

**BAEN101CCT**

# **Individual and Society**

*SLM Based on Distance & Regular Mode Synchronized Syllabus*

For

**B.A./B.Com**  
**(First Semester)**

**Directorate of Distance Education**

**Maulana Azad National Urdu University**

**Hyderabad-32, Telangana-India**

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Course-B.A./B.Com

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(SLM Based on Distance & Regular Mode Synchronized Syllabus)

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## Message

The basic mandate of the Act whereby Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established by the Parliament of our beloved country is the promotion of higher education through Urdu language. This is the point that distinguishes MANUU from all other central universities and gives it a unique feature, an honour which is not granted to any other institutions of higher learning. The very objective of promotion of knowledge through Urdu is meant to facilitate the accessibility of contemporary knowledge and disciplines to Urdu knowing community. For a long time, Urdu has remained devoid of scientific and scholarly materials. A cursory glance over a library or shelves of a book seller substantiates the fact that Urdu language is diminished to only a few “literary” genres. Further, the Urdu reader/community is unaware of the today’s most important areas of knowledge whether it is related to his own health and life or related to the financial and commercial systems, whether it is related to machines and gadgets around him or the issues related to his environment or vicinity. The unavailability of content related to the above domains of knowledge has created an atmosphere of apathy towards attaining knowledge that exhibits the lack of intellectual abilities in Urdu community. These are the challenges that Urdu University is confronted with. The scenario of Self Learning Materials (SLM) is also not very different. The unavailability of course books in Urdu at school level comes under discussion at the commencement of every academic year. Since the medium of instruction of Urdu University is only Urdu and it offers almost all the courses of important disciplines, the preparation of books of all these subjects in Urdu is the most important responsibility of the University. DDE has embarked upon the preparation of its own Self Learning Materials (SLM) on massive scales. As a result of the hard work of the concerned faculties and full cooperation of the writers, the process of publications of books has begun well. I believe that after completing the job of publishing Self Learning Materials (SLM) in a minimum possible time, the concerned faculties will initiate publishing knowledge enhancing materials in lucid Urdu language so that we may fulfill the mandate of this University.

With best wishes.

**Prof. S.M. Rahmatullah**

*Vice Chancellor, I/C.*

MANUU, Hyderabad

## Message

You all are well aware that Maulana Azad National Urdu University began to function from 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and Translation Division. Regular mode of education commenced from 2004 and various departments were established which were followed by the appointments of faculty. Self learning material was prepared through writing and translation with full support of competent authority.

For the past few years UGC-DEB kept emphasizing on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Accordingly, at Maulana Azad National Urdu University, the syllabi of distance and regular mode are synchronized by following the norms of UGC-DEB and Self Learning Materials are being prepared afresh for UG and PG courses containing 6 blocks - 24 units and 4 blocks - 16 units respectively.

Distance education system is considered highly effective and beneficial around the globe. The large number of people enrolled in it stands a witness to the same. Realizing the literacy ratio of Urdu speaking population, Maulana Azad National Urdu University implemented Distance education from its beginning. In this way, the university reached out to Urdu speaking population through distance learning method prior to regular. Initially, the study materials of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University and Indira Gandhi National Open University were borrowed. The intention was to prepare our own study materials rapidly and not to be dependent on other universities but the intent and effort could not go hand in hand. Consequently, it took plenty of time to prepare our own Self Learning Material. Eventually, the task of preparing Self Learning Material commenced systematically at war foot. We had to face numerous hindrances but never gave up. As a result, university started to publish its own study material at high speed.

Directorate of Distance Education runs fifteen courses consisting of UG, PG, B.Ed, Diploma, and certificate courses. In a short span of time, courses based on technical skills will be started. A huge network of nine regional centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and five sub-regional centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. One hundred and fifty five study centers are run simultaneously under these regional and sub-regional centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. DDE also utilizes ICT for its educational and administrative activities.

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

Directorate of Distance Education will not only play a vital role to bring educationally and economically backward Urdu speaking population into the main stream but also in the increase of Gross Enrolment Ratio.

**Prof. Abul Kalam**

*Director, Directorate of Distance Education,*  
MANUU, Hyderabad

## **Introduction to the Course**

The course *Individual and Society* (BAEN101CCT) is prescribed as a core course for the first semester undergraduate students. It aims at providing the students an insight into a basic understanding of literature and its relation with the society. It is a fact that literature has its roots in society and to appreciate it one needs a clear understanding of various factors and issues of the society. The syllabus makers have rightly included the issues like caste, class, gender, race, ethnicity and ecology in this course. Without a basic understanding of these concepts, readers may not be able to comprehend the society in general and the literary texts in particular.

The course is divided into six blocks. Each block consists of four units. The first block introduces the concepts of caste and class in society. The second block deals with women writers and stereotypes. The third block brings the Indian women writers in focus. The fourth explores the elements of racism whereas the fifth highlights the ideas of nation, politics, communalism and violence. The last block focuses on culture, ecology and migration.

The course aims at familiarizing the students with a wide range of issues and writers. In each block two units deal with the theoretical framework and two present a textual instance. The texts included consist of poems, short stories, and excerpts from critical essays by British, American, Indian, and diasporic writers. Following the principle of 'known to unknown', in the initial blocks the issues pertaining to Indian society have been discussed and then the global ones. The same sequence has been followed while introducing the authors.

In this book, under each unit the objectives, key points of the topic, learning outcomes, glossary and sample questions are given. At the end, a question paper is attached for giving the students an idea of the paper pattern.

It is hoped that the Self Learning Material (SLM) in your hand will be helpful in appreciating the sociological approach to literature.

**Prof. Mohammed Abdul Sami Siddiqui**  
*Course Coordinator*

# **Individual and Society**

# Unit - 1: Society and Caste

## Structure

### 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Objectives

### 1.2 Society and Caste

#### 1.2.1 Kinds of Society

#### 1.2.2 Concept of Indian Society

#### 1.2.3 Distinct features of Indian Society

#### 1.2.4 Problems faced by Indian Society

#### 1.2.5 Caste: An Introduction

#### 1.2.6 Social Stratification

#### 1.2.7 Exploitation of Shudras

#### 1.2.8 Features of Caste System

### 1.3 Learning Outcomes

### 1.4 Glossary

### 1.5 Sample Questions

### 1.6 Suggested Readings

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Society and Caste are directly proportional to each other as it is the society, particularly Indian, which provokes the caste discourse. Man, who is a social animal forgets that the supreme creator has created all the creatures equal irrespective of caste, creed, sex, sect, region and religion. So, people ought to live with each other without making hierarchy suggesting one's superiority over the other.

Etymologically, the term society has been derived from the Latin word '*socius*' and the French word '*societe*' that denominate persons belonging to a particular group. A society is a group of people who live together in the same geographical place or territory and is subject to almost the same cultural norms and obey the same political leader. The term society is used not only to refer to a group of individuals, but also to the dynamic pattern of interaction--standards that occur among them. Men express their nature by developing and recreating an organisation

that directs and regulates their actions in many ways. Society exists, where each human being acts towards each other in ways defined by their mutual recognition. The more competitive a group is the more diverse the social relationships are. There may be representatives of a community from various ethnic groups. A society can be a particular ethnic group too, for instance, Bhutan, a nation-state, or a broader cultural group, such as a western society. Society, however, is not limited solely to humans. Animals live in society as well. Besides, the society in which man lives has been differentiated from that of animals due to its governance and culture. The first form of society is always considered to be a family-an organisation that stands out from animal life. Beginning with the family, human life is meant for independence and sharing of physical, mental and spiritual substance. Although the conflict has been a dominant feature of human history within and between cultures, all societies struggle to balance their unity to ensure the happiness, well-being and safety of their beloved ones.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is Society?
2. How society and caste are interrelated to each other?

---

## **1.1 Objectives**

---

This block aims to furnish information about

- Concept of Society
- Concept of Indian Society; its features and problems
- The Caste system in Hindu society
- The basic structure and features of the Caste system
- Social Stratification
- Role of Gandhiji and B.R Ambedkar in the abolition of Untouchability

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## **1.2 Society and Caste**

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Different scholars have defined society in various ways. The meanings provided by them are either structural or functional. From the functional point of view, society is characterised as a

complex of mutual relationship groups, interacting with each other, allowing human beings to carry on their life-activities and helping each person, in association with his fellows, to fulfil his wishes and fulfil his interests. Society, among other things, incorporates the complete social legacy of folklore, values and structures from a systemic point of view: of practises, emotions and ideals. From its functional and structural dimensions, the following two concepts view society respectively.

According to Maciver, "Society is a system of procedures and usages, of power, authority and mutual assistance, of many groups and divisions, of controls of human behaviour of liberties. This ever-changing, dynamic structure we name as society. It is a web of social relations."

According to Giddings, "Society is the union itself the organisation, the sum of formal relationships that are connected by associated individuals".

### **1.2.1 Kinds of Society:**

Social thinkers have classified many kinds of societies, each of which possesses its unique characteristics.

**a. Hunting and Gathering Societies:** The society, which survived by hunting animals and gathering edible plants, refers to the hunting and gathering society. Societies that depend chiefly or exclusively on hunting wild animals, fishing and gathering wild fruits, vegetables, nuts and berries to support their diet. Food gathering, hunting and trapping were the first adaptations humans made and it lasted for thousands of years before being taken over by animal husbandry and agriculture and then by industrialization. When human beings learnt to produce food, human society changed rapidly. The pace of these changes got accelerated with industrialization.

**b. Pastoral Society:** This type of society refers to a social group of pastoralists, whose way of life is based on pastoralism and is typically nomadic, i.e. moving from one place to another in search of food, shelter etc. Usually, the lives of these people revolve around the rearing of heard or folks. The pastoral society consists of pastoralists who depend on domesticated livestock for their livelihood. In other words, the main source of their livelihood comes from herding and domesticating animals. Pastoralists move their animals from one place to another for pasture and raising and taking care of animals, they struggle to obtain fodder for them.

**c. Horticulture Society:** It is a type of society that is dependent on horticulture, production of fruits, for its survival. The term horticulture means the art or practice of gardening and cultivating plants. It is a society that is subservient to the produce i.e. gained from flora. Moreover, the people are dependent on cultivation of plants for their livelihood. It implies a class of people whose aspects of survival are entirely associated with plants, trees, and productions derived from the same.

**d. Agricultural Society:** An agrarian society or agricultural society refers to the society whose primary source of subsistence is agriculture i.e. it is the art and science of cultivating the soil, growing crops and raising live stock. It also refers to an organisation directed to the acceleration of food production. This society's economy is chiefly dependent on producing and maintaining crops and farmland. In agriculture societies, majority of the population drive their income from agriculture. Further, agrarian societies are those settlements of people where livelihood is primarily earned by cultivating land and by carrying out related activities such as animal husbandry.

**e. Industrial Society:** It refers to a society driven by the use of technology and whose standards and functions of life are dictated by technological tools. It is that society that depends on advances in science and technology to drive farming or production that in turn supports a large population. In this kind of society, factory production is the primary source of economic activity, thus serves as a chief source of livelihood. It is that society in which technologies of mass production are used to make large amounts of goods in factories. To put it in another way, it is that society that depends on science and technology to produce its basic goods and services.

**f. Post-Industrial Society:** It refers to that type of society in which the economic emphasis is on providing services and information. It is that stage of society's development where the service centre generates more wealth than the manufacturing sector of the economy. In this kind of society, emphasis is given to human resource and knowledge than manufacturing goods. There is an increase in the production of services and attention is paid on new technologies that foster the need for new scientific approaches such as IT and Cyber security. Moreover, human capital is a more important factor in determining the strength of a society. It is also called digital age where an exchange of knowledge among masses is common.

***Check your Progress:***

1. The term society came from which word?
2. Elaborate your views about Society?
3. What are the different kinds of societies?

### **1.2.2 Concept of Indian Society:**

Indian society is a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic society. In every social aspect, there is a large variety of Indian society. There is a diversity of language, class, economy, faith, ethics, caste, groups, etc implying a society that is pluralistic in nature and form. The fundamental topics are hierarchy, caste system, purity and pollution, social interdependence, family power and peace, class, rural and urban existence, unity, etc.

Indian culture is recognised as one of the richest and dynamic traditions in world history. It involves different classes and sub-groups thereby owing distinct cultures. Due to its demographic characteristics, it is not static; it is rapidly evolving and growing. Innovation, intellectuality and spirituality are its distinct keynotes. It is bound by its values, practises, partnership, friendship, compassion and religious way of life. Besides, it is a remarkable mixture of idealism and modernization.

**1. Multilingual Society:** It is estimated that 1652 languages exist in India. India's national language is *Hindi* and is the most commonly spoken language.

**2. Multi-ethnic Society:** Almost all the world's races coexist together.

**3. Multi-religious Society:** In India, there is no official religion. It is therefore, known as a land with various religions. The world's major religions coexist in India. India's main religion is Hinduism. After Hinduism, Islam, that is followed by Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The religions practised by the smaller population are: Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Bahaism.

**4. Multiclass Society:** There are many classes in India, such as the upper class, middle class, lower class, lower middle class and several other classes.

**5. Patriarchal Society:** Indian culture is a society dominated by men. The ultimate power in any household resides in the hands of males.

**6. Unity and Diversity:** There are various kinds of individuals living together in India, and that is why India is called the land of diversity. Indians belonging to various races, castes, faiths, colours and sects prosper in their ways together. To perform their rituals, they have complete independence. Thus in spite of the diversity, people exist in harmony. The famous phrase over here is unity and diversity that expresses harmony and unity among various groups or individuals.

**7. Coexistence of Modernity and Traditionalism:** Traditionalism suggests that classical ideals of life are retained and transferred down to the next generations. Whereas modernity refers to the state of life that breaks away from the past and assimilates into new modes of life. There is no question that modernity is trending in India but Indians never forget their traditional values. So along with traditionalism, Indian society is progressing with modernity.

**8. Balance between Spiritualism and Materialism:** Spiritualism means fostering an individual's relation with God. Materialism, however, refers to physical comforts and material possessions, thereby treating it as more essential than spiritual values. However, the balance between the two is maintained by individuals of India.

**9. Balance between Individualism and Collectivism:** The word individualism refers to religious, social or political views that enhance individual independence, self-reliance and equality. Collectivism, on the other hand, signifies the concept of giving priority to a group rather than to separate individual inclinations.

### **1.2.3 Distinct Features of Indian Society:**

**1. Caste Diversity:** Caste is a type of social stratification which divides society into various social groups. In nature, these classes are hereditary and endogamous, having a common name, practise, occupation and community. Its basic characteristics include:

- a. Segmental division of society.
- b. Social and religious hierarchy.
- c. Civil and religious disabilities.

- d. Endogamy.
- e. Untouchability.
- f. Restriction of food sharing and social intercourse

**2. Social Demography:** In understanding Indian demographic and socio-economic factors such as death rate, birth rate, child mortality rate, population growth etc., it is very important to consider the sequential analysis of population structure and distribution. Therefore, it plays a key role in the social and cultural factors of society.

**3. Marriage and Family:** To form a family, marriage is the legitimate social pattern between two or more parents. In Indian society, there are many forms of marriages, such as polygamy, monogamy, etc. Today, monogamy prevails most in Indian society.

**4. Religious Tolerance:** It is Indian society's most prevalent feature. Everyone respects all the dominant religions without any critique. Without any threat, anyone can practise and spread his or her religion.

**5. Ability of Assimilation:** India's culture has welcomed many positive things from other countries. It knows how to adopt and assimilate stuff according to its demands. The capacity to assimilate, therefore, makes Indian society historically and culturally rich.

**6. Joint Family System:** The pattern of Indian cultures is usually intertwined. Joint family refers to the family where a family lives and enjoy a shared kitchen with their children and grandchildren. The family structure often shifts with the evolving pattern of society. Joint families are substituted by nuclear families where parents rear their children, with no third generation space.

#### **1.2.4 Problems faced by Indian Society:**

India is one of the world's leading countries, so Indians face different challenges such as social problems, economic problems, education-related problems with healthcare issues, and poverty and many more. Some are highlighted below:

**1. Casteism:** In Indian society, casteism is an overly significant question. It is discrimination on the basis of caste of an individual and can contribute to many social-level issues.

**2. Poverty:** Poverty is another significant problem faced by the Indian nation. The rural and slum communities in India are regarded as poor. There are number of people who are not supplied with the most basic necessities of life i.e. food, shelter and clothes.

**3. Illiteracy:** In India, the rate of literacy is very low. There is a lack of literacy due to poverty. It is also troublesome for the society in particular and country in general.

**4. Corruption:** It is the most widely spreading disease in society. Much of the roots of corruption reside in all most every department.

**5. Unemployment:** It is the main problem prevailing in Indian society. In every sector, even the PhD holders are not working. Indian youth are also struggling a lot for the job. They are caught between a devil and a deep sea as, after spending half of their lives in achieving terminal degree they are still jobless. Unemployment has resulted in trauma and dissatisfaction. This is not healthy for any society.

**6. High Inflation Rate:** Low GDP rate and high inflation lead to an increase in the prices of basic goods that restricts the buying power of people. This contributed to society's economic recession.

**7. Unhygienic Condition:** Many individuals live in unsanitary conditions that cause the birth of different diseases. Due to unhygienic conditions, the status of individuals is also poor. So, it impacts the society adversely as primarily wealth is health.

There are many other problems in Indian society other than this, such as communalism, cultural disparities, black money etc.

### **1.2.5 Caste: An Introduction:**

Etymologically, the term 'caste' has been derived from the Portuguese word '*casta*' meaning race. It is also usually correlated to the Latin word '*castus*' meaning pure race. The word for caste in Sanskrit is '*Varna*' meaning colour. Caste can be characterised as a social stratification based on income, inherited rank or privilege, ethnicity, occupation, or profession differences. The structure is so complex that no widely accepted definition of the word caste is possible.

A special form of social stratification is caste. With a set ritual status, it is hitting at the very root of harmonious existence that India ideally boasts off. It is an ascribed status, which means that its members are dependent on birth, or we can claim that the status in society is acknowledged on the basis of one's birth. Caste is endogamous in nature that carries out all the rituals within the social community of one's own. The status of a caste in the caste system is defined not by socio-economic advantages, but by birth, i.e. caste is dependent on birth or recognised by birthright. It cannot be changed by a human. By default, it is static. The caste system is closed. It is not therefore possible to change it easily. The Indian caste system is known as a closed system. It is mandatory for members of a specific caste to marry within their caste. Inter-caste marriages or marriages outside the caste are forbidden. There is a predetermined occupation of a caste too and that is why various castes are given different occupations. There are also diet caste restrictions. High-caste individuals do not accept food from the hands of lower caste individuals. The members of a particular caste won't dare to form marital relations, nor would they dine together.

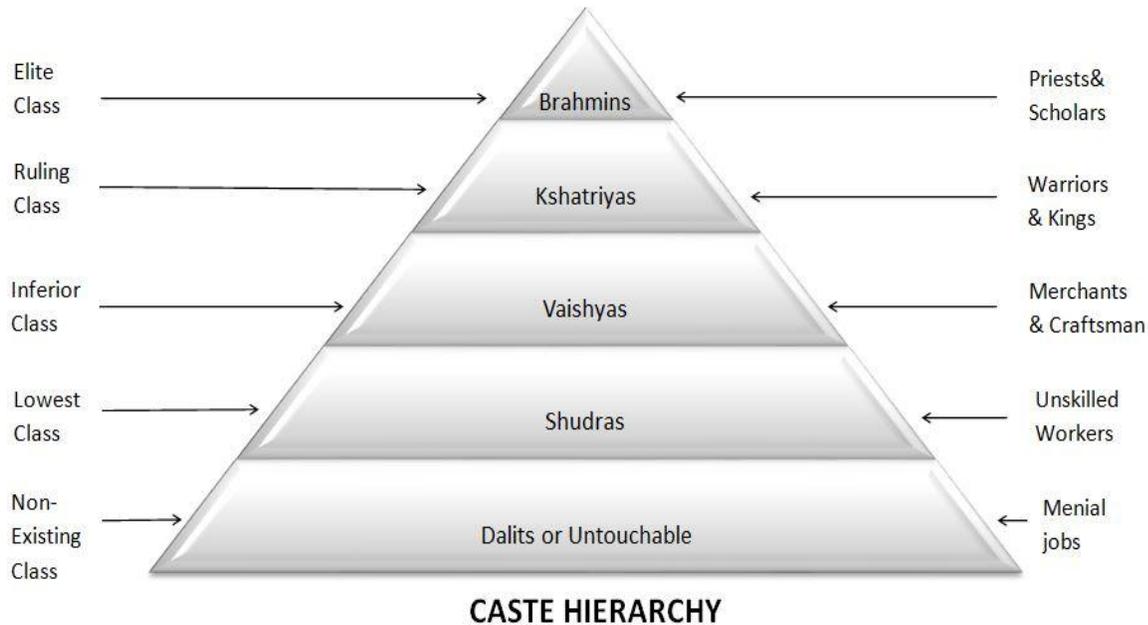
#### **1.2.6 Social Stratification:**

In general social stratification implies the division of society into separate strata or layers. In the caste system, personal interaction with other caste members is specifically prohibited to maintain purity; such caste integrity is also preserved in one's caste by the laws of endogamy that is marriage in one's own caste.

The origin of the Indian caste system can be found in Hindu mythology. The caste system was also introduced by other religions in India. There are four castes known as Varnas, according to Hindu scripture. These are: Brahmin, the highest caste that includes priests and scholars, the second is Kshatriyas, which includes kings, soldiers and landlords, the third is Vaishyas, which consists of the merchant class, and the last is Shudras, which includes peasants, workers and servants. This caste system is often referred to as a four fold caste system. There are untouchable castes outside these four castes that exist outside the Varna system.

In Hinduism, the caste system is rigid. Individuals of different castes could not interact with each other. The elite class, Brahmins, consider themselves superior. The ruling class was Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Vaishyas are inferior and Shudras are the lowest caste. In such a vast structure, the helpless untouchables or Dalits exist nowhere. The idea of dominance and hierarchy remains in this system.

Brahmins are believed to be born from the mouth of Lord Brahma, so they are priests and teachers. The Brahmins and Kshatriyas used people as slaves. Kshatriyas are carved of his arms so they are kings and warriors. Vaishyas from his legs, so they are known as merchants and traders. Shudras from his feet were manual workers and were expected to do menial jobs for upper castes. See fig. no



(Fig.No. 1.2.6)

### 1.2.7 Exploitation of Shudras:

In the typical social structure, the Brahmins enjoyed a higher position due to their higher status. They exploited the lower castes in many ways. At that time, they were the only ones who knew and read Vedas or Sanskrit texts. So, they used religion as a weapon against low castes or Shudras. In olden times, the priest had to perform sacrifices to please their gods. But the sacrifices were long, elaborate, restricted and source of exploitation for lower castes. As the sacrifices were restricted so the lower caste did not having the right to sacrifice on their own. Instead they were dependent on upper caste i.e Brahmins for their sacrifices. So, Shudras depended on Brahmins for their sacrificial activities. Brahmins tortured and brainwashed Shudras that they were unchaste and won't be thus able to sacrifice themselves, otherwise God would get angry with them. Brahmins fixed in their minds that no one other than themselves should know the sacrificial formula or mantras. As Vedas were in the Sanskrit language so, Shudras were not able to read and decipher appropriate meaning out of the Holy Scriptures. Thus

Brahmins interpreted Vedas wrongly among common masses. Knowledge deficit Shudras had no other option left but to perform sacrificial duties. By using their lusty and cunning minds Brahmins put a condition in front of Shudras that they must pay Brahmins for their rituals that they would be performing. Brahmins washed the brains of Shudras completely by fixing the wrong information and data in their minds. They took a great benefit from a lower caste in the name of religion and played their role as Gods on earth. For instance, a Shudra gave plenty of wheat or any other useful commodity to Brahmin as a token to perform a sacrifice. The priest puts a handful of wheat in the sacred fire or Agni and keeps the rest to sustain his self. In this way, Brahmins were sucking the blood of lower castes.

Moreover, there were many restrictions on lower classes such as they don't have equal rights as the upper castes have. They didn't have equal opportunities. Discrimination occurs on the basis of caste. Lower castes were restricted to go and meet upper caste and upper caste also avoided to come across the lower ones. Brahmins used to teach their fellow beings that they should not eat the food of lower classes or go to their houses. If they did, they would become impure. The son of a Shudra would not dare to cast a glance at Brahmin's daughter. So, the talk of marriage was a herculean task and next to impossible thing. Lower caste did not have the right to contact directly with God but they were dependent on Brahmins for it. Lower castes didn't have the permission to enter into the temples, in the place where the idol of god and goddesses were placed. They were only permitted to clean the lawn of temples. In this way Vedas were misinterpreted by Brahmins and they attempted to make sure they functioned as intermediaries between God and the lower classes.

Hence, the position of lower classes was exploited by Brahmins in many ways especially in the name of religion.

### **1.2.8 Features of Caste System:**

Society is classified into different castes. A person's status does not depend on his income or wealth but by the caste discourse. No amount of wealth can change his status or position in society. The following are regarded key elements of caste:

**1. Hierarchical Division of Society:** Caste brings into society an aspect of hierarchy by dividing it into different strata such as Brahmin, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. In certain positions, these major castes are classified in terms of high or low. Ghurye notes, that there are approximately 200 caste groups in each linguistic region, which are further subdivided into

almost 3000 smaller groups, each being endogamous and comprised the individual's area of effective social life.

**2. Hereditary:** Every caste is an inherited community. Because of its birth, the membership of an individual is decided. Every caste has a traditional occupation and all members strictly obey this profession to earn their living.

**3. Civil and Religious Disabilities:** People of various castes suffer more from civil and religious disabilities especially those who have not been ranked high in the stratification process. They are not eligible to hold religious rituals in public places in their disabled form and often have very few civil rights or services. They are not even allowed to draw water from public wells; even if a lower caste man draws water from it they believed that the wells would get polluted. The downtrodden were not even permitted in the proper city nor could they listen to sacred verses and were even forbidden from entering the temples.

**4. Endogamy:** A significant element in the caste system is endogamy or marriage within one's caste or sub-caste community. This is one of the key explanations for the longevity of the caste system. One has to get married in this system within his or her caste. It enhances group harmony in this system. It also encourages the preservation of property in the city. Besides, the number of members in a caste is also propagated. Because of this practice, women remain satisfied and quite grateful as they adapt easily to their own culture. Above all, it ensures the purity of blood.

**5. Distinct/Unique Culture:** The caste is said to be its own ruler, a tiny and complete social world in itself. Each caste has a separate culture, customs, traditions, speech, clothing, etc. that distinguishes it from other castes. Caste laws declare the behavioural pattern of food preferences.

**6. Closed group:** It is a closed structure and difficult to change one's caste status. Once a person is born in a particular caste he has to be in it until he dies. Endogamy, distinct culture and heritage together make a closed group of castes. Except by birth, no one may enter into a specific caste.

**7. Limited Choice of Occupation:** Depending on the ritual, pollution or purity of their relative occupation, each caste was ranked high or low. Each caste tends to have a monopoly on its inherited occupation and needs to change it. As a result, there is a restricted opportunity to choose from. It is usually assumed that his hereditary occupation would be replaced by an

individual belonging to a specific caste. Caste people are scarcely able to abandon their ancestral occupation.

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### 1.3 Learning Outcomes

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Dear students, this unit furnished us with the information about Society and Caste system in Hindu society, the concept of Indian Society, its features and problems faced by the Indian Society. We also learnt the basic structure and features of the caste system. We also got to know about the Social Stratification and how Shudras were exploited by Brahmans in the name of religion by creating a caste hierarchy. Also we learnt the role of Gandhi and B.R Ambedkar in the abolition of untouchability.

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### 1.4 Glossary

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**Society:** A group of individuals living for a common reason as an organised group of people or a society.

**Static:** That cannot alter or never changing

**Anarchy:** Absence of law and order

**Hinduism:** A faith, philosophy and culture native to India, distinguished by the creationist viewpoint and a supreme oneness personified in several forms and natures.

**Hierarchy:** A political, economic, religious or social structure in which individuals are ranked above others with some supremacy.

**Corruption:** Bribery, the state of being tainted or debased.

**Casteism:** It is a form of caste discrimination.

**Insanitary:** lack of sanitation

**Endogamy:** It is the tradition of marrying within one's social circle, such as the caste group.

**Hereditary:** Anything that has been genealogically transmitted from one generation to another.

**Pollution and Purity:** It is an abstract term that finds certain practices, entities and occupations ritually polluting and pure in the caste system.

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## 1.5 Sample Questions

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### 1.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The term 'Society' came from which word  
(a) Greek (b) Latin (c) Spanish (d) French
2. Horticulture means  
(a) Growing flowers (b) Raising animals (c) Growing vegetables (d) None
3. Society is dynamic  
(a) No (b) Yes (c) Semi dynamic (d) None of these
4. Static means  
(a) Not changing (b) Changing (c) Moving (d) Both b and c
5. Brahmins consist of  
(a) Scholars and priests (b) Warriors and rulers (c) Merchants and traders (d) Both b and c
6. Who gave the title to untouchables as Harijans that means "Children of God "  
(a) B.R Ambedkar (b) Gandhiji (c) JotiraiPhule (d) Ram Mohan Roy

### Fill in the blanks

1. Etymologically the word \_\_\_\_\_ has come out of the Portuguese word "*casta*" which means \_\_\_\_\_
2. The nature of society is \_\_\_\_\_

### True and False

1. Indian caste system is not rigid \_\_\_\_\_ True/False
2. *Harijans* mean "Children of God " \_\_\_\_\_ True/False

### 1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Describe briefly the concept of Indian Society?
2. Explain endogamy?
3. What is social stratification?
4. Define the term hierarchy?
5. Briefly describe the "Caste Laws" by Jhotiba Phule?

### 1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Elaborate the Indian Society with special reference to caste system?

2. How Brahmins act as an intermediary between God and common masses?
3. Discuss the contribution of Gandhi and B.R Ambedkar in the abolition of untouchability?

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## 1.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Arya, Sunita. "Caste an India Story: Real Tryst With Destiny."
2. Beteille, Andre. *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
3. Deshpande, Manali S. "History of the Indian caste system and its impact on India today." (2010).
4. Hutton, John Henry. *Caste in India: Its Nature, Function and Origins*. Blueprint Publications, 1969.
5. Srinivas, Mysore Narasimhachar. *The Caste System in India*. Global Publishers, 1969.

## **Unit -2: Caste Laws**

### **Structure**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

#### **2.1 Objectives**

#### **2.2 Caste Laws**

2.2.1 Birth as the Sole Criteria of Caste

2.2.2 Pollution

2.2.3 Food and Laws

2.2.4 Caste and Occupation

2.2.5 Symbols of Status

2.2.6 Segregation of the Sub-castes

2.2.7 Endogamy

2.2.8 Upward Movement

2.2.9 Summary

#### **2.3 Learning Outcomes**

#### **2.4 Glossary**

#### **2.5 Sample Questions**

#### **2.6 Suggested Readings**

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### **2.0 Introduction**

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The caste system in India is religiously motivated social system in which Indian people are differentiated socially in terms of language, gender, tribe, religion, region, class etc. Although there are similar kinds of distinctions in all societies across the world, it becomes problematic when such differentiations are considered as the defining factors for systematic social ranking and means to gain access to valuable assets such as wealth, income, prestige, and power. The caste system in India is regarded as a restrained stratification structure, implying that a person's social rank or position is assigned to him considering the caste in he or she was born. The birth limits that person's social behavior and social communication. Historically, it has roots in Hinduism, India's most popular religion, which has been updated both under British reign and Buddhist revolution. This unit would bring to light the different aspects of the caste system in India such as social stratification, hierarchy and its impact on modern India.

The Hindu society is organized on the basis of the caste system. The caste system maintains a social hierarchy. The hierarchy has inherent idea of purity and impurity. The higher caste people are considered pure and the lower caste people are considered impure.

Broadly, there are five major divisions or castes: 1) the Brahmins, 2) the Kshatriyas, 3) the Vaishyas, 4) the Shudras 5) the Untouchable who are into menial jobs). Actually, the caste system is more complex than this five-fold division. There are smaller groups or jatis within each of the five major castes. These groups are endogamous; they have a traditional occupation; they have a certain degree of autonomy in matters of culture, ritual, and law. The lower groups attempt to raise their status by adopting the customs and rituals of the higher jatis.

***Check your Progress***

1. Which are the five major castes of Hindu society?
2. What determines purity and impurity in a caste system?

\*This Unit is based on M.N. Srinivas "The Caste System in India" in *Social Inequality: Selected Readings* (ed.) AndreBeteille. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969. Pp. 265-272.

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## **2.1 Objectives**

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This unit aims to give you an idea about:

- the caste system in Hindu society,
- the laws (or rules) which govern the various castes and sub-castes,
- "Caste Laws" by Jhotiba Phule
- the basis, structure, and features of the caste system

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## **2.2 Caste Laws**

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Jyotirao Phule is regarded as a predominant social reformer of the 19th century. But, thanks to his far-fetched interpretation of Indian history and ancient texts, he was accused of fermenting animosity among the non-Brahmins during his lifetime. His opponents ridiculed his

lack of control over philosophy and grammar. For obvious reasons, Jyotirao's severe critique of the Brahmins backfired as it didn't yield him many supporters in the higher sections of society or governance. But it undoubtedly resulted in protest to society's upper caste dominance.

In this unit, we will look into the excerpts from Phule's *Caste Rules* and try to understand the relevance of his social reform initiative. We will address the ideas Phule deploys and attempt to understand the unorthodox opinion and belief that he assigns to the caste system.

All of us agree with the fact that the caste system has existed for centuries in India. Even now, it is there in towns and villages, but not in the same form and shape of the ancient caste system. The rigidity of the caste practices differs from region to region and state to state. Yet, the caste system exists indisputably across the country in mild and severe forms. The easiest way to feel the caste in the present day is going to the matrimonial columns of Indian newspapers. News hour debates in the wake of backward class reservations in higher education are yet another instance that we can feel the caste discrimination. Now let's step forward and discuss Phule's 'Caste Laws'.

### **Caste Laws by Jyotirao Phule:**

Caste laws is an excerpt from the Preface to the book *Slavery (Gulamgiri)* published in 1873. This book is the most influential publication by Jyotiba Phule. The very title shows Phule's attitude to the issue of Caste. Phule perceived caste and caste rules a form of slavery. The essay has been sub-title as "In the civilized British Govt. under the Cloak of Brahminism."

The subtitle brings following two points to the forefront.

- a. Caste was viewed by Phule as a kind of slavery supported by the Brahmins which flourished under the British reign.
- b. Only people's social movement will bring the liberation of the Sudras and the AtiSudras. Therefore, there is a need to get up and call the people against the Brahmins' social dominance.

Besides, this specific essay starts with three quotes that clarify and add up to the ideas emphasized in the title and the dedication. The former quote, from Homer, highlights the brutal or inhuman dimension of slavery. As slavery robs a man of his virtue and integrity, nothing can be worse than slavery.

The second quote attracts our attention towards the fact that, since time immemorial, Indian education has been used not to uplift people's status, but to 'over-educate' a small group to keep the majority at the mercy of the few who have learned. By denying the educational rights of the lower castes as well as of women, the Brahmins perfected this practice with the support of British administration, which did no better by supplying only a few with education so that they could use those few to exploit lower caste people. It in turn helped to perpetuate the Brahminic tradition under the guise of civilized management.

The third quotation attracts our attention to the wickedness of Brahminic superiority and the inconsistencies of this structure. Although the Brahmins boast immense expertise, they uphold superstitious practices jealously, undermining human dignity. Furthermore, the author suggests that the only way out of this system is to attack Brahminical structure and reduce their dominance.

***Check your Progress***

1. Why do you think the essay starts with quotes?

**The crux of the Essay by Phule:**

The Caste Laws by Phule can be broken up into three parts:

- a. Brahminism has been presented in terms of its historical evolution.
- b. The second part of the essay portrays the firm establishment of Brahminism through the Caste construction while appropriating unparalleled powers and privileges to themselves.
- c. The third section analyses the Brahmins' continuing supremacy and the government's inability to get rid of the offensive tradition of caste. It also proposes different ways to provide Sudras with the country's rightful due.

Let us explore the historical context introduced in the first part of the essay by Phule. In this section, the key arguments raised are:

A. Brahmins are remnants of Aryan raiders who, after a prolonged war, replaced and suppressed the original residents of India.

B. As is clear from the names they called themselves, the Brahmins maintain the disposition of the Aryans who were tricky and egoistic.

C. Due to the strong resistance that aborigines put up, the Aryans despised them and started name calling. This is clear from the names (such as Chandala, Sudra, Mahar) the Brahmins used to address the lower caste community.

D. In the Brahmin myths and legends, the battle is chronicled in such a manner that belittles Aborigines by portraying them as barbaric, unfair, ugly, etc.

E. In the Brahmin literature, *Rakshas* are depicted as evil, but the word *Rakshas* denotes land security. Therefore, the exaggerated accounts about *Rakshas* are indicative of the depth of their hate.

F. The Aryans subjected aborigines to inhuman brutality after subjugating them. This has similarity with American Indians who were subjugated by the New Settlers in America.

Now if we pay attention to this part, we'll find that Jyotirao produces a substitute picture of the past. The opponents also constructed a counter history to Phule's narratives. They accused him of imprecision. But Phule was quite aware that the Brahminic version of the past and the Brahminic philosophy had to be questioned to crack their supremacy. Therefore, he tried to view the past from the viewpoint of Sudra. His language is very emotional and sharp. He questions the binaries of good and evil, stabled on the framework of Devas and Daity's. By classifying almost all other castes under a large caption of "Kshetrias," he attempts to pitch Brahmins against everyone else.

He also offers a different view of the Devas by posing Parasuram as a demon. His point revolves around the notion that the Aryans were simply barbarous and vengeful and greedy for blood. So he argues that the Brahmin God is desperate, greedy, revengeful and bloodthirsty. On parallel, he portrays the Aborigines as courageous and simple citizens who were victimized by the cruel and unjust invaders.

In the second section, Jyotirao describes the strategies of the Brahmins to polarize their aboriginal people and to appropriate all privileges and powers to themselves. The key points discussed in this section are as follows:

a. In the Institution of Caste, the profound cunning of the Brahmins is evident. The Brahmins availed all privileges through this institution, whereas the Sudra's and Ati-Sudras were deprived of even fundamental rights.

b. Sudras were reduced to the status of animals under Brahminism. Their lives were worth no more than that of a cat, or a dog. For example, if a Brahmin kills either a Sudra or an animal, he

can be religiously apologized from the sin by fasting. At the same time, if a Sudra killed a Brahmin, the expiation is to put his/her life to an end.

c. Brahminic rules and regulations available in “*ManavaDharma Shastra*” empower the Brahmins to put the rest of people to slavery. This religious text is full of insensitive instances in which the Brahmins have developed their supremacy over the downtrodden Sudras.

d. This slavery system was so deeply ingrained and so rigid during the Peshwas time that it persisted unchallenged. This was done by deceiving people and keeping them permanently uneducated.

In the third segment, he points to a potential and possible solution to the problem. In the section, the key points discussed are:

a. Certainly, the influx of Western civilization has undermined the supremacy of the Brahmin. While under the Peshwa, the Brahmins of Phule's time did not have the same authority, they nevertheless refused to discard the invalid ideas of Brahminic dominance. Phule argued that as long as these ideas prevailed in society, Sudra will continue to struggle.

b. He partially blames the government for the situation. He argues that the government has concentrated its time and money on educating higher class people spending the resources grossly collected from the lower castes. He points to the irony that the major part of the ‘Indian Empire’s revenue comes from the working or middle classes, while the higher classes contribute almost nothing.

c. He contests that the civil services in the country have been mismanaged. The Brahmins monopolized the higher offices in the government. The wellbeing of 'Ryot' is possible only if the government allows the other castes in the civil services, and breaks the Brahminic monopoly.

d. However, to make the education accessible to the common people, it is necessary to make sure that the 'Ryot' get a fair chance. Since higher education can take care of, the government must focus more on mass education.

e. Lastly, he urges that every educated Sudra must take the responsibility of working for the elevation of his fellow Sudra. They must strive to show the real image of Sudra’s social status to the government and try to free themselves from the exploitation and domination of the Brahmins.

Sudras should have their schools in every village, which are staffed by Sudra community. The country can expect to advance and thrive only by emancipating Sudra, because they are the country's 'life and sinews'.

**Summing Up:** As you know the essay 'Caste Laws' is extracted from the prologue to his novel, *Gulamgiri*. The purpose of the essay is to make people conscious of the caste system's crippling impact on society. The book was intended to raise the masses' consciousness and incite them to work in opposition to the continued presence of caste rules. Therefore, the tone and tenor of the essay are being charged and impassioned. For these purposes, a reasonable style was not suitable. A pitched high style, as we discover in this piece of writing, works well to stimulate individuals to action.

The next thing that Jhotirao wanted to bring out is the image of misery and hardships of the people under the caste system. Therefore, he relates the caste system to slavery. We are all aware that slavery is an incredibly inhumane system. A slave is robbed of all humanity and integrity. He sent a strong message by comparing hardships of slavery with Sudra's misery. At the same time, Phule was mindful of the fact that freeing people from mental slavery was much more complicated than physical slavery. By denying the education to them, Sudras were kept ignorant. They had accepted what Brahmins had taught them. And the Brahmins told them about a divine scheme that ordered the Brahmins to be the favourites of God and that the Sudra had a responsibility to serve up the Brahmins.

Only by presenting an alternative image of the past such a system of values could be countered. Thus, Jhotirao writes an alternative description of the past and seeks to overthrow the chain of command of Daivya/Daitya. He attempts to prove that neither Devas were the Brahmins nor Daityas were the Sudras. Thus he seeks to change the narrative altogether. He is trying to show that not only are these Brahmin tales implausible, but also are evidence of their cunningness. The Brahmin tried to persuade Sudras to believe that since the Sudra are uneducated, they are inferior. The Sudra, Phule says, must not be taught by the Brahmins since the Brahmins were not willing to deny the ideas of their dominance. The Sudra must be trained and taught by the Sudra's so that he can consider himself as a Brahmin counterpart. This is however, only feasible if the administration has altered its approach towards mass education. The government must invest time and money on the basic education of the common masses instead of spending time and resources on higher education, which mostly profits the Brahmins. Society

would be free from the offensive caste rules if the masses are educated and there will be more peace and harmony in society. That is the only way for the nation to prosper and progress.

***Check your Progress***

1. What are the key arguments raised in the first part of the essay?
2. The Caste Laws of Phule can be broken up into \_\_\_\_\_ parts.

**2.2.1 Birth as the sole Criteria of Caste:**

A person's caste is determined by his or her birth. But there is a traditional view which holds that birth in a particular caste is not accidental. The Hindu notion of karma and dharma decide the birth of a person in a particular caste. According to this belief, the actions of a person during his life decide to which caste or sub-caste he should be assigned in his next life. If a man does good deeds, he qualifies to be born in a higher caste. But if a man indulges in evil deeds, he will be born in a lower caste in his next life. Similarly, if a person follows the rules of his caste or sub-caste in his present life, he is observing the dharma. Hence, he is eligible to be born in a higher caste in his next birth.

***Check your Progress:***

1. What is the role of karma and dharma in the determination of the caste of a person?

**2.2.2 Pollution:**

Pollution is an important factor which defines relations among various castes. A higher caste gets polluted by contact with a lower caste. This contact includes physical touch, eating and sex. When pollution occurs due to inter-caste dining, inter-caste marriage, etc., the polluted person has to undergo a purification ceremony. Then he regains his previous status. There is a scale of punishment depending on the severity of the offence. The process of purification can be drastic if a person of high caste eats food cooked by an Untouchable. The punishment for such an offence could be excommunication.

Physical contact between a Brahmin and an Untouchable is forbidden. In addition, the distance between any two castes is prescribed. The required distance varies depending on the castes concerned.

***Check your Progress***

1. When does pollution occur?
2. What is the remedy for a polluted person?
3. What is the maximum punishment for a person who is polluted?

**2.2.3 Laws on Food:**

Because contact between castes is not allowed, castes and sub-castes live separately in a village. There is solidarity (or unity) in the sub-castes because of their segregation. Thus the Untouchables live on the outskirts of the village. The other sub-castes have certain areas or streets designated for their residence. The caste rules permit a man taking cooked food from a person of the same or superior caste. However, food cooked by a lower caste person should not be consumed by a higher caste person. Such food is supposed to pollute a person of the higher caste. Two persons who give and take food should be of equal status in the caste system. If a person cannot accept cooked food from another, it means that the giver belongs to a lower caste.

The acceptance of cooked meals also depends on various other factors such as the kind of food, the medium of cooking (water or fat), the caste of the cook, and the place of cooking (temple or home). Another important feature of the caste system is the connection between food and social status. Most Brahmins are vegetarians; some avoid even eggs. The fourth caste, the Shudras, eat meat. There is a gradation in the varieties of meat also. Thus, pork is deemed to be inferior to mutton. Hence those who eat pork are considered lower in status than those who eat mutton. In this scale of values, beef and beef-eaters are at the lowest level.

The Hindus regard vegetarianism as morally superior to meat-eating. This is derived from the belief that it is a sin to kill living creatures for feeding oneself. Similarly, alcohol is forbidden for the higher castes. As stated earlier, Brahmin eating food cooked by an Untouchable violates the laws of his caste. In the same way, sex relations between the higher castes and the Untouchables are forbidden. Such offences are punished by the caste courts. Excommunication is the usual punishment for both the offences. Even the Untouchables are careful in accepting food

and water from sub-castes other than their own. Such intra-sub-caste eating and drinking are believed to pollute the taker. For instance, a washerman will not dine with a barber.

***Check your Progress:***

1. Explain the laws governing the giving and taking of cooked food among the castes.
2. What is the connection between food and status in Hindu society?

#### **2.2.4 Caste and Occupation:**

A significant feature of the caste system is that each caste or sub-caste has a traditional occupation. Even now, in the villages, the castes and sub-castes engage themselves in occupations handed down from generation to generation. One exception to this is agriculture which is practised by all castes irrespective of their social standing.

The logic behind the segregation of some castes is that their occupations involve contact with unsanitary things. Raising pigs and handling hides are defiling jobs. These are the occupations of the Untouchables. Some occupations may not be actually polluting, but traditionally they are considered inferior and hence assigned to the inferior castes. Toddy-tapping is an example of this. The higher castes are forbidden from killing any animal or catching fish or raising animals and birds. These are all old taboos which are broken now with the rapid growth of urbanization.

The division of labour implied in the distribution of occupations among different castes and sub-castes is so entrenched in the caste system that members of a sub-caste believe that their traditional occupation is their natural one. It is not right for them to choose some other profession. People stick to their occupations and guard their skills as their secret. Each sub-caste considers its particular occupation as its monopoly. If there is an encroachment on the monopoly, the village court or the village elders settle the matter.

***Check your Progress:***

1. What is the reason behind the segregation of some sub-castes?
2. What is meant by labour monopoly?

### **2.2.5 Symbols of Status:**

The possession of the higher castes, their houses, customs, dresses and religious ceremonies are considered status symbols by the lower castes. The lower castes are prohibited from taking over any such item of the higher castes. This practice was upheld by the authorities of the day. For instance, the lowest castes were not permitted to build houses with tiled roofs.

### **2.2.6 Segregation of the Sub-castes:**

The rigid practice of the caste laws stated above force each sub-caste to live in a world of their own. The members of a given sub-caste reside in a particular area. Many of them are related by marriage or otherwise. They share a culture and follow the rules regarding food and drink. They celebrate festivals which are special to their sub-caste. They have a common traditional occupation. They refuse to reveal the secret skills of their occupation to outsiders to a large extent. The caste courts and the assemblies consisting of elders in the villages dispense justice. Each sub-caste has a system of values and it tries to avoid conflicts with other sub-castes on this score. Each sub-caste is autonomous to a large extent. But, at the same time, it is also dependent on other sub-castes. Thus the castes in a village are interdependent. They give and take.

### **2.2.7 Endogamy:**

Endogamy is a remarkable feature of each sub-caste. This means people generally marry within their own sub-caste. Educated persons of the higher castes in recent times are marrying outside their sub-caste provided the same culture and values are shared by both the sub-castes.

The other kinds of alliance, hypergamous marriages, take place every now and then. A man of a higher caste marries a girl from a lower caste. But a lower caste man marrying a higher caste woman does not happen. This is strictly forbidden.

### **2.2.8 Upward Movement:**

An upward movement of a sub-caste to a higher caste is possible over a period of time by adopting the practices and customs of the higher caste. These include vegetarianism, teetotalism, and worship according to Brahminic customs. By adopting the Brahminic ways of life, a lower caste attempts to raise its status in the caste hierarchy. The caste system, despite its rigid structure and strict laws, has evolved in such a manner that the lower castes try to raise their status by following the higher castes in ritual and customs. This has given rise to a degree of uniformity in the culture of the Hindu society.

The hierarchy implicit in the caste system is criticized by Buddhism and Jainism. Lingayats in Karnataka also attack it. These attempts to break the caste system have not succeeded. Ironically, the dissenting (or reformist) group became a caste and gave rise to its own caste system. Under British rule, the caste system was somewhat weakened. The rulers gave up their support to the caste system. The British government allowed a person punished by a caste court to seek justice in a court established by it and file cases against the village elders for defamation. Before the British came on the scene, a person violating a caste law was punished by fine or excommunication from the caste. A person's conduct was controlled by the caste and village councils.

A community enjoys autonomy under the caste system. It is brought into contact with other communities which together form a hierarchy. It is amazing that the culture, customs and rituals of topmost caste, the Brahmins, have been imitated and cherished by the other castes. This tendency has spread even to the tribes in remote areas. Caste brought together autonomous groups all over. It also gave a framework for relations with non-Hindu groups like Muslims and Christians. Attempts to break the caste system by revolutionary movements have failed. The promoters of such movements ended up as another caste.

***Check your Progress***

1. How can a person from a caste achieve a higher status?
2. Name the groups which criticized the caste system.

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## **2.3 Learning Outcomes**

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Dear students, this unit furnished us with information about the caste system prevalent in Hindu Society. We also got familiar with Jyotirao Phule's preface to his *magnum opus Gulamgiri*, which largely propounds the annihilation of caste system in India. We also got to know the caste system's crippling impact on society, the laws which govern the various castes and sub-castes and the features of the caste system.

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## 2. 4 Glossary

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**Hierarchy:** An organization with grades of authority from the lowest to the highest.

**Pollution:** The destruction of purity.

**Endogamy:** The practice of marrying within a specific social group or caste.

**Autonomy:** Self-government.

**Ritual:** The rites and forms connected with a ceremony.

**Criterion:** Standard of judgment.

**Karma:** The spiritual principle of cause and effect.

**Dharma:** Morally upright behaviour

**Excommunication:** Exclusion (as a punishment) from the privileges of a member of a caste.

**Segregation:** Isolation.

**Class:** A number of things or persons regarded as forming a group by the reason of some common traits, qualities, characteristics or attributes.

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## 2.5 Sample Questions

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### 2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Hindu society is organized on the basis of the caste system. It is divided into groups which are arranged in a:

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| (a) Diarchy   | (b) Anarchy  |
| (c) Hierarchy | (d) Monarchy |

2. The possessions of the higher castes, dresses, customs and religious ceremonies are considered status symbols by the:

- |                   |                        |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| (a) Higher castes | (b) Middle class       |
| (c) Lower class   | (d) Lower middle class |

3. The Indian ..... is a religiously motivated social system in which people in India are differentiated socially in terms of language, gender, religion etc.

- (a) Sati system
- (b) Caste system
- (c) Value system
- (d) Pagans system

4. How many divisions or castes are there in Hindu Society?

- (a) Eight
- (b) Seven
- (c) Six
- (d) Five

5. The '*Manava Dharma Shasta*' depicts the cruelty of:

- (a) Brahamins
- (b) Vaishyas
- (c) Shudras
- (d) Kshatriyas

6. The caste laws of Phule can be broken up in how many parts:

- (a) One
- (b) Two
- (c) Three
- (d) Four

7. Caste Laws is an excerpt from the preface to the 1873 book:

- (a) *Slaver*
- (b) *Brahmanism*
- (c) *Caste system*
- (d) *Praja*

8. \_\_\_\_\_ Movement of a sub-caste to a higher caste is possible over a period of time by adopting the practices and customs of the higher caste:

- (a) Lower
- (b) Middle
- (c) Upward
- (d) Downward

9. Which is an important factor that defines relations among various castes:

- (a) Spirituality
- (b) Stratification
- (c) Pollution
- (d) Communication

10. Jhotiba Phule is:

- (a) Social reformer
- (b) Politician
- (c) Philosopher
- (d) Teacher

### 2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on
  - a. Pollution
  - b. Excommunication.
2. Comment on factors responsible for the division into castes and sub-castes?
3. Write a note on the laws relating to food in the caste system?
4. How does Phule present history of Brahminism?
5. Explain the relationship between caste and occupation.

### 2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the structure of the caste system?
2. Explain the caste laws given by Jotirao Phule?
3. Write short notes on the following:
  - (a) Status Symbol
  - (b) Segregation
  - (c) Endogamy

---

## 2.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Ghurye, GovindSadashiv. *Caste and Race in India*. PopularPrakashan, 1969.
2. Hutton, John Henry. *Caste in India: Its Nature, Function and Origins*. Press Oxford University Press, 1969.
3. Ostor, Akos, LinaFruzzetti, and Steve Barnett, eds. *Concepts of a Person: Kinship, Caste, and Marriage in India*. Oxford University Press, 1992.

## **Unit - 3: Society and Class**

### **Structure**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

#### **3.1 Objectives**

#### **3.2 Society and Class**

##### 3.2.1 Characteristics of Society

##### 3.2.2 Social Class

##### 3.2.3 Characteristics of Class System

##### 3.2.4 Classification of Society

##### 3.2.5 Common Category of Classes

##### 3.2.6 Class Conflict

##### 3.2.7 Karl Marx on Conflict Theory

##### 3.2.8 Key takeaways of Conflict Theory

##### 3.2.9 Weberian Perspective on Class

#### **3.3 Learning Outcomes**

#### **3.4 Glossary**

#### **3.5 Sample Questions**

#### **3.6 Suggested Readings**

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### **3.0 Introduction**

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The ideas of class and society are mutually inclusive suggesting that they operate and function by mutual interaction. The idea of a class has to be contextualized in the idea of society and the latter is an organic whole for the formation of which former contributes. The society is an assembly of different structural formations and one of them is class- an organized unit in itself. The society comes into existence when different individual components come into play and integrate themselves. The society is an abstract notion of existence accommodating diverse forms grounded in the name of religion, politics, race, caste, class and so on. The class has definite qualifications that can be seen or measured on the lines of politics, race, religion etc. There may be a class of people identifying itself in the name of religion and its associated principles. There can be a class where different people associate with each other by sharing the

same political orientations and there can be a class whose unity is formed by the unified ideas of race and caste. The class is a unit of people backed by its own constitutional framework that can be ideological in nature as well. The class apart from being an inseparable component of society is a structure in itself and functions with a separate agenda that may run contrary to the general law of society. In a world where different classes function independently and want to satiate their individual ideological and practical hunger, society stands challenged and fragmented. To create and maintain the balance the classes ought to work in an inclusive and accommodative way so that the idea of ordered society is not only nurtured but put to practice as well.

***Check your Progress:***

1. How does class and society operate and function by mutual interaction?
2. What do you mean by the class being an inseparable part of society and the structure in itself?

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### **3.1 Objectives**

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This unit aims to provide information about

- The relationship between society and class
- Characteristics of society and social class
- Classification of society
- Class Conflict as per Karl Marx
- Weberian perspective on class

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### **3.2 Society and Class**

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Etymologically, the term society as already mentioned in the unit ‘Society and Caste’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘*societas*’ and the French word ‘*societe*’ that denominate persons belonging to a particular group. As discussed in our earlier units, a society is a group of people who live together in the same geographical place or territory and are subject to almost the same cultural norms and obey the same political leader. The term society is used not only to refer to a group of individuals, but also to the dynamic pattern of interaction--standards that occur among them. Men express their nature by developing and recreating an organisation that directs

and regulates their actions in many ways. Society exists, where each human being acts towards each other in ways defined by their mutual recognition.

***Check your Progress***

1. What is a Society?
2. How society and class are interrelated to each other?

### **3.2.1 Characteristics of Society:**

The existence of society is as old as humans themselves on this planet earth. To prevent chaos and anarchy among humans, society is important. Society exists when all human beings behave in a socially appropriate way towards each other. Society is not static rather it is dynamic and changes with time. Society is characterized by its population, its likeness, its distinction, its interdependence, its dynamism, its collaboration, its conflict, its permanent nature, its rivalry, its assimilation and accommodation, its sociability etc. Following are the characteristics of society.

**1. Population:** Societies without humans do not exist. A society must have a population or a group of individuals. Society simply means a collective partnership structure, rather than just a community of individuals. Certainly community of people is important for the establishment of social relationships. Thus, it is therefore the first necessity and requirement of the society.

**2. Likeness:** It is the most significant aspect of society. Without a sense of likeness there could be no mutual recognition of belonging together. This sense of likeness was found in early society on kingship and in modern times, society is based on the values and principles of nationality. Society is a galaxy of people where people may or may not share the similarity of thought and action but they are always tied together in a composed social organisation. Friendship, intimacy and association of any kind would be impossible without the sense of likeness. It also helps in understanding one individual from the other.

**3. Difference:** Along with likeness, the difference is another essential feature of society. Society depends on difference and difference, in turn, depends on likeness. The difference is complimentary to social relationships. If people would be alike in all respects there would be little reciprocity, then relationships would become complicated and society would not be formed. There are mutual differences in aptitude, interest and capacity too. These differences are necessary for the growth of society. Moreover, if there is no difference in society then life becomes dull and boring that would ultimately lead to pessimism. Naturally, no one would like

to live a lethargic and boring life. Variety as they say is the spice of life. There must be some spice in life to make it interesting, exciting and thrilling.

**4. Interdependence:** Interdependence is also another important characteristic of society. A single human being cannot survive on own. He is dependent on others for his various needs as he cannot perform all his activities alone. No one is self-sufficient; in one way or other a human being is dependent on others for the fulfilment of his basic needs and necessities. It also leads to the establishment of healthy relationships. Famous Greek philosopher Aristotle remarks that “man is the social animal; he cannot live in isolation and is dependent on others”. Survival and wellness of each individual are very much depending on the interdependence. With the advancement in society this interdependence also increases manifold. Not only are individuals interdependent but groups, communities and nations too are dependent for their existence and satisfaction.

**5. Abstract Nature:** Society is an abstract concept that is appropriated in a concrete social association of people. It is a web of social relationships. It is an abstract entity that cannot be seen, touched or observed, yet we can feel it. It consists of social relations, customs, laws, norms, mores, values, and so on. These all are abstract entities. People only feel and realise these relations.

**6. Dynamic:** It means a society that often keeps changing with time. Stereotypes, customs, beliefs, tradition, and folk also under-go change and new customs come into vogue. The nature of society is not static but dynamic. Every society is often in a state of continuous change and cannot remain constant for a long time. Suddenly and gradually it changes over time.

**7. Cooperation:** It is the very basis of social life. Society cannot survive without cooperation. It develops the feeling of mutual help and understanding among the members. It is an important element to constitute society. Unless and until there is cooperation among the people of society, they cannot live a happy and satisfactory life. In fact, all social institutions rest on cooperation. It lessens mutual destructiveness.

**8. Conflict:** Along with cooperation, conflict is also essential for society. It plays an important role in strengthening social relations. Conflict makes cooperation meaningful. Both conflict and cooperation are two sides of the same coin and coexist mutually. These two elements also contribute to the formation of society.

**9. Permanent Nature:** By nature the society is permanent. It does not disappear from the scene. It is a permanent social structure, as long as humans exist, society too remain in existence. It is totally different from the temporary gatherings of people.

**10. Competition:** Competition also plays a vital role in forming a society. Without competition there would be no urge among members to achieve big goals.

**11. Assimilation and Accommodation:** Assimilation is the process of integration into the dominant culture of a community by individuals or groups of different ethnic backgrounds. Whereas accommodation is a mechanism by which conflicting and competing individuals and groups adapt their relationships to each other in order to resolve obstacles that occur in rivalry, infringement or conflict. These two are also a major component of society. They facilitate the functions of society.

**12. Sociability:** Simply, man cannot live a disciplined life without a society. Sociability is the quality of being social. There is no code of conduct to live a satisfying life and it is society only that teaches us morals, laws, customs, norms, social relationships etc. So, to follow the code of conduct, society or sociability is must.

### **3.2.2 Social Class:**

Social class is commonly characterised as a stratification of individuals possessing similar social status. Income, wealth, occupation, education etc. are the necessary elements that are required to determine class. Within a society, there are many classes. These are primarily ranked hierarchically with regard to income and wealth. In social class there exists a triangle that is the concept of equality, the concept of inferiority and the concept of superiority as well.

Thus, in a social class, there is a sense of superiority with respect to members of one's own social class; a sense of inferiority prevails with respect to those who remain above other social classes. In addition to this, a social class also possesses a sense of superiority with regard to those who remain below in the social hierarchy. The social classes can be differentiated from one another based on behaviour, standard of living, dressing sense consumption patterns etc.

### **3.2.3 Characteristics of Class System:**

Some of the primary characteristics of a class system are as under:

1. The class system refers to a system focused primarily on an individual's economic status.
2. It is an accomplished status. It is not an assigned or inherited status, but is based on an individual accomplishment.

3. In terms of income and wealth, the nature of a class structure is hierarchical. Anyone can accomplish any class according to his hard work, sincerity, efforts, knowledge and honesty.
4. This is almost a universal phenomenon. It can be found in all industrial and modern societies worldwide.
5. In contrast to the caste system, it's a more mobile system.
6. There is unfair power and income distribution in this framework.
7. It is a group which is free. There is a chance of up and down.
8. It is a system with a degree of constancy or stability.
9. It has its own special style of life and cultural aspects.
10. This is a framework that has a sense of unity and awareness.
11. The class of a person is defined by his authority, wealth and occupation.
12. It is based on an individual's achievements.
13. The class structure demonstrates no ban on external marriage, unlike the caste system. There is no such limitation on marriages within one's own class in the class structure.

***Check your Progress***

1. Define social class?
2. Social class consists of a triangle. Explain?
3. Mention some of the characteristics of a class system.

### **3.2.4 Classification of Society:**

There are three distinct classes of society as per social theorists. The three classes are as:

1. Capitalist class
2. Middle class
3. Proletariats or Lower class

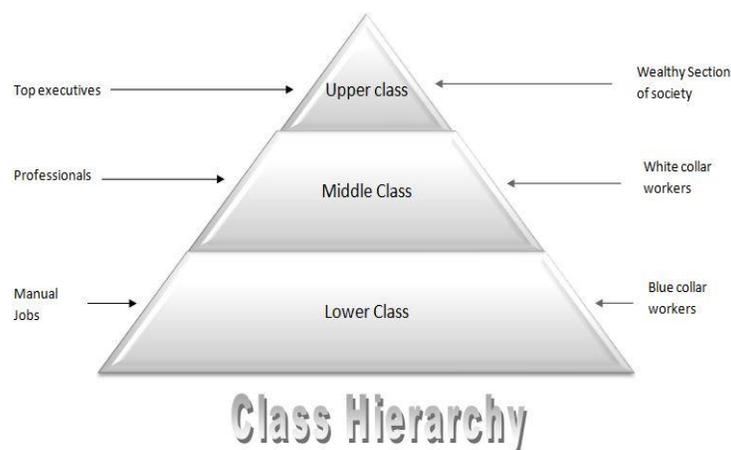
**1. Capitalist class:** It refers to a class where the means of production is controlled by capitalists. In other words, the owner of the production makes the capitalist class. The rich people with their economic power also acquire political powers. They are the owners, as they have the manufacturing equipment. Ultimately, the owner becomes wealthy and according to his wish, takes advantage and therefore exploits working or poor class. The helpless poor are mere puppets in the hands of capitalists.

**2. Middle class:** This class refers to the class that falls in the middle of a social rank. This class is heterogeneous in nature i.e. consisting of people having diverse occupations. It constitutes not only traders but also teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, etc. This social class is superior to proletariats and inferior to the capitalist class. Furthermore, this is subdivided into three classes based on the living standard, income and other assets. These sub-classes include the following:

1. Upper middle class
2. Middle class
3. Lower middle class

**3. Proletariats:** This includes the working class or lower class. These are the industrial workers who own no property, and work on low or meagre wages. They have only one way to earn their livelihood by working hard and selling their labour. In society, a common man can enter into the capitalist class by his competence and hard work. He too can achieve a big social status. The only requirement is determination. For example, Ambani's, Birla's, Tata's, and Bata's etc.

There was also one more criterion in a society based on which class would be ranked. In early medieval times, the individuals used to belong to the class in which he was born. He was bound to follow his father's occupation. For example; a slave's son had to be a slave, the master's son had to be a master, and the landlord's son had to be a landlord. They were not allowed to choose any occupation of their choice. They had to follow their ancestral occupation willingly or unwillingly. They had no freedom to achieve and enjoy any other social status. See fig no.



(Fig. no: 3.2.4)

### 3.2.5 Common Category of Classes Include:

In layman's language class hierarchy can be also divided and subdivided into many classes. The division includes Upper class, Middle class and Lower class. The Upper class is further subdivided into Upper-upper and Upper-lower. The middle class is also sub-divided into Upper-middle and Lower-middle class. Lower class is also sub-divided into the Working class and the Under-class. Let's discuss one by one:

**1. Upper class:** This class refers to the people or group of people who dwell at the apex in social rank. This means they reside at the top above the middle class and working class as well in a social hierarchical system. This class include the people who enjoy the highest position in society and possess huge properties and at times they even do not need to work to earn money. They usually rank with highest social status and lodges on the highest layer of the social ladder. They own excellent share of wealth due to which, they are considerably rich in political, financial and economic terms.

In earlier times, upper classes were called as aristocrats; land owing and nobility. This group generally do not have to work for living as they are having the inherited money. This class is further sub divided into two groups. These two groups include upper -upper class and lower-upper class.

**a. Upper-upper class:** This includes the extremely wealthy families and their income is inherited from generation to generations. They constitute the aristocrats and high class families and have the advantage of 'old money'. Old money means they have been rich for many generations. People in this class are the most royal and prestigious.

**b. Lower-upper class:** This class consists of people who earn money from entrepreneurship, investments and business ventures etc. The money they earn is probably called 'new money' as this money is not inherited instead they have to earn it by means of enterprises. But no matter, whether it is an upper-upper class or a lower-upper class both are exceptionally rich and can be known as super rich.

**2. Middle class:** Middle class refers to the class who are above the lower class and below the upper class in the system of social hierarchy. In other words, this class falls in the middle of a social hierarchy. This class is further sub divided into two classes that are: lower- middle class and upper- middle class.

**a. Lower- middle class:** It is a sub-division of the middle class. It consists of less educated people having low income. It includes teachers, small business owners, managers etc. They are

above the poverty line and can afford their basic needs. But they are not able to generate a surplus amount that is to save for the future.

**b. Upper- middle class:** It consists of highly educated people. They include professionals, businessmen having high incomes, like doctors, CEOs, lawyers, professors etc. In other words, they consist of people having white collar jobs.

**3. Lower class:** This refers to the class which falls below the middle class, owing the lowest position in the social hierarchy. They have the lowest rank in society. They may also be called as underclass. They are those people who are at the bottom of the socio-economic rank. They have low income, low education and low status jobs. It is also sub-divided in two groups which include the working poor and the underclass.

**a. The Working Poor:** This includes the people who have jobs but those jobs are not enough to get them out of poverty.

**b. The Under-class:** They are the most depressed class in terms of economy. They are often out of the labour force. They are an underprivileged class of society. They are permanently in the state of poverty. They lack the opportunities and have no proper education. The low quality of their schooling combined with lack of money restricts them in pursuing education. They lack the basic necessities of life i.e. food, shelter and clothing. Often they live in small apartments with large members accommodating in a single room which leads to unhygienic conditions and in turn cause a lot of diseases. Due to lack of education, they don't have any proper family planning. They have to struggle even for their basic needs like food and shelter. For them it is very difficult to hold such a big fort with such less finances. They are the most deprived sections of society.

***Check your Progress***

1. What are the most common classes?
2. Discuss the upper class?
3. Which sub class is the most deprived class?

**3.2.6 Class Conflict:**

Class conflict is a tension that exists in society where different classes confront each other for their respective interests. In other words, class conflict focuses on competition between groups within a society over limited resources. Class conflict is also known as a class struggle or class warfare, as it is a kind of war between different classes in society due to the difference in

economic and social status. The conflict theory basically stresses the unequal distribution of resources, status and power in a society.

### **3.2.7 Karl Marx on Conflict Theory:**

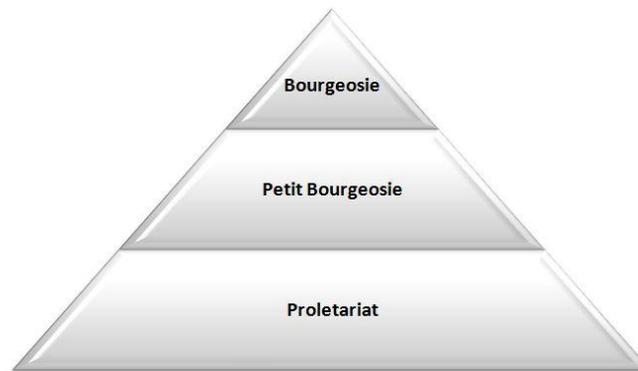
Karl Marx was a German philosopher, political theorist, economist, sociologist historian and a socialist revolutionary. The theory of class conflict is proposed by Karl Marx, who is known as the father of communism now recognised as Marxism. Conflict theory refers to the theory in which a society is in a state of continuous conflict due to limited resources or competition among classes.

Marx believed that society is evolved through several stages. Most of them are feudalism, capitalism and finally socialism. Karl Marx devoted his life to examining the purpose of class conflict. He specifically propounded two classes in society; they are Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat class. The 19th century was an era of capitalist society where the rich upper called bourgeoisie were few in number and the poor lower class called the proletariat were large in number. He describes the rich as 'haves' and the poor as 'have not's' He observed that there is a huge difference between rich or more upper class versus poor or working class people.

Marx contributed a lot in his class conflict theory. There is an economic struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats. The society is broken up into two groups, a controlling group and a controlled group. When one group loses power ultimately the other group gains it. Thus, the conflict between groups is a normal phenomenon and happens because of the scarcity of resources. Marx believes that conflict theory exists in every aspect of society. When the oppressed group becomes frustrated, it results in the emergence of conflict.

According to Marxists perspective, the bourgeoisie had control over resources, they owned the factories that generated everything, that people needed and they sold their produce to earn living. The proletarian had the labour to sell in order to make their living and were dependent on the factory owner to get paid. There was a visible economic inequality between factory owners and workers. Though, there was interdependency between the factory owner and the poor worker, the owners never admitted that thing, as they would lose some esteem by doing so. Marx noticed that by suppressing the proletariat class, the capitalists are producing their own grave diggers. He believed that it was this economic inequality that led to change in society. As the working class realized, they had been exploited, they unite and a sense of class consciousness arose in them though slowly and gradually. This sense of consciousness caused a struggle between the two classes popularly known as class struggle.

Marx marked that the proletariat class had to work without any question in the business to get paid by the bourgeoisie. In this process, the poor became poorer and rich became richer. Marx observed very keenly, that the workers were not earning the much amount of money as they deserved. All the control was in the hands of owners and they exploit the working class by extracting large labour and paid fewer wages to them. Conflict theory remarks that bourgeoisie gain power no matter economic or social, primarily by subjugating the poor and powerless workers. This disparity automatically leads to conflict among classes. Marx also believes that conflict brings a revolution in society. See fig.no. 3.2.7



Class Structure-Karl Mark

(Fig.no: 3.2.7)

### 3.2.8 Key takeaways of Conflict Theory:

1. Conflict arises when there is a competition that eventually leads to a rivalry between the different groups over a limited number of resources in society e.g. Fifty candidates competing with each other for just one post directly arouses the sense of rivalry among different individuals as the number of resources i.e. posts are limited.
2. Prolonged or Continuous dominance of ruling class frustrates the ruled class.
3. Disparity, injustice and inequality of the capitalists over poor and powerless workers.
4. Economic, social and political power is a dangerous weapon of the struggle between the two.
5. Unequal division of labour, power, and resources contribute to the upheaval of conflict.
6. Every class is trying to maximize its power by repressing the fragile ones.

These are some basic reasons behind the conflict among classes.

### 3.2.9 Weberian Perspective:

Max Weber, a German political economist and sociologist agreed with Karl Marx on some points, but he believed that not only economic disparity but also inequalities in social and political power led to conflict among classes. He observed that different classes were affected differently on various bases such as gender, race, religion, education etc. These differences among classes can cause conflict.

Weber remarked that in any society there is more than one conflict. Not only conflict in property but in addition to the property, status, power or part and class are some other dimensions of conflict among classes. He noted that society is stratified on the basis of class that consists of the economic order, the prestige that includes status or social order, and the legal order or political power that he called party or power.

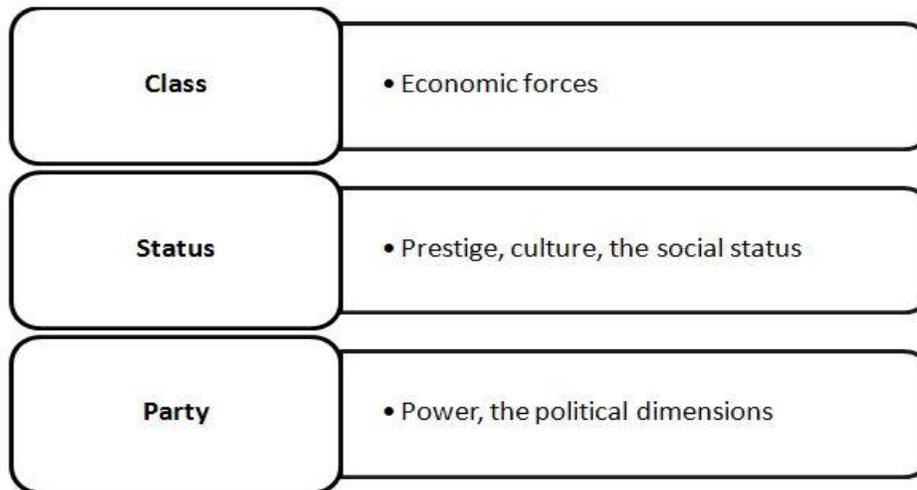
People can rank high on one or two of these dimensions of stratification and low on the other. Weber marked that the actions of people and classes cannot be understood by single dimension like only in economic terms. He further identified three distinct elements of stratification, that include class, status, and party

Let's briefly discuss Weber's ideas about class, status, and power or party:

**1. Class:** According to Weber, a class is a group of people who share a similar economic position. He mentioned different classes like upper class, the petit bourgeoisie (small business and professionals), middle (property less white class workers) and manual working class. In addition to this, Weber refers to the class as a group of people who share a common position in the economic field. Further, he defined the class as, "a class is a property where its members" are primarily determined by property differences.

**2. Status:** Status refers to the unequal distribution of social honour. Education, income, family background and all those criteria that are valued in society may be defined as makers of status. Furthermore; the possession of property is not always associated with social honour. Prestige can be achieved by other means too like high professionals, who have share in business etc.

**3. Party or Power:** In the view of Weber, parties are always structures struggling for domination. The people who constitute a party are those who have a goal towards which they strive collectively and in a planned way. Moreover, he noted that power can be of different kinds. Parties are oriented in order to attain power. However, Weber observed that the process of social stratification is a reflection of the unequal distribution of power that contributes to the formation of conflict among different classes. See fig no 3.2.9



**Max Weber multidimensional stratification comprising of three dimensions- Class, Status and Party**

(Fig.no: 3.2.9)

***Check your progress***

1. Who is Max Weber?
2. Name the four classes mentioned by Weber?
3. List the dimensions of stratification that led to conflict?
4. What is a Class?

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### **3.3 Learning Outcomes**

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Dear Students, the unit furnished us with information about Society and Class and how they are directly proportional to each other. We also learnt the relationship between society and class and the characteristics of society and social class. We also learnt the classification of society into three distinct classes' viz. Capitalist class, Middle class and Proletariats i.e. Lower Class. We also saw two major scholars who have immensely contributed in the field of class i.e. Karl Marx and Max Weber. We discussed in detail Class Conflict by Karl Marx and Weberian Perspective on class.

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### **3.4 Glossary**

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**Social class:** It is defined as a group of individual in a society, possessing similar social status

**Heterogeneous:** Of different kinds

**Capitalist:** It refers to the class where factory owners owned the means of production

**Proletariat:** These were the industrial workers, who owned no property and work on low wages

**Old money:** Money which is inherited from generation to generation

**New money:** Money that is not inherited rather it is earned by means of entrepreneurship

**Bourgeoisie:** People who owned the means of production.

**Class consciousness:** The sense of awareness and self-understanding of a worker, that he is a member of the social class

**Conflict theory:** It is a theory that stresses the unequal distribution of resources and competition for limited resources

**Status:** Prestige and social honour

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### 3.5 Sample Questions

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#### 3.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Conflict theory was first given by

- (a) Max Weber
- (b) Karl Marx
- (c) Emily Durkheim
- (d) Georg Simmel

2. Proletariat consists of

- (a) White collar workers
- (b) Factory owners
- (c) Professionals
- (d) Working class

3. Sub divisions of lower

- (a) The working poor and underclass
- (b) Upper upper class
- (c) Lower middle class
- (d) Lower upper class

**State whether the following statements are True or False**

1. Social class refers to the class possessing a similar social status

Ans. true/false

2. Proletariat owned the means of production

Ans. true/false

3. Under classes don't have any proper family Planning due to lack of education

Ans. true/false

4. Karl Marx is a French philosopher

Ans. true/false

### **Fill in the blanks**

1. In social class there exists a ----- of equality, inferiority and superiority

Ans. Triangle/Circle

2. Three distinct classes are capitalist, middle class and---

Ans. Proletariat/ Rich

3. Karl Marx propounded the theory of -----

Ans. Class conflict/ feminism

### **3.5.2 Short Answer Questions**

1. What is social class?

2. Briefly mention the three distinct classes?

3. Who is Karl Marx?

4. Define Conflict Theory?

5. List the names of four types of classes described by Weber?

### **3.5.3 Long Answer Questions**

1. Discuss the main characteristics of society?

2. Elaborate on the view of Karl Marx on 'conflict'?

3. Explain the Weberian perspective with special reference to class, power, and status

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## **3.6 Suggested Readings**

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1. Giddens, Anthony. *The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies*. Hutchinson, 1973.

2. Marshall, Gordon. *Repositioning Class: Social inequality in Industrial Societies*. Sage, 1997.

3. Poulantzas, Nicos. "The capitalist state: a reply to Miliband and Laclau." *New Left Review* 95.1 (1976): 63-83.

4. Wright, Erik Olin. *Class Structure and Income Determination*. Academic Press, 1979.

## Unit - 4: *Kallu*

### Structure

#### 4.0 Introduction

#### 4.1 Objectives

#### 4.2 *Kallu*

- 4.2.1 About the Author
- 4.2.2 Works
- 4.2.3 Career in Film Industry
- 4.2.4 Female Sensibility in Her Writing
- 4.2.5 Overview of the Short Story
- 4.2.6 Summary
- 4.2.7 Predicaments of Widowhood
- 4.2.8 Poverty and Childhood
- 4.2.9 Marriage and Social Status
- 4.2.10 Class Hierarchy
- 4.2.11 Reconciliation

#### 4.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 4.4 Glossary

#### 4.5 Sample Questions

#### 4.6 Suggested Readings

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### 4.0 Introduction

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Ismat Chughtai is among those writers who can be considered as the turning point in the history of Urdu literature. Some of the issues she raised through her writings were rarely touched by other writers, particularly by women writers. Literature is the mirror of society and vices and virtues of society are reflected in the art of an artist. If issues such as obscenity and lesbianism are unacceptable in the writings, it should not be part of our society as well. If a writer incorporates such issues in his/her writings, it's not the mistake of the writer but society. Ismat Chughtai raised such issues in her writings and because of this she remained controversial and Fatwah was issued against her.

In this unit, the life of Ismat Chughtai, her writing style, prevalent themes in her writing and her books will be discussed. You will have a detailed thematic and artistic analysis of the short story 'Kallu' by Ismat Chughtai. It will be followed by outcomes of learning and glossary

of difficult words. You will have a few suggested questions too which include multiple-choice questions, short answer questions and long answer questions. In the end, some books will be suggested for further studies which will enhance your understanding of Ismat Chughtai.

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## 4.1 Objectives

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This unit will provide you with practice in reading comprehension by giving you:

- The short story 'Kallu' extracted from '*The Quilt and Other Stories*' (Translated into English in 1990)
- The summary and themes of the short story
- A list of difficult words in the story
- Comprehension questions at the end of the unit

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Acquaint yourself with the author Ismat Chughtai and her themes
- Learn how middle-class Muslim families are ill-treated and suffered on the grounds of hierarchy and weak financial background
- Know that there is inequality within a community
- Realize that confidence and moral courage during hardships will reward us with achievement
- Experience the value of humbleness and remembering one's roots even after the success

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## 4.2 *Kallu*

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### 4.2.1 About the Author:

Ismat Chughtai was a bold, straight forward and rebellious writer of Urdu literature. She was born on 21 August 1915 in Badayun, Uttar Pradesh. Her parents were Mirza Qaseem Baig and Nusrat Khanam and she was ninth among her ten siblings. She did her SSC and Intermediate from Aligarh; went to Lucknow for higher studies and completed her B.A from Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. After doing her graduation from Lucknow she came back to Aligarh and did the Bachelor of Teaching Training. She pursued her education according to her interest in spite of those days' restrictions imposed on girls particularly in Muslim families. She worked as a Head Mistress in a girls' school in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. After that, she joined Raj Mahal Girls'

School, Jodhpur, Rajasthan as a Principal. She went to Mumbai in 1941 and became Inspector of Municipal girls' schools. Later she was promoted to the post of Superintendent of Municipal schools in Mumbai and took retirement from there.

A born rebel, she led an unconventional life. Having completed higher education, she took a job and married a man of her choice, Shaheed Latif. Ismat was associated with the "All India Progressive Writers' Association" (AIPWA), which encouraged and formatted Chughtai as a writer. Apart from the short story 'Kallu', she has to her credit the best short story 'Lihaf' which revolves around the theme of lesbianism, published in literary journal *Adab-e-Lateef* in July 1942. 'Lihaf' created a commotion among the readers because of its theme and most important because it was written by a woman. Ismat Chughtai was the first female writer in Urdu to bring such issues in 'Lihaf'. Ismat was an important literary figure of the 1940s literary scene. Her themes include female sexuality, femininity, middle-class gentility and class conflict often with Marxist perspective. She is known for her indomitable spirit and a fierce feminist ideology. She was awarded the Padma Shri in 1975 and Galib Award in 1984 for her invaluable contribution to Urdu Literature. Her other works include novels, dramas, short stories and non-fictional essays. She also wrote for films and took to acting. She followed the doctrine that she had written and published.

In the late 1980s, she was diagnosed with Alzheimer disease. After a long suffering, she died on 24 October 1991. Her death was also full of controversy like her life. The controversy was regarding her dead body whether it should be buried or cremated. According to Rakhshanda Jalil, once during the conversation between Ismat Chughtai and Qurratulain Hyder, Ismat Chughtai said that she was scared of thegrave because one would feel suffocated there. She would rather prefer to be cremated. Keeping her desire in consideration she was cremated on 24 October 1991 in Chandanwadi Crematorium, Mumbai.

***Check your Progress:***

1. When and where was Ismat Chughtai born?
2. Who is the writer of the short story 'Lihaf'?
3. Why was Ismat Chughtai cremated after her death?
4. In which year did Ismat Chughtai receive Padma Shri Award?

#### 4.2.2 Works:

Ismat Chughtai was a controversial and prolific writer. In her literary career, she was greatly influenced by her brother Azeem Baig Chughtai, who was a humourist and a short story writer. Rasheed Jahan, the co-author of *Angaare*, was the second great influence in her life. Her writings revolve around the themes of middle-class Muslim family, labourers, femininity, homosexuality, etc. Her books include; seven collections of short stories, seven novels, one biographical novel, three novelettes and two collections of dramas. Apart from these, she authored sketches, essays and reportage. Her first drama ‘*Fasadi*’ and first short story ‘*Dheet*’ were published in 1938 in monthly literary magazine “*Saqi*”. Her first novel ‘*Ziddi*’ was published by Educational Book House, Aligarh in 1941. Her first collection of short stories ‘*Kaliyan*’ was published by Maktaba-e-Urdu, Railway Road, Lahore in 1941.

#### Short Stories Collections:

1. *Kaliyan (1941)*
2. *EkBaat (1946)*
3. *Chotain (1942)*
4. *Do Haath (1952)*
5. *Chhui Mui (1952)*
6. *Badan ki Khushbu (1979)*

#### Novels:

1. *Ziddi (1941)*
2. *Tedhi Lakeer (1944)*
3. *M’asuma (1961)*
4. *Saudayi (1964)*
5. *Jangli Kabootar (1970)*
6. *Ajeeb Aadmi (1974)*
7. *Ek Qatra Khoon (1976)*

#### Biography:

1. *Qaghazi Pairahan*

**Novelettes:**

1. *Teen Anadi (1960)*
2. *Naqli Rajkumar (1960)*
3. *Dilki Duniya (1960)*

**Awards:**

1. *Padmshri (1975)*
2. *Iqbal Samman (1990) by Madhya Pradesh Government*
3. *Ghalib Award*
4. *Andhra Pradesh Urdu Akademi Award*
5. *Rajasthan Urdu Akademi*
6. *Government of India State Award*
7. *Parvez Shahidi Award*
8. *Makhdoom Award*
9. *Soviet Land Nehru Award*
10. *National Film Award*
11. *Filmfare Award*
12. *Indian Civilian Award*

***Check your Progress:***

1. Which is the first novel of Ismat Chughtai?
2. How many collections of short stories were written by Ismat Chughtai?
3. Name the only biography written by Ismat Chughtai.
4. How many novelettes did Ismat Chughtai write?

#### **4.2.3 Career in Film Industry:**

She married Shahid Lateef, a short story writer and movie director. She too wrote movie scripts, dialogues and directed some of the movies and also cast in few. Her first movie *Chhed Chhad* was released in 1943. She wrote dialogues for the movies; *Shikayat*, *Ziddi*, *Aarzu*, *Junoon*, *Buzdil*, *Sheesha*, *Garm Hawa*, *Sone ki Chidiya*, etc. She received Filmfare Award in 1974 for the movie *Garam Hawa*.

#### **4.2.4 Female Sensibility in her Writing:**

Ismat Chughtai was a powerful, daring and outspoken Urdu writer. She covered the issues of the middle-class Muslim family, female sensibility, lesbianism, and problems of proletarians. Basically, she is known for the representation of issues related to Muslim women from a middle-class family, their restrictions and financial crisis. Because of her frank and straightforward writing style related to the issues of women she was censured as an obscene writer. She was obstinate and open-minded from her childhood. She started her literary career with the doyens of Urdu literature like Krishn Chandra, Rajendra Sing Bedi and Sadat Hasan Manto. Maybe because of this her writing was different from female temperament. Her predecessor female writers like Nasr Sajjad Haider, Sughra Humayun Mirza and Hijab Ismail have a balanced writing style. Even the style and language of Rasheed Jahan was not as sharp and intense as Ismat Chughtai. Rasheed Jahan was one of the co-authors of *Angare* (1932); a collection of ten short stories published by Syed Sajjad Zaheer, an Urdu writer associated with All India Progressive Writers Association. *Angare's* effect was like a firestorm in academia as well as conventional and orthodox Muslim families. It was supposed to be against Islam and Muslim sensibility. The writers were threatened to be prosecuted, nevertheless, no case was filed against them. Rasheed Jahan was threatened to be attacked by acid if she was seen in public.

Most of the writings of Ismat Chughtai are based on family rather than the society, which was another reason for her aggressive female sensibility other than her stubborn nature. She touched some issues of women that were not touched by male writers. Being a woman she could understand family issues specifically, women issues better than male writers. Suffocating lives of housewives, their unfulfilled sexual desire, mental dilemma, their physical harassment, and problems related to the girls of middle class Muslim families, etc. were the issues depicted by Ismat Chughtai.

The short story 'Lihaf' by Ismat Chughtai is the best example of her outspoken and daring attitude. The intense reaction against this short story indicates that male-dominated society cannot accept issues such as lesbianism raised by a woman writer. The story depicts lesbianism and quilt (lihaf) becomes the metaphor of unfulfilled sexual desire. It was the most debated and controversial short story because it was written by a woman. Ismat Chughtai was the first woman writer to raise such issues in Urdu literature. The story depicts a personal, individual as well as social tragedy of a Muslim family. It is an individual tragedy because it depicts the discontent of a woman in conjugal life and as the action takes place due to the unnecessary social restrictions implemented upon women, it is a social tragedy.

***Check your Progress:***

1. What are the main themes of Ismat Chughtai?
2. What were the effects of *Angare* like a firestorm?
3. How many short stories does *Angare* have?

#### **4.2.5 Overview of the short story:**

The short story *Kallu* of Ismat Chughtai is excerpted from '*The Quilt and Other Stories*' (1990). The original title of the story in Urdu is '*Kallu ki Maan*' which was published in '*Do Haath*', a collection of short stories by Ismat Chughtai. It is about the life of Kallu (Kalimuddin), an orphan Muslim boy, and his mother. In his childhood, he was sent by his mother to stay with a well-to-do family to improve his position well in life. It depicts the hardships and predicaments of a widow and her orphan son. It highlights the prejudices against people who are financially weak or belong to lower-caste in general and Muslim community in particular. The story discloses how Kallu travels through adversities and becomes a successful government officer. It demonstrates that discrimination is not at all an obstacle in the progress of lower-caste people. The story ensures that higher education to lower-caste people will change the mind set of upper-caste people. Ismat illustrates the rigid class hierarchies and also the complex relationship between caste and class in our society.

#### **4.2.6 Summary:**

The short story 'Kallu' revolves around the life of Kallu, (Kalimuddin) a young Muslim boy sent by his mother, Ayesha, to stay with a well-to-do family of Mumani Jan, with the hope

that Kallu will be able to make something of himself and improve his position in life. The story also depicts the predicaments of Kallu's mother who was married at an early age and widowed in her youth as her husband was shot dead in a war. An orphan and poverty-ridden Kallu is sent to the family of Mumani Jan to improve his lifestyle but he is made to work more than a servant, exploited, ill-treated and insulted. The story highlights the prejudices against people who are financially weak or belong to lower-caste.

After the death of Kallu's father, Ayesha had to work in the house of one or the other relatives. It was during the days when she worked as a servant in the house of Mumani Jan that she intended to educate Kallu and make him a well-mannered man so that he might get a better job and give her a luxurious life which she couldn't receive from her husband. Meanwhile, another storm knocked her life, when innocent Kallu expressed his feelings for Salima Bi, the daughter of Mumani Jan. He was not only taunted and beaten but both mother and son were expelled from the house.

Now Kallu and his mother began to work in the Kothi of Nawab Mumtaz in the neighbourhood. She was appointed as a nurse for Nawab who was very old, suffering from numerous diseases like arthritis and dysentery, and was on his death-bed from two years. Due to Nawab's irritating behaviour, abuses and contamination of the mouth no servant could stay more than a week. Dinner parties were held in the mansion and his children and grandchildren were living a luxurious life. No one had time to look after the old man and clean his vomits again and again. The aid and assistance of Kallu's mother worked like a miracle as Nawab began to feel better, his irritations ended and he stopped abusing. On one fine day, Nawab proposed Kallu's mother to marry him as he didn't want to spoil his hereafter by taking the services of a woman of the age of his granddaughter. She couldn't say anything and goes to her room where she addresses her deceased husband in imagination asking him what her crime was that she has to go through such hardships.

Kallu and his mother came to the house of Mumani Jan with an intention that he would get educated and improve his position in life but he is treated worse than a servant. His day begins with boiling water for morning tea and ends with innumerable trips to the kitchen and dining table supplementing everything to the cook. When the breakfast is over, he sits alone in the kitchen and eats the leftover burnt ends of toast and paratha hurriedly drowning them with some tea. Thus, he does the work of a bearer and sweeper and all other works for two rupees a

month. He bears all the indignity and hardship with a smile. Kallu's mother usually visits him on Teej festive occasion and brings him molasses and fried corn. Kallu develops a liking for Salima bi, Mumani Jan's daughter, and the feeling seems to be mutual. One day the innocent boy Kallu proposes Salima bi to marry her and she agrees. Mumani Jan overhears the conversation and goes into arage and throws her sandal at Kallu which blows up his nose and makes it bleed. Kallu's mother finds him bleeding and creates a furore over it. Shivered with anger, Mumani Jan throws both mother and son out of the house immediately. Kallu, like all servants before him, is easily forgotten soon. Years later, Kallu returns to the same house as a young and handsome Mr Din, the Deputy Collector. But Mumani Jan is indignant towards the rising of Kallu's fortune. She does not accept the altered situation because it entails an admission of her guilt. However, Mumani Jan is convinced and her ego is satisfied when he addresses her as 'Amma bi' instead 'Dulhan bi' (the master)and Kallu is accepted back into the family for precisely the same reason for which he has been thrown out of the house for expressing his desire to marry Salima bi.

Thus, the story not only illustrates rigid class hierarchies but, also hints at the complex relationship between caste and class in our society.

***Check your Progress:***

1. Why did Kallu and his mother come to the house of Mumani Jan?
2. Which class of society does Kallu represent?
3. Why were Kallu and his mother thrown out of Mumani Jan's house?
4. Who became Deputy Collector at the end of the story?

#### **4.2.7 Predicaments of Widowhood:**

Widowhood and its predicaments are one of the prevalent themes in the writings of Ismat Chughtai. In the present short story, Kallu's parents Ayesha and Raheem were married at anearly age. Raheem went to the war and was shot dead when Kallu was a few months old kid and Ayesha became a widow at the age of twenty-five. Though they belong to a Syed family, their conditions deteriorated to the position of servants. Ayesha had to stay with one or the other relative and work as a servant to fill her and Kallu's bellies and to give him aproper education.

For a few years, she was in the house of her elder sister but her condition was not more than a servant. Kallu was treated even worse than a servant. Mother and son were doing all the works of the house for their survival and few ragged clothes. They were never treated as relatives. Even the children of Ayesha's elder sister felt shame to call her aunty. After a few years when Kallu was barely seven years old, he and his mother were thrown out of the house when he expressed his wish to marry Salima Bi.

Now she began to work as a nurse of a bedridden Nawab in the neighbourhood. He was very old and on the bed from two years suffering from numerous diseases. His jaws were always contaminated and he was such an abusive and ill-mannered man that no servant could stay there for more than a week. This poor woman had to listen to the abuses of the old man because she had no other option. After a few months the health of Nawab began to improve and he proposed to Kallu's mother to marry him, by saying that he didn't want to spoil his hereafter by taking services from a woman who is of the age of his granddaughter. She was shocked and complained to his deceased husband in imagination that what was her mistake that she was being punished in such a way. With the hope of having a home and proper education for Kallu, she married the old man who was on his death bed.

#### **4.2.8 Poverty and Childhood:**

Kallu and his mother came to the house of Mumani Jan when he was barely seven. Mumani Jan was a rich woman who prefers hierarchy that will govern social structure. Kallu and his mother Ayesha came to the house of Mumani Jan not only to earn their livelihood but to improve his position in life. But, on contrary to it, he is destined to become a servant and more to it exploited and ill-treated by Mumani Jan. Though he does all the work of the bearer, sweeper and washer boy, he does not get even breakfast. His condition could be understood, "When the breakfast was over he sat alone in the kitchen and ate leftover burnt ends of toast and paratha, hurriedly drowning them with some tea."

During lunch, Kallu repeatedly dashes to the dining hall with hot roties besides giving the baby's cradle a little push now and then on the way. He does all this just for two rupees a month along with some old and ragged cast-offs. Tired of the work, he dozes off but a kick would awaken him. Slumped with exhaustion, he would stare into space like an idiot but someone or the other in the family alerts him to work: "Seeing him sitting like this, looking as foolish someone

or the other would stick a straw in his ear surreptitiously and startled, he would bashfully turn to a task that required his attention.”

***Check your Progress***

1. Where do Kallu and his mother go for work? Why?
2. Mumani Jan is a ----- believer of -----
3. How much is Kallu paid?

**4.2.9 Marriage and Social Status:**

Kallu develops a liking for Salima bi and she too likes him. One day Kallu proposes Salima to marry her and she immediately responds positively. But Mumani Jan overhears the conversation and becomes furious. Livid with anger, Mumani Jan removes her sandal from her foot and smashes his nose. When Kallu’s nose begins to bleed, his mother, Ayesha, on seeing her son bleed, creates uproar there. But Mumani Jan does not give any chance to the mother and son and screams at them, “Get out of my house, you hypocrite!” Mumani yelled and ordered both mother and son to leave the house. Kallu’s mother wept and begged forgiveness, but her pleas went unheeded.” Stubborn and hierarchy stricken, Mumani Jan throws them out of the house. In course of time, Kallu is forgotten like all servants before him.

***Check your Progress***

1. Kallu proposes ----- to marry.
2. Who denies Kallu’s proposal? Why?
3. How does Mumani react?
4. Kallu’s mother’s name is -----.

**4.2.10 Class Hierarchy:**

Staunch lover and supporter of rigid class hierarchy, Mumani Jan neither digests nor accepts Kallu’s position as the Deputy Collector. Though Kallu belongs to Qureshi, a recognisable caste of Muslim Community, Mumani Jan does not accept his class and even does not consider him as a fellow human being. Being loyal and humble, Kallu visits Mumani’s house as a former servant so he does not behave officially though he is the Deputy Collector. He

remembers the days he worked there as a servant. But Mumani does not accept him heart fully as she does not consider his social status. She condemns the government as it has facilitated the lower class people for getting access to higher positions. She says, “My God! What is wrong with the government? It seems just about anyone can land a job with it these days!”

***Check your Progress***

1. In which position Kallu revisits Mumani’s house?
2. Kallu belongs to -----, a recognisable caste of Muslim community.
3. Does Mumani accept Kallu as Deputy Collector? Why?

**4.2.11 Reconciliation:**

Years later Kallu returns to the town as the Deputy Collector, Mr. Din, where he worked as a servant boy. On hearing this, Mumani is not only indignant to the rising of Kallu’s fortune but his social status as well. When Chacha Mian, a relative of Mumani Jan brings to the notice of Mumani that Kallu wants to marry Salima bi whom he hasal ready proposed to marry. But, Mumani Jan does not want to be humiliated. She says, “He is just here to show off his superiority.”

Mumani Jan cannot accept the altered situation because it entails an admission of her guilt. She rejects the idea of Kallu getting married to Salima bi because of his social status. Despite, his present position, Kallu pleads with Mumani Jan for Salimabi’s hand in marriage. As Mumani is a woman of wavering mentality and a mixture of good and bad, she is yielded slowly towards Kallu’s proposal. The former hierarchy is restored in a symbolic way when Kallu addresses Mumani Jan as ‘Amma bi’ instead ‘Dulhan bi’, the master. Now Mumani Jan speeds up the marriage arrangements of Kallu and Salima bi.

***Check your Progress***

1. Who takes the initiative of Kallu’s marriage?
2. Mumani Jan is a woman of ----- personality.
3. Who convinces Mumani? How?

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### 4.3 Learning Outcomes

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After going through the unit you should remember the following points:

- Ismat Chughtai is the champion of middle-class Muslim families.
- the ill-treatment and suffering of the middle-class Muslim families on the grounds of hierarchy and financially weak background.
- there is inequality within a community especially the Muslim community poverty engulfs Kallu's childhood
- Kallu's humble beginning as a servant boy symbolizes the ill-treatment of class hierarchy within the Muslim community
- Kallu travels through many hurdles and becomes a Deputy Collector stands as a symbol of hope for the middle-class community
- Mumani Jan, a staunch believer of class hierarchy, represents class domination on weak sections of the Muslim community
- Kallu wins the hand of Salima Bi from Mumani Jan's family
- Kallu's obedience changes the mindset of Mumani Jan

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### 4.4 Glossary

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**Pumps:** Light flat shoes (without fastenings)

**Katha:** A natural ingredient of pan applied on betel leaves

**Paan dan:** A box containing pan ingredients

**Adwan:** The strings at the foot of a cot

**Midget:** Any small person

**Yell:** Shout

**Guffawed:** A boisterous laugh

**Crinkled:** To fold

**Sullen:** Gloomy, dismal

**Cantankerous:** Ill-tempered

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## 4.5 Sample Questions

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### 4.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The story highlights the ill-treatment of middle-class families within a ----- community. (Hindu/Muslim)
2. Chughtai leads ----- life. (a conventional/an unconventional)
3. Ismat Chughtai was awarded the Jnanpith Award. (Yes/No)
4. Does Mumani Jan accept Kallu's development? (Yes/No)
5. Kallu came to Mumani Jan's house as a servant boy at the age of  
(a) Seven      (b) Nine      (c) Ten      (d) None
6. Kallu proposes to marry  
(a) Mumani      (b) Salma bi      (c) Salima bi      (d) All
7. Kallu returns to Mumani Jan's house as Deputy Collector  
(a) Mr Kallu      (b) Mr Din      (c) Mr David      (d) None
8. Kallu is a/an  
(a) Mohd      (b) Qureshi      (c) Ansari      (d) None
9. Chughtai is associated with  
(a) AIPWA      (b) APIWA      (c) AIWPA      (d) All
10. The novel *Tedhi Lakeer* is written by  
(a) Saadat Hasan Manto      (b) Sajjad Zaheer      (c) Chughtai      (d) All

### 4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Contrast the characters of the speaker's mother and Mumani Jan.
2. A servant boy, Kallu, becomes Deputy Collector. Discuss

3. Mumani is a woman of confused character. Explain
4. Kallu calls Mumani ‘Amma’ instead ‘Dulhan’ at the end of the story. How do you understand this?
5. Kallu is a hope and symbol of the middle-class Muslim community. Discuss

#### **4.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. The story proves that people’s attitude is dictated and decided by money. Elaborate
2. Ismat Chughtai, born rebel, brings reconciliation by Kallu’s obedience. How do you support your answer?
3. Give constructive advice to eradicate inequality within communities.

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## **4.6 Suggested Readings**

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1. Bakhsh, Sultana. *Ismat Chughtai Shakhshiyat aur Fan*. Word Vision Publishers, Islamabad, 1992.
2. Farhat, Waseem. *Ismat Chughtai*. Ideal Foundation, 2015.
3. Jabir, Muhammed. *Taraqqi Pasand Khwateen ke Afsanon mein Nisayi Hissiyat ka Tanqidi Tajziya*. Ph.D Thesis. Maulana Azad National Urdu University, 2019.
4. Naqvi, Tahira. *The Quilt and Other Stories*. Sheep Meadow Press, 1994.

## **Unit - 5: Brief History of the Emergence of Women Writers**

### **Structure**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

#### **5.1 Objectives**

#### **5.2 Emergence of Women Writers**

##### 5.2.1 Feminism

##### 5.2.2 Women Writers in the Ancient World

##### 5.2.3 The 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries

##### 5.2.4 The 16th Century

##### 5.2.5 The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

##### 5.2.6 The Nineteenth Century

##### 5.2.7 The Modern Age

##### 5.2.8 Contemporary Women Writers

##### 5.2.9 Indian Women Writers

#### **5.3 Learning Outcomes**

#### **5.4 Glossary**

#### **5.5 Sample Question**

#### **5.6 Suggested Reading**

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### **5.0 Introduction**

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Women constitute around half of the total human population. Ironically, they have been treated as a vulnerable group and have never enjoyed equal opportunities with men. Their condition has been pathetic under male hegemony and domination, thus are made to encounter extreme challenges. In the field of literature, male writers have always portrayed them negatively. As a result, they felt the need to write about their experiences, problems, needs, and aspirations. Over the centuries, women in many countries have spoken out for their sex and have started projecting the plight of women in their writings. They have produced commendable works reflecting on the predicament of women and also focus the attention on the woman as “reader” and woman as “writer.” The writings of women, today, are acclaimed world wide owing to their high writing potential.

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## 5.1 Objectives

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Our primary objectives in this unit are:

- To give you an overview of the history of women's literature and the emergence of women writers
- To acquaint you with the meaning of feminism
- To provide you knowledge about women writers writing in different eras
- To familiarise you with various issues which women writers deal with in their writings.

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## 5.2 Emergence of Women Writers

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Women's literature is defined by various publishers as a category of writing done by women. Women have made significant contributions to literature since the earliest texts were ever written. Women writers existed in ancient cultures also, but their number was limited. Women's writing; as an academic discipline, is a unique area of literary studies which believes that gender has shaped, historically, the experiences of women across the world. As a new field of study, it has been developing since the 1970s. It focuses exclusively on texts written by women and describes their position as women within the literary world. The onus in the field of women's writing is on exploring how women, as a marginalised group, have broken the glass ceilings and come up with the expression of varied experiences. Women's writing is greatly recognized by a number of dedicated journals and organisations. A sizeable number of "English and American literature programs" keep on offering courses on literature written by women, thus making women's writing an area of specialization. Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), talks about the need to explore a "tradition of women's writing." Women's writing insists on valuing and expressing women's point of view.

### 5.2.1 Feminism:

Before tracing the history of the emergence of women writers, it is pertinent to throw some light on the meaning of 'Feminism.' Feminism is the ideology that seeks equality of women with men. It recognises the inadequacy of male-centred ideologies and endeavours to achieve the economic, social, racial, or cultural equality of women with men. There are many categories of feminism and feminists sharing common ideology form particular groups such as

radical feminists, Marxist feminists, eco-feminists, etc. The history of Western feminism is divided into three waves—first wave, second wave and third wave.

### **5.2.2 Women Writers in the Ancient World:**

Although men writers have dominated the most writing in antiquity, literature written by some eminent women writers has also survived. Education was limited to a few most of who were men. We know about some women whose works have survived. Two such prominent women writers are:

#### **Enheduanna (2285-2250 BCE):**

Enheduanna is the earliest known female author and the first known writer ever recorded. She was born in the Sumerian city-state of Ur and is credited to have written poetry, psalms, and prayers. Daughter of Sargon the Great, she became a priestess of the highest order of the goddess Inanna and Nanna, the moon god and held the office for over forty years. Through her works, she was able to change the perceptions of her people towards the nature of the Mesopotamian gods and the concept of the divine. Her contribution to Sumerian literature includes the three powerful hymns to Inanna (goddess)—“The Great-Hearted Mistress,” “The Exaltation of Inanna,” and “Goddess of the Fearsome Powers.” Through these hymns, she redefined the role of gods in the lives of people of the Akkadian Empire under the rule of Sargon and assisted in promoting religious homogeneity. She is also known for her poetry which reflects her frustrations, religious devotion, hopes, and her response to war, making her writing highly personal and direct. However, some scholars question the authenticity and authorship of her works.

#### **Sappho:**

Sappho, the lyric poetess was born in Lesbos, Greece in the sixth century (BCE), to an aristocratic family. She lived a life according to her own ideas and possessed a unique personality and high esteem. Being immensely talented, her works made her popular. She received an ample amount of acclaim in the hands of figures such as Solon and Plato. Some scholars opine that owing to her lesbian sensibility, most of her poetry is now lost and is available in the fragmentary form except for the poem, “Ode to Aphrodite.” However, most of the historians and philosophers are unsure about it. She composed her poetry in the Aeolic Greek dialect which appeared as a hindrance for Latin writers to translate her texts. The extant poetry of Sappho embodies her concerns with romantic love between women. Some scholars advise

against relating the lesbian sensibility in her personal life. Her poetry would be sung to the accompaniment of the lyre. She writes about love and passion in simple and clear language.

### **5.2.3 The 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Centuries:**

Although female literacy continued to be very rare, a few women in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries learned to read and write. A number of women writers appeared on the scene. Some of them are given here.

#### **Christine de Pisan (1364-1430):**

A prolific and versatile French poet and writer, Christine de Pisan wrote on diverse themes. In her poems of courtly love and several other works, she champions the concerns of women. She was the first woman of letters in France and wrote a prose work entitled, *The Book of the City of Ladies* in 1405, depicting women known for their heroic deeds and virtues. It was followed by the sequel, *The Book of Three Virtues*, continuing with her earlier theme. Having penned romantic ballads for the French aristocracy, her works were widely received. She also wrote the biography of King Charles V, the *Book of the Deeds and Good Morals of the Wise King Charles V*. Her works were revolutionary and translated into many other languages

#### **Margery Kempe (1373-1440):**

Margery Kempe was an English religious mystic and author of the first autobiography in England, *The Book of Margery Kempe*. The book traces her spiritual journey from a wife and mother to a chaste Christian visionary. It continues to remain an influential resource on Christian spirituality. She records her relationship with God and the powerful role played by religion in the lives of the people.

### **5.2.4 The 16th Century:**

Many women writers emerged in the sixteenth century. A unique Mughal woman writer is described here.

#### **Gulbadan Banu (1523-1603):**

Gulbadan Banu was the daughter of Babur, the first emperor of the Mughal Empire and was a highly respected and notable member of the court. She was the first Mughal woman writer and wrote *Humayun Nama*, the biography of her brother, Emperor Humayun. The book has been translated into a number of languages. A battered copy of the manuscript is still kept in the British museum. She had a unique and objective way of writing

### **5.2.5 The 17th and 18th Centuries:**

Women authors began to come on the scene more prominently in the seventeenth century. England, during the period, saw the emergence of many significant women writers. A brief history of the women writers in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is given here.

#### **Aphra Behn (1640?-1689):**

Aphra Behn is credited to be the first English woman to earn her living by the pen. She was an English dramatist, a poet, and a fiction writer and her versatility was immense. She had married a merchant named Behn. Her early works were tragicomedies in verse. *The Forc'd Marriage*, the first play written by her in 1670 was followed by *The Amorous Prince* the next year. *Abdelazer*, her only tragedy, was staged in 1676 and after that she turned to light comedy and farce. *The Rover*, her vivacious comedy was a commercial hit. She is today better known as a novelist. Her novel *Oroonoko* (1688) or *The Royal Slave* narrates the story of a captured African prince and explores the themes of slavery, race, and gender. Behn's reputation as a poet was no less impressive than her fame as a dramatist and is often heralded as the successor of Sappho.

#### **Frances Burney (1752-1840):**

Familiarly known as Fanny Burney, Frances Burney is famous for her novels, plays, diaries, and letters. Her diaries provide great information about the 18<sup>th</sup> century society. Critics have applauded her comedies and compared her work to the work of Richard Sheridan. Her novels were immensely popular during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Charles Burney, her father discouraged her literary calibre and denied her the formal education. However, she read extensively and started writing career at a young age. *Evelina* (1778), her first novel published anonymously involves a series of unhappy incidents that threaten the relationship between Evelina and Lord Orville. The novel became a great success. *The Wanderer*, her final novel (set during the French Revolution) depicts an aristocratic young French woman fleeing to England where she is made to suffer. She also compiled *Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, her father's memoirs, taking her a decade to put the papers together.

#### **Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806):**

Elizabeth Carter was a translator, poet, and nonfiction writer. She was a master of many languages—Greek, Latin, French, and Arabic and studied history, astronomy and geography. Her writing career began in 1734. “On the Death of Mrs. Rowe,” her poem is an elegy written for the

fellow poet, Elizabeth Rowe. She published *All the Works of Epictetus Which Are Now Extant* in 1758. W. A. Oldfather, the 20<sup>th</sup> century biographer and translator describes the book as “a very respectable translation under any conditions.” The translation earned her much reputation and enough money to meet her expenses. She also published *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1762 and was made a significant member of the Bluestocking circle, an association of women authors including Hannah More, Frances Burney, and many others to promote women’s educational and literary opportunities.

**Sarah Jennings Churchill (1660-1744):**

Sarah Jennings Churchill was the Duchess of Marlborough and a non-fiction writer. Her childhood friendship with Queen Anne opened doors for her in the court. The two had arguments over some cabinet appointments which resulted in her leaving the court in 1711. Her outspokenness gave her wide public reputation. Contemporary critics like Samuel Johnson and Horace Walpole were highly critical of her. Dr Johnson wrote that she “had not superior parts but was a bold, frontless woman who knew how to make the most of her opportunities.” Horace Walpole wrote that her *Account* is “the annals of a wardrobe rather than of a reign.” Alexander Pope vilified her more ruthlessly.

**Elizabeth Robinson Montagu (1720-1800):**

Elizabeth Robinson Montagu was well read and highly informed unlike other women of her age. The younger sister of novelist Sarah Scott, she had great love for the arts and writing skills. She came to be known as “Queen of the Bluestockings” promoting literary and intellectual exchanges. Three of her dialogues were published in George Lyttelton’s book, *The Dialogues of the Dead*. In 1769, she published her most outstanding work, *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* as a response to Voltaire’s “critique of Shakespeare.” She defends Shakespeare and compares him to ancient Greek and modern French dramatists and praises his use of the supernatural. The book was well received and Samuel Johnson remarked, “That lady exerts more mind in conversation than any person I ever met with.” She is recognized as one of the notable female intellectual writers of her time.

**Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762):**

Poet and non-fiction writer, Mary Wortley Montagu was not formally educated but was a voracious reader and taught herself Latin. In 1714, she published an anonymous essay (the only woman ever to have done so) in Addison’s *Spectator*. She wrote “Town Eclogues” in

collaboration with John Gay and Pope. She also published *Turkish Embassy Letters*. She anonymously authored, from 1737-38, a newspaper, *The Nonsense of Common-Sense* (supporting the Whigs) and distributed her writings privately. Her writings were praised by many of her contemporaries. *Turkish Embassy Letters* was claimed by Samuel Johnson to be the only book he read for pleasure. She advocated higher education for women and insisted on their political involvement.

**Hannah More (1745-1833):**

Hannah More was a non-fiction writer, dramatist, poet and novelist. She was one of the prolific writers of England of her time. She met the famous actor, David Garrick in 1774 who inspired and produced her two tragedies, *Percy* (1777) and *The Fatal Falsehood* (1779). In these two plays, she exploits the tensions existing between England and Scotland during those days. She gained prominence as a poet also. *Bas Bleu; Or Conversation: Two Poems*, her most famous poetic work was published in 1786. Samuel Johnson praised her poetry and hailed her to be the most “powerful versificatrix in the English language.” She was an active member of the antislavery movement and published *Slavery, A Poem* in 1788. She is also well known for her political activism.

**Sarah Pennington (1674-1749):**

Sarah Pennington was a conduct writer and little information is available about her early life. She began writing after separation from her husband, Joseph Pennington and her daughters. She published *An Unfortunate Mother’s Advice to Her Absent Daughters* in 1776 to prevent her daughters from committing the same mistakes which she had made. Her writings invited huge public opinion and were read by all. At her death, *Gentleman’s Magazine* described her as a woman writer with “extraordinary abilities.”

**Sarah Scott (1723-1795):**

A fiction writer, Sarah Scott was given no formal education but started writing since her childhood. She was the elder sister to Elizabeth Montagu. Her first published work, *The History of Cornelia* (1750) is about a young girl who protects her virtue and chastity. She also published *A Journey through Every Stage of Life* (collection of sentimental stories) in 1754. *A Description of Millennium Hall, and the Country Adjacent* (1762), her most famous work is about the idea of a female utopian community. She also wrote a sequel to this work, *The History of Sir George*

*Ellison* featuring the protagonist who seeks to reform the society by helping poor people and bringing changes in the Jamaican plantation. Her works have recently been reprinted.

#### **Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797):**

A nonfiction writer and novelist, Mary Wollstonecraft spent an unhappy childhood with an alcoholic and cruel father. His brutality towards his wife introduced Wollstonecraft to the injustices suffered by women. She was a self-educated woman and became a governess and a school teacher. She had written a number of books such as *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788), *Mary, A fiction* (1788) (the autobiographical novel), and the major work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*. The sequel to *A Vindication* was the feminist masterpiece published in 1792, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. The book was influenced by the events of the French Revolution.

#### **5.2.6 The Nineteenth Century:**

Wollstonecraft's works made the question of women's rights as a part of public discussion. Despite the dominance of men writers in the nineteenth century, the age produced great women writers such as Jane Austen, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Shelley, and the Bronte sisters. They had to face many obstacles in their writing careers. A brief introduction of the aforementioned writers is given here.

#### **Jane Austen (1775-1817):**

Jane Austen is one of the most popular female novelists in English literature. She wrote, at the age of fifteen, *The History of England: From the Reign of Henry the Fourth to the Death of Charles the First* (1790). Her writings were influenced by Samuel Richardson, Frances Burney, and Maria Edgeworth. Her novels were published anonymously and she explored the issues of capitalism, slavery and women's education. The novels written by her include *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma*, *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*. Her writings are widely read.

#### **George Eliot (1819-1880):**

Born Mary Ann Evans, George Eliot was an influential fiction writer, essayist and translator. She wrote stories about rural life aiming at enlightening rural people about modern life. She commented upon the equality of the two sexes in her famous essay, "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft." She turned to fiction in 1858 with the pen name, George Eliot and wrote *Scenes from Clerical Life*. After the publication of *Adam Bede*, her identity was

discovered, but she continued to write under the pen name. *Silas Marner*, *Middlemarch*, and *Daniel Deronda* are some other novels written by her. She conveys her message through intricate and lengthy plots.

**Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861):**

Spouse of famous Victorian poet, Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's fame rests mainly upon her love poems named *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and *Aurora Leigh*. She wrote *The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point*, protesting against the slavery system in America. She also published the politically charged poem, "Casa Guidi Windows" and the book, *Poems before Congress*. She was the first woman poet in England to be considered for the position of poet laureateship. She was eulogized as England's greatest woman poet at the time of her death.

**Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-1865):**

Novelist, short story writer, and nonfiction writer, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote one of the best biographies written in the nineteenth century, *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857). Her fiction won acclaim from Charles Dickens and Thomas Carlyle. She was highly remembered for her novel, *Cranford* (1853). The novel is a feminist account of women's struggle for divinity, autonomy and survival. In *North and South*, she tries to improve relations between industrialists and workers, making the novel a good example of the Condition of England Novel. It was a controversial but a best-selling critical success. Her historical novel is *Sylvia's Lovers*. *Wives and Daughters*, a domestic novel is her last work. She earned good income from her writings in addition to gaining critical attention.

**Mary Shelley (1797-1851):**

Novelist Mary Shelley was born to two great literary figures—William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. She married the romantic poet P B Shelley and befriended Lord Byron. In response to a challenge thrown by Byron on writing a ghost story, Mary wrote *Frankenstein*; or, *The Modern Prometheus* (1818) which became a literary success.

**The Bronte sisters:**

The three sisters—Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855), Emily Bronte (1818-1848), and Anne Bronte (1820-1849)—together are called Bronte sisters and their novels were classics. All three of them attended different schools. Left alone at home quite often, they began to write stories at an early age. In 1846, they published a volume of poetry by using pseudonyms—Currer by Charlotte, Ellis by Emily, and Acton by Anne. Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* and Anne's *Agnes Grey*

were published in 1847. Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* were published in 1848. Emily and Anne died of tuberculosis and Charlotte continued to write. Charlotte published *Shirley* in 1849 and *Villette* in 1853. She too died of tuberculosis in 1854.

### **5.2.7 The Modern Age:**

Women authors emerged as innovators with the advent of literary modernism. They focused on the experiences of women characters, their sufferings, domestic and social problems and developed unique lyrical models of expression. The noticeable among them are Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Elizabeth Bowen, Rebecca West, Vita Sackville-West, Sigrid Undset, Katherine Mansfield, Amy Lowell, Hilda Doolittle, Muriel Spark, and Simone De Beauvoir. A brief description of some of them is given here.

#### **Virginia Woolf (1882-1941):**

Born to a famous man of letters, Sir Leslie Stephen and Julia Duckworth Stephen, Virginia Woolf was an eminent novelist, literary critic, and essayist. Woolf suffered from depression due to the deaths of most of her family members. She was married to the aspiring novelist, Leonard Woolf who supported and protected her during the depression period until her died in 1941. The two, along with Vanessa and Clive Bell became the nucleus of the Bloomsbury Group, a group of exceptionally talented and brilliant intellectuals all of whom lived in the Bloomsbury area in London. Her novels include *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day*, *The Waves*, *The Years*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and many more.

#### **Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973):**

A novelist and short-story writer, Elizabeth Bowen was born in Ireland. She was married to Alan Cameron in 1923 and published her first book *Encounters*; a collection of stories featuring "inexperienced young women" caught in difficult situations. She explored similar themes in her novel, *The Hotel* and became acquainted with the Bloomsbury group. *The Last September* is her major novel about a quite young woman trying to shape her personality in an aristocratic family. Her reputation rests on *Friends and Relations*. Apart from novels, she also wrote numerous short stories.

**Rebecca West (1892-1983):**

Born Cicely Isabel Fairfield, Rebecca West was a novelist, nonfiction writer, journalist, and travel writer. Her desire at an acting career was fleeting in her training at the Academy of Dramatic Art. Consequently, she started working in journalism and blossomed in that profession. She became a passionate and prolific journalist and wrote for journals which include *Freewoman*, the *Clarion*, the *Star*, *Daily News* and the *New Statesman*. The novel, *The Return of the Soldier* was written by her. She also wrote *The Judge*, a novel which talks about two generations of the women's suffrage movement. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is her most well-known travelogue. More than twenty books and a number of articles and book reviews are to her credit.

**Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923):**

Katherine Mansfield was a short story writer and poet. *In a German Pension* is the title of her first short story collection published in 1911. She married the poet, critic, and editor, John Middleton Murray in 1918. The setting of most of her stories is New Zealand. She is widely known for her short story collections and her other works, *Poems* and *The Letters of Katherine Mansfield*. In her works, she questions conventions of social class, marriage, and family, and finally died of tuberculosis.

**Muriel Spark (1918-2006):**

Muriel Spark is considered one of the best yet unappreciated novelists of the twentieth century. Her first novel, *The Comforters* is about Caroline who, like Spark, is attempting to write a novel. She achieved success with the publication of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) and *The Mandelbaum Gate* (1965). She received considerable praise from critics and her fellow novelists. Her works exhibit her religious sensibility and are written in high economical style. She received honorary degrees from various eminent universities across Europe.

**Simone De Beauvoir (1908-1986):**

Born in France, Simone De Beauvoir was one of the most influential feminist figures in the twentieth century. She is primarily known for her groundbreaking two volume book, *The Second Sex* (1949). She was a woman of integrity and formidable courage and developed a lifelong association with the existentialist philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre. Her novels exhibit

existentialist themes. *Mandarins* her best-known fiction won her Prix Goncourt. She also penned four books on philosophy. Her works deal with feminist concerns and the issue of ageing.

### **5.2.8 Contemporary Women Writers:**

The second wave of feminism encouraged a new generation of women writers and interest grew in the writings of the women of colour. In the contemporary period, women writers produce experimental, high art novels and best sellers. Their writing has changed the conceptions of literature. Some of the prominent writers are Adrienne Rich, Audre Lord, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and many others. They are described as here briefly.

#### **Adrienne Rich (1929-2012):**

Adrienne Rich was a notable American teacher, poet, scholar, and critic who wrote numerous collections of poems, tracing a stylistic transformation from a formal to a more powerful and personal style. She wrote poetry volumes such as *A Change of World* (1951), *The Diamond Cutters and Other Poems* (1955) and *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-law: Poems 1954-1962* (1963). Her commitment to the women's and the feminist movements is commendable and she openly acknowledged her lesbian sensibility. Several books of criticism are also to her credit which include *Of Women Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976), *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence* (1979), *Blood, Bread and Poetry* (1986), and many more. Her career spanned seven decades and she chronicled her journey in poetry and prose.

#### **Alice Walker (Born 1944):**

Alice Walker is an African-American novelist, short story writer, poet, critic, and social activist. A prolific black woman writer, she made history for being the first black woman writer to receive the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1983 for her novel, *The Color Purple*. Walker continues to enjoy the reputation of being a prominent novelist having a sizeable corpus of creative fiction to her credit. She portrays sexual, racial, class and various other issues of black women in her fiction and also reveals the painful past of her ancestors. She is a dynamic writer and her works have inspired people worldwide. She wrote novels such as *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, *Meridian*, *The Color Purple*, *The Temple of My Familiar*, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, and many others.

### **Toni Morrison (1931-1991):**

A novelist par excellence and originally named Chloe Ardelia Wofford, Toni Morrison is the Nobel Prize-winning author having made history for being the first African-American woman writer to have received the award in 1993. As the first African-American senior editor at Random House, she promoted the writing-career of many young African-American writers like Toni Cade Bambara, Henry Dumas, Michelle Cliff, Angela Davis, etc. In a world where even today the voices of black women are undervalued, she is the personification of courage. Blending the personal and the political, she believes that art should have meaning and projects realistically African-American social and cultural history. Employing a beautiful poetic language, Morrison imagines and tells powerful stories. She interrogates American history and questions the portrayal and place of Afro-Americans especially black women in the dominant white culture.

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### **5.3 Learning Outcomes**

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In this unit, an attempt has been made to trace the history and emergence of women writers since the time of the earliest texts ever written. Each women author has been critically introduced with a brief review of what is known about her, her works and significance. It has been explained how significantly women writers have contributed to world literature despite their encounter with varied problems and issues. The role of women writers is hugely commendable and they continue to top the list and produce bestsellers.

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### **5.4 Glossary**

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**Authorship:** The profession of writing

**Lesbian:** A woman who is sexually attracted to other women

**Anarchist:** A person who rebels against any authority or established order

**Modernism:** A movement in the twentieth century literature which believes in modifying traditional beliefs in accordance with modern ideas

**Memoir:** A historical account or biography written from personal knowledge

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## 5.5 Sample Questions

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### 5.5.1 Objective Questions:

- (1) Men writers have portrayed women negatively. (True / False)
- (2) The writings of women today are acclaimed. (True / False)
- (3) Mary Wollstonecraft is a pivotal feminist figure. (True / False)
- (4) Muriel Spark belongs to the twentieth century. (Yes / No)
- (5) Mary Shelley married Lord Byron. (Yes / No)
- (6) Sappho was born in -----.
- (7) *The Second Sex* was written by -----.
- (8) George Eliot was the pen name of-----.
- (9) Who wrote *Oroonoko*?
- (10) Who wrote *Jane Eyre*?

### 5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is feminism?
2. Mention the women writers of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Discuss the Bronte sisters.
4. What do you know about Virginia Woolf and Vita-Sackville West.
5. Name any three modern women writers and their prominent texts.

### 5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

- 1 What is women's literature?
2. Critically discuss the women writers of the ancient period.
3. How is the writing of Black women writers different from English women writers?

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## 5.6 Suggested Readings

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1. De Shazer, Mary K, editor. *The Longman Anthology of Women's Literature*. Longman, 2001.
2. Gilbert, Sandra M and Susan Gubar, editors. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*. 3rd ed., W W Norton and Co Inc., 2007.
3. Hager, Alan, editor. *Encyclopedia of British Writers: 18<sup>th</sup> Century*. 2nd ed., Facts on File, 2009.
4. Kelly, Suzanne, Gowri Parameswaran, and Nancy Schniedewind, editors. *Women: Images and Realities: A Multicultural Anthology*. 5th ed., McGraw-Hill Humanities Social, 2011.
5. Krueger, Christine L, editor. *Encyclopedia of British Writers: 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Facts on File, Inc., 2003.

## Unit - 6: Virginia Woolf—Shakespeare’s Sister

### Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Objectives
- 6.2 Shakespeare’s Sister
  - 6.2.1 *A Room of One’s Own*
  - 6.2.2 Significance of *A Room of One’s Own*
  - 6.2.3 Financial Independence of Women
  - 6.2.4 The Unnamed Narrator
  - 6.2.5 Critical Responses to *A Room of One’s Own*
  - 6.2.6 Shakespeare’s Sister
  - 6.2.7 Women in the Elizabethan Age
  - 6.2.8 The Tragedy of Judith Shakespeare
  - 6.2.9 Condition of Women in a Male-dominated Society
- 6.3 Learning Outcomes
- 6.4 Glossary
- 6.5 Sample Questions
- 6.6 Suggested Readings

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### 6.0 Introduction

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Virginia Woolf is one of the pioneering feminist writers an influential novelist and noted intellectual of Modern age. As a feminist writer, she wondered how men had always enjoyed power, fame, wealth, or influence and women had been deprived of all these things and assigned only the job of childbearing. She believes that women had never been given due credit and status which they deserved. *A Room of One’s Own* is the revolutionary and seminal text where Woolf explores the inseparable relation between money and creativity. It is a book-length philosophical essay that exerts an immense influence on feminist writing and literature. Woolf talks about the limitations and problems that women have been facing in a literary tradition dominated by men. Men writers were considered more creative and intelligent than their female counterparts at the time of Woolf. The position of a female writer can be improved if she is guaranteed, privacy,

freedom, and intellectual emancipation. Woolf asserts that material conditions had never been available to women writers whenever they attempted to write. She opines that women should have private space, financial independence, and free time, which she believes are the requirements for writing.

In the book, Woolf speculates about the fate of a woman with Shakespeare's genius in the Elizabethan age. By inventing an imaginary character as Shakespeare's sister named Judith, she illustrates that even being as gifted as Shakespeare, Judith would be denied the opportunity to make her career. Judith, like Woolf herself, is trapped at home and is not allowed to attend school. She, unlike her brother, gets no chance to establish her legacy. Woolf also reasons that in future, a female Shakespeare would be born if women are given private space and independent income. Basically, she wrote *A Room of One's Own* to expose the marginalization of women and simultaneously to elevate their status.

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## 6.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this unit are:

- To deepen your understanding and knowledge of Virginia Woolf's works and ideas.
- To examine the importance of economic independence and private space in the lives of women writers.
- To give you an idea of what educational, psychological, financial, and other barriers women have to face if they tried to express or shape their talents.
- To familiarise you with the kind of hardships that Judith Shakespeare faced in the pursuit of her career in theatre and the simultaneous rejection, discouragement and indifference she received.
- To know about the kind of fate that women artists would meet if they tried to disobey their parents or spoil their chastity.
- To tell you how anonymity became a norm with women writers in the past, forcing them to adopt pseudonyms.

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## 6.2 Shakespeare's Sister

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Born Adeline Virginia Stephen (1882-1941), Virginia Woolf was one of the pioneers of the modernist movement and took numerous positions of a feminist writer, essayist, critic, and

publisher. Born to the eminent Victorian parents Leslie Stephen and Julia Jackson Duckworth, Woolf suffered from depression since her childhood. Her traumatised youth was shaken many emotional shocks that came with the death of many of her family members. Also, she was deeply tormented after seeing the effects of the two world wars which prompted her to write *Three Guineas*. The incident of her mother's death triggered the first mental breakdown in her. She met and married Leonard Woolf, the critic, political philosopher, and writer in 1912 and he supported her throughout her mental illness. The couple joined the Bloomsbury group and in 1917, founded the Hogarth Press and started publishing their own stories. Later on, they began to publish the writings of outstanding writers including T. S. Eliot, Sigmund Freud, and Katherine Mansfield among many others. After suffering a series of breakdowns, she loaded her pockets with stones and committed suicide by drowning herself in the River Ouse. Fortunately, she had left a note for her husband stating:

I feel certain I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way all that anyone could be. I don't think two people could have been happier till this terrible disease came. I can't fight any longer. I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me you could work. And you will I know. You see I can't even write this properly. I can't read. What I want to say is I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You have been entirely patient with me and incredibly good. I want to say that—everybody knows it. If anybody could have saved me it would have been you. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer. I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been. (120)

Virginia Woolf received no formal education like most of the women of her age. However, the books of her father surrounded her every time and she was allowed to spend much time in his library. It was here that she developed a love for literature and thus laying a firm basis for her writing. After having exerted a strong influence on other women novelists, she candidly believed that a writer should be of the neutral nature and her novels exhibit, as Ian Mackean writes, "feminine sensitivity and masculine rigour." Unlike her contemporary novelists—John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennett who wrote from masculine viewpoints, Woolf provided full autonomy to her characters. Her first novel, *The Voyage Out* was published in 1915. The novel

appeared to be the product of a young intellectually matured writer where her imagination is seen in full bloom. In her conventional novel, *Night and Day*, she writes about the role of women in modern society. In her experimental novel, *Jacob's Room*, she employed the technique of stream of consciousness and the novel is based on her brother Thoby. Woolf shared an intimate relationship with her literary muse, Vita Sackville-West who became the reason behind writing her novel, *Orlando* (1928). The novel was ground breaking and proved to be a breakthrough for Woolf and received critical praise in the large amount.

Woolf's most experimental novel, *The Waves* (1931) traces the stories of six different characters. It is a classic example of the stream of consciousness technique. She also wrote *The Years*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Flush*, and *Between the Acts*. She worked as a reviewer with the *Times Literary Supplement*. *A Room of One's Own*, major work in the twentieth-century feminist criticism was published in 1929. As Harold Bloom remarks, "Woolf is now more often discussed as the author of *A Room of One's Own* than as the novelist who wrote *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. . . I cannot think of another strong novelist who centres everything upon her extraordinary love of reading as Woolf does."

Woolf is rightly regarded as one of the best literary essayists and the greatest feminists of the twentieth century. She was an innovator and formulated unique ideas about the modern novel. After the end of World War II, her reputation had declined. However, within no time she regained her reputation. Scholars and academicians worldwide give her a high place of being an eminent feminist. M. H. Abrams remarks, "An important precursor in feminist criticism was Virginia Woolf, who, in addition to her fiction, wrote *A Room of One's Own* and numerous other essays on women authors and on the cultural, economic and educational disabilities within what she called a "patriarchal" society that has hindered or prevented women from realising their creative and productive possibilities" (110). She believes that women are never safe in a male-dominated society and are exposed to all kinds of difficulties and risks. Women suffer both mentally and emotionally and do not get, like their male siblings, a congenial atmosphere at home. Woolf herself was a victim of this marginalisation. Her own emotional and mental crisis convinced her about the problems faced by womenfolk.

After Mary Wollstonecraft, Woolf is most probably the first feminist critic who wrote on the female plight and inspired later feminist critics to protest against male hegemony by all possible means. Like her, Woolf stressed the equality of men and women in the fields of

education, dignity, and the economy. Both the writers were against male superiority and ego. Shormnishtha Panja compares the two writers in *Critical Theory: Textual Application* and writes:

Like Wollstonecraft Woolf felt the anger and vituperation of men against women and patriarchal notion of female inferiority were a result of a fragile masculine ego and its need to feel superior. She inaugurated the notions of women's canon being an alternative to the walk of the dead while male authors by unearthing important female writers like lady Winchilsea or Margaret of New Castle who would otherwise have been lost in obscurity. (59)

Woolf criticizes the majority of male writers for promoting patriarchal notions in their works and demands that women should be given equality in all spheres of life. To demonstrate how women have been discriminated, she speaks of English women and their treatment in English society. She uncovers how the financial dependence of women has contributed to their marginalization. She believes in the idea that women to put forward their notions and ideas confidently and freely unless they are given economic independence. She argues since women depend on their fathers and husbands for money to buy pen and paper, they cannot narrate stories or write fiction the way they wish to. In the nineteenth century, women writers like Jane Austen had to write fiction in the drawing room or some common rooms where anybody could come and disturb them, breaking the flow of their ideas.

According to Woolf, the “creative power of women” differs “greatly from the creative power of men.” Being one of the foremost feminist writers, she has been praised for her theoretical and fictional work. She alludes to the stream of consciousness technique and adopts a peculiar style of writing. She brings technical innovations in her novels and is acclaimed for her narrative subjectivity. A towering female writer, her writing is lyrical in nature and her works are greatly experimental. She exposes the oppressive and authoritative nature of society and its treatment of women.

### **6.2.1 *A Room of One's Own*:**

Woolf published *A Room of One's Own* on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 1929 in the Hogarth Press. It is based on the lectures that she was invited to deliver on the topic “Women and Fiction” at Cambridge University in October 1928. The lectures were later revised and compiled into a full length book. Woolf writes:

This essay, which is largely fictitious, is based upon the visit of an outsider to a university and expresses the thoughts suggested by a comparison between the

different standards of luxury at a man's college and at a woman's. This leads to a sketch of women's circumstances in the past, and the effects of those circumstances upon their writing. The conditions that are favorable to imaginative work are discussed, including the right relation of the sexes. Finally, an attempt is made to outline the present state of affairs and to forecast what effect comparative freedom and independence will have upon women's artistic work in the future.

The book consisting of six chapters, at many places, can be read like a novel, transcending boundaries between fiction and criticism. It is regarded as the first major work in feminist criticism and is immensely important not only in the critical debates on feminism, but also on gender studies, sexuality, and modernity. It is quite readable and accessible with a unique fictional style and it introduces certain theoretical and critical issues, influencing many works in criticism and theory. Jane Marcus views it as the first "modern text of feminist criticism, the model in both theory and practically a specifically socialist feminist criticism." Woolf cites Bronte sisters and Jane Austen to analyze the struggle of women as artists and their position in literary history. Despite its huge reception, *A Room of One's Own* is a bit confusing, putting forward a set of contradictory arguments. Woolf expresses her views on androgyny and writes that "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly."

Woolf exposes the patriarchal ideology that stops women from getting most opportunities to live their lives freely and independently. She uncovers how women have been excluded from the social, cultural, and economic mainstream of life. *A Room of One's Own* is a commentary on the issues and torments that women face in finding creative possibilities. Woolf reveals that women could not spend their own money without taking consent from her father or husband. It is the male members who decide where her money should be spent. Woolf makes a long list of services that women render in their homes. The restricted world imposed upon them by their society makes them poorer day by day. Woolf tried to muse why men were so angry with women and jealous of them and learnt that it was their insecurity of losing authority and power, hence, men suppressed them and maintained their superiority. She reveals that power is vested in men and women should stop to be "protected sex" as protection restricts their world.

### **6.2.2 Significance of *A Room of One's Own*:**

*A Room of One's Own* is a path breaking feminist text where the author employs different methodologies, analysis, hypothesis, and philosophical ideas to get a clear idea of why there has

always been a scarcity of female writers. The title indicates and stresses on privacy which women must have to be free and independent. Woolf deliberately uses the word “room” in the title to explain that privacy lends independence to women. In their journey of writing, women have to fight many obstacles and they must receive education, space, and possess money. The book has become a house providing shelter to a large number of women writers and helping them to express their suffering and issues. Woolf writes that a woman writer has always been an “inheritor as well as an originator.” The Marxist-feminist critic, Michele Barrett praises Woolf’s book and notes that “the conditions under which men and women produce literature are materially different.” Men controlled women at that time as women had no work or money of their own. Even if they attempted to write, they could not dare to sign their own work.

### **6.2.3 Financial Independence of Women:**

Woolf, at the outset of the essay, boldly asserts that “a woman must have a room of her own if she is to write fiction.” The statement depicts that women were not financially independent those days and had no opportunity to express their abilities and potential. Woolf stresses the importance of having financial independence for women because they have been forced to suppress their creativity in its absence throughout the ages. Women must have inheritance and privacy of their room to promote their creative genius. To justify her view, Woolf provides historical arguments to unveil that privacy and lack of money in the past barred brilliant women from writing effectively and blocked their creativity. She argues, “Intellectual freedom depends upon material things” and proposes that women should be considered a separate class. Money plays a pivotal role in the life of women as it ends their slavish dependence on men. Woolf believes in the material basis of literary production and affirms that writing is neither a divine gift, nor unearthly or transcendent, it is physically made.

### **6.2.4 The Unnamed Narrator:**

Woolf fictionalizes an unnamed woman character and tells readers to name her “Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or any other name you please . . .” She is the only major character in the book and gives a story like taste to the text. Woolf brings the narrator purposefully and makes her a universal voice by providing her with a shifting identity. She makes her a blend fiction and fact to make her point. She is an erudite storyteller who examines the multifaceted and complicated history of literature. She questions the existing assumption that women cannot be good writers. She feels the dearth of data of the literature written by women

writers. The shifting identity of the narrator depicts the different identities that women adopt at home and in society. The narrator speaks in a tone filled with dissatisfaction, bitterness, and worry. Woolf argues that even modern women writers feel insecurity and write in anger and may be in future, their writings will bloom as they will be having money and privacy.

### **6.2.5 Critical Responses to *A Room of One's Own*:**

Woolf's book attracted an ample amount of criticism after it was published. Most of the reviews the book received were favorable. The *Times Literary Supplement* called it a "delightfully peripatetic essay that glances in a spirited and good tempered way over conflicts old and new." Arnold Bennett both praised and criticized her. He wrote about Woolf that "she can write" but criticized her for her use of grammar. He attacked her and said that "she talks about everything but the thesis. . . . She is not consciously guilty of padding. She is merely the victim of her extraordinary gift of fancy (not imagination)." However, the book was highly praised by J. C. Squire in the review which he published in the *Observer* and he stated that it was "written with great grace and an unobtrusive imagery and its prime merit is its utterly candid statement of an intellectual woman's point of view." The *Empire Review* lauded the book for its admirable humor and stressing the independence of women. Another review appeared in the *Spectator* and praised its wide reputation, writing, "Future historians will place Mrs. Woolf's little book beside Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Rights of Women* and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*. It does for the intellectual and spiritual liberation of women what those works did for their political emancipation. But *A Room of One's Own* outshines them both in genius." Hermione Lee criticizes the book for being an essay and writes that the book has "emerged from a story which is itself an exploratory refusal to choose between different species fantasy or fact, realism or romance, essay or fiction."

### **6.2.6 *Shakespeare's Sister*:**

"Shakespeare's Sister" comprises the third chapter of *A Room of One's Own*. In this chapter, Woolf examines the facts, taking recourse to history to explore the relationship between "women and literature." She comments on the portrayal of "women in fiction" and their actual depiction in history. Woolf hypothesises the existence of Shakespeare's talented sister, Judith who receives no formal education like her brother. In seeking the possibility that there would be a woman who would match the status or genius of Shakespeare, Judith represents the silenced women artists and writers. Through her character, Woolf clarifies that women need good

material and social conditions in order to express their talent and capabilities. Due to lack of money and appropriate social conditions, Judith lost both her creativity as well as wealth. Material income could have gained her popularity. The narrator concludes, “It would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare.” Woolf brings Judith to illustrate this point.

After reaching home disappointed at not having arrived at some truth even after extensive research on the statement why women are poorer than men, the narrator in *A Room of One's Own* turns to history which she opines, “records not opinions but facts.” She seeks to learn about English women living in the Elizabethan age, producing productive male writers. Woolf examines the effects of the misogynistic world on women artists. Women did not get any opportunity to develop their talents and creativity.

### **6.2.7 Women in the Elizabethan Age:**

The book informs the readers about Shakespeare's sister and her fate if she ever lived. Woolf, at the beginning of the chapter, examines the status of women in the Elizabethan age. Regarded as the golden era in the history of English literature, Elizabethan age produced several notable men poets, dramatists, prose writers, and sonneteers but did not produce any single female writer. Deeply moved by it, Woolf started analyzing the history of the age. She opened historian Trevelyan's book, *History of England* and was astonished to know the reality of the predicament of women in the age. She learns that wife beating was a norm prevalent in that society and men irrespective of their social status exercised it. If girls refused to marry the person of their parents' choice, they were badly beaten and locked up in rooms. Daughters were married to uphold the family honour and were mere puppets in the hands of men. Child marriages were very common. Woolf writes, “Marriage was not an affair of personal affection, but of family avarice, particularly in the ‘chivalrous’ upper classes . . .” However, in literature unlike history, the things were quite contradictory. Women characters such as Clytemnestra, Antigone, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, Desdemona, etc were depicted as women of character with upright personalities. She is given a high stature in imagination as she features in literature particularly poetry, but is in reality given no importance at all. Quoting Trevelyan, Woolf writes:

Imaginatively, she is of the highest importance; practically she is completely insignificant; she pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact, she was the slave of anybody whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the

most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life, she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (36)

Woolf suggests readers to think imaginatively and poetically. She learns from Professor's Trevelyan's book that history comprises of many movements and wars where men took central place. Even women of the highest rank such as Elizabeth or Mary are occasionally mentioned. Middle class women, despite having high intelligence and character, were excluded. The women of the age did not own money and were betrothed at a very young age. They did not record their work and Woolf tells the students of the two colleges to compile a history, recording the role of women. Woolf asks a number of questions related to the women of the Elizabethan age. She asks-- why didn't any woman from Elizabethan period produce poems? How did Elizabethan women's days pass by? Were Elizabethan women educated? Did an Elizabethan woman own a room of her own?

#### **6.2.8 The Tragedy of Judith Shakespeare:**

Woolf talks about a bishop who had once announced that no woman in the "past, present, or future" could possess the "genius of Shakespeare" and declares, "Women cannot write the plays of Shakespeare." The book deals with the tragic fate of a highly intelligent girl. Woolf imaginatively creates Shakespeare's sister and imagines what would happen if Shakespeare had a sister who was equally as intelligent, gifted, and talented as he was. Woolf writes that Shakespeare attended Grammar School and studied Latin, grammar, and logic there. Shakespeare as a wild boy did many odd activities which include poaching rabbits, shooting a deer, or marrying a woman in the neighbourhood at a very tender age. Soon, he left for London, found a job in the theatre, and became a successful actor, making performances everywhere even at the palace of the queen. Woolf mentions that his sister was as exceptionally gifted as her brother but was supposed to stay at home. She uncovers the double standards of the Elizabethan society and reflects on the discrimination and treatment meted out to the women living in the Elizabethan age. As she writes:

She was as adventurous, as imaginative, as a boy to see the world as he was. But she was not sent to school. She had no chance of learning grammar and logic, let alone of reading Horace and Virgil. She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told

her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. (39)

Judith's parents did not encourage her talent because they were well aware of the life which women were supposed to live. She scribbled some pages up but had to hide or set them on fire. Woolf states that the family locked the women up and restricted their activities in the public domain. Judith soon came to know about her being betrothed to a neighbour's son. She cried loudly, but of no use and was beaten by her father and emotionally blackmailed by him. In order to save herself from all this and hide her disobedience from her father, she packed her belongings in a small bag and left for London to fulfil her dream. Like her brother, she was crazy and had a taste for theatre. Standing at the door, she expressed her desire to act and men sitting at the stage laughed at her and the theatre manager told her that no woman could become an actress. She faced utter rejection and ridicule. Finally, the theatre manager pitied her and Judith soon found herself pregnant by him. She could not bear all this and "killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle." No monuments were erected for her no matter how exceptionally talented she was. In the end, Woolf agrees with the bishop that no woman could possess the "genius of Shakespeare" because genius people are not born among downtrodden, uneducated, or working class. So there is no question of a woman who is forced into homely responsibilities being genius.

### **6.2.9 Condition of Women in a Male-dominated Society:**

Woolf affirms that some kind of genius must have existed in women and working classes, but women did hardly get any opportunity to express themselves. She reasons that the writing labelled as anonymous might have been written by some unknown women. Women despite having genius would have gone mad and killed themselves because the patriarchal society would concentrate on their body and molest them instead of accepting their worth. Chastity was considered vital for them and they needed courage of the highest form to cut from it. It had religious importance in their lives. The writings of women writers in the past must have gone unsigned and unrecognised. The sense of chastity made them adopt male pseudonyms and women writers such as "Bronte sisters, George Eliot, and George Sand" were some victims who had to succumb to the male-dominated literary traditions and become anonymous as "anonymity runs in their blood." In this way, they veiled their identity.

The attitude of the world towards writing capability in terms of gender differed entirely as Woolf writes, "The world did not say to her as it said to them; write if you choose; it makes no

difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, write? What's the good of your writing?" Mr. Oscar Browning once remarked that even the best of women were "intellectually inferior" to even the "worst men." Men believed that women were incapable of possessing intellect which affected them negatively. However, women novelists have passed through all these issues and turned triumphant in producing works of merit. Woolf writes that women were not encouraged to become artists even in the nineteenth century. Men questioned their creativity and never accepted them and this discouragement instilled a sense of inferiority among them. Woolf writes that 'genius' is unfortunately measured by the opinions held by other people and opines that like Shakespeare, the mind of the artist should have to be "incandescent." She states that the reason of having a little knowledge about Shakespeare's mind is due to the filtering out his personal "grudges and spites and antipathies" in his works and the absence of this personal protest lends his works a "free and unimpeded" tone.

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### **6.3 Learning Outcomes**

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Novelist par excellence and an influential theorist, Virginia Woolf lived through the time when women in England got the right to vote and began taking admission in colleges and universities. Women started different professions and tried their hands in various fields. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf details about the women writers living from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century and the problems and hardships they were made to face in the patriarchal society where women were confined to homes only and considered as mere sex objects. They were banned from cultural spheres and educational institutions and lacked financial opportunities. Woolf elaborates on the loss or suppression of women's talents by some unjust social and cultural practices which marginalise women. Through Judith, Woolf underscores the problems faced by women over centuries. Woolf argues that women should be given economic independence and privacy. Woolf's contemporary writers criticised her views and ideas, but they were widely praised by the later theorists and examined across cultures. Woolf asserts that women writers should write incandescent poetry like Shakespeare did. She speculated on numerous issues and problems concerning women. She looked beyond the time that she lived in and anticipated many other problems women had to face in future. Later feminists grounded their works and notions on Woolf's ideas.

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## 6.4 Glossary

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**Feminist:** One who believes in feminism and seeks equal opportunities and treatment of women with men.

**Intellectual:** A person who thinks deeply and comprehensively about things.

**Seminal:** Containing new and important ideas and having a great influence on later works

**Legacy:** Something that is a part of history and remains there since earlier time

**Political Theorist:** A person who is involved in constructing or evaluating political theory and philosophy.

**Sigmund Freud:** The Austrian psychiatrist and founder of psychoanalysis who influenced almost all the domains of the twentieth century.

**Katherine Mansfield:** A prominent modernist writer

**Androgynous:** The state of having the physical characteristics of both the sexes

**Hogarth Press:** A British publishing house founded by Leonard Woolf and Virginia Woolf

**Hypothesis:** A supposition or proposition made on the basis of limited evidence without any assumption of its truth

**Inheritance:** Something that is inherited; legacy

**Transcendent:** relating to a spiritual realm, superior, surpassing

**Queen Elizabeth:** Queen who reigned England from 1558-1603

**Bishop:** A senior member of the Christian clergy

**Logic:** Reasonable thinking

**Anonymity:** A state of namelessness or impersonality

**Chastity:** The state of never having had sex

**Incandescent:** Passionate or full of strong emotion

**Newnham:** Women's college affiliated to the University of Cambridge.

**Girton:** College affiliated to the University of Cambridge.

**George Eliot:** Mary Ann Evans' pen name

**Critique:** A comprehensive analysis and assessment of a literary, political, or philosophical work

**Peripatetic:** An Aristotelian philosopher

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## 6.5 Sample Questions

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### 6.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Stereotyping or prejudice against women based on their gender is called:  
(a) Feminism (b) Racism  
(c) Sexism (d) Discrimination
2. When we support women's rights to make them on par with men politically, socially, or economically, it is known as:  
(a) Sexuality (b) Feminism  
(c) Discrimination (d) Sexism
3. Who is the most notable modernist writer?  
(a) Jane Austen (b) Virginia Woolf  
(c) William Shakespeare (d) Emily Dickinson
4. Where was Shakespeare born?  
(a) Germany (b) America  
(c) Ireland (d) England
5. Judith Shakespeare was:  
(a) Gregarious (b) Talented  
(c) Loyal (d) Quarrelsome
6. What, according to Woolf, is the reason behind the statement that in Shakespeare's time, no woman could have written plays like him?  
(a) Lack of genius (b) Lack of ambition  
(c) Financial Problems (d) Lack of Experience
7. How, in Shakespeare's time, did parents treat the literary ambitions of their daughters?  
(a) Encourage them (b) Stop their ambitions  
(c) Feel happy at the (d) Help them
8. What makes Judith set off for London?  
(a) After feeling angry (b) To become famous  
(c) Her creative genius motivates her (d) To avoid marriage
9. When was *A Room of One's Own* published?  
(a) 1927 (b) 1928  
(c) 1929 (d) 1930

10. Virginia Woolf died of:

- (a) Cancer      (b) Tuberculosis
- (c) Was killed   (d) Suicide

### 6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on Judith Shakespeare and the problems she faced at her home.
2. What, according to Woolf, is the narrative of history on the position of women?
3. What do you think of the purpose of Virginia Woolf to create the fictional character of Judith Shakespeare in her book?
4. Why did women writers have to opt for anonymity?
5. What prevented Judith Shakespeare from achieving literary success?

### 6.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain why does Virginia Woolf state that Elizabethan women did not write poetry?
2. How does Woolf explore the significance of the social and material conditions in writing literature?
3. Write a detailed note on Virginia Woolf and her works. Describe her as a noted modernist writer dealing with feminist themes.

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## 6.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Alexander, Jean. *The Venture of Form in the Novels of Virginia Woolf*. Gateway Faculty Press, 1974.
2. Anthony, Susan B. *The History of Woman Suffrage*. Rochester, 1881.
3. Apter, T. E. *Virginia Woolf: A Study of Her Novels*. Macmillan, 1979.
4. Barrett, M. *Women's Oppression Today*. Verso, 1980.
6. Blackstone, Bernard. *Virginia Woolf: A Commentary*. The Hogarth Press, 1972.
7. Bowlby, Rachel. *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations*. Basil Blackwell Publishers, 1988.
8. Lehmann, John. *Virginia Woolf and her World*. Thames and Hudson, 1975.
9. Majumdar, Robin and Allen McLaurin. *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge, 1975.
10. Rose, Phyllis. *Women of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf*. Routledge, 1978.
11. Rosenthal, Michael. *Virginia Woolf*. Routledge, 1979.

## **Unit - 7: Women and Stereotypes**

### **Structure**

- 7.0** Introduction
- 7.1** Objectives
- 7.2** Stereotyping—Meaning and definitions
  - 7.2.1 Difference between ‘Gender Stereotype’ and ‘Gender Stereotyping’
  - 7.2.2 How do Women Suffer?
  - 7.2.3 Gender Equality
  - 7.2.4 Difference between ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’
  - 7.2.5 Patriarchy
  - 7.2.6 Masculinity vs. Femininity
  - 7.2.7 Gender Roles
  - 7.2.8 Stereotypes about Women
  - 7.2.9 Some Common Examples of Stereotypes about Women
  - 7.2.10 Comparing Stereotypes about Men and Women
- 7.3** Learning Outcomes
- 7.4** Glossary
- 7.5** Sample Questions
- 7.6** Suggested Readings

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### **7.0 Introduction**

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The whole of the human race is born free and equal in status and dignity. It is the humans who have created differences amongst themselves and assigned roles to their existence. The concept of gender and gender roles prevails everywhere. Almost every society expects men and women to behave and present themselves differently. The creation of gender roles has led to fragmentation and confusion in society. Societies have created gender roles and formulated ideas about what men and women should do and should not do. By doing so, they have caused much damage to the identity of women. Societies expect men to be strong and bread earners and women to be emotional and unpaid domestic workers. Women suffer differently in developed and developing countries. The work done by women is least appreciated and remains largely unacknowledged. They face marginalization and oppression everywhere and continue to suffer

disproportionately. The stereotypes regarding women have existed since the advent of civilization and caused discrimination, gender-based violence and abuse against them in manifold ways. The stereotypes are witnessed in almost all spheres of their life. Gender stereotyping is a serious threat to gender equality and breeds gender violence and discrimination. It perpetuates that men are more competent and talented than women. Despite huge public awareness regarding the need for eliminating rigid gender roles, women continue to be stereotyped enormously.

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## 7.1 Objectives

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This unit shall cover the following objectives:

- Students will be able to deepen their understanding of stereotypes in general and stereotypes about women in particular.
- They will reflect on the harsh impact of stereotyping on women.
- They will be able to understand the basic differences between sex and gender, masculinity and femininity, gender equality and gender roles, and analyze how these concepts have evolved over time.
- They will get an idea about the general nature of the suffering of women and analyse how unfair stereotypes about them are
- They will evaluate some common stereotypes against women which are being witnessed in day-to-day life

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## 7.2 Stereotyping—Meaning and Definitions

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The idea and concept of stereotype has emerged over time. Etymologically, the word “stereotype” is derived from the French word “*stereotype*” and the Greek word “*stereos*” meaning “firm or solid.” *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘stereotype’ as “a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing” or “a relief printing plate cast in a mould made from composed type or an original plate.” According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, stereotype means “a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment.” Firmin Didot, the French printer and engraver employed the

term for the first time in 1798 in relation to the process of printing. The term began to be used outside of the printing field since 1850. It was used for the first time in the modern sense in 1922 by the American journalist, Walter Lippmann in his book, *Public Opinion*. Lippmann uses the term in the psychological sense and argues that human beings possess and rely on their limited knowledge of things that surround them. According to him, things are perceived much differently than they are in reality and thus, stereotypes emerge with readymade concepts. After Lippmann, many psychologists and sociologists tried to explain stereotypes comprehensively. Stewart and others opine that people with poor social and psychological adjustment are mostly stereotyped. Stereotypes are always negative and signal antipathy.

### **7.2.1 Difference between ‘Gender Stereotype’ and ‘Gender Stereotyping:**

A gender stereotype is defined as a preconception or generalized idea about certain characteristics or attributes which men and women are expected or demanded to possess. It also represents the roles that men and women are expected to perform in a social group, creating wide gender biases. Gender stereotypes can be positive as well as negative. For example, women are considered both “nurturing” as well as “weak.” Women meet a cruel treatment due to the stereotypical expectations associated with them. Stereotypes about women are more dangerous and are a result of prejudices against them. Women are stereotyped because men provide a baseless justification of their power and authority over them. Sexist attitudes against women hinder their advancement and progress.

On the contrary, gender stereotyping is the exercise or practice of attributing, to men or women, a specific feature or roles which they are expected to perform in different social setups. In other words, gender stereotyping is a process of ascribing the stereotypical beliefs to men and women. Stereotyping degrades and discriminates women and there is an immediate need for abolishing negative gender stereotypes. Gender stereotyping is a grave issue which limits the abilities and talents of men and women to develop their personal and professional skills. It is exceedingly encouraged by society and affects women miserably. Girls are taught from an early age that their bodies are meant to be sexualised, objectified, and consumed by others. They are made to believe that they themselves invite sexual assaults. The society promotes the sexist attitudes against women which results in their unequal and unfair treatment.

### **7.2.2 How Do Women Suffer?**

Women have always been demoted to the position of “other” and face grating experiences in a patriarchal society. Simone de Beauvoir in her book, *The Second Sex* states,

“One is not born a woman, but becomes one”. Some traditional beliefs propound the idea that men are born to dominate and subjugate women. Men believe in their power hierarchy and take pride in it. Great philosophers like Aristotle put forward similar notions and designated males as “active” and females as “passive.” He called females “mutilated souls,” i.e. individuals who do not possess a soul. He believed in the superiority of males over females and considered men to be rulers and women to be ruled by them.

Although men and women are physiologically different, these differences should not serve as a firm basis for the superiority or dominance of men over women. The theories of male superiority or supremacy are now challenged and it is believed that female subjugation developed historically. Despite these developments, women continue to remain subjugated and stereotyped. In many societies, women are taken to be subordinate to men in all spheres of life. It is the male members of the family and society who exercise power and control over women, depriving women of their legal rights and opportunities. They are even denied the right to themselves and their property. Women’s subjugation or subordination lends them an inferior or secondary position and ends their access to varied resources and decision-making.

Women have never been treated as respected human beings and have always been exploited and marginalized. They are equally rational and intellectual beings, but still considered as subordinate to men. They play all the roles assigned to them without any kind of protest and act as puppets in the hands of men. They play the stereotype roles of a daughter, sister, wife or mother and in every phase, man acts as their master. In many societies, the birth of a girl is considered unfortunate and as she starts growing up, she is taught to be passive and endure all kinds of discrimination and violence silently. With the passage of time, women succeed in mastering all these lessons and fit themselves in the patriarchal society. They try to make every male member happy including their husbands and in-laws. At times, a woman is beaten by her husband and in-laws, but she endures everything mutely. If she proves to be infertile or barren, she is divorced or thrown out of the family. Wife-beating becomes a common thing. Ultimately, she becomes powerless and helpless.

Domestic violence is a socio-cultural concern faced by women globally. It leaves a negative impact on the physical, social and psychological well-being of women. Gender inequality is a global concern and many societies accept it as a normal thing without realizing its repercussions. Violence against women is a major barrier to their empowerment, safety and participation in society. It often goes unnoticed and is never documented. A majority of women

are at a greater risk even at their homes also and it takes a heavy toll on their physical and mental health. Violence against women takes many forms and they start suffering since the time they are born. At infancy, we witness female infanticide and the emotional and sexual abuse of girl children. Girls are forced into early marriage, female genital mutilation, child prostitution, and sexual abuse by relatives or strangers. In adolescence, they encounter incest, sexual harassment, rape threats, forced prostitution and forced pregnancy. They suffer marital rape and abuse by their male partners and are also supposed to pay dowry. In short, they face sexual, physical and psychological abuse. Despite these suffering, their problems have always been neglected. With the result, they find themselves in depression, anxiety, fear, and disorders of many sorts. At some places in the world, thousands of women are reported to be missing. Simone de Beauvoir argues that Western societies have been patriarchal. Women are given a secondary position in society and are considered second class citizens.

### **7.2.3 Gender Equality:**

Gender equality means to give people of all genders equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities. It is a process of giving people, regardless of their gender, equal access to resources and opportunities. It involves participation and empowerment of all the sexes in every sphere of public and private life. Gender inequality impacts people of all ages and causes violence against women. Gender equality is a basic human right which makes societies safer and healthier. It prevents the subjugation of women, promotes economic growth and protects human rights. It is the basic and unavoidable foundation for a peaceful and sustainable world. No doubt girls go to school and women are not forced to marry early now. Many women serve in private and public spheres. Despite these developments, women continue to remain underrepresented. Although much has been done to ensure gender equality over the years, a great number of challenges still remain there. Women should be given opportunities to access employment, leadership and decision-making. Mary Wollstonecraft opined that women should enjoy equal social, intellectual or legal rights with men. In *A Vindications of the Rights of Woman*, she confesses, “Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison” (151). Discrimination and violence against women should be stopped and they should be empowered. They should be given equal rights to land and property and also to sexual and reproductive health.

#### **7.2.4 Difference between ‘Sex’ and ‘Gender’:**

Sex refers to the biological aspects of humans or other living things which define them as “male” or “female.” It is something that is assigned to individuals at birth and is determined by their anatomy. Sex defines how human beings are distinguished on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures. Almost all people are born with physical features or characteristics that label them male or female. In other words, we can say that sex is purely related to genetics.

Gender usually refers to the characteristics or features of men and women that are socially constructed. The social construction is related to the ideas of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity.’ Gender is characterized by unequal power, giving special privilege to men only. It refers to the social, cultural and psychological features of ‘maleness’ or ‘femaleness.’ It denotes the social and cultural role of the sexes within a social group or society. Children are sensitized about their gender identity soon after they begin to understand things. Gender identity means the knowledge or awareness that an individual is a boy or a girl. It refers to a person’s realisation or internal sense of who they are as gendered beings. The knowledge of one’s being as a male or a female determines how people see themselves and interact with others in society. Male members are believed to be the protectors of the family and females to be the maintainers. Gender roles develop in response to environmental or social conditions such as family interactions, education, peers, etc.

#### **7.2.5 Patriarchy:**

Patriarchy is defined as the rule of the father and depicts a male-dominated family, hampering women’s development and advancement. It is also defined as the process of institutionalization of male power and dominance over women. Adrienne Rich defines patriarchy as, “Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial, social, ideological, the political system in which men by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male.” Power is enjoyed by men and women are largely excluded from it. Patriarchy makes men dominate women and creates obstacles for women to go forward. It describes the power relations between males and females, downgrading women to a secondary or inferior position. In this social structure, males are given higher status than women and females are considered as good as non-human beings. There generally exists a hierarchy of power among the male members. Patriarchal society prioritizes

men by limiting human rights of women and demands women to take instructions from men. Patriarchy subjugates women and makes them subordinate to men in many ways.

### **7.2.6 Masculinity vs. Femininity:**

Masculinity refers to the traits or characteristics which are typically associated with males. It denotes what it means to be a 'man' in a given society. It is the degree to which individuals consider themselves to be masculine. It refers to the strong and powerful nature of men which their society grants them. Men are generally seen as aggressive and competitive. Masculinity demands men to be dominant, brave, strong, independent, and innovative. Femininity refers to the traits, features or characteristics typically associated with being female. Like masculinity, it is a gender term existing in the socio-cultural category and defines what it means to be a 'woman' in society. It is the societal members who decide what it means to be a female. Femininity attributes the qualities of delicacy, humility, compassion, and womanhood to the female members of society. Emerging from the patriarchal ideology, it is a counterpart to the concept of masculinity. Femininity demands women to be collaborative, vulnerable, humble, caring, and nurturing.

### **7.2.7 Gender Roles:**

Gender as an analytical concept is socially constructed and differentiates the 'biological' differences between men and women. It refers to the differences in the behaviour of men and women that make them 'masculine' or 'feminine.' It assigns a definite set of norms to men and women known as gender roles. So, a gender role is a set of "social norms" which dictate what kind of behavior of men and women is acceptable and desirable. Moore defines gender roles as "sets of norms that define how people in a given social position ought to behave". Like gender, gender roles, too, are a result of social construction. Gender roles have developed over centuries in every culture or society and have been internalized to great degrees. Since our birth, we are taught to take on gender roles and socialized to be masculine or feminine. Gender roles define our interest and behaviour and have a deep impact on our daily lives. They are passed on from generation to generation. Gender role expectations are found in every society or culture. Women are mostly expected to exhibit feminine characteristics such as taking care of children; cooking, cleaning the house, and soothing hurt family members. They are usually expected to dress in feminine ways and some typical colours such as pink are associated with them. Traditionally, men are expected to be leaders, policy makers, aggressive and dominant. Gender roles are

created on the basis of stereotypes about gender. They include exaggerated and flawed beliefs about the nature of males and females and create bias and discrimination in society. Society reinforces stereotypical gender roles.

### **7.2.8 Stereotypes about Women:**

Stereotypes about women are totally unfair. They describe the ways of how women will act in the social group to which they belong. Stereotypes about women are deeply ingrained in our society and harm the self-images of women. There are different ideas of these stereotypes in different countries and cultures. Women are stereotyped on the basis of the four reasons given below:

1. Women are stereotyped on the basis of their personality. They are expected to be excessively emotional and accommodating, not self-confident and aggressive. They are traditionally linked to being dependent and nurturing.
2. Women are stereotyped owing to their domestic behavior. They are expected to rear and take care of children in the family, clean the house and cook. They are usually expected not to earn money or do home repairs.
3. Women are also stereotyped on the basis of their occupation. They are expected to take professions such as nursing and teaching and are least expected to be doctors and engineers.
4. Women are stereotyped on the basis of their physical appearance. Society expects women to be graceful and thin. They are not expected to be muscular and tall and are supposed to wear feminine dresses, hairstyles and make up.

### **7.2.9 Some Common Examples of Stereotypes about Women:**

There are many misconceptions about women. Women are viewed as less competent and ambitious than men. They are summed up by worn-out stereotypes that undermine their potential and talent. They are perceived to be weak and conniving. Whenever we mention the word 'woman,' the images of 'housewife,' 'gossiping,' 'thin,' 'graceful,' 'slim,' and 'sexy' immediately canopy our minds. The most widespread stereotypes about women are:

- Women are fragile, erratic, and helpless.
- Women are not considered good at Science or Maths subjects.
- Women are expected to develop romantic or love relationships with men.
- Women are expected to value their physical and sexual beauty. Some standards of beauty are set for them and they are thought to be flawless as per their physical appearance.

- Women are regarded as helpless and childish.
- Women are taken to be emotional and sensitive.
- Women are considered irrational and unstable. They look for long term relationship goals and parenthood.
- Women develop deep emotional bonds and attachments.
- Women have no good interest in careers and vocations.
- Women are good at cooking and cleaning.

### **7.2.10 Comparing Stereotypes about Men and Women:**

Society pits men and women against each other. It makes them aware how typically they should act. Some common gender stereotypes are:

- Men are considered powerful and tough and women are considered helpless and weak.
- Men are regarded as insensitive and women are sensitive and intuitive.
- Men are considered rational, sensible, and logical and women are considered irrational and unstable.
- Men do not form committed relations easily whereas women are seriously committed in relationships.
- Men are mostly career-conscious and interested in vocations and women have no such interest in vocations or career.
- Men are not considered as good parents as women are. Parenting is of secondary interest to them.
- Men are good at making things which women usually cannot do.

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## **7.3 Learning Outcomes**

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In this unit, we have studied that women are victims of stereotyping, subordination and subjugation. They are considered secondary to men. Discrimination and violence against women exist everywhere. Gender stereotyping has led to inequalities between men and women and has negative repercussions on society. It continues to remain as an obstacle to the achievement of gender equality and puts unhealthy demands on men and women which limit their capabilities and natural talents. Society easily encourages stereotypes about women and discourages their equality with men. Stereotyping about women remains a strong force in the functioning of

society everywhere. It is one of the major human rights violations and a barrier to women's equality. Learners should develop critical intelligence as regards stereotypes. They should raise awareness of the persistence of gender stereotyping in society and explore the reasons that contribute to this persistence. Gender stereotypes are witnessed all around the world and make hell out of the lives of women. There is an immediate need for challenging gender stereotypes. Violence and stereotyping against women call for a wide range of measures which need to be taken to promote gender equality. Some of them are:

1. Nowadays we see that stereotyping is openly done in media, internet, and cinema. Women are targeted at these platforms. We should take a stand and set examples by pointing them out and exposing them. Such matters should be discussed with family, friends and acquaintances and they should be made aware of how hurtful the stereotypes can be.
2. To every possible extent, we should become role models for our friends and family by respecting the gender identity of people. We must create opportunities for people to let them express themselves regardless of what society demands from them or expects of them.
3. We should muster the courage to speak up if we see somebody making sexist comments and obscene jokes against women. We should challenge them and speak against gender stereotyping.

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## 7.4 Glossary

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**Dignity:** The state quality of being worthy of honour or respect

**Existence:** Philosophically, it refers to the ontological property of being. It means the fact or state of living or having objective reality

**Fragmentation:** The process or state of breaking or being broken into fragments

**Marginalisation:** It means the treatment of a person, group, or concept as insignificant or peripheral. It is the social process of becoming or being made marginal, especially as a group within the larger society

**Oppression:** It means the prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority or the state of being subject to oppressive treatment

**Advent:** A coming into place, view, or being; the arrival of a notable person or thing

**Discrimination:** The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, sex, or disability

**Engraver:** A person whose job is to engrave things or one who cuts designs or words on metal, glass, or wood.

**Sociologist:** An expert in or student of the development, structure, and functioning of human society. Sociologists study human behaviour or interaction

**Antipathy:** A deep-seated feeling of aversion or something disliked

**Preconception:** A preconceived idea or prejudice

**Prejudice:** A preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience

**Authority:** The power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience

**Idiosyncrasy:** A mode of behaviour or way of thought peculiar to an individual

**Hierarchy:** A system in which members of an organisation or society are ranked according to relative status or authority

**Access:** The means or opportunity to approach or enter a place

**Subjugation:** The action of bringing someone or something under domination or control

**Anatomy:** The branch of science concerned with the bodily structure of humans, animals, and other living organisms, especially as revealed by dissection and the separation of parts

**Maleness:** The quality of being a man or a boy, or the fact of being the sex that fertilises eggs, and does not produce babies or eggs itself

**Femaleness:** The properties characteristic of the female sex. It means the feminineness, sexuality, gender—the properties that distinguish organisms on the basis of their reproductive roles

**Institutionalisation:** The action of establishing something as a convention or norm in an organisation or culture

**Compassion:** Sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others

**Conniving:** Given to or involved in conspiring to do something immoral, illegal, or harmful

**Subordination:** The action of subordinating or the state of being subordinate

**Patriarchal:** Relating to or denoting a system of society or government controlled by men

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## 7.5 Sample Questions

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### 7.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following is a gender stereotype?
  - (a) There are more women than men
  - (b) Men represent a gender
  - (c) Women represent a gender
  - (d) Women are emotional
2. Which of the following statements is true?
  - (a) Sex and gender are one and the same thing
  - (b) Sex and gender are two different things
  - (c) Sex is culturally determined
  - (d) Gender is biological in nature
3. Boys are strong in Mathematics and Science than women.
  - (a) Agree
  - (b) Disagree
  - (c) Strongly Agree
  - (d) Strongly Disagree
4. In a patriarchal society, women are considered:
  - (a) Strong
  - (b) Dependent
  - (c) Weak
  - (d) Both B and C
5. Who made the statement “One is not born a woman, but becomes one?”

- (a) Elaine Showalter
  - (b) Virginia Woolf
  - (c) Mary Wollstonecraft
  - (d) Simone de Beauvoir
6. Gender is ..... constructed.
- (a) Biologically
  - (b) Economically
  - (c) Spiritually
  - (d) Socially
7. The patriarchal system is defined as a system of .....dominance.
- (a) Male
  - (b) Female
  - (c) Sex
  - (d) Gender
8. Patriarchy is opposite to:
- (a) Patricide
  - (b) Matricide
  - (c) Matriarchy
  - (d) Subjugation
9. Stereotyping is a .....process.
- (a) Positive
  - (b) Negative
  - (c) Neutral
  - (d) Can't say
10. Gender equality gives ..... rights to all people.
- (a) Equal
  - (b) Unequal
  - (c) Strong
  - (d) Weak

### **7.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What do you mean by gender? What is gender equality?
2. Sex and gender are two different concepts. Bring out the essential differences between the two.
3. How is masculinity different from femininity? Are they biologically determined or just gender concepts?
4. Explain the importance of gender equality. Is gender equality a concern for men?
5. Name some stereotypes about women which you experience in day to day life.

### **7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write a detailed note on sufferings and subjugation of women which they face in a male-dominated or patriarchal society?
2. What is gender stereotyping? How are women stereotyped in different social setups?
3. Gender stereotyping in general is purely unfair. How are the stereotypes about women different from the stereotypes about men?

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## 7.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 8: W B Yeats—*A Prayer for My Daughter*

### Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Objectives
- 8.2 *A Prayer for My Daughter*
  - 8.2.1 Irish Sensibility in W. B. Yeats
  - 8.2.2 The Use of Myth and Symbolism by Yeats
  - 8.2.3 *A Prayer for My Daughter*—Text
  - 8.2.4 Summary
  - 8.2.5 Analysis
  - 8.2.6 Theme
  - 8.2.7 Structure
  - 8.2.8 Figures of Speech Used in the Poem
- 8.3 Learning Outcomes
- 8.4 Glossary
- 8.5 Sample Questions
- 8.6 Suggested Readings

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### 8.0 Introduction

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W. B. Yeats was one of the most renowned poets of the twentieth century and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1923. He was a connecting link between the nineteenth century and the twentieth century English literature, writing in both the pre-modern and the modern poetic styles. Besides being a poet of great distinction, he was also a mystic, mythologist, and a romantic with deep prophetic vision. He had a profound interest in magic and occult and challenged the mechanistic ideas of the universe through his use of Celtic mythology and symbolism. In *A Prayer for My Daughter*, Yeats expresses his concern and anxiety over the prosperity and future wellbeing of his daughter, Anne. He is worried about how she will survive under the turbulent and tough times brought by First World War. Yeats exhibits his helplessness as a father and wishes his daughter a life of safety, security, peace, innocence, and beauty. He wants her to become civilised and wishes her to get married into a spiritually and traditionally well-knit aristocratic family. Yeats wrote the poem when Anne was an infant and expressed his

deep love and concern for her. He was aware of death, decay, and destruction brought by the war. In Ireland, Irish nationalism and the rise of Catholicism were on the peak, making the life of people very hard, filling it with upheaval, unrest, fear, frustration, despondency, and desolation. Yeats wrote the poem in this backdrop.

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## 8.1 Objectives

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The unit shall cover the following objectives:

- To provide you knowledge about the biographical and literary background of W. B. Yeats
- To deepen your understanding of the poet's idea of and support to the Irish nationalism
- To familiarise you with the elements of his poetry and the issues / themes that he deals with in his poetry
- To give you a general analysis and the critical summary of "A Prayer for My Daughter"
- To make you analyse the theme, structure, and the literary devices used by the poet in the poem

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## 8.2 *A Prayer for My Daughter*

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William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) was born in Dublin to John Butler Yeats and Susan Pollexfen who moved to London soon after his birth. It was through his father and his literary friend circle that Yeats was exposed to the intellectual ambience in Dublin and London. John Butler Yeats introduced Yeats to the English Pre-Raphaelite and aesthetic traditions. Yeats stands out as an outstanding, dominant, and illustrious writer of the Modern age and is also recognised as the last greatest poet belonging to the English romantic tradition. He was a noted Irish poet, dramatist, and ardent Irish nationalist. At the age of 24, he met another staunch Irish nationalist, Maud Gonne, and was fascinated by her beauty and dedication to the Irish cause. He loved her deeply, but she remained aloof and never responded his feelings despite his four continuous proposals. Maud Gonne married John MacBride, another revolutionary in 1903. Her marriage shattered Yeats in pieces and left him completely dejected. Later, Yeats married Georgie Hyde-Lees in 1917 after having her known for some years. This marriage made his life serene and Georgie Hyde-Lees bore him two children. However, he could never forget Maud

Gonne and her memory remained etched in his mind. She served as a literary muse in many of his literary works. The one-sided love resulted in his searching for refuge in esotericism and Eastern wisdom. Consequently, Yeats came under the influence of Madame Blavatsky, a great occultist. He wrote the preface for Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* (English translation) in 1913 and the work made Tagore receive the Nobel Prize for literature.

Yeats's poetry was published in 1885 for the first time in the *Dublin University Review*. In the same year, he met the noted patriot, John O'Leary who was imprisoned for twenty years for his revolutionary nationalist ideas. O'Leary advised young writers to read and write about Irish themes and issues and Yeats came under his influence within no time and produced poems pregnant with themes and elements of Irish legends, ballads, songs, and folklore. He explored the mythology and folklore of Ireland in works like, *Representative Irish Tales*, *The Countess Cathleen*, *Irish Fairy Tales*, *The Celtic Twilight*, etc. Moving to London in 1886, he wrote openly about Irish issues in his poems and other works. It was in London that he met Maud Gonne who was passionately devoted to Irish nationalism. He also befriended Lionel Johnson and both of them (along with many others) founded the Rhymer's Club in 1890. It was a group of London poets who met to discuss their poems, preferring aestheticism to nationalism and focussing on subjectivity and craftsmanship. Yeats wrote *Wind among the Reeds* (1899) under the influence of the group. Despite his religious temperament, Yeats imbibed from his father a lack of interest for Christianity which arose from dogmatic rationalism of the Protestant tradition. He replaced Christianity with his interest in magic and mythology. He was involved in the Celtic Revival, a movement against the cultural impact of English rule in Ireland in the Victorian period, aiming to promote the cultural heritage of Ireland. After 1910, his work was largely influenced by Ezra Pound and he turned to modernism especially, in his use of imagery. His health started deteriorating and made Maud Gonne visit him in 1938, and he breathed his last on 28 January, 1939. He had written three lines for his epitaph which read, "Cast a cold eye / On life, on death / Horseman, pass by!"

Generally, Yeats's poems are categorised into two phases or periods—the early period and the later period. He started his career as a romantic and a predominance of dreaminess and mythology is seen in his early poems such as *To an Island in the Water*, *The Madness of King Goll*, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, *The Sorrow of Love*, and others. His early poems were strongly influenced by William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites. *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1888), *The Rose* and *The Countess Cathleen* (1893) come under this category. As he grew up, he began to

shift his attention to realism. His early poetry was escapist and he started writing about his failure in love and Irish political turmoil. The tone of his poems in the last phase is more tragic. He wrote his best poetry after he had crossed the age of fifty. Such works include *The Wild Swans at Coolie* (1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921), *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair* (1933).

### **8.2.1 Irish Sensibility in W. B. Yeats:**

The Irish Renaissance, also known as the Celtic Revival represents the creative period in Irish literature nearly from 1880 to 1939, the year of Yeats's death. Yeats was greatly influenced by John O'Leary and became interested in Irish nationalism. He read Irish patriotic literature intensively and joined the Young Ireland Society. Along with other leaders, he aimed at creating distinctive national literature of Ireland by going back to the roots of Irish history, legends, and folklore. Yeats belonged to the Anglo Irish minority (the Protestant sect) that had been in power in Ireland for many centuries. Most of the members of this community held themselves to be of English origin, but Yeats was a staunch follower of Irish nationality. He maintained his Irish cultural roots despite having lived in London for pretty much time. Irish heroes and legends feature in many of his poems and plays. He was accused of elitism which, ironically, contributed to his greatness and popularity.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Yeats shifted his interest to theatre and with Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn decided to promote native Irish drama. Three dramas were staged in 1899 in Dublin including Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*. The immense success of these productions culminated in establishing the Irish National Theatre Society presided over by Yeats. Abbey theatre was renovated and reopened in December 1904 featuring plays by Yeats, Lady Gregory, and J. M. Synge. Lady Gregory provided enough support for Yeats's writing, particularly at her Coole Park estate. Yeats devoted much time and energy writing plays and collaborated with Lady Gregory for *Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. After becoming a public and political figure in Ireland, he served as the Irish senator for two years. Ironically, his greatest works such as *The Tower* (1928) and *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1929) were published after he received the Nobel Prize.

### **8.2.2 The Use of Myth and Symbolism by Yeats:**

One of the reasons for Yeats's popularity rests in his use of myth and symbolism. He borrowed myths from religion, Greek and Irish mythologies, and primitive folklore. He uses

illusive imagery and symbolic structures in his poetry. His choice of words is symbolic and metaphorical, suggesting significant abstract thoughts. He was attracted widely to Hinduism, occult and theosophical beliefs. Unlike the other modernist poets who preferred writing in free verse, he employed traditional forms of writing. In his later works, Yeats was engaged with contemporary issues and themes with his style undergoing a wonderful transformation. In English literature, Yeats is considered one of the greatest symbolists, making use of innumerable symbols in his poetry. Arthur Symons dedicated his book, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* to Yeats. Yeats believes that the value of a symbol lies in its richness or indefiniteness of meaning or reference. Several meanings can be given to a single symbol. His symbols and images are often related to nature, religion, birds, animals, historical events, mysticism, and other kinds of phenomena. The symbols that he draws from occult studies are quite obscure and unintelligible. Some of the occult symbols used by him are “rose,” “cross,” “lily,” “water,” “tree,” “bird,” “moon,” “sun,” etc. The “rose” is a significant symbol in Yeats and is in particular found in his poetry volume, *The Rose*. To him, it is a symbol of both earthly as well as eternal love. For Yeats, the symbol of Byzantium stands for unity and perfection. He was taken in by the beauty, art, architect, and artifices of Byzantium. In his later poetry, the important symbols are the “spinning tops,” “winding stairs,” “gyres,” “spirals,” and many more. For him, the “tower” is a symbol of isolation and seclusion.

### **8.2.3 A Prayer for My Daughter—Text:**

*ONCE more the storm is howling, and half hid  
Under this cradle-hood and coverlid  
My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle  
But Gregory's wood and one bare hill  
Whereby the haystack—and roof—levelling wind,  
Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;  
And for an hour I have walked and prayed  
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.*

*I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour  
And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,  
And under the arches of the bridge, and scream  
In the elms above the flooded stream;*

*Imagining in excited reverie  
That the future years had come,  
Dancing to a frenzied drum,  
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.*

*May she be granted beauty and yet not  
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,  
Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,  
Being made beautiful overmuch,  
Consider beauty a sufficient end,  
Lose natural kindness and maybe  
The heart-revealing intimacy  
That chooses right, and never find a friend.*

*Helen being chosen found life flat and dull  
And later had much trouble from a fool,  
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,  
Being fatherless could have her way  
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.  
It's certain that fine women eat  
A crazy salad with their meat  
Whereby the Horn of plenty is undone.*

*In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;  
Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned  
By those that are not entirely beautiful;  
Yet many, that have played the fool  
For beauty's very self, has charm made wise.  
And many a poor man that has roved,  
Loved and thought himself beloved,  
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.*

*May she become a flourishing hidden tree  
That all her thoughts may like the linnets be,*

*And have no business but dispensing round  
Their magnanimities of sound,  
Nor but in merriment begin a chase,  
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.  
O may she live like some green laurel  
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.*

*My mind, because the minds that I have loved,  
The sort of beauty that I have approved,  
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,  
Yet knows that to be choked with hate  
May well be of all evil chances chief.  
If there's no hatred in a mind  
Assault and battery of the wind  
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.*

*An intellectual hatred is the worst,  
So let her think opinions are accursed.  
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born  
Out of the mouth of plenty's horn,  
Because of her opinionated mind  
Barter that horn and every good  
By quiet natures understood  
For an old bellows full of angry wind?*

*Considering that, all hatred driven hence,  
The soul recovers radical innocence  
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,  
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,  
And that its own sweet will is Heaven's will;  
She can, though every face should scowl  
And every windy quarter howl  
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.*

*And may her bridegroom bring her to a house  
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;  
For arrogance and hatred are the wares  
Peddled in the thoroughfares.  
How but in custom and in ceremony  
Are innocence and beauty born?  
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,  
And custom for the spreading laurel tree.*

#### **8.2.4 Summary:**

Anne, a little infant is fast asleep in a cradle and a furious storm is whistling outside, battering everything. The intensity of the storm is very high. The hill and the woods can hardly bear the brunt of the storm. Also, the haystack and the roof cannot withstand the raging winds. The atmosphere creates a sense of panic in the poet. Unaware of everything, Anne is sleeping calmly but Yeats is deeply worried about her safety and nagging thoughts grip his mind. He gets apprehensive about Anne's future life. By keeping the baby in the cradle, Yeats feels that he is providing limited security to his daughter. In gloom and despair, he walks and prays for his daughter and wishes her safety and protection from the storm raging outside and the political turmoil brewing across Ireland. He wishes that the social conditions prevailing outside do not affect her innocence and simplicity.

Yeats walks in restlessness for an hour and his gloom deepens. The winds are so destructive that even the strong elm trees are tossed around by them. The poet hears the screaming of the sea upon the tower. The "flooded stream" can wash away everything that comes in the way and symbolises the poet's anxiety for his daughter. The wildness and destructiveness of the storm compel him to think about the future of his child. After some time, the poet happens to see some light and gets a respite from the traumatic storm, giving him a ray of hope and optimism. Yeats writes, "That the future years had come, Dancing to a frenzied drum" and he seeks a permanent solution to the turmoil in Ireland.

Yeats believes that Anne would grow up to be a beautiful girl, but he never wishes her to be a paragon of physical beauty. He opines that beauty does have hazardous effects and can be destructive for a woman. He warns against beauty that can breed hatred and obsession. It can spoil the life and career of the lover and make him vengeful towards the beloved. Beauty should not inspire wild passions in others and it, at times, misleads the beholders into a false sense of

hope. Beauty instils arrogance in a woman which often robs her of her kindness. Yeats wants her daughter to save herself from being proud and vain and wishes her to be beautiful enough to secure a good husband.

Yeats cites examples from myth and recounts the sad fate of Helen of Troy. Helen's excessive beauty brought her trouble and destruction. The most beautiful girl ever lived brought doom upon her and others. Likewise, Maud chose a foolish man as her husband and the episode taught the poet some bitter lessons. Yeats also brings the image of the queen Aphrodite, who rose out of the spray. She was fatherless and nobody was there to guide her. Yeats pledges to guide his daughter properly in every matter. He wants his daughter to be kind, courteous, and an agreeable young woman as he believes that it is better for a woman to be modest and compassionate than being beautiful and arrogant. He views that men who love women for their physical beauty receive nothing but disappointment. He gives great importance to the qualities of kindness, courtesy, and civility and writes, "In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned; / Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned / By those that are not entirely beautiful."

Yeats wants his daughter to imbibe wisdom, happiness, and reticence and wishes her to live in protection, away from the turmoil and danger. He brings the image of a big deep-rooted tree to ensure the safety and security of his daughter. Yeats prays, "O May she live like some green laurel / Rooted in one dear perpetual place." He wants her to be as satisfied as a linnet and wishes her to be deep rooted in tradition. Time and again, he highlights the importance of self-contentment for women and argues that kind and contented women are incorruptible. He believes that hatred is the root cause of all evils and wishes his daughter's soul to be entirely free from it. He argues that a soul which is afflicted by hate is doomed and consumes the creativity.

The poet once again talks about Maud Gonne who rejected him and married MacBride. He praises her for being highly gifted, but views that it was her "opinionated mind" which forced her to reject him. Yeats does not want his daughter to be opinionated and implores her to leave wild feelings and passions. He wishes her to be of a temperate nature. According to him, women should possess innocence and make everyone feel happy and comfortable. He wants his daughter to be free of arrogance and haughtiness and submit to God's will. Towards the end of the poem, Yeats expresses his final wish and imagines the marriage of his daughter. He wishes her daughter to be married to a good man possessing aristocratic values and traditions, custom and ceremony. He finally enjoys her safety and security in his home in contrast to the outside ambience and

ends his prayer by going back to the images of “horn” and “tree.” The poem ends on a note of optimism.

### **8.2.5 Analysis:**

The poem was written in 1919 and published in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* in 1921. Yeats addresses the poem to Anne, his daughter. The poem was written two days after Anne’s birth while Yeats stayed in a tower at Thoor Ballylee during the Anglo-Irish war. The poem explores the themes of Irish nationalism, turmoil, sexuality, etc. Feminist critics have questioned Yeats’s approach to women in the poem. Yeats introspects and ponders over what best he can do to raise his daughter. He wants her to grow into a kind lady with moderate beauty. A furious storm is raging outside and Yeats is highly anxious as to how his daughter may be saved from the tough times ahead. The storm can be taken as the symbol of Irish War of Independence, thus giving the poem a historical touch. Owing to his experience of unrequited love with Maud Gonne, he concludes that beautiful hearts are more important than beautiful faces. Although the poem is mostly about the poet’s prayers for his daughter, he indirectly expresses his views on femininity and his failure in love. In this regard, Harold Bloom remarks, “Its actual subject is not the new born Anne Butler Yeats but Maud Gonne, and the bridegroom who ends the poem in so movingly archaic fashion is Yeats himself, making in a phantasmagoria marriage he was denied in life, yet ironically marrying only his own soul.”

Yeats married late, at the age of 52. After his daughter’s birth, he changed altogether and became a responsible man of the family. The fear of the protection of his child haunted him due to the political uncertainty going on in Ireland and the First World War. He had the fear and anxiety of losing his child because the son of his best friend, Lady Gregory, whom Yeats dedicated an elegy, was killed in the war. The poem is personal in tone as it depicts a father’s fear and hopes for the future of his daughter. Yeats exhibits his disapproval of the self-centered love which can spoil the life of a lover. He does not want his daughter to be beautiful like Helen or Maud Gonne. The poem portrays how, in the modern world, reason has overshadowed passions. Some threatening forces surround the poet’s daughter like a “flooded stream,” yet the father is hopeful for her better future despite being in the turbulent world. Yeats argues that beauty in women can, at times, bring destruction and he prays for her daughter, “May she be granted beauty and yet not.” He focuses on feminine innocence and describes how Helen’s beauty caused the Trojan War. He urges his daughter to be courteous and earn love with sincerity

and good efforts as “Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned.” He implores her to inculcate qualities which may help her become confident and independent

### **8.2.6 Theme:**

The poem explores the theme of concern and love of a father for his new born daughter. Yeats asserts that a father’s love can never be selfish. He presents his hopes in his daughter and wishes her to become a beautiful and virtuous soul. The poem is beset with didactic tones and exhibits feelings of uncertainty, gloom, fear, and hope. Yeats openly affirms the superiority of courtesy, contentment and wisdom of women to their physical beauty and charms.

### **8.2.7 Structure:**

*A Prayer for My Daughter* is a lyric poem consisting of ten stanzas of eight lines each with two rhymed couplets followed by a quatrain. The poem follows the rhyme scheme, “AABBCDDC.” The stanzas are written with some variation on *ottava rima* (eight-lined stanza) which Yeats used in other poems, “Among School Children” and “Sailing to Byzantium.” The poem uses iambic pentameter and trochaic pentameter alternatively. As an example, the two meters can be seen in these lines, “I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour / And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower.” The poem is highly applauded for its structure.

### **8.2.8 Figures of Speech Used in the Poem:**

Yeats has employed and exploited numerous literary devices in the poem such as paradox, personification, symbolism, sibilance, alliteration, assonance, and onomatopoeia. He uses paradox in the line “murderous innocence of the sea” and sibilance in the words “sea-wind scream.” “Scream” is an example of onomatopoeia also. Other examples of onomatopoeia are “howling,” “spray,” “choke,” “scowl,” and “howl.” The examples of personification presented in the poem are “dancing” of the future years (implying transience of life), “sea wind scream,” “frenzied drum,” “angry wind,” etc. Some examples of alliteration are “be granted beauty,” “howling and half-hid,” “cradle-hood and coverlid,” “great gloom,” “being made beautiful,” “like the linnet,” “hatred driven hence,” “find a friend,” etc. Some of the symbols used in the poem are “flooded stream” and “sea wind,” denoting turbulence. Out of the many other symbols used in the poem, the “tower” represents Yeats’s vision of the dark and gloomy future of mankind.

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## 8.3 Learning Outcomes

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In this unit, we have learnt that W. B. Yeats was a great Modern writer and a dominant literary figure of his times. He was a dreamer and visionary and felt strange in a world of scientific developments. His poetry is full of myths, imagery, and symbolism. He borrows his mythology from Gaelic heroic legends and has had a close association with Irish methodological tradition and folklore. He had a profound interest in Irish Nationalism, magic and occult. “A Prayer for My Daughter” is a prayer-like poem in which Yeats seeks a better and prosperous future for his daughter. Yeats prays that his daughter is not like Maud Gonne or Helen, but possess modesty and kindness instead of physical beauty. The poem reflects how anxious and gloomy the poet is about his daughter’s adjustment with the hard times in future. Innocence, custom, ceremony, wisdom, courtesy, and kindness are highly valued by the poet.

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## 8.4 Glossary

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**Renowned:** Someone who is famous or known about by many people

**Nobel Prize:** It is the most prestigious award of the world given annually for outstanding work in six subjects—physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, economics, and peace. It is named after Alfred Nobel and was first awarded in 1901.

**Mythology:** It is a study or collection of myths, especially belonging to a particular religion or cultural tradition

**Symbolism:** It is the use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities

**Occult:** It refers to mystical, supernatural, or magical powers, practices, or phenomena

**Turbulence:** Great commotion or agitation. It also refers to instability or disturbance

**Upheaval:** A violent or sudden change or disruption to something

**Despondency:** A state of being extremely low in spirits, the quality of being unhappy

**Aestheticism:** An intellectual and art movement supporting the emphasis of aesthetic values more than the socio-political themes for literature and other arts

**Ardent:** Very enthusiastic or passionate

**Revolutionary:** Engaged in or promoting revolution

**Esotericism:** A state or quality of being obscure and only understood by a very small number of people with special knowledge

**Protestant:** A member or follower of any of the Western Christian Churches that are separated from the Roman Catholic Church in accordance with the principles of the reformation

**Sensibility:** The quality of being able to appreciate and respond to complex emotional or aesthetic influences

**Folklore:** The traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations orally

**Theosophy:** Teaching about God and the world based on mystical insight

**Oblivious:** Not aware of or concerned about what is happening around

**Turmoil:** A state of great disturbance, confusion, or uncertainty

**Ferocity:** The state of being frightened and violent

**Obsession:** An idea or thought that continually preoccupies or intrudes on a person's mind

**Reticence:** The quality or state of being reserved and restrained

**Haughtiness:** The appearance or quality of being arrogantly superior and disdainful

**Optimism:** It means hopefulness and confidence about the future or the success of something

**Methodological:** Relating to the system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity

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## 8.5 Sample Questions

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### 8.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When was the poem written?  
(a) 1919 (b) 1920  
(c) 1921 (d) 1922
2. Where did W. B. Yeats belong to?  
(a) England (b) Ireland  
(c) Scotland (d) New Zealand
3. What is the name of the woman Yeats loved deeply?  
(a) Lady Gregory (b) Maud Gonne  
(c) Katherine (d) Elizabeth
4. What is the poet's mood in the poem?  
(a) Anxious (b) Happy

(c) Jubilant (d) Serious

5. At what age was Yeats married?

(a) 51 (b) 52

(c) 53 (d) 54

6. Yeats compares Maud Gonne to?

(a) Venus (b) Zeus

(c) Helen (d) Mary

7. How is Anne sleeping?

(a) Anxiously (b) Calmly

(c) Restlessly (d) Happily

8. Does Yeats approve of physical beauty in the poem?

(a) Yes (b) No

(c) Can't say (d) May be

9. Whom did Maud Gonne marry?

(a) J. M. Synge (b) McBride

(c) Seamus Heaney (d) W. B. Yeats

10. Towards the end of the poem, what does Yeats imagine?

(a) His daughter's marriage (b) Her Death

(c) Her Education (d) Her Career

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

1. What does Yeats wish for her daughter?

2. What lessons does Yeats learn from his experiences of love with Maud Gonne?

3. Discuss the poet's concern for his daughter as revealed in the poem?

4. What according to you is the message that the poet wants to convey?

5. Why is Yeats so much worried about the future of his daughter?

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

1. In what respects can the poem be called a "modernist" poem? Elaborate.

2. Why is the speaker's tone so melancholic? Explain.

3. Give a critical appreciation of the poem. Can it be studied under feminist studies? Discuss.

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## 8.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 9: Indian Women Writers in English

### Structure

9.0 Introduction

9.1 Objectives

9.2 Indian Women Writers in English

9.2.1 Women Writers before Independence

9.2.2 Women Writers after Independence

9.2.3 Themes

9.2.4 Conclusion

9.3 Learning Outcomes

9.4 Glossary

9.5 Sample Questions

9.6 Suggested Readings

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### 9.0 Introduction

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Indian Women writing in English refers to the body of literature that is produced by Indian Women writers in Indian English. **Indian English Literature** is also referred as **Indian Writing in English**. Hence, it simply refers to the works that are written by Indian women authors in the English Language. It is apt to mention here that their native language needn't be English; they can have any of the numerous languages as their native language. This is popularly referred to, as **Indo-Anglian Literature**. Indian women writers have offered a new scope and magnitude to the literature of India. We know, it has developed sometime and it was not born out in one day. It took the efforts of many great personalities for several years to bring Indian English to the present climax of its existence. Here it must be made clear that Indian literature is not only about novels, but also about poetry and short stories. Before the birth of the novel in India, it is believed that many women writers composed songs, short stories and small plays. This fact echoes still that women were upholders of the rich Indian tradition of fables and storytelling.

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## 9.1 Objectives

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This unit aims to offer an understanding of the following objectives:

- Background of women writers in Indian Writing in English.
- To know the various works produced by women writers in Indian Writing in English.
- To know the variety of themes these women writers employ in their writing.

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## 9.2 Indian Women Writers in English

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There was a rush of women writers in the mid-nineteenth century, who attempted to write in English. Overtime, English literature has experienced some changes in the writing patterns. Women writers have fused the recurrent female experience in their writings, as a result of which the culture and language patterns of Indian literature got affected. The works of Indian women writers were previously undervalued for some patriarchal assumptions. Indian societies have prioritized the experience of male. The reason for this seems to be that women previously used to write about their experience in the domestic arena, while male authors used to deal with heavy themes. Hence, it was presumed and felt that their works would get more recognition and acceptance than women writers in society. This has had serious consequences on women's writing. All these factors led to the decline of women's writing. It was only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century more and more women participated in India's reformists' movement against the British rule. It again led to an increase in women's literature. However, their main emphasis was on the country's freedom struggle. Over the years, feminist ideologies began to influence the English literature of India.

Women writings were considered as a power source and a medium of modernism and feminist statements in the twentieth century. Feminist writings witnessed a phenomenal feat in Indian English Literature during the last decades of the twentieth century. We are in a period of those women writers who have money and were educated from the west. But they stress on the burning issues of our society associated with women since long. Their works are thoroughly enjoyed by general masses.

These women writes have used feminism recurrently in their works. **Feminism** is a belief that aims to fight for equality of all people irrespective of their gender, race, colour, or social status. Through their works, they display that women have realized that they are not helpless and

dependent. They argue that a female is as competent as a man. Today women have started to earn themselves. They are not anymore limited to household chores. Women of the modern era think on different lines and that is what we see in the works of these Indian women writers. They explore the feminine subjectivity and apply the themes that range from childhood to complete womanhood. It is by dint of their works that they aim to transport the message of feminism. They hold the view that feminism means an end to all woes and suffering of women in silence.

***Check your Progress***

1. Define Indo-Anglian Literature?
2. What is Feminism?

### **9.2.1 Women Writers before Independence:**

Today there are many women writers in India because writing is treated as a great profession now. Women don't hesitate to express themselves anymore. They vent their feelings or ideas through different genres like poetry, novels dramas, essay or short stories. They express their opinion not only about everyday life issues but also issues which are considered as taboo at least in the Indian context. We acknowledge these women writers because they assisted us to understand life. However, do you know any woman writer who wrote before the advent of Independence? It is interesting to know how those women writers expressed themselves, were there large chunk of women writers even before independence. It was hard for them to rise to such an occasion especially when the partition was on cards. We shall discuss some of the women writers who wrote before Independence.

**Kamini Roy:** We shall start with Kamini Roy who was born in 1866. She was a Bengali poetess and a feminist. She is believed to be the first woman to receive an honours graduate in British India. She came from an elite background. Her father was a judge and a poet. She had a passion for writing from her earlier days. She published her collection of poems in the form of a book called *Alo O Chhaya* only at the age of eight. Her other notable works are: *Mahasweta*, *Pundorik* etc.

**Ismat Chughtai:** If you are a lover of Urdu literature you must have heard her name as she is a very popular figure of Urdu Literature. She has produced many revolutionary works which have

created a long lasting impression on the minds of the readers. Like Kamini Roy she too wrote about issues which were considered offensive. She is one of those women writers who frankly penned about the same sexual desires. An important work of Ismat Chughtai is *Lihaaf*, although she was summoned in a court for its obscenity.

**Amrita Pritam:** She holds the honour of being the first female poet of Punjab. She wrote both in Hindi and Punjabi. She moved from Lahore to India at the time of partition. One thing must be admitted that she is loved and praised by the people of both countries for her artistic excellence.

*Aaj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu* is one of her poems treated as *Ode to Waris Shah*. This poem is believed to have been written in honour of the lives that were lost during the partition. This poem addresses Sufi poet Waris Shah, it presents a visualization of the massacre of partition.

**Krishna Sobti:** She is one of the notable Hindi women writers who were honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award. She received this prestigious award for her novel *Zindaginama*. She has a great place in *Hindi* Literature. Many of her works are translated into Urdu and English language for the convenience of the readers. She also became famous for her novel *Mirto Marajani* which was published in the year 1966. This novel exclusively deals with the theme of women sexuality. Some of her notable works are: *Yarron ka Yaar*, *Nafisa* and *Sika Badal Gaya*.

***Check your progress***

1. When did India achieve her Independence?
2. Who wrote *Lihaaf* ?
3. Which poem of Amrita Pritam is treated as an *Ode to Waris Shah*?
4. For which novel did Krishna Saboti receive the prestigious *Sahitya Akademi Award*?

### **9.2.2 Women Writers after Independence:**

India earned its fame as a nation with so many women authors making their way into the field of literature. Writers like Suniti Namjoshi, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Anuradha Marwah employed realism as the summation of their literary works. The list of women writers

comprises of the writers like: Bharti Mukherjee, Nargis Dalal, Krishna Sobti, Dina Mehta, Goswami Malta Chendur, Gauri Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Jumpha Lahiri, Manju Kapur, Gita Hariharan, Rama Mehta and many more. Through their writings, they have poignantly portrayed the world of women. They have developed their style of writing and voice the concerns of women effectively and appealingly. Writers like Kamla Markandaya, Anita Desai and Nayantara Sahgal cross the threshold of feminism and depict themes of alienation in the modern and urban city, tradition and modernity, east-west encounter and no doubt racial conflicts. Let us discuss some of them briefly for our understanding.

**Rama Mehta:** (1923-1978) born in Nanital, she is a sociologist and writer who rose to fame with her famous novel *Inside the Haveli* (1977). It depicts the efforts to present the dilemma of women caught between the clutches of tradition and will to be free and liberated. It is called the fictionalization of purdah among the Oswals of Mewar. It is filled with a sociological and moral vision. Geeta, the protagonist hails from the liberal family background. She loses the privacy and her lively spontaneity inside this Haveli as against her vigilant mother-in-law. She rarely speaks and she accepts the discipline without any protest. It is the maidservant Lakshmi, who is more courageous and refuses to submit to the system passively. Geeta, on the other hand, fails to fight against the system. Some of her works are: *The Western Educated Woman* (1970) *India Now and Through Time* (1971) *Divorced Hindu Woman* (1975) etc.

**Santha Rama Rau:** (1923-2009) she is an Indian American born writer, hailing from Chennai she is mainly famous for her travel writings. She gives vent to her observation of men, manners and cultures. Her important works like, *Home to India* (1945) and *Gifts of Pallage*, (1961) depict her love for India as well as the growth of her own-self as an artist. In her novels, we find a vivid description of the men, women and the events. Some of her works are: *Remember the House*, and *The Adventures*.

**Kamala Markandaya:** (1924-2004) a native of Mysore, she is a graduate of Madras University. She is a prolific writer and her works mostly deal with themes of tragic waste, despair, ruined love and no doubt the quest of self- realization. In one of her works, *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), she treats the theme of hunger and starvation in the context of Indian villages. Her range of themes is vast; *A Silence of Desire* (1960) deals with the theme of love and class conflict. Another work *The Coffer Dams* (1969) deals with the theme of a gigantic dam and its impact on

the lives of people. The theme of racial conflict is evident in her other novel *The Nowhere Man* (1972). Apart from this, cultural conflict is a recurrent theme in her works. In *Nectar in Sieve*, Rukmani represents east, while Dr. Kenny represents the west. Yet another work *Some Other Fury*, deals with political passion and patriotism. It is suggestive of passion for independence. *A Silence of Desire* portrays the east-west encounter in the form of conflict between the Indian spiritualism and western modernism. The reflection of conflict between science and superstition is shown through the conflict of husband and wife. The themes of her works are broader, wider and universal. Her fifth novel, *A Handful of Rice* (1966) is indicative of hunger for food. Her tragic vision has been presented with the greatest artistic skill in her works. The plots of Kamala Markandaya are well-knit with distinctive narrative techniques. There is a vivid portrayal of her characters. Her style is suggestive and flexible.

**Mahasweta Devi:** (1926-2016) is an Indian social activist and writer in Bengali. She is famous for her works related to *Lodhas* and *Shabars*, the tribal community of West Bengal. She is also an activist who dedicated her life to the struggles of tribal people in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chatisgarh. In her regional fiction, she often depicts the oppression done to tribal people by the authoritarian upper caste landlords and government officials. Postcolonial critic Gayatri Spivak has translated the short stories of Devi into English. Some of her notable works are: *Mother of 1084*, (1974), *Imaginary Maps* (1993) *Rudali* (1993) *Breast Stories* (1997),

**Ruth P. Jhabvala:** (1927-2013) was born of Polish parents in Germany; she married an architect and settled in India in 1951. Though she lives in India, she is unfamiliar with India. She does not seem to have much concern and sympathy for the poor and backward class of Indian society. Therefore, it would be feasible to comment that she is an Indo-Anglian writer with an outlandish attitude towards India. Her important works are: *The Nature of Passion* (1956), *Esmond in India* (1958), *The Householder* (1960), *Out of India* (1971), *Heat and Dust* (1975), *My Nine Lives* (1998) to name a few. Although aloof to Indian society she is still able to present the eccentric qualities of India that is why some of her novels are considered as social comedies. We find that irony, satire, skepticism are pooled together in her works. She won the prestigious award of Booker prize for her novel *Heat and Dust* in 1975. It is a remarkable work of art in style and technique. Her style is simple, comprehensive and spontaneous.

**Nayantara Sahgal:** (1927 till present) is the daughter of Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, sister of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. She is a gifted writer; most of her works are pregnant with the ideas of

human values and complex human relationship. Some of the important works of Nayantara Sahgal are: *A Time to Be Happy* (1958), *Storm in Chandigarh* (1969), *The Day in Shadow* (1971), *A New Situation in New Delhi* (1977), *Rich Like Us* (1985) and *Time of Morning* (2000). Since she has the taste of political nature and acquaintance with political people, therefore, the background of her political works is very much realistic; *A Time to Be Happy* portrays the coming of Indian Independence, while *The Time of Morning* summarizes political turmoil or happenings during the last years of Nehru's Prime-ministership. Her third novel, *Storm in Chandigarh*, reflects the events that followed the partition of Punjab into a Sikh dominated state and Haryana into a Hindu dominated one. Her works present the concern of Indian passive attitude which does not question or resist the narrow mindedness. *A Situation in New Delhi* deals with love and life of Devi, a minister. It is a novel about a petty politician without any morals. It also talks about frustrating minds or young people who then turn into terrorists. Most of her works present the theme of democratic ideas and freedom.

**Kamla Das:** (1934-2009) Hailing from Kerala and writing in Malayalam and English, she used Madhavikutty as her pen name. She adopted the name Kamla Suraiya after she embraced the religion of Islam. We all know her as a poetess; however, she earned name and fame even in the field of fiction. Her only two novels deal with the theme of identity crises in a male-dominated society. The story of an unmarried happy life is recurrent in the novel *Alphabet of Lust*. Mansi the protagonist was married to a man Amol Mitra double her age rather old enough to be her father. It is out of this disappointment and dejection that she became a poetess. She develops a relation with Vijay and shares bed with him and many others. Her other novels *A Doll for the Child Prostitute* predominantly talks about the theme of liberation and identity.

**Anita Desai:** (1937 till present) She is also known by the name of Anita Muzumdar. She was born in Mussoorie. She is among the few great writers who have created a long lasting impression on the minds of readers. Salman Rushdie admitted, "Anita Desai is one of India's major authors". She can be observed as a manifesto of the female dilemma. *Cry the Peacock* (1963) is a wonderful novel which aims to explore the stormy emotional world of Maya, the protagonist. The novel deals with the unhappy married life of Maya and Gautama. She is completely disturbed by the death of her pet dog Toto. It seems that her husband is unable to understand Maya and even speaks to her in a logician tone. Maya is astounded by the prophecy of an astrologer, who tells her, that she will lose her husband after four years of her marriage.

Jasbir Jain comments on this aspect and says that the central image of the novel is “the confrontation between life and death and on inability on Maya’s part to accept them as they are”. Her second novel *Voices in the City* (1965) is yet another psychological novel. It is a portrayal of the mental life of Monisha. Lack of communication and theme of alienation is concurrent in her other novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975). The novel is divided into three parts: present, past and future. The protagonist and her husband feel that they are inhabitants of two different worlds. *Bye Bye Black Bird* is filled with the theme of alienation and frustration of the immigrants in an alien country. The exploration of rootlessness and homesickness is predominant in this novel. The title of the novel *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) is taken from the novel *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. *Clear Light of the Day* highlights the theme of the effect of remembrance of the past on Bim and Tara. Some of her other works which deal with various themes like family, adventure and experience of life are: *The Village By the Sea* (1982) *In Custody* (1984) *Fasting Feasting* (1999) etc.

**Shashi Deshpande** (1938 to present) holds the reputation of being one of the prolific novelists of Indian English Fiction. She has written ten novels, many short stories, books for children which got published in the *Femina* and *Eves’ Weekly*. Her field of fiction has the power to generate interest and that is why she has received tremendous response from the critical fraternity. The plethora of critical works available on her fiction shows that the themes, concern, style, and technique of her works have been subjected to several critical interpretations. The critical scholarship on Deshpande is available mainly in the form of a few lengthy studies and many articles. Most of the articles which are available to us are generally written about the award-winning novels as such the other works of the novelist remain mostly unexplored. The award-winning novels like *The Dark Hold No Terror* 1980, *Roots and Shadows* 1983, and *That Long Silence* 1988 have been interpreted in every second article but the whole canvas is being least attend to. It is evident that once the critical analysis on her works is done, we are open to a broad pattern of observations in her fictional world, which can broadly be categorized in certain areas of interest and feminism being one of them. Some of her works are: *The Dark Holds No Terror* (1980), *If I Die Today* (1983), *Roots and Shadows* (1986), *That Long Silence* (1987), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A Matter of Time* (2000), *Small Remedies* (2002) and *Moving On* (2004). *The Legacy* (1978), *The Miracle* (1986), *It Was Dark* (1986), *It Was Nightingale* (1986),

**Bharti Mukherjee:** (1940-2017) She was an Indian American writer; she also served as professor emerita in the department of English at California University. She is a diaspora writer who settled abroad. She wrote beautiful novels like *Tiger's Daughter* (1971) *Wife* (1975) *Jasmine* (1989) *Desirable Daughters* (2002) *The Tree Bride* (2004) etc. The theme of sensibility of the immigrants in America is pressed in the novel *Tiger's Daughter* and *Wife*. Her work *Jasmine* is a widely recognized novel not only in India but also in countries like Vietnam. Most of her works whether novels or short stories reflect the culture and experience of immigrants.

**Gita Mehta:** (1943 till present) She is Delhi based writer who established her reputation with novels like *Karma Cola* (1979) *Raj* (1988) *A River Sutra* (1993) *Snake and Ladders* (1997) *Eternal Ganesha* (2006). The issue of old age tradition turning into commodities is at the heart of the novel *Karma Cola*. *Raj* is a novel about the civil wars of independence. While *A River Sutra* is the story of a bureaucrat who retires to a sacred river in search of tranquility but encounters a girl who has run away from the kidnapers. Through the portrayal of the monk, religious vanity has been exposed. She is critical of the hypocrisy of the religious beliefs and practices. She presents a contradictory world of religious practices in India.

**Shobha De:** (1948 till present) starting her career as journalist Shobha De became, a household name in the field of fiction. It would be fit to mention that she edited the *Stardust, Society and Celebrity*. She even wrote columns in leading newspapers of India like *The Times of India*. She has penned down many novels some of them are: *Socialite Evening* (1989) *Starry Nights* (1989) *Sisters* (1992) *Sultry Days* (1994) *Shooting from the Hip* (1994) *Small Betrayals* (1995) *Second Thoughts* (1996) *Selective Memory* (1998) *Speedpost* (1999) *Spouse* (2005) *Shoba De at Sixty* (2010) *Shetaji* (2012) and many others. She is indeed among the few novelists of India who talks frankly and forthrightly about the sex issues. She is essentially a feminist writer. She tries to highlight the moral and spiritual vacuum of modern men and women in urban society. Her style of writing is simple racy and metamorphic.

**Manju Kapur:** (1948 till present) is now undoubtedly an established and endorsed writer in the Indian English fiction. She has attracted and extracted a lot of debate from the great thinkers and critics. Her fiction has a bottomless potential and can be interpreted from several angles. Her books are 'writerly texts' with a treasure of meanings. They please the readers as well as brainwash the misled people. Although she has been commented upon for her feministic

concerns and the treatment of gender issues, yet there is still tremendous scope for more study to explore other numerous aspects which her works deal with. The critical studies that are available on Kapur's writings show that she has been read and researched for only small projects like research papers, reviews and articles. There is no elaborative study on her novels separately. On the whole, whatever the readers have done, it provides a partial glimpse of her multi-dimensional books. Therefore, the need is to attempt an all-comprehensive and all-inclusive study on Manju Kapur. Her Important works: *Difficult Daughters* (1998), *A Married Woman* (2003), *Home* (2006), *Immigrants* (2009), *In Custody* (2011) and *Brothers* (2016).

**Sudha Murthy:** (1950 till present) has reached her destination the hard way. She shouldered many responsibilities on the way like supporting her illustrious husband. She has fulfilled her dreams, though it appears she has always taken a back seat in life, she now heads Infosys Foundation, she is a teacher, an engineer and writer. Some of her works are: *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories* (2002), *Wise and Others* (2002), *Mahashweta* (2000), *Dollor Bahu* (2003), *The Day I Stopped Drinking Milk* (2012), and *The Magic of the Lost Temple* (2015) etc.

She draws experiences from the busy life in her writing. Told simply, her stories are about everyday matters and issues that are clearly evident to relate. For example, her book *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*, narrates her childhood experiences of growing up under the supervision of grandparents. "It doesn't matter how intelligent you are, how well off you are, or how well connected you are. Your perseverance, your courage - if you keep that intact, only such people will always be successful." Having worked with people from different walks of life, Sudha Murthy believes that her true calling is to serve others.

**Gita Hariharan** (1954 till present) being one of the prolific novelists, she has earned name and fame in Indian English writing. She too has vividly explored the world of women. She scores the reputation of being one of the feminist novelists of India. She has been worked upon but there is still scope for research in her works, because the fictional world and canvas of Gita Hariharan are broad. Her important works are: *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), *The Art of Dying and Other Stories* (1993), *The Ghosts of Vasu Master* (1994), *When Dreams Travel* (2008), *In Times of Siege* (2003), *The Winning Team* (2004) and *Fugitive Histories* (2009)

**Namita Gokhale:** (1956 till present) She is an Indian writer who wrote almost twenty books including some works of fiction. Her remarkable novel, *Paro: Dreams of Passion* (1984) reflects the higher strata of society, the rich business class people, politicians and bureaucrats. The novel is believed to have autobiographical elements. It is filled with psychological and sexual overtones. In *Paro*, sex is identical to the search for identity and creativity. Her style of writing is also peculiar. She is one of those writers who provide vent to their feministic gumptions through their works. Some of her important works are: *A Himalayan Love Story* (1996), *Mountain Echoes* (1998), *The Book of Shadows* (1999), *Things to Leave Behind* (2016) etc.

**Gita Sahgal:** (1956 till present) born in Bombay, she is a writer and journalist who writes on issues of feminism, fundamentalism and racism. She is the director of a prize-winning documentary. She is also a human rights activist. She has been a co-founder of the women's organization. She is the daughter of famous novelist Nayantara Sahgal. Among the famous writings and film production of Gita Sahgal are: *Tying the Knot* (2002) and she co-edited *Refusing Holy Orders: Women and Fundamentalism in Britain* with Nira Yaul Divas. In her early years in Delhi, she was a part of a feminist network, which fought against the laws of dowry and rape.

**Arundhati Roy:** (1961 till present) Popularly known as Suzanna Arundhati Roy, leapt to fame with her novel, *The God of Small Things* (1997). She is a writer as well as a socio political activist. She became a millionaire celebrity writer. The thematic concern of the novel is oppression and exploitation. This novel is a story of a Syrian Christian family in Aymen. Papachi is the head of the family, who comes to his ancestral house in Kerala to spend his retirement. Papachi had to strife and struggle hard to make his profile that of a sophisticated, generous and moral man but at home, he is a monstrous bully with his children and wife. Mammachi's tale is, therefore, a tale of inhuman suffering caused by her husband. She runs a small scale pickle shop to sustain her family. Velutha, a Parvan has an affair with Ammu. He is a skilled carpenter. He joins the communist party as a member but suffers from class distinction and as a result of which he suffers and dies. He is "The God of Small Things". He left no imprints in the sands, no ripples in the water, and no image in mirrors.

Arundhati won Booker Prize for this novel in 1997. This novel earned harsh critical as well as laudatory reviews. Stream of consciousness technique has been used in this novel. This

novel holds the rare distinction of being a novel with unconventionality of structure and chronology of the narrative. Some of her other popular works are: *The End of Imagination* (1998) *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001) *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) *My Seditious Heart* (2019) *Azadi* (2020) etc.

**Kiran Desai:** (1971 till present) is an Indian author, her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) won the Man Booker Prize in 2006. She is the daughter of Anita Desai who was herself shortlisted for the Booker Prize on three occasions. Kiran Desai's first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* was published in 1998. It received accolades from all corners by reputed authors. It won the Bretty Task Award. Her second book, *The Inheritance of Loss* was widely acknowledged and praised by critics throughout Asia, Europe and the United States. She was awarded the 2013 Berlin Fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin. Some of her works are: *WinQSB* (2003) *Emblems of Transformation* (2015).

**Ira Trivedi:** (1938) Born in Lucknow, she is an author, yoga teacher and speaker. Her published works are, *What Would You Do to Save the World?* (2006) *The Great Indian Love Story* and *There is No Love on Wall Street* (2009) all of which have been translated into some regional languages. Her latest book, *There is No Love on Wall Street* (2011) was released at Jaipur Literary Festival by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Junot Diaz which was translated into Greek and Spanish. *What Would You do to Save the World*, is the story of good looking intelligent graduate in management who dreams of becoming a Miss India ever since her childhood. Her second novel, *The Great Indian Love Story*, talks about lavish parties, coke mafia, sexed-up dolls and raunchy extramarital affairs. It also talks about how youngsters get trapped and lose themselves in the world of drugs and sex and finally end up losing their life. An important thing to mention here is that most of her protagonists are named Riya in her works. The reason is still unknown why she names them as Riya.

Continuing with the ritual of naming her protagonists as Riya *There is no Love on the Wall Streets* (2011) tells the story of a pre-medical student who gives up the life of latex gloves for the charms of Wall Street. Trivedi writes for many leading magazines and newspapers, some of her other works include book reviews too. Trivedi being a yoga teacher teaches at Sivananda yoga centers across the country. Hence, it is proven that Indian Literature is equally enriched by women writers. Every one of them deals with issues related to society, culture, identity,

oppression and exploitation, self- actualization and realization or any other important feministic issue.

***Check your progress***

1. Who wrote *Inside the Haveli*?
2. *Nectar in Sieve* was published in the year?
3. Whose daughter is Nayantara Sehgal?
4. Who adopted her name as Kamla Suriaya after embracing the religion of Islam?

**9.2.3 Themes:**

Indian Women writing in English has become a powerful means of late in the twentieth century. These writers have dealt both with issues that are current and burning as well as issues and concern which are prevalent in our society since long. The range varies from childhood themes to state of womanhood. Writers like Shashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Kamla Markandya have highlighted the problems which women confront in a male dominated society. We also see that women writers have depicted the theme of realism in their works. The works of Arundhati Roy, Nargis Dalai, Bharti Mukherjee, and Namita Gokhle are rich in such themes. While writers like Shobha De and Manju Kapur are outspoken, they have boldly discussed the issue of sisterhood in their works. In addition to this some of the common themes employed by women writers are: female subjectivity, alienation, domestic violence, patriarchy sexual abuse, decision making, love, motherhood etc.

**9.2.4 Conclusion:**

We may conclude by saying that there are many accomplished women writers in English. They have achieved great success among the literary fraternity. They are sensitive to the issues that have been neglected since ages. They have ensured that they are not entrapped by the boundaries of customs and tradition. They break the silence and emerge as victorious. Hence they free themselves from the sense of enslavement to emancipation.

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### 9.3 Learning Outcomes

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The students will get an idea about the various women writers in Indian Writing in English. They will understand the variety of themes that are employed by these women writers. The unit further enables the students to know the pre-independence and post-independence women writers. Students are informed about the social political and cultural issues related to Indian Writing in English with reference to women education, and empowerment in the present times. It will help to instil the values of morality, ethics and courage to stand against all odds and to develop humanistic concern among students.

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### 9.4 Glossary

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**Obscenity:** Vulgarity.

**Climax:** Peak of something or the highest level.

**Patriarchy:** A system of society where men are considered powerful and women are excluded.

**Feminism:** It is a range of social, political and economic movements that aims to create an equal opportunity for both genders.

**Gender bias:** It is feeling or behaviour that shows favouritism towards one gender over others mostly men over women and boy over girls.

**Protagonist:** The main character of the story around whom the entire work revolves.

**Autobiographical:** A self-written story of one's own life.

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### 9.5 Sample Questions

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#### 9.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Indo Anglian Literature is also called Indian Writing in English\_\_\_\_\_ Yes/No
2. Feminism is belief that aims to fight for equality of all genders\_\_\_\_\_ Yes/No
3. Amrita Pritam writes in Punjabi\_\_\_\_\_ True/False
4. Krishna Saboti writes in Hindi \_\_\_\_\_ True/False
5. Where was Kamla Das born\_\_\_\_\_?

6. Whose work is *That Long Silence*\_\_\_\_\_?
7. *Sika Badal Gaya* is written by\_\_\_\_\_?
8. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* was published in the year\_\_\_\_\_?
9. *Cry the Peacock* is psychological novel\_\_\_\_\_ Yes/No
10. *The Great Indian Love Story* is written by\_\_\_\_\_

### 9.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on feminism?
2. Discuss some of the pre- independence women writers?
3. Write a brief note on the works of Anita Desai?
4. Discuss Kamla Das as a Poet?
5. Throw some light on the life of Shashi Deshpande.

### 9.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Write a detailed note on Post-Independence women writers?
2. Elaborate some of the common themes prevalent in the Indian Women Writings.
3. Discuss Arundhati Roy as a feminist writer?

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## 9.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Basu, Aparna. *Women in Indian Society*. New Delhi: Pratham Books, 1990. Print.
2. Bharat, Meenakshi. *Desert in Bloom: Contemporary Indian Women's Fiction in English*. eds. Meenakshi, Bharat. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2004. Print.
3. Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. *Indian Writing in English*. London: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 2012. Print.
4. Jain, Jasbir. *Women Writing Across Cultures*. New Dehli: Rawat Publication. 2002. Print.
5. Valenti, Jessica. *Feminism: A Young Women's Guide to Why Feminism Matters*. Seal Press: 2014. Print
6. Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. New Delhi: Foundation, 1929. Print.

## **Unit - 10: *Marriages Are Made***

### **Structure**

**10.0** Introduction

**10.1** Objectives

**10.2** *Marriages Are Made*

10.2.1 Summary

10.2.2 Critical appreciation

**10.3** Learning Outcomes

**10.4** Glossary

**10.5** Sample Questions

**10.6** Suggested Readings

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### **10.0 Introduction**

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Indian English women's poetry is seen as revolutionary and confessional in its form. The women poets have carved poems out of their familial spaces. These writers have condemned and dismantled the patriarchal structures that keep women in shackles. Through their writings, they have voiced the sufferings of females that remain subdued due to the patriarchal structures. Eunice de Souza is one of the famous confessional female poets from India who is often compared to Sylvia Plath in her style of writing. Eunice de Souza through her writing pictures the alienation that a woman suffers when she is clutched in socially imposed identity. She is asked to behave in accordance with such identity throughout her life without any dissatisfaction and bitterness. She has written about the complexity of the female psyche, love, sexuality, and the dilemma that a female suffers in society. This chapter will discuss in detail one of Eunice de Souza's famous poems "*Marriages are Made*" which talks about how marriages are executed in Indian society.

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### **10.1 Objectives**

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The following objectives will be achieved in this unit.

- Introduction to Eunice de Souza as an important Indian female writer in English.
- Introduction to the poem, “Marriages are made” by Eunice de Souza.
- Explain the outlook of the poetess on marriage.
- Analysis, summary and explanation of the poem.
- Attempt examination based questions without any difficulty.

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## 10.2 *Marriages Are Made*

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Eunice de Souza is widely regarded as one of the best female Indian poets writing in English. She was born on August 1, 1940, in a Goan Catholic family and took heavenly abode on July 29, 2017. Her father died when she was three years old and was raised without a father in Pune. She started her early education in the same place. She pursued her master's in English Literature from Marquette University in Wisconsin. She finished her Ph.D. at the University of Bombay. She is a renowned poet, novelist, and literary critic who carved her space in Indian Writing in English. She started her teaching career at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, and served the institution for around three decades until her retirement.

Eunice de Souza started her literary career as a writer by publishing a variety of writings including poems, novels, articles, etc. She engaged herself as an actor and a director in the theatre. She was also associated with a famous literary festival called *Ithaka* organized in St. Xavier College, Mumbai. She started her career as a poet and published.

- *Fix (1979)*
- *Women in Dutch Painting (1988)*
- *Ways of Belonging (1990)*
- *Selected and New Poems (1994)*
- *A Necklace of Skulls (2009)*
- *Learn from the Almond Leaf (2016)*

Eunice de Souza experimented with novel writing after two decades of poetry writing with *Dangerlok* (2001) as her first published novel. It was followed by *Dev And Simran* (2003), and four children books. She contributed extensively as a columnist on a variety of topics from history, art, literature, politics, and she drew a number of issues from her personal life as well for the *Mumbai Mirror*. She has edited many anthologies and collections for *Mumbai Mirror*. *Dangerlok* turned out to be a big success and the book follows the story of Rina Ferreira a middle-aged woman who is a lecturer in English literature and a poet. It gives insight into her life as the survival of a single woman in Mumbai. The second novel, *Dev And Simran* is a story about a young couple living in Bombay, coping up with the conditions in the city and everyday married life followed by the loss of a child. After sometime Dev also dies and Simran is left alone in the vastness of the city. With the help of few close-knit friends, she tries to come out of her suffering. It is a magnificent novel that celebrates agonies and ordinary moments in life. Her work speaks volumes about her writing as she became the only woman to be included in the *Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992). She edited a number of books, including the anthology, *Nine India Woman Poets*, which is actually a history of poems of Indian women writing in English. Through her writing, she gives a profound understanding of contemporary society and various extensive relationships in urban Indian societies. She has dealt extensively with the plight of women in urban contemporary India who work hard for their daily needs and the alienation, rebellion, agony, and isolation that accompanies womanhood in such a challenging environment. Her poems commonly explore the theme of loss, alienation, and isolation that accompany womanhood. In her writings especially poetry she used everyday English and draws from her experiences of the Goan Community. She has enthusiastically questioned the patriarchal structures in the society in all the religions followed in India especially the rigid structures in Christian society.

Eunice De Souza remained single throughout her life and cared for her mother until her death. Ranjit Hoskote upon the death of Eunice de Souza in 2017 said that she had a liberating approach for young women poets. He says that her poetic style is one where there is wisdom in her poetry wrapped with a voice, with a dry humour that has taken a minimalist form in her last collection of poems with a clear representation of thoughts. Eunice de Souza, through her work has left a mark on the generations to come.

### **Themes in the poetry of Eunice de Souza:**

#### 1) Sexuality

The theme of female sexuality reverberates throughout Eunice de Souza's poetry. The contemporary women poets have unabashedly spoken their minds out while dealing with anger, agonies, pain, anxieties that a woman undergoes at some point in her life, sometimes during her adolescence, marriage, sexual relationships, motherhood, etc. they celebrate their sexual identity and female body. These writers deal with the theme of changes happening in the female body during pregnancy. They have carved their way to speak about sexual freedom and they have voiced themselves as a living entity that was earlier considered dead or muted in male writings. These contemporary Indian women writers have embraced their bodily existence themselves and have inspired many other Indian women, overturning the male domination through their writings. The frankness with which they write about male-female sexual relationship sets a strong voice against the patriarchy. K.D. Singh comments on the post-independence contemporary female writers, "The post-Independence, post-colonial era in India has been a phase of intense introspection, search for roots and identity." (*Feminism and Post-feminism: The Context of Modern Indian Women Poets* 58). In Eunice de Souza's poem *Fix* (1979), she writes about the adolescent experience of a girl growing up in her fifties in a Goan- Catholic male-dominated society. The poem is a response to the expression of the female body which has a 'performative' voice in it as suggested by Eunice de Souza. She gives significant importance to the female body and sexuality in her poetry. She portrays a combative picture of the female body, 'sense of touch', 'flow of blood', 'speech of sex' etc. In her another poem, (*A Necklace of Skulls* 24), she writes about female sexuality explicitly,

*The blood congeals at lover's touch*

*The guts dissolve in shit. (A Necklace of Skulls 24)*

In her works, there is a constant sadness about the situation of women in the patriarchal society and she tries to free women from the chains of male-dominated traditions through the explicit use of sexual language. The poem, *Marriages Are Made* by Eunice de Souza engages the reader with the same question of female desire and sexuality which society tries to curb through traditions. It is through their writings Eunice and her contemporaries posit how patriarchy had restrained them within the four walls and had stopped them to speak out their minds. She as a writer writes from the female perspective and envisages her needs and desires of the female body. She openly talks about various dimensions of sex and man-woman sexual relationship. Her writing is an act of 'feminist resistance.' She uses the language as a tool of resistance against

male-domination and patriarchal enforcement. She articulates a powerful voice against patriarchy in her writing as done in *Marriages are Made*, she confronts and critiques the old rules, established notions. Eunice de Souza in *A Necklace of Skull* talks about universal female sexual desires and the affliction that surrounds them, she writes:

*The skin tight*

*Over my bones*

*I thought the whole world*

*Was trying to rip me up.*

*Cut me down go through me*

*With a razor blade. (28-29)*

Eunice de Souza in the following lines talks about sexual fulfilment by a female in a patriarchal society,

*Marie, my frequent sexual encounters*

*represent more than an attempt*

*to find mere physical fulfillment.*

*They are a poet's struggle to*

*transcend the self/and enter into*

*communion/With the world.*

*Write a poem about women flesh.*

*Watch her become oh womanly and grateful. (18-19)*

It can be concluded that Eunice de Souza in her poems celebrates the female body, female sexuality, and female pregnancy. The female body is a site of resistance against the patriarchy. It is full of "biological sexual" function, needs, and desires. The expression and vocabulary used by Eunice are seen as nasty and unpleasant by the male-dominated society but she daringly

expresses her thoughts and feelings in her work. In her poetry, the body is considered the central focus that makes her poetry interesting. As a contemporary poem it focuses on the relationships devoid of emotional interaction that most females suffer in the lifetime at one point or another. Her approach to love, sex, and the female body is not only unconventional but also revolutionary. In their poetry body loses all its relevance in that love-relationship which is devoid of emotional interaction. Thus, the representation of the sexuality of females has carved out a space for contemporary female poets to articulate the subjugation as universal.

## 2) Confessional Poetry

Writing in a confessional mode, Eunice de Souza is often compared to Sylvia Plath. In her poems, she reflects upon the harsh realities of the Goan male-dominated catholic community. The treatment of women and injustice done at the hands of the male is clearly portrayed in her writing. In addition to this, she describes the state of affairs and interdictions which tells us about her education as a young girl in a male-dominated society. She is agitated over the loss of female dignity in society as a result of decreasing human values which are deep-rooted in patriarchy that the poet brings forth in her work. Her work is a socio-cultural document of the Goan Catholic community where she yearns for dignity and equality.

In one of her poems, *Forgive Me Mother*, she writes about the death of her father and de Souza taking place of her father. It is often seen in parallel to Sylvia Plath's poems about her father, *Daddy*. She chooses a confessional mode in *A Necklace of Skulls* where girls are taught to use "bracelet" for "brassieres" etc. the preachers did not allow boys and girls to be together at a young age,

*The preacher thundered:*

*Never go with a man alone*

*Never alone*

*And even if you're engaged*

*Only passionless kisses. (6)*

Due to such a strict, restricted and conservative society, many girls remain ignorant about their sexuality. Thus in the poem *Fix*, she writes about a young girl asking about pregnancy, "Can it

happen when you're in a dance hall I mean, you know what, getting preggers and all that, when You're dancing?" In Eunice de Souza's poem *Catholic Mother* her tone is resentful and defiant and it depicts her loss of faith in God:

*We're One Big Happy Family,*

*God Always provides*

*India will suffer for*

*her Wicked Ways*

(These Hindu buggers got no ethics).

De Souza represents the position of the mother in a Goan Catholic family as she enjoys a place of superiority in the family. Adil Jussawalla mentions significantly that: "Those readers who prefer a softer or more lyrical line around its edge may find it extremely unpleasant." (90) De Souza's poetry is often seen as "a betrayal" by her community for unabashedly portraying a disparaging picture of her community.

To conclude, Eunice de Souza uses the confessional mode of writing as an instrument to exploit and break open the chains of patriarchy. She cries out for the lost dignity of the females in Indian society which is predominantly a male-dominated society. Along with other contemporary female poets, they celebrate the existence of being a female, her body, her needs, sexuality, and desires. They have overturned the image of females as voiceless and fragile. These poets have presented females in decorated *avatars* as they hurl themselves from the shackles of patriarchy. In this respect, Amrita Raj Gargey opines, "The Contemporary Indian Women writers have taken utmost care in expressing their identity and sentiments effectively". (209)

### ***Marriages are Made***

*My cousin Elena*

*is to be married*

*The formalities*

*have been completed:*

*her family history examined*

*for T.B. and madness  
her father declared solvent  
her eyes examined for squints  
her teeth for cavities  
her stools for the possible  
non-Brahmin worm.  
She's not quite tall enough  
and not quite full enough  
(children will take care of that)  
Her complexion it was decided  
would compensate, being just about  
the right shade  
of rightness  
to do justice to  
Francisco X. Noronha Prabhu  
good son of Mother Church.*

**-by Eunice De Souza**

### **10.2.1 Summary:**

*Marriages are made* is a beautiful poem written by Eunice de Souza. In the poem, Eunice de Souza describes that her cousin is going to get married and how she has been selected to get married after fulfilling different criteria set by our society. She writes that how her cousin, a young girl, is made to suffer at the hand of society when it comes to choosing her as a bride. She is objectified and muted at the same time where she is not allowed to voice her opinion. She tells the reader that a girl has to go through various criteria set for her and once she fulfils those only then she is liable to marry or chosen to be a bride for the groom. These tests include examining her physical attributes such as: looks, height, weight, complexion, etc. She is judged for her character in addition to this; her family history is also checked. The whole process is carried out by the family members from the groom's side, not the bride. The boy and girl going to marry are not allowed to see each other before marriage. She writes that the physical attributes of a girl decide whether she qualifies as a bride or not. Such traditions are blindly followed by people while making the important decision of someone else's life.

Elena's family is examined, to know if they have any family medical history related to TB and madness. Many people check about these things to avoid springing of such diseases in generations to follow. After completely examining the formalities related to family background, now she will be examined as if by a physician. No discrepancy of any sort is entertained therefore, to begin with, her eyes are checked properly to ensure if they are alright without any uneven and should be attractive enough to catch hold of an onlooker. Next, her teeth are examined for cavities so that she has a beautiful smile on her face. Her stool is metaphorically checked to possibly see the non-Brahmin worm which indicates she should belong to the same community as that of the groom i.e., she should be a Christian. Further, she writes that her height is examined as she is not that tall and her weight is also fine. Her skin complexion is regarded as just fine to compensate which is a satire on how Indian society prefers a girl with a fair complexion. She writes her complexion will do justice to her to be husband Francisco X which also shows that if a man has darker skin it is accepted by society.

The whole procedure of approving a girl for marriage is based on certain criteria that a girl should be fair, beautiful, good-natured, tall, and slim. If she satisfies all such needs then she is selected as a good match. While selecting a girl, no importance given to the understanding between boy and girl or qualities of her as a human being rather selection process is completely based on the outer appearance of a girl than her inner beauty. The girl who is getting married, is made artificial and distant as is restricted to an object or present to be taken for the groom. She is muted as she cannot have any say in anything related to the process and marriage.

Eunice de Souza brings forth the patriarchal set up that governs a woman to perform various roles and duties assigned to her.

### **10.2.2 Critical Appreciation:**

This poem by Eunice de Souza is a critical commentary on the institution of marriage in our society. It explains to us about how women are the sufferers of a patriarchal institution as it does not allow women to voice their choices and hence, they feel alienated from society. Marriage is an important institution/ custom that governs our life. It is supposed to be the harbinger of peace, prosperity, and happiness in the life of people getting married. In many cases, it has been observed the way this institution works in our society bounds women to perform their duties as a wife irrespective of their happiness.

Through her work, Eunice de Souza, attacks the emptiness of a common saying in our society that ‘marriages are made in heaven’. In her title of the poem which is a reduced version of the above saying “Marriages are Made”, she leaves an open-ended question for the reader to interpret. The reader is to decide whether Marriages are made in heaven or is it the society that makes it happen. The critical reading of Eunice’s poem reflects that the institution of marriage is socially constructed. It takes a dig on society; the way people invoke to humiliate a woman to undergo preparations of marriage. The society makes her undergo all sorts of physical and family background examinations. The process of a woman’s examination reflects the subjugation of women in a patriarchal society where the match-maker or family of the boy are no less than vultures hovering above her.

A woman has to prove herself worthy of the prospective bridegroom. Her family history is thoroughly scrutinized to know if any disease that prevails in the family like TB or madness. Her eyes are checked for squints and her teeth are checked for cavities, other than this her family background is also checked to confirm if she belongs to the same community and is a non-Brahmin. It also highlights the fact that the male dominated society leaves no space for women who are average looking, who have a physical ailment or if any disease runs in their blood line. She is looked down upon by the prospective groom’s family and the society as well. Here, another important fact that no one asks about the physical attributes of the groom if he compliments the girl or if he has any disease history in his family.

While all these formalities are being carried out there is no one thinks about her feeling if she is happy with the match and if she really wants this marriage. The patriarchal institution of marriage does not give any value to her emotions. The process of approval tears apart her body and soul as two different entities. It is evident from her writing that preference is given to the physical appearance of a woman than her feelings. Eunice overturns the romantic notion of marriage which involves the union of man and woman. She has made use of litotes to portray an image of Elena based on negation. She has not used similes, metaphors. It is evident that even though the poem is about Elena’s marriage but she is a subdued figure in the poem and a streak of male domination is clearly seen. There is an effect of understatement that is present throughout the poem. Just like a woman is secondary for society, her feelings are secondary and no preference is given to her feelings, almost like a doll without any emotions. The same effect is given by Eunice in her poem ‘Marriages are Made’ with the use of litotes. The poem is almost

like a monologue by a third person i.e., the poet who is also the narrator of the poem. The poem is written in free verse.

At the end of the poem, the name of the prospective bridegroom is mentioned i.e., Francisco X, who is portrayed as a lord/ master to Elena which highlights the fact that Elena is bound to serve her master throughout her life. It is a satire on the bond of marriage which demands equal love and respect is put at a toss as the man in the bond automatically acquires a higher status before marriage due to a patriarchal setup in our society.

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### 10.3 Learning Outcomes

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The learner is expected to get acquainted with Indian writing in English. The learner will learn about the contribution of female writers in Indian Writing in English with a special focus on Eunice de Souza's writings as she is the only female writer to be included in the *Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets* (1992). The learner by now must have got a good hold on the poem *Marriages are Made* discussed in detail. The problem of marriage as a socially constructed institution is discussed through the reading of the poem. The plight of a woman and the humiliation she has to undergo before she gets approved for the prospective bridegroom. The learner must have also learned about the patriarchal structure that has marginalized women as objects who do not have a voice and are rendered mute. Further, the learner can read the books provided in the suggested readings to read more about the contribution of female writers and Eunice de Souza's writings in detail. After the detailed study of the poem, the learner will be able to write questions in the examination without any difficulty.

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### 10.4 Glossary

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**Confessional:** Something in the manner or style of a confession.

**Condemned:** Express one's disapproval over something.

**Dismantled:** Take to pieces.

**Patriarchal:** A society in which male holds an upper position to that of a female.

**Shackles:** A pair of fetters connected by a chain that restricts the movement.

**Alienation:** A state of disassociating with something that you do not feel.

**Clutched:** To grasp or hold something tightly

**Suffering:** A painful prolonged experience.

**Sprawling:** Spreading and expanding at a faster pace.

**Colloquial:** Pertaining to everyday language use, not formal.

**Enthusiastically:** Said in a loud and forceful manner.

**Reduced:** To shorten something.

**Dig:** In a mocking and insulting manner.

**Invoke:** To implore someone to do something.

**Subjugation:** To bring someone under one's domination.

**Prospective:** Something that is expected to happen in future.

**Understatement:** To present something small or less important than it really is.

**Litotes:** It is an understatement which is expressed with use of a negative.

**Humiliation:** The state of being humbled or reduced to submission.

**Rendered:** To cause, to become

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## 10.5 Sample Questions

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### 10.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. In the poem, more emphasis is given to
  - (a) Worth of the female
  - (b) Physical attributes
  - (c) Education
  - (d) Material possession
2. Elena is a victim of the society's
  - (a) Patriarchal set up
  - (b) Male domination
  - (c) Rules and customs set forth by the society
  - (d) All of the above
3. Marriages in society are the consequence of
  - (a) Heaven
  - (b) Society
  - (c) Females
  - (d) One's own will
4. Eunice de Souza was born in a

- (a) Parsi Community
  - (b) Goan Hindu Community
  - (c) Goan Catholic Community
  - (d) Jewish Community
5. The poem, “Marriages are Made” talks about
- (a) Women empowerment
  - (b) Victimization of women
  - (c) Self-love of women
  - (d) Independence of women
6. The contemporary female poets talk about
- (a) Sexuality
  - (b) Agonies and sufferings of females.
  - (c) Female psychology
  - (d) All of the above
7. The voice of Elena is rendered mute as
- (a) She chooses not to speak
  - (b) She is physically disabled
  - (c) She is not allowed to voice herself
  - (d) None of the above
8. Which of the following is not written by Eunice de Souza
- (a) *Fix*
  - (b) *Women in Dutch Painting*
  - (c) *The Stinking Rose*
  - (d) *Ways of Belonging*
9. What is the name of Elena’s prospective husband?
- (a) Frazer
  - (b) Francisco X
  - (c) Franklin
  - (d) Peter
10. Elena is checked for which of the following things to become a bride
- (a) Teeth
  - (b) Eyes

- (c) Complexion
- (d) All of the above

### 10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Why does the poet say ‘Marriages are Made?’
2. Explain the poet’s view on how marriages are executed in Indian society.
3. Give a critical appreciation of the poem “Marriages are Made”.
4. Give the sum and substance of the poem “Marriages are Made”.
5. How oppression against women is reflected in Eunice de Souza’s poetry?

### 10.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss Eunice de Souza’s poem ‘Marriages are Made’ as a comment on the way society treats a woman.
2. Comment on the title of the poem by Eunice de Souza, ‘Marriages are Made’.
3. Discuss how Elena is marginalised during the process of selection as a bride for prospective groom with special reference to the poem, ‘Marriages are Made.’

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## 10.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Acharya, Shanta. “On poetry and the creative process”. *Indian English Women Poets*.  
Ed. Anisur Rahman and Ameena Kazi Ansari. Creative Books, 2009.
2. Albertazzi, Silvia. “The Indian Women, the Body and the Flesh: Re-reading Some Poems  
by Kamala Das, de Souza and Bhatt”. *Discussing Indian Women Writers Some  
Feminist Issues*. Ed. Alessandro Monti and R.K. Dhawan. Prestige Books, 2002.
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4. Bartky, Sandra Lee. “On Psychological Oppression.” *Philosophy and Women*. Ed. Sharon  
Bishop and Marjorie Weinzig. Wordsworth, 1979.

5. Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. Routledge Classics, 2013.
6. Chaudhuri, Sutapa. "Sutapa Chaudhuri: The Poems of Sujata Bhatt". 3-4. Web. 28 Jan. 2014. < <http://www.museindia.com/regularcontent.asp?issid=47&id=3924>
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DeSouza, Eunice and Melanie Silgado. *Puffin Book of Poetry for Children: 101 Poems*. Paperback, 2005.
10. Dwivedi, A.K. *Spectrum History of Indian English Literature in English*. Eds. Ram Sewak & Charu Sevak Singh. Atlantic, 1999.  
---*Early Indian Poetry in English: An Anthology 1829-1947*. Paperback, 2010.
11. King, Bruce. *Modern Indian Poetry in English*. Oxford University Press, 1987.
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---*Women's Voices: Selections from Nineteenth and Early- Twentieth Century Indian Writing in English: Selections From 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Indian Writing in English*. Paperback, 2003.

# Unit - 11: Gynocriticism

## Structure

### 11.0 Introduction

### 11.1 Objectives

### 11.2 Gynocriticism

#### 11.2.1 Background: Feminism

#### 11.2.2 Feminist Literary Criticism

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## 11.0 Introduction

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This unit is about Gynocriticism or ‘gynocritics’, a reading practice that involves women reading texts written by women as a distinct literary tradition. The purpose of this unit is to introduce you to a strand of feminist literary criticism known as Gynocriticism. This unit is divided into sub-categories so that you get familiar with the context that led to the emergence of Gynocriticism. It introduces you to the rise of feminism, the history of feminist literary criticism and then finally the place of Gynocriticism within feminist literary criticism.

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## 11.1 Objectives

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This unit has the following objectives:

- To understand Gynocriticism
- To know the background that led to the idea of ‘gynocriticism’
- To know its limitations as well as achievements

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## 11.2 Gynocriticism

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Gynocriticism is the historical study of women's writing as a distinct literary tradition and subculture. It differs from male literary tradition and canon. It is premised on the notion that women's writings constitute a distinct category based on the experiences of women only rather than male authors whose works were replete with prejudices and biases against women.

The term 'gynocritics' was coined by Elaine Showalter in her essay, "Towards a Feminist Poetics" (1979). Gynocritics seek to formulate a female framework for the analysis of women's literature rather than to adopt male models. It seeks to establish a parallel literary tradition and canon to amplify the creative potential of women over the ages, having different themes, motifs, experiences and the identity of its own.

Gynocriticism takes into account women as writers, readers, and writers as well as the producers of meaning. Women's writings have always existed but men did not take them seriously as they thought women were incapable of producing texts worth reading. Why and how did that happen? To answer this question, we need to go back to the history of feminism and its arguments to know more about it. Before discussing gynocriticism in detail, it is important to briefly survey feminism so that the thread of discussion is completed and natural sequence is formulated for the proper comprehension of the topic under discussion.

### 11.2.1 Background: Feminism:

Every theory, every literary tradition, every genre has a context in the backdrop of which they appear and the same is case with gynocritics or gynocriticism. We need to go back to the context and the roots which propelled it into action and that context is feminism. A brief review of feminism is must to discuss at length the topic at hand.

Feminism has come a long way from where it started. It encompasses various set of values, issues, and matters peculiar to women belonging to various nationalities, cultures, races, religions, sexual orientations and ethnicities. However, if there is any central idea behind feminism across the divide it is the relation between men and women, the working of patriarchy and male supremacy. It is the fight to stand for one's own self, to break the walls that obstruct women's self-realization.

We don't hear of many female philosophers, scientists, politicians, and scholars in human history except in the recent past. The primary reason is that women were not allowed to move

out and get access to all the opportunities that men had availed in history. She was consigned to domestic space. Her right to education, to enter into politics and to shape the life was denied to her. She was considered an enigma, a mystery, and her nature was either identified with the bitch or a goddess. A sharp division of space was created that confined women to the household activities and men to all the actions required of him in the world. The man was considered as a norm, and woman as the 'other', inferior, emotional, instinctive, impulsive, and lacking reason. However, a change occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women began to react against this attitude and started exposing the underlying cause of women's silence and inferiority in the world. M.A.R Habib argues that,

Feminist criticism is not a uniquely twentieth-century phenomenon. It has antecedents going all the way back to Greece in the work of Sapho---it also surfaces in Chaucer's Wife of Bath, who blatantly values "experience" over authority—during the renaissance a number of women poets emerged in France and England. In the seventeenth century, writers such as Aphra Behn and Anna Bradstreet were pioneers in gaining access to the literary profession.

Modern Feminism began late in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with Mary Wollstonecraft, whose book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is considered one of the earliest and seminal texts of feminism. Any discussion on feminism actually starts with this book, primarily because of the way it engaged with the question of women, her rights and her position in the contemporary world and also her representation in literature. In fact, we talk about feminism in modern context only because of the way women started engaging in the issue, systematically, academically and philosophically. A plethora of women scholars delving into the subject industriously is unprecedented in history. Other foundational books on feminism are Virginia Woolf's *A Room of one's Own* (1929), and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949).

Depending upon the nature of feminist movements, the history of feminism is generally divided into waves or phases. The first wave dates from 1830-1920 and it was political in nature as it was rooted in political and social activism, seeking equal political and legal rights. It was concerned with the right to vote and had a progressive social vision. The second wave feminism (1960's and 1980's) investigated into the mindset that normalized inequality. It explored the nature of the neutral fields of knowledge to understand how the inferiority of women in comparison to men was naturalized. Simon de Beauvoir's famous statement, "one is not born,

but rather, becomes a woman” in *The Second Sex* popularized the concept that gender was a social construct rather than naturally given. Simone de Beauvoir argued in the book that the reasons of oppression on women were neither historical nor social but anatomical. She explains how women was relegated to second sex and subordination by a long tradition of thought from Aristotle to present times and also by the views popularized by biology, psychology, historical materialism, legal codes, religion and myths about women in literature. So the second wave was social as well as academic in nature exposing in multiple ways, the working of patriarchy and its various forces that inhibited women’s social and economic freedom.

Third-wave feminism started in the 1990’s and was a reaction against the second-wave feminism and also expansion of it. It reacted against the universalism of upper middle-class white women and its definitions of femininity. It came under attack from various groups for invisibilizing their oppression and experiences. Voices of dissent grew from black, lesbians, working class women and “Third world Women”. Sally Ann Drucker writes, “The third-wave sees women’s lives as intersectional, demonstrating how race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism. It examines issues related to women’s lives on an international basis”. Black feminism, Dalit feminism, and Islamic feminism for examples are some recent developments in feminism.

In a nutshell, when we talk about feminism, we know it is not a blanket term for all the women. There are rather feminisms with different value systems and issues that affect women in the world, all trying to address them in their own ways.

### **11.2.2 Feminist Literary Criticism:**

Feminist literary criticism is a natural result of the feminist movement or women consciousness. As women saw patriarchy or male supremacy at work everywhere, literature became an object of study to highlight how this supposedly neutral writing enshrined the values of patriarchy and how the literary classics that people had valued for long couldn’t stand the scrutiny of feminists or feminist literary criticism.

Literature like many other fields of knowledge was considered gender-neutral. The absence of women from the literary field was seen as normal, and their non-existence was considered as a lack on the part of women who did not write. The existing literary canon was considered unbiased and it was assumed that there were fair means of judging or evaluating a work of art and its worth. Patricia Waugh observes in this regard:

‘It was implied that if few women managed to attain the highest standards of literary production, it was because they rarely wrote, and when they did, they simply did not write as well as men. The first task of feminist criticism was to disprove this assumption by offering an alternative, plausible reason for the absence of women in literature’.

According to Patricia Waugh, “Feminist Literary Criticism was born out of the debates of second wave feminism. Feminists brought to literature a suspicion of established ideas which made their approach truly revolutionary. They were interested in literature as a powerful means of creating and perpetuating belief systems”.

Bijay Kumar Das provides a brief and beautiful overview of feminist literary criticism in his book, *Twentieth Century literary Criticism*. He writes,

‘Feminist literary criticism primarily responds to the way women are presented in the literature. It has two basic premises: one, ‘women’ presented in literature by male writers from their own view point and two, ‘women’ presented in the writings of female writers from their point of view. The first premise gives rise to a kind of feminist criticism known as Phallogentrism and the second premise leads us to another kind of feminist criticism known as Gynocriticism’.

Elaine Showalter refers to Carolyn Heilburn and Catherine Stimpson who compare feminist critique to the Old Testament, ‘looking for the sins and the errors of the past,’ and gynocriticism to the New Testament, ‘seeking the grace of imagination’.

In the absence of women writers, phallogentric criticism diverted its attention to the works written by men. It started examining the representation of female characters in their texts. It turned out that such a neutral field also promulgated an idea of a woman that fitted the notions of patriarchy. They highlighted the inherent bias, sexism and misogyny in literature. Literature in this way was seen as an instrument of socialization and normalization of the values of men. These texts often showed the stereotypical images of women as goddesses or devil incarnate. It was also realized that women were not encouraged to write, and even if they did, they had to rely on pseudonyms to get acceptability and recognition in society.

Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* and Elaine Showalter’s, *A Literature of their Own*, Germaine Greer’s, *The Female Eunuch* are among the earliest texts that investigated male authors and their representation of women and exposed their misogyny. De Beauvoir for example, examines the female representation in the works of authors

like, D. H Lawrence, Montherlant, Claudel, Breton and Stendhal whom she finds as reflecting the great collective myth of women, as flesh, as poetry, and as a bridge between this world and beyond. She observes that literature has been instrumental in perpetuating myths about women as enigmatic and mysterious. This myth substitutes for reality, and if it contradicts with the essence of women, such women are considered unreal. What it actually does is to project women as, “the absolute other, without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being” (*The Second Sex*, 238). Elaine Showalter while interpreting Thomas Hardy’s famous novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* observes about the scene where the drunken Henchard sells his wife and his infant child, “Henchard sells not only his wife but his child, a child who can only be female. Patriarchal societies do not readily sell their sons, but their daughters are all for sale sooner or later.”

Feminist literary critics argue that we would not learn anything about the experiences of women from these texts, as it is completely missing from the novels written by men. Female experiences have been completely negated in the literature.

In her book, *Sexual Politics*, Millet examines the works of twentieth century male authors like D.H Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer and Jean Genet. Patricia Waugh writes in this regard, “Her discussion of Lady Chatterley’s Lover exposes a sustained celebration of masculine sexuality and a misogynistic presumption of female passivity”. Millet also examines his use of language and imagery which involves lengthy descriptions of a male body and relegating female body to a mere gaze. He further writes, “The effect of Millet’s persuasive analysis was profound, permanently influencing the manner in which male writers were subsequently perceived”.

Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics* highlights the politics behind patriarchy and how it works to perpetuate its rule and supremacy over women in many ways. Waugh observes in this regard, “All aspects of society and culture functioned according to a sexual politics that encouraged women to internalize their own inferiority until it became psychologically rooted. Literature was a tool of political ideology because it recreated sexual inequalities and cemented the patriarchal values of society”.

Millet subjected psychoanalysis of Freud to the same scrutiny and identified the same problem with him as well. She discarded psychoanalysis as an improper tool for the analysis of feminist criticism. Millet, Greer and Simone de Beauvoir are considered prominent figures that propelled second wave feminism into action. Few notable achievements of these feminists are:

- Reading was considered as a political act.
- Male literary giants came under feminist scrutiny.
- Sex and gender were considered as distinct categories.
- The traditional literary hierarchy was challenged.

Second wave feminism was aided by phallogocentric criticism. It identified recurrent themes, images, stereotypes, and patterns to bring to fore latent and manifest attitudes to women in literary texts.

In the discussion above we saw how feminism began as a political movement for civil rights then moved ahead to investigate the cultural mindset responsible for the subjugation of woman and finally turning towards literature to highlight how it had also promulgated the stereotypical image of women instead of providing the real glimpse into the vivid experiences of a woman. In the absence of women's writing at this stage, attention was paid to the texts authored by men to identify their treatment of woman characters, their scope in fiction, and their self-realization. It is this reading practice that's known as phallogocentrism.

The entire journey of feminist criticism has been beautifully summarized by Peter Barry as:

'Firstly, feminist criticism became much more eclectic, meaning that it began to draw upon the findings, and approaches of other kinds of criticism—Marxism, structuralism, linguistics and so on. Secondly, it switched its attention from attacking the male versions of the world to exploring the nature of the female world outlook, and reconstructing the lost or suppressed records of female experience. Thirdly, attention was switched to the need to construct a new canon of women's writing by rewriting the history of the novel and poetry in such a way that neglected women writers were given new prominence'.

In the following discussion, we will pay our attention towards this distinct phase of interest in feminist literary criticism and discuss in detail Gynocriticism.

### **11.2.3 Gynocriticism:**

It is very natural that feminists should have focused their attention on their own experiences and looked for writings of women to draw inspirations from, rather than being reactionaries all the time. Wherever there is subjugation, the writings have followed the same sequence: the phase of imitation, the phase of reaction or protest, and finally the stage of self-

assertion and exercise of the creative potential of the oppressed. Elaine Showalter calls the same phases as, feminine phase (1840-80), feminist phase (1880-1920) and female phase (1920 onwards). It is in the spirit of gynocriticism to establish a tradition and connectivity in literary writings of women to fill the gap left by the male literary canons.

Elaine Showalter, credited for coining the term 'gynocritics', writes that it is the shift from 'androtexs', which is books by men, to 'gynotexs', which is books by women. In other words it is the same as a shift from phallogentrism to gynocriticism. Gynocriticism is the study of gynotexs. However, this should not mislead us into thinking that it is just the study of texts written by women. Gynocritics considers women's writings as a different tradition from that of men. It is premised on the argument that women feel and experience differently in comparison to men. They consider women's writings as a subculture within the literary tradition.

Gynocritics seeks to formulate a female framework for the analysis of women's literature rather than to adopt male models. It seeks to establish a parallel literary tradition and canon to amplify the creative potential of women over the ages, having different themes, motifs, experiences and patterns.

Gynocritics postulates that there is a distinctly female experience which can only be found in the writings of women. Furthermore, it argues that women not only wrote differently from men but should be read differently also, and in order to feel, observe or explore those differences in the texts, a separate framework, methodology or principles are required to address or explore those sensibilities. Showalter argued that only a gender-specific framework or analysis would do justice to the literary analysis of the texts of women. She argues that there were themes and images in women's writings that differentiated them from the writings of men. The themes of imprisonment, hidden rooms, images of madness and fantasies of mobility in the novel, *Jane Eyre*, for example represents the frustration of women during the Victorian period. Patricia Waugh writes, "By reading literature with an awareness and sensitivity to latent meaning, the gynocritics reader can go beyond the surface of the text and begin to explore its full potential for meaning".

#### **11.2.4 Strategies of Gynocriticism:**

The first strategy of gynocriticism was to establish and formulate a female literary tradition. It was to oppose the idea that women never wrote or that women's writings were not worthy of being included in literary classics or literary canons. Since women were not encouraged to write and had to unfetter themselves from patriarchy, their writings evolved in a

different way. They first copied or imitated the male classics, and then they protested against the stereotypes in them, and finally paid attention to their own experiences. The *feminine* phase is shown as the period of male pseudonyms in the 1840 and to the death of George Eliot in 1880. The *feminist* period starts from 1880 and ends in 1920 when women got right to vote, and finally the *female* phase (1920-60), a phase of self-awareness. In this way the evolution of female literary tradition was shown in three phases.

The second strategy of gynocriticism was to increase the number of female authors and make them available for the readers. New writers were encouraged and forgotten texts were resurfaced for the evaluation. Patricia Waugh observes, “Virago press was instrumental in both of these processes. Established in 1973, it intended to publish only female authors, and in 1978, it published Antonia White’s *Frost in May*, the first in the Virago Modern Classics Series which republished books by women that were no longer easily available. By attempting to do so gynocritics stated that women had written abundantly and were not lacking in merit and creative potential. This female subculture or literary tradition was suppressed by male literary tradition that did not allow it to flourish and to combat this deficiency the monopoly of the press was challenged and feminist journals were popularized to give space to neglected and emerging writers.

Another strategy was to question the criteria of canon formation. By establishing a female literary tradition, gynocritics responded to the bias of male literary tradition and its canons. They also doubted the role of theory, the use of existing language and psychoanalysis for the interpretation of or literary analysis of women’s writing. Feminist literary critics were divided in their opinion with respect to the use of theory. According to Peter Barry, “The Anglo-Americans maintain a major interest in traditional critical concepts like a theme, motif, and characterization...they see the close reading and explication of individual literary texts as the major business of feminist literary criticism”. Elaine Showalter championed the close reading of the texts and skeptically looked at the existing theories.

Gynocritics raised questions about periodization, professionalization, genres, narrative form, racial difference, literary influence, and aesthetic judgment. In Showalter’s own words, gynocritics are concerned with a range of issues like, the history, styles, themes, genres and structures of writing by women; the psychodynamics of female creativity, the trajectory of the individual or collective female career; and the evolution or laws of a female literary tradition.

Another contention was with the use of language. Feminist also saw language as gendered and oriented for patriarchy only. Helene Cixous, a French theorist came up with the term called *écriture féminine* which she used in her essay “The laugh of the Medusa”. She believed that there exists in some shape and there can be a separate language for literary expression which can be termed as feminine writing or *écriture féminine*. It transgresses, flouts grammatical rules and structures. It can neither be theorized, enclosed or coded and its nature is rooted in the belief that it will always surpass ‘discourse that regulates the male-dominated system’. This kind of writing, Cixous believes, is unique to female physiology or physical construction. She argues that, “women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes...” (Marks and de Courtivron, 256). M.A.R Habib writes in this regard, “Indeed, what recurs throughout this text is a poetic exhortation to women to bring into being a female language” (703).

Julia Kristeva also talks about *écriture féminine* in the form of *symbolic* and semiotic language. The symbolic language is one which is concerned with authority, repression and control and the semiotic is that facet of language which defies order and logic and it is characterized by ‘displacement’, ‘slippage’ and condensation.

In the elaborate discussion above we came to know that Gynocriticism or gynocritic reading is a separate or a parallel tradition to phallogentrism and feminist critics worked to explore areas and strategies that could differentiate them from the writings, methodologies, frameworks, theories and principles popularized by men. The primary purpose was to establish a separate literary tradition of women and create a framework to analyze the literature produced by women. Gynocriticism occurs as a radical re-visioning of the entire literary process, its production, circulation, periodization, use of language, themes, canons and motifs. One of the radical ideas promoted by Gynocriticism is the creation of a language that appeals to and reflects the sensibilities of women which was propounded by Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva.

#### **11.2.5 Limitations of Gynocriticism:**

The human world is complex, so are the experiences, the ways of living and the cultures of people living here. Therefore, every theory, every philosophy can be questioned on genuine grounds because no theory or practice can represent the experiences of all the people in the world.

As an academic enquiry, gynocriticism also has its loopholes. It has been criticized on many grounds by feminist critics. Let's highlight each one of those objections one by one:

- Gynocriticism has been accused of moving close to essentialism, the belief that things have a set of characteristics which make them what they are.
- It was criticized for doing the same thing as men. For example, canon formation and creation of a literary tradition were considered masculine inventions.
- “The cult of author was seen as a poorly disguised example of masculine individualist authority” (Waugh, 330).
- Working class women, blacks and lesbians protested against its universalism and accused it of sidelining their experiences.
- It tried to create a grand narrative about women but omitted differences and divisions among women.
- It stressed the role of the author at the cost of readers or the text
- It was argued that Showalter relied on male ideas of hierarchy, authority and individualism.
- The creation of parallel tradition and canon worked to further marginalize women rather than incorporating them into the dominant cultural discourse.

#### **11.2.6 Conclusion:**

Despite its limitations, gynocritics actually helped in the development of women writers by providing them space and also reproducing the works of some of the neglected authors in history. The monopoly of the press was challenged and separate journals were published to help women publish their work. It helped in the creation of politically sensitive readers who were aware of the sexual politics inherent in the works of literature produced by men.

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### **11.3 Learning Outcomes**

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By the end of this unit, students should be able to understand what Gynocriticism is all about. Students will understand the feministic importance of texts and the need to analyze feminist texts from the gyno-critical approach. They will understand the background of feminist criticism also. Moreover, they will be familiarized with various feminists of the contemporary times.

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## 11.4 Glossary

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**Patriarchy:** A social system in which the father is head of the household, having authority over men and children and in which lineage is traced through the male line. In short it is the rule of the father

**Gynocriticism:** The historical study of women writers as a distinct literary tradition

**Gynotext:** Texts written by women

**Androtext:** Texts written by men

**Essentialism:** The view that objects have properties that are essential to them.

**Feminism:** The advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of the equality of the sexes.

**Psychoanalysis:** It is a set of theories and therapeutic techniques used to study the unconscious mind.

**Misogyny:** Hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women.

**Sexism:** The belief that people of one sex or gender are inherently superior to the people of other gender or sex.

**Stereotype:** A conventional and often oversimplified or exaggerated conception, opinion or image of a person.

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## 11.5 Sample Questions

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### 11.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who first used the word Gynocriticism?
  - (a) Showalter
  - (b) James Joyce
  - (c) Virginia Woolf
  - (d) None
2. Which essay of is written by Showalter?

- (a) “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness”
  - (b) Deconstruction
  - (c) Structuralism
  - (d) None
3. *Towards a Feminist Poetics* is written by?
- (a) Derrida
  - (b) Virginia Woolf
  - (c) Richardson
  - (d) None
4. Which is the famous work written by Kate Millet regarding feminism?
- (a) *Sexual Politics*
  - (b) *The Second Sex*
  - (c) *A Room of One's Own*
  - (d) None
5. In which year was *Sexual Politics* written
- (a) 1969
  - (b) 1967
  - (c) 1789
  - (d) None
6. Who wrote the famous book *The Second Sex*
- (a) Simon de Beauvoir
  - (b) Kate Millet
  - (c) Virginia Woolf
  - (d) None
7. *A Room of One's Own* is written by?
- (a) Simon de Beauvoir
  - (b) Kate Millet
  - (c) Virginia Woolf
  - (d) None

8. What are three stages of Feminism according to Elia Shtetser-Gold  
(a) feminine (b) feminist (c) female  
(b) feminism (b) female (c) formative  
(c) figurative (b) formalism (c) female  
(d) all
9. *Me Too* Movement is related to feminism?  
(a) yes  
(b) no
10. Black Feminism, Dalit Feminism and Islamic Feminism are all a part of the mainstream feminism?  
(a) yes  
(b) no

#### **11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What is Gynocriticism? How does it differ from Phallogentrism?
2. Discuss the context in which Gynocriticism emerged.
3. What are the strategies of Gynocriticism?
4. Discuss the issues of Feminism.
5. Discuss third wave of Feminism.

#### **11.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Discuss the limitations of Gynocriticism.
2. Discuss the various types of feminism.
3. Write a detailed note on various women feminists that you have studied in your course.

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## 11.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Third ed., Manchester University Press, 2010.
2. Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Classic, 2015.
3. Castle, Gregory. *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory*. Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
4. Das, Bijay Kumar. *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, Pvt Ltd, 2008.
5. Showalter, Elaine. *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, literature and Theory*. Pantheon Books, 1985.  
  
*...A Literature of their Own*. Virago, 1999.
6. Habib, M.A. Rafey. *Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present: an Introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
7. Waugh, Patricia, editor. *Literary Theory and Criticism: an Oxford Guide*. Oxford University Press, 2007.
8. Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989.

## Unit - 12: *Yellow Fish*

### Structure

#### 12.0 Introduction

#### 12.1 Objectives

#### 12.2 *Yellow Fish*

##### 12.2.1 Background

##### 12.2.2 Gender

##### 12.2.3 Unique Style of Narration

##### 12.2.4 Theme

##### 12.2.5 Language

##### 12.2.6 Critical Analysis

##### 12.2.7 Summary

#### 12.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 12.4 Glossary

#### 12.5 Sample Questions

#### 12.6 Suggested Readings

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### 12.0 Introduction

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C.S. Lakshmi, writing under the pseudonym of Ambai, is a feminist Tamil writer. She was born in 1944 in Tamil Nadu, and grew up in Bangalore and Mumbai. She received her PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University and her stories have been translated into five volumes entitled *In a Forest*, *A Deer*, *Fish in a Dwindling Lake*, *A Meeting on the Andheri Overbridge*, *The Purple Sea*, and *A Night with a Black Spider*. Her writing touches on societal perceptions and the understanding of one's self, family, sensitivity, and love and its restrictions.

She received the Ford Foundation Fellowship for her project 'Illustrated Social History of Women in Tamil Nadu' in 1981; in 1992 she received the Homi Bhabha Fellowship to do a project on female musicians, dancers and painters. Indian feminist publisher 'Kali for women' has published this research work in two volumes, entitled 'Singer and the Song' and 'Mirrors and Gestures'. Other non-fiction works include *The Face Behind the Mask: Women in Tamil Literature* (Vikas, New Delhi, 1984), *An Idiom of Silence: An Oral History And Pictorial Study of Art, Consciousness and Women* in a Series entitled *Seven Seas and Seven Mountains*. 'The

*Unhurried City: Writings on Chennai* (ed.) (2004) published by Penguin Books, *Walking Erect with An Unfaltering Gaze* (2013). Recently she translated *Black Coffee in a Coconut Shell* (2018) a collection of essays on personal experience with caste, ed. by Perumal Murugan.

In 1988, Lakshmi founded SPARROW (Sound and Picture Archives for Research on Women) a non-governmental organization for documenting and archiving the work of female writers and artists. She is currently a member of the University of Michigan's Global Feminisms Project. She was awarded the Lifetime Literary Achievement Award of Tamil Literary Garden, University of Toronto, in 2008. She lives in Mumbai with her husband, foster daughter and two brothers.

Early fiction writers always presented woman either as an epitome of virtue, or as an evil and enchanting whore. She was never portrayed as a human being capable of both good and evil. She was either put on a pedestal and worshipped as a Goddess, or dragged along the dirty streets of profanity, branded 'a social outcast.' These myths that were barriers to the realization of the 'real woman' were destroyed by the present day writers. The present day writers give us all the relevant particulars within the pages of a novel or a story. They do not eulogize women.

'Yellow Fish' is a short story written in Tamil by Ambai and translated by Lakshmi Holmstorm. It is a very simple, touching story which deals with an aspect of woman's experience, a fisherwoman whose baby died sometime in her past, also accompanied by a vivid description of the lives of fishermen and their wives. Her fiction is known for its emphasis on issues concerning women and innovative narrative techniques experiments. The story 'Yellow Fish' is described as one of her most passionate feminine works, which leaves an impression of the story as a collage of images.

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## 12.1 Objectives

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This unit has the following objectives:

- To know about the life of C.S.Lakshmi
- To know about the works of C.S Lakshmi
- To know about the style of her writing
- To understand the term 'Fiction'
- To appreciate Ambai's contribution to English Literature

- To realize the issues concerning with women
- To form an in-depth understanding of the narrative techniques of Ambai
- To derive pleasure from the style and language of the author
- To comprehend the varied themes used by the author in her short stories

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## 12.2 Yellow Fish

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In one's life, conceptions and creativity fall into a seamless unity very rarely. Ambai, the Tamil novelist has achieved this unique balance. In her short stories, "Yellow Fish" and "Once Again", women are oppressed and have no scope for self-realization and fulfillment. Here, Ambai stimulates women to talk against the slavishness which prevails in the society at present. She depicts the real need for words in order to attain the real freedom. By showing each female protagonist, Ambai is not seeking revenge for the ills of Indian womanhood. She has fashioned a new concept of feminist fiction. She does not want to lock horns with male supremacy, but to make us aware that we are not to settle for an existence which is completely void.

One of the most prominent modern Indian writers, Ambai is the pen-name of C. S. Lakshmi, a Tamil writer. She made a special recognition for herself in the world literature, as a whole. She was born in 1944 in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, but grew up in Mumbai and Bangalore. She did her MA in Bangalore and Doctorate from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi in the 1970's.

Ambai was greatly influenced by her grandmother who was a self-taught Tamil scholar and cultivated an interest in the young girl for Tamil literature. In addition to her grandmother, Ambai's own mother too was another constructive influence on her. Ambai read fervently all the Tamil magazines and journals her mother subscribed to and grew up on the conservative, tradition bound often-romantic writings that these magazines encouraged and perpetuated. She began writing at the age of sixteen, and she comments on her early writings as: 'Most of my initial stories had very rigid and orthodox views of sexuality, femininity and life in general. The widows in my stories, offer a speech full of symbolic metaphors always refused to remarry and my heroines married idealists who were combinations of Tagore, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.' Thus, as early as the 1960s, she received critical acclaim and awards with a novel and a short story.

*Nandi Malai Charalile (At Nandi Hills Falls)*, a novel and *Gnanam (Knowledge)* and a few other short stories were some of her early writings, which were modelled on traditional concepts of womanhood and chastity. She took up the name of ‘Ambai’, the pseudonym for all her creative writing. Her first collection of short stories was published in 1976. Later, she continued to publish in 1988 too, which established her reputation as a major short story writer.

Women centred stories questioning the paradoxes of their suppressed existence, experimenting with new forms; new themes and a new language became the crux of her ideas in her writings. She is hailed as one of the most important Tamil writers today. In 2008, she was awarded the Lifetime Literary Achievement Award of Tamil Literary Garden, University of Toronto, Canada, for her contribution to Tamil literature and she became the only Tamil writer to have been included in the recently published *Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature* edited by Amit Chaudhuri. She has also written scripts for her husband, film maker Vishu Mathur’s movies.

She is the founder and Director of Sound & Picture Archives for Research on Women (SPARROW) in Mumbai. She is a recipient of Narayanaswamy Aiyar Prize for her fiction. *Sirakukal muriyum, Vittin mulaiyil oru camaiyalarai* and *The Face behind the mask: Women in Tamil literature* are some of her notable works. Many of her stories have been translated into English. The Library of Congress holds five of her writings in its collection.

***Check your Progress:***

1. Who is Ambai?
2. What does she feel about her early writings?
3. What became the crux of her writings later?
4. Name some of her works.

**12.2.1 Background:**

The story takes us to the tropical seashore on a hot summer day. The lives of fishermen and their families are portrayed realistically by the author. Their day schedule is vividly described. As the boats come in the fishermen’s wives gather at the seashore to get the nets in and sort the fish into those that can be sold or used and those with no value. We see a great mixture of colours and sensations as the fish are sorted out. The ones with no value are just thrown on the shore to die. The woman sees a yellow fish in the sand, gasping for water. It is told in the first

person by the woman and she begins to see in the dying fish her daughter that died many years ago, right after she was born. The baby opened and closed her mouth as if she was trying to suck in air. The yellow fish forces these images back on her mind. She dies and her ashes are placed in a small urn. When her husband brings the urn home the woman demands that the lid be opened and she places the ashes of the baby into the sea from where the yellow fish came. The yellow fish seems to struggle to get back into the sea. The woman tells a fisher boy to throw the yellow fish back in the sea. He laughs at the feeling he cannot understand. The last lines of the story catch up the emotion. "You can see its clear yellow for a very long time then it merges into the blue-grey-white of the sea".

***Check your Progress:***

1. What does the story portray?
2. Who does the woman see in the dying Yellow fish?
3. Comment on the background of the story 'Yellow Fish'

### **12.2.2 Gender:**

Ambai's short story 'The Yellow Fish' predominantly speaks about an aspect of a woman's experience. Her fiction is known for its emphasis on issues concerning women and in the Tamil literary scene Ambai's voice is heard with the feminist consciousness and hence it contributes to our understanding of gender.

The two events that take place in the story reveal a thematic connection between them and make us understand that Ambai is here dealing with larger issues at a micro level like life and death, one's struggle to survive, etc. Though these issues are common to all living beings, the woman's point of view is portrayed clearly and they become the issues that are close to a woman's heart because they form an integral part of her struggle to survive in a hostile world. The story is told only from Anu's point of view and not from that of Arun's because the experiences form only the part of Anu's emotional makeup. Towards the end of the story, when Anu asks Arun to keep the lid of the urn open Arun could not understand the reason behind Anu's strange behaviour but it is Anu's emotional temperament that makes her feel as if her daughter is still gasping for breath though it's just the ashes in the urn.

When Anu asks the fisher boy to throw the yellow fish into the sea, he snorts at her and then grabs the fish by the tail firmly and runs towards the sea. This incident shows that though the boy helps the yellow fish to survive by throwing it into the sea, he seems to be very insensitive thus projecting the same quality in the male outlook itself by the characters of Arun and the fisher boy. Thus the gender differences are seen.

***Check your Progress***

1. In whose point of view is the story narrated?
2. Who are the male and female characters in the story?
3. What are the two events that take place in the story?

**12.2.3 Unique Style of Narration:**

Ambai is known for her innovative narrative techniques experiments. The “Yellow Fish” gives us an impression of the story made of a collage of images. The narrative content is not much and can be distinctly divided into three parts.

The first part gives a description of the fishing boats returning ashore and the division of work between the men and women once the ships are ashore. There is also a discarded fish and its struggle to survive reminding the narrator of a similar struggle she witnessed some time back is presented in the first part.

The second part takes us into the recent past through the eyes of Anu who remembers the incident of her new-born daughter, named Jalaja, how she died and her husband Arun brings the child’s ashes in an urn and are immersed in the sea later, as she looks at the discarded yellow fish, struggling to survive.

The third part is the climax of the story where Anu, though sad and depressed, helps the discarded yellow fish to survive and returns it to the sea. Thus, the two events of the story, though not connected in any way, form the experiences of the first person narrator Anu.

The author presents “an extraordinary collage of colours, on the shores of the wind-swept sea. A composition that imprints itself on the mind and memory”, in such a way as if she is painting a colourful yet a realistic painting. ‘Faded blue and ash-grey sea’ is juxtaposed with the bright colours of the fisherwomen’s clothes, the white boats, the darkened bodies and hands of

men by the salt wind; the dry sand, the brown wood of the boats, and the white bellied fish. Images of the sea and water play dominantly throughout the story.

***Check your Progress***

1. List out the colourful images that are used in the story.
2. What do you understand by the word collage?
3. What is the name of the new born baby and guess the meaning and its connection to the story?
4. Do the colours used in the story enhance the meaning of the story?

**12.2.4 Theme:**

Most of Ambai's stories are about relationships. All of them contain brilliant observations about contemporary life. Exploration of space, silence, coming to terms with one's body or sexuality, and the importance of communication are some of the recurring themes in her works. Thus, one main theme that is evident is 'struggle for survival' which pervades through the present story, "Yellow Fish". The two aspects of the narrative – yellow fish and the infant Jalaja, show the struggle for survival. Both of them are thematically linked with skilful use of images and metaphors. The image of the tiny mouth gasping to breathe forges a link between both the events. Jalaja loses the struggle while the yellow fish survives with the help from the narrator.

Another theme that runs in the background is the way the male and female characters react to the incidents that take place in the story and it becomes pivotal in understanding the gender differences. The degree of insensitivity in the male outlook and the helplessness and grief in Anu, the only female character is portrayed very vividly.

It is Jalaja's memory that makes Anu decide to help and save the yellow fish by throwing it back into the sea, where the ashes of Jalaja lie. She does this by asking for the help of a fisher-boy. Thus, Anu manages to save the fish and return it to the sea. The arrogant leap of the fish once it reaches the sea at the end of the story can be metaphorically interpreted and can have a variety of meanings.

Firstly it could mean that there are endless possibilities if opportunities to thrive are provided. Secondly and more importantly it could point towards the overriding theme of self-

liberation in all of Ambai's writings. It is almost as though Anu too has leapt towards freedom along with the yellow fish. Anu's freedom is freedom from the bondage of ideologies. It is a freedom from grief; a liberating move that takes her towards self-realization. Ultimately this emerges to be the theme of the story and links up the narrator's life with the two instances narrated by her.

***Self Assessment Test***

1. List out some important the themes in the story.

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2. What are the two aspects of Ambai's story, "Yellow Fish"?

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**12.2.5 Language:**

It is a very simple story, translated from Tamil, with some good imagery and emotions. The language used is simple and direct making it into a crisp piece of writing but hitting at the universal themes such as the struggle of survival and self-liberation. The story is narrated through a first-person perspective, though the narrator enters the narrative as the 'I' in the later half of the story, not revealing the name of the narrator at the very first instance. The events are seen through the eyes of this character. Sea and water are life-giving forces in this story. The livelihood of the fisherfolk depends on them. The sentences, 'A yellow fish is thrown away on the sand', 'Like Jalaja's mouth', capture the attention of the reader as Ambai makes them stand by themselves. The infant, Jalaja is presented to the reader as 'too hasty infant' telling that she was probably born premature and had to be kept in the incubator. Thus, the story is presented in the form of images rather than telling the sequence of events as they occurred. Further, the images of 'the narrator standing outside Jalaja's room constantly watching her struggle to survive', 'of ashes being brought home in a small urn' and the narrator's insistence that the mouth of the urn be opened and then the somberline that the ashes were immersed in this very sea presents the collage of images through which the story is unfolded.

Similarly the emotions are packed in the small phrases such as the “loud racking sobs” which hint at the intense grief that was buried till then in the narrator’s heart. Her helplessness as she stands outside her child’s room, watching her struggling to survive, and finally, urging her husband to open the urn’s mouth as though she is trying to help her child to breathe now as she couldn’t earlier.

***Check your Progress***

1. What are the universal themes that the story speaks of?
2. What do you understand by the term ‘imagery’?
3. What are the life giving forces in the story?
4. Why did Anu urge her husband to open the urn’s mouth?
5. Attempt a note on the emotional scenes of the story.

**12.2.6 Critical Analysis:**

The characteristic feature of the story is the use of colourful imagery. The scene of fishing boats returning of the sea, the high summer and the heated sand, the images of sea and water predominate throughout the story. The other images, we see, are of the fish being unloaded, the ‘good’ fish is splashed on the troughs, and the rest, that is the ‘bad’ ones are thrown away. All these images are filled with colours – the colours are also painted in juxtaposition, for instance, faded blue and the ash grey sea with the bright colours of the fisherwomen’s clothes: demonic red, blinding indigo, profound green and assaulting blue. These stand vibrant against the white boats and the bodies of the men, darkened by the saltwater, the black hands of the fishermen and the brown of the wood and the white bellied fish. Ambai, then shifts our attention from the din of the fisher-folk to a little yellow fish thrown away on the sand of the shore. The first person narrative fixes the perspective and point of view of the story.

The excellent use of imagery by *Ambai* thoroughly captivates the readers as they find their emotions’ stirring too as the story comes to an end. All the colours used, give a symbolic character to the story. It is as though Ambai wants to add more material to the images by the use of colours, depicting the characteristics of the objects, like a real life image to give her audience the feel of their own experiences.

### 12.2.7 Summary / Points to Remember:

"Yellow Fish" is a simple, very moving story about fishermen and their wives and a woman whose baby died long ago translated from Tamil. The story opens with the description of the setting as the typical tropical seashore. The wives of the fisherman are all gathered at the shore as the boats arrive to get the nets in and sort the fish into those that can be sold or used and those with no value. Different colours are projected as the sorting of fish is done. Then the story starts in the first person by a woman who sees a yellow fish in the sand, gasping for water. As she looks at the dying fish she sees in it her daughter who died some years ago, soon after her birth. The baby also opened and closed her mouth as if trying to suck in air, the yellow fish forces these images back on her mind. She dies and her ashes are placed in a small urn. When her husband brings the urn home the woman demands that the lid be opened and she places the ashes of the baby into the sea from where the yellow fish came. The yellow fish seems to struggle to get back to the sea. The woman tells a fisher boy to throw the yellow fish back in the sea. He laughs at the feeling he cannot understand. The story ends with these lines: "You can see its clear yellow for a very long time. Then it merges into the blue-grey-white of the sea".

### *Self Assessment Test*

1. Write a short note on the ending of the "Yellow Fish"

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*Note: You can answer it in two to three lines.*

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## 12.3 Learning Outcomes

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The learner is able to

- Differentiate between fiction and nonfiction and cite examples of some literary texts in each category.
- Appreciate Ambai's contribution to English Literature as many of her works are translated into English.
- Realize the issues concerning women – the role of women in Yellow Fish and the role of the main protagonist, Anu and her emotional stand.

- Form an in-depth understanding of the narrative technique, the style and language used by the author and appreciate the unique features of the story.
- Comprehend the varied themes used by the author in the story – Life and death, struggle for survival, self-realization, freedom, etc.
- Understand and know various works of C.S.Lakshmi
- To cognize the background of the story.

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## 12.4 Glossary

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**Compelled:** To force someone to do something

**Assaulting:** To attack someone violently

**Collage:** A piece of art made by sticking various different materials such as photographs and pieces of paper or fabric on to a backing

**Withering:** To cause to wilt, fade, or lose vitality

**Shudders:** Shake, shiver, tremble

**Incubator:** An enclosed apparatus in which premature or unusually small babies are placed and which provides a controlled and protective environment for their care

**Crematorium:** A building where dead bodies are burned, usually as part of a funeral ceremony

**Miniature:** A representation or image of something on a small or reduced scale

**Racking:** Very bad and very painful

**Heaving:** Extremely crowded

**Tossing:** Move or cause to move from side to side or back and forth

**Snort:** To make an explosive sound by forcing air quickly up or down the nose

**Splutters:** Make a series of short explosive spitting or choking sounds

**Swish:** Move with a hissing or rushing sound

**Dominate:** Control

**Juxtaposition:** Contrast

**Fanatic:** A person who is enthusiastic about religion and has extreme opinions.

**Antagonism:** A feeling of hate

**Divergent:** Develop in different directions.

**Hostile:** Having very strong feeling of dislike for somebody.

**Conjectural:** Based on conjecture.

**Divisive:** Likely to cause disagreement between the people of different religions.

**Phenomenon:** A fact or an event in nature or society which is not fully understood.

**Mal-development:** Faulty or imperfect development.

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## 12.5 Sample Questions

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### 12.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. C. S. Lakshmi (Ambai), born in 1944 in Tamil Nadu, is a distinguished
  - (a) Fiction Writer in Tamil
  - (b) Fiction Writer in Telugu
  - (c) Nonfiction writer in Tamil
  - (d) Nonfiction writer in Telugu
  
2. Her works are characterized by her passionate espousal of the cause of women, humour, a lucid and profound style, and a touch of \_\_\_\_\_
  - (a) Humanism
  - (b) Realism
  - (c) Romanticism
  - (d) Idealism
  
3. She is the only Tamil writer to have been included in the recently published
  - (a) Picador Book of Modern Indian Writing
  - (b) Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature
  - (c) Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature
  - (d) Picador Book of Indian Literature
  
4. The themes projected in Yellow Fish are:
  - (a) Self-liberation
  - (b) Struggle for survival
  - (c) Gender
  - (d) All the above

5. Identify the work of Ambai
- (a) A Purple Sea (1992)
  - (b) In a Forest, a Deer (2006)
  - (c) *Fish in a Dwindling Lake* (2012)
  - (d) All the above
6. What is the story of Yellow Fish about?
- (a) Fish
  - (b) Fishermen
  - (c) Anu
  - (d) All the above
7. Her first collection of short stories was published in \_\_\_\_\_
- (a) 1966
  - (b) 1986
  - (c) 1976
  - (d) None of the above
8. Which colour is not mentioned in the story?
- (a) Red
  - (b) Ash
  - (c) Yellow
  - (d) Violet
9. What is the season mentioned in which the story takes place?
- (a) Winter
  - (b) Summer
  - (c) Autumn
  - (d) Monsoon
10. What is the image, the woman sees on seeing the yellow fish?

- (a) Her dying daughter
- (b) The high spirited life of marine life
- (c) The risky lives of fishermen
- (d) All of the above

**12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Describe the setting of the story.
2. Describe the struggle of yellow fish.
3. Why does Anu feel for yellow fish?
4. Who is Jalaja and what happened to her?
5. Describe the role played by the fisher boy.

**12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. What is the impact of the colour employed in the story?
2. What is the significance of sea and water in the story?
3. What is the theme of the story? Explain

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## 12.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 13: Racist Elements in English Literature

### Structure

- 13.0 Introduction
- 13.1 Objectives
- 13.2 Racialism
  - 13.2.1 Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative*
  - 13.2.2 Joseph Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*
  - 13.2.3 Racism in the Post-Colonial English Literature
  - 13.2.4 Black and White: An Oppositional Study in English Literature
  - 13.2.5 Racism in Harlem Renaissance
  - 13.2.6 Black African Writings and Anti-Racism
  - 13.2.7 Racism in Indian English Literature
- 13.3 Learning Outcomes
- 13.4 Glossary
- 13.5 Sample Questions
- 13.6 Suggested Readings

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### 13.0 Introduction

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Racism as a theme in English literature has existed in different forms and structures for centuries. Usually, the theme of racism finds place in the writings of those African-American writers and also in the writings of those colonial English writers who wrote on themes of the clash between the Eurocentric West and the Orientals. The elements of racism also appear in the writings of those postcolonial African writers who write both in their mother tongue and in English. The element of racism in English literature is either present in the forms and structures of sociological and anthropological issues of racism or it forms the structure of anti-racist movements.

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### 13.1 Objectives

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The objective of the chapter is to familiarize the students with the theme of racism and its elements in English literature. The analysis of the literary texts will create before the learners a

vivid picture of the role of racialism in segregating people. The present chapter will also provide various sub genres of English literature that discuss racism as its themes. Differences and the similarities between casteism and racism has also been established.

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## **13.2 Racialism**

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Racialism or racism is a political ideology which divides human beings on the basis of their colour, caste, creed and regional orientations. Most of the postcolonial nationalities are directly or indirectly connected with the racial implications of the eurocentric prejudices. The term has been defined in the Merriam Webster dictionary as “a theory that race determines human traits and capacities.” Usually, the term racism and its implications are associated with black people who, contrary to the white people, are considered bad and inferior. Such a notion of binary opposition creates the psychological feeling among the human discourses that white people are cultured, educated and civilized and the black people are uncultured, uncivilized and uneducated. It should also be noted that most of the world order is still discursively associated with this colonial hangover: that black is bad and white is good. However, the colonial masters brought this kind of prejudice against the black people in Africa and other postcolonial Orientals in order to subdue them and exploit them economically and racially. However, the Blacks were not only the mute spectators of this discourse, but also strong opponents of the white supremacy in politics and literature. The conventional English literature consciously presented these issues with a parochial interpretation; or in other words they represented the white literature as prominent literature than the oriental discourses and literature. It is the American English literature which is more predominantly loaded with the racial issues and themes. When William Wordsworth and John Keats were celebrating the “unrealistic” nature and its glorified beauty, there were certain writers who concentrated on their life and its realistic issues. These issues were emanating from the white people’s prejudices against the Black.

### **13.2.1 Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative*:**

Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative* is considered as one of the prominent writings on racist elements in British literature. The original title of the book is *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. It was published in the year 1789. Less than a decade later, in the year 1798, William Wordsworth’s remarkable text *Lyrical Ballads* was published. Olaudah Equiano was born in Southern Nigeria. He was a

staunch supporter of British Abolitionist Movement. He was also one of the backbones of Sons of Africa in Britain. The text was an autobiographical narrative which exclusively depicted the horrors of slavery during the romantic period in Britain. Olaudah Equiano vehemently argues in this autobiographical text that African culture is not an inferior culture. Chapter 4 of the text delineates Equiano's life at London. He met Daniel Queen at London. He was a slave among the tens and thousands of slaves captured and controlled by the British whites. Amongst the innumerable whites he met during his slavery in London, it was only Robert King who behaved with him in a cultured and a civilized manner. All the others treated him as an inferior Black slave would be treated in those days. The text was a real African travel and slave narrative in British domain. There are around 12 chapters and 2 volumes in the text. Chapter 5 of the text delineates oppression, cruelty and extortion that Equiano confronted in his life in London. The publication of *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) caused the enactment of British Slave Trade Act in 1807. Hence, it is to be noted here that the British literature during the Romantic period itself contains those writings which reflect racial prejudices and oppression of the white people against the Blacks. However, such racial segregation from the white people were predominantly represented by the blacks because they were the recipients of the oppression. Conventional British writings during this period consciously avoided this racial prejudice. In addition to it, they claimed that it is their duty to civilize the black people with their culture, education and religion by marginalizing the age-old culture, religions and educational practices of the Blacks and other people in the colonies.

### **13.2.2 Joseph Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*:**

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was published in 1899. The novel is based on Joseph Conrad's experience in the Belgian Congo. The novel is about imperialism and it provides a bridge between Victorian values and the ideals of modernism. Joseph Conrad described the novella as "a wild story." The novella exclusively depicts the life of the Fang people, Blacks, in Belgian Congo. The novella set the notion in English literature that African people were uncivilized, primitive, uneducated, uncultured and instinctual by nature. This was a serious blot on the Black race. It was Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian novelist, who did a counter attack on *Heart of the Darkness* in his lecture entitled *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of the Darkness*. Achebe called the novella as an "offensive and deplorable book" (7) and "blinkered with xenophobia" (8).

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of the Darkness* deals with the experiences of Charles Marlow, the narrator, and Kurtz, the ivory trader, in the Belgian Congo. Kurtz was modelled on the life of a real character named Georges Antoine Klein. The novella can possibly be read at different interpretive levels, especially in its myriad forms of aesthetic values. However, Conrad's manner of presenting the Fang people and the African culture were undoubtedly racial in nature. Chinua Achebe holds in *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of the Darkness*:

Although the work of redressing which needs to be done may appear too daunting, I believe it is not one day too soon to begin. Conrad saw and condemned the evil of imperial exploitation but was strangely unaware of the racism on which it sharpened its iron tooth. But the victims of racist slander who for centuries have had to live with the inhumanity it makes them heir to have always known better than any casual visitor even when he comes loaded with the gifts of a Conrad (10)

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of the Darkness* is undoubtedly a racist novella. The lurking phenomenon behind the discourses of the novella is the western imperial policy in which the hegemonic west cemented the notion that the West is more superior and their white culture is predominantly superior to the African black culture. Achebe staunchly criticized this westernized notion of the African representation in *Heart of the Darkness*.

### **13.2.3 Racism in the Postcolonial English Literature:**

Postcolonial literature is the reinterpretation of those literatures which aim to trace out the elements of colonization of the West. The western power prominently developed their colonial agenda in colonies by bringing the concept of binary oppositions. This is based on the notion that the black is bad and white is good. This binary opposite is also termed as Manichean Allegory, a term popularized by the prominent postcolonial critic Abdul R Jan Mohammed. Manichean Allegory means seeing the world as divided into mutually excluding opposites. Abdul Jan Mohamed in his critical essay 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature' remarks, "Motivated by his desire to conquer and dominate, the imperialist configures the colonial realm as a confrontation based on differences in race, language, social customs, cultural values, and modes of production" (64).

There are innumerable postcolonial critics who vehemently opposed the white world's imperial practice of parochial representation of the black people. Frantz Fanon was one of the prominent critics among them. His *Black Skin and the White Mask: An Essay for the Disalienation of the Blacks* (1952), *Towards the African Revolution* (1964), and *The Wretched of*

*the Earth* (1961) are some of the prominent critical works based on the themes of racialism and Black issues. During the postcolonial period there was a strong force or undercurrents of opposition against the whitish forms of black marginalization. There were innumerable writers who emerged against the white forms of representations of the blacks. Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, and Ngugi Wa Thiango were some of the prominent writers among them. All of them celebrated the African Black Culture or Black Race as an opposition to the white parochial and xenophobic representation of the blacks.

#### **13.2.4 Black and White: An Oppositional Study in English Literature**

Racist elements in English literature are abundantly associated with slavery and Black people. These Black people prominently hail from African nations. However, a major cache of American English literature presented the themes of racist and anti-racist in its literary discourses. Harlem Renaissance is one among the innumerable movements against the racist culture in America. In America, people were divided on the basis of race and colour. Blacks were considered as uncultured and uncivilized because of their African ancestry.

Toni Morrison is one of the stalwarts among African American writers who vehemently questioned the practice of racism in American societal discourses. Chloe Anthony Wofford Morrison (Toni Morrison) presented a vivid picture of American racial culture in her remarkable novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970). The novel is set in the Great Depression period. Pecola Breedlove, the protagonist of the novel, considered herself as ugly due to her black colour and she believed that to be white is beautiful. She also firmly believed that if she had blue eyes she would be loved and her life would be transformed. Ironically, she is considered as a nasty little black bitch. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is a real representation of African people in America. The novel explicitly portrays the horrors and oppression confronted by Pecola and her family due to their skin colour. Her mother's name is Pauline and her father's name is Cholly. Her father was humiliated by two white men who found him having sex for the first time and made him continue while they watched. The culture of the White people towards the Black people was greatly inhuman and dehumanizing. They were not at all ready to accept the Black people in America as humans. Instead, they treated them as slaves and instinctual animals. In such a racially deprived society, the blacks were considered inferior in status and culture. They themselves considered "whiteness" and "blue eyes" as the symbol of beauty. The consequences of such a dehumanized identity are vast and variant. Due to his utter shame and frustrations, Cholly, Pecola's father, raped her and she later became mad. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

(1970) visualizes the harsh consequences of racism in the United States. The emergence of African American literature in English was a real boost to the projection of racist elements in world literature. It was a serious opposition study from the white perspective of “whitish-beauty” to the “blackish-identity.” African writers like Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and Cheikh Hamidou Kane truly represented the blackish-race identity and culture. Their writings were a rebellion against the imperial forces like British and French whereas African-American writers’ rebellion was against their own national white people. The former was an international phenomenon whereas the latter was a national phenomenon. In the case of race studies, the former phenomenon is undoubtedly fewer in number, whereas the latter, the national phenomenon of racial issues, are in abundance.

### **13.2.5 Racism and Harlem Renaissance:**

Harlem Renaissance during 1920s is also named as “New Negro Movement.” It was a new African-American intellectual expression, in order to celebrate the Black race and its traditions. It was a movement in order to create community consciousness amongst the Black people in the United States. It is named as Harlem Renaissance because the movement flourished in Harlem of Manhattan of New York City. The movement greatly influenced African-American English literature by taking African black identity as the core of literature. Moreover, the movement was a proactive one in bringing the Black people in United States on a single platform and organizing them against the racial superiority of the White. Alain Locke’s anthology of poems entitled *The New Negro* is considered as the main pillar of Harlem Renaissance and Black literature. The anthology contains poems of celebrated Black writers like Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Zora Neale Hurston. Their poems are studies on racism and Black identity in white majority nations like America. Langston Hughes’s poem “As I Grew Older” is a remarkable poem on issues of racism. The poem reveals the hopes and aspirations of a black identity in a racial environment.

#### **As I Grew Older**

It was a long time ago.  
I have almost forgotten my dream.  
But it was there then,  
In front of me,  
Bright like a sun—  
My dream.

And then the wall rose,  
Rose slowly,  
Slowly,  
Between me and my dream.  
Rose until it touched the sky—  
The wall.  
Shadow.  
I am black.  
I lie down in the shadow.  
No longer the light of my dream before me,  
Above me.  
Only the thick wall.  
Only the shadow.  
My hands!  
My dark hands!  
Break through the wall!  
Find my dream!  
Help me to shatter this darkness,  
To smash this night,  
To break this shadow  
Into a thousand lights of sun,  
Into a thousand whirling dreams  
Of sun!

The poem reveals the existing condition in black identity and his ambition to break these shackles of racialism. The poet realized that in order to attain his dream, he should break the wall made of the racial blocks. He says that his black hand can break this great wall of racial subjugation and thus he can attain his hopes and aspirations. He can enter into a world of thousands of lights of sun, means he can enter into a world of freedom and liberty. One of the dehumanizing aspects/consequences of racism is that it curtailed the possibilities of freedom and liberty to the black people. Movements like Harlem Renaissance tried to bring freedom for the black people. Segregation of human beings on the basis of their skin colour and racial origins are inhuman and uncultured. Therefore, the protest against racialism is a humanitarian revolutionary

movement. Claude McKay's celebrated poem "To the White Fiends" is another important poem that stands against the racialism of the white Americans. The title of the poem is in the form of an address to the white fiends, not friends. The word "fiend" means an evil spirit.

### To the White Fiends

Think you I am not fiend and savage too?  
Think you I could not arm me with a gun  
And shoot down ten of you for every one  
Of my black brothers murdered, burnt by you?  
Be not deceived, for every deed you do  
I could match – out-match: am I not Africa's son,  
Black of that black land where black deeds are done?  
But the Almighty from the darkness drew  
My soul and said: Even thou shalt be a light  
Awhile to burn on the benighted earth,  
Thy dusky face I set among the white  
For thee to prove thyself of highest worth;  
Before the world is swallowed up in night,  
To show thy little lamp: go forth, go forth!

The poem brings a dichotomy between white people and dark people. The narrative style of the poem is very apt in exposing the evil mindedness of the white people and that's why the poet called them as "fiends." The poem reveals that the White people shot down the blacks, murdered them, and burnt them. The poet says that he can outshine the white people, as a black man, in these deeds. But, he prefers not to do so because he is not the son of Africa, but the son of Almighty God. This poem reveals the qualities of universal love and sympathy enshrined in humanity. The poem is revolutionary in nature in exposing the faulty notion of the White love and salvation.

In short, in the representation of racism in English literature, Harlem Renaissance and its movement, writers played a pivotal role.

### **13.2.6 Black African Writings and Anti-Racism:**

The real protest against the racial theories and agendas of the West actually emanated from the Black African writers. They celebrated Black African culture, race and ethnicity sans any shame and cultural jeopardy. The Black African writings originally depict the silenced and

mutated version of the Black culture and race by the White-West. The White-West consciously created the notion, throughout their colonial discourses, that the Black African culture, race and ethnicity are animistic and instinctual. It was the by-product of the cultural imperialism of the West. But, prominent Black African writers like Cheikh Hamidou Kane, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, and Ngugi Wa Thiango celebrated their black race and culture as their literary themes. It is the cultural forms in which the black race is considered as superior and great to the cultural forms of white people. These writers brought a new renaissance in the field of human racial studies rejecting the notion of binary opposites of colonial theories. One of the striking features of the Black African writings is that it never tarnished the culture of the West and never did it portray them as inferior and uncivilized. Instead, they celebrated the Black African culture and race as prominent and superior. However, they vehemently protested against the parochial and xenophobic representations of the black race by the West in their colonial writings. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and *Arrow of God* (1964) are the two prominent English novels in postcolonial English literature. These two novels represent the disintegration of African culture with the penetration of Eurocentric thought in African nations. Achebe's novel *Arrow of God* (1964) exclusively portrays the cultural imperialism confronted by the *Igbo* race in Africa. The novel is a powerful study on the cultural imperialism of West in African nations. They, the West, succeeded in their cultural imperialism by simply projecting the *Igbo* culture and race as uncultured and uncivilized. By projecting this constructed thought of the West on the African people, *Igbo* race, they led their cultural imperialism without any impediments. However, Chinua Achebe, as a novelist from Africa itself, provided the diversified cultural potentiality of the African race and culture in his novels.

Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1962) is a powerful play to highlight to the fore the importance of reclaiming the African culture, race and tradition. Through the fight between Baroka, the lion, and Lakunle, the civilized man, Wole Soyinka projects the importance of keeping African culture and racial tradition as it is, without any addition of the Western conceptual values. Here, Wole Soyinka powerfully proclaims the argument that African culture and its racial traditions are not inferior but superior as the Western culture and racial traditions.

Wole Soyinka's 'Telephone Conversation' (1963) is a powerful poem on anti-racial/anti-racism studies. The poem is about a telephonic conversation between a landlady and a speaker. The landlady is a white lady at the reception of an apartment. The speaker is enquiring about the availability of a room in the apartment. But when the speaker reveals that he is Black African,

the receptionist who is a white lady becomes a little confused and she asks about how much black he is. The white lady again asks whether he is dark or very light dark. The poem is a powerful satire against the racial thoughts of the Western white people. Their prejudices against the black people are revealed through the questions like “ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?” When the speaker reveals to the white lady that he is “brunette-in colour or darkish”, the white lady replies, “THAT’S DARK, ISN’T IT?” Then the black speaker says:

“Facially, I am brunette, but, madam, you should see  
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet  
Are a peroxide blond. Friction, caused--  
Foolishly, madam--by sitting down, has turned  
My bottom raven black--One moment, madam!”

The poet/speaker sarcastically says that his facial colour is brunette and his palm and soles of feet are peroxide blonde or white in colour. His contempt and protest against the white racial superiority is reflected in the next line of the poem. He says that his bottom is raven black. The poet contemptuously says that all his body parts are not pure raven black except his bottom part. By hearing his contemptuous and sarcastic reply the white lady replies nothing but ends the conversation.

Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s *The Ambiguous Adventure* (1961) is a powerful African spiritual novel which portrays the existence of African spiritual environment during the colonial period. Cheikh Hamidou Kane was Senegalese writer. He directly provides the Islamic spiritual environment in Africa during the period of colonization in order to disprove the western instinctual theories about the African people.

Amiri Baraka is another prominent Black African writer who writes against the racialism of the White. His former name was Everett LeRoi Jones. Later, he accepted Islam and named himself Imamu Amiri Baraka. His play *Dutchman* (1964) is a remarkable literary piece on the theme of racism. The play focuses on the conversation between Lula, a white woman and Clay, a black man. Both of them are traveling in a subway in New York City. Their conversation is long and flirtatious. Lula, as a woman of white skin, penetrates into the psyche of Clay through her conversation with him. Gradually, through her conversation with him, Lula exposes herself as the embodiment of great sexual body in front of Clay-the black man. But Clay is not weak and

immature to fall into the traps of Lula. She becomes angry and begins to ridicule his black identity and low status. Hardly had she realized that she can't trap Clay in her lines, when she stabs him twice in his heart. She directs all the other passengers to throw his body out of the train. Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* (1964) is a powerful study on the psychology of white body and its parochial attitude towards a black body. The play exposes the imaginary world of Lula. She imagines that all the black men are sexually vibrant towards white body. This imaginary world of the white world is disintegrated in the play. Her anger is emanating out of her shame. The shame is created by Clay, the black man, by rejecting the white body of Lula. Clay is not only a recipient of racial prejudice in the play but also a strong proponent of anti-racial/anti-racism elements in a white majority world. Racism exists in its extreme form in *Dutchman* (1964). One of the striking features of the play is that it contains both racial and anti-racial/anti-racism themes. Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker, Richard Wright, James Baldwin are the other prominent Black African writers who brought the themes of racism and anti-racism in their writings. Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) is another prominent English novel which deals with the theme of racism. *The Color Purple* (1982) thematises the living condition of the Black women in the Southern United States during the 1930s. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) is another prominent English novel which is based on the theme of racism in America.

### **13.2.7 Racism in Indian English Literature:**

Indian English literature, a sub genre of English literature, often focuses on the theme of racism in its literary discourses. As the Eurocentric thought about the white body is that it is superior, the Indian cultural spheres too hold the same view that the white body is more superior to the black body. Though the subcontinent is not a geographical location for white body, its sociological and cultural realms are strongly in tune with the white culture and body. The sub genres within the field of Indian English literature like Dalit Literature, Adivasi Literature, and Aboriginal Literature thematises issues and problems of racism. It is a known fact that the Dalits, Adivasis and the aboriginal people in India are not fair and white but dark skinned. The subjugation and parochial representations confronted by these sections of people are discussed in Indian English Racial and Anti-Racial/Racism Literature/Studies.

Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) is a powerful novel that discusses the poor living conditions of the untouchables in India. Racism and the traditional job practices are correlated in India. It means, low paying and low status jobs are inscribed upon low caste people. These low caste people usually bear a black body, not a fair body. These people are not allowed to

acquire education. Moreover, their social inferiority is underlined by inscribing low status jobs, like latrine cleaning, upon them. The novel is based on the experience of Mulk Raj Anand's aunt. It depicts a day in the life of Bakha, a latrine cleaning boy. Characters like Pandit Kalinath, a man of high caste, show a frowning and an outcaste attitude towards Bakha and his caste. The low caste people in India, especially Dalits, receive the same inhuman treatment from the higher caste people. It is same as the Black people receiving an inhuman treatment from their white counterparts. The novel was written at Sabarmati Ashram of Mahatma Gandhi. Mulk Raj Anand puts forth three solutions for the empowerment of untouchables. They are: –

- 1) Gandhi's social reforms
- 2) Introduction of technology like flushing toilet and
- 3) Conversion to Christianity.

Racism and caste prejudices in Indian English literature are predominantly prevalent in certain autobiographies like Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* (1984) and Laxman Mane's *Upra or An Outsider*. Sharan kumar Limbale is a remarkable Dalit writer writing in Marathi language. Many of his works are translated into English including *Akkarmashi*. The English title of the text is *The Outcaste* (2003). The autobiography reveals the question of identity of Limbale. He was actually born to a lower caste woman as the son of a higher caste Patil man. But, in the society, he was treated as an illegitimate child. The autobiography reveals the sexual exploitation of Dalit woman's body by the upper caste men.

In essence, English Literature abounds in racial elements. They are present in British literature, American English literature, African American English literature, African Black literature, Postcolonial literature and Dalit literature. The elements of racism in literature are incorporated by themes of racism, anti-racism, and casteism. Literature, as a social reformative movement, tries to bring the issue as it is and tries to block it by bringing the themes of anti-racial/racism elements. Casteism is another form of tool to bring the elements of segregation amongst the people. The same theme and its elements are also available in English literature, especially in Indian English literature.

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### **13.3 Learning Outcomes**

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Students will get a thorough idea about the subject of racism in English literature. They can describe and define the word racism in relation to other literary representations. They can

explain and elaborate the themes of racism available in different subgenres of English literature. They can also list out prominent English literary texts that thematise racialism. They can compare and contrast casteism and racism in English literature. The learners can also inspect certain other literary works in order to trace out racial elements in them. They can compose essays and short answer questions on the themes of racism in English literature.

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## 13.4 Glossary

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**Racialism:** A political ideology advocating superiority of rights based on race

**Manichean:** A dualistic philosophy dividing the world between evil and good

**Allegory:** The representation of abstract principles by characters or figures

**Binary:** Being in a state of two or mutually exclusive condition such as on and off, true or false, right or wrong

**Xenophobia:** Dislike of or prejudice against people from other countries.

**Casteism:** Prejudice on the basis of Caste

**Dalit Writings:** Literary writings dealing with Dalits

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## 13.5 Sample Questions

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### 13.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who is the playwright of the play *Dutchman*?
2. Cheikh Hamidou Kane is a \_\_\_\_\_ writer.
3. What is the original title of Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative* (1789)?
4. Find out the American Writer from the given names.
  - (a) Olaudah Equaino
  - (b) Joseph Conrad
  - (c) Chloe Anthony Wofford Morrison
  - (d) William Wordsworth
5. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* was published in \_\_\_\_

- (a) 1934
- (b) 1935
- (c) 1920
- (d) 1933

6. 'The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature' is written by\_\_\_\_\_

- (a) Chinua Achebe
- (b) Cheikh Hamidou Kane
- (c) Abdul Jan Mohamed
- (d) Edward Said.

7. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's "Heart of the Darkness"" is written by\_\_\_\_\_

- (a) Arundhati Roy
- (b) Sharankumar Limbale
- (c) Wole Soyinka
- (d) Chinua Achebe

8. *Akkarmashi* [The Outcaste] is written by\_\_\_\_\_

9. Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* is published in\_\_\_\_\_

10. The poem 'As I Grew Older' is written by\_\_\_\_\_

### 13.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What is racism? Give some examples of racism in English literature.
2. Give a brief description of racism in Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative*.
3. Discuss Chinua Achebe's attack against Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.
4. Bring out the elements of racism in Langston Hughes's poem 'As I Grew Older'.
5. Trace out the relationship between casteism and racism.

### 13.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the elements of racism in Black African-American English Literature.
2. Explain the elements of racism in English literature.
3. What is Harlem Renaissance? How far the movement was successful in the field of anti-racial/racism movements in America?

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## 13.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness." Web. 28 Nov. 2020. <[https://polonistyka.amu.edu.pl/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/259954/Chinua Achebe,-\\_An-Image-of-Africa.-Racism-in-Conrads-Heart-of-Darkness.pdf](https://polonistyka.amu.edu.pl/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/259954/Chinua_Achebe,-_An-Image-of-Africa.-Racism-in-Conrads-Heart-of-Darkness.pdf)>
2. Achebe, Chinua. *The Arrow of God*. USA: Anchor Books, 1994. Print.
3. Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. S.I.: Penguin, 2018. Print.
4. *Conrad, Joseph*. *Heart of Darkness*. U K: *Lightning Source Inc.*, 2014. Print.
5. *Equiano, Olaudah, 1745-1797*. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or, Gustavus Vassa, the African*. Peterborough, Ont. : *Broadview Press*, 2001. Print.
6. *Fanon, Frantz, Richard Philcox, Jean Paul Sartre, and Homi K Bhaba*. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Cape Town: *Kwela*, 2017. Print.
7. *Fanon, Frantz*. *Black Skin, White Mask*. New York: *Grove*, 1967. Print.
8. Hughes, Langston. "As I Grew Older." *Poem Hunter*. Web. 27 Nov. 2020. <<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/as-i-grew-older/>>
9. Kane, Cheikh Hamidou. *Ambiguous Adventure*. London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1972. Print.
10. Limbale, Sharankumar. *The Outcasts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Print.
11. Mane, Laxman. *Upra*. [*An Outsider*]. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademy. 1997. Print.
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13. Morrison, Tony. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970. Print.
14. Soyinka, Wole. "Telephone Conversation." Web. 28 Nov. 2020. <[https://www.k-state.edu/english/westmank/spring\\_00/SOYINKA.html](https://www.k-state.edu/english/westmank/spring_00/SOYINKA.html)>
15. Soyinka, Wole. *The Lion and the Jewel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963. Print.
16. Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990. Print.

## **Unit - 14: Telephone Conversation**

### **Structure**

- 14.0** Introduction
- 14.1** Objectives
- 14.2** Telephone Conversation
  - 14.2.1** About the Author
  - 14.2.2** Themes
  - 14.2.3** Explanation
    - 14.2.3.1** Lines 1 - 10
    - 14.2.3.2** Lines 11 - 20
    - 14.2.3.3** Lines 21 - 30
    - 14.2.3.4** Lines 31 – 35
  - 14.2.4** Summary
  - 14.2.5** Analysis
- 14.3** Learning Outcomes
- 14.4** Glossary
- 14.5** Sample Questions
- 14.6** Suggested Readings

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### **14.0 Introduction**

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The present unit presents a critical study and analysis of ‘Telephone Conversation’, a poem by Wole Soyinka. The cultural and artistic aspects in the poem will be discussed from various perspectives. Along with the explanation and summary of the poem, the biography of the poet and his important books will also be discussed in this unit. After the analysis of the poem, learning outcomes will be given in which important points discussed in the unit will be mentioned to provide a better understanding of the poem. It will be followed by sample questions which will include ten objective questions, five short answer questions and three long answer questions to assess your understanding of the text. Some books will be suggested at the end. You can enhance your understanding of the poem, know about the poet, his important themes and writing style by going through the suggested books.

‘Telephone Conversation’ is a poem in which a black man is trying to confirm the details about the housing with a white landlady over the phone and begins after the two have discussed the location and the price. The speaker informs the landlady that he is an African. The landlady enquires him regarding his skin colour. The poet responds with sarcasm and humor to the landlady’s insulting questions. The poem speaks about racial discrimination. It also focuses on the lack of proper communication between the different races.

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## **14.1 Objectives**

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The poem ‘Telephone Conversation’ by Wole Soyinka is based on racial discrimination against black people by white race. It is in conversation mode between an African and a white landlady. While going through the poem one can feel the stench in the words of white landlady and humour of the black man. The objectives of this unit are:

- To provide information about the poet and his works.
  - To show how racial discrimination exists even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century though several laws are introduced against it.
  - To make learners understand and appreciate the poems through various perspectives across cultures.
  - To enable the readers to interpret biographical, linguistic and contextual meaning of a literary text, specifically a poem.
  - To enlighten the readers about the issues faced by coloured people in the present time.
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## **14.2 *Telephone Conversation***

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### **14.2.1 About the Author:**

Wole Soyinka was born on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1934 in Abeokuta, Nigeria. His full name is Akinwande Oluwole Babatunde Soyinka. After his studies in Nigeria and the UK, he worked with the Royal Court Theatre in London. He is a Poet, playwright and an essayist. He is the first African to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1986. He played an important role in Nigerian politics and in the struggle for independence from the Great Britain.

Soyinka attended St. Peter's Primary School in Abeokuta and went to Abeokuta Grammar School where he received several prizes for literary compositions. In 1946, he was accepted by the Government College of Ibadan which was an elite secondary school in Nigeria. He worked as a Professor of Comparative Literature in Nigeria from 1975 to 1999. He served as Goldwin Smith Professor for African Studies and Theatre Arts from 1988-1991. He also worked as a Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Nevada, La Vegas and at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California. He has also worked at Oxford, Harvard and Yale universities. He was awarded the Europe Theatre Prize in December 2017 for his contribution to the realization of cultural events that promote understanding and the exchange of knowledge between peoples.

*The Lion and The Jewel* performed in 1959 at Ibadan Arts Theatre was the first play by Soyinka. The play *The Trials of Brother Jero* was first produced in 1960. He produced a memoir entitled *Ake: The Years of Childhood* in 1981. *Madmen and Specialists*, *The Strong Breed*, *Death and the King's Horseman*, *A Dance of the Forests*, *Kongi's Harvest*, *The Beatification of Area Boy* and *King Baabu* are few of his popular plays.

#### **14.2.2 Theme:**

The theme revolves around the incident which happens when a person telephones to rent a house. The questions asked to him are not about the usual things like facilities provided and other basic requirements/amenities but about the skin colour of the caller. The landlady is sarcastic and discriminates the caller and he feels sorry for something which he was born with. The conversation goes on about how dark the caller is and asking him to describe himself. Poem depicts the stereotypical images infected in the imagination of both the races. The speaker harbours the idea that the white lady is 'lipstick coated' and 'long gold-rolled/ Cigarette-holder pipped' when he listens her voice. He imagines that being a white she has good-breeding and very cautious utterance. In the same way the lady thinks being an African the speaker must be 'Light Or Very Dark?' or 'Dark? Or Very Light?' The poem ends with a humourous note when speaker says he is not completely black as the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet are peroxide blond and his bottom turned raven black due to sitting foolishly.

### 14.2.3 Explanation:

#### 14.2.3.1 Lines 1 - 10

*The price seemed reasonable, location  
Indifferent. The landlady swore she lived  
Off premises. Nothing remained  
But self-confession. "Madam," I warned,  
"I hate a wasted journey--I am African."*

*Silence. Silenced transmission of  
Pressurized good-breeding. Voice, when it came,  
Lipstick coated, long gold-rolled  
Cigarette-holder pipped. Caught I was foully.  
"HOW DARK?" . . . I had not misheard . . . "ARE YOU LIGHT*

#### Explanation:

The poem begins with a conversation between two people, a black man trying to rent a house and a white lady, the owner who swears that she lives away from the premises. The price is reasonable and the location seems alright for the speaker who confesses that he is an African and he hates a wasted journey. He wanted to confirm whether, being an African, he would be rented the house. From this point onwards, the conversation takes a different turn. There is a silence from owner's side. Although the lady has had a good breeding, this comes as a contrast since she expresses her displeasure by remaining silent. After a moment the silence is broken by the lady who asks him how dark he is. The speaker thinks he misheard but when the white lady repeats if he is light or very dark, he understands that it is important for her to know that he is an African.

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

1. What are the three things the poet likes about the flat in the first three lines of the poem?
2. What did poet tell the lady about himself? Why didn't he want to visit the flat?
3. Why was there silence? What did the land lady ask the poet?

**14.2.3.2 Lines 11 – 20**

*OR VERY DARK?" Button B, Button A. Stench  
Of rancid breath of public hide-and-speak.  
Red booth. Red pillar box. Red double-tiered  
Omnibus squelching tar. It was real! Shamed  
By ill-mannered silence, surrender*

*Pushed dumbfounded to beg simplification.  
Considerate she was, varying the emphasis--  
"ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?" Revelation came.  
"You mean--like plain or milk chocolate?"  
Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light*

**Explanation:**

After being asked from the lady about his colour, the speaker feels disgusted. He feels as if he is reduced to telephone buttons. As if he is being asked whether he is button A or button B. He becomes angry and his surroundings seems red to him. Here red is the symbol of anger. He compares his community and white people with black tar and a huge bus. Black people are being crushed by white as the tar by bus. He could smell the stench of hypocrisy from her words. In public white people show off as educated, well mannered and respectful for blacks but they practice discrimination in their private life. When the speaker requests for more simplification he is surprised as she asks him with emphasis again if he is dark or very light. Now the speaker asks the lady that whether she wants to know that his colour is like plain or milk chocolate?

***Check your Progress***

1. What did the lady compare the poet with?
2. How was the poet shamed?
3. How could the author smell the stench from the lady's words?

**14.2.3.3 Lines 21 - 30**

*Impersonality. Rapidly, wave-length adjusted,  
I chose. "West African sepia"--and as afterthought,*

*"Down in my passport." Silence for spectroscopic  
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent  
Hard on the mouthpiece. "WHAT'S THAT?" conceding*

*"DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS." "Like brunette."  
"THAT'S DARK, ISN'T IT?" "Not altogether.  
Facially, I am brunette, but, madam, you should see  
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet  
Are a peroxide blond. Friction, caused—*

**Explanation:**

While responding the question of white lady regarding his skin colour the speaker confesses that he is 'West African sepia.' He is assertive in saying that it's according to what his passport says. The lady speaks right into the receiver and asks him to explain what he means. The black man says it's like brunette. The lady asks it's 'Dark' only. Isn't it? The poet/speaker opens up with humour that not very dark but facially he is brunette in colour and goes on to say that the lady should see the rest of him. He says the palm of his hands and soles of his feet are bleached peroxide blond that means they aren't black but light as peroxide blond. At this point, the poet expresses his anger and tells the lady loudly that he is not completely black.

***Check your Progress***

1. What does the poet's passport say about the colour of the poet?
2. How does the poet describe his face?
3. What is peroxide blond?

**14.2.3.4 Lines 31 - 35**

*Foolishly, madam--by sitting down, has turned  
My bottom raven black--One moment, madam!"--sensing  
Her receiver rearing on the thunderclap  
About my ears--"Madam," I pleaded, "wouldn't you rather  
See for yourself?"*

**Explanation:**

The speaker continues to explain mockingly about his colour that he is not completely dark. He continues by saying that he foolishly sat on his back which has turned it into raven black due to friction. Sensing that she might slam the receiver any time, he pleads the white lady to see for herself. The poem ends with this request and eventually she slams the receiver on his face.

***Check your Progress***

1. Why has the black man's bottom turned black? To which bird does he compare the colour of the bottom?
2. What did the poet sense at the end of the conversation?
3. What was the lady's reply to the poet?

**14.2.4 Summary:**

The "Telephone Conversation", a poem by an illustrious Nigerian African poet Wole Soyinka, is meant to highlight the impact and presence of racial discrimination still prevalent in the society despite the fact that a law is passed against such an inhuman act. The poem is written in a conversational tone/style wherein a conversation is being carried out on a telephone between a black man and a white woman. The man is looking for a room, advertised by white woman for rent. The racism and hypocritical nature of the white lady is amply brought to light by the poet through the conversation. Though it was advertised in newspaper that there is no issue of race and anyone can take a room for rent but the man, keeping in view his previous experiences, calls to confirm about the veracity of this information. When he tells that he is an African, she asks if he is very dark or light. When he informs her that he is half black, she remains silent and doesn't respond. The man requests her to meet him and verify the fact that he is only half-black but she hangs the phone and does not pay heed to him.

It is brought to the limelight, through their discourse, that how racial menace lies latent in the heart of an individual. Laws are there against such discrimination but these are of no value because an individual cannot be forced or moved to alter his thinking. In addition, the poem has highlighted the concept of dual nature of human beings as well. As per the advertisement given in the newspaper and the initial conversation on telephone, it is made clear that the lady has no issues as far as the race is concerned but later she acted otherwise. On the other hand, dwindling nature of human beings is also shown through the black man. He was shown as angry at the

question of his colour at the very first stage, later on he seems to be requesting and justifying the fact that he is not totally black rather his soles and palms are of yellowish colour. In addition, he puts himself for display when he tells the lady to come for verification and see the exact colour of his skin. It has significantly pinned down the discourse across the racial boundaries among human beings.

It is brought to light by the poet that we still judge people by their colour and race in spite of the fact that we are living in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We deem each other superior and inferior on the basis of the colour of the skin rather than the character and the level of humanity and compensation. Colour is being utilized as a tool for identification that shows the mockery of humanity and how pseudo the concept of modernism is. The poem on a broader canvas wants to pinpoint the fact that judging people on the basis of colour and race is very inhuman, irrational and dehumanizing. The lady was nice until she comes across the fact that the speaker is of black colour. After that abrupt change of tone, language is noticed.

#### **14.2.5 Analysis:**

In the poem “Telephone Conversation”, the poet has highlighted the very pathetic and inhuman act on the part of white people who deem humans inferior and superior and good or bad on the basis of colour and race rather than their character and humanity. The poet has incorporated satire, irony and imagery in abundance in order to highlight this very complex fact. Simple and civilized tone of the speaker is contrasted with the rude, arrogant and hypocritical facet of landlady, as both are representing their class and their thinking pattern. Those who are deemed and projected as polite and sophisticated are black at heart and those who are having black colour and are deemed as savage and bad are practicing the other way round.

Both white and black people are stereotypes having typical mentality that represents their inner disliking for each other. Both of them do not publicly admit it but their actions display their inner self. Despite all the conscious attempts they make to hide their inner prejudices they are unable to do so. The lady in spite of terming him black uses the term light and dark which is significant with regard to the study of inner self and pretentious nature of whites towards blacks. Despite all the gentleness of tone and concealing fact, the speaker deems it as oppressing and discriminating which is a stain on the face of humanity.

## **Underlying Theme**

The theme of racialism is not merely limited to an individual rather the White people deem that the blacks or African people as a whole are inferior and bad in nature and character. In addition, the discrimination does not merely hamper and limit the resources of housing for the black but affect them in every walk of life in general. An abrupt change in the conversational tone of the landlady also indicates the hasty and inconsistent nature of human beings as well. It is also supplemented by the attitude of the black speaker. He too is not consistent as he initially mocks the lady for asking the colour of his skin for renting a room but later seems to be beseeching her to verify that he is not totally black rather similar to a “West African sepia.” He tempts the lady, by saying that there are few parts of his body that are white in colour, to get a house on rent.

The speaker deems that colour and race are very simple facets that cannot be dealt with in such a light tone but in fact race and identity are very complex in nature and very difficult to resolve in such a simple fashion. But the very word ‘African’ changes the entire fabric and tone which does not remain confined merely to the colour of skin rather it has a background and a much deeper connotation as well. The silence of the landlady on the phone after getting to know the race of the speaker indicates that on the one hand she does want to show her dislike for him on the basis of his colour and on the other hand she does not want to lend him the room merely because he is an African and black in colour.

The colour forms an integral theme of this poem. The denial of rented accommodation to the blackman is basically due to his colour. The poet is from a black race and the landlady who is a white woman, is prejudiced against the blacks, so she refuses to give the flat on rent.

### **The words which are used to describe the blacks are:**

Dark

Very Dark

Plain chocolate

West African sepia

Brunette

Raven black

Tar

**The words used for describing the whites are:**

Light

Very light

Long gold rolled

Pressurized good breeding

Milk chocolate

Peroxide blond

There are few intervals of silence in the poem between the landlady and the Blackman which have significant meaning and importance. When the landlady becomes silent for the first time, the poet knows for sure that she is unwilling to rent the flat. He feels disgusted. There is an uneasy silence right after when the poet says he is an African. The silence is broken by the landlady herself when she continues the conversation to ask how dark he is. During the conversation the landlady becomes silent for a few times specifically, when the poet tells that his colour is like “West African sepia” as is given in his passport. The landlady becomes silent again because she doesn’t understand what it means and asks the poet to explain it. The capitalised letters in the line “WHAT’S THAT?”, “DON’T KNOW WHAT THAT IS” indicate the loudness in the lady’s tone. It also indicates the racist mentality of the whites dominating the blacks. By using the capital letters, the poet distinguishes the attitude of the whites from the blacks.

**Form and Structure:**

The poem is written in free verse, casual in tone and manner with lines of various lengths. The poet has not maintained any sort of regular rhyme or meter pattern rather it has been written in a casual conversational style. However, the poem has a lyrical effect based on dialogues of two persons having a telephonic conversation. It follows the pattern of questions and answers. The use of present tense in the poem is also in line with the present need and desperate condition of the speaker who is looking for a room on rent. Although, the poem is short and seems simple but in reality, the meanings that it conveys are multilayered touching upon complex facets and ideas. It is written in the form of first-person narrative.

Through simple language and conversational tone, the poem conveys its message with greater clarity leaving no place for ambiguity as far as the relation between language, tone and subject matter of the poem is concerned. The technique of repetition is being utilized by Soyinka to highlight the attitude of white elites towards the black on one hand, and their dual nature,

hypocrisy and narrow mindedness on the other hand. The words “black”, “red” and “light” are the instances of the repetitive nature that the poet wants to put emphasis on during the narration of the poem. The very colour is also symbolic of the fact that in a white and elite society, white is deemed as the colour of superiority while as the black becomes an emblem of inferiority.

The tone of the poem is light, comic and casual but the message it has conveyed is deep and broad. The style is free but it is full of passive sarcasm as far the prevailing discrimination in the society is concerned. The poet might be speaking on the basis of his personal experiences but he is speaking for entire humanity, not merely for himself. The poem is enriched because of its enriched language and the timeless idea that is meant to project.

### **Literary Devices:**

#### **Imagery:**

The poet has made a vivid use of imagery. The speaker (black man) forms a mental image of the white woman as someone who is “lipstick coated” with a “long gold rolled cigarette-holder” in her mouth, by merely hearing her words on the telephone and her conversational tone.

The poet has further utilized the image in which a huge bus is shown squashing the black tar as in a symbolic way. It is symbolic of the fact that how white intelligentsia is maltreating and behaving with the blacks and how black Africans are being undermined, marginalized and trampled in a white society of elites in a similar way the “red double-tiered omnibus” is “squelching tar”. The attitude of the speaker in the poem is the representation of the anger and frustration that black people have against whites because of their own wrong doings.

As the very tone and text of the poem suggests that the poet has written it in a satirical manner. He is satirizing the hypocrisy and racist behavior of a white landlady on one hand and the dual and dwindling nature of black man, speaker of the poem, on the other. To him, human beings are not what they seem to be. Their attitude in the public and private is different. In addition, the nature and behavior of human beings are also not consistent rather it changes with the need and time in accordance with the situation they are in. In addition to this, the speaker of the poem is shown mocking the lady that prejudice and discrimination is a blot on the face of humanity. It does not signify the status of human beings rather it diminishes their character and dignity in the eyes of others.

**Irony:**

Irony is yet another literary device that the poet has used effectively in the poem. Keeping in view the advertisement displayed in the newspaper, it seems the landlady is indifference as far as the race of the tenant is concerned. But during the conversation with the speaker who is seeking the very room for rent she remains silent and does not respond positively merely because the speaker himself confesses that he is African, means that he is black in colour. She deems his colour as a means to determine his identity which is against what she has stated in paper. So, difference between her words and actions has been brought to light by the poet.

The poet has used irony to highlight the very complex and hypocritical nature of whites who show pretentiousness in actions and words. Their words represent something else to what their actions show. Another facet of the irony is also evident when the black man was aware of the fact that there is discrimination and prejudice that does exist in society then why does he himself makes a confession that he is an African. It indicates the fact that he himself has no confidence in himself or is not satisfied with his colour, otherwise there was no need of mentioning it by himself. In addition, when he mocks her for her very question of light and dark colour then why does he devalues himself towards the end of the poem by requesting her to let her see and then decide the colour of his skin that it is not totally black.

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### 14.3 Learning Outcomes

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After going through the unit, the readers are expected to know:

- The racial discrimination faced by Black people in America and other European countries.
- How the Black people, after enduring a greater suffering, are able to express through humour what they have underwent.
- To appreciate a literary text in different contexts.
- The literary devices used in the poem “Telephone Conversation”.
- That Wole Soyinka is the first African writer to receive Nobel Prize for literature.
- That Wole Soyinka is a champion who represented the predicament of Black people.

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## 14.4 Glossary

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**Indifferent:** Not interested, apathy

**Transmission:** Process of broadcasting something by Radio or TV

**Good-breeding:** A person who has good breeding has been trained in childhood to be polite and behave correctly

**Fouly:** Extremely unpleasant.

**Stench:** Strong unpleasant smell.

**Rancid breath:** Tasting or smelling unpleasant; unpleasant breath.

**Squelching tar:** Squelch is to make cracking sound and tar is a black thick sticky hot substance used for making roads.

**Ill-mannered:** Rude and unpleasant.

**Dumbfounded:** Shocked, surprised.

**Assent:** Agreement or approval.

**Clinical:** Showing no emotions or feelings, character or warmth

**Impersonality:** Unfriendly.

**Sepia:** Having reddish brown colour, like that of an old photograph.

**Spectroscopic flight of fancy:** Spectroscope is dispersion of light into seven different colours, similarly the word means the thoughts of the lady which are dispersed.

**Accent:** The way in which the people in a particular area pronounce a particular word.

**Conceding:** To admit defeat

**Brunette:** Dark hair, dark eyes and dark skin.

**Peroxide blond:** Is a woman who has used peroxide to bleach her hair.

**Raven black:** Refers to the kind of black colour, raven is a very black bird and this comparison is used to describe black people.

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## 14.5 Sample Questions

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### 14.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Wole Soyinka was a writer from-

- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| (a) India   | (b) Australia |
| (c) Nigeria | (d) Canada    |

2. Who is the first African Nobel laureate in English literature?
  - (a) Nadine Gordimer (b) Chinua Achebe
  - (c) Ama Ata Aidoo (d) Wole Soyinka
3. Is the poem relevant today?
  - (a) No (b) Yes
4. The poem “Telephone Conversation” is composed by
  - (a) Amitav Ghosh (b) John Donne
  - (c) Wole Soyinka (d) None of these
5. The poem “Telephone Conversation” is a conversation between
  - (a) Husband and wife (b) Two friends
  - (c) A black man and a white landlady (d) Father and son
6. “Telephone Conversation” is a satire on
  - (a) Love (b) Married life
  - (c) Racism (d) None of these
7. The caller in “Telephone Conversation” is a/an
  - (a) White (b) American
  - (c) Black (d) None of these
8. In the poem “Telephone Conversation” the owner of the house was an Indian.
  - (a) True (b) False
9. In the poem the speaker compares himself with
  - (a) Ice-cream (b) Sweet
  - (c) Chocolate (d) Biscuit
10. The conversation in the poem is about
  - (a) Shopping (b) Love
  - (c) Rent (d) Game

#### 14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Is the title “Telephone Conversation” suitable for the poem? Discuss.
2. What are the reasons for intervals of silence in the poem?
3. Why is the colour an important feature of this poem? What words in the poem describe the colour?
4. What does hide-and-speak mean in the poem?
5. What’s the significance of use of capital letters in the poem?

### 14.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What is the central theme of the poem “Telephone Conversation”? Write your opinion about racial discrimination and mention few names of the people who fought for the equal rights.
2. Do you think the speaker was stung by landlady’s insensitivity? Give a detailed description of it with reference to the poem.
3. Discuss the experience of the speaker with the landlady in the poem “Telephone Conversation” by Soyinka.

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### 14.6 Suggested Readings

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1. “*To Sir, With Love*” Mr. E.R. Braithwaite
2. Soyinka, Wole. “Telephone Conversation by Wole Soyinka: Summary and Analysis.” *Bachelorandmaster.com*, 12 Dec. 2020, [www.bachelorandmaster.com/britishandamericanpoetry/telephone-conversation-summary-analysis.html#.YAfAwl4za1s](http://www.bachelorandmaster.com/britishandamericanpoetry/telephone-conversation-summary-analysis.html#.YAfAwl4za1s).
3. Soyinka, Wole. “Telephone Conversation.” *LitCharts*, 20 Dec. 2020, 9 pm, [www.litcharts.com/poetry/wole-soyinka/telephone-conversation](http://www.litcharts.com/poetry/wole-soyinka/telephone-conversation).

## Unit - 15: The Doubly Marginalized Women

### Structure

15.0 Introduction

15.1 Objectives

15.2 The Doubly Marginalized Women

15.2.1 Gender Inequality

15.2.2 Discrimination on the basis of Caste and Class

15.2.3 Position of the Indian Women through the different periods of history

15.3 Learning Outcomes

15.4 Glossary

15.5 Sample Questions

15.6 Suggested Readings

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### 15.0 Introduction

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Let us begin with the lines from Kamala Das's poem "An Introduction":

Then...I wore a shirt and my  
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored  
My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl  
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,  
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in.

(<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/an-introduction-2/>)

What do these lines indicate? A simple answer to this question is that someone (a woman) is prohibited from taking up a man's role. Also she is asked to take her womanly role which is set in her society which includes cooking and other house hold chores. It is actually the dilemma of the modern woman to try to strip off the female cloak and to emancipate herself from fixed roles and rules of a patriarchal social set up. Women are oppressed in a society by a male dominated discourse. Men hold the centre and women are put to a periphery. In other words, women have been marginalized because they are given secondary roles and enjoy less importance in the society. Men have always possessed all the primary roles. Women have been

treated as inferior, weak, brainless, and womanly which in turn has given them the marginal roles in society. For instance, men are not supposed to weep loudly, if they do so it is said that they are 'weeping like a woman'. It hints to the belief that weeping quality belongs to women only and men are supposed to be strong. This statement itself suggests that men will have to do braver jobs and women being weak will have to do jobs accordingly. This practice is prevalent because of the cultural conditioning of our society. We are actually brought up in such an environment, where we are taught these culturally specific roles determined by patriarchal society. If a woman does anything which is considered as a taboo in a society, she is labelled with negative terms. Lower class and lower caste women get doubly oppressed and marginalised. Firstly, they get marginalised on the basis of gender and secondly, they get marginalised on the basis of caste or class.

***Check your Progress***

1. What do you mean by marginalisation?
2. What is Patriarchy?

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## **15.1 Objectives**

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After going through the unit you will be able to:

- To learn gender discrimination
- To learn the intricate patterns of oppression on the basis of gender
- To get to know the interpretation of double marginalisation of women
- To learn about the strain of being a Tribal or Dalit women in society.

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## **15.2 The Doubly Marginalized Women**

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### **15.2.1 Gender Inequity:**

Let us try to understand first the difference between gender and sex. Sex is biological, and includes anatomy and physiology. The bodies of men and women are biological entities, but

they are invested with particular meanings in a society. To put it in simple words, men are stronger than women and this social construction has been culturally conditioned deep in us. This makes gender ideological because it naturalizes a social performance (woman's role). Therefore, woman is made to accept the idea that she is made or born to be a mother, a device for procreation. Furthermore, for women, lower wages are fixed and justified on the basis of proving weaker and less efficient. Women's writing is rejected by citing the reason that it deals only with less important issues like the home. So, what we see here is that the social differences are masked in favour of the biological difference.

Women have always been assigned a secondary and a limited role in society. To take an example, Rousseau had set out the following plan for the education of women, "For my part, I would have a young English woman cultivate her agreeable talents in order to lease her future husband with as much care and assiduity as a young Circassian, cultivates hers, to fit her for the harem of a Circassian Bashaw" (Wollstonecraft, 95). In other words, women have to be trained to become a pleasant companion for men. This shows that women can't affirm their identity, they always have to identify themselves in terms of men. Mary Wollstonecraft's '*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*' (1792) is a plea for gender inequality and marginalisation of women. In this book, we find that Wollstonecraft challenges the notion that women exist only to please men as was assumed by Rousseau. She argues that men and women must be given equal opportunities in education, work and politics. Wollstonecraft points out that women must be treated as equals because they play a crucial role in the society, namely, bringing up children. Women should take stand to become companions rather than mere wives to their husbands. This can happen only when women acquire education. Wollstonecraft tried to emancipate women from the stereotype/ stereotypical image of woman as a creature of sentiment. It was this tendency, Wollstonecraft argued, that kept the women subordinated.

In USA Margaret Fuller's activism and writings, especially her *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), can be seen as a parallel origin for Western feminism (along with Wollstonecraft). Just like Wollstonecraft, Fuller opines that education is the means of emancipation for women.

In England, the major political change in the position of women came about with the suffragette movement which companied steadily for women in the first two decades of the twentieth century to give them the right to vote. And thereafter, it paved way to more career

options for women in the second half of the twentieth century e.g. school teaching, nursing and typing, meant that more women entered the workforce than ever before. After this, college-teaching became another option as did research. The twentieth century novelist Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) argues that women writers should be given economic independence and privacy. She further argues that because women do not have power, their creativity has been systematically stifled through the ages.

Liberal feminism underwent a radical change with the publication of Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). This work draws the attention towards the key areas of girl's education, female sexuality, marriage and domestic-work which she slightly calls 'unrewarding drudgery'. Beauvoir argues that men feel that they are always right and align all negative qualities to women. Although women are changing, they have started to take part in the affairs of women's world which is "*still a world that belongs to men*" (Beauvoir 21). Beauvoir also argues that woman is never identified as a being in itself but in relation to men. Beauvoir comments:

... humanity is male and men define women not in itself but as relative to him: she is not regarded as an autonomous being...[woman] is simply that man decrees: thus she is called 'the sex' by which is meant that she appeals essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex----- absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not be with reference to her: she is the identical, the essential as opposed to the essential. He is...the absolute-----she is the other (116).

In India, there were patriarchal codes set for women. Like Rousseau's educational system for women, there were infamous laws put forth by Manu. According to the laws of Manu,

Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her son protects (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence.

(The Laws of Manu, Chapter IX).

Manu is considered to be the law giver and founder of Hindu hierarchical society, as he imposed the rules of social behaviour. These infamous laws were put forth many years ago but unfortunately in many parts of the country they are still in practice. Women are subordinated to men and are discriminated on the basis of gender. Gender based discrimination can easily be



### **15.2.2 Discrimination on the basis of Caste and Class:**

Women of the lower class and caste get doubly marginalized. Firstly, they have to face the patriarchal nature of the society. Secondly, they become the prey of larger oppression of caste and class. Indian and American societies have myriad castes and classes. There is an intricate pattern of caste structure in India and America and the impact of the caste structure on women is tremendous as now women are discriminated within their own caste on the basis of gender.

Discourse plays a very vital role in society in developing the power relations. Men and women can get unknowingly trapped into it by unintentionally internalizing the ideology. People can get attracted to it without understanding the implications of it. So, we often end up in misrecognition of ideology. In this regard, Charles Taylor, in the seminal text *Multiculturalism* comments:

Our identity is partly shaped by recognition of its absence, often by misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being(5).

The danger of misrecognition comes from the explanation of internalisation of patriarchal beliefs about women's inefficiency, and from the impact of white supremacy on the black psyche. Let us take an example of how internalisation of the stereotype works. If a group of women are said that they cannot do well in maths before they take test, there is the possibility of them performing badly. This is not a miracle, we said and it happened. However, we gave them a negative feeling and their psyche internalised it and they got the similar kind of results. This example is similar to our understanding of the stereotype threat where those in minority groups are at a risk of conforming to a negative stereotype about their group. If a black woman writes or does something extraordinary, she has to prove the authenticity of it, as she has no agency, no power over anything.

Phillis Wheatley, the first published African-American poet, while trying to publish her book had to prove its authenticity before the white men. These cultures are not supposed to have

efficiency to produce high literature. A most recent articulation of this can be seen in the remarks of Saul Bellow: “Who is the Tolstoy of the Zulus? The Proust of the Papuans? I would be glad to read them”. Here it indicates a hierarchy, putting western culture at the top. And this shows that these kinds of ideologies and discourses are just to maintain power and authority over the other castes and classes.

White men sit at the top in the society; this has to do more with being white and being male. White men have the freedom to do or choose whatever they want. They are perceived as the rational actors. Their agency and authority is accepted and recognized by all. White women gain benefits and in-group status based on their whiteness and proximity to white males (as mothers, wives, daughters etc.). So, white women do benefit from white patriarchy. White women are protected from black men who are not allowed to come near them. Let us take an example of the black folklore:

Black man: oh Lord, will I ever?

White man: No, nigger, never!

Black man: As long as there's life, there is hope.

White man: And as long as there's trees, there's rope. (39)

This indicates a warning to black men to stay away from white men. But at another level it also indicates black men's supposed desire for white women, and they are unable to leave white women because white women's bodies mean something that black women's bodies could never articulate.

However, in this desire for whiteness is hidden the deep truth of searching and desiring freedom. Men are dying for freedom and black men are dying for white women, who for them, are the symbol of freedom. In this connection, Eldridge Cleaver comments:

I know that white man made the black woman the symbol of slavery and the white woman the symbol of freedom. Every time I embrace a black woman, I'm embracing slavery, and when I put my arms around white woman, well, I'm hugging freedom. The white man forbade me to have the white woman on pain of death. Literally, if I touched a white woman it would cost me my life. Men die for

freedom, but black men die for white women, who are the symbol of freedom (40).

Cleaver's comment can also bring home a message that at least black men have advantage over white and black women based on their maleness or proximity to patriarchy and myriad forms of male power. This is perhaps because the society follows a patriarchal model. So, the black women are left with no choice other than to lift their status. They are doubly oppressed, one by the black men who belong to their caste and class and second by the white men who hold the ultimate authority. Their treatment in the society becomes unbearable. So the black women have to struggle with racial, gender, and more often than not class discrimination.

Caste discourse does not imply only putting people in hierarchy, but it also includes complex power politics related to the social construction and perception of people. It was Uma Chakravarti who through her book *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens* traces these paradoxical doctrines, through the life experience of Hindu women, from a broad temporal perspective from the Mesolithic era to the contemporary times. The book argues that even feminist movements and strong constitutional provisions have been unable to revise or transcend the existing static social order. These movements are strongly criticised by the Dalit feminists whose struggle has been different and multilayered. Chakravarti states that caste oppression is different from other oppressions like that of racial oppression in the West and it is very difficult to study it through a single theoretical framework.

Caste-distinction affected countries such as India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh remain deeply patriarchal society where women are often oppressed by men and socially restrained from accessing the same rights and privileges. Dalit women in South Asia face a very harsh patriarchal system. They have to face a severe intersectional discrimination of being a Dalit and woman too. This makes them a key target of violence and systematically denies them the choices and freedom in various spheres of life.

Tribal women too in India suffer from caste, class and gender discrimination. If we look at the tribals in general, they are discriminated on the basis of caste and class; however, the tribal women carry the problem of gender too. They are also exploited or even traded in prostitution and abused by police, as is shown by Mahashweta Devi in her stories *Doulati* and *Palamo*. *Doulati*, a fourteen-year-old girl, is entrapped by a man of upper class who, after promising to

marry her, leaves her in a brothel and Basmati, the protagonist of *Palamo*, is compelled to become a prostitute by her husband. From these two examples we get to know that not only the upper class men oppress the tribal women but they are also oppressed by their own men folk. In the story *Palamo*, Mahashweta Devi also deals with the problem of child marriage. Basmati is married to Nanku at the age of seven and is also sexually harassed by a high caste man in the field. In the novella, *Gauhan*, Mahashweta Devi expresses how tribal women are forced to do unpaid labour. Jhalo, a character in this novella is forced to work without pay when her husband dies in a coal mine accident.

***Check your Progress***

1. Can women get doubly marginalised?
2. How is the struggle of black women different from black men?

### **15.2.3 Position of the Indian women through the different periods of history:**

#### **Pre-Vedic and Vedic times:**

In the earlier times (pre-Aryan) people in India were agricultural communities who led their lives according to the seasons. During those times God was female and it represented life in the form of the earth mother. People used to worship the mother goddess because the religion of the Hindus was based on fertility. Kali and Shiva are pre-Aryan deities and also the Shakti cult of Hinduism may also be traced back to this time. Women were considered as an embodiment of cosmic power and energy according to Shakti cult of Hinduism. This belief finds its expression in the dual deities of Durga, “the great mother”, who is believed to have lured Shiva, her husband away from asceticism back to life.

Mother goddess remained popular during the pre-Aryan times only. The arrival of Aryans changed the social and religious situation abruptly. The Aryan Brahmins eliminated the Shakti cult and replaced the female with the male as the dominant principle. When Aryans migrated to India in around 1500 B.C., they brought with them the patriarchal order of family organization, in which the line of descent is from father to son, and the daughter leaves her father's house on marriage to live with the husband and father-in-law.

However, during Vedic times women were still held in high esteem in the society. The Vedas are the religious books written by Aryan Brahmins around 1200 B.C. to record earliest written Indian history. During this period too, there was no gender-based discrimination, women, at times, remained unmarried in their quest for knowledge and wisdom. Vijalaksimi Seshadri writes that education for women might have been in vogue at least until the third century B.C. for there were many women scholars among Buddhists and Jains (29). Also women had the freedom to marry at mature age and widows could remarry.

### **Post-Vedic Period:**

During this period (ranging between 300 B.C. and beginning of the Christian era) there was a decline in the status of women in the Indian society. When the Aryans moved from Punjab to the Gangetic plains; they needed more and more warriors to fight with the tribes they encountered and therefore, they preferred sons to the girls. The decline of the women's status can be traced from the lines of Chandogya Upanishad, a religious text from the pre-Buddhist era. This is a prayer which was supposed to be said by the spiritual aspirants: "May I never, ever, enter the reddish, white, toothless, slippery and slimy yoni of the women" (viii, 14.1). Women were thus regarded as the barriers to the attainment of spiritual knowledge. The women's sexuality seemed to be repugnant and it needed to be kept under strict control by family and society. There also emerged a three-class social structure, divided into Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors and aristocrats) and Vaishyas (commoners). Aryans dominated the native population around 1500 B.C. and started classing the indigenous people and those of mixed descent as outsiders, relegating Sudras (servants) to the fourth category Caste became hereditary and a bane too.

The impact of caste on women became unbearable as they were discriminated with their own caste on the basis of gender. Property laws were issued to forbid daughters to inherit immovable property, because such property would have passed on to their husband's family at marriage. Women were only given movable property, called dowry. And because of dowry people wanted male child only. The birth of a daughter can add to the dowry burden of people at the time of their marriage. You can still find these things prevalent in contemporary Indian society.

**The Mughal Period:**

The advent of the Mughals in the sixteenth century consolidated the Islamic power in India. Under the Mughal rule, a woman's lowly position in the upper castes of both Muslim and Hindu community was reinforced. In particular, Purdah spread in areas where the Hindu-Muslim conflict was the strongest, based on the fear of abduction and rape from the other community. Under the Mughals, child marriage, widow discrimination became the symbols of pride and prestige among the high caste Hindu women. Women were taught to be submissive and follow the patriarchal nature of their religion. On the other hand, Muslim women enjoyed better legal status than Hindu women. They were even allowed to study the religious texts, to divorce and to remarry. They had the rights of inheritance. The shariah (Islamic law), defines suicide as illegal and sati was a kind of suicide, but no restraint on this practice by Hindus was attempted.

**The British Rule:**

When the British started ruling India, the position of women became even worse. Female infanticide became prevalent; education for girls was prohibited and Sati system was still practiced. Christian missionaries began to fight against child marriage, polygamy, female infanticide but were strongly opposed by fanatic Hindus. One of the greatest social reformers of this age was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who founded the Brahmosamaj in 1828 and pleaded for the principle of freedom for women and equality of sexes. The advent of Gandhi was crucial for women's question. Gandhi made people understand that there is no authority in scriptures to ill-treat women. He also enlightened Muslims against Purdah system. Education of women during the nineteenth century witnessed a turning point. In around 1819, Christian missionaries opened schools for girls. However, only converts from Harijans and the lower class sent their daughters to these kinds of institutions. Pandita Ramabai and Rama Bhai Ranade understood the importance of education and they founded institutions and vocational schools which helped thousands of women.

**After Independence (1947):**

Women played a very significant role in the independence of India. After independence, they fought for their own identity and rights. Many women organizations were founded to fight against the discrimination of women. In post-colonial India, education of the girls was considered important and necessary. However, it soon got associated with the idea of getting a good husband in the matrimonial market. In this regard, Vrinda Nabar writes,

Middle class girls, are educated largely as a concession to a superficial social change. Given the new executive culture, a personable wife has become a necessary appendage. Matrimonial advertisements frequently mention at least a BA degree as one of the necessary assets of a would be bride. Larger number of girl--women are now enrolling for degrees as a result, though many leave halfway if a “good match” is procured (68).

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### 15.3 Learning Outcomes

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This unit helped in understanding the power of gender and implications of it on women of lower class and caste. It also provided information about the position of Indian women over the different periods of history. We also got to know the misrecognition of patriarchal norms and its internalization in society. We also learned how gender discrimination differs for whites and blacks or for one who holds authority and for those who strive for it.

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### 15.4 Glossary

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**Feminism:** Social, economic, and political equality of sexes.

**Patriarchy:** Male dominated society.

**Stereotype:** An over-generalised belief.

**Internalisation:** Learning of values or attitudes etc. which get incorporated within yourself.

**Discourse:** Speak or write authoritatively about a topic.

**Ideology:** Set of opinions or belief of a group or an individual.

**Oppression:** Cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority.

**Cosmicpower:** External spiritual energy.

**Polygamy:** Practice or custom of marrying more than one person.

**Femaleinfanticide:** Practice of killing the girl child after she is born.

**SatiSystem:** The ancient Hindu tradition, where a widow would throw herself on her husband's pyre and burn to death.

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## 15.5 Sample Questions

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### 15.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. In Pre-Aryan age god was:

(a) male (b) female (c) both a and b (d) none of these

2. Complete the following quote:

“..... I never, ever, enter the redish, white, toothless, slippery, and slimy yoni of the women”.

(a) might (b) could (c) may (d) none of these

3. The Aryan Brahmins eliminated the ..... and replaced the female with the male as dominant principle?

(a) Bhakti cult (b) Shakti cult (c) both a and b (d) none of these

4. Aryans migrated to India around.....

(a) 1300 B.C (b) 1400 B.C. (c) 1500 B.C. (d) none of these

5. When the Aryans migrated to India, they brought with them.....

(a) matriarchal order (b) patriarchal order (c) both a and b (d) none of these

6. Sati was performed under Mughals by:

(a) Muslim women (b) Hindu women (c) both of these (d) none of these

7. Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded Brahma Samaj in:

(a) 1827 (b) 1828 (c) 1830 (d) none of these

8. When did Christian Missionaries open schools for girls?

(a) 1817 (b) 1818 (c) 1819 (d) none of these

9. Who at first sent their daughters to the institutions of Christian missionaries?

(a) lower class (b) converts from Harijans (c) upper class (d) a and b

10. Who understood the importance of education and founded institutions and vocational schools which helped thousands of women?

(a) Pundita Rama Bai (b) Rama Bhai Ranade (c) Both of these (d) None of these

### **15.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. How do black men enjoy the fruits of patriarchy despite belonging to lower class and caste?
2. What is the difference between gender and sex?
3. Why are women marginalised?
4. Discuss the position of women in contemporary India.
5. How is gender inequality harming the women freedom?

### **15.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Discuss how do women get doubly marginalized?
2. Does ideology play a role in maintaining and strengthening patriarchy? Explain with examples?
3. Is the plight of black women and tribals the same? Explain.

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## 15.6 Suggested Readings

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## Unit - 16: *Still I Rise*

### Structure

16.0 Introduction

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### 16.0 Introduction

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The poem “Still I Rise” written by Maya Angelou describes the oppression and the persecution of the society towards the African Americans – especially women – in her time. This poem powerfully elucidates that no matter what the constitution or the level of injustice, there will always be those who will ‘rise’ up against these tyrannies and evolve and change the nature and course of the society for the better; something which Maya Angelou achieved in her lifetime.

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### 16.1 Objectives

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After going through the unit you will be able:

- To learn about the life of Maya Angelou as an African-American poet
- To reread the history from the perspective of Black Americans
- To enjoy and appreciate the figures of speech involved in the poem.

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## 16.2 *Still I Rise*

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### 16.2.1 About the Author:

Dr. Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was one of the greatest voices in contemporary literature. She was an African-American poet, memoirist, educator, historian, best-selling author, actress, dramatist, civil rights activist, film maker, director and a teacher par excellence. Angelou won international recognition with the publication of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, the first series of six autobiographical volumes. Later books in the series are *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas*, *Gather Together in My Name*, *The Heart of a Woman*, *All God's Children Need Travelling Shoes Mom & Me & Mom* and *A Song Flung up to Heaven*.

Angelou, a highly respected spokesperson for the black, was one of the first African-American women to publicly discuss their personal life and as such is referred to as a new kind of memoirist. Drawing on themes like identity, family and racism, the depiction of her experience forced the people of all colours to reflect on race and their privileged/unprivileged status for the students in schools and universities internationally. She has been awarded over 30 honorary degrees and was nominated for Pulitzer Prize in 1971.

### 16.2.2 Structure of the Poem:

“Still I Rise” is a nine stanza poem. The first seven stanzas are quatrains, stanza eight has six lines and the ninth has nine. The first seven stanzas follow a rhyme scheme of ABCB, the eighth: ABABCC and the ninth: ABABCCBBB.

### 16.2.3 Summary and Appreciation

#### Stanza 1:

The poem “Still I Rise” is a revolt against the constructed history of Europeans against the blacks. The poem is addressed to the white males who oppress them. The speaker says that the oppressors can write their history wrongly with their twisted lies. They can crush her into the dirt. But like dust she will rise from there. The whites had distorted and disfigured the history of the blacksmith their mass propaganda. The poet uses the word ‘still’ to mean the eternity of the tyrannical oppression of the society. By stating ‘bitter’ and ‘twisted lies’ she mocks the society for making racial as well as sexist and discriminating comments and judgments. The poet also states: ‘write me

down in history' referring to the notion that history is written as per the society and those opposing it are always portrayed at the wrong end. Also, the poet very beautifully refers to the superiority and the inferiority of the social classes, and how in the eyes of the people the former are always correct.

### **Stanza 2:**

She asks them whether her courageous attitude offends them and why they are so sad. She walks along with such a confidence that she had oil wells pumping from her living room. The poet uses rhetorical questions such as 'Does my sassiness upset you?' to mock the racial society more. The poet delineates for the readers the expectations of the society after analyzing it herself. She states: 'want to see me broken...lowered eyes...shoulders falling down...' This gives wonderful picture to the readers about the abusive society of that time and their harassment.

### **Stanza 3:**

In this stanza, the speaker compares herself with the moon and the sun. She says that she will rise like the tides that these heavenly bodies create. She will rise like the high hopes. By comparing herself to this natural phenomenon, she means that she is unstoppable and unpredictable like the natural elements.

### **Stanza 4:**

In this stanza, she asks a series of questions to the oppressors and reveals their attitude towards the blacks. She asks whether they want to see the blacks broken, bowed down with lowered eyes or in any another submissive posture. They always imagined blacks with their drooped shoulders and with weakened cries.

### **Stanza 5:**

She asks whether her pride makes them mad and whether they are upset because she is so happy and joyful as though she had gold mines in her backyard. The speaker expresses her confidence and the pride she has for herself.

### **Stanza 6:**

The Whites are capable of shooting at her with their words. They can cut her with their sharp eyes. They can even kill her with their hatred. Nevertheless, just as the air keeps rising, she

will keep rising. When the poet states: ‘shoot...words’, ‘cut...eyes’, ‘kill...hatefulness’, the readers are fully capable of understanding the fact that the persecutions still haven’t ended. They represent the abuses inflicted upon the victims in every manner: ‘words, cuts, and hatefulnes’s’.

**Stanza 7:**

She asks them whether her sex appeal makes them upset and whether they are shocked by the fact that she dances as though she had precious gems between her legs. The speaker here reveals her gender identity. The diamonds between her thighs have sexual connotations.

**Stanza 8:**

She declares that she has risen up out of history's shameful act of slavery. She will rise up from this deeply painful past. She is as vast and full of power as a dark ocean that rises and swells and carries in the tide.

**Stanza 9:**

She rose up leaving behind all the darkness of terror and fear. She rose up into a bright morning that is full of joyful wonder. With the personal qualities and grace she had inherited from her ancestors, she embodies the dreams and hopes of past enslaved people. ‘I will rise, and rise, and rise.’

**16.2.4 Symbols and Images:**

Although the poem “Still I Rise” is a direct poem that addresses the racial injustice and double oppression of black women, the poet has made use of a number of symbols and images in the poem to convey her ideas. Some of the prominent symbols used by the poet are:

**Oil Wells:**

In the second stanza, the speaker makes the poem’s first reference to a symbol for wealth. She describes her confident manner of walking as what one might expect from someone who has ‘oil wells’ pumping in her home. The speaker is suggesting that she is rich and powerful—not in the monetary sense, but rather in spirit. Her wealth of courage and determination makes her untouchable and gives her control over her life, just as a rich person with oil wells presumably has enough money to live as he or she pleases.

### **Gold Mines:**

In the fifth stanza, the speaker makes the poem's second reference to a symbol of wealth. This time, she describes her proud attitude, which may even be interpreted as arrogance. Once again, she is so full of pride and confidence that her carefree laugh suggests that she has gold mines in her own backyard. Like the oil wells, the gold mines represent not just wealth, but perpetual wealth—the oil keeps pouring out of the wells, and the gold keeps coming out of the mines. She does not have a fixed amount of wealth (courage, determination)—it is limitless.

### **Diamonds:**

In the seventh stanza, the speaker makes the poem's last reference to a symbol of wealth. In this provocative stanza, she describes her liberated spirit. When she dances, one might say that she has 'diamonds' at the meeting of her thighs. Again, the diamonds represent wealth and power, but they may also represent beauty and even sexuality. It is a cliché that women love diamonds, and the jewel is often considered a sign of royalty. However, rather than wearing the diamonds as a necklace or a crown, they are interestingly portrayed between her legs. This choice of language suggests a sexual connotation, implying that she is not only a beautiful woman but a sensual one—her diamonds represent her sexual prowess.

### **Nature:**

In the third stanza, the speaker refers to natural elements (heavenly bodies) and phenomenon such as the moon, the sun, and the tides when speaking of the certainty of her determination. Just as the moon and sun rise and set, her courage will persist in a repetitive cycle. Her courage and determination are as inevitable as the passage of time, as marked by the lunar and solar cycles and the natural ebb and flow of the tides. References to tides and the ocean in the eighth stanza also indicate the speaker's strength. She is as powerful as a deep ocean, and she is strong enough to resist being knocked over by the tide—or knocked down by her oppressors.

## **16.2.5 Figures of Speech in the poem:**

### **Metaphors and Similes:**

The poet uses many similes and metaphors throughout the poem:

"But still, **like** air, I'll rise" (simile)

"Shoulders falling down **like** teardrops" (simile)

"Dance **like** I've got diamonds at the meeting of my thighs" (simile)

"But still, **like** dust, I'll rise" (simile)

"Just **like** moons and **like** suns" (simile)

"You may trod me in the very dirt" (metaphor)

"You may shoot me with your words" (metaphor)

"You may cut me with your eyes" (metaphor)

"You may kill me with your hatefulness" (metaphor)

"I'm a black ocean" (metaphor)

"I am the dream and the hope of the slave" (metaphor)

"Did you want to see me broken" (metaphor)

#### **Alliteration and Assonance:**

"**D**ance like I've got **d**iamonds" (alliteration)

"Does my **s**assiness upset you" (alliteration)

"Does my **s**exiness upset you" (alliteration)

"**H**uts of **h**istory's shame" (alliteration)

"**B**itter, **t**wisted lies" (assonance)

"**W**elling and **s**welling" (assonance)

#### **Allusions:**

The poet alludes to slavery and the slave trade at the end of the poem. The 'huts of history's shame' likely refer to where slaves were housed, and the poet mentions slavery explicitly just once near the poem's conclusion. 'But still, like dust, I'll rise' is an allusion to the Bible. Adam is created from the dust or soil.

### **Metonymy and Synecdoche:**

‘History's shame’ is an example of metonymy. This figure of speech stands for all those who conducted the slave trade and those who implemented policies that kept down certain elements of society by both gender and race.

### **Personification:**

‘History's shame’ personifies history and gives it the attribute of feeling an emotion like shame.

## **16.2.6 Themes:**

### **a. Black Identity:**

The poem, “Still I Rise” starts with Angelou’s criticism against the constructed history of the Europeans about the blacks. She says that they had written them in the history with the bitter lies which made them uncivilized in front of the world. They were considered as dirt. They will rise from their down trodden state as dust which is raised from the earth by the wind. The white could not accept them walking straight with confidence.

Angelou’s hopes are high about the future status of the blacks. She is expressing the attitude of the whites in the form of questions. They always wanted to see them as broken, with bowed head and lowered eyes. They only could imagine the blacks with drooped shoulders and weakened with cries. Whenever they show some haughtiness, the white consider it as an offence. The realization of their identity is the most precious thing in the life of the blacks.

Angelou is expressing their will power in strong words. The whites can shoot at them with their harsh words, they can cut the black with their pointed eyes, and they may kill the blacks with their hatred, even then like the air they can rise. Far from the problems of the whole black people, Angelou moves towards the issues of the black women. She refers to the different ways in which both the sexes were treated by the white, a black man is considered as sexually intolerable while as the black women are being sexually exploited by both the whites and the blacks. Here she realizes her power as a woman who is black.

Angelou propagates her agenda. They will rise above the whole shame they had been suffering; from the misinterpretations about them and their culture. Out of the whole pains they had suffered they will rise. She says that their culture is like an ocean which is spread in to various directions like music, stories, power etc. they are going to learn to be courageous by learning from their roots. The days and nights filled with fear are coming to an end.

The poem “Still I Rise” can be considered as a slogan for the blacks who were protesting against the whites colonization. The colonial powers had made the Black history distorted with their own implications about the Black’s nature. But here, Angelou is raising the potential of the blacks by saying that like the dust, they will rise out of the earth where they have been living for centuries under the feet of the whites. The poem clearly portrays the celebration of the Black identity which they recaptured after centuries.

The case of Black women is very complex. In the society, she never enjoys equality. She is the person who is exploited by the White people as well as the Black men. She suffers as a slave and as a woman. Hence, her position in the society is the lowest. When she rises from the bottom level, it gives much hope. The woman power is very important in the Black society as they act as the strong back support for each family, where most of the Black men spend their earning for their own merry making. When the women come to the front with a will power to protest, that is going to change the whole face.

**b. Self Discovery:**

Maya Angelou's “Still I Rise” is a poem about strength and endurance, and about affirmation. It is an African-American woman's response to those who wish her hard and hate her. It’s an inspirational poem symbolizing defiance and her strength to overcome negative criticism and oppression. It is about what is expected of a person like the speaker and what that person is capable of doing despite the expectations.

Angelou, early in her life, experienced the twin forces that would determine the shape of her life and the nature of her career: personal rejection and institutional racism. Angelou's creative passion for her work is demonstrated in her strong talent of weaving similes and hyperboles into her work. In “Still I Rise”, themes of rejection and racism can be seen. The first stanza may well reflect the concept of slavery, seen with the word ‘history.’

“You may write me down in history,  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.”

The first line suggests that the telling of the history of slaves in America has long been controlled by whites who decided what was recorded in books and what was true as they saw it, but never spoke of the reality of the lives of the slaves—forced to leave their homes and be

treated like property, as if they were no longer people. However, Angelou's theme of perseverance is also present with the use of the word 'dust.'

This poem's main message is about people's prejudice against others who are physically different, either because of colour or gender. Maya Angelou's poem, "Still I Rise" chronicles the feelings of her ancestors' legacy of slavery and oppression. The narrator talks positively on the subject and with her sarcasm approaches the oppressor in a determined and prideful manner which she uses to express her strength of fighting back, no matter what the obstacle is. To conclude, Maya's "Still I Rise" offers an inspirational value, urging others to think more highly of themselves. Literary techniques are used well, providing the readers with an accurate way of understanding her thoughts.

Thus right till the end, Maya maintains her victorious tone and proud defiance, while speaking up for the rights of African-American women all over the US of her time. This pays tribute to the African American race for experiencing worst circumstances and serves as an inspiration and instills confidence. As nothing will keep a person down if he/she keeps on trying. Maya Angelou quotes that "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

### **c. Celebration of the Black Spirit:**

The poem "Still I Rise" is a document that registers the protest against racial discrimination. The Whites had made the Black history distorted and constructed an artificial history as per their choice. Maya Angelou is raising the potential of the Blacks saying that like the dust, they will one day rise out of the dirt where they have been living for centuries under the feet of the Whites. The poet poses a lot of rhetorical questions in front of them about how the Whites liked to see the Black. She is asking, whether they wanted to see the Blacks to walk without a strong will power by lowering their eyes and shoulders. She is again asking whether the self-realization of both the Black men and women offends them. When the Black people celebrate their life, art and culture, the whites cannot accept it. They always wanted the blacks as their slaves. The poem specifically depicts the celebration of the Black identity which they regained recaptured after centuries. The case of Black women is more complex than the Black men. They always had to face double oppression. They are exploited at that hands of White people as well as the Black men. The Black woman is both a slave and a woman at the same

time, so she cannot rise to the high order of the society and when she rises from the bottom level, it gives much hope.

**d. The Power and Beauty of the Black:**

“Still I Rise” is a modern-day ode to the power and beauty of blackness. Although the speaker’s racist society believes that black people’s lives and bodies are less worthy than others’, the speaker herself strongly rejects that idea. The speaker asserts her full humanity and also associates her body with symbols of value, such as ‘oil wells,’ ‘gold mines,’ and ‘diamonds.’ These comparisons implicitly critique racist and sexist assumptions of beauty and power. The poem becomes an ode to Black womanhood. The speaker insists on the inherent humanity, value, power, and beauty of her black body. She rises ‘like dust,’ a subtle biblical allusion: in the Bible, God created humans from ‘dust,’ and humans return to ‘dust’ once they die. By stating that she is ‘like dust,’ the speaker asserts her full humility; she is as much a creation of God as anyone else. These symbols are all objects of great value. Oil wells provide their owners with wealth and, consequently, power. Gold and diamonds are expensive and prized for their beauty. Thus, the speaker assigns value to her body and grants it power and beauty regardless of what society says. Taken as a whole, the lines declare and reclaim the speaker’s body and power in her femininity as a Black woman. Humanity, power, and beauty, Angelou declares, are abundant in blackness and black womanhood.

**e. History of the Black:**

Maya Angelou begins the poem mentioning the black history which was distorted by the White people. In the history of the pre-colonial and post-colonial world, the Black is represented as the uncivilized and uncultured folk by the Europeans, and Angelou raises her voice against this White supremacy. The history of the Black Americans is painful. Under the Whites, their history is painted with blood and sufferings as slaves. They were being exploited physically, economically and psychologically. They had a very strong cultural background and heritage built by their ancestors. This heritage refers to the songs and stories which gave them strength, the strong physical condition to work in the field and also the spirit or the identification of the self. But unfortunately, all these were destroyed by the Whites. But throughout the poem, Maya Angelou asks her fellow beings to rise from the dust and release themselves from all chains bound to their soul. She gives them confidence to stand up. They are a group of people who are totally broken in the history. Hence, they have to rise from the earth as dust is raised by the wind.

Angelou shows the will power of the Black using the following expressions such as rising of the sun and moon, and the certainty of the tides and the hopes springing in the minds.

**f. Defence:**

“Still I Rise” can be considered as a defence shield of the speaker in the face of oppression. This oppressor, addressed throughout as ‘you,’ is full of ‘bitter, twisted lies’ and ‘hatefulness’ toward the speaker, and hopes to see the speaker ‘broken’ in both body and spirit. However, despite all the methods of the oppressor to ‘shoot,’ ‘cut,’ or ‘kill’ her, the speaker remains defiant by continuing to ‘rise’ in triumph. Angelou was a staunch civil rights activist, and “Still I Rise” can be taken as a powerful statement specifically against anti-black racism in America. At the same time, its celebration of dignity in the face of oppression feels universal, and can be applied to any circumstance in which a marginalized person refuses to be broken by—and, indeed, repeatedly rises above—prejudice and hatred. The speaker responds to this ill treatment not only by surviving, but by thriving—something that provokes anger from her oppressor. Regardless of the oppressor’s negative and hateful responses, the speaker continues to prosper. The speaker even explicitly rejects the oppressor’s desire to ‘see [her] broken.’ The oppressor wants to elicit ‘lowered eyes,’ ‘teardrops,’ and ‘soulful cries’ from the speaker, to see her downtrodden. Thus, simply living with joy, pride, and dignity is an act of resistance against and triumph over oppression. The poem has clear and particular resonance with Black Americans. More broadly, the poem is a ringing assertion of the dignity of marginalized people and an insistence on their ultimate, inevitable triumph over violence and hate.

**g. Rise :**

The word ‘rise’ in the title of the poem is perhaps the most influential and critical word in the poem. The definition of ‘rise’ in the English language is: “an upward movement; an instance of rising.” Throughout the poem the readers witness the various patterns in which the poet urges those who are stifled within the shackles of oppression to ‘rise’. The poet ridicules the society and their customs and rubs her success into their faces. She rises from the persecution and the harassment and urges others to do so too. Towards the beginning, the poet enumerates the society’s oppression and then she defiantly states that: ‘like dust, I’ll rise’, ‘like air, I’ll rise.’ By comparing herself to ‘dust’, one could suggest that she was warning the members of the society; warning them not to think of her as a child; warning them not to think of her as dirt because ‘like dust’ she may be small but she is fully capable of causing them harm. The word ‘rise’ generally

refers to an action. It forces the readers to think, from where or what does the poet talk about rising from The answer to this particular question can be obtained from the phrases used in the last stanzas of the poem: 'History's shame', 'Past that's rooted in pain', 'nights of fear' and 'daybreak...wondrously clear.' The poet talks about rising from within these oppressive situations towards a better and brighter future that is 'wondrously clear.' Her final repetition of the sentence 'I rise' three times, explains the whirlwind of emotions seething inside her and her dream of being treated as equal and with justice.

#### **h. Strength, positivity, and perseverance:**

The main theme in this poem is of strength, positivity, perseverance and overcoming oppression. This can be seen from the very beginning of the poem and is reflected in the title itself, which indicates that the poet is not scared to fall because from her ashes she will rise and be greater than before. The poem does have a universal theme. Each and every person, be of any race has had to deal with overcoming one or another level. Everybody knows what it feels to be discriminated, and dealing with your own struggles in life. The poem reverberates with the theme of never giving up which indicates that this may be the main lesson that the poet wants to convey through her writing.

This poem teaches that each person has enough strength within them to overcome the problems in their life and all we need to do is to believe in ourselves. We should take pride in who we are and where we come from. The main theme of the poem is one of strength, endurance and courage. It can be considered as a universal theme, which the poet wants to present, as it is applicable to everyday situations where we need to be determined in face of hardships and show perseverance when life throws challenges at us.

The poem refers to situations where people have been marginalized and struggle to make themselves heard. They have to rise above their situations as is evident from the words 'You may trod me in the very dirt/ But still, like dust, I'll rise.' Even if a situation seems extremely difficult you will stand up and fight back and rise again. It is especially applicable to the apartheid years and even today when people of colour in different parts of the world, especially in South Africa struggle to make their voices heard People (homosexuals, blacks/whites, women etc) need to be heard and voice the difficulties they face because of the discrimination, marginalization etc. This theme of resilience is especially universal as people will always be fighting back against the difficult- or the oppressive situations/regimes of the world. The refrain, 'I rise' towards the end

of the poem, refers to the oppressive situations where people rise above their circumstances and try to escape. It also gives a universal sense of hope, hope to rise from their circumstances. Angelou emphasizes the power within the individual which also represents a universal theme. Her poem may refer to abusive situations, political situations, bullying, discrimination etc. This poem is a mouthpiece for the marginalized and gives voice and a sense of power to the underprivileged/them.

### **16.2.7 Narrative Mode of the Poem:**

The entire poem “Still I Rise” is composed in the first-person narrative. It lends an autobiographical touch to the poem. On the one hand, the use of ‘I’ in the poem is a tool to express selfconfidence of the writer. On the other hand, ‘I’ is a medium to expose the injustices faced by the Black Americans in the History.

The letter ‘I’ in the title informs the readers about the ensuing format of the poem. Maya Angelou uses the first person narrative to her advantage in a very skillful manner in order to boast about her success ‘oil wells’, to rebuke the society and their unjust customs ‘want to see me broken’ and finally informing the world that no matter the persecutions and sexist discrimination she will rise from the ashes.

Moreover, through this format, the readers are able to notice the poet’s tone of sarcasm – ‘don’t you take it awful hard’ – In a much better way while also noticing the poet’s strong and tedious tone in the fourth, fifth and the sixth stanza. This helps the readers to deduce that may be Maya Angelou’s problems with the society and its people ran deeper than it appeared on the outside. Further more, the poet’s consummate use of first person narrative is most effective towards the end of the poem when she compares herself to a ‘black ocean’ stating that she ‘bears’ the ‘tides.’

In the previous stanza, the poet similarly compares herself to the ‘moons’ and ‘the suns’ and mentions the ‘certainty of tides.’ These two stanzas and comparisons, when juxtaposed together, could possibly allude to the same meaning: The ‘tides’ refer to the disputes, obstacles and tyrannical oppression of the society. The ‘black ocean’ and ‘moons’ and ‘suns’ refer to the poet’s constant adherence and resilience; as the cycle of the sun and the moon rotates in an on-going perpetuity; similarly, the ‘ocean’, no matter the raging tides, still flows whilst adhering to the magnitude of the tides formulating within it. Through this, the readers are able to

comprehend and perceive the layers of symbolism and allegories endowed within the poem by the poet for the readers and the world to discern.

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### 16.3 Learning Outcomes

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- Interpret poetry from various perspectives of cultures, languages and historic periods
  - Understand and appreciate “Still I Rise” as a literary piece
  - Analyze the various elements of poetry, such as diction, tone, form, genre, imagery, figures of speech, symbolism, theme, etc
  - Develop a deeper appreciation for the cultural diversity by introducing the learners to poetry from a variety of cultures throughout the world.
  - Develop their own creativity and enhance their writing skills.
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### 16.4 Glossary

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*You*: The White

*The bitter, twisted lies*: The constructed history of Black people

*Sassiness*: Lively and spirited

*Does my sassiness .....living room?*: The self confidence radiating from the blacks seems to upset the Whites

*'Cause I laugh like.....my own backyard*: Denotes the joy, happiness and self respect of the blacks

*Does my sexiness.....meeting of my thighs*: The writer is proud of being a woman

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### 16.5 Sample Questions

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#### 16.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What does the author mean by twisted lies?
2. Who is beset with gloom?
3. What is the gift given by the ancestors?
4. Who is the ‘you’ in the poem?

### Fill in the blanks

5. 'I Know Why the Caged Birds Sing' is a ..... written by Maya Angelou
6. The poem "Still I Rise" has ..... stanzas
7. 'But, like dust, still I rise' The figure of speech used in this line is .....

### True or False

8. The poem "Still I Rise" is a statement against racial injustice
9. The poem is written in the form of a sonnet
10. The speaker had a gold mine in her backyard

### 16.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How does Maya Angelou present the history of the blacks?
2. Explain "Still I Rise" as a celebration of the spirit of blacks.
3. Briefly explain the use of the word 'rise' in the poem "Still I Rise."
4. The poem "Still I Rise" is a defence shield in the face of oppression. Explain.
5. Explain the power and beauty of blackness as expressed in the poem "Still I Rise."

### 16.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain how the blacks are identifying themselves in the poem "Still I Rise"?
2. Provide an explication of self-discovery in Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise."
3. Write a note on the first person narrative in the poem "Still I Rise."

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## 16.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Angelou, Maya. *And Still I Rise*. Hachette Digital, London, 1986.
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## **Unit - 17: Nation and Politics**

### **Structure**

**17.0** Introduction

**17.1** Objectives

**17.2** Nation and Politics

**17.2.1** Definitions of Nation and Politics

**17.2.2** The Origin of Nation and Politics

**17.2.3** Nation, Nationalism, and Politics

**17.2.4** Territoriality of the Nation and Politics

**17.2.5** The Nation, the State, and Politics

**17.3** Learning Outcomes

**17.4** Glossary

**17.5** Sample Questions

**17.6** Suggested Readings

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### **17.0 Introduction**

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Life is an ongoing process which needs constant improvements to suit the emerging human and natural activities. We have different kinds of defining concepts which are critical to well being of mankind. Nation and politics are among those defining concepts which are the most overused and misused terms in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this unit various perspectives of the terms nation and politics will be discussed. Its influence on human population and variety of delineations and manipulations in different contexts will also be the part of discussion. It will be followed by the learning outcomes where a number of points will be mentioned which will provide you the crux of the unit. Few sample questions have also been provided to give the analytical understanding of the topic. It is followed by a list of books recommended for reading as they will enhance the understanding of readers about the topic.

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### **17.1 Objectives**

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The objectives of this unit are:

- To provide readers with a better understanding of the terms ‘nation’ and ‘politics.’
- To discuss the use, overuse and misuse of the term ‘nation’.
- To provide an understanding about the term ‘politics’.
- To describe the relation between nation and politics.
- To examine the connection between state, nationalism and territoriality.
- To analyze the influence of imperialism on a nation.

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## **17.2 Nation and Politics**

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### **17.2.1 Definitions of Nation and Politics:**

The term ‘nation’ is one of the most controversial concepts during the modern times. Firstly because many people disagree on single conception of the term nation and secondly because its formation in different parts of the world has been characterized and shaped differently and is unique to the social history, political history and in some cases even economic history of the area and age wherein the nation is created. Consider the formation of what is today referred to as modern day European nations whose histories can only be traced to wars. Again, consider the South American nations which can mostly be associated with the slave trade. In Africa and Asia, the situation is again different wherein the natives had little or nothing to contribute to, what is today known as African and Asian nations.

The interesting thing about both politics and nations is that they all unite people on different grounds. Nationhood seems to be the end means of politics as politics is the process by which this is done. On this basis, we should aim at examining the relationship between nations and politics, the nation, and the people and the interference of political power and/or state power. But first it is necessary to know what a nation and as well as politics are.

The nation is one of the complex concepts considering the fact that it has no fixed nature. When said, it has no fixed nature, it means in its conception, definition, origin and its functioning. The process of national conception is individual in its nature. It means that an individual has to accept himself as a member of the society, be willing to fight and die for it and also offer it as a refuge who shares the same perspective and space with him. Secondly, these nationals have to accept each other and accept to share a common understanding. In general, the process goes beyond individual acceptance of each other to fighting general good for all as a

group. As a group here means, lifting individual differences in favour of national welfare even if the individual gets hurt, it has to be done with the feeling of sacrifice. Yet it is very difficult to agree because some people are ready to share a common space but are not willing to sacrifice their personal interests for national interests or probably have a different notion of a nation.

With regards to the definition of a nation, it is necessary to discuss various perspectives on the origin of the concept of nation. Many may define a nation as a group with a shared history, which is quite correct based on the fact that some modern nations are built on the history of Western imperialism and devastation of colonial relics as in the case of Africa. A second definition may be ethnic or tribal that gives priority to ideological construction of nations and probably the process of defending them (nations) through wars. With these varying origins, and as a result, inspirations to what a nation ought to be, the possibility of defining it and viewing it differently by different persons, are high.

While talking about its functioning, the problem of power sets in. The issues like who controls who and what is essential for the peace and stability of the nation. Power is directly connected to politics because this is the process of adaptable actors and actions of a nation. But who has to do this and who dedicates the powers is even more complicated in defining and deciding. Nations based on the history of Imperialism have a high likelihood of foreign interference in their local affairs and functioning, especially by their former colonizers than those with a constructed ideology and dominion. It is on this basis that we also see new visions of defining the functioning of the nation.

This mutual recognition, of different people on the basis of supposedly shared characteristics that qualify them for membership of the same nation, also serves to distinguish them from other persons who are thereby excluded from membership of the imagined national community. This may involve nothing more than simple difference but it could become the basis for rivalry and antagonism, leading ultimately, perhaps, to campaigns of expulsion and genocide. The criteria for imagining nationhood are quite different, are often disputed, and generally change along with accepted ideas about statehood. Building on the same premises, Guimarães declares that:

A nation in modern political sense is a community of individuals who are linked socially and economically, share a given territory and recognize the existence of a

common past - even if they differ about aspects of this past. The community has a common vision of the future and believes that this future will be better if they remain united than if they separate - even if some aspire to change the social organization of the nation and its political system.

There is no perfect benchmark for setting the outline for the term 'nation'. The elements which encourage collective self-consciousness only outline the basic spirit of the concept and lead to a mere abstract idea. Every nation in the world is different from another nation because of its peculiarities established among people and their ideological beliefs and views. So, each nation thrives on its own description. It becomes difficult to confine the varied, continuously changing and panoramic scope of the nation within the confined walls of general definitions. It can be said that no scientific definition of nation can be devised.

Thus, the nation is one of the very few concepts that can be defined with objectivity. But the most common trait of it is that it deals with a group of people who share some common features such as language, ethnic roots, language, history, religion and are willing to live together but it is not necessary that whole population shares all the characteristics. Yet, the notion of sharing common features may as well be misleading because unity here is in disagreement. As earlier stated, it is appreciated that accepting to surrender self-interest for national interest and ever willing to compromise and dialogue with each other is one way. Individuals get concerned with national business more than their personal businesses and disagreements arise because they want to support national businesses.

This process of making rules, amending, supporting, defending, disagreeing and compromising for national interest is what we call politics which is the another point of concern to be discussed in this unit. Thus, we can define politics as a complex set of rules and principles that values national interest above individual interest. It tries to control the abundance of ideas and suggestions which may end up bringing tension and preventing development rather than encouraging it. As such, we consider politics to be a kind of solution, guide and peace broker mechanism that brings the society together despite the differences. As such, politics is a way to an end and not an end in itself. It is a pathway of conflict decision, the end being peaceful coexistence in a society that is determined to act as one rather than as individuals. Politics is a uniting practice in the society without which the nation is let loose and vulnerable to isolation.

Since our main interest is not to dwell on the definition of the terms, we shall move beyond the definitions to examine more intriguing aspects/ facets of nations. We shall consider nations as an ideological concept or mental formation which binds people together for a common good. Politics can be considered as the binding force that uses different means to keep the nation intact. Therefore, it can be asserted that all nations are political, however with the understanding that politics and power is always attributed to a state, with well-defined territorial discrimination.

Thus, the basic relationship between nation and politics is that while a nation may seem to be a natural occurrence, politics is the bond and/or diplomacy that ties them together even in times of differing opinions and conflicts among group members.

***Check your Progress***

1. Why the term 'nation' is considered to be very controversial?
2. What do you mean by politics?
3. How nation and politics are connected?

**17.2.2 The Origin of Nation and Politics:**

As discussed earlier, the origin of nations cannot be carelessly traced to a single source. Based on this, Day and Thompson (2004) have attributed the origin of nations to two schools of thought, which are - the modernist and the ethnic. On the one hand, Modernists insist on the fact that origin of the nation is rooted in the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism, and does not go beyond that. In this light, they argue that the nation is a new concept, probably in conception and functioning whose foundation and groundwork can only be attributed to the above mentioned phenomena. On the other hand, ethnicists believe that nations predate modern formations of industrialisation to ancient ethnics. However, it can be argued that nations maybe modern but their origin is not. Or better to hold that the concept maybe modern but the phenomena is slightly as old as humanity itself. This could likely be true because ancient history and mythology seem to give much priority to living together. Its complexities and the resolutions consider the notion of politics as a primary indicator in the origin and functioning of the nation.

The origin of nations can be traced far back to the origin of man. In essence, the functioning of nations pre-existed the term which was only coined later to describe the already

existing phenomena. If nations can be traced as far back as the origin of man, then politics can as well be, since politics is another topic to be discussed in this unit. Theologians, who trace the earliest nation which was being inhabited by Adam and Eve, indicate that the characteristics of nation and politics existed even then. The characteristics of nation and politics are apparent when we see the immediate descendants such as Cain and Abel disagree and tussle for power and go to the extent of murder. It is evident that the phenomenon is not new either to modern or ancient history but that the term and not the phenomenon was coined and developed later.

Apart from theologians, historians have traced ancient nations in Africa which pre-existed colonialism such as that of Mali, Ethiopia, Egypt and Sokoto. These nations were built on ideologies and ruled by powerful kings who defended their common principles from invaders even through wars. This, therefore, means that nations have always been there exercising political power. The relevance, creation and function of nations was easier to be evaluated in those days more than today, not only because there were fewer nations but also because nations were traditional and immobile as compared to the numerous modern nations with a virtual population scattered all over the globe. The exercise of power was at the center of nations from the very beginning. In short, problems arose from the creation of humanity as traced by both theologians and historians alike.

***Check your Progress***

1. Discuss the origin of nation.
2. Trace the roots of politics.
3. Is history helpful in building a nation? Discuss.

**17.2.3 Nation, Nationalism, and Politics:**

Nation finds its expression in nationalism. Nationalism is not an entity; it cannot be seen, but felt. It finds its manifestation in national activities. In other words, nationalism is the spirit of a nationality. It is a kind of political consciousness of belonging to a group. The term nationalism has different variations which cannot be encapsulated in a nutshell. Its concept changes according to the context and individual. The term nationalism was first used in 1789 by Augustin Barruel, a French priest. Though the term was coined in 1789, the concept is as old as human existence. Since its coinage no other term has been as controversial and debated as this. It might have happened due to its wide popularity across the globe. There are diverse forms of

nationalism/ national identity in Indian context. It was agrarian national identity in Medieval age while Mughal period witnessed an assimilated nationalism. The British rule observed the disruptive nationalism; The Nehruvian period restructured it into secular and democratic mode while it is global and cosmopolitan at present. “Nationalism in its broader meaning refers to the attitude which ascribes to national individuality a high place in the hierarchy of values” (Seligman 231), qtd by Kundra: 61. Guimarães defines nationalism as:

The sentiment of considering the nation to which one belongs, for one reason or another, better than other nations and thus, to have more rights. Extreme manifestations of this sentiment are xenophobia, racism and imperial arrogance. Nationalism is also the desire for affirmation and political independence before an oppressive foreign state. When the state has already become independent, it is the desire to assure within the territory better treatment from the state, or at least treatment equal issued to foreigners, whether individuals or entities. The significant nationalist movements from a political perspective - the most simple historic manifestations of which stem from ethnic, linguistic identification or to belonging in the past to a political organization - have as their principal objective the establishment of a state or the modification of the policies of the state to defend the interests of those in the movement. (2008:145)

As mentioned earlier, nations have an unparalleled religious chronology and this religious chronology assesses the nation of Israel over all other nations and adorns it as God’s chosen nation. It is this thinking that has been maintained so far, thereby giving birth to the notion of superiority of some nations over others and the political implications thereof. These implications vary from prejudices and/or biases from the presupposed superior nations. These nations have led to the widespread of discrimination and racism and other social ills threatening the functioning of nations in a globalised world.

In a nut shell, nationalism is also a political entity of the nation through which people demonstrate their love for their nation (patriotism) and also defend their nation from alien attack or unjust political rule.

***Check you Progress***

1. What do you understand by the term 'nationalism'?
2. When was the term 'nationalism' first used?
3. Can we say that nationalism is a political entity

**17.2.4 Territoriality of the Nation and Politics:**

Territoriality is the monopolization of a particular place by an individual or group. Territories have been defined variously as any defended place or area of site-specific dominance. Since a nation as a traditional entity holds no claim to a territory, its politics is limited to mutual understanding and natural functioning of traditional institutions. This is rather closer to ancient nations than to modern nations which have a firm control over territory. Etherington (2010) renders this clearly when he asserts that:

When nationalists exercise or seek to exercise control over a given territory in the name of the nation, this is justified by claims that the nation somehow belongs to the territory and that the territory somehow belongs to the nation, and thus it appears 'normal' for nationalists to control it. This mutual belonging, as a means of legitimizing nationalist control of territory, can be referred to as national territorial belonging.

It is this fight over territorial space that makes the nation political. This is because the actions and activities within a nation are often considered to occur naturally and fighting also brings the use of power and control which is a defining characteristic of politics. The relationship between nation and politics here is based on the claim of a nation over territory. This claim thus is a process of discussing a politically defined space which they can call theirs. When this is done, the territory acquired becomes a cultural container, hosting a group with a common interest. In this way the territory supplies the nation with cultural and historical material to build on, making the relationship between the two mutual.

This relationship is easily understood because this particular group which constitutes a nation does not do so in void. They need a territory and in order to get established on this territory, they have to fight any competing nation or state intruding the same space. The people

are thus part of the territory. They define the territory and identify with it, fight for it and are known because of it since most nations are identified geographically. To summarize, the above description highlights the fact that there is no nation without a territory, yet, the fundamental question here may be concerning the virtual nations. Regarding this, a ready response will be the origin of the virtual inhabitants. That is, the loyalty and respect and love of motherland for the territory of origin.

We have established a nation as a historical creation based in most cases on imperial impositions on the one hand and on the other hand as an ideological creation based on power and domination. Unlike other researchers who attributed politics only to the second process of national creation, we slightly differ from them in that we assert that both are political. The process itself was political even though arbitrary in that the western powers which mapped out the segregation had a certain kind of conciliation and agreement among them before doing that. If we again change the discussion to attributing politics to the national inhabitants and not imperial rule, it again holds that these locals negotiated their independence, which was a political action. More so, after independence, they have been discussing internal rules and regulations governing them as well as negotiating with other alien nations in order to maintain international peace.

***Check your Progress***

1. What do you understand by territoriality?
2. What makes a nation political?
3. Is politics necessary to save nation?

**17.2.5 The Nation, the State, and Politics:**

Just like nation, there are varied definitions of a state, even though not as controversial as the former. Kundra asserts that “in common parlance, “Country”/ “State” is a populated, politically defined, geographical entity which has a government and a sovereign system; it is extensively recognized at international level” (2019: 57). According to the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of the State (1933):

A State must conform to the following criteria in order to exist: a permanent population, a defined territory, and a government capable of maintaining effective

control over its territory and of conducting international relations with other States. This definition is given from an international perspective. The term “State” is usually used interchangeably with country. “Country denominates a geographical territory, whereas State expresses a legitimized administrative and decision making institution”. (Chandra, Shailesh 30)

In this way we can affirm that statehood abides in a territorial well defined political setting that exercises power. The state has a territory, legitimized bodies dedicated with group power, with individuals dedicated to exercise those powers. Such powers can be used to dictate group interest against individual interest, unlike nations wherein these institutions are not legitimized and extremely empowered. A common characteristic of states is that they enjoy recognition and control over their population and territory. There are few exceptions to these statements, sovereign city-states and small island states lack significant geo-economic and geopolitical power. Inhabitants of these states recognize this state just as an ideal body that guides their daily living within a larger corporation. Even though states can be traced as far back as this the historical process that brought them to the light and current status rather took a slow turn. It is this state form that is often described as a nation-state. The history of state formation is far too complicated and discontinuous to permit such an interpretation.

The term ‘state’ is usually used interchangeably with country. “Country denominates a geographical territory, whereas State expresses a legitimized administrative and decisionmaking institution” (Chandra, Shailesh 30), as quoted by Kundra. A country significantly integrates population, demarcated land, government, and sovereignty. Syed Ahmed Khan’s “One Country, Two Nations” theory is based on the idea that a country may consist of more than one nation. When a nation of people has a state or country of their own, it is called a Nation-State.

The forgone discussion thus signifies that the relationship between nations and states is so interwoven that any attempt to separate them will leave either of them hanging. One of the most important relationships between a nation and a state is geopolitically based. The state is a man-made structure which was devised to safeguard the interest of a particular group or even that of a nation, which in this situation makes it a nation-state. The state and the nation in most cases function in a mutual relationship, with the nation providing the identity and reason for existence of the state whereas the nation providing the necessary legitimate governance and exercising the political power.

***Check your Progress***

1. Define the term 'state'.
2. What are the criteria for a state to exist'?
3. Is it possible to separate nation and state?

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### **17.3 Learning Outcomes**

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In the end of the unit students will be able to:

- Define the terms 'nation' and 'politics'.
- Understand the reasons for emerging nation and nationalism.
- Recognize various types of nationalism.
- Know the relation between nation and politics.
- Realize the negative influences of extreme nationalism.
- Comprehend the importance of territoriality for a nation.
- Identify the negative influences of divisive and disintegrative policy.

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### **17.4 Glossary**

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**Nation:** There is no universal definition of a nation. Everybody would agree that peoples with common ethnic roots, language, religion, historical memory and the explicit desire to act as a political unity make up a nation.

**Politics:** It is the set of activities that are associated with making decisions in groups, or the other forms of power relations between individuals, such as the distribution of resources or status. The academic study of politics is referred to as political science.

**Nationalism:** Identification with one's nation and support for its interests, especially to the detriment of the interests of other nations or advocacy of or support for the political independence of a particular nation or people.

**State:** A state is a political unit that has sovereignty over an area of territory and the people within it.

**Power:** It is the capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events or a political process that offers people power over their own lives

**Ideology:** John Wilson's *Introduction to Social Movements* (1973) defines ideology as “a set of beliefs about the social world and how it operates, containing statements about the rightness of certain social arrangements and what action would be undertaken in the light of those statements.” He goes on to say, “An ideology is both a cognitive map of sets of expectations and a scale of values in which standards and imperatives are proclaimed. Ideology thus serves both as a clue to understanding and as a guide to action, developing in the mind of its adherents an image of the process by which desired changes can best be achieved” (Wilson 1973: 91-2).

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## 17.5 Sample Questions

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### 17.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which of the following claim is associated to primordialist ideas of nationalism and nationhood?
  - (a) Nationalism emerged in the late nineteenth century
  - (b) Nationalism is exclusively a source of evil
  - (c) Nations have existed for a long time, since well before modernity
  - (d) None of these
2. When we say national identity is a political identity what do we mean?
  - (a) Politicians create national identity in order to manipulate the masses
  - (b) National identity only exists within the state bureaucracy, outside of this bureaucracy it is nationalism
  - (c) National identity is linked to, and helps to shape the distribution of power.
  - (d) None of these
3. Which definition best describes nation building?
  - (a) The process of drawing new borders for countries,
  - (b) The effort to build the sense of national identity among citizens
  - (c) Conquering neighbouring nations
  - (d) None of these
4. Which of the following is not the characteristic of a state?

- (a) Motivated by profit
  - (b) Sovereign power
  - (c) Monopoly on the legitimate use of force
  - (d) The power to make laws for citizens
5. It is associated with conflict resolution and decision-making.
- (a) A state
  - (b) Politics
  - (c) Nationalism
  - (d) The nation
6. The following are the characteristics of a nation except one.
- (a) A common culture
  - (b) Common ethnic group
  - (c) Controlled by an institutional government
  - (d) Common history
7. Which one of the following is true about nations and politics.
- (a) They are independent of each other
  - (b) A nation is the bond that ties politics together
  - (c) Politics is the bond that ties a nation together.
  - (d) None of these
8. The state and a country are exactly the same thing.
- (a) True
  - (b) False
9. When a nation of people has a State or country of their own, it is called a Nation-State.
- (a) True
  - (b) False
10. All states are nations and all nations are states.
- (a) True
  - (b) False

**17.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What is the difference between nation and nationhood?
2. What are the similarities between a nation and a state?
3. What are the two schools of thoughts that explain the origin of nations?

4. Among nations and politics, which came first? Briefly justify your claim.
5. What is the difference between nationalism and patriotism?

### **17.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. The nation and the state are the different sides of the same coin. Discuss
2. The nation is political but the state is more political. Discuss.
3. Define and discuss the term nationalism in detail.

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## **17.6 Suggested Readings**

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## Unit - 18: *The Dog of Tetwal*

### Structure

18.0 Introduction

18.1 Objectives

18.2 *The Dog of Tetwal*

18.2.1 About the Author

18.2.2 Partition Literature

18.2.3 Major Characters

18.2.4 Summary

18.2.5 Themes and Issues

18.2.5.1 Partition and the Loss of Humanity

18.2.5.2 Identity and Conflict

18.3 Learning Outcomes

18.4 Glossary

18.5 Sample Questions

18.6 Suggested Readings

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### 18.0 Introduction

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Saadat Hasan Manto, one of the greatest short story writers of Urdu literature, was born during the colonial times more specifically at a time when India was fighting for its freedom from British rule. He is one of the writers who not only saw the Independence and partition of India but also happened to see the hard realities of it. However, he died at a very young age due to his addiction to alcohol. He was associated with the Progressive Writers Movement but later on this association turned bitter.

Manto is mostly remembered for his partition stories. The short story *The Dog of Tetwal* is one such story that reflects on the issue of partition in a novel and distinct manner. It was through this story Manto tries to show that how the people of both the countries responded to each other and during the partition they did not even want to leave the animals behind. Manto

tries to show the absurdities of partition that took many lives and is still taking a toll on lives of the innocent people.

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## **18.1 Objectives**

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The objective of this unit is to introduce the readers to one of the greatest writers of Urdu literature, Saadat Hasan Manto and simultaneously to his prime area of writing, partition literature. Partition literature broadly deals with the issues and themes of partition of India into two countries: India and Pakistan. It portrays how the humanity suffered due to this divide which took place on the religious grounds. More importantly the objective of this unit is to introduce Saadat Hasan Manto's short story *The Dog of Tetwal* which is based on the theme of partition.

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## **18.2 *The Dog of Tetwal***

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### **18.2.1 About the Author**

Saadat Hasan Manto, fondly remembered as Manto, was a short story writer who wrote in Urdu. He worked as a journalist and screenplay writer in Bombay before the partition of India. He is known for writing bold and provocative short stories without any fear or hesitation. This often landed him into many court cases but he was never proven guilty. The most important thing that played a crucial role in the life of Manto is the Partition of India. The partition of India devastated him in such a way that he could not come out of it. He wrote much on the subject of partition. Most of his writings are inspired from real life situations and his characters also very much resemble with real people and are not merely fictitious. In other words he portrayed what he saw around him or the characters the writer met or saw in his daily life.

During his lifetime Manto was not appreciated much for his writing skills and he did not live very long to enjoy the fame and respect that he received posthumously. He passed away at the age of forty-three. He was addicted to alcohol which took a heavy toll on his life. During this short span of time, Manto wrote twenty collections of short stories. Apart from this, he also wrote a novel, three essays, two sketches, five collections of dramas for radio and so on. However, he is mostly remembered for his short stories. His stories predominantly deal with the

issue of partition. Recently in India a biopic entitled *Manto* was made on his life and work by a noted actor and director Nandita Das.

Saadat Hasan Manto was born on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1912 in Ludhiana, in the undivided colonial India. His ancestors were from Kashmir. His grandfather was Khawaja Jamal Uddin whose youngest son Maulvi Ghulam Hasan was Manto's father. He was a very strict disciplinarian. His relationship with Manto was not very cordial. Manto was the child of his second wife. Nevertheless, unlike his father Manto had a very comforting relationship with his mother. Similarly, Manto had a very good relationship with his wife too who stood by his side in his difficult times as well. Manto was unconventional and stubborn, for which his father and brothers are often blamed as they did not treat him well.

Manto was never an outstanding student, he cleared his matriculation in third attempt. He had great difficulty in passing the exam of the Urdu language, the language which he mastered and came to be known as the greatest short story writer of Urdu literature. Soon after leaving Aligarh Muslim University, Manto fell sick and suffered from tuberculosis. He went to Delhi for the treatment. To recover from it he went to Kashmir where he fell in love with a Kashmiri shepherd girl. Nevertheless, once he returned from Kashmir and started working for All India Radio in 1941 to earn a livelihood. Here he wrote more than hundred plays for radio. In September 1942, he left for Bombay to join the film industry. He worked with many film companies and studios like the Imperial Film Company, Film City, Saroj Movietone, Hindustan Cinetone, etc.

The art of story writing came to him through translation. In his early twenties, he used to translate the works of western writers from different languages like English, French and Russian into Urdu. From those writers he learned the art of story-telling or narration. He mastered the art of short story so much that he used to complete a story in one go with some minor corrections. In general, his stories did not deal with aristocratic characters or subjects rather they were about the common folks. His stories always shock its readers specifically the conclusions which haunt the readers. The titles of his short stories seem related to very common things or words that one uses frequently in the day-to-day life like *Bu*, *Khol Do*, *Kali Shalwar* and *Thanda Gosht*. These stories always remain with the readers and they haunt them until one learns to ignore them. Each story is unique in its own way and never fails to impress the readers that these characters who in their day-to-day life appear as normal human beings are the ones who partake in heinous crimes. This

is what Manto tries to make his readers understand that his characters are like other individuals. They are around us and we see and meet them in our day-to-day life. Further, some of Manto's stories deal with sex workers; a subject which was considered a taboo to talk about in those days. He wanted to draw our attention towards them and make us understand that they too are human beings like us.

Manto never supported the partition of India which was based on the religious grounds. However, soon after the Partition of India he migrated to the newly created country, Pakistan. It is very strange for his young readers to understand this brutal reality. There are different narratives regarding his migration to Pakistan. According to one of the narratives, it was his impulsive decision to migrate to Pakistan. During the time, when the partition was announced, his wife was in the region which fell under Pakistan. At that time Manto was in Bombay. One evening he was drinking with his friends and one of his friends who happened to be Hindu said that if they were not friends, he would have killed Manto. This was enough for Manto. The very next day he packed his bag and moved to Pakistan. In another narrative it is said that he felt insulted because the stories of Ismat Chughtai and Nazir Ajmeri were selected for a film and not his. So, he felt humiliated and decided to migrate to Pakistan in anticipation of a new world.

However, this turned out to be a nightmare for him. When he came to Pakistan the scenario was different than what he expected but still he did not lose hope and continued to write. Things did not go according to his plan and instead of better opportunities he was boycotted and labelled with names both by the government and the people. He lost his friends from Bombay. He felt dejected and found solace in alcohol. However, he began to worry for the future of his children and wife. He tried to leave alcohol and focus once again on his writing, so he made a serious attempt but could not succeed.

Manto's life as a creative writer can be divided into three phases. The first phase is from 1934 to 1937. This phase comprises of stories which were written during his stay in various cities like Amritsar, Lahore and Aligarh. They were published as a collection under the name of *Atish Pare* in 1936, in different magazines like *Khalq*, *Saqi* etc. In these stories Manto's special attention was given to the art of narration. When it comes to his art of story-telling there are specific points like shocking endings, lucid and concise stories. However, these stories like his any other writings were criticised for narration, scenic effects and assimilation. The stories of this period were not based on the subject of sex which is majorly seen in his later stories.

The second phase of writing is from 1937 to 1948 January that is before his migration to Pakistan. These stories and articles brought his name along with the names of other luminaries like Krishan Chander, Upendar Nath Ashk and N. M. Rashid. The stories are: “*Na Mokammal Tehrir*”, “*Laltein*”, “*Misri Ki Dali*”, “*Mausam Ki Shararat*”, “*Bhanjh*”, “*Shy Shum Chuhedan*”, “*Ghusulkhana*”, “*Shannahe*” and “*Us Ka Pati*”. During this period one finds the influence of Progressive Writers Movement in his writings like “*Naya Qanoon*”, “*Shughul*” and “*Naara*”. During this time he also had to visit court on the charges of obscenity in his stories like “*Kali Shalwar*”, “*Dhuan*” and “*Bu*”. Some works which were considered as his masterpieces of this period are, “*Hatak*” and “*Khushiya*”. He also wrote “*Darpok*”, “*Tarraqi Pasand*”, “*Padhe Kalima*”, “*Sooraj Kay Liye*”, “*Das Rupaye*”, and “*Mantar*”. These stories were published in various collections during this time like *Manto Ke Afsane* (1940), *Dhuan* (1941), *Afsane Aur Drame* (1943), *Lazzat-e-Sang* (1947), *Aao* (1940), *Janazey* (1942), *Teen Aurtein*, *Manto kay Mazameen*, *Afsane aur Drame* (1942).

The third and the last phase of his writing begins from migration until the time of his demise that is from 1948 to 1955. During this time he wrote unforgettable short stories on the subject of partition like “*1919 Ki Ek Baat*”, “*Ram Khilawan*”, “*Sahai*”, “*Mozail*”, “*Akhri Salute*” and “*Tetwal Ka Kutta*.” The collection of stories that were published during this time are: *Chughad* (1948), *Khali Botlen*, *Khali Dabbey* (1950), *Badshahat Ka Khatma* (1954), *Beghar Ijazat* (1955), *Burque* (1955) and *Ratti, Masha, Tola* (1956). The stories that were published after his demise include *Namrood Ki Khudai*, *Sarkandon Ke Peechey*, *Phunde*, *Thanda Gosht*, *Chashme Rozan*, *Gulab Ke Phool*, and *Majzoob Ke Bar*.

Apart from these short stories, Manto has also written sketches, essays and articles on numerous subjects. It is said that if Manto had not written short stories then his prose writings would have been enough to remember him. They are considered to be his greatest contribution to Urdu literature which includes “*Mera Saheb*”, “*Murli Ki Dhun*”, “*Bari Saheb*”, “*Babu Rao Patel*”, and “*Nargis*.”

### **18.2.2 Partition Literature:**

Before reading the short story “*The Dog of Tetwal*” it is pertinent to understand in this context what does partition and partition literature mean.

India was divided on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947 into two parts that is India and Pakistan. Once again it was torn into another piece in 1971 and Bangladesh was created. The story to divide the country was initiated in the 1940's. During this time the idea of the Two Nation Theory was injected in the minds of the masses. This is a political ideology that provides the reasons for separating the country into two parts on religious grounds.

This historical incident that turned the life of the millions into a tragedy also shook the lives of the writers. They could not resist themselves from representing those harsh realities of the greatest tragedy of Indian history. All the writers of different Indian languages irrespective of the genres wrote about the experiences of the masses and the tragedy they faced for the coming generations to remember.

The realities of the partition of India were written by many writers but in Urdu literature it is Manto who will be remembered for writing on this subject. His most significant contributions to this are *Toba Tek Singh*, *Khol Do*, *Thanda Gosht*, *Siyah Hashiye* and so on. In *Siyah Hashiye*, Manto has managed to shock his readers by writing in very few lines. For instance, see (i) Ungrateful Lot and (ii) Losing Proposition1.

### **Ungrateful Lot**

“What an ungrateful nation! After all the trouble I went to, slaughtering fifty pigs in this mosque and what happens?

Not one bloody customer! And now do you know, on the other side there are people queuing outside every temple to buy beef?”

### **Losing Proposition**

The two friends finally picked out a girl from the dozen or so they had been shown. She cost fort two rupees and they brought her to their place.

One of them spent the night with her. “What is your name?” he asked

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1“Black Borders Siyah Hashiye”.Urduwallahs.<https://urduwallahs.wordpress.com/2012/05/23/black-borderssiyah-hashkiye/>.

When she told him, he was taken aback. “But we were told you are the other religion.”

“They lied,” she replied “The bastards cheated us!” he screamed, “selling us a girl who is one of us. I want my money refunded.”

Manto has managed to present various aspects of the tragedy. There is hardly any aspect of partition that Manto did not touch upon. He always leaves us shocked and provides a chance to think and ponder. In his short story *The Tetwal's Dog* or *The Dog of Tetwal* it is difficult to imagine the fate of the animal that was killed in the name of a country. Here is the summary of the short story *The Dog of Tetwal*.

### **18.2.3 Major Characters:**

**Captain Harnam Singh:** Captain Harman Singh is a complex character at one moment he shows sympathy, care, concern and love by singing love song, feeding a biscuit to the dog and in the next moment he asks the dog to prove his identity. Ultimately, he is the one who kills the innocent dog.

**Captain Himmat Khan:** He belongs to the Pakistani camp. He also shows inhumanity towards the dog and plays a major role in killing the dog.

**Dog of Tetwal:** The innocent dog, which was roaming here and there in search of food, gets killed at the hands of human beings who happened to be on the two different sides of the border due to their religion and choice of migration. An innocent animal which does not understand the concept of partition had to bear the brunt of it.

**Bashir:** He is a Pakistani soldier. He does not treat the dog well. He gives the name Sapad Sunsun to the dog and also ties a piece of paper around his neck labelling him as a Pakistani dog. He does that on the behest of Captain Himmat Khan.

**Banta Singh:** Banta Singh belongs to the Indian camp. Along with others he also hears the barking sound of the dog and goes into the direction of its sound inside the bushes and brings him to the camp. He is the one who gives the dog its name, chapad jhun jhun.

#### 18.2.4 Summary:

The story begins at the border site where soldiers of India and Pakistan are at their respective camps. Readers are first introduced to the Indian camp where Captain Harnam Singh is on night guard/watch. He wakes Ganda Singh up to take over the guard. He lies down and begins to hum a song whose lines are:

“Bring me a pair of shoes studded with stars  
Studded with stars  
O!’ Harnam Singh  
O Yaara  
Even if you have to sell your buffalo”

It is a romantic song where his beloved is asking him to buy her a pair of shoes with stars on them. In the subsequent lines, he agrees to buy her the shoe even if he has to sell his buffalo. Banta Singh also begins to hum a Heer song, a very famous Punjabi folk song, which is a romantic-tragedy. The way Banta Singh suddenly began to hum the song, in the same way he became silent. It seemed as if sadness was creeping over the mountains too. Suddenly they heard barking of a dog. Banta Singh went inside the bushes and came along with a dog. He brought the dog to the camp and announced his name as *chapad jhun jhun*. Hearing his name all the soldiers laughed. Captain Harnam Singh gestured towards the dog and called him towards him and the dog perhaps thinking that some food is being offered began to sniff the floor. Seeing this, Captain Harnam Singh threw a biscuit at him and the dog began to sniff it and opened his mouth to enjoy it but then Captain Harnam Singh picked the biscuit up and exclaimed that the dog cannot eat the biscuit if it is a Pakistani. Listening to this all the other soldiers began to laugh. Sardar Banta Singh comes to the dog’s rescue and tells Captain Harnam Singh that the dog is an Indian. Captain Harnam Singh laughed and addressed the dog and asked him to prove his identity to which the dog responded by wagging his tail. After observing the scenario, Captain Harnam Singh said this is not the proof to which Banta Singh replied that it is a refugee. A soldier responded by saying now dogs also have to be either Pakistani or Hindustani. Captain Harnam Singh said like the Pakistanis, Pakistani dogs will also be shot dead. On hearing this a soldier exclaimed “Hindustan Zindabad!” Hearing this, the dog got scared and when. Captain Harnam Singh notices this, he was pleased and said to the dog, “Why are you scared of our slogan *Chapad Jhun Jhun?*” and offered him one more biscuit. Banta Singh writes a name plate which also states that this is an Indian dog and hangs it around the dog’s neck.

After describing the early morning scene/scenario and how the Indian soldiers were trying to enjoy the company of the dog now the story moves to the Pakistani camp. It seems the dog stayed with the Pakistani soldiers some days before it went to the Indian camp. Now in the Pakistani camp, Captain Himmat Khan was looking at the map of Tetwal. Along with him was sitting the wireless operator who was receiving the messages of the Commander. A few meters away Bashir was sitting - reclining his back to a stone – and humming a song whose lines are: ‘Where, darling, did you pass the night ... darling, where?’<sup>2</sup> Bashir began to sing loudly. Now in the loud and strict sound of Captain Himmat Khan also said where did you spend the night? Bashir with the shocking expression began to see Captain Himmat Khan who was asking this question to the dog. They now see the name plate around the dog’s neck. Someone read it. They come to know that the dog has spent the night in the Indian camp. After some time Captain Himmat Khan asked Bashir to write on a lid of a cigarette box *Sapad Sunsun*, the reply to *chapad Jhun Jhun*, and he also asked him to write that it is a Pakistani dog. Captain Himmat Khan tied the rope around the dog’s neck and said to the dog not to betray them. He also said to the dog that the punishment for such crime is only death. The dog throughout this conversation wagged its tail. After saying all this to the dog, he led the dog towards the direction of Indian camp and asked the dog to deliver their letter to them. He called himself its officer and asked the dog to follow his order and after delivering the letter he asked the dog to return to them. The dog was moving slowly in the direction of the Indian camp. Suddenly “Himmat Khan raised his gun and fired a shot into the air.”<sup>3</sup> The sound of the shot echoed and it was heard in the Indian camp as well but why it was shot, that remained elusive. Captain Harnam Singh asked the whereabouts of *Chapad jhun jhun* to Banta Singh. When Captain Harman Singh saw him coming from the enemy side, he also fired a shot aiming at the dog but he missed it. The dog was shocked and alarmed. When it heard another sound, it ran into the direction of Captain Himmat Khan’s camp. When Captain Himmat Khan saw this, he said to the dog loudly that the brave are not afraid. To turn the dog once again towards the Indian camp, Captain Himmat Khan shot a fire. Now Captain Harman Singh shot a fire and it just sang past the dog’s ear. The dog began to shake its head. Now Captain Himmat Khan fired a shot that just missed the dog’s foreleg. The dog did not understand where to go. At one moment it was going in one direction, the next moment in other direction. This brought a smile on the faces of Captain Himmat Khan and Captain Harman

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<sup>2</sup> Aatish Taseer. (trns). “The Dog of Tetwal” by Saadat Hasan Manto. <https://granta.com/the-dog-of-Tetwal/>  
<sup>3</sup>*ibid*

Singh. When the dog finally took the direction of Captain Harman Singh's camp, then Captain Harman Singh took a serious aim at the dog and shot it. It injured the dog's leg and a shrieking sound was heard in the air. In this condition the dog decided to take the direction of Captain Himmat Khan's camp. Captain Himmat Khan shouted and asked the dog to go ahead as the brave do not bother about their wounds and they do not care about their lives and gamble theirs. He asked the dog to keep moving towards the Indian camp. The moment it took the direction of the Indian camp, Captain Harman Singh aimed at the dog and shot it. The dog collapsed on the spot. Captain Himmat Khan called it martyrdom. Captain Harman Singh while "running his hands over the still warm barrel of his gun, said: 'He died that death that is a dog's alone.'"<sup>4</sup>

### **18.2.5 Themes and Issues:**

#### **18.2.5.1 Partition and the Loss of Humanity:**

All the people of the country of different religious backgrounds and sects were living in the same country until the time of Partition. Suddenly partition has brought the identity consciousness among the people and they began to fight in the name of the country even the animals were not left in this political war. Apart from this the people who are shown to be sympathetic and caring and loving towards their fellow countrymen and their own family members, suddenly became hostile towards the people who live on the other side of the border who until then were their friends or neighbours. They have shown their cruelty and inhuman behaviour by involving every single thing or by dividing everything in the name of religion and country.

Manto has very beautifully presented all these issues in his short stories like when the dog begins to sniff the biscuit thrown by Captain Harman Singh but before it enjoys the biscuit it was picked up by Captain Harman Singh. He said that the dog cannot eat the biscuit if it is from Pakistan. Apart from that he asked the dog to prove its identity. Manto, perhaps, wants to say that a dog who is a simple creature and who was in search of food, wandering here and there, is asked to prove its identity. Dog, a creature that does not speak and say anything in his own defence and support is asked very meaningless questions. The food is denied to him. It is so meaningless and utter stupidity of the people that they do every untoward thing in the name of the country.

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*4Ibid*

In other words, perhaps, Manto also wants to suggest that the condition of the common man is like the dog who does not know anything and who does not understand the distinction between India and Pakistan. For him the matter of concern is his survival. He sees humans on both the sides of the. But the people like Captain Harman Singh and Captain Himmat Khan are everywhere who kill innocent people in the name of religion and country. Further, to show the animosity and hatred towards each other, the soldiers on both the sides of the border fire at each other without any reason. Apart from that, one can also observe the calm and peaceful atmosphere Manto has projected in the story in contrast to the killing and inhuman acts on part of the humans.

#### **18.2.5.2. Identity and Conflict:**

The story also reflects on the identity and conflict issues like the moment they came to know that the dog might be from the other side of the border they began to ask several questions even the dog was asked to prove his identity. Once the dog goes to Pakistani camp, the soldiers like Captain Himmat Khan question the dog about his absence.

“Bashir softly sang:

‘Where, darling, did you pass the night ... darling, where?’

No sooner had Bashir, in jest, let his voice rise, than he heard Captain Himmat Khan thunder: ‘Oye! Where the hell have you been all night?’

Bashir gazed questioningly at Himmat Khan, but saw that he was addressing somebody else.

‘Oye, spit it out!’

Then Bashir saw.

Sitting some distance away was the stray dog, who only a few days ago had come like an uninvited guest into their midst and proceeded to remain there among them.

Bashir smiled, and addressing the dog, said: ‘Where, darling, did you pass the night ... darling, where?’

The dog energetically wagged its tail, sweeping it like a broom over the stony ground.

Captain Himmat Khan picked up a small stone and threw it at the dog.

‘Bastard, can’t do anything but wag his tail.’”<sup>5</sup>

This shows that on the one hand they care for the dog. On the other side, the moment they come to know that it belongs to India, they become suspicious and begin to think that the name of the dog must be some code from the other side of the border. Thus, in this act of suspicion and animosity the life of the dog is taken away.

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### 18.3 Learning Outcomes

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In this unit students have been introduced to one of the greatest writers of Urdu literature Saadat Hasan Manto, who has written extensively on the issue of partition. Students have also been familiarized with the concept of partition and partition literature. Apart from this, students have studied the story “The Dog of Tetwal” in detail like its major characters, themes and issues and so on. They have also learnt some meanings of the words in the glossary and so far whatever they have read in this unit is being tested through objectives, short and long questions. Some works are also suggested to them for further reading and deeper understanding of the subject.

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### 18.4 Glossary

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**Elusive:** Difficult to find or achieve.

**Shrieking:** Making a high-pitched piercing cry or sound.

**Wag:** With reference to an animal’s tail, move or cause to move rapidly to and fro.

**Gaze:** To look at something intently.

**Refugee:** A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

**Slogan:** A short, easily remembered phrase used by an organization so that people will recognize it or its products.

**Ungrateful:** Not feeling or showing gratitude.

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*5* *ibid.*

**Proposition:** A statement or assertion that expresses a judgement or opinion.

**Softly:** In a careful and gentle manner or with a quiet and gentle voice or sound.

**Uninvited:** (of a person) Arriving somewhere or acting without having been asked.

**Sweep:** Clean (an area) by brushing away dirt or litter.

**Rise:** Move from a lower position to a higher one; come or go up or get up from lying, sitting, or kneeling.

**Energetically:** In a manner showing or involving great activity or vitality.

**Innocent:** Not responsible for or directly involved in an event yet suffering its consequences not guilty of a crime or offence.

**Proceed:** Begin a course of action or move forward.

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## 18.5 Sample Questions

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### 18.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When was Manto born?

(a) 11 May 1912 (b) 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947

(c) 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 (d) None of these

2. What was Manto's full Name?

(a) Manto (b) Saadat Hasan Manto

(c) Saadat Hasan (d) None of these

3. Identify the two works of Manto.

(a) I. *Bu* II. *Khol Do* (b) I. *Jadien/Roots* II. *Ek Shauhar Ki Khatir (All for a Husband)*

(c) I. *Do Haath (A Pair of Hands)* II. *Aag Ka Darya (River of Fire)* (d) None of these

4. How many countries were created at the time of partition of India in 1947?

(a) One (b) Two



### 18.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Explain the term partition literature in detail and discuss any one work of your choice on the issue of partition.
2. Explain the character of dog and how partition has affected the dog.
3. Discuss the two sides of human nature that is cruelty and kindness with reference to the story ‘*The Dog of Tetwal.*’

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### 18.6 Suggested Readings

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## **Unit - 19: Communalism and Violence**

### **Structure**

**19.0** Introduction

**19.1** Objectives

**19.2** Communalism and Violence

**19.2.1** Communalism

**19.2.1.1** Definition of Communalism

**19.2.1.2** Origin of Communalism

**19.2.1.3** Stages of Communalism

**19.2.1.4** Main features of Communalism

**19.2.1.5** Contributing factors to Communalism

**19.2.2** Violence

**19.2.2.1** Definition of Violence

**19.2.2.2** Types of Violence

**19.2.2.3** Triangle of Violence

**19.2.2.4** Relationship between Communalism and Communal Violence

**19.2.2.5** Steps to combat communal Violence

**19.3** Learning Outcomes

**19.4** Glossary

**19.5** Sample Questions

**19.6** Suggested Readings

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### **19.0 Introduction**

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Indian is a multi-religious society, where individuals or groups in the society try to prove their self-identity through multiple factors like language, culture, custom, religion, economy, history etc. Religion plays a vital role in the formation of identity. Besides, religion is the base of communalism. Plurality of religions, languages, cultures and customs create a sense of superiority among people, when their superiority and loyalty is challenged or ridiculed a communal conflict emerges. However, violence is the use of physical force in order to damage, injure, abuse, or destroy. It also has lifelong consequences on physical and mental health and social functions. Such communal riots create a feeling of insecurity among minorities. Similarly,

religious contradictions, misunderstanding and fanaticism are also responsible for the rapid growth of communalism in the post-partition India. Communal consciousness is increasing among Indians through the working of the numerous factors like culture, economy, and history. In addition to this, communal belief is also developed due to economic competition and religious fundamentalism in India. Communalism is an ideology which leads to communal violence. Such communal violence endangers the communal harmony of the nation.

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## **19.1 Objectives**

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The unit aims to fulfil the following objectives:

- Explaining what communalism is?
  - Revealing the origin of communalism in India.
  - Disclosing the stages of communalism.
  - Identifying the contributing factors to communalism.
  - Analyzing the meaning of violence.
  - Tracing the categories of violence.
  - Classifying Galtung's Triangle of violence
  - Discussing the relationship between communalism and violence.
  - Unveiling/Providing the steps to prevent communal violence.
  - Describing main features of communalism.
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## **19.2 Communalism and Violence**

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### **19.2.1 Communalism:**

The word communal is derived from the word 'commune' which means feeling of oneness, but in the contemporary context it means hatred, mistrust, rivalry etc. among the people of different religions. However, it has come to be associated with tensions and clashes between different religious communities in various regions.

The term 'communalism' is used particularly in South Asia and Africa in the early twentieth century. In India, British colonial authorities constructed communalism in order to stimulate the violence among different religious groups. India is a secular nation where several

religions co- exist. India is known for cultural, lingual, ethnic and racial diversity. Communalism has become threat to India's unity. It opposes secularism and humanism. So, communalism is the root cause of violence between two different communities.

In ancient India, people lived together peacefully and there were no communal feelings in them. Similarly, there was acceptance for each other's culture, customs and traditions. But after the partition of India on religious lines, communal ideology stresses the significance of one religion over the others. In addition to this, religious leaders, for their personal gain often advocate/instigate fanatic behaviour among the followers through their speeches.

Communalism has endangered harmony and peace of nation in so many ways in the past. It provokes violence between two communities. It is also an ideology of social, religious and political groups that their religion, customs and practices are superior to that of other groups. As religion is the personal and sensitive issue for most of the people. Therefore, any disrespect towards one's religion stimulates violence. Similarly, economic development with special care for the people of communities which are marginalized.

#### **19.2.1.1 Definition of Communalism:**

According to **Murray Bookchin**, communalism is, "a theory or system of government in which independent communities participate in a federation."

Besides, **Zenab Banu** defines, "It is an ideology in which a minority receives unequal treatment from the majority, on the basis of religion, culture and ethnic characteristics."

Well-known historian **Harbans Mukhia** specifies, "Communalism is the phenomenon of religious differences between groups, often leading to tension and even rioting between them."

According to **Wilfred Cantwell Smith**, "Communalism is an ideology that has emphasized the social political and economic unit of each religion and has emphasized even the antagonism between different communal groups."

Indian historian **Bipin Chandra** determines, communalism as, "the belief that because a group of people following a particular religion, they have common social, political, and economic interests," additionally he says that religious distinction is the fundamental distinction that overrides all other distinctions.

### **19.2.1.2 Origin of Communalism:**

Communalism has emerged and developed in the pre-partitioned India especially from the mid-nineteenth century. After the 1857 mutiny, British government understood that it was very difficult for them to stop freedom movement of Indians. Hence, they adopted 'divide and rule' policy. This policy changed the whole political picture of India. The colonial rulers stated to promote that Hindu, Muslim, Sikh etc. were a separate community. British government wanted to strengthen separation and weaken the unity by divisive forces in order to disintegrate Indians in their respective communities.

Moreover, British government promoted communalism, casteism and provincialism. Such promotion resulted in the emergence of political leaders who represented their religious community. By introducing religion-based representation in the legislative or political bodies, colonial authorities felt the need to divide the society on communal lines.

British policy worked and various political parties were formed like Muslim League in 1906, Hindu Mahasabha in 1915, Akali Dal in 1920, and Depressed Class Association in 1924 to represent their communities. In addition to this, British Government accepted policy of separate electorate in 1909 elections. Hindu and Muslim contestants contested from separate constituencies, which belonged to their respective religions. In this way, British Government which was a Supreme authority, promoted communal, provincial and caste leaders, to represent their community. However, during Non-Cooperation Movement (1919-1922) and Khilafat Movement all religions came together under one umbrella/banner. But after the withdrawal of Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922, Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim League all got separated. Moreover, in 1937 elections, congress got the majority and Muslim League was defeated. Muslims educated in English were limited as compared to Hindus. As a result, Hindus were getting jobs and representations in political institutions. The Muslims viewed that their interests were antagonistic to Hindus' interests and vice-versa. In order to safeguard the interests of Muslims, Jinnah gave his fourteen points in 1929 as he thought that being minority in India, Muslim's voice would be suppressed/stifled. Jinnah's demands of fourteen points were rejected by Nehru committee. The biggest consequence of that was partition of India.

### **19.2.1.3 Stages of Communalism:**

Historian Bipin Chandra in his book entitled 'India Struggles for independence' explained that there are three stages of Communalism that are as follows:

### **First stage**

In this stage, there is a belief that people who follow the same religion have common secular interests. Such people have same political, economic and social interest. There was the rise of Nationalists in this stage. Besides, there was the formation of political parties on the religious lines. Social religious movement started in the mid of nineteenth century. The intention behind these movements was to bring positive changes in the religious community without harming the interests of other communities. This stage is also known as ‘Communal Consciousness.’

### **Second stage**

People in this stage think that their common secular interests are dissimilar and divergent from the interests of the follower of another religion. As a result, a separate political electorate was demanded from the British rulers before Partition. There can be no common bond of economic, political, and social interest between the two different religious groups. Similarly, it believed in communal politics but liberal in nationalist, humanist and democratic. For example, people from religion A may believe that their concerns for jobs are separate from the concerns for jobs of religion B. This stage is known as ‘Liberal Communalism’

### **Third stage**

This stage is known as ‘Extreme Communalism’. This is an extreme form of communalism. The interests of the followers of the different religion are to be seen as totally incompatible and hostile. People believe that their secular interests are absolutely divergent to another community’s interests. Communal politics is based on this ideology. Communal violences are conjectural consequences of communal ideology. In this stage people of two religious group became hostile towards one another and they started fighting, such quarrel leads to separation. It demanded separate nation on religious lines which was based on hatred and fear.

#### **19.2.1.4 Main features of Communalism:**

- It is an ideology.
- Disseminating of intense dislike for the other religions.
- It is based on orthodox principles.
- Believes that their own religion is superior to other religion.
- This ideology works to eliminate the values of another religion.

- It leads to abuse of power.
- It doesn't consider a citizen of a nation as a citizen but as a member of particular community.
- Believing that communal interests are superior to the national interests.
- It is based on prejudices.
- Considers that specific interest of a particular community can be increased only by maintaining a separate identity so that their interests are served.

### **19.2.1.5 Contributing Factors to Communalism:**

#### **Historical Factors**

Communalism was injected in India by British rulers through their 'divide and rule' policy. British made one community believe that the other community is getting certain benefits. The Partition of Bengal in 1905 on religious lines, separate electorate under government of India Act 1909, and appeasing of various communities through Communal Award in 1932 are the root causes for the emergence of communalism in India. Besides, misinterpretation of facts and figures during the nationalist struggle is the cause for development of communalism. Various religious organizations like Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League were involved in meeting their religious interests instead of focusing on the National movement. In addition to this, there were lot of misrepresentations about ancient India. The biggest consequence of misrepresentations is that the partition of India took place on religious lines.

#### **Psychological Factors**

The absence of dialogue between two different communities and fear psychosis are psychological factors which play vital role in promoting communalism. Fear psychosis is created when one community starts to believe that they are targeted only because they belong to a particular religion. Such scare causes insecurity among that community even though the fear is an imaginary one. This psychological mindset results in communalism.

#### **Economic Factors**

Government policies also were implemented discriminately in pre-partition India. So, anger and frustration about another community gave way to communalism. People started believing that they were facing problems, because all the benefits were given to other community members that lead to communal disharmony.

## **Political Factors**

Communalism propagated due to the nexus between religion and politics. Similarly, politicians use religion in provoking political interest. In short, it includes vote bank politics.

## **Local and Regional Factors**

Apart from various religious ideas, there may be local issues in a particular area which may further increase the enmity between two religious communities.

### **19.2.2 Violence:**

Violence creates instability in the society. Whenever there is violence, there is unresolved conflict. Violence is a global phenomenon which is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. Violence has become increasingly interpersonal and tied in with criminal activity, particularly in urban areas. It also causes profound physical and psychological trauma, which results into the reduction of the quality of life in the society. Violence can be defined as disorders of human inter connections. Violence cannot be attributed to one factor. It occurs at different levels as its causes are complex.

#### **19.2.2.1 Definition of Violence:**

There is no clear cut definition for violence as it is a complex phenomenon. There are some responses to violence like fear, confusion, anger, frustration and bitterness.

**World Health Organization proposes** a definition of violence: “The international use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, deprivation.”

**Collins’ dictionary defines**, violence as a “behavior which is intended to hurt, injure, or kill people.”

**Merriam Webster dictionary proposes**, Violence as an “instance of violent treatment or procedure.”

**Cambridge dictionary specifies violence as**, “Actions or words that are intended to hurt people.”

### 19.2.2.2 Types of Violence:

World Health Organization divided violence into three types according to characteristics of those committing the violent Act.

#### i) **Self – directed violence**

In this category of violence, one tries to injure himself or herself intentionally. Self-abuse, suicidal behaviour are subdivisions of self-directed violence. In this type of violence, the victim and perpetrator is the same individual.

#### ii) **Interpersonal violence**

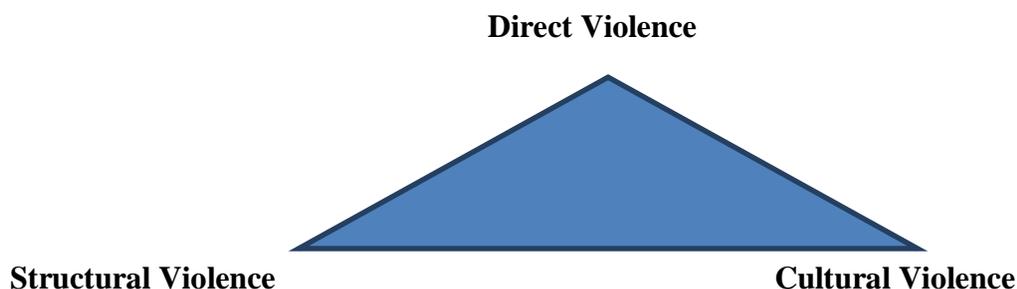
It is the violence which is largely between family members and intimate partners. It takes place exclusively at home. It includes violent act of the person against another like child maltreatment, elder abuse, and intimate partner abuse. In addition to this, it includes rape or sexual assault by strangers, random acts of violence and violence in institutional settings. School-based programming, gender equality training will be helpful to reduce the violence in family.

#### iii) **Collective violence**

It is the violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group and commit violence against another group for achieving political, social, economic objectives. It includes war, lynching, violent political conflict, genocide, torture etc. In short, collective violence is committed in order to fulfil a particular social/political agenda. It refers to violence committed by larger groups of people.

### 19.2.2.3 Triangle of Violence:

Johan Galtung's triangle helps to understand violence clearly. It is also a useful tool to analyse violence. He identified three categories of violence which are as follows:



**Direct Violence:**

It is the violence with clear specific perpetrators and victims. It can be carried out by states, by groups in the society and even it can take place within family. Security force attack, mob violence, terror attacks, honour killings, torture, sexual violence, land grabbing assaults are examples of direct violence. It includes physical violence. Hence, the perpetrators and victims of violence are visible.

**Structural Violence:**

As compared to direct violence, structural violence is a broader one. It can harm people of every field. It harms people by injustice, discrimination and inequality. So it is very difficult to find the perpetrators as it is related to prejudiced mindset of people. It leads to denial of basic rights or access to work or justice and so on. It is built into the structure of society and it is not visible; it is latent. It often involves unequal distribution of power and wealth. In this violence, victims are visible but perpetrators are not visible. It benefits some in the society and disadvantages others.

**Cultural Violence:**

It is usually invisible. It arises from cultural, religious, and radiological blames as it is related to attitudes, values, norms, and beliefs of the human beings. So, the roots of violence lie in what way someone thinks or speaks or feels about the other. This violence can be transmitted in various ways through ideology and language.

**Direct and Indirect Violence:**

Sociologist **Johan Galtung** provides a useful distinction between direct and indirect violence. There are some situations in which, violence can't be attributed to a specific person but rather to structures put in place that exert violence on individuals or communities.

- **Direct violence** perpetrator can clearly be identified in this violence. So, all forms of self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and many forms of collective violence can be understood as examples of direct violence.
- **Indirect violence** –in this violence no direct perpetrator exists. Violence is built into structures. Structural violence exists when certain groups, classes, genders are privileged to access resources and opportunities over others. In order to transform the existing discriminatory structures social and political changes need to be done.

#### **19.2.2.4 Relationship between Communalism and Communal Violence:**

Communalism is modern ideology which enforces communal violence between two different communities. Such ideology results into difference in beliefs, tensions, bloodsheds and anarchy in the country. In India, there are so many examples of massive communal violence which resulted in the death of hundreds of people. Partition of India (1947), Anti- Sikh riots (1984), Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya (1992), Assam communal violence (2012), Muzaffar Nagar violence (2013) and Delhi riots (2020)- all are the prominent examples of communal violence. The feeling of communalism has deepened since the late nineteenth century, being a cause of unrest. Communalism is strengthened due to intermingling of politics and religion. For the electoral purposes, communal and religious identities were exploited.

Political leaders also encourage communalism for vote bank politics. Besides, political parties select contestants for the election belonging to the majority in that constituency. Voters also generally vote on communal basis. Sometimes communal violence breaks out in many parts of the country. Correspondingly, after elections, representatives also by ignoring national interests try to safeguard the interest of their community. Such conditions increase hatred, fear, and insecurity among the various communities in India. It convulses the foundation stones of democracy, secularism, and national integration. Sometimes communal ideology leads to communal riots. The result of communal riots is physical injury and psychological harm, which is an obstacle in communal harmony.

#### **19.2.2.5 Steps to Combat Communal Violence:**

Communal violence has no spontaneous outburst as it is planned to fulfil political objectives. The following steps can be followed to combat communal violence:

##### **i) Creation of Peace Maintenance Committee:**

Collective measures need to be taken for the formation of peace maintenance committee at local levels. If there arises any issue between two communities then such committee will assist in preventing communal violence or communal thinking of society by increasing/initiating a dialogue between two communities. As Delhi Government formed a Peace Harmony Committee in the wake of Delhi violence. Such committee needs to be given some rights and special budget for its smooth functioning.

**ii) Speedy Disposal of Communal Issues:**

There is one legal maxim 'justice delayed is justice denied.' It means, if legal remedy is available to plaintiff, but not in stipulated time, it is same as if no remedy is available at all. It can be observed that there are so many pending cases of communal riots. The delay in the judgment causes the feeling of insecurity and mistrust in the judiciary which is the worst thing in the development of communal harmony. Sometimes it can be observed that even judiciary has become a puppet in the hands of the ruling party. Communal violence is punishable under Indian Penal Code and an ordinary law but there is a failure in implementation of these laws. When perpetrators of communal violence are not punished and get off scot free, in that case crimes will flare up. Legal system needs to expedite the process in order to prevent communal violence.

**iii) Awareness Building of Secularism:**

India is a secular nation, but in practice it isn't as it doesn't perform its function in a real secular manner. Secularism is being grinded in dust of communalism. According to Asghar Ali Engineer, illiteracy is blamed for creating communal consciousness among the backward society. In the same way, politicians are especially exploiting the illiterate and manipulating communal feelings for political gain. Once illiteracy is removed through various programs, automatically people will understand the importance of secularism. Besides, the de-communalization of all sections of society is essential to strengthen democracy. Similarly, it is very necessary to make people believe that the presence of certain community is not harmful to the presence of another community. Such secular ethos and constitutional values need to be propagated. Indian constitution has provisions to protect the interest of all religions. Public awareness programs need to be done/conducted/organised through various social activities. Similarly, university students are encouraged to perform drama, role plays, songs etc. during youth festivals which motivate them to lead a secular life as youth are the future of our nation.

**iv) Ban on Communal Political Parties:**

Political parties misuse religious sentiments of the people for the fulfilment of political motives. Besides, political parties incite communalism using religious issues and through this they try to satiate their hunger for power. Government needs to find out political parties which are having direct and indirect connection with communal forces and control the activities of communal organizations. Such communal parties play with the religious sentiments of people for their political gain. Communal practice is prevailing in India, in the name of secularism. Most of

the political parties show their secular face but in practice they are involved in communal politics.

**v) Media's Role:**

Media is the fourth pillar of democracy. Media should deliver news in a manner that it won't contribute in provoking violence. Media needs to act responsibly and create a forum for discussion which will promote communal harmony. In addition to this, social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook are easily accessible to every individual. It is the duty of every individual who access social media platform not to forward images, videos, and messages which provoke communal violence and behave as a good and responsible citizens of India.

**vi) Religious Leaders' Role:**

The preaching of religious leaders is followed by masses in letter and spirit. They are respected among their communities. They can shape the opinion, attitude and behaviour of the followers. Religious leaders should explain to their followers the importance of communal harmony by giving religious references. Such preaching will be helpful in preventing communal violence.

**vii) Proper administration of law and order:**

The average policemen think on communal lines; they are the protectors of the interests of their community. Police authority needs to work properly with the cooperation of Peace Maintenance Committees and members involved in a conflict to resolve religious conflict. Their role is essential to settle the dispute at the initial stage. Criminal justice system has taken interest in prevention of violence before it occurs. Police should act as a crime prevention agency. They need to investigate the cases without prejudiced mindset. There are many people who are engaged in anti-social activities like smuggling, robberies, murders, trafficking and so on, in the name of religion. It is very important to curb their anti- social activities in order to maintain social balance in the society. However, religious rhetoric is not used to create factions in the society. Ideas and values of the Constitution need to be promoted which guarantees the right to freedom, right to live and so on.

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## 19.3 Learning Outcomes

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Mahatma Gandhi says, “I have nothing of the communalist in me because my Hinduism is all inclusive.” Communalism is modern ideology where religion is being considered as a basis of a Nation. Similarly, communalism is formed on religious lines. Hence, communalism leads to communal violence. Besides, it is one of the biggest threats in Indian society. It promotes respect as well as partial views about particular religions. In contrast, secular ideology enhances national value and communal harmony. Its study will promote the secular thinking. Communalists use state power for the dominance of one religious group over the rest. Nationalism is not restricted to religion; person belonging to any religion can have love for his nation. Communalists think that commonalities are superficial and immaterial among all the religions. The nature and form of communalism changed post-partition in India. If communalism will be based on secularism, our dream to become a developed nation will remain unfulfilled. So, it has become necessary to review the nature of secularism and functioning of secular policy in India in order to become a developed nation.

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## 19.4 Glossary

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**Plaintiff:** A person who starts a legal action against somebody in a court of law.

**Phenomenon:** A fact or an event in nature or society which is not fully understood.

**Mal-development:** Faulty or imperfect development.

**Perpetrator:** A person who carries out a harmful, illegal or immoral act.

**Discriminatory:** Unfair treating of one person or a group of people.

**Deprivation:** To prevent somebody from having something.

**Rhetoric:** A way of speaking or writing that is intended to influence people.

**Ethos:** A set of ideas and attitudes associated with a particular group or society.

**Convulse:** To make sudden violent movements that you cannot control.

**Disseminate:** To spread information, knowledge, ideas etc. so that it reaches as many people as possible.

**Fear Psychosis:** Mental disease that make someone believe things that are not real.

**Nexus:** Connection, link.

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## 19.5 Sample Questions

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### 19.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Write a definition of communalism.
2. State the meaning of violence.
3. The word 'communalism' is derived from?
4. Explain collective violence.
5. Describe the self-directed violence.
6. What are the types of violence?
7. Explain Interpersonal violence.
8. What is direct violence?
9. What is the title of Bipin Chandra's book which explains three stages of communalism?
10. Name the three categories of violence mentioned in Johan Galtung's Triangle.

### 19.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Define violence and explain different categories of violence.
2. Write a short note on origin of communalism.
3. Define communalism and what are the stages of communalism?
4. Explain the meaning of violence and describe Galtung's triangle of violence.
5. Write the main features of communalism and explain contributing factors to communalism.

### 19.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. State the relationship between communalism and violence.
2. What are the various steps to combat communal violence?
3. Write the dictionary meaning of violence, its types, and Galtung's triangle of violence.

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## 19.6 Suggested Readings

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1. Agarawal, Sparsh; Khandelwal, Shruti (2017), *Communalism in secular India: threat to minorities*, www.legalserviceindia.com.
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5. Galtung, Johan (1969), *Violence Peace and Peace Research*, Journal of Peace Research, vol. 6 No. 3 Oslo, Sage publication ltd.
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## Unit - 20: *The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi*

### Structure

20.0 Introduction

20.1 Objectives

20.2 *The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi*

20.2.1 About the Author

20.2.2 Discussion

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20.2.2.2 Section – 2

20.2.2.3 Section – 3

20.2.2.4 Section – 4

20.2.2.5 Section – 5

20.2.2.6 Section – 6

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20.2.2.8 Summary

20.3 Learning Outcomes

20.4 Glossary

20.5 Sample Questions

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### 20.0 Introduction

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The essay, *The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi* by Amitav Ghosh, is an extract from the longer version under the same title which forms a part of the anthology *The Imam and the Indian* published in 2002. It records the events as seen and experienced by the writer himself. It refers to the aftermath of a momentous event which took place in New Delhi on October 31, 1984. The author records his experiences in a very objective manner; but the sensibility of the author is very subjective. The piece is a good example of autobiographical prose. Amitav Ghosh uses memory and imagination and combines them with facts to create this beautiful sample of creative/literary non-fiction. It has been written in the first-person narrative form; and it is very subjective because it involves the reader in an intense response to the events being described. The author's participation in the action is narrated with a modest reserve. The author gives center stage to the

common people, and their humanity and courage. Without over-dramatizing the narrative, Ghosh conveys the bleak prospect of violence, mistrust and hatred that threatens to divide society and people sharply. At such times, as the essay will show you, it is the common man and his inherent goodness and sensitivity to the others' pain that saves the situation.

One unusual feature of the essay is the seeming dis-connect between the title and the content of the essay. There are no ghosts in the essay; and, more importantly there is no role of Mrs Gandhi in the narrative of events. At the end of our detailed reading of the essay, we shall try to analyze the significance of the title.

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## **20.1 Objectives**

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The prescribed essay “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi” is a non-fiction prose piece. Such prose writings include historical writings, memoirs, journalistic essays, biographies etc. The creative non-fiction writer describes a real event or events but employs a number of literary techniques, and adds a dramatic flavor to his writing. The objective of this unit is to acquaint the readers with a piece of prose writing of the same kind. During the detailed discussion we shall be touching upon the many techniques that have been used by Amitav Ghosh to enhance the effectiveness of the essay. Apart from this, the content of the piece makes it an eye-witness record of history.

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## **20.2 *The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi***

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### **20.2.1 About the Author:**

Amitav Ghosh is a prominent and an established Indian writer known for his non-fictional approach to creative writing. He is a novelist, historian and anthropologist. He is well known for bringing to light the characters, traditions, norms and dichotomies prevailing within India. His works also explore the crosscultural ties of India with its colonist background. He was born in 1956 in Kolkata, India, after formal education, he received a Ph.D. in social anthropology from Oxford in 1982 and worked at Delhi University till 1986. He has also served as a visiting professor at Virginia University, Columbia University, and American University in Cairo and the University of Pennsylvania. In addition, he contributed regularly to The Indian Express, New

Republic and Granta. His major focus of attention is to explore the social and geographical identities.

Due to his original tone and capturing language he is deemed as one of the most renowned Indian writers of his time. There is a strong bond that co-exists between his writing and the people and places for which he is writing. His first novel the *Circle of Reason* was published in 1986 which won “one of the France’s top literary awards, Prix Medici étrangère. In addition, in 1990 he won Annual Prize from Indian Academy of letter. His major works include *Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *In An Antique Land* (1992), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996), *Dancing in Cambodia & other Essays* (1998), *Countdown* (1999), *The Glass Palace* (2001), *The Imam & the Indian* (2002), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Incendiary Circumstances* (2005), *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), *Flood of Fire* (2015) and *The Great Derangement* (2016).

### **20.2.2 Discussion:**

For our reading convenience, and to facilitate comprehension, the essay has been divided into seven sub-units. We’ll round up the discussion and summarize the whole essay at the end.

#### **20.2.2.1 Section – 1:**

##### **“The first reliable report” ... “Nobody said a word as we sped away down the Ring Road”.**

The essay begins on a note of proper reportage. The writer’s journalistic precision is obvious in the way he records the time of the first information of the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi. The rest of the section in this sub unit is devoted to the description of the journey of Ghosh by bus to his friend Hari Sen’s house in the “other end of the city.” The journey by bus is used to build the atmosphere of growing panic, mounting unrest, and chaos ending in violence on the streets, as the news of Mrs Indira Gandhi’s assassination by her Sikh bodyguards’ spreads. The news provokes sudden reaction and the Hindus resort to violence to take revenge upon the Sikhs.

Amitav Ghosh describes what he sees en route to his friend’s house in a very factual manner. The author leaves out some details like the name of the hospital where the crowd was gathering, or the name of Hari Sen’s neighborhood. [This reminds us of the journalistic style used in newspapers or on electronic media, when a calamitous event is described involving different sections of society in an impersonal, objective manner, omitting the factual details like

the names of people, their religion etc.] The first phase of the bus journey is quite uneventful, except that Ghosh notices that shops, stalls and eateries were closing down at an unusually early hour. The second bus gets a last-minute passenger. Ghosh does not notice particularly that he is a Sikh. [Why? That's quite common, isn't it? You just see someone get into your bus. You don't look at them or notice everything about them. Moreover, Sikhs traveling in a Delhi bus is quite a common sight].

As the bus moves and passes by the hospital, the trouble has started brewing and becoming quite violent. As the bus drew near to the hospital, they see a huge crowd. There were many young people, disheveled and restive “red-eyed young men in half-unbuttoned shirts.” Many of them were armed; and some of them were stopping cars and buses. They were looking for Sikhs. The Sikh passenger in the bus was restless and panic-stricken. Then, two extraordinary things happened. A sari-clad woman spoke to the Sikh in a loud whisper and warned him to be quiet and hide under the seat. The man was startled but had sense enough to follow her advice and hid between seats. Ghosh here wishes us to see an example of humanity of the sari-clad lady, most probably a Hindu, gauging the situation and helping to save the man. Minutes later, the bus was intercepted by armed young men. They came up to enquire if there was any Sikh aboard the bus. The driver promptly said no, there was no such person on the bus. His voice was followed by a chorus of voices from the bus saying, “no, let us go now, we have to get home”. The bus was allowed to move on. All were silent. [What does this imply? The Sikh had been saved by all of them. But there was no talk of how good they had been, or how heroic their act was in saving the Sikh gentleman]. The author uses the word “thugs” twice to describe the “menacing bands of young men”, “dressed in bright sharp synthetics.”

***Check your Progress***

1. The starting point of the essay is an event reported on the media, the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi.
2. The author is able to witness the different events because he travels by the bus across the city (Delhi). He encounters incidents which make him [and through him, us too] aware of the humanity and sense of responsibility of common people.

#### **20.2.2.2 Section – 2:**

**“Hari Sen lived in one of New Delhi’s recently developed residential colonies”...“the violence had reached the same level of intensity”.**

The passage begins with a mention of the type of locality where Ghosh goes with his friend Hari Sen. It is a middle class residential colony, with a mixed population. Hari Sen’s family lives in the colony in a big one-storey bungalow. Their neighbor is a Sikh gentleman named Mr Bawa. Mr Bawa’s house is a grand house. Ghosh spends a few lines in describing the bungalow and its “uncharacteristically daring” design. In the next paragraph, Ghosh talks of Hari Sen’s family as a large household full of eccentric people. The author makes a literary reference to the house called Macondo which is named after the magical village in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s works. These two paragraphs appear as diversions from the main theme of the novel. This is where the author’s literary sensibilities become evident. When he describes Mr Bawa, he focuses on his eccentricities, though not in a critical manner. [One is reminded of Charles Dickens’s style of description].

In the morning, Ghosh learns about the selective violence of mobs on prowl, targeting the homes and business places of Sikhs. People were getting killed, and houses were being looted and set on fire. Non-Sikhs who protected the Sikhs were also not spared. The paragraph starting with the line “It was still and quiet, eerily so” brings out another aspect of mob violence, which had only been hinted at earlier. The mobsters and looters were helped by organized terror-mongers. The violent mob was given directions and provided weapons as well as transport. They were given information and directions about where to attack. This is the frightening truth that Ghosh wishes us to focus on. The author authenticates this idea by quoting a Civil Rights Report (which was published later). The report talks about how the carnage, and the incidents of “burning alive the Sikhs on public roads” were calculated moves to “terrorize the people.” The sentence “Fire was everywhere; it was the day’s motif” is very effective in conveying the day-long violence and the enormity of loss of human lives.

Another very chilling report is presented as an extreme example of human depravity and ruthlessness of the mobs on that day. The description of how a father and his three sons were burnt alive becomes more shocking, when we are told, in the very words of the surviving lady of the family, that the hiding place of the father and sons was perhaps revealed to the mob by someone. The mob was driven by a frenzy of revengefulness.

We agree with the author when he says that one would have thought that man-slaughter and violence at the time of the Partition of India was a one-time happening; and would not ever be repeated. But the happenings on that day in October in Delhi, human nature showed its hateful, evil side yet again and “the violence had reached the same kind of intensity.”

***Check your Progress***

1. Ghosh stays back at Hari Sen’s house that night. The next morning seems quite peaceful, but soon the incidents of violence take over and the bloodshed is all around.
2. The targets of all this violence are Sikhs.
3. News, interviews and reports are used by the author to authenticate the descriptions of the horrible events.

**20.2.2.3 Section – 3:**

**“As Hari and I stood staring into the smoke-streaked sky” ... “I was awed by their courage.”**

The next morning Hari’s mother, who is concerned about her neighbor’s safety, rang up Mrs Bawa to invite her and her husband to shift into the safety of her house. Mrs Bawa’s response was typical of any innocent person who can never believe that any one could harm them in their own home. She refused the offer gracefully. Around noontime, news came that the violent mobs had entered the colony. Hari and Amitav Ghosh go to persuade the Bawa couple to leave their house and come along. Mr Bawa was a thin, small man. He was very puzzled as to why he and his wife should be affected by what had happened. “He had no more sympathy for the Sikh terrorists than we did; his revulsion at the assassination was, if anything, even greater than ours.” He was a true nationalist and was proud to be an Indian. He did not at all think that he could be attacked by any mob. It was difficult to convince him.

Everyone waited in the hope that curfew would be imposed to control the situation; and that Paramilitary forces would be deployed to control the spate of violence. According to the reports in other cities like Calcutta, the situation had been brought under control. But in Delhi it appeared that the only important thing to be done was for the dignitaries to pay respects to the assassinated leader.

Meanwhile, the violent mob had reached the alley next to Hari Sen's. This time when he was contacted, Mr Bawa agreed to come. But the difficulty was that there was a shoulder high wall separating the two houses. The Bawas were somehow persuaded to climb the wall. They took a long time to come. Their cook, a Hindu, assisted them to climb over the wall and then returned to guard the house. As they are brought in and welcomed into the house by Mrs Sen, Ghosh notices how warm and welcoming the house was; but this only accentuated the fact that there was only a small distance between the safe comfort of the house and the imminent danger outside.

Soon some 'thugs' reached Mr Bawa's house and started harassing the cook brandishing knives to frighten him. Hari and Ghosh listens to the interrogation from behind the wall in panic, lest the cook should reveal the whereabouts of Mr and Mrs Bawa. If he did that, surely both the houses would be burned down. The cook succeeded in warding off the thugs. Some of them continued to rattle the bars of the gates of Hari's house. The friends, Hari and Ghosh confront the thugs, and told them that there was no one in the house in bold loud voices, though they were feeling petrified inside. Surprisingly this had an effect and the thugs moved away.

Inside Mrs Sen's house Mr and Mrs Bawa sat as though everything was alright, having tea and indulging in small talk with Mrs Sen. Ghosh feels awed by the courage and trust of this elderly Sikh couple.

***Check your Progress***

1. This passage highlights three important characters, viz., Hari Sen's mother Mrs Sen, Mr Bawa and Mrs Bawa, the elderly Sikh couple. All of them are old-worldly, graceful and innocent in their outlooks. But each of them is different from the other.
2. Amitav Ghosh comments upon the inaction of the Government. While people wait anxiously for some help, the violence continues unabated.
3. Amitav Ghosh and HariSen succeed in warding off the thugs by boldly facing them and asking them to leave.

#### **20.2.2.4 Section – 4:**

**“The next morning, I heard about a protest” ... “without a second thought, I joined”.**

The next morning, Amitav Ghosh attended a meeting which was held to protest the rioting and violence. He came to know many details of the chaotic day and night that had passed. “The violence” Ghosh says, “was worse than I had imagined.” All neighborhoods, institutions and business houses of the Sikhs had been looted and burned down. There were countless brutal murders. After some speeches, it was decided that the group of protestors would go into the worst hit neighborhood and confront the rioters. Here Ghosh mentions some of the people who joined the protest. The names are as follows: Swami Agnivesh the Hindu ascetic, Chandra Shekhar who became India’s PM years later, Ravi Chopra scientist and environmentalist, and a few politicians. Amitav Ghosh admits that by nature he is not prone to joining any crowd activity. But the attempts of this very small group of positive minded people affected him, and he joined without thinking any more about it.

As he examines his own ambivalent mood regarding joining the protest march, Ghosh remembers an essay written by V.S. Naipaul who had always been the role model for literary style of Ghosh. At the time of joining the protest march, Ghosh says that something he had read by Naipaul came to mind at that juncture. Ghosh calls Naipaul’s prose “incomparable.” In the essay [the details of which have been forgotten by Ghosh] Naipaul talks of how he looks down from his hotel window at a crowd of protestors marching in the streets. The sight “fills him with an obscure longing,” and he wishes very much to join the protestors in the street; yet he does not go down for the only reason that he was not inclined to join crowds. Ghosh likes to think that his nature in this regard was much like Naipaul’s.

As the meeting concludes and the handful of protestors against violence rise to their given task [that of putting an end to the flagrant violence], Ghosh finds himself freed from this thrall in which his readings and his understanding of himself held him. As the marchers move out of the compound, Ghosh joins them without any further misgivings or doubts.

***Check your Progress***

1. This passage shows two important actions performed by the writer. One is to help offered in saving Mr and Mrs Bawa and warding off the ‘thugs.’ The second action, which is quite unusual kind of thing for him to be doing, is to join the crowd of protestors and move for the cause of peace.
2. The writer mentions V.S. Naipaul admiringly. He refers to an essay written by Naipaul, in order to describe his own initial reluctance to join any public sort of protest, or any sort of crowd activity.
3. Ghosh is quite happy at the start of a counter movement to rioting and violence; though he is critical of the fact that, while thousands would be gathered to join a political rally, there were only about 80 people who joined the peace rally.

**20.2.2.5 Section – 5:**

**“The march headed first for Lajpat Nagar...” ... “A moment later, they were gone”.**

Lajpat Nagar is in New Delhi, but, as the author says, its ambience is like that of Old Delhi. It is a crowded place. Since there had been rioting and looting in that area, the protest march first decided to go to Lajpat Nagar. As they emerged in the locality, the scenes of the chaos of the previous day and night were in front of their eyes in the form of burned down cars, ransacked homes, gutted cinema halls, etc. The sight was much too gory to be borne easily. The scenes stuck in the mind and refused to be forgotten. Ghosh says that the feelings of disgust and revulsion were not in any way unique to him; almost everyone had the same panic rising in the heart.

Later in life also, it is traumatic to remember the scenes he witnessed that day. Above all, the most terrifying moment of that day of the protest march was when the peace rally members were facing a violent attack by the rioters. They had marched into many localities earlier in the day. They used to march straight into the middle of the crowd of thugs and talk to them. Often there would be heated verbal exchanges; but soon the thugs would back down. In this one instance which is indelibly marked in Ghosh’s mind, the mob was very determined and angry,

“intent on confrontation.” They rushed towards the peace rally members, with knives and steel rods. The Peace March members stopped; but continued to raise slogans. They were filled with a “kind of rapture”, and felt a complete commitment to their cause for peace. They were prepared to be attacked, but never let go of their protest against violence.

Suddenly something extraordinary happened. While the slogans continued to be raised without a break, with no warning or rehearsal, the women in the rally stepped out and formed a circle around the men. They then turned to the attackers as though challenging them to attack.

The thugs were astounded and confused. Soon they dispersed. Ghosh says that the event is unforgettable but also unique. The fact that the women exhibited such extraordinary courage was great indeed. Its effect on the wrong-doers was also very extraordinary.

***Check your Progress***

1. The Peace rally marched into many riot-ridden areas.
2. The rally adopted Gandhian methods. Even the slogans being raised were what Gandhi had taught the Indians during the Freedom struggle. Ghosh calls these methods “Gandhian staples of peace.”
3. The Peace March in Lajpat Nagar proved to be a memorable one.
4. Ghosh remembers this one incident strongly, and that is his salute to women’s courage and natural strength.

**20.2.2.6 Section – 6:**

**“The march ended at the walled compound”... “become characteristic of the contemporary world.”**

The march ended, followed by the setup of an organization named Citizen’s Unity Front in a short time with an objective to support the victims who are in need of all sort of relief i.e. something to eat and drink and shelter to live. The movement received an enormous response with respect to goods such as clothing, blankets and food items. The large compound was thronged with trucks full of goods. The clothing and food items were received in abundance that there was no place to keep them. Front volunteers like the author returned to their routine affairs after serving the afflicted for few days but the amount of work other volunteers did especially

women, for Sikh children and women, continued for years in camps to repair the damage that was done in mere three days.

The author deemed the investigation to find out the guilty as mere waste of time as nothing will come out of it. But a pamphlet “Who are the Guilty” highlighted the role of politicians for inciting the riots and the police who let them do the way they like. These survivors are compensated to some extent by the government in spite of the fact that some of these homeless have been settled by government yet none of the rioter has been brought to justice till date. According to the author, sanity is just as far as Punjab region is concerned and rest of the country is at the beck and call of instigators of violence. He has quoted the notion of Bosnian author Dzevad Karahasan who pinpointed the notion that co-exists between modern aesthetic notion and the unresponsive attitude of the world with regard to violence prevailing around the globe.

***Check your Progress***

1. An organization named Citizen’s Unity Front was set up to support the victims who were in need of all sorts of relief.
2. Front volunteers including the author returned to their daily routine after few days after serving the afflicted but few of the women volunteers continued to repair the damages for years.
3. A pamphlet “Who are the Guilty” was designed for investigation but none of the riots have been brought to justice despite the fact that it always kept the government under pressure from all the corners of society though the survivors were compensated to some extent.

**20.2.2.7 Section – 7:**

**“When I went back to my desk”... “remembering the stories we have not written.”**

To Ghosh, his next novel was sure to be under the influence of the past events but in the veil of “an aesthetic phenomenon.” Even the name of his next book *The Shadow Lines* is based on these events. But the real events in plain words were consciously not narrated by numerous writers including Amitav Ghosh due to the fact that it may instigate the riots or may result in

terrorist' activities. But Ghosh has also to make a distinction between being an author and being a citizen and has to act rationally rather than mere an author in depicting the violence as to him "writers don't join crowds." But when authorities fail to act the way they are expected to then writers have to join the club with all the obligations and guilt that are attached to it. And Ghosh has witnessed both the terror of violence and infirmity of humanity projected at the same time. The terror of violence resulted in hopelessness and makes people homeless but heaps of essential goods in Hari's home testify the infirmity of humanity. Whenever Ghosh witnessed such events anywhere, he questioned the civilized response that was required to tackle violence. Ghosh has ended the essay on the note that aesthetic of indifference might prompt the exigency of recalling those events we have not inscribed yet.

***Check your Progress***

1. As a novelist Amitav Ghosh wanted to depict these events of violence in his next novel but couldn't lest it instigates riots and terrorist activities.
2. Ghosh remembers the quotation 'writers don't join crowd' by V. S. Naipaul but he had to when authorities failed to act as expected.
3. The writer suggests that civilized response is required to tackle such violence which may occur anywhere.

**20.2.2.8 Summary:**

The essay is an extract from a longer piece by Amitav Ghosh under the title "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi." The event that forms the basis of this essay is the assassination of the then Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi in 1984 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, by her Sikh bodyguards. The event was shocking in itself. But more shocking were the incidents of violence and unrest that followed, as the supporters of Mrs Gandhi went on a rampage. There was blood-curdling cruelty, and the revengefulness crossed the borders of humanity in its utter ruthlessness. Sikhs were singled out and killed, their properties were looted, and their public institutions, like Gurudwaras and schools, were gutted.

Ghosh gives an eye-witness narration of what he saw that day and after. He also takes help from official records and media reports. Ghosh's piece may be described as creative or literary non-fiction. He writes in a personal, impressionistic manner. He also refers to some

literary figures in order to explain his point of view. He goes back and forth in time while narrating the incidents of 1984. The essay was published in 1995.

The title of the essay is intriguing. The word ‘ghosts’ has been used by Ghosh in the sense of ‘after-effects’ or aftermath. Mrs Gandhi was no more, but it was as though her ghost(s) walked the streets of Delhi on that fateful day.

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### 20.3 Learning Outcomes

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After going through the unit, it is expected that the readers:

- Know Amitav Ghosh and his contribution to English literature.
  - Realize the reality of 1984 riots.
  - Know the role of unscrupulous politicians in instigating the riots.
  - Know the role of Citizen’s Unity Front to support the afflicted.
  - Know the importance of a slim pamphlet ‘Who are the Guilty’ to mount pressure on government to compensate the afflicted.
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### 20.4 Glossary

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**Long-Distance Phone Call:** Remember those were the days when mobile phones were not so much in use in India. People had to book Trunk Calls, or Lightning Calls through the Telephone Exchange.

**Macondo:** This is a fictional town described in the famous Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez's (1927-2014) novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

**VS Naipaul (1932-2018):** A renowned writer of Fiction and non-Fiction from Trinidad. His famous works include *A House for Mr Biswas* and *In a Free State*.

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### 20.5 Sample Questions

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#### 20.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The name of the organization was

- (a) Citizen's Front                      (b) Citizen's Unity  
(c) Citizen's Unity Front              (d) Citizen's Front Unity
2. The organization was set up after.....once the events took place.
- (a) Few days                              (b) Few hours  
(c) Few months                          (d) Few years
3. The author worked with the team of .....University as a volunteer
- (a) Bombay                                (b) Delhi  
(c) Calcutta                                (d) None of these
4. ....women and children were rendered homeless.
- (a) Sikh                                      (b) Muslims  
(c) Hindu                                    (d) Christian
5. Violence took place in
- (a) 1980                                      (b) 1982  
(c) 1984                                      (d) 1986
6. The name of the novel under the shadow of this violence is
- (a) In An Antique Land                  (b) Circle of Reason  
(c) The Shadow Lines                  (d) Calcutta Chromosome
7. Amitav Ghosh was born in 1956 in
- (a) Delhi                                      (b) Hyderabad  
(c) Kolkata                                  (d) Mumbai
8. "The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi" by Amitav Ghosh is a/an
- (a) Novel                                      (b) Short Story  
(c) Essay                                      (d) Drama
9. Amitav Ghosh received Jnanpith Award in
- (a) 2015                                      (b) 1999

(c) 2018

(d) 2020

10. “The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi” was published in the collection entitled

(a) The Common Reader      (b) Essays of Elia

(c) Interpreter of Maladies      (d) The Imam and the Indian

### 20.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. With what objectives Citizen’s Unity Front was formed?
2. Describe the role of women on various occasions in the light of essay you studied.
3. What was the purpose of the pamphlet “Who are the Guilty”? Did it serve its purpose completely?
4. What correlation does exist between aesthetic phenomenon and world indifference towards violence?
5. Amitav Ghosh uses many phrases by hyphenating words. One example is ‘middle-aged’ [often without the hyphen]. Can you find some more examples from the text?

### 20.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Describe Mr Bawa’s personality and appearance in your own words. Do you think Ghosh is making fun of the Bawas?
2. There is a mismatch between the first description of the household of Hari Sen, and what is described later about Sen’s mother. Can you comment on it?
3. Why have we called the essay creative/literary non-fiction? Can you identify the features of fiction, journalism, and history in the piece you have studied?

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## 20.6 Suggested Readings

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1. *1984: In Memory and Imagination – Personal Essays and Stories on the 1984 Anti Sikh Riots*. Editor: Vikram Kapur. 2016.
2. *A Room of One’s Own*. Author: Virginia Woolf. 1929.
3. *In Cold Blood*. Author: Truman Capote. 1965.

## Unit - 21: Culture and Ecology

### Structure

21.0 Introduction

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21.2 Culture and Ecology

21.2.1 An Introduction to Culture

21.2.2 An Introduction to Ecology

21.2.3 Ecocriticism

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21.6 Suggested Readings

Glory be to God for dappled things –  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;  
And álltrádes, their gear and tackle and trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

- G.M. Hopkins "Pied Beauty"

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## 21.0 Introduction

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Environment has always been studied as a factor that determines man's biology and culture (Odum & Barret 2005). The relationship between human cultures and environment has been studied through the Cultural Ecology, which is one of the two major subdivisions of human ecology. It is a new direction in current eco-criticism which reinterprets the relationship between human culture and nature. Culture is something that was created while people have been living in nature over centuries. There are numerous literary works that describe the relationship between the nature and human beings. Writers often used nature in various ways to express human feelings and behaviours. One can see in G.M. Hopkins "Pied Beauty", "God's Grandeur" and Allama Muhammed Iqbal's poem "Himalaya" (*O Himalaya!*) [the poem is mentioned in suggestion for your kind information]- the poet praising the nature. The harmonious link between man and nature has existed for a long time, while the recent decades have witnessed the drastic changes which have affected this relationship. The current global environmental crisis is a bi-product of human culture. The anthropocentric human attitudes dominated and exploited the natural world putting its survival under question. The modern industrial, capitalist, neo-colonial forces pose serious threats to the environment. However, a biocentric vision for the sustainable future inspired many eco critics in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and they voiced for a perfect ecology in which all living nonliving beings co-exist peacefully in such a way that no one neither dominates nor exploits the other.

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## 21.1 Objectives

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This unit aims to give you an idea of:

- Culture and Ecology
- The field of ecology and its historical development
- The literary and cultural movement called *Ecocriticism*
- The relation between Cultural Ecology and Literature
- Marxist environmentalism and its features
- Feminist environmentalism and its major characteristics

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## 21.2 Culture and Ecology

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### 21.2.1 An Introduction to Culture:

The word culture has received many connotations in different ages and contexts. It has been used for “tending of natural growth’, and then, by analogy, a process of human training” (XIV *Introduction*) as Raymond Williams tried to put it in his *Culture and Society 1780-1950*. It has also been used to understand the behaviour of human and other species, their habits, norms, dress code, food habits, living style, etc. It now also includes arts, music, literature, law, costumes, customs and beliefs. Some scholars have tried to define culture through a different lens. It has a deep relationship with identity. Merriam-Webster defines culture as “the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.” It also means “the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time.” It also means, according to this dictionary, “the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization...” The same dictionary defines it as “the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic.” Yet another definition of culture is that it is an “integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.” Raymond Williams in his *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976) writes,

Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. This is so partly because of its intricate historical development, in several European languages, but mainly because it has now come to be used for important concepts in several distinct intellectual disciplines and in several distinct and incompatible systems of thought... (87). [One can read a small write up on “Culture” in *Keywords* by Williams].

Thus, culture remained an interesting concept and it is always in the process of change, ‘being’ and ‘becoming’. Human cultures are cradled and nurtured in nature. Thus, it is pertinent to study nature through literature and other means of representations.

### 21.2.2 An Introduction to Ecology:

Scientifically speaking, Ecology is a branch of biology. It aims to study and understand the relationship between living organisms including humans and their relationship with environment. The word ‘ecology’ was coined by the German thinker **Ernst Haeckel** in the late

19<sup>th</sup> century. The word originated from the Greek *oikos*, meaning *home*. Thus, ecology deals with the relationship between organisms and their physical environment. This biophysical environment involves both ‘biotic’ (organic/living) and ‘abiotic’ (non-organic/ non-living) components. Both these components are mutually related and interact through ‘ecosystem’. Ancient Greek philosophers -Aristotle and his student Theophrastus contributed largely in laying the foundations of ecology as the concept was mostly influenced by the concepts of ethics, philosophy, and natural history. Modern Ecology emerged as a discipline in the late nineteenth century. Several important events contributed to its development.

- **Alexander von Humboldt**, the famous geographer and philosopher of nature and science, who is considered as the father of ecology, explored the relationship between plant species and geography through his very famous work *Idea for a Plant Geography* (1807).

- **Alfred Russel Wallace**, the contemporary of Charles Darwin investigated the connection between the animal species and its geography. Wallace is famously known as “father of biogeography” respecting his contributions in the field. During his career, he worked extensively on the concepts of Darwinian evolution and natural selection. One of his major works is *The Geographical Distribution of Animals* (1869).

- Both plant and animal species later categorised into a single community of living beings called *biocoenosis*. The term was coined by **Karl Möbius** in 1877. The geographical area which provides uniform environmental conditions for the survival of these organisms was eventually termed as *biotope*.

- **Eugen Warming**, the Danish Botanist was the first known scientist to study the non-living organism (abiotic) as relevant as biotic communities. Warming investigated the reasons why species occurred under certain specific biogeographical conditions. His famous work *Oecology of Plants* was translated into many languages including German, Polish, Russian and English.

- **Charles Darwin**’s theory of evolution marked a drastic change in the history of modern culture. His remarkable text *The Origin of Species* (1859) laid the foundation for many ecological principles. Darwin argued that all species of organisms develop their heritable traits over time through natural selection. The theory also emphasized that all life on earth relates to each other. Being a practitioner of both evolution and ecology,

Darwin considered himself to be a ‘naturalist’. Darwinian natural history inspired several authors and scientists to engage the modern cultural and environmental discourses deeply even though the pioneers of modern Ecology made less reference to him in their works.

- By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the field of ecology developed in Chemistry. **Nicholas de Sassure** and **Lavoisier** contributed to chemical research on plant growth. In 1875, the Austrian geologist Edward Suess coined the term *biosphere* in 1875.

- The concept of ecosystem emerged in the first half of twentieth century, officially termed by **Tansley** (1935). An ecosystem consists of a community of organisms which interacted with each other and their surrounding environment. There are two major land-based eco systems- Terrestrial and Aquatic. The former one is the land- based ecosystem while the latter is water based.

-**Vladimir I. Vernadsky**, Russian geologist redefined the concept of *biosphere* in his famous 1926 work.

- In the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, **Henry Chandler Cowles**, one of the pioneers of ‘dynamic ecology’, studied about *ecological succession*, the process of change happens in the species/ ecological community over time.

- **Eugene P. Odum** and his brother **Howard T. Odum** studied extensively on ecosystem and ecology. Their book *Fundamentals of Ecology* was published in 1953. They argued that it is important to study ecology as a separate discipline and explore the relation between man and nature more deeply.

*Human ecology* emerged as a distinct field of study in the 1970s. It is an interdisciplinary study that explores the relation between human beings and their natural and social environment. The concept first appeared in the 1907 book *Sanitation in Daily Life* written by **Ellen Swallow Richards** later, **Ernst Haeckel** and **Carl Linnaeus** introduced the early modern aspects of human ecology. The shifting of the concept from biological to human science attracted many socio-cultural thinkers to study the discipline with a new approach. The newly emerged socio-ecological approach attempted to connect ecology with cultural evolution of human societies.

### **21.2.3 Ecocriticism:**

The last few decades have witnessed the dangerous exploitation of environment by human society. The global climate change and ecological disasters posed relevant questions to

the world and it became necessary to bring an ecological literacy among the people. Subsequently it led to the emergence of the literary and cultural movement called *ecocriticism*. It is a branch of scholarship emphasized on the 'nature' and 'culture'. One of the first notable anthologies *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm provides a definition of ecocriticism that it is the study of the relationship between literature and environment. Michael P. Branch refers to eco-criticism as a "call for 'cultural change' which is not merely an exercise in analysing nature in literature but a move towards a more biocentric world view, an extension of ethics, a broadening of humans, conception of global community to include non-human life forms and the physical environment." (qtd. in Rangarajan 7). Pramod Nayar explains:

Ecocriticism as a critical mode that looks at the representation of nature and landscape in cultural texts, paying particular attention to attitudes towards 'nature' and the rhetoric employed when speaking about it. It aligns itself with ecological activism and social theory with the assumption that the rhetoric of cultural texts reflects and informs material practices towards the environment, while seeking to increase awareness about it and linking itself (and literary texts) with other ecological sciences and approaches (Nayar 330).

Eco-criticism attempts to answer the question that how the literacy has affected man's relation with the natural world. On the one hand, it discussed culture's ecological approaches. On the other hand, it explored the elements of nature/ ecology in canonical texts. Eco criticism seeks to understand -

- The historical connection between human- nonhuman lives
- Where the nature- writing texts are placed in the literary canon
- How the environmental awareness has been portrayed in existing literature
- How to evaluate texts as responses to the environmental crisis.
- How the capitalist and patriarchal world exploits nature/environment
- How human beings deal with the discourses of development, urbanisation, demography etc.
- How the environmental activism is linked to literary studies (Nayar 331).

There are two waves of ecocriticism as proposed by Lawrence Buell. During the first wave, critics focused more on the philosophy of organism by writing extensively on nature

through poetry and fiction (Buell 138). They explored “the effects of culture upon nature, with a view towards celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, and reversing their harm through political action” (Howarth, 69).” The second wave investigated how the culture devalues and destroys the environment. Eco-critics use the word ‘nature’ in a broader sense referring to whole of the physical environment which contain both biotic and abiotic organisms. Eco-criticism creates an eco-consciousness among the readers by focusing on humanity’s need to preserve every object of environment.

Contemporary ecocriticism involves different dimensions to engage with the society through various socio- political approaches. There are new theories like Eco-Feminism, Eco-Marxism, Post-colonial eco-criticism etc. which have been established over decades, considering earth as a ‘social sphere.’

#### **21.2.4 Cultural Ecology and Literature:**

Cultural ecology is an approach in anthropology to study similarities and differences in various cultures and their relation to environment/ecology. It was developed by an American anthropologist Julian Hynes Steward in 1930s. It has become relevant in literary studies in the latter half of the twentieth century. During this period, eco-criticism emerged as the most productive site for new theoretical explorations in the Humanities. American transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller and Henry David Thoreau were largely inspired by the influence of nature and thoroughly believed that the reality of the world is truly dependent on nature. Emerson argued that the sources for artistic and intellectual productivity ultimately lie in the nature. Henry David Thoreau, who is known as the father of eco-criticism wrote his autobiography *Walden* in the backdrop of the shore of Walden Pond, near his hometown. This work captured the late 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic ‘nature’ imagination. Margaret Fuller's *Summer on the Lake During 1843* is a Transcendental travelogue that explores the land of America. American nature writings were synonymous with British Romantic Literature. Their perspectives rejected the idea of objectifying nonhuman nature just as a material context to human civilization, rather acknowledged it as an inevitable part of cultural evolution.

During the post-Enlightenment era, the philosophy of nature was developed by figures like Goethe, Schiller, Schlegel, and Schelling. They studied natural history as an organic- holistic entity. Their ideas not only laid foundation for the romantic literature in Germany, but also influenced writers of English and American romanticism. Swarnalatha Rangarajan writes in her

book *Eco-Criticism: Big Ideas and Practical Strategies* that “romantic literature has provided a febrile site for the emergence of eco poetics” (31). The romantic writers believed that human consciousness and language are affected by natural surroundings. Many key texts laid foundation for contemporary environmental thinking belongs to the Romantic period. In *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth explains that he prefers the language of “low and rustic life (which) was generally chosen...because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature” (7).

In *Nature's Economy* (1977), Donald Worster remarks,

The very core of romantic view of nature was what later generations would come to call an ecological perspective: that is, a search for holistic or integrated perception, an emphasize on interdependence and relatedness in nature, and an intense desire to restore man to a place of intimate intercourse with the vast organism that constitute the earth (82).

The relationship between Romanticism and Ecology is little ambivalent because romantics went on to consider nature as ‘sacred’ and ‘wild’ at a period when nature was most devalued and exploited due to industrialisation. However, the Romantic Literature influenced the Deep ecology movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Romantic age has also witnessed the emergence of writings on animal rights. Samuel Coleridge’s *To a Young Ass* (1794) Robert Southey’s *To a Spider* (1799), Robert Burns’s *To a Mouse* (1785) etc. reflected poets’ sympathy towards animals.

Coming to the twentieth century context, *The Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson, which is known as one of the pioneer texts of Environment Literature, addressed several environmental concerns of the age. The major 20<sup>th</sup> century writings on this subject includes Jonathan Bate’s *Romantic Ecology* (1991), Karl Kroeber’s *Ecological Literary Criticism: Romantic Imagining and the Biology of Mind* (1994), James C McKusick’s *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (2000), OnnoOerleman’s *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (2002), Kate Rigby’s *Topographies of the Sacred* (2004) etc. **Raymond Williams**, the famous British cultural theorist also has given an important place to nature in his writings. His work *The Country and the City* (1973) is considered as an important text of the ‘second wave’ eco-criticism.

### **21.2.5 Marxist Environmentalism:**

Marxist understanding of environment revolves around the ecological critique of capitalist production. Pramod K. Nayar quotes David Pepper (1996) in his book who suggested that “man and nature are engaged in a dialectic relationship. Man, changes nature as much as it changes man. With globalization, sites of production move to poorer (Third World) nations, and both labour and nature are over-exploited” (336). Socialist ecologists argue that the ultimate reason for the changes happening in the environment is class inequalities and unequal distribution of wealth (Nayar 336). That is, “Labour and production are always geared towards profit generation, and hence environment is exploited” (336). Marxist ecocriticism hence approaches environment through social structures. Marx provided a historical- materialist analysis of ecology. Marxian approach to ecological crisis got momentum in the last few decades.

The major features of Marxist Environmentalism are:

- Marxist ecologists argue that humans are not really separate from their environment, but dialectically interconnected.
- Urge for revolutionary social changes to remove the existing inequalities in the mode of production and there by ending the conflict between nature and humanity.
- Aim to dismantle capitalism and encourage common ownership of mode of production.
- Rejected the idea of private property ownership.

### **21.2.6 Feminist Environmentalism:**

Ecofeminism emerged as a theoretical discourse in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was a reaction to the anthropocentric dualism advocated by Enlightenment humanism. The term was coined by a French feminist Francoise d’Eaubonne in 1979 to denote the male dominated violence inflicted on nature and women. Ecofeminism traces parallels between exploitation of women and exploitation of nature. The term grew out of several movements including an accident that happened in the nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania in 1979. After the tragic event, a group of women conducted a conference in Amherst, Massachusetts to study the connection between women and environment. Another event which fuelled the movement was Love Canal Disaster (1970).

Ecofeminists argued that the dominance men have over the earth reflected the power imposed over women in a patriarchal world. The nature has always been attributed with

'feminine' characters of fragility, sacrifice, passivity, reproduction etc. These symbolic attributions and their impact led to the emergence of new feminist approach towards nature and gender. Ecofeminism is a pluralistic movement with several causes. Greta Gaard defines it as a movement which seeks to end all oppression, by liberating 'nature'.

The major features of Ecofeminism are:

- Viewing nature as a commodity like a woman's body
- Looking at science and technology as a tool by men to ensure their cultural dominance and to exploit the nature
- Linking the subordinate status of women to the environmental degradation
- Rejection of socially constructed binaries: man/woman; culture/nature
- Addressing social inequalities in world structures and critiquing the patriarchal- capitalist perspectives
- Fighting against environmental destruction and encouraging to survive
- Highlighting the feminist and postcolonial concerns on environment.

There are several branches of ecofeminism including cultural ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, social ecofeminism, and socialist ecofeminism.

- Cultural Ecofeminism

Cultural feminists argue that the reason behind the subservient position of women is patriarchal culture. They advocate for female cultures where women's principles should be promoted and thereby winning over patriarchy.

- Spiritual Ecofeminism

Spiritual ecofeminists argue that God and religion are patriarchal forces therefore need to bring back ancient religions (goddess worship) to rebuild the connection between nature and women. Spiritual ecofeminism was criticized for finding a mythical way to flee from real ecological issues.

- Social Ecofeminism

Social ecofeminism admits the natural male domination, but only as a particular form of hierarchy. Social ecofeminists focused more on the socio- economic and political roots of domination and urged to eliminate all kinds of hierarchies and thereby achieving the liberation of women and nature.

- Socialist Ecofeminism

According to Socialist ecofeminists, patriarchy is built upon the capitalist system and only a socialist revolution can eradicate this domination. They argue that private ownership and men's class interests lead to the double oppression of women.

1970s has witnessed the publication of several books on women and environment. Few of them are Rosemary Radford Ruether's *New Women, New Earth* (1975), Annette Kolodny's *The Lay of the Land* (1975), Susan Griffin's *Women and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (1978), Mary Daly's *Gyn/ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (1978), Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980) etc.

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### 21.3 Learning Outcomes

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This unit has introduced us to culture, ecology, cultural ecology and their relationship with literature. It covered the information about how culture and ecology are interrelated. The first part discussed the historical development of ecology. The unit also discussed the topics of ecocriticism and different branches and theories associated with it. The readers also got to know how cultural ecology and literature are related to each other.

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### 21.4 Glossary

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**Abiotic:** Relating to non-living organisms

**Aquatic:** Relating to water

**Biocoenosis:** An association of different organisms forming a closely integrated community.

**Biosphere:** The biosphere is the sum of all ecosystems.

**Biotic:** Relating to living organisms

**Biotope:** The region of a habitat associated with a particular ecological community.

**Botanist:** A person who studies about plants

**Capitalism:** Capitalism is an economic system aimed to gain profit based on the private ownership of the means of production

**Commodity:** A product or material that can be bought and sold

**Cultural ecology:** Cultural ecology explores the relation between culture and environment.

**Culture:** Culture is an umbrella term which encompasses the social behaviour and norms found in human societies

**Dialectical:** Concerned with or acting through opposing forces.

**Ecocriticism:** It is an interdisciplinary study of how literature and environment are connected.

**Ecology:** It is the study of organisms, and how the organisms interact with each other and their environment.

**Enlightenment:** The Age of Enlightenment was an intellectual and philosophical movement that dominated the world of ideas in Europe during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Environmentalism:** It is a broader philosophical and social movement concerned about the environmental protection.

**Feminism:** Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to establish the equality of the sexes in all spheres.

**Marxism:** Marxism is a method of socioeconomic analysis that uses a materialist interpretation of historical development, better known as historical materialism, to understand class relations and social conflict as well as a dialectical perspective to view social transformation.

**Materialism:** Materialism is a philosophical idea that every substance in nature including mental state and consciousness are results of material interactions.

**Naturalist:** A person who studies about plants and animals

**Neo- Colonialism:** The use of political, cultural, economic, or other powers to control other countries, especially former colonies.

**Organism:** Any entity which embodies the properties of life is called an organism in biology.

**Postcolonialism:** Postcolonialism is a field of study that explores the cultural and political impacts of colonialism and imperialism focusing on the human consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their lands.

**Romanticism:** It is a movement in arts and literature that originated in the late 18th century England.

**Terrestrial:** Things related to land

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## 21.5 Sample Questions

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### 21.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who is the author of the famous work *Idea for a Plant Geography*?
  - (a) Alexander von Humboldt
  - (b) Alfred Russel Wallace
  - (c) Karl Mobius
  - (d) Eugen Warming
2. Who coined the term *biosphere*?
  - (a) Edward Suess
  - (b) Vladimir I. Vernadsky
  - (c) Henry Chandler Cowles
  - (d) Eugene P. Odum
3. Who coined the term *ecosystem*?
  - (a) Karl Mobius
  - (b) Arthur Tansley
  - (c) Howard T. Odum
  - (d) None of them
4. Rachel Carson's *The Silent Spring* was published in which year
  - (a) 1955
  - (b) 1962
  - (c) 1970
  - (d) 1968
5. Who is known as the father of ecocriticism?

- (a) Ralph Waldo Emerson
  - (b) Margaret Fuller
  - (c) Henry David Thoreau
  - (d) None of the above
6. Name the author of *The Lay of the Land*
- (a) Rosemary Radford
  - (b) Annette Kolodny
  - (c) Susan Griffin
  - (d) Mary Daly
7. Who wrote the book *Romantic Ecology*?
- (a) Jonathan Bate
  - (b) Onno Oerleman
  - (c) Kate Rigby
  - (d) None of the above
8. Henry Chandler is a .....philosopher
- (a) German
  - (b) English
  - (c) Danish
  - (d) American
9. The term *biocoenosis* was coined by
- (a) Alexander von Humboldt
  - (b) Karl Mobius
  - (c) Eugen Warming
  - (d) Charles Darwin
10. *The Origin of Species* was published in which year?
- (a) 1859
  - (b) 1850
  - (c) 1885
  - (d) 1900

### 21.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Write a short note on Romanticism and Ecology.
2. Write a short note on Marxist environmentalism.

3. Which are the major features of Feminist Ecocriticism?
4. Write a note on different types of Ecofeminism.
5. Write in a paragraph on culture and ecology.

### **21.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write a brief note on what do you understand by Ecocriticism.
2. What are the major milestone events in the development of ecology?
3. Write an essay on Cultural Ecology and Literature.

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## **21.6 Suggested Readings**

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1. Mishra, Sandip Kumar. (2016). Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature. *BRICS Journal of Educational Research*, 6(4), 168-170.
2. Nayar, Pramod K. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism to Ecocriticism*. Pearson, 2010.
3. Zapf, Hubert. *Handbook of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology*. De Gruyter, 2016.
4. Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Revised edition). Oxford University Press, 1976.

## Unit - 22: Toys

### Structure

22.0 Introduction

22.1 Objectives

22.2 Toys

22.2.1 Roland Barthes – Introduction

22.2.2 Life and Achievements

22.2.3 Key Ideas

22.2.4 Mythologies

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22.2.7 Toys and Childhood

22.3 Learning Outcomes

22.4 Glossary

22.5 Sample Questions

22.6 Suggested Readings

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### 22.0 Introduction

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This unit is an attempt to explore and evaluate how Roland Barthes uses toys and other objects to analyze how myths are created and reinforced by traditions and media in any society. Though he wrote about the French society, his ideas can be applied to other states and societies also to understand how myths are created through what he calls, Metalanguage.

The study of myths will help us shed light on how status quo is maintained by the bourgeoisie class in any society. It will also help in understanding textuality. It is from his ideas on gender and childhood that a comprehensive understanding can be made about the role of toys in creating and reinforcing gender roles and gender performance. His arguments are critical in evaluating gender, childhood and the role of toys in society.

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### 22.1 Objectives

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After going through this unit you will be able:

- To help students in learning to apply the idea of metalanguage and textuality operating in society.
  - To aid students in comprehending the notion of myth making.
  - To ensure that they will be able to identify the major arguments that Barthes makes about toys after reading this unit.
  - To guide students while they analyze the gender roles and gender performance that is promulgated by toys in childhood.
  - To make students aware about the linkages between objects, meaning and roles that the bourgeois class uses to maintain their status quo.
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## **22.2 Toys**

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### **22.2.1 Roland Barthes- Introduction:**

Roland Gerard Barthes (1915-1980) is a towering figure in the field of literary and cultural theory. He was a French essayist, theorist, philosopher and critic. He was also known for his seminal work on semiotics. He had interest in diverse subjects and wrote extensively. He influenced many schools of thought including structuralism, semiotics, social theory, anthropology, new criticism and post-structuralism.

### **22.2.2 Life and Achievements:**

Roland Barthes was born in Cherbourg, France on November 12, 1915. He died in Paris on March 25, 1980. He took his initial education in a secondary school in Paris and studied classical letters, grammar and philology. For most of his academic life, he was associated with the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) and the Collège de France. He was highly influenced by Ferdinand de Saussure's theory on semiology. Semiotics is the formal study of symbols and signs.

Barthes suffered from ill-health all his life and had to be self-isolated regularly that led to a lot of disruptions in his studies. However, he showed great promise as a student and continued to work diligently towards his career. He worked on Greek Tragedies for his MA thesis and received the award in 1941. He also studied classical literature, grammar and philology, lexicology and semiology, all subjects that showed up greatly in his later works. Due to his ill-health he was exempted from participating in the World War II. It is in the 1960s that he starts to

explore semiology and structuralism. He started to gain a solid reputation for himself by the late 1960s. It is in 1967 that he writes the essay, “The Death of the Author” which is a influential piece exploring the limits of structuralist thinking thereby paving the way for and showing undertones of Jacques Derrida’s theory of deconstruction.

He spent his career working and developing a complex understanding of signs, symbols and significations in modern, bourgeois society. He brings into question the finer points of language critically examining acceptable and accepted theories like Marxism. He views the world of signs he inhabits very differently.

Along with Philip Sollers, he contributed to the *avant-garde* literary magazine called *Tel Quel* that was very close to the kind of writing that Barthes was interested in doing. It is after the death of his mother that Barthes writes and publishes one of the leading works of his career *Camera Lucida* which is on the nature of photography and is also a close study of the photos of his mother. However, the work itself does not reproduce any of his mother’s photographs. He also, by this time, publishes his autobiography in 1975 which is titled *Roland Barthes*.

His works include *Writing Degree Zero*, *Elements of Semiology*, *Mythologies*, *The Pleasure of the Text*, *S/Z: An Essay* among others. On February 25, 1980, he is knocked down by a van while he is walking home in the streets of Paris. He succumbs to his death on March 26, 1980 due to the chest injuries he sustains during this accident.

### **22.2.3 Key Ideas:**

Barthes opposed power, establishment, conventional ideologies and traditional values totally. For Barthes, whenever a theoretical line of thinking became accepted and garnered stability in societal reception, he moved his discourse and his practice to something new. It has been said of Barthes that he was a rebel with, and sometimes, without a cause. He, as a thinker, theorist and an intellectual, always functioned outside the institutionalized and accepted norms of knowledge. He was always writing outside the positions of power.

Barthes became famous for many things. He declared *The Death of the Author*, focused greatly on the theory and practice of inter-textuality and endorsed the study of signs in the establishment and regulation of society. His ultimate emphasis has always been on the nature of theory: he believed that “the discursive practice of theory must be one which challenges received ideas, and questions the orthodoxies which inevitably dominate any language” (Allen 4).

Barthes focus was always leaning towards the demolition of customary ideas of knowledge and well-recognized forms of knowledge creation. These could either be part of the academic culture or popular culture. His books *Mythologies*, *A Lover's Discourse* and *Camera Lucida* became quite famous not just in academic circles but also in popular culture. In Graham Allen's introduction to Barthes, he succinctly sums up Barthes' intellectual presence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "A theorist who directed his attention to all facets of cultural and intellectual life, Barthes' work has an immediacy and a relevance that is rarely attained by other theorists" (4).

There are two major aspects in theoretical thinking that Barthes has influenced considerably that will be discussed in this section. They are –

1. *The Death of the Author* and
2. Textuality.

The text, *The Death of the Author* was written in the year 1967. This essay marks the starting point in understanding Barthes' turn towards post-structuralism. In this essay, he comments on the relationship between signs and the art of writing and reading. This text should be read within the context of the capitalist society in which Barthes was writing. He argues that the author of a text is presented as if s/he is a "transcendental signified, standing behind the work" much like God stands "behind the material universe." It is in this regard that the author is in charge of giving structure to and making sense of the world that s/he creates. And because it is a world that is thoroughly explained, it can also be tamed. In Barthes' words as quoted by Graham Allen, "the Author is supposed to *feed* the book, i.e., he lives before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it; he has the same relation of antecedence with his work that a father sustains with his child" (74). In the Western male dominated world, God, Father and the Author play similar roles – of making sense of the world and therefore defining the limits of the knowledge that is produced. This makes it easier for the capitalist world where the works, because they are defined, structured and interpreted in a certain fashion, can also be cultivated and domesticated in a certain way that serves the status quo. This figure of the Author, thus limits and controls the various meanings that are produced in society. This kind of writing directly questioned the Western need for having a single narrative, a unified, singular, stable and irrefutable Meaning and Truth. This was the essential point that post-structuralists were trying to make.

The idea of textuality in Barthes' writing deals with the relation between texts – this is referred to, in theoretical terms, as intertextuality. This is discussed largely in the seminal work *S/Z* by Roland Barthes that also marks the shift from structuralist to post-structuralist thinking. The word 'text' shares its origins with the word textiles or the manufacturing of cloth – Barthes argues that this is significant. He points out that the word 'text' is an ancient one that involves “notions of spinning and weaving.” He further argues that similar to the act of weaving and spinning, a text is made up of “quotations, references and echoes.” For example, to understand a love poem, one is already familiar with the signs and language associated with romance. The text is thus a “quotation without quotation marks.” It goes back to the cultural signatures and discourses on love that has already been established. When one poem accepted as being “relatable” it is because this trope/ sign/ commonplace knowledge that has already been established through cultural signification. The more the text is relatable, the more it is potent in its meaning. This allows for the argument that there is no unified, single, stable truth that is unshaken and original in nature. The shift towards post-structuralist way of thinking marks the questioning of Singular Meaning and Singular Truth. It moves towards understanding and acknowledging the intermingled relation between texts that makes the singularity (and authoritative knowledge) of an author suspect.

The next section deals with Barthes' famous work, *Mythologies*. But before that, one needs to understand the idea behind the book which will be dealt with in the next section.

#### **22.2.4 Mythologies:**

Barthes wrote the text *Mythologies* in the year 1957. In this text, Barthes argues about the presence of “mythologies” and the process of myth making in present-day society. It is a series of short essays (54) followed by an essay titled “Myth Today.” Some of the short essays include “The Brain of Einstein”, “Novels and Children”, “Wine and Milk”, “Striptease”, “Plastic” among others. It is in these essays that Barthes talks about the myths that modern society continuously builds through popular culture. It is through the analysis of everyday objects and items of daily life that Barthes tries to establish the significance of signs in modern life. He also tries to establish the various cultural implications of everyday objects that we do not necessarily consider as part of a cultural statement or the establishment and sustenance of bourgeois society.

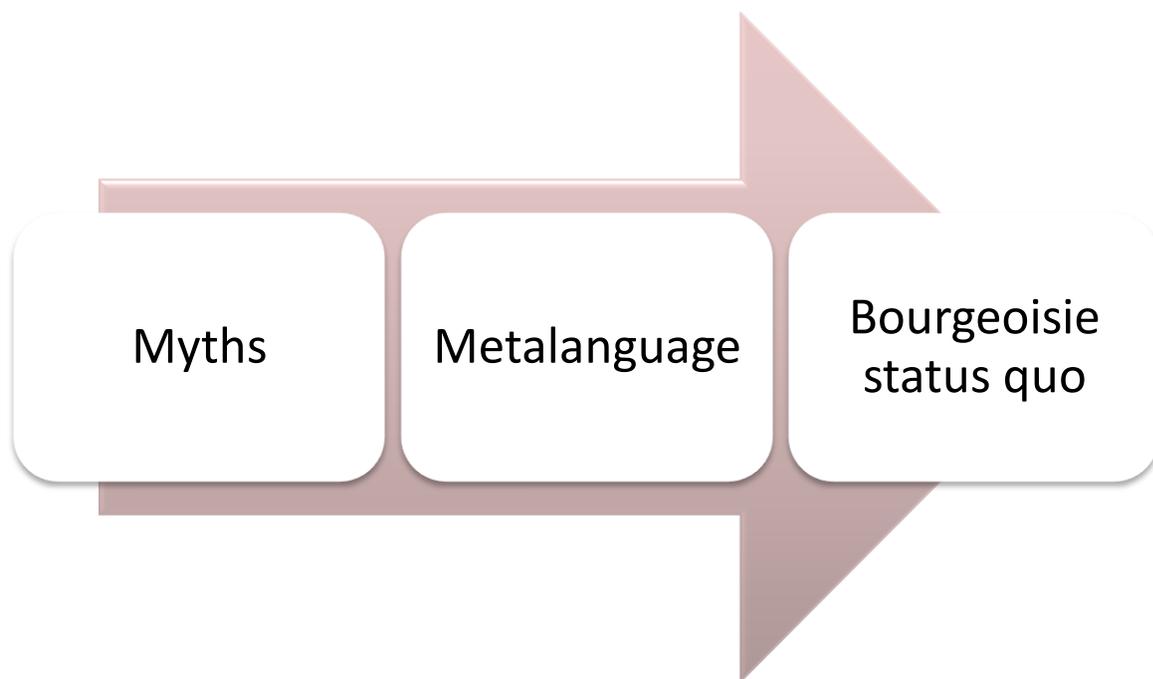
Barthes closely examined and interpreted various cultural materials that established, sustained and helped flourish bourgeois society and its culture. For example, Barthes talks of

how wine is produced in French society as a healthy habit though it can actually have unhealthy consequences. Another example could be the use of toys to explain how society teaches young children to “play” with miniature adult materials so as to prepare them to use the world that they will inhabit once they grow old. Yet another example is the myth revolving around the brain of Einstein. It has now come to represent intelligence so much so that the picture of the brain of Einstein on a box of toy is more likely to be bought by parents in the hoping that, by playing this game, their child would also become as intelligent as Einstein.

Barthes is trying to explain the concept of how signs function in a society. He argues that language functions at two levels – the first is the “language-object” that refers to the actual physical object and is the first linguistic order system. The second system of language is the “metalanguage.” This is where a myth is really created in a bourgeois society and thereafter transferred and communicated. These are connotations of already-established cultural ideas or concepts that help convey meaning through ‘an already accepted form of knowledge.’ This can be explained through one of the essays mentioned earlier – “Wine and”. In this essay, he argues that the first “language-object” refers to the beverage but the “metalanguage” refers to the myriad of accepted cultural ideas surrounding wine – Church, Christmas (malt wine), robustness, health (drinking a glass of wine a day helps in maintaining health). It can even bring to mind the idea that a glass of wine at the end of the day relaxes the person. Wine (expensive ones) could also suggest a person’s status in society. Wine is the drink of the rich or the middle-class bourgeois. Therefore, he traces and highlights the “myth” that is created around wine that came to be accepted and something that should be pursued and is desirable. This can and has been applied to many other objects, that seem to be inconsequential, and natural order of things when in fact, it is the metalanguage that is in play and colours the perception of the society. For the purpose of illustration, this idea can also be applied to toys. Plastic toys have come to be recognized as the toys of the bourgeois class that are more expensive. From this follows the assumption that the children whose parents cannot afford expensive toys are not really enjoying their childhood. And when it is applied to the notion of gender roles and performance, “dolls” are seen as symbols that actually help little girls to learn the lessons of domesticity without having to teach it to them through other direct means.

The myths that are created in a bourgeois society serve only one purpose – to maintain the status quo. The constant reproduction of a mythological idea - constantly fed through media

representations - eventually leads that concept to be considered the Truth. For example, people with tattoos are hardcore criminals or on the road to becoming them. Another example could be that shalwar-kameez clad women are considered softer, more domesticated, and respectable; they belong to “good households.” Questioning traditions and arguing does not suit “women” of reputable families. Similarly, boys who do not play with cars and prefer playing with dolls are not “men enough” and need to be coerced into showing “more masculine” traits. “Crying” is a sign of weakness that a man or a boy at any point cannot express or experience. “Smoking” is a taboo for women but a sign of maturity in a man in spite of the established scientific fact that it is injurious to health.



1. Illustration - Myth making in Society

#### **22.2.5 Toys:**

In this section of *Mythologies*, Barthes deals with the idea of toys in French society. It is a short essay of one page. It crisply argues that all the toys that are produced in French society see the child as “another self.” Toys, therefore, are a “microcosm of the adult world” where toys are miniature versions of the adult world. Toys in French society look upon the child as a “smaller man” who uses smaller versions of instruments, objects and other materials from the adult world.

Barthes argues that toys, when created for the smaller man, do not have the element of creation to them. Toys are meant to be used; the child is meant to be the owner but never the creator. He goes on to argue that French toys “*always mean something*” (emphasis, not mine) and they constitute the “techniques of modern adult life” including objects and toys related to the Army, Broadcasting, the Post Office, Medicine, School, hair styling, Air Force, transport etc. It is in this fashion that children are socialized and prepared for the adult life that they have to lead when they grow older. The child is thus socialized to the ‘natural’ order of things that the society of the adults has decided are essential for a ‘comfortable’ and a ‘convenient’ living. It is through toys that children get accustomed to the unusual aspects of life (the man-made ones) that include war, bureaucracy, ugliness etc.

Barthes makes note of the socialization of small girls into the future roles of mothers through toys that prepare them for this role. He talks of dolls that urinate that are “meant to prepare the little girl for the causality of house-keeping, to ‘condition’ her for the future role as mother” (Barthes 53). This will be dealt further in the next section.

Barthes points out that toys are therefore created in such a manner that it helps children grow into a world which they *use* rather than *create*. Barthes argues that this allows children to grow up into individuals that perform “actions without adventure, without wonder, without joy” (Barthes 54). This makes sure that, in the adult society, the child will grow up to have everything supplied to him/her ready-made; s/he will never be allowed to “discover anything from start to finish” (Barthes 54).

Barthes then makes mention of a set of blocks; he argues that a set of blocks allows children to *create* meaningful objects that can move, walk or roll. This allows children to “create life, not property.” He also mentions that such toys are rather rare.

Barthes then moves on to draw attention to the aspect of capitalism and bourgeois element in these toys by concentrating on the material of the toys – the toys are made up of “graceless material, the product of chemistry, not of nature.” He is trying to argue that toys are made of plastic material which “destroys all the pleasure, the sweetness, the humanity of touch.” He compares them to the toys made of wood where he argues that wood is a material that is at once firm and soft, as it has the “natural warmth” and it removes the “chemical coldness of metal” (54). The child is able to connect wooden toys with other objects – the tree, the table, the

floor thereby helping create relations with the child. Toys made of wood do not break easily; they wear out but still remain true to their nature. When they do grow old, they tend to dwindle rather than swell “like those mechanical toys” (54).

Barthes ends his note on toys, with a crisp and comparative note on wooden and plastic toys: he argues that wooden toys allow children to build relations with them, they mean something to the child even after they have faded away. Toys that have chemical substances tend to break easily and quickly and “once dead, they have no posthumous life for the child” (55).

### **22.2.6 Toys and Gender:**

Barthes makes a strong argument about gender roles and the function that toys play in the reinforcing of what constitutes gender and the roles women are expected to play in society once they grow up. Children are taught some roles as children that they are supposed to conform to as adults. Toys segregate genders in society and decide for the children what role they will be expected to play not only as children but also as grown ups.

There are many examples of how toys reinforce the roles little girls are supposed to emulate and later on reproduce as adult women. A classic example of this would be the Barbie doll or even the doll houses. A doll house prepares little girls in the establishment and the maintenance of houses.

Similarly, boys are given toys that reinforce the ideas of accepted masculinity in society. The toys related to mechanics, the Army, cars, trucks etc., are expected to reinforce in the minds of small boys that they are expected to show certain traits of masculinity in order to be accepted as boys in the world they live in. Most toys that boys play with are related to a profession, thereby inculcating in them the idea that they will, when they grow up, be the primary bread-winners for the families.

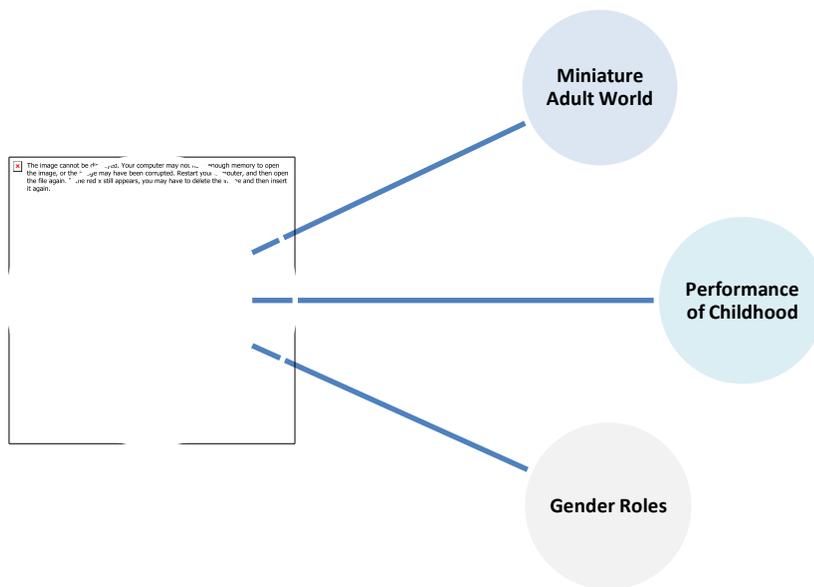
“play is really a form of work, one that poses as an alternative to the adult world, yet which habituates children to their future labor in it, of which consumption is a significant part” (Kuenz 61).

### 22.2.7 Toys and Childhood:

Jane Kuenz, in her article, “Playtime: Toys and the Labor of Childhood” extends the arguments put forth by Barthes. She points out that for children, given that they are expected to emulate the adult world in miniature, “play is really a form of work, one that poses as an alternative to the adult world, yet which habituates children to their future labor in it, of which consumption is a significant part” (61).

Kuenz argues that childhood as a distinctive stage in the life of a person is established through the consumption of specific commodities. There is a certain amount of work that children are supposed to put into their “play” for them to consume toys and the other forms of mass culture.

#### Tables for Illustration



#### 1. Illustration – Toys

## Quick Recap

Toys are made of plastic material which “destroys all the pleasure, the sweetness, the humanity of touch.” Barthes prefers toys made of wood which is a material that is at once firm and soft, as it has the “natural warmth” and it removes the “chemical coldness of metal” (54).

Barthes points out that toys are created in a manner that helps children to grow into a world which they “use” rather than “create.” He argues that this allows children to grow up into individuals that perform “actions without adventure, without wonder, without joy” (Barthes 54). This makes sure that, in the adult society, the child will grow up to have everything supplied to him/her ready-made; s/he will never be allowed to “discover anything from start to finish” (Barthes 54).

### 2. Understanding Toys and Childhood

Barthes argues that French toys “*always mean something*” (emphasis, not mine) and they constitute the “techniques of modern adult life” including objects and toys related to the Army, Broadcasting, the Post Office, Medicine, School, hair styling, Air Force, transport etc.

### 3. Toys always have Meaning

Barthes makes mention of a set of blocks; he argues that a set of blocks allows children to *create* meaningful objects that can either move, walk or roll. This allows children to “create life, not property.” He also mentions that such toys are rather rare.

### 4. Toys and Creativity

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## 22.3 Learning Outcomes

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There are many learning outcomes from this text. They are listed as follows:

- The students will learn to apply the idea of metalanguage operating in society
- They will comprehend the notion of myth making.
- They will be able to identify the major arguments that Barthes makes about toys.
- They will be able to analyse gender roles and gender performance that is promulgated by toys.
- They will be able to evaluate linkages between objects, meaning and roles that the bourgeois class uses to maintain their status quo.

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## 22.4 Glossary

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**Mythologies:** A collection of myths derived from Greek words, mythos (story of the people) and logos (word or speech)

**Myths:** A symbolic narrative

**Metalanguage:** A Language that describes language; a form of language or set of terms used for description or analysis of another language

**Textuality:** In linguistics, textuality is the property by which successive sentences form a coherent text in contrast to a random sequence

**Semiology:** The Study of Signs and Symbols

**New Criticism:** A formalist movement in literary theory that emphasized close reading of poetry and other forms of literature in order to understand it as a self-contained object.

**Formalism:** It is a form of literary criticism that entails the study of text without foreign and outside influences.

**Deconstruction:** It is an approach to understanding the relation between meaning and the text and was originated by Jacques Derrida

**Structuralism:** A study that entails the understanding of various structures in and constitutive of nature, society and the human psyche. It was initially associated with Western Discourses of Levi-Strauss, Marx and Althusser.

**Lexicology:** The study of form, meaning and the study of words

**Grammar:** The study of the arrangement of words to make sentences

**Philology:** It is a branch of knowledge that deals with structures inherent in historical development and the relationship of language or languages.

**Poststructuralism:** It is a study that is built upon the rejection of structuralism where it tries to draw the focus on the indeterminacy of meaning. It also draws attention to the fact that the significance or the meaning of structure of any text is inherently unstable.

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## 22.5 Sample Questions

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### 22.5.1 Objective Questions:

#### True or False

1. Barthes believes that toys made of chemicals should be an essential part of a child's upbringing.
2. Toys today are made to bring up children that will *use* rather than *create* a world.
3. Barbie dolls strengthen gender roles.
4. Barthes opposes the idea of children playing with toys.
5. Barthes was a proponent of established norms in society and supported traditional values.
6. Barthes wrote the essay "The Death of the Author" in the year \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) 1968 (b) 1971  
(c) 1967 (d) 1969
7. Barthes' text *Mythologies* has an essay at the end. What is its title?

- (a) Myth Tomorrow (b) Myth Yesterday  
(c) Myth Now (d) Myth Today

8. There are many short pieces in the text *Mythologies*. Which one of the following is a title that is present in the text?

- (a) Barbie Dolls (b) French Army  
(c) Einstein's Brain (d) Childhood and Play

9. Death of an Author means –

- (a) Author dies after s/he writes a text (b) Authors don't own copyrights to their works  
(c) There is no original, unified Truth (d) Authors don't actually write their work

10. The word 'text' is an ancient word. It is related to

- (a) Spinning and weaving (b) Clothes  
(c) Knitting and sewing (d) Kneading

### **22.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Write a short essay on Barthes' comments on the Death of the Author.
2. Write a short estimation of Barthes' main ideas.
3. How does Barthes describe and talk about wooden toys?
4. What kind of relation do children build with plastic toys and other toys made of chemicals?
5. Why does Jane Kuenz call "play a form of work?"

### **22.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. How do you relate Barthes' ideas of textuality with his commentary on the French toys in Modern society?
2. Write an essay on the relation of gender roles and toys in society as explained by Barthes.
3. Relate Barthes' ideas on myths that are created today with the ideas of toys, adulthood and the creation of childhood.

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### **22.6 Suggested Readings**

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## Unit - 23: Diasporic Literature

### Structure

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23.2.1 Diasporic Literature

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### 23.0 Introduction

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Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world

- **Heidegger**

Diasporic Literature or Literature of Diaspora is one of the emerging forms of literature which is being produced in almost all parts and in all the languages of the world. It is also gaining popularity and a wide readership across the English and other Departments of Humanities and Social Sciences. Although the idea of diaspora and diasporic literature can be traced back to ages; in the recent past the growing importance and active participation of the diaspora communities in the socio-cultural, economic, political, and literary developments of both homeland and host land attracted critical attention from all the fields of knowledge and discourses. This literature covers wide range of issues that emerged with migrants settling in a new land leaving their home(land) behind. Issues like idealizing and longing for

home/homeland, memory, dislocation, culture, ethnicity, identity, alienation, the feeling of loss, retaining certain values, food habits, etc. find place in the diasporic literature. These themes shaped the structure and esthetics of diaspora literature. This literature depicts issues and narrates the stories of migrants and the descendants of migrants who left their land or ancestral land for various reasons and became diaspora. Today, almost all famous writers from the South Asian countries are either diasporic or write about diaspora community. Some major diasporic writers from South Asia today are Hanif Qureshi (*The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990)) and (*The Black Album* (1995)), Salman Rushdie (*Midnight's Children* (1981)), Kiran Desai (*The Inheritance of Loss* (2006)), Monica Ali (*Brick Lane* (2003)), Khalid Hussein (*The Kite Runner* (2003)), Mohsin Hamid (*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007)), Nadeem Aslam (*Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004)) and *The Wasted Vigil* (2008)), Romesh Gunsekera (*Monkfish Moon* (1992)), and Nayomi Munaweera (*Island of Thousand Mirrors* and *What Lies between Us* (2016)). But before one goes into the debate about diasporic literature, in order to understand and define diaspora literature thoroughly, one needs to know what 'diaspora' is and what its characteristics are. This chapter underscores the basic understanding of diaspora in section 23.2.2.

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## **23.1 Objectives**

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Diaspora in general has become one of the most powerful factors about both homeland and host land so it is pertinent to study this important segment of society. Literature helps in the wholesome understanding and provides inputs about the life and experiences of this community. Thus, this chapter is designed to introduce us to one of the most recent developments within the broader category of literature called Diasporic Literature. This chapter also gives a brief outline of what a diaspora is. It also aims to enhance students' understanding of diasporic literature with some references from India. It provides examples of few well-known authors and their work for further reading.

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## **23.2 Diasporic Literature**

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### **23.2.1 Diasporic Literature:**

Any writing which comprises the themes and characteristics of diaspora as pointed out by Robin Cohen or similar themes is called diaspora literature. It can be a literature of/by migrants,

descendants of immigrants, about migrants/diaspora community. The components of this literature are writers, themes, and diasporic peoples. For example, among the writers, Agha Shahid Ali, Salman Rushdie, Jhumpa Lahiri, V.S. Naipaul, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Bapsi Sidhwa, et. al. Today almost all writers from India and other South Asian countries migrate to the West and write about various issues of Indians in India and abroad. Those who migrate, they and their writings by default become diasporic. But can all the writers who migrate consider themselves as diaspora or write about the diasporic issues? This is a big debate which I tried to address in my aforementioned article. With the emergence of Diaspora Studies, writers like Raja Rao, Munawwar Rana, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Sajjad Zaheer, etc. can also be read through this lens.

### **23.2.2 Understanding Diaspora:**

Since the arrival of Adam on the earth, human beings have been migrating for various reasons including, search for shelter, food, farming, animals, escape from natural calamities, and more recently for better living conditions, job, education, out of persecution, exile and manmade conditions, the emergence of the border, the spread of empire, trade, religion, etc. Nowadays migration is mostly affected by the socio-cultural, political, and economic transformations across the globe. The factors which affect people to leave one's place are called "push factors" and factors that attract people to migrate to or to come to a certain place/s are called "pull factors" as pointed out by the migration theorist Everett S. Lee. In modern times, with the effect of globalization which has compressed time and space, the mobility of goods and people across the national and transnational borders has been accelerated. But most of the time, when human beings migrate, be it voluntarily or forcefully, certain things always travel with them invisibly. They also leave many things behind when they migrate from one place to another place, particularly from one "socio-cultural setting" (Chapparban 2019) to another socio-cultural setting. Sajaudeen Chapparban writes,

“Diaspora gets formulated after the migration takes place, be it any form of migration from temporary to permanent and internal to international. It gets formulated if a person migrates from one socio-cultural setting to an/other socio-cultural setting which is different from the previous one...Socio-Cultural setting refers to the familiarities, use and practices/atmospher of a particular language, culture, religion, food, custom, dress, rituals, social practices and identities etc. The disrooting/distancing of an individual or a

group of people from one socio-cultural setting to an/other socio-cultural setting lead to the post – migration feelings which gradually build diasporic sense such as the building of community/identity, building solidarity, collectivism, retaining food and dress codes, retaining or looking to maintain identity, sense of disrootedness, sense of belonging, nostalgia and memories of things left behind, be/longing, feeling of going back/homeland, sense of alienation etc. in a nutshell, rerooting/revisiting/rebuilding the socio-cultural setting which s/he left behind or thinks that need to be rebuild in homeland or hostland” (Chapparban 2019).

Those left behind things immensely affect the inner and outer life and behavior of both the immigrants and host societies. These post-migration conditions are called diasporas. Many scholars tried to trace a yardstick to define the idea of diaspora. They tried to theorize new global conditions of human beings and human mobility. Scholars like Robin Cohen, William Safran, Appadurai, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, James Clifford, et al. have given space to think beyond the existing disciplinary boundaries, culture, nation, etc.

Today, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA 2019) there are around 272 Million international migrants which means 3.5% of total global population. Although, as pointed out by Marie Mc Auliffe and Binod Khadria in the *World Migration Report 2020*, this percentage “is a very small minority of the world’s population, meaning that staying within one’s country of birth overwhelmingly remains the norm” but despite that, this percentage is discursive in socio-economic developments of both the country of origin and destination. Majority of people migrate a shorter distance which resulted in international migration i.e. larger number of people migrate within countries as estimated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2009) around 740 million people in the world are internal migrants. That means migration is integral part of our society. There are larger diaspora groups across the world. Some of the notable communities are the Chinese (34 million), the Indian (32 Million), African, Mexican, Palestinian, etc.

Etymologically, diaspora is an anglicized version of a Greek word “*διασπορά*” “*diaspeirein*” which means "scattering/dispersion." It is a combination of a preposition "dia\_" which means ‘over’ and a verb “speiro" meaning 'to sow’. In the *Book of Deuteronomy*, the term finds its equal meaning”gault”, addressing the people of Israel that 'thou shall be the diaspora in

all kingdoms on earth.' In the critical observations, it was first applied in the context of Greek "to characterize the exile of the Aegean population after the Peloponnesian War" in the context of migration and colonialism. Later on, it was applied to the Jews, Palestinians, Armenians, Africans, Indians, Chinese, and almost all migrants from different nationalities into other countries.

Traditionally, this term was exclusively referred to the Jewish community. Later on, it was applied to almost all communities who are living and even settled in another land. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines diaspora in the same way. It says diaspora means, "the Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel", It also says, "the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside ancient Palestine after the Babylonian exile", "people settled far from their ancestral homeland" and "the movement, migration or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland." But this kind of definition has undergone massive modifications and developed to be applied to almost all immigrant communities who have diasporic sensibilities.

Robin Cohen's book, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (1997) helps us understand the basic characteristics of diaspora. He categorized diaspora into five major types:

1. Victim/refugee diasporas: Jews, Africans, and Armenians
2. Imperial/colonial Ancient Greek, British, Russian and Others: Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch
3. Labour/Services: Indentured Indians, Chinese, and Japanese, Sikhs, Turks, Italians
4. Trade/business/professional: Venetians, Lebanese, Chinese, Today's Indians, Japanese
5. Cultural/hybrid/ postmodern: Caribbean peoples, Today's Chinese, Indians.

The book also discusses the question, why and how one can call any person or a group of people who immigrates or emigrates as a diaspora or not. Robin Cohen's definition tried to theorize the idea of diaspora. He writes, "Diaspora signified a collective trauma, a banishment, where one dreamed of the home but lived in exile. Other people abroad who have also maintained strong collective identities have, in recent years, defined themselves as diasporas, though they were neither active agents of colonization nor passive victims of persecution" (ix *Introduction*). The IOM (The International Organization for Migration) defines diaspora as "Migrants or descendants of migrants whose identity and sense of belonging, either real or symbolic, have been shaped by their migration experience and background. They maintain links

with their homelands, and to each other, based on a shared sense of history, identity, or mutual experiences in the destination country” (*Glossary on Migration* IOM2019:49).

Robin Cohen has also pointed out the following markers for defining diaspora.

1. *Dispersal* from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. Alternatively, the expansion from a *homeland* in search of work, in pursuit of a trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. A *collective memory and myth* about the homeland, including its location, history, and achievements;
4. An *idealization* of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. The development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6. A strong ethnic group *consciousness* sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, and the belief in a common fate;
7. A *troubled relationship* with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. A sense of *empathy and solidarity* with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and
9. The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. (*emphasis added* 1997, 26)

Another thinker of Diaspora studies William Safran points out the similar characteristics of being diaspora:

- 1) They, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions;
- 2) They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements;

- 3) They believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and, therefore, feel partly alienated and insulated from it;
- 4) They regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate;
- 5) They believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and
- 6) They continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (83-84).

These characteristics are found in almost all classical or established diaspora communities. But in the modern/contemporary forms of migration, one could see that the immigrants face similar issues like re/imagining home/land, identity crises, duality of life, belonging, memories, nostalgia, alienation, hybridity, diasporic consciousness, discrimination, solidarity about their respective community, transnational networks, etc. These experiences of contemporary migrants' match with the classical forms/models of diaspora therefore these contemporary migrants are called beginning diaspora or the incipient diasporas.

One can also get the help of writings produced by thinkers and scholars in this field of diaspora studies as mentioned earlier. One of my articles "Psychology of Diaspora" in *Encyclopedia of religion and Psychology* (Editor David Lemming 2020) will also concertize one's understanding of the complex dynamics of this concept.

### **23.2.3 Stages of Diasporic Literature:**

The literature of diaspora or diasporic literature which appeared today in its mature form has emerged over a period of time as the very notion of diaspora itself. It suddenly did not appear in its today's form. It developed gradually from travel writing and migration literature to today's diaspora literature. As travel and migration are integral parts of a diaspora formulations, travel writing and migrant narratives/writing is also the integral part of diaspora literature formulation. One can trace the following stages while understanding this literature.

**a. Travel Literature:**

Travel is the first step towards the formulation of diaspora. Initially, if one traces the history of diaspora writing we may find the traits of diaspora in travel writing. Travel writing/Travelogues and Migrant Narratives can be the first stage of diaspora writing. This also includes the writing of refugees. These writings can also be called Incipient Diaspora writing because it consists the diasporic elements like memory, nostalgia, home, interactions, hybridity, assimilation, alienation etc. One of the earliest works of travelers from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century India include Shaikh Din Mohammed, Mirza Itesamuddin, Mirza Abu Lutfullah Khan, and Taleb Khan. Their writings were the earliest writings of the Indian Diaspora in the West. It depicts the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe. One of first English text from the subcontinent is Lutfulah's (1802-1874) autobiography titled "*Autobiography of Lutfullah, a Mohammedan gentleman: and his translations with his fellow-creatures: interspersed with remarks on the habits, customs, and character of the people with whom he had to deal.*" This work is a detailed account of an Indian in Imperial England and his social and cultural interactions and transactions. Other writers in this category include Aga Khan, Zulfikar Ghose, and Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan et al. Sir Syed's *Musfairan-e-London*, written in Urdu, describes his journey to Europe for education as Amit Choudhary's *Afternoon Raag*, portrays the lives of Indian students in Oxford. Sajjad Zaheer's Urdu novel, *London ki Ek Raat* (*A Night in London* (1935)) also discusses the life of an Indian student in England and political activism for the freedom of India.

The old generation of diasporic Indian writers like Raja Rao, G. V. Desani, Santha Rama Rau, DhalchandraRajan, Nirad Chaudhari, VedMetha, Mulk Raj Anand, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and Bhadur Shah Zafar who mainly looked back at India and hardly ever recorded their experiences from India as expatriates. Works like Raja Rao's *The Serpent and the Rope* and A. K. Ramanujan Indo-American poem "A Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House" have some references of being diasporic. If one reads these texts or personalities today through diasporic perspective, then one finds them as diasporic as Salman Rushdie and Jhumpa Lahiri.

**b. Migrant Literature:**

There are not many references and texts to the literature of migrants in our academic debates. This doesn't mean that there is no literature on migrants in or from India. The Miyah poetry in Assam narrates the saga of migrants from within and the other states of India to Assam.

Chetan Bhagat's *2 States: The Story of My Marriage* (2009) also depicts the interstate migration, but it is loaded with diasporic themes like cultural shock, adaptation, assimilation issues, etc. Most of the writings, by the Maghribi/North African migrants in Europe, are the best examples of migrant literature. One of the most notable writings of Indian Diaspora produced after the partition. For example, Bapsi Sidwa's *Ice-Candy Man* (1988) and *An American Brat* (1993). Some works which explore the issues of soldiers of the World Wars to foreign fields can also be included in this category. For example, Michael Ondaatje's 1992's Booker Prize winning novel *The English Patient*. Most of the writings by the immigrants and about immigrants earlier appeared in different categories like New Literature, Minority Literature, etc.

The migrant writing is the secondary stage towards the diaspora literature. Therefore, today one finds that these texts in the syllabi of diaspora literature or studied as diaspora texts. These early stages of writing experiences in new land/host land/foreign land reached to formulate diaspora writing as a separate section within the broader categories of literature.

**c. Diasporic Literature:**

Contemporary Indian diaspora writers are famous because of their diasporic engagement. Either the writer is diasporic or their themes. Writers like Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Agha Shahid Ali, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, V.S. Naipaul, Bharati Mukherjee, Vikram Seth, Jhumpa Lahiri, Benyamin, and Hari Kunz cover diverse issues of cultural and social assimilation, citizenship, cultural shock/encounter, rootlessness, alienation, nostalgia, identity issues, discrimination, xenophobia, vandalism, racialism, gender, class, caste issues, issues of assimilation, acculturation, hybridization, etc.

The Indentured labor system also deported millions of Indians into colonial plantations across the colonies between the 1830s – 1910s. Judith M. Brown in her book *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (2006) observes,

By the last decades of the twentieth century, over 9 million people of South Asian descent lived outside the subcontinent. South Asians have made a significant and distinctive contribution to the economies, societies, and cultures of the places to which they have gone...and they have increasingly influenced the politics, economies, and cultures of the places which they and their ancestors left. (Brown 1)

Millions of Indian laborers were sent to Africa, Caribbean countries, countries in South and South-east Asia. Some of the works like Edward Jenkin's *Lutchmee and Dilloo*(1877), ARF Webber's *Those that be in Bondage* (1917), David Dabydeen's *Slave Song* (1984 ), Cyril Dabydeen's poetry collection, *God's Spider*, and novels like *Drum of my Flesh*, *The Wizard Swami*, *Dark Swirl*, etc. explore the theme of Indian diaspora communities in plantation colonies. Other writers include Mohammed Sharlow, Ishmith Khan, Jan Lo Shinebourne, Ramabai Espinet, and Peggy Mohan. This writing is about how they negotiate with identities in new lands.

This literature became famous due to its unconventional themes, style, and also bagged different prestigious prizes in the field of literature. Writers like V.S. Naipaul were awarded Nobel Prize in 2001. Whereas the Pulitzer Prize of 2000 went to *The Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri. Many writers won the Booker prizes for their work engaged in diasporic subjects such as V.S. Naipaul's *In a Free State* won the Booker Prize in 1971, in the year 1975 Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in 1981, Arundhati Roy for *The God of Small Things* in 2005, Kiran Desai for *The Inheritance of Loss*, in 2008 Arvind Adiga for *The White Tiger* and the Sri Lankan-Canadian Michael Ondaatje for *The English Patient* in 1992.

Diaspora Literature is also produced in other national and regional languages including Urdu, Hindi, Malayalam, Bengali, Punjabi, Telugu, Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bhojpuri, etc. Writers like V. Muzafer Ahamed (*Camels in the Sky: Travels in Arabia*), Benyamin (*Jasmine Day, Goat Days*2008), Nikhil Ramteke (*An Arabian Dream*), and Deepak Unnikrishnan (*Temporary People*2017) are exclusively exploring issues of Indian labors in the Gulf. These kinds of literatures still required critical attention and recognition in the academic arena.

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### **23.3 Learning Outcomes**

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Through this chapter, the students are expected to familiarize themselves with new literatures emerging from different parts of the world. Most of the references in this chapter are drawn from Indian Diaspora Literature, as a curious studentone can explore similar writings according to his or her interest -country wise or language wise. They are expected to understand what diaspora and diaspora literature are in general and how and why one calls particular writing diasporic.

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## 23.4 Glossary

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**Migration:** Any act of moving from one usual place to another place either by animals, birds or human, crossing a national or international border for temporary or permanent for whatsoever reason is called migration.

**Migrant:** According to the IOM (The International Organization for Migration) “An umbrella term, not defined under international law, reflecting the common understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. The term includes a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally-defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students.” (*Glossary on Migration* by IOM 2019: 132)

**Immigration and Emigration:** An immigrant is a person who *comes* to another country or borders thus, this act of coming is called immigration. On the other hand, emigrant means a person who *leaves* a place therefore this act of leaving is called emigration. One needs to remember a Latin origin of prefixes “*im\_*” and “*em\_*”. ‘*im\_*’ means “comes/in”, and ‘*em\_*’ means “leaving/out of”.

**Refugees and IDP:** A refugee is a person or a community who is persecuted in their homeland and forced to leave and seek refuge in another country. There are other reasons for forced displacement such as civil-wars, war, natural calamity, disaster, man-made problems, geo-political issues, policies, etc. People who are forced to move within a national border are called IDPs (Internally Displaced People). “Refugees are defined and protected in international law. The 1951 Refugee Convention is a key legal document and defines a refugee as: ‘someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion’”.

(UNHCR - the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html#:~:text=The%201951%20Refugee%20Convention%20is,group%2C%20or%20political%20opinion.%E2%80%9D>)

**Hybridity:** Hybridity is a term which was earlier associated with biological and plant sciences which now gained popularity in the humanities and social sciences debates due to mixing/juxtaposing of cultures/identity. Recently, it was associated with a cultural theorist HomiBhabha's work *The Location of Culture* (1994) wherein he extensively discussed the new patterns of the identity of people on the move and making of a 'third space.'

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## 23.5 Sample Questions

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### 23.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Diaspora is a \_\_\_\_\_ word.
  - (a) German
  - (b) Greek
  - (c) Hebrew
  - (d) Arabic
2. What, according to Everett S. Lee, are the forces behind human migration?
  - (a) Intriguing Factor
  - (b) Push factor
  - (c) Driving factor
  - (d) Pull factor
  - (e) Push and Pull factor
3. Globalization has compressed \_\_\_\_\_
  - (a) People
  - (b) Time and space
  - (c) Place and economy
  - (d) None of the above
4. Which of the following is not the category of diaspora mentioned by Robin Cohen?
  - (a) Victim/refugee diasporas
  - (b) Imperial/colonial
  - (c) Labour/Services
  - (d) Religious
5. Which of the following is a diaspora writer?
  - (a) Agha Shahid Ali
  - (b) Salman Rushdie
  - (c) Jhumpa Lahiri
  - (d) All of the above
6. Which text of Sir Syed can be read as incipient diaspora literature?
  - (a) Musfairan-e-London
  - (b) A'in-e-Akbari

(c) Silsilat-ul-Muluk                      (d) Asbab-i-Baghawat-e-Hind

7. Which of the following works of Chetan Bhagat deals with intercultural issues?

(a) Five Point Someone                      (b) One Night @the Call Center

(c) 2 States                                      (d) The 3 Mistakes of My Life (2008)

8. IDP stands for \_\_\_\_\_.

(a) Internationally Displaced People      (b) Internally Displaced People

(c) Integrated Different People              (d) None of the above

9. Which of the following writers of diaspora received the Nobel prize?

(a) V.S. Naipaul                                (b) JhumpaLaheri

(c) Ruth PraverJhabvala                      (d) Salman Rushdie

10. “Hybridity” is a concept used for \_\_\_\_\_ of identities.

(a) Mixing                                        (b) Dividing

(c) Breaking                                      (d) Unifying

### **23.5.2. Short Answer Questions:**

1. What do you understand by the concept of diaspora?

2. What are the basic components of Diaspora Literature?

3. Can migrants be called diaspora?

4. Name few writers who bagged international prize for writing diasporic texts.

5. What are the reasons of migration in contemporary time?

### **23.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Illustrate the idea of Diaspora Literature in the context of India?

2. Write a brief note on Diaspora Literature in any language other than English.

3. Highlight the diasporic themes in any text that you read recently.

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## Unit – 24: *Indian Movie, New Jersey*

### Structure

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### 24.0 Introduction

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The term “Diaspora” is borrowed from the Greek word “scattering.” In general, it refers to the dispersion of people from their own land. If one wants to know what diaspora literature is; one can say in simple terms, it is a literature written by the writers who reside outside their homeland. However, a work of fiction based on its content can also be considered as diasporic literature. For clearer and better understanding of the term diaspora literature it is necessary to draw a distinction between the confusing words like diaspora and exile or diasporic literature and exilic literature. When one looks at these words they appear completely two different terms but in both the situations the writer or narrator is away from his/her homeland. He/She miss his/her homeland. However, in the context of diasporic literature, the protagonist migrates to a foreign

land for better prospect. But when a person or a writer is forced to go away from his/her homeland then she/he is sent in exile, a forceful migration.

In the context of diaspora a writer or narrator has migrated to another country for better future prospect and may or may not return to his homeland. There is all possibility for him to thrive in the new atmosphere whereas in the exile a narrator wants to return to his homeland at any cost. Diaspora is a positive term with a world of dreams and possibilities whereas the term 'exile' is a very negative word where it is difficult or impossible to survive. Exile is forced where an individual does not have any other choice but to leave one's own homeland whereas diaspora is a world of choice and possibilities. In exile, there is a threat to life and survival whereas in diaspora one can not only survive but can also thrive. Apart from this, exilic literature is written when the memory of the homeland is very clear whereas in diasporic literature this will not be the case. In diasporic literature the nostalgia for one's homeland will be lessened but not completely absent or the writer will be conscious of its ancestral homeland.

For better and clear understanding of the Indian diaspora literature one can divide it into following two types -

- (1) Forced migration: when a writer is forced to leave his homeland due to various reasons
- (2) Voluntary migration: when a writer chooses to migrate to another country to settle there.

The division of forced migration and voluntary migration helps one to know how these two forms of writing is looking at the country and its culture in a different or similar manner both positive and negative. They either praise or criticise the country or its culture.

Similarly, Sudesh Mishra has also categorised the Indian diaspora into two that is the old and the new one. The old diaspora is the one who migrated to Trinidad, South Africa, Guyana etc. from 1830 to 1917 whereas the modern diaspora migrated to foreign lands like USA, Britain, Canada, Australia and so on after India's independence.

The post-modern diaspora can be once again divided into two categories (1) the writers who have spent part of their lives in India and later on migrated to foreign lands. (2) The another group of writers belong to the second generation of diaspora, that is, they were born and brought up in a foreign land. Nevertheless, they all wrote more or less on the same themes like displacement, refashioning and so on in the backdrop of India's socio-political setting.

The writers like Salman Rushdie and V.S. Naipaul have contributed to a large extent and added value and caused progress in the English literature. In Indian diasporic literatures there are writers who have established themselves as the Indian diaspora who are Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Hari Kunzru, Rohinton Mistry, Shashi Tharoor, Anita Desai, Vikram Seth and Sunetra Gupta. They have explored different themes and issues of diasporic literature. They never see their homeland alike; one writer may talk about homeland and another on dislocation, displacement, a feeling of loss, alienation and cultural identity, ethnicity and so on.

For instance, in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* "displacement" is the theme. Earlier boundaries never existed when people used to travel. But now people are conscious of their identity. However, today the situation is completely different. Migrants are conscious of their cultural displacement and it is impossible for them to remove the memory of their homeland from their minds.

Further it is important to note that migration has its own pros and cons. The success and failure of one's migration to a foreign land depends on the idea of risk factor. Migration is nothing but the risk, risk of losing one's homeland or risk of losing one's cultural values or risk of losing one's identity and so on. Dwivedi also opines that "Migration always implies change: the change involves the risk of losing one's identity. Whilst the migration recognizes him/herself in his/her new image, the people around him/her do not accept his/her otherness. Therefore, s/he is compelled to face everyday life through a continuous oscillation between reality and dream."<sup>6</sup>

This aspect of diasporic life is shown very clearly in V.S Naipul's *A House of Mr. Biswas*. The life of the Naipauls transformed drastically once they migrated to a foreign land. They adapted to the new cultural values leaving behind their ancestral cultural values or refashioned themselves as per the requirements or adjusted to the situations of the foreign land. The strict Hindu Brahmins when the Naipauls were in India but once they landed on a new foreign land the strict vegetarians turned non-vegetarians and chicken, fish, mutton became a part of their dinner tables. Apart from that the traditional Indian clothes were replaced by the western clothes. Naipaul and his siblings learnt only the foreign language, English.

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<sup>6</sup> O. P. Dwivedi. *Literature of the Indian Diaspora*, Pencraft International, 2011.P. No. 02.

Mohan Biswas, in the novel *A House for Mr. Biswas* by V.S. Naipaul, is an Indo-Trinidadian and whose dream is to have a house of his own. The story suggests the dreams of Naipaul's father from a post-colonial perspective. Tulsi family acts as a symbol of Hindu immigrant's ways of life in Trinidad. Further, the character of Mohan Biswas or Ganesh Ramsumair is someone who is away from his own homeland but it is through their heritage that they can peep into their past. In other words, Naipaul's characters are dominated by their past or of their ancestral land.

Nostalgia is one of the major and distinct themes where in the migrants want to relearn and get acquainted with their culture, traditions, and rituals, past and so and so forth. The idea of homelessness is intensified when and if the writer does not find solace or home or a place to be comfortable or of his own. Most of the diasporic writings focus on this aspect of diasporic life. "Avtar Brah states that 'home' is a mythical place in diasporic literature"<sup>7</sup>. Here 'mythical' refers to a place which does not exist and when it does not exist then there is no question or possibility of return to that land. Even if it is possible for the writer to revisit that land then the writer won't find any attachment with that land. The love and affection for one's homeland gets lost somewhere. Rohinton Mistry is one of the diasporic writers who predominantly writes from this perspective. His works includes *Such a Long Journey* (1991), *Tales from Firozsha Baag* (1992) and *Family Matters* (2002) which are the examples that deal with the theme of nostalgia. According to him "Nostalgia is interesting as an emotion, but for a writer to write out of a feeling of nostalgia is debilitating because it makes the writing too sentimental."<sup>8</sup>

Immigrant experience is also one of the interesting aspects of diasporic literature which Jhumpa Lahiri has presented in her work *The Namesake*. The conflictual and complexities of diasporic identity and their different experiences in a foreign land are brought to the light through the characters of Gogol and Ashima. Gogol knows that "...his parents, and their friends and the children of their friends and all his own friends from high school will never call him anything but Gogol." Ashima begins to realise that "for being a foreigner...is a sort of lifetime pregnancy, a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts." Gogol and

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<sup>7</sup>Avtar Brah. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Publon: Psychology Press 1996. P. No. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Rohinton Mistry quoted in "Exploring Indian Diasporic Literature" by Aishwarya Johnson. <https://www.indianfolk.com/exploring-indian-diasporic-literature-riya/#:~:text=Indian%20Diasporic%20writings%20are%20divided,country%20due%20to%20various%20reasons.>

Ashima's realisation is something that actually reflects on the issue of identity conflict/crisis which comes as a part of migration.

Another interesting aspect or theme of the diasporic writing is the connection and historical understanding of one's homeland which needs to be taken into consideration. When one migrates from one's homeland to a foreign land then it generally brings out the strong feeling of belongingness to homeland. This is presented in the form of describing the cultural practices and so on. On this William Safran says, "the dispersal from homeland from two or more foreign regions, those who are away from their homeland, will have a collective memory of it, and have a belief that they will always be outrageous in their host state." As Avtar Brah reminds us, this "homeland" might be imaginary rather than real. This feeling to go back to one's homeland encourages people to maintain their relationship with their ancestral roots, thus forming a type of "ancestral impulse."<sup>9</sup> This kind of connection with one's homeland creates a diachronic understanding of one's own country. It is presented in the form of personal memories.

However, the themes and issues of diasporic literature have always been about the home or the migrant land's issues, conflicts, cultural values, differences and so on. Like all of these writers Chitra Benerjee Divakaruni is also an Indian diasporic writer. The present unit focuses on her poem "Indian Movies, New Jersey" (1990).

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## **24.1 Objectives**

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This unit introduces you to the acclaimed author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and more specifically to her poem "Indian Movie, New Jersey." At the beginning the students will be introduced to life, career and other writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni which earned her recognition. Later, this unit will focus on the poem, themes, critical analysis along with some other interesting facts about the poem.

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## **24.2 *Indian Movie, New Jersey***

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<sup>9</sup>Avtar Brah. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. Publ: Psychology Press 1996. P. No. 25.

### 24.2.1 About the Poet:

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is one of the diaspora writers. She was born in the year 1956 in Kolkata, India. She completed her graduation from the University of Calcutta. She left for USA for further studies and obtained her post-graduation degree from Wright State University and then PhD from the University of California, Berkeley. Presently she is teaching Creative Writing at the University of Houston. She has several poetry collections to her credit such as *Dark Like the River* (1987), *The Reason for Nasturtium* (1990), *Black Candle: Poems about Women from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (1991) and *Leaving Yuba City: New and Selected Poems* (1997). She is widely known for her work *Arranged Marriage* (1995) which is a collection of short stories. She is the author of the acclaimed novel *The Mistress of Spices* (1997). Her other notable writings are *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Palace of Illusions* (2008), *One Amazing Thing* (2010), *Shadowland* (2010), *Oleander Girl* (2013), *Before We Visit the Goddess* (2016) and *The Forest of Enchantments* (2019). She has received several awards as an author notably the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Prize for Fiction, the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Prize and the Pushcart Prize.

Till now Banerjee has tried her hand at different genres like fiction, children and young adult stories, short stories, poems, anthologies and various other kinds of creative and critical writings. But in most of her writings, she deals with few common themes: issues of women, cultural traditions and expectations; struggle about new ways of life and most importantly the issue of migration and experiences related to that. Quite often she also deals with the theme of love in different ways. Her poetry volumes like *Dark Like the River*, *The Reason for Nasturtiums*, *Black Candle* and *Leaving Yuba City*, address important matters like the images of India, the Indian-American experiences, and the condition of children and women in a patriarchal society. Her prose writings like short stories and novel deal with similar relevant subject matters.

### 24.2.2 Summary of the Poem:

“Indian Movie, New Jersey” deals with the subject of basic human need for home. Generally, home is associated with comfort and familiarity, where one can practice the cultural needs to its best. It’s about the feeling and satisfaction about one’s individual experiences of being at home. In the poem, the speaker misses home badly and thus desires for a sense of belonging. There might be various reasons like bitter experiences of the present place or being

looked down upon. Here the poet tries to compare traditions, cultural expectations and value systems in India and the United States respectively.

In the poem, “Indian Movie, New Jersey”, Divakaruni presents collective feelings of the immigrants who are longing for their homeland. The poem presents the situation where for the diaspora, home becomes the reality and they are more at ease with this feeling than the one in which they are situated. One can observe this from the tone and nostalgic mood of the poem which can be specifically seen in the initial two lines of the poem.

The poem also juxtaposes reality with illusion, which are very much interlaced within the poem, that stresses the conflict of these two human perceptions that co-exist but never overlap. The title of the poem contrasts the embellished “Indian Movie” with the monotony of “New Jersey” to emphasize the strain of alienation of the Indian immigrants towards a new life in a new place.

Movies and in general the magic of cinema is an escapist medium where viewers break free from the burden of reality. The movie theatre has been used as a symbol where people can escape and find comfort. The speaker suggests that immigrants ‘need not be embarrassed by words dropping like lead pellets into foreign ears.’ The theatre is seen as a place where the flickering movie-light wipes from our faces years of America. Prof. Jeffrey Peter reads Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s poem “Indian Movie, New Jersey” as a poem which employs Bollywood film as the central symbol of disillusionment that Indian immigrants experience in America. He says that the Bollywood movie is a manifestation of the desires the immigrants desperately yearn for, but also perplexingly display immigrant resentment towards the submission of their native culture and values for a life in America. It is ironic but Indian Movie essentially becomes an absolute truth of happiness for the immigrants despite its obvious gilded fantasies and kitschy appeal.

The poem talks about the Indian cultural values and in doing so it narrates an incident of a family which consists of three children. On the one hand, the son who was born in the foreign land does not associate himself with the Indian culture rather he likes to be an American which is his native place now. He feels associated with the land being the second generation immigrant. On the other hand, the daughter of the family leaves her fate to the parents wish, that is, she wants her parents to fix her marriage with the boy of their choice. By doing so she is honouring

the family's name and custom which generally happens in any Indian family. This is clearly projected in the lines 21-24, when it reads "sons who want Mohawks and refuse to run the family store, daughters who date on the sly." The speaker of the poem is highly affected by the cross-border experiences. It indicates that the Indians keep their hair natural and long while girls wait for their spouses to be approved by the parents.

### **24.2.3 Themes and Issues:**

#### **24.2.3.1 "Imagined Communities":**

Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1982) argues that the term nation is an "imagined political community" (6). He reasons that the nation is an imagined community because "the members of even smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (ibid.) this is so because the community irrespective of the prevalence of inequality and exploitation the nation always has or conceive a deep sense of horizontal comradeship (7) it is observed when they claim their political or national identity.

Away from their homeland diasporic people tend to feel or have a deep sense of belongingness with each other irrespective of socio-economic inequalities. In critical situations they come forwards to help each other and share their experiences of life in the foreign land. Whenever it is required of them they get ready to help and support each other in various manners like they gather together and strike, organize seminars and conferences and so on and so forth in order to make their presence felt or to fight for their rights in host countries. These activities are similar to that of "Imagined Communities". Hence, to put forward their demands and to create a sense of identity they engage themselves in such activities appears to be political one. In the foreign land they revive their home culture and indirectly show their collective identity in foreign land as these are also artefacts according to Anderson. (4)

#### **24.2.3.2 "In-Between"/ "Diaspora Space":**

When people settle and begin their life in a foreign land then they tend to change themselves and leave some of their home culture's cultural practices and so on in order to identify themselves with the foreign culture. The host culture here becomes a dominant and hegemonic. However, they generally do not forget their core cultural identity traits. However,

they begin to live in the in-between space wherein they cannot claim they complete identity in their homeland nor they can completely associate themselves with the host cultural identity. According to Homi K. Bhabha this is “in-between” space. Further, Avtar Brah in *Cartography of Diaspora* (1996) terms this location as “diaspora space”. According to her, this “diaspora space” is “a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes” (208).

Apart from these two major themes and issues that are almost found in every diaspora writings the following are some of the specific themes and issues they are as follows:

#### **24.2.3.3 Dream and Reality:**

The people who migrate to other countries in search of a livelihood and make the other country as their second home always think about their homeland and its cultural values, festivals and so on. They may or may not marry in the same country or community but they always want to instill in their children the cultural values of their homeland. They are always in those sweet memories of festivals, marriage and so on. They even visit their homeland on occasion of rituals, the times when the families come together, enjoy or celebrate together. They once again take back with them the sweet memories of their land. However, the harsh realities of their extended family issues and so on remain latent from them or they are not directly involved into them much.

Similarly, the moves they make in their careers and family or happy occasions, abroad are experienced alone with no one to share their joys and sorrows with. They do not share it with their families. The poet has hinted about this in these lines “We do not speak of motel raids, cancelled permits, stones thrown through glass windows, daughters and sons raped by Dotbusters.” The poet is referring to the Dotbusters, a group that used to attack the Indian Hindus in and around New Jersey. They harassed and assaulted many Indians between 1987 and 1993.

In the next few lines of the poem, the poet talks about the future:

In this dim foyer, we can pull around us the faint, comforting smell of incense and pakoras, can arrange our children’s marriages with hometown boys and girls open a franchise, win million in the mail. We can retire in India, a yellow two-storied house with wrought-iron gates, our own Ambassador car, Or at least move to rich suburb, Summerfield or Fort Lee, with neighbours that will talk to us.

In general people have their retirement plans like how they want to spend their time and life once they reach the old age. In this poem, the poet is reflecting upon the retirement plans of the Indian diaspora. It is the dream that every Indian migrant dreams at some or the other point of time in their life in the foreign land. They plan that for some years they will work in this foreign land and then go back to their homeland. If it is not possible then they can at least stay back and shift to a better place where their neighbours will be white who will not judge them based on their ethnicity. They will be friendly and talk to them. Nevertheless, they are hoping for a better future. In other words, they are thinking about a future which will upgrade their status in the society or bring a shift in their status once they retire.

**American Dream:** James Truslow Adams is credited for propagating the concept of “American Dream” in his famous work *The Epic of America* (1931). The American dream is a belief that was shown to the people that anyone who is ready to take risk and work hard can be successful in this land. The upward mobility is possible to achieve for anyone and for this luck is not required you can achieve it only through your sheer hard work. Thus, people believing in this concept of American dream migrated to America.

There are various literary works that have talked about the concept of American Dream. For instance Arthur Miller in his work *The Death of a Salesman*, one of the most famous American dramas, presented the concept of American Dream. However, it portrays the concept through the character Willy Loman. Willy however misinterprets the concept. According to him, anyone who has a good personality or “personally attractive” and “well liked” will surely achieve material success promised by the America.

Apart from Arthur Miller, there are various other American writers who have employed the concept of American dream in their works. In literature it is traced back to Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography. There are numerous works that have presented the concept in different manner portraying the possibilities and success of American Dream like *The Great Gatsby* by Scott F. Fitzgerald, *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison and so on.

However, in this poem “Indian Movie, New Jersey” the poet ends the poem with hopelessness which is reflected from the usage of the words, “we can trust in movie truths: sacrifice, success, love and luck, the America that was supposed to be.” But in reality the America which is supposed to be is not that America. People went there with dreams or possibilities it has shown to the people. The poet perhaps is talking about it because the Indians

who went to America with the aspirations and retirement plans had to face different realities of life there. They can trust the movies that show “sacrifice, success, love and luck” and they also believed in the America that was supposed to be but in reality which was not. The poet is questioning that American dream here. However, the Indian migrants are able to understand the reality that how impossible and difficult it is for them to be in a different land. Nevertheless, they avoid talking about the hard realities of their day-to-day life because they do not want to spoil the mood of the people. It is also because there in some or the other form everyone has faced or facing these issues.

#### **24.2.3.4 Escape from Reality:**

The poem is set in a cinema hall where all the Indian migrants have gathered to see a film. This may be a theatre where all the Indian audiences come to see a film or at least those who have the Indian sensibilities. The poet has not described or hinted about the language or whether it is a Bollywood film or a regional film. It is left to the readers’ imagination to consider it either a Bollywood or a regional film. However, the fact remains that all the Indian diaspora has gathered to watch the film as a means to escape from their day-to-day life in the foreign land.

Once the film is over, people do not want to rush to their homes as we generally do in India. They wait and talk to each other, not about their day-to-day issues that they all are facing in the foreign land, rather they are interested in talking about their trip to India or about newly purchased gold chain and so on. The following lines of the poem illustrate the same idea:

“After, we mill around  
unwilling to leave, exchange greetings  
and good news: a new gold chain, a trip  
to India. We do not speak  
of motel raids, cancelled permits, stones  
thrown through glass windows, daughters and sons  
raped by Dotbusters.”

Further, they do not want to talk about the “motel raids, cancelled permits, stones thrown at their glass windows and daughters and sons raped by Dotbusters.” They do not want to talk about these things as they know that everyone who has come there to watch a film have suffered or gone through from this assault and harassment at the hands of the natives. Thus, they do not want to talk about these issues and spoil the mood and the occasion.

#### **24.2.3.5 Cultural Differences:**

The poem also draws our attention towards the cultural differences between the Indian diaspora and the natives of the foreign land. The first stanza of the poem talks about the cultural difference in terms of beauty standards of western film heroines and Indian heroines. It says, “Not like the white film stars, all rib and gaunt cheekbone, the Indian sex-goddess smiles plumply from behind a flowery branch. Below her brief red skirt, her thighs are satisfying-solid, redeeming as tree trunks. She swings her hips and the men-viewers whistle. The lover-hero dances in to a song, his lip-sync a little off, but no matter, we know the words already and sung along.”

It says that the western heroines are thin and skinny whereas the Indian film heroines are plump and their thighs are fat like a tree trunk. Further, the Indian heroine is referred as sex-goddess because they are associated with beauty or they are so beautiful that all the young girls or women want to be like them.

Further, the sex-goddess can speak in English like the natives and suddenly when she shifts to thickened English to make a humour, all the audience understands the humour and they laugh on it. Thickened English is something that a non-native speaker speaks in with the influence of his mother tongue. For example: a south Indian Telugu speaker will speak in a different manner or pronounce the English words in a different manner than the Tamil speaker of English language. This is the Indianised form of English or Thickened English.

Further the poet says “Here we need not be embarrassed by words dropping like lead pellets into foreign ears....” These lines specifically emphasize the reaction of the native English speaker when a non-native English speaker speaks English. When a non-native English speaker speaks in English it appears to the native English speakers as if the pellets are dropping into their ears. However, while watching the movie when the heroine shifts to the thickened pronunciation they are not embarrassed about it rather but they laugh at it.

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### **24.3 Learning Outcomes**

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So in this unit we learnt about the author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. We came to know about the life, career, various writings and importantly writing style of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. Her poem “Indian Movie, New Jersey” has been discussed in detail in this unit. We

even have tried to focus closely on the poem, its themes, critical analysis along with some other interesting facts. Further we have some /keywords from the poem. After then, sample questions related to the poem are being provided. At the end, we have some references for further reading on the subject, on the poet and the poem.

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## 24.4 Glossary

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**Thickened English:** The pronunciation of Indian Americans when they speak English that comes with highly Indianised English and which is unlike the native speakers of English.

**Sex-Goddess:** The phrase refers to Indian heroine who is plump unlike western actresses who are all thin.

**First- Generation Migrants:** The people who first or initially migrated to the foreign lands in hope for better future prospects.

**Second -Generation Migrants:** The children of the first generation migrants who are native to the foreign land as they are born and brought up in the foreign land. They no more feel associated with their parents' homeland and for them the foreign land is their home land. This creates a cultural gap between their parents and them.”

**Mohawk:** “A member of an Iroquoian people originally inhabiting parts of what is now upper New York State, one of the five peoples comprising the original Iroquois confederacy.”

**Foyer:** It is an open area at the entrance of a cinema hall or hotel which is used by public.

**The American Dream:** It is an idea, a dream that promises equal opportunity to all provided one is willing to work hard.

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## 24.5 Sample Questions

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### 24.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Identify the writings of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni.

(a) *Palace of Illusion* and *Arranged Marriage* (b) *Midnight's Children* (c) *The Namesake*

2. Name one of her collections of short stories

(a) *Arranged Marriage* (b) *Black Candle: Poems about Women from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (c) *Sister of My Heart*

3. In which foreign land she lives?

- (a) Canada (b) USA (c) South Africa
4. Jhumpa Lahiri belongs to which generation of diaspora?  
 (a) First generation (b) Second generation (c) Indian writer
5. Where is the narrator of the poem?  
 (a) In the cinema hall (b) In the dining hall (c) In the kitchen garden
6. Who is the sex-goddess in the poem?  
 (a) Indian heroines (b) Western heroines (c) Poet
7. How is the English of the diaspora?  
 (a) They speak like natives (b) They have thickened English style of speaking (c) They do not know English
8. How was the lip sync of the hero?  
 (a) A failure (b) Good (c) Poet did not mention anything about it
9. Who are Mohawks?  
 (a) Indian (b) Native American (c) Canadian
10. The American drama in which the concept of American dream is portrayed by the Willy Loman is  
 (a) Death of a Salesman (b) Life of a Salesman (c) Children of Salesman

#### **24.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What do you understand by Migration and Diaspora?
2. Write about the location of the poem “Indian Movie, New Jersey”.
3. Briefly discuss that “Indian Movie, New Jersey” as a Diasporic Poem.
4. Discuss how cinema has been used a tool in the poem Indian Movie, New Jersey”.
5. Who are ‘Dotbusters’? Discuss with reference to the poem “Indian Movie, New Jersey”.

#### **24.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write a critical summary of the poem “Indian Movie, New Jersey.”
2. Write about three important themes mentioned in the poem “Indian Movie, New Jersey.”
3. Describe how the poetess has highlighted the immigrant life experiences in this poem.

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## 24.6 Suggested Readings

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**MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY**  
**Bachelor of Arts**  
U.G (BAEN101CCT) I SEMESTER EXAMINATION (December 2017)  
**Paper: The Individual and Society**

**Time: 3 hours Max.**

**Marks: 70**

**Note:** This question paper consists of three parts: Part – A, Part-B and Part-C. Number of words to answers each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.

**Part–A** contains **10** compulsory questions of multiple choice/fill in the blank/very short answer type question. Answer all questions. Each question carries **1** mark. **(10x1=10 marks)**

**Part-B** contains **08** questions of which students are supposed to answer **05** questions. Answer each question in approximately 200 words. Each question carries **06** marks. **(5x6=30 marks)**

**Part-C** contains **05** questions of which students are supposed to answer **03** questions. Answer each question in approximately 500 words. Each question carries **10** marks. **(3x10=30 marks)**

**Part-A**

**Question: 1:**

- (i) In 1975, Ismat Chughtai received the \_\_\_\_\_ for her contribution to Urdu Literature.
- (ii) “Shakespeare’s Sister” is written by \_\_\_\_\_
- (iii) In Greek Mythology, the goddess of love is \_\_\_\_\_
- (iv) What was the name of Anu’s daughter in “Yellow Fish”?
- (v) What is the pen name of C.S Laksmi?
- (vi) “Yellow Fish” is translated from which language \_\_\_\_\_
- (vii) Maya Angelou was brought up by her \_\_\_\_\_
- (viii) “The Dog of Tetwal” was first published in which language \_\_\_\_\_
- (ix) “The Ghost of Mrs Gandhi” is taken from the collection \_\_\_\_\_
- (x) William Butler Yeats was born in \_\_\_\_\_

**Part-B**

- 2) Why does Phule consider caste to be a ‘creation of their (Brahman) deep cunning nature’?
- 3) Analyse the line “And may her bridegroom bring her to a house/Where all’s accustomed, ceremonious” by W.B. Yeats.
- 4) Write a brief note on Marriage in Ismat Chughtai’s short story.

- 5) Why does Woolf turn to history books in her attempt to find out about women writers?
- 6) Analyze the conversation between Anu and Arun in the story “Yellow Fish”.
- 7) Analyze the title of the poem “Marriages are Made”.
- 8) Write a note on irony in the poem “Telephone Conversation”.
- 9) Write a note on Indian camp and the Pakistan camp in the story of “The Dog of Tetwal”?

### **Part-C**

- 10) What is the significance of Kallu’s calling Mumani Jan “Amma” rather than “Dulhan Bi” at the end of the story?
- 11) A prayer for his daughter can be interpreted for the restoration of order and grace in a battered civilization. Explain?
- 12) Describe Barthe’s essential point about difference between plastic and the wooden toys?
- 13) What is the theme of the poem “Telephone Conversation” by wole Soyinka?
- 14) Discuss the following lines from “Still I Rise”...

Does my sassiness upset you?

Why are you beset with gloom?

‘Cause I wa’k like I’ve got oil wells

Pumping in my living room

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## Notes