

**MAEN303CCT**

# **Comparative Literature**

**M.A. English  
(Third Semester)**

**Centre for Distance and Online Education  
Maulana Azad National Urdu University  
Hyderabad-32, Telangana- India**

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## Comparative Literature

For

M.A. English

3<sup>rd</sup> Semester

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## CONTENT

*Message*

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*Introduction to the Course*

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
1. History and Evolution of Comparative literature	11
2. Significance of Comparative Literature in Indian Context	29
3. Benjamin, Walter: excerpt from <i>The Task of the Translator</i>	44
4. Jonathan Culler: <i>Comparative Literature, at Last</i>	61
5. <i>Jane Eyre</i> : Background, Plot, Characters	75
6. <i>Jane Eyre</i> : Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation	93
7. <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> : Background, Plot, Characters	109
8. <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> : Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation	121
9. <i>Hamlet</i> : Background, Plot, Characters	134
10. <i>Hamlet</i> : Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation	148
11. <i>The Seagull</i> : Background, Plot, Characters	161
12. <i>The Seagull</i> : Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation	173
13. (a) Arun Kolatkar: 'Turnaround'	184
(b) Faiz Ahmed Faiz: 'Subh-e-Aazadi'	
(c) Gurajada Appa Rao: 'Love the Country'	
14. (a) Habba Khatoon: 'Lol of the lonely Pine'	208
(b) Amir Khusrau: 'Just by Casting a glance'	
(c) Tagore: 'Give me Strength'	
15. (a) Kamala Das: 'My Mother at Sixty six'	229
(b) Andre Breton: 'Five ways to Kill a Man'	
(c) Derek Walcott: 'A Far cry from Africa'	
16. (a) Emily Dickinson: 'I M Nobody! Who are You?'	247
(b) Khalil Gibran: 'Children'	
(c) Pablo Neruda: 'Clenched Soul'	
<b>Sample Question Paper</b>	<b>267</b>

## Message

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU) was established in 1998 by an Act of the Parliament. It is a central university with NAAC accreditation and the mandate of the university is: (1) promotion of Urdu language, (2) accessibility and availability of professional and technical education in Urdu medium, (3) providing education through traditional and distance learning mode, and (4) a specific focus on women's education. These are the points that distinguish this central university from all other central universities and give it a unique feature. It has been emphasized even in the National Education Policy 2020 to achieve education in mother tongues and regional languages.

The very objective of promotion of knowledge through Urdu is meant to facilitate the accessibility of contemporary knowledge and disciplines to Urdu knowing community. For a long time, there has been a dearth of course material in Urdu. The non-availability of books in Urdu is a matter of concern and Urdu University considers it a privilege to be part of the national process of providing course material in mother tongue/home language as per the vision of NEP 2020. Further, the Urdu speaking community is at a disadvantage in gaining updated knowledge and information in emerging areas or newer knowledge in existing fields due to non-availability of reading material in Urdu. The unavailability of content related to the above domains of knowledge has created an atmosphere of apathy towards attaining knowledge that could significantly affect the intellectual abilities of the Urdu knowing community. These are the challenges that Urdu University is confronted with. The scenario of Self Learning Materials (SLM) is also not very different. The unavailability of course books in Urdu at school/college level comes under discussion at the commencement of every academic year. Since the medium of instruction of Urdu University is only Urdu and it offers almost all the courses of important disciplines, the preparation of books of all these subjects in Urdu is the most important responsibility of the University. To achieve these objectives, MANUU makes available course material in the form of Self Learning Material (SLM) to the students of Distance Learning. The same is also available for sale to anyone interested in gaining knowledge through Urdu. To further provide access to learning, eSLM in Urdu is available for free download from the University website.

I am immensely pleased that due to the hard work of the concerned faculty and full cooperation of the writers, the process of publications of books has begun on a massive scale. To facilitate the students of Distance Learning, the process of preparing and publication of Self Learning Material (SLM) is of paramount importance to the University. I believe that we will be able to meet the requirements of a large Urdu knowing community through our Self Learning Material and will fulfill the mandate of this University and justify our presence in this country.

With best wishes,

**Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan**  
*Vice Chancellor*  
MANUU, Hyderabad

## Message

In the present era, distance education is recognized as a very effective and useful mode of education all over the world and a large number of people are benefiting from this mode of education. Maulana Azad National Urdu University also introduced the distance learning mode since its establishment in view of the educational needs of the Urdu speaking population. Maulana Azad National Urdu University started in 1998 with the Directorate of Distance Education and the regular programmes commenced from 2004, and subsequently various departments have been established.

The UGC has played a vital role in efficiently regulating the education system in the country. Various programs running under Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode at CDOE are approved by UGC-DEB. The UGC-DEB has emphasized on synchronizing the syllabi of distance and regular mode to enhance the level of distance learning students. Since Maulana Azad National Urdu University is a dual mode university catering to both distance and traditional mode of learning, to achieve its goal in line with the UGC-DEB guidelines, Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) was introduced and Self Learning Materials are being prepared afresh for UG and PG programmes containing 6 blocks with 24 units and 4 blocks with 16 units respectively.

The Centre for Distance and Online Education offers a total of seventeen (17) programmes comprising of UG, PG, B.Ed., Diploma, and Certificate programmes. Along with this, programmes based on technical skills are also being started. A huge network of nine Regional Centers (Bengaluru, Bhopal, Darbhanga, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Ranchi, and Srinagar) and six Sub-Regional Centers (Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jammu, Nooh, Varanasi, and Amravati) was established to facilitate the students. Apart from this, an extension center has also been established in Vijayawada. More than one hundred and sixty Learner Support Centres (LSCs) and twenty Programme Centres are run simultaneously under these Regional and Sub-Regional Centers to provide educational and administrative support to the students. The Centre for Distance and Online Education makes full use of ICT in its educational and administrative activities, and offers admission to all its programs through online mode only.

The soft copies of Self Learning Material (SLM) for students are made available on the website of the Centre for Distance and Online Education and the links of audio and video recordings are also made available on the website. In addition, facilities of E-mail and WhatsApp groups are being provided to the students through which the learners are informed about various aspects of the program such as course registration, assignments, counselling, examinations, etc. In addition to regular counseling, additional remedial online counseling is being provided from the last two years to improve the academic standards of the students.

It is expected that the Centre for Distance and Online Education will play a vital role to bring educationally and economically backward population into the mainstream of contemporary education. In near future, changes will be made in various programmes under the New Education Policy (NEP-2020) in view of the educational needs and it is hoped that this will help in making the Open and Distance Learning system more efficient and effective.

**Prof. Mohd Razaullah Khan**

***Director, Centre for Distance and Online Education***

MANUU, Hyderabad

## Introduction to the Course

The M.A. English programme is designed to give a sound knowledge of English Language, Literature and Literary Theory so as to empower the prospective students for higher studies and employment, apart from helping them prepare for competitive exams. It is spread over two years (four semesters) minimum duration. The objectives of the programme are as follows:

- a. to provide a sound base in the English language
- b. to provide insights into the development of English and the phonological, morphological, syntactical and stylistic aspects of language
- c. to provide knowledge in the teaching of English
- d. to explore the various literatures in English
- e. to provide exposure to the different genres, movements and periods of English literature
- f. to facilitate critical and analytical abilities
- g. to introduce literary theory and criticism
- h. to build confidence among learners with language skills in English
- i. to enable the working target group to enhance their qualifications and
- j. To facilitate higher education in the open distance learning mode.

At the end of the two-year post graduate programme in M.A. English, the learner would have mastered the theoretical knowledge of the English language and literature. The learners would be able to appreciate literatures in English, take up critical analysis, understand the different movements, periods and concepts in the study of English language and literature. The two-year programme will prepare the learner for competitive examinations, for employment and for research by developing their skills, apart from leading to refinement.

The course “Comparative Literature” aims to enable the learners to appreciate and understand the diverse cultures and societies through glimpses of world literature. The literary devices employed in various genres across different time and geographic zones may interesting reading. You are expected to make comparative and contrastive analysis of literature produced in different countries. The course is divided into four Blocks and each Block has four Units.

This SLM is supplemented by audio-video lessons. You may visit IMC MANUU YouTube channel <http://youtube.com/u/imcmanuu> for the complete list of AV lessons in English.

With you in your journey through the fields of English language and literature!

**Prof. Gulfishaan Habeeb**

Programme Coordinator



# **Comparative Literature**



# Unit - 1: History and Evolution of Comparative Literature

## Structure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Objectives

1.2 History and Evolution of Comparative Literature

1.2.1 Various Schools of Comparative Literature

1.2.1.1 The French School

1.2.1.2 The German School

1.2.1.3 The American School

1.2.1.4 The Indian School

1.2.2 Comparative Literature as an Approach

1.2.3 Translation as a tool of Comparative Literature

1.2.4 Understanding Comparative Literature through Reader Response Theory

1.2.5 Let Us Sum Up

1.3 Learning Outcomes

1.4 Glossary

1.5 Sample Questions

1.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Comparative literature is the study of literature across cultures, languages, periods, nations, ideologies, and disciplines. It emerged as a discipline in Europe during the 19th century when literary scholars like Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe began studying literature in various languages, cultures, and times to understand the commonalities, differences, and influences across borders. This study aids in comprehending the "other," but in reality, it assists in broadening our understanding of ourselves and distancing us from narcissistic narrowness. The Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Buffalo describes it as "the study of two or more literatures in comparison (e.g., English and German) and their multi-dimensional components, which may encompass historical, gender, economic, cultural, social, philosophical, religious, and linguistic factors of the distinct cultures being analyzed."

One of the primary reasons for the emergence of comparative literature during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is the advancement in industrialization, information and communication

technology (ICT), globalization, migration, the rise of anti-colonial voices, shifts in critical thinking, the emergence of new intellectual paradigms such as post-colonial studies, gender studies, women's studies, socio-political upheavals, etc.

Comparative literature stems from literature, linguistics, philosophy, history, anthropology, and cultural studies. It is both a multidisciplinary and an interdisciplinary field aiming for a multidimensional and comprehensive understanding of two different phenomena. Initially, it involved the study of literary and cultural expressions across national, linguistic, ideological, and disciplinary boundaries. From its origins in exploring literature across nations and languages, comparative literature has evolved into an interdisciplinary approach within the humanities and social sciences. The method of comparison can be applied to various subjects, themes, periods, texts, phenomena, histories, cultures, movements, arts, politics, societies, etc.

Initially, comparative literature focused on analyzing and understanding two or more texts from different languages or countries. However, it can also examine two different texts by different authors in the same or different languages. Translation plays a significant role in comparing texts from distinct languages, remaining a major pillar of comparative literature. A comparatist is an individual engaged in comparative study/analysis. A proficient comparatist in languages requires proficiency in two or more languages, coupled with a deep understanding of two or more cultures. There can also be a comparison within a language of two different texts. Similarly, a comparatist in social sciences needs an understanding of two or more social phenomena or factors within society to compare multiple aspects. In this context, knowing two languages is not crucial; understanding two phenomena or factors for comparison is essential. According to the Department of Comparative Study at Ohio State University, "Comparative Literature focuses on studying literature from diverse cultures, nations, and genres, exploring relationships between literature and other forms of cultural expression. It raises questions about the role of literature in society, how literature evolves over time as a form of art, and its interactions with values, social movements, and political contexts?".

In the rapidly evolving local and global social landscapes of today, comparative literature assumes amplified significance due to increased mobility and the shrinking of time and space which subsequently led to bringing two or more cultures closer. Its importance escalates as various nations and individuals intermingle. Creating sustainable, peaceful, and respectful societies necessitates a deep understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, languages,

people, and traditions. This comprehension stands as a crucial factor in striving for harmonious coexistence within our interconnected world with diversities.

*Check your progress*

**Do you know?**

Comparative literature is the study of literature across cultures, languages, periods, nations, ideologies, and disciplines, emerging in 19th-century Europe with scholars like Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. It aids in understanding diverse cultures and broadening our perspectives. The field is multidisciplinary, involving literature, linguistics, philosophy, history, anthropology, and cultural studies, aiming for a comprehensive understanding of different phenomena. Comparative literature initially focused on analyzing texts from different languages or countries but has evolved to include interdisciplinary approaches within the humanities and social sciences. Translation and proficiency in multiple languages are crucial for comparatists. Today, comparative literature is vital in our globalized world, promoting a deep understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, which is essential for fostering harmonious coexistence.

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## **1.1 Objectives**

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- provide an introduction to the fundamentals of comparative literature
- define comparative literature
- explore the various schools within this discipline
- trace its emergence, and elucidate its relevance in contemporary society and scholarship within the humanities and social sciences

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## **1.2 History and Evolution of Comparative Literature**

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In the realm of science and information and communication technology (ICT), with a growing awareness of 'differences' and the consciousness surrounding them, the study of literature, particularly comparative literature, becomes essential. Literature serves as a mirror

reflecting society, portraying contemporary life, habits, styles, cultures, religions, and politics. Engaging with literature aids in understanding society at large. Reading comparative literature not only involves comprehending the 'other,' as we perceive it, but also delves into discovering aspects we have yet to explore. It represents a process of broadening our understanding of the world, cultures, people, and literature, which we previously categorized as 'other,' though, in reality, they are an integral part of us.

In multicultural, multilingual, and multi-religious societies such as India and South Africa, comparative literature holds particular significance due to the visibility of linguistic, cultural, and religious diversities within these contexts. Unlike European countries where crossing national borders is essential for comparison, comparative literature within India assumes a different relevance and significance. It provides distinct approaches to understanding the 'other,' fostering mutual understanding within a society.

In his article "Comparative Literature," published in the *Encyclopedia of Translation and Interpretation* (2022), Rodriguez Lius discusses the origins of comparative literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century alongside emerging fields like comparative law and comparative philology. His focus lies within the European context. Lius emphasizes that comparative literature aims to identify commonalities among various legal systems, languages, and, specifically, different literary works.

The term's origin remains a topic of debate, with its initial developments traced back to France. The earliest record of the term appears in Jean-François-Michel Noël's volume, *Cours de littérature comparée*, published in 1816, though it significantly differed from the eventual concept of comparative literature. The pioneers in this field include Abel-François Villemain, Philarète Chasles, and Jean-Jacques Ampère. Charles-Augustin Saint-Beuve notably contributed to establishing comparative literature as a formal field during a conference in 1868, having previously discussed "compared literary history" in 1840.

The first specialized journal on this subject was published in Cluj, Romania, in 1877 by Hugo Meltzl, under various titles translating to 'comparative literature journal.' It was later titled *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* in 1879. The term gained prominence in English through Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett's work published in 1886, specifically named *Comparative Literature* (Rodriguez 2022).

Comparative literature has become an accepted discipline worldwide. Its establishment initially occurred in France but eventually gained recognition in both American and European universities. Gerald Gillespie, in an article featured in *Aspects of Comparative Literature:*

*Current Approaches* edited by Chandra Mohan (1989), listed several western universities where comparative studies were initiated as a formal discipline. He notes that while Comparative Literature has primarily focused on European languages, efforts have been made to expand towards non-European traditions. This ongoing evolution signifies a global integration of non-European literary concepts, evident through the contributions of American Sinologists and Japanologists like James Liu (Stanford University), Wai Lim Yip (University of California, San Diego), Peter Lee (University of Hawaii), Pauline Yu (University of Minnesota), and Earl Miner (Princeton University).

Further, Gillespie delineates five trends shaping literature understanding post-World War II, including the erosion of national boundaries in literary theory, declining prestige of literary history, widening rejection of authors as the focal point of literary institutions, growing importance of aesthetic considerations, and a general trend towards "scientific" approaches and revisionary philosophies of literature:

1. One trend is the accelerated crumbling of national frontiers in literary theory, and to some extent even in interpretive practices. The United States is by no means the only larger country where critical 'schools' of specifically foreign pedigree compete with a spectrum of native tenets and habits, and where critical co-operation and conflation lead to strange hybrids and new waves. Smaller nations like the Netherlands and Hungary experience such cross-currents, too.
2. A second trend has been a severe decline in the prestige of literary history, despite the influential example of great practitioners such as Ernst Robert Curtius lasting into the second half of our century, and intermittent newer attempts to reconstitute a historical approach. This decline has been felt in the allied field of the history of ideas which once boasted figures like Wilhelm Dilthey, Arthur O. Lovejoy, et al.
3. A third trend has been the widening rejection of the notion that those creative authors are the organizing center of literary institutions or that the interpretation of works of art is units and documents of literary history. In North America, this has meant a turning away even from the anti-biographies, text-oriented, New Criticism of forties and fifties.
4. A fourth commitment trend is the widespread reputation of aesthetic consideration as truly significant except as elements in the sociology of literature and the greatly expanded interplay between literary studies and the human sciences.

5. The fifth trend is the on-rolling general trend towards putative “scientific” approaches and revisionary philosophies of literature” (Gillespie, 1989)

### ***Check your progress***

#### **Definition and Relevance**

Comparative literature involves studying literature across cultures, languages, periods, nations, ideologies, and disciplines.

It reflects society, portraying contemporary life, habits, styles, cultures, religions, and politics.

It helps understand and appreciate diverse cultures, aiding in the mutual understanding within societies.

#### **Historical Context**

Comparative literature emerged in the 19th century, alongside fields like comparative law and philology.

It began in France, with pioneers like Abel-François Villemain and Jean-Jacques Ampère.

The first journal on comparative literature was published in Romania in 1877 by Hugo Meltzl.

#### **Evolution and Trends**

The discipline has evolved globally, influenced by European and American academic paradigms.

Trends shaping literature understanding include the decline of national boundaries in literary theory and the prestige of literary history, rejection of authors as the organizing center, growing importance of aesthetics, and scientific approaches to literature.

### **1.2.1 Various Schools of Comparative Literature:**

The study of comparative literature encompasses diverse approaches and perspectives. It comprises three prominent schools: the French, German, and American schools, which laid the groundwork for our initial understanding of this field. In more recent times, the Indian school of comparative literature has contributed significantly, offering unique viewpoints and enriching the broader understanding within this discipline. Moreover, there exist numerous other schools and associations of comparative literature worldwide, varying across nations, regions, and languages.

#### **1.2.1.1 The French School:**

The establishment of comparative literature as a discipline and its global dissemination owe credit to French intellectuals. The study of comparative literature in French commenced



during the second and third decades of the twentieth century, exerting a profound influence on the literary landscape until World War II. Pioneering this discipline were notable figures like Abel Francois Villemain (1790-1870), who delivered a series of lectures in Paris between 1824 and 1829. His works, *Tableue de la litterature au VIIIe siecle* and *Tableue de la litterature en Moyen Age en France, en Italie, en Espagne et en Anglettere*, were foundational. His such as Philarete Charles and Jean-Jacques Ampere extended Villemain's legacy. Philarete Charles (1798 – 1873) extensively connected French literature with other European literary traditions, producing over forty volumes of criticism. Claudio Gullen, in *The Challenges of Comparative Literature*, highlighted Charles's comparisons between authors, countries, and literature from Germany, France, Spain, England, among others. Charles characterized French genius as exceptionally congenial, embracing all emotions and thoughts from diverse civilizations, setting France apart yet allowing a profound understanding of others.

As the twentieth century dawned, the tradition of comparative literature in France blossomed further, notably after Joseph Texte's contributions. Fernand Baldensperger (1871-1958) published "Goethe en France" in 1904. Paul Hazard's work in *Revue de litterature compare* (1921) also significantly impacted comparative literature in France. In 1931, Paul Van Tighem's pioneering manual on comparative literature solidified its standing as a discipline and influenced its global reception.

Early French comparatists were guided by empiricist and positivist approaches, seeking the origins and influences shaping literary texts. Notable critical thinkers and philosophers within this school, including structuralists and deconstructionists like Marcel Proust, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, among others, explored semiotic, linguistic, philosophical, mythological, and cultural dimensions within comparative literature.

#### **1.2.1.2 The German School:**

The German school of comparative literature flourished along side the French school, spanning from the mid-nineteenth century to the period of World War II. Among the prominent figures within this school were scholars and critics such as Peter Szondi, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Friedrich Schlegel. Peter Szondi played a pivotal role in fostering comparative scholarship at the Free University, Berlin. He achieved this by inviting renowned contemporary critics, including Jacques Derrida, Lionel Trilling, Pierre Bourdieu, Theodor Adorno, and others, to contribute to the field.

This school of thought emphasized delving into the historical and cultural contexts of literary works. Its emergence coincided with the rise of nationalism in Germany, leading to a particular emphasis on national and cultural identities within literature. Scholars within this school explored how these identities contributed to shaping the collective psychology of the masses during that era.

Further, the German school approached comparative literature with a profound emphasis on understanding literature within its historical, cultural, and societal backgrounds. This focus on context allowed for a deeper exploration of how literature reflected and influenced the national and cultural identities prevalent at the time. The scholars within this school scrutinized the interconnections between literary works and the socio-political environment, unraveling the intricate relationships between literature, cultural identity, and mass psychology during their historical contexts.

### **1.2.1.3 The American School:**

A study of the American school of comparative literature delineates the reasons for its emergence as a discipline, distinct from its European counterparts, which stemmed from the diverse racial, cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds arising from the influx of immigrants since Columbus's voyages in 1492. Early concepts such as the "Melting Pot" and Transcendentalism laid the groundwork for the burgeoning of Comparative Literature in America.

By the mid-20th century, a surge of new ideas reshaped American societal, political, and intellectual spheres, catalyzed by post-war issues, the civil rights movement, feminist activism, migration, globalization, and technological advancements. This milieu, influenced by European academic paradigms, saw the ascendancy of post colonialism, feminism, cultural studies, ethnicity, and race studies as pivotal elements in shaping comparative studies in the USA. Claudio Guillen underscored crucial reasons behind the ascension of comparative literary studies in America:

The Fascism of 1930 caused a massive migration to the new world of a large number of esteemed artists intellectuals and scientists from all the latitudes and longitudes of Europe. The Universities of North America, in contrast to their European counterparts, recognized degrees granted by institutions in foreign countries; they did not regard themselves as closed enclaves. As a result, they benefited to a remarkable extent from such conjunction of the spirit of learning, reaching new heights in specialties as

diverse as the history of art, Physics, Sociology, Psychology, Psycho-analysis, Architecture, Political Science, History of Science, Linguistic-and also comparative literature". (Claudio Guillen, P. 60)

It was in September 1958, at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, the 'International Comparative Literature Association' (ICLA) was established during its Second Congress. Scholars and critics such as Harry Levin, Renato Poggioli, Northrop Frye, Roland Mortier, Haskell Block, Anne Balakian, A. Owen Albridge, Walter Holler, Antonio Alatorre, Guillermo de Torre, Francisco Lopez Estrada, among others, participated in this event.

#### **1.2.1.4 The Indian School:**

The Indian school of comparative studies offers a distinctive perspective to the evolution of comparative literature, given India's diverse tapestry of region, culture, language, races, ethnicity, and tradition. This adds a multilingual, multicultural, and transnational dimension to the study of diversities within the discipline. Indian comparatists engage in the comparative analysis of various Indian languages and literatures, encompassing Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Gujarati, Assamese, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, and more. Translation serves as a critical tool in comparing these linguistic traditions. Prominent figures in Indian comparative studies include Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sukanta Chaudhuri, A. K. Ramanujan, Bijay Kumar Das, Sisir Kumar Das, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Harish Trivedi, and R. K. Singh.

Significant strides in the field can be observed through the establishment of departments of comparative literature and/or courses in various Indian universities, such as Jadavpur University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Calicut, University of Hyderabad, University of Mumbai, EFL University, Central University of Gujarat, University of Delhi, and Maulana Azad National Urdu University, among others. Further, the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI) stands as the national association for scholars and students of comparative literature in India. CLAI actively advocates for a more comprehensive study of literature and culture by leveraging the tools of comparative literary studies. Originating in 1987, CLAI emerged from the merger of the Indian National Comparative Literature Association (INCLA) and the Comparative Indian Literature Association (CILA) in Kolkata and Delhi, respectively. Its major objectives include:

- To spread the concept of comparative literature among members of the academic community especially those involved in the single literature disciplines, and among other individuals, associations of institutions genuinely interested in Comparative Studies.

- To further national interaction through awareness of comparative literature among the linguistic states of India.
- To promote the ideal of one world by appreciation of comparative literature beyond national frontiers, and in pursuance thereof to rise above separate identities of single national literatures so that the all-embracing concept of Viswa-Sahitya as visualized by Tagore or Goethe's Weltliteratur may be realized as a measure of international understanding.
- To encourage interdisciplinary studies among educational institutions and other related bodies to promote the study of literature and other arts.

(Source: CLAI <https://www.clai.in/>)

Likewise, today almost every country has its own association of comparative literature, contributing to and drawing from the global framework of comparative literature.

### *Check your progress*

#### **Prominent Schools**

French School: Established comparative literature as a formal field, focusing on empiricist and positivist approaches.

German School: Emphasized historical and cultural contexts of literature, influenced by nationalism.

American School: Distinct due to diverse backgrounds and influences of post-war issues, civil rights movement, and globalization.

Indian School: Unique due to India's multicultural and multilingual context, with significant contributions to comparative literature.

#### **Key Figures and Contributions**

French: Abel-François Villemain, Jean-Jacques Ampère, Charles-Augustin Saint-Beuve.

German: Peter Szondi, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schlegel.

American: Harry Levin, Renato Poggioli, Northrop Frye.

Indian: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sukanta Chaudhuri, A. K. Ramanujan.

#### **Institutions and Associations**

Departments and courses in Indian universities like Jadavpur University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Calicut, and others.

Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI) promotes comparative studies and interdisciplinary approaches.

***Check your progress***

1. Can you explain the significance of comparative literature in understanding diverse cultures?

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2. Identify the key historical figures and their contributions to the development of comparative literature.

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3. Describe the primary trends that have shaped the understanding of literature post-World War II.

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4. Compare the approaches of the French, German, American, and Indian schools of comparative literature.

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5. Discuss the role of institutions and associations like CLAI in promoting comparative literature studies.

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6. Reflect on how comparative literature aids in fostering mutual understanding and harmonious coexistence within multicultural societies.

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**1.2.2 Comparative Literature as an Approach:**

"Comparative Literature", as Henry Remak says, "is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationship between the literature on one hand and the other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the art (i.e. painting, sculpture, architecture, music), philosophy, history, the social sciences, politics, economic, sociology, the sciences, religion, etc on the other hand. In brief, it is the comparison of one literature with other spheres of human expression" (*Comparative Literature; Method and Perspective*).

An intriguing facet of comparative literature is its contribution to and popularization of a comparative approach in scholarly pursuits, applicable to any subject, theme, or discipline. It necessitates comparison, not only among different languages or countries but also within a single language or country. This comparison extends beyond texts to encompass culture, art, writers,

experiences, religion, movements, and other aspects essential for a comprehensive comparative perspective.

### **1.2.3 Translation as a Tool of Comparative Literature:**

The history of translation dates back to ancient tales like the biblical story of the Tower of Babel in Christianity and historical accounts such as Cicero's era (106 – 43 BC), along with stories from ancient Babylon (3rd Millennium BC). Translation serves as a vehicle for removing language barriers and introducing diverse languages, cultures, societies, and literatures from across the globe. Its significance extends beyond the realm of linguistic studies, as Bijay Kumar Das coined it as "Linguistic Bridge–Building." Translation holds a crucial role in humanistic discourse within the domain of comparative literature. Comparative literature acts as a conduit for global humanism, akin to how translation serves as a bridge between languages and literatures. According to Bijay Kumar Das, translation plays a pivotal role in 'Nation building' in nations like India, Africa, and Canada. Similarly, comparative studies contribute significantly to fostering 'world humanism,' promoting global integrity, harmony, and peace.

Translation plays a pivotal role in comparative studies, especially when comparing texts in different languages. For instance, when comparing an Urdu novel with an English one, a knowledge of both the languages is necessary. If one lacks proficiency in both languages, translating the Urdu text into English or vice versa becomes essential for a comparative analysis. Susan Bassnett and Lefeverse underscored the significance of translation, highlighting its shaping influence on global development. They stated: “With the development of translation studies as a discipline in its own right... translation has been a major shaping force in the development of the world, and no study of comparative study can take place without regard to translation" (11).

However, it is essential to recognize that comparison within a language is also feasible. This form of comparison involves analyzing aspects of texts within the same language, yet stemming from different cultures, genres, settings, times, nations, or genders. For instance, the comparative study of Virginia Woolf and Arundhati Roy, despite their cultural, national, and temporal disparities, is viable because both authors write in English. Similarly, exploring themes, styles, periods, genres, ideologies, or identities within the same language across two or more texts is another facet of comparison. Examples include contrasting the English dramas of Shakespeare and modern Indian English dramas of Girish Karnard, or examining the poetry of Robert Frost and William Wordsworth. Within the Urdu language, comparative analysis of the

ideologies of Mohammad Iqbal and Faiz Ahmad Faiz falls into this category of 'within' language studies.

While translation is integral to comparative literature, it is crucial to acknowledge that comparative studies can exist without translation. Translation becomes essential when comparing texts in different languages, especially if one lacks proficiency in those languages. Although scholars like Susan Bassnett highlight translation studies as a primary discipline with comparative literature as a subsidiary area, others like Bijay Kumar Das emphasize that translation is inseparable from comparative literature. Their varied perspectives likely arise from different contexts or priorities concerning the role of translation in comparative studies.

#### **1.2.4 Understanding Comparative Literature through Reader Response Theory:**

The reader response theory provides an intriguing lens through which we can comprehend comparative literature and its interpretation by readers from diverse backgrounds. It emphasizes that the meaning of a text is not solely embedded in words but also in the interaction, experiences, background, and interpretation that a reader brings while engaging with it. Readers incorporate certain preexisting notions to connect and interrelate with the text. Despite aiming for objectivity, readers' subjective experiences inevitably influence their understanding. N. Krishnaswamy, in his *Contemporary Literary Theory*, contends that: "We cannot assume an objective, impartial, and detached stance, as our consciousness is entwined with historical and sociocultural 'phenomena,' which becomes deeply personal and inwardly absorbed" (12).

The doctrine of phenomenology, founded by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, underscores the role of the receiver or perceiver in constructing meaning. Husserl posits that our consciousness and the external world warrant philosophical exploration. According to him, the 'phenomenon' that appears in our consciousness encapsulates the fundamental attributes and universal essence of things. Wolfgang Iser, adopts a phenomenological approach to interpreting texts. In his essay, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," he contends that readers, while engaging with a text, construct a world of imagination that shapes 'the virtual dimension' of the text's meaning. Iser highlights the importance of understanding "unfamiliar" experiences while retaining our identity as readers. He explores how an active reader can maintain their own identity while engaging with "unfamiliar" material and yet remain familiar, referring to Poulet's conclusion: "Whatever I think is a part of my mental world. And yet here I am thinking a thought that manifestly belongs to another mental world, which is being thought in me just as though I did not exist. Already the notion is inconceivable and seems even more so if I

reflect that, since every thought must have a subject which is alien to me... Whenever I read, I pronounce is not myself."

When we read works like Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex" or Shakespeare's "Hamlet," we often notice some parallels between the character of Hamlet or King Oedipus and ourselves, mentally identifying with the 'I' as the reader, in alignment with Poulet's observation. However, upon finishing the text, we cannot maintain the same emotions and thoughts experienced while reading. We strive to identify similarities and differences between the protagonist and ourselves. Therefore, while studying comparative literature, we do not rigidly adhere to the "blend" of any specific nation or region, whether American, African, or any Western style. Instead, we seek to discern and assess standard values and establish a connection between the "self" and the "others." This approach allows us to comprehend the "others" similarly to how we understand ourselves, aiming to relate to the unfamiliar, as Iser states, "the unfamiliar to be understood."

### **1.2.5 Let Us Sum Up:**

The study of comparative literature is a journey that humbles us, reminding us that neither are we inherently superior nor is anyone else. Instead, it teaches us that every culture has its own Shakespeare, Ghalib, Wordsworth, Milton, Dickens, Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Kalidasa, and many more luminaries. Through comparative literature, we cultivate a deep cross-cultural appreciation, nurturing an interdisciplinary mindset and fostering critical thinking. It allows us to comprehend others in a harmonious, mutual manner, dismantling the rigid binary of 'us versus them.'

This field is pivotal in comprehending diversities, recognizing their relevance and importance, particularly in diverse, multicultural societies. Engaging with comparative literature enriches students by refining their skills in comparison, critical analysis, interdisciplinary study, cross-cultural understanding, and research methodologies. Moreover, it opens doors to the vast realm of world literature, enriching one's understanding of global perspectives, cultural diversity, and cross-cultural competence.

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## **1.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should have gained an understanding of Comparative Literature, its meaning, origins and evolution through the different schools. You should have also understood the importance of translation in the study of comparative literature.



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## 1.4 Glossary

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### **Intersectionality:**

Intersectionality stands as a framework for socio-cultural or literary studies. Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate, introduced this concept in 1989. According to the Oxford Dictionary intersectionality is “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.”

### **Intertextuality:**

Intertextuality, coined and developed by Julia Kristeva in 1966, delves into studying the relationship between two or more texts. It examines how they influence one another directly and indirectly by borrowing various elements. This approach was further developed by theorists such as reader-response theorist Roland Barthes, the Formalist Mikhail Bakhtin, and the Structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure.

### **Interdisciplinarity:**

Interdisciplinarity is a comprehensive and integrated approach used to understand novel or unique phenomena like globalization, migration, comparative literature, global studies, diaspora, and more. It arose due to the inadequacy of traditional disciplinary frameworks in studying emerging phenomena. It integrates methods, approaches, skills, and techniques from various disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

### **Translation:**

Translation refers to the act of rendering one text from one language into another. Its definition has expanded to encompass emotions and artistic forms in recent times.

### **Cultural Studies:**

Cultural studies holds equal importance in comparative literature departments. Sometimes, separate departments for comparative literature and cultural studies exist due to the distinct development of cultural studies as a field. It is an interdisciplinary field that emerged in the mid-20th century, emphasizing the relationship between culture and society. Cultural studies explores the connection between various cultural aspects (literature, art, religion, media, style, food, etc.) and social, political, economic, and historical processes and developments.

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## 1.5 Sample Questions

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### 1.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Which article by Rodriguez Lius discusses the origins of comparative literature?
  - (a) “Comparative Studies”
  - (b) “Comparative Literature”
  - (c) “Literature in Context”
  - (d) “Translation and Interpretation”
2. In which year was the term “Comparative Literature” first recorded?
  - (a) 1824
  - (b) 1877
  - (c) 1816
  - (d) 1886
3. Who published the first specialized journal on comparative literature in Cluj, Romania?
  - (a) Abel-François Villemain
  - (b) Hugo Meltzl
  - (c) Jean-Jacques Ampère
  - (d) Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett
4. What was one of the reasons behind the emergence of comparative literature in America?
  - (a) The rise of nationalism
  - (b) The diverse backgrounds of immigrants
  - (c) The influence of Asian scholars
  - (d) The spread of digital technologies
5. Where was the International Comparative Literature Association established?
  - (a) Paris, France
  - (b) Berlin, Germany
  - (c) Chapel Hill, USA
  - (d) Cluj, Romania
6. Which scholar highlighted translation’s role in nation-building in nations like India, Africa, and Canada?
  - (a) Susan Bassnett

- (b) Lefeverse
  - (c) Bijay Kumar Das
  - (d) James Liu
7. Which scholar used a phenomenological approach to interpret texts?
- (a) Fernand Baldensperger
  - (b) Roland Barthes
  - (c) Wolfgang Iser
  - (d) Philarete Charles
8. What is one of the key objectives of the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI)?
- (a) To publish exclusive literary works
  - (b) To spread the concept of comparative literature
  - (c) To promote single national literatures
  - (d) To limit studies to European languages
9. Who delivered lectures in Paris that were foundational to the French school of comparative literature?
- (a) Abel-François Villedieu
  - (b) Philarète Chasles
  - (c) Jean-Jacques Ampère
  - (d) Charles-Augustin Saint-Beuve
10. Which scholar emphasized that translation has been a major shaping force in global development?
- (a) Bijay Kumar Das
  - (b) Gerald Gillespie
  - (c) Susan Bassnett
  - (d) Henry Remak

### **1.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What constitutes the primary objective of comparative literature?
2. What role does translation play within the realm of comparative literature?
3. Define cross-cultural understanding in the context of comparative literature.
4. Who were the pioneering French scholars involved in the development of comparative literature?

5. What does CLAI stand for in the context of comparative literature?

### **1.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. What were the prevailing common factors contributing to the emergence of comparative literature?
2. What are the distinct schools of comparative literature and what contributions have they made to this field of study?
3. In what ways does comparative literature serve as a valuable research methodology?

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## **1.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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1. Mohan, Chandra. *Aspects of Comparative Literature*. 1989.
2. Gullen, Claudio. *The Challenges of Comparative Literature*.
3. Praver, S.S. *Comparative Literary Studies*. 1973.
4. Das, Bijay Kumar. *A Handbook of Translation Studies*. 2005.
5. Rodriguez, Luis Pegenaute. "Comparative Literature." ENTI (Encyclopedia of Translation and Interpretation), AIETI, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6366248>.

## Unit – 2: Significance of Comparative Literature in Indian Context

### Structure

#### 2.0 Introduction

#### 2.1 Objectives

#### 2.2 Significance of Comparative Literature in Indian Context

##### 2.2.1 Introduction to Comparative Literature

##### 2.2.2 Definition and Scope of Comparative Literature

##### 2.2.3 Introduction to Comparative Literature in India

##### 2.2.4 Understanding Comparative Literature

##### 2.2.5 Diversity of India: Cultures, Languages and Literatures

#### 2.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 2.4 Glossary

#### 2.5 Sample Questions

#### 2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 2.0 Introduction

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Comparative literature holds significant relevance in the Indian context due to the country's rich cultural diversity, multilingualism, and complex historical heritage. Here are several reasons why:

**Multilingualism:** India is home to hundreds of languages and dialects. Comparative literature provides a platform to explore and analyze literary works across different languages, allowing scholars to understand the interconnections and influences between various linguistic traditions.

**Cultural Diversity:** India's cultural landscape is incredibly diverse, with each region having its own distinct literary traditions, themes, and styles. Comparative literature enables scholars to examine these diverse literary traditions, identify commonalities, and appreciate the unique cultural perspectives reflected in different literary works.

**Historical Perspective:** India has a rich literary heritage that spans thousands of years. Comparative literature allows for the examination of how literary movements, themes, and genres have evolved over time, providing insights into the socio-cultural and historical contexts in which these works were produced.

**Colonial and Postcolonial Studies:** India's colonial history has had a profound impact on its literature and culture. Comparative literature provides a framework for analyzing colonial and postcolonial narratives, exploring issues of identity, power dynamics, and resistance in literary texts produced during and after the colonial period.

**Translation Studies:** Translation plays a crucial role in comparative literature, enabling the exchange of literary ideas and narratives across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In the Indian context, where many literary works exist in multiple languages, translation studies are essential for making these texts accessible to a wider audience and fostering cross-cultural dialogue.

Overall, comparative literature in the Indian context serves as a dynamic field of inquiry that fosters a deeper appreciation of the country's rich literary heritage, promotes cultural exchange and dialogue, and contributes to a broader understanding of global literary traditions.

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## 2.1 Objectives

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After going through the Unit, the students will be able to:

- know the importance of Comparative Literature in academics.
- understand the significance of Comparative Literature globally in general and in Indian context in particular.
- have the knowhow of historical perspectives of Comparative Literature.
- have a historical and contextual analysis Comparative Literature studies.

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## 2.2 Significance of Comparative Literature in Indian Context

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### 2.2.1 Introduction to Comparative Literature:

Comparative literature is a field that explores literature across different cultures, languages, and periods. It examines how literary texts from various traditions interact, influence

each other, and contribute to our understanding of human experiences and the world. Here's an introductory overview:

**Key Concepts:** Some key concepts in comparative literature include intertextuality (the relationship between texts), translation (the process of rendering texts from one language to another), reception theory (how texts are interpreted by different readers and cultures), and literary influence (how one author or tradition impacts another).

**Methodologies:** Comparative literature employs various methodologies, including close reading (analyzing texts in detail), historical contextualization (examining texts in their historical and cultural contexts), comparative analysis (identifying similarities and differences between texts), and theoretical frameworks (applying theories from literary criticism and other disciplines).

**Global Perspectives:** Comparative literature embraces a global perspective, challenging the dominance of Western literature and promoting the study of non-Western and marginalized literary traditions. This global approach fosters cross-cultural understanding and appreciation for the rich diversity of world literature.

**Implications:** Comparative literature has important implications for understanding cultural exchange, globalization, and the construction of literary canons. By studying how literary texts travel across borders and interact with different cultural contexts, scholars gain insights into the dynamics of cultural influence and the complexities of identity formation.

In essence, comparative literature offers a dynamic and inclusive approach to studying literature, fostering dialogue between different cultures and enriching our understanding of the human experience through the exploration of diverse literary traditions.

### **2.2.2 Definition and Scope of Comparative Literature:**

Comparative literature is an academic discipline that examines literature from different cultural, linguistic, and national contexts. Its scope encompasses the comparative study of literary works, authors, genres, movements, and themes across diverse cultural traditions. Here's a breakdown of its definition and scope:

**Definition:** Comparative literature involves the analysis, comparison, and interpretation of literary texts from multiple languages and cultures. It seeks to understand how literature reflects and shapes cultural identities, historical contexts, and universal human experiences. Comparative literature scholars explore connections, influences, and interactions between

literary traditions, often employing interdisciplinary approaches that draw on fields such as literary theory, cultural studies, linguistics, and history.

**Scope:**

- **Cross-cultural Comparison:** Comparative literature examines literary texts from different cultural contexts, including Western and non-Western traditions. It explores similarities, differences, and exchanges between literary works and traditions, shedding light on the diversity of human expression and cultural values.
- **Multilingual Analysis:** Comparative literature involves the study of texts written in various languages. Scholars may analyze translated works to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and explore the challenges and nuances of translation.
- **Interdisciplinary Exploration:** Comparative literature incorporates insights from diverse disciplines, including literary theory, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and history. This interdisciplinary approach enriches the analysis of literature by considering its socio-cultural, political, and historical dimensions.
- **Thematic and Genre Studies:** Comparative literature explores recurring themes, motifs, and genres across different literary traditions. Scholars may focus on specific themes (e.g., love, identity, migration) or genres (e.g., poetry, drama, novels) to analyze how they are expressed and interpreted in various cultural contexts.
- **Historical and Contextual Analysis:** Comparative literature considers the historical, political, and social contexts in which literary works are produced and received. Scholars examine how historical events, cultural movements, and ideological shifts influence literary production, reception, and interpretation.

Comparative literature offers a broad and inclusive framework for studying literature across cultures, languages, and historical periods. It fosters cross-cultural dialogue, expands literary canons, and deepens our understanding of the complexities of human expression and cultural diversity.

### **2.2.3 Introduction to Comparative Literature in India:**

Comparative literature in India is a dynamic and thriving field that explores the rich literary traditions of the Indian subcontinent in dialogue with global literary canons. Here's an introductory overview:

**Historical Context:** Comparative literature in India has deep roots, dating back to ancient times when Sanskrit scholars engaged in comparative studies of Indian epics, scriptures,



and philosophical texts. However, the modern discipline of comparative literature emerged during the colonial period, influenced by interactions with Western literary traditions and colonial education systems.

**Multilingualism and Diversity:** India's linguistic and cultural diversity is a hallmark of comparative literature studies in the country. Scholars explore literary works written in various Indian languages, including Sanskrit, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, and many others. This multilingual approach enriches comparative analyses and fosters a deeper understanding of India's literary heritage.

**Translation and Reception:** Translation plays a crucial role in comparative literature studies in India, facilitating the exchange of literary texts across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Scholars analyze translated works and their reception in different linguistic communities, exploring issues of fidelity, cultural adaptation, and power dynamics in the process of translation.

**Global Dialogues:** Comparative literature in India engages in dialogues with global literary traditions while also asserting the significance of indigenous literary expressions. Scholars critically examine the impact of globalization, diasporic literature, and transnational cultural flows on Indian literature, highlighting both its cosmopolitanism and its rootedness in local cultures.

**Challenges and Opportunities:** Comparative literature in India faces challenges such as linguistic diversity, uneven access to resources, and the dominance of English-language literature in academic discourse. However, it also presents opportunities for cross-cultural exchange, decolonizing knowledge production, and revitalizing lesser-known literary traditions.

Comparative literature in India offers a vibrant platform for exploring the rich tapestry of Indian literary expressions in dialogue with global literary discourses. It celebrates the diversity of Indian languages and cultures while engaging with broader questions of literary theory, cultural identity, and human experience.

#### **2.2.4 Understanding Comparative Literature:**

Understanding comparative literature involves delving into the exploration of literary texts across different cultures, languages, and periods to uncover connections, similarities, and differences. Here's a breakdown:

**Cross-Cultural Analysis:** Comparative literature examines how literary works from diverse cultural backgrounds interact, influence each other, and reflect universal human

experiences. It explores themes, motifs, and narrative techniques that transcend cultural boundaries, fostering an appreciation for the diversity of global literary traditions.

**Multilingual Perspective:** Comparative literature encompasses the study of literature written in various languages, including translations. Scholars analyze how linguistic differences shape literary expression and interpretation, and they explore the challenges and opportunities of translating texts across languages.

**Theoretical Frameworks:** Comparative literature employs various theoretical frameworks to analyze literary texts, such as structuralism, poststructuralism, feminism, postcolonialism, psychoanalysis, and reader-response theory. These theories offer different perspectives on how texts are produced, interpreted, and experienced across cultures.

**Methodological Tools:** Comparative literature utilizes diverse methodological tools, including close reading, comparative analysis, historical contextualization, reception theory, and translation studies. Scholars employ these tools to identify patterns, influences, and transformations in literary texts as they move across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

**Critical Dialogue:** Comparative literature fosters critical dialogue between different literary traditions, encouraging scholars to engage in cross-cultural exchanges and rethink conventional interpretations of texts. Through comparative analysis, scholars uncover new insights into the complexities of human experiences and cultural interactions.

Comparative literature offers a dynamic and inclusive approach to studying literature, transcending linguistic and cultural barriers to explore the universal themes, motifs, and narratives that unite humanity. It promotes cross-cultural understanding, enriches literary scholarship, and celebrates the diversity of global literary expressions.

### **2.2.5 Diversity of India: Cultures, Languages and Literatures:**

India is renowned for its remarkable diversity in cultures, languages, and literatures, reflecting its long history of civilization, migration, and cultural exchange. Let's explore each aspect:

#### **1. Cultures:**

- **Regional Diversity:** India is home to a vast array of regional cultures, each with its own distinct traditions, customs, and practices. From the vibrant festivals of Kerala to the colorful attire of Rajasthan, the cultural landscape of India is incredibly diverse.

- **Religious Diversity:** India is the birthplace of several major religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Each religion has left an indelible mark on Indian culture, shaping its art, architecture, festivals, and social customs.
- **Cuisine and Cuisine:** Indian cuisine varies significantly from region to region, reflecting local ingredients, cooking techniques, and cultural influences. Whether it's the spicy curries of the south or the aromatic biryanis of the north, Indian cuisine offers a tantalizing journey for the taste buds.
- **Arts and Crafts:** Indian arts and crafts showcase a rich tapestry of creativity and craftsmanship, from intricate silk sarees to ornate temple carvings. Each region boasts its own unique artistic traditions, including painting, sculpture, pottery, and textile weaving.

## 2. Languages:

- **Linguistic Diversity:** India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with over 22 officially recognized languages and hundreds of dialects. The major language families in India include Indo-Aryan (e.g., Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi), Dravidian (e.g., Tamil, Telugu, Kannada), and Austroasiatic (e.g., Odia, Santali).
- **Official Languages:** While Hindi and English are the official languages at the national level, each state in India has its own official language(s) as well. This linguistic diversity reflects the country's complex history of political, social, and cultural interactions.
- **Literary Traditions:** Each language in India boasts a rich literary heritage, with ancient epics, classical poetry, and modern literature that reflect the unique cultural and linguistic identity of its speakers. From the Sanskrit epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana to the Tamil Sangam poetry, Indian literature encompasses a vast and varied literary landscape.

## 3. Literatures:

- **Ancient Texts:** Indian literature has a long and distinguished history, with ancient texts dating back thousands of years. The Vedas, Upanishads, and epics like the Mahabharata and Ramayana are foundational texts that have shaped Indian culture and thought.
- **Classical Literature:** Indian classical literature encompasses works in Sanskrit, Tamil, and other classical languages, including epic poems, lyrical poetry, philosophical treatises, and dramatic plays. Writers like Kalidasa, Valmiki, and Thiruvalluvar have made enduring contributions to Indian literature.
- **Modern Literature:** Indian literature underwent a renaissance in the 19th and 20th centuries, with the emergence of modern writers who grappled with issues of social

reform, identity, and colonialism. Figures like Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, R.K. Narayan, and Mahasweta Devi have left an indelible mark on Indian literature.

In summary, the diversity of India's cultures, languages, and literatures is a testament to the country's rich and multifaceted heritage. It reflects the complexities of Indian society, its deep-rooted traditions, and its ongoing cultural evolution.

### **2.2.6 Significance of Comparative Literature in India:**

- how comparative analysis enhances our understanding of individual literary works and their socio-cultural contexts.

- Explore the role of comparative literature in academic settings, including universities and research institutions.

- Discuss the importance of incorporating comparative approaches in literature curricula to foster critical thinking and intercultural competence.

Comparative analysis plays a crucial role in enhancing our understanding of individual literary works and their socio-cultural contexts in several ways:

**Identifying Patterns and Themes:** Comparative analysis allows readers to identify recurring patterns, themes, and motifs across different works. By comparing multiple texts from the same period or culture, readers can discern commonalities and differences, shedding light on prevalent ideas, values, and concerns within a particular socio-cultural context.

**Contextualizing Literature:** Literature does not exist in a vacuum; it is deeply embedded within socio-cultural contexts. Comparative analysis helps situate individual works within broader historical, political, and cultural frameworks. By examining how different texts respond to similar social or historical events, readers gain insights into how literature both reflects and shapes the societies in which it is produced.

**Exploring Cultural Diversity:** Comparative analysis allows for the exploration of cultural diversity within and across literary traditions. By examining works from different cultures or regions, readers can appreciate the rich tapestry of human experience and gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity, ideology, and worldview.

**Highlighting Literary Influence:** Comparative analysis reveals the interconnectedness of literary texts and traditions. By tracing influences and intertextual references between works, readers can uncover layers of meaning and significance that might not be apparent when analyzing texts in isolation. This approach helps elucidate how literary movements evolve over time and how individual works contribute to broader literary traditions.

**Challenging Assumptions and Stereotypes:** Comparative analysis encourages readers to question assumptions and stereotypes about particular cultures or literary traditions. By juxtaposing diverse texts and perspectives, readers are prompted to critically evaluate preconceived notions and recognize the complexity and nuance inherent in cultural expression.

**Broadening Perspectives:** Comparative literature exposes students to a wide range of literary traditions, genres, and themes from diverse cultures and languages. By studying texts from different socio-cultural contexts, students gain a broader understanding of human experiences, beliefs, and values. This exposure encourages them to question their own assumptions and develop empathy and respect for cultural differences.

**Encouraging Critical Analysis:** Comparative approaches challenge students to critically analyze literary texts by examining similarities and differences across cultures. They learn to identify underlying themes, motifs, and narrative techniques, as well as the socio-historical contexts that shape literary production. This analytical process enhances their ability to engage with complex ideas and construct well-reasoned arguments.

**Promoting Intercultural Dialogue:** Comparative literature fosters intercultural dialogue and exchange by encouraging students to explore connections and contrasts between different literary traditions. Through discussions and collaborative projects, students learn to appreciate the richness of cultural diversity and recognize the universal themes that transcend linguistic and geographical boundaries. This dialogue promotes mutual understanding and breaks down stereotypes and prejudices.

**Developing Language Proficiency:** Comparative literature curricula often involve the study of texts in their original languages or through translations. This exposure to different linguistic structures and literary styles enhances students' language proficiency and fluency. It also enables them to engage more deeply with the cultural nuances and subtleties embedded in the texts, thereby expanding their communicative competence.

**Cultivating Critical Awareness:** Comparative approaches in literature curricula cultivate critical awareness by encouraging students to examine the ways in which power dynamics, colonial legacies, and socio-political factors influence literary production and reception. They learn to interrogate dominant narratives and to recognize marginalized voices and perspectives within the literary canon. This critical consciousness empowers students to challenge injustice and advocate for social change.

**Preparing Global Citizens:** In an increasingly interconnected world, intercultural competence is essential for effective communication and collaboration across cultural boundaries. Comparative literature equips students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to navigate diverse cultural landscapes and to engage meaningfully with people from different backgrounds. It prepares them to become informed and empathetic global citizens capable of addressing complex global challenges.

Incorporating comparative approaches in literature curricula is essential for fostering critical thinking and intercultural competence among students. By exposing them to a diverse range of literary texts and perspectives, comparative literature prepares students to engage thoughtfully with the complexities of the human experience and to navigate an increasingly interconnected world with empathy, understanding, and respect. Comparative analysis deepens our appreciation of individual literary works by placing them in dialogue with one another and with the socio-cultural contexts from which they emerge. By fostering a nuanced understanding of literature and its cultural significance, comparative analysis enriches our engagement with texts and broadens our perspective on the world.

### **2.2.7 Future Directions and Challenges:**

- Examine the challenges faced by scholars and practitioners of comparative literature in India, such as linguistic barriers and funding constraints.
- Discuss potential opportunities for overcoming these challenges and advancing the field of comparative literature.

Scholars and practitioners of comparative literature in India encounter various challenges, including linguistic barriers and funding constraints, which can significantly impact their research and academic pursuits.

**Linguistic Barriers:** India is a linguistically diverse country with hundreds of languages spoken across its regions. While this diversity enriches the field of comparative literature by providing a vast array of literary traditions to study, it also poses challenges. Scholars may face difficulties in accessing and analyzing literary texts written in languages with which they are not familiar. Translation efforts are essential but often insufficient, as nuances and cultural contexts may be lost in translation. Moreover, the dominance of certain languages, such as English and Hindi, can marginalize literary works in regional languages, hindering their inclusion in comparative studies.

**Limited Resources and Funding Constraints:** Comparative literature research requires access to a wide range of resources, including books, journals, databases, and archival materials. However, many academic institutions and research centers in India face resource constraints, which can impede scholars' ability to conduct thorough comparative analyses. Additionally, funding for research projects in comparative literature may be limited, especially for interdisciplinary or multilingual studies. This lack of financial support can hinder scholars' efforts to undertake ambitious research projects or attend conferences and workshops essential for academic networking and collaboration.

**Institutional Support and Recognition:** Comparative literature is sometimes overlooked or undervalued within academic institutions in India, which may prioritize more traditional disciplines. As a result, scholars working in this field may struggle to receive adequate institutional support, including access to research facilities, mentorship, and opportunities for professional development. Furthermore, the lack of recognition for comparative literature as a distinct academic discipline can hinder scholars' career advancement prospects and funding opportunities.

**Political and Cultural Sensitivities:** India's complex socio-political landscape can present challenges for scholars engaged in comparative literature research, particularly when examining sensitive or controversial topics. Censorship, political pressure, and cultural taboos may restrict the scope of inquiry or discourage scholars from exploring certain themes or literary works. Negotiating these challenges while upholding academic integrity and intellectual freedom requires careful navigation and sometimes entails self-censorship to avoid backlash or persecution.

Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from scholars, academic institutions, funding agencies, and policymakers. Initiatives to promote linguistic diversity, increase funding for comparative literature research, enhance institutional support, and safeguard academic freedom are crucial for fostering a vibrant and inclusive scholarly community in India.

### **2.2.8 Conclusion:**

Concluding an introduction to comparative literature would ideally tie together the key themes, goals, and methodologies discussed in the text. Here's a sample concluding note:

"In wrapping up our exploration of comparative literature, we have embarked on a journey through the rich tapestry of global literary traditions, unveiling both the universal human experiences that unite us and the diverse cultural landscapes that define us. From the nuanced

analysis of themes and motifs to the examination of translation, intertextuality, and cross-cultural influences, we have witnessed the power of comparative literature to transcend boundaries and foster a deeper understanding of ourselves and others.

As we conclude, let us remember that the essence of comparative literature lies not only in the study of differences but also in the celebration of connections. It challenges us to engage with texts as windows into different worlds, inviting us to empathize with perspectives beyond our own. Through this interdisciplinary lens, we gain insight into the complexities of human existence and the myriad ways in which literature reflects and shapes our shared reality.

Moving forward, may our journey in comparative literature inspire us to continue exploring, questioning, and seeking common ground amidst diversity. Let us embrace the transformative potential of literature to bridge divides and cultivate empathy, fostering a more interconnected and compassionate global community."

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## 2.3 Learning Outcomes

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After going through the Unit, the students are expected to:

- understand the importance of Comparative Literature.
- know the significance of Comparative Literature discipline in Indian context.
- know the influence of cultures on Comparative Literature.
- have the understanding of challenges in Comparative Literature discipline.

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## 2.4 Glossary

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**Incredibly:** Amazingly

**Fostering:** Nurturing

**Intertextuality:** The relationship between texts, especially literary ones

**Literary Canons:** It is the collection of works considered representative of a period or genre

**Nuances:** A subtle difference or distinction in expression, meaning, response, etc.

**Recurring:** Continual

**Hallmark:** A mark or sign of authenticity or excellence

**Tapestry:** Complexity



**Structuralism:** Structuralism is a method of interpreting and analysing such things as language, literature, and society, which focuses on contrasting ideas or elements of structure and attempts to show how they relate to the whole structure.

**Poststructuralism:** Poststructuralism refers to a way of thinking that emphasizes the radical uncertainty of knowledge (particularly knowledge in language) and posits that “truth” is not a fixed concept, but instead constantly changes based on your cultural, political, social, and economic position in the world.

**Feminism:** The belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men

**Postcolonialism:** The historical period or state of affairs representing the aftermath of Western colonialism

**Psychoanalysis:** Psychoanalytic theory is based on the assumption that individuals have unconscious thoughts, desires, memories, and feelings which may cause clinical symptoms.

**Reader-Response Theory:** It focuses on the reader or audience reaction to a particular text, perhaps more than the text itself.

**Motifs:** An idea that is used many times in a piece of writing

**Tantalizing:** Making you want something that you cannot have or do; tempting

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## 2.5 Sample Questions

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### 2.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. India is home to hundreds of languages and dialects.

- (a) True                      (b) False

2. Comparative literature allows for the examination of how literary movements, themes, and genres have evolved over time.

- (a) True                      (b) False

3. India's colonial history has no impact on its literature and culture.

- (a) True                      (b) False

4. Translation plays a crucial role in comparative literature.

- (a) True                      (b) False

5. Some of the key concepts of comparative literature are intertextuality, translation, reception theory, and literary influence.

(a) True                      (b) False

6. Comparative literature does not employ close reading methodology.

(a) True                      (b) False

7. Comparative literature is an academic discipline that examines literature from different cultural, linguistic, and national contexts.

(a) True                      (b) False

8. Comparative literature explores recurring themes, motifs, and genres across different literary traditions.

(a) True                      (b) False

9. India's linguistic and cultural diversity is a hallmark of comparative literature studies in the country.

(a) True                      (b) False

10. Comparative literature in India faces challenges such as linguistic diversity, uneven access to resources, and the dominance of English-language literature in academic discourse.

(a) True                      (b) False

### **2.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Give a brief introduction to Comparative Literature.
2. Discuss in brief the key concept of Comparative Literature.
3. Analyze the historical perspective of Comparative Literature in short.
4. Describe in short the importance of translation in Comparative Literature.
5. How linguistic barriers affect Comparative Literature studies?

### **2.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. What is the significance of Comparative Literature discipline in a multilingual and multicultural country like India?
2. What are the challenges of Comparative Literature studies?
3. What are the scopes of Comparative Literature in India?

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## 2.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Ahmad, Aijaz. "'Indian Literature': Notes towards the Definition of a Category." In *Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. Aijaz Ahmad. London: Verso, 1992.
2. Das, Sisir Kumar. *A History of Indian Literature. Vol 1: 1800-1910: Western Impact / Indian Response*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1991.
3. George, K.M., ed. *Comparative Indian Literature*. Madras and Trichur: Macmillan and Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 1984-85. 2 vols.
4. Majumdar, Swapan. *Comparative Literature: Indian Dimensions*. Calcutta: Papyrus, 1985.

## Unit - 3: Walter Benjamin: excerpt from *The Task of a Translator*

### Structure

#### 3.0 Introduction

#### 3.1 Objectives

#### 3.2 *The Task of the Translator*

##### 3.2.1 Walter Benjamin as a Critic

##### 3.2.2 Function of Translation

##### 3.2.3 Translation as a Mode / Translatability

##### 3.2.4 Kinship of Languages

##### 3.2.5 The Poet and the Translator

##### 3.2.6 Fidelity and License

##### 3.2.7 Errors in Harry Zohn's Translation

#### 3.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 3.4 Glossary

#### 3.5 Sample Questions

#### 3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 3.0 Introduction

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The essay, *The Task of the Translator*, was originally titled *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*. It takes into account the German translated version of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens* by Walter Benjamin. It was a foreword to *Tableaux Parisiens*. *Tableaux Parisiens* consists of eighteen poems which Benjamin incorporated in the second edition of his work *Les Fleurs du Mal* (*Flowers of Evil*) in 1861.

The essay perceives translation in its inter-linguistic dimensions. In this essay, Benjamin deals with the aspects of communication in language. The essay also focuses on the historical features of languages. Benjamin rejects the role of the audience in both critical appreciation of the work as well as literal translation. According to him, translation is a mode. Some literary works possess the feature of translatability. The original text is related to the translated text. Translation can thus be considered as an afterlife of the original. Benjamin conceptualizes translation as reflection of the original and translation and original as parts of the larger domain i.e. language.

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## 3.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- know the contribution of Walter Benjamin as a critic and a translator
- understand the significance of translation
- consider translation as a mode and know the task of the translator
- determine kinship of languages inherent in translation
- distinguish between the poet and the translator
- discuss fidelity and license as contradictory concepts in translation
- show how errors in Harry Zohn's translation of Walter Benjamin's essay *The Task of the Translator* alters its original intended meaning

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## 3.2 *The Task of the Translator*

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As already pointed out in the "Introduction," in this essay, Benjamin perceives translation in its inter-linguistic dimensions. He lays down the role of a translator and his responsibilities. This essay provides an insightful reading into Comparative literature where the role of translation is immense. Benjamin rejects the role of the audience in both critical appreciation of the work as well as literal translation. So, according to him, translation is not audience or reader-centric.

### 3.2.1 Walter Benjamin as a Critic:

Born on 15 July 1892, into a rich Jewish family, Walter B. Benjamin attended a boarding school in Haubinda, Thuringa. There he was associated with the liberal educational reformer, Gustav Wyneken. Later, he wrote for *Der Anfang*, a journal which was devoted to Wyneken's ideas about the spiritual purity of youth. He actively participated in the Youth Movement.

Walter B.S. Benjamin was a German Jewish philosopher, cultural critic and essayist. He was influenced by German idealism, Romanticism, Western Marxism and Jewish mysticism. He made significant contributions to aesthetic theory, literary criticism and historical materialism. Being an associate of the Frankfurt School, he had friendship with the dramatist Bertolt Brecht and the Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem.

"*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*" (1935) and "*Theses on the Philosophy of History*" (1940) are his well-known essays. He also wrote essays on Baudelaire,

Goethe, Kafka, Kraus, Leskov, Proust, Walser and translation theory. He translated the section of Baudelaire's "*Les Fleurs du Mal*" and parts of Proust's "*A la recherche du temps perdu*" into German. The ideas of Brecht, Adorno, Scholem, Eric Gutkind and Ludwig Klages inspired him. Marxism, Jewish mysticism and occultism influenced his works.

Walter Benjamin received *summa cum laude* award in 1919 for his Ph.D thesis titled *The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism*. He had to withdraw his thesis from the University of Frankfurt in 1925. But it was published in book form in 1928 and garnered good reviews in journals and newspapers. It also formed the core of a seminar course taken up by Theodore W. Adorno at Frankfurt University in 1932-33.

Walter Benjamin was exiled in 1933. The Institute for Social Research funded him for his academic activities during 1930s. This enabled him to complete works like "*The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility*" and "*The Arcades Project*." Walter Benjamin stayed in French concentration camps for Germans in 1939 during World War. Benjamin returned to Paris but fled again due to the advent of German Army in 1940. He tried to emigrate to Spain illegally, but was stopped by the customs officials. He became frustrated and committed suicide on 27 September 1940 on the border of Spain.

### ***Check your progress***

- 1) Explain Walter Benjamin's contribution to cultural and critical thought.
- 2) What was Benjamin's work on translation?
- 3) What were the influences on Benjamin's work?

### **3.2.2 Function of Translation:**

Benjamin disregards the role of reception in critical appreciation of any literary work. The consideration of reader in the evaluation of literature is a flawed idea. He opines that all art unravels man's nature and existence but, is not concerned with his response. He argues that translation is not meant for the reader who does not read the original. It entails that he considers translation as a form. Translation merely seems to convey ideas inherent in the original. Benjamin regards the assumption of translation holding true to the original as futile. For him, literary work is not about communication.

He believes that translation must not attempt to reproduce the meaning of the original as it is not necessary to appreciate it. According to him, any translation which provides only information is a bad translation. He contends that a literary work not only conveys the meaning

but also possesses aesthetic qualities. Hence, the translator can reproduce the same features of the original in the translated text only if he is also a poet.

The translators do not possess the qualities of a poet in most of the cases. So this often results in inferior translation. Benjamin argued that the original is not aimed at the reader. So the question of translation aiming at the reader does not arise.

***Check your progress***

- Explain Walter Benjamin's view on reception of any literary work.
- What is the function of literary work, according to Benjamin?
- What are the causes of inferior translation, according to Benjamin?

**3.2.3 Translation as a mode / Translatability:**

Walter Benjamin does not regard the function of language as communication necessary in relation to translation. He considers translation as a form which depends on the extent to which the original can be translated. Translatability entails two meanings; first, an adequate translator to be found and second, whether the work demands to be translated. A work which has all the qualities of being great needs to be translated. It ascertains whether a particular work has the features that can enable its translation.

Some literary works are characterized by their translatability. It does not mean that they should be translated. The significance of an original text is seen in the translated texts. The original text is related to its translation. Even a good translation comes nowhere near the original in terms of its significance. Translation emerges from the original text; hence it can be considered as its afterlife. The original gains significance through translation. The original text is translated later. The translation does not take place immediately after the original creation. It is through translation that the original text reaches a wider audience. The original becomes more popular after its translation. Conversely, only popular texts are translated. Benjamin points out that the philosopher understands natural life via the phases of history. Every concept is evolutionary. It has its own history. Similarly, the history of the great works of art takes into consideration the earlier works, their significance in the age of the artist and its future impact and relevance. This concept is similar to T.S. Eliot's notion of 'tradition' wherein he stressed the need to understand the present works in the light of the past works and their potential impact on the future. The work acquires much significance if it is able to retain its relevance in the future. Translatability thus holds its relevance in the future. Hence, translatability is a quality of a select few works that are significant and famous. Benjamin laid more emphasis on the literary works

when translating than on the ability of the translator. He pointed out that the task of the translator is to "renew" great works.

### ***Check your progress***

- What does Benjamin mean by translatability?
- How can translation be considered an afterlife of the original?
- What is the task of the translator?

### **3.2.4 Kinship of Languages:**

Translation of the original work has a special purpose. As the purposes of all forms of life are reflected in their nature and significance, similar is the case with translation. According to Benjamin, the aim of translation is to show reciprocal relationship between languages. Translation represents kinship of languages which is ever present. Benjamin suggests that kinship does not indicate similarity. So, translations do not show it by portraying the form and meaning of originals exactly. Benjamin rejects the concept of the kinship of languages based on similarity or common origins. However, he suggested the concept of pure language, which indicates that languages are complementary in nature.

Benjamin is apprehensive that the kinship of languages can be shown without portraying the form and meaning of the original exactly. Hence, the theory of translation cannot encapsulate this accuracy and could never point out the significant criteria to be taken care of in a translation. But the kinship of languages is evident in a translation very precisely as compared to the similar nature of two literary works. The association between an original and a translation can be seen in the light of cognitive theory. As there can be no objectivity in cognition, similarly translation cannot be done if it aims to be similar to the original. Translation has a special purpose.

Translation is transformative; the original text changes in due process. Benjamin suggests that the temporal aspect should be taken into account for the translation process. Time brings changes both in the original and its translation. Time effects changes both in the original as well as its translation. Time effects change in the native language of the translator also. Therefore, translation is provisional. Benjamin refers to the historical development of language. He suggests that words and their meanings undergo change. Even the writer's literary style may become outdated with the passage of time. Translation is bound to oversee the growth of its own language. Eventually, it renews the language. Thus, the translator observes the historical evolution of the original language and then develops his own new, renewed language.



The kinship of languages manifests in translation not because of similarity between the original and the translated text. Kinship does not mean similarity. Benjamin observes that the relatedness of two languages cannot be seen either in two literary works or words. The kinship of languages lies in the motive laid bare in each language. These languages correlate with each other as their intentions are similar. Thus, Benjamin evolves a notion of "pure language" which envisions an amalgamation of the different world languages. He suggests that this language should be the medium of the translator's domain. A single language cannot evince this relationship between languages. This relationship can be experienced only when one language passes into another language. But no translator can manage all the world languages in a single sample of translation. The translator just highlights the interaction of two languages in the large linguistic domain that comprises all languages, the pure language. Benjamin points out that languages supplement each other in intention.

Benjamin distinguishes between *das Gemeinte* (what is meant) and *Art des Meinens* (the manner of meaning it) to explain the relationship between languages captured in a pure language. He points out that the French word *pain* and the German word *Brot* are two ways which mean 'bread'. These are different manners used to refer to the same object - bread. Thus *pain*, *brot* and *bread* are the words related to each other and fall in the domain of pure language. These words possess the same meaning but are expressed differently. The different words belonging to the different languages of the world evince the various ways how the same object unravels meaning. The translator aims to convey in his own language the way other languages unravel meaning. The translator must not just translate the words *pain* or *brot* as *bread* but reveal how 'bread' means differently in French and German. For example, the German word *brot* includes the short word which means the colour *red*. It is evinced in the sound of the English word *bread* which rhymes with the colour *red*. However, this association between *bread* and *redness* is not evident in the French words *pain* and *rouge* bearing the same relation. Benjamin advocates the poetic mode of perception of what words mean in translation too. He considers *Art des Meinens*, the form crucial in translation than *das Gemeinte*, the content. For him, manner of meaning is exclusive to the other language and the meaning that is evolved is the same in all the languages. Hence, the translator should not disclose the content of the original, but its way of representing the meaning.

The authentic translation reflects in the target language the way in which a foreign language evinces meaning and shows the typical manner of meaning observed in the original.

Benjamin points out that authentic translation can be done through the exact transliteration of the syntax, which hints that words are important in translation. The sentence is meaningful but an obstacle for a translator. It is necessary to ignore what the foreign text is about. It is essential to dismantle sentences into words and syntactical components and transmit them into one's own language by exact transliteration of syntax.

The chief purpose of translation remains elusive. It cannot be translated as the association between the content and language is not the same in the original and translation. The content and language is unitary in the original but multi-layered in translation.

Benjamin suggests that translation is provisional. Translation cannot claim permanence but its goal is to reach the higher level of linguistic domain. Translation transfers not only subject matter but also exalts language.

### ***Check your progress***

- How does translation represent kinship of languages?
- What is Walter Benjamin's notion of 'pure language'?
- How is translation provisional in nature, according to Walter Benjamin?

### **3.2.5 The Poet and the Translator:**

The original text continues to acquire fame and significance with the passage of time. Romanticists had a special ability to analyze literary works. But they never looked at translation seriously and focused on literary criticism. However, their own translations acknowledge the existence of its literary mode. The poet may not be a translator. Even literary history does not suggest that great poets were famous translators and little-known poets were indifferent translators. Eminent poets as Luther, Voss and Schlegel were good translators. Holderlin and Stefan George were poets as well as translators. Translations are different. Hence, the translator's task is different from the poet's work.

The job of the translator is to find the factors that impact on the language he uses for translation that create the reflection of the original. The translator must direct specific intentions towards the target language, which creates an echo of the original. The concept of echo establishes the relationship of the translator with language, which is different from the relationship the poet has with language. The relationship of translation with language is oriented towards language as a whole. This feature of translation distinguishes it from the work of the poet. The poet focuses only on certain linguistic contextuality. The poet's intention is

spontaneous and primary while the translator's intention is secondary. In a translation, integration of many languages into one whole language is done. Such a language is the language of truth and philosophical in orientation. A good translation reflects the intention of the original in a harmonious manner. Thus, translation is tucked between poetry and philosophy. Translated works are not clearly defined but leave an impact on literary history.

### ***Check your progress***

- What was the attitude of Romanticists towards translation?
- What is the difference between the poet and the translator?
- How does language evolve in a translation?

### **3.2.6 Fidelity and License:**

Walter Benjamin relates translation with reproducibility, which is a feature of cultural forms like photography and cinema. The concepts of fidelity and license are crucial in a discourse on translation. The liberty of exact replication and fidelity to the word are no longer tenable in translation. In translation, fidelity to words cannot completely replicate the original's meaning.

Benjamin suggests that sense in a poetic work does not imply meaning alone. It suggests connotations of words too. So 'fidelity' to translation appears to be a misnomer. Words possess emotional connotations. Literal translation of syntax diminishes the theory of reproduction. It is a barrier to the clear understanding of text. Holderlin's translations of Sophocles prove this point. Fidelity in reproducing the form hinders the content or the meaning. So literalness is not synonymous with sense. The provision of a license enables even the bad translators to provide some meaning. According to Benjamin, the successful translator must endeavor to reach the core of an original work and then try to replicate it. He must not take only the words at their face value and the etymological changes historically, but also the connotations of a word. The context should be taken into account during translation.

The association between the original and the translation is similar to the fragments of a larger language. The languages must complete each other. So translation should not attempt to simply convey sense. The language of the translation must express the intention of the original. It should not aim to reproduce but act as a supplement to the language. Fidelity is ensured by literalness, which affirms that languages should be complemented. A general translation must

have transparency. It should allow the pure language of the original to unravel. This is possible through the exact transliteration of the syntax. It suggests that words are crucial for a translator.

Fidelity and license in translation are contradictory concepts. License essentially means freedom to render sense, but it is not considered important. Benjamin suggests that in a pure language, all information is extinguished. This extinction of meaning is freedom from the communicative aspects of language. He holds that language is pure only when it does not communicate. According to Benjamin, the communication of information cannot be transmitted accurately. In a language, context decides the meaning. Translation has the ability to regain pure language. To achieve this ability, a free translation uses its own language. The job of the translator is to unravel the pure language which shows allegiance to another language. The task also includes breaking the barriers of one's own language. Translation reflects the original minimally in sense and utilizes the freedom minimally in sense and utilizes the freedom to pursue its own linguistic path. The German philosopher and poet Rudolf Pannwitz blames translation for attempting to focus only on the source language rather than the target language. The flaw of the translator, according to Benjamin, is that he is obsessed with his own language and never considers the essence of the foreign language.

Benjamin further points out that adhering to the norms of foreign language also depends on the extent to which the original is translatable. The low quality language and the bulky information make the translation impossible. If the level of the work is high, it becomes translatable. Translations are untranslatable due to the loose meaning attached to them. Benjamin praises the German romantic poet Friedrich Holderlin for his translations of the Greek tragic drama *Sophocles* and refers to them as models. He points out that all great texts, particularly sacred writings, are more translatable. It suggests that they are translatable as these texts contain the truth and the language is truthful too. Benjamin suggests that translation should resemble the original and literalness and freedom should intertwine in both the original and translation. He regards the nature of Scriptures as ideal for all translation.

### ***Check your progress***

- Explain how fidelity and license in translation are contradictory concepts.
- What must the successful translator attempt to do, according to Walter Benjamin?
- What is the prototype of all translations, according to Walter Benjamin?

### 3.2.7 Errors in Harry Zohn's Translation:

Walter Benjamin's "*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*" was translated into English as "*The Task of the Translator*" by Harry John in 1968. This version is quite well-known to English readers. However, there are some errors in this translation.

The first error can be seen in the following sentence:

*“gewisse Relationsbegriffe ihren guten, ja vielleicht besten Sinn behalten wenn sie nicht von vorne herein ausschliesslich auf den Menschen bezogen warden”.*

(Benjamin 1980:10)

*“certain correlative concepts retain their meaning, and possibly their foremost significance, if they are referred exclusively to man.”*

(Benjamin 1968:70)

The negative is omitted, which changes the meaning and it becomes difficult to follow Benjamin's argument. Paul de Man considers this omission significant as it does not reveal Benjamin's emphasis on the inhuman and mechanized operation of language.

The second omission occurs in the sentence below:

*“Wenn aber diese derart bis ans messianische Ende ihrer Geschichte wachsen. ....”*

(Benjamin 1980:14)

*“If, however, these languages continue to grow in this manner until the end of their time...”*

(Benjamin 1968:78)

Zohn does not translate the word “messianisch.” It is crucial due to the emphasis on the influence of messianism on Benjamin and this essay.

The third omission can be found in the sentence below as Benjamin talks about “Wesenhafte Kern”, which is the main task of the translator:

*“Des erreicht es nicht mir Stumpf und Stiel, aber in ihm steht dasjenige, was an einer Übersetzung mehr ist als Mitteilung. Genauer lässt sich dieser wesenhafte Kern als dasjenige bestimmen, was*

*an ihr selbst nicht wiederum übersetzbar is.”*

(Benjamin 1980:15)

*“The transfer can never be total but what reaches this region is that element in a translation which goes beyond transmittal of subject matter. This nucleus is best defined as the element that does not lend itself to translation.”*

(Benjamin 1968:75)

Here, Zohn does not translate the words “an ihr” and “wiederum” which suggests that an object of the translator’s main task is beyond his reach. This implies that the aspect of “wessenhafte kern” reflected in a translation cannot be translated again. It ensues that translation of a translation blocks access to the core of the language. Benjamin here refers to the translatability of the text but the clarification is not perceptible.

The fourth omission takes place in a sentence wherein Benjamin discusses the issue of fidelity and freedom in translation.

*“Treue and Freiheit- Freiheit der sinn gemassen Wiedergabe und in ihrem Dienst Treue gegen das Wort- sind die althergebrachten Begriffe in jeder Diskussion von Übersetzungen.”*

(Benjamin 1980:17)

*“The traditional concepts in any discussion of translation are fidelity and license- the freedom of faithful reproduction, and in its service, fidelity to the word.”*

(Benjamin 1968:79)

Zohn leaves the words “sinn gemassen Wiedergabe”. This makes it difficult for the audience to understand that freedom which Benjamin makes reference to is the same freedom emphasized by Horace, Dryden and other translation theorists to abandon word-for-word translation and seek to transfer content (meaning) in a translation. This omission causes a misunderstanding of Benjamin’s text/essay which can be seen in the below passage translated by Zohn.

*“Wenn Treue and Freiheit der Übersetzung*

*seit jeher als widerstrebende Tendenzen betrachtet wurden so scheint auch diese tiefere Deutung der einen beide nicht zu versöhnen, sondern im Gegenteil alles Recht der andern abzusprechen. Denn worauf bezieht Freiheit sich, wenn nicht auf die Wiedergabe des Sinnes, die aufhören soil, gesetzgebend zu heissen?”*

(Benjamin 1968:18-19)

*“Fidelity and freedom have traditionally been regarded as conflicting tendencies. This deeper interpretation of the one apparently does not serve to reconcile the two; in fact, it seems to deny the other all justification. For what is meant by freedom but that the rendering of the sense is no longer to be regarded as all important?”*

(Benjamin 1968:79)

Zohn’s translation implies that the reevaluated idea is freedom and this reinterpretation renders the issue of fidelity futile. It is contrary to what Benjamin’s text argues. The above passage offers the meaning of the word Wortlichkeit as a reinterpretation of fidelity which Benjamin refers to. Hence, the concept implied through this reevaluation is freedom. The last sentence could have been like this:

“For what can the point of freedom be, if not the reproduction of meaning, which is no longer to be regarded as normative?”

### ***Check your progress***

- What are the errors in Harry Zohn’s translation of Walter Benjamin’s essay *The Task of the Translator*?
- What is the impact of Harry Zohn’s leaving the translation of the word “messeianisch”?
- What change in meaning occurs when Zohn does not translate the words “sinngemassen Wiedergabe”?

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### 3.3 Learning Outcomes:

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At the end of this Unit, you should be able to have an understanding of Walter Benjamin's translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux* into German and his contribution to aesthetic theory and literary criticism. You should be able to know that translation should not make an effort to transfer the meaning of the original, but communicate the aesthetic qualities of the original. You should remember that the poet's intention is primary and spontaneous while the intention of the translator is secondary. Fidelity and license are contradictory concepts in relation to translation. Fidelity envisions likeness to the original, whereas license to convey the sense empowers translator to take liberty with original. You should also know that some errors are observed in Harry Zohn's translation of Walter Benjamin's essay *The Task of the Translator*. These errors inadvertently deviate the meaning which Benjamin sought to explicate originally.

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### 3.4 Glossary

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<b>Detrimental:</b>	Causing harm or damage
<b>Symphony:</b>	Agreement, balance
<b>Divergence:</b>	Separation
<b>Unfathomable:</b>	Incapable of being fully explored or understood
<b>Contingently:</b>	Dependent on or conditioned by something else
<b>Apodictically:</b>	Incontestable, logically certain
<b>Plausible:</b>	Possibly true, reasonable
<b>Corporeality:</b>	Bodily existence
<b>Tenuous:</b>	Very weak or uncertain
<b>Antecedents:</b>	A thing or an event that exists or comes before another
<b>Convergence:</b>	Junction, intersection
<b>Cognition:</b>	Perception
<b>Immanent:</b>	Inherent; existing, operating or remaining within
<b>Hackneyed:</b>	Stereotyped
<b>Quaint:</b>	Old-fashioned or unfamiliar



<b>Perpetual:</b>	Everlasting, constant
<b>Hallowed:</b>	Holy, revered
<b>Superfluous:</b>	More than wanted; not needed
<b>Reverberation:</b>	A continuing effect; an echoing sound
<b>Ideational:</b>	Being of the nature of a notion or concept
<b>Depository:</b>	A place, especially a large building, for storing things
<b>Muse:</b>	Inspiration
<b>Banauistic:</b>	Relating to ordinary people or ordinary jobs
<b>Rudiments:</b>	A basic principle or element or a fundamental skill
<b>Fidelity:</b>	The quality of being accurate or close to the original
<b>Impedes:</b>	To interfere with or slow the progress of
<b>Arcade:</b>	Gallery
<b>Reconcile:</b>	Adapt, adjust, conform
<b>Stratum:</b>	Layer
<b>Pre-ponderance:</b>	Predominance, advantage
<b>Abyss:</b>	A difficult situation that brings trouble
<b>Vouchsafed:</b>	To tell or give something to someone
<b>Watershed:</b>	Turning point, crucial factor
<b>Dogma:</b>	A fixed religious belief
<b>Interlinear:</b>	Having the same text in various languages or versions on alternate lines
<b>Prototype:</b>	The first example of something, from which all later forms are developed
<b>Elusive:</b>	Illusory, puzzling
<b>Disjunction:</b>	Disunion
<b>Exalted:</b>	Dignified
<b>Harmonize:</b>	Integrate
<b>Connotation:</b>	A feeling or idea suggested by a particular word
<b>Dialect:</b>	A regional variety of language

<b>Fleetingly:</b>	Momentary
<b>Conceivable:</b>	Possible to believe
<b>Hallmark:</b>	Characteristic
<b>Dominion:</b>	Sway
<b>Reciprocal:</b>	Mutual
<b>Kinship:</b>	Relationship between members of the same family
<b>Analogous:</b>	Related
<b>Posterity:</b>	Future generations
<b>Flux:</b>	Continuous change
<b>Supra historical:</b>	Having significance outside the historical process

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### 3.5 Sample Questions:

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#### 3.5.1 Objective Questions:

- Benjamin believes that the notion of an ideal \_\_\_\_\_ is an obstacle in the artistic premise of art.
  - Writer
  - Receiver
  - Translator
  - Critic
- According to Benjamin, translation is a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Mode
  - Creative
  - Secondary
  - None of these
- The translation of important works of world literature marks their stage of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Creativity
  - Originality
  - Criticism
  - Continued life
- The function of translation is to express the reciprocal relationship between \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Original and translated text
  - Languages
  - Critical text
  - Writer and translator
- The central \_\_\_\_\_ of languages evince a distinctive convergence.
  - Relationship
  - Creativity
  - Kinship
  - None of these

6. The association between content and language is not same in the original and the \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Critical text      (b) Translation  
(c) Poem              (d) None of these
7. \_\_\_\_\_ ignored translation in their theoretical writings.
- (a) Classicists      (b) Romanticists  
(c) French writers      (d) Victorians
8. Benjamin suggests that the intention of the translator is \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Primary      (b) Good  
(c) Derivative      (d) Superfluous
9. Fidelity and \_\_\_\_\_ are the two traditional concepts in discussion of translation.
- (a) Spontaneity      (b) Naturalness  
(c) License      (d) Accuracy
10. Words possess emotional \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Connotations      (b) Feelings  
(c) Intensity      (d) None of these

### 3.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are the characteristics of inferior translation?
2. What is the task of a translator, according to Walter Benjamin?
3. Examine the historical concept of languages.
4. Distinguish between the poet and the translators.
5. What does Benjamin consider the prototype of all translations? Why?

### 3.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss translation as a mode.
2. Examine kinship of languages in relation to translation.
3. "Fidelity and License are contradictory concepts in the discussion of translation". Elaborate with reference to Walter Benjamin's *The Task of a Translator*.

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## 3.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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## **Unit - 4: *Comparative Literature, at Last* By Jonathan Culler**

### **Structure**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

#### **4.1 Objectives**

#### **4.2 *Comparative Literature, at Last*: Jonathan Culler**

##### **4.2.1 Introduction to Comparative Literature**

##### **4.2.2 Key Aspects of Comparative Literature**

##### **4.2.3 Comparative Literature: Benefits of the Study**

##### **4.2.4 About the Author: Jonathan Culler**

##### **4.2.5 Jonathan Culler: Major Contributions**

##### **4.2.6 Contributions to Critical Theory**

##### **4.2.7 *The Literary in Theory*: Jonathan Culler**

##### **4.2.8 *Comparative Literature, at Last*: Jonathan Culler**

##### **4.2.9 Detailed Summary: *Comparative Literature, at Last***

##### **4.2.10 Summing Up**

#### **4.3 Learning Outcomes**

#### **4.4 Glossary**

#### **4.5 Sample Questions**

#### **4.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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### **4.0 Introduction**

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Structural linguistics, a prominent movement in the 20th century, revolutionized how we understand language. It shifted the focus from the historical evolution of languages to their underlying systems and structures. This approach had a profound impact on various fields, including comparative Literature and critical theory. In comparative literature, structuralism offered tools for analyzing the similarities and differences between literary works across languages. By delving into the "grammar" of literature, scholars could identify recurring patterns and themes that transcended cultural boundaries. As far as critical theorists are concerned, structural linguistics provided a foundation for critical theory movements like deconstruction. These movements challenged the idea of a single, fixed meaning in a text, emphasizing the role of language systems in creating meaning through relationships between words and concepts. Ferdinand de Saussure is considered as the father of structural linguistics. He proposed that language functions like a system of signs, where meaning is generated not by individual words

but by their relationships within the system. Roman Jakobson, building on Saussure's work, explored the various elements that create meaning in language, such as sound systems and grammatical rules. Claude Lévi-Strauss, a prominent anthropologist, applied structuralist principles to analyze myths and social structures, revealing underlying patterns and relationships.

While structural linguistics offered powerful tools, its application to literature was not always straightforward. Jonathan Culler, a literary critic, cautioned against simply transplanting linguistic techniques onto literature. He argued for a nuanced approach that acknowledges the unique "grammar" of literature in creating meaning. His work, particularly *Structuralist Poetics*, played a crucial role in bridging the gap between structuralism and literary theory. Structural linguistics, with its emphasis on systems and structures, continues to influence various academic disciplines. Delving deeper into the works of Saussure, Jakobson, and Lévi-Strauss, along with Culler's insightful critiques, can provide a deeper understanding of this fascinating approach to language and its enduring impact.

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## 4.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce the essay *Comparative Literature, at Last* by Jonathan Culler
- shed light into concepts, ideas and developments of comparative literature
- discuss the scope of comparative literature as a genre of study in the modern era
- help the learner to develop an insight into the future of comparative literature as a genre of study
- develop an insight into contributions and the theoretical perspective of Culler

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## 4.2 *Comparative Literature, at Last: Jonathan Culler*

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### 4.2.1 Introduction to Comparative Literature:

Comparative literature is an academic discipline that extends the scope of studies of various literary and cultural expressions beyond and across the boundaries of linguistic, national, geographic, gender, religious, social, historical, philosophical and disciplinary parameters. It examines the universal aspects of literature and cultural expressions. It analyses literary texts

disregarding the limitations of approaching and studying them within the language of their origin or individual contexts.

The ancient Greeks and Romans had been practicing the comparison between the classical literature of their time and that of the Persians and the Egyptians. Medieval Europe had been greatly influenced by the classical texts and comparison had been the hallmark of standard literature during the time. The Enlightenment movement in the eighteenth century may be considered the early form of modern comparative literature. The Italian and French philosophers emphasized the importance of studying the vernacular literature within the context of cultural and historical milieu. They investigated the thread between literary productions and social fabric underlining the cultural relations across the texts.

Comparative literature developed as a discipline in the eighteenth century. French scholars like Abel-François Villemain (1790-1870) and Philarète Chasles (1798-1873) were eager to explore the historical and cultural connections between French and other European literatures. German scholars like August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767-1845) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) highlighted the concept of "world literature", emphasizing a broader recognition of global literary traditions.

The first journal of comparative literature, *A Review of Comparative Literature* (1921), was published in France. Comparative literature has been evolving constantly incorporating the latest theoretical frameworks, extending its relevance beyond Western traditions, and mingling with different cultural contexts. In short, comparative literature emerged as a discipline from multiple sources under various historical, cultural and intellectual influences. It keeps its dynamic existence in evolution and adaptation from perspectives and interpretations of literature across cultures.

#### **4.2.2 Key Aspects of Comparative Literature:**

- **Comparative Study.** Comparative literature analyses the thematic similarities, stylistic features, and historical influences that are common in literary texts produced in different cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts and periods. It explores the similarities between the literary texts produced in different environments.

- **Intertextuality.** Comparative literature delineates the interconnections between literary texts produced in dissimilar literary domains. It investigates the interplay between literary texts and describes how references, allusions and meanings from multiple texts are knitting a web of relationships across time and space.

- **World Literature:** Comparative literature promotes and contributes to the existence of world literature. It appreciates the diversity of global literary productions and unites them under the scope of world literature.

- **Interdisciplinary.** Comparative literature adopts insights and methods from history, philosophy, anthropology, sociology etc. to analyze literary texts. In doing so, it promotes an interdisciplinary approach to literary studies.

#### 4.2.3 Comparative Literature: Benefits of the Study

- **Improves Analytical Skills and Critical Thinking.** Comparing and contrasting diverse texts enables the learners to identify cultural patterns, analyze linguistic arguments and develop new interpretations.

- **Promotes Understanding and Cultural Awareness.** While exposed to different literary traditions, comparative literature encourages learners to foster a better appreciation for different cultures and the unique perspectives they handle.

- **Develops Communication and Language Skills.** Engagement with multiple texts in various languages enables learners to foster the potential to learn different languages and improve their communication skills.

- **Fosters Skills for Diverse Careers.** The skills like critical thinking, analytical and communication skills developed through comparative literature studies enable the learners to opt for careers in various departments like academia, mass media, education, and international affairs.

#### *Check your progress*

1. How do you define comparative literature?

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2. What are the key aspects of comparative literature?

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3. What are the benefits of comparative literature study?

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#### 4.2.4 About the Author: Jonathan Culler

Jonathan Culler, born in 1944, is a prominent American literary critic. He is particularly recognized for his work in structuralism, literary theory, and criticism. Culler's career flourished at Cornell University where he held the distinguished title of Class of 1916 Professor of English and Comparative Literature. Culler's writings have significantly impacted the field. His book,



*Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (1975) is credited as one of the first introductions to French structuralism for the English-speaking world. Another influential work, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (1997), is praised for its innovative approach to the subject. His book, *The Literary in Theory* (2007) discusses the notion of theory and literary history's role in the larger realm of literary and cultural theory. For Culler, 'Theory' is not a single idea, but a vast toolbox. It draws from various fields like linguistics, anthropology, Marxism, and psychoanalysis to analyze literature.

Culler has been a phenomenal figure in academia. He has been a fellow of prestigious institutions like the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the British Academy, Brasenose College, Oxford and University, Yale University etc. Modern Language Association of America awarded the James Russell Lowell Prize for outstanding book of criticism in 1976 for *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*. His *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*, a contribution to the 'Very Short Introduction' series was praised for his technical mastery. The book has been appreciated globally when translated into 26 languages, including Kurdish, Latvian, and Albanian. The book has reserved eight chapters to address issues and problems relating to literary theory.

In *Theory of the Lyric* (2015), Culler approaches the Western lyric tradition from Sappho to Ashbery. He delineated the two dominant models of the lyric after exploring the major parameters of the genre. 1) Lyric as the expression of the author's affective experience. 2) Lyric as the fictional representation of the speech act of a persona. According to Culler, these models limit and ignore the rhythm and sound patterns of lyric poetry.

#### **4.2.5 Jonathan Culler: Major Contributions**

Jonathan Culler's major contributions lie in the realm of literary theory, particularly in making complex ideas accessible and promoting new schools of thought. Here are some highlights:

**Demystifying Structuralism:** Culler's book, *Structuralist Poetics*, is a landmark. It introduced the then-complex ideas of French structuralism to English-speaking audiences. This book played a key role in bringing this influential school of thought to a wider critical discussion.

**Making Theory Approachable:** Works like *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* showcase Culler's ability to explain dense theoretical concepts clearly and concisely. These works have made complex ideas accessible to a broader range of readers.

**Championing New Movements:** Culler's writings have been instrumental in promoting critical theory movements like structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstruction. He has helped scholars and students understand and engage with these new ways of analyzing literature. In essence, Culler's work bridges the gap between complex theoretical concepts and literary analysis. He has been a key figure in shaping how we understand and interpret literature.

#### **4.2.6 Contributions to Critical Theory:**

Jonathan Culler argues that structural linguistics offers a powerful tool. It allows us to analyze not just how language works, but also how meaning is generated in human cultures, which Culler sees as similar to language systems. However, in his book *Structuralist Poetics*, he warns against simply transplanting linguistic techniques to literature. Instead, he proposes uncovering the unique "grammar" of literature that creates meaning. Structuralism, at its core, believes that meaning arises from underlying systems. Every action or creation, like an utterance in language, relies on pre-existing rules and conventions to be understood.

Jonathan Culler challenges the traditional view of literary theory as a tool for uncovering a text's hidden meaning. Instead, he argues that theory should focus on the act of interpretation itself. He emphasizes the role of the "competent reader," who actively engages with the text. To understand how meaning is constructed, Culler identifies recurring elements in texts that different readers interpret in varied ways. He proposes two categories of readers: the critic, who analyzes the text based on their own experiences, and future readers who will build upon the work of previous interpreters.

Some critics argue that Culler blurs the lines between literature and writing in general. John R. Searle, for example, suggests Culler's explanation of deconstruction makes Jacques Derrida seem clearer and more accessible, but also downplays the complexity of his ideas. Searle further criticizes Culler for neglecting the influence of earlier philosophers like Husserl and Heidegger on Derrida's work.

#### ***Check your progress***

1. Who is Jonathan Culler?

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2. How do you identify Culler as a structuralist?

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3. What are the contributions of Jonathan Culler?

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#### **4.2.7 *The Literary in Theory*: Jonathan Culler**

The essay “Comparative Literature, at Last” is the last of the twelve chapters in the book *The Literary in Theory* (2007) by Jonathan Culler. The book invites the readers into major discussions on the bond between literature and theory. It reserves discussions on literature under three sections - theory, concepts and critical practices. Culler looks into the shifting role of theory. He argues that theory must exist embedded within literature and cultural practices. It must not exist as a separate entity like an ‘eclipse’ of literature. He points the fingers towards theories like structuralism which overshadowed the literary and cultural texts. He highlights the importance of correlation between theory, literature and cultural studies. He believes that theory can possess literary qualities evading the gap between these entities. Theory can illuminate and construct ‘literary qualities’ in texts. He suggests an edit to the concept of ‘literary’ and expanding its meaning to a higher level. He believes that the presence of theory must be felt in textual and cultural analysis, avoiding the focus on the mere ‘literariness’ of texts. He acknowledges the emerging resistance towards theory within literary and cultural studies. He observes that the resistance originates from a threat to conventional interpretations or dissatisfaction with intricate terminology. Culler argues that practicing with theory provides significant tools for uncovering the complexities of texts and nurturing critical thinking.

Culler underlines the dynamic and evolving nature of theory. He promotes regular treatment with theory to perfect and retain its application to the transforming landscape of literature and cultural studies. In short, "Literary in Theory" promotes critical insights into the correlation between theory and literary texts. It emphasizes the advantages of using theory to evaluate texts, decode multiple interpretations, and expand our knowledge of the literary landscape.

The book also analyses various literary concepts employed in cultural and literary theories. He investigates and explores the processes involved in the construction of literary and cultural texts, the role of the reader in generating meaning in texts, the connection between verbal/nonverbal signs and their meanings etc. Culler attempts to decode the ways that various individuals interpret texts and various factors influence them to formulate their interpretation. He is curious to know how language and actions produce effects on readers and create realities for them. He does not spare the question unattended referring to the notion of ‘all-knowing narrator’ existing in various texts.

### *Check your progress*

1. What is the role of theory in literary analysis, according to Jonathan Culler?
- 
2. What are the major discussions in *Literary in Theory*?
- 

#### **4.2.8 *Comparative Literature, at Last: Jonathan Culler***

Jonathan Culler demands an updation in the understanding of comparative literature in *Comparative Literature, at Last*. He denies the conventional approach of focusing on "source studies" and "influence" as the basic taglines of the discipline. He proposes a universal perspective to comparative studies and suggests treating the discipline as a "transnational phenomenon."

Culler points out the criticism targeted to comparative literature in the wake of new branches of studies like 'cultural studies'. A decline in comparative analysis and a shift towards fields like cultural studies are the reasons behind the challenges posed against the comparative approach. Comparative literature is marginalized due to the resistance to this shift and clinging to its conventional limitations. Culler highlights the need for revitalizing the genre and proposes key strategies for the purpose: 1) The Centrality of literature is to be reasserted. Culler insists on maintaining the centrality of literature and emphasizes it as the core focus of comparative literature. The development of cultural studies and other interdisciplinary genres challenges the traditional notion of comparative literature. Comparative literature should remain crucial to the analysis of literary texts. 2) The concept of comparison is to be expanded. Culler demands a strategic change in the traditional notions of comparative literature. It must expand the focus beyond the influence and source studies of literature. A wider range of comparative approaches to be promoted in the field like analysis of literary forms, genres, themes, and theoretical frameworks across geographical and temporal boundaries. 3) Integrate new theoretical approaches. Culler promotes comparative literature to integrate prevailing critical theories and methodologies to evaluate and interpret literature insightfully. This attitude will liberate comparative literature to become an integral and vibrant field in the academic landscape.

#### **4.2.9 Detailed Summary: *Comparative Literature, at Last***

##### **Central Argument**

Jonathan Culler argues for a paradigm shift in conventional methods of comparative literature practices, which focuses on tracing sources and influences of literary texts. He proposes a new approach anchored on intertextuality.

### **Traditional Approaches**

Culler believes that traditional approaches need to be updated according to the developments in literary and cultural studies. The limitations of conventional approaches like 'source hunting' and 'influence studies' are emphasized in his criticism. He observes that these approaches often lead to reductionist readings that overemphasize the influence of one text on another, neglecting the complexity and autonomy of each text. He argues that this approach often neglects the interconnection between texts within a broader literary and cultural context.

### **Intertextuality and New Comparative Literature**

Culler emphasizes the relevance of incorporating an intertextual approach to the comparative literature. He observes intertextuality as the web of connections between texts, which are in dialogue with each other, referring, alluding and drawing meaning from each other. Culler believes that the intertextual approach will enhance comparative literature to a richer and novel understanding of texts through the unending chain of conversations between the texts across various cultures and historical periods.

### **Benefits of the New Approach**

The new comparative literature approach focuses on intertextuality. Culler believes that this approach will strengthen comparative literature. It can explore how the texts shape and are shaped by other texts. It can present a deeper understanding of the texts, their meaning and significance. The focus on textual relations can develop comparative literature to new heights. Intertextuality will liberate comparative literature beyond the limitations of nation or language. It can foster relations between texts from alien cultures and languages. The national boundaries will transcend under the new approach.

### **Importance of Theory**

Culler highlights the prominence of critical theory in the analysis of intertextual relationships. A strong theoretical base must be supportive of the intertextual analysis of texts. Culler suggests that the new comparative literature must allow for a broader understanding of global literary traditions. The analysis of diverse literary traditions and texts will lead comparative literature into the front of world literature. In short, he urges for a paradigm shift in comparative literature, urging a move away from source-hunting and influence studies towards a

more intertextual approach. He emphasizes the importance of understanding texts to each other, fostering a richer and more interconnected understanding of literature across cultures and throughout history.

***Check your progress***

1. What is the central argument in *Comparative Literature, at Last*?

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2. What are the flaws of traditional approaches in comparative literature, according to Culler?

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3. What is the new approach to comparative literature proposed by Jonathan Culler?

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**4.2.10 Summing Up:**

At the end of this Unit, the learner should have gleaned from Jonathan Culler's observations on the future of comparative literature. The essay might challenge the reader to reconsider the traditional definition and scope of comparative literature. Culler invites the reader's to think out of box, when arguing for a more inclusive approach that embraces literatures from various cultures and genres, not just limited to European works. Culler reminds the reader the need to adapt and evolve over time while emphasizing a new approach to comparative literature.

The reader is introduced to the ways for comparative literature to revitalize the field by incorporating new theoretical frameworks and engaging with a wider range of texts. The traditional focus on tracing influences between literatures might be critiqued. Culler proposes a shift towards a more intertextual approach, analyzing how literary works interact and create meaning within a broader cultural context.

The reader can see Culler suggesting new approaches for the future direction of comparative literature. This could involve embracing new technologies, collaborating with other disciplines, and fostering a more global perspective. The reader could be delighted to the way they can contribute to the development and innovation of ideas comes to them according to the demand of their age.

The demand for a paradigm shift in comparative literature has been the need of the hour to survive the genre as an independent discipline. "Comparative cultural studies" a notion proposed by Canadian comparatist Steven Totosy de Zepetnek could be a derivation of what

Culler proposed in the essay. Virk Tomo, Slovenian literary historian and essayist, in *Comparative Literature versus Comparative Cultural Studies* alarms against this notion, observing that it would evoke fatal consequences for comparative literature as a discipline. Attention to the possibilities of the development of comparative literature as an independent discipline for the future is the solution. A functional pragmatic reading of the literary and cultural texts must be promoted.

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### 4.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have gained knowledge about comparative literature. You should have also got an idea about *The Literary in Theory* by Jonathan Culler and a detailed understanding of *Comparative Literature, at Last*.

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### 4.4 Glossary

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**Comparative Literature:** A field of study that analyzes literature across languages and cultures.

**Interdisciplinarity:** Drawing knowledge and methods from multiple disciplines.

**Canon:** The established body of works considered important within a culture or literary tradition.

**Hegemony:** The dominance of one culture or ideology over others.

**Heterogeneity:** The existence of diverse elements or perspectives.

**Hermeneutics:** The theory and practice of interpretation, particularly of texts.

**Deconstruction:** A philosophical and literary movement that challenges the idea of fixed meaning in texts.

**Postcolonialism:** The study of the cultural legacy of colonialism.

**World Literature:** Literature considered on a global scale, not just within national boundaries.

**Historiography:** The study of how history is written and interpreted.

**Discourse:** A system of thought or communication shared by a group of people.

**Cultural Exchange:** The transmission of ideas, practices, and creative works between cultures.

**Reception Theory:** The study of how audiences receive and interpret literary works.

**Canon Formation:** The process by which certain works become accepted as part of a literary canon.

**Comparative Methodology:** The specific methods used to compare and analyze literature across different cultures.

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## 4.5 Sample Questions

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### 4.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The main argument of comparative literature, according to Jonathan Culler, likely focuses on:
  - (a) Defining a universal literary canon.
  - (b) Rethinking the traditional scope of comparative literature.
  - (c) Promoting the study of only European literature.
  - (d) Establishing clear boundaries between literature and criticism.
2. In the context of comparative literature, "heterogeneity" refers to:
  - (a) The dominance of a single culture in literary studies.
  - (b) The existence of diverse literary traditions and perspectives.
  - (c) A focus on historical accuracy in literary analysis.
  - (d) The strict adherence to established literary forms.
3. Which concept is most closely associated with deconstruction, a movement discussed in comparative literature?
  - (a) The creation of a fixed and universally accepted meaning for a text.
  - (b) The idea that texts have inherent and stable interpretations.
  - (c) The emphasis on the historical context in shaping literary meaning.
  - (d) The exploration of how texts can have multiple and unstable meanings.
4. Interdisciplinarity in comparative literature likely involves:
  - (a) Limiting the field of study to literature alone.
  - (b) Drawing insights from other disciplines like history and philosophy.
  - (c) Focusing solely on the formal elements of literary works.
  - (d) Prioritizing the national origin of the author over the work's content.
5. World literature, as a concept explored in comparative literature, emphasizes:
  - (a) The superiority of Western literary traditions.
  - (b) The importance of national identity in literary analysis.
  - (c) The study of literature on a global scale, transcending national boundaries.



- (d) The strict adherence to established literary genres.
6. The concept of "hegemony" is relevant to comparative literature because it examines:
- (a) The objective evaluation of literary merit.
  - (b) The dominance of certain cultures or ideologies in literary studies.
  - (c) The influence of historical events on specific literary works.
  - (d) The strict classification of literature into different periods.
7. When discussing "canon formation" in comparative literature, we are likely concerned with:
- (a) The process by which certain works become widely recognized and influential.
  - (b) The censorship of specific literary works based on moral or political reasons.
  - (c) The chronological order in which literary works are studied.
  - (d) The stylistic features that define a particular literary movement.
8. Reception theory, a concept explored in comparative literature, focuses on:
- (a) The author's original intention in creating a literary work.
  - (b) The historical context in which a literary work was written.
  - (c) The way audiences interpret and respond to literary works throughout history.
  - (d) The technical skills required for successful literary analysis.
9. In comparative literature, "historiography" is most likely relevant to understanding:
- (a) The specific techniques used for close reading of literary texts.
  - (b) The different ways literary history has been written and interpreted.
  - (c) The influence of prominent literary critics on specific works.
  - (d) The recurring themes and motifs found across various literary traditions.
10. Why might comparative literature challenge traditional ideas about literature?
- a) It emphasizes the importance of strict grammar rules in writing.
  - b) It encourages a narrow focus on a single national literature.
  - c) It questions fixed meanings and explores the cultural context of literature.
  - d) It discourages the analysis of literary form and style.

#### **4.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. In Culler's view, how might comparative literature need to evolve to stay relevant?
2. What are some potential benefits of a more interdisciplinary approach in comparative literature?
3. How does the concept of "heterogeneity" challenge traditional views of literary canons?

4. Briefly explain how deconstruction, as discussed in comparative literature, might influence the way we read and interpret texts.
5. Compare and contrast the concept of "world literature" with a focus on national literature.

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

1. What are the limitations of traditional approaches in comparative literature, according to Culler?
2. Discuss the scope of the intertextual approach in comparative literature.
3. Theory must be the backbone of literary analysis. Discuss in the light of Culler's point of view.

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## **4.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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## Unit - 5: *Jane Eyre*: Background, Plot, Characters

### Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 *Jane Eyre*: Background, Plot, Characters
  - 5.2.1 Charlotte Bronte: Life, Career and Death
  - 5.2.2 *Jane Eyre*
  - 5.2.3 Background
  - 5.2.4 Plot
  - 5.2.5 Characters
  - 5.2.6 Conclusion
- 5.3 Learning Outcomes
- 5.4 Glossary
- 5.5 Sample Questions
- 5.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 5.0 Introduction

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The first edition of Charlotte Bronte's novel *Jane Eyre* appeared in the year 1847 under the title *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*, interestingly mentioning the editor's name as "Currer Bell." 'Currer Bell' was her pen name that she used for the longest time since women writers were neither widely read nor critically appreciated in that era. Ironically, women writers were barely considered capable of producing potential literary works. However, after the publication of *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte rose to fame in no time, since it was and has been widely regarded as a significant literary work. The author could leave her mark in the literary world through the novel which is considered as a realistic description of a Victorian woman's inner life. Women's struggles with her natural desires and social positioning and gave the genre of novel writing a renewed honesty. It helped her get a lot of attention and readers, too.

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### 5.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- familiarize you with British literature of the nineteenth century

- enable you to comprehend British prose style (novel writing) of the nineteenth century
- make you critically appreciate the British novel in general and other works written by Bronte sisters in particular
- facilitate a comparative study of the novel

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## 5.2 *Jane Eyre*: Background, Plot, Characters

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### 5.2.1 Charlotte Bronte: Life, Career and Death

Charlotte was born to Patrick Bronte and Maria Branwell. A third child of the family, she was born in Thornton, Yorkshire, in the year 1816. Charlotte mainly lived in Haworth, a small town on the Yorkshire moors, where her father was appointed curate in 1820. Mrs. Bronte, Charlotte's mother passed away in the year 1821 from cancer, as largely believed to be the reason of her death. Later, the children, namely Charlotte, her four sisters Maria, Elizabeth, Emily, Anne, and their brother Branwell were taken in by their infamous, unpleasant, maiden aunt Elizabeth Branwell. In addition to getting freedom to explore the moors, their father also encouraged them to read whatever books they liked.

Mr. Bronte decided to enrol his four oldest girls in the Cowan Bridge school for the daughters of poor clergy members when it first opened in 1824. Most literary critics and biographers agree that description of Lowood School in *Jane Eyre* is a good representation of how bad things were there. Maria and Elizabeth, her two oldest sisters also died in 1824 from tuberculosis that they believed to have got at school because it was not well run. Their father removed Charlotte and Emily from Cowan Bridge school after this tragedy.

The "Glass Town" is a collection of stories written by the remaining four siblings, who were inspired by the gift of beautiful set of toy soldiers gifted by their father. It was written during the time when both of them were grieving their sisters' demises and the vacuum that it created. They were also looking for a means to end their apparent loneliness. In these early writings, the kids collaborated to construct a fully imagined world called the imaginary West African empire of *Angria*. Until her early twenties, Charlotte constantly changed and added to parts of the *Angria* story, creating several important characters and places. These stories are full of fancy, dramatic, and repetitive than Charlotte's later produced mature and realistic adult fiction. However, Charlotte's writing style did improve because of these stories.

After discovering that he had a severe lung condition, Patrick gathered the courage and decided that his daughters should go to school and get education. It will become their means of financially independent survival, in case of his demise. Charlotte enrolled in Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head in 1831. Even though Charlotte was shy, lonely, and had trouble in school, she made two friends for life: Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey. Charlotte was given a chance to work as a teacher at her own school Roe Head, but she opted to go back to Haworth instead. Charlotte returned to Roe Head in 1835 as a governess, possibly dissatisfied with the solitude of life at Haworth and seeking a busy career. Because she believed that being a governess was akin to serving someone as a slave and that she was temperamentally unsuited for the job, 1838 she was ultimately forced to resign. Regrettably, the most suitable job opportunity for middle-class women in Victorian England was to become a governess. Charlotte endured two more unsatisfactory governess positions because the family needed the money, feeling like an undervalued servant in the homes of affluent families. She did not enjoy living in other people's homes.

Charlotte came up with the concept of opening her school at Haworth to find a job that would enable her independence. She registered as a student at the Pensionnat Heger in Brussels at 26 to improve her French fluency and learn German to increase her teaching credentials before starting this endeavour. Charlotte developed a deep yet one-sided passion for Monsieur Heger while feeling free to live and lead her life individually in a foreign country. He was the married headmaster of the school. Charlotte spent two years in Brussels before leaving for England. She could not enrol even one pupil, so her attempt to start school was unsuccessful.

On the other hand, Charlotte started focusing all her attention on polishing her writing skills. Charlotte decided that she, Anne, and Emily should try to self-publish a book of poems as she heard of Emily's writings. 1846 they reached their goal by writing under male names like Currer Bell, Acton Bell, and Ellis Bell. This was because female authors were not taken seriously in the Victorian era and before that time. These determined women kept writing even after *Poems*, their first book, failed to make money. They each started drafting a novel, thrilled to be writing full-time. *Agnes Grey* by Anne and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily both found publishers. Several publishers did not want to publish *The Professor* by Charlotte, partly about her adventures in Brussels and partly based on her life. Charlotte, who had previously refused to give up, started composing *Jane Eyre* in 1846 while visiting Manchester with her father, who had to undergo cataract surgery. Charlotte kept a journal throughout his recovery to make notes. *Jane*

*Eyre* was published in several editions, the first published on October 16, 1847, after Smith, Elder, and Company consented to publish the finished book. It was an immediate hit, catapulting Charlotte to literary stardom. She also received an impressive 500 pounds, or 25 times what she was paid as a governess.

Nevertheless, family tragedy quickly overshadowed the joys of literary achievement. Branwell, Anne and Charlotte's siblings, passed away in 1848, just after they told their publishers who the "Bells" really were. Branwell, a failure for his own family, as he never lived up to his family's high standards, ultimately died as an opium addict and drunkard. Soon after, Emily and Anne passed away. Despite finishing *Shirley*, her second book, in 1849, Charlotte was left emotionally broken by the loss of her surviving siblings. She only gained recognition in the literary world after her sisters, who were her biggest fans, could no longer celebrate her success with her. Following the release of this work, Charlotte travelled to London, where she met several notable contemporary authors, such as William Thackeray and Elizabeth Gaskell.

The Reverend Arthur B. Nicholls, who had served as Mr. Bronte's vicar at Haworth since 1845, made an engagement proposal to Charlotte in 1852. Charlotte had previously turned down several marriage proposals in the hopes of finding genuine love; however, the ultimate and profound loss of her three siblings may have convinced her to take Nicholls' proposal seriously. Charlotte claimed to respect Nicholls but not love, indicating that their union lacked the intense emotion shared by Jane and Rochester. Charlotte's father did not want her to marry Nicholls, so she turned him down at first. Nicholls left Haworth in 1853., the same year *Villette* came out. The ceremony was held on June 29, 1854. The time helped in subsiding Reverend Bronte's opposition to the marriage. After her marriage, Charlotte struggled to find the time to write because she was required to care for her ailing father and carry out the responsibilities of a minister's wife. During the early phases of her pregnancy, sometime around the year 1854, Charlotte contracted pneumonia on her regular soggy and long walk on the moors. The disease resulted in her demise on March 31, 1855, one month before turning 39. Her two books were posthumously released in 1857 *The Professor*, composed in 1846 and 1847, and *Mrs. Gaskell's Life*.

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

1. When was Charlotte born?

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2. Mention the name of her last novel.

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3. What literary legacy did she leave behind?

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### **5.2.2 Jane Eyre:**

Mrs. Reed, the ruthless and wealthy aunt of young Jane Eyre, cares for her as an orphan. One of the few acts of compassion in the house that Jane encounters is from a servant named Bessie. She used to entertain her with stories and songs. Jane was locked up in the red chamber by her aunt as a punishment for arguing with her cruel and bullying cousin John. It was the same place where her uncle passed away. She begins to feel the presence of her deceased uncle and faints there in a horrifying state. She sees Bessie when she opens her eyes a long time ago. She also sees Mr. Lloyd, the kind-hearted chemist present there. It was he who suggested Mrs. Reed to send away Jane to the school.

After arriving at Lowood School, Jane discovers that her life is everything but ideal when she sees herself being surrounded by different types and kinds of mates and teachers. However, unfortunate enough, Mr. Brocklehurst, the headmaster, turned out to be a vicious, dishonest, and nasty man. He used school money to facilitate his family's luxurious lifestyle while preaching to his students about leading a life in poverty and misery. Jane has a good friend named Helen Burns in school, who becomes both valuable and sometimes irritating due to her robust and martyr-like approach to the problems at the school. Again, misfortune was not leaving her. Helen, her newly made friend, dies from consumption as a severe typhus outbreak hits the school. The pandemic, however, did become the major factor that caused Mr. Brocklehurst to leave the school by highlighting the unsanitary conditions. In the series of misfortunes at a very young age and quite a short period, Jane's life substantially improves after a group of more compassionate guys replaces Brocklehurst. Subsequently, she stayed at Lowood school for a total period of eight years—six as a student and two as a teacher.

Soon, Jane began to yearn for novel and different experiences as she began to work as a teacher for two years. She begins to apply for vacancies. An excellent job lands in her lap, and she accepts a job as a governess at Thornfield Manor, where she instructs a bubbly French kid named Adèle. Mrs. Fairfax runs the estate. She is a housekeeper in charge of the house and the estate. The estate owner Rochester is a dark, handsome and passionate man who owns Thornfield. Jane initially begins to like him and, over the period, falls in love with him. One night a fire broke out in the estate. Fortunately, Jane was awake, and she helped Rochester escape a fire. It

was believed to have happened by a drunken servant named Grace Poole. Nevertheless, Jane concludes that she has yet to be given the complete story because Grace Poole is still employed at the estate. One day Rochester brings Blanche Ingram, a stunning but cruel lady, to the estate. Jane is shocked and becomes miserable as Jane anticipates Blanche becoming engaged to Rochester. However, instead, Rochester proposes to Jane, who happily accepts it with a surreal air.

Their wedding was soon arranged. As the happy couple Jane and Rochester prepare to exchange their vows, an interruption of the loud, unknown male voice suddenly declares that Rochester already has a wife. It was Mr. Mason. He introduced himself as the brother of that secret wife of Mr. Rochester. Her name was Bertha. Mr. Mason publicly claims Rochester married his sister Bertha a few years ago when he was in Jamaica. He also added that she was still alive. The hall, including Jane, was shocked and silent. In addition, Rochester did not even try to defend himself or deny the allegations by Mr. Mason. Shockingly enough, he slowly explains that Bertha has long gone mad but still lives with him in his care.

He then takes everyone to Thornfield to introduce Bertha. Jane was struggling to digest this newly revealed truth. However, they see Bertha Mason, who is crazy and has a terrible mental state, walking around the house and growling like an animal. This is why Rochester keeps Bertha hidden in his home in the third story. The secret was shared only by him and the housekeeper, Grace Poole, who used to look after her. Then, Jane realized Bertha set the mysterious fire in the estate. She was the one who was making strange, loud noises in the third story. The heartbroken Jane flees Thornfield without planning where to go.

Jane became homeless when she left the estate in a heartbroken state of mind. One day she ran into three siblings who live in a manor known as Marsh End or Moor House. They proposed to take her in. Their names were Diana Rivers, Mary Rivers, and St. John Rivers. Jane accepts the proposition as she has no other choice. Though, she soon becomes acquainted with them. St. John helps Jane land a position as a teacher at a charitable school in Morton. One day, he declares that the Rivers siblings are her cousins, her uncle John Eyre passed away and left her a substantial legacy of 20,000 pounds. She verifies the information and immediately distributes the sum equally from her inheritance.

St. John plans to embark on a missionary journey to India. He strongly advises Jane to accompany him as his wife. Jane agrees to travel to India as his companion but not as his wife. St. John almost persuades her to change her mind about wedding. However, one night she suddenly



hears Rochester's voice screaming her name across the moors. She understands that her love for him can never change. She discovers that Bertha had burned the entire estate to the ground upon her return to Thornfield. Rochester managed to keep the servants alive but suffered eye and hand loss in the process. Jane comes to know that she should head to Ferndean, where Rochester now resides with his two domestic helpers, John and Mary.

Rochester and Jane come closer once again. They shortly get married. Here, the novel also comes to an end and Jane writes that she has been happily married for ten years now. Rochester and Jane live in perfect equality with a beautiful child. Rochester also regained vision in one eye.

***Check your progress***

1. Who was Jane Eyre?

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2. Why was she put in care of her uncle's family?

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3. Why was she sent away to a residential school? What was the name of the school?

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**5.2.3 Background:**

Maria Branwell and Patrick Bronte welcomed Charlotte into the world on April 21, 1816, in Yorkshire, England. Charlotte's relative, a devoted Methodist, assisted her brother-in-law in raising children because her mother passed away when Charlotte was five years old. In 1824, Charlotte and her sisters Maria, Elizabeth, and Emily went to Cowan Bridge, a school for ministers' daughters. Charlotte and Emily were brought home after a tuberculosis epidemic claimed lives of Maria and Elizabeth. Charlotte returned to school a few years later in Roe Head, England. In 1835, she was hired as a teacher at the school, but after some time. However, she soon decided to work as a private governess. She landed a good job in 1839 where she was supposed to live with and tutor the children of the affluent Sidgewick family. She left the job in no time because it was making her feel miserable. She did continue her job hunt as a governess. She also realised that her dream of opening a school wouldn't be practically feasible anytime soon. The second time, Charlotte was just as unhappy with her job as a governess, so she asked her sisters for help to start making more serious plans for opening a school.

The Bronte sisters' schooling failed, but their literary endeavours were practical. Their stories, poems, and plays were early indicators of a shared writing talent that eventually led

Emily, Anne, and Charlotte to take up the career as novelists. At a young age, the children invented a fictitious world called Angria. Charlotte proposed that she, Anne, and Emily work together on a book of poems once they were adults. The three sisters wrote under masculine pen names: Charlotte used 'Currer Bell', Emily used 'Ellis', and Anne used 'Acton Bell'. After their poetry collection did not get much attention from the public, the sisters decided to write their books under the same pseudo names. While Charlotte's first book, *The Professor*, unfortunately could not get published in her lifetime, whereas Anne and Emily both created their masterpieces in 1847. Charlotte penned *Jane Eyre* in the same year. The book was one of the best-reviewed and best-selling books of its time. It criticised Victorian ideas about gender and social class.

*Jane Eyre* contains autobiographical elements. The loss of Charlotte's sisters at Cowan Bridge brings to mind Lowood School and the worst experiences she had there. It was there that her closest friend died from tuberculosis. Some of Mr Brocklehurst's hypocritical religion comes from the Reverend Carus Wilson, the Evangelical pastor at Cowan Bridge School. By basing the fictional Lowood school on the school that had treated her so poorly, Charlotte exacted vengeance on it. The tragic tuberculosis death of Jane's companion Helen Burns makes Charlotte's sisters Maria and Elizabeth's deaths from the same illness during their time at Cowan Bridge school come to mind. Also, John Reed's fall into alcoholism and disintegration is likely based on the life of Branwell Bronte, Charlotte Bronte's brother, who became addicted to opiates and alcohol in the years before he died. Jane eventually takes on the role of governess, just like Charlotte, giving her a neutral vantage point to watch and analyse Victorian society's oppressive social ideals and customs in the nineteenth century.

The novel has the characteristics of a Bildungsroman genre. It is a style of writing where the writer tells the story of a child's development. This genre primarily focuses on the feelings and experiences accompanying and inspiring that child's growth into adulthood. *Jane Eyre's* plot is structured in this way. Jane shows five different parts of her main character's life, each of which happened in another place: her childhood time being spent in Gateshead, the early education pursued at the Lowood School, her time as a governess at Thornfield estate, the good time spent at with the Rivers family at Morton and Marsh End (also called Moor House), and her happy reunion after a lot of struggle with Rochester that turns into their marriage at Ferndean. These encounters help Jane develop into an experienced woman who develops the ability to look back at her past as a narrative in the book.

In addition, *Jane Eyre's* Bildungsroman style written plot and social criticism are filtered through the horror story. The Gothic subgenre also has Germanic roots, like the Bildungsroman. It became popular in England at the end of the eighteenth century. Usually, it is about supernatural events, lonely places, and strange things that happen, all of which are meant to make you feel scared and nervous. Jane's experiences with ghosts, secret plans, and supernatural things give the book a solid, lasting sense of fantasy and mystery.

After *Jane Eyre* was a success, Charlotte told her publisher who she was and went on to create several other books, including *Shirley* in 1849. She rose to the esteem of the intellectual community of London over the ensuing years. However, she felt dejected and lonely after the deaths of her sister Anne in 1849 and her brothers Emily and Branwell in 1848. She married Reverend Arthur Nicholls in 1854 despite not being in love with him. The following year, she passed away from pneumonia while still pregnant.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Does the novel share autobiographical traits with the author's life?

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2. Name the publication house that agreed to publish *Jane Eyre*.

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3. How did Charlotte die?

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### **5.2.4 Plot:**

The first-person story of *Jane Eyre* is presented from the viewpoint of Jane, a seemingly "plain" girl who faces many difficulties in life. Jane's life is chronicled throughout the book, from childhood to adulthood.

Jane is living with her aunt Mrs. Reed, at the start of the book. She is treated horribly by Mrs. Reed and her kids, and one night Mrs. Reed confines Jane in the "Red Room," rumoured to be a haunted chamber in the household. She is seen reading by herself in the breakfast room at the beginning of the book, attempting to escape the Reed family and find some solitude. This, however, is short-lived because Jane's tormentor Master John Reed, who is also her cousin shows up. He calls Jane a "rat," implying that she is needy, unappreciative, and a beggar since she depends on his mother's fortune. An altercation starts when Jane strikes back. Jane is abducted and put in the "Red Room" after Mrs. Reed instructs her staff to break up the brawl. The Red Chamber, a 'haunted' chamber in the home, is where Jane thinks she first encounters her uncle's

ghost. She slams the door repeatedly to be allowed outside because she is scared of this, but no one answers. Jane has a fever that almost kills her.

Jane is sent to a residential school namely Lowood School by Mrs. Reed, where the headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, also mistreats her. The school's conditions are terrible, and Helen Burns, Jane's dearest friend, passes away from consumption. Jane's time at Lowood School was anything but enjoyable. Mr. Brocklehurst, the school's headmaster, was a harsh and dishonest man. He encouraged self-sacrifice from his students, while ironically maintaining a comfortable lifestyle for himself and his family with the money collected from the student's tuition, keeping the pupils in poverty. It was claimed that Lowood School was based on the institution Charlotte and her sisters attended. Her two older sisters had ailments that caused them to pass away before puberty. It is believed that Charlotte's sister Maria was the model for Jane's companion Helen Burns, who passed away from consumption. Jane's situation improves as a group of officials with higher moral standards takes over the institution. She spent six years as a student at Lowood, then continued for two more years as a teacher.

Jane quit the job in search of a change and accepted the role of governess at Thornfield Manor for Adela Varens, Mr. Edward Rochester's daughter. She was content with her surroundings, including the beautiful old house, the peaceful library, her tiny room, the garden with its enormous chestnut tree, and the large meadow with its thorny trees. Jane could never have felt at ease with Mr. Rochester if he had been a heroically gorgeous young man. He had a broad, protruding brow, a harsh, square mouth, and a square jawline, but despite this, the plain little governess felt inexplicably pleased in his presence. But she couldn't get close to him because of his character. Adela Varens is not Mr. Rochester's child; instead, she is the daughter of a Parisian dancer who tricked him and abandoned the young girl. He revealed a lot to her, but she could not draw any conclusions about the peculiar cloud that always hung over his joyous occasions, his apparent fondness for Jane, or his decision to keep some deep sorrow from her.

Then Thornfield experienced the strangest events. Jane arrived home one evening to discover Mr. Rochester's open room door and his bed on fire. She mightily struggled to extinguish the fire and jolt him out of the coma the smoke had put him in. He instructed her to keep quiet about what happened. Later, while Mr. Rochester was hosting a sizable gathering at Thornfield, Mr. Mason from Spanish Town in Jamaica arrived. That evening, a call for assistance woke Jane up. The guests were awakened when she entered the hall. Mr. Rochester was coming

down the stairs from the third floor with a candle in his hand. He convinced the visitors to return to their rooms, stating, "A servant has had a nightmare."

However, Jane was obligated to care for Mr. Mason all night as he lay in a bed on the third level with severe arm and shoulder injuries. Jane deduced that a woman had caused the wounds based on sporadic cues. After calling for a doctor, Mr. Rochester had the injured man transported in a coach before morning, with the doctor keeping an eye on him. Jane receives an unexpected summons to Gateshead to visit her dying aunt, Mrs. Reed. She gets a letter from John Eyre in Madeira asking his niece, Jane, to get in touch with him through Mrs. Reed. He implied that he might adopt her because he was single and without children. It had a three-year expiration date. Mrs. Reed had never attempted to give it to Jane since she despised her too much to help her succeed.

When Jane returns to Thornfield, Mr. Rochester proposes, which she accepts since she loves him and has faith in him. On the day of their wedding, suddenly a man named Mr. Mason appeared with an announcement that this wedding can not take place since Mr. Rochester is already married his sister Bertha Mason and she is still alive.

When pressed for an explanation, the speaker, a London-based lawyer named Mr. Briggs, produces documentation establishing that Mr. Rochester had wed Bertha Mason in Spanish Town, Jamaica, fifteen years ago. And to confirm that the woman is still alive and in Thornfield, he produces Mr. Mason. Edward Rochester frankly and recklessly admits that he had wed, as the attorney said, that his wife was still alive, and that he had kept her at Thornfield in secret for years. She was insane and hailed from a family of lunatics who had been idiots for three generations. His father and brother, who wanted him to marry into a wealthy family, had conspired to entice him into the marriage.

To determine what kind of being Thornfield had been duped into espousing and whether or not he had the right to breach the vows, Rochester asks the clergyman, the lawyer, and Mr. Mason to visit Thornfield. He leads them to the third floor when they return to Thornfield. A fire was burning in a room without windows, surrounded by a high, sturdy fence. A lamp was hanging from the ceiling by a chain. A dependable maidservant was hunched over the fire, cooking something. A figure was seen moving back and forth in the deep shade at the room's far end. At first glance, it was impossible to identify what it was. It appeared to be crouching on all fours while grabbing and growling like a crazy wild beast. However, it was dressed, and a thick

mane of untamed, dark, grizzled hair hid its head and features. Everybody was shocked when Mr. Rochester introduced her as his insane wife. the guests immediately left.

That evening, Jane snuck out of Thornfield. She offered the driver of the first coach she saw the few shillings she had and asked him to transport her as far as he could for the money. He dropped her off in the moorlands at a crossroads 36 hours later. She moved through the heather. She ate bilberries that evening and slept beneath a crag. She was brought into Marsh End, the residence of the Reverend St. John Rivers, a young and aspirational minister from the nearby community of Morton, two days later, starving and soaked. Jane had nothing but kindness from Mary and Diana, his two sisters. They were about to resume their governing duties in a sizable southern English metropolis.

St. John hired Jane to be the headmistress of the girls' school in Morton. He intended to work as a missionary in India. Jane was invited to accompany him and become his wife. However, something prevented her from agreeing; he felt called to go on a mission, but she did not. Then he told her that her uncle had passed away and left her 20,000 pounds. Mr. Briggs, a solicitor in London, attested to this. Jane also learned that St. John, Mary, and Diana's mother had been her father's sisters, making them the rightful heirs to her uncle in Madeira. She insisted that they receive a portion of the legacy.

One evening, St. John was pressuring Jane to make a choice. She almost caves into his pressure, even though she doesn't love him. Even though there was just one candle, there was plenty of moonlight in space. She realises she can't leave the man she loves when she hears a voice yell, "Jane! Jane!" across the moors. She left for Thornfield the following day. She travelled two miles to the Rochester Arms in 36 hours. She ventured to Thornfield with much trepidation, only to see a burned-out ruin.

She discovered that Thornfield Hall had burned down the year before, around harvest time, when she returned to the inn. In the middle of the night, the fire started. Rochester had attempted to save his wife. They could hear her shouting from a mile away after she scaled the roof and stood there waving her arms. Rochester had entered the ceiling. He called her name, and the audience responded, "Bertha!" She yelled as he drew closer before bolting away. She was dead on the pavement the next moment.

After removing him from the rubble, a surgeon had to amputate Rochester's hand instantly; he was alive but severely injured. One of his hands had been crushed to the point of necrosis. Additionally, they were irritated and lost vision in the other eye. He was currently in

Ferndean, a manor home on a farm he owned some thirty miles from where Thornfield Hall once stood. Jane discovered him there, miserable, helpless, and disabled. Now that he is liberated, Jane can say the well-known phrase, "Reader, I married him."

When Edward Rochester's firstborn was placed in his arms, he could see that the child had inherited his own eyes, just as they had once been – big, dazzling, and black. Eventually, the sight came back to Edward Rochester's eye. He realised that time, with a whole heart, that God had tempered justice with mercy.

It is a bildungsroman novel. It is a narrative about enduring personal hardship and finding the strength, tenacity, and intelligence to overcome obstacles. The female protagonist passes the test of time, society, and many unfortunate yet challenging circumstances. However, she never loses hope and stops trying until she reaches her destiny as an individual woman who builds her life on her terms.

### **5.2.5 Characters:**

**Jane Eyre:** The story follows Jane's physiological and psychological development from her unhappy childhood spent with the obnoxious Reed family to her happy married life in Rochester at Ferndean. Jane's development depends on reading, schooling, and creativity, contributing to her eventual success. Jane, the central protagonist and narrator, is a young woman with a plain demeanour. She is an educated, kind, and honest woman. She deals with discrimination, first from her own extended family and then in society at large. She was a woman who grew up an orphan while making adjustments and accepting what life had thrown at her over the period. Through her journey, she encountered many who threatened her individuality, independence, and suitability to live as she liked. However, she defies all the threats as a strong-willed woman and finds her way through all her challenges. She successfully defends her beliefs in equality, the dignity of the individual, and high morals and ethics. She prioritises both kinds of fulfilment—emotional as well as intellectual. She takes her decisions and stands by them. She even fights for what she believes is ethically correct. She is a woman who poses apparent challenges to the Victorian societal norms that are biased toward a Second Sex and showcases her strong advocacy in fighting for what she believes in.

**Rochester,** the male protagonist in the novel, owns Thornfield. He employs Jane. He is a handsome and wealthy man with a dashing personality. However, he carries some secrets that strikingly add to the suspense and thrill of the story. He falls in love with Jane. He goes on to set aside his societal etiquette and what he calls norms of decency and class discrimination to

connect with Jane. These steps show his honest and genuine efforts to further connect with Jane. He is an ardent world traveler who has traveled across Europe through adulthood. Sometimes he behaves in a reckless and impetuous manner. However, he acquires the sympathies of his readers since he has been through significant challenges and struggles that life has thrown at him, including his early marriage to Bertha Mason. Nonetheless, he tries to undo his doings by publicly accepting his mistakes and proposes to begin a new life with Jane after paying for his recklessness. Jane falls in love with Rochester despite his not-so-likeable demeanour and unappealing appearance because she feels they mostly share similar values. He is the first to promise her genuine love, a good home, and a happy family life. However, the novel is set in the Victorian era, representing men's superiority over women. In addition, Edward Rochester, the male protagonist, is showcased as socially and economically superior to Jane but she is his intellectual equal. However, Jane will only get married to Rochester once she has amassed wealth and a family. She has been on the verge of giving up on her passion entirely. She waits until her lack of money, loneliness, or passion does not affect her too much. After the book, Rochester also loses his manor house and sight, making him weaker, while Jane has grown stronger. Although Jane claims they are equal, the marital dynamic has ultimately shifted in Jane's favour.

**St. John** is Jane's cousin. He meets up with Jane accidentally, along with his sisters Mary and Diana. They support Jane after she flees Thornfield by providing for her necessities. He proposes marriage to Jane and allows her to move to India with him as his wife. Jane likes moving to India and working for needy people, but she cannot agree to marry him for it. He pressurises Jane. Hence, it acts as a counterpoint to the hero, Rochester. Rochester was emotionally invested in Jane, whereas St. John wanted to marry her for the sake of marrying.

**Mrs. Reed** is Jane's aunt. She cruelly treats Jane at Gateshead Hall up until the point when she is eleven years old. Jane was sent away to school sometime around this time. However, Jane did initiate her efforts to make amends with her aunt, but the older woman is still angry. Hence, she never accepted her because her late husband has always valued Jane, this girl, above his own three children.

**Bessie** is the one individual who consistently shows kindness to Jane throughout her adolescence. She was the housekeeper at Gateshead Hall. She used to read books for her and sing songs. Bessie later marries the coachman, Robert Leaven, at the Reeds and leaves Gateshead.



Jane's cousin, **Georgiana Reed**, is one of Mrs. Reed's two daughters. When they were young, the lovely Georgiana was unkind to Jane; nevertheless, as they grew older, she became friends with her cousin and confided in her. Georgiana attempts to flee with Lord Edwin Vere, but Eliza, her sister, informs Mrs. Reed of the agreement and thwarts the scheme. Later, after Mrs. Reed's death, Georgiana weds a wealthy man.

The Reed family's pharmacist, **Mr. Lloyd**, is the one who recommends that Jane go to a boarding school. Mr. Lloyd. He has always been kind to Jane. He used to write letters to Miss Temple to verify Jane's account and her background. He also used to save Jane from the accusations of Mrs. Reed, whenever required.

**Eliza Reed** is one of Mrs. Reed's two daughters and Jane's cousin. Eliza, who is not quite as stunning as her sister, gives her life to the church with self-righteous devotion. She finally enters a convent in France and rises through the ranks to become the Mother Superior there.

**Mr. Brocklehurst**, the mean, cruel, dishonest, and hypocritical headmaster of Lowood School, unfortunately used to teach the doctrine of privation at the school. On the contrary, he steals funds from the school to finance and maintain his lavish lifestyle. Brocklehurst is known as a prominent hypocrite throughout the story. His shady and dishonest activities are brought to light when a typhus outbreak has swept through Lowood, and as a result, he is disgraced in the public eye and forced to leave the school.

**Bertha Mason**, popularly regarded as Rochester's secret wife, was once a stunning and wealthy Creole woman in her adult life. As the story goes on, she becomes more and more crazy, violent, and animalistic. Bertha lives her life imprisoned in a hidden room on the third floor of Thornfield, with Grace Poole as her caretaker. However, Bertha occasionally breaks herself free when Grace is under the influence of alcohol. Bertha is the one who is ultimately responsible for the destruction of Thornfield and her death in the subsequent fire.

The **Mason family** includes Richard as Bertha's brother. He suffers an injury at the hands of his psychologically sick sister when he is at Thornfield. Mason. The solicitor Briggs shows up at Rochester's house after Mason has learned that Rochester is about to marry a woman named Jane. They planned to stop the wedding and expose the truth about Rochester's earlier marriage with Bertha.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Who is the male protagonist of the novel?
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2. What is the name of Rochester's first wife?

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3. Why did Rochester keep her secretly hidden from the public eye?

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### **5.2.6 Conclusion:**

The novel has a typical happy conclusion for a Victorian tale. Jane receives rewards from every figure who treats her well. Adèle become Jane's pleasant companion as soon as she reached to the school. Diana and Mary Rivers have had loving marriages. Jane is afraid of losing herself in a relationship with St. John. However, she seems perfectly content to become one with Rochester in a marriage that appears to be perfect. What distinctions exist between the partnerships, and how does Jane stay true to Rochester? Primarily as a result of his wounds. Jane still relies on her spouse as his "vision" and "right hand." So, the chapter is a strange mix of words that talk about their "perfect concord" and words that show Rochester's dependence, like when it says that he sees nature and literature through her. Jane gives Rochester partial vision regeneration after two years of excellent behaviour, but he can still not read or write much.

### ***Check your progress***

1. How does the novel end?

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2. How can Charlotte Bronte be remembered in the literary oeuvre of the known British literary world?

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3. How does the novel become a representative of a typical Victorian world of England?

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## **5.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should have become familiar with Victorian fiction in general and novel written by Charlotte Bronte, i.e., *Jane Eyre*, in particular. You should have gained an understanding of the nineteenth century British literary works, the prominent literary figures and their contribution in the development of varied genres, here, the Victorian novel.

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## 5.4 Glossary

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**Classical work:** Judged over a period of time to be of the highest quality and outstanding of its kind

**Oeuvre:** The body of work of an author

**Creole woman:** A person of mixed French or Spanish descent speaking a dialect of French or Spanish

**Pleasant companion:** Someone you spend a lot of time with, i.e., here, Adele and Jane

**Self-righteous:** Having or characterized by a certainty, especially an unfolded one, that one is totally correct or superior one

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## 5.5 Sample Questions

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### 5.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Where was Charlotte Bronte born?
2. What social and economic background did she come from?
3. What was the pseudonym used for publication of Charlotte Bronte's first novel?
4. When did she publish her first ever written work written in collaboration with her sisters?
5. What was the novel of her posthumously published novel?
6. When was *Jane Eyre* first published?
7. What pseudonyms were chosen by Bronte siblings as writers?
8. What was the name of the maid who was assigned the secret duty to cater Rochester's first wife?
9. What was the name of Rochester's daughter?
10. What was the name of Rochester's first wife?

### 5.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Discuss *Jane Eyre* as an autobiographical novel.
2. 'Rochester can be considered a typical Victorian man.' Elaborate the answer with the help of the novel.
3. Write a detailed note on how the novel represents the cultural and social condition of that era.
4. Write a brief description on Charlotte's life at the Lowood school.

5. How has Bronte sisters contributed in normalizing the writing by female authors in the era when it was not so normal while receiving immediate success upon publication? Discuss the answer with suitable examples from the text.

### **5.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Draw a character sketch of Mr. Rochester as a male protagonist with the help of the details provided in the chapter.
2. Discuss the novel as a Victorian Prose/Novel following the genre specific characteristics of the same.
3. Critically comment on the fame and name Charlotte Bronte as a woman writer received in the Victorian era where women were barely considered eligible to produce serious literature.

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## **5.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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1. Margaret Lane. *Introduction to Jane Eyre*. Dent/Dutton, 1969.
2. Knies, Earl A. *The Art of Charlotte Bronte*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1969.
3. Peters, Margot. *Charlotte Bronte: Style in the Novel*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973.
4. Allott, Miriam, ed. *The Brontes: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge, 1974.
5. Dunn, Richard J., ed. *Jane Eyre*. Norton, 1971, updated, 1987.

## **Unit - 6: *Jane Eyre*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation**

### **Structure**

**6.0** Introduction

**6.1** Objectives

**6.2** *Jane Eyre*

**6.2.1** Themes

**6.2.2** Narrative Technique

**6.2.3** Critical appreciation

**6.2.4** Conclusion

**6.3** Learning Outcomes

**6.4** Glossary

**6.5** Sample Questions

**6.6** Suggested Learning Resources

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### **6.0 Introduction**

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In the last Unit, you were introduced to the novel *Jane Eyre* which was published in the year 1847 by Charlotte Bronte. In the last Unit, you studied how it narrates the life story of the protagonist named Jane. Through the story, she is portrayed as a courageous young woman who juggles the challenges life throws at her personally and professionally. The chain of unending struggle began when she was taken in by the Reeds, her uncle, and her aunt. She was sent away to the boarding school named Lowood School owing to certain unfortunate circumstances. However, misfortune kept chasing her. She falls in love with a handsome gentleman and her employee Mr. Rochester. The truth was brought to the fore that he was married, and he accepted it, too. The story takes an unexpected turn in the sudden circumstances, but Jane does not give up. She was a survivor. Her tenacity, razor-sharp wit, and bravery finally help her overcome all the challenges. Rochester and Jane, the love birds, get married and have a child towards the end. It is believed that the story closely resembles the life of the author, Charlotte Bronte.

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## 6.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- familiarize you with the Victorian novel
- make you critically appreciate the British novel in general and other works written by the Bronte sisters in particular
- enable you to have a deeper understanding of the themes, narrative technique, and to attempt a critical appreciation of the text
- facilitate a comparative study of the novel

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## 6.2 *Jane Eyre*

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Before we discuss the themes and the narrative technique in *Jane Eyre*, let us quickly recapitulate the last Unit and summarize the novel. Jane is a young girl, about 10 years old. She is the main protagonist of the story. She loses her parents to typhus and becomes an orphan. She then moves to her uncle's and aunt's house. This extended family shuns Jane aside and leaves her in the care of the nursemaid. However, Jane's young life hit a "low" point when she was taken to the austere Lowood Institution, a residential charity school. Her extended family almost outcasted her at school for years and never looked back. She grew up there. The school played a significant role in shaping her personality over the years; as a young woman, she and the other girls residing there were highly tormented over the years. Nevertheless, her struggles filled her with the courage and strength to be an independent woman.

Jane, a courageous survivor, has been making decisions for herself. She initially chose to work in the Lowood school, her almamater. After a few years, she decided to leave the place and began a job hunt as a governess. Fortunately, she receives a confirmed job opportunity as a house governess from a wealthy man named Edward Rochester, who owns the estate at Thornfield Hall. Jane was hired to teach and look after a beautiful young French kid, Adèle. She was born to a French dancer, one of Rochester's lovers. She also makes friends with the kind and generous housekeeper, Mrs. Alice Fairfax.

Jane begins to get attracted to Rochester, her employer. However, her one-sided love seemed like an ending when she gathered that he might marry a snooty and well-to-do young woman named Blanche Ingram. Eventually, the turn of events takes such a shape that Rochester

and Jane confess their love to each other and proceed to the marriage. On their wedding day, however, Jane learns that Rochester cannot legally marry her as he is married to a lady named Bertha Mason. She was psychologically challenged for a long time. Therefore, despite staying in the same mansion, she is locked away on the third floor in the same house due to her violent behaviour.

Jane could immediately relate and realize that her presence accounts for the strange noises she heard inside the mansion. Bertha's existence legally prevents Rochester from marrying Jane though he feels justified in continuing to date Jane because he was believed to be duped into marrying Bertha. He begs Jane to move to France with him, where they can live together as husband and wife. Nevertheless, Jane refuses the proposal on moral grounds and, in a heartbroken and shattered condition, immediately leaves Thornfield without any plan.

She had no other place to go to after Thornfield. Hence, she began encountering varied issues with her accommodation, job, safety and security. During one such struggling day, some strangers shelter Jane, whom she later learns to be her cousin, whom she was separated from in childhood. St. John, one of her cousins, became a devout priest. He shares his plan of moving to India as a missionary with Jane. He also offered her the opportunity to join him if she would like to. However, before Jane could decide, he proposed marriage to her. At first, Jane consents to join him in India, but the prospect of wedding him doesn't seem acceptable because she is still in love with Rochester.

Nevertheless, St. John did not accept her rejection. On the other hand, he began to emotionally pressurise her into marrying him. Considering minimal or no options other than marrying him, she hesitantly changes her mind. However, he began to push her repeatedly to reconsider the marriage proposal. Finally, Jane requests Heaven for guidance. At midnight, she suddenly hears a mesmerizing call from Rochester seeking her help in her dream. Jane understands where her destiny wants her to go. She instantaneously returns to Thornfield and discovers that the estate has been destroyed by the fire, which Rochester's wife Bertha started before jumping to her death. Jane jumps into the fire to save Rochester. Regrettably, Rochester was blinded by the fire. However, towards the end, Jane and Rochester reunite and get married. Before the conclusion, the readers are informed that Rochester partially regains his vision, and the couple has a son.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Who is the narrator in the story?

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2. Who is Rochester?

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3. Name any three characters in the novel.

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### 6.2.1 Themes:

The novel deals with varied themes throughout the storyline. A few key themes are discussed at length here,

#### **Independence vs. Love**

The exploration of the desire for love is a prominent thematic element in Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. Jane seeks to establish a sense of self-value, social integration, and romantic attachment. Throughout the narrative, the protagonist, Jane, embarks on a journey of self-discovery, whereby she grapples with the challenge of attaining love while maintaining her integrity and well-being. The protagonist rejects Rochester's offer of matrimony due to apprehensions regarding the potential erosion of her autonomy. Jane believes that entering into a marital union with Rochester. At the same time, he remains legally bound to Bertha, which will result in her assuming the role of his mistress, abandoning her moral principles in favour of her emotions. Nevertheless, her experiences at Moor House present her with a contrasting set of challenges. The individual in question engages in philanthropic endeavours within socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, thereby enjoying financial autonomy. However, she lacks adequate emotional sustenance to carry out her charitable pursuits effectively. Jane knows St. John's marriage proposition lacks love for her. Nevertheless, Jane's events at Moor House serve as crucial trials of her autonomy. The protagonist's ability to enter into matrimony with Rochester and relinquish her asymmetrical dependence on him as her "master" is contingent upon her successful demonstration of personal autonomy. It is feasible for a union to exist between individuals of equal standing.

#### **Religion**

Jane attempts to balance her spiritual duties and worldly indulgences harmoniously. She encounters three notable religious figures, including Mr. Brocklehurst, Helen Burns, and St. John Rivers. Each represents a distinct spiritual framework that Jane finally discards as she refines her convictions regarding faith, morality, and the practical ramifications of these notions. Charlotte



Bronte detected perils and instances of hypocrisy within the evangelical movement prevalent during the nineteenth century, and Mr. Brocklehurst manifests these concerns. In asserting his mission to eradicate pride among his students, Mr. Brocklehurst employs evangelical discourse. However, his imposition of numerous adversities and humiliations upon them, exemplified by his instruction to straighten the naturally wavy hair of one of Jane's classmates, is fundamentally inconsistent with Christian principles. Undoubtedly, adhering to Brocklehurst's regulations presents a formidable challenge. Bronte's scepticism towards the evangelical movement is seen in his insincere endorsement of his affluent family and their social standing, which comes at the expense of Lowood School and its student body. However, Jane deeply respects and admires Helen, her friend. She finds embracing Helen's gentle and forgiving interpretation of Christianity challenging due to its perceived passivity.

In subsequent chapters, St. John Rivers is an additional illustration of Christian behaviour. This manifestation of Christianity is characterised by a strong drive for success, a desire for recognition and admiration, and a notable sense of self-importance. St. John presents Jane with a lifestyle requiring her to compromise her integrity, encouraging her to suppress her emotional inclinations to fulfil her moral responsibilities. Despite Jane's rejection of all three forms of religion, she remains steadfast in upholding her moral ideals, engaging in spiritual practises, and maintaining her belief in God. In Chapter 26, the protagonist seeks solace from a higher power, praying to God for consolation after her ruined wedding. In Chapter 28, the protagonist entrusts her survival to a higher power as she traverses the desolate heath, enduring severe hunger and extreme poverty. The user expresses strong disapproval towards Rochester's engagement in sexual immorality. The individual is unwilling to contemplate cohabitation with the subject in question, contingent upon both ecclesiastical and legal institutions' continued recognition of his marital status with another lady. However, Jane encounters significant challenges while attempting to sever ties with the sole romantic relationship she has ever experienced. The protagonist ascribes her liberation from a potentially unethical existence to a divine being (Chapter 27).

Jane ultimately reaches a comfortable compromise. The individual's conception of spirituality contrasts with Brocklehurst's regarding its lack of severity and unpleasantness. Furthermore, it does not advocate for disengagement from the external realm, as with Helen's and St. John's religious beliefs. According to Jane, religion has the potential to regulate and manage intense emotions while also serving as a source of inspiration for individuals to exert

diligent effort and attain success in their external endeavours. These achievements encompass complete self-awareness and a steadfast belief in a higher power.

### **Class Social**

*Jane Eyre* critiques the inflexible social hierarchy prevalent in Victorian England. Brontë asserts that the novel's most efficacious exploration of this matter lies in her scrutiny of the arduous societal predicament encountered by governesses. Like the figure of Heathcliff in Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights*, Jane possesses an ambiguous social status and engenders significant turmoil among those in her vicinity. Jane had aristocratic manners, elegance, and knowledge because Victorian governesses were required to possess a comprehensive understanding of noble "culture" and impart to children the principles of a refined lifestyle and their academic education. Nevertheless, despite their status as remunerated labourers, they were subjected to servile treatment, rendering Jane in a state of helplessness and poverty during her tenure at Thornfield. Upon Jane's realisation of her affection for Rochester, a double standard becomes evident, whereby she is perceived as his intellectual counterpart yet lacks the same social standing. Jane is reluctant to enter into matrimony with Rochester due to her indebtedness towards him for his perceived condescension in proposing to her, even before the revelation of the Bertha Mason situation. In Chapter 17, Brontë presents "The Grief of Jane" as a critical examination of Victorian class ideologies.

Jane consistently expresses her opposition to the practice of class discrimination. In Chapter 23, the protagonist reprimands Rochester, exemplifying her disapproval by stating, "Is it your belief that my diminutive stature, impoverished circumstances, lack of prominence, unattractive appearance, and ugliness render me devoid of both a soul and a heart?" Your understanding is incorrect. I possess a soul and a heart of comparable magnitude to yours. If a divine entity had granted me a certain level of physical attractiveness and significant wealth, it would have been my responsibility to create circumstances that would make it equally challenging for you to part ways with me, just as it is currently arduous for me to do so. It is imperative to remember that Jane Eyre consistently adheres to societal norms without deviation. Ultimately, Jane's capacity to marry Rochester on equal terms is solely facilitated by the lucky monetary acquisition of her inheritance from her uncle, which can be perceived as possessing an almost otherworldly quality.

## **Gender**

Jane continuously champions the cause of equality and works to end all forms of oppression. The primary character faces the difficult task of opposing patriarchal dominance, which includes those who support the oppression of women and promote the subjugation of other species, in addition to the existing social hierarchy based on social class. Edward Rochester, Brocklehurst, and St. John Rivers are three notable male characters threatening Jane's pursuit of equality and moral rectitude. All three demonstrate aspects of misogyny to some degree. Both parties are committed to maintaining Jane's subordinate status, which will prevent her from articulating her thoughts and emotions. To achieve independence and embark on a journey of self-discovery, Jane must depart from Brocklehurst, decline St. John's invitation, and proceed to Rochester solely after she has secured an equal-opinion marriage. Jane fulfills the ultimate criterion when she demonstrates the capacity to operate effectively within a familial and communal framework throughout her time at Moor House. The development of the female protagonist's financial independence diminishes her dependence on Rochester to satisfy her romantic longings. Furthermore, Rochester is revealed to be visually impaired and reliant on Jane as his "mentor and support" after the novel. Chapter 12 illustrates a notion regarded as exceedingly progressive from a feminist standpoint at the time. The author contends that, like men, women need a space to direct their efforts and develop their skills. In the same way that males would be impacted, women are subject to excessive restrictions and a total absence of advancement. Advocating for restricting others' activities to decorative needlework, culinary arts, textile craftsmanship, or musical performance may suggest that those with more significant advantages have a limited perspective. It is an intellectually unsound practice to pass judgment or ridicule on individuals who aspire to pursue or investigate activities or disciplines that transcend the traditional expectations associated with their gender.

## **Residence and Belonging**

A location to which Jane feels a sense of belonging characterizes her residence; she assists with the book. Jane asserts that Gateshead is not her residence due to her lack of legal authorization to be there, in response to the Reeds' apothecary Mr. Lloyd's inquiry about whether she is content to do so. Jane characterises herself as "useless" and "a discord" towards Gateshead due to her lack of the Reeds' temperament. She is ultimately unable to contribute to the contentment of the family due to her incompatibility. These are the assertions made by Jane in the initial chapter. At Gateshead, Jane feels even more alone because no one adores her and she

has no one to return the affection. Jane seeks alternative employment following Miss Temple's departure from Lowood, primarily because she holds Miss Temple accountable for the ambience that embraced Lowood. Jane can no longer justify making Lowood her home because of the absence of the person she cherishes the most. After developing an intense emotional connection with Rochester at Thornfield, to the extent that Jane refers to him as her "only home," she ultimately decides to separate from him because continuing to reside with him would promote his immorality and detrimentally affect his soul. Her unease in his presence stems from the information she has acquired regarding Bertha Mason. As Jane eventually returns to Rochester, he can utilise her once more, as his eyesight has improved. Jane's motivation for making decisions throughout the novel is her longing to be accepted and esteemed by others.

### **Uncertainty and Fear**

Bronte uses terrifying Gothic imagery, particularly when discussing the paranormal, to underscore the unease and ambiguity surrounding Jane's role in the world. The horrifying crimson room serves as the reader's introduction to the Gothic and supernatural. Although Uncle Reed may not haunt the room, Jane is haunted by his connection to it because it is a constant reminder of the unfulfilled promise that she would have a home at Gateshead and that he cannot guarantee her the affection she deserves. Later, the storm that splits the chestnut tree where Rochester and Jane have a passionate kiss casts a foreboding aura as though nature were against their union. This incident reminds Jane that, despite appearances, her happiness with Rochester is unsteady. Furthermore, many academics believe Bertha to be Jane's Gothic twin or a physical representation of the ferocious feelings and rage that Jane experienced in her youth. The relationship between Bertha and Jane highlights Jane's concerns about becoming Rochester's wife. Jane believes Rochester will grow weary of her even without knowing about Bertha, and their union will upset the rigid Victorian social order by having a governess marry her master. This is how Bertha's intimidating presence conveys Jane's anxiety about their upcoming nuptials and the uncertainties of her social standing.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Define the term theme.

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2. What are the key themes in the novel?

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3. Explain the theme of 'uncertainty and fear' in brief.

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### 6.2.2 Narrative Technique:

*Jane Eyre* is entirely written from the protagonist, Jane's point of view. By narrating the story ten years after the novel's culmination, Jane can establish a connection with and contemplate her former self. The author employs the present tense in specific passages of *Jane Eyre* to describe events as she observes them. Jane writes, "At this moment, the coach is a mile away; I find myself alone," to provide an example. This occurred immediately after her flight from Thornfield. The abrupt transition to the present tense effectively conveys Jane's tormented mental state, creating a striking impression. The reader can also interpret Jane's remembrance of traumatic events as an illustration of how they have altered her. She recalls vividly the emotions she experienced upon her escape from Rochester. In subsequent chapters, Jane employs the device of distance to narrate with the benefit of retrospect, drawing the reader's attention to the passage of time. Jane's unwavering convictions influence the reader's perception of the story's occurrences and the other individuals involved. When describing Blanche Ingram, for instance, Jane instructs the reader to observe her arrogant and assured countenance. Blanche's subsequent actions clarify her position for the reader, thereby corroborating Jane's assessment.

The initial publication of *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography* comprised three volumes. It was stated that "Currer Bell" authored these volumes. There is a common misconception that Charlotte Brontë's personal life inspired the Lowood section of the book. Her academic background is believed to include the same as that of the protagonist of her story, Jane. Anti-Catholic criticism notwithstanding, the piece became an instant success. The strong sense of immediacy that *Jane Eyre* exhibited through her frequent first-person addresses and first-person perspective contributed to its overall appeal. Additionally, Jane is a singular icon because she is a courageous, self-reliant woman who confronts issues without regard for the opinions of others. Moreover, the novel was notable for its fusion of multiple genres. Moral realism is consistent with Jane's choice to prioritize her desire over her moral obligation. However, Bertha's fiery demise and her narrow escape from a bigamy marriage were consistent with the Gothic tradition.

*Jane Eyre* is situated in Moor House, Gateshead Hall, Lowood School, Thornfield Hall, and Ferndean, among other locations. Every specific place is associated with a unique era in Jane's life. Jane spends her formative years in Gateshead, where the Reed family resides, and she develops in this terrible crimson room. At this juncture, Jane encounters her initial truly terrifying situation—an alleged encounter with the spirit of her uncle Reed. After observing

Jane's profound transformation after this incident, Mrs. Reed enrolled her in Lowood School, an institution renowned for its severe academic standards. The arduous atmosphere of the English school attended by Bronte and her sisters was described in Lowood School. As described in the book, the students contracted typhus and consumption. According to the analysis of several scholars, Mr. Brocklehurst's theory of forfeiture resembles the prevalent evangelical beliefs of nineteenth-century England. Some frequently construe this passage as a critique of the Protestant sect in Christianity. Jane follows Lowood to Thornfield Hall in Rochester, where an enigmatic and ominous presence lurks during the night. Like supernatural descriptions, Bronte adds numerous elements that contribute to the Gothic ambience and enhance the setting's complexity. Like how sexual apprehensions are examined in multiple Gothic novels, Jane and Rochester in Thornfield contemplate romantic love. Despite their relatively modest physical significance, Moor House and Ferndean possess noteworthy appellations. "Moor" denotes a mooring or a designated area where an object is secured. Upon receiving her inheritance at Moor House, Jane attains her first-ever sense of stability. Jane affirms that she has been Rochester's wife and equal for the past decade and that the "fern" in Ferndean symbolizes the new beginning she and Rochester will embark upon in that location.

*Jane Eyre* contains formal and comprehensive writing. Long lines containing semicolons, colons, and intricate word selections are typical of Charlotte Bronte's work. For example, Jane characterizes her initial encounter with Mr. Rochester: "The incident had transpired; it was an incident devoid of consequence, romance, or interest; however, it signified a transformation from a mundane existence." Despite the frequent use of formal language and complex syntax in Victorian literature, Jane's writing style demonstrates her intellectual acumen and reflective nature. Jane's descriptions are disorganized, giving the impression that she meticulously considers each aspect. When Jane declares that she will "ever more bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" after her matrimonial union with Rochester, Bronte frequently alludes to the Bible. This is an explicit allusion to the description of Adam and Eve in Genesis. The book receives a significant moral and ethical enhancement through biblical allusions, which underscore Jane's moral duty to depart from Rochester upon discovering his marital union with Bertha Mason.

The events in the novel are permeated by a tone that fluctuates between confessional and philosophical, as well as one that is sad and enigmatic. Jane frequently addresses the reader directly. She often pauses to philosophize as she explains herself and her actions while meditating on the motivations behind the behaviour of others. These asides suggest that Jane

may be experiencing apprehension regarding the response of her audience. The reader may also interpret these explicit assertions through a feminist lens. Despite using a male pseudonym to publish *Jane Eyre*, Bronte's determination to give Jane a strong voice in opposition to the Victorian ideal of the submissive woman demonstrates the sophistication and vitality of women's voices. During heightened emotional intensity, such as when Jane is incarcerated in the red chamber, when she first encounters Rochester, or when Bertha wanders at night, the Gothic, sombre elements that resemble supernatural occurrences come to the forefront. The existing tension and drama intensify the sense of foreboding and direct focus towards Jane's inner turmoil. Throughout the novel, Jane's melancholy outlook on her place in the world stems from her lack of financial resources and familial connections; the disconcerting tone of these sections' manifests Jane's insecurity.

*Jane Eyre* resembles a bildungsroman the most in terms of its structure. Written in German and meaning "novel of education," the Bildungsroman is a literary genre that chronicles the maturation and intellectual development of its wise and philosophical main character. *Jane Eyre* demonstrates not only Jane's intellectual and emotional development but also her physical transformation. Jane establishes that her life has been profoundly affected by her conflict with those in positions of greater authority right from the outset. Throughout the novel, Jane struggles with adherence to ethics and her desire to pursue her passions. By coming to terms with the inherent contradictions in her life, Jane has the potential to attain liberation by the conclusion of the literary work. As is customary for the bildungsroman subgenre, this approval signifies Jane's development into an adult.

The novel has been incorporated into numerous entertainment genres. Many television, film, and stage adaptations of *Jane Eyre* were produced, including the 1943 film starring Joan Fontaine as Jane and Orson Welles as Rochester. Furthermore, the 1966 publication *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys provides intricate particulars regarding Rochester's initial union with Bertha.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Who is the narrator in the novel?

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2. Was *Jane Eyre* adopted into entertainment genres?

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3. In which year was the novel produced as a film?

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### 6.2.3 Critical Appreciation:

The author of the book, *Jane Eyre*, used the personal pronoun "I" to write the book in the style of an autobiography. Many personal parts of Charlotte Bronte's personal traumatic experiences found their way into Jane's description of her life; nonetheless, the author shouldn't view the book as a covert autobiography. Thus, the book is reminiscent of *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens, which includes parts of the author's real-life experiences.

Overall, this book is dreary, sad, and bleak. The trials and tribulations of the protagonist, Jane Eyre, are the focus of this book. She almost immediately strikes the reader as tragic, and she stays that way until the very end when she finally fulfills her deepest desire by marrying Mr Rochester, the man she has loved for a long time. The novel is generally highly touching and heart-breaking, and Jane has very few happy encounters.

*Jane Eyre* has a really intriguing and nearly compelling storyline. Apart from other factors, the novel is worth reading just for the plot appeal. We read the story nearly in one breath and cannot put the book down until we have concluded. There are various distinct stages to the narrative. The initial part of the narrative is on Jane's adventures at Gateshead-hall, where she falls prey to her aunt Mrs. Reed's callousness and that of her three children.

The following phase involves Jane's time at Lowood School, where she studied there for six years and then taught there for two years. Her connection with Helen Burns, a disguised representation of Charlotte Bronte's sister Maria, who had passed away at a young age from tuberculosis, is one of her most memorable memories in this instance. The next phase of Jane's life offers her employment as Adele's governess at Thornfield Hall. This stage is the most significant in the narrative because it depicts the most apparent, romantic, and traumatic events in Jane's life. Here, she develops feelings for Mr. Rochester, a married man with a psychotic wife who lives in the same home as him.

Following her departure from Thornfield Hall, Jane finds herself desperate. Tired and hungry, she cannot obtain food or shelter until she reaches the home of a minister and missionary named St. John Rivers. She briefly finds relief from her sadness here and is very at ease until St. John's suggestion that she marry him starts to press hard and border on harassing her. Her life ends when she travels to Ferndean and marries Mr. Rochester, who is now blind and whose wife died at Thornfield Hall during a fire she had created. All these alterations in Jane Eyre's life make a tale of great interest.



Some critics have accused *Jane Eyre* of having a very sloppy plot structure. However, the accusation is unfounded and unsupported. An autobiography is invariably a lengthy story that encapsulates all or a significant portion of the subject character's life, in this case, Jane. An autobiography can not be expected to have a compact or tightly-knit construction because it covers the various periods of the hero's or heroine's life or both. The adjective "loose" might be used to describe the novel's structure, but not in a negative way. In addition to detailing the protagonist's different experiences, an autobiography must have a sizable cast of characters because the protagonist would unavoidably and naturally interact with a wide range of people throughout their life.

There are numerous characters in Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield* and many characters in *Jane Eyre*. The central focus of an autobiographical novel is the narrator, even though other characters may catch our attention and pique our interest at different points in the narrative. This is what gives an autobiographical novel its sense of coherence. The supporting cast in *Jane Eyre* primarily adds to the story's fascination, but Jane remains the book's star, and Mr. Rochester comes very near to matching her in terms of the complexity of his portrayal.

Without question, *Jane Eyre* is a romantic novel. It contrasts significantly with Jane Austen's writings in this regard, which can be classified as entirely realistic with just sporadic romantic intrusions. Although Jane is also notably practical, "romantic" fits it better.

The intense love connection between Jane and Mr. Rochester serves as this book's primary source of romance. Mr. Rochester is an attractive man. Jane Eyre is a lovely girl. Additionally, there is a significant age difference between Mr. Rochester, who is approaching forty, and Jane Eyre, who is only twenty. Because of this, it could seem unromantic for a plain-looking young lady to be in love with an older man who is virtually and physically unappealing. But it is a very romantic relationship because of the enthusiasm and intensity of passion on both sides, the persistence of love on both sides and the almost obsessive quality of this love. Despite having a realistic core, *Jane Eyre*, like many of Shakespeare's plays, features a lot of absurdities and improbabilities that need to be revised to improve the overall merit of the piece. The simple idea that Mr. Rochester's insane wife is in the same home as him and has been sequestered in a room on the top floor without anyone, not even the housekeeper Mrs. Fairfax, being aware of her presence, is the height of folly. Mr. Rochester had explicitly ordered Mr. Mason to wait until the next day to meet Bertha. Thus, his visit to Thornfield Hall and his decision to meet her in the room where she is sequestered represent another folly.

The mysterious Mr. Rochester rarely visits Thornfield Hall and stays there for more than a few days at a time. He spends most of his time elsewhere. Even the housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax, who is connected to Mr. Rochester, finds Mr. Rochester a mystery. Another absurdity is that Mr. Rochester is taking on the duty of raising Adele, with whom he has absolutely no relationship. The attempt by Mr. Rochester to save his insane wife, who had herself set the home on fire, is a very improbable gesture of selflessness. He acted insanely, risking his life to save a crazy woman who had consistently caused him pain. So, it is a blatant impossibility for St. John and his two sisters to be Jane's cousins. It is a coincidence that lacks credibility in our eyes.

The central theme of *Jane Eyre* is realism. The way the issue of childhood is handled in this book is arguably its most remarkable example of realism. The book's initial chapters are truly unique in how well the struggles and private thoughts of ten-year-old Jane are conveyed. Again, the description of the circumstances in which the orphan girls reside and attend the charity school known as Lowood School is remarkable due to its realism. The portrayal of the people, though, is the most realistic aspect of this book. Realistic character rendering is Charlotte Bronte's forte. Of course, Jane herself and Mr. Rochester receive the best renditions. Charlotte Bronte shows Jane in the most realistic way possible, and Mr. Rochester, a strange and confusing personality, convinces us of the reality of his portrayal, mainly when he tells Jane Eyre about his previous promiscuous life. The supporting characters, such as Mrs. Reed, Mr. Brocklehurst, Miss Temple, Mrs. Fairfax, and, last but not least, Blanche Ingram, are also shown very realistically. Additionally, the Rivers family members have all been accurately portrayed, with St. John as the most prominent person.

#### **6.2.4 Conclusion:**

When *Jane Eyre* was first published, there was a great deal of disagreement among 19th-century critics about the characters, how religion and authority were portrayed, the writing style, scene choices, and the author's gender. Still, they all agreed that the novel was exceptional and enthralling because of Jane's freedom of expression and Bronte's narrative power, both unconventional at the time. Bronte's answer to her detractors was to urge readers to question contemporary norms and re-examine morality and religion rather than continue to live in injustice (Bronte 1848). Overall, Jane Eyre's narrative strength, distinctively strong feminist heroine, and defiance of social norms caused a wide range of passionate reactions.

#### ***Check your progress***

1. When did Charlotte die?

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2. How can she be remembered in the literary oeuvre of the British literary world?

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3. How did Charlotte gain acclaim in her era?

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### 6.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have gained knowledge about the themes and narrative technique in the novel. You should have also attempted a critical appreciation of *Jane Eyre*.

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### 6.4 Glossary

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**Genre:** Type/kind/sort of literary work

**Autobiographical:** A work that deals with the writer's own life

**Governess:** A woman employed to teach children at home in specific households

**Orphan:** A child whose parents are dead, here, main protagonist Jane Eyre

**Lowood School:** A residential school for girls where Jane was sent to study

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### 6.5 Sample Questions

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#### 6.5.1 Objective Questions:

- 1 What are the names of the Bronte sisters?
2. What was the name of Lowood School's principal?
3. Write the name of Charlotte's first novel.
4. When did she publish her first creative work in collaboration with her siblings?
5. What was the genre of that work?
6. Where did Mr. Rochester live?
7. Name the caretaker maid who looked after Bartha secretly.
8. What was the name of Bartha Mason's brother?

9. Where did Jane meet her cousins?
10. Where did Rochester meet his first wife?

### **6.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Discuss *Jane Eyre* as a Victorian novel/prose.
2. Explain the plot of the novel.
3. Write a detailed note on various themes of the novel.
4. Prepare a critical analysis of the main characters of the novel.
5. How did the Bronte sisters contribute to creating a mindful creative space for their female creative descendants in the Victorian era and later?

### **6.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Examine in detail the themes in *Jane Eyre*.
2. Trace the characteristics of a bildungsroman in the novel *Jane Eyre*.
3. Discuss the narrative technique employed by Charlotte Brontë in *Jane Eyre*.

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## **6.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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Brontë, Charlotte. 1848. *Jane Eyre: an autobiography / by Currer Bell*. 2nd ed ed. London: London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1848.

## Unit - 7: *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Background, Plot & Characters

### Structure

#### 7.0 Introduction

#### 7.1 Objectives

#### 7.2 *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Background, Plot, Characters

##### 7.2.1 Background

##### 7.2.2 Plot Analysis

##### 7.2.3 Sense of Conflict

##### 7.2.4 Advent of Complication

##### 7.2.5 Climax of the Plot

##### 7.2.6 Elements of Suspense

##### 7.2.7 Conclusion

##### 7.2.8 First Person Narrator

##### 7.2.9 Characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea*

##### 7.2.10 Let Us Sum Up

#### 7.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 7.4 Glossary

#### 7.5 Sample Questions

#### 7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 7.0 Introduction

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*Wide Sargasso Sea*, is a post-colonial novel written by Jean Rhys in English. It is set during the 1940s and 1960s in England and was published in 1966. It is about the lives of Caribbean people under the colonial effects of the English regime, and hence the novelist has criticized the colonial approach of England there. She has provided ample space in the novel to describe the state of slaves and the deprived class of Caribbean people. The beauty of the Caribbean landscape is also well-delineated in the novel. As the novelist herself is of Caribbean origin, her style and narrative techniques are very much in the same lines as are followed by Caribbean writers. The tone she has used in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is sensational, mysterious and passionate on one hand and has an aesthetic touch on the other hand, mainly through the liking and affiliation of Antoinette towards aesthetic life and landscapes of the Caribbean and Jamaican region.

The setting and background of *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be traced back to 1840 and this novel is a change in the mode and tone when compared to the novelist's earlier works which were in European style and conventions. The novel is highly symbolic and there is a diversity of thematic values. Political, social and racial issues are frequent ideas that hit readers again and again in the novel. As the novel is depicted in two different cultures, that is West Indian and European culture, so there is a clash between two different ideologies as is depicted in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The novel also centers around diverse and hybrid layers of identities, i.e., social, cultural, sexual, economic and racial. The concept of marriage in the novel is suggestive of the fact that financial needs and support are prime behind every marriage and not feelings or love, as seen in the case of Antoinette, Annette and even behind the marriage of Rochester and the result is a collapse.

***Check your progress***

1. *Wide Sargasso Sea*, is a post-colonial novel written by \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The setting and background of *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be traced back to \_\_\_\_\_.

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## **7.1 Objectives**

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This Unit is meant to give the background and the setting in which the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* is written, how the plot is constructed and how characters are portrayed. Specifically, the objectives of this Unit are to:

- make the readers familiar with the Caribbean culture and how it was affected by the colonial regime
- bring to light the conflict and clash that existed between two opposite cultures and ideologies i.e. colonial and colonized.
- make the readers know about different narratives and plot techniques which are implied in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
- give background knowledge and the setting in which the novel is written in order to fully comprehend the novel.
- give insights in to exploring the diverse traits that the major characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* possess.
- enable readers to get to know the different layers of identity crisis going on in the lives of Caribbean people.

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## 7.2 *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Background, Plot, Characters

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### 7.2.1 Background:

*Wide Sargasso Sea* is a novel that is set in Jamaica in the Caribbean region when it was a part of England's colonial regime. The year in which it is set is never mentioned in the novel, but we can get the idea when Jean Rhys mentions that she enters Covent in 1839, that the novel is set in the 1840s. It was a time of great social, cultural, racial and political upheaval in the Caribbean region under the imperial regime of English. The novel begins to mark its beginning after sometime soon after the British passed the Emancipation Act in 1833 in which slaveholders were promised that they would be compensated but they never received it and hence were ruined, financially, including the father of Antoinette. Slaves were freed but their lives were as bad as during slavery because of the four-year apprenticeship with their former owners. Dominica, the place where the novel is set, was entangled between French and British imperial pursuits. And the novel ends in England at Thornfield Hall, which was the house of Rochester, the husband of Antoinette.

The title of the novel is suggestive of the Sargasso Sea of northern Atlantic Ocean, a vast area which is deemed to be home of seaweed *sargassum*. In addition, the Sargasso Sea is thought to be a mysterious sea because of an oceanic black hole where ships drift in a hopeless situation when winds cease to blow. The title is indicative of the fact how the characters of the novel are trapped in their own Sargasso Sea. The ending of the novel is also mysterious as readers are not revealed about what happens when Antoinette has a dream to set the house on fire. Even the last lines of the novel: “*Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do. There must have been a draught for the flame flickered and I thought it was out. But I shielded it with my hand and it burned up again to light me along the dark passage*” are ambiguous. The word “passage” is also significant as Antoinette passes through many personal, financial, political and racial passages prior to her last dark passage. The ending of the novel has invited endless interpretations of what happens next as nothing is revealed.

*Wide Sargasso Sea* reflects two distinct traits. One is to present the sensibilities that are held by West Indian writers and the other is to project the European concept of modernism. Jean Rhys was born in 1890 in Dominica, which was an island in the Caribbean region. She was the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a white Creole mother. She grew up at a time when the English colonial period was dying. She grew up between two different cultures based on two different

ideological patterns. However, she was influenced by her black nurse or servant who raised her. She was the one who introduced her to the language, customs and culture of Caribbean people. Religious norms were also made known to Rhys through her black servant. And when she was 16, she left her home in Dominica and shifted to England. This act left her with a perpetual feeling of displacement and she was never able to feel associated with her ancestral home again. In the 1920s, she began to travel in Europe and was impressed by the artists and artistic skills of modern and innovative writers as well as artists.

Being marginalized in a conventional society, she began to raise questions about conventional male-dominated society. Surrounded by poverty and illness, she turned towards wandering and alcoholism. Finally, though reluctantly, she settled down in England for which she had some kind of fondness. Due to her psychological and physical state, she remained away from literary horizons until the 1960s. In 1966 came her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, after a gap of 27 years of her previous novel and it was a complete shift of context from an industrial European context towards 19<sup>th</sup> century Caribbean life. It turned out to be a masterpiece in the literary world that depicted and humanized the racially pejorative character of a mad woman of West Indian origin. The novel was a fresh experiment surrounded by modern aesthetic techniques and an impactful feminist rewriting. Hence, the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* gave voice to a marginalized class of society and transformed her initial tragic demise into a sort of Victory.

Though, the novel was influenced by Brontë's novel, Jean Rhys tried her best to break the thematic conventions and make sure that *Wide Sargasso Sea* stood on its own merit. There is novelty in style and narrative technique, which were meant to project cultural and racial hybridism. The novel was profound with symbols and images and it was meant to unearth the fragmented identities and fears of marginalized classes of the society. The novel was based on a struggle against dominating traditions and conventions. The novel being a post-colonial piece of literary skills, questioned the exploited role of England and the sympathies arise for Caribbean people and the region which was exploited by England as a colony. The novel also aroused psychoanalytical reading because of her experimental nature towards narrative technique and exploration of unconsciousness. Jean Rhys incorporated modern and post modern devices such as fragmentation, super-naturalism, sublimity and passion in her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

### ***Check your progress***

1. When was the Emancipation Act passed?
-



2. After a gap of how many years, was the *Wild Sargasso Sea* published?

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### **7.2.2 Plot Analysis:**

#### ***Initial Tone***

Initial or the introductory part of a novel does not mark its way as far as the initial tone or situation with regard to plot construction is concerned. Here, readers are mainly informed about the unstable childhood of Antoinette, which is due to a number of factors. Her father is dead and her mother's financial condition is very poor. After a struggle with no positive outcome, Annette decides to marry Mr. Mason to support and secure her family, but tragically it ends up at the cost of her son, home, sanity and even her life. Annette's experience has far reaching effects on the life of Antoinette surrounded by fears and insecurity.

#### ***Three Act Plot***

*Wide Sargasso Sea* is written in three acts. After the initial tone or situation of the novel in which the troublesome childhood and adulthood of Antoinette is described in the first act of the plot, after a month's courtship with Rochester, whom she marries. In the second act of the plot, the initial pleasant married life of Antoinette and Rochester is described, which later drastically changes when Rochester receives a letter in which Antoinette's infidelity is revealed. Antoinette is also shown giving drugs to Rochester after that he sleeps with his maid as a reaction to Antoinette previous act. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> act of the plot, Rochester sends Antoinette back to England and locks her in an attic, but she manages to escape a dream in which she sets the entire house on fire.

### **7.2.3 Sense of Conflict:**

After a turbulent experience, amid fears and insecurity, Antoinette entered into marriage in order to break the burden of life, to shun her fears and to help herself financially. The marriage here is not out of love or for mutual matrimonial bliss, rather a sort of financial and social arrangement which is set by step father and step brother of Antoinette. After a courtship with Rochester, she gets married to him, but her wealth is taken over by her husband. Thus, she has lost her economic freedom as well. Her husband, Rochester in the beginning seems to have some genuine feelings for her but later on all proves otherwise.

### **7.2.4 Advent of Complication:**

Initially the relationship between Rochester and Antoinette is somewhat smooth, but when Rochester receives a letter, it creates insecurities and doubts in their relationship. Even

after receiving letter disclosing the relationship between Antoinette and Sandi Cosway, Rochester remains unmoved because he pretends as something he already knows. But on the other hand, he does not give Antoinette a single chance to defend her position or situation before him. From there onwards, their relationship is drastically changed due to the revealing letter Rochester receives regarding Cosway.

#### **7.2.5 Climax of the Plot:**

Surprisingly, the climax of the novel is centered on a sexual climax where union during sex is not mainly physical union or physical pleasure, rather it acts as casting one's power and authority over the other. It is revealed in the climax that Rochester has a physical relationship with her wife Antoinette, but at the same time, he had developed a physical relationship with his maid and sleeps with Amélie who mocks Antoinette and calls her a "white cockroach." Rochester's infidelity breaks Antoinette and she loses all hopes of happiness and blissful relationship with Rochester who punished her by sleeping with Amélie.

#### **7.2.6 Elements of Suspense:**

The climax is followed by such incidents in the plot which are full of suspense and surprises. Though those acts are meant by various characters to mend the situation but those actually worsen the situation. Characters, instead of behaving rationally and talking to each other, resort to reactions, which leads to worsening of the situation. They feed each other's emotions, which results in burning out everything. Antoinette goes to meet Christophine and on her return she has a quarrel with Rochester. All these events lead both Antoinette and Rochester to a point where they are no longer able to discern love and hate.

#### **7.2.7 Conclusion:**

In the concluding part of the plot, the readers are informed that Rochester, after declaring Antoinette insane, sends her back to England and locks her up. During her lock up, Antoinette has a dream in which she has sets her entire house on fire. But when she wakes up, she runs down towards the dark passage in her attic, which is the culmination of the novel and its plot. Though, she reveals that she has come to know what actually is to be done, she never reveals the nature of the task during the concluding part of the plot. The open end of the novel leaves the readers unaware of the truth about what happens from an impartial point of view.

#### **7.2.8 First Person Narrator:**

The novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* is narrated mostly through a 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator to the readers either through Antoinette or through the voice of Rochester. Mostly, both the narrators

describe the same events but from different prospective and viewpoints. Sometimes one narrator reveals or tells the events to other narrator or character, as in the case of Antoinette, who reveals her past to Rochester. In between all the narrators and switching off the narrator, the readers are never made known to what actually happens about the actual truth from an impartial point of view.

### **7.2.9 Characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea*:**

#### **Antoinette**

She is the heroine and the part narrator of the novel. She is of European origin and was born in the Caribbean region. Throughout the novel, her relationships with other characters in the novel are depicted through the lens of cruelty, exclusion and alienation and that is why she finds comfort and solace only in the natural beauty of Caribbean landscapes. In the novel, her childhood and adulthood is depicted amid social crisis and financial crisis. She has witnessed that her family house had been set on fire by a mob of former slaves. In addition, she sees her mother who became mad due to family and financial crisis. Later on, she marries an Englishman for financial benefits, which later turns into a disaster in her life. Though, in the beginning, everything goes well, the letter her husband Rochester receives about his wife, Antoinette's relationship destroys their married life. Rochester locks her up in an attic and the only escape from there was suicide. The novel ends with her dream of setting her own house on fire.

#### **Mr. Rochester**

He is an English man and the husband of Antoinette. Unlike his wife Antoinette, he is disturbed and dismayed in the natural setting of Jamaica. He was the second son of his father and did not get anything from the family estate, so he decides to marry Antoinette for financial prospect. After the marriage, things were going well until Rochester received a letter having an allegation against his wife. Without probing and giving her a chance to defend herself, he locks her up in an attic to die. To take revenge on Antoinette, he even sleeps with the maid. His feelings of love and liking for Antoinette turn into hatred and animosity which lets his wife Antoinette to die or commit suicide in an attic where she is seen running towards a dark passage.

#### **Annette**

She is the mother of the heroine Antoinette and in the initial setting of the novel is shown as a widow. After the death of her husband, she has been in debt and entangled in a financial crisis. Her relationship with Antoinette is not very cordial as she mostly attends to her sick son instead of paying attention to Antoinette. Out of serious financial conditions she decides to

remarry to settle things. She marries Mr. Mason, a rich man of financial prospect. But instead of getting any solace, her marriage life adds fuel to the fire and she is declared mad and insane. In the midst of this crisis, she dies, but her death takes place off stage and the readers do not know how and in which state she dies. Her death is similar to the death of her daughter Antoinette's death at the end of the novel. Like their names, which are similar, their destiny and marriage lives are also similar. They share the same mental, social, economic and psychological state. The only difference is that Antoinette does not inherit mental illness from her mother.

### **Mr. Mason**

He is an English man and the second husband of Annette. Like Rochester, he is also indifferent towards the natural landscapes and Caribbean beauty. He ignores the warning and dangers posed by the former slaves of a nearby village when he is told by his wife Annette, and the result is that her family house was burnt to ashes. Unlike other characters in the novel, he does not marry for money as Annette has nothing. But, like other marriages in the novel, the feelings of love are soon lost and he declares his wife insane and mad, which actually leads her to become mentally and mentally sick. In the wake of this disastrous outcome, she dies in a mad state, but the actual event takes place off stage and unknown to the readers.

### **Christophine**

She is the servant of Annette and the nurse of her daughter Antoinette. Her role in the life of Antoinette is very significant as being the nurse she used to act as a substitute mother for Antoinette in the absence of Annette due to her attending her sick son or due to the madness and mental illness she undergoes during the course of events in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Again, when Rochester behaves harsh towards Antoinette after her marriage, she provides solace and inspiration in these words "A man don't treat you good, pick up your skirt and walk out" and "Have spunks and do battle for yourself." Lastly, she again comes for Antoinette's rescue to supply her drugs to give to Rochester when he is enraged after the letter revealing her secret relationship.

### **Daniel Cosway**

He is yet another character who plays a key role in destroying the matrimonial relationship between Antoinette and Rochester. It is also revealed that he himself is the illegitimate son of Mr. Cosway and also among one of his slaves. He sends a letter apparently to destroy the married life of Antoinette on one hand and to blackmail Rochester on the other hand to keep the scandal secret. He seems very educated and intellectual, but he debases himself

through some evil act. That is why he is termed as intellectually inferior by Rochester mainly because of his race and generally because of his nature. His role, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is mainly negative and evil.

### **Minor Characters**

Apart from the major characters that are briefly presented in this Unit, there are other characters as well in the *Wide Sargasso Sea* who make the plot and story complete. Pierre is the sick brother of Antoinette and does not play much role in the novel. Tia, another minor character, is a friend of Antoinette. Amélie is the maid of Antoinette. Aunt Cora, Godfrey, Grace Poole, Hilda, Marie Augustine and Myra are some of other minor characters in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Into how many Acts is the novel divided?

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2. Name any two characters in the novel.

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### **7.2.10 Let Us Sum Up:**

*Wide Sargasso Sea* a post-colonial novel written in 1966 and it sheds light on the lives of the Caribbean people under the colonialism of England's rule. The novel is set in Jamaica in the Caribbean region when it was a part of England's colonial regime. The novel is set in a time of great social, cultural, racial and political upheaval in the Caribbean region under the imperial regime of English. It begins sometime soon after the British passed the Emancipation Act in 1833, when slaveholders were promised that they would be compensated. Dominica is the place where the novel is set and it is entangled between French and British imperial pursuits. And the novel ends in England at Thornfield Hall with Antoinette is shown running towards "dark passage" during her lock up in the attic by her husband Rochester. Antoinette, Mr. Mason, Rochester, Annette, Sidney Cosway, Daniel Cosway and Christophine are the major characters that take part during the events of the plot. The plot is divided into three acts. There are conflicts prior to the climax of the plot. The element of suspense is also there in the novel. The novelist has utilized 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator or narrative technique to narrate the plot of the novel.

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### 7.3 Learning Outcomes

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After going through the Unit, you should be able to understand the Caribbean culture and how it was affected by the colonial regime. You should have an idea about the conflict and clash that existed between two opposite cultures and ideologies i.e. colonial and colonized. You should be aware of narrative technique and plot construction in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

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### 7.4 Glossary

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**Sargasso:** The Sargasso Sea is a region of the Atlantic Ocean

**Emancipation:** Liberation

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### 7.5 Sample Questions

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#### 7.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. *Wide Sargasso Sea* was published in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) 1960
  - (b) 1962
  - (c) 1964
  - (d) 1966
2. *Wide Sargasso Sea* belongs to the period that is generally known as \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) Romantics
  - (b) Renaissance
  - (c) Colonial
  - (d) Post-Colonial
3. The setting and background of *Wide Sargasso Sea* can be traced back to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) 1820
  - (b) 1840
  - (c) 1860
  - (d) 1880

4. The Emancipation Act which brought out a financial change in the Caribbean region was introduced in \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) 1819
  - (b) 1829
  - (c) 1833
  - (d) 1900
5. Jean Rhys was born in 1890 in Dominica which was an island in the \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Caribbean region
  - (b) Atlantic region
  - (c) Northern regions
  - (d) None of these
6. Jean Rhys wrote *Wide Sargasso Sea* after a gap of \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) 25 years
  - (b) 27 years
  - (c) 15 years
  - (d) 19 years
7. The novel ends in England at Thornfield Hall which was the house of \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Rochester, the husband of Antoinette
  - (b) Antoinette, the wife of Rochester
  - (c) Annette, the wife of Mr. Mason
  - (d) Mr. Mason, the husband of Annette
8. *Wide Sargasso Sea* was influenced by \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Jane Austin's novel
  - (b) Hemingway's novel
  - (c) Brontë's novel
  - (d) All of these
9. Which narrative form has been used by Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
- (a) 1<sup>st</sup> person
  - (b) 2<sup>nd</sup> person
  - (c) 3<sup>rd</sup> person
  - (d) Unknown

10. Who was the servant of Annette as well as the nurse of her daughter Antoinette?

- (a) Christophine
- (b) Daniel Cosway
- (c) Sandi Cosway
- (d) Mr. Mason

#### 7.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Antoinette is entangled between two cultures and two different ideologies. How? Explain from your reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea*.
2. What sorts of identity crisis are depicted in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
3. How has the Emancipation Act changed the financial life patterns of slaves and slave masters as depicted in *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
4. What is the major reason behind the marriages in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and why do they collapse?
5. Draw a character sketch of the main character Antoinette especially with respect to her movement towards “dark passage.”

#### 7.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. What are the chief features of major characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys?
2. Discuss the plot construction in *Wide Sargasso Sea*? Explain its various stages.
3. Attempt a critical appreciation of the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

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### 7.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Penguin Classics: Penguin Student Editions, 2001.
2. Ramchand, Kenneth. *The West Indian Novel and Its Background*. London: Faber and Faber, 1970.
3. Nayar, P.K. *Postcolonial Studies: An Anthology*. New Jersey. John Wiley & Sons, 2015.
4. Frickey, P. M. *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys*. Three Continents Press, (1990).
5. Şenel, N. “A postcolonial reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys.” *Journal of Language and Literature Education*, 11, 38-45. 2014.



## **Unit - 8: *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation**

### **Structure**

#### **8.0 Introduction**

#### **8.1 Objectives**

#### **8.2 *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation**

##### **8.2.1 Themes**

###### **8.2.1.1 Slavery**

###### **8.2.1.2 End of Imperialism**

###### **8.2.1.3 Identity Crisis**

###### **8.2.1.4 Woman Enslavement and Madness**

##### **8.2.2 Narrative Technique**

###### **8.2.2.1 First Person Narration**

###### **8.2.2.2 Non-Linear Autobiography**

###### **8.2.2.3 Diversity in Narration**

###### **8.2.2.4 Diverse Tone of Narration**

###### **8.2.2.5 Similarities among Narrators**

###### **8.2.2.6 Shift between Past and Present**

###### **8.2.2.7 Dreams as Narrative Technique**

##### **8.2.3 Critical Appreciation**

###### **8.2.3.1 Tension and Tussle**

###### **8.2.3.2 Economic Instability Affects Relationships**

###### **8.2.3.3 Madness and Violence**

###### **8.2.3.4 Unhealthy Relationship**

###### **8.2.3.5 Symbolic Significance of Coco**

###### **8.2.3.6 Recurrent Motifs**

##### **8.2.4 Let Us Sum Up**

#### **8.3 Learning Outcomes**

#### **8.4 Glossary**

#### **8.5 Sample Questions**

#### **8.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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### **8.0 Introduction**

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The novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys is depicted and narrated in two different cultures. Hence, there are two ideologies that are presented in the novel, seemingly opposite to

each other. It is noticed that the nature, culture, ideology and background of both the narrators are opposite. Throughout the novel, it is found that there is persistence and ever growing tension prevailing among different segments of society. In the novel, not only the economic downfall of white slave owners takes place, but also there are relationships that collapse. In the novel it is seen that there is no smooth and healthy relationship among characters, either in their personal or social life.

Apart from the issue of slavery of blacks by whites, the women in the Caribbean region were also enslaved by their men. Women were slaves to their white masters and were exploited to fulfill their lust. This double enslavement of the women made them lose their mental balance and become insane. This is what is seen in the case of Antoinette and her mother Annette in the *Wide Sargasso Sea*. This drives them towards anger, frustration and violence, which is seen in the case of Antoinette, who bites the arm of her husband and stabs her step brother. Her dream of setting the house on fire is the culmination of that frustration and violent nature.

***Check your progress***

1. Who wrote the *Wild Sargasso Sea*?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. In which region is the novel set?

\_\_\_\_\_

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## **8.1 Objectives**

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- make you familiar with the concept of multiple narrators in the novel
- bring to light the conflict and clashes that existed between two opposite cultures and ideologies
- explore the diverse and recurrent themes
- enable you to understand the link between madness and slavery.
- help you appreciate the novel

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## **8.2 *Wide Sargasso Sea*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation**

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### **8.2.1 Themes:**

#### **8.2.1.1 Slavery:**

The concept of slavery is one of the key ideas and the most recurrent theme in the novel. Slaves are presented as sugar plantation workers with well to do and resourceful slave owners. Such practices were very frequent in the West Indian region in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later on, these practices were given up but no compensation as was promised was given to black slaves who were the victims of that slavery. This resulted in anger and hostile attitude of black slaves towards their owners. This conflict between a black slave and his white master is not only the significant theme of enslavement in the novel but in all the major works of Jean Rhys. Antoinette and Annette's enslavement and depending on their husband is also yet another type of enslavement presented in the novel. It is represented by the fact that women are enslaved to their husbands. The husbands could do whatever they liked and no one asked them about their cruel behavior. That is what is seen in the case of these two women who were put to an end by their respective husbands.

#### **8.2.1.2 End of Imperialism:**

Another key idea and theme of the novel is the end of the British Empire in the Caribbean region. It is shown on the verge of collapse. British people tried to maintain it one way or the other, but it was all in vain. Eventually, it led to the end of slavery in the region. Not only do whites lose their power and status, but they become victims of the same state in which once Black Slaves were in. In the novel, it is seen that Rochester, being the representative of the white and British regime, tries his best to manage and control his wife, who is representative of the Caribbean region, but he is unable to manage and control her. Similarly, even after losing power, the British tried to keep an economic and social check on the Caribbean, whom they deemed as their legitimate slaves, but now the situation has changed to such a degree that it is not possible.

#### **8.2.1.3 Identity Crisis:**

There is identity crisis at different levels as depicted in the novel. One such crisis is between whites who were born and grew up in England, and blacks, who were native inhabitants of the Caribbean region who grew up as slaves to whites. This is the cultural and racial conflict in terms of identity as both hold different ideological patterns. Social fabric is completely

changed by the former slaves who now pursue their social, cultural and economic identity in their own homes. Women of black race who were also slaves were raped by whites. The illegitimate children thus born drifted to two backgrounds and remained under constant conflict in terms of their identity. As a result of this, the worst part is the antagonistic discourse among slaves which later takes the form of violence as is seen in case of burning the house of Cosway by black slaves.

#### **8.2.1.4 Women Enslavement and Madness:**

Women in the Caribbean region were also enslaved by their men. They had to seek social and economic security from their men who treated them badly. It is also noticed that such enslavement of the women leads them to become mad and insane. So, there is a close link that is found between madness and enslavement. Anger, frustration and violence on the part of women are also seen as a result of the enslavement they go through at the hands of men. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* it is seen that after the death of her husband, Annette is seeking to marry to secure herself, but it resulted in her demise. In the same way, her daughter Antoinette marries Rochester with the same objective and with the same outcome. Men are shown marrying to attain more power and money instead of for love and matrimonial bliss.

#### ***Check your progress***

1. Which colonial power asserted control over the Caribbean region?

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2. Who is Antoinette married to?

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#### **8.2.2 Narrative Technique:**

##### **8.2.2.1 First Person Narration:**

The first thing that is worth mentioning about the narrative technique in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the use of the first person narrator. The plot is been narrated through 1<sup>st</sup> person. However, it is important to note that the narration is not limited to any one narrator, rather it is narrated by several narrators and speakers. The main narration of the novel is done by Antoinette and Rochester. The narration shifts through past and present time and tense. Time and tense are used to suit the narrator as well as the events and place where different sections of the novel are set.

##### **8.2.2.2 Non-Linear Autobiography:**

Though the novel is influenced by *Jane Eyre*, unlike it, Jean Rhys, in *Wide Sargasso Sea* does not allow a linear autobiographical pattern of narration. Rather the plot is narrated by two

narrators or speakers. The first and the third part of the novel are narrated by Antoinette who is also the heroine and main character of the novel. The second part of the novel is narrated by Rochester, who is the husband of Antoinette in the novel. It served two purposes at the same time. One, it makes the plot or narration well versed and second, allow the characters to project their inner self in more elaborate manner. That is why it is often noticed in the narration that the same event has been narrated by both the narrators, but their perspective is different, which adds richness to the narration of the events..

#### **8.2.2.3 Diversity in Narration:**

Through multiple narrative techniques, it has been made easier to unearth the cultures and ideologies from the mouth of different narrators. It allows richness, diversity and authenticity of inner self from each culture more widely. In addition, through two narrators, the novelist Jean Rhys is able to present different perspectives and points of view in the novel more easily and in a natural way. Both the narrators have given diverse and multifarious points of view as their nature and background is different. Their exposure and experiences are also different, which have great influence on the narrative technique.

#### **8.2.2.4 Diverse Tone of Narration:**

It is noticed that the narration of the first and third part which is done by Antoinette, is simple, easy and straightforward, which is also indicative of her nature and self. But the narration in the second part, which is done by Rochester, is more refined, deliberate and impartial as compared to Antoinette, whose narration is somewhat personal, childish and hence partial. It is imperative to note that not merely the tone and approach of both the narrators are different, but they are the representative of opposite and contrasting realities. It is seen that the protagonist Antoinette tries her best efforts to cancel her past events and life and start afresh, while Rochester is in search of pursuing the more in-depth understanding of the place where he is in the novel. Hence, it can be concluded that culture is set against culture.

#### **8.2.2.5 Similarities among Narrators:**

Though the nature, point of view and art of narration is different among both the narrators, there are few similarities among them which have deep influence in reshaping their narrative technique as well as point of view. Their role, status and position in their respective set up is identical. Both are deemed as foreigners or outsiders in their societies. There is a compelling agent that has forced Antoinette twice to go to Jamaica as well as England. She has no choice and can not control what is going on in her life and even her ultimate end towards “dark

passage.” Both these narrators have been rejected by their respective parents and their brothers have been given preference over them. However, there is a contrast as Antoinette is rejected by her mother Annette while Rochester faces the same fate at the hands of his father. The effects of these social and personal setbacks have deep impacts on shaping of their characters and, hence, on their point of view on life.

***Check your progress***

1. Name two characters who are also narrators.

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2. What novel inspired the *Wide Sargasso Sea*?

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**8.2.2.6 Shift between Past and Present:**

The events of narration in *Wide Sargasso Sea* shift between past and present. This shift of time and tense is associated with the state of madness both the narrators go through. It was their past which had led them to such a state and even after every possible effort they are unable to shun their past. So, the present state in novel as well as its narration shifts and moves in the past tense. Even the ultimate downfall of Antoinette is due to the event that took place in the past, but that affected her present life as well. So, past events in the narration has reshaped and readjusted to the present in the novel. Jean Rhys’ attempt to introduce narrative technique through dual narrative has diversified and enriched the plot and narration as diverse prospective and layers of point of views are allowed and accessed through this narrative technique. In addition, the structure also allows the madness to be woven naturally in the events.

**8.2.2.7 Dreams as Narrative Technique:**

The role of dreams is significant in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The protagonist, Antoinette has numerous dreams in the course of events and each of her dreams has a relevance and significance to the development of her character as well as to the plot in the novel. The first dream that she has regarding befriending her friend Tie indicates and relates her innocence before the readers. It is also indicative of the danger tha lies ahead in life. Fears and apprehensions are also associated with that dream. Second, the dream that she has is indicative of her marriage with Rochester and her removal from Caribbean origins which she feels no more associated with mainly because of the terrible things that happen to her in Jamaica. The third dream that she has during her lock up in the attic wherein she set her house on fire is indicative of the fact that she has chosen her course of action. Her running towards the “dark passage” is perhaps the culminating point of the

dream. Though, readers are unaware of the events take place after it, there is evidence of what might happen next.

### **8.2.3 Critical Appreciation:**

#### **8.2.3.1 Tension and Tussle:**

Tension is accompanied by the tussle that goes on between white slaveholders and their black slaves side by side. It is increasing with every passing day. Economic fallout has taken place in the lives of the black slaves through an act that is known as Emancipation Act of 1833. After this downfall, there is a change in fortune in the lives of black slaves. They are free and no more slaves, but there is a reversal in fortune among white slave owners as they have become victims. The economic crisis makes life tough for white slave owners that the first husband of Annette drinks himself to death as he could no longer bear the hardships of life. Mr. Mason who was a rich man and after his marriage with Annette faces similar situation as slaves even burn their house into ashes and they have to flee from their house.

#### **8.2.3.2 Economic Instability Affects Relationships:**

Most of the characters in the novel marry merely for attaining social as well as economic security rather than having any liking or sincere feeling for their partner. The marriage of Annette with Mr. Mason and Antoinette marriage with Rochester are typical examples of this sort of marriage arrangement but the result is failures and collapses of marriage. As far as the economic demise and deterioration is worsening in their life, their relational situation also gets worsen. Doubts, fears, distrusts and discomfort run through the novel as well as in the marriage lives of the above mentioned characters as well. Enslavement which was a key issue before the Act of 1833, takes place in the form of enslavement of wives through Mr. Mason who enslaves Annette and Antoinette is enslaved by their husbands by declaring them mad. Their worsen situation and demise in the lock up take place off stage so readers are not sure about the actual state in which their final demise takes place.

#### **8.2.3.3 Madness and Violence:**

These two aspects of human activity are found in abundance in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Events of violence are closely associated with the state of madness and insane. Antoinette not only bite the arm of her husband due to anger, frustration and madness that she goes through especially after the revealing letter that is received to her husband Rochester. The episode of burning the house of Annette into ashes by the slaves is an example of reaction that is based on race and slavery. Similarly, the readers notice at the end of the novel that Antoinette holds a

candle in her hand with the intent to burn the house into ashes as she has seen in her dream. It is a reaction to her madness that she goes through after being locked up in an attic by her husband. So, madness results in violence and anger is a recurrent idea in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

#### **8.2.3.4 Unhealthy Relationship:**

Slaves and slave owners are shown at daggers drawn throughout the novel which is a typical example of unhealthy social relations among people. People are shown treated on the basis of class, race, and status and even based on gender which has disturbed the fabric of social relation among people. Economic pursuits are also imperative behind the unhealthy relations among characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. People marry for economic purpose, such as in the case of Annette with Mr. Mason and the result is frustration and collapse of marriage. She does so to bring stability in her life but it resulted in ending her life. Similarly, her daughter Antoinette marries Rochester with similar situation and consequences. So, it is concluded that for marriage and human relations money or economic pursuits are not vital. However, servants are being projected as someone who bring console and solace in the lives of their masters. Antoinette finds comfort with her friend Tie in her childhood and she is served by Grace Poole during her lock up time in attic when she was bitterly treated by her mother and husband respectively.

#### **8.2.3.5 Symbolic Significance of Coco:**

Coco is the name of Antoinette's bird which has a symbolic relevance and significance in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Her step father Mr. Mason cuts off its wings and prevents it from its flight, similar fate is faced by Antoinette throughout her life especially after her marriage with Rochester who cuts her flights and imagination. It reaches at its climax when she is locked up in an attic on the part of Rochester by declaring her mad, insane and disloyal. Coco wants to have flight in the horizons while Antoinette wants to bloom in her life, but both are unable to do so. Coco wings are cut, Antoinette faces a bitter and severe childhood and tries to come out of it. But her marriage with Rochester spoils all her dreams especially after the letter that her husband received from Daniel Cosway. It is culminated in their lock up drive towards the "dark passage."

#### **8.2.3.6 Recurrent Motifs:**

Demise, decline, death, madness, anger and frustration are the most recurrent motifs found in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Antoinette and Annette go mad and insane during the events of the novel after passing through numerous traumas in their social, personal as well as emotional lives. Madness either on the part of Antoinette, Annette or on the part of slaves results in anger and violent acts in the end with far reaching consequences. So the nexus of madness,



anger and violence are interconnected in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Violence is seen through the acts of black slaves burning the house of Annette into fire, Antoinette is bitterly treated and neglected by her mother, and Antoinette stabs her step brother and bite the arms of her husband Rochester. Antoinette even goes on to burn her house down at the end of the novel. All these events of violence are the results of frustration, the characters go through after being mad and insane.

***Check your progress***

1. Who is the protagonist?

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2. Does madness play an important role?

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**8.2.4 Let Us Sum Up:**

*Wide Sargasso Sea* is a master class novel written by Jean Rhys. It is written in the 1<sup>st</sup> person narrative form. However, there is a diversity of narrators. The first and third part is narrated by Antoinette while the second part is narrated by Rochester. The tone of both the narrators is different. Antoinette's tone is simple, easy and childish while that of Rochester is mature, liberal and impartial. The narration of the events is depicted both in the present as well as the past. Dreams have been utilized by the novelist as a narrative technique. A critical study of the novel shows a conflict and tension among different segments of society i.e. white and black men and women. The conflict between cultures and ideologies is also there in the novel. There is a link between economic and relationship demise. Economy plays a key role in the marriages taken place in the novel. The collapse and unhealthy relations lead to madness and violence. Coco which is Antoinette's bird is a symbolic representation of Antoinette as the wings of both are cut and prevent them from flight. Demise, conflict, madness, frustration and death have been utilized by the novelist as recurrent motifs in the novel. On thematic level, the theme of slavery has been extensively designed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The blacks and women are projected as slaves. Side by side, the decline of the British imperial regime is shown in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. There is an identity crisis that has several layers i.e. racial, social, and economic and gender. Women are facing double enslavement.

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### 8.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should be able to have insight into the theme, plot construction and narrative technique, apart from being able to attempt a critical appreciation of the novel. Specifically, you should be familiar with the concept of multiple narrators in *Wide Sargasso Sea* understand the conflict and clash between two opposite cultures and ideologies in the novel, and the link between madness and slavery.

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### 8.4 Glossary

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**Persistence:** Perseverance

**Segment:** Section, part

**Antagonistic:** Hostile

**Discourse:** Conversation, discussion

**Multifarious:** Diverse

**Deliberate:** Conscious

**Shun:** Avoid

**Attic:** Upper floor

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### 8.5 Sample Questions

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#### 8.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. The narrative technique adopted in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) Third person narrator
  - (b) Second person narrator
  - (c) 1<sup>st</sup> person narrator
  - (d) None of these
2. The narration of the first and third part in *Wide Sargasso Sea* which is done by Antoinette is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) Simple narration
  - (b) Easy narration
  - (c) Childish narration

- (d) All of these
3. The main narration of the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* is done through \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Annette
  - (b) Mr. Mason
  - (c) Antoinette
  - (d) Antoinette and Rochester
4. The narration in the second part of the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* which is done by Rochester is more \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Refined
  - (b) Deliberate
  - (c) Impartial
  - (d) All of these
5. How many dreams does Antoinette have in the course of events in the *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
- (a) One dream
  - (b) Two dreams
  - (c) Three dreams
  - (d) Multiple dreams
6. The economic downfall took place in the lives of black slaves because of \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Emancipation Act
  - (b) Liberation act
  - (c) Freedom act
  - (d) All of these acts
7. The events of violence in the *Wide Sargasso Sea* are closely associated with the state of \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Madness
  - (b) Violence
  - (c) Frustration
  - (d) Madness and insane.
8. Demise, decline, death, madness, anger and frustration in the *Wide Sargasso Sea* are the examples of the most recurrent \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Motifs

- (b) Symbolism
  - (c) Diversity
  - (d) All of these
9. Who cuts off its wings and prevents Coco, Antoinette's bird from its flight?
- (a) Rochester
  - (b) Cosway
  - (c) Mr. Mason
  - (d) Annette
10. What is the key behind the unhealthy relations among characters in *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
- (a) Economic pursuits
  - (b) Social compulsions
  - (c) Racial discrimination
  - (d) None of these

#### 8.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How is the theme of women enslavement and madness interconnected in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
2. Why and how did the British imperial regime decline in the Caribbean region as depicted in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
3. What is the symbolic significance of Antoinette's bird Coco in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
4. How is slavery and identity crisis interlinked by Jean Rhys in her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
5. How do madness and unhealthy relationships lead to violence as is projected in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*?

#### 8.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss in detail the narrative technique employed by Jean Rhys in *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
2. How are demise, decline, death, madness, anger and frustration projected as recurrent motifs in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*?
3. How will you critically evaluate Jean Rhys' novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* after going through the Unit?

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## 8.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Frickey, P. M. *Critical Perspectives on Jean Rhys*. Three Continents Press, (1990).
2. Nayar, P.K. *Postcolonial Studies: An Anthology*. New Jersey. John Wiley & Sons, 2015.
3. Ramchand, Kenneth. *The West Indian Novel and Its Background*. London: Faber and Faber,1970.
4. Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Penguin Classics: Penguin Student Editions, 2001.
5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWJ0fUQoe7s>
6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WyIJvr5Us48>

## Unit - 9: Hamlet: Background, Plot, Characters

### Structure

#### 9.0 Introduction

#### 9.1 Objectives

#### 9.2 Hamlet: Background, Plot, Characters

##### 9.2.1 Shakespearean Drama

##### 9.2.2 Features of Shakespeare's Plays

##### 9.2.3 Hamlet: Background

##### 9.2.4 Hamlet: Plot

##### 9.2.5 Hamlet: Characters

#### 9.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 9.4 Glossary

#### 9.5 Sample Questions

#### 9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 9.0 Introduction

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Drama is a literary genre meant to be performed. As Hudson writes, "It is designed for representation by actors who impersonate the characters of its story, and among whom the narrative and the dialogue are distributed." The epic and the novel narrate and report the action and events, whereas drama imitates the action. Therefore, in the classical era, drama was called a 'stage play.' In this Unit, you will study the play *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. Shakespeare was born on April 23rd, 1564, in Stratford on Avon to John Shakespeare and Mary Aden. He was baptized on April 26<sup>th</sup>. However, there are various opinions about the date of his birth. Shakespeare was the eldest surviving son of his parents. Shakespeare's father became a respected man of Stratford through hard work. However, in about 1578, John Shakespeare's fortune started declining; thus, he sold some of his property. At the age of seven, Shakespeare was sent to Stratford Grammar School to get a good education. There, he studied Latin, Greek, and Classical Studies along with literature. At the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, who was older than him. She came from a land-owning family. You have already studied Shakespeare's life and works.

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## 9.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- enable you to read and understand the play *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- appreciate drama
- study the background, plot and characters

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## 9.2 *Hamlet*: Background, Plot, Characters

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In an earlier course, you studied Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*. Like *King Lear*, *Hamlet* is also a tragedy. In the following subsections, you will read more about this play. In the next Unit, you will discuss the themes and techniques employed in the play.

### 9.2.1 Shakespearean Drama:

You have already studied Shakespeare and his contribution to English drama in an earlier semester. You have also studied Shakespearean drama. In this Unit, you will read specifically about his play, *Hamlet*, one of the four great tragedies by Shakespeare. Shakespeare started his career as an actor-dramatist. Some of his major plays, *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, etc., were written by the year 1592. In 1594, he joined Lord Chamberlain's Company and remained with it for around sixteen years. Under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth, Richard Burbage and Cuthbert built London's first theatre in 1576, where Shakespeare was also a shareholder. As the theatre prospered, Shakespeare's career as the leading dramatist also progressed by leaps and bounds. He presented a huge number of plays before Queen Elizabeth. In 1599, Shakespeare formed an organization to fund and form a new theatre known as the Globe Theatre. This was the time when drama became the most popular form of entertainment. Shakespeare was not only a playwright but also an actor, though he could not become famous as an actor. He had appeared in Johnson's *Everyman in His Humour* and also in the *Sejanus, His Fall*. He had acted in his own plays as well; for example, the role of Adam in *As You Like It* and the role of Ghost in *Hamlet* were performed by Shakespeare himself initially.

Shakespeare went back to his native town in 1611. But his connections with theatre and London remained active. In 1613, he was present at the anniversary of the King's accession and also cooperated with Richard Burbage in designing the emblem of the Earl of Rutland's shield. How Shakespeare disconnected himself from the theatre is exactly not known, but, supposedly,

his connection with theatre was limited by the burning down of the Globe Theatre in 1613 during the performance of Henry VIII. Shakespeare was the most famous playwright of his era, whose style of writing plays was unique as well as impressive.

### **9.2.2 Features of Shakespeare's Plays:**

There are several remarkable qualities of Shakespearean dramas, but only some of the specific features are discussed here. Shakespeare's plays were either inspired or based on some older plays, chronicles, or tales; for example, the play *King Lear* was based on the mythological Leir of Britain. He had used Holinshed's Chronicles as a base for his plays like, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Cymbeline*, etc. Therefore, it could be said that he had borrowed the plots of some of the plays from others. But, in his mature plays, we notice that his inclination shifted from plots to character development, which itself was the highest achievement of dramatic art. However, his original plays were much stronger than his earlier plays, where he had woven the plot into the plot. The technique of subplot made his play strong and unique. An example of his deftness is *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where he presented years of history in just five acts. History becomes fascinating after being mixed with Shakespeare's imagination.

Shakespeare had a mastery over creating characters. His characters, from King to clown, have been deftly created and are unrivalled. His characters are complete, rounded, capable and real. They are not puppets in the hands of dramatists. In his earlier plays, Shakespeare used blank verse. He had a preference for stopped and rhymed couplets, which sometimes took the form of a stanza, similar to the pre-Shakespearean comedies.

### **9.2.3 Hamlet: Background**

An unnerving phantom is seen patrolling the battlements of Elsinore Castle in Denmark on a gloomy winter's evening. The Ghost is first noticed by two sentinels and afterward by the young Prince Hamlet and his fellow Horatio. The apparition demands that Hamlet take revenge on the assassin, Claudius, who has since taken up the throne and married Hamlet's mother, Queen Gertrude.

As Prince Hamlet is contemplative and analytical by nature, he delays taking revenge for his father's death, going into a profoundly depressing and even seemingly insane state of mind. Concerned by the prince's unpredictable actions, Claudius and Gertrude look for the reason. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two of Hamlet's cronies, were hired to spy on him.

Polonius, the haughty Lord Chamberlain, suspects that Hamlet could be insane due to his love for Ophelia. Therefore, he asks Claudius to arrange to keep an eye on Hamlet. Though



Hamlet's behaviour is that of a mad man, he does not seem to be in love with Ophelia because once he tells her to go into a nunnery and claims that he wishes to declare marriage as a criminal act.

Hamlet takes advantage of the chance to investigate his uncle's guilt after a troupe of touring performers visits Elsinore. So, should Claudius be found guilty, he will undoubtedly respond by asking the performers to recreate a scene resembling the one in which Hamlet's father might have been killed. When the murderous time finally arrives in the theatre, Claudius bolts from the room. Both Hamlet and Horatio concur that this establishes his guilt. Claudius is found praying as Hamlet reaches to kill him. Hamlet thinks that murdering Claudius while he is praying would not be a suitable form of retaliation since he thinks it would send Claudius's soul to heaven. Now frightened of Hamlet's madness and concerned about his own security, Claudius gives the order to send Hamlet to England straight away.

After her father's death, Ophelia drowns in the river due to extreme sadness. Laertes, the son of Polonius, who was in France at the time of Ophelia's death, furiously returns to Denmark. He is convinced by Claudius that Hamlet is accountable for the deaths of his sister and father. Meanwhile, Hamlet's ship is attacked by pirates while going to England. Thus, he sent letters to Horatio and the King informing him that he had returned to Denmark. Claudius then plans to exploit Laertes' anger to get Hamlet murdered. Claudius arranges a duel for Laertes and Hamlet and contaminates Laertes' sword so that Hamlet will die if he draws blood. The King also poisons a glass as a backup plan, which he will deliver to Hamlet.

Hamlet returns to the Elsinore neighbourhood right before Ophelia's burial. He attacks Laertes, overawed due to grief; he claims that he has always been in love with Ophelia. He says to Horatio that he feels everyone should be ready for death because it may come at any time. On Claudius's orders, an idiotic courtier named Osric shows up to set up the fencing duel between Laertes and Hamlet. The swordplay starts, and the first hit goes to Hamlet, who turns down the King's offered tumbler of alcohol. Rather, Gertrude drinks from it, and the poison kills her instantly. Even though Hamlet is wounded by Laertes, the poison does not instantly kill him. Laertes is first harmed by the blade of his own sword.

The horrific sight of the entire royal family dead and splayed on the floor astounds Fortinbras. He makes steps to seize control of the realm. In response to Hamlet's final request, Horatio recounts the sad tale of Hamlet. Fortinbras gives the command to dispose of Hamlet in a fashion appropriate for a slain soldier.

### 9.2.4 *Hamlet*: Plot

The term *plot* refers to the sequence of the events that take place in any play. These events disclose the main story-line of any literary writing, be it drama, novel, or short story. All these events are interconnected. Along with revealing the story-line, the plot also talks about the cause and effect of action in literary writing. Freytag's pyramid is very convenient for understanding the structure of a plot. It talks about all the essential elements of a plot.

According to the pyramid given by Freytag, the elements of a plot can be discussed as follows:

- 1. Exposition-** It is the first element or part of the plot. In the beginning, the audience is provided with the background information of the story, the setting of the play/novel/story (the setting includes information about the time and place of the events), information about the characters and also any other relevant detail for example, any historical detail or any specific idea or information, etc. Basically, exposition ensues in the first act itself. In the play *Hamlet*, the appearance of the Ghost and their revelation about his murder sets the main plot, and this revelation is a part of the exposition.
- 2. Rising Action-** The next part of the plot is 'Rising Action', which can be called the inciting incident or 'creation of a complication' in the story. This is shown through an incident in the drama or any other literary work that presents a problem for the characters. This problem or conflict decides the action and events in the writing. Rising action is considered to be the most important part of the plot because it affects the climax and the result of the story. If a play has five acts, rising action takes place either in Act Two or Act Three.
- 3. Climax-** The third essential of a plot is 'Climax'. It is the central turning point that occurs after the rising action. The climax happens when the conflict and the tension in a play reach their peak, and after that, the story moves toward the end. After the climax, no further twists or actions can be added. Though the climax is the highest point of tension in the play, it is not necessarily a negative event. Certainly, in a tragedy, the climax would lead to a sad ending, but in a comedy, the climax indicates a happy ending. It usually takes place by the end of the third act in a five-act play.
- 4. Falling Action-** While the rising action directs the play towards the climax, the falling action paves the way for the ending. A series of events following the climax and leading

towards a resolution and ending of the play is called falling action. If we have a five-act play, it usually happens in the fourth act.

- 5. Denouement-** This is the last part of the play, which connects all the loose ends and reveals the outcome of the story. The denouement is a French word that means 'conclusion' or 'outcome.' Therefore, in the denouement, the writer solves all the mysteries and answers all the questions about the characters and their destiny. It is the point in the story where, sometimes, the future of the characters is also revealed after the resolution. Usually, in a five-act play, denouement happens in the last act.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, there is one main plot and two subplots. The main plot presents Hamlet's resolution and his revenge for his father's murder. This plot is called the 'Revenge Plot'. The other subplots in the play involve Hamlet's romance with Ophelia and the impending war with Norway.

*Hamlet* is one of William Shakespeare's most successful and renowned plays. It is a sad story of a young prince whose father had been killed, and the prince struggles hard to take revenge upon his father's murderer. This play is an example of moral downgrading, retribution, and existential reflection. It is a complicated narrative with so many characters highlighting different concepts of humanity.

The play opens with a ghost roaming around the Danish Palace. The Ghost claims to be the late King Hamlet, who had died just some time ago. The apparition discloses that his brother Claudius, who has now inherited the throne and wed Queen Gertrude, had killed him. The narrative progresses with the revelation of King Hamlet's murder. Prince Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost of his father exposes the truth about his father's murder and the treachery of his mother and uncle. The Ghost asks Hamlet to exert revenge upon the culprits. Hamlet vows to kill the murderer of his father.

As the play moves forward, Hamlet faces internal as well as external conflict and struggles hard to fulfil his father's wish. One of the major study points in this drama is Hamlet's inner conflict, which gets revealed in front of the audience through his soliloquies. His tormented inner self is clearly visible in his soliloquies. He wants to take revenge upon his uncle, but for various reasons, he has to delay it. The very first time when he gets a chance to kill Claudius, he holds it off because Claudius is praying at that time. Hamlet's holding off on taking revenge increases the strain and pressure in the play, which is felt by the audience, too. The effect of this

tension is felt in the Danish court as well; therefore, King Claudius tries to hide his guilt under the façade of normalcy.

To reveal the truth, Hamlet acts like an insane person so as to get some time to inspect his uncle's treason. This is when the themes of deception and treachery get mixed into an atmosphere full of distrust and suspicion. Hamlet's conversation with other characters further discloses the plot of the play.

Hamlet's relationship with other characters in this play is a complex one. This complexity is the highest between him and his mother, Gertrude. After the murder of her husband, she married Claudius, which resulted in creating a rift between the son and the mother. Hamlet's relationship with other characters is also vague and ambiguous; one such example is his relationship with Ophelia, the daughter of Polonius. The ambiguity between them is visible in addition to the discussion of love, treachery, and the effects of lying.

This play by Shakespeare also focuses on highlighting the deterioration of the state of Denmark due to corruption. This theme of corruption is represented by the kingdom's deteriorating status under the rule of Claudius. The current King's immoral act has resulted in the moral decline of the court. The usurpation of his brother's wife and kingdom is evidence of the declining and dysfunctional social system.

Another aspect of the narrative depends upon the presentation of the supernatural, which is shown through the arrival of the Ghost on the stage. The introduction of the Ghost sets the mood for the impending tragic end of the play. The effect of supernatural elements quite resembles the gothic style of story-telling, where the actions of the protagonist are directed by the existence and disclosures of ghosts, spirits, etc. Similarly, in this play, Hamlet's actions are affected by the revelations made by his father's Ghost.

As the play progresses, Hamlet's efforts to take revenge become stronger and strengthen the 'plot of revenge.' Next is the subplot of Hamlet and Ophelia's romance. Due to the stress and dilemma about his father's murder, Hamlet has been going through stress and pressure, which has affected his behaviour towards others, including Ophelia. His unpredictable behaviour takes away Polonius' life. These things were quite unbearable for Ophelia, and she suffered a lot. At an unfortunate hour, she drowns and dies. Here, the subplot of Hamlet and Ophelia's romance is overshadowed by the main plot of revenge. Laertes, the brother of Ophelia, comes to know about his family's death and seeks revenge.

In *Hamlet*, the struggle between fate and free will is shown through Hamlet's internal conflict, his fight with his thoughts, and the impact of circumstances on him. Thus, the clash of internal as well as external reasons is reflected in the play. Though fate is stronger, the actions and decisions of humans have the upper hand in changing the course of action of the characters.

Another subplot in the play is about the impending war in Norway. The narrative is counterbalanced by this plot. The Prince of Norway, Fortinbras, has been attempting to capture the Danish territory, which his father lost. Here, Shakespeare has highlighted political ambitions and retaliation. This subplot enhances the overall effect and impression of the drama by adding some complimentary vantage points like honour, authority, and the consequences of the impetuous behavior.

Towards the culmination of the play, Hamlet's internal conflict becomes more severe. The curtain closes with a distressing feeling for the audience after witnessing a number of fatalities on the stage. The play bears many deaths, beginning with the killing of Polonius, the death of Ophelia, Claudius, Gertrude, Laertes, and Hamlet himself. As the elements of tragedy indicate that the tragic flaw of the hero leads to a tragic end. *Hamlet*, a Shakespearean tragedy, follows the ideals and presents the tragic end of the hero.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Define the terms given below:
  - (a) Exposition
  - (b) Denouement
2. Discuss the point of climax in the play *Hamlet*.

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### **9.2.5 *Hamlet*: Characters**

A person who plays a role in a play is called a character. Every character has some personal traits depending upon the role that he/she is playing on the stage. Usually, we divide characters into two broad categories: Flat characters and Round characters. A flat character is one who does not affect the course of events in a drama and validates no significant depth to the action of the drama. A flat character is a two-dimensional character. A rounded character, also known as a three-dimensional character, exhibits more intricate, composite, and ornate features of his/her personality. They affect the dramatic action as well as get affected by the events in the drama. Every play has various characters. Here are some of the important characters from the play *Hamlet*:

## **Hamlet**

He is the protagonist of the play. Hamlet is the son of the late King of Denmark. He is a serious, considerate, and beloved young prince of the kingdom. Hamlet is a kind-hearted man who cares for his people and kingdom. Even in the beginning, he cares for Claudius. It is only after knowing about the brutal murder of his father at the hands of treacherous Claudius that Hamlet becomes angry. He is a devoted son who dedicates his life to avenging his father's death. When the ghost of the late king reveals to Hamlet that he was killed by Claudius, Hamlet becomes depressed. The delay in taking revenge increases his stress and anxiety. This is the reason behind Hamlet's suicidal thinking and increasing insanity. He becomes obsessed with revenge, and when he is unable to fulfil his promise of avenging his father, he feels dejected and behaves like a mad person.

Though his despair and misery have affected his personality a lot, Hamlet remains an intelligent young man throughout the play. It is his smartness that he fakes his madness so as to fool Gertrude and Claudius. Although Hamlet has posed a scene of madness to expose the guilt of Claudius there are occasions when this madness seems very much real. His mental health, certainly, is in question at times due to his strange behaviour.

All the sadness, desolation, dejection, and tension have converted Hamlet into a frustrated man who is angry all the time and shouts at people. But this anger is due to the erroneous acts of other people. He despises his uncle for his wrongdoings; he is unhappy with his mother because of her disloyalty, and he is frustrated due to his fake friends. His unhappiness with everything resulted in alienating Ophelia, whom he had once courted. Throughout the play, he is thoughtful and gloomy. However, Hamlet's anger may well be justified, but it cannot be denied that this anger resulted in so many deaths in the play.

## **Claudius**

He is the antagonist of the play. Claudius kills his own brother, marries his brother's wife, and becomes the King of Denmark. He is an unfaithful, treacherous, and selfish man who scolds Hamlet for grieving his father's death. He has forbidden Hamlet from going back to his university studies in Wittenberg. Claudius is a conspirator who poisoned his elder brother and then married his sister-in-law so that she would never be able to go against him. Throughout the play, he keeps on planning and conniving against Hamlet. When he realizes that Hamlet could be a threat to his crown, he does not hesitate to scheme to kill Hamlet. However, the outcome of his bad deeds is his own death at the end of the play. The only good side of his character, shown in

the play, is his sense of guilt after watching the troupe perform and his desire to arrange a proper burial for Ophelia. His love and concern for Gertrude can also be called genuine.

### **Gertrude**

She is the queen of Denmark, the wife of the late King, and the mother of Hamlet. After the death of her husband, she marries Claudius, her former brother-in-law. She is shown as an affectionate mother, but Hamlet suspects her because of her disloyalty towards her first husband. Hamlet suspects her of being a part of the conspiracy against his father. She is presented as a weak woman who depends on Claudius and agrees to whatever he says. She can't face and win arguments. Hamlet dislikes her for her closeness to Claudius, but her love for him remains strong and constant. By the end of the play, she drinks the poisoned drink, which was brought for Hamlet and dies. Her motherly affection is real.

### **Polonius**

Polonius is the King's main advisor and the father of Ophelia and Laertes. Polonius is also the Lord of Chamberlain. When his son, Laertes, was leaving for France to complete his studies, Polonius advised him, "to thine own self be true," which means to be true to yourself. However, Polonius himself could not remain unswerving in his words. He gets killed at the hands of Hamlet, though unknowingly. When Hamlet goes to his mother's chamber, he thinks it is Claudius behind the tapestry, but to his surprise, it is Polonius, whom he had attacked with his sword.

### **Ophelia**

She is Polonius' daughter and Hamlet's beloved; however, Hamlet's changed behavior confuses her later on. Ophelia is an obedient girl who stops seeing Hamlet at her father's instruction and also spies for King Claudius. She is in love with Hamlet and thinks that he also loves her. But Hamlet's unpredictable behaviour and changing courtships confuse her. She is a loving daughter who is so dejected by the death of her father that she drowns herself in the river and dies. Throughout the play, Ophelia is presented as a beautiful, wise, and loving girl.

### **Laertes**

He is Ophelia's elder brother and the son of Polonius. He is exactly the opposite to Hamlet. Unlike Hamlet, Laertes makes decisions fast; he does not waste time overthinking. He is extremely shocked by the news of his father's death; therefore, he revolts against Claudius. But Claudius manipulates and convinces him that all the misfortune was brought upon his family by Hamlet. Though he attempts to kill Hamlet, he is not callous and pitiless. By the end of the play,

he confesses that he was instigated by Claudius to kill Hamlet. His revelation of the truth clearly shows the good side of him.

### **Horatio**

He is a close friend and advisor of Hamlet. He is presented in the play as a sensible man who, from time to time, advises Hamlet regarding different issues in his life. He is a vigilant and learned man. When Hamlet is dying, Horatio wants to end his own life, but Hamlet persuades him to live so that he can narrate Hamlet's story to the coming generations.

### **Fortinbras**

Fortinbras is the Prince of Norway whose father was killed by Hamlet's father. Therefore, he wants to take revenge and kill Hamlet. He comes onto the stage towards the end of the story. After the death of Hamlet and others, Fortinbras held the reign of Denmark. He is a serious, confident, and considerate character.

### **The Ghost**

It is the spirit of Hamlet's dead father, who is also called Hamlet. He was the King of Denmark and was killed by his own brother, Claudius. The Ghost of the Dead King is presented as one of the key elements of the play, which accelerates action. He informs Hamlet about the transgressions of Claudius and Gertrude. However, Hamlet's suspicion about the existence of the Ghost remains an unsolved mystery.

### **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern**

They are acquaintances of Hamlet, and they spy for him on the Prince of Norway, Fortinbras. Both of them are cowardly but obedient. They are non-rational and not very trustworthy. When Claudius instructs them to accompany Hamlet to England and behead him upon reaching there, they agree to him, but fate decides something else, and these two characters get beheaded. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not true to Hamlet.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Differentiate Flat characters from Rounded characters.

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2. What is the tragic flaw in the character of Hamlet?

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### 9.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should be able to perceive and enjoy the drama as a literary genre. You should have gained knowledge about *Hamlet*, its background, its plot and the characters in the play.

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### 9.4 Glossary

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**Genre:** Category

**Soliloquy:** An act of speaking one's thoughts aloud

**Narrative:** Account of events

**Entreated:** Treat in a specified manner

**Usurp:** Take a position illegally

**Ratified:** Agreement

**Mettle:** Ability to cope with the problems

**Avouch:** Affirm

**Portentous:** Momentous significance

**Dirge:** A mournful song

**Countenance:** Appearance

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### 9.5 Sample Questions

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#### 9.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who had seen the ghost for the first time in the play *Hamlet*?
  - (a) Bernardo and Marcellus
  - (b) Hamlet
  - (c) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
  - (d) Gertrude
2. Who killed Hamlet's father?
  - (a) Gertrude
  - (b) Polonius
  - (c) Claudius

- (d) Fortinbras
3. Which of these is not a theme of the play *Hamlet*?
- (a) Revenge
  - (b) Psychological Issues
  - (c) Treachery
  - (d) Hope
4. Where does the play take place?
- (a) Denmark
  - (b) Norway
  - (c) Spain
  - (d) London
5. What did the Ghost ask Hamlet to do?
- (a) To take revenge
  - (b) To marry Ophelia
  - (c) To kill Fortinbras
  - (d) To go to Norway
6. How did Ophelia die?
- (a) Due to hanging herself
  - (b) Due to drowning
  - (c) Murdered
  - (d) Suicide
7. Who did Ophelia want to marry?
- (a) Hamlet
  - (b) Fortinbras
  - (c) Claudius
  - (d) Horatio
8. Who was Horatio?
- (a) Hamlet's friend
  - (b) Hamlet's brother
  - (c) Hamlet's soldier
  - (d) Hamlet's enemy
9. Why did Claudius kill the King?

- (a) To win the battle
- (b) To become the King
- (c) To save his own life
- (d) To save the kingdom

10. Whom did Hamlet recommend to have the throne of Denmark?

- (a) Laertes
- (b) Horatio
- (c) Fortinbras
- (d) Ophelia

### 9.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Who is the Ghost, and why does he ask Hamlet to take revenge?
2. What is the reason behind Hamlet's strange behaviour?
3. What is the difference between plot and theme?
4. What is the reason behind Fortinbras' coming to Denmark?
5. Write a note on the stage directions of the play Hamlet.

### 9.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the plot of the play *Hamlet* in detail.
2. Elucidate upon the play *Hamlet* as a revenge tragedy.
3. Deliberate upon the character of Hamlet in detail.

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## 9.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Bradley, A. C. (1905). *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (2nd ed.). London: Macmillan. Chambers, E. K. (2009).
2. Shakespeare, W. (2000). *Hamlet*. Ed. Philip Edwards. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
3. Showalter, E. (1985). Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism. In Parker, Patricia; Hartman, Geoffrey (Eds.), *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. New York and London: Methuen. pp. 77-94. ISBN 0-416-36930-8.

## Unit - 10: *Hamlet*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

### Structure

10.0 Introduction

10.1 Objectives

10.2 *Hamlet*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

10.2.1 Themes

10.2.2 Narrative Technique

10.2.3 Critical Appreciation

10.2.4 Summing Up

10.3 Learning Outcomes

10.4 Glossary

10.5 Sample Questions

10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 10.0 Introduction

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In literature, literary devices hold a very significant place. They are used to enhance the beauty of the writing and to add an additional essence to it. A literary technique is a medium which allows an author to create profounder meaning that goes beyond the words that are written on the pages of a text. To elevate the beauty of a novel, drama or short story, these literary techniques are employed alongside the plot and theme. They provide a faster reflection on the subject matter that is dealt with in that writing.

*Hamlet* is one such play where we find an apt use of literary techniques like soliloquy, metaphor, irony etc. These literary techniques not only strengthen the narrative but also assist the audience to analyze the plot development, the internal conflict of characters and to understand various themes of the play.

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### 10.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- enable the learners to read and understand the drama *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare.

- appreciate and understand the difference between Plot and Theme.
- understand various themes presented by Shakespeare in this play.
- recognize different narrative techniques.
- develop aesthetic sense in the learner so as to critically appreciate the drama.
- acquaint the learner with various aspects of analyzing a play critically.

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## 10.2 *Hamlet*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

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### 10.2.1 Theme:

A theme is an implied stance on the main issue or message of any literary work. An author employs a theme to present vital concepts and to convey specific messages on different issues that the characters of the story are dealing with. As J. A. Cuddon writes in the *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, “The Theme of a work is not its subject but rather its central idea, which may be stated directly or indirectly”. (721)

Themes on the basis of their importance are divided into two categories- major themes and minor themes. The more imperative and persistent themes are considered major because they are a significant part of the story. However, minor themes are not so significant and lasting in any story. They appear for a short period of time and can be replaced with some other minor theme. Minor themes are limited to one or the other section of the literary writing and do not cover the complete story whereas a major theme runs throughout the literary writing and plays an inseparable role there.

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy, published as a quarto in 1603 and in a much fuller version in 1604. Shakespeare’s work is much influenced by Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, which was a remarkably successful work of the era. *The Spanish Tragedy* caught the late Elizabethan palate for a theme of revenge. This model matured fully in the Jacobean theatre and became famous as the genre of ‘Revenge Tragedy’.

Shakespeare has built his *Hamlet* on the similar pattern and has presented the well demanded revenge tragedy. Here the protagonist comes to know about the murder of his father at the hands of own uncle, who is, now, the king of Denmark. Hamlet is encountered by the ghost of his father who tells him about the murder and urges him to take a revenge. The obligatory act of taking up a revenge for any wrongdoing happened to a near and dear one was the conventional theme of that time. Shakespeare too presents the same conventional obligation cast upon the hero

of the play. Along with the theme of revenge, Shakespeare presents some other prominent themes as well, in this play.

**Theme of Revenge-** It is the major theme of the play Hamlet. Shakespeare has presented this theme through two characters in the play- Hamlet and Laertes. Hamlet is the protagonist of the play and is a serious and brave young man. When his father's ghost reveals the truth behind his murder, Hamlet becomes troubled as well as perplexed. Initially, he could not believe on this revelation, therefore, to investigate about the truth he organizes a play so as to check Claudius' guilt. During the performance of that play, Hamlet notices the changing colours of Claudius' face and infers that the King is guilty of killing his own brother. Thus, Hamlet swears to take revenge upon him. On the other hand, when Laertes comes to know about the death of his father Polonius at the hands of Hamlet, he decides to kill Hamlet and fulfil his duty as a son. Therefore, it is a double-revenge-story.

The theme of revenge is presented through two entirely different approaches- in the case of Laertes, we find an impetuous young man who is quick-tempered and does not wait in taking action, whereas, Hamlet is a philosophical and heedful man who ponders over his decision. These two approaches run parallel, throughout the play, casting and creating contrasts. The theme of revenge also has an impact of religious-component as Hamlet delays his revenge while Claudius is praying and he contemplates his decision of killing someone. Also, Hamlet is in a state of dilemma about fulfilling his duty as a son by avenging his father's murder and Christian aversion to killing someone. Alternatively, Laertes does not have any such thoughts, he only considers his duty to avenge his father's death. Thus, the theme of revenge is the most important theme in this play which is presented tactfully by the playwright.

**Theme of Death-** Death looms large throughout the play. It pervades right from the opening scene of the play when the ghost of the dead king apprises Hamlet about his killing and asks him to avenge. The death of the former king indicates anarchy and social disruption, which also is one of the minor themes of the play, in the country. The unnatural death of the King, has triggered social disorder and has created an atmosphere of killings and revenges.

There are many deaths in this play, the murder of the previous king of Denmark-Hamlet, inadvertent killing of Polonius, Ophelia's suicide etc. throughout the play, Hamlet is full of the thought of death and keeps on contemplating upon it. One of his famous soliloquies is about death, "to die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks...". Throughout the play, we notice that Hamlet is rivetted by death. Since, he has

pledged to avenge his father's murder, his behaviour has changed. Most of the time, he is engrossed in the thoughts of death and revenge. This obsession with death is a result of his extreme angst and ache.

Next, we see Polonius dying at the hands of Hamlet who assumes that it is Claudius hiding in Gertrude's room and attacks him. His hard-blow kills the man who turns out to be Polonius. The death of Polonius, is also used to accentuate the theme of death in the play. Ophelia dies due to dejection and heartbreak. Her death is the most tragic death in the play which is not shown on the stage. She dies offstage by drowning in the river. Her death is considered to be a suicide and is a subject of debate for scholars. We find that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern also die off stage. This theme of death permeates from the opening scene till the end of the play when Laertes and Hamlet also die.

**Theme of Corruption and Social Distrust-** Another theme of the play is corruption and social distrust. Corruption is presented through the mediums of anarchy, treachery, death, decay, revenge, poison etc. Shakespeare discloses the theme of social unrest and corruption in the very opening scene when Marcus says, "something is rotten in the state of Denmark". In that same scene, the ghost tells Hamlet Claudius' treason and Gertrude's disloyalty. Another example of the bad state of Denmark is the attack of the Prince of Norway.

The stability and proper functioning of any kingdom is in the hands of the ruler and it is an established fact that a nation's health depends upon its legitimate king. Shakespeare presents that the ruling king is a murderer and usurper. Thus, the rule of an unlawful king has resulted in lawlessness, unrest, social destruction and turbulence. Hamlet as a prince is worried about the condition of his kingdom and is troubled by the increasing corruption and rot. It is not only the deterioration of the physical appearance of the kingdom but also the inner institutions of the society, like court, are also dying slowly. An example of Hamlet's concern could be felt through one of his speeches where he talks about social decay and putrefaction, "an unweeded garden that grows to seed, things rank and gross possess it". When Hamlet hides Polonius' body in a place where it would decay fast and stink the whole palace, it symbolically presents the rotting and stinking social system which is increasing secretly and would soon pollute the entire kingdom.

**Theme of Religion-** Religion also plays a very prominent role in this play and is one of the themes. When Hamlet finds Claudius praying, he delays his revenge because of his religious belief that being killed during prayer, Claudius would go to heaven. Another example can be

seen through his soliloquies, where he contemplates on the subject of suicide. Hamlet's belief in destiny is another example of the impact of religion on him. The other important aspect of the play is the presentation of the Christian idea of sacrifice. In the last scene, the death of Hamlet is symbolic of Christ's sacrifice for humanity. All the deaths by the end of the play, symbolize an image of purifying the court from all the corruption and represent a new beginning with good hopes.

**Theme of Appearance, Deception and Reality-** There is a gap between appearance and reality as presented by the playwright. The appearance of Claudius is simple, innocent and considerate but in reality, he is full of deceit and conspiracy. He is called a 'smiling villain'. Similarly, Gertrude also holds different appearances and realities. Shakespeare has shown that deception is the true reality of some of the characters but that is not clearly visible to others. Hamlet pretends to be mad so as to find out the reality behind the actions of Claudius and Gertrude. As the play develops, the theme of appearance and reality narrows down and the characters are unmasked. At the end of the play, their true identities come to the fore.

**Theme of Women-** There are two important female characters in the play- Gertrude and Ophelia. The condition of Hamlet is very much impacted and affected by these two women. Whenever he talks to either of the two, he feels agitated. Both the women are important for him yet he does not trust either. First, the presence of Gertrude reminds him of his father's death and her disloyalty. About Ophelia he thinks that she is involved in the 'palace-politics' against him. Both the female characters play prominent roles in the play but they die one by one.

**Theme of Politics-** Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a political drama. Claudius murders King Hamlet (Hamlet's father is also referred to as Hamlet in this play), marries his widow, Gertrude and becomes the new king. This way he has seized Hamlet's right of succession. He even plans to kill Hamlet so as to safeguard his position as the king because Hamlet's existence is a threat to his throne. Another example of palatial politics is Polonius conspiring against Hamlet to get closer to Claudius. Along with this, we find that some characters, including Gertrude, spy on each other in order to remain in power and prove their supremacy.

***Check your progress***

1. What is a theme and how is it different from a plot?

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2. Mention any two themes in this play.

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### 10.2.2 Narrative Technique:

A play has dramatic techniques that are also called the elements of a drama which include plot, theme, characters, dialogue etc. While talking about the use of narrative technique in a drama, a special focus is upon the presentation of the use of some specific literary techniques. Shakespeare's plays are very rich play in terms of the use of literary techniques and *Hamlet* is no exception to it. Some of those literary techniques are discussed here.

**Narrative Tension-** The story of the play *Hamlet* is introduced and presented through the inner dimensions of the characters. Shakespeare not only focus on the presentation of action on the stage but also concentrates on revealing the thought process of the characters. He presents how the conflicted emotions of the characters impact their decisions and actions. *Hamlet* is in a state of narrative tension. A state where a character attempts at resolving an issue but do not succeed. The stress that gets build up due to his/her unsuccessful efforts, is referred to as narrative tension. It also refers to how audience react to any specific and crucial element in the play. In this play, *Hamlet's* desperate desire to take revenge of his father's death, is the central conceit. But at the same time, he keeps on pondering over and delays his action which build narrative tension in the play. Other characters also play a role in building up narrative tension through a display of significant and serious feelings. We have *Ophelia* whose psychosis echoes in a social-system where many people fear revealing their true feelings. Such feelings are clearly relatable and allow the audience to understand those conflicted feelings and accept their unresolving, as presented on the stage.

**Soliloquy-** When on the stage, a character thinks loudly or talks to oneself, either silently or loudly, it is called 'Soliloquy'. Basically, a dramatist uses this device to inform the audience about the motives and thoughts of the character. Sometimes, in order to guide the judgements and responses of the audience, a playwright employs the technique of soliloquy wherein he/she allows a character, on the stage, to think aloud or speak his mind, loudly. At this time, there may be other characters present on the stage or this character may also perform alone. If other characters are there on the stage, they are presented as if they are not listening to the soliloquy of the other character, while the audience is able to listen to it.

*Hamlet's* most famous speech which begins with "To be or not to be", is also the most famous soliloquy of the play. This play is remarkably significant for the use of soliloquies. There are seven soliloquies in this play, which enable the audience to understand the quandary and misery of *Hamlet*. Shakespeare has used these soliloquies to serve an important purpose of

revealing the theme of the play. These soliloquies also add to the depth of the play and explore inner-selves of the character.

Whenever Hamlet speaks his soliloquies, he opens a window for the audience to look inside his mind and know about his thoughts and conflicts. Audience, after listening to these soliloquies, understand Hamlet's psyche and actions. Another purpose of using soliloquies is to reveal the theme of the play. When Shakespeare employs different soliloquies in different scenes and acts, he talks about life, death, revenge and the question of existence. All these come forward to reveal various themes of the play. All the philosophical questions, posed by Hamlet, add to the action of the play and cast a profound effect on the minds of the audience and the readers. Soliloquies also play an important role in developing the plot. Hamlet's intentions, struggles, dilemmas and plans get revealed through his soliloquies and this revelation helps moving the events around the main plot. All the troubles and confusions, he encounters while planning and executing his revenge upon his uncle, are reflected through his soliloquies. Along with these, a dramatist can very aptly device a soliloquy to engage the audience for a longer period of time and also more effectively. For example, let's see one of Hamlet's soliloquies-

To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And by opposing end them.

This soliloquy still forces audience/readers to contemplate on the questions of life and death. Still, after centuries of the presentation and publication of this play, this speech of Hamlet remains relevant and resonates in the minds of the audience. Another important factor of the soliloquy is that it contributes to the overall dramatic tension of the play. The internal conflict and dilemma of Hamlet, his emotional trauma and delay in action, create an everlasting impact on the audience. These soliloquies enable the audience to get an idea of Hamlet's future actions.

**Dramatic Irony-** The presentation of dramatic irony in a tragedy is commonly used technique, which a playwright employs to reveal the hidden connotation and inference of any situation. Dramatic Irony refers to a technique "where the audience understands the implication and meaning of a situation on stage, or what is being said, but characters do not" (Cuddon,216).

Shakespeare has used this literary device very aptly and there are several examples of its usage in many of his plays. Here we find that Claudius lies about the death of Hamlet's father, that the king died due to snake bite and everyone believes him. But the revelation of the truth by

the ghost changes the scenario. In *Hamlet*, dramatic irony is built when the ghost reveals the truth about his murder. Only Hamlet and the audience are aware of the fact and other characters do not know it. another example of dramatic irony is linked with Hamlet's pretence of madness. He fakes his madness to be confirm about Claudius' guilt. The truth behind his madness is known by him and the audience only.

Shakespeare uses dramatic irony to induce strong emotions in audience. He makes audience sympathize with Hamlet as well as question his delay in action. At the same time, dramatic irony produces a feeling of suspense and binds the attention of the audience.

**Symbols-** As the *Dictionary of Literary Theory and Literary Terms* states, the term symbol has been taken from the Greek word 'symbellein' which means 'to throw together'. The Noun for the same term is "Symbolon" meaning emblem, token or sign. Therefore, a symbol refers to an object (animate or inanimate) that represents or stands for something else and a literary symbol combines an image with a concept.

The inner mayhem of the characters is represented through symbols. *Hamlet* is a play full of inner thoughts and gloom and the use of symbols makes it easier to understand these. Some of the examples of symbols are ghost that symbolizes victory of the evil, flowers symbolize lure and lust, the un-weeded garden represents decay and darkness and the constant change of Hamlet's clothing/wardrobe symbolizes his internal turmoil and transformation.

**Metaphor-** There is a notable use of metaphors in the play *Hamlet*. Most of these are about the natural world, for example an unweeded garden represents unsolved problems. Laertes calls Hamlet's love for Ophelia, 'as violet in the youth of primy nature' which implies the fleeting status of love. Shakespeare has provided an in-depth understanding of the scene and characters through the use of metaphors.

**Foreshadowing-** It is one of the dominant literary techniques used in *Hamlet*. Foreshadowing is a technique where certain events or any specific information, in a narrative, are arranged in such a style that they shadow some later events. This technique helps in suggesting at outcomes of some events through the use of some symbols. In this play, Hamlet's encounter with the ghost of his father foreshadows his ultimate vengeance against his uncle, Claudius.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Define- Soliloquy, Metaphor and Foreshadowing.

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2. Is irony used in the play *Hamlet*?

- 
3. “To be, or not to be, that is the question, whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer”, Who says these lines?
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### **10.2.3 Critical Appreciation:**

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a timeless classic, tragic play which has been well received by the audience. The play became popular because of its intricate characters, multifaceted plot and a presentation of the psychological human conditions. Most importantly, it is known for its unfathomable hero 'Hamlet' and his dilemma of avenging his father's death. The play also represents religious values that stop a person from committing a sin. Here religion is used as one of the themes that put Hamlet in a state of confusion when he is about to kill Claudius, while later was praying. His internal conflict make audience empathize with him throughout the play.

*Hamlet* is also a notable play for the use of various literary devices like foreshadowing, irony and soliloquies. Shakespeare has used soliloquies for revealing Hamlet's inner conflict. He also presents allusions in this play and incorporates certain mythological and biblical references that enhance the beauty of the play. One such example of allusion is in Act 4, Scene 3 when Hamlet compares his father to Hyperion. Along with this the play is rich in the use of rhetorical devices and stylistic effects of language.

It is also remarkable for its exhibition of themes like revenge, neurosis, corruption, behavioural changes and mortality etc. Shakespeare has used these themes to showcase intricacies of human behaviour and thoughts. Another important detail about the play is the use of dramatic irony and elaborated word-play which makes narrative, reflective and engaging. Through the use of irony, Shakespeare has attached multiple interpretations to the text. Here, readers/audience feel the pain of Hamlet, dislike Claudius' actions and deduce the impending doom through the irony and symbolic references. Shakespeare has set the plot through the arrival of the ghost who adds an element of supernatural to the text and discloses the theme of mystery.

The play leaves an everlasting impression on literature and theatre lovers. It is the keystone of world literature and has been adapted in so many works, discussions and films, since then. Hamlet, truly, is one of the most celebrated works by Shakespeare.

### **10.2.4 Summing Up:**

Shakespeare's works require deeper engagement with the text, so as to comprehend them. *Hamlet*, a masterpiece of all ages, allows an in-depth knowledge of studying literary devices and

offers a ground to build and sharpen critical thinking and exploratory skills. After reading this play, students would be able to develop critical thinking to understand, appreciate and analyze complex themes and plot progression. The works of art need patience and empathetic attitude towards interpreting them. A reading of *Hamlet* would enhance students' capability to appreciate a work of art.

The play, *Hamlet* is also remarkable for its language and its study improves an ability to enjoy metaphors, images, symbols, and the writing style. It enables the students to discover the exquisite gradation of Shakespearean language. The play also provides a glimpse into the cultural and historical scene of that era. It enables students to reconnoiter social, cultural and political machinations of the time. Analyzing various dramatic devices allows students to improve their vocabulary and improve their communication skills. They learn to present their ideas more effectively and persuasively. Reading literature always brings out the hidden creative thinking of readers and provides them a keen observant skill. They can also apply the knowledge and understanding of literature on their own writings and improve them.

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### 10.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have learned about Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. You should have gained an understanding about the themes and narrative technique apart from learning to critically appreciate the play.

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### 10.4 Glossary

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**Apoplex'd:** Unconscious or Paralyzed

**Bodkin:** A Dagger or Stiletto

**Cozenage:** Deception or Treachery

**Dane:** King of Denmark

**Eisel:** Vinegar

**Harbingers:** Indications

**Herod:** King of Judea (foe of Jesus)

**Hyperion:** God of Light

**Mirth:** Joy

**Mourn:** Lament

**Scullion:** A Servant who is assigned the most menial work in the kitchen

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## 10.5 Sample Questions

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### 10.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who arranges for a fencing match between Hamlet and Laertes?
  - (a) Laertes
  - (b) Ophelia
  - (c) Gertrude
  - (d) Claudius
2. Who speaks the given line, “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark”?
  - (a) Gertrude
  - (b) Claudius
  - (c) Hamlet
  - (d) Ghost
3. Who brings the news of Ophelia’s death?
  - (a) Laertes
  - (b) Polonius
  - (c) Ghost
  - (d) Horatio
4. Who tells Hamlet about the poisoning of swords in the Act V?
  - (a) Gertrude
  - (b) Claudius
  - (c) Rosencrantz
  - (d) Laertes
5. Whom did Hamlet compare his father with?
  - (a) Hyperion
  - (b) Herod
  - (c) Zeus
  - (d) Titan

6. Which soliloquy appear in Act III, scene I of the play, Hamlet?
- (a) To be or not to be
  - (b) Friends, Romans, Countrymen,
  - (c) Out, out, brief candle
  - (d) Is this a dagger
7. Who says the given words for Hamlet- “as violet in the youth of primy nature”.
- (a) Laertes
  - (b) Ophelia
  - (c) Claudius
  - (d) Polonius
8. Why does Hamlet want to kill Claudius?
- (a) To revenge his father’s death
  - (b) To become a king
  - (c) To marry Ophelia
  - (d) To kill Polonius
9. When was the play *Hamlet* published?
- (a) 1609
  - (b) 1603
  - (c) 1700
  - (d) 1701
10. The play *Hamlet* ends with the line:
- (a) The rest is silence
  - (b) This is the end
  - (c) All is well that end is well
  - (d) All of them are dead

**10.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What do you understand by the term, ‘literary techniques’ ?
2. What is foreshadowing and how is it used in the play *Hamlet*?
3. Write a short note on the theme of corruption as presented in the play *Hamlet*?
4. How did Ophelia die?
5. Why did Claudius poison the cup of drink and the swords?

### 10.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. “*Hamlet* is a revenge tragedy.” Discuss in detail.
2. What is a soliloquy? Deliberate upon the use of soliloquies in the play *Hamlet*.
3. Attempt a critical appreciation of the play *Hamlet*.

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## 10.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Bradley, A. C. (1905). *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth* (2nd ed.). London: Macmillan. Chambers, E. K. (2009). *The Elizabethan Stage*. Vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0-19-956748-5.
2. Shakespeare, W. (2000). *Hamlet*. Ed. Philip Edwards. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press.
3. Showalter, E. (1985). Representing Ophelia: Women, Madness, and the Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism. In Parker, Patricia; Hartman, Geoffrey (Eds.), *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*. New York and London: Methuen. pp. 77-94. ISBN 0-416-36930-8.



## Unit - 11: *The Seagull*: Background, Plot, Characters

### Structure

11.0 Introduction

11.1 Objectives

11.2 *The Seagull*: Background, Plot, Characters

11.2.1 Background

11.2.2 Plot

11.2.3 Characters

11.3 Learning Outcomes

11.4 Glossary

11.5 Sample Questions

11.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 11.0 Introduction

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*The Seagull* is one of the major plays by the Russian dramatist Anton Chekhov. The play was written in 1895 and staged in 1896. The play deals with the romantic and artistic conflict between four characters in the play. They are Boris Trigorin, Nina, Irina Arkadina and Konstantin Treplev. Among these characters, Trigorin is considered one of the greatest male characters ever created by Anton Chekhov in his plays. The play was a revolt against the melodrama of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was Konstantin Stanislavski, the Russian theatre practitioner, who made the play a world-popular one through his direction of the play in 1898 at the Moscow Art Theatre. The play is about a play that Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev is premiering for his family. His lover, Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya, is the star of the play. However, his mother, Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina, ridicules him and mocks the play. The dejected Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev shuts the play down. The play exposes a meta-theatrical experience of the nature of art and the artist. There are 4 acts in the play and each act has 2 parts. The play reveals the theme of the unfulfilled life of the artist. The major symbols of the play are the seagull and the lake. *The Seagull* is a study of the human state of affairs and artistic tendencies. The symbol of the seagull has an important role in the play. Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev has killed a seagull and brought it as a gift to Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya. However, Nina is disgusted by the actions of Konstantin

Gavrilovich Treplev. In turn, Nina breaks up with Konstantin. Later, she joined Trigorin to act with him. This action made Konstantin feel intense jealousy and hatred towards Trigorin.

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## 11.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- familiarize you with the background, plot, and characters of the play *The Seagull*
- help you know the kind of social and artistic life that existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia.
- make a comparative study of the play with other texts
- Understand the different characters and their psychological and social behavior in a particular context

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## 11.2 *The Seagull*: Background, Plot, Characters

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### 11.2.1 Background:

Anton Chekhov wrote four major plays: *Ivanov*, *The Seagull*, *Three Sisters*, and *The Cherry Orchard*. *The Seagull* was first performed in 1896 in Petersburg. The first performance of the play was a grand failure. The audience outright rejected the play. However, the later performance of the play was a grand success. Very soon the play became popular throughout the Russian provinces. *The Seagull* is powerful with its new form of subtext and also its presentation of colloquialism and realism. The genre, realism, received new acclaim with the staging of *The Seagull*. It became a grand success with its realistic presentation of ordinary life. It rejected the classical tendencies of the grand performance of the heroes and heroines. There are some autobiographical elements in the play. The amateur playwright in the play *The Seagull* is Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev. Anton Chekhov too experimented with new forms and techniques in his plays. He gives maximum attention and care to ordinary people's language in his plays.

### 11.2.2 Plot:

A plot is a sequence of events within a play that tells a story. A plot is the main essence of the story of a performance. Five components make a plot. They are exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The main plot of the play *The Seagull* is the clash between generations. The main characters in the play are artists. They are guests on a country estate.

They are Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina, a middle-aged actress; her lover, Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin, a successful writer; her son, Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev, a writer, and Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya, a young aspiring actress whom Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev loves. When the sun goes down, a stage is quickly set up outside on Sorin's farm in rural Russia. The stage overlooks a peaceful lake, making for a natural backdrop for the upcoming drama.

Medvedenko, a humble teacher, complains about his money troubles. He thinks that having money would make him a more attractive partner for Masha, who is the daughter of the estate manager Shamrayev. However, Masha is focused on her unreturned love for Treplev and doesn't reciprocate Medvedenko's feelings, even though she knows he likes her.

Meanwhile, Treplev nervously gets ready for the first performance of his play. He talks to Sorin about Arkadina not liking his work. He picks flower petals and wonders about her feelings for him. It becomes clear that he longs for approval from the Russian artistic community, separate from the fame of his parents.

Nina comes and shares her wish to get away from her parents' concerns and join in the artistic lifestyle at Sorin's farm. She symbolically compares herself to a seagull drawn to the lake. However, her romantic moment with Treplev is interrupted by workers and guests.

Among the group, Paulina's one-sided love for Dorn is revealed, and Arkadina proudly recites lines from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with Treplev responding similarly to reflect her relationship with Trigorin. As Treplev's play begins, Arkadina's disruptive behavior leads to the play ending early, making Treplev upset and causing him to leave the stage.

### ***Check your progress***

1. What is a plot?

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2. Who are the main characters in the play *The Seagull*?

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### **11.2.3 Characters:**

The major characters in the play *The Seagull* are Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev, Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina, Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya, Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin, Sorin, Yevgeny Sergeyevich Dorn, Masha, Ilya Afanasyevich Shamrayev, Semyon Semyonovich Medvedenko and Paulina Andryevna. Let us discuss the characters in detail.

### **Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev**

Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev is one of the four major characters in the play. He is the son of Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina. She is an actress. He is a writer and he is trying to emerge as a successful writer. He tries to bring some kind of revolutionary changes in his dramatic form to get approval and affection from his mother. However, his mother Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina spends her major time outside. So, there was a wide gap in the relationship between the son and the mother. The son is now attempting to bring his mother's attention to him by writing popular plays. However, Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev chooses some daring and out-of-the-box ideas in his stories of the play. Moreover, he selects Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya, his neighbor, as the main protagonist of the play. Nina was a young and beautiful girl. In the initial stages, he felt some kind of alienation due to the ideological wedge that he created between himself and the group of intelligentsia his mother included. Moreover, his passionate love for Nina also brought him depression. He wants both popularity and love. He wants to gain popularity in the world of art and artists and seek Nina's love. His character is complex. We can find some kind of Shakespearean elements of character traits in the character of Treplev. The character of Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev is similar to the character of junior Hamlet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The relationship between his mother and Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin, the writer, is just like the relationship between Gertrude and Claudius. He is in a situation in which he is trying to identify himself before the pompous personality of his mother and other Russian intelligentsia. Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev has killed a seagull and brought it as a gift to Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya. However, Nina is disgusted by the actions of Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev. In turn, Nina breaks her relationship with him. Later, she joined with Trigorin to act with him. This action made Konstantin feel intense jealousy and hatred towards Trigorin. Even his success as a reputed writer fails to bring him a happy life. He lives without the love of Nina. This void prompts him to take his life in his own hands.

### **Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina**

Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina is one of the four major characters of the play *The Seagull*. She is a beautiful middle-aged woman. However, her beauty has passed its prime. She is one of the strong members of the Russian intelligentsia group. Her first marriage was with a man who was inferior in status to her. That man was the father of her son Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev. She considered herself superior to her son. This kind of social hierarchy is exhibited in the character of Arkadina. She is selfish, hypocritical, and self-serving. She pays little attention to

her son due to the inferior social status that he possessed from his father. She is a successful stage actress and she is now in love relationship with Trigorin, the popular writer. Her character exposes the kind of social segregation that existed in Russia during that time. The two social groups are the common masses and the elite intelligentsia. People like Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev must prove their potential to the artistic elite group. She always ridiculed the artistic attempts of her son. She always demeaned his plays. We can trace the elements of social superiority in her. She did not even read the stories of her son when he became an acclaimed writer. However, in the case of her lover Trigorin, she was attentive and meticulous. Arkadina is such a character who seeks love and reputation from others. She is a pompous woman. She is a typical representative of the Russian artistic intelligentsia group, a group without content and core ideals. Chekhov describes this play as a comedy. She exhibits compassion when she cares for her son's wound injury and when she encourages Nina to be an actress. Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina's character in which Chekhov exhibits the dilemma of Russian society during the emergence of aristocracy and elitism. She is brought up elite with her companionship with her lover. Her rejection of her first husband and her son is a typical form of new emergent supremacy and elitism. Her overwhelming beauty made her included in such a position and identity form. She acquired superiority and popularity not because of her family lineage but because of her looks and social grouping.

### **Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya**

Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya is one of the important characters in the play *The Seagull*. It was Nina who first mentioned a seagull in the play. She compares herself to a seagull which is drawn towards a lake. Her dream in life was to become a professional actress. She was the lover of Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev. Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev has killed a seagull and brought it as a gift to Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya. However, Nina is disgusted by the actions of Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev. In turn, Nina breaks her relationship with Konstantin. Later, she joined with Trigorin to act with him. She always says, "I am the Seagull." This state of affairs of Nina reveals her mental condition in a Russian society where social status is based on the kind of achievement that a person has attained in his/her personal life. Nina is dare enough to continue her personal life through all her pain and disappointment. She is a nineteen-year-old girl and she is the neighbor of Sorin's estate. In the early life of her life itself, she confronted various financial difficulties. Her mother died when she was young. Her mother left her fortune to her husband. Her father remarried and put all the wealth in her stepmother's name. This was a great

insecurity for Nina. She was in love with Treplev with the hope that Treplev could bring her to the companionship of Treplev's mother, Irina, a popular actress. She was such a brilliant character to take all risks in her personal life. Her companionship with Trigorin shows her overambitious nature. She wants to achieve her dream by whatever means. This is the typical nature of the Russian social circle during the days that a person's achievement can only be taken for her/his acceptance in the intelligentsia circle. Nina is trying to achieve her dream by burying all her integrity.

***Check your progress***

1. Name the characters in the play *The Seagull*.

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2. Who compares herself to a seagull in the play *The Seagull*?

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3. Who killed the seagull in the play *The Seagull*? What was its after-effect?

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**Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin**

Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin is one of the four major characters in the play *The Seagull*. He is a popular writer. He is one of the members of the Russian intelligentsia and artistic community. He is the lover of Arkadina. However, he is tempted by the beauty of the young Nina. He is such a reclusive writer. He always selected the estate as the place of his writing. He disliked the overcrowded company and their gossiping. According to him, the overcrowded company and gossiping are a kind of hindrance to his writing. His writing career took away his youth and romantic experiences. To escape from that tiresome work, he had a love affair with Nina. Nina was a young beautiful girl. He was an opponent of Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev in two ways: 1) as the lover of Treplev's mother and 2) as the artistic opponent.

Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin is a versatile writer and he has already made his reputation as a well-known writer in society. However, he never supported and encouraged Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev to become a successful writer. Both he and his lady love Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina always sidelined Treplev. He has a clear understanding of his writing career. According to him, people would never say a good word about him. He knew that the appraisal of his art would fetch him happiness. But the reality is quite contrary. The conversation between Nina and Trigorin shows this aspect:

Nina: But don't your inspiration and the act of creation give you moments of lofty happiness

Trigorin: Yes. Writing is a pleasure to me, and so is reading the proofs, but no sooner does a book leave the press than it becomes odious to me; it is not what I meant it to be; I made a mistake to write it all; I am provoked and discouraged. Then the public reads it and says: "Yes, it is clever and pretty, but not nearly as good as Tolstoi," or "It is a lovely thing, but not as good as Turgenieff's 'Father and Sons,'" and so it will always be. To my dying day I shall hear people say: "clever and pretty," and nothing more, those that knew me will say as they pass my grave: "Here lies Trigorin, a clever writer, but he was not as good as Turgenieff."

His writing career has been turbulent with various pains and difficulties. It was not easy to make a popular image in the field of writing. Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin is a passionate writer who has accurate awareness about the kind of life that he is now leading and its connection with art.

### **Sorin**

Sorin is the landowner of the estate where the play takes place. Formerly, he was a government servant and after his retirement, he spends his time at his country farm. He is the brother of Arkadina and the uncle to Treplev. He encourages both his sister Arkadina and his nephew in their profession. He is a man of failure in his love and his ambition. His ambition was to become a writer. However, he could not attain either. He admits it:

Sorin: Do you know, my boy, I like literary men. I once passionately desired two things: to marry, and to become an author. I have succeeded in neither. It must be pleasant to be even an insignificant author.

Sorin's dejected condition in life is directly related to his continuous service at the Department of Justice. He considers himself a total failure in life. His attitude is created by the kind of experiences that he has attained from his twenty-eight years of service at the Department of Justice.

## Yevgeny Sergeyevich Dorn

Yevgeny Sergeyevich Dorn is a local doctor. In his youth, he was very charming and popular among women. Dorn is one of the representatives of the meta theatre of this play. He plays the role of a member of the audience. He witnesses all the events on the stage. He has an awareness of the characters of Arkadina, Sorin, and the rest of the characters in the play. He has an affection for Paulina. But that affection was not in the form of a love affair. He always motivates and inspires the talents of Treplev. He gives soothing words to Treplev whenever Arkadina pours her anger and frustration on him. He has quite a positive approach to artists. He holds the view:

It is only right that artists should be made much of by society and treated differently from, let us say, merchants. It is a kind of idealism.

He has a strong ideal approach to art and literature. Art without a definite objective will ruin the persona of the artist itself. He states:

[E]very work of art should have a definite object in view. You should know why you are writing, for if you follow the road of art without a goal before your eyes, you will lose yourself, and your genius will be your ruin.

As a doctor, he holds some philosophical arguments on the process behind death. According to him fear of death must be overcome. He says:

The fear of death is an animal passion which must be overcome. Only those who believe in a future life and tremble for sins committed can logically fear death.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Who was the lover of Arkadina in the play *The Seagull*?

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2. Who served in the Department of Justice?

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3. Who is the local doctor in the play *The Seagull*?



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## **Masha**

Masha is the daughter of Paulina and Shamrayev, the managers of Sorin's farm. She always wears black as a kind of protest against her life's failure. She is a drug addict and also a heavy drinker. She has a strong feeling for Treplev. However, it was not returned from Treplev. She married the mediocre Medvedenko, the poor school teacher. However, still, her strong love for Treplev existed. Mash was such a strong character that she believed that one day her problems would perish. She says about her life:

I feel as if I had been in the world a thousand years, and I trail my life behind me like an endless scarf. Often I have no desire to live at all. Of course that is foolish. One ought to pull oneself together and shake off such nonsense.

Her bidding farewell to Trigorin is tear-jerking. Her words echo her deep love for Trigorin. Masha is a practical character. When she realized that she could not attain the love of Trigorin, she bid goodbye to him. Masha is one of the typical Chekhovian characters who holds strong faith in herself when all the life difficulties burden her. She tries to accept her problems as it is. Instead of making some hard decisions, she bears the problems positively. She was ready enough to exchange her love for Medvedenko in the place of Treplev.

## **Ilya Afanasyevich Shamrayev**

Ilya Afanasyevich Shamrayev is the father of Masha and the husband of Paulina. He is the manager of Sorin's farm. He has a close connection with Russian artists. He attentively listens to the words of Arkadina. However, he is an authoritarian in his profession of farm running and the subject of horses. He never accepted his son-in-law Medvedenko. He was cruel towards him. It was Ilya Afanasyevich Shamrayev who made the stuffed seagull for Trigorin. It was the same moment when Shamrayev gave the stuffed seagull to Trigorin, that the whole stage heard a loud shot sound. It was the sound of Constantine shooting himself. Constantine's relationship with Nina broke when he presented her with a carcass of the seagull. One of the major symbols in this play is the seagull which signifies both freedom and destruction. The stuffed seagull and the carcass of the seagull presented by both Shamrayev and Treplev respectively signify the represented form of freedom and destruction.

### **Semyon Semyonovich Medvedenko**

Semyon Semyonovich Medvedenko is a poor local school teacher. He talks too much about his poverty and difficulties in life. He married Masha. His father-in-law never liked him much. The play starts with the conversation between Masha and Medvedenko:

Medvedenko: Why do you always wear mourning

Masha: I dress in black to match my life. I am unhappy.

Medvedenko: Why should you be unhappy [Thinking it over] I don't understand it. You are healthy, and though your father is not rich, he has a good competency. My life is far harder than yours. I only have twenty three roubles a month to live on, but I don't wear mourning. [They sit down]

### **Paulina Andryevna**

Paulina is the mother of Masha and the wife of Ilya Afanasyevich Shamrayev. She is unhappy in her loveless marriage. She sees her life condition in the life of her daughter Masha. She loves Dorn. However, her fate was to marry Shamrayev. In the same manner, her daughter loves Treplev, but she later married Medvedenko, the local school teacher.

### **Other Minor characters**

Yakov; a hired workman, the Cook, the Maid, and the Watchman are the minor characters in this play.

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## **11.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should have an idea about the background, plot, and characters of the play *The Seagull* by Anton Chekhov. You should be able to know the definition of the term plot. You should have also become familiar with different characters in the play and their characteristic traits.

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## **11.4 Glossary**

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**Plot:** A plot is a sequence of events within a play that tells a story. A plot is the main essence of the story of a performance

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

**Character traits:** The individual qualities or attributes of a person that make his/her overall character.

**Carcass:** The dead body of an animal.

**Genre:** A category of art, music, or literature.

**Intelligentsia:** Group of highly educated people who have a strong influence in politics.

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## 11.5 Sample Questions

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### 11.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Anton Chekhov is a writer from.....
2. Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* is written in.....
3. Identify the speaker:

“Do you know, my boy, I like literary men. I once passionately desired two things: to marry, and to become an author. I have succeeded in neither. It must be pleasant to be even an insignificant author.”

4. Who was the poor school teacher in the play *The Seagull*?
5. Who were the four major characters in the play *The Seagull*?
6. Who was the amateur playwright in the play *The Seagull*?
7. How many acts are there in the play *The Seagull*?
  - (a) 5
  - (b) 6
  - (c) 4
  - (d) 3
8. Who committed suicide in the play *The Seagull*?
  - (a) Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev
  - (b) Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin
  - (c) Yevgeny Sergeyevich Dorn
  - (d) Sorin
9. Who presented a carcass of seagull to Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya?
  - (a) Ilya Afanasyevich Shamrayev
  - (b) Semyon Semyonovich Medvedenko
  - (c) Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev

(d) Paulina Andryevna

10. Who always says “I am the Seagull” in the play *The Seagull*?

(a) Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina

(b) Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya

(c) Masha

(d) Boris Alexeyevich Trigorin

### **11.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Write a short note on the background of the play *The Seagull*.
2. explain in brief the significance of the seagull in *The Seagull*?
3. Discuss in brief the theme of love in the play *The Seagull*.
4. Who are the four major characters in the play *The Seagull*? Write a short note on their character traits.
5. Write a short note on the meta-theatrical elements in the play *The Seagull*.

### **11.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write an essay on the character portrayal in the play *The Seagull*.
2. Examine in detail the background and plot of the play *The Seagull*.
3. Write an essay on Russian middle-class society which is presented in the play *The Seagull*.

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## **11.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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1. Chekhov, A. P. *Selected Works in Two Volumes*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 2002. Print
2. Whyman, R. *Anton Chekhov*, London & New York: Routledge Publisher, 2011. Print

## Unit - 12: *The Seagull*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

### Structure

12.0 Introduction

12.1 Objectives

12.2 *The Seagull*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

12.2.1 Themes

12.2.2 Narrative Technique

12.2.3 Critical Appreciation

12.3 Learning Outcomes

12.4 Glossary

12.5 Sample Questions

12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 12.0 Introduction

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*The Seagull*, authored by the Russian dramatist Anton Chekhov, is considered one of his major plays. Originally written in 1895 and staged in 1896, the play is known to be a romantic and artistic conflict between four main characters: Boris Trigorin, Nina, Irina Arkadina, and Konstantin Treplev. Among these characters, Trigorin is considered one of the greatest male characters ever created by Anton Chekhov in his plays. The play was a revolt against the melodrama concept of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and gained immense popularity after Konstantin Stanislavski, the Russian Theatre practitioner, directed it in 1898 at the Moscow Art Theatre.

The play revolves around Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev, who is premiering a play for his family. His lover Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya is the star of the play. However, his mother Irina Nikolayevna Arkadina ridicules and mocks the play, leading to Konstantin shutting it down. The play exposes a meta-theatrical experience of the nature of art and the artist, with each act comprising two parts. It reveals the theme of the unfulfilled life of the artist.

The seagull and the lake are the major symbols of the play. *The Seagull* is a study of the human state of affairs about their artistic tendencies. Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev has killed a seagull and brought it as a gift to Nina Mikhailovna Zarechnaya. However, Nina is disgusted by the actions of Konstantin Gavrilovich Treplev. In turn, Nina broke her relationship with

Konstantin and joined with Trigorin to act with him, which made Konstantin intensely jealous and hateful towards Trigorin.

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## 12.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the themes, narrative techniques, and critical appreciation of the play *The Seagull*
- gain insights into the social and artistic life that prevailed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia

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## 12.2 *The Seagull*: Themes, Narrative Technique, Critical Appreciation

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### 12.2.1 Themes:

Anton Chekhov's play, *The Seagull* is an undisputed masterpiece that explores various themes like the role of an artist, self-evaluation, the meaning of life, unrequited love, and identity crisis. Upon delving deeper into the play, you will find that it exposes the theme of art and artist and their social and artistic life in a competitive world with utmost confidence and clarity.

#### **The social and artistic life of artists**

Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* explores the interplay between social and artistic life in 19th-century Russian society. The play features four major characters who represent the middle-class social system of that era. It is a highly competitive society where artists like Arkadina, Trigorin, Treplev, and Nina strive to achieve success and social status. Trigorin, a popular writer, holds significant influence over the Russian Intelligentsia and the artistic community. The play highlights how culture and art played a critical role in shaping the community standards of that time.

Treplev, another aspiring artist, tries hard to make a name for himself but receives constant rejection from his artistic circle, including his mother, Arkadina. She, in turn, holds a condescending attitude towards her son, largely due to her former husband's social inferiority in status. Arkadina is romantically involved with Trigorin, who is not only a popular writer but also a man of social status, unlike Treplev's father. Meanwhile, Treplev is in love with Nina, who later realizes that her success as an actress depends on her association with Trigorin, an influential writer in the group of Intelligentsia.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian society, social status was a crucial determinant of an artist's success. All the characters in *The Seagull* are in a constant state of competition, using their artistic abilities as a tool to gain social belonging and status. The play illustrates how the artistic and social lives of Trigorin, Treplev, Arkadina, and Nina are intertwined. Anton Chekhov successfully portrays how social and artistic life are not separate entities but are deeply interconnected. The character Yevgeny Sergeyevich Dorn states: "It is only right that artists should be made much of by society and treated differently from, let us say, merchants. It is a kind of idealism." He has a strong ideal approach toward art and literature.

### **Self-Evaluation**

It is worth noting that self-evaluation is an important theme in *The Seagull*. The characters in the play are all focused on evaluating themselves and their own character. Treplev, for instance, is a character with a strong desire to become a successful writer, but he experiences failure due to a lack of inspiration and support. However, he remains self-aware of his strengths and weaknesses and continues to work towards his goals. Similarly, Sorin, the landowner of the estate, has faced failure in both his love and ambition to become a writer. Despite this, he acknowledges his shortcomings and strives to improve himself. Overall, the play portrays a positive message about personal growth and the importance of self-reflection.

Sorin knows that his life failure starts from his continuous service at the Department of Justice. He says that he is a total failure in life. He states:

It is easy for you to condemn smoking and drinking; you have known what life is, but what about me. I have served in the Department of Justice for twenty eight years, but I have never lived, I have never had any experiences. You are satiated with life, and that is why you have an inclination for philosophy, but I want to live, and that is why I drink my wine for dinner and smoke cigars, and all.

In the play, there is a character named Masha who is very self-aware. Despite facing numerous challenges, she remains a strong character and holds onto the hope that her problems will eventually come to an end. In fact, she has a positive outlook on life and is determined to overcome any obstacles that come her way.

Semyon Semyonovich Medvedenko is a dedicated local school teacher who focuses on the positive aspects of life. Though he may mention his financial struggles, he does not let them define him. In his conversation with Masha, he demonstrates a deep understanding of his own worth and the value he brings to the world.

Medvedenko: Why do you always wear mourning?

Masha: I dress in black to match my life. I am unhappy.

Medvedenko: Why should you be unhappy [Thinking it over] I don't understand it. You are healthy, and though your father is not rich, he has a good competency. My life is far harder than yours. I only have twenty three roubles a month to live on, but I don't wear mourning. [They sit down]

### **Meaning of life**

In the play, all the characters are on a journey to discover the true meaning of their existence. They relentlessly search for purpose and significance in their lives. Treplev and Nina attempt to find meaning through their creative pursuits of writing and acting, but they find the process to be challenging. Both of them aspire to achieve fame and recognition in their respective fields, believing that success will grant them a greater sense of fulfilment. However, the play highlights the fact that while success is important, it is the unyielding determination of humans that truly defines the meaning of life. Sorin, another character in the play, views a life without accomplishing goals as empty and meaningless. His aspiration was to become a prolific writer, but he failed to achieve his dream. Masha is also a character who strives to find purpose in life. She acknowledges that her journey is difficult, but she remains committed to discovering the true meaning of her existence.

Masha displays a strong sense of acceptance towards her problems, choosing to face them head-on instead of shying away from making tough decisions. Her optimistic outlook towards life enables her to handle her issues with a positive attitude. She even displays a willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of the people she loves, as evidenced by her readiness to exchange her affection for Medvedenko in place of Treplev.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Who is considered the greatest male character Anton Chekhov ever created?



2. What are the major themes that are explored in the play *The Seagull*?

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3. Who is the character that aspires to become a popular actress in the play *The Seagull*?

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### **Unrequited Love**

*The Seagull* also captures the theme of unrequited love through its complex web of characters and their intertwined relationships. Each character's love represents different stages of life and love, but none of them seem to find true satisfaction. While some of them, like Masha, may have adjusted to their unrequited love, others, such as Treplev, cannot bear the weight of their unfulfilled desires. This leads to a dramatic conclusion where Treplev, due to his love and professional failure, ultimately takes his own life.

Medvedenko loves Masha, but Masha loves Treplev. Treplev does not love Masha, he loves Nina. Nina also loves Treplev. But later, for her professional success she falls in love with Trigorin. Arkadina loves Trigorin who loved the young actress Nina. Paulina loves Dorn. But she later married Shamrayev.

Chekhov's play offers a profound insight into the existential status of human beings on this earth, where love and other aspects of human tenderness are often unreciprocated, and life goes on in a different direction. The characters' struggles to find happiness in love, and their ultimate failure to do so, serve as a reminder that human life is fragile and fleeting. Despite the sadness that permeates the play, it is a testament to Chekhov's mastery of the human condition and his ability to capture the complexities of love and life in all their forms

### **Existentialism**

Existentialism is a powerful philosophical inquiry that delves into the very essence of human existence. It seeks to explore and answer the most fundamental questions regarding the meaning, purpose, and value of human life. *The Seagull*, a prominent play in the world of literature, is known for its strong existentialist themes. Throughout the play, we see a number of characters grappling with the existential crisis of their lives. One notable character is Masha, who struggles to find meaning in her life through a romantic relationship with Treplev. Unfortunately, Treplev does not reciprocate her feelings. Masha believes that without love, life is meaningless and futile. Masha later changes her mind and marries Medvedenko, though she was still in love with Treplev. Masha ultimately chose to marry Medvedenko despite initially being in love with Treplev. Sorin, on the other hand, is a character who failed to achieve both his love and ambition.

He aspired to become a writer, but unfortunately, his love life and ambition didn't align, and he had to admit his failure in both aspects. He is a man of failure in his love and his ambition. His ambition was to become a writer. However, he could not attain both his love and ambition. Sorin may feel that his continuous service at the Department of Justice has hindered his success, but he has undoubtedly gained valuable experience and skills that will serve him well in any future endeavours. Sorin's dejected condition in life is directly related to his continuous service at the Department of Justice. He says that he is a total failure in life.

One of the characters, Dorn, is a doctor who has a philosophical view on death. He believes that one must overcome the fear of death, and shares his arguments on the process of dying: "The fear of death is an animal passion which must be overcome. Only those who believe in a future life and tremble for sins committed can logically fear death." The characters of Nina and Treplev in the play symbolize the theme of existentialism. Both of them aspire to be successful artists: Treplev as a writer and Nina as an actress. However, they struggle to find meaning in their lives. Treplev's failures in love, art, and life ultimately lead him to take his own life. The play *The Seagull* explores the theme of existentialism in great depth.

### ***Check your progress***

1. What is existentialism?

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2. Who is the doctor in the play *The Seagull*?

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3. Who is the character in the black dress in the play *The Seagull*?

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### **12.2.2 Narrative Technique:**

Anton Chekhov used a naturalistic style in the presentation of the play. Metaphor is one of the narrative techniques in the play. A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them. The title of the play *The Seagull* itself is a metaphor. Treplev was in love with Nina, the young actress. However, Nina rejected him. Treplev presented her with a dead seagull. This signifies that her rejection of his love will end his life. Treplev, towards the end of the play, committed suicide. The lake is another metaphor of the play. The lake represents both Treplev and Chekhov's desire to move to a more naturalistic theatre not limited by three walls.

The lake means several different things to the play's characters. The lake is a place of reflection, respite, and escape.

### **12.2.3 Critical Appreciation:**

Anton Chekhov's play *The Seagull* is widely acclaimed as a masterpiece. The play delves into the themes of human uncertainty, fate, unrequited love, and the struggle for success. All the characters in the play are striving to achieve success but their efforts ultimately prove to be in vain. Treplev aspires to be a famous writer while Nina dreams of becoming a renowned actress. Despite their best efforts, they fail to achieve their goals. To make matters worse, Treplev, who was once in love with Nina, is left heartbroken when she ends their relationship and begins a romantic liaison with Trigorin, a successful writer. In that competition, there is no relevance for human relationships. Treplev, due to his professional and love failure committed suicide. The suicide was a blow to the Russian Intelligentsia. Treplev's father was a common ordinary man. But his mother was the popular actress Arkadina. Arkadina is now in a love relationship with Trigorin. Arkadina is not supporting and inspiring her son in the profession of writing. She is always ridiculing her son. She holds contempt and anger towards Treplev mainly because of his father's, her own former husband, social status. Arkadina and Trigorin belong to the Intelligentsia group, but they lack the intelligence and moral strength to accept other socially disadvantaged members of society.

The play, *The Seagull* is a powerful depiction of the social tug-of-war that existed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian middle-class society. In that competitive world, certain characters would thrive while others would perish. For instance, Masha, with her daring confidence, managed to survive despite facing total failure in both her love and professional life. However, characters like Treplev could not make it in the stiffly competitive world.

According to Whyman "*The Seagull* is not simply a play that reveals the complexities of idealistic love and longing." The play examines the realistic part of human life. The fictional characters and their existence in the play examines this reality in core. The play delves into the essence of real life by deviating from the typical plot structure of a clear beginning, middle, and end. Chekhov skilfully portrays real life through the depiction of each character in the play, intentionally eschewing the traditional hero and heroine archetypes. Instead, the play reflects the subjective nature of heroism and femininity, mimicking real-life complexities.

The play achieved great success by seamlessly blending elements of tragedy and comedy, making it a prime example of tragi-comedy. Through its portrayal of middle-class characters, the

play meticulously dissects the significance of money in defining social identity. Characters such as Lady Arkadina exemplify the elite societal class, favoring opulence and extravagance, while others struggle to afford basic necessities. Chekhov's masterful depiction captures the intricacies of modern life, delving into the complexities of materialism, fame, and the emerging industrial era.

Furthermore, the play embodies Chekhov's insight into the human psyche, particularly its entanglement with monetary wealth and celebrity status. Characters like Tripolov, Trigorin, and Dr. Dorn serve as conduits for Chekhov's philosophical musings, offering perspectives akin to the author's own outlook on life. Desires feature prominently within the play, with characters such as Arkadina and Masha fervently pursuing their aspirations, ultimately encountering disillusionment, echoing the inevitability of unattainable desires in real life.

The play effectively incorporates elements of expressionism, wherein the writer presents the world as perceived through their state of mind, rather than as it exists. Anton Chekhov's work focuses on portraying the inner feelings and emotional states of the characters, rather than solely depicting the external world. The play powerfully presents the characters' inner struggles and desires. For instance, Tripolov's efforts to establish himself as a writer, Nina's aspiration to become a great actress, and Trigorin's desire to emulate Tolstoy all reflect the inner complexities of the characters. The relationships and interactions, such as Arkadina's connection with Trigorin, are also portrayed through an expressionistic lens. The play effectively captures the societal mindset of the time and its impact on the characters, providing a blend of realism and expressionism. Overall, *The Seagull* serves as a modern drama that delves into the influences of material progress on everyday life. Chekhov himself emphasizes in his Letter to Maria Kiselyova:

To a chemist nothing in the world is impure. The writer must be just as objective as the chemist; he must free himself of everyday subjectivity, and he must know that manure plays a most respectable role in nature and that evil passions are just as much a part of life as virtues. (Chekhov, 1887)

Chekhov's masterful depiction of reality in *The Seagull* authentically captures the essence of life. This representation is skillfully transformed into a work of art due to Chekhov's artistic genius. He firmly believes that all life experiences can be used as source material for artistic creations. *The Seagull* stands as a compelling demonstration of Chekhov's ability to draw from real-life occurrences and fashion them into a profound and artistic masterpiece.

### *Check your progress*

1. Who is Arkadina's son?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Who gives Nina a dead seagull?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. The play, *The Seagull* is a powerful depiction of the \_\_\_\_\_ tug-of-war that existed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian middle-class society.

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## 12.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have gained a comprehensive understanding of the themes, narrative techniques, and critical appreciation of Anton Chekhov's play, *The Seagull*. You should have also learned about existentialism and Chekov's contribution to drama.

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## 12.4 Glossary

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**Existentialism:** Existentialism is a philosophical inquiry that explores the meaning, purpose, and value of human existence.

**Metaphor:** A figure of speech where a word or phrase is used in a non-literal way to describe something else.

**Narrative Technique:** Narrative technique refers to the methods writers use to convey their story to the reader.

**Simile:** A figure of speech used to compare things of different kinds for emphasis or vivid description.

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## 12.5 Sample Questions

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### 12.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Who is the influential writer in the Intelligentsia group?
2. Can you name the four main characters in the play "*The Seagull*"?
3. Konstantin Stanislavski is a well-known practitioner of Russian \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What are the two significant symbols in the play *The Seagull*?

5. Who is Treplev's lover?
6. Among the following which is the major theme of the play *The Seagull*?
  - (a) Existentialism
  - (b) War
  - (c) Animal love
  - (d) Environmental pollution
7. What narrative style does Anton Chekhov employ in his play, *The Seagull*?
  - (a) Natural
  - (b) Realistic
  - (c) Expressionistic
  - (d) Surrealistic
8. Who is the popular actress in the play *The Seagull*?
  - (a) Nina
  - (b) Arkadina
  - (c) Masha
  - (d) Paulina
9. Who is the mother of Treplev?
  - (a) Arkadina
  - (b) Paulina
  - (c) Nina
  - (d) Masha
10. Which of the following is one of the themes of the play *The Seagull*?
  - (a) Self-evaluation
  - (b) Evaluation
  - (c) Critical evaluation
  - (d) Observation

#### **12.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. Define the term existentialism.
2. Discuss in brief self-evaluation by some characters in the play.
3. Write a brief note about Anton Chekhov's narrative technique in *The Seagull*.
4. Examine in brief the theme of unrequited love in the play *The Seagull*.
5. How is the society depicted in the play?

#### **12.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write an essay on the major themes in *The Seagull*.
2. Attempt a critical appreciation of the play *The Seagull*.
3. Discuss how the action unfolds through the narrative technique employed in *The Seagull*.

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## 12.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Chekhov, A. P. *Selected Works in Two Volumes*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 2002. Print
2. Whyman, R. *Anton Chekhov*, London & New York: Routledge Publisher, 2011. Print
3. Clyman, Toby W. *Chekhov's Great Plays: A Critical Anthology*. New York: New York University Press, 1981. Print
4. Gilman, Richard. *Chekhov's Plays: An Opening into Eternity*. London: Yale University Press, 1995. Print.

## Unit - 13: Arun Kolatkar, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Gurujada Appa Rao

### Structure

#### 13.0 Introduction

#### 13.1 Objectives

#### 13.2 Arun Kolatkar, Faiz Ahmed, and Gurujada Appa Rao

##### 13.2.1 Arun Kolatkar

###### 13.2.1.1 “The Turnaround”

##### 13.2.2 Faiz Ahmed Faiz

###### 13.2.2.1 “Subh-e-Azadi”

##### 13.2.3 Gurujada Appa Rao

###### 13.2.3.1 “Love Thy Country”

#### 13.3 Learning Outcomes

#### 13.4 Glossary

#### 13.5 Sample Questions

#### 13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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### 13.0 Introduction

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In the earlier Blocks and Units of this course, you have been introduced to comparative literature, the different schools of comparative literature, the theory and practice of comparative literature. You also undertook a study of comparative literature across genres like essay and novel. In this Unit, you will study comparative poetry with special reference to three Indian poets: Arun Kolatkar, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Gurujada Appa Rao. The three poems prescribed for your study are “The Turnaround,” “Shub-e- Azadi, and “Love Thy Country” written by Arun Kolatkar, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Gurujada Appa Rao respectively. In the following sections you will learn in detail about the poets and their works.

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### 13.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- study Arun Kolatkar, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Gurujada Appa Rao as Indian poets
- understand their contributions to poetry



- undertake a comparative study of their poetry
- explore the poems, “The Turnaround,” “Subh-e-Azadi,” “Love Thy Country”

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## 13.2 Arun Kolatkar, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Gurujada Appa Rao

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### 13.2.1 Arun Kolatkar:

In this section we will learn in detail about Arun Kolatkar and his contributions before we study his poem, “The Turnaround.”

#### Introduction to the Poet

Arun Balkrushna Kolatkar, born on November 1st, 1932 in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, hailed from a traditional Hindu joint family. His early influences stemmed from figures like Rajaram Mohan Roy, Rajarshri Shahu Maharaj, and Karmveer Bhaurao Patil. After receiving primary and secondary education in Bombay, Kolatkar pursued his graduation at the J.J. School of Arts in Bombay in 1974. While residing in Mumbai, he pursued a career as a commercial artist, working in advertising, graphic design, and art direction.

His personal life was marked by the challenges of a marriage opposed by both families, leading to subsequent personal struggles and a shift in career focus. Despite initial struggles, he found his footing in the world of art, earning a diploma in painting from J.J. School of Arts in 1957 and later completed a fine arts degree through distance education. Kolatkar’s transition from poverty to a focus on Marathi and English poetry marked a significant shift in his career. He passed away on September 25th, 2000, but his legacy extends beyond his work as a graphic designer, as he is acknowledged as a versatile and influential poet in both modern Indian writing in English and Marathi poetry. Influences from the early Marathi folk theatre and Western literary figures like William Carlos Williams and American Beat Poetry shaped his poetic style.

Kolatkar received numerous accolades for his contributions to English and Marathi literature. His notable awards include the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 1977 for "Jejuri" and the Sahitya Akademi Award in 2005 for "Bhijki Vahi." He was recognized by various organizations, such as the Kag Institute and the Bahinabai Foundation Trust, and held positions of honor, such as the President of Marathwada Sahitya Parishad, receiving the ‘Kusumgras Award’ in 1993. In terms of his poetic achievements, Kolatkar stands as a prominent figure among Indian poets writing in English. His bilingual proficiency in Marathi and English allowed him to self-translate his works, releasing collections in both the languages. His works, including

"Jejuri," "Bhijaki Vahi," "Chirimiri," "Kala Ghoda Poems," "Sarpa Satra," and "The Boatribe and Other Poems," showcase his literary taste in both the languages. Kolatkar's literary achievements have earned him recognition among the foremost Indian writers, solidifying his place in the literary pantheon.

### **Modern Indian English Poetry and Kolatkar**

Modern Indian English Poetry, emerging from the mid-20th century to the present day, embodies a rich amalgamation of diverse cultural, social, and linguistic facets within the post-colonial Indian experience. Pioneers like Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Dom Moraes, Kamala Das, and Arun Kolatkar laid the foundation for this literary movement, incorporating the complexities of cultural diversity and socio-political issues into their work.

These poets navigated multiple languages, intertwining English with regional languages such as Marathi, Hindi, and others. They laid the groundwork for a multilingual poetic repertoire, broadening the canvas for expressive diversity. This movement also saw the emergence of poets like Jayanta Mahapatra, Eunice de Souza, and Vikram Seth, who further enriched the landscape of Modern Indian English Poetry.

Their verses are reflective of everyday experiences, human relationships, spiritual explorations, and the urban landscapes of a rapidly changing society. The poetry often delves into societal intricacies, addressing themes of identity, urbanization, caste, gender, and the post-colonial Indian experience. This exploration continues to evolve through the contributions of contemporary poets such as Meena Kandasamy, Ranjit Hoskote, and Tishani Doshi, among others, who continue to shape and redefine this literary landscape.

These poets employ vivid imagery, nuanced language, and powerful metaphors deeply rooted in the Indian context. Their works embrace symbolism and cultural allusions, offering layers of interpretation and depth. This continuum of poets within the genre epitomizes a broad spectrum of perspectives, intricately woven into the fabric of modern Indian English poetry.

Arun Kolatkar's poetry is a pivotal cornerstone in the panorama of Modern Indian English poetry. His seminal work, "Jejuri," is a brilliant example of his poetic genius. This collection embodies the convergence of spirituality, cultural explorations, and an astute socio-political commentary within the framework of a pilgrimage. Kolatkar employs vivid imagery and keen observations to delve into the complexities of faith, urbanization, and the inherent paradoxes of modern life.

Kolatkar's ability to infuse ordinary moments with extraordinary depth and insight sets him apart. Take, for instance, the poem "The Turnaround," a vivid portrayal of a wanderer navigating through various towns, reflecting the struggles and ironies of existence. His use of personification and subtle satire in attributing agency to cities or towns is a hallmark of his style. In discussing Kolatkar alongside other stalwarts of modern Indian English poetry, one cannot overlook the contributions of poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, and Kamala Das. Ezekiel's works, renowned for their urban sensibilities and astute observations of society, delve into the complexities of a changing India. Ramanujan, celebrated for his scholarly and reflective approach, explores linguistic and cultural intersections with profound depth. Kamala Das, on the other hand, infuses raw emotion and personal experiences, particularly exploring themes of love, gender, and societal norms.

However, what sets Kolatkar apart is his unique ability to straddle linguistic boundaries, seamlessly working in both Marathi and English. This bilingual prowess allowed him to capture a broader spectrum of Indian experiences and bridge cultural divides through his translations and original works. Kolatkar's "Jejuri" delves into the spiritual and cultural tapestry of India, Ezekiel's "The Unfinished Man" reflects urban existentialism, Ramanujan's translations of classical Indian poetry showcase a scholarly exploration of cultural heritage, and Kamala Das's "The Old Playhouse" delves into deeply personal and emotional landscapes.

### **13.2.1.1 "The Turnaround":**

In this section, we will introduce you to the poem "The Turnaround." We will also discuss the themes, the style, and the significance of the poem. We will also examine the use of symbols and imagery in the poem.

#### **"The Turnaround": Introduction**

"The Boatribe and Other Poems," published posthumously in 2009, serves as a comprehensive anthology of Arun Kolatkar's scattered and previously uncollected poems, meticulously compiled by A.K. Mehrotra, Ashok Shahane, and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. The collection brings together works previously dispersed across various publications and magazines, offering readers a comprehensive view of Kolatkar's poetic journey.

This anthology is thoughtfully organized into five distinct sections. The sections encompass a range of poetic expressions: "Poems in English," "Poems in Marathi," "Words for Music," comprising translations of revered religious songs from Maharashtra's Bhakti poets, and

finally, "the Boatribe." The poems within this volume traverse the enigmatic and scattered path of Kolatkar's life, offering readers a glimpse into the poet's evolving artistic landscape.

The publication not only presents Kolatkar's scattered works but also provides a sense of coherence and completion to his diverse poetic expressions. Despite the varied thematic explorations, Kolatkar's signature naturalistic precision and emotional detachment remain consistent throughout his poetic endeavors.

Arun Kolatkar's "The Turnaround" is from "The Boatribe and Other Poems" that encapsulates a poignant journey through the poet's experiences, chronicling his encounters while navigating various locales. The narrative unfolds through vivid imagery and raw, unembellished language, painting a stark picture of a relentless and tumultuous sojourn. The poem delineates the hardships faced in different places, depicting a sequence of events that gradually erode the protagonist's circumstances. Each stop represents a new challenge, from being reduced to begging in Bombay, the acquisition of meager sustenance in Kalyan, to the uncomfortable experiences in Nasik and the tribulations encountered along the journey.

The poet's descriptions are visceral and unvarnished, detailing the arduousness of the journey, including encounters with unsympathetic locals, degrading experiences, and an unrelenting quest for basic necessities. Throughout, there's a pervasive sense of degradation and the struggle for survival. Despite the trials and tribulations, the poem takes a pivotal turn toward the end. The encounter with an old man and a young woman in a humble abode brings a moment of respite. The simple act of receiving water and the unanticipated provision of food depict a rare instance of generosity and contentment, standing out amidst the harsh landscape of the protagonist's journey.

Thus, the poem encapsulates a profound exploration of resilience, humility, and the transformative power of human connections within the harsh and unyielding landscape of the protagonist's journey. The poem unfolds a narrative of a wanderer traversing through various cities in western Maharashtra—Kalyan, Nashik, Rotegaon, and Kopargaon. This trek through the landscape mirrors Kolatkar's own trials during his impoverished but eventful years in Mumbai. The protagonist's journey becomes a reflection of personal hardships, where the cities encountered serve as symbolic landmarks in his narrative. "Bombay made me a beggar" personifies the city, attributing a transformative effect to the urban environment on the narrator's life. Each city visit unfolds a distinct episode—Kalyan providing a meager sustenance of jaggery and also where he sold his blanket to survive. In Nashik, the protagonist parts with a possession

(Tukaram) for basic sustenance, and his subsequent encounters indicate a struggle for survival amid varying reactions from the locales.

The poem navigates through moments of deprivation, where basic needs like food and water become elusive. The encounters with individuals along the journey, marked by initial aversion and abuses but culminating in acts of kindness, underscore the complexities of human interactions amid hardship.

### **Themes**

"The Turnaround" by Arun Kolatkar encapsulates the essence of a journey – both physical and metaphorical – emblematic of his broader thematic explorations across his poetic corpus. The poem traces the odyssey of an itinerant wanderer through various towns in Maharashtra, portraying the hardships and realities faced by the marginalized. This **journey motif** is recurrent in Kolatkar's oeuvre, threading through his various works. In "The Turnaround," the physical trek from Bombay through towns like Kalyan, Nashik, Rotegaon, and Kopergaon serves as a metaphor for a deeper existential quest. The journey isn't solely geographical but delves into the human experience, mirroring the quest for meaning and identity, a recurring motif in Kolatkar's poetry.

The portrayal of the towns serves as a canvas illustrating the hues of urban life, reflecting societal indifference, struggle, and a quest for sustenance. Each town embodies a microcosm of human existence, where the narrator experiences instances of both kindness and harsh realities. The poem's stark portrayal of the physical journey intertwines seamlessly with the metaphorical journey – a quest for identity, meaning, and survival. Kolatkar weaves this motif into the broader themes evident in his oeuvre: the search for spirituality, the individual's struggle in a rapidly changing urban landscape, and the complexities of societal marginalization. The journey, in its physical and symbolic manifestations, serves as a powerful lens through which Kolatkar scrutinizes and critiques societal norms, individual struggles, and existential dilemmas. Kolatkar's renowned works, such as "Jejuri" and "Sarpa Satra," explore spiritual quests and the deeper human journey, but with a more allegorical and mythological underpinning. "Jejuri" scrutinizes the search for spirituality amidst the physical and metaphysical landscapes, whereas "Sarpa Satra" explores human nature through myth and contemporary history. However, in contrast to these more symbolic and allegorical pieces, "The Turnaround" offers a straightforward narrative of a physical journey, mirroring the societal and existential struggles

faced by the marginalized. The poem serves as a lens to view Kolatkar's societal critiques, reflecting the plight of those on the fringes of society in a direct, unadorned manner.

"The Turnaround" also shines in its stark portrayal of the human journey, emphasizing the **societal critique** and the struggles of the marginalized. This distinct narrative approach elucidates Kolatkar's versatility, presenting a direct and raw depiction in contrast to the more layered and allegorical nature of his other celebrated works. "The Turnaround," serves as a poignant critique of societal norms, capturing the marginalized, the struggles, and the harsh realities often overlooked by the mainstream narrative. It emphasizes the themes of poverty, displacement, and the indifference of urban society towards those on the fringes. Each town in the poem becomes a microcosm reflecting societal challenges, where the narrator encounters both kindness and harshness, reflecting a broader societal dichotomy.

In "Jejuri," Kolatkar explores the disconnect between traditional spirituality and the modern world. He critiques the commercialization of spirituality, questioning the essence of faith in a rapidly changing society. In "Kala Ghoda Poems," Kolatkar satirizes the post-colonial urban landscape, highlighting the disparity between the privileged and the marginalized

In "The Turnaround," Bombay is personified as a pivotal entity that shapes the narrator's circumstances, portraying an **urban landscape** that molds destinies and determines livelihoods. The poem presents a distinct depiction of the city and its influence on the individual within the urban milieu. Bombay, portrayed as the initial antagonist, plays a crucial role in the narrator's transformation into a beggar. This characterization mirrors the harshness and challenges often associated with urban life, where the city's overwhelming nature can push individuals to the margins of society. The city serves as a symbol of stark contrast. It's where the disparity between affluence and destitution is most pronounced. The juxtaposition of Bombay as the catalyst for the narrator's plight sets the tone for the societal critique within the poem, reflecting the city's diverse facets—its opulence and its severe disparity.

The portrayal of Bombay like other cities in "The Turnaround" embodies the quintessential urban landscape, painting a picture of an influential and formidable entity that dictates the trajectory of individuals' lives within its realm. The city is not just a geographical location but a force that shapes destinies, often exacerbating the struggles of those on its margins.

Kalyan is described as a smaller town in the poem, it offers the narrator a meager lump of jaggery to suck, symbolizing a gesture of assistance in the face of adversity. It represents a contrast to the overwhelming struggle faced in Bombay, portraying a glimpse of humility and

communal support in a smaller urban setting. The narrator sells his Tukaram, an important possession, to acquire basic sustenance like bread Nashik. This portrayal showcases the necessity for survival in the face of poverty. In Rotegaon, the narrator confronts a trial, representing the challenging and trying aspects of urban life. He dragged a dead dog away, gave up his sleep and was scolded by a woman pissing in the dark. The 'year of famine' and the 'dead bullock' adds to the narrator trial. Like a rag picker, the narrator picks up "beedi" and a "coin" from the road. The incessant and exhaustive walking in Rotegaon shows the futility of the journey as: "It was walk walk and walk all the way"

Kopargaon is depicted as a town where the narrator learns of Stalin's death. It symbolizes a larger urban area where begging is met with shame, and the narrator has to beg for food after a long, tedious walk, revealing the societal attitude towards those seeking help. The narrator faces difficulties in receiving aid, portraying the challenges of seeking support in a town with higher societal expectations. With the scorching sun "like a hammer" on the head and "itching arse", the physical condition of the narrator deteriorates.

Each city in the poem offers a distinctive perspective on the urban landscape. They serve as stages where the protagonist encounters diverse challenges, highlighting the varying degrees of assistance, indifference, and struggle present in these different urban settings.

### **Style, Symbols and Imagery**

Arun Kolatkar, in his poem "The Turnaround," skillfully employs vivid imagery and a colloquial style to convey the raw essence of urban life and the struggles faced by the marginalized. The use of imagery in the poem is evocative and vivid, painting a stark picture of the narrator's journey through different cities. Lines such as "Kalyan gave me a lump of jaggery to suck" conjure up a tangible, sensory experience, reflecting the small acts of kindness in a harsh environment. The image of "a small village that had a waterfall but no name" creates a sense of mystery and deprivation, emphasizing the anonymity and neglect faced by certain locations.

Further, Kolatkar's use of colloquial language, such as "Bombay made me a beggar," I gave myself a good bath/in a little stream" infuses the poem with an authentic and relatable tone. This colloquial style allows for an immediate connection with the reader, drawing them into the gritty reality of the narrator's experiences. The simple, conversational language brings a sense of intimacy and familiarity, making the hardships faced by the narrator more palpable and relatable

to the audience. The use of abusive language by the old woman not only shows the unfiltered spontaneous depiction, embracing the emotional impact, capturing real life.

The combination of vivid imagery like “one of my chappals gave up the ghost” and colloquial language in "The Turnaround" serves to create a profound and emotionally resonant portrayal of urban life and the challenges faced by the marginalized. The poem is a testament to Kolatkar's command over language and his unique approach to articulating the socio-cultural realities of urban life. The poetic style in "The Turnaround" showcases Kolatkar's ability to infuse everyday language with profound meaning. His employment of stark, unadorned language including abusive words mirrors the harsh realities of poverty, displacement, and marginalization. Kolatkar's stylistic choices with images like “The sun like a hammer on the head./An itching arse” contribute to the creation of a vivid, almost cinematic representation of the narrator's journey through different cities, capturing the reader's attention with its poignancy. The poem's structure and form align with Kolatkar's larger body of work, characterized by brevity and simplicity. The poem adopts a free verse style, allowing for a natural and unfiltered expression of the narrator's experiences. Kolatkar's ability to convey a complex range of emotions and societal issues through simple, concise language is a hallmark of his poetic style.

Kolatkar's diction, style, and thematic concerns in "The Turnaround" not only exemplify his prowess as a poet but also contribute to a deeper understanding of his larger body of work, serving as a poignant reflection of urban life and the experiences of the disenfranchised in the complex societal fabric.

### **Significance of the Title “The Turnaround”**

The title "The Turnaround" in Arun Kolatkar's poem encapsulates a significant shift or reversal in the narrator's life journey. It symbolizes a pivotal moment or series of moments that alters the trajectory of the protagonist's experiences and perspective. The narrator's journey through various cities, from being shaped by the harshness of Bombay to the small acts of kindness in places like Kalyan and the struggle for survival in other towns, reflects a transformative experience. The title symbolizes a critical point where the narrator's circumstances, emotions, and perceptions undergo a substantial change. The term "turnaround" also implies a change in direction, both literally and metaphorically. It denotes a shift from a downward trajectory to a potentially upward or altered path. It signifies a moment of self-realization, resilience, or adaptation in response to life's challenges. This transformation might not be overtly positive, but it denotes a shift in the narrator's journey, character, or understanding



of the world. Further, the title also alludes to a cyclical or repetitive nature of the protagonist's experiences. The journey through various cities represents a cycle of highs and lows, triumphs and hardships, which form an integral part of the narrator's existence.

In the context of Arun Kolatkar's body of work, the theme encapsulated in "The Turnaround" reflects a recurrent motif found in many of his poems. Kolatkar's poetry often navigates themes of transformation, societal critique, and the human experience in various settings. In "Jejuri," the journey to the temple town represents a transformative experience, reflecting a shift in perception or understanding about faith, culture, and tradition. Similarly, in "Kala Ghoda Poems," the urban landscape becomes a backdrop for transformative moments, portraying the complexities of modern city life.

***Check your progress***

1. Describe Arun Kolatkar's early influences and educational background.

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2. What significant shift marked Kolatkar's career?

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3. Discuss the role of urban landscapes in "The Turnaround".

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4. How does Kolatkar's bilingual proficiency contribute to his literary achievements?

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**13.2.2 Faiz Ahmad Faiz:**

In this section we will discuss Faiz Ahmed Faiz as a poet and his contribution to the Progressive Movement. Thereafter, we will study the poem "Shub-e-Azadi."

**Introduction to the Poet**

Faiz Ahmad Faiz, an iconic figure in Urdu literature and an esteemed poet of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, stands as a luminary whose verses resonate with profound insights, social consciousness, and an unwavering commitment to the ideals of justice and freedom. Born on February 13, 1911, in British India, Faiz embarked on a literary journey that transcended geographical and cultural boundaries, leaving an indelible mark on the world of poetry.

Faiz's work reflects the tumultuous times in which he lived, encompassing the struggle for independence, the partition of India, and the subsequent challenges faced by the newly formed nations. His poetry serves as a powerful commentary on the sociopolitical landscape, addressing issues of oppression, inequality, and the human condition. As a prominent member of

the Progressive Writers' Movement, Faiz utilized his poetic prowess to advocate for social justice, portraying the collective aspirations and struggles of the masses. His verses, characterized by a seamless blend of classical Urdu traditions and modernist sensibilities, carry a timeless quality that continues to captivate readers across generations.

Throughout his prolific career, Faiz authored several collections, including "Nuskha-e-Ha-e-Wafa," "Dast-e-Saba," and "Zindan Nama." His enduring legacy extends beyond the realm of literature, making him a symbol of resilience, intellectual prowess, and a beacon for those who seek to confront societal injustices through the power of words. Faiz's poetic brilliance garnered widespread recognition, and he received numerous awards and accolades for his contributions to literature and social causes. In 1962, he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize, and later, in 1976, Faiz received the prestigious Nishan-e-Imtiaz, one of Pakistan's highest civilian honors. His critical acclaim extended beyond national borders, solidifying his reputation as a poet of international stature.

Faiz's personal life, marked by periods of imprisonment and exile due to his political activism, reflected his unwavering commitment to the principles of justice and human rights. Despite facing adversity, he remained steadfast in his pursuit of a just and equitable society. Faiz Ahmad Faiz's legacy endures not only through his poetry but also through the impact of his ideas on social and political spheres. His work has been studied, translated, and celebrated globally, and his influence continues to shape the discourse on literature, politics, and human rights.

### **Faiz Ahmad Faiz and Progressive Writers' Movement**

Faiz Ahmad Faiz was an influential figure in the Progressive Writers' Movement, an intellectual and literary initiative that emerged in the 1930s in British India. This movement aimed to use literature and art as tools for social reform and political awakening. The Progressive Writers' Movement was a literary and intellectual endeavor characterized by writers and poets committed to using literature as a medium for social and political activism. This movement, transcending linguistic and regional boundaries, featured writers from diverse backgrounds, including Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, and Punjabi. A distinctive feature of the Progressive Writers was their deep engagement with societal issues, advocating for social change, and promoting a progressive worldview rooted in socialism, secularism, and anti-imperialism. Their poetry focused on the struggles of the marginalized, addressing themes of exploitation, poverty, and social inequality. Emphasizing realism and relevance, the movement sought to connect with the masses by employing accessible language and direct narratives. The Progressive Writers'

Movement fostered unity in diversity, bringing together writers of various cultural and religious backgrounds who shared a common vision for social reform. Their work fused traditional poetic forms with modernist techniques, creating a dynamic and innovative expression of ideas. Patriotism and a strong sense of nationalism were evident in their writings, reflecting their active participation in the freedom struggle. Key figures such as Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Sahir Ludhianvi, and Ismat Chughtai played pivotal roles, leaving a lasting impact on the literary and cultural landscape of the subcontinent.

Faiz, along with several other notable writers, played a crucial role in this movement, using their pens to address social issues and advocate for change. The Progressive Writers' Movement sought to break away from the literary traditions of the time, focusing on creating works that highlighted the plight of the masses, critiqued societal norms, and called for social justice. Faiz's poetry, in particular, became a powerful voice for the oppressed, speaking against exploitation and advocating for the rights of the common people. Other prominent figures within this movement included Saadat Hasan Manto, Ismat Chughtai, Ahmed Ali, Sajjad Zaheer, and Mulk Raj Anand, among others. Each of these writers brought their unique perspectives and talents to the forefront, collectively contributing to the movement's goals.

#### **13.2.2.1 “Subh-e-Azadi” (“Dawn of Freedom”):**

In this section, we will discuss the poem “Subh-e-Azadi” by Faiz Ahmed Faiz. We will also explore the theme and study the use of symbols and imagery in the poem.

##### **Introduction**

The poem "Subh-e-Azadi" by Faiz Ahmad Faiz is a poignant depiction of the momentous event of the Indian subcontinent's partition into Pakistan and India in August 1947. As a literary masterpiece, it delves into the multifaceted theme of independence, exploring its nuanced effects, aspirations, and the stark realities that emerged in the wake of this significant political transition. In his contemplation of this historical juncture, Faiz captures the essence of independence beyond the mere delineation of borders. His poetic narrative unfolds as a somber reflection, unmasking the hidden realities and the idealistic dreams that once fueled the yearning for a separate state. The poet's vision diverges from the popular narrative of freedom. For Faiz, independence transcends the physical separation of territories; it embodies an ongoing struggle, a relentless journey marked by unyielding challenges and enduring resistance.

In contrast to the prevailing optimism associated with newfound sovereignty, Faiz's perspective harbors a sense of foreboding, forewarning the populace about the imminent

difficulties and impediments awaiting them in the aftermath of liberation. His poetic rendition exposes the underbelly of freedom, unveiling the shattered promises that form the foundation of this newfound dawn. Faiz's verse culminates with a poignant message, urging the continuation of the struggle. He underscores that the apparent destination of freedom is but an illusion, and the promised dawn remains a distant aspiration yet to be achieved. The poet's somber tone and piercing insights stand as a stark departure from the conventional glorification of independence, unraveling the complexities and challenges inherent in the pursuit of liberty.

### **Theme**

The main theme of "Subh-e-Azadi" by Faiz Ahmad Faiz revolves around the complexities and nuances of achieving independence, specifically against the backdrop of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947. Faiz explores not only the jubilation and optimism associated with the dawn of freedom but also delves into the unfulfilled promises, struggles, and harsh realities that persist despite the apparent liberation.

The poem begins with an imagery-rich portrayal of dawn, symbolizing the long-awaited moment of freedom. The breaking dawn represents a new beginning, fostering a sense of optimism and hope. Faiz captures the collective aspiration for a brighter future, emphasizing the positive energy associated with the attainment of independence. Beneath the surface of celebration, Faiz introduces a poignant undertone by alluding to the unfulfilled promises that accompanied the struggle for freedom. The poem suggests a sense of disillusionment, questioning whether the promised dawn has truly arrived or if the anticipated ideals have been compromised. Faiz employs powerful metaphors such as "Jawan Lahu" (youthful blood) to symbolize the passionate and fervent nature of the struggle for independence. However, he also highlights the hurdles and obstacles faced by the populace in achieving their goals. The line "Chale jo yar to daman pe kitne hath pare" conveys the idea of impediments that thwarted the realization of the envisioned independence.

Unlike celebratory narratives of independence, Faiz's poem looks beyond the immediate moment and reflects on the aftermath. The poet contemplates the challenges and difficulties that persist even after achieving political freedom. The poem suggests that true independence is a continual process, extending beyond the political boundaries to address economic, social, and emotional dimensions. In the final four lines, Faiz broadens the scope of the poem by emphasizing the unity of humanity. He negates the conventional notion of "the moment of our freedom" and advocates for a collective journey toward peace. The poet imparts a lesson of

brotherhood and solidarity, suggesting that genuine freedom is attainable only when individuals come together in harmony.

Thus, "Subh-e-Azadi" captures the multifaceted nature of freedom, addressing not only the immediate joyous moment but also the enduring struggles, unmet promises, and the ongoing quest for true and comprehensive independence. The poem invites readers to contemplate the profound and complex journey toward a liberated existence.

### **Tone**

The tone of "Subh-e-Azadi" by Faiz Ahmad Faiz is complex and multifaceted, reflecting a range of emotions and perspectives associated with the theme of independence. Faiz employs a blend of optimism, introspection, and subtle criticism, creating a nuanced tone that resonates throughout the poem. The poem opens with an optimistic and celebratory tone as Faiz vividly describes the breaking dawn, symbolizing the long-awaited moment of freedom. The imagery of dawn is filled with hope and positive energy, capturing the collective sense of joy associated with achieving independence. The tone gradually becomes reflective and contemplative. Faiz introduces a layer of introspection, questioning the nature of freedom. The poet prompts readers to think beyond the immediate joy and contemplate the unfulfilled promises and challenges that persist in the aftermath of independence. The tone takes on a critical and questioning quality as Faiz challenges the conventional narrative of independence. The poem suggests a level of skepticism about whether the promised dawn has truly arrived and whether the anticipated ideals have been compromised. This critical tone adds depth to the overall message of the poem. Despite the subtle criticism, the poem maintains a tone of resilience and determination as Faiz acknowledges the struggles and hurdles faced during the quest for independence but encourages a continued struggle for the true goals of freedom. The poem's tone carries a sense of perseverance in the face of challenges. Finally, the tone becomes humanistic and unity-driven. Faiz emphasizes the importance of brotherhood and solidarity, steering the poem toward a tone of collective responsibility for achieving genuine freedom. The poet imparts a lesson of peace and unity, contributing to a tone that transcends individual struggles for a broader societal good.

Thus, the tone of "Subh-e-Azadi" is a rich amalgamation of celebration, introspection, criticism, resilience, and humanistic ideals. Faiz Ahmad Faiz navigates through these tones to deliver a layered and nuanced exploration of independence and the ongoing quest for true freedom.

## **Style**

Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poetic style in "Subh-e-Azadi" is characterized by lyrical eloquence, vivid imagery, and a profound engagement with socio-political themes. The diction employed by Faiz is both elevated and poetic, evident in phrases like "ravished with freedom," and "transparent light." The poem unfolds with a seamless flow, facilitated by enjambment, mirroring the continuous and ongoing nature of the struggle for freedom. Faiz strategically uses repetition, as seen in phrases like "this is not that Dawn" and "come away from this false light," to emphasize his urgent message and underscore the stark contrasts between anticipated ideals and compromised realities.

The symbol of the "night's vagrant wave" conveys the tumultuous and unpredictable nature of the journey towards independence, emphasizing the challenges faced. The poem also features mythical allusions, such as the Sirens, adding complexity to the diction and contributing to its allegorical nature. The overall tone is both forward-looking and inspirational, encapsulated in the call to action at the poem's conclusion, urging readers to "search for that promised dawn." The use of alliteration, as in "tarnished rays" and "transparent light," adds a musical quality to the poem, enhancing its aesthetic appeal. Additionally, Faiz employs paradoxes, such as the "terrible rampant lie," to convey the disillusionment inherent in the achieved freedom.

## **Images and Symbols**

In "Subh-e-Azadi," Faiz Ahmad Faiz exhibits a masterful command of language and imagery, employing powerful symbols to craft layers of meaning that resonate deeply. The central symbol of the "Dawn" represents the collective hope for political independence, and Faiz's choice of descriptors like "tarnished rays" and "night-smudged light" paints a vivid picture of the disillusionment that follows the actualization of this freedom. The metaphor of "muslims of transparent light" encapsulates both fragility and purity, enriching the symbolic representation of the envisioned dawn. The "night's vagrant wave" becomes a compelling image, symbolizing the unpredictable and tumultuous nature of the struggle for freedom. Faiz uses the Sirens with their "beguiling arms" and "bare bodies" as a potent metaphor for distractions that divert individuals from the pursuit of genuine freedom. The "lantern by the road" becomes a beacon of guidance, heightening the anticipation and the perpetual quest for the promised dawn. The repetition of the refrain "this is not that Dawn" reinforces the symbolic contrast between the envisioned and compromised realities, creating a rhythmic resonance of disappointment. The powerful image of night weighing down on the people conveys the enduring burden of past

struggles, solidifying the poem's overarching theme. Faiz's meticulous crafting of these images and symbols in "Subh-e-Azadi" transforms the poem into a poignant and timeless commentary on the complexities of India's independence. The image of "broken promises" serves as a powerful metaphor, emphasizing the disparities between the anticipated freedom and the compromised reality. The "apparent destination" and the "promised dawn" become symbols of illusory achievements, reinforcing Faiz's skepticism about the true nature of political independence. The metaphorical use of "terrible rampant lie" unveils a harsh critique, suggesting the pervasive deception surrounding the proclaimed freedom. The image of "hands tugging at our sleeves" evokes a sense of urgency and external pressures, symbolizing the various forces attempting to influence the trajectory of the struggle. Additionally, the "search for that promised Dawn" becomes an enduring image of resilience and determination, showcasing the perpetual quest for genuine freedom despite setbacks.

***Check your progress***

1. How did Faiz's personal life reflect his commitment to his principles?

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2. How did Faiz's poetry contribute to the goals of the Progressive Writers' Movement?

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3. What historical event does "Subh-e-Azadi" depict, and what is Faiz's perspective on it?

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4. Identify and explain symbols and imagery used in "Subh-e-Azadi".

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**13.2.3 Gurujada Appa Rao:**

In this section, you will be introduced to the poet Gurujada Appa Rao and his contributions to modernism in Telugu poetry. Later, you will study his poem "Love thy Country."

**Introduction**

Gurajada Venkata Apparao, affectionately known as Gurajada, stands as a luminary figure in the rich tapestry of Telugu literature and cultural reform during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Born on either November 30, 1861, or September 21, 1862 (the latter being the preferred date by his descendants), Gurajada's life journey unfolded against the backdrop of a changing society, colonial India, and the princely state of Vizianagaram. Hailing from a Telugu Brahmin family, Gurajada's early life was marked by familial roots in the Kalinga region, and his father, Venkata Rama Dasu, held significant positions in the Vizianagaram Samsthanam.

Gurajada's education, which commenced in Cheepurupalli and continued in Vizianagaram, faced financial challenges following his father's untimely death. Despite the hardships, he emerged as a scholar, completing his matriculation in 1882 and obtaining an F.A. in 1884. Gurajada's association with the ruling family of Vizianagaram became a defining aspect of his adult life. His relationship with Maharajah Pusapati Ananda Gajapati Raju and later, as a trusted advisor to Maharani Appala Kondamamba, not only shaped his personal trajectory but also influenced his perspectives on societal issues. In the realm of literature, Gurajada's contributions were revolutionary. His seminal work, the play *Kanyasulkam* (1892), challenged societal norms and critiqued the deplorable condition of widows in traditional Brahmin families. The play, considered a masterpiece, was the first Telugu drama written in spoken dialect, showcasing Gurajada's commitment to addressing social inequalities and moral standards.

Beyond the stage, Gurajada made significant strides in poetry and literary activism. His English poems, including "Sarangadhara," displayed linguistic versatility. However, it was his transition to Telugu, encouraged by contemporaries like Sambhu Chandra Mukherji and Gundukurti Venkata Ramanayya, that marked a turning point in his literary career. Gurajada's tireless efforts extended to social reform and education. His involvement in the Voluntary Service Corps, membership in debating clubs, and advocacy for curriculum reform in high schools underscored his commitment to broader societal betterment. The later years of Gurajada's life saw continued literary output, including the revised edition of *Kanyasulkam* in 1909, and the composition of the renowned Telugu patriotic song "Desamunu Preminchumanna" in 1910. Despite health challenges and financial hardships, Gurajada's legacy persisted through his literary achievements and commitment to societal upliftment. Gurajada Venkata Apparao's influence transcended his lifetime. He remains a revered figure in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh, with streets, statues, and cultural institutions bearing his name. His enduring impact on Telugu literature, coupled with his unwavering dedication to social reform, cements Gurajada's place as a pioneer whose contributions continue to resonate in the cultural and literary heritage of undivided Andhra Pradesh.

### **Gurajada Venkata Appa Rao and Modernism in Telugu Literature**

Gurajada Venkata Appa Rao, a visionary in the realm of Telugu literature, is widely recognized as a trailblazer of modernism, particularly for his groundbreaking work in the development of modern Telugu drama. Born during a time when the British Empire strengthened its influence in India, Gurajada witnessed the influx of English and Italian dramatic troupes



touring the subcontinent, presenting works, notably those of Shakespeare, in cities like Bombay and Madras. The advent of modern drama in India had its roots in the eighteenth century, and pioneers like Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo emerged as the first Indian dramatists in English. Simultaneously, secular play-writing in regional languages, such as Bengali and Marathi, gained momentum following the establishment of universities in cities like Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras in the mid-1850s.

Gurujada Venkata Appa Rao's literary contributions, particularly his stance on the language and form of Telugu literature, marked a departure from traditional norms. While acknowledging Telugu as a language of sweetness, culture, and politeness, he advocated for a departure from Sanskrit elements and archaic grammatical structures that had dominated medieval Telugu. His critique of the Telugu literary dialect highlighted the need for a more accessible and contemporary form of expression, free from the constraints of outdated linguistic conventions. Gurujada was not merely a linguistic innovator but also a social reformer with a keen understanding of the changing dynamics in Telugu society. His magnum opus, *Kanyasulkam*, published in 1897, stands as a landmark in Telugu literature, representing a critical juncture when society grappled with the clash between tradition and colonial modernity. This seminal work addressed pressing social issues, notably the system of bride-price and the exploitative practice of selling young girls as brides to elderly men. The impact of *Kanyasulkam* extends beyond its thematic exploration; it played a pivotal role in shaping the modern sensibility of Telugu literature. Gurujada's work embodies the spirit of the time, marked by a self-reflexive examination of socio-cultural institutions, a departure from orthodoxy, language reform, a quest for new literary forms, and the growing significance of prose as a means of disseminating ideas and ideologies.

#### **13.2.3.1 “Love Thy Country”:**

In this section, will study the poem “Love Thy Country” and examine the themes, symbols, and imagery in the poem.

##### **Themes**

In the poem, the themes and style are aligned with a call to action for individuals to actively contribute to the well-being and progress of their country and the world at large. The repeated emphasis on love for the country is not merely a sentimental expression but a call to engage in practical and meaningful actions. The poet discourages idle talk and encourages thoughtful deeds that contribute to national prosperity.

The association between wealth and health suggests a holistic approach to national development, highlighting the interdependence of economic well-being and the health of the populace. The poem's advocacy for education as a cornerstone for progress underscores the importance of knowledge in fostering societal advancement. The poet's directive to move beyond empty claims of patriotism to tangible acts of welfare reflects a desire for practical, positive change. The poem employs a straightforward and commanding style, using imperatives and repetition to drive home the message.

In the final stanza, the poem expands its scope to a global perspective, advocating for unity among nations and religions for the greater cause of world peace and progress. This underscores a vision of interconnections and collaboration, suggesting that progress and well-being are not isolated endeavors but require collective efforts on a global scale.

Overall, the poem serves as a motivational piece urging individuals to translate their love for their country into concrete actions, contributing not only to national development but also to the broader goal of global harmony and progress.

### **Style**

The poem exhibits a straightforward and didactic style with clear, concise language. The diction is simple yet meaningful, urging the people to understand the real meaning of Patriotism. The poet employs imperative statements such as "Love the country," "Stop the Useless talk," and "Learn all kinds of Education," creating a sense of direct instruction and encouragement for the reader to take action. The use of short, active verbal phrases contributes to the motivational tone of the poem. The repetition of phrases like "Raise the Goodness" and "Build a great National Wealth" serves to emphasize key concepts, reinforcing the importance of positive actions and contributions to the nation.

The poet uses vivid imagery, particularly in phrases like "Stride in the way leading to Wealth and Health of Nation," which creates a visual representation of progress and prosperity. The style is also characterized by a rhythmic flow, created by the use of parallelism and balanced structures in the lines. This rhythmic quality enhances the motivational and uplifting nature of the poem, making it suitable for a motivational speech or a call to action.

In terms of diction and style, the poem strikes a balance between simplicity and impact, effectively conveying its themes of patriotism, individual responsibility, and global cooperation in a manner that resonates with a diverse audience.

## **Symbols and Images**

The central theme revolves around patriotism, which is not just an abstract love for the country, but translates into efforts and action towards its progress and development. The use of phrases like "Love the country" and "Raise the Goodness" suggests a call to action, encouraging readers to express their love for their nation through positive and constructive deeds. The imagery of "Stride in the way leading to Wealth and Health of Nation" invokes a sense of progress and prosperity so that the well-being of individuals to the overall health of the country.

The emphasis on 'good food' and a 'healthy appearance' further underscores the importance of individual well-being in contributing to the nation's strength. The phrase "Learn all kinds of Educations, Build a great National Wealth" suggests that education is seen as a key element in fostering national prosperity. The poet discourages mere verbal expressions of patriotism, urging individuals to engage in tangible acts for the welfare of their countrymen. The phrase "take up a welfare act for your Countrymen and show the world the good results" emphasizes the need for practical, positive contributions.

The concluding lines about nations and religions walking hand in hand for world peace and progress evoke a sense of unity and global cooperation. This imagery of nations as "brothers" implies a shared responsibility for creating a harmonious and progressive world.

To conclude, the poem employs a motivational and instructional tone, using everyday images and symbols to convey the importance of personal responsibility, education, and practical actions in contributing to the well-being and progress of both the individual and the nation.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Who was Gurujada Venkata Appa Rao, and what is his significance in Telugu literature?

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2. What themes are emphasized in "Love Thy Country"?

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3. Describe the style and tone of "Love Thy Country".

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4. How did Gurajada's views on language and form contribute to modernism in Telugu literature?

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### 13.3 Learning Outcomes

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At the end of this Unit, you should have an idea about the greatness of Arun Kolatkar, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Gurujada Appa Rao through a comparative study of their poems, “The Turnaround,” “Shub-e-Azadi,” and “Love Thy Country,” respectively.

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### 13.4 Glossary

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**Bhakri:** A type of unleavened Indian bread, often associated with rural or traditional settings.

**Chappal:** Indian term for a sandal or slipper, symbolizing wear and tear and the challenges faced during the journey.

**Hands Tugging at Our Sleeves:** Symbolizes external pressures and influences on the struggle for freedom.

**Hejira:** A migration or journey, often undertaken for religious reasons; in the context of the poem, it refers to the narrator's journey through various towns.

**Kopargaon:** A town mentioned in the poem, representing a stage in the narrator's travels and experiences.

**Lantern by the Road:** Symbolizes guidance and the perpetual quest for the promised dawn.

**Rotegaon:** A town mentioned in the poem, symbolizing a specific phase in the narrator's journey.

**Sirens:** Metaphorical figures representing distractions and temptations diverting from the pursuit of freedom.

**Stream:** Represents a natural element in the narrator's journey, offering a cleansing experience and perhaps a moment of reflection.

**Tukaram:** Likely a reference to Saint Tukaram, a 17th-century Marathi poet and saint, symbolizing a valuable possession.

**Useless Talk:** Refers to meaningless or unproductive discussions, discouraged in the poem in favor of taking positive actions.

**Wealth and Health of Nation:** A recurring theme in the poem, symbolizing the overall prosperity and well-being of a nation.

**Stride:** A metaphorical term in the poem, suggesting purposeful and determined progress towards national prosperity.

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## 13.5 Sample Questions

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### 13.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. What does the city of Bombay symbolize in Kolatkar's poem "The Turnaround"?
  - (a) Prosperity
  - (b) Transformation
  - (c) Poverty
  - (d) Joy
2. In the poem, what is the significance of the narrator selling his Tukaram in Nashik?
  - (a) Spiritual enlightenment
  - (b) Purchase of food
  - (c) Journey continuation
  - (d) Loss of identity
3. What does the metaphor "chappal gave up the ghost" suggest in the poem?
  - (a) The narrator's footwear became a ghost
  - (b) The worn-out state of the footwear
  - (c) A supernatural event on the journey
  - (d) The narrator encountered a ghost.
4. How does the stream in the poem contribute to the narrator's journey?
  - (a) It symbolizes an obstacle
  - (b) It represents a physical boundary
  - (c) It serves as a space for purification and renewal
  - (d) It marks the end of the journey
5. In the context of the poem, what does the "night's vagrant wave" symbolize?
  - (a) A peaceful transition to freedom
  - (b) The unpredictable and tumultuous nature of the struggle
  - (c) A moment of clarity in the darkness
  - (d) The inevitable triumph of the oppressed
6. What does the image of "broken promises" signify in Faiz's critique in "Subh-e-Azadi"?
  - (a) Unfulfilled aspirations of the people
  - (b) Deceptive nature of political leaders
  - (c) Failed attempts at reconciliation

- (d) A narrative of shattered dreams
7. What is the significance of the metaphor "terrible rampant lie" in the poem?
- (a) A hopeful declaration for the future
  - (b) A critique of political deception and propaganda
  - (c) A symbol of enduring truth
  - (d) An expression of unwavering optimism in the face of challenges
8. The lines "Like Brothers, the nations and religions should walk hand in hand" advocate for:
- (a) Cultural isolation
  - (b) Global unity and cooperation
  - (c) Religious intolerance
  - (d) Nationalistic pride
9. According to the poem, what is the key to the Wealth and Health of the Nation?
- (a) Political stability
  - (b) Technological innovation
  - (c) Education and a healthy lifestyle
  - (d) Natural resources
10. In the poem "Love the Country," what central theme is emphasized in the lines "raise the Goodness"?
- (a) National pride
  - (b) Moral integrity
  - (c) Economic prosperity
  - (d) Cultural diversity

### 13.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. How does the depiction of various towns, including Bombay, Kalyan, and Nashik, contribute to the overarching themes in "The Turnaround"?
2. Briefly explain the symbolic meaning behind the worn-out chappal in the poem. How does it represent a significant aspect of the narrator's journey?
3. How does Faiz Ahmad Faiz use the metaphor "terrible rampant lie" to convey his critique of the post-independence reality in "Subh-e-Azadi"?
4. What are the thematic implications of the lantern by the road as a symbol of guidance in the poem. How does this image contribute to the overall narrative and tone of "Subh-e-Azadi"?

5. How does the poet emphasize the connection between individual health and the progress of the country?

### 13.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the socio-cultural aspects highlighted during the narrator's stay in Rotegaon. How does this episode contribute to the overall societal critique in "The Turnaround"?
2. Discuss the thematic significance of the refrain "this is not that Dawn" in Faiz's poem. How does this repetition contribute to the poem's structure and emotional impact?
3. Discuss the poet's perspective on patriotism and its manifestation in actions for the welfare of the country.

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## 13.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Ahmed, Faiz. *The Colours of My Heart: Selected Poems*. Penguin Random House India, 2017.
2. Dubrow, Jennifer. "The aesthetics of the fragment: Progressivism and literary modernism in the work of the All-India Progressive Writers' Association." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 55.5 (2019): 589-601.
3. Meharotra A.K. 2009, "Introduction," *Boatride and Other Poems*. Mumbai: Pras Prakashan, 2009. Print.
4. Nerlekar, Anjali. *Bombay Modern: Arun Kolatkar and Bilingual Literary Culture*. Vol. 23. Northwestern University Press, 2016.
5. Suryanarayana, Peri (1 January 1968). *The life and greatness of Sri Gurajada Venkata Apparao*. Vignana Sahiti Publications.

## **Unit - 14:**

**(a) Habba Khatoon: “Lol of the lonely Pine”**

**(b) Amir Khusrau: “Just by Casting a glance”**

**(c) Tagore: “Give me Strength”**

### **Structure**

**14.0** Introduction

**14.1** Objectives

**14.2** Comparative Poetry

**14.2.1** “Give Me Strength”

**14.2.1.1** Rabindranath Tagore

**14.2.1.2** Appreciation of the poem

**14.2.1.3** Significance of the title

**14.2.1.4** Poetic devices

**14.2.2** “Lol of the Lonely Pine”

**14.2.2.1** Habba Khatoon

**14.2.2.2** Appreciation of the poem

**14.2.2.3** Significance of the title of the poem

**14.2.2.4** Poetic devices

**14.2.3** “Just by Casting a Glance”

**14.2.3.1** Amir Khusro

**14.2.3.2** Appreciation of the poem

**14.2.3.3** Significance of the title of the poem

**14.2.3.4** Poetic devices

**14.2.4** Comparative Assessment of the poetic genius of Rabindranath Tagore, Habba Khatoon, and Amir Khusro

**14.2.5** Thematic Comparison of Rabindranath Tagore’s poem “Give Me Strength”, Habba Khatoon’s “Lol of the Lonely Pine”, and Amir Khusro’s “Just by Casting a Glance”

**14.2.6** Symbolism/Imagery in Rabindranath Tagore’s poem “Give Me Strength”, Habba Khatoon’s “Lol of the Lonely Pine”, and Amir Khusro’s “Just by Casting a Glance”

**14.3** Learning Outcomes

**14.4** Glossary

**14.5** Sample Questions

**14.6** Suggested Learning Resources



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## 14.0 Introduction

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This Unit attempts to analyze Rabindranath Tagore's poem *Give Me Strength*, Habba Khatoon's *Lol of the Lonely Pine* and Amir Khusro's *Just by Casting a Glance*. These three poets are placed in their respective milieu and their poetic genius is evaluated. The above mentioned poems are critically appreciated. The thematic comparison of these poems is undertaken. Symbolism and imagery employed in these poems are juxtaposed. The various poetic devices employed are also taken into consideration.

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## 14.1 Objectives

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The Objectives of this Unit are to:

- critically appreciate Rabindranath Tagore's poem *Give Me Strength*, Habba Khatoon's *Lol of the Lonely Pine* and Amir Khusro's *Just by Casting a Glance*
- evaluate the poetic devices employed in the above mentioned poems
- understand the poetic genius of Rabindranath Tagore, Habba Khatoon and Amir Khusro and make a comparative assessment
- make a thematic comparison of these poems
- examine the use of imagery in these poems

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## 14.2 Comparative Poetry

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### 14.2.1 "Give Me Strength":

Let us first read the prescribed poem as given below:

This is my prayer to thee, my lord --- strike,  
strike at the root of penury in my heart.  
Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.  
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.  
Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend  
my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.  
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy  
will with love.

Rabindranath Tagore

#### **14.2.1.1 Rabindranath Tagore:**

Rabindranath Tagore was born in 1861 in a reputed family. His mother passed away when he was young. His father used to travel a lot. So he was brought up by servants. His family was involved in the Bengal Renaissance. So he actively participated in the Renaissance movement at a young age.

Rabindranath Tagore was sent to a school in England for education. But he had no interest in formal education. He dropped out of school and college and learned Shakespeare's works on his own. Then he came back to India and got married to Mrinalini Devi.

Tagore composed the National Anthem of India. He was a mystic poet. He was also a dramatist, novelist and a painter. He gave lectures in Japan and USA. People of Western countries appreciated his works. He was the first non-European to receive a Nobel Prize in Literature. His 'Amar Shonar Bangla' became the National Anthem of Bangladesh. One of his works was taken up as National Anthem of Sri Lanka.

Tagore was inspired by Kalidasa's poetry. His siblings, some of them poets and philosophers also influenced him. He was taught Literature, History, Arts, Maths etc. by his siblings. Later, Tagore established an experimental school in Santiniketan in 1901. The school followed Guru-Shishya model of teaching. Classes were engaged under the trees. He also toured several countries to popularize his ideology.

Tagore wrote short stories such as Kabuliwala, Kshudita Pashan, Atotju, Haimanti, Musalmanir, Golpo. He mostly criticized Hindu marriages and customs in his stories. He wrote novels like Noukadubi, Gora, Chaturanga, Ghare Baire and Jogajog. His novels depict the dangers of nationalism and other social evils. He wrote many plays. One of his famous play was Valmiki Pratibha which dealt with the life of the dacoit Valmiki. Gitanjali was one of the famous poems written by him. Tagore turned to drawing and painting at the age of sixty. Exhibitions in Europe displayed his paintings due to their uniqueness.

Tagore rejected nationalism but desired Indian independence. He criticized colonialism through his songs. He received Knighthood from Britishers in 1915. But he renounced it because of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. Most of Tagore's works were adopted into films and TV serials.

Tagore was ill for the last four years of his life. He went into coma in 1937 and died on 7 August 1941.

***Check your progress***

1) Why did Santiniketan became famous?

---

2) How did Tagore learn literature and art?

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3) Why did Tagore renounce Knighthood conferred on him by the Britishers?

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**14.2.1.2 Appreciation of the poem:**

Rabindranath Tagore's *Give Me Strength* is an inspirational poem. The poem is a prayer to God. The poet asks God to provide him strength to face the problems in life. The poem is short. The poet prays to God to strike at the core of his heart and remove ignorance. He requests God to provide him with strength to sustain the joys and sorrows of life with same spirit. He wants to become stoic. He intends to serve mankind with sincerity and humility. He wishes to help the needy and never bow before rude and disrespectful authority. He also wishes that he should rise above trivial things and surrender himself to the will of God.

***Check your progress***

1) Why did Tagore ask God to provide him?

---

2) How does Tagore intend to serve mankind?

---

3) What does Tagore wish for?

---

**14.2.1.3 Significance of the title:**

In the poem *Give Me Strength*, Tagore aims at spiritual strength. He does not refer to material poverty. He wishes not to have any spiritual weakness in his heart. So he prays to God

to remove the spiritual weakness from his heart. There should be no space for it in his life. It will enable him to serve the poor selflessly.

Human relationship with God is incomplete without selflessness. One should surrender completely to the will of God. This is a significant requirement to the acceptance of God as a Supreme Being. So the poet prays to God to elevate him spiritually and give him enough courage to face this world.

***Check your progress***

1) What does Tagore aim at?

---

2) How is the title of the poem significant?

---

3) Why does the poet wish not to have spiritual weakness?

---

**14.2.1.4 Poetic devices:**

Figures of speech are used effectively in the poem. Repetition is used in the poem for enhancing poetic effect. The word or a phrase is repeated for emphasis. The words 'me', 'my' and 'to' are repeated in the poem to point out the significance of the self. The phrase 'give me the strength' is repeated in all the lines, except the first two, which indicates that the poem is a prayer to God. Alliteration is used in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh line of the poem.

Anaphora is used at the beginning of some consecutive lines. For instance, the word 'give' is repeated. 'Anadiplosis' is found in two or more consecutive lines. The word 'strike' joins the lines. Oxymoron is used in the third line of the poem. The words 'joys' and 'sorrows' contrast each other.

The rhyming scheme of the poem is ab, ab. Trochaic pentameter and rondeau rhyme is used. The poem is written in tercets and is in free verse.

***Check your progress***

1. What is the form and structure of the poem?

---

2. Why is the phrase 'give me strength' repeated in all the lines?

---

3. How does the poet use 'alliteration' effectively in the poem?

---

#### 14.2.2 "Lol of the Lonely Pine":

Let us first read the prescribed poem by Habba Khatoon as given below:

The one who dazzles –have you seen that one?  
Upon him look!  
A sleepless stream in search of him I run,  
A restless brook.  
In far off woods, a lonely pine I stood  
Till he appeared,  
My woodcutter, and came to cut the wood.  
His fire I feared,  
Yet though he burn my logs, behold I shine,  
My ashes wine.

---- Habba Khatoon

##### 14.2.2.1 Habba Khatoon:

Habba Khatoon was a legendary Kashmiri women poet of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She was born in Chandrarhar, Pampore in Pulwama. She was very beautiful; hence named Zoon which means the Moon. She acquired education from a village Moulvi. She was married to a peasant when she was quite young. Her in-laws could not realize her poetic genius. It led to constant conflicts which turned abusive and ultimately led to her divorce. Thus she got separated from her husband and went to her parents' home. She could not recover from this pain and took to singing. She used to wander in the fields in the valley and sing songs of love and separation. Her melodious voice and beauty impressed Prince Yusuf Shah Chak who fell in love with her. Yusuf Shah married her and she was given the title of Habba Khatoon. Yusuf Khan became the ruler of Kashmir and lived happily with her for four years. Then Mughal Emperor imprisoned Yusuf Shah Chak and then he never saw Habba again.

Habba got separated from her husband again. Destiny gave her a severe blow for the second time. She led her life in pain. Then she composed sad lyrics while wandering in the different villages.

***Check your progress***

1. Why was Habba Khatoon called ‘Zoon’?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Who gave Zoon the title ‘Habba Khatoon’?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How was Habba Khatoon separated from Yusuf Shah Chak?

\_\_\_\_\_

**14.2.2.2 Appreciation of the poem:**

*Lol of the Lonely Pine* is a romantic lyric. It deals with Habba Khatoon’s yearning for her beloved. Habba Khatoon describes her lover as a charming young man. She is in search of him. She desperately wants to meet him. She expresses that she could not sleep peacefully. His thoughts torment her and she is restless. She wanders alone in the forests. She hopes to meet her lover in the forests. Her lover is a woodcutter who appeared in the forest later. She fears that he will burn the wood. She speaks metaphorically here. The fire that she refers to, is perhaps the woodcutter’s desire. The ‘logs’ is a reference to her body. She is ready to be burnt. She agrees to satisfy his desire. She expresses that their communion would in fact make her more beautiful. The poem reveals Habba Khatoon’s desire to meet her beloved. It reveals that long separation has caused a burning desire in her.

***Check your progress***

1. What is the poem about?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why could not the lady sleep peacefully?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Who is the woodcutter?

\_\_\_\_\_

**14.2.2.3 Significance of the title of the poem:**

The title of the poem *Lol of the Lonely Pine* is quite significant. The poem is a lyric of a lonely lady. The lady is separated from her lover. She is youthful and beautiful but fate has something else in store for her. She could not enjoy the company of her lover. The pain of sorrow caused by separation is too much for her. The separation had made her alone. She yearns to meet her lover. His thoughts trouble her and she finds it difficult to live without him. She could not

sleep at night. She becomes restless and desires union with her lover. In fact, she wanders in the forest alone in the hope of meeting his lover. She sings songs of love, pain and separation. Thus, the title of the poem indicates the lady's pain at the separation from her lover. It also reveals her desire for communion.

***Check your progress***

1. How is the title of the poem relevant to its theme?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why is the lady restless?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why does the lady wander alone in the forest?

\_\_\_\_\_

**14.2.2.4 Poetic devices:**

Iambic foot is used in the poem. Unstressed syllable is followed by the stressed syllable. Pentameter is found in each line followed by diameter in the alternate lines. The rhyme scheme of the poem is ab ab cd cd ee. The last two lines in the poem form a heroic couplet and the final words of the lines rhyme with each other. The word 'shine' rhymes with 'wine' ending on an emotional note. Masculine rhyme is used as the rhyme falls on the final stressed syllable at the end of the line.

Figures of speech are used by the poet which enhances artistic effect. Repetition is used in the first line; the word 'one' is repeated to emphasize the point that the search was for a particular person close to that lady. Inversion is used in the second line and the ninth line. Alliteration is used in the third line. The sound 's' is repeated which creates musical effect. Alliteration is also used in the seventh and eighth line. Personification is used in the third line. The stream is ascribed a human quality. It is referred to as being sleepless. Thus, figures of speech are used to a greater effect in this poem that lends charm to it.

***Check your progress***

1. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Which rhyme is used in the poem?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Point out instances of alliteration in the poem.

---

### 14.2.3 “Just by Casting a Glance”:

Let us first read the prescribed poem by Amir Khusro as given below:

You've taken away my looks, my identity, by just a glance.  
You've taken away my looks, my identity, by just a glance.  
By making me drink the wine of love-potion,  
You've intoxicated me by just a glance;  
My fair, delicate wrists with green bangles in them,  
Have been held tightly by you with just a glance.  
I give my life to you, Oh my cloth-dyer,  
You've dyed me in yourself, by just a glance.  
I give my whole life to you, Oh, Nijam,  
You've made me your bride, by just a glance.  
You've taken away my looks, my identity, by just a glance.

--- Amir Khusro

#### 14.2.3.1 Amir Khusro:

Amir Khusro was a prominent personality of medieval India. He was born in Patiyali, Uttar Pradesh in 1253. His father was Turkish and mother, an Indian. His father died when he was young. So he lived with his maternal grandparents. His grandfather was an attendance master of soldiers at the palace of Emperor Ghayasuddin Balban. Khusro used to visit court with his grandfather and thus became acquainted with famous literary figures. He took interest in poetry and music. He got training in horse riding and martial arts. Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, a Sufi saint was his spiritual master.

Amir Khusro is credited with the composition of Khayal of North Indian classical music called Hindustani. He transformed raga Dhrupad mixing Persian tunes in it. He composed Qawwali on the lines of Bhajans. He used Bhojpuri and Persian, popularly called Hindvi in his poetry. Many of his poems are used today by Ghazal singers.

Khusro was a royal poet during the regime of Sultan Alauddin. Alauddin was morally upright and banned intoxicants. Khusro supported him in this movement. He made all people, irrespective of caste and class, his disciples. He inspired people to lead a good life devoid of all evils. He started regular prayers for all and even the rich and those holding positions attended



those prayers. People turned towards mysticism and devotedness. Khusro's teachings were so effective that people abstained from evils and focused on spirituality and ethics.

Amir Khusro also contributed to the Hindu-Muslim unity. He wrote in Hindvi language which appealed to many people. In 1310, Khusro became a disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, a Sufi saint. Khusro was a prolific poet. He introduced the *ghazal*, a form of poetry in India. He was the first to compose *paheli*. He introduced *khayal* and *tarana* styles and was a pioneer in Hindustani music who combined Persian and Arabic elements. Khusro used eleven metrical patterns. He wrote Ghazal, Masnavi, Qata, Rubai, Do-Beti and Tarkibhand. He had command over Turkish, Persian, Arabic, Hindi and Sanskrit. His blend of Persian-Hindi as suggested by his master Hazrat Nizamuddin was constructed to foster a bond between Hindus and Muslims. Khusro was a favourite disciple of Sufi saint, Hazrat Nizamuddin. He died six months after the death of Hazrat Nizamuddin and lies buried next to the grave of his master.

### ***Check your progress***

1. How did Amir Khusro get interested in music and arts ?

---

2. What is Amir Khusro's contribution to Indian music?

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3. What was the relationship between Amir Khusro and Hazrat Nizamuddin?

---

### **14.2.3.2 Appreciation of the poem:**

The poem reflects the relationship between the poet and his preceptor. The poet compares his preceptor to his beloved. The poet says that the beloved has subsumed his looks and even his identity by just looking at him slightly. The beloved has made him drink the elixir of love. He has compelled him to drink the magical drink that made him emotionally excited.

The poet tells her that her hands are fair and delicate with green bangles worn. The hand has been held firmly by the lover. This state has been induced by the lover. The poet refers to his lover as cloth-dyer who has immersed the poet in his love. The poet is ready to dedicate entire life to the lover. The poet dedicates some of the lines of the poem to his preceptor, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. The poet calls his preceptor as a groom whereas he refers to himself as his bride. It was just a deadly look of his preceptor that the poet was induced into a trance. He fell in love with his preceptor just as the husband would behave with his wife. He dedicated his entire life to his preceptor as the wife would dedicate herself completely to her husband. The poet

would serve his preceptor just as the dutiful wife would commit to her husband. The power of the sight of the preceptor was so strong that the poet surrendered himself to him. This is repeatedly emphasized in the poem.

***Check your progress***

1. What is the poem about?

---

2. What has the poet compared his preceptor to?

---

3. What does the poet call his preceptor?

---

**14.2.3.3 Significance of the title of the poem:**

The title of the poem suggests the core theme of the poem. It indicates the magnetic charm of the groom. The groom implied is the mentor of the poet. The poet mentions that his preceptor, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya looked at him and took away his looks as well as his identity. He has made him immerse in love thoroughly. The love has completely overpowered him. The poet surrendered himself completely to his preceptor. He has dedicated his entire life to him. He devoted completely to his preceptor. The charm and spirituality of the preceptor was irresistible. It made the poet felt extremely attached to him. He was in awe of him and held him in great reverence. He decided to follow the teachings of his preceptor. He developed a strong emotional bond with him. The spiritual connection between them was the means to attain the mode of salvation. The poet served his preceptor with absolute dedication. He submerged his identity with that of his mentor. Thus, the title of the poem is suggestive of the fact that the poet has been hypnotized by his teacher. The poet feels that he should enter into a spiritual communion with his mentor.

***Check your progress***

1. How is the title of the poem significant?

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2. Who is the poet's preceptor/mentor?

---

3. How has the mentor of the poet attracted him?

---

#### 14.2.3.4 Poetic devices:

The poem consists of eleven lines. Most of the words in the poem are monosyllabic. Anapaestic foot is mostly followed in the poem. The first, second and the third line is hexameter while the rest of the lines are tetrametre. The rhyming scheme of the poem is aaba cada eaa. The first, second and the last line of the poem is repeated to emphasize that the poet has been infatuated by his mentor. All the words in the lines are repeated for greater effect. The part of the line 'I give my life to you' is repeated in the seventh and ninth line of the poem where the poet surrenders himself to his preceptor and refers to him as a 'cloth-dyer' and 'Nijam'. Alliteration is used in the third line where the sound 'm' is repeated. The word 'my' is repeated in the seventh line. Alliteration is also used in the tenth line of the poem. Metaphor is used in the seventh and ninth line of the poem. The preceptor is referred as 'cloth-dyer' and 'Nijam' respectively.

#### *Check your progress*

1. What is the rhyming scheme of the poem?

---

2. Why repetition is used in the poem?

---

3. How does the poet use metaphor in the poem?

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#### 14.2.4 Comparative Assessment of the poetic genius of Rabindranath Tagore, Habba Khatoon, and Amir Khusro:

Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Habba Khatoon is a Kashmiri poet of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and Amir Khusro was a poet of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Tagore and Khusro are male poets but speak about the condition of women in their times. Tagore wrote in the common dialects of the local people. He sought to find the sources of calmness of mind and spirit. Most of the themes of his poems were related to human and divine love. He even translated most of his Bengali poems into English. W.B. Yeats wrote an introduction to his collection of poems *Gitanjali* which was published in 1912. Ezra Pound praised his poetry and he was awarded Nobel Prize for it. Tagore experimented with poetic forms but it got lost in translations.

Tagore uses myths, legends and ancient tales in his poetry. But he lends universal significance to it and conveys ideas of peace, joy, beauty, love and harmony. He was also influenced by Vaishav poetry. *Gitanjali* shows its impact as it deals with human desire for union

with God. Tagore is referred to as “Shelley” of India as he depicts nature in his poetry. According to him, human beings and nature are intertwined. He finds inspiration and spirituality in nature. He personified the objects of nature and the phenomena of nature. He used nature myths in his poems. Tagore’s poems carry certain messages. It conveys that simplicity and honesty can earn God’s pleasure. True love and devotion are required to win God’s love.

Tagore used many literary forms, but the major one was the lyric. He used Bengali verse forms like the *payar* with blank verse and the sonnet. Thus, it was the merger of Indian and western forms to create a new poetry. Irregular couplets and free verse are used in his later poetry. This contrasts with the uniform style and structure of his English versions.

The theme of spirituality pervades Tagore’s poetry. He wrote hymns for Brahma Samaj. The principles of the Vedas and the Upanishads can also be found in his poetry. But he recognizes spirit in nature and human life. The fusion of the natural and the supra- natural is reflected in his poetry. Many of his poems deal with the theme of love. His own art also forms the crux of some of his poems. There is a depiction of the political situation in some of his poems. He criticizes local as well as global issues. Many of his poems also reflect the condition of women.

Tagore’s philosophical teachings find expression in his poetry. He emphasizes that we can realize God by achieving oneness with God. This can be done if one overcomes illusion and ignorance through genuine love of God. He believes that love is more important than knowledge. God creates human beings to realize the bliss of love. This can be achieved through the union of the lover and the beloved. Tagore conceptualizes that God created nature to evoke love in human beings.

Lol was introduced for the first time in Kashmiri poetry by Habba Khatoon. Lol is similar to the lyric and reveals a brief thought. It is melodious and deals with love. Habba Khatoon’s poetry is essentially about love-in- separation. She has not written a single poem in praise of Yusuf Shah, a Kashmiri ruler, though she lived in his company for some time. She chose separation in love as the theme of her poetry. Her poetry reveals restlessness in love.

Habba Khatoon’s poetry marks a transition from Sufi poetry to romantic poetry. Habba uses a particular Persian metre in her poetry. It was suggested to her by Syed Mubarak, a poet. He also convinced her to sing. Her songs are soulful and liked by Kashmiris. Her romantic poetry is incomparable in Kashmiri literature.

Habba's yearning for Yusuf was romantic. She freely expresses her love for her husband, quite unlike Medieval Muslim women. She voiced angst of female desire which was in a way radical in spirit. Yet, the simplicity of her poems does not let us assume their erotic nature. Habba's poetry depicts the emotions of the common people. An air of romance pervades her poetry. The pain of separation from her husband haunts her.

Habba's poetry is replete with images, similes and metaphors of nature. Her poetry is abundant in the use of flowers such as Jasmine, wild yellow rose, hinting at the feminine consciousness. She abstained from using animal imagery which depicts power and domination.

Habba's poetry shows human beings in the lap of nature and reveals the relationship between humans and nature. Her misfortune and suffering made her abandon the world and seek refuge in her natural surroundings. She wandered aimlessly in the forests. Her poetry, which is somber in tone, is in contrast to the environment, which evinces vitality, freshness and new beginning. She is desolated, alone, on the verge of decay and death.

The poetry of Habba refers to agrarian activities. Her lyrics are remembered and sung even today by the Kashmiris. Habba's poetry bears a lyrical quality. Expressions and thoughts blend in her poetry and lend a charm to it. Her poetry deals with the routine life of ordinary people. She depicts the activities of rural people who live close to nature. The life of rural people is depicted in an effective manner and style.

Habba's lyrics are musical and easy to memorize. Habba quite freely expresses her pain of being separated from her beloved. Her lyrics are melancholic and nostalgic. Her poetry resembles pantheism in which the natural course of events correspond to the underpinnings of the soul. Habba finds her life devoid of all joy and pleasure in the absence of her love. Habba Khatoon represents her era. Her poetry has a universal appeal. It is eternal.

Habba Khatoon uses figures of speech, particularly similes and metaphors in her poetry. Her poetry possesses pastoral elements. Her diction is simple. Her emotions are elevated through thoughts. She does not consider love as a transcendental emotion. She yearns for sensual love. She completely surrendered herself before her lover. But his disinterestedness and neglect caused her immense pain. Her failed marriage and then a love-story shaped her psyche. Her poems are marked by pain, sorrow, frustration, longing and disillusionment.

Amir Khusro's poetry reflects the rich cultural tradition of India. His poetry evince Indian values and reveals socio-political ethos of India. He was a Sufi mystic and a devoted follower and disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin. He dedicated many of his works to his spiritual master.

When Khusro was eight years old, his father took him to Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. Khushro remarked that he would choose his spiritual guide and the saint would talk to him from a distance, if he possesses divine power. It is said that Hazrat Nizamuddin sent him a message and accepted him as his disciple. The two thus became intertwined. Hazrat Nizamuddin referred to him as Miftah-al Sama, the key of religious ecstasy. It is also supposed that Hazrat Nizamuddin applied his saliva on Khusro's lips that enhanced his poetic genius. He was bestowed with the title of *Tooti-e-Hindustan* or the parrot of Hindustan.

Amir Khusro was a versatile poetic genius. He was a musician and composer who was credited for being a pioneer of Indo-Muslim music. He invented new ragas and six forms of music as Qaul, Qalbana, Khayal , Tarana, Naqsh and Gul.

Khusro's perpetual love for his spiritual master, Hazrat Nizamuddin is evident in his poetry. Khusro is depicted as a bride who has surrendered her heart, personality, and identity to her groom, Nijaam. Khusro experienced ecstasy and rapture. He was so overcome with grief at the demise of Hazrat Nizamuddin that he spent six months weeping at the feet of Hazrat's grave. Hazrat Nizamuddin wished that Khusro be buried a little away from Hazrat Nizamuddin's grave.

Being a devout Muslim and disciple of Hazrat Nizamuddin, Amir Khusro believed in ethics and observance of sharia. His spiritualism embodies his philosophy of love. The humanism in his poetry is a consequence of his divine love. His works deal with almost varied facets of life. His humanism knew no caste, colour or creed. He dared to talk about the equality of men even before the king.

Love is the greatest feature of human nature. Every soul is attracted towards another soul. Love beautifies the soul which is inherent in the love for humanity. According to Sufis, love is higher than religion. The person worships God out of love. Love makes him a slave. The person who possesses deep insight sees God in everything. Thus, Khusro tries to elevate his relationship with God through love. Khusro's poems examined the theme of separation from the beloved, a metaphor used to refer to God. His poems reflect the Sufi desire to transpose into this state. His poems transfer the readers to a different state beyond this world.

Khushro's handling of the theme of love was due to his strong bond with Sufi preacher Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya which, was beyond all relationships. It was the means to reach the beloved, that is, God. Khusro believed that his master could transform him into divine qualities and it would be possible through surrender of the ego. This requires service to the preceptor, which he demonstrated by working in the kitchen of Hazrat Nizamuddin to prepare food for the

poor daily. Khusro advocates this kind of spiritual seeking abandoning worldly possessions. He himself transformed from a poet to a seeker, a Qalandar, a free soul. This characterizes his later poetic works.

***Check your progress***

1. Examine Rabindranath Tagore's philosophical teachings as evident in his poetry.

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2. Discuss Habba Khatoon's contribution to Kashmiri poetry.

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3. Evaluate Amir Khusro as a spiritual poet.

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**14.2.5 Thematic Comparison of Rabindranath Tagore's poem "Give Me Strength", Habba Khatoon's "Lol of the Lonely Pine" and Amir Khusro's "Just by Casting a Glance":**

Wisdom, spiritual satisfaction, love and service to mankind are the themes of Rabindranath Tagore's poem *Give Me Strength*. The poem encourages people to move out of darkness. Everyone should pray for enlightenment so that we can remain balanced in happiness as well as sorrow. One should submit to the will of God in all circumstances.

The poem is a prayer. The poet prays to God to strengthen his heart to enable him to bear joys and sorrows. He requests God to remove hatred from his heart and fill it with love and kindness. He urges God to endow him with strength to look after the poor. He should not be selfish and never fear a cruel ruler. He should serve the poor. He also urges God to dissociate him from insignificant things of the world. He also wishes to submit completely to the will of God. The poem depicts the values of love and service.

Thus, the poem is an appeal to God. The phrase 'hit at the penury' indicates that the heart should be filled with love and selflessness. The poet's intention is to elevate his character to moral stature.

The theme of Habba Khatoon's *Lol of the Lonely Pine* is the beloved's yearning for her lover. The beloved regards her lover as a dashing, young man. She is in search of this man. She cannot sleep for a while. His memories haunt her. She is restless. She searched for him in the forests. She thought that he would come to the forests as he was a wood cutter. When he arrived, she was worried that he would then quench his sexual desire as he was away from her for quite a while. But she was ready for the communion. In fact, she would then become charming and beautiful. The sexual union would transform her into a youthful, vibrant lady.

Thus, the theme of the poem is about the narrator's love for her lover. Her desperation is caused by the absence of her lover. She waits for the arrival of her lover. The theme of the poem suggests her separation from her lover.

The theme of Amir Khusro's poem *Just by Casting a Glance* is the master- disciple relationship. It is suggestive of the poet's love for his mentor. The poet is enticed by the charm of his mentor. His magnetic personality attracted the poet. His spirituality was something that the poet wanted to share. The preceptor made the poet surrender his personality and identity to him. The concept of love propounded by his preceptor overwhelmed the poet. He immersed himself completely in the self of the preceptor. He regarded himself as the young bride. He cherished the company of his preceptor. He dedicated his whole life to him. He followed the ideals of the preceptor. He submitted himself to the mentor, whom he refers to as a groom. He was very much infatuated by the spirituality of his preceptor.

Thus, the theme of the poem is absolute love for God. The means to attain closeness to God is through the preceptor. It is one of the principles of Sufism.

#### ***Check your progress***

1. What is Tagore's prayer to God in his poem *Give Me Strength*?

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2. Discuss the theme of Habba Khatoon's *Lol of the Lonely Pine*.

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3. Examine the master- disciple relationship in Amir Khusro's poem *Just by Casting a Glance*.

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#### **14.2.6 Symbolism/Imagery in Rabindranath Tagore's poem "Give Me Strength", Habba Khatoon's "Lol of the Lonely Pine" and Amir Khusro's "Just by Casting a Glance":**

Imagery is not used much in Rabindranath Tagore's poem *Give Me Strength*. The image of 'penury' refers to the state of heart full of malice, hatred and jealousy. The poet prays to God to remove these feelings from his heart. 'Bend my knees' is a phrase used to convey that the poet should not surrender before the strong and powerful ruler. The phrase 'to raise my mind high' is indicative of the poet's prayer that he should not think of the insignificant things in life.

Habba Khatoon has used imagery in *Lol of the Lonely Pine* effectively. The image of 'stream' is used to portray the condition of the beloved. She is described as "a sleepless stream" that flows or moves from one place to another in search of her lover. She is referred to as a



“restless brook”, a rivulet which continuously flows. The lady is even called a “lonely pine”, indicating her wait and solitude. The “fire” image refers to sexual passion which the lady thinks her lover will possess as a result of a long separation from her. The image of “ashes” suggests that she is ready to be engulfed in the passionate communion which will make her youthful and vibrant.

Amir Khusro’s *Just by Casting a Glance* is highly symbolic. The image of “wine” suggests a drink which made the poet feel out of the world. It transported him into an ecstatic state. The image of “green bangles” hints at youth, perhaps a recently married bride. The bride yearns for the love of her husband. The image “cloth-dyer” refers to the magnetic charm of the preceptor. In fact, the irresistible spirituality of the preceptor made the poet his disciple. The image of ‘dye’ is used to invoke the feelings of association between the poet and his preceptor. The poet surrendered himself completely to his preceptor. The image of ‘Nizam’ suggests that the relationship between the poet and his preceptor resembles that of the husband and wife. Their love for each other transcends all other worldly considerations.

***Check your progress***

1. What does ‘penury’ refer to in Rabindranath Tagore’s *Give Me Strength*?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why does Habba Khatoon use the image of fire in her poem *Lol of the Lonely Pine* ?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Explain the images “cloth-dyer” and “Nizam” used in Amir Khusro’s *Just by Casting a Glance*.  
\_\_\_\_\_

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### **14.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should have understood that Rabindranath Tagore’s poem *Give Me Strength* is a prayer to God, Habba Khatoon’s *Lol of the Lonely Pine* is a lyric, and Amir Khusro’s *Just by Casting a Glance* is a love poem. You should have gained an understanding of each of the three poems. You should have also learned to study them collectively as comparative poetry.

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## 14.4 Glossary

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### Give Me Strength

**Strike:** Hit forcefully

**Penury:** Extreme poverty

**Fruitful:** Producing results

**Disown:** Refuse, to not own

**Insolent:** Not very pleasant

**Might:** Great power

**Trifle:** Insignificant things

**Thee:** You

**Surrender:** To give up

### Lol of the Lonely Pine

**Pine:** A tall evergreen tree; very unhappy as if somebody has gone away

**Dazzle:** To impress deeply, overpower

**Stream:** A small river, the continuous movement of a liquid, to move somewhere in a continuous flow

**Brook:** A small flow of water, creek, tributary.

### Just by Casting a Glance

**Glance:** To quickly look at somebody, quick look

**Love-potion:** Magical drink which makes person fall in love

**Intoxicated:** Loss of physical and mental control, emotionally excited, elated. extreme pleasure.

**Cloth-dyer:** Person who changes the colour of cloth

**Nijam:** Groom

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## 14.5 Sample Questions

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### 14.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Rabindranath Tagore is referred to as \_\_\_\_\_ of India.

(a) Yeats

(b) Whitman

- (c) Rumi                      (d) Shelley
2. Rabindranath Tagore's *Give Me Strength* is a \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Elegy                      (b) Sonnet  
(c) A prayer                  (d) Idyll
3. In *Give Me Strength*, Tagore aims at \_\_\_\_\_ strength.
- (a) Physical                  (b) Mental  
(c) Spiritual                  (d) Political
4. Tagore urges God to endow him with strength to care for the \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Rich                      (b) Poor  
(c) Women                      (d) Children
5. \_\_\_\_\_ introduced Lol for the first time in Kashmiri poetry.
- (a) Lal Ded                      (b) Habba Khatoon
6. In *Lol of the Lonely Pine*, Habba Khatoon refers to herself as a \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Widow                      (b) Bride  
(c) Fire                          (d) Lonely pine
7. The images of 'fire' and 'ashes' are used in \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Rabindranath Tagore's *Give Me Strength*  
(b) Amir Khusro's *Just by Casting a Glance*  
(c) Habba Khatoon's *Lol of the Lonely Pine*  
(d) None of these
8. Amir Khusro's *Just by Casting a Glance* is about the \_\_\_\_\_ relationship.
- (a) Parent-child                  (b) Master-disciple  
(c) ruler-ruled                  (d) None of these
9. Amir Khusro used to revere \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya  
(b) Khwaja Moinuddin Chisty  
(c) Hazrat Abdul Qadar Jilani  
(d) Bakhtiar Kaki
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is referred to as 'Nijaam' in *Just by Casting a Glance*.
- (a) Amir Khusro                  (b) The poet's preceptor  
(c) Sultan                          (d) The poet's father

### 14.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. What are Tagore's views on equanimity?
2. Why does Tagore want to raise his mind high above daily trifles?
3. Examine the theme of Habba Khatoon's *Lol of the Lonely Pine*.
4. Bring out the element of Sufism in Amir Khusro's *Just by Casting a Glance*.
5. Comment on the use of images in Amir Khusro's *Just by Casting a Glance*.

### 14.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Make a comparative assessment of the poetic genius of Rabindranath Tagore, Habba Khatoon and Amir Khusro.
2. Bring out the thematic comparison of Rabindranath Tagore's poem *Give Me Strength*, Habba Khatoon's *Lol of the Lonely Pine* and Amir Khusro's *Just by Casting a Glance*.
3. Examine the use of imagery in Rabindranath Tagore's *Give Me Strength*, Habba Khatoon's *Lol of the Lonely Pine* and Amir Khusro's *Just by Casting a Glance*.

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## 14.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Mattoo, Neerja. *The Mystic and the Lyric: Four Women Poets from Kashmir*. Zubaan Books, 2019.
2. Mohammad, Habib. *Hazrat Amir Khusrau of Delhi*. 1979.
3. Devy, G.N. *Indian Literary Criticism: Theory and Interpretation*. Orient Longman, 2022.
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6. Losensky, Paul E., Sunil Sharma. trans. *In the Bazaar of Love: The Selected Poetry of Amir Khusrau*. India. Penguin Books, 2011.
7. Roy, Prahlad. "Religious education and Rabindranath Tagore". *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. Vol 3, Issue 6, June 2015.

## **Unit- 15:**

- (a) Kamala Das - “My Mother at Sixty Six”**
- (b) Andre Breton - “Five Ways to Kill a Man”**
- (c) Derek Walcott - “A Far Cry From Africa”**

### **Structure**

#### **15.0 Introduction**

#### **15.1 Objectives**

#### **15.2 Introduction to the Poets**

##### **15.2.1 Summary of the poem titled “My Mother at Sixty Six” by Kamala Das**

###### **15.2.1.1 Critical analysis of the poem “My Mother at Sixty Six”**

###### **15.2.1.2 Themes in the poem “My Mother at Sixty Six”**

##### **15.2.2 Summary of the poem titled “Five Ways to Kill a Man” by Andre Breton**

###### **15.2.2.1 Critical analysis of the poem “Five Ways to Kill a Man”**

###### **15.2.2.2 Themes in the poem “Five Ways to Kill a Man”**

##### **15.2.3 Summary of the poem titled “A Far Cry From Africa” by Derek Walcott**

###### **15.2.3.1 Critical analysis of the poem “A Far Cry From Africa”**

###### **15.2.3.2 Themes in the poem “A Far Cry From Africa”**

##### **15.2.4 Let Us Sum Up**

#### **15.3 Learning Outcomes**

#### **15.4 Glossary**

#### **15.5 Sample Questions**

#### **15.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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### **15.0 Introduction**

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Comparative literature consists of masterpieces woven in different languages across the globe that leave a mark on readers to see parallels and differences in the writings of writers throughout the world. The chapter is a study of literature from three different nationalities. Though the poems to be discussed have appealed to the readers in their respective regions but at the same time these poems echo unparalleled aesthetics when studied together. The writers reflect upon the issues from a personal perspective. Through the reading of the chapter, the learner will understand and explore literature from different places with a universal appeal through the writings of the selected writers who are iconoclastic figures in their own regions.

This will give learners a deeper understanding of the universality that exists in poems irrespective of the place.

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## 15.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- introduce Kamala Das, Andre Breton and Derek Walcott
- present the summary, analysis, and explanation of their poems
- Examine their contribution to comparative poetry

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## 15.2 Introduction to the Authors

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**Kamala Das** was born on March 31, 1934 in Punnayurkulam, Kerala. Kamala Das is a pen name of Kamala Surayya, also called as Madhavikutty, is a famous Indian poetess writing in English. In addition to writing in English, she secured her place among the prominent Malayalam writers. She was admired as a writer in Kerala for writing short stories on a range of topics and her autobiography. Her autobiography in English was published under the pen name of Kamala Das. In addition, she was a syndicate columnist and expressed her views on various topics rooted in politics, feminism, sexuality and child care. She is often compared to Anne Sexton and Robert Lowell in her writing style, and Sylvia Plath and Marguerite Duran for her frankness in her writings.

Kamala Das was born to V.M. Nair and Nalapat Balamani Amma. Her father was an executive at the Walford Transport Company that traded in Bentley and Rolls-Royce. In addition, he was a managing director of the famous Malayalam daily Mathrubhumi, whereas her mother was an acclaimed Malayali poetess.

Much of her childhood was spent at Nalapat's ancestral home where her great uncle, a prominent writer, inspired her to write poetry at an early age. She was married at the age of fifteen to Madhav Das, a bank officer who encouraged her to write and later her work started getting published in cult anthologies of that time, that brought her recognition among famous writers writing in English. During the 1960s, which is considered as a **tumultuous** decade for art and literature in Calcutta, she became a reckoned voice among the prominent Indian writers in English.

Das held numerous significant positions during her lifetime. She was vice-chairperson of Kerala Sahitya Akademi. She held a central position as Chairperson of Kerala Forestry Board. She played a significant role as the President of the Kerala Children's Film Society. She held editorial positions at Poet magazine and illustrated weekly of India respectively. In 1963, she bagged the Pen Asian Poetry Prize. She was awarded the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award in 1968 for her work titled Thanuppu, written in Malayalam. In 1984, she was also shortlisted for the prestigious Nobel Prize. In addition, she was conferred with the Kendra Sahitya Academy Award in English in 1985, Asian Poetry Prize in 1998 and many other prestigious awards. She founded the Lok Seva Party to work for underprivileged children. *The Times* called her "the mother of modern English poetry" in 2009. A biopic titled *Aami* was released on Feb 9, 2018. At the age of 65, she converted to Islam and on her death, she was buried at Palayam Juma Masjid at Thiruvananthapuram with state honour.

She is a confessional poet. She wrote fierce poetry on love and sexuality. She shared her unapologetic views on female sexuality that turned her into a rebel. Her work centres on personal experience rather than colonial one that formed the major theme of writings during that period. She is known for her unfiltered, frank, and candor expressions that shun away timidity against the patriarchal conventions. She explores the sexual frustration of a female in a patriarchal society. She writes about the angst and desire of a woman in a married life. Some of her famous works in Indian English writing are *Alphabet of Lust*, a novel written by Das in 1976. Her short story collection, titled *A Doll for the Child Prostitute*, was published in 1977. In 1992, she published another collection, *Prostitute and Padmavati, the Harlot and Other Stories*. She actively contributed as a poet throughout her life by publishing *The Sirens* (1964), *Summer in Calcutta* (1985). This was filled with themes like love, betrayal and anguish. This collection was a breath of fresh air amidst the writings of Indian writers writing in English which was based on themes of independence and nationalism. *An Introduction* (1965), *The Descendants* (1967) voiced female issues of sexuality in an explicit manner. *The Old Playhouse and other Poems* (1973) is another famous work by Das. She went to publish *The Stranger Time* in 1977, *Tonight, This Savage Rite* in 1979, *Collected Poems* in 1984. *The Anamalai Poems* was published in 1985. Her confessional mode is seen in *Only the Soul Knows How to Sing* (1997), *My Mother at Sixty-Six* (1999) where she shares the emotion of a child going away from her old mother, and *Ya Allah* in 2001. Kamala Das's works set a different tone amongst the confessional poets in India.

Therefore, the works have been translated into many languages like French, Spanish, Russian, German, and Japanese following the popularity among the readers.

**Andre Robert Breton** was born on Feb 19, 1896 in Normandy, France. He was a writer, poet and associated with surrealism. Breton went to medical school, but he was conscripted for WWI and his education was interrupted. Breton was deeply influenced by Alfred Jarry, a devotee of Jacques Vache, during his service at a neurological ward in Nantes, who showed lawlessness and disdain for established artistic traditions.

Andre Breton joined the Dadaists after being influenced by psychiatry and symbolism. He became part of a Dadaist group in Paris in 1916. In 1919, Breton along with Soupault published “Les champs magnetiques”, that was the pioneer of automatic writing i.e., surrealist technique. Breton was successful in founding the Bureau of Surrealist Research in 1924 and worked closely with Dadaist Tristan Tzara. This association resulted in the publication of the *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924. He became part of the French Communist Party in 1927 but was soon expelled in 1933. In 1928, he published a novel titled *Nadja* about his experience with a visionary woman who later became insane. Breton joined the French Army in the medical corps at the start of WWII, but his writings were banned, neglecting nationalism. He fled to the US with the help of a fellow American and lived there for a few years. Later, he organised a surrealist exhibition at Yale University. During his exile in US, he met Aime Cesaire after few years and wrote an introduction to Cesaire’s work “Cahier d’un retour au pays natal” (1947). During this period, he met his third wife, Elisa Bindhoff and went on to write *Arcane 17*.

In 1946, he returned to Paris and opposed the French colonization of Algeria. He was an avid collector of art in all forms and, during a financial crisis in 1931, he made money by selling his collection of paintings, sculptures, photographs, manuscripts etc. Breton devised Surrealism as an extensive philosophy that brings together the seemingly two distinct states of affair of dreaming and waking. The movement provided Breton a sense of liberation to express himself through his work. The movement reckoned on the works of painters like Hieronymus Bosh and James Ensor along with writers like Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud al with influence of political views of Karl Marx.

Breton published some famous works, including, *L’Immaculée Conception* in 1930, written in collaboration with Paul Éluard. They made an effort to convey a verbal impression of various types of mental problems. In 1932, Breton explored the possibility of dream and reality through his works *Les Vases communicants* (The Communicating Vessels) and *L’Amour*



*fou* (Mad Love) published in 1937. He expressed his critical views in the work *Les Pas perdus* (The Lost Steps) in 1924, *Légitime Défense* (Legitimate Defense) in 1926. He exhibited connection between painting and surrealism in the work *Le Surréalisme et le peinture* (Surrealism and Painting) published in 1926, *Qu'est-ce que le surréalisme?* (*What is Surrealism?*) published in 1934 gives a clear understanding of surrealism, and *La Clé des champs* (The Key to the Fields) was published in 1953. He passed away in Paris on September 28, 1966.

**Derek Alton Walcott** was born on 23 January 1930 in Saint Lucia and passed away on 17 March 2017 in Cap Estate. He was a remarkable poet who became the voice of Caribbean literature. In addition to poetry, he wrote plays about the African people in the West Indies. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992. Walcott received his education at St. Mary's College in Saint Lucia. Later, he attended the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. He started teaching at a school in Saint Lucia, followed by a school located in Grenada. He began composing poems at an early age. He contributed numerous articles and reviews in various periodicals in Trinidad and Jamaica. He was agog in play writing and pursued studies in theatre in 1958 in New York City. He began producing plays in Saint Lucia in 1950. He kept moving between Trinidad and the United States for the rest of his life.

Walcott is celebrated more for his poetic genius than his playwriting. Walcott's poetry revolves around black folks and Caribbean islands whose beauty is best reflected in his poem *In a Green Night: Poems 1948–1960* (1962). Walcott is often seen to be caught up between his African culture and European influence, being a native of Caribbean. The selected verses in his following poems titled *Selected Poems* published in 1964, *The Castaway* written in 1965, and the *Gulf* composed in 1969 express the beauty of the Caribbean simultaneously expressing his feelings of personal isolation. *Another Life* published in 1973 is an autobiographical poem written by Walcott. He studied the cultural differences that exist due to language and race in his two works *Sea Grapes* published in 1976 and *The Star-Apple Kingdom* in 1979 respectively. He writes about the alienation of a black writer in America in *The Fortunate Traveller*, published in 1981. His work titled *Midsummer* written in 1984, delves into the distancing of a person from his Caribbean homeland.

Walcott is critically acclaimed for his book-length poem *Omeros* (1990) which is primarily based on Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in a Caribbean setting. In his collection titled *The Bounty* (1997) he writes about his mother's death and his Caribbean house. Walcott published a

poetic biography titled *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000) on the life of a French painter Camille Pissarro born in West Indies. The book-length poem *The Prodigal* (2004) explores the nature of identity and exile based in Europe and North America. In his work *White Egrets* (2010) ageing forms the central theme of the collection.

In addition to the poetry collection, Walcott contributed approximately thirty plays along with the poems. He is well-known for his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967) which depicts the struggle for reclamation of identity and culture. In another play titled *Ti-Jean and His Brothers* in 1958, he writes about brothers striving hard to overpower the evil force. This is based on a West Indian folktale. In his work *Pantomime*, published in 1978, he delves into the theme of colonization through the story of Robinson Crusoe. In 1993, *The Odyssey: A Stage Version* was published, which is again based on theme from black folk culture in the West Indies.

Walcott received many literary accolades throughout his life. In 1971, he was awarded the Obie Award for his play *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. He was given MacArthur Foundation award. His poetry collection *White Egrets* won T.S. Eliot Prize in 2010. He won Poetry lifetime recognition award by the Griffin Trust in 2015.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Why is Kamala Das known as “mother of Indian poetry”?

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2. Who started the Surrealist movement?

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3. To which place does Derek Walcott belong to?

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### **15.2.1 Summary of the poem titled “My Mother at Sixty Six” by Kamala Das:**

“My Mother at the Age of Sixty-Six” is one of the most celebrated poems of Kamala Das. The poem highlights a daughter’s feelings for her old mother. The poem pictures the personal relationship of the poetess with her mother, which has a universal echo of love and pain which is inevitable. She captures the complexity of emotions in a simplistic manner while leaving for Cochin.

The poet writes that she was coming back from her parents’s house after a visit on a Friday morning when she saw her mother who had grown so old that it aches her heart to see her present condition. Her mother sat next to her in the car and she was sleeping carelessly, her mouth was open, which also shows her less control over her body as she is aging. The fatigue of

old age is reflected in the way she sleeps in the car. The poet writes that her face is pale now, as if she was a dead person. The poet feels pained as she thinks that the tentacles of death have already clutched her tight.

The poet acknowledges the pain of old age and separation at the same time, both are inevitable. Therefore, she tries to distract herself from this feeling by looking out of the car window. She sees the trees sprinting by as their car moves speedily. It is nothing but the time that passes by quickly, as fast as her mother has aged within a few years from a youthful woman to an old lady. The poetess also watches young children playing outside their house. Their happy voices echo the youthfulness and energy that reminds her of life as a beautiful gift that culminates in death.

She goes into an introspective mood that may be she did not care enough for her aging mother and time flew by without her even realizing it until that day. Her heart pangs deeply at the helplessness of the situation where she has to leave her mother at an old age once again. In the next few lines, she writes that she is used to the temporary pain of separation growing up as she worked far away from her.

She compares her mother's ashen and pale face to a winter moon. She says like a winter's moon that loses its brightness and radiance behind the fog in the winter season and looks dull and dying similarly, her mother's face has also become dull with the advancing old age. On the other hand, winter season also symbolizes slow down and inactivity of old age that has crawled upon her once youthful mother. In the last lines of the poem, after the realisation that she is but helpless to control her advancing old age, she chooses to smile before parting her old mother with the hope that she might live longer and bids her goodbye.

#### **15.2.1.1 Critical analysis of the poem “My Mother at Sixty Six”:**

The Indian writer, Kamala Das explores the affectionate relationship shared by a daughter and an old mother. The daughter becomes conscious of her mother growing old and the truth that follows. She is not ready to bear the thought of losing her. Throughout the poem, the narrator describes the change in emotions she feels looking at her old mother on her way to the airport as she leaves for Cochin. The irony in the poem *My Mother at Sixty-Six* is that the poetess finds it difficult to accept that her mother has grown old.

The poetess describes that it was on her journey to the airport from her parents's house that she noticed age of her mother who was sitting next to her in the car. When she looks at her mother asleep next to her with her mouth open, she realises how much she has aged over the

period of time. She compares her face to a corpse as she no longer has the youthful glow on her face which is indicative of her nearing death.

She distracts herself from these distressed thoughts by shifting her glance from her mother's face to the outside. On looking out of the window, she finds a binary that existed. She could see young trees passing by at a great speed, just like her mother's age. Imagery is used to show life and activity in "young trees sprinting" and "merry children spilling". The poetess could see children running out of their houses to play. Their happiness was an embodiment of energy and optimism, whereas she felt the opposite when she looked at her mother.

She looks back at her mother while standing at the airport security check. She focuses on her mother's face only to find her face to be dull and wearisome like a winter's moon that lacks lustre. Similes have been used to compare the mother's face to that of a corpse and a "late winter's moon". The poetess brings to surface the fear of losing her as a child. She finds the parting situation at the airport difficult as she feels sad to leave her in this situation at her approaching end. She composes herself in front of her mother and waves her mother goodbye. Though the last words of the poem are "smile, smile, smile," the poem ends on a sad note that reality cannot be changed. Repetition and alliteration can be seen in the use of the word 'smile' in the last line of the poem. Neither can the poet reverse the aging process of her mother nor can she stay back with her mother to shower love on her during her old age.

#### **15.2.1.2 Themes in the poem "My Mother at Sixty Six":**

**Ageing** - Ageing is a natural process which is inevitable and irreversible. The poem focuses on the aging of a human being that evokes sad emotions in a child to see parents getting old. It depicts the change in physical appearance of a human being, loss in energy, slowing down of body functions, and the loss of youthfulness that once existed. It also raises one's consciousness towards the passing of time and the approach to death. In the poem, the poetess seems guilt ridden as she will not be able to take care of her mother in old age.

**Separation** - Separation from a loved one is another theme explicit in the poem. The poet fears separation from her old mother, who is in her sixties. In the poem, she reflects upon the temporary separation she experiences when she leaves her mother behind for her work and visits her occasionally. Further, she writes that leaving her old mother in her sixties hints at permanent separation that might follow soon, as death might knock on her door and she would not be able to see her again.

**Acceptance** - The poem shares the concept of acceptance of different phases in life. The poet is unhappy seeing her mother ageing. She experiences guilt for not being able to take care of her in old age, but as the poem ends, she accepts the reality of life and puts a smile on her face as she leaves the airport. She understands the harsh reality of life that ageing is part of human life and her mother too has to get old. She will leave this world, marking a culmination of their relationship. Kamala Das has beautifully illustrated the idea of acceptance using imagery and symbolism in the poem.

### **15.2.2 Summary of the poem titled “Five Ways to Kill a Man” by Andre Breton:**

The poem titled “Five Ways to Kill a Man” is written by Andre Breton. It is about the different ways through which a large number of humans have been killed over a period of time. Here the poet elaborates on different ways of sabotaging humans for centuries. He writes about five major transformative changes in the history of mankind that has portrayed a ruthless picture of killing people at the hands of people in power. It also talks about the incompetency of human beings to contribute something positive in their lives. Andre Breton writes about the crucifixion of Christ as the first event that is equivalent to the killing of humanity. He writes that Christ, the saviour of humanity, was forced to carry a wooden plank to the top of a hill. In the following lines, the poet focuses on the people who were indifferent seeing the condition of Christ and the brutalities carried out on him. Instead, they were mere spectators wearing sandals to throw at the Christ. These people outrightly rejected knowledge of Christ who came to save them. The poet highlights the cruelty of such people against Christ that even his cloak was torn off in order to deny him a proper burial. When, on one occasion, Christ asked for water, he was only given vinegar soaked in a sponge. Finally, he was nailed to the wooden cross plank and succumbed to death.

In the second stanza, he mentions the loss of human life in civil wars fought by Kings in England during the Middle Ages, before the renaissance. He elaborates upon the use of steel swords marked with distinct emblem of the side they were fighting for in wars. The poet describes the craftsmen who were so skilled at making swords that the warriors could pierce the metal armour of other soldiers with that steel sword. The poet writes about the scene in the war of the English countryside where the warriors fight under different flags, skilled in using bows and arrows, with white horses. He writes, after such gruesome happenings at both the ends, this victory of human killing is celebrated as a banquet in the King’s castle. The underlying irony in these lines is that the killing of a man is celebrated with pomp and show.

In the third paragraph, he highlights the brutalities carried out by men using gas to kill other human beings mercilessly. Here, the poet talks about the killings that happened during WWI by gas. He writes that the English army was caught up in their own act of destroying the German army as they blew the gas cylinders towards the German army, but due to a change in the wind, their own soldiers were killed. The poet writes that such a killing was succeeded by fighting against each other in inhuman conditions by staying in ditches full of mud, black boots to move through the tough terrain, bomb squads diffusing bombs that are capable of taking many lives at a time. These conditions got worst with the bubonic plague. In the next stanza, the poet presents a fourth way of killing men. This time, man makes use of aeroplanes to drop bombs by pressing a small switch. Here, he refers to the bombarding of two cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki during WWII. Further, he writes about how people become inhuman. The poet writes that killing is carried out as two governments share different perspectives on things and support different sides in the war. They have different opinions on the use of science and technology and how Americans built nuclear bombs after knowing the German psychopath, Hitler, had already built something similar. Here he calls this person as a psychopath who decided to kill lakhs of people with a bomb making that land inhabitable for future generations as no one could remain unaffected by the radiation caused by the dropping of nuclear bombs.

Lastly, he suggests the fifth and easiest way to kill a man is to live in the contemporary age following WWII, i.e., in the 1950s. He writes that this is the age accompanied with its own set of problems of uncertainty, doubt, poverty, inflation, unemployment etc. He implicitly suggests the inhumane treatment of human beings towards other fellows. He conveys that these problems will kill men naturally if not addressed properly with utmost care.

#### **15.2.2.1 Critical Analysis of the poem “Five Ways to Kill a Man”:**

The poem titled “Five Ways to Kill a Man” comprises five stanzas. In each stanza, the poet discusses five different ways in the history of mankind when the most number of killings have been carried out. He outlines the fact, the way man has turned the world into a hell by their own actions. The poem consists of thirty-one lines. The first, second, and fourth stanzas consist of seven lines each, whereas stanza third is made up of six lines and stanza fifth comprises of four lines respectively.

The tone of the poem is highly ironic as the poet highlights how such heinous crimes of murder committed against humanity are celebrated under the pretence of gaining more wealth, power and success. He also points out that a murderer never confesses the ghastly act of murder

carried out by him. He also portrays the inhuman nature of man against each other from time immemorial. He writes that all the killings were carried out when people had different visions and opinions, even the noble soul like Christ was not spared by people who did not agree with his vision. Furthermore, he writes in the second paragraph, the irony of a grand celebration carried out after the killing of people by the winning house. In order to gain power, humans have ruthlessly paved their way by killing so many people. They are even ready to suffer depression living in trenches, wearing black boots, being affected by plagues and even using poisonous gas to get rid of their opponents.

In the next stanza, he writes that humans became technologically advanced but used this advancement to kill each other. Here he cites the example of bombarding two cities of Japan with atomic bombs and later justified his actions. Lastly, he writes that, to be born in this age is to be killed naturally due to hunger, poverty, and unemployment.

The poem does not follow any rhyme scheme, though the poet makes use of metaphor when he compares the armour of a soldier with a cage of metal that is keeping them caged to fight for their king. In another paragraph, he uses metonymy when he compares “two flags” to different houses that are opposed to each other fighting against one another. Writing such a poem, the poet evokes a consciousness among readers of the damage caused to humanity from time to time by killing so many people, also making them aware of the heinous crimes committed by humans against each other.

#### **15.2.2.2 Themes in the poem “Five Ways to Kill a Man”:**

**Wars against human beings** - The poet outlines major wars fought among the people from time immemorial which are also referred to as the greatest wars against humanity. He spells out that it is the crucifixion of Christ at the hands of evil people that marked the first major crime against humanity. He writes from here on, man has gone to heights by making use of guns, gas and atomic bombs to kill each other. The poet here mentions that man has adopted different ways to kill each other making the world an inhabitable place for some people who do not agree with the vision of one in power. He also points out the hatred human beings have been carrying in their hearts and celebrating the death of other beings as a mark of achievement and success. At the same time, he writes that with each passing war, the number of killings has increased proportionally. The World Wars have resulted in the killing of people beyond imagination.

**Crisis of present times** - Throughout the poem the poet focuses on the way wars over the centuries have led to mass destruction all over the world. It is only in the last paragraph that he

mentions a silent death covered in the contemporary issues that could kill half the population on the planet without the use of any weapon. The present time issues he refers implicitly are hunger, disillusionment, poverty, the absurdity of life, unemployment, as a result of irresponsible human actions in the past.

### **15.2.3 Summary of the poem titled “A Far Cry From Africa” by Derek Walcott:**

Derek Walcott’s famous poem “A Far Cry From Africa” is set in Africa. The poet says that wind is moving through the “tawnt pelt”, Africa that means he is describing an image of Africa which is turned brown. The Nigerian tribe, Kikuyu is swarming like flies all over the place. The once called paradise is covered with corpses of Kikuyu people who lost their lives defending their land against the colonisers. The colonisers do not show any empathy towards the lost lives. Instead, they treat them equal to animals. The colonisers use statistics to justify their expansion and killing of people in the colonies. The poet remarks the scholars make use of different facts to debate about the injustice carried out by the colonisers. In the next line, he presents a conflicting view where he questions whether these explanations make any difference to a white boy who is killed while sleeping. The poet here refers to the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya during 1950s. Here the African people were killed like Jews which in turn is followed by killing of white child in its bed by the black people.

In the second para, the poet describes the farmers snapping long grass that fills the air with white dust. The dust here is actually the flying away of ibises, a long-legged bird of white colour. These birds are disturbed by the farmers and fly away just as they have been doing for thousands of years since the beginning of civilization. The violence among animals is seen as ‘natural’ but humans who consider themselves God like are nothing less than animals as they fight and kill each other. They carry out wars against each other as if dancing to the beat of drums made out of corpses.

The poet writes that though fighting against the Whites is termed as ‘courage’ by the natives, it is actually the fear of getting exterminated at the hands of the perpetrator that motivates them to fight and protect themselves, which has a different perspective from a white colonial perspective who term the killing of native rebellion as way to maintain peace in the colonies. The poet calls this uprising a way to justify the violence perpetrated by them. The colonisers, in turn justified it as a necessity, just like they had in the past during the Spanish Civil war. He calls the natives as apes who are technologically underdeveloped are fighting against the supreme power who are technologically advanced and have advantage over them.



He presents his traumatic view that he is poisoned with the blood of the coloniser and the colonised. In the same spirit, he writes, he is unable to choose between African people, his ancestors and the English language that he loves so much, it has taught him so much, and given him an expression to put forward his views. At the same time, he is moved by the violence carried out on the Africans that gives him sleepless nights as he cannot stand violence.

#### **15.2.3.1 Critical Analysis of the poem “A Far Cry From Africa”:**

The poem is one of the most famous poems of Derek Walcott that is set in Africa with the Mau Mau uprising as the backdrop. In the poem, the poet presents his ambivalent view on the war of independence for Nigeria fought in the 1950s against the colonisers. He presents a gruesome picture of Africa as the war has resulted in the killing of innocent people, leading to streams of blood in the country. The poet writes that violence perpetrated by any side is not welcomed as it is the loss of human life. He is in an indecisive state as he can neither choose Africa nor English tongue. He writes that he loves the English tongue that is result of colonization but at the same time he cannot tolerate the slaughter of African people with whom he shares the blood and traditions.

The title of the poem contains an idiom “a far cry” which the poet is able to hear because of his African lineage, but it is not audible to any other person. This also suggests that the poet is present at a distance to hear the impossible sound. It also means Africa, once considered as ‘paradise’ is in ruins now, is calling out for help.

The poet uses animal imagery throughout the poem. In the first two lines, he regards the mood of African land as a ferocious animal that is ready to kill the colonisers. In the next few lines, he accepts the ‘nature’s law’ of animals hunting each other for their survival but, he condemns humans turning into animals to gain power over the others. He writes that human beings have no rationale behind mass murders carried out by them. He is against the animalistic behaviour of humans that has resulted in unstoppable violence.

The opening lines of the poem suggest the wind of change blowing through Africa that is likely to bring a change in a contented country. The Kikuyu people are seen as ‘flies’ sucking on streams of blood running on the grassland of Africa. The poet made use of personification as he personifies ‘worm’ to give out a strong message that compassion cannot change the situation. Further, the poet makes use of imagery of ibis where they are driven out by the natives for their settlements.

The use of the word ‘poisoned’ suggests that the poet is not happy about the situation that he is witnessing. He is unable to reconcile with the violence inflicted by the colonisers on African people, but at the same time, he loves the English language, the language of the colonisers, so much that he cannot part with it. The irony presented in the poem when the poet put forward his dilemma in choosing between Africa heritage and the English language is clear when he chooses to write a poem in English and get it published. The poem is composed in free verse. It does not follow any rhyming scheme.

### **15.2.3.2 Themes in the poem “A Far Cry From Africa”:**

**Identity Crisis:** The major theme of the poem is the identity crisis faced by Walcott. Walcott holds African and European roots, that makes it difficult for him to choose between Africa and the English tongue that he loves. He feels his blood is “poisoned” by atrocities carried out by each of them on one another. He is unable to relate to any one of them as he stands against the violence carried out by the colonisers as well as the natives of Africa. The poem hints towards the conflicted personality of the poet.

**Violence:** The poem is set in Africa with the Mau Mau uprising as the backdrop to gain independence from the colonial rule during the 1950s. Due to this rebellion by the natives against the whites, many people were killed on both sides showing a gruesome picture of violence. The poet shows the different forms of violence that exist in nature and the change they bring to the surroundings. He writes that animals carry out violence on each other for food and survival, whereas humans ruthlessly kill each other to attain more power. The poet successfully portrays the painful legacy of violence of colonisation in Africa and killing of the Whites in retaliation by the natives.

**Language as a tool of Resistance:** the poem brings to light the ambivalent yet complex relationship shared by the colonised people and the colonisers i.e., English. The poet undergoes a conflict while choosing between Africa and England, because learning English has given a means of expression and thought, but at the same time, English colonists have caused pain and suffering to the African people. So, the act of expressing himself in English is causing him pain and happiness at the same time. He makes use of the language of the oppressor as a means of self-expression. He shows resistance towards the violence caused by the British in Africa by writing in English as the language carries the identity and heritage of the colonisers. He expresses his hatred of the English rule, but at the same time finds that English has become part of his personality and a means of self-expression from which he cannot part away.

### *Check your progress*

1. What are the major themes discussed in the poems?

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2. How are these poems personal in nature?

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3. Where did the Mau Mau uprising take place?

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#### **15.2.4 Let Us Sum Up:**

The above mentioned poems are significant contributions to modern writings in English. All the poems are deeply personal as the writers share their emotions about their changing relationships with humans. In the first poem, Das shares her emotions on leaving her old mother. The second poem mirrors the horrors of ruthless killing of humans over the centuries. The last poem highlights the split identity of the poet due to violence carried out by Africans as well as the British on each other.

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### **15.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should have become familiar with the prescribed poems and gained an understanding of the poets and their milieu.

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### **15.4 Glossary**

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**Iconoclasti:** One who breaks the established norms

**Tumultuous:** Disorderly

**Reckoned:** To count on

**Surrealism:** A movement or philosophy that emphasizes on power of subconscious

**Conscripted:** One who is enrolled compulsory military service

**Disdain:** Contempt

**Heinous:** Disgraceful

**Pretence:** Act

**Ghastly:** Causing fear

**Accolades:** Award, prize

**Pangs:** Sharp pain, painful emotion

**Sabotaging:** Destroy

**Tantalizing:** Provoking

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## 15.5 Sample Questions

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### 15.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. When was Derek Walcott born?
  - (a) 1920
  - (b) 1930
  - (c) 1896
  - (d) 1936
2. Who is known as “the mother of modern English poetry” in Indian Writing in English?
  - (a) Sarojini Naidu
  - (b) Kamala Das
  - (c) Toru Dutt
  - (d) Shashi Deshpande
3. The most famous work by Derek Walcott is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (a) *Omeros*
  - (b) *White Egrets*
  - (c) *The Castaway*
  - (d) *The Prodigal*
4. Which rebellion forms the backdrop of the poem “A Far Cry From Africa”?
  - (a) Haitian Revolution
  - (b) Malagasy Uprising
  - (c) Mau Mau Uprising
  - (d) Texas Revolution
5. Why is the narrator sad at the airport?
  - (a) She is leaving her mother forever.
  - (b) She has to leave her old mother behind.
  - (c) She is not sad.

- (d) She does not want to go.
6. According to the poet in the poem “Five Ways to Kill a Man” with each passing age the number of killings has \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) Decreased
  - (b) Remained same
  - (c) Increased
  - (d) None of the above
7. The poet compares her mother’s face to \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) An Autumn moon
  - (b) A summer moon
  - (c) A winter moon
  - (d) A winter sun
8. Why was the writer unable to see the difference between his desk chair and reclining chair?
- (a) He was lost
  - (b) He was tired
  - (c) He was never tired
  - (d) There was no difference between the two
9. What is “the absence of all desire” according to Lu Hsun?
- (a) It is the first step towards salvation
  - (b) It is the first step towards death
  - (c) It is the first towards life
  - (d) It is living life of free will
10. When was the time when the writer started enjoying little things in life?
- (a) During his recovery from illness
  - (b) When he was healthy
  - (c) When he was workaholic
  - (d) He never enjoyed little things in life

**15.5.2 Short Answer Questions:**

1. What is the theme of the poem “A Far Cry From Africa” by Derek Walcott?
2. What is the narrator of the poem “A Far Cry From Africa” in dilemma for?

3. What are the different ways of killing a man as discussed in the poem “Five Ways to Kill a Man”?
4. What was the consequence of the fourth way of killing a man in the poem “Five Ways to Kill a Man”?
5. Why is the mother’s face compared to a ‘late winter’s moon’?

### **15.5.3 Long Answer Questions:**

1. Write the critical appreciation of the poem “Five Ways to Kill a Man”.
2. Discuss the ideas shared in the poem “A Far Cry From Africa” by Derek Walcott.
3. What are themes discussed by the poetess in the poem “My Mother at the Age of Sixty-Six”?

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## **15.6 Suggested Learning Resources**

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1. Dwivedi, A.N. *Kamala Das and Her Poetry*. Atlantic Publication, 2000.
2. Hammer, Robert D. *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*. Three Continent Press, 1992.
3. Kour, Iqbal. *Perspective on Kamala Das’s Poetry*. Intellectual Publishing House, 1995.
4. Mittapali, Rajeshwer. *Kamala Das: A Critical Spectrum*. Atlantic Publication, 2001.
5. Padhi, Sangita. *Indian Poetry in English: A Critical Study*. Atlantic Publication, 2018.

**Unit - 16:**  
**(a) Emily Dickinson: “I’M Nobody! Who are You?”**  
**(b) Khalil Gibran: “On Children”**  
**(c) Pablo Neruda: “Clenched Soul”**

**Structure**

- 16.0 Introduction
- 16.1 Objectives
- 16.2 Emily Dickinson, Khalil Gibran, and Pablo Neruda
  - 16.2.1 Emily Dickinson
    - 16.2.1.1 “I’M Nobody! Who are You?”
  - 16.2.2 Khalil Gibran
    - 16.2.2.1 “On Children”
  - 16.2.3 Pablo Neruda
    - 16.2.3.1 “Clenched Fist”
  - 16.2.4 Comparative Assessment
- 16.3 Learning Outcomes
- 16.4 Glossary
- 16.5 Sample Questions
- 16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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**16.0 Introduction**

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Poetry, as a genre, expresses the innermost intense emotions of different kinds. The poet provides the experiences of happiness, gloominess, turmoil, pathos and various kinds of shades of human emotions that exist alike all over the world sans language, culture, race and gender, caste and creed. The study of the poetry of one poet in comparison with others gives a deeper understanding of their poems as well as enhances the importance of expression in contemporary conditions, raising a voice of resistance, giving philosophical insights, healing the wounds, spreading the message of humanity, etc.

Emily Dickinson (America), Khalil Gibran (Lebanon) and Pablo Neruda (Chile) represent three different nations, three different cultures, but they speak in the same vein. The basic philosophical assumptions and undercurrents in their poetry are universal. Their representation of the world may differ, but the texture of their thoughts brings them together as human fellows located in three different spaces and time.

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## 16.1 Objectives

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The objectives of this Unit are to:

- critically appreciate Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are You?,” Khalil Gibran’s “On Children” and Pablo Neruda’s “Clenched Soul”
- evaluate the poetic devices employed in the above mentioned poems
- understand the poetic genius of Emily Dickinson, Khalil Gibran and Pablo Neruda and make a comparative assessment
- make a thematic comparison of these poems
- examine the use of imagery in these poems.

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## 16.2 Emily Dickinson, Khalil Gibran, and Pablo Neruda

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In this section, you will be introduced to three poets, Emily Dickinson, Khalil Gibran, and Pablo Neruda. You will also undertake a comparative study of their poems prescribed for your study.

### 16.2.1 Emily Dickinson:

Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her father was a renowned lawyer and a United States Senator. Her family were Calvinists. But Emily was attracted to the Protestant faith and transcendentalism. She was a master of Latin and developed a keen interest in Botany. She lived alone and avoided social contact. She had several love affairs but those were brief. She had a turbulent relationship with her parents. Her mother was unaffectionate and her father did not support her writing endeavours. Her family home was converted into a museum in 2003. She faced many health issues. She suffered from depression and anxiety disorder. She died at the age of fifty-five due to a stroke.

Emily’s sister found her collections of poems after her death. Emily shared her poetry with her friends in written correspondence. Only ten were published during her life. The important aspect of her poetry was her unusual use of syntax. She used dashes and capitals abundantly. She avoided pentameter and mostly used trimeter and tetrameter. Emily used irregular meter mostly. Ballad stanza is employed when she uses regular meter. Emily was influenced by Benjamin Newton, William Wordsworth, Ralf Waldo Emerson, William Shakespeare and Lydia Maria.



Emily Dickinson wrote about 1800 poems. Her poems deal with love and death. Her major poems are “Because I could not stop for Death”, “I heard hope is the thing with feathers”, “I’m Nobody! Who are you?”, “I heard a Fly buzz when I died”, “Success is counted sweetest”, “A narrow fellow in the grass”, “A bird came down the walk”, “I taste a liquor never brewed”, “There’s a certain Slant of light”, and “I like to see it lap the Miles”.

***Check your progress***

1. Name any three poems by Emily Dickinson.

---

2. What are the major themes in Emily Dickinson’s poetry?

---

3. What are the main influences on Emily Dickinson?

---

**16.2.1.1 “I’m Nobody. Who are you?”:**

In this section we will discuss the poem, “I’m nobody. Who are you?” by Emily Dickinson. We will attempt an appreciation of the poem, look at the poetic devices, and examine the significance of the title.

**Appreciation of the poem:**

The poet says she is nobody. She is insignificant. She asks whether you are also insignificant. If so, then they are a pair of friends. She advises that they should not tell anybody. Or else they would be banished from their world of privacy. Public life, to the poetess, is cramped and dreary. It is like the life of a frog which proudly tells its name to its admiring bog where it lives. But the frog is not known outside the marshy bog.

The present poem is often quoted as an example of Emily’s modesty. But it seems to be an illustration of Emily’s self-exile into a private world of her own. The result of her self-imposed exile was that she remained insignificant during her lifetime. She was nobody in the world. But it does not matter. Two ‘nobody’s’ can become companions. In the second stanza, there is a touch of satire. Public life is dreary and cramped. It is like the life of a frog which tells its name all the time to the boggy ground where it lives.

***Check your progress***

1. Why does the poet want to be insignificant?

---

2. What is public life, according to the poet?

---

3. What is public life compared to?

---

### **Significance of the title of the poem**

Emily Dickinson, in this poem, renounces the world by denying any special identity, status or recognition in society. It is an affirmation of nothingness of human beings in the vast scale of the universe. The poem underscores the togetherness of those who do not have any fixed identity as per the norms of the world. The fear of revealing one's identity is present as nobody can cause great damage to their existence. It is imperative to carry the tag of some unique identity all the time to categorize human beings for various reasons. People without identity are like shadows of ghosts, invisible but dangerous in the eyes of people who have a fixed visible identity. Threat to the fixed and visible identity would result in the advertisement of people having no identity. The poet is quite sure about it and cautions not to reveal the identity.

The poet, on the other hand, after renouncing identity, status, fixity, and visibility, becomes critical of these facets of existence. In her opinion, it is 'dreary' to have status or being somebody. She condemns publicity or visibility and pronouncing it every now and then. It seems to be like a 'frog' which attracts the attention of everybody throughout the day like it. The poem evinces the desire of the poetess to lead a quiet life without any desire to be known. Thus, the title of the poem is striking and significant.

### ***Check your progress***

1. How does the poet renounce the world?

---

2. What does the poet warn about?

---

3. What is dreary, for the poet?

---

### **Poetic devices**

The poem consists of two stanzas. Each stanza is a quatrain. In the first stanza, the speaker refers to the reader or all the other people and introduces themselves as 'Nobody'. So, it is about identity and solidarity. The second stanza discusses people who want to be 'somebody'.

The poem is generally Iambic. It does not possess a regular meter due to metrical variations and unusual punctuation. The exclamation mark in the middle of the first line and the

stress on ‘No’ emphasize that the speaker does not feel the need to reveal her identity. All the lines have either three or four stresses. The Iambic tetrameter is seen in the seventh line, which hints at boredom in the lives of ‘somebodies’. The first two lines and the sixth and eighth lines in the poem rhyme. The first pair, you/too, indicates the speaker’s excitement that they have found a ‘you’, another person who is also a ‘Nobody’. ‘Too’ suggests that there is more than one person. Another rhyming pair is frog/bog. A bog is the dwelling of the frog or the frog lives in swampy bogs. This rhyme indicates that like frogs, ‘somebodies’ yearn for recognition.

Assonance is used in the line “Are you-Nobody too” as the sound /oo/ is repeated. Anaphora is found in the first stanza as the word ‘How’ is repeated. The line “Don’t tell! they’d advertise-you know” is an example of hyperbole. In the opening lines of the poem, irony is used since the poetess introduces herself as nobody. Oxymoron is used in the first two lines in the poem. The line ‘to an admiring bog’ is an example of personification. Simile is used in the second line of the second stanza to compare people who want to be famous to a frog.

### ***Check your progress***

1. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. State the function of rhyming words in the poem.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What comparison is made in the second stanza?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **16.2.2 Khalil Gibran:**

Khalil Gibran was born on 6 Jan 1883 to Kamila Jubran and her second husband, Khalil Sa’d Jubran in Bisharri, North Lebanon. He had a half brother, Butrus Rahma and two younger sisters, Sultana and Marianna. His family were Moronite Christians. His mother, Kamila Jubran was the daughter of a Maronite priest. His father was a drunkard and a gambler. He used to collect taxes for the village headman, but lost his job due to the some irregularity and his property was seized. Kamila deserted her husband and took the children to the US. She strove to educate the children. Khalil received primary education in the US. He further studied in Beirut, Boston and Paris.

Khalil was a central figure in Arabic literary modernism. He was influenced by European modernism of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. His works deal with the experiences and loneliness of Middle Eastern immigrants in the US. His style inspired the Arabs. The themes of alienation, disruption

and lost rural beauty and security in the modern world pervade his works. However, American critics do not rate him highly.

Khalil Gibran was influenced by Leonardo da Vinci's drawings. His Arabic style was influenced by late 19<sup>th</sup> century European Romantic writers. He portrayed Lebanese folk culture in his works. His first book, *Al Musiqqa* (On Music) published in 1905, consists of only 11 pages. In this work, he points out that music was worshipped by past civilizations. His *Ara'is al muruj* (Nymphs of the Valley) published in 1906 is a collection of three short stories. *Al Arwa al-mutamarrida* (Spirits Rebellions) published in 1908 is a collection of four stories. *Al Ajniha al-mutakassira*, a novella was published in 1912. His first book in English, *The Madman: His Parables and Poems*, was published in 1918. His other works include *Al Mawakib* ( The Procession - 1919), *Al Awasif* ( The Storms - 1920), *The Forerunner: His Parables and Poems* - 1920, *Al Bada'i' wa al-tara'if* (Best Things and Masterpieces) - 1923, *Sand and Foam* - 1926, *Kalimat Jubran* in Arabic - 1927, *Jesus, the Son of Man: His Words and his Deeds* - 1928 and *Arabic Al- Sanabil* (Heads of Grain - 1929). His masterpiece was *The Prophet* published in 1923. Besides, he also wrote two one-act plays, *Lazarus and his Beloved*, and *The Blind*.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Mention the recurrent themes in Khalil Jibran's works?

---

2. What were the influences on Khalil Gibran?

---

3. Why was Khalil Gibran considered a central figure in Arabic literary modernism?

---

### **16.2.2.1 "On Children":**

#### **Appreciation of the poem**

The poem is about the advice given by the prophet Al-Mustafa to a woman. The woman is a mother who asks him about children. First of all, the prophet clarifies that parents cannot consider their children as their own. Religion prescribes that the soul belongs to only God who is the supreme 'life'. The human soul is a part of this supreme 'life'. So the prophet speaks about the spiritual self inside the children. He emphasizes that children belong to God. Parents are just the medium through whom children assume bodily form.

The speaker emphasizes that children are the sons and daughters of God. God desires human form and sends its fragments to earth. God intends to unravel the mysteries of nature. The

speaker suggests that children are sent to the world through their parents. Parents thus become a part of the divine scheme. God controls everything. God chooses appropriate persons for the purpose. So, to assume that children come from their parents is not proper spiritually. Human beings unite in a marital bond and give birth to a new form, but God infuses life into that body. The soul initiates its worldly journey. The parents of the children nurture and guide the children. But when the appointed hour comes, the soul returns to its origin. So the parents are companions only momentarily.

The speaker then advises the manner in which children can be brought up. Parents do not realize that children will ultimately return to God. They love their children selflessly even if they do not follow them. They cannot impose their thoughts on children. The soul chooses its parents but does not know about the future. So, the parents should align with the divine proposition. They should not interfere with God's will. They should provide spiritual nourishment to the children. They cannot constrain the souls. They can just provide for the external environment while God protects it. After death, the soul merges at a certain place. Human beings are unaware of this place.

The speaker also refers to the childhood stage. It is a phase when the soul is in its purest form. Childhood is divine. Human beings wish to return to this phase and enjoy the bliss. But the past cannot be lived again. Parents strive to be like their children, but the process is irreversible. Life moves forward but cannot turn backward. The thoughts of the past should not mar the present. One should live in the present moment. The parents are also warned not to make the children like them. This suggests that parents had lost their innocence in adulthood. So they should not spoil the innocence of children by trying to make children like them.

The speaker, Al-Mustafa says that parents are bows through which God sends their children as 'arrows.' Bows and arrows are dependent on each other for action. An arrow cannot move further unless acceleration is provided by a bow. The bow cannot send the arrow without force. A skilled archer sends an arrow to the exact mark. God is supposed to be an archer who looks at the mark, the divine spirit. God bends the arrow and sends it to the fixed mark. Similarly, parents should be flexible in their approach.

Lastly, the speaker talks about the kindness of God. The 'bending' refers to the flexibility of the human mind. Parents who are not rigid can enable good spiritual development of a child. The flexibility of the bow enables swiftness of an arrow. God loves both the bow and the arrow. It suggests that God is concerned about both parents and children. The speaker further suggests

that parents should have a stable mind. They should not break apart. They should remain firm and be flexible too, which can enable their children to reach the final destination.

***Check your progress***

1. Who is the supreme life?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Name the Speaker in the poem.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Why should the parents align with the divine proposition?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significance of the title of the poem**

The poem offers advice on parenting. It discusses how two individuals, united in marriage, can become model parents. The prophet, Al-Mustafa, is a wise person who guides the parents. When the mother asks him to instruct her about children, he informs that the children do not belong to the parents. Rather, children are fragments of the divine. The prophet emphasizes that the soul requires a medium to come into existence on earth. God chooses parents as this medium. Parents have to nourish these souls until they find their own self. Parents act like arrows and are used to propel arrows. God holds the arrow and sends it in a particular direction. Similar is the role of parents. If they fail to do so and try to act as per their wish, they indulge in manipulation of the divine scheme.

The poem discusses the idea of nurturing children. It deals with the mindset of parents on upbringing of a child. Thus, the title of the poem is significant.

***Check your progress***

1. What is the significance of the title of the poem?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How can parents become role models, according to the poet?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How do children exist on earth?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Poetic devices**

“On Children” is a prose-poem which does not conform to the norms of conventional poetry. It contains sixteen prosaic lines. It does not contain all the poetic features. The lines are

long and do not follow a rhyming scheme. It is composed in free verse. It does not possess a particular metrical pattern. It contains Iambic metre as well as trochaic metre.

Figures of speech make the poem more effective. Paradox is used in the third line, “Your children are not your children,” which suggests a truth that appears shocking. The next line “Life’s longing” is a metaphor. It is also alliteration as the letter ‘l’ is repeated. Epigram is used in the fifth and sixth lines. Anaphora is used in the fourth and the fifth line as the same word is used in the beginning. Antithesis is used in the eleventh line, “You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you” as the opposite ideas are brought together. Personification is used in the twelfth line as life is spoken as if it is an object. A metaphor is used in the last few lines where God is compared to an archer and parents to a bow. The Epigram is used in the last line of the poem.

***Check your progress:***

1. How poetic is “On Children?”

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the rhyming scheme of the poem?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. State epigrams used in the poem.

\_\_\_\_\_

**16.2.3 Pablo Neruda:**

Pablo Neruda was born on 12 July 1904 in the town of Parral in Chile. His real name was Neftali Ricardo Reyes Basoalto. He adopted the pen name of Pablo Neruda in memory of the Czechoslovak poet, Jan Neruda. His father was a railway employee and his mother was a teacher. After the death of mother, his father moved to Temuco and married dona Trinidad Candia Malverde. Pablo spent his youth in Temuco, where he was acquainted with Gabriela Mistral, head of the Girls secondary school, who began to like him. Initially, he wrote some articles for the daily *La Manana*. *Entusiasmo y Perseverancia* was his first poem. In 1920, he started writing for the literary journal *Selva Austral*. Some of his poems can be found in his first published book *Crepusculario* (1923). In 1924, he published *Veinte poemas de amor y una cancion desesperada* which became very popular and was widely translated. Neruda studied French and Pedagogy at the University of Chile in Santiago. Later, he became a French teacher.

The government appointed him as a counsel. So he travelled to different places in the world between 1927 and 1935. During this period, he wrote a collection of poems *Residencia en*

*tierra* in 1933. The Spanish civil war and the murder of Garcia Lorca moved him and he joined the Republican movement in Spain and then in France. He published the collection of poems *Espana en el Corazon* in France in 1937. He returned to Spain in 1937. Subsequently, his poetry dealt with political and social issues. In 1969, he was appointed ambassador to France.

In 1939, Neruda became Counselor for the Spanish emigration. Then he became Consul General in Mexico. He rewrote his poem *Canto General* which describes the entire South American continent. It consists of about 250 poems and was published in 1950. This was translated into 10 languages. In 1943, Neruda returned to Chile. In 1945, he became a senator of the Republic and joined the Communist Party of Chile. He protested against President Gonzalez's policy against miners in 1947 and had to remain underground for two years. He left the country in 1949 and again returned in 1952. *Las Uvas y el Viento* (1954) deals with the events of his exile. The collection of poems *Cien sonetos de amor* published in 1959 is dedicated to his wife Matilde Urrutia. His poems were based predominantly on the themes of love, depression, politics and nature.

Pablo Neruda was one of the most well-known Chilean poets. He was one of the most significant Latin-American poets to write in Spanish in the twentieth century. He received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1971. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in France. He died on 23 September 1973.

### ***Check your progress***

1. Which work of Pablo Neruda was widely translated?

---

2. Which poem of Neruda deals with his exile?

---

3. What was the real name of Pablo Neruda?

---

### **16.2.3.1 “Clenched Fist”:**

#### **Appreciation of the poem**

*Clenched Soul* occurs in Neruda's collection of poems *100 Love Sonnets* published in 1959. The poem is a sonnet which offers penetrating insight into human emotions.

*Clenched Soul* depicts the human condition and emotions. In the first stanza, the speaker describes the soul as clenched and shut off from the world. It conveys resistance as the soul holds something tightly. It deals with the speaker's emotional state which remains confined to itself.



The second stanza of the poem depicts the speaker's will to release himself from the state of isolation and join with the world. He desires to free the soul and live to the fullest in the lap of nature. He wants to be immersed in the beauty of nature. In the third stanza, the speaker describes the suffering of a living being. He refers to the world as a "wild abyss" containing sorrow and pain. The speaker finds it difficult to deal with the bitter reality of life. In the fourth stanza, the speaker points out that death is unavoidable and the nature of life changes. But human beings do not accept this fact and try to escape from reality. In the final stanza the speaker again refers to "clenched soul." He considers himself as a prisoner confined to his own emotions and cannot break free. It hints that struggle in life is constant and human beings have their limitations.

Thus, the poem deals with human experience. The poem depicts human beings' struggle to face bitter reality. It deals with the universal human experience.

***Check your progress***

1. Explain the form of the poem.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the poem about?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What does the poet refer to the world?

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significance of the title of the poem**

Neruda first describes the speaker's mind which is melancholic. The speaker rues the loss of a moment of romance shared with someone close to him. He regrets the loss and becomes sad. The image of the "blue night" suggests darkness. The speaker desires more intense moments. The sunset depicts beauty and joy that the poet and his beloved are unable to experience. It evokes a sense of celebration, but the speaker is isolated and sad. The son is referred to as a coin which hints at fragility and the moment they desire is beyond them. The speaker remembers a moment with a person but cannot reach it. "Clenched Soul" hints at the powerful emotions which cannot be controlled. The moment, being in the past, cannot be recaptured. There is a kind of rhetoric which hints at uncertainty. The speaker accepts that the person he desires has left and he is lost. It hints at emptiness and the speaker feels vulnerable at the absence of a person the speaker desires, which leaves a void in his life.

The poem is a reflection on loss and desire. It is about the desires that are not fulfilled and continue to haunt people forever. The speaker personally is overwhelmed by a strong emotion that he cannot control. He desires something that he cannot possess.

The poem celebrates the beauty and the fleetingness of life. Imagery creates a sense of surprise in the natural world. “The clenched soul” indicates that emotions are human and cannot be repressed. The poet depicts a sense of loss and desire which is personal as well as universal. Thus, the title of the poem is significant.

***Check your progress***

1. What does the image of the “blue night” suggest?

---

2. Why does the poet refer to the fiesta sunset?

---

3. What does the poet mean by “clenched soul”?

---

**Poetic devices**

The poem consists of fourteen lines. It contains two quatrains and two tercets. Iambic pentameter is used in the poem. The rhyming scheme of the poem is abba abba cdc dcd. Repetition is used in the second line of the poem. A metaphor is used in the third line of the poem as the night is described as blue. The sun is compared with a coin in the sixth and seventh line. So it is an example of a simile. Simile is again used in the twelfth line as the sweater is compared with a dog. Repetition is used in the second last line of the poem as the word ‘always’ is repeated to emphasize that he remembers his beloved every time.

Imagery is used in the poem to create the desired poetic effect. The image of the world as a “wild abyss” is used to convey sorrow and pain. The image of the “blue night” hints at darkness. The fiesta sunset depicts beauty and joy that the poet and his beloved cannot experience. It evokes a sense of celebration, but the speaker is isolated and sad. The son is referred to as a coin which hints at fragility and the moment they desire is beyond them. He recalls his pleasant memories, but he refers to these memories as ‘burned’ like a “coin in my hand”. “The clenched soul” suggests that emotions are human and cannot be repressed.

***Check your progress***

1. What is the rhyming scheme of the poem?

---

2. Explain the use of figures of speech in the poem.

---

3. Which image is used to describe the world?

---

#### **16.2.4 Comparative Assessment:**

##### **The poetic genius of Emily Dickinson, Khalil Gibran and Pablo Neruda:**

Emily Dickinson was an introvert and lived a private life. With the exception of a few pieces, all her poems were published after her death. It is possible to group these poems under the headings like love, death, immortality etc. Her treatment of various themes, nature, love, pain, suffering, death, and immortality is distinctive and her poems on these subjects have their own identity. Some of Dickinson's early poems contain a praise of nature as "the gentlest mother." She looks upon nature as a moral teacher or guide. This attitude is evident in the poems, *I had been hungry all the year, and She is content with picturing changes*, etc. "A light exists in spring and "As imperceptibility as grief" are fine poems about spring and summer respectively. She had a genuine reverence for nature.

Many of Emily Dickinson's poems are concerned with the themes of death and immortality, the Creator, and the Redeemer. These themes are mystical in nature and her poems on these themes are the fruit of a very deep insight and an intensely emotional nature. The poems do belong to the body of that literature which is based on the search of the mystic of God and for union with Him. There is faith, certainty and religious conviction. We find an effort at a complete identification with the Divine spirit which motivates the true mystic. She believes in God and in the things of the spirit. Death and heaven are the objects of constant speculation. In the poem, "Because I could not stop for Death," she sees death as a person whom she knew and trusted.

Emily Dickinson described immortality as the 'flood subject.' She knew that one of the strongest incentives to belief was the intense desire of the heart not to be robbed by the grave. This was the firmest proof for now to believe that the grave was a gateway to immortality. She described it in the poem, "Because I could not stop for death." In this poem, death escorts her to her new house that is her grave. The horses lead her to eternity. It is one of her most confident statements about the existence of the soul after death.

Her treatment of the passion of love is characterized by the originality which is a feature of all her work. Love, in her view, triumphs over both life and death to achieve an almost divine

status. One of her poems, "Till Death is narrow loving," states that only death's separation truly measures the extent of love. Her poem, "The Soul selects her own society" describes the exclusiveness of affection or the highly selective quality of love. "Again his voice is at the door" deals with a sublime emotional moment when two human beings are united by love. She sublimated her passion of love and visualized a heavenly marriage with God or Christ. An important poem in this category is "I cannot live with you," where human passion is transformed into divine love.

Emily Dickinson's poetry is even more distinctive in technique. Her use of words, consciousness and economy, metrical and rhyme patterns are different. Dickinson's treatment of various themes is of astonishing integrity and originality. Many of her poems are meditation on the nature of things. Her symbols and her metaphors have much clarity and transparency. Her poems are perfectly natural as she had a very keen observation.

Khalil Gibran was a Lebanese-American poet and philosopher. Gibran wrote various genres, such as poetry, short stories, fables, political essays and letters. He also wrote plays in English and Arabic. His works revolve around religion, science, love, happiness and death. His works are romantic in nature and influenced by the Bible, Friedrich Nietzsche and William Blake. The works are lyrical and depict Gibran's religious nature. He used an experimental style which was most of the time oratorical. Symbolism pervades his works. His language is less idiomatic. His most famous work is *The Prophet*, published in 1923. It is about the Prophet who was about to board a ship but was stopped by the residents of the city who requested him to give information about the mysteries of life. The prophet then talks about love, marriage, passion and death. His longest book is *Jesus, the Son of Man: His Words and His Deeds as Told and Recorded by Those Who Knew Him*, published in 1928. It was about the views of about seventy eight people who knew Jesus. His final work was *The Earth God* (1931), which was a debate of three Gods on the transcendence of the human world. "On Children" occurs in Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet*. In this poem, Khalil Gibran offered advice on children. The prophet explains how parents should think of their child.

Pablo Neruda is the most important Latin-American poet of the twentieth century. Pablo Neruda's first collection of poems *Crepusculario* was published in 1923. These poems resemble Symbolic poetry. His second collection of poems *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* was a result of a failed love affair. The four distinctive traits observed in Neruda's poetry are love, depression, political issues and usual daily life. These trends are in sync with Neruda's

personality. His love affairs, depression in exile, commitment to political causes and interest in daily life bear influence on his poetry. Being a communist, he advocated social justice, which is reflected in his poems too.

***Check your progress***

1. How does Emily Dickinson deal with immortality?

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2. Is Khalil Gibran a mystic poet?

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3. Mention any two distinctive characteristics of Pablo Neruda's poetry.

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**Thematic Comparison of Emily Dickinson's "I'm Nobody! Who are You?," Khalil Gibran's "On Children", and Pablo Neruda's "Clenched Soul"**

Emily Dickinson's "I'm Nobody! Who are You?" enquires about the necessity for garnering attention. It talks about the virtues of isolation. It is an ode to solitude and anonymity which was a special feature of Dickinson's poetry. Emily and those people like her chose to be 'Nobodies' over 'Somebodies.' The poem suggests that there is nothing wrong with living a secluded life.

The speaker claims that she is nobody. She also encourages others to be nobody. The speaker's identity is anonymous. She asserts that it is important to be nobody. She points out that some people yearn for fame. They would want others to become like them. She suggests that people that shy people are not boring. Instead, she calls 'somebody' as dreary. These people are obsessed with their fame and sing praises of their own. They are desperate to seek attention and show that they are important, but the poet asserts that one should live alone and should not be dependent on others for recognition of their identities.

In "On Children," Khalil Gibran informs the parents that they do not own their children. He points out that children exist on the earth as life longings for itself. Gibran expresses his views through the prophet. Gibran regards parenthood as a spiritual journey in which the child and parents have a role to play as determined by God. The child is compared to an arrow and looks at the future. The parent is likened to the bow and should be stable and both are dependent on God, the divine archer. The theme of the poem is spirituality and humanism. The poem indicates that the journey of every person depends on hope and faith. It is about how children should be raised spiritually. It emphasizes the connection between generations and the

significance of recognizing the qualities of every individual. He stresses that children can shape the world and parents have a responsibility to guide them. Parents should guide children but also respect their freedom and realize their talent.

In “Clenched Soul,” the themes of loss, confusion and love persist. Pablo Neruda portrays his grief, despair and heartbreak at the loss of his beloved. He describes the first night when he will be alone. He will be without a person with whom he was supposed to spend his entire life. He does not know what to do without her. He remembers his past. He thinks that he and his beloved are walking together “hand in hand”. The blue colour is used to highlight his sorrow and deeper emotions. He recalls his pleasant memories, but he refers to these memories as ‘burned’ like a “coin in my hand.” It signifies the pain he felt at his beloved’s absence. He is confused and asks himself why his beloved deserted him .He thinks that she might have found someone else in life. Neruda portrays love in a negative light. He stresses that love can be painful.

***Check your progress***

1. Mention the thematic concerns in Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are You?”

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2. Does the concept of an archer relate to the theme of Khalil Gibran’s “On Children”?

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3. What does the term Clenched Soul indicate?

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**Comparison of Symbolism/Imagery in Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are You?,” Khalil Gibran’s “On Children”, and Pablo Neruda’s “Clenched Soul”**

Imagery is not much used in Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are You?” The only image used in the poem is that of a frog. The speaker compares ‘somebody’ to a frog. This frog is the public creature which indicates that frogs signal their arrival through loud croaks. The other frogs surrounding them imitate. It hints that ‘somebodies’ are also interested in talking about themselves all the time to other people. The frog symbolizes this irritating tendency. The bog is a swampy and smelly place. It indicates that the company of somebody is an unpleasant experience. The way adopted by somebody to be known as being significant makes them insignificant.

In Khalil Gibran’s “On Children,” the speaker provides an image of a bow and an arrow. God holds the bow and aims to shows an arrow at a fixed target. He calls parents as ‘bows’ and children as ‘arrows’. Thus, like bows, parents shoot their children towards a better future. If the

bow is flexible, it will bend more. If the string of the bow is strong, it can impart strength to the arrow. If the aim is steady, the arrow can reach its destination perfectly. Gibran refers to God as an archer and thus the Supreme Archer sends children to the world with a definite purpose. The cycle of life continues for generations. The souls of the children reside in a metaphysical home. It is not possible to recognize its vastness. But one can live in the present and raise children perfectly.

In “Clenched Soul,” the symbolism of a hurt dog, the color blue, the insecurity of twilight darkness of night is used to signify the emotion of loss and sadness. The hurt dog symbolizes the broken-hearted animal’s request for aid. The sun is a symbol of happiness but turns into an object which burns the character. The blue colour indicates the poet’s sorrow and deeper emotions. He recalls his pleasant memories, but he refers to these memories as ‘burned’ like a “coin in my hand.” It hints at the pain he felt at his beloved’s absence.

### ***Check your progress***

1. What image is used in Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are You?”
2. Mention the symbol(s) used in Khalil Gibran’s “*On Children?*”
3. What images/symbols are employed in “Clenched Soul?”

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## **16.3 Learning Outcomes**

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At the end of this Unit, you should have understood that Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are You?” is a lyric on isolation and insignificance, Khalil Gibran’s “On Children” is an advice to parents and Pablo Neruda’s “Clenched Soul” is a romantic poem. You should have become familiar with the figures of speech, the poetic devices and the thematic concerns of the individual poems. You have also learned to attempt a comparative assessment of the prescribed poems.

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## **16.4 Glossary**

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### **I’m Nobody! Who are you?**

**Dreary:** Dull, bleak

**Bog:** An area of wet muddy ground

### **On Children**

**Bosom:** A woman's chest

**Longing:** Desire

**Dwell:** Living place

**Tarries:** Delay leaving a place

**Archer:** One who shoots with a bow and arrows

**Swift:** Quick

**Clenched Soul**

**Clenched:** To hold very tightly

**Fiesta:** Festival, celebration

**Recede:** Move back, withdraw

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## 16.5 Sample Questions

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### 16.5.1 Objective Questions:

1. Emily Dickinson died at the age of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Fifty five                      (b) Sixty  
(c) Forty                              (d) Thirty
2. Public life, to Dickinson, is \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Bliss                                (b) Busy  
(c) Tiresome                          (d) Dreary
3. Public life is compared to the life of a \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Frog                                 (b) Lion  
(c) Sailor                                (d) Poet
4. Khalil Gibran was influenced by the drawings of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) Mona Lisa                          (b) M.F.Hussain  
(c) Leonardo da Vinci                (d) Michel Angelo
5. Khalil Gibran's Arabic style was influenced by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(a) 19<sup>th</sup> century European romantic writers  
(b) 20<sup>th</sup> century modernists  
(c) American modernists  
(d) French realists



6. The speaker, Al-Mustafa says that parents are bows through which God sends their children as \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) Messengers            (b) Angels  
(c) Arrows                (d) Playthings
7. “On Children” discusses the idea of nurturing \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) Nature                (b) Good habits  
(c) Parents                (d) Children
8. The line, “Your children are not your children” is an example of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) Simile                (b) Metaphor  
(c) Oxymoron            (d) Irony
9. Neftali Ricardo Reyes Basoalto adopted the pen name of Pablo Neruda in memory of the poet, \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) Pablo Picasso        (b) Jan Neruda  
(c) John Keats            (d) Robert Frost
10. “Clenched Soul” occurs in Neruda’s collection of poems *100 Love Sonnets* published in \_\_\_\_\_ .
- (a) 1959                (b) 1962  
(c) 1966                (d) 1968.

### 16.5.2 Short Answer Questions:

1. Comment on Emily Dickinson’ views on public life.
2. Examine the theme of self-imposed exile in the poem, “I’m Nobody! Who are You?”
3. How is the concept of the bow and arrow central to the theme of the poem “On Children”?
4. What advice does the prophet give to the woman?
5. What does Pablo Neruda mean by the term *Clenched Soul*?

### 16.5.3 Long Answer Questions:

1. Make a comparative assessment of the poetic genius of Emily Dickinson, Khalil Gibran and Pablo Neruda.
2. Bring out the thematic comparison of Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are You?”, Khalil Gibran’s “On Children”, and Pablo Neruda’s “Clenched Soul”.
3. Examine the use of imagery in Emily Dickinson’s “I’m Nobody! Who are You?”, Khalil Gibran’s “On Children” and Pablo Neruda’s “Clenched Soul”.

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## 16.6 Suggested Learning Resources

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1. Bloom, Harold. Ed. *Modern Critical Views: Emily Dickinson*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985.
2. Johnson, Tamara. Ed. *Readings on Emily Dickinson*. San Diego: Greenhaven, 1997.
3. Dickinson, Emily. "I'm Nobody! Who are you?" In *Poems and other Writings*. New York: Library of America, 2000.
4. "Khalil, Gibran 1883-1931," Poets.org <https://poets.org/poet/Khalil-Gibran>.
5. R.C., Abbot. "Khalil Gibran on why parents don't own their children." <https://rcabbot.medium.com/Khalil-Gibran-on-why-parents-don't-own-their-children54061ccdda297>
6. Pablo, Neruda: Poems. <https://PoemsHunter.com.2011>.

MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY  
M.A. English  
III SEMESTER EXAMINATION, February 2022  
Code : MAEN303CCT Paper : Comparative Literature

Time: 3 hours

Max. Marks : 70 Marks

Note : This question paper consists of two parts : Part – A and Part-B Number of words to answers each question is only indicative. Attempt all parts.

Part-A contains 10 questions, of which students are supposed to answer 8 questions. Answer each question in approximately 100 words. Each question carries 05 marks. (8x5=40 marks)

Part-B contains 5 questions, of which students are supposed to answer 3 questions. Answer each question in approximately 250 words. Each question carries 10 marks. (3x10=30 marks)

Part – A

1. Write a note on *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a post-colonial novel.
2. With reference to Appa Rao's poem that you have read, comment on the element of patriotism in it.
3. Attempt the character sketch of Irina Arkadina.
4. How is the person whom Khusro is addressing in his poem *Just by Casting a Glance* related to him?
5. Write a critique of Pablo Neruda's *Clenched Soul*.
6. Write a short note on the depiction of violence in Derek Walcott's poem *A Far Cry from Africa*.
7. Critically examine the use of imagery in the poem *Five Ways to Kill a Man*.
8. What do you understand by Walter Benjamin's concept of 'Kinship of Languages'?
9. Attempt critical appreciation of Emily Dickenson's *I am Nobody! Who are you*.
10. Comment on the element of modernism in the poetry of Arun Kolatkar and Kamla Das.

Part – B

11. Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem is a critique of partition. Discuss
12. Write a detailed note on the use of supernatural in the play *Hamlet*.
13. "No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the audience"  
Comment
14. According to Jonathan Culler, what is Comparative Literature?
15. Comment on 'Love versus Autonomy' as a major theme of *Jane Eyre*.

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