. Castes may become the cause of unemployment if it is based on castes only. Castes as economic organization is a harmful institution as it involves the subordination of natural powers of human beings.

It was believed in Hindu culture that caste system was to preserve purity of blood. Ethnologists say that there is no purity of blood in any part of the world. In fact, caste system came into being after different races of India; there was co-mingling of blood and culture in caste system in India. There is no difference between Brahmins of different states. Very often, virtue was caste-ridden and caste-bound. Castes destroyed the sense of public purity. In caste system, merits are not appreciated. Only births are appreciated or humiliated. In Hinduism, people supported castes based on birth and not virtues, talents, or skills.

Dr. Ambedkar discussed how caste system should be annihilated. He said that inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriage can affect the caste system. In fact, inter-caste dining is not so effective. Inter-caste marriage is the powerful solution for annihilation of caste system. Caste is not a physical object like a wall of bricks; it is a nation or a state of mind. Annihilation of caste system refers to national change, the change of thoughts. The remedy, according to Dr. Ambedkar, is to destroy the belief of the purity of the Shashtras. It is therefore necessary to reject many ideas of shashtras. If people follow them rigidly, there would be no abolition of caste system. The foundations of caste cannot change society. Anything based on caste foundations will never create positive changes.

Therefore, Dr. Ambedkar said that caste system should be uprooted by the people with genuine efforts. He criticized the concept of Swaraj by saying that Swaraj is the defence of Hindus in India. If India wants to adopt true Swaraj, Hindu society needs to be casteless.

Dr. Ambedkar's views about caste was linked with endogamy. Endogamy is the customs of marrying only within the local castes, clan, tribe, or community. In caste system it is solemnization of marriage within the castes. There are various kinds of endogamy like tribal endogamy, caste endogamy, class endogamy, rule endogamy, etc. Dr. Ambedkar said that scholars focused on child marriage, Sati pratha, and widowhood but, in fact, it is based on endogamy. He said that the caste is an enclosed class. Brahmins were the first class that created walls of endogamy.

Dr. Ambedkar said that virtue is caste-ridden and morality is caste-bound in Hindu society. Referring to patriarchal attitude, Dr. Ambedkar explained the links between caste and cruelty or violence against women. He criticized Manu as a religious philosopher who regarded Shudras as untouchables and low-caste people. He also rejected women as lower sex. Women in India suffered right from childhood to old age depending on men (male).

Dr. Ambedkar was a progressive thinker with respect for all human beings. He supported Dalits and women to liberate them from upper-caste people and patriarchal domination. In his work, "Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development," he identified caste as an institution which was not practiced in past or contemporary society in most of the countries of the world. Only Hindu society divided four classes of people—Brahmans, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Shudra turned into self-closed caste as they were treated as the lowest caste and untouchables. Practice of endogamy created this evil customs in India. Dr. Ambedkar argued that even in Vedic times, people self-identified themselves as particular castes rather than Hindus. This hierarchical order of society divided people into higher and lower castes. Shudras were generally illiterate, poor, and oppressed. The worst part of this system was untouchability which was based on the idea of purity and pollution. Shudras were kept outside social interaction. The ideology of Brahmanism propounded broken (Dalit) people.

Gandhiji wanted to reform in caste system but Dr. Ambedkar wanted to annihilate it completely. He introduced certain laws in Indian constitution for equality and annihilation of evils of caste system. Dr. Ambedkar's conversion to Buddhism was a powerful strategy to reject Brahmanism. He believed that Brahmanism did not accept equality, liberty, and fraternity. Critical element of the caste system is the prohibition of inter-caste marriage. He believed that caste is not just social order but the state of mind. He criticized Hindu Shashtras as they were often humiliating, irrational, and inhuman.

### **Check Your Progress–I (MCQs)**

**Fill in the gaps with appropriate answers:**

1. Dr. Ambedkar belonged to \_\_\_\_\_ caste.  
(A) Mahar (B) Untouchable (C) Harijan (D) Shudra
2. Dr. Ambedkar drafted the \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Laws (B) Rights of India (C) Administration (D) Constitution
3. "Dalit" refers to \_\_\_\_\_ community.  
(A) Broken (B) Oppressed (C) Untouchable (D) Poor



4. \_\_\_\_\_ is the worst aspect of Hindu culture.  
(A) Caste system (B) Brahmanism (C) Poverty (D) Exploitation
5. \_\_\_\_\_ were the racists in past India.  
(A) Aryans (B) Dravids (C) Brahmins (D) Traders
6. Chokhamela was a \_\_\_\_\_ poet.  
(A) Brahmin (B) Kshatriya (C) Dalit (D) Marathi
7. Dr. Ambedkar's father's name was \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Krishnaji (B) Ramji (C) Mohan (D) Gulab
8. Dr. Ambedkar received scholarship from \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Upper-caste institution (B) Gayakwads (C) Foreign university (D) Delhi University
9. Dr. Ambedkar published weekly papers named \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Nayak (B) Maha Nayak (C) Mook Nayak (D) Hindu Nayak
10. Dr. Ambedkar was inspired by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Western philosophy (B) Russian Revolution (C) French Revolution (D) British rule
11. Dr. Ambedkar believed that \_\_\_\_\_ is a key for social change.  
(A) Caste system (B) Economy (C) Education (D) Democracy
12. Endogamy refers to \_\_\_\_\_.  
(A) Inter-caste marriage (B) Rejection of inter-caste marriage (C) Rejection of education (D) Marriage within caste or community

### **18.7 What is Casteism? (Jati, Varna and Caste)**

Casteism is a huge problem in India. It is an inequality which prevails still in India. It is an age-old issue that has created many human problems. People in India discriminate against people based on their castes. Discrimination can be seen in workplace, education, marriage, and social interaction. It is an issue that has many root causes. There is a rigid social hierarchy that existed in ancient time and even today in several parts of the country. Their occupation and status are based on caste system.

Another cause for casteism is the lack of social mobility in our country. It is a serious problem that requires solution of eradicating discrimination and inequality. For many earlier centuries, casteism existed in India. There was social stratification which was based on birth in certain cases.

Casteism is a social system that has impacted Indian society and culture. It is still prevalent in different parts of India. It is a hierarchy with four parts—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra. Brahmin is regarded as the highest and Shudra as the lowest caste. Casteism has been rejected since 1950 but it still exists in India. There are different forms of discrimination like caste, gender, religion, and regionalism. It impacts social life, politics, and economy. It harms economic growth as it does not allow low-caste people to provide work and skilled occupations.

### **18.8 Evils of Casteism in India**

India has a different kind of recession which is called casteism. It influenced social life and culture of India. Thus, there was socio-economic impact of casteism on Indian people and society. There was the worst evil of inequality and hierarchy. In 1500 B.C., Aryans came to India and they humiliated local people like Dravids, etc. Warriors and priests tried to dominate society and priests became dominant as Brahmins.

Caste system is the worst social system in India. It affected marriages, education, jobs, economy, and politics. It is known as jati, varnas, and caste. Varnapratha or Varnashram was the part of ancient culture of India. In the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, this evil persisted in those days. According to Dr. Ambedkar, inter-caste marriage and inter-caste dining can eradicate the upper and lower caste mentality and inequality.

### **18.9 History of Casteism in India**

The origin of caste system in India is not fully known. However, it was in ancient time, particularly before 2000 years. It was the part of Hindu culture. The Aryans arrived in India and settled in North India. They claimed that they were intelligent and superior. They rejected and humiliated local people, particularly Dravids of South India. Caste system appears in Vedas and epics like the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. Hindu caste became stronger between 1000 and 200 BCE. The caste system changed a little during some periods of Indian caste history.

The caste system had four primary castes: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudras. In past Hinduism, Aryans treated Shudras as untouchables, dark people, and demons. Aryans were Gods (Devas) while local people were Asuras or low-caste people. Originally, caste depended on person's work but later, it became hereditary. People in India experienced very little social mobility. Inter-caste marriage was strictly prohibited in India. Untouchables were not allowed to drink water from the same source like the well of the upper-caste people. They had to live away from other caste people. In India, there were thousands of castes, sub-castes, and combinations. Even among the lower-caste people, there was a hierarchy among them. The untouchables were regarded as polluted, filthy, and impure. They cleaned, scavenged animal carcasses, and ate meat of the dead animals. They did leather work, cleaned faeces and defecation of the other people. Upper-class people kept them away, maintaining distance with them.

In short, it can be said that Indian caste system generated many evils like rejection, humiliation, domination, and exploitation. Inequality is an immoral vice for entire mankind. Dr. Ambedkar studied about it profoundly and made efforts to eradicate caste system.

### **18.10 Dr. Ambedkar's Efforts to Remove Caste System from India**

Dr. Ambedkar was a great jurist, economist, and civil rights leader. He was an advocate of equality, fraternity, and liberty. He served as a chairperson of drafting committee of the Indian constitution. That is the reason why he was called the father of the Indian constitution. He also served as a law minister

after India gained independence. He was a great supporter of equality and made a lot of efforts to remove untouchability and abolish caste system in India. He fought against casteism as the great leader of the Dalits.

Dr. Ambedkar was a staunch supporter of equality and he played an important role in bringing the low-caste people to mainstream. He strongly believed that education was a key source of equality and freedom. The Hindu Code Bill became an important reality due to Dr. Ambedkar's efforts. He fought for the right of the down-trodden people. He demanded the right and equality for the Dalits and other oppressed people.

Dr. Ambedkar criticized Hindu concept of Varnashram and religious texts that propagated untouchability. He led the Dalits to burn the copies of *Manusmriti* which propagated inequality and untouchability. In 1932, Dr. Ambedkar signed the Poona Act for reservation of seats for Dalits. He always felt that casteism is the biggest disgrace of Hindu society. He often differed from Mahatma Gandhi who favoured Varna pratha of Indian culture. That is the reason why Dr. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism with 36500 Dalits. He strongly believed that Buddhism was more liberal and spiritual than Hinduism. Lord Buddha never claimed that he was a God and he preached his followers like a common man. He chose a golden path of harmony between two opposite ideas. He chose Buddhism as the religion of equality and harmony. It was based on rationality and consciousness. Hinduism is full of rituals and superstitions while Buddhism is moralistic and humanitarian.

In his work *Annihilation of Caste*, he talked about the humiliation and sufferings of the Dalits. He said, "Hindus do not possess a consciousness of kind but they possess the consciousness of caste." The party was deprived of political, physical, social, and educational rights. He suggested two important remedies for annihilation of castes—inter-caste marriage and the rejection of religious scriptures. He believed in liberty, equality, and fraternity. Equality looks like fiction but, however, it is the governing principle of ideal society.

### **Check Your Progress–II (Questions with Brief Answers)**

1. What is casteism?
2. What are the evils of casteism?
3. What were the reforms of Dr. Ambedkar?
4. Discuss brief history of casteism in India.
5. What were the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar to remove casteism?
6. Write a short note on impact of Dr. Ambedkar on Indian culture.

### **18.11 Impact of Dr. Ambedkar on Indian Culture and Indian Thoughts**

Dr. Ambedkar is known as the father of Indian constitution. He was a great thinker and activist. He made several social reforms in India. He was deeply concerned about the Dalits and other oppressed people. He drafted Indian constitution to protect the oppressed people and remove the evil of casteism. These efforts to eradicate social evils are highly effective on Indian culture and thoughts. Like a great messiah, he strove to eradicate inequality, untouchability, and casteism from Indian thoughts. He fought bravely against caste discrimination which was based on hierarchical caste system.

Dr. Ambedkar believed that education is the key to social revolution. He rejected ancient Indian culture that supported caste system. Dr. Ambedkar regarded education as a powerful tool for social improvement.

Dr. Ambedkar said that Dalits should be educated, well united. They should struggle for social change with social harmony and reject discrimination. He also believed that the Dalits should be strong enough to oppose caste system, inequality, and discrimination.

Dr. Ambedkar also used political ideas for protecting the Dalits. He did not agree with the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi about Varna pratha. Dr. Ambedkar also believed that industrialization would improve the economy of the country and provide large-scale employment. His views on tax policies and agricultural system were highly relevant for equality and protection of the poor people. He also empowered women. He believed that women should have equal rights and gender equality. He introduced Hindu Code Bill to support gender equality and women's rights. He respected women and supported the dignity of women. Dr. Ambedkar also struggled to provide reservation for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes for education and employment. The system of reservation was introduced by Dr. Ambedkar to bring the oppressed people into the mainstream of the Indian society.

Dr. Ambedkar was a great thinker whose impact on Indian thoughts and culture are highly relevant today.

### **18.12 Let Us Sum Up**

In this unit, we discussed about the life and the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar on Indian society. He was a great social reformer and activist. His views on caste system created great social change. Dr. Ambedkar himself belonged to Mahar family. He struggled a lot for equality, fraternity, and liberty. His contribution to equality, education, and constitution of India is quite relevant and effective even today. He is one of the reformers who changed the social scenario of Indian society.

### **18.13 Key Words**

Endogamy—Exogamy—Caste system—Varna pratha—Indian culture—Annihilation of castes—Genesis of caste—Jati, Varna and caste—Equality, liberty, and fraternity.

### **18.14 Suggested Reading**

1. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, *Castes in India: Genesis and Development*.
2. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, *Riddles in Hinduism*.
3. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Castes* (1936).
4. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, *Who Were the Shudras?*
5. Keer, Dhananjay, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*.
6. Kumar, Aishwarya, "The Lies of Manu."
7. *Dr. Ambedkar's Economic and Social Thoughts*.

### **Answers (MCQs)**

#### **Check Your Progress–I**

1. (A)
2. (D)
3. (B)
4. (A)
5. (A)
6. (C)
7. (B)
8. (B)
9. (C)
10. (C)
11. (A)

## Unit 19

## R. K. Narayan: Swami and Friends (1935)

### 19.0 Objectives

#### 19.1 Brief Information about R. K. Narayan

#### 19.2 Plot Summary of Swami and Friends

#### 19.3 Main Themes of Swami and Friends

#### 19.4 Analysis of Major Characters

#### 19.5 Let Us Sum Up

#### 19.6 Key Words

#### Check Your Progress

#### 19.7 Suggested Reading

### 19.0 Objectives

- In this unit, students will get an overview of R. K. Narayan as a writer.
- The unit will analyse the historical and cultural context of the novel, exploring how the setting in pre-independence India shapes the characters and their experiences.
- Additionally, the unit will conduct a detailed analysis of major characters such as Swami, Rajam, Mani, Mr. Ebenezer, and Swami's parents, examining their roles, motivations, and contributions to the narrative.
- The unit will identify and analyse the themes presented in the novel, such as the clash between tradition and modernity, the challenges of growing up, friendship dynamics, and the influence of societal expectations.
- The unit will engage in discussions about the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by the characters, encouraging students to reflect on the characters' decisions and actions in the context of the societal norms of the time.

### 19.1 Brief Information about R. K. Narayan

Renowned Indian author R. K. Narayan (full name: Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami) is most recognized for his books and short stories that are set in the made-up town of Malgudi. He was born in Madras (now Chennai), India, on October 10, 1906, and died in Chennai on May 13, 2001. R. K. Narayan was born into a Brahmin household that spoke Tamil. R. K. Narayanaswami was his father, and he was a headmaster. Narayan attended Christian College in Madras as he continued his study. Despite not having a degree, he read a lot and had a strong interest in English literature.

*Swami and Friends*, Narayan's first book, was released in 1935. It introduced readers to the made-up town of Malgudi and signalled the start of his prolific literary career. Malgudi is the setting for several of Narayan's writings; the town has come to be associated with his narratives. Among the series of works from Malgudi that are noteworthy are *The Bachelor of Arts*, *The Guide*, and *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*. Narayan is renowned for his wit, humour, and simplicity in writing. He depicted common people's daily lives with astute

observation and a hint of satire. Narayan published a great deal of short stories in addition to novels, many of which dealt with themes of interpersonal relationships, cross-cultural conflicts, and the comedy in ordinary circumstances.

Narayan's contribution to Indian literature brought him fame on a global scale. Numerous languages have translations of his writings. His novel *The Guide* earned him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960. For his outstanding contribution to writing, Narayan was granted the Padma Vibhushan, the second-highest civilian honour in India, in 2000. One of the forerunners of contemporary Indian literature written in English is R. K. Narayan. Subsequent generations of Indian writers have drawn inspiration from his works. Narayan's cultural influence has been further cemented by the adaptation of some of his books into motion pictures and television shows. Writings by R. K. Narayan are still praised for their wit, understanding of human nature, and ability to capture the complexity of Indian society. His contribution to literature has left a lasting legacy in the world of Indian and global literary traditions.

## **19.2 Plot Summary of Swami and Friends**

*Swami and Friends* is divided in two parts.

### **Part 1:**

#### **1. An Overview of Malgudi**

- Swaminathan, also known as Swami, resides in the made-up town of Malgudi, which is introduced at the beginning of the novel. Swami is looking forward to the Albert Mission School resuming this summer break.

#### **3. Swami's Friends**

- Mani, Shankar, and the recent arrival Rajam are among the close-knit circle of friends that Swami has. The group soon elects Rajam, the police superintendent's son, as leader, and they engage in a variety of antics and escapades.

#### **5. School Life**

- The lads go through the highs and lows of school life, having to deal with academic pressure and rigid professors like Mr. Ebenezer, the headmaster. In particular, Swami battles with his academics and his father's expectations of him.

#### **7. The Cricket Match**

- The guys arrange for their group and another, led by a boy called Raghu, to play a game of cricket. The game takes on great significance in the story, bringing themes of rivalry, camaraderie, and childhood nostalgia to light.

#### **9. Conflicts and Their Resolution**

- There are moments of tension in the group, especially between Swami and Rajam, which results in a brief falling out. The boys' relationship endures after their disputes are resolved in the first section.

## **Part 2:**

### **1. The Start of the New School Year**

2. The commencement of the new academic year ushers in the second section. After Rajam is moved to a different school, Swami and the others must deal with his absence. The group's dynamics shift, and Swami finds it difficult to fill Rajam's absence.

### **3. Disagreements and Obstacles**

4. Swami encounters more difficulties, such as scholarly demands and disagreements with his dad. The story explores Swami's inner conflicts and the intricacies of his relationship with his family.

### **5. The Argument with Rajam**

6. Now enrolled in a new school, Rajam returns to Malgudi. Swami and Rajam have a misunderstanding that causes an ego conflict and damaged friendship.

### **7. The Train Journey**

8. The novel's turning point is a poignant train ride during which Swami muses on his life, his friendships, and the decisions he must make. As Swami struggles with his inner demons, the story intensifies in intensity and passion.

### **9. Conclusion**

Swami returns home at the end of the book, having gained valuable insight into the intricacies of friendship, loyalty, and life. The story effectively conveys the difficult and sometimes bittersweet aspects of growing up.

## **19.3 Main Themes of Swami and Friends**

### **Clash between tradition and modernity**

Swami's father is a symbol of traditional values, especially when it comes to education. He abides by the social norms and traditional expectations of academic performance. Traditional expectations are challenged by the introduction of contemporary educational techniques and the influence of British colonial values in the school setting. Mr. Ebenezer, the headmaster, starts to represent the imposition of contemporary, British-style education. Swami's early relationships with Mani and Sankar are examples of customary, regional friendships. Their sense of community and shared cultural values are the foundations of their friendship. Rajam, who recently moved to the area, offers a contemporary viewpoint. The conventional friendships in Swami's life stand in stark contrast to Rajam's exposure to a wider perspective and his father's role as the police superintendent.

Rajam's respect for Western values, his intelligence, and his progressive ideas make him an icon of modernity. His persona defies social mores and turns into a driving force for Swami's transformation. The disputes that develop between Rajam and Swami, especially in the book's second portion, emphasize the tension between enduring friendships and the growing influence of contemporary ideals. The disputes between Swami and his father illustrate a generational divide. Swami's father is a perfect example of conventional beliefs; he places a high priority on following social norms and achieving scholastic success. Conversely, Swami aspires to a more



contemporary way of life, as evidenced by his obsession with train travel and his need for clothes in the Western manner.

In the book's last section, the train ride represents modern advancement symbolically. Swami's train voyage represents the change from conventional to contemporary influences. While travelling, Swami considers how his life has changed, symbolizing a literal and figurative shift towards modernity. Rajam's pride in his country and sense of patriotism are reflections of traditional values based on resistance to foreign authority and self-identity.

Although Rajam's opposition to British principles is based in tradition, it also reflects a contemporary viewpoint because it is consistent with the growing nationalist fervor that was prevalent during the colonial era. The imaginary town of Malgudi is an embodiment of traditional Indian cultural dynamics. The customs, celebrations, and daily activities portrayed in Malgudi are indicative of the conventional facets of Indian culture. Malgudi is exposed to modern influences with the introduction of personalities such as Rajam and the effects of colonial education, resulting in a conflict between tradition and modernity. The conflict between modernity and tradition in *Swami and Friends* has several facets; it permeates the relationships between the characters, the expectations of society, and the changing cultural fabric of Malgudi, a fictional town. The novel's examination of identity, cultural shift, and the difficulties of navigating a time of transition in Indian history is deepened by this conflict.

### **Challenges of growing up**

The fundamental theme of R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* is the difficulties of growing up. The book offers a thorough examination of Swami's challenges, disagreements, and predicaments as he makes his way from infancy to puberty. Swami struggles with the demands society and his father make of him to do well academically. Exam pressure is a reflection of the usual struggles that young people have in a cutthroat educational setting. Swami has disagreements with those in positions of power, especially Mr. Ebenezer, the headmaster. These disputes serve as a metaphor for the difficulties young people encounter while navigating the expectations and regulations established by adults in positions of power.

The complexities of Swami's friendships with Mani, Sankar, and eventually Rajam illustrate the difficulties in establishing and preserving connections during the turbulent adolescent years. Young individuals often endure conflicts, misunderstandings, and shifting allegiances. Swami struggles with identity issues, attempting to identify his place in the world and his identity. A typical issue during the formative years of adolescence is the internal difficulties involved with identity creation, which are depicted in the novel. The conflicts that arise between generations as children are exemplified by Swami's and his father's arguments. Tension arises between Swami's wish for independence and his father's expectations; this illustrates the larger difficulties encountered by young people trying to live alone. Swami has to make morally difficult choices, like in the case of the exam paper theft incident. These circumstances make him consider moral and ethical issues, which helps him grow in these areas.

The topic of Swami's yearning for independence repeats. His interest with the concept of boarding school and the subsequent train ride represent the need for liberty and self-governance, which are universal goals shared by young people trying to make a name for themselves. Swami goes through emotional upheaval, particularly in his friendships and family ties. The book examines the emotional complexity of growing up, such as interpersonal fears, familial expectations, and relationship disputes. Innocence gradually wears off as Swami negotiates the difficulties of puberty. The natural shift from childhood carefree days to the more complicated and hard parts of growing up are depicted in the novel.

A key component of Swami's path is introspection and self-discovery. He develops emotionally and personally as a result of learning more about himself, his values, and his goals via a variety of situations. The difficulties of growing up are part of what makes *Swami and Friends* so rich; R. K. Narayan expertly portrays the intricacies and universal hardships that come with the changing time of youth. The story gives readers a better understanding of the moral, social, and emotional aspects of growing up and becoming an adult.

### **Friendship and camaraderie**

R. K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* has friendship and camaraderie as a central and recurring theme. The friendship dynamics between young boys in the made-up town of Malgudi are examined in the book. The story opens with the introduction of Swami and his buddies, Rajam later on, Mani, and Sankar. The common experiences of play, school, and daily life serve as the foundation for the companionship. The boys' relationship serves as a symbol of their cohesion and support, especially in the face of obstacles like Mr. Ebenezer, the harsh headmaster, and the demands of the classroom. The buddies' passion for cricket and their desire to start a cricket team are among their shared interests. Together with strengthening their relationship, these shared activities provide the group a feeling of direction and identity.

Conflicts and arguments are a part of the friendship theme, particularly those that arise between Swami and Mani and later with Rajam. These disputes show the difficulties and complexities that friendships may present, as well as the opportunity for improvement and settlement. The pals provide mutual support to one another. They offer emotional support when things are tough, such when Swami has disagreements with authorities and troubles in school. Swami and the other guys' character growth is greatly aided by their friendships. They achieve personal growth and acquire valuable life lessons from their relationships with one another. The book examines friendships that transcend social and financial divides. Mani defies social standards and represents the variety within the group because he comes from a less affluent background than Rajam.

The fierce yet cordial rivalry between friends is symbolized by the cricket match between the two teams captained by Rajam and Swami. It turns into a crucial occasion that puts their friendships to the test. The group takes on a new dynamic with Rajam's entrance into the narrative. His diverse upbringing and life experiences underscore social and cultural divides while complicating

the friendships. The sentimental significance of friendship in the lives of the protagonists is emphasized throughout the book. Even later in the story, when Swami is reflecting on his journey, the memories of their shared experiences stay with him. The friendships that the characters in the book have are important shaping factors in their lives. They influence the boys' perceptions of trust, loyalty, and the subtleties of interpersonal interactions. The narrative of *Swami and Friends* revolves around the theme of friendship and camaraderie. The book examines the enduring and transforming impact of true friendships during the formative years of youth through the highs and lows of the characters' relationships.

#### **19.4 Analysis of Major Characters**

##### **Swaminathan(Swami)**

The story is mainly told from the viewpoint of Swami, a ten-year-old boy. His youthfulness emphasizes the purity and naiveté of his outlook. Swami has a natural curiosity about the things in his surroundings. His questions, observations, and creative ideas all demonstrate his curious temperament, which is characteristic of a toddler. Swami belongs to a close-knit circle of pals that includes Mani, Sankar, and Rajam. His friendships are an important part of his existence, and the story is shaped by the complexities of these connections. Swami has difficulties at school, especially with Mr. Ebenezer, the headmaster. His run-ins with authority serve as a stark reminder of the difficulties a young person has while attempting to express his individuality under rigid rules.

Swami suffers in his studies and under pressure from the faculty. There is friction in his character because of what his father expects of him and because of the educational system. Expectations and disagreements characterize Swami's relationship with his father. Their generational divide is a reflection of the larger conflict between modernity and tradition.

Swami receives emotional support from his mother. Her loving and compassionate demeanour contrasts with his father's strictness. Swami struggles to reconcile his desires with what society expects of him and the difficulties of growing up. His inner conflicts give his persona more nuance as he attempts to negotiate the challenges of puberty. Swami highly regards Rajam's leadership abilities and intelligence. But disagreements happen, particularly in Part 2, which makes their connection strained. This facet delves into the brittleness of childhood bonds.

Swami's experiences provide insight into the social and cultural shifts that occurred in India prior to freedom. His persona functions as a microcosm, encapsulating the spirit of a civilization in transition. Towards the end of the book, Swami's emotional and personal journey is represented by the train ride. It acts as a reflection of his development, struggles, and decisions. The character of Swami in *Swami and Friends* offers a complex portrait of childhood, friendship, and the difficulties of growing up in a society that is changing. As they delve into common issues of friendship, identity, and the challenges of making the shift from childhood to adolescence, readers can relate to his experiences.

### **Rajam**

Rajam is an important character in *Swami and Friends* by R. K. Narayan. Rajam becomes the obvious choice to lead Swami's group of buddies. He is well-liked by his peers because of his charm, wit, and self-assured manner. Rajam's father is superintendent of police, a very important job. Rajam is distinct from his peers because of the social standing and influence this background bestows upon him. Rajam's strong academic performance gives him a cerebral edge. His accomplishments support his leadership position and influence the group's dynamics. Rajam conveys a great feeling of nationalism and patriotism. He is against British ideals, particularly as they were practiced while India was a British colony. His opinions give the story a political and social depth.

Swami has great admiration for Rajam. Swami is greatly impacted by Rajam's attributes, which mold his viewpoints and guide his choices. But Swami also faces internal strife and conflict as a result of this admiration. An important turning point in the story occurs when Rajam transfers to a different school. It includes themes of separation and longing and examines how strong the friendship between Swami and Rajam is. In the novel's second section, Rajam and Swami have a misunderstanding. Their connection becomes more complex as a result of this dispute, which also highlights the influence of society expectations and the frailty of friendships. Rajam's persona stands for advancement and modernity. His beliefs and principles go against established conventions, making him a symbol of the shifting social standards.

In translation, the name "Rajam" means "king" or "prince." Rajam's leadership abilities and his regal demeanour are reinforced by this symbolic name among his buddies. A resolution to the disputes between Swami and Rajam marks the novel's conclusion. But it also signifies Rajam's leaving, highlighting how relationships are fleeting and change is inevitable. Rajam's role in *Swami and Friends* makes a big contribution to the discussion of issues like friendship, societal change, and the conflict between modernity and tradition. His presence deepens the story and acts as a spur for Swami's emotional and personal development.

### **Mani**

A significant character in *Swami and Friends* by R. K. Narayan is Mani, also referred to as Muniswami. Mani's physical prowess and strength define him. He stands out from the other boys in the group with his muscular presence and his well-known athletic prowess. Mani is a passionate and faithful friend, especially to Swami. Mani's loyalty endures despite sporadic arguments and disputes, demonstrating the enduring quality of genuine friendship. In the group, Mani takes on a protective role, particularly toward Swami. His tendency to be protective of him emphasizes the complexities of their friendship and adds a depth of camaraderie. Mani's disagreements with Rajam exacerbate the tension among the pals. These disputes highlight the diverse personalities within the group and the difficulties in preserving harmony.

Rajam comes from a more affluent household than Mani does. This social class divide reflects the characters' varied origins and adds another level of intricacy to the group dynamics. Mani frequently speaks out against perceived injustice since he has a strong sense of fairness. This trait highlights his morals and ideals and gives his character a deeper moral dimension. Mani offers a contrasting influence with his practical and physical qualities, while Rajam influences Swami with his sophisticated and modern ideals. Collectively, they support Swami's overall development.

Throughout the book, Mani's friendships with Swami and the other boys change and evolve. This lively depiction captures the ephemeral nature of friendships in adolescence. Mani's persona can be interpreted as a metaphor for the average person. Because of his hardships, loyalty, and sense of justice, he appeals to a wider audience and gives the story a hint of universality. Over the course of the story, Mani's character changes somewhat. As he learns to resolve conflicts and navigates the difficulties within the group, his maturity is apparent. Mani's persona in *Swami and Friends* enhances the depth of the story by emulating virtues like justice, strength, and loyalty. His relationships with Swami and the other characters shed light on the nuanced nature of friendships and the variety of influences that mould people in their early years.

### **Mr. Ebenezer**

The Albert Mission School's headmaster, Mr. Ebenezer, is featured in *Swami and Friends* by R. K. Narayan. It is implied that Mr. Ebenezer is a severe disciplinarian. His persona reflects the rigid standards and regulations that are common in schools at the period the novel is set, embodying the authoritarian nature of the educational system. Mr. Ebenezer keeps tight rules in place at the school. His attitude to upholding order and rule compliance among the kids makes it clear that he places a high priority on discipline. Mr. Ebenezer's interaction with the students is comparatively detached. He frequently interacts with them in a harsh and commanding manner, which adds to their sense of unease and terror.

Mr. Ebenezer turns into a point of contention and strain for Swami. The novel's examination of the difficulties students have in the classroom is aided by Swami's meetings with the headmaster. The character of Mr. Ebenezer represents the shortcomings of the educational system at the time. Narayan criticizes the inflexible and harsh elements of education during the colonial era through the headmaster. Mr. Ebenezer, a headmaster in a colonial environment who received his education in Britain, represents the power of British education policy. His persona adds to the overarching topic of the conflict between colonialism's effects and traditional Indian ideals.

Conflicts in the story are sparked by Mr. Ebenezer's position as headmaster. Some storyline points are driven by his strictness and the repercussions he puts on pupils, including Swami, which also adds to the overall tension in the narrative. One could consider Mr. Ebenezer to be a stand-in for the bureaucratic apparatus that controls education. His persona draws attention to the difficulties presented by an indifferent and frequently impersonal system

that disregards the needs of specific pupils. Students are under more strain because of the headmaster's approach, which highlights how difficult the learning environment is at that time. The detached attitude of Mr. Ebenezer toward each student's unique situation highlights how impersonal the colonial educational system was. Through his role in *Swami and Friends*, Mr. Ebenezer critiques the educational system of the colonial era and draws attention to the difficulties experienced by students in a strict and authoritarian setting. His existence adds to the novel's overarching themes, which include the collision of civilizations and the effects of British colonialism on Indian society.

### **Swami's Father**

A major character in *Swami and Friends* by R. K. Narayan is Swami's father. Swami's father is a symbol of conventional wisdom and standards. He exemplifies the devotion to cultural and societal traditions, including those pertaining to behaviour and education that characterize the older generation. In the household, Swami's father is presented as having authority. His choices and expectations have a great deal of weight, which reflects the patriarchal nature of most families in the era in which the book is set. The father of Swami thinks highly of education. He wants Swami to succeed academically because he sees it as a means of achieving success and respect in the future. This emphasis is a reflection of the time's societal expectations.

Swami's father stands for a generation that is resistant to the ways of the contemporary world and its changing trends. Their divergent views on schooling, careers, and social expectations highlight the generational divide. The mismatch between Swami's personal goals and inclinations and his father's expectations is a major tension throughout the book. Swami's personal and emotional journey is propelled by this tension. Swami's father genuinely worries about Swami's future, which is why he is rigorous and emphasizes education. Even with his dictatorial manner, he acts out of a desire to give his son the greatest possible future.

The mother of Swami maintains equilibrium throughout the family dynamics. A more complex family dynamic is created by Swami's mother, who offers emotional support and understanding, in contrast to his rigorous and academically driven father. Being the leader of the household, Swami's father represents patriarchal power. The conventional roles of parents and the structure of families are reflected in his character. Swami's father character reflects the expectations and social mores that were common in the period of British colonial authority. His morals and beliefs are consistent with the conservative worldview of the time. Swami's development is greatly influenced by the character of his father. Their relationship's problems and remedies help the book explore the difficulties people encounter in a society that is evolving. In the book *Swami and Friends*, Swami's father is a stand-in for conventional wisdom and parental expectations. By emphasizing the conflicts between generations and the changing cultural milieu of pre-independence India, his character deepens the story.

### **Swami's Mother**

Her endeavours to close the gap are a reflection of her wish for intergenerational harmony within the family. Swami's mother follows tradition, much like her husband does. Her presentation of these principles, meanwhile, is more restrained and places an emphasis on a loving and considerate approach to family dynamics. The unselfish nature of Swami's mother is embodied in her. Her deeds and sacrifices on behalf of the family underscore the significance of the family and the costs incurred for its well-being, underscoring the customary role of women in that period. The universal concept of maternal love and instincts is represented by Swami's mother. Her protective and kind demeanour endears her to readers, giving the story more emotional depth.

The character of Swami's mother is a reflection of the expectations and social mores of the day. Her responsibilities as a caregiver and homemaker are consistent with the traditional tasks that Indian women were allotted in the years leading up to freedom. An important factor in Swami's development is his mother. Her influence helps Swami comprehend the value of emotional support, compassion, and family values. Readers from many cultural backgrounds can relate to Swami's mother's character. She is a timeless and relatable person because of her attributes of love, understanding, and sacrifice. In *Swami and Friends*, Swami's mother serves as both a family member and a symbol for larger themes of maternal love, peace within the family, and the challenges of maintaining traditional gender roles in a society that is changing.

### **19.5 Let Us Sum Up**

Set in the made-up town of Malgudi, *Swami and Friends* is R. K. Narayan's debut book. The narrative centres on Swaminathan, a little child referred to as Swami with affection, and his adventures with companions Mani and Sankar. Swami's time in school is characterized by interactions with Mr. Ebenezer, the severe headmaster, and the demands of the classroom. Their group dynamic changes when Rajam, the police superintendent's son, arrives. The four go on adventures together, one of which is trying to start a cricket team. In an attempt to highlight the wider societal conflicts, Rajam suggests that Indian and British students play cricket against one another while India's fight for independence rages in the background. Throughout the game, Swami struggles with his dual allegiances, divided between his pals and his father's support of the British. Swami's reflective train ride at the end of the book symbolizes his transition into puberty and his reflections on the difficulties of growing up in a society that is changing. The pre-independence India in *Swami and Friends* eloquently conveys the subtleties of childhood, friendship, and the conflict between tradition and modernity.

### **19.6 Key Words**

**Antics:** Foolish, outrageous, or amusing behavior; playful and mischievous actions.

**Camaraderie:** Mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together; a sense of goodwill and rapport.

**Colonial:** Pertaining to or characteristic of a colony or colonies, especially in the historical context of colonization by a foreign power.

**Dilemmas:** Situations in which a difficult choice has to be made between two or more alternatives, especially equally undesirable ones.

**Escapades:** Adventurous and daring activities or exploits, often with an implication of mischief or excitement.

**Formative:** Pertaining to the process of forming or developing something; related to the early stages of development or education.

**Intricacies:** The complex details, parts, or elements of something; the state of being intricate or complicated.

**Introspection:** The examination or observation of one's own mental and emotional processes, thoughts, and feelings; self-reflection.

**Poignant:** Evoking a keen sense of sadness, regret, or emotional intensity; deeply moving.

**Predicament:** A difficult, unpleasant, or embarrassing situation from which it is challenging to extricate oneself; a dilemma.

**Puberty:** The period during which adolescents reach sexual maturity and become capable of reproduction, typically marked by physical changes such as the development of secondary sexual characteristics.

**Stark:** Severe, harsh, or grim in appearance or outline; complete or utter.

**Toddler:** A child who is just beginning to walk and learn to talk, typically aged one to three years old.

**Turbulent:** Characterized by conflict, disorder, or confusion; marked by unrest or disturbance.

### **Check Your Progress**

#### **Choose the correct option:**

1. What is the name of the fictional town where *Swami and Friends* is set?  
a) Malgudi b) Madras c) Mysore d) Mangalore
2. Who is Swami's best friend in the novel?  
a) Mani b) Rajam c) Somu d) Raji
3. What is Swami's full name in the story?  
a) Swaminathan Iyer b) Swaminathan Pillai  
c) Swaminathan Nair d) Swaminathan Rao
4. What is the name of Swami's school in the novel?  
a) Albert Mission School b) Malgudi High School  
c) Sarayu School d) Board School
5. Who is Swami's strict headmaster in the story?  
a) Mr. Shyam b) Mr. Ebenezer  
c) Mr. Namboothiri d) Mr. Rajam

#### **Answer in brief:**

1. What is the setting of the novel?
2. Which school does Swami attend?
3. Who is the headmaster of Swami's school?



4. What event does Swami participate in to showcase his artistic talents?
5. What is the major conflict that Swami faces in the novel?

Write a detailed note on the following questions:

1. Discuss the theme of friendship in *Swami and Friends*. How does Swami's relationship with his friends evolve throughout the novel?
2. Examine the role of education in the story. How does the school environment shape Swami's character and influence his experiences?
3. Explore the significance of the fictional town of Malgudi as a setting in *Swami and Friends*. How does the town contribute to the overall atmosphere of the novel?

### 19.7 Suggested Reading

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## Unit 20

### Arun Joshi: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas (1971)

#### 20.0 Objectives

##### 20.1 Introduction: Arun Joshi as a Novelist

##### 20.2 Introduction: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

##### 20.3 Themes: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

##### 20.4 Characters: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

##### 20.5 Billy Biswas, the Central Character

##### 20.6 The Ending of The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

##### 20.7 The Symbolism of Nature in the Novel and Its Contribution to the Protagonist's Search for Authenticity and Meaning

##### 20.8 Setting: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

#### Questions

#### MCQs

#### 20.0 Objectives

- To understand the central themes explored in the novel, such as alienation, authenticity, and the search for meaning.
- To analyse the character development of Billy Biswas and the factors that contribute to his transformation.
- To explore the symbolism of nature in the novel and its significance in Billy's quest for authenticity and understanding.
- To examine the encounters with various characters, such as Baba Naga, Sonam, and the Hermit, and their impact on Billy's self-discovery and perception of the world.
- To reflect on the ending of the novel and its implications for Billy's quest for fulfillment, considering whether he achieves his desired state of authenticity or if ambiguity remains.
- To discuss the use of surrealism and ambiguity in the narrative and their effect on the reader's interpretation of the story.
- To analyse the portrayal of societal expectations and materialism in Billy's dissatisfaction and his subsequent search for a more meaningful existence.
- To reflect on the novel's exploration of the human condition and its insights into personal growth, identity, and the pursuit of meaning.
- To examine the impact of the setting, both urban and natural, on the narrative and its contribution to the themes and character development.
- To engage in critical thinking and interpretation of the text, considering the

novel's larger implications and the resonance of its themes with contemporary society.

### **20.1 Introduction: Arun Joshi as a Novelist**

Arun Joshi, an acclaimed Indian novelist, is recognized for his profound exploration of existential themes and the complexities of human experience. Born on December 16, 1939, in Varanasi, India, Joshi's literary contributions have left an indelible mark on Indian literature. Though his life was tragically cut short at the age of 47 in 1993, his legacy as a novelist continues to resonate with readers.

Joshi's works stand out for their introspective narratives, rich characterizations, and philosophical undertones. He skillfully delves into the depths of the human psyche, probing the existential crises faced by his characters and examining the conflicts between societal expectations and individual identity. His writing style exhibits a keen understanding of the complexities of human emotions, expressed through lyrical prose and evocative imagery.

With a deep intellectual curiosity, Joshi's novels often explore themes such as alienation, rootlessness, the search for authenticity, and the inherent struggle of the human condition. His protagonists are often introspective individuals grappling with a sense of disillusionment, prompting readers to contemplate the larger questions of existence and personal growth.

Arun Joshi's literary career took off with the publication of his debut novel, *The Foreigner*, in 1968. This work received critical acclaim for its portrayal of a young man's cultural displacement in London and his subsequent search for identity. However, it was his second novel, *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, published in 1971, that solidified his reputation as a writer of great depth and insight. This novel, considered a modern classic of Indian literature, explores the themes of alienation, authenticity, and the pursuit of meaning in a fragmented world.

Joshi's novels resonate with readers not only for their exploration of existential concerns but also for their ability to capture the nuances of Indian society and culture. He skillfully blends the personal and the universal, drawing from his own experiences and observations to create narratives that strike a chord with readers from diverse backgrounds.

Throughout his career, Arun Joshi received numerous accolades, including the Sahitya Akademi Award for his novel *The Last Labyrinth* in 1982. His works continue to be studied and celebrated for their literary merit, their psychological depth, and their ability to provoke introspection and contemplation.

As a novelist, Arun Joshi's legacy resides in his ability to weave together compelling narratives and profound themes, inviting readers to reflect on the complexities of human existence. His works remain relevant and continue to captivate readers, offering a profound understanding of the human condition and the search for meaning in a rapidly changing world.

## 20.2 Introduction: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is a thought-provoking novel written by Indian author Arun Joshi. First published in 1971, the book explores the existential crisis of its protagonist, Billy Biswas, who chooses to abandon his comfortable life in the city and embrace an isolated existence in the forests of India.

The novel begins with the introduction of Billy Biswas, a well-educated and successful man living in Delhi, India. Despite his outwardly fulfilling life, Billy is plagued by a deep sense of discontentment and alienation from the materialistic society he finds himself in. He feels disconnected from his surroundings, questioning the purpose and meaning of his existence.

Driven by a strong urge to escape from the superficiality of urban life, Billy embarks on a journey to the remote forests of Sikkim. He leaves behind his wife and affluent lifestyle, seeking solace and enlightenment in the wilderness. This drastic decision shocks those around him, who fail to comprehend the motivations behind his departure.

As Billy ventures deeper into the forests, he becomes progressively detached from human society. He adopts a nomadic lifestyle, relying on his survival skills and living off the land. Through encounters with various individuals, including a spiritual guru, a tribal woman, and an eccentric hermit, Billy confronts his own beliefs and confronts the contradictions of human existence. One of the central themes in the novel is the conflict between modernity and tradition. Billy's rejection of modern society represents a rebellion against the societal norms and values he feels suffocated by. However, his idealistic pursuit of an unspoiled life in nature is also fraught with difficulties. He faces the harsh realities of survival, battling loneliness, hunger, and the constant threat of the wild.

As Billy immerses himself in the natural world, he experiences a profound spiritual awakening. The forests become a metaphorical space where he seeks to reconcile his inner turmoil and find meaning in life. The novel explores the duality of human nature, the struggle between reason and instinct, and the search for a deeper understanding of oneself.

Throughout the narrative, Arun Joshi employs vivid descriptions and rich symbolism to create an atmosphere of mystery and introspection. The natural landscape serves as a powerful backdrop, reflecting the protagonist's state of mind and the philosophical questions he grapples with.

*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is a deeply philosophical novel that delves into the complexities of human existence and the yearning for something beyond the materialistic world. Arun Joshi's evocative prose and the exploration of themes such as alienation, spirituality, and the conflict between modernity and tradition make this book a compelling read that challenges readers to reflect on their own lives and the choices they make.

## 20.3 Themes: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

In Arun Joshi's second novel, *The Strange Case of Mr. Billy Biswas*, the crisis of self and the quest for fulfillment form the central experience of the protagonist, Billy Biswas. The novel delves into the theme of alienation and

rootlessness in a unique and intriguing manner, presenting a thought-provoking exploration of the human condition.

At the heart of the novel is Billy Biswas, a successful and educated man living in a bustling city. Despite his material wealth and societal standing, Billy finds himself deeply dissatisfied and disconnected from his surroundings. This sense of alienation stems from a profound feeling of emptiness and the realization that his life lacks true meaning.

Driven by an intense desire to escape the superficiality of urban existence, Billy makes a drastic decision to abandon his comfortable life and retreat to the remote forests of Sikkim. This act of renunciation is a manifestation of his yearning for authenticity and a genuine connection with the world around him. Billy's quest for fulfillment takes on a profound dimension as he immerses himself in the natural environment. The forests become a sanctuary where he can confront his own identity and search for a deeper understanding of himself. Through encounters with various characters and experiences, Billy engages in a relentless exploration of his inner self and the existential questions that plague him.

The theme of alienation is intricately woven throughout the novel. Billy's sense of estrangement from the society he leaves behind is a reaction to the materialistic values and superficial relationships that dominate his life. By embracing solitude and the solitude of nature, he seeks to reconnect with his essential self, free from the pressures and expectations of societal norms.

Rootlessness is another prominent theme in the novel. As Billy ventures deeper into the forests, he abandons the familiar trappings of his former life and embraces a nomadic existence. This physical displacement mirrors his inner state of being, as he grapples with a sense of displacement and a longing to find a sense of belonging and purpose.

Arun Joshi explores these themes in a strange and unconventional way. Billy's journey is marked by encounters with enigmatic characters who challenge his preconceived notions and push him to question his own beliefs. From a spiritual guru to a tribal woman and an eccentric hermit, each encounter serves as a catalyst for Billy's introspection and growth.

Through the character of Billy Biswas, Arun Joshi presents a profound exploration of the crisis of self and the quest for fulfillment. The novel delves into the complexities of the human experience, grappling with themes of alienation, rootlessness, and the search for authenticity. By immersing the reader in the enigmatic world of Billy's transformation, Joshi invites us to reflect on our own lives and the choices we make in our pursuit of true fulfillment.

#### **20.4 Characters: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas**

*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* by Arun Joshi features a range of intriguing characters who contribute to the depth and complexity of the narrative. Each character brings a unique perspective to the exploration of existential themes, adding layers of meaning to the story. Here are some of the notable characters in the novel:

**Billy Biswas**

The protagonist of the novel, Billy Biswas, is a successful and educated man who experiences a profound crisis of self. Dissatisfied with the materialistic society he finds himself in, Billy abandons his comfortable life and ventures into the remote forests of Sikkim. Through his journey, Billy undergoes a transformation, seeking authenticity and a deeper understanding of his own identity.

**Amrita Biswas**

Amrita is Billy's wife, left behind in the city when he embarks on his quest. She represents the conventional values and expectations of society. Throughout the novel, Amrita struggles to comprehend Billy's motivations and actions, highlighting the contrast between conformity and individuality.

**Baba Naga**

Baba Naga is a spiritual guru whom Billy encounters in the forest. He is a mystic figure, deeply connected to nature and possessing esoteric knowledge. Baba Naga becomes a guide for Billy, provoking him to question his beliefs and embark on a spiritual journey of self-discovery.

**Sonam**

Sonam is a tribal woman whom Billy meets during his time in the forest. She represents a connection to the indigenous and natural world. Through her simplicity and closeness to nature, Sonam offers Billy a different perspective on life and a glimpse into a more harmonious existence.

**The Hermit**

The Hermit is an eccentric character who lives in seclusion deep in the forest. He embodies a complete detachment from society and its norms. The Hermit's existence challenges Billy's notions of identity and meaning, pushing him further in his quest for self-realization.

**Professor Basu**

Professor Basu is a childhood friend of Billy's who reappears in the narrative. He represents the embodiment of societal expectations and the pursuit of conventional success. As Billy reunites with Professor Basu, their interactions serve as a stark reminder of the stark contrast between their chosen paths.

These characters, with their diverse perspectives and roles, contribute to the thematic exploration of the novel. They represent different facets of the human experience, challenging Billy's worldview and pushing him towards introspection. Through their interactions, the characters help shed light on the central themes of alienation, rootlessness, and the quest for fulfillment.

Arun Joshi's portrayal of these characters is nuanced and multidimensional, allowing readers to engage with their struggles, desires, and perspectives. Each character serves a specific purpose in the narrative, providing insight into the complexities of human existence and the search for authenticity in a world dominated by materialism and conformity.

### **20.5 Billy Biswas, the Central Character**

Billy Biswas, the central character in Arun Joshi's novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, undergoes a profound transformation throughout the narrative. His character is marked by a deep sense of existential crisis, a yearning for authenticity, and a relentless search for meaning and self-discovery.

Billy begins the story as a successful and educated man living in the city. Despite his material wealth and societal standing, he feels disconnected and alienated from his surroundings. He is plagued by a profound sense of emptiness and a realization that his life lacks purpose and fulfillment. This dissatisfaction leads him to make the radical decision to abandon his comfortable life and retreat to the remote forests of Sikkim.

Billy's departure from his urban existence is driven by a desire to escape the superficiality and materialism of society. He seeks a deeper connection with the natural world and hopes to find his true self in the process. This act of renunciation is a manifestation of his yearning for authenticity and a rejection of the societal norms and expectations that he feels suffocated by.

As Billy immerses himself in the forests, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery and introspection. He encounters various individuals, each contributing to his evolution in different ways. From spiritual gurus to tribal women and eccentric hermits, these encounters challenge Billy's beliefs and push him to confront his own identity.

Throughout the narrative, Billy's character evolves from a disillusioned and restless individual to someone on a quest for enlightenment. He undergoes a profound transformation as he grapples with questions of existence, the nature of reality, and the meaning of life. The forest becomes a metaphorical space where he confronts his fears, desires, and inner demons.

Billy's character is marked by contradictions and inner conflicts. On one hand, he seeks solitude and disconnection from society, rejecting the trappings of modern life. On the other hand, he longs for connection, understanding, and a sense of belonging. His journey is fraught with challenges, including loneliness, hunger, and the constant threat of the wild, which test his resolve and determination.

Arun Joshi portrays Billy's character with depth and complexity, capturing the intricacies of his internal struggles and the profound changes he undergoes. Through Billy's experiences and encounters, the novel explores the themes of alienation, rootlessness, and the search for authenticity and meaning in a fragmented and materialistic world.

Billy Biswas's character represents the universal human desire for self-discovery and a yearning for a deeper connection with the world. He serves as a vehicle for readers to reflect on their own quests for identity and purpose, encouraging introspection and contemplation about the choices they make in their own lives.

### **20.6 The Ending of The Strange Case of Billy Biswas**

The ending of *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* leaves room for interpretation and ambiguity, allowing readers to contemplate the nature of Billy's quest for

fulfilment and the extent to which he achieves his desired state of authenticity. While the novel does not provide a definitive resolution, it offers insights that prompt reflection on the complexities of the human condition.

Throughout the narrative, Billy undertakes a transformative journey in search of meaning and self-discovery. He rejects societal norms, retreats into the forests, and encounters various characters who challenge his beliefs and push him towards introspection. These encounters contribute to his growth and understanding, shaping his evolving perspective on life.

In the final chapters of the novel, the narrative takes a surreal turn, blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination. Billy's experiences become increasingly enigmatic, and the line between his inner psyche and the external world becomes blurred. This ambiguity in the ending raises questions about the extent to which Billy's quest for authenticity has been fulfilled.

One interpretation of the ending suggests that Billy does not achieve a definitive state of authenticity. Instead, his journey represents a continuous process of self-discovery, with no fixed destination. The surreal and ambiguous nature of the conclusion suggests that the search for fulfillment is ongoing and that true authenticity may remain elusive. The ending invites readers to reflect on the ever-evolving nature of personal growth and the complexities of the human experience.

Another interpretation is that Billy's quest for authenticity lies not in reaching a specific destination but in the process itself. The encounters, challenges, and self-reflection he experiences throughout his journey are what shape his understanding of himself and the world. In this sense, the ending highlights the significance of the journey itself, rather than a final destination.

Ultimately, the novel's conclusion intentionally leaves room for interpretation, allowing readers to engage in their own contemplation about the nature of fulfillment and authenticity. It prompts us to question whether true fulfillment can ever be fully attained or if it is an ongoing pursuit that evolves with our own personal growth.

*The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* invites readers to reflect on their own quests for meaning and authenticity, emphasizing that the journey itself holds profound significance, even if the ultimate destination remains elusive. The ambiguity of the ending encourages readers to explore the complexities of the human condition and the ongoing search for fulfillment that defines our lives.

### **20.7 The Symbolism of Nature in the Novel and Its Contribution to the Protagonist's Search for Authenticity and Meaning**

In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*, the symbolism of nature plays a crucial role in the protagonist's search for authenticity and meaning. Nature serves as a powerful metaphor throughout the novel, representing a realm of purity, interconnectedness, and self-realization. By immersing himself in the natural environment, Billy embarks on a transformative journey that leads him closer to understanding his true self. Let us analyse the symbolism of nature and its contributions to Billy's quest.



### **Escape from Materialism**

Nature symbolizes an escape from the materialistic and superficial values of urban society. Billy, dissatisfied with the emptiness of his city life, retreats to the remote forests of Sikkim. By leaving behind the artificiality of the urban world, he seeks a deeper connection with the natural environment, which represents a purer and more authentic way of living.

### **Harmony and Interconnectedness**

Nature symbolizes a state of harmony and interconnectedness. Through his encounters with the natural world, Billy recognizes the delicate balance of ecosystems and the interdependence of all living beings. This realization prompts him to re-evaluate his own place in the world and his relationship with others. Nature acts as a reminder of the interconnectedness of all existence and inspires Billy to seek a more harmonious way of being.

### **Reflection of Inner Turmoil**

The wilderness reflects Billy's inner turmoil and serves as a mirror for his own psychological state. As Billy navigates the forests, he encounters various challenges, such as hunger, loneliness, and the threat of the wild. These external obstacles parallel his internal conflicts and emotional struggles. Nature becomes a canvas upon which Billy's internal battles are reflected, allowing him to confront and ultimately transcend his inner demons.

### **Symbol of Transformation and Rebirth**

Nature symbolizes transformation and rebirth. Throughout the novel, Billy undergoes a profound inner transformation, shedding his former self and embracing a new understanding of his own identity. This transformative process mirrors the cycles of nature, where life emerges from death and renewal follows decay. The natural environment serves as a catalyst for Billy's personal growth and the rebirth of his authentic self.

### **Source of Spiritual Insight**

Nature serves as a source of spiritual insight and enlightenment. Billy encounters mystic figures like Baba Naga, who are deeply connected to the natural world. Through these encounters, nature becomes a conduit for spiritual teachings and revelations. Billy's immersion in nature opens his eyes to a deeper understanding of existence, helping him gain insights into his own identity and the nature of reality.

The symbolism of nature in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* contributes significantly to the protagonist's search for authenticity and meaning. Nature represents an escape from materialism, a symbol of harmony and interconnectedness, a reflection of inner turmoil, a symbol of transformation and rebirth, and a source of spiritual insight. Through his immersion in the natural environment, Billy undergoes a transformative journey, ultimately bringing him closer to a deeper understanding of himself and the world around him.

## 20.8 Setting: The Strange Case of Billy Biswas

The setting of *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* plays a significant role in shaping the narrative and the themes explored in the novel. Arun Joshi masterfully uses the contrasting landscapes of urban life and the remote forests of Sikkim to highlight the dichotomy between materialistic society and the search for authenticity and meaning. Here is a note on the setting of the novel:

The novel begins in the bustling, materialistic city environment. This urban setting represents the trappings of modern society, with its emphasis on wealth, social status, and conformity. The city is characterized by artificiality, consumerism, and a sense of alienation. It is in this setting that Billy Biswas, the protagonist, initially experiences a profound crisis of self, feeling disconnected and dissatisfied with the superficiality of his life.

As the story progresses, the setting shifts to the remote forests of Sikkim, a stark contrast to the urban landscape. The forests symbolize an escape from the constraints of society and the search for authenticity. Here, nature becomes a powerful force, offering solace, introspection, and a deeper connection with the self and the world.

The forests of Sikkim are described as lush, untamed, and teeming with life. They represent a realm of purity, where the interdependence and interconnectedness of all living beings are palpable. The dense foliage, the sounds of wildlife, and the ethereal beauty of the natural surroundings immerse the reader in a sensory experience, mirroring Billy's own journey.

Within the forests, Billy encounters various characters who contribute to his transformation and understanding. These encounters take place in mystical settings such as caves, remote hermitages, and secluded natural clearings. These locations add an air of mystery and spirituality to the narrative, further emphasizing the contrast between the urban world and the natural realm.

The setting of the novel reflects the larger themes of alienation, rootlessness, and the search for authenticity. The city represents a society driven by materialism, conformity, and disillusionment, while the forests represent a realm of introspection, self-discovery, and a connection to the natural world. The contrast between these settings highlights the tension between societal expectations and the individual's quest for meaning.

Arun Joshi's vivid descriptions of the settings immerse readers in the contrasting worlds of the novel, enabling them to experience the disconnect of urban life and the allure of the natural world. The setting acts as a powerful backdrop, shaping the narrative and serving as a catalyst for the protagonist's journey of self-discovery.

The setting of *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* serves as more than a mere backdrop; it becomes a central element in the exploration of the novel's themes, providing a physical manifestation of the protagonist's quest for authenticity and fulfilment.

## Questions

1. What are the main themes explored in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*?

2. How does Billy Biswas's character evolve throughout the novel? Discuss the factors that contribute to his transformation.
3. Analyse the role of nature and the wilderness in Billy Biswas's search for authenticity and meaning.
4. Discuss the significance of the encounters with characters like Baba Naga, Sonam, and the Hermit in shaping Billy's understanding of himself and the world around him.
5. Reflect on the symbolism in the novel, such as the symbolism of nature, and discuss its impact on the narrative.
6. How does Arun Joshi portray the theme of alienation and rootlessness in the novel? Provide examples from the text.
7. Explore the use of surrealism and ambiguity in the narrative. What purpose do they serve in the story?
8. Discuss the role of societal expectations and materialism in Billy Biswas's dissatisfaction and subsequent journey.
9. Analyse the ending of the novel and its implications for Billy Biswas's quest for fulfilment. Does he achieve his desired state of authenticity?
10. What insights does *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* offer about the nature of personal growth, identity, and the search for meaning in a fragmented world?

### MCQs

1. What is the central theme explored in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*?
  - a) Love and relationships
  - b) The pursuit of power
  - c) Alienation and authenticity
  - d) Political corruption
2. How does the protagonist, Billy Biswas, undergo transformation in the novel?
  - a) Through his encounter with mystical creatures
  - b) Through his pursuit of wealth and material possessions
  - c) Through his exploration of urban life
  - d) Through his search for authenticity and meaning
3. What role does nature play in Billy Biswas's search for authenticity?
  - a) It represents a realm of artificiality and conformity
  - b) It serves as a backdrop for materialistic pursuits
  - c) It symbolizes a connection to the self and the natural world
  - d) It is an obstacle that hinders Billy's personal growth

4. Which of the following is NOT a character encountered by Billy Biswas in his journey?
- a) Baba Naga
  - b) Sonam
  - c) The Hermit
  - d) Mr. Smith
5. How does the ending of the novel contribute to the protagonist's quest for fulfilment?
- a) It provides a clear resolution to Billy's search for authenticity
  - b) It introduces ambiguity and leaves room for interpretation
  - c) It reveals that Billy has achieved his desired state of fulfilment
  - d) It dismisses the importance of personal growth and introspection

**21.0 Objectives****21.1 Introduction: Jhumpa Lahiri as a Novelist****21.2 Introduction: *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri****21.3 Characterization****21.4 Major Themes****21.5 Setting****21.6 The Socio-Political Reference****21.7 Significance of the Title****Questions****MCQs****21.0 Objectives**

- Understand the thematic depth and explore the complex themes presented in the novel, such as identity, sacrifice, loss, and political activism.
- Analyse the character development and examine how the characters' choices and experiences shape their identities and relationships.
- Explore the socio-political context of 1960s India and its influence on the characters' lives, particularly during the Naxalite movement.
- Investigate the significance of the settings, both in India and the United States, and how they contribute to the overall narrative and character development.
- Examine the author's writing style, narrative techniques, and use of symbolism to convey the novel's themes and messages.
- Evaluate the portrayal of family dynamics and the role of tradition, duty, and personal freedom within the context of familial relationships.
- Consider the impact of historical events, such as political movements and social unrest, on personal lives and individual choices.
- Reflect on the novel's exploration of cultural assimilation and the complexities of balancing cultural heritage with the pressures of adapting to a new environment.
- Discuss the significance of memory, time, and the exploration of the characters' past experiences in shaping their present lives and relationships.
- Engage in critical analysis and interpretation of the text, considering different perspectives, themes, and symbols, and formulating informed opinions about the novel's overall message and impact.

### 21.1 Introduction: Jhumpa Lahiri as a Novelist

Jhumpa Lahiri, born on July 11, 1967, is an acclaimed American author of Indian descent. She is best known for her poignant and emotionally resonant novels, which explore themes of cultural identity, immigration, and the complexities of human relationships. Lahiri's distinctive voice and masterful storytelling have garnered her numerous accolades and a devoted readership worldwide.

Lahiri's novels are deeply rooted in her own experiences as a second-generation immigrant. Born in London to Bengali parents, she was raised in Rhode Island, United States. Growing up, Lahiri felt a strong sense of disconnection from her Indian heritage and struggled to find her place between two cultures. This theme of cultural duality permeates her work, making her novels relatable to readers from diverse backgrounds.

Lahiri's debut novel, *The Namesake* (2003), catapulted her to literary fame. The book tells the story of Gogol Ganguli, a young Indian-American grappling with his identity and the burden of his unusual name. Lahiri delves into the complexities of family dynamics, generational clashes, and the search for personal and cultural belonging. *The Namesake* received critical acclaim and was later adapted into a successful film.

In her second novel, *The Lowland* (2013), Lahiri delves into the lives of two brothers, Subhash and Udayan, who grow up in Calcutta during the turbulent 1960s. The narrative explores the political unrest in India and its impact on the lives of ordinary people. Lahiri skilfully weaves together themes of love, sacrifice, and the enduring bond between siblings.

Lahiri's writing is characterized by its lyrical prose and keen attention to detail. She has a remarkable ability to evoke powerful emotions in her readers, drawing them into the inner lives of her characters. Her stories often span generations, tracing the ripple effects of past decisions on present-day lives. Lahiri's exploration of identity, memory, and the immigrant experience resonates deeply with readers who have grappled with similar issues.

Aside from her novels, Lahiri has also published several notable short story collections. Her debut collection, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, making her the first Indian-American author to receive this prestigious award. The collection captures the struggles and triumphs of characters caught between cultures, examining themes of love, loss, and the yearning for connection.

Lahiri's work has been widely recognized and has received numerous awards and honors, including the National Book Award for Fiction and the PEN/Hemingway Award. Her writing has been praised for its authenticity, compassion, and ability to bridge cultural divides. Lahiri's novels have not only entertained readers but also fostered a greater understanding of the immigrant experience and the complexities of human relationships.

In addition to her success as a novelist, Jhumpa Lahiri is also a dedicated translator and essayist. She has translated works from Italian into English and has written extensively about her personal journey learning the Italian language and her love for Italian literature.

Jhumpa Lahiri's contribution to contemporary literature is invaluable. Through her novels, she has given a voice to the immigrant experience and explored the universal themes of identity, belonging, and the search for connection. Her beautifully crafted stories continue to captivate readers and serve as a testament to the power of storytelling to bridge cultural divides.

### **21.2 Introduction: *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri**

*The Lowland* is a captivating novel written by acclaimed author Jhumpa Lahiri. Published in 2013, it is Lahiri's second full-length novel and showcases her exceptional storytelling abilities and profound exploration of themes such as family, love, sacrifice, and the interplay between personal choices and historical events. Set primarily in Calcutta, India, during the tumultuous 1960s, *The Lowland* offers a compelling narrative that spans continents and generations, immersing readers in a world of complex characters and the intricate web of their interconnected lives.

The novel centres around two brothers, Subhash and Udayan, who grow up in the quiet suburb of Tollygunge near Calcutta. Despite their close bond, they possess contrasting personalities and ambitions. Subhash, the elder brother, is reserved, cautious, and driven by a desire for stability and education. Udayan, on the other hand, is daring, rebellious, and drawn to political activism during a time of significant social unrest in India.

As the story unfolds, Lahiri skilfully portrays the political climate of the era, capturing the Naxalite movement, a Maoist revolutionary uprising that sought to address social inequalities and fight for land reform. Udayan becomes deeply involved in the movement, leaving a profound impact on his life and those around him. Subhash, however, takes a different path, leaving for the United States to pursue his studies, ultimately leading to a stark divergence in their life trajectories.

*The Lowland* delves into the consequences of their choices, as well as the ripple effects felt by their families and loved ones. Lahiri explores themes of identity, guilt, and the enduring bond between siblings. Through her meticulous prose, she paints a vivid portrait of the characters' emotional landscapes, as they grapple with the weight of their decisions and the profound impact of historical events on their lives.

The novel traverses multiple generations, spanning continents from India to America, as Lahiri examines the complex relationships between parents and children, the reverberations of past decisions, and the longing for reconciliation and forgiveness. Through her insightful storytelling, she illuminates the intricacies of human connection, the enduring power of love, and the fragility of the human spirit.

*The Lowland* is a deeply introspective and poignant exploration of personal and political landscapes, blending historical context with the intimate journeys of its characters. Lahiri's nuanced portrayal of their hopes, dreams, and inner conflicts creates a narrative that is both emotionally resonant and intellectually engaging. As readers are transported between the vibrant streets of Calcutta and the quiet corners of suburban America, they are invited to contemplate

universal themes of identity, belonging, and the complexities of human relationships.

In *The Lowland*, Jhumpa Lahiri once again demonstrates her mastery of storytelling, weaving a tapestry of characters and their lives against the backdrop of historical events. Her exquisite prose and keen observation allow readers to immerse themselves in the lives of her characters, navigating the intricate terrain of personal choices and the timeless quest for love, meaning, and reconciliation.

### 21.3 Characterization

*The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri is a novel characterized by richly and intricately drawn characters who embody the complexities of human emotions, desires, and relationships. Lahiri's meticulous attention to detail and her ability to delve deep into the inner lives of her characters make them vivid, relatable, and profoundly compelling. Through her masterful characterization, Lahiri explores the depths of human experiences, evoking empathy and understanding in readers.

The novel's primary characters, Subhash and Udayan, are brothers whose lives take dramatically different paths. Subhash, the older brother, is portrayed as a quiet and introspective individual. He possesses a strong sense of responsibility and chooses the path of stability and education. Subhash's character is marked by his constant self-reflection, his deep sense of duty, and his enduring love for his family. As the novel progresses, readers witness Subhash's transformation as he grapples with guilt, grief, and the consequences of his choices.

Udayan, the younger brother, serves as a stark contrast to Subhash. Udayan is depicted as passionate, rebellious, and drawn to political activism. He becomes involved in the Naxalite movement, fervently fighting for social justice and land reform. Udayan's character embodies the idealism and fervour of youth, but he also carries the burden of his choices and the impact they have on his family. Through Udayan, Lahiri explores the complexities of personal convictions and the repercussions they can have on both individuals and their loved ones.

Gauri, Udayan's wife, is another central character in the novel, offering a nuanced portrayal of a woman grappling with her own desires, independence, and the expectations society places on her. Gauri's character undergoes significant development throughout the story, as she navigates the challenges of motherhood, grief, and her search for personal identity. Lahiri captures Gauri's internal conflicts and her quest for self-discovery with great sensitivity, presenting a complex and multi-dimensional female character.

Lahiri also excels in portraying the supporting characters who play crucial roles in the lives of the main protagonists. Bela, Subhash and Gauri's daughter, is a character who undergoes a profound transformation from a young girl grappling with her parents' past to a strong-willed woman navigating her own sense of identity. Other supporting characters, such as Subhash and Udayan's parents, provide further depth and context to the



family dynamics, offering insights into the intergenerational struggles and cultural values that shape the characters' lives.

Through her vivid characterization, Lahiri explores themes of family, love, loss, and the impact of personal choices on individual trajectories. The characters in *The Lowland* are multi-faceted, flawed, and relatable, allowing readers to empathize with their joys, sorrows, and internal conflicts. Lahiri's keen observation of human behaviour and her ability to capture the complexities of human relationships create a narrative that is both deeply personal and universally resonant.

### **Udayan's Character**

Udayan, a central character in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland*, is a complex and compelling figure whose choices and ideals shape the narrative and have a profound impact on the lives of those around him. Udayan's character embodies the fervour, idealism, and inherent contradictions of youth, as well as the consequences of his actions.

From the outset, Udayan is portrayed as an intelligent and curious young man. Growing up in the Tollygunge neighbourhood of Calcutta during the 1960s, he becomes deeply engaged with political activism and the Naxalite movement, which seeks to address social inequality and advocate for land reform. Udayan's involvement in the movement is driven by his strong sense of justice and his desire to effect meaningful change in society.

Lahiri portrays Udayan as passionate, impulsive, and willing to take risks. He is willing to challenge societal norms and fight for his beliefs, even if it means putting himself and his loved ones in danger. Udayan's rebellious spirit and unwavering conviction make him a captivating and enigmatic character, drawing both admiration and concern from those around him.

Udayan's relationship with his older brother, Subhash, is a significant aspect of his character development. Despite their differences in temperament and life choices, Udayan and Subhash share a deep bond. Udayan looks up to Subhash as a source of stability and guidance, while Subhash feels a sense of responsibility towards his younger brother. Their relationship is characterized by both love and tension, as they navigate their differing paths and the consequences of their choices.

The consequences of Udayan's actions reverberate throughout the novel, particularly in the lives of those closest to him. His involvement in the Naxalite movement ultimately leads to tragic outcomes, affecting not only his own fate but also that of his family. Udayan's character raises questions about the price of idealism, the weight of personal choices, and the consequences of pursuing one's convictions in a world marked by political upheaval.

Lahiri skilfully portrays Udayan's complexity, delving into his internal conflicts, doubts, and regrets. Despite his passionate activism, Udayan is not immune to the doubts and contradictions that come with challenging societal norms. His character is haunted by the repercussions of his choices, and readers witness the toll that his actions take on his loved ones, particularly his wife, Gauri, and their daughter, Bela.

Udayan's character serves as a catalyst for exploring broader themes within the novel, such as the clash between personal desires and societal expectations, the price of idealism, and the enduring power of love and forgiveness. Through Udayan, Lahiri presents a nuanced exploration of the complexities of human nature, the consequences of our choices, and the intersections between personal and political lives.

Udayan's character in *The Lowland* is a deeply compelling and multi-dimensional portrayal of an idealistic and passionate young man caught in the throes of political activism. Lahiri's skilful depiction of Udayan's complexities, motivations, and the consequences of his actions adds depth and resonance to the novel, inviting readers to grapple with questions of personal responsibility, sacrifice, and the intricate web of human relationships.

### **Gauri's Character**

Gauri, a central character in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland*, is a complex and multi-faceted character whose journey serves as a compelling exploration of personal identity, self-discovery, and the complexities of love and loss. Gauri's character undergoes significant transformation throughout the narrative, making her a deeply introspective and thought-provoking figure.

Initially introduced as Udayan's wife, Gauri is portrayed as an introverted and intellectually curious woman. As the story progresses, Lahiri unravels the layers of Gauri's character, delving into her desires, fears, and her struggle to reconcile societal expectations with her own sense of individuality.

Gauri's character stands in contrast to the traditional expectations placed upon her as a wife and daughter-in-law. She yearns for intellectual stimulation and independence, which leads her to pursue her studies and eventually become a professor. Gauri's quest for personal identity and intellectual fulfilment challenges societal norms and expectations, placing her at odds with her role as a dutiful wife and mother.

Lahiri skilfully captures Gauri's internal conflicts and the complexities of her choices. When faced with the tragedy of Udayan's death, Gauri experiences a profound shift in her character, transforming from a seemingly reserved and obedient wife into an independent and self-reliant woman. Her grief becomes intertwined with a longing for personal freedom and the pursuit of her own desires.

Gauri's relationship with her daughter, Bela, is a significant aspect of her character development. After Udayan's death, Gauri distances herself emotionally from Bela, burdened by her grief and a desire for individuality. This emotional distance creates a rift between mother and daughter, further complicating Gauri's journey of self-discovery and reconciliation.

Through Gauri's character, Lahiri explores the complexities of motherhood, sacrifice, and the societal expectations placed upon women. Gauri's struggle to reconcile her desires for personal fulfillment with her role as a mother raises poignant questions about the sacrifices women are expected to make and the price they pay for personal autonomy.

Lahiri's portrayal of Gauri is marked by her ability to evoke empathy and understanding in readers. Despite Gauri's flaws and the consequences of her

choices, Lahiri presents her as a deeply human character with vulnerabilities and complexities. Gauri's journey serves as a powerful exploration of the human capacity for growth, forgiveness, and the pursuit of personal happiness.

Gauri's character in *The Lowland* is a captivating exploration of personal identity, self-discovery, and the complexities of societal expectations. Lahiri's nuanced portrayal of Gauri's internal conflicts, desires, and the consequences of her choices creates a character that is relatable and thought-provoking. Gauri's journey invites readers to contemplate the challenges faced by individuals seeking autonomy and fulfillment within the confines of societal norms and personal obligations.

### **Subhash's Character**

Subhash, one of the central characters in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland*, is a deeply introspective and empathetic figure whose journey explores themes of duty, sacrifice, and the complexities of personal identity. Subhash's character is characterized by his quiet strength, resilience, and unwavering sense of responsibility.

From the outset, Subhash is depicted as the older brother, embodying a sense of maturity and protectiveness towards his younger brother, Udayan. Subhash's character is marked by his pragmatism, caution, and desire for stability. He chooses a path of education and leaves India to pursue his studies in the United States, which sets him on a trajectory vastly different from that of Udayan.

Lahiri delves into Subhash's inner world, capturing his introspection and the weight of his choices. Subhash's character is shaped by a deep sense of duty towards his family, particularly his parents and Udayan's widow, Gauri. He willingly takes on the responsibilities left by Udayan's death, even at the expense of his own personal desires and happiness.

Throughout the novel, Lahiri explores Subhash's evolving relationship with Gauri, which undergoes a profound transformation as they navigate grief, guilt, and the complexities of their shared past. Subhash's character is marked by his capacity for forgiveness and his ability to understand the nuances of human nature, as he seeks to find common ground and provide stability in the lives of those around him.

Subhash's role as a father figure to Bela, Udayan and Gauri's daughter, is another significant aspect of his character. Subhash's unwavering love and care for Bela provide a sense of stability and guidance in her life. His commitment to supporting her dreams and fostering her growth symbolizes his enduring sense of responsibility and compassion.

Lahiri presents Subhash as a character grappling with questions of personal identity and the consequences of his choices. While he pursues a life of stability and seemingly sacrifices personal happiness, Subhash's journey ultimately leads him to confront his own desires and the impact of his decisions on his own sense of fulfillment.

Subhash's character also serves as a vehicle for exploring themes of immigration and cultural adaptation. As he navigates life in the United States,

Lahiri captures Subhash's struggles with assimilation, the longing for home, and the tension between preserving his cultural heritage and embracing the opportunities of his new surroundings.

Subhash's character in *The Lowland* is a deeply introspective and compassionate figure, whose journey delves into themes of duty, sacrifice, and personal identity. Lahiri's nuanced portrayal of Subhash's inner conflicts, his unwavering sense of responsibility, and his capacity for forgiveness create a character that resonates with readers.

Jhumpa Lahiri's characterization in *The Lowland* is a testament to her skill as a writer. Through her carefully crafted characters, she delves into the depths of human experiences, offering a profound exploration of identity, responsibility, and the intricate connections between individuals. The characters in *The Lowland* will linger in readers' minds, reminding them of the complexities and universal truths that make us all human.

## **21.4 Major Themes**

*The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri explores several major themes throughout the narrative, delving into the complexities of human experiences and relationships. Some of the key themes in the novel include:

### **i. Identity and Self-Discovery**

The novel delves into the exploration of individual identity and the search for self. Characters like Gauri and Subhash navigate the tensions between personal desires and societal expectations, struggling to reconcile their true selves with the roles assigned to them by family and society. Their journeys of self-discovery highlight the complexities of identity formation and the choices individuals must make to assert their authenticity.

### **ii. Family and Relationships**

Lahiri explores the intricate dynamics of family relationships and the impact they have on individuals. The novel portrays the bonds of love, loyalty, and duty within families, but also the conflicts and misunderstandings that can strain these connections. The characters in *The Lowland* grapple with the complexities of familial obligations, the weight of sacrifices, and the consequences of their choices on their loved ones.

### **iii. Political and Social Turmoil**

Set against the backdrop of the Naxalite movement in India, the novel examines the consequences of political and social upheaval on individuals and their communities. Lahiri explores the ideals, sacrifices, and consequences of political activism, as well as the reverberating effects it has on personal lives. The political landscape serves as a catalyst for personal transformations, raising questions about the price of idealism and the complexities of personal convictions.

#### **iv. Loss, Grief, and Redemption**

The theme of loss permeates the narrative, as characters grapple with the deaths of loved ones and the profound impact of these losses on their lives. Lahiri explores the various ways in which individuals cope with grief, navigate their memories, and seek redemption. The characters' journeys towards healing and finding meaning in the face of loss provide poignant reflections on the human capacity for resilience and renewal.

#### **v. Cultural Identity and Assimilation**

The novel explores the experiences of characters who navigate the challenges of cultural assimilation, particularly in the context of immigration. Lahiri delves into the complexities of balancing cultural heritage with the pressures to adapt to a new society. The characters' struggles with their cultural identity, sense of belonging, and the tensions between their Indian roots and their new environments form a significant thematic thread in the novel.

#### **vi. Time and Memory**

Lahiri examines the ways in which time and memory shape individuals' perceptions of themselves and their relationships. The narrative moves back and forth in time, weaving together past and present, as characters reflect on their memories and the impact of past events on their lives. The themes of time and memory highlight the fluidity of personal narratives and the lasting effects of the past on the present.

*The Lowland* explores these themes with nuance and depth, offering profound insights into the human condition, the complexities of personal choices, and the enduring power of love, loss, and self-discovery.

### **21.5 Setting**

The setting of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative, providing a rich backdrop against which the characters' lives unfold. The novel primarily takes place in two distinct settings: Tollygunge, a neighbourhood in Calcutta, India, and Rhode Island, United States. Each setting contributes to the atmosphere, cultural context, and themes explored in the story.

Tollygunge, a suburb of Calcutta, serves as the initial setting and establishes the characters' cultural roots and the social and political climate of 1960s India. Lahiri vividly portrays the landscape of Tollygunge, with its lowlands, marshes, and the titular "lowland" that holds symbolic significance throughout the novel. The physical environment reflects the characters' emotions and circumstances, often mirroring their feelings of confinement, uncertainty, and the ever-present potential for change.

Tollygunge also serves as a microcosm of the socio-political unrest prevalent during the Naxalite movement. The neighbourhood becomes a hotbed of

political activism, reflecting the characters' involvement and the repercussions they face as a result. The vivid depiction of the political landscape in Tollygunge highlights the clash between ideals and reality, the weight of personal choices, and the enduring effects of political turmoil on individuals and communities.

Rhode Island, on the other hand, represents the contrasting setting where Subhash moves to pursue his studies and subsequently builds a life. The shift from the bustling streets of Calcutta to the quiet suburbs of Rhode Island emphasizes the cultural dislocation and sense of displacement experienced by Subhash and, later, Gauri. The vastness and openness of the American landscape stand in stark contrast to the densely populated and culturally vibrant neighbourhoods of India, further emphasizing the characters' feelings of isolation and the challenges they face in adapting to a new environment.

Lahiri meticulously captures the nuances of both settings, weaving in cultural references, language, and customs to immerse readers in the distinct atmospheres of Calcutta and Rhode Island. Through her evocative descriptions, readers can sense the sights, sounds, and textures of each setting, enhancing their understanding of the characters' experiences and the broader socio-cultural contexts in which they exist.

The contrasting settings in *The Lowland* reflect the characters' journeys of self-discovery, cultural assimilation, and the complexities of their identities. The physical landscapes serve as powerful metaphors for the characters' emotional landscapes, underscoring the themes of displacement, loss, and the search for belonging. Whether it is the labyrinthine streets of Tollygunge or the suburban calm of Rhode Island, the settings in the novel provide a vivid and evocative backdrop for the exploration of personal histories, choices, and the enduring impact of place on individual lives.

Overall, the carefully crafted settings in *The Lowland* enrich the narrative, allowing readers to immerse themselves in the cultural, historical, and emotional contexts that shape the characters' journeys. The contrast between Calcutta and Rhode Island underscores the themes of cultural identity, displacement, and the complex interplay between personal and geographical landscapes.

### **21.6 The Socio-Political Reference**

In Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland*, the socio-political references primarily revolve around the backdrop of the Naxalite movement in India during the 1960s and its lasting impact on the characters and their lives. The lowland itself, a geographical feature in the Tollygunge neighbourhood of Calcutta, becomes symbolic of the socio-political unrest and upheaval experienced by the characters.

The Naxalite movement was a leftist political uprising in India that emerged as an offshoot of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). It aimed to address issues of social inequality, poverty, and land distribution. The movement gained significant traction in West Bengal, particularly in urban areas like Calcutta, where activists called for radical changes to the existing social and political order.

In *The Lowland*, the lowland serves as a metaphor for the marginalized sections of society, representing the dispossessed and oppressed. It becomes a meeting point for political activists, including Udayan. Udayan becomes deeply involved in the Naxalite movement, embracing its ideals and engaging in acts of political resistance. The lowland itself becomes a refuge and a clandestine space for organizing and planning activities against the establishment.

The socio-political references highlight the themes of political idealism, personal sacrifice, and the consequences of political activism. Udayan's involvement in the Naxalite movement has a profound impact on his life, as well as the lives of those around him. Lahiri explores the tensions between personal convictions, familial obligations, and the broader political landscape of the time. The Naxalite movement serves as a catalyst for personal transformation, raising questions about the price of idealism, the complexities of personal choices, and the enduring effects of political upheaval on individuals and their communities.

Furthermore, Lahiri examines the repercussions of the movement through the lens of Subhash and Gauri. They navigate the aftermath of Udayan's death, grappling with grief, guilt, and the reverberating effects of the Naxalite movement on their lives. The socio-political references in the novel underscore the ways in which political ideologies can shape personal narratives, leaving lasting imprints on the characters' relationships, identities, and sense of belonging.

Overall, the socio-political references in *The Lowland* provide a contextual framework for exploring themes of political activism, sacrifice, and the enduring impact of political movements on individual lives. The lowland symbolizes the marginalized and becomes a powerful backdrop against which the characters' personal and political struggles unfold, highlighting the complexities of navigating socio-political landscapes and the consequences of ideological choices.

### **21.7 Significance of the Title**

The title of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Lowland* holds significant symbolic and thematic relevance throughout the narrative, encompassing multiple layers of meaning. The term "lowland" refers to a geographical feature in the Tollygunge neighbourhood of Calcutta, India, but it also carries metaphorical connotations that extend beyond the physical landscape.

At a literal level, the lowland represents a marshy and often flooded area characterized by its geographical location and topography. In the novel, the lowland serves as a distinctive setting where significant events unfold, such as the secret meetings of political activists during the Naxalite movement. The physical landscape of the lowland, with its dense vegetation and proximity to water, reflects the characters' experiences of being engulfed in the complexities of their lives and the socio-political unrest of the time.

Metaphorically, the lowland embodies notions of confinement, entrapment, and stagnation. It becomes a symbol of the limitations and restraints imposed on the characters, particularly in relation to societal expectations and familial

obligations. The lowland represents the boundaries within which the characters are confined, both by external circumstances and their own choices. It serves as a metaphorical landscape of limitations and the struggle to break free from those constraints.

Moreover, the lowland also symbolizes the marginalized and disenfranchised. It represents the neglected and forgotten segments of society, the voiceless and oppressed. The lowland becomes a space where political resistance takes root, as the characters find refuge and meaning in fighting against social injustice and inequality. It signifies the struggle for social change and the desire for a more equitable society.

The title *The Lowland* encapsulates the central themes of the novel, including the complexities of personal identity, the impact of societal expectations, and the consequences of political activism. It underscores the characters' experiences of being caught between opposing forces—between tradition and modernity, between duty and personal desires. The lowland serves as a metaphorical backdrop against which the characters navigate their paths, confronting their own limitations, and striving for liberation and self-discovery.

Furthermore, the title evokes a sense of melancholy and introspection. It implies a sense of longing and nostalgia, as the characters grapple with their pasts and the choices that have shaped their present lives. The lowland becomes a space of reflection, where the characters confront their regrets, grief, and the irrevocable impact of their actions.

The title *The Lowland* carries multiple layers of significance in Jhumpa Lahiri's novel. It represents the physical setting, the metaphorical constraints imposed on the characters, and the socio-political context in which their lives unfold. The lowland serves as a potent symbol of confinement, resistance, and the complexities of personal and societal limitations. It underscores the themes of identity, sacrifice, and the enduring pursuit of freedom and self-discovery.

### Questions

1. Discuss the theme of identity in *The Lowland* and how it evolves throughout the novel. How do the characters navigate the tensions between personal desires and societal expectations in their quest for self-discovery?
2. Analyse the role of family and its impact on the characters in *The Lowland*. How do familial bonds shape their choices, actions, and sense of identity? Explore the complexities of duty, loyalty, and sacrifice within the context of family relationships.
3. Discuss the significance of the Naxalite movement in the novel. How does it shape the lives of the characters, their relationships, and their sense of purpose? Explore the consequences of political activism and the complexities of personal convictions in a socio-political context.



4. Analyse the character of Gauri in *The Lowland* and her journey of self-discovery. How does she navigate the conflicting expectations of tradition, personal freedom, and motherhood? Discuss the choices she makes and the consequences they have on her life and relationships.
5. Explore the theme of loss and its impact on the characters in *The Lowland*. How do they cope with grief, navigate their memories, and seek redemption? Analyse the ways in which loss shapes their identities and their relationships with others.
6. Discuss the role of setting in *The Lowland* and its significance in the narrative. How do the contrasting settings of Tollygunge and Rhode Island reflect the characters' experiences, cultural identities, and sense of belonging? Explore the ways in which the physical landscapes mirror the emotional and psychological landscapes of the characters.
7. Analyse the character of Subhash and his journey of self-discovery and personal growth. How does he navigate his sense of duty, responsibility, and the consequences of his choices? Discuss the themes of resilience, forgiveness, and the complexities of personal fulfillment in his story.
8. Discuss the theme of cultural assimilation in *The Lowland*. How do the characters grapple with their Indian roots and the pressures to adapt to a new environment? Explore the tensions between preserving cultural heritage and embracing the opportunities of a different cultural context.
9. Analyse the theme of time and memory in *The Lowland*. How do the characters' past experiences shape their present lives and relationships? Discuss the ways in which memory and the passage of time influence their perceptions of self and their understanding of their own histories.
10. Discuss the significance of the title *The Lowland* and its thematic resonance throughout the novel. How does it symbolize the characters' experiences of confinement, resistance, and the pursuit of self-discovery? Explore the various layers of meaning associated with the title and its connection to the broader themes of the book.

### MCQs

1. What is the primary setting of *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri?
  - a) New York City
  - b) London
  - c) Calcutta
  - d) Mumbai
2. Which socio-political movement plays a significant role in the novel?
  - a) Indian Independence Movement
  - b) Civil Rights Movement

- c) Naxalite Movement
  - d) Women's Suffrage Movement
3. The character of Udayan is deeply involved in which movement?
- a) Feminist Movement
  - b) Anti-Apartheid Movement
  - c) Naxalite Movement
  - d) LGBTQ+ Rights Movement
4. Which character in the novel undergoes a journey of self-discovery and personal growth?
- a) Subhash
  - b) Gauri
  - c) Udayan
  - d) Bela
5. What is a central theme explored in *The Lowland*?
- a) Science fiction and technology
  - b) Historical events and war
  - c) Family relationships and sacrifice
  - d) Romantic love and passion

**22.0 Objectives****22.1 Introduction****22.2 Act-wise Summary****22.3 Major Themes****22.4 *Final Solutions*: A Problem Play****22.5 The Role of Chorus****22.6 Let Us Sum Up****Questions****Suggested Reading****Answers****22.0 Objectives**

1. To provide students a deepened understanding of Dattani's dramatic canvas.
2. To give a thematic overview of the play to students.
3. To make students acquaintance with the problem play and use of chorus.

**22.1 Introduction**

Mahesh Dattani, born on August 7, 1958, in Bangalore, is a prominent figure in Anglo-Indian drama. Despite initially working in advertising and in his family's business, his true passion was drama. He joined the Playpen theatre group, directing various plays covering diverse themes. In 1986, he wrote *Where There is a Will*, marking his dedicated involvement in theatre. Dattani established a theatre studio to nurture emerging talents and promote their skills. He earned recognition for his literary achievements, including the Sahitya Akademi Award for *Final Solutions and Other Plays*. Besides, he shares his theatrical expertise by teaching at Portland State University and organizing workshops.

Dattani's reputation extends internationally, as he is acclaimed for his playwrighting skills. Some of his well-known plays include *Where There's a Will* (1988), *Dance Like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *Final Salutations* (1992–93), *Night Queen* (1996), *Do the Needful* (1997), *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998), *Seven Circles Round the Fire* (1998), *The Swami and Winston* (2000), and *Thirty Days in September* (2001).

Mahesh Dattani, a highly acclaimed Indian playwright, has garnered widespread praise from media and critics, earning recognition as a significant contemporary literary figure. *International Herald Tribune* hails him as one of India's top playwrights, while Mario Relich from *Wasafiri* lauds his global stature. *The New York Times* describes Dattani as a versatile writer whose

works resonate with American literature, and Vibhuti Patel notes his prominence alongside Salman Rushdie's influence. These reviews establish Dattani as a leading playwright who welcomes criticism.

*Final Solutions*, authored by Mahesh Dattani in 1993, stands as a notable work in his repertoire. This play delves into themes of communal tensions, prejudice, and the potential for empathy, navigating a society grappling with its history of conflict. The narrative spans two crucial periods in Indian history—the aftermath of the 1947 Partition and the persisting communal discord. Interwoven characters and their interconnected stories shed light on the enduring impact of historical events on contemporary attitudes and relationships.

## **22.2 Act-wise Summary**

### **Act I**

Act I of *Final Solutions* begins by introducing Daksha, now known as Hardika, who reflects on her diary entries from 1948, a tumultuous time during India's independence marked by violence and chaos. Her father's mention of the departing British having "let loose the dogs" foreshadows the upcoming chaos.

The Partition of India led to brutal riots and killings, which Daksha recounts from her hiding place with her mother. The trauma of those events lingers, and Daksha, now a grandmother, is disheartened by the lack of change. The family has moved to Amargaon after leaving their home in Hussainabad, and another riot breaks out triggered by an attack on a Hindu tradition.

The Hindu chorus expresses strong emotions and resentment towards the Muslim community, reflecting prevailing communal tensions. Smita, a character who strives for cross-religious friendships, reassures her Muslim friend Tasneem that not everyone is driven by hatred. Ramnik, Smita's father, promotes understanding and unity by speaking with Tasneem's father.

The Muslim chorus reveals fear of retaliation and a desire for peaceful coexistence. The entrance of two Muslim boys, Bobby and Javed, highlights internal conflicts within the Muslim community. Ramnik's decision to shelter them defies the mob's demands and showcases his commitment to counter hatred.

Aruna, Ramnik's wife, initially opposes the decision but later softens, representing the potential for empathy and change. Smita's interaction with Bobby and Javed hints at interfaith friendships. The act ends with tension and uncertainty, setting the stage for further exploration of identity, prejudice, and unity amidst adversity.

In Act I, Mahesh Dattani intricately portrays characters' reactions to communal tensions, showcasing internal conflicts, interactions, and decisions that highlight the complexities of societal divisions. The act lays the foundation for exploring themes related to identity, prejudice, and the human capacity for empathy and change in the play's subsequent acts.

### **Act II**

In Act II of *Final Solutions*, the play paints a gripping scene set in a neighbourhood engulfed by communal riots, brimming with tension and

suspicion. The chorus, a group of agitated individuals, voices their frustration over an ongoing curfew and the worsening relations between Muslims and Hindus. They bemoan being unable to retrieve a chariot from a Muslim area and accuse Muslims of insults and stabbings. Their scepticism extends to their leader's intentions, questioning the inaction taken to address the situation.

Amidst this charged atmosphere, a confrontation emerges involving Smita, Bobby, Javed, and the neighbourhood residents. Aruna reacts strongly upon discovering Smita's association with the Muslim boys and insists she abandon her studies and stay home. As suspicions escalate, it is revealed the boys claim to attend the same college as Smita, which raises further doubts. Ramnik becomes increasingly wary of the boys and their motives.

Smita clarifies that one of the boys, Javed, is the brother of Tasneem, and the other, Bobby, is Tasneem's fiancé. Ramnik remains sceptical, demanding explanations for their presence. Smita explains Bobby frequently visits Tasneem and that they plan to marry. Tensions grow as the residents question the boys' reasons for being there. Ramnik probes deeper, particularly regarding Javed's relationship with his sister.

As the tension mounts, the neighbourhood residents remain suspicious despite initial hospitality. A stone thrown by a mob enters the house, intensifying the atmosphere of distrust. Hardika, drawing from past experiences during communal riots, expresses resentment towards Muslims and recounts her father's death. The residents debate Ramnik's decision to employ a Muslim boy with a troubled past, while Smita and Ramnik strive to defuse the situation.

Ramnik's offer of shelter for the boys and a promise to accompany them to the bus stand signifies a temporary reprieve. Yet suspicions persist, and the characters continue grappling with their doubts. Discussions range from the origin of Bobby's name to the recent curfew-triggering incident involving a damaged religious procession.

Revelations about Javed's criminal activities, shared by Smita, shatter the fragile trust that had been built. Javed, devastated by Smita's disclosure, leaves in shame and remorse for his past actions against the community that had offered him refuge. Act II delves deeply into the intricacies of communal divides, suspicion, and complex human relationships. It highlights the fragility of trust and the profound emotions stirred by communal tensions, shedding light on the challenges of maintaining harmony amidst turmoil.

### **Act III**

In Act III of *Final Solutions*, the Muslim chorus takes centre stage, positioned in a prayerful stance that mirrors their deep fear of the Hindu majority's desire to erase their distinct Muslim identity. This fear casts a shadow over the prospects of communal harmony, with the Muslim chorus questioning whether they should assimilate into obscurity to avoid persecution. They draw a poignant analogy, likening their relationship with the Hindu majority to oil refusing to mix with milk. Their resolve is clear: they are determined to maintain their unique identity.

As the narrative unfolds, Bobby keenly observes a transformation in Javed, noticing subtle shifts in his character wrought by recent events. Ramnik's

extraordinary hospitality challenges stereotypes, as it becomes evident that Hindus are not universally harbouring hatred. Daksha, meanwhile, shares reflections from her diary, drawing parallels between her grandparents' unchanging nature and the steadfastness of a banyan tree amid societal shifts. Daksha's husband, Hari, embodies naivety by wrongly stereotyping those who went to Pakistan. Daksha navigates her husband's misconceptions and encourages him to engage in college activities to better understand the perspectives of the youth regarding the nation's future. In an attempt to highlight the harsh reality of communal tensions, Daksha narrates the plight of Zarine's family. Their shop was burnt down, causing financial woes. Despite being offered a job, Zarine's father's pride prevents him from accepting help. Daksha's internal conflict reveals her struggle to sympathize with those who place blame on others for their misfortunes.

Javed shifts the focus to a psychological analysis of those inciting riots. He delves into how innocent individuals are lured into this destructive path due to financial incentives, emphasizing the exploitative nature of the conditions they find themselves in. These individuals initially find pleasure in shouting divisive slogans but eventually face repulsion and inner conflict. A heated exchange between Ramnik and Javed ensues, leading to introspection on both sides. Javed suggests that Ramnik's resentment stems from Javed disproving Hindus' supposed liberalism. Despite the tension, Javed eventually departs, with Bobby defending his actions and Ramnik revealing his underlying desire to promote unity.

Bobby recounts Javed's transformation from a confident youth to someone traumatized by a specific incident. This incident shattered Javed's self-assuredness, leading to gradual behavioural changes. The contrast between Bobby's communication style, rooted in rationality, and Javed's assertiveness highlights the dynamics of irrationality and emotionality in human communication. Daksha emphasizes the power of music to bridge cultural divides, narrating her visit to Zarine's house where empathy is established. Meanwhile, Ramnik grapples with the decision of involving the police in Bobby and Javed's criminal activities. Javed challenges Ramnik's perception of the police.

In an unexpected twist, Smita enters the scene, apologizing for a disclosed secret, leading to tension with Tasneem. Interestingly, Javed's indifference to the apology suggests the insignificance of the disclosure. Another thread of conversation, initiated by Aruna's inquiry about fetching water, unravels a series of events revealing underlying societal prejudices and cultural dynamics. Javed and Bobby, unaware of Aruna's discriminatory attitudes, offer to help, but Aruna hesitates, indicating her belief in their lower social status.

Javed's sincere apology for forgetting this social divide underlines the deep-rooted divisions within Hindu society. Aruna challenges traditional norms, advocating for equality and respect for all religions. However, her stubbornness reveals her attachment to her culture and resistance to change. A fiery exchange between Aruna and Smita ensues, highlighting their differing views on cultural preservation and modern exploration. Smita emphasizes the

importance of open dialogue and respectful disagreement. Aruna staunchly defends her beliefs, reflecting her unwavering commitment to cultural heritage.

Ramnik intervenes, offering nuanced advice on respecting differing beliefs. The conversation shifts to Smita's relationship with Bobby, introducing the theme of generational clash. Tensions rise as Bobby confesses his feelings for Tasneem, hinting at a potential love triangle. Smita remains steadfast in her beliefs. The generational divide continues as Smita's grandmother, Hardika, expresses her scepticism towards the Muslim boys. She recalls past communal violence and remains wary of their intentions, highlighting the long-lasting impact of historical events. Daksha's efforts to bridge communities inadvertently lead to misunderstandings, portraying the challenges of overcoming biases and fostering connections.

In the midst of these debates, Bobby's gesture of holding a Hindu deity's idol challenges societal norms, symbolizing unity and acceptance. As the scene concludes, the tapestry of beliefs, emotions, and generational divides becomes apparent. The dialogue underscores the complexities of belief systems, the tension between tradition and modernity, and the journey to mutual understanding in a diverse society.

## Check Your Progress 1

### Fill in the blanks:

(milk, Tasneem, 1948, Will, identity, unity, music, Other, division, rathayatra)

1. Mahesh Dattani penned his own play titled *Where There is a* \_\_\_\_\_ in 1986.
2. Mahesh Dattani's literary accomplishments include receiving the Sahitya Akademi Award for his book *Final Solutions and* \_\_\_\_\_ Plays.
3. In Act I, a group of individuals gathers in the street to discuss an attack on a traditional \_\_\_\_\_ procession.
4. In Act II, Smita reveals that Javed is the brother of her Muslim friend \_\_\_\_\_.
5. In Act III, the Muslim chorus expresses their fear of assimilating into the Hindu majority, likening it to oil not mixing with \_\_\_\_\_.
6. In Act III, Bobby's gesture of holding a Hindu deity's idol symbolizes the potential for \_\_\_\_\_ and acceptance.
7. In Act III, Daksha empathizes with Zarine's family and shares a positive interaction through the power of \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Act I begins with Daksha reading her diary entries from \_\_\_\_\_ years earlier, a tumultuous time in the nation's history.
9. The play *Final Solutions* explores themes of communal tensions, prejudice, and empathy in the context of a society grappling with its history of violence and \_\_\_\_\_.

10. The Muslim chorus in Act III expresses fear of the Hindu majority wanting to obliterate the Muslim \_\_\_\_\_.

### 22.3 Major Themes

#### (I) Memory and History

*Final Solutions* by Mahesh Dattani is a thought-provoking play that delves into the intricate relationship between memory, history, and communal tensions within Indian society. The narrative revolves around characters whose interactions and conflicts highlight the lasting impact of historical events on individual and collective consciousness. The character Daksha/Hardika serves as a bridge between past and present; her 1948 diary entries vividly recount the turmoil of India's Partition and its traumatic aftermath. Through her memories, the play underscores how historical events imprint deep scars on the psyche, perpetuating bias and fear.

The play examines how historical narratives shape identities and contribute to communal divides. It depicts the selective nature of memory, as characters remember events from their perspectives, revealing the complexity of understanding a shared history. Communal riots and tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities illustrate how history can be manipulated to fuel division. Amidst this backdrop, characters like Bobby, Javed, and Smita represent the potential for change, demonstrating the possibility of breaking free from the cycle of violence and hatred.

In its nuanced exploration, the play underscores the challenge of reconciling past traumas and fostering empathy to build a more harmonious society. The characters' struggles and relationships reflect the ongoing influence of memory and history, shedding light on the intricate interplay between personal experiences and broader historical contexts. Ultimately, *Final Solutions* prompts contemplation on the enduring impact of history, the power of individual actions in shaping it, and the potential for reconciliation amidst deep-rooted tensions.

#### (II) Communal Tension and Violence

*Final Solutions* is a thought-provoking play by Dattani that explores communal tension and violence through its intricate characters and their interactions. The narrative weaves historical events, personal biases, generational gaps, and societal pressures to illuminate the perpetuation of discord within a community. Against the backdrop of India's tumultuous past, the play reveals the intricate web of human emotions and the dual potential for unity and division.

The character of Daksha/Hardika serves as a poignant embodiment of the enduring impact of communal violence. Her haunted memories from the Partition era illustrate the deep-seated trauma that lingers for decades, influencing her perspectives and relationships. The chorus, representing different societal segments, amplifies the collective sentiment of resentment and prejudice that often accompanies such tensions, reflecting how shared grievances can fuel animosity.



The play also showcases moments of unity and empathy amid communal strife, such as Smita's cross-community friendship with Tasneem and Ramnik's protective gesture towards Bobby and Javed. Internal struggles faced by characters, like Javed's transformation and Aruna's adherence to tradition, underline the complexities of personal change and cultural dynamics. Symbolic elements, such as Bobby holding a Hindu deity's idol, emphasize the potential for transcending religious barriers and fostering interfaith understanding.

### **(III) Identity and Prejudice**

The play delves into the theme of identity, portraying how historical events, societal norms, and personal beliefs shape individual and communal identities. Characters like Daksha, who transforms through her memories of Partition into Hardika, exemplify the evolving nature of personal identity. Prejudice plays a significant role, driving conflicts rooted in religious biases, as depicted through the tensions between Hindus and Muslims. The characters' reactions to Bobby and Javed reveal the profound impact of prejudice on thoughts and actions, while Aruna's resistance to change showcases how biases are passed through generations.

However, the play also emphasizes the potential for overcoming prejudice and fostering understanding. Characters like Ramnik and Smita challenge norms, working to bridge divides between communities. Ramnik's hospitality and protection of Bobby and Javed demonstrate unity and the power of dialogue. Smita's friendship with Tasneem and her confrontation of her mother's beliefs underscore the transformative potential of interfaith relationships. Internal conflicts within characters, such as Javed's journey from violence to redemption, and Aruna's struggle between tradition and modernity, illuminate the complexity of human nature.

Communication is a central theme in addressing prejudice and nurturing empathy. Dialogues and debates expose biases and fears, emphasizing the importance of honest conversations to confront uncomfortable truths. Through nuanced exploration of identity and prejudice amidst communal tensions, the play invites introspection, challenging the audience to consider the role of empathy, understanding, and unity in overcoming divisive biases.

### **(IV) Interfaith Relationships and Unity**

Act I immerses the audience in the aftermath of the Partition of India in 1948, vividly depicting its impact on individuals and communities through Daksha's recollections. The historical backdrop sets the stage for present-day interactions, highlighting the varied responses to ongoing communal tensions. The Hindu chorus symbolizes deep-rooted prejudices, while characters like Smita, Ramnik, and Tasneem seek to bridge divides through empathy.

Act II delves deeper into suspicion and mistrust, exemplified by confrontations involving Smita, Bobby, Javed, and the neighbourhood residents. Generational clashes, like those between Aruna and Smita, underline the importance of open dialogue. Javed's remorse for past actions sheds light on the internal struggles within a cycle of violence.

Act III explores the fears of the Muslim community and Javed's introspection, providing a nuanced understanding of communal conflicts. The clash between

tradition and modernity, as seen through Aruna and Smita's conflict, emphasizes the value of respectful disagreement. Throughout the play, Dattani portrays the complexities of interfaith relationships, emphasizing the potential for transformation and unity through empathy and open communication.

#### **(V) Generational Clashes**

*Final Solutions* explores the transformation of Daksha into Hardika, a grandmother haunted by Partition-era traumas, and parallels them with contemporary communal tensions. Act II deepens generational discord, questioning Smita's associations, while Ramnik defies stereotypes and Muslim characters' inner struggles underscore complex identity issues. Act III foregrounds the generational clash, dissecting cultural norms and tradition through Smita and Aruna's strained relationship, and portraying Javed's journey towards self-discovery. The interplay of evolving perspectives and societal divisions encapsulates the play's theme of generational clashes, illustrating the societal quest for unity through empathy, understanding, and respect.

The play adroitly weaves personal histories, beliefs, and interactions to show how each generation confronts its unique challenges. This theme serves as a prism to examine intricate human relationships, empathy's potency, and the potential for positive transformation amid adversity. By unearthing the complexities binding a diverse and fractured society, the play offers a poignant reflection on generational conflicts, prompting contemplation on the threads that can mend societal divisions and inspire harmonious coexistence.

#### **(VI) Complexity of Human Emotions**

*Final Solutions* intricately weaves the theme of the complexity of human emotions throughout its narrative. The characters' emotional journeys reflect the multifaceted nature of human feelings amidst communal tensions, societal prejudices, and the pursuit of unity. Daksha's haunting experiences during India's Partition, conveyed through her diary entries, illustrate the lasting impact of traumatic events on individual psyches. These recollections encompass a spectrum of emotions, ranging from initial joy to eventual horror and fear, demonstrating the indelible scars of history.

The play further delves into the interplay of emotions in response to ongoing communal tensions. The Hindu chorus embodies a mix of anger, resentment, and fear towards the Muslim community, illustrating how historical events and societal influences shape collective emotions and attitudes. Conversely, characters like Smita showcase the power of compassion and empathy to transcend religious divides, fostering genuine connections that break down barriers. Transformations, such as Javed's journey from violence to remorse and Bobby's symbolic gesture of unity, emphasize the evolving nature of emotions and the potential for change. Amidst generational clashes and reconciliation struggles, *Final Solutions* offers a profound exploration of human emotions in complex circumstances, shedding light on the human capacity for growth, unity, and transformation.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

**Write answers to the questions.**

1. How does Daksha/Hardika's diary serve as a link between past and present events in the play?
2. How do Daksha's memories of the Partition impact her perceptions and attitudes in the play?
3. How do Daksha's memories of the Partition era reflect the long-lasting impact of communal violence on individuals?
4. How does Ramnik's gesture of protecting Bobby and Javed symbolize the potential for unity amid communal strife?
5. How does the chorus represent the collective sentiment of resentment and prejudice in the play?
6. How are the characters' identities shaped by historical events, cultural heritage, and personal beliefs in the play?
7. What message does the play convey about the power of empathy, understanding, and unity in overcoming divisive prejudices?
8. How does Javed's transformation exemplify the possibilities for change and growth in the context of interfaith relationships?
9. How does Act II reveal the challenges and opportunities for fostering interfaith harmony in a divided society?
10. What does *Final Solutions* suggest about the importance of acknowledging biases and fostering communication in the pursuit of interfaith unity?

#### **22.4 *Final Solutions*: A Problem Play**

A problem play is a term often used to describe a particular type of drama, primarily associated with the works of playwright William Shakespeare. Problem plays are characterized by their exploration of complex and controversial social or moral issues, often presenting dilemmas and conflicts that challenge traditional conventions and norms. These plays do not fit neatly into the categories of comedy or tragedy, as they often contain elements of both.

The concept of problem plays was popularized by the critic F. S. Boas in the early 20th century, and the term is most commonly applied to three of Shakespeare's plays: *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*. These plays deal with themes such as justice, morality, the nature of power, and the complexities of human relationships in ways that can be thought-provoking and even discomforting.

The play, authored by Mahesh Dattani, consists of three acts that progressively delve deeper into the complexities of its themes. Set against the backdrop of communal tensions, identity, prejudice, and empathy, the play captures a microcosm of societal challenges within the interactions and inner conflicts of its characters.

Act I establishes the setting of communal tensions and unity. Memories of the Partition haunt Daksha, paralleling ongoing communal conflicts. The attack on a religious procession sparks another riot, revealing diverse responses from

the characters. Ramnik, a symbol of hope, shelters two Muslim boys, reflecting an individual's commitment to countering hatred. Cross-cultural friendships and understanding are explored, challenging divisive narratives.

Act II delves into prejudice and trust, unraveling layers of bias. Deep-seated caste prejudices surface when Aruna hesitates to accept help from the Muslim boys. Ramnik's protective stance and Javed's transformation underscore human complexity and potential for change. The fragility of trust is revealed as tensions rise due to Smita's disclosure. Generational clashes and the struggle to alter ingrained beliefs are explored.

Act III probes identity and change, as characters confront their pasts and beliefs. The Muslim chorus expresses fear of losing identity, while introspections reveal the psychological turmoil of those involved in violence. Debates between characters emphasize the clash between tradition and modernity, the significance of open dialogue, and the challenge of reconciling differing viewpoints. A scene where Bobby holds a Hindu deity's idol symbolizes unity beyond religious boundaries.

*Final Solutions* effectively embodies the problem play genre through its intricate exploration of societal issues. The characters represent diverse perspectives, from Ramnik's commitment to unity to Aruna's unwavering tradition. Javed's transformation and introspection highlight the potential for change, while Hardika's memories emphasize historical impact. The play's structure allows a gradual deepening of themes, with dialogue-driven narratives emphasizing the power of conversation and self-reflection.

In conclusion, *Final Solutions: A Problem Play* by Mahesh Dattani exemplifies the essence of a problem play, intricately dissecting communal tensions, identity, prejudice, and empathy. Through multifaceted characters and their interactions, the play stimulates contemplation on societal attitudes and personal beliefs, inviting audiences to introspect and engage with these challenging themes.

### **Check Your Progress 3**

#### **Write answers to the questions.**

1. What is a problem play, and how is it characterized?
2. Who popularized the concept of problem plays, and which three Shakespearean plays are commonly associated with this term?
3. In what ways is *Final Solutions* by Mahesh Dattani a problem play?
4. How does Act I of *Final Solutions* set the stage for exploring communal tensions and unity?
5. Who is Ramnik in *Final Solutions*, and how does he symbolize hope and change?
6. What role does trust play in Act II of *Final Solutions*?

7. What is the overarching message that *Final Solutions* conveys to its audience?
8. How does the play challenge the notion of easy resolutions in addressing societal problems?
9. How does the play encourage audiences to challenge their own biases and beliefs?
10. How does *Final Solutions* serve as a microcosm of larger societal challenges?

### **22.5 The Role of Chorus**

The chorus in Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* plays a crucial and multifaceted role that enhances the play's thematic depth, dramatic tension, and social commentary. Comprising characters embodying various viewpoints, the chorus serves as a powerful tool for conveying societal complexities, prejudices, and the potential for unity and transformation. Its role can be understood through several key aspects.

Firstly, the chorus acts as a symbol of collective emotion and the voice of society. It encapsulates the sentiments and opinions of different segments of society, reflecting prevailing attitudes and tensions. For example, the Hindu chorus in Act I mirrors the animosity towards the Muslim community, highlighting how group mentality can fuel division and hostility. The chorus also amplifies internal conflicts faced by individual characters, externalizing their personal struggles. In Act II, the chorus voices concerns over deteriorating relations between communities, reflecting the anxiety felt by characters like Smita and Ramnik. This provides a broader context for their dilemmas.

Representing diverse perspectives, the chorus enables the audience to engage with a multitude of beliefs. The Muslim chorus in Act III expresses the desire to preserve their identity, adding depth to the portrayal of Muslim characters and showcasing multi-dimensional struggles.

Moreover, the chorus serves as a device for foreshadowing and irony. References to the departing British "letting loose the dogs" hint at the ensuing chaos, while highlighting contradictions within characters' beliefs underscores human complexity. The chorus also reflects societal change. Act III demonstrates a shift in characters' perspectives, as they challenge biases, paralleled by a transformation in the chorus itself. This reflects the power of individual growth and resistance against communal hatred.

Facilitating dialogues and debates, the chorus brings conflicting viewpoints to the forefront, driving character development and narrative progression. Additionally, it explores both unity and division within society. Moments of potential unity, such as Ramnik sheltering Bobby and Javed, contrast with divisive sentiments expressed by the chorus, illustrating the intricate interplay between societal unity and division.

The chorus in *Final Solutions* enriches the narrative by reflecting societal complexities, deepening character development, and providing a platform to explore the intricacies of identity, prejudice, and the pursuit of unity in the face of adversity. Through its collective voice and diverse perspectives, the chorus amplifies the play's exploration of communal tensions, societal divisions, and the potential for empathy and change.

#### **Check Your Progress 4**

##### **Fill in the blanks.**

(destructive, unity, sentiments, conduit, internal, foreshadowing, prejudices, perspectives, narrative, evolution)

1. The chorus in *Final Solutions* acts as a mirror to prevailing attitudes and \_\_\_\_\_ within society.
2. The chorus in the play represents different \_\_\_\_\_ and beliefs within the context of communal tensions.
3. The chorus serves as a \_\_\_\_\_ for externalizing internal struggles and conflicts.
4. The chorus reflects the \_\_\_\_\_ of individual characters' perspectives and beliefs.
5. The chorus in *Final Solutions* contributes to the overall \_\_\_\_\_ and themes of the play.
6. The chorus underscores the \_\_\_\_\_ consequences of communal tensions through foreshadowing and irony.
7. The chorus in Mahesh Dattani's play *Final Solutions* represents the \_\_\_\_\_, emotions, and opinions of various segments of society.
8. Ramnik's decision to shelter Bobby and Javed showcases the potential for individual actions to promote \_\_\_\_\_ and counter communal hatred.
9. The chorus serves as a device for \_\_\_\_\_ and irony, often highlighting contradictions within characters' beliefs and actions.
10. The chorus amplifies the \_\_\_\_\_ conflicts faced by individual characters, providing a broader context for their personal dilemmas.

#### **22.6 Let Us Sum Up**

In this unit, we saw how Dattani uses the past and present to portray the picture of communal conflicts in society and also the generational conflicts in a family. His command over characterization is evident throughout the play. We also witnessed themes ranging from communal violence to changing perspectives as the play develops. We saw how Dattani's play presents the concept of a problem play in *Final Solutions*. We also saw an effective use of the chorus to create a stronger stage presence.

### Questions

1. Analyse the role of Ramnik as a symbol of tolerance and unity in the face of communal violence in *Final Solutions*.
2. Discuss the significance of Smita's interactions with Tasneem and her efforts to maintain cross-religious friendship in the play.
3. How does Mahesh Dattani use the character of Daksha/Hardika to explore the long-lasting impact of historical events and biases on individuals in *Final Solutions*?
4. Discuss the characters of Bobby and Javed.
5. Analyse the generational conflicts and differing viewpoints among characters like Smita, Aruna, and Ramnik.

### Suggested Readings

Dattani, Mahesh. *Final Solutions*. Penguin India, 2005.

Das, Bijay Kumar. *Form and Meaning in Mahesh Dattani's Plays*. Atlantic Publishers & Distributors, 2008.

Chaudhuri, Asha Kuthari. *Mahesh Dattani: An Introduction*. Foundation Books, 2005.

### Answers

#### Check Your Progress 1

1. Will
2. Other
3. rathiyatra
4. Tasneem
5. milk
6. unity
7. music
8. 1948
9. division
10. identity

#### Check Your Progress 2

1. Daksha/Hardika's diary entries provide a vivid account of the Partition era in 1948, offering insight into historical events and personal experiences that continue to influence the present.
2. Daksha's memories of the violence, fear, and loss during the Partition era shape her perspectives and attitudes, highlighting the lasting impact of historical trauma.
3. Daksha's memories evoke trauma and fear from the past, illustrating how communal tension and violence leave deep scars on individuals.

4. Ramnik's willingness to shelter the boys showcases the importance of transcending religious barriers to promote understanding and peace.
5. The chorus embodies the anger and frustration born out of perceived injustices, highlighting how communal tensions can be perpetuated through shared grievances.
6. The characters' identities are influenced by their backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences, showcasing how personal and communal identities are interconnected.
7. The play emphasizes the importance of empathy and understanding in transcending prejudice and fostering unity among diverse communities.
8. Javed's internal conflict and change of heart reflect the potential for personal transformation and reconciliation in interfaith interactions.
9. Act II showcases the tension and potential for understanding among characters, emphasizing the complexities of interfaith relationships.
10. The play underscores the significance of addressing biases and engaging in open dialogue to promote empathy, understanding, and interfaith unity.

### **Check Your Progress 3**

1. A problem play is a dramatic work that explores complex and controversial social or moral issues, challenging conventional norms. It often presents dilemmas and conflicts, blurring the lines between comedy and tragedy.
2. F. S. Boas popularized the term "problem play." The plays *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *All's Well That Ends Well* by Shakespeare are often referred to as problem plays.
3. *Final Solutions* deals with communal tensions, identity, prejudice, and empathy, presenting complex issues without easy answers, reflecting the characteristics of a problem play.
4. Act I introduces memories of Partition, contemporary communal conflicts, and diverse reactions to a riot, reflecting a spectrum of responses from unity-seeking to prejudice.
5. Ramnik becomes a symbol of hope by sheltering Muslim boys despite opposition, showcasing an individual's commitment to countering hatred and fostering unity.
6. Act II explores challenges of trust and prejudice, revealing tensions and fragility as characters confront biases and their past actions.
7. *Final Solutions* invites the audience to reflect on the complexities of communal tensions, prejudice, and the potential for empathy and change.
8. *Final Solutions* presents complex issues without providing clear solutions, leaving audiences with ambiguity and encouraging them to grapple with the intricate nature of these problems.



9. Through the characters' interactions and conflicts, *Final Solutions* illustrates the power of conversation and the potential for personal growth by questioning one's biases and beliefs.
10. The characters' interactions and conflicts mirror larger societal challenges related to communal tensions, identity, and empathy, providing a nuanced exploration of these issues.

#### **Check Your Progress 4**

1. prejudices
2. perspectives
3. conduit
4. evolution
5. narrative
6. destructive
7. sentiments
8. unity
9. foreshadowing
10. internal

**23.0 Objectives****23.1 Historical and Biographical Background of Padmanabhan****23.2 A Preview of Padmanabhan's Works****23.3 *Harvest*: Act-wise Summary****23.4 Themes of the Play****23.5 Character Analysis****23.6 Conclusion****Suggested Readings****Answers****23.0 Objectives**

1. To familiarize students with Manjula Padmanabhan and her oeuvre of literature.
2. To provide students a deepened understanding of her play *Harvest*.
3. To develop a critical understanding of postmodern Indian English drama.

**23.1 Historical and Biographical Background of Padmanabhan**

An international award-winning Indian English playwright, journalist, comic strip artist, and children's book author, Manjula Padmanabhan was born in Delhi on June 23, 1953. She belongs to an educated Keralite family. She spent most of her childhood in Sweden, Pakistan, and Thailand. In 1969, the family returned to India. She completed her graduation in Economics and post-graduation in History from Elphinstone College, associated with the University of Mumbai. She started working as an editor at *Parsiana*, a Zoroastrian community semi-monthly magazine written in English and published in Bombay.

She began her career as an illustrator in 1979 with Ali Baig's book *Indrani and the Enchanted Jungle*. She later became well known for the depiction of the female character Suki in the comic strip *Doubletalk*. The character of Suki later appeared in *The Pioneer*, a daily newspaper, from 1992 to 1998. After *The Pioneer* stopped publishing, *Suki Yaki* appeared in *The Hindu Business Line*.

She is the first Indian English playwright to earn international fame with her play *Harvest*, which was awarded the Onassis International Cultural Competition Prize for Theatrical Plays in Greece in 1997.

**23.2 A Preview of Padmanabhan's Works**

In her career as a dramatist, Padmanabhan has published five plays in English, beginning with *Lights Out* (1984). The play was first performed in 1986 by Sol Theatre Company at Prithvi Theatre, Bombay. In her introduction to the play, Padmanabhan mentions that the play is based on an eyewitness incident in

Santacruz, Mumbai. Even though the characters are fictional, the incident is a fact. She writes:

“In real life, as in the play, a group of ordinary middle-class people chose to stand and watch while a woman was being brutalized in a neighboring compound. In real life, as in the play, the incident took place over a period of weeks. And in real life, as in the play, no one went to the aid of the victims.”

The play discusses the savagery of the gang rape of an unknown slum-dweller. Initially, the female characters try to investigate the everyday inhuman incident, but their voices are shut down by their husbands’ patriarchy. The victim has no relationship with the characters of the play, but as a woman, her pain is felt by the women characters Leela, Naina, and Frieda, who try their level best to help the victim. However, as depicted in the play, in regular Mumbai life, others are hardly interested in what is happening around them. This is shown by the male characters Bhaskar and Surinder. To an extent, they even try to make money out of this incident by selling photographs of the brutal rape to media channels. The play depicts the everyday, harsh reality of Mumbai life in which the author grew up.

Her next play *The Artist’s Model* was published in 1995. The play deals with metaphysical questions relating to art and exploitation. In the next year, 1996, she published *The Sextet*, which comprises a series of six short skits about aspects of sexuality.

Padmanabhan’s next international award-winning play, *Harvest*, was published in 1998. The play deals with organ donation used as a tool for selfish reasons by first-world country citizens (represented through the character Ginni), which leads to the exploitation and risk of the lives of third-world citizens (such as those living in Indian slums). This play will be discussed in detail in this unit.

Her fifth play *Hidden Fires* was published in 2003. The play is a collection of five monologues, each with a separate title. The first monologue, “Hidden Fires,” is spoken by a shopkeeper who was a victim of Hindu–Muslim riots. A group of people burnt his wife and urinated in the mouth of his dead son, who was killed in front of him. The next monologue, “Know the Truth,” features a news anchor, Pranam Shanti, who interviews politicians regarding conflict regions. The irony is that the anchor hides the truth and advises people to keep smiling, which contrasts with the name of the show. The monologue “Famous Last Words” is about a game with letters and resembles the harsh reality of life. The fourth monologue, “Points,” presents a young woman who uses an unlit candle to symbolize the spirit of a country. She describes a country as boundless, encompassing the earth, and questions key aspects such as ownership. She claims belonging to a country while recognizing it does not belong to any individual. Exploring the elusive origins of both country and humanity, she likens us to rearrangements of nature’s elements. She defines reality as the sum of everything, yet distinctly separate from any singular component, capturing the complex essence of existence beyond tangible boundaries. The fifth monologue, “Innovation,” features a woman who says that anyone who hears his or her name is welcome to raise his or her hand. According to her, a name matters greatly in an individual’s life. It is the first thing we get when we are born, and it is one of the few things that survive us when we die. Unlike her other more conventional plays, this work is a combination of five monologues written in the aftermath of the 1992 Bombay riots.

She has also experimented with other genres of literature. Her short-story collections include *Hot Death, Cold Soup* (1996) and *Kleptomania* (2004). She wrote an autobiographical travel memoir, *Getting There* (2000). Her novels include *Escape* (2008) and *The Island of Lost Girls* (2015). She has also authored several children's books and comic-strip collections, including *This is Suki!* (2002), *Double Talk* (2005), *Mouse Attack* (2003), *Mouse Invaders* (2004), *Unprincess!* (2005), *I Am Different! Can You Find Me?* (2011), *We Are Different!* (2013), and *Three Virgins and Other Stories* (2013).

### Check Your Progress

1. When was Padmanabhan's play *Lights Out* first performed, and where?
2. What is the inspiration behind *Lights Out*, according to Padmanabhan's introduction to the play?
3. How does the play *Lights Out* depict the bystander mentality in a real-life incident?
4. What is the central theme of Padmanabhan's play *The Artist's Model*, published in 1995?
5. What does *The Sextet*, published in 1996, comprise, and what themes does it explore?
6. Describe the plot of Padmanabhan's award-winning play *Harvest*, published in 1998.
7. In what way does *Hidden Fires*, published in 2003, explore the aftermath of Hindu–Muslim riots?
8. Briefly discuss the content of the monologue titled “Know the Truth” in *Hidden Fires*.
9. What is the overarching theme of the monologue “Innovation” within the collection *Hidden Fires*?
10. Apart from her plays, what other genres of literature has Padmanabhan experimented with? Name some works in those genres.

### 23.3 *Harvest*: Act-wise Summary

Manjula Padmanabhan wrote this play in 1997 for the Onassis Theatre Competition held in Greece, on the challenges facing humanity in the next century.

The play is set in the future, in the year 2010, representing the cannibalistic nature of “progressive” first-world countries such as America that exploit poor nations through the illegal organ donation business. The deal is offered in disguise: temporary luxurious facilities are allotted to keep the donors' organs healthy. The organs of the donors can be transplanted into the bodies of first-world receivers whenever required. It is a Mephistophelian bargain that ultimately leads to annihilation.

The play *Harvest* tells the story of a poor family: Om Prakash, Ma, Jaya, and Jeetu. Om Prakash agrees to transplant his organs through InterPlanta Services to overcome his poverty and enjoy a better lifestyle. This fictional transnational

corporation provides human organs to rich Americans. The rich American Virgil, in the guise of Ginni, lures the poor family with modern resources of pleasure and money. However, they mistakenly take Jeetu, Om's brother, as the donor. Jaya, Om's wife, strongly opposes the arrangement, as she prefers to die with dignity rather than submit to the First World by sacrificing her identity rooted in her Third World body.

The play consists of three acts.

**Act I** has two scenes. Scene I opens with the description of the setting: a single-room accommodation in a tenement building in a Mumbai suburb (a chawl). It starts with regular verbal arguments between Ma and her daughter-in-law Jaya. From the initial dialogue, Ma hopes Om will get a job soon and is also irritated with her younger son Jeetu, whom she abuses in his absence with words such as "rascal" and "pimp."

While the quarrel continues, Om arrives and Jaya opens the door. He carries a bulky parcel. When Om shares the news of his new job, Ma is delighted. Om describes the job interview: around six thousand applicants stood in a row inside a building that felt like a machine or a slaughterhouse, surrounded by guards. The candidates moved through a tunnel; it was dark, and he could hardly see. The conversation between Om and Ma suggests how inhumanly the body-check procedure was done for organ donors. It resembles a hygiene check before slaughter. Candidates had to follow instructions without questioning. Only after passing were they provided food packets. The guards would later visit the home for final confirmation and instructions.

### **The Setting of the Play**

Manjula Padmanabhan wrote *Harvest* (1997) for the International Onassis Competition. The play was later adapted into a film titled *Deham* in 2001 by Govind Nihalani, an acclaimed film director. The setting is an Indian metropolis that presents the conditions of a third-world country. The play revolves around organ donation in which donors are from the third world and recipients are from the first world. Padmanabhan notes:

"The donors and receivers should take on the racial identities, names, costumes and accents most suited to the location of production. It matters only that there be a highly recognizable distinction between the two groups, reflected in speech, clothing and appearance."

### **Plot of the Play**

The play is divided into three acts. Set in Mumbai in 2010, it takes us into the tense apartment of a poor family. It narrates the story of Om, the chief protagonist, and his family. The family faces a serious economic crisis after Om is dismissed from his clerical job. Om agrees to donate his organs by contractual promise through InterPlanta Corporation to a first-world receiver, "Ginni." Gradually, Ginni takes control of the family and disciplines them through a "contact module." Events take a darker turn when Jeetu, Om's younger brother, is mistakenly taken as the donor by the corporation. Om runs away, leaving others to face the consequences.

### **Summary of the Play**

As discussed, the play deals with the selling of human organs: recipients are from first-world countries like North America and donors from third-world countries like India. The facilitator is a US-based transnational corporation called InterPlanta Services. The selling of organs takes place for money. “Ginni,” a woman from America, is the organ receiver, and Om, the donor, is from India who sells his organs to her. Ginni is not physically present on stage; she is visible only via video, dictating hygienic and healthy lifestyle routines to Om and his family. Through Om, the whole family—especially Jeetu and Jaya—also becomes implicated in the contract. Thus, the “donors” belong to the same family: Om, Jaya, Ma, and Jeetu.

When Om discloses the nature of his new job to Jaya, she tries to make him understand the consequences. However, Om does not accept Jaya’s warnings. He tells his mother, and she is pleased at the prospect of money and first-world comforts. Om hides his marital status from the company because the contract demands an unmarried donor. Thus, he introduces Jaya as Jeetu’s wife and Jeetu as his brother-in-law. Ginni does not demand any organs immediately. Instead, she gradually sanitizes the family’s apartment and installs devices, including the contact module and multicoloured pellets (the family’s sole food source). The contact module is installed to allow Ginni to instruct Om whenever she wishes. A “video couch” is also brought for Ma to enjoy, isolating her from human interaction.

Gradually, the plan unravels when the company mistakenly takes Jeetu instead of Om. Jeetu brings home dirt and disease, which repulses Om and Ma. They fear how Ginni might react and thus drive him out, but Jaya sympathizes with him. When the guards appear to take the donor, Om panics and hides. They forcibly take Jeetu, mistaking him for Om. Jaya fails to convince the guards that the person they are taking is not Om but Jeetu. Jeetu is taken away. Jeetu is a gigolo, and Jaya shares a clandestine relationship with him.

Jeetu returns home blind. Now he can “see” only when Ginni projects images directly into his mind through the contact module. Jeetu becomes enchanted with Ginni’s voice and begins to feel sexual gratification in the possibility of an important part of his body being transplanted into hers. He is taken away a second time, still not realizing that in the guise of gratification he is steadily being deprived of his body parts.

Ma remains absorbed in the video couch; Om escapes, leaving Jaya to face the consequences. Jaya is shocked when she realizes that Ginni is only a computer-generated fantasy; Virgil is the actual recipient of the organs. Virgil, hungry for youth, is not satisfied with Jeetu’s body. With new organs, he craves a female companion. He seduces Jaya, but she rejects the idea of conceiving for a computerized image and wants a real human presence. Virgil refuses physical contact, as he cannot risk entering the “infected” spaces of the third-world donor’s world.

### **23.4 Themes of the Play**

The themes of the play vary from helplessness and human relationships to the systemic problems of third-world societies. Major themes include poverty and the commodification of organ donation.

### **Commodification of the Human Body**

*Harvest* is based on the issue of organ trade in India. It presents a family surrounded by conflict and deprivation. Within the family, Om and Jaya have an unstable marital relationship; Jaya has a secret affair with her brother-in-law Jeetu. Amid economic setback and emotional deprivation, Om chooses what seems like a “solution”: he decides to sell his organs to a multinational corporation in exchange for money. Om is hired by InterPlanta to donate his healthy organs to a wealthy receiver in the West. Padmanabhan presents this commoditization of the third-world body through advances in transplant medicine and technology.

Om comes home and announces that he has succeeded in getting a new “job.” He is chosen as a healthy donor from India who has sold his organs to a buyer in the USA. His feelings are both delight and despair. He tells his mother: “We’ll have more money than you and I have names for!” and adds, “Who’d believe there’s so much money in the world?” (Gilbert, 219). The despair is visible in Om and Jaya’s conversation:

“Om: I went there because I lost my job at the company. And why did I lose it?

Because I am a clerk and nobody needs clerks anymore! There are no new jobs now—there’s nothing left for people like us! Don’t you know that?

Jaya: You’re wrong, there are choices—there must be choices—

Om: Huh! I didn’t choose. I stood in queue and was chosen! And if not this queue, there would have been other queues...”

The beginning introduces readers to a grim world of institutionalized organ trade, particularly in economically deprived societies. Padmanabhan’s word choices underscore commodification: Om says he “did not choose”; rather, “they have chosen him.” He imagines himself lucky because he is offered this contract. Even Om’s mother becomes astonished to discover that her son is being paid “for nothing.” This reveals the seductive pull of capitalist promises on the common person.

The play also suggests that such “options” function as forced choices for the deprived. Donors are allured by money, and the act is framed as free choice. Later, the reality hits, and Om realizes the magnitude of his decision: “How could I have done this to myself? What sort of fool am I?” (Gilbert, 234). In this way, financial deprivation pushes individuals into choices they might otherwise reject. The commodification of the human body becomes normalized, even legitimized, in the name of erasing poverty.

These third-world bodies are treated like ready-made products, easily bought and sold. Thus, *Harvest* is often read as a futuristic play whose vision of 2010 represents how a third-world middle-class family can be confined within the tempting but exploitative global economy of the first world. The title *Harvest* is apt because it evokes the buying, gathering, and extraction of human organs for a global market controlled by foreign receivers.

At the same time, *Harvest* is not only about organ trade; it is also about the overriding presence of technology that intervenes in human lives and governs them. The play represents a battle between man and machine, where technology becomes a tool through which the powerful discipline and control the powerless.

### Technology and Gadgets

Padmanabhan highlights the influence of technology in the lives of poor people like Om, who are unskilled in computerization. Even the selection procedure for Om's new job shows how technology is used to deceive and control. After the agreement, the house is filled with technological devices. Everyone becomes used to this life, especially Om and Ma. These devices discipline the donor and the family.

This begins when Ginni enters their home through the contact module, described as a "white, faceted globe." Ginni enters without physically entering the donor's geographical space. She likely avoids the perceived risk of third-world "unhygienic" conditions. Through the module, she monitors their activities and regulates their routines so that the organs remain healthy. Ginni learns that Om's family shares a toilet with forty other families: "No-one has a toilet in the house. Forty families share one" (Gilbert, 225). She reacts: "It's disgusting! And I—well, I'm going to change that. I can't accept that. I mean, it's unsanitary!"

InterPlanta then installs a private toilet. Likewise, to "control" healthy food, they dismantle the kitchen and replace it with their cooking device and jars of multi-coloured food pellets. The family is disciplined into strict timings. All of this appears like "help," but it is driven by the receiver's self-interest: the donor's body must be maintained like property.

The logic of millennial capitalism operates through seduction. Third-world individuals are seduced into selling organs to solve monetary problems. The body is mined and finally harvested. In this way, *Harvest* shows how organ trade grows from gross inequalities between first- and third-world citizens, while technology becomes a means of surveillance and control.

### Check Your Progress 02

#### Fill in the blanks:

1. The major themes of the play *Harvest* include helplessness, human relationships, and the problems of \_\_\_\_\_ countries.
2. *Harvest* explores the commodification of \_\_\_\_\_ donation in India.
3. Om decides to sell his organ to an international multinational company called \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Jaya, in *Harvest*, maintains a secret affair with her brother-in-law \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Om expresses both delight and despair when announcing his new job as an eligible, healthy donor to a buyer in the \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Om's mother is astonished to find out that her son is just paid for \_\_\_\_\_ in the organ trade job.



7. Manjula's play *Harvest* highlights the impact of the \_\_\_\_\_ means of capitalist economy on the common man.
8. The play argues that the options presented to individuals in third-world countries are often disguised as \_\_\_\_\_ choice.
9. The title of the play, *Harvest*, is apt as it deals with the issue of buying and gathering \_\_\_\_\_ organs in India.
10. *Harvest* represents the battle between man and machine for the possession of \_\_\_\_\_ beings.

### Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs)

1. What are the major themes discussed in the play *Harvest*?
  - a. Romance and Adventure
  - b. Helplessness, Human Relationships, and Third World Issues
  - c. Science Fiction and Fantasy
  - d. Mystery and Suspense
2. In *Harvest*, why does Om decide to sell his organs?
  - a. To fund a family vacation
  - b. To resolve conflicts within his family
  - c. Due to economic setbacks and emotional deprivation
  - d. To contribute to medical research
3. Which multinational company hires Om for organ donation in *Harvest*?
  - a. Global Organs Inc.
  - b. Inter Planta
  - c. Med Tech Solutions
  - d. Organ Harvest Corporation
4. What is the impact of the capitalist economy on the common man in the play?
  - a. Financial prosperity and stability
  - b. Social equality and justice
  - c. Delight and despair in making choices
  - d. Freedom from external influences
5. According to Om, why did he lose his job before taking up the organ trade?
  - a. Lack of skills and qualifications
  - b. The decline of clerical jobs in the market
  - c. Unfair treatment by the company
  - d. Personal choice to pursue a new career
6. What realization does Om have about his decision to sell his organs?
  - a. He is the luckiest person in the world.
  - b. He made a grave mistake and feels like a fool.

- c. It was a well-thought-out and rational decision.
  - d. His family will benefit significantly from the choice.
7. How does the play *Harvest* depict the commodification of the human body?
    - a. Through a critique of consumer culture
    - b. By showcasing the ease with which organs can be bought and sold
    - c. Both a and b
    - d. Neither a nor b
  8. What does the play *Harvest* represent in terms of technology and human beings?
    - a. Cooperation and harmony
    - b. Battle between man and machine
    - c. Technological utopia
    - d. Absence of technology in human life
  9. According to the passage, what is the overriding presence in *Harvest*?
    - a. Poverty
    - b. Human relationships
    - c. Technology
    - d. Mystery and suspense
  10. The play *Harvest* extends its vision to which year, representing the confinement of a middle-class family to the global economy?
    - a. 2000
    - b. 2010
    - c. 2020
    - d. 2030

### 23.5 Character Analysis

**Om Prakash:** The protagonist who agrees to sell his organs for money.

**Jaya:** Om's wife, who resists the contract and suffers after Om escapes.

**Ma:** Mother of Om and Jeetu; in old age, she still craves money and comforts.

**Jeetu:** Om's brother; mistakenly taken for organ donation and becomes the victim.

**Ginni:** An imagined figure of a wealthy American woman who appears via technology.

**Virgil:** A wealthy American old man who is the real recipient of the organs.

### 23.6 Conclusion

In this unit, we discussed the playwright Manjula Padmanabhan, her life, and her literary career. We also studied her major works and style of writing. Then we examined her play *Harvest*, focusing on its background, plot, act-wise development, characters, and themes. The unit highlighted how the play exposes

organ trade, poverty, technological surveillance, and the exploitation of third-world bodies under a seductive global capitalist system.

### **Suggested Readings**

(As per the text provided, no specific entries were listed in this section.)

### **Answers**

#### **I. (Check Your Progress: Biographical/Works Section)**

1. *Lights Out* was first performed in 1986 by Sol Theatre Company at Prithvi Theatre, Bombay.
2. The inspiration for *Lights Out* comes from Padmanabhan's eyewitness incident in Santacruz, Mumbai, where ordinary middle-class people watched while a woman was brutalized.
3. The play shows bystander mentality as ordinary people keep watching the violence over weeks, and nobody helps the victim.
4. *The Artist's Model* deals with metaphysical questions related to art and exploitation.
5. *The Sextet* comprises six short skits about aspects of sexuality.
6. *Harvest* deals with organ donation used selfishly by first-world citizens, leading to exploitation and danger for third-world citizens.
7. *Hidden Fires* explores the aftermath of Hindu–Muslim riots through five monologues.
8. “Know the Truth” presents news anchor Pranam Shanti, who interviews politicians on conflicts but hides the truth and advises people to keep smiling.
9. “Innovation” emphasizes the importance of a person's name in life.
10. She also wrote short stories (*Hot Death*, *Cold Soup*; *Kleptomania*), a travel memoir (*Getting There*), novels (*Escape*; *The Island of Lost Girls*), and children's books/comic strips.

#### **II. (Check Your Progress 02: Fill in the Blanks)**

1. third world
2. organ
3. Inter Planta
4. Jeetu
5. USA
6. nothing
7. magical
8. free
9. human

10. human

**III. (MCQ Answers)**

1. b

2. c

3. b

4. c

5. b

6. b

7. c

8. b

9. c

10. b

**24.0 Overview of the Unit****24.1 Objectives****24.2 Learning Outcomes****24.3 Introduction****24.4 Brief Overview of the Play****24.5 Importance and Relevance of the Play in Indian Literature and Theatre****24.6 Plot Summary****24.7 Introduction to the Main Characters—Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini****24.8 Description of the Central Conflict—The Quest for Completeness and Identity****24.9 Explanation of the Love Triangle between the Characters****24.10 Discussion of the Climax and Resolution of the Play****24.11 Themes****24.12 Identity and the Search for Completeness****24.13 Analysis of Devadatta's Struggle with His Dual Nature****24.14 Examination of Kapila's Desire for Physical Perfection****24.15 Exploration of Padmini's Pursuit of Emotional Fulfillment****24.16 Gender and Societal Expectations****24.17 Examination of the Roles and Expectations Placed on Men and Women in Indian Society****24.18 Analysis of the Characters' Attempts to Break Free from Societal Norms****24.19 Discussion of the Consequences of Defying Societal Expectations****24.20 Love and Desire****24.21 Exploration of the Different Forms of Love Portrayed in the Play****24.22 Analysis of the Characters' Desires and Their Impact on Their Relationships****24.23 Discussion of the Consequences of Unrequited Love and Unfulfilled Desires****24.24 Symbolism and Allegory****24.25 Analysis of the Symbolism of the Horse's Head****24.26 Examination of the Allegorical Elements in the Play****24.27 Discussion of the Deeper Meanings and Interpretations of the Play's Symbols and Allegories****24.28 Cultural and Historical Context****24.29 Explanation of the Influence of Indian Mythology and Folklore on the**

## **Play**

### **24.30 Discussion of the Social and Political Climate during the Time the Play Was Written**

### **24.31 Analysis of the Play's Reflection of Societal Issues and Concerns of Its Time**

### **24.32 Overview of the Critical Reception of *Hayavadana***

## **Revision**

## **Assessment**

## **Answers**

## **MCQs**

## **Answer Key**

## **Try Yourself**

## **MCQs**

## **Work Cited**

## **24.0 Overview of the Unit**

This unit explores *Hayavadana*, a play by Girish Karnad, focusing on themes of identity, love, and human complexities. It intertwines Hindu mythology and folklore to examine societal norms and existential human conditions.

### **24.1 Objectives**

- Understand the thematic essence of Karnad's *Hayavadana*.
- Analyse character development and their internal conflicts.
- Explore the play's cultural and historical context.
- Discuss the symbolism and motifs in *Hayavadana*.

### **24.2 Learning Outcomes**

- Ability to articulate the central themes of *Hayavadana*.
- Analyse and interpret the characters' dilemmas and transformations.
- Discuss the play's reflection on Indian society and culture.
- Understand the play's significance in contemporary literature.

### **24.3 Introduction**

*Hayavadana* is a play by Girish Karnad that deals with the complexities of human relationships and the quest for happiness and wholeness. The story takes place in a mythical world where gods and humans coexist. The play centers around two close friends, Kapila and Devadatta, who are seeking love and perfection in their lives. Kapila is intellectual while Devadatta is strong and physically perfect. Both men, however, feel incomplete and deeply unsatisfied. This dissatisfaction leads them on a journey involving Padmini, a beautiful and intelligent woman who embodies their ideal of perfection.

Soon they become caught in a love triangle, and the narrative is complicated by a horse-headed entity called "Hayavadana." The story develops into a tale of identity and self-discovery as the characters grapple with questions of love and

what it means to be whole. *Hayavadana* presents the complex nature of human beings and raises profound questions about the essence of humanity.

#### **24.4 Brief Overview of the Play**

The play *Hayavadana* by Girish Karnad is a thought-provoking work that explores themes of identity, love, and the inherent complexities of human nature. Set in ancient India, it follows the lives of two close friends, Devadatta and Kapila, who are caught in a love triangle with Padmini, a beautiful and intelligent young woman.

What makes this play distinctive is the unconventional twist introduced by Karnad—the merging of physical and intellectual identities. The play's strange and intriguing premise becomes a backdrop for deeper philosophical questions about human desire and fulfillment. Karnad's expert storytelling and use of humour help navigate complex concepts with an accessible tone. He weaves elements of folklore, mythology, and existentialism, creating a narrative that challenges conventional notions of identity and love.

#### **24.5 Importance and Relevance of the Play in Indian Literature and Theatre**

*Hayavadana* is immensely important in Indian literature and theatre. The play explores complex themes such as identity and the quest for completeness. It reflects Karnad's attempt to bring traditional Indian stories and mythology into contemporary theatre. It challenges conventional notions of identity and questions the limitations of human nature through its hybrid narrative and its blending of traditional and modern theatrical elements.

The play also holds significance within Indian theatre for its rootedness in culture and performance traditions. Karnad blends classical sources with modern theatre techniques and demonstrates the adaptability and universality of Indian stories. In this sense, *Hayavadana* becomes a reference point for the diversity and depth of Indian literature and theatre, opening doors for dialogue between different audiences within and beyond India.

#### **24.6 Plot Summary**

The play opens with the transposed-headed figure of Hayavadana offering prayers at a temple of Kali. He has a human body but a horse's head, lamenting his incompleteness.

We then meet Devadatta and his friend Kapila along with Devadatta's wife Padmini. Devadatta is reflective and intellectual, while Kapila is a strong and athletic man. Both friends are enamoured of Padmini's beauty.

Out of jealousy, Devadatta tries to outdo Kapila in feats of strength and self-torture but fails. Finally, he beheads himself as the ultimate sacrifice to the goddess Kali to fulfill his wish of possessing Padmini over Kapila. Padmini is devastated and quickly persuades Kapila to go to the temple and similarly behead himself and join his friend in death.

Kali appears and tells them their heads and bodies will be restored but mixed up between the two friends. Thus, Devadatta's head ends up on Kapila's body while Kapila's head sits on Devadatta's body. Neither feels complete. Devadatta misses his intellectual capabilities while trapped in an athletic body unsuited for

scholarly pursuits. Meanwhile, Kapila finds himself feeble and weak in Devadatta's body.

Padmini also feels conflicted as she sees her husband's head on her lover's body and vice versa. The transposed-head duo come across Hayavadana. Together, they all embark on a quest to the Kali temple to ask the goddess to separate their heads from their mismatched bodies once and for all.

After a dramatic ritual, Kapila's body dies leaving Devadatta's head on top of it. Padmini and Devadatta continue together with their child, feeling they have reconciled the contradictory parts of themselves. But the play leaves open the question of whether complete knowledge of the self is possible, as Hayavadana, with his half-equine state, suggests.

#### **24.7 Introduction to the Main Characters—Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini**

In Girish Karnad's play *Hayavadana*, Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini are the central figures around whom the story revolves. Devadatta, a remarkable intellectual and poet, is known for his intense desire to attain physical perfection, which becomes a driving force behind the plot. Kapila is Devadatta's closest friend, characterized by his impulsive and passionate nature. Despite his humble background, Kapila's loyalty and devotion to Devadatta create a deep bond between the two. Padmini, a beautiful and intelligent woman, is caught between the affections of Devadatta and Kapila, and her dilemma forms a significant dimension of the play's conflict.

#### **24.8 Description of the Central Conflict—The Quest for Completeness and Identity**

The central conflict in *Hayavadana* revolves around the quest for completeness and identity. The characters are plagued by a desire to find fulfillment and a coherent sense of self. Devadatta seeks completeness through achievement and recognition, yet remains dissatisfied. Padmini experiences conflict between intellectual attraction and physical desire, and her longing for an ideal partner becomes a form of existential dissatisfaction. Kapila also grapples with the pressures of identity and belonging. Their intertwined quests lead to a conflict of desires and a continuing search for wholeness, acceptance, and self-fulfillment.

#### **24.9 Explanation of the Love Triangle between the Characters**

Alongside identity and completeness, *Hayavadana* also presents a complex love triangle between Padmini, Devadatta, and Kapila. Padmini is married to Devadatta but is drawn to Kapila. Devadatta struggles with the reality of emotional insecurity and jealousy, while Kapila faces the guilt of reciprocating Padmini's feelings and betraying his friendship with Devadatta. This triangle highlights the complexity of human emotions and the moral dilemmas created by conflicting loyalties.

#### **24.10 Discussion of the Climax and Resolution of the Play**

The climax occurs as the characters confront the consequences of the head-and-body exchange and their pursuit of idealized completeness. The resolution suggests that perfection cannot be achieved solely through physical attributes or



intellectual prowess; rather, it raises the possibility that completeness is an unstable ideal. The play's ending remains provocative, leaving audiences with questions about the possibility of true wholeness and the limits of human desire.

#### **24.11 Themes**

Throughout *Hayavadana*, Karnad explores themes such as identity, love, friendship, desire, jealousy, and the quest for perfection. The play portrays the human struggle to reconcile conflicting desires and emotions, and it examines the pressures that societal norms impose on relationships and selfhood. The friendship between Devadatta and Kapila is strained by desire and jealousy, raising questions about the depth and limits of friendship.

#### **24.12 Identity and the Search for Completeness**

Identity and the search for completeness are explored through the dilemmas of Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini. Padmini is torn between Devadatta's intellect and Kapila's physicality, and she longs for a partner who combines both. Devadatta and Kapila also experience dissatisfaction with their own selves, revealing how identity is shaped by both inner aspiration and external expectation. Karnad suggests that the pursuit of completeness is deeply human, yet potentially unattainable.

#### **24.13 Analysis of Devadatta's Struggle with His Dual Nature**

Devadatta's character highlights the conflict between intellectual aspirations and physical desire. He embodies the tension between mind and body, reason and passion. His dissatisfaction and jealousy intensify his internal struggle. Through symbolic motifs, Karnad presents Devadatta's dual nature as a representation of the human condition and its contradictions.

#### **24.14 Examination of Kapila's Desire for Physical Perfection**

Kapila's desire for perfection reflects pressures created by social ideals. His longing to embody an accepted form of masculinity shapes his actions and complicates his relationships. This desire reveals the broader human struggle for acceptance and the internal insecurity created by ideal standards.

#### **24.15 Exploration of Padmini's Pursuit of Emotional Fulfillment**

Padmini seeks emotional fulfillment and struggles with conflicting attractions. Her journey complicates conventional depictions of a dutiful wife. Through her dilemmas, the play explores how desire is shaped by both longing and social constraint, and how emotional satisfaction cannot be reduced to either physical beauty or intellectual superiority.

#### **24.16 Gender and Societal Expectations**

The theme of gender and societal expectations is explored primarily through Padmini. She challenges traditional roles and reveals how patriarchal norms restrict women's choices. Her internal conflict and her decisions reflect the cost of defying expectations and the struggle for self-definition.

#### **24.17 Examination of the Roles and Expectations Placed on Men and Women in Indian Society**

The play highlights how social roles shape men and women differently: men are expected to embody authority and strength, while women are expected to be obedient and self-sacrificing. Through its characters, *Hayavadana* critiques these norms and invites audiences to question inherited structures.

#### **24.18 Analysis of the Characters' Attempts to Break Free from Societal Norms**

Padmini resists passive submission and seeks agency. Kapila questions conventions and pursues his own understanding of truth and identity. Their attempts to break from norms face resistance, revealing the constraints society imposes on individuals who seek autonomy.

#### **24.19 Discussion of the Consequences of Defying Societal Expectations**

Defiance brings social judgment, conflict, and tragic outcomes. The play portrays how society punishes departures from accepted roles, especially for women. The consequences underline the rigid power of social expectations and the personal cost of challenging them.

#### **24.20 Love and Desire**

The play explores love and desire in complex, sometimes contradictory ways. The love triangle dramatizes the tension between personal desire and social obligation. Karnad uses these relationships to question the nature of love, loyalty, and the limits of desire.

#### **24.21 Exploration of the Different Forms of Love Portrayed in the Play**

The play presents romantic love, friendship-based love, and self-love (as reflected in the desire for completion). These different forms are shown to be interwoven, often creating conflict rather than resolution.

#### **24.22 Analysis of the Characters' Desires and Their Impact on Their Relationships**

Desire reshapes relationships and creates instability. Padmini's longing for both intellect and physicality drives her dissatisfaction. Devadatta's jealousy and need for perfection strain friendship and marriage. Kapila's conflicting loyalties intensify the tragedy.

#### **24.23 Discussion of the Consequences of Unrequited Love and Unfulfilled Desires**

Unrequited love and unfulfilled desire lead to despair, betrayal, and destructive choices. The play presents desire as both energizing and dangerous, capable of producing transformation as well as collapse.

#### **24.24 Symbolism and Allegory**

Karnad's use of symbolism and allegory deepens the philosophical reach of the play. Images such as the horse-headed figure and the head-body exchange

become vehicles for exploring questions of selfhood, desire, and human limitation.

#### **24.25 Analysis of the Symbolism of the Horse's Head**

The horse's head symbolizes incompleteness, hybridity, and the struggle to reconcile different parts of identity. It becomes a visual representation of the play's central concern: the impossibility of achieving absolute wholeness.

#### **24.26 Examination of the Allegorical Elements in the Play**

The love triangle and the head-body exchange can be read allegorically as a struggle between mind and body, intellect and passion, social order and personal desire. Hayavadana's condition becomes an allegory for human contradiction.

#### **24.27 Discussion of the Deeper Meanings and Interpretations of the Play's Symbols and Allegories**

Symbols such as the horse-headed figure and the exchange of heads invite reflection on the instability of identity. The play suggests that human beings are shaped by competing impulses, and the desire for "perfect" coherence often produces fragmentation.

#### **24.28 Cultural and Historical Context**

*Hayavadana* draws from Indian myth and folklore while engaging modern concerns. By blending traditional narrative sources with contemporary theatrical methods, Karnad creates a work that speaks both to cultural memory and present anxieties.

#### **24.29 Explanation of the Influence of Indian Mythology and Folklore on the Play**

The play draws heavily from Indian mythology and folklore, particularly stories associated with identity transformation and moral dilemmas. These mythic elements provide a cultural framework for exploring universal human questions.

#### **24.30 Discussion of the Social and Political Climate during the Time the Play Was Written**

Written in the 1970s, the play emerges during a period of social and cultural change in India. Debates about tradition and modernity, gender roles, and identity were especially visible, and the play reflects this transitional climate.

#### **24.31 Analysis of the Play's Reflection of Societal Issues and Concerns of Its Time**

The play reflects issues such as gender inequality, the pressure of social expectations, and the tension between inherited identity and chosen identity. Its engagement with these concerns helps explain its continuing resonance.

#### **24.32 Overview of the Critical Reception of *Hayavadana***

*Hayavadana* has received strong critical acclaim for its thematic depth, inventive structure, and integration of Indian performance traditions with modern drama.

Critics often highlight its exploration of identity, desire, and social critique, as well as its impact on modern Indian theatre.

### **Revision**

- Understand the main characters: Devadatta, Kapila, and Padmini, and their unique traits.
- Remember the central themes: identity, love, desire, and the quest for completeness.
- Note the incorporation of traditional Indian theatre elements like Yakshagana.
- Consider the role and symbolism of the horse-headed Hayavadana.
- Reflect on the love triangle and its impact on the characters.
- Observe how the play challenges societal norms, especially regarding gender roles and expectations.
- Recognize the blend of mythology and contemporary issues in the narrative.
- Think about the play's ending and its commentary on human existence and imperfection.
- Consider the historical and cultural context of the play, especially its relevance to 1970s India.

### **Assessment**

#### **Answer in brief**

1. Discuss the theme of fragmented identity in *Hayavadana*.
2. Analyse Padmini's character in the context of societal norms.
3. Explain the symbolism of the horse-headed deity in the play.
4. How does *Hayavadana* reflect the socio-cultural changes in 1970s India?
5. Discuss the use of traditional Indian theatre elements in the play.
6. How does the play challenge conventional notions of identity and perfection?
7. Evaluate the play's conclusion and its message about human existence.

#### **Answers**

1. *Hayavadana* delves into the theme of fragmented identity through the characters' head swap. This surreal event questions the true essence of identity by disrupting the conventional alignment of mind and body, creating a dichotomy that challenges the characters' understanding of themselves.
2. Padmini represents the challenges women face in conforming to societal norms. Torn between intellectual and physical attractions to Devadatta and Kapila, respectively, her character illustrates the internal and external conflicts a woman undergoes in a patriarchal society.
3. The horse-headed deity, Hayavadana, symbolizes the quest for completeness and the complexity of human desires. His incomplete transformation and continuous search for perfection mirror the human

condition's inherent incompleteness and the perpetual struggle for a holistic identity.

4. With its focus on identity, gender roles, and societal norms, *Hayavadana* mirrors the socio-cultural upheavals of 1970s India. It captures a society in transition, grappling with modernity while remaining rooted in tradition.
5. The play incorporates elements of traditional Indian theatre, particularly Yakshagana. This choice pays homage to India's theatrical heritage and adds cultural depth to the storytelling.
6. By intertwining mythological motifs with contemporary issues, *Hayavadana* challenges conventional notions of identity and perfection. It questions whether completeness is achievable and examines complexities inherent in human identity.
7. The conclusion leaves audiences with a commentary on the human condition, suggesting that the pursuit of perfection and definitive identity may be futile, and emphasizing human imperfection and complexity.

### MCQs

1. What is the central theme of *Hayavadana*?
  - a) Political strife
  - b) Love and betrayal
  - c) Identity and completeness
  - d) War and peace
2. Which mythological figure is referenced in the play?
  - a) Krishna
  - b) Hayavadana
  - c) Ganesha
  - d) Shiva
3. Who are the main characters in *Hayavadana*?
  - a) Padmini, Devadatta, and Kapila
  - b) Ram, Sita, and Lakshman
  - c) Vikram, Betaal, and Somdev
  - d) Draupadi, Arjun, and Bhima
4. The play incorporates elements of which traditional Indian theatre?
  - a) Kathak
  - b) Yakshagana
  - c) Bharatanatyam
  - d) Kuchipudi
5. What symbolizes the fragmented nature of identity in *Hayavadana*?
  - a) The changing seasons
  - b) The river
  - c) Interchanged heads and bodies
  - d) The forest

6. Which city is the setting for *Hayavadana*?
  - a) Varanasi
  - b) Ujjain
  - c) Delhi
  - d) Mumbai
7. *Hayavadana* reflects the socio-cultural context of India during which decade?
  - a) 1950s
  - b) 1960s
  - c) 1970s
  - d) 1980s
8. What is the dilemma faced by Padmini in the play?
  - a) Choosing between wealth and poverty
  - b) Choosing between love and duty
  - c) Choosing between intellectual and physical attraction
  - d) Choosing between tradition and modernity

#### **Answer Key**

1. c) Identity and completeness
2. b) Hayavadana
3. a) Padmini, Devadatta, and Kapila
4. b) Yakshagana
5. c) Interchanged heads and bodies
6. b) Ujjain
7. c) 1970s
8. c) Choosing between intellectual and physical attraction

#### **Try Yourself**

1. Analyse the role of folklore in *Hayavadana*.
2. What does the play suggest about the nature of desire?
3. Discuss the impact of Karnad's use of language in the play.
4. How does *Hayavadana* challenge traditional gender roles?
5. Compare and contrast Devadatta and Kapila.

#### **MCQs**

1. What form of theatre is used as a narrative device in *Hayavadana*?
  - a) Opera
  - b) Puppetry
  - c) Mime
  - d) Ballet
2. Girish Karnad was influenced by which of these literary figures?
  - a) Shakespeare
  - b) Kalidasa

- c) T. S. Eliot
  - d) Homer
3. What aspect of human life does *Hayavadana* primarily explore?
    - a) Economic struggles
    - b) Spiritual enlightenment
    - c) Political power
    - d) Emotional complexities
  4. Which element is central to the play's plot?
    - a) A magical sword
    - b) A mysterious book
    - c) A love potion
    - d) A head swap
  5. How does *Hayavadana* relate to the concept of "Rasa" in Indian theatre?
    - a) By focusing on historical events
    - b) Through emotional essence
    - c) By using classical dance
    - d) Through its use of comedy
  6. What does the character Hayavadana represent in the play?
    - a) Wisdom
    - b) Jealousy
    - c) Innocence
    - d) Transformation
  7. The setting of *Hayavadana* reflects which era of Indian history?
    - a) Mughal
    - b) British Raj
    - c) Ancient
    - d) Post-independence

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યુનિવર્સિટી ગીત

સ્વાધ્યાય: પરમં તપ:

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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 મહેંકે;  
બંધન નહીં કો સ્થાન સમયના જવું ન ઘરથી દૂર  
ઘર આવી મા હરે શારદા દૈન્ય તિમિરના પૂર.

સંસ્કારોની સુગંધ મહેંકે, 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

