

**B.A. Third Year**  
**English Literature, Paper - II**

**INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH**



**मध्यप्रदेश भोज (मुक्त) विश्वविद्यालय – भोपाल**  
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## INTRODUCTION

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Indian English literature (IEL) defines the body of work by Indian writers who write in the English language and whose native or co-native language could be one of the numerous languages of India. Indian writing in English has a relatively short but highly charged history. In 1793, Sake Dean Mahomed wrote perhaps the first book by an Indian in English, called *The Travels of Dean Mahomed*. However, most early Indian writing in English was usually non-fictional work, such as biographies and political essays. In the present day, Indian English literature has been associated with the works of the members of the Indian diaspora which include Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, Anita Desai, who are of Indian descent. Indian authors have long since carved a niche for themselves in the minds of readers worldwide. With their uniquely Indian style of writing characterized by satirical descriptions of their land, fluidity of language and a melancholy vibe, writers from the far eastern subcontinent are adored by critics and the common populace alike.

This book, *Indian Writing in English* is written in a self-instructional format and is divided into five units. Each unit begins with an Introduction to the topic followed by an outline of the Objectives. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to test the reader's understanding of the topic. A list of Self-Assessment Questions is also provided at the end of each unit and includes short-answer as well as long-answer questions. The Summary and Key Terms section are useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

## NOTES



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# UNIT 1 M.K. NAIK: HISTORY OF INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH

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M.K. Naik: History of  
Indian Writing in English

## NOTES

### Structure

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit, you will learn about M. K. Naik's work *A History of Indian English Literature*.

M. K. Naik is a renowned critic, editor and historian of Indian English Literature. He is the former Professor and Chairperson of the Department of English at Karnatak University, Dharwad and spends his time between Pune, India and Melbourne, Australia. Naik stood first in his B.A. exams and was guided by Barrister Balasaheb Khardekar to take up English Literature as a subject of specialization as opposed to Marathi Literature. That was perhaps the beginning of his initiation in English literature, an initiation that was to last a lifetime. Apart from *A History of Indian English Literature*, he has also published *Raja Rao* (1972, 1982), *Mulk Raj Anand* (1973), *The Ironic Vision: A Study of the Fiction of R.K. Narayan* (1983) and *Dimensions of Indian English Literature* (1984) and so on. Prominent among the collections edited by him are *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* (1968, 1972, 1977), *Aspects of Indian Writing in English* (1979), *Perspectives on Indian Drama in English* (1977), *Perspectives on Indian Prose in English* (Abhinav, 1982) and *Perspectives on Indian Poetry in English* (Abhinav, 1984).

He is the author of five books of light verse under the *nom de plume* Emken. These include *Indian Clerihews*, *Indian limericks and Beowulf and All That: An Unorthodox History of English Literature in Comic Verse*. He has recently co-authored (with Shyamala A. Narayan) the widely acknowledged volume *Indian English Literature (1980-2000): A Critical Survey* (2001). His *History of Indian English Literature* (1982) has gone into seven editions and is considered vade mecum for the students of Indian writing in English.

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### 1.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Assess the nature of the resistance Indian writers in English face from critics and authors in India and abroad
- Discuss the structure and organization of M.K. Naik's historical research
- Describe the attitude of Indian writers to Britain before and after the 1857 revolt
- Examine the similarities between M.K. Naik's and K.R.S. Iyengar's work

### 1.2 THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE

Both K.R.S. Iyengar and M. K. Naik start on a common assumption:

Indian English Literature began as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late 18th century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India. As a result of this encounter, as F.W. Bain puts it, 'India, a withered trunk ..... suddenly shot out with foreign foliage'. (Naik 1982-2006, 1) One form this foliage took was that of original writing in English by Indians, this partially fulfilling Samuel Daniel's sixteenth century prophecy concerning the English language:

*Who (in time) knows whither we may vent  
The treasures of our tongue? To what strange shores  
This gain of our best glory shall be sent  
T' enrich unknowing nations with our stores.*

This stance should be read critically. It has the following crucial assumptions that may have been acceptable for critics like Naik and Iyengar, but is no longer feasible for us:

- (i) That pre-British India was 'stagnant', 'chaotic', 'a withered trunk' that was activated, put into order or 'shot out with foreign foliage'. This as Vishwanathan, Achebe and others will argue is an assessment that springs from a colonised Indian position that was current in the immediate phase after colonization. Both Naik and Iyengar can be understood as writing under that influence.
- (ii) Colonization was a benign and productive influence that triggered creativity in the colonies that the colonies were not capable of by themselves. Thus, colonization, in the long run, proved beneficial to the colonies because of the rich creative ferment it produced. Chinua Achebe's whole thesis rests on the premise that pre-colonial Africa was not a land of savagery which the European powers conquered and civilized. An original and native form of order, perhaps more valuable for the colony than the one imposed by the British already

existed in the colonies before the European powers came in. The colonizing Europeans destabilized this original and native order. What followed was this broken and disturbed order tediously negotiating with the new order. This is how Indian writing in English is viewed today.

The reason why the unit begins with this refutation is because it is important to understand where and how this literature, whose history you are reading here, emerged in the first place. Indian writing in English is not an imitation of English writers nor is it Indian in the pre-colonial sense of the term if pre-colonial writing can be spoken of as Indian. It emerged out of an 'eventful encounter' between two parties culturally and politically different in many ways. The fact that one because of its 'rationality' and strategizing managed to control the other and thereby ushered in a dubious 'peace' does not mean that one should be ranked superior and the other inferior. Who knows where native Indian literature would have gone in the absence of colonial intervention? It could have been for the better or the worse-or perhaps both depending upon the yardstick we use to evaluate it.

After these common starting assumptions, the next step both Iyengar and Naik take is to chart the complexity of the literary landscape. It is in this charting, however, that Naik and Iyengar part ways. There are some critical issues on which Naik disagrees with Iyengar. The subsequent section will point out some of the important issues that confront Naik while charting this landscape and the first is of course the term with which to describe the writing whose history Naik is out is writer.

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### 1.3 THE PROBLEM OF NAMING AND DEFINING

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The first problem that a historian of any new area faces is to define the area that he has chosen to work on. The problem, in other words, is to find an idea or a set of ideas that can form an effective boundary of the field. Naming is just the beginning of it, and as you will see, many other important problems emerge.

While most critics agree that the area loosely labelled Indian writing in English is a discrete area of study, there is very little agreement on what it should be called. Naik poses the problem thus:

‘..this body of writing has, from time to time, been designated variously as “Indo-Anglian literature”, “Indian Writing in English” and “Indo-English literature”’

Naik devotes another page in his Introduction to the issue, this time to discuss the various appellations that have been given to this area from time to time namely:

‘Indo-Anglian literature’, ‘Indian Writing in English’, ‘Indo-English literature’ and ‘Indian English literature’. The first of these terms was first used as the title of the *Specimen Compositions from Native*

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*Students*, published in Calcutta in 1883. The phrase received general currency when K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, the pioneer of this discipline, used it as a title to his first book on the subject: *Indo-Anglian Literature* (1943)...

There are numerous finer shades that need to be distinguished within the writing produced in India. The first distinction arises from the nationality of who writes and with what intent.

Strictly speaking, Indian English literature may be defined as literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality. It is clear that neither 'Anglo-Indian Literature', nor literal translations by others (as distinguished from creative translations by the authors themselves) can legitimately form part of this literature. The former comprises the writings of British or Western authors concerning India. Kipling, Forster, F. W. Bain, Sir Edwin Arnold, F. A. Steel, John Masters, Paul Scott, M. M. Kaye and many others have all written about India, but their work obviously belongs to British literature. Similarly, translations from the Indian languages into English cannot also form part of Indian English literature, except when they are creative translations by the authors themselves. If Homer and Virgil, Dante and Dostoevsky translated into English do not become British authors by any stretch of the imagination, there is little reason why Tagore's novels, most of his short stories and some of his plays translated into English by others should form part of Indian English literature. The crux of the matter is distinctive literary phenomenon that emerges when an Indian sensibility tries to express itself originally in a medium of expression which is not primarily Indian.

This kind of differentiation helps Naik evolve a working concept that may sound good but is not-workable because of the rather large margin of subjectivity:

'The crux of the matter is the distinctive literary phenomenon that emerges when an Indian sensibility tries to express itself originally in a medium of expression which is not primarily Indian.'

This leaves a small class of Indian society called Anglo-Indian, i.e., people who claim to have English as their mother tongue, but are born and brought up in India like Henry Derozio, Ruskin Bond etc. However, even in their case, the Indian strain in them is bound to affect the nature of both their artistic sensibility and their way of expressions.

Naik goes on to discuss a few other cases where his working concept runs into problems. He begins with Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Ruth Praver Jhabvala. Coomaraswamy born out of a Sri Lankan father and English Mother, was neither an Indian citizen nor did he live in India. Yet, the entire orientation of his thought is so unmistakably Indian that it is impossible not to consider him an Indian English writer. On the other hand, are author like Naipaul whose Indian ancestry is unquestionable, but he is so much of an outsider that he cannot be considered a writer in the Indian English traditional; he must be included in the history of West Indian writing.

One can ask why is it important to find an appropriate label or appellation for an area of history? Why is it important to defend one's label and critique others? Both Naik and Iyengar are deeply caught up in these activities. The first necessity on the part of the historian is practical. If a historian does not evolve a working definition of the area he or she is out to historicize, then how does one conceptualize the historical project at all? The necessity, in other words, emerges not from the desire to label, but from the desire to write a history.

The second necessity is ideological or political. Definitions, contrary to what science would have us believe, are ideological effects. Scholars and academics arrive at a definition of an entity because it serves their ideological ends. Others disagree because it does not serve their ideological end. However, the rhetoric of their explanations indicate that the reason why they have chosen the label is because it represents the truth for them.

Let us illustrate this point by comparing the forces that frame Iyengar's 'Indo-Anglian' and Naik's 'Indian literature in English'. Recollect a paragraph as noted by Iyengar:

'I prefer the term "Indo-Anglian" to "Anglo-Indian" or "Indo-English". The late Principal P. Seshadri included, not only Sir Edwin Arnold and Trego Webb, but also Tagore and Sarojini Naidu, in his brief survey of "Anglo-Indian Poetry"; and Mr. George Sampson, in his *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, gives a section to "Anglo-Indian Literature" and refers in it, among others, to Tagore, Manmohan Ghose and Sri Aurobindo. But I thought it desirable to distinguish between Englishmen who write on Indian themes and Indians who use English as the medium of artistic expression; and I saw no harm in applying the already current terms "Anglo-Indian" and "Indo-Anglian" to these two categories of writers.'

Iyengar's point is distinction.

Writing at the end of the colonial era and at the beginning of the independence era, it was important to define everything Indian as opposed to British. Therefore, it was important to acknowledge the 'Anglo' component in terms of the language used, it was equally important to indicate that the person and sensibility writing is Indian as are the ethos and the subject matter. For him, these assertions, exclusivist and differential functions are adequately met in the term Indo-Anglian, thus he is happy with it.

However, as Iyengar himself acknowledged later, everyone was not happy with this coinage. Naik, as you have seen, is not happy with translations by non-Indians or Indians into English of Indian works as Indian English literature. Naik toes the establishment line when he agrees to use the term accepted by the Sahitya Akademi, the official academy of letters in India. The term aptly demonstrates that it is one of the many streams that flows into the ocean of Indian literature, as well as the fact that it is an inevitable product of the nationalization of the English language to express the Indian sensibility.

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It should be noted that the Akademi is interested in sustaining an image of multi-cultural India where every culture deserves and receives equal respect. Besides it, also wants to indicate that English is no longer a European language, but one that has been completely nationalized in India. This gives the country a natural and inalienable right over the Indian variant of English. Think carefully, these are not literary but political statements, and the term 'Indian English' literature serves this political end very well.

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### 1.4 STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

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Naik's historical research has a structure and organization that is different from Iyengar's research. Although both of them have an identical subject matter and goal-to write a history of literature written in India in English between 1800s-1940s/70s, it appears that their intents are different. It is also a fact that Naik's research follows and is therefore aided and guided by the works of many scholars and researchers like Iyengar. Iyengar, on the contrary, was something of a pioneer for which he is justly acknowledged and given credit. His job was to set the ball rolling, Naik's task is to drive it forward. Both accomplish their challenges pretty well. Iyengar's volume, given the limitations of communication and technology available in the 1940s appears gigantic. Naik's works, given the tradition of which he is a part appears impressive.

The first element one notices in Naik's book is the exploration of the nature and scope of the field called Indian Literature in English. Iyengar begins similarly. Each ends with a different label for this field, one differential, the other institutional. However, by the 1970s the parameters of the debate have changed. The contesting labels have changed and the reasons why one label should be used over the other have also undergone a change. You have already read about the different reasons offered by Naik and Iyengar in one of the sections above.

Naik's more informed approach to the field is also reflected in the structure of his text. He organizes the genres and the authors writing them under four broad historical eras that can be approximately classified as Pre-1857, Post-1857, Gandhian era and post-independence era. While this classification can be interpreted as not much more than a way of organizing the content according to very broad and sweeping historical movements, this also has to be interpreted in opposition to the individual centered chapters of Iyengar. For Naik, individual authors are best understood as emerging from broad historical movements which define their styles and content, while in Iyengar big individual names like Rammohan Roy, Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi are seen directing the currents of history. While Iyengar broadly understands history as determined by significant individual interventions, Naik understands the materiality of history as determining individual writings. Without being conscious of it, Naik reflects a Marxist bias.



The sections are divided into subsections on the basis of genre, mainly prose, poetry, drama, fiction and in some the short story. Prose is the most voluminous in all the sections because it includes all kinds of writings—articles, features, speeches, monographs, dissertations, and so forth. This leaves very little out of the scope of the book. Genre based subdivision has its own advantages and disadvantages. It permits grouping of works with identical themes within a given genre, and also helps study the evolution of criticism ideas through the form and content of these genres. However, it does not permit the possibility of studying comparatively a theme as it manifests through different genres.

Another interesting highlight of the Index is the emergence of the short story as a genre in the Gandhian era. Not one or two but about fifteen odd novelists are discussed in this section. While the genre had been prevalent in India since 1885, very few authors (four to be precise) are mentioned as beginning to use this form. Not only does it indicate the formation of a critical consciousness in the authors that can analyse the then current social and cultural milieu to produce the short stories and the longer novels, it also indicates the emergence of a relatively leisured reading class to receive such stories. The sensibility that creates a short story is not only observant and critical of its surroundings, but has also developed the analytical, organizational and presentation tools to give it the shape of a short story. It is not surprising that such abilities should be seen stirring in the Indian masses around the time Mahatma Gandhi radicalized the political environment into the anti-British campaign.

Before concluding, let us briefly state a few lines about Naik's treatment of the authors. The formula applied throughout the work, especially in the later sections, is that a critical recap of the earlier writings in that genre begins the exploration that then flows into a brief treatment of the important themes in the works. Given the number of authors he deals with here, it is scarcely possible to treat them with any more rigour in a somewhat slender history volume. If Iyengar discusses three to four major works in a given chapter, Naik goes upto ten or fifteen. This is not only because he looks at a much bigger period of history, but also because the three or four decades following the freedom movement were vigorously creative in the literary realm. Post-independence India was grappling with a number of issues that demanded intense exploration and the Indian literary and artistic sensibility was responding vigorously to it.

### Check Your Progress

1. What is the common assumption through which both Naik and Iyengar start their work?
2. What is the Sahitya Akademi interested in sustaining?
3. List one reason why Naik and Iyengar find it necessary to label the area of history or literature that they are examining.

## NOTES

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## 1.5 BEGINNING OF ENGLISH EDUCATION IN INDIA

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### NOTES

Like in the case of Iyengar, the first question that bothers Naik is to establish how, why and when English education began in India?

Let us pause for a moment to look at the significance of this event to a historian of literature. How does it matter when English was introduced into the Indian education system? What the historian should try to study is when did it flower into Indian literature in English? Neither Naik nor Iyengar seem to be interested in framing out the relevance of this original question.

One obvious advantage of asking this question is that it helps us chart who the people were who were first exposed to English education and how a literary community with certain specific interests emerged from it. It is true that the first need for educating Indians in English was felt because Englishmen could not rule a colony like India without a common language between the ruler and the ruled. Besides the imperialists within the Britishers felt that it was a potent instrument to colonize 'The lesser breeds without the law'. They also thought that the spread of English education among the nations would lead to the assimilation of western culture by the Indians and that this would make for the stability of the empire—a view strongly advocated by Charles Grant, who argued: 'To introduce the language of the conquerors seems to be an obvious means of assimilating a conquered people to them'.

The issue of English education was hotly debated between the imperialists and orientalist among the Englishmen. Some Indian intellectuals including Raja Ram Mohan Roy argued and wrote extensively for the cause in the name of the advancement of the natives through the enlightening education and thought systems of England.

Without a body of advisers, administration clerks and lower level functionaries, a few thousand Englishmen were finding it increasingly difficult to administer a huge territory and population like India.

While English education provided the administrative staff desperately required by the British, it eventually led to the emergence of many leaders and intellectuals that the British would not have been happy to own. Jawaharlal Nehru was the product of the liberal and humanistic learning which was the product of English education. Some of Mahatma Gandhi's political ideals derived from the same ferment. Nirad C. Chaudhuri took the language and the culture in such an intensely purist spirit that he went on to educate Englishmen on English. Vishwanathan's work delves deep into the politics of this cultural appropriation through English and the ways in which it helped or obstructed the British colonial cause.

## 1.6 INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND THE GREAT REVOLT

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Before 1857, British rule in India was generally accepted by most Indians as a great boon divinely delivered. If you look at the ethos of pre-1857 writing by Indians it is steeped in subservience to a superior culture. Raja Ram Mohan Roy worked with missionary zeal to establish an English-centered education and cultural system in India. Fired by Western liberation, he worked extremely towards establishing Western education in India and advocated cultural reforms clearly guided by European ideals and values. His fight against Sati and his writings on women's inheritance rights are good examples of his Europe-inspired concerns.

Similarly, the first notable poet of Indian English literature, Henry Vivian Louis Derozio indicate a strong influence of the British Romantic poets in theme, specifically that of Byron. Although Derozio wrote with a strong nationalistic zeal and patriotic fervour and even included a host of Indian legends and myths in his poem, he insists on writing in English and for an audience that accepted English as the preferred if not the only medium of creative expression.

India-British relations underwent a sea change after the 1857 revolt and that change reflected in the nature of Indian writing in English after 1857. Indian English literature struggled tediously in the next two decades to reject the English model and evolve an authentic artistic utterance for itself. This was primarily because all the administration measures widened the gap between the British and the Indians. As the British withdraw into their protection shell, the possibility of returning to a harmonious unprejudiced relationship became impossible.

The year 1857 effected some important changes in the nature of the British population. The East India Company personnel were replaced by British government officials who were primarily members of the English middle class opting for government employment. These officials, implementing the crown's policies had a very different relation with the country and its people compared to the Company officials who were here pursuing a business fortune and sometimes had a more involved, loving and even personal relationship with the native population. None of this was true of the administrator.

The invention of the steamship and the opening of the Suez Canal reduced the travel time between England and India to thirty days. This meant that unlike the Company officials who settled in India, British administrators could hope to return to India multiple times during one's Indian tenure. Besides, it was now possible for the officers' family and children to join them in India either occasionally or permanently. This led to the rise of British colonies—a tiny white oasis in the brown desert around that effected complete segregation between the natives and the whites in their day to day lives.

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British versions of 1857 had no qualms in calling it a savage uprising by mutinous sepoys and they did nothing to remove the irritation caused by their behaviour after the Revolt. The British was perceived by the native in the stereotype of a colonizer while the Indian was looked upon as a savage. A long and bitter estrangement between the two peoples thus began which remains unaddressed even today.

This deep restructuring of the British-Indian relations led to the rise of a new spirit. With 1857 in the background, the aristocracy lost all its political relations with the British. The lower classes were too meek and powerless to pose any resistance to the British. There was born from the middle stratum of society a new integrated all India class with varied background but a common foreground of knowledge ideas and values. This was the new born soul of the country and in time it was to infuse the whole of India with its spirit.

Indian English literature has a symbiotic relationship with this new-born spirit. On the one hand, it is this spirit that gave rise to the new artistic maturity of this literature; on the other hand, it was this literature which shaped the spirit in a way such that it could lead to the assertion of a new Indian identity that would demand and achieve independence from the British.

The first stirrings of this new spirit began to be felt in religious, social and political reform movements. Many good specimens of Indian English literature were involved in the conceptualization and program of these movements; even as the movements went on to create new literatures behind them. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna mission with the writings of their leading statements like Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Swami Ramakrishna are some relevant examples of the abovesaid claim. One should not forget Syed Ahmad Khan and the reformist politics that he instituted on the Muslim community. These movements strongly covered the length and breadth of India and in one sense continue in their original forms even today.

Soon other leaders and movements, not religious, but social and with definite political implications joined the bandwagon. The British India Association of which Surendra Nath Banerjee was a founding member was intended to be an All-India movement based on the conception of a united India. Indian literature in English is thus linked to the emergence of a nationalist consciousness and a united Indian state.

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## 1.7 RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

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Having catalogued and discussed an entire body of Indian literature in English, Naik, in the last chapter, stops to discuss and assess the nature of the resistance it faces from critics and authors in India and abroad. Let us first explain the what and why of the nature of this resistance. To establish the nature and scope of this resistance, let us look at Naik's assessment of it:

There are, in fact, even today many, both in India and abroad, who believe that Indian English literature is little more than an exotic Indian dish fried in British butter, which may serve to titillate a jaded literary

palate for a time by its outlandish flavour. According to this school of thought, it is, at best merely a hot-house plant, a contrived thing which may, for some time attract attention by its novelty, illustrating the logic of Dr. Johnson's well-known example of a woman's preaching being 'like a dog's walking on its hinder legs. It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all.' Such misgivings are not entirely a new phenomenon. As early as 1895, we find R. C. Dutt declaring, 'All attempts to court the Muses in a foreign tongue', must be fruitless... True genius mistakes its vocation when it struggles in a foreign tongue. More recently, we have Buddhadev Bose's outright denunciation of Indian English poetry as 'a blind alley lined with curio shops, leading nowhere. In the same year, M. Chalapati Rau improved upon this and dismissed the entire Indian English literature in equally strong terms: 'Indian Writing in English is at its best composition, and the best of it is translation. Nothing more is possible except for some one who can live the language, think the language, and write, not compose in, the language. It has also been reported that in the class-room of an American University, R.K. Narayan's fiction is being used to furnish sociological data rather than artistic material for critical assessment.

Critics of Indian English literature have attacked it from different stand-points: The simplest argument is that English is only an acquired language for most Indians. Kailaspathy and Anantha Murthy have argued that 'English with most Indians is still a language of official public affairs, of intellectual and academic debate. They do not use English for their most intimate purposes, "to think and feel, bless and curse, quarrel and kiss." It is maintained, English is the living speech of the people in countries like the United States, Australia and New Zealand, in which a new national literature was and is being forged. English is rooted in the soil there, and can therefore blossom forth, reflecting in its growth the very peculiarities of the soil and the climate and the ethos of the people who have sprung up from and returned to that soil. In contrast with this, English is perhaps in the brain of the Indian, but not in his blood and bones.

John Wain even declares that 'Indian English, being a *lingua franca*, lacks the fineness of nuance that makes literature possible.... It is not a question of "writing English like a native," because many Indians are native English speakers, or nearly so. If English is not the language in which they lisp their first words, it is still acquired very early. The question is, a native of where?"

The list of charges against this literature continues further:

Another oft-repeated charge against Indian English literature is that its practitioners wrote with an eye on the foreign reader and hence try to provide stereo-types of both character and situation, which attract this reader. Like Benjamin Franklin's famous recipe for a New England elegy, the recipe for a successful Indian novel in English is, according to these critics, now very well patented. Take an assortment of sadhus, fakirs, maharajas, agitationists, Westernized Indian men and traditional Indian women—either pious paragons or seductive sirens according to your mood and choice—and let them perform against the

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background of communal riots and nationalistic uprisings; throw in a couple of tiger-hunts, rope-tricks, snakes and elephants; and a pinch of mysticism if you can carry it off successfully—and there you have your Indian English master-piece.

Naik quotes Mr. Sachidananda Vatsyayan to frame another rather characteristic charge against this writing:

‘But why can’t the Indian writer write in his mother tongue? Why must he choose an alien language, ‘which hardly two per cent of his own countrymen understand, and which is very soon to go the way all Englishmen went thirty years ago?’ Presiding over the fifth All India Writers’ Conference in 1965, Mr. Sacchindananda Vatsyayan, a noted modern Hindi writer, launched a scathing attack (in masterly English) on Indian English literature. He dubbed its practitioner ‘a second-class brother’ and ‘a poor relation’ and concluded, ‘To be Indian as a writer is first and foremost to write Indian, to write in an Indian language... . To be Indian must mean giving expression to what is unique in our experience...India cannot have a literature—I mean a great literature and one in which her spirit will find expression—except in an Indian language.’

Let us understand the charges first:

1. Indian literature is an exotic dish fried in British butter. We don’t appreciate its quality. We appreciate the fact that it is there at all.
2. True Indian genius can never find adequate expression in a foreign tongue - R.C. Dutt. This point finds expression in numerous other critiques that vary only in the finer details.
3. Indian English poetry is a blind alley lined with curio shops, leading nowhere - Buddhadev Bose.
4. Indian English being the *lingua-franca* lacks the fineness of the nuance that makes literature possible - John Wain.
5. Its practitioners write with an eye on the foreign reader.
6. Why can’t Indians write in their mother tongue? - S. Vatsayan.

The first and third charge is too immature and callous to be even discussed. If someone discusses Toru Dutt and Raja Ram Mohan Roy as dogs performing on their hind legs or as futile endeavours do not need to be engaged with in a dialogue.

The second and sixth charges are more serious and it should be read more as an invitation to an exploration rather than a refutation of legitimacy. The question it foregrounds is the link between a language and the ferment of ideas it chooses to express. It banks heavily on the assumptions that every Indian mind creates or experiences this ferment in a non-English language and therefore the native language is best suited to expressing this ferment. Therefore, the author should shun the English language and bank on his/her native language.

While the question of the minds ferment and expressive ability’s relation with language is being scientifically explored today, it is really doubtful if the ferment of ideas in cases like Toru Dutt, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore and

R.K. Narayan, to mention some amongst many, existed only in the native language. Faced with a choice of which language to produce a work in, the author weighs questions related to this ferment, target readers, publisher's parameters and a host of other factors. If the author has critically and sensibly explored these issues and made a choice, critics should respect it and evaluate it, rather than denounce it in principle. Many of the Prefaces, articles and discussions mentioned in Naik's text are such explorations which show their authors engaging with some of the same questions that are voiced here. These appear to be little cognizance of those explorations in these principled denunciations.

The fifth charge is accepted in principle by Naik who joins the chorus of condemnation of people who reduce literature to a saleable commodity. In conclusion, let us look at the following quote by Naik that refutes the fourth charge discussed above.

An answer to this question will perhaps be found in the distinction made by Professor Paul Christophersen, between a foreign language and a second language. The former is: 'a language which is not one's own, though one may have a good knowledge of it; a second language is a language which is one's own, though not one's first in order of importance, nor usually, the first to be learnt. A foreign language is used for absorbing the culture of another nation; a second language is used as an alternative way of expressing the culture of one's own.'

In the case of at least some Indians, English has always been 'a second language' in this sense and they have naturally used it for expressing themselves creatively. In fact, until recently—and this is true of many even today—the educated Indian wrote his letters in English, used English at work and play and acquired it so perfectly that it often became a verbal skin, rather than a coat. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, 'It is not true in all cases that one can't write first class things in a learnt language.' The example of Conrad, who learnt English at the age of twenty-six comes to mind immediately. He wrote, 'My faculty to write in English is as natural as any other aptitude with which I might have been born... Its very idioms, I truly believe, had a direct action on my temperament and fashioned my still plastic character... If I had not written in English, I would not have written at all.'

Vladimir Nabokov wrote eight novels in Russian, turned to English at the age of forty and wrote eight novels in this language, including *Lolita*. And in our own generation, the ambidextrous Samuel Beckett has, by this example, again shown that creative effort is possible for a writer in more languages than one. But perhaps the best argument in support of Indian English literature is the fact that the best in it has been taken seriously and subjected to minute appraisal by critics in both India and abroad. Surely, the sensibility of men like E.M. Forster and Lawrence Durrell, Graham Greene, William Walsh and Jack Lindsay in the west and Srinivasa Iyengar and V.K. Gokak in the east cannot be said to have suddenly undergone a complete critical paralysis when confronted by Indian English literature, for they have all appreciated the finer things in it. And even the most touchy Indians will have to concede that not all the Western praise is mere patronising, nor all the Indian commendation brazen salesmanship. Again, the proof of the success of

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Indian English literature is its success. The steady interest it has roused, in recent years, in English-speaking countries shows that it has merits other than those of sheer novelty and exoticism.

One last issue needs to be taken up before we conclude this discussion on Nayak. Why have certain well-meaning and reputed intellectuals questioned the viability of this field of writing? All of them have given reasons to support their charge. The nature of this opposition is intrinsically political. If Indian literature in English is given a free reign, three fallouts are likely:

- (i) Substandard, compromised or even market oriented Indian literature will result. This can have disastrous consequences for the quality of literature unleashed upon the masses and the reputation of Indian literature in the world.
- (ii) Given the continued assault of imperial powers through the cultural and economic domain in a complex phenomenon called neo-imperialism, it is important to resist these forces at the level of language and literature. Containing Indian English literature appears a good strategy to do it.
- (iii) Writing Indian literature in English processes presents and transfers the Indian reality in a particular way that may be inimical to certain political interests. In a post-structuralist world of fluid realities, reality is more an entity for appropriation and policing rather than simple understanding and expression.

In all the theoretically well founded claims discussed above, one can read the struggle for the appropriation and policing of the Indian reality in a world beset with regional, fractional, economic and non-economic forces.

### Reviews and Criticism on Naik

Naik impressed the scholarly community in India and abroad by his scholarship, especially taxonomical acumen. Many of his studies were related to the area of Indian Writing in English, British and American Literature. But Naik specialized in many more areas and genres.

This fact was also acknowledged by the critics of Indian Writing in English. Most of the early phase of Naik's scholarship was devoted to the research in the area of prose, fiction and poetry.

The middle phase of his career, Naik devoted to research in the area of novel, poetry, non-fiction and drama.

Naik devoted to research in the areas of literary theory, literary history, myth, religion, poetry and drama and Indian poetics in the last phase of his career. Going by his publications, we can guess that they are seminal contributions to scholarship. In most of them, there is a distinct Indian approach for he always emphasized that we should apply our own methods of analysing and understanding Western works of literature.

Naik's contribution as a 'research guide' is also remarkable. The research scholars like G. S. Balarama Gupta, C. V. Venugopal, C. R. Yaravintelimath and



others received their Ph.D. Degrees under his supervision. As a researcher, his effort have always been directed towards the intensive exploration of his work.

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### Check Your Progress

4. Why was the first need felt by the British for educating Indians in English?
5. What was the attitude of Indian writers in English towards the British before the revolt of 1857?
6. What was the purpose of the British India Association?

### NOTES

## 1.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The common assumption that both Naik and Iyengar make before starting their work is that Indian English Literature began as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late 18th Century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India.
2. Sahitya Akademi is interested in sustaining an image of multi-cultural India where every culture deserves and receives equal respect. Besides it, also wants to indicate that English is no longer a European language, but one that has been completely nationalized in India.
3. It is important to find an appropriate label or appellation for an area of history for both Naik and Iyengar because of practical reasons. The necessity, for them, emerges not from the desire to label, but from the desire to write a history.
4. The first need for educating Indians in English was felt because Englishmen could not rule a colony like India without a common language between the ruler and the ruled.
5. Before 1857, British rule in India was generally accepted by most Indians as a great boon divinely delivered. If you look at the ethos of pre-1857 writing by Indians it is steeped in subservience to a superior culture.
6. The British India Association of which Surendra Nath Banerjee was a founding member was intended to be an All-India movement based on the conception of a united India.

## 1.9 SUMMARY

- M.K. Naik is a renowned critic, editor and historian of Indian English Literature.
- Apart from *A History of Indian English Literature*, he has also published *Raja Rao* (1972, 1982), *Mulk Raj Anand* (1973), *The Ironic Vision: A Study of the Fiction of R.K. Narayan* (1983) and *Dimensions of Indian English Literature* (1984) and so on.

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- Iyengar and Naik start on a common assumption, i.e., Indian English Literature began as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late 18th century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India. As a result of this encounter, as F.W. Bain puts it, 'India, a withered trunk ..... suddenly shot out with foreign foliage'.
- Indian writing in English is not an imitation of English writers nor is it Indian in the pre-colonial sense of the term if pre-colonial writing can be spoken of as Indian. It emerged out of an 'eventful encounter' between two parties culturally and politically different in many ways.
- After these common starting assumptions, the next step both Iyengar and Naik take is to chart the complexity of the literary landscape. It is in this charting, however, that Naik and Iyengar part ways.
- Writing at the end of the colonial era and at the beginning of the independence era, it was important to define everything Indian as opposed to British. Therefore, it was important to acknowledge the 'Anglo' component in terms of the language used, it was equally important to indicate that the person and sensibility writing is Indian as are the ethos and the subject matter.
- Naik's historical research has a structure and organization that is different from Iyengar's research.
- Although both of them have an identical subject matter and goal-to write a history of literature written in India in English between 1800s-1940s/70s, it appears that their intents are different.
- The first element one notices in Naik's book is the exploration of the nature and scope of the field called Indian Literature in English.
- Naik organizes the genres and the authors writing them under four broad historical eras that can be approximately classified as Pre-1857, Post-1857, Gandhian era and post independence era.
- The sections are divided into subsections on the basis of genre, mainly Prose, Poetry, Drama, Fiction and in some the Short Story.
- Like in the case of Iyengar, the first question that bothers Naik is to establish how, why and when English education began in India?
- Before 1857, British rule in India was generally accepted by most Indians as a great boon divinely delivered.
- India-British relations underwent a sea change after the 1857 revolt and that change reflected in the nature of Indian writing in English after 1857.
- This deep restructuring of the British-Indian relations led to the rise of a new spirit.
- Indian English literature has a symbiotic relationship with this new-born spirit. On the one hand, it is this spirit that gave rise to the new artistic maturity of this literature; on the other hand, it was this literature which shaped which the spirit in a way such that it could lead to the assertion of a new Indian identity that would demand and achieve independence from the British.

- Having catalogued and discussed an entire body of Indian literature in English, Naik, in the last chapter, stops to discuss and assess the nature of the resistance it faces from critics and authors in India and abroad.

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## 1.10 KEY TERMS

- **Nom de plume:** It is an assumed name used by a writer instead of their real name; a pen-name.
- **Vade mecum:** It is a handbook or guide that is kept constantly at hand for consultation.
- **Ethos:** It refers to the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations.
- **Boon:** It implies something to be thankful for; a blessing or benefit.
- **Lingua franca:** A language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different.
- **Prophecy:** A prophecy is a message that is claimed by a prophet to have been communicated to them by a deity. Such messages typically involve inspiration, interpretation, or revelation of divine will concerning the prophet's social world and events to come.
- **Indo-Anglian:** The term Indo-Anglian is used to denote original literary creation in the English language by Indians.
- **Marxism:** It is a method of socioeconomic analysis that views class relations and social conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and takes a dialectical view of social transformation.

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## 1.11 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

### Objective Questions

- I. Fill in the blanks appropriate words.
  - (a) The first problem that a historian of any new area faces is to define the \_\_\_\_\_ that he has chosen to work on.
  - (b) The first notable poet of Indian English Literature was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (c) Most of the early phase of Naik's scholarship was devoted to the research in the area of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- II. State whether True or False
  - a. Specimen Compositions from Native Students was published in Calcutta in 1883.
  - b. Naik was happy with translations from non-Indians.
  - c. The year 1857 effected some important changes in the nature of British population

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the similarities between M.K. Naik's and K.R.S. Iyengar's work?
2. Why does M.K. Naik use the term 'Indian English Literature' instead of K.R.S. Iyengar's term Indo-Anglian Literature?
3. Write a short note on Naik's treatment of authors.
4. What are the likely fallouts if Indian literature in English is given a free reign?
5. What was the opinion of the scholarly community on Naik's research?
6. What was Samuel Daniel's sixteenth century prophecy regarding English Language?
7. Why does Naik disagree with Iyengar? State the reasons.
8. Why is the nationality and the intent of the writer important?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. What is the structure and organization of M.K. Naik's historical research?
2. Critically analyse the attitude of Indian writers to Britain before and after the 1857 revolt.
3. Assess the nature of the resistance Indian writers in English face from critics and authors in India and abroad.
4. Discuss some of the charges against Indian literature.
5. Describe the progress and growth of English education in India.
6. Explain Naik's optimism on why and when English education began in India.
7. Comment on Indian English Literature and the Great Revolt.
8. Why is it important when English was introduced in the Indian Education system? Analyse the statement.

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## 1.12 FURTHER READING

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- Agrawal, K.A. (editor). 2003. *Indian Writing in English: A Critical Study*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers.
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## UNIT 2 POETRY

### Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Objectives
- 2.2 Lyric Poetry: An Introduction
  - 2.2.1 Lyric Poetry: Development and Its Types
- 2.3 Ode: Meaning and Types
  - 2.3.1 Types of Odes
  - 2.3.2 Ode and Its Importance in Literature
- 2.4 Sonnet: An Introduction
- 2.5 Elegy: Meaning and Characteristics
  - 2.5.1 Pastoral Elegy
  - 2.5.2 Elegy: History and Importance
- 2.6 Rabindranath Tagore: About the Author
  - 2.6.1 *Gitanjali*: An Introduction
  - 2.6.2 Summary
  - 2.6.3 The Genesis of the English Version of *Gitanjali*
  - 2.6.4 The Religious Thought of Rabindranath Tagore
  - 2.6.5 The first Two Songs of *Gitanjali*: Summary
  - 2.6.6 The First Two Songs of *Gitanjali*: Critical Appreciation
- 2.7 Sarojini Naidu: About the Author
  - 2.7.1 *The Flute-Player of Brindaban*: Summary
  - 2.7.2 *The Flute-Player of Brindaban*: Critical Appreciation
- 2.8 *A Love Song From the North*: Text, Summary and Critical Appreciation
  - 2.8.1 *A Love Song from the North*: Text
  - 2.8.2 *A Love Song from the North*: Summary
  - 2.8.3 *A Love Song from the North*: Critical Appreciation
- 2.9 *An Indian Love Song*: Text, Summary and Critical Appreciation
  - 2.9.1 *An Indian Love Song*: Text
  - 2.9.2 *An Indian Love Song*: Summary
  - 2.9.3 *An Indian Love Song*: Critical Appreciation
- 2.10 Summary
- 2.11 Key Terms
- 2.13 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 2.14 Further Reading

### NOTES

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This unit begins with an introduction, about the types of poetry such as lyrics, odes, sonnet and elegies. Further in this unit, you will critically analyse the poems written by some of the finest Indian English poets—Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu. These two literary writers are original in their style of writing and their themes highlight the local context, Indian culture and traditions, presenting a vivid picture of the Indian culture in their work for the West to admire. These poets aimed to inspire the readers to be nationalist in spirit and alleviate the social evils for bringing about positive changes in the society. The Eastern philosophy of life has inspired people over generations both in the East as well as the West. The Indian spirituality is unique in its own way, the 'Krishna' consciousness, the emphasis on 'action' being a determinant of our fate has found audience abroad. Both Tagore and Sarojini Naidu wrote their yearning for striking the chord with Lord. This act

would bring them salvation from all pains and suffering. It is a tone of complete faith and surrender to the God and belief in performing the right action.

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### 2.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Discuss the various forms of poetry such as lyric poetry, ode, sonnet and elegy
- Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Rabindranath Tagore
- Critically analyse the first two songs of *Gitanjali*
- State the significant contribution of Sarojini Naidu in India's freedom struggle
- Evaluate the poems *Flute-Player of Brindaban*, *A Love Song from the North* and *An Indian Love Song*

### 2.2 LYRIC POETRY: AN INTRODUCTION

The word 'lyric' is derived from the Greek word *lyre* which is an instrument used by the Greeks as an accompaniment to a poem. Poets who use lyrical form of poetry exhibit particular temperaments and sentiments by means of words. Such dispositions give out an array of emotions, from extreme to subtle, concerning existence, love, death, or other such life experiences.

A poet writes lyric poetry with an aim to establish a direct contact with the readers. Such kind of poetry expresses a poet's sentiments as he or she expresses his or her state of mind or emotions in it. Most of the lyrical poems are based on sentimental and lofty themes which encourage readers to develop a deeper aspect of looking at life. Readers of these poems are able to relate to the poems as they are based on feelings and emotions and thus, these poems have a universal appeal attached with them.

#### Characteristics of Lyric Poetry

The following are the main characteristics of lyric poetry:

- In lyric form of poetry, poets write short poems which are generally expressed by one speaker, who articulates either his or her state of mind or thought process of or emotions.
- Formerly, the lyric poetry was sung to the tune of a lyre. Lyric form of poetry is known for its intense emotional content.
- Through such poems, the poet lets out his feelings such as happiness, grief and wonder and so on. However, such intense emotions do not last for a long period of time and which primarily may explain the fact that such poems are of a short length.
- It is also known as an 'untainted form of poetry'.
- Lyric poetry usually denotes a personal expression, which means that the poet states his/her own feelings through it.
- It is also categorized as a formal type of poetry as it conveys to the reader the poet's personal emotions or frame of mind, usually vocalized in the first person.

## Construction of a Lyric Poem

A lyric poem is generally constructed in three parts which have been briefly mentioned as follows:

1. The first part of the poem is the part in which the theme of the poem is introduced. After analysing the first part, the reader is able to analyse and form an idea of what he or she is going to witness in the preceding stanzas.
2. The second part of the poem dwells deeper upon the theme of the poem which is introduced in the first part. The poet enlarges the theme and gives the reader a better view of the basis of the poem.
3. The third part of a lyric poem reveals the climax of the theme and the poet thus, draws his or idea to a conclusion.

Lyric poetry is marked with streaks of spontaneity which forms one of its most important attributes. It is so because in such form not much of an effort is required as it is an expression of his or her inner feelings.

### 2.2.1 Lyric Poetry: Development and Its Types

In this section, we will discuss the development of lyric poetry and its types.

#### History and Development of Lyric Poetry

Generally, lyric speakers are symbolized as poets who see themselves in a world of loneliness. However, in dramatic lyrics, nevertheless, the speaker of a lyric poem is denoted as speaking to another person in a particular condition or circumstance. John Donne's *Canonization* and William Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* are examples of such dramatic lyric poetry.

Although the lyric is spoken in first person, the 'I' in the poem does not necessarily denote the poet of the poem. In some lyric poems, for example *When I consider how my light is spent* a sonnet written by John Milton and *Frost at Midnight* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the mention of the known circumstances of the poet's life clarifies that the reader must give due attention to the personal expression.

Even in personal lyrics such as these, however, both the character and expression of the speaker may be solemnized and formed by the author in a way that is favorable to the preferred creative influence. In many lyrics, the speaker is a conventional period-figure, for example, the long-suffering suitor in the Petrarchan sonnet or the courtly, witty lover of the Cavalier poems. Whereas in other kinds of lyrics, the speaker might be an invented figure not much like the poet's character and circumstance.

The genre of lyric poetry understands a large variety of expressions. Some, like Ben Jonson's *To the Memory of... William Shakespeare* and Walt Whitman's ode on the death of Abraham Lincoln, *O Captain, My Captain* are ceremonial poems emphasizes on a communal expression. There are certain poems which express personal feelings such as Shelley's *To Night*, or Emily Dickinson's *Wild Nights, Wild Nights*.

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**Famous lyrical poets**

Some of the renowned lyrical poets are as follows:

- Sappho: 630 BC – 580 BC
- Percy Bysshe Shelley: 1792 – 1822
- William Wordsworth: 1770 – 1850
- Pindar: 517 BC – 438 BC
- Emily Dickinson: 1830 – 1886
- Robert Frost: 1874 – 1963
- Langston Hughes: 1901 – 1967
- Charles Baudelaire: 1821 – 1867
- Robert Burns: 1759 – 1796
- Rabindranath Tagore: 1861 – 1941
- Christina Rossetti: 1830 – 1894
- Sergei Yesenin: 1895 – 1925
- Ivor Gurney: 1890 – 1937

**Development of Lyric Poetry**

Lyric poetry developed throughout various centuries and we will in this section trace its development as an important part of literature.

**16th Century**

During this period in Britain, an English composer, Thomas Campion composed lute songs and the sonnet gained popularity due to ardent efforts of poets like Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare. French poets like La Pléiade, Pierre de Ronsard, Joachim du Bellay, and Jean-Antoine de Baïf worked with the aim of breaking free from age old traditional French poetry, predominantly Marot and the grands rhétoriciens, so they started to imitate classical Greek and Roman poetry forms like the odes. Pindar, Anacreon, Alcaeus, Horace, and Ovid are some well acclaimed names of this school of thought. They also produced Petrarchan sonnet cycles.

In Spain, devotional form of poetry took to the lyric form in order to fulfill religious purposes. Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Garcilaso de la Vega, and Lope de Vega are some noteworthy poets of this era in Spain. Though Luís de Camões is known across the world for his epic *Os Lusíadas*, yet his contribution as the greatest Portuguese lyric poet of this period cannot be denied.

In Japan, lyric poetry was known by the name ‘naga-uta’ (‘long song’) during this era. Japanese lyric poetry of this time alternated five and seven-syllable lines and concluded with an extra seven-syllable line.

**17th Century**

During the 17th century, lyrical poetry dominated as a major form of poetry in literature. Works of poets such as John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Thomas Carew, Ben Jonson, Aphra Behn, Richard Crashaw, Robert Herrick, George Herbert, Richard Lovelace, John Suckling, John Milton, and Henry Vaughan, helped this



form to gain an important place in literature. Readers appreciated such form of poetry as it was short, full of emotions which one could easily connect with.

### 18th Century

During the period of 18th century, countries such as England and France saw a decline in the lyrical form of poetry. Places of congregation such as the English coffeehouses and French salons, which were frequented by poets, authors and other literary intellectuals witnessed atmosphere of literary conversation which was not amiable to lyric poetry. Poets like Robert Burns, William Cowper, Oliver Goldsmith and Thomas Gray however, were exceptions to this newly formed opinion and their lyrics were not much affected by the general opinion floating around. Some popular 18th century German lyric poets are Novalis, Johann Wolfgang, Friedrich Schiller, von Goethe, and Johann Heinrich Voß. Kobayashi Issa, a poet of Japanese origin gained popularity in lyric poetry during this era. In Diderot's Encyclopédie, Louis chevalier de Jaucourt described lyric poetry of that time as 'a type of poetry totally devoted to sentiment; that's its substance, it's essential object'.

### 19th Century

In Europe, the lyric, 1842 portrait of William Wordsworth written by Benjamin Haydon appeared as the primary form poetry of the 19th century. It gained so much prominence that it came to be considered as synonymous with poetry. The romantic lyric poetry written during this time comprised first-person explanations of the feelings and emotions of a particular time; however the emotions were extreme but personal.

William Wordsworth is known for his contribution in the field of writing sonnets. Other renowned poets such as John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley are other proclaimed names in the field of Romantic lyric poetry. Towards the end of the century, the Victorian lyric became more linguistically self-conscious and defensive in comparison to the Romantic Lyric form of poetry. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Christina Rossetti are some well-known Victorian lyric poets of this era.

This era saw popularity for lyrical poetry. Numerous poetry compilations published in this era are a testimony to this fact. The poetry written by Joseph von Eichendorff is an example of the German Romantic restoration of the folk-song custom introduced by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Gottfried von Herder, and Carl Joachim Friedrich Ludwig von Arnim and Bretano's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. During the same time, revival of lyric poetry could be witnessed in France also. It was recognized as the leading genre of French poetry.

The rise of lyric poetry in Russia during the early 19th century can be largely attributed to Aleksandr Pushkin. The Swedish poetry was also influenced by the lyric poetry and Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom, a famous Swedish poet of his time wrote many lyric poems. In Italy poets Giovanni Pascoli, Ugo Foscolo, Giacomo Leopardi and Gabriele D'Annunzio gave a new dimension to lyric poetry.

### 20th Century

In the beginning of the 20th century, American poetic scene was influenced by rhyming lyric poetry, which was generally an expression of the poet's. Europe and the British colonies also witnessed similar kind of changes in lyric form of poetry.

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Walter de la Mare, Edmund Blunden, and A E Housman are some prominent lyric poets of The English Georgian era. In India, Rabindranath Tagore was applauded by Yeats for his lyric poetry as he compared Tagore with the troubadour poets.

The 20th century modern poets like H D, T S Eliot, Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams however, challenged the applicability and appropriateness of the lyric in the modern age. They based their argument on the notion that such form of poetry was too heavily dependent on rhyming language and cared very little about the intricacy of thought. In the era post World War II, the American New Criticism came back to the lyric form of poetry, as they argued that it is a form of poetry in which traditional use of rhyme, meter and stanza is used and was personal in the lyric convention. American poetry witnessed a new form of lyric poetry which included subjects like relations, sex and homely life. Poets like Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton emerged as the new mainstream lyric poets of the 50s and '60s.

**Check Your Progress**

1. State one main feature of lyric poetry.
2. State some of the 20th century modern poets.

**2.3 ODE: MEANING AND TYPES**

An ode is a form of lyric poetry which is based on a grave theme and follows a definite structure. The style of ode is elevated and is structurally intricate. In the words of an American author, Norman Maclean, 'the term now calls to mind a lyric which is massive, public in its proclamations, and Pindaric in its classical prototype'. Pindar's intricate verses were written in sets of three: moving in a dance tempo to the left, the chorus recited the strophe; moving to the right, the antistrophe; then, standing still, the epode. The Pindaric ode which is also referred to as 'regular ode' and have almost similar form, with the strophes and antistrophes included in the ode, written in a pattern of one stanza, and all the epodes written in another verse.

An ode is a verse written in lyrical form in admiration of an individual, a particular happening or a thing. This form of poetry found its roots in Ancient Greece. Initially, all Greek odes were set to music. This form was later on popularized and adjusted in Renaissance England and led to a new set of conventions.

The definition and explanation of ode has however evidently transformed with passing time, as now it is often used usually used to denote a commendation or adoration.

A typical ode has three main parts in its structure:

1. Strophe
2. Antistrophe
3. Epode

**2.3.1 Types of Odes**

The Ancient Greek poetry talks of three different types of odes which are discussed as follows:

1. **Pindaric ode:** Pindaric ode is named after the famous Greek poet Pindar, who is often accredited for creation of this form of ode poetry. Ode poetry comprises the formal opening of the 'strophe', followed by the imaging verse known as the 'antistrophe'. The meter and length of this is same as that of the strophe. The last and the concluding verse is called the 'epode'. The meter and length of the epode is different in comparison to the previous two sections of the poem. These examples of ode were formerly performed by a chorus and complemented by performers and instruments like the aulos and lyre.
2. **Horatian ode:** The Horatian ode has found its name from the Roman poet Horace. This ode is a homostrophic ode, which means that each stanza of such an ode form consists of the same meter, rhyme scheme, and length. In addition to this, another feature that differentiates a Horatian ode from a Pindaric ode is that, Horatian odes are also not as formal as the Pindaric odes. Rather, in comparison to Pindaric odes they are more warm and contemplative.
3. **Irregular Odes:** Irregular ode is form of lyric poetry which uses rhyme scheme and meter, but the difference between this and the other odes is that it does not have the same verse construction as the Pindaric or Horatian odes. Different parts of this ode do not correspond with each other. Whereas in the other two forms of odes, significant correspondence can be seen. The rhyme scheme of an irregular ode requires just the lines to rhyme anywhere, and not in a specific place.

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### 2.3.2 Ode and Its Importance in Literature

The ode form of lyric poetry has been at an exalted position in the history of English literature. Since a long time in history, Pindaric odes have often been written and performed in order to commemorate victories in the athletic field. Later in time, romantic poets started to write English odes to rejoice their powerful emotions and profound adulations. The ode proved to be suitable for both the 18th century as well as the 19th century as these eras were resonate with their love of drama in Ancient Greece and in the Romantic period. Edmund Spenser is known to have written the first identified odes in English which were the *Epithalamium* and *Prothalamium*. In reality, the ode form of lyric poetry actually gained popularity with the arrival of irregular odes written by Abraham Cowley. Romantic poets such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats are well known for their famous examples of odes in the English language.

#### Examples of Ode in Literature

Some of the prominent examples of ode in literature are discussed in the following section.

#### Example 1: *Victory Ode*

– by Pindar

*Creatures for a day! What is a man?  
What is he not? A dream of a shadow*

*Is our mortal being. But when there comes to men  
A gleam of splendour given of heaven,  
Then rests on them a light of glory  
And blessed are their days.*

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**Explanation:** The above stated example of ode is a translation of the work of a poet who fashioned the whole form, Pindar. It depicts the magnificent theme of triumph and the glory of man.

### Example 2: *The Progress of Poesy*

– by Thomas Gray

*Wake up, you little sleep head, awake  
And give great joy to life that's found in dreams  
From Nature's most sweet sounding streams A thousand turns their twisty  
journeys take  
The dancing flowers, that above them blow  
Breathe life and music as they flow Now the vast waves of sound drift along  
Deep, beautiful, vast and strong  
Through the fields and vales and valleys they glide  
And rolling down the mountain side  
Daring and carefree the water pours  
From the highest edge they jump and falling, they roar.*

**Explanation:** *The Progress of Poesy* written by Thomas Gray is an outstanding example of a traditional Pindaric ode. The strophe and mirroring antistrophe in the poem are strikingly evident. The poet has chosen three line verses each having a rhyme between the first lines which strengthens their connection. The concluding stanza is twice the length of the first ones and includes a somewhat diverse rhyme scheme. This can be called the concluding epode of the poem. Imagery has also been used by the poet. In addition to that, the language used by him glorifies nature and art, which is characteristic of the Pindaric ode.

### Example 3: *Ode on Solitude*

– by Alexander Pope

*Sound sleep by night; study and ease,  
Together mixed; sweet recreation;  
And innocence, which most does please,  
With meditation. Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;  
Thus unlamented let me die;  
Steal from the world, and not a stone  
Tell where I lie.*

**Explanation:** *Ode on Solitude* by Alexander Pope is a lovely specimen of a Horatian ode which lives up to the tradition in real spirit. In this ode, four-line stanzas have been used by Pope, which is characteristic of all Horatian odes. In addition to this, his verses are even homostrophic, which means all stanzas of the poem have identical meter, rhyme scheme, and length. This ode rests on a more reflective and private theme, just as the case is with a typical Horatian ode. Rather

than articulating the grandness of the beauty of nature, Pope reflects on the superiority of seclusion and brings about how, owing to that, the speaker gets more time to meditate.

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### Check Your Progress

3. What is the rhyme scheme of an irregular ode?
4. What are the parts of ode poetry?
5. What is the main theme of the ode, *Victory Ode*?
6. Which type of ode is used by Alexander Pope in Ode on *Solitude*?

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## 2.4 SONNET: AN INTRODUCTION

The sonnet form is one of the most enduring literary forms of poetry in English. The sonnet form was introduced by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey in the sixteenth century in English. The word sonnet itself was introduced in English language in 1557 as the title of Surrey's poems. This is either directly borrowed from Middle French sonnet or directly from Italian sonetto, literally 'little song'. The root word is also either the Old Provencal diminutive of son 'song, sound,' or Latin sonus 'sound'. In either case, the definition of sonnet has both the attributes.

Sonnet was the most common form of poetry in the late Middle Ages. By the thirteenth century, it had developed as a standardized form. The form consists of fourteen equal lines that follow a set rhyme scheme. The sonnet form was perfected in the fourteenth century during the Italian Renaissance by Francesco Petrarca, the Renaissance scholar and poet. Sir Thomas Wyatt in the sixteenth century translated some of the Petrarchan sonnets in English and is credited with introducing the sonnet form in English literature.

The traditional Italian or Petrarchan sonnet is a fourteen-line poem with an octave and sestet. Usually, these fourteen lines follow the hendecasyllable (a line of verse containing eleven syllables) and Alexandrine (a line of two hemistichs [half-lines] of six syllables each, separated by a caesura) meters. The octave, first eight lines normally ask questions and the sestet, the last six lines answer them. At the end of the eighth line of the Petrarchan sonnet, there is a 'volta' or 'turn', a point in the sonnet where the idea or theme is turned on its head. This will be like a question is answered (or introduced), or the subject matter is further complicated. Usually, the volta takes the form of a 'but' statement contradicting or complicating the content of the earlier lines. A Petrarchan sonnet follows the rhyme scheme abba, abba, cdecde, though with some variation, especially within the final six lines.

The first eight lines have interlinked rhyming scheme that also point out the same idea or theme in them. Further, we can understand that the rhyme scheme 'abba' typically starts at a point moving towards another and coming back again to the starting point. This talks about the closely knitted subject matter within the four lines. After the volta along with a change in the idea or theme, the rhyming scheme also takes a turn. The variations of rhyme in the sestet can take the form of

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cdccdc or cddcee. The theme in the Petrarchan sonnet is usually the unattainable love of the beloved. However, this is mostly unrequited love. As a result, in the sonnet, the lover will be seen praising the beloved and justifies his love for her. The beloved in this sonnet is portrayed as an ideal who also teaches the lover the feeling of love. In one of his famous collection of sonnets 'Rime Sparse (Scattered Rhymes)', Petrarch talks about his transcendental longings for Laura. These longings are translated into an earthy and impatient expression of physical desire in some of his sonnets. This theme is further exploited by the poets who followed him. The theme later became so entangled with the sonnet form that people started defining sonnet as a love song and it became associated with high poetic diction, vivid imagery, and romantic love.

Let us now look at some of the important sonneteers here.

### 1. Wyatt and Surrey

As mentioned earlier, the sonnet emerged in English literature in the sixteenth century through Thomas Wyatt and his younger contemporary Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey's translation of Petrarchan sonnet into English. The early circulation of their sonnets was in manuscripts only. Their sonnets were first published by Richard Tottel in his *Songes and Sonettes* that is better known as 'Tottel's Miscellany' in 1557.

### 2. William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare is widely known in literary circles as the 'famous playwright of English literature'. He has thirty-seven plays to his credit; all of them with varied themes and characters. In addition, he has also written three narrative poems and 154 sonnets.

The Shakespearean sonnet is divided into four stanzas. The first three are quatrains (four line stanza) followed by a couplet (two line stanza). The form is often named after Shakespeare, not because he was the first to write in this form but because he became its most famous practitioner. It has the following rhyme scheme 'abab, cdcd, efef, gg'. The division of three quatrains and a final concluding couplet offered him greater amount of variety with regard to rhyme and theme than is usually found in its Italian predecessors. All his sonnets typically use iambic pentameter, a ten syllable line where the first syllable is unstressed and the second syllable is stressed.

Shakespeare uses the three quatrains to develop an idea with three different images and finally reach the conclusion in the couplet. The change in mood or theme mostly happens in the beginning of the third quatrain with a final couplet concluding the arguments. But most often, he waits till the couplet ends and usually summarizes the theme of the poem or introduces a fresh look at the theme. Out of these 154 sonnets, the first 126 sonnets written are addressed to a fair young man in his youth and the last 28 sonnets are addressed to a dark lady. Nobody knows that a flesh and blood person exists in reality or not. The themes of the sonnets abound in love, beauty and mortality. This sequence was published in 1609.

### 3. Edmund Spenser

Edmund Spenser is an English poet. He is known for his epic poem *The Faerie Queene* which is a celebration of the Tudor dynasty. He is known for his

experiments in the stanza form. He divided his long poem into nine line stanzas of which the first eight lines are written in iambic pentameter and the last line is in iambic hexameter. It follows the rhyming scheme of 'ababbcbcc'. This stanza is called a Spenserian stanza.

He has also written a sequence of sonnets called *Amoretti*. The main theme of this sonnet is that it tells the story of Spencer's own successful courtship and marriage to Elizabeth Boyle. In this sonnet, he also experimented with the basic form of sonnet. The resultant form is called the Spenserian sonnet. This sonnet is also divided into three quatrains and a final couplet with iambic pentameter lines. The rhymes are interlinked as in 'ababbcbccdcdee'. The interlinking of rhymes in the three quatrains also tells us that they speak of similar themes and the couplet will offer a conclusion.

#### 4. John Milton

John Milton, the famous English poet, is known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. He was a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under Oliver Cromwell. However, like other English poets, he has also written sonnets.

#### 5. John Donne

John Donne is recognized as one of the prominent metaphysical poets. Metaphysical poets are largely cognizant for their use of metaphysical conceit in their poems. Metaphysical conceit is an extended metaphor that combines two immensely diverse ideas into a single idea, often using imagery. Poems like *The Canonization*, *The Flea* are all examples of the use of this metaphysical style. Donne is known for his unique treatment of love and amorous courtship in his poems. However, later in his life, he became an Anglican priest. During the tenure of his poetic career, he is known for his famous *Holy sonnets*. Here, the lover is mankind and the beloved is God, his creator.

#### 6. William Wordsworth

Wordsworth and Coleridge heralded a new era in English Literature with their publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*. This period came to be known as the 'Romantic period'. Wordsworth defined 'poetry' as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility. *The Prelude* is one of the significant poems written by Wordsworth. In addition, he has written several sonnets as well. Some of his famous poems are *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*, *The World is Too Much With Us* and *London*, 1802.

#### Check Your Progress

7. What is the main theme of the Petrarchan sonnet?
8. Define the term 'metaphysical conceit'.
9. How has William Wordsworth defined poetry?

## 2.5 ELEGY: MEANING AND CHARACTERISTICS

The word elegy originated from the Greek word 'elegeia,' which means to lament or to be sorrowful. In Greek and Roman literature, any poem which was written in

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elegiac meter, meant irregular hexameter and pentameter lines was denoted by the term ‘elegy’. However, it was also referred to as the subject matter of conversion and loss regularly articulated in the elegiac stanza form, particularly in themes of love. With this concept in mind, there are certain poems which are referred to as ‘elegies’ such as *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer*.

An elegy usually brings comprises of three stages of grief which are as follows:

- Grief
- Praise of the dead
- Consolation towards the loss

In countries such as Europe and England, the term ‘elegy’ continued to have altering meanings throughout the period of Renaissance. The elegies written by John Donne, in the later part of the sixteenth century and the early part of the seventeenth century, are poems which are based on the themes of love. Even though they are related to the essence of elegy as sorrow, many of them stress upon variability and forfeiture.

In the 17th century, the term ‘elegy’ meant a formal and sustained laments in verse on the demise of a specific individual which generally concluded with a consolation. The medieval poem, *The Pearl* and Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess* (elegies in the mode of dream allegory); Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (1850), and W H Auden’s *In Memory of W. B. Yeats* (1940) are some examples of this form of elegy.

There are some instances where the word ‘elegy’ is also used to represent the gloomy musings on transience for example, Thomas Gray’s *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1757) and the *Duino Elegies* (1912-22) of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke on the impermanence of poets as well as of the worldly things which form the subject matter of their poems.

The ‘dirge’, which means a sad song also exhibits sorrow on the event of death of someone in particular, however it is slightly different from an elegy in terms of being short, less formal, and generally characterized as a text to be presented in form of a song; Shakespeare’s *Full Fathom Five Thy Father Lies* and William Collins’ *A Song from Shakespeare’s Cymbeline* (1749) are some good examples of the dirge.

In the existing times, ‘threnody’ is used primarily as an equivalent of dirge and monody for an elegy or dirge which is offered as the expression of one single individual. John Milton describes his *Lycidas* (1638) in the subtitle as a ‘monody’ in which the author bewails a learned Friend.

One of the main subtypes of the elegy is the pastoral elegy, which is a representation of both the poet and the person he laments, this individual in the poem is generally also a poet, such as, shepherds (its Latin is ‘pastor’). This poetic term was initiated by the Sicilian Greek poet, Theocritus and was later carried on by the Roman Virgil. Pastoral poetry found its advancement in many European countries during the Renaissance and was popular among the masses even during the 19th century.



## Characteristics of an Elegy

An elegy is a poem which expresses gloomy thoughts of a person. It is commonly written in praise of the deceased and has an air of sorrow around it. An 'elegy' is very different from 'eulogy' which is an account that is put together in prose. Such an account praises the dead person and is read at his or her funeral for all present to listen. Although an elegy may serve the purpose of a eulogy yet it has certain characteristics which make it distinct from other forms of expression or poetry. The characteristics of a traditional elegy are as follows:

- An elegy begins with a lament of loss of life of a person or loss of a thing.
- The sorrow is followed by the poet's admiration for the person or thing lost. In the second part of the construction generally the lost person's qualities and remarkable performances or activities are endorsed.
- An elegy is a kind of a lyric which centers on expression of sentiments, beliefs or opinions.
- The language and structure of an elegy is formal and ceremonial.
- An elegy may be based on either the transience of life of a person or the attractiveness and magnificence of somebody close to the speaker's heart.
- An elegy may search answers to questions related to the nature of life and death of the body or immortality of the soul.
- Sometimes an elegy also expresses the speaker's resentment or rage about a loss or demise.
- The last or the third stage of the elegy is about its consolidation. This element may be more religious.
- It is of various types such as personal, impersonal or pastoral.

### 2.5.1 Pastoral Elegy

Pastoral elegy is a poem which dwells upon the combined subject of death and sublime country life. This form of poetry usually includes shepherds who express their emotions. The pastoral elegy takes the pastoral or rural components and connects them to expression of sorrow on a loss. The pastoral form of poetry has numerous significant characteristics, like the solicitation of the contemplate; manifestation of the sorrow or the heartache of the shepherd or the poet; admiration of the dead; an outburst against demise; a particularization of the impacts of that particular demise on nature; and last but not the least, poet's concurrent acceptance of certainty of death and at the same time his unflinching hope for immortality. Pastoral elegies have also been seen sometimes to have included a mourners' procession, humorous deviations to diverse topics arising from decease, and representation by means of flowers, refrains, and pompous queries.

The pastoral elegy characteristically impacts the reader with its most characteristic form. It revolves around modest rural figures. There is a stark difference between an ordinary pastoral poem and a pastoral elegy, it would be most pertinent to bring about that where in the former the main character of the poem is a shepherd. At the same time, in pastoral elegy, the dead person is generally

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re-formed as a shepherd, irrespective of what the deceased person's role or character may have been when he was alive. In addition to that, along with being re-formed as a shepherd, the dead person is usually surrounded by traditional mythological beings, for instance nymphs and fauns and so on.

### **The pastoral elegy and present-day poetry**

The pastoral elegy form of poetry prospered in Europe during the period of Renaissance and the 19th century. In the modern era however, poets like J V Cunningham and Alan Dugan worked towards re-imaging the pastoral elegy and giving it a new form. The recently written pastoral elegies have been transformed in both subject and form. The pastoral elegies of the modern times have been presented in a somewhat more satirical form. However, it does not mean that the original form of pastoral elegy has been lost in time. Some modern poets like, William Carlos Williams and W H Auden still follow the original form of pastoral poetry and they have written poems that withhold its traditional form and characteristics.

### **2.5.2 Elegy: History and Importance**

We will in this section discuss about the development of elegy as a literary form and its importance in English literature.

Elegy was a prominent form of lyric poetry prevalent during the era of the classical Greek literature. The word elegy is derived from the Greek word 'elegia' which expressed grief, remorse, apprehension. Before the emergence of ode as a literary form, elegy gained a separate existence from a complementary song and was generally written in distichs, which means, in a strophic unit of stanza comprising a line in hexameter and a line in pentameter. Elegies were commonly seen as an expression of grief.

However, later the poets started to use elegies as an expression of other feelings like remorse or delight which was motivated by sensual urge. Not many Greek elegies have been able to sustain the vagaries of time only a few parts have remained, but various Latin elegies written by Tibullus and Propertius are still available in their original form for the benefit of the reader of English literature. *Tristia* by Ovid is a masterpiece of this form of poetry.

The elegies written in the modern European literature era, express gloomy and forlorn feelings after some passionate experiences or they are enthused by reflection on insubstantiality of human existence. For Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux, a French poet, the elegy is mourning in funeral cloth. The original elegies which formed a major part of the English literature contained nothing but lamentations, however, with the changes in time, elegies were no longer considered as poems of lamentations. In Italy, the elegy was cultured from the Middle Ages after the manner of Petrarch. In Germany, the content of elegies has been supernatural right from the start. Here, it would be pertinent to mention two different types of elegies: first which was characterized by an end of the 18th century offering by Goethe and the second by a beginning of the twentieth century offering by Rilke.

## Famous Elegy Poets

Some of the famous poets who have written elegies are as follows:

- Thomas Gray: 1716 – 1771
- Rainer Maria: 1875 -1926
- John Donne: 1572 – 1631
- Anna Akhmatova: 1889 – 1966
- Johannes Secundus: 1511 – 1563
- Joachim du Bellay: 1522 – 1560

## NOTES

### Importance of Elegy in Literature

The concrete definition of elegy only happened to take form during the 16th century. During the ancient Greek era, any poem written in elegiac verses, which had the potential to deal with a variety of subject matter, like love or war, along with demise was referred to as an elegy. Poetry written in the elegiac form which consisted of alternating hexameter and pentameter stanzas was used for themes which were on a smaller scale as compared to the epic forms of poetry.

Poets from Greece and ancient Rome even made use of elegy for themes which was based on humor and satire. However, with the changes, the definition of elegy took a more limited form. It started to gain prominence as a literary form during the 16th century. However, this form of poetry is not much popular anymore in modern-day literature in its strictest form. Nonetheless, there are a lot of poems which are written in the memory of their departed loved ones.

### Examples of Elegy in Literature

#### Example 1: *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

– By Thomas Gray, 1750

*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.  
Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;  
Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r  
The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.*

**Explanation:** Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* was written in the memory of his friend, Richard West, is a very well-known example of elegy. The poet laments on the death of his poet friend. He contemplates on the inevitability of life and death consigns all men irrespective of their class and all people are destined towards a fate of oblivion.

**Example 2: *O Captain! My Captain!***

– By Walt Whitman, 1891

**NOTES**

*O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;  
But O heart! heart! heart!*

*O the bleeding drops of red,  
Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.*

**Explanation:** Walt Whitman's famous poem, *O Captain! My Captain* is an elegy written in memory of the American President, Abraham Lincoln. In this brilliant piece of work, the poet beautifully brings together a sense of forfeiture, admiration, and comfort in the very first stanza of the elegy. The subject matter provides a comfort to the readers and yet at the same time, it fills ones heart with grief and sadness as it deals with the demise of Abraham Lincoln.

**Example 3: *Fugue of Death***

– By Paul Celan, 1948

*Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night  
we drink you in the morning at noon we drink you at nightfall  
drink you and drink you  
A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes  
he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden  
hair Margarete  
Your ashen hair Shulamith we are digging a grave in the  
sky it is  
ample to lie there*

**Explanation:** This profoundly agonizing elegy is a classic work of art by poet, Paul Celan. In his elegy, the poet remembers those who had lost their lives in the Holocaust. Celan was privy and witnessed the same from a ghetto where he lived with his Jewish family. Though addressing a large group of people is not a characteristic feature of a typical elegy, yet Celan's poem identifies the combined agony and hurt of a complete population.

**Example 4: *Jack***

– By Maxine Kumin, 2005

*I meant to  
but never did go looking for him, to buy him back  
and now my old guilt is flooding this twilit table  
my guilt is ghosting the candles that pale us to skeletons  
the ones we must all become in an as yet unspecified order.  
Oh Jack, tethered in what rough stall alone  
did you remember that one good winter?*

**Explanation:** Maxine Kumin's *Jack* was written in 2005 and can be considered as an example of a contemporary elegy. He has put together all facets of loss in her elegy, however, in a reverse order. The poem begins at a happy note which depicts a scene of satisfaction, but ends on a serious and sad note as the poet, having sold her horse Jack and never coming to know of his whereabouts ever again.

## NOTES

### Example 5: *The Role of Elegy*

– By Mary Jo Bang, 2007

*The role of elegy is  
To put a death mask on tragedy,  
A drape on the mirror.  
To bow to the cultural  
Debate over the aesthetization of sorrow,  
Of loss, of the unbearable  
Afterimage of the once material.  
To look for an imagined  
Consolidation of grief  
So we can all be finished  
Once and for all and genuinely shut up  
The cabinet of genuine particulars.  
What is elegy but the attempt  
To rebreathe life  
Into what the gone one once was  
Before he grew to enormity.*

**Explanation:** The contemporary poet, Mary Jo Bang published a book, *Elegy*. The book is a collection of numerous sad musings on the death son. The main theme is that the poet ponders over the role of elegy, and concludes that elegy is 'the attempt/to rebreathe life/into what the gone one once was'.

### Check Your Progress

10. What is the main theme in *The Role of Elegy* by Mary Jo Bang?
11. Name some of the famous elegy poets.

## 2.6 RABINDRANATH TAGORE: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7 May 1861. He was the youngest surviving children of Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi. He was their thirteenth child who survived. His father Debendranath Tagore was a leading light of the renowned reforming Hindu organization, Brahmo Samaj, which worked for the upliftment of the Hindu society from its orthodox, age old superstitious beliefs, caste system, gender discrimination and other social evils. He believed in a liberal interpretation of the Vedic literature so as to set the Indian society on the road to modernization.

## NOTES

He encouraged his children also to learn English language and read English Literature.

Tagore was indeed blessed to be born in an erudite family where the siblings were well accomplished in their respective fields. One of his brothers – Dwijendranath was a philosopher and established poet, Satyendranath was the first Indian appointed to the elite—all European India Civil Service. Another one, Jyotirindranath was a musician, composer and playwright. His sister, Swarnakumari was a novelist par excellence. He enjoyed a wonderful childhood, getting exposed to all art forms, his interest was aroused in reading, music, literature, painting, virtually in all art forms. Thus, his senses and pure sensibilities were well developed at a very young age. He received his schooling at home. His elder siblings left no stone unturned to fill his life with real, vivid and interesting experiences which left an indelible mark on his mind, heart and soul. In 1878, he went to England to continue his studies. In 1880 he was back in his home land and published a rich corpus of his compositions. His first poem was published on 25 February 1875 in *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. His translation of *Macbeth* from English to Bengali was published in *Bharati* for the first time. This magazine was launched by his brother Dwijendranath Tagore. His literary works impressed Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, especially, the historical verse play *Rudra Chakra* and *Sandhya Sangeet*, published in 1882.

Tagore went through numerous experiences both gloomy and joyous in his life. In other words, his life was filled with rich experiences which anyone would envy at the same time it was interspersed with such sorrow that would scare the very soul of a person. In 1884 he lost his sister-in-law (she committed suicide), who was also his dear friend. In 1891 he started a Bengali monthly magazine – *Sadhana*, during this phase he stayed in Shelaidaha, managing his ancestral property. It was here that he developed greater sensitivity with nature and a genuine connect with its beauty and his spiritualism achieved finer expressions. The serene and calm environment developed his poetic sensibility and resulted in the composition of *Chitrangandha*. During this phase of his life he worked towards the upliftment of the living conditions of his countrymen. He was a compassionate human being who with his visionary thought took several measures to improve the living conditions of peasants and rustic people.

The most difficult phase of his life were the years between 1902 and 1907 when he lost some of his near and dear ones of his family consecutively – his wife, younger daughter, father and youngest son. This immense human loss had a profound impact on his philosophy, life and work. He dedicated a collection of poems written in fond memory of his wife under the title *Smaran*. He became a serious writer and wrote his famous novels: *Choker Bali* (1903) and *Gora* (1906). He became active in social welfare and politics. In 1908 he was elected as President of provincial political conference. Although, Tagore believed in getting freedom from the British Raj, he chose to have his own style for working towards his goals. He was not very much convinced with Gandhiji and his mode of getting freedom (Non-cooperation Movement).

He was the first Indian to get an international recognition for his work *Gitanjali*. In 1913 he became the first non-European recipient of the prestigious

Noble Prize in Literature. The poetic rendition in this collection was spiritual and composed in a purely sublime and artistic manner stirring the soul of the reader.

In 1915 he received two prestigious awards for his contribution to literature and social reformation – Doctor of Literature from Calcutta University and ‘Knighthood’ which he returned in protest to the Jalianwalla Bagh massacre in April 1919. In 1921, he entrusted all rights of his Bengali books to Viswabharti University. In 1940, he was conferred Oxford doctorate by representatives of the University of Oxford. In 1941, he breathed his last.

### Works of Tagore

Tagore was a well renowned, multitalented, intellectual poet, musician, dramatist, lyricist, painter, an artist, nationalist and a politician all rolled in one. He is admired and referred to as Gurudev, kaviguru, ‘bard of Bengal’ and viswaguru. In the late 19th and 20th centuries he was instrumental in bringing in shades of contextual modernism in Indian Bengali art, music and literature.

He belonged to a rich affluent, educated Indian Bengali family and began composing poems at a young age (8 years). His first collection of self-composed poems was released under the pseudonym, *Bhanusimha*, at the age of sixteen. Later on, he wrote short stories and drama as well. He was a philosopher devoted to naturalism, humanism and spiritualism. He founded the Viswa Bharati University, an education enterprise based on his dream philosophy of naturalism, humanism and universal brotherhood. He was a nationalist who wanted his country to be free from the colonial rule of the British Raj. The themes which he picked up in his writings ranged from the local, social, specific, cultural and political context stretching over to the international and beyond this human existence to the universal and spiritual. Two of his famous compositions were selected as national anthem: *Jana Gana Mana* (India) and *Amar Shonar Bangla* (Bangladesh).

Tagore’s *Gitanjali*, is a prose verse. As per the *Literary Dictionary* prose poems are:

A short composition employing the rhythmic cadences and other devices of free verse, such poetic imagery and figures and printed wholly or partly in the format of prose i.e. with a right hand margin instead of regular line breaks. The genre emerged in France in the 19th Century, notably in Charles Baudelaire’s “Spleen de Paris” (1869) and Arthur Rimbaud’s “Les Illuminations” (1886); a significant sequence of English prose poems is Geoffrey Hill’s “Merican Hymns” (1971) and a prose poem is self-contained work usually similar to lyric, whereas poetic prose may occur intermittently within a longer prose work.

Tagore is said to have developed a special liking towards this genre and applied it more in his later poetry. *Gitanjali* was initially written in Bengali and it was later translated into English. Tagore’s critics have commented that his original rendering was far better than his translation. Translating the poems in same rhythmic structures in English is a challenging task and the prose verse provided Tagore an apt medium for this task.

## NOTES

## NOTES

**Bengal Renaissance**

Bengal Renaissance refers largely to the social, cultural, psychological, and intellectual changes in Bengal during the nineteenth century, as a result of contact between certain sympathetic British officials and missionaries on the one hand, and the Hindu intelligentsia on the other. The setting for the Bengal Renaissance was the colonial metropolis of Calcutta.

There were four aspects of the Renaissance movement, which the Bangali intelligentsia developed systematically throughout the nineteenth century.

First, there was the modernization of the Bengali language and the simultaneous birth of a new Bangali literature.

Second, there was the rediscovery of, and identification with an Indian classical era hailed as a golden age which placed South Asian civilisation on a par with the grandeur of Greece and Rome.

Third, there was the Serampore missionary interpretation of the Protestant Reformation, which Indians applied creatively to their own historic situation.

And finally, there was the secular view of universal progress on which India's hope lay not in resurrecting the past but in projecting the golden age into the future.

**2.6.1 *Gitanjali*: An Introduction**

Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* is one of the most celebrated works in modern Indian literature. The word *Gitanjali* combines two Hindi words 'git', that is, song, and 'anjali', meaning offering, and, thus, means 'prayer offering of song'. Its fame has been due, partly at least, to its having been instrumental in winning for its author the much-coveted Nobel Prize. As soon as it was published, it caught the imagination of lovers of poetry all over the world, and especially in the West. The Irish poet W. B. Yeats, whose reaction to the poem is detailed below, was ecstatic in his praise for these poems.

*Gitanjali* is a collection of 103 English poems, created as well as translated by Tagore. In the English *Gitanjali*, Tagore has not included all the songs which are included in the Bengali original. It contains selections from that source and also a good many from different other works of his including 'Naivedya', 'Kheya' and 'Gitimalya'. Moreover, it is said, he has not made literal translations of the Bengali originals into English, but only given free renderings of them. Sometimes, two poems have been combined or telescoped into one, and, sometimes, lines and phrases have been either completely omitted or summarized or juxtaposed with others.

Though the songs which comprise it have been taken from different books, the English *Gitanjali* is not merely a miscellaneous assortment of poems. Tagore did not simply dump the poems he liked within the framework of a single work without any objective, order or purpose. The poems revolve around one central idea: the interrelationships among the poet, God, Nature and the world. The poet works out several delicate nuances of this relationship, revolving around the myriad moods, experiences and insights yielded by the relationship.



Traditional religion, that is, the way Hinduism has been codified by the Priests, is often under attack. What is suggested instead of this apparently decadent and fossilized form of religious practice is a religion of surrender and a mystic union with the Divine which, according to the poet, yields blissful happiness and harkens a new spirituality.

Tagore like a Sufi saint says through his lines about the concept of reaching God through Music and Meditation that involves surrendering to His Supreme Self. Nuances of this mystic union with surrender involve trials and tribulations but eventually yield blissful delight. All these are captured beautifully in this book. While one poem describes the relationship with God as a person waiting for the temple gates to be opened, the other describes beautifully a woman who is ready and awaiting her lord to come and embrace her.

It resembles the poetry of mysticism which presents the Divine as the great affirmation, the fountain of energy, and the source of life and death. Man in this scheme is like an instrument which can be tuned to be in perfect harmony with this Divine source and energy. This is just one of the images which the poet uses to suggest the Man-God relationship. The poem contains hundreds of such minor and major images that help us reflect on the nature and pleasures of the relationship. Tagore picks up common day-to-day events and places in terms of which to speak of his relationship with God which helps us identify and relive those experiences, making them real for us.

M. Rama Rao, while discussing the reactions of certain luminaries like Dr Radhakrishnan to the poems, writes:

Dr Radhakrishnan tersely characterizes the poems of *Gitanjali* as the offerings of the Finite to the Infinite. To quote the words of Sri K. S. Ramaswami Sastry, 'In many places in this great book of poems, Tagore expresses in language full of the passion of God his aspiration, his keen desire for God-Vision, and conveys to us the message that such desire is the crown and glory of life'. And again, 'Tagore points out how this crown of life is to be won after a great deal of preparation of the inner life and after fullness of experience is acquired, sweetening the soul and purifying the heart. In other words, the poems of *Gitanjali* give impassioned expression to the aspiration of the human Soul—the 'jeevatma'—... for union with God, the Universal SOUL 'Paramatma', ...' The unique distinction of this book lies in the fact that it is intensely religious and at the same time enchantingly poetical.

## 2.6.2 Summary

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to summarize this collection of poems in a couple of hundred words. What we have here is a collection of over 103 poems and each will have to be summarized individually because they are all interrelated yet uniquely different. Some of them you may have read as a part of your English lessons like 'Where the mind is held without fear...' and others which may have been quoted by others like:

*Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!*

*Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?*

## NOTES

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The early poems in the collection inspire people to leave idol worship, while the middle ones speak about the poet's relation to God. Nuances of God and Man's tribulations with God are captured beautifully in this book. While one poem describes a person waiting for the temple gates to be opened, the other describes beautifully a woman who is ready and awaiting her lord to come and embrace her.

De-mystifying the joys of the nature is also one of Tagore's favourite subject in the set of poems. The eagerness to await the rain and the eagerness to see the sun, each of these moods has been captured beautifully in the book. However, Nature for Tagore is always a vehicle through which he speaks about the divine. This is perhaps because Nature provides a number of phenomena in terms of which the Divine makes sense. Or perhaps because Nature in the poet's mind is the instrument through which the divine manifests itself to Man.

Rain forms an important feature of this book, with many poems dedicated to rain itself. While one poem explains the joy of oncoming rain, the other brings about the mysticism of a stormy night. Similar things can be said about the night and dawn. Flora and fauna are also dispersed liberally through the poems. From the beauty of small flowers to the shades of mighty banyan trees, these poems use Nature in a bewildering variety of roles.

### 2.6.3 The Genesis of the English Version of *Gitanjali*

Tagore in a letter to his niece Indiradevi Chaudhurani, written in Bengali, described the conditions in which the English version of *Gitanjali* was created. Indiradevi has herself translated that letter into English. The letter is divided into three parts: the first deals with Tagore's views on his own ability to translate into English, the second deals with the material and physical circumstances under which the translation took place, and the third by which it passed into the circle of his European friends. Some excerpts from the first part are given below:

You have alluded to the English translation of *Gitanjali*. I have not been able to imagine to this day how people came to like it so much. That I cannot write English is such a patent fact that I never had even the vanity to feel ashamed of it. If anybody wrote an English note asking me to tea, I never felt equal to answering it. Perhaps you think that by now I have got over that delusion. By no means. That I have written in English seems to be the delusion.

Some of the major ideas in this humble confession are as follows:

1. It is not that Tagore was not proficient in the English language. Given his erudition and scholarship, it is difficult to believe that he could not write in English in the conventional sense. That he did not feel confident expressing his emotions and ideas in English or rather he felt more comfortable in Bengali is a more acceptable reading of his statements. However, in this statement, Tagore stresses the importance of language in poetic creation. He could write this kind of poetry only in Bengali because it was only in this language that his thought and emotions found an exact equivalence or representation; it was the lyrical and rhythmic contours of only this language that he could manage best. This could also be because his emotions and thoughts had been framed in and through the Bengali dialect in the first place.

2. Tagore has no qualms in acknowledging that he can write best in Bengali and only in a workable manner in English. The colonial snobbery relating to the English Language, and sometimes associated with Tagore himself, is completely absent from this assessment.
3. That the English version suffers on a number of counts, especially when compared to the Bengali original, not only in the accuracy with which the words and phrases convey the thoughts and feelings but also because the English language is much less melodious and lyrical when compared to Bengali.

Let me now move on to the second part:

On the day I was to board the ship, I fainted due to my frantic efforts at leave-taking and the journey itself was postponed. Then I went to Shelidah to take rest. But unless the brain is fully active, one does not feel strong enough to relax completely; so the only way to keep myself calm was to take up some light work.

It was then the month of Chaitra (March-April), the air was thick with the fragrance of mango blossoms and all hours of the day were delirious with the song of birds. When a child is full of vigour, he does not think of his mother. It is only when he feels tired that he wants to settle himself easily in her lap. That was exactly my position. With all my heart and with all my holiday I seemed to have ensconced myself comfortably in, the arms of Chaitra, without missing even a particle of its light, its air, its scent and its song. In such a state one cannot remain idle. When the air strikes one's bones they tend to respond in music; this is an old habit of mine, as you know. Yet I had not the energy to gird up my loins and sit down to write. So I took up the poems of *Gitanjali* and set myself to translate them one by one. You may wonder why such a crazy ambition should possess one in such a weak state of health. But believe me, I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado. I simply felt an urge to recapture through the medium of another language the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in the days gone by. The pages of a small exercise-book came to be filled gradually, and with it in my pocket I boarded the ship. The idea of keeping it in my pocket was that when my mind became restless on the high seas, I would recline on a deck-chair and set myself to translate one or two poems from time to time. And that is what actually happened. From one exercise-book I passed on to another.

The journey referred to here is the one undertaken by Tagore to England. By then, the Bengali original was ready 'in his pocket'. The two important issues from this quote are as follows:

1. The spring of 1913 that enervated him physically and mentally also provided him with the opportunity to travel on the seas and exert himself so that he could relax through his writing and creative expression. The relationship that he works out between Nature and himself is interesting. Nature is the mother and he the energetic child. When he tires as a part of his rigorous daily life, he returns to Nature, the mother for relaxation. The English version of *Gitanjali*, Tagore would have us believe, was created in the relaxing folds of this mother's lap. This is starkly reminiscent of the British Romantics, notably Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley.

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2. Given his health, it would have seemed ‘reckless bravado’ to attempt a project of this magnitude. But he makes it clear that the translation of the verses was done in response to an urge to recapture the joyful feelings and sentiments associated with the original work in another language, perhaps in order to share it with a larger audience. The creative impulse behind the translation was one of seeking pleasure and joy.

The third section deals with the discovery of the script of the translation by Rothenstein and its eventual route through Yeats to global fame:

Rothenstein already had an inkling of my reputation as a poet from another Indian friend. Therefore, when in the course of conversation he expressed a desire to see some of my poems, I handed him my manuscript with some diffidence. I could hardly believe the opinion he expressed after going through it. He then made over the manuscript to Yeats. The story of what followed is known to you. From this explanation of mine you will see that I was not responsible for the offence, which was due mainly to the force of circumstances.

Two ideas are crucial here: Rothenstein’s praise and Tagore’s attribution of the translation to ‘the force of circumstances’. The friend’s praise and its eventual confirmation by Yeats points to the intrinsic merit of the piece which registers almost immediately in the minds of both the Englishmen. The text was to be finally published in the West in 1912 with a flattering but deeply felt introduction by W. B. Yeats. Tagore, however, insists, like Shelley, that his poetic work is not to be attributed to him but an external power which he here identifies as the force of circumstances.

#### 2.6.4 The Religious Thought of Rabindranath Tagore

*Gitanjali* is at its heart a deeply religious poem. If you question whom these songs or verses are being offered to, the only answer you are likely to receive is the divine. However, the concept of divine that inspires Tagore is very different from the concept of divine as it exists in conventional sectarian Hinduism that believes in worshipping a deity in the name of religion and follows a set of elaborate rituals in doing so. Tagore’s concept of the divine is deeply humanistic and attaining communion with God is for him in a crucial sense attaining the perfect knowledge of and communion with one’s own self.

This revised notion of divinity is born at the juncture of the profound spiritual insights of the East and the equally powerful humanism of the West. In this sense, Tagore represents an original and unique synthesis between the East and the West. As he writes, ‘When the streams of ideals that flow from the East and from the West mingle their murmur in some profound harmony of meaning it delights my soul.’

What follows in this section is an analysis and detailing of what Tagore understood by that deeply humanistic religion. Broadly speaking, there are two elements involved in it: a questioning and even deriding of sectarian notions of religion, and the definition of a new humanistic religion and practices.

The first element in Tagore’s definition of religion is a critique and rejection of some conventional forms of religion, specifically sectarian forms. Sectarianism

is rejected because it is limited, localized and cuts man off from the free flow of meaningful cultural existence. A general indictment against all narrow-minded religious people is given succinctly in one of his 'fireflies':

*The sectarian thinks  
that he has the sea  
ladled into his private pond.*

Literary critic Donald R. Tuck summarizes Tagore's negative critique of sectarian religions and other constricting religious forms, thus:

Tagore likes to compare the sectarian to the world of nature. He sees in the narrow man and the dewdrop reflections of the same incongruous claim. On the one hand there is a claim of absolute certainty, while on the other hand such assurance has been asserted from a very confining base of exposure.

*His poetic firefly flits:  
The dewdrop knows the sun  
only within its own tiny orb.*

The sectarian is one who condemns others' reasons from a constricted world view and reaches conclusions ostensibly applicable to all men.

The religious man of action is scrutinized by Tagore, for he too stifles ultimate concern. Song and dance, offering and temple should become concerns in which men are grasped with ultimate meaning. The sects had recorded the notes, but had lost their meaning. Tagore writes:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut?

*... Come out of thy meditations and leave  
aside thy flowers and incense!*

Who is it that men worship in darkened corners, by means of beads, incense and flowers? *Who* is the proper question, for both the object of worship and the worshipper himself are persons. The sectarians have depersonalized religion; their worship is directed to material objects.

Those who have rejected the world and live a life of renunciation also feel the poetic rebuke of Tagore. The daily life of sensual involvement is not to be negated in favour of retreat from the temptations of the senses. On the contrary, Tagore sings:

Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

It is through the senses of sight, sound and touch that the desires of joy and love are set free. The mass of poor men, those lowly in status and those who search and travel on pilgrimage, whisper the sounds of religious concern in Tagore's poetry.

In lieu of these restricted and restricting views of religion, Tagore posits a liberated and liberating view of religion that celebrates the complete fulfilment of man through his own agency, using concepts like God to facilitate that fulfilment. This new view of religion is based on a particular view of man, his life and endeavours. An important quotation from Donald Trump's analysis is as follows:

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The basic element of religion is man, man not as some unchanging artefact of history, but as a living being in the process of becoming something else, something more satisfying. Man is searching for meaning. He has clues to meanings all about him. Taking those clues, he realizes that there are depths of satisfaction beyond his present limitations, and so he sets out on a pilgrimage with others to learn. This pilgrimage leads him to realms beyond the senses, and to a unifying experience with the ultimate, which is conceived as personal.

Why is man caught in this eternal quest for meaning? Many answers can be suggested to this fundamental question. This may be a function of human desire that moves on from one goal to another in a quest for fulfilling itself but always finds that fulfilment eluding. This desire for fulfilment is born out of man sensing his separation from other things, other men and even at his deepest level from himself. He, therefore, sets out in search for meanings yet unrealized. Deep inside, at an experiential level, he knows that it is only in love that he can find fulfilment for his eternal quest. Not knowledge but life experienced on his pulse has taught him this. It is only by the complete surrender of the desiring self to a cause or a divinity that this quest for meaning and fulfilment can be paradoxically achieved.

Trump takes this argument further to explore the dynamics of such surrender:

The search for meaning is not confined to the intellect, but it is one which will engage the whole of his being. He also knows that the search will take the form of a human quest a person to person dialogue. The artistic talents and propensities as well as the experiences of human love will be employed in the search. Prior to man's departure on pilgrimage, he has uttered his first prayer, 'Lead me from the unreal to Truth.'....

The important point to notice here is that the individual's complete self occupies a central place of importance in this world-view. Fulfilment will come not because of divine intervention or because of the practice of some esoteric ritual but because the individual has struggled and evolved a path, unique to him, in the process of achieving this fulfilment.

Despite this centrality of focus on the individual in Tagore's view of religion, it does not cut man off from the social dimension of his life. When fulfilment is achieved, man is impelled towards an ever widening aura of activity and area of services which link that enlightened man to the affairs of other men. 'The religious man's sphere of activities is not to be isolated from the crowded marketplaces of the world, where most men live. Religion cannot cut itself off from other men because of wealth, class, status, or professed allegiance to religious labels. Rather, its sympathy is with all men, in order to teach, direct and lead them to the loving relationship with the loving Person', Trump concludes.

### 2.6.5 The first Two Songs of *Gitanjali*: Summary

The English *Gitanjali-Song Offering* is a translation of poems composed in Bengali by Rabindranath Tagore. This original Bengali collection had 156-157 verses. The English *Gitanjali-Song Offering* was published by the Indian Society of London in November 1912. It contained 103 poems – a translation of Tagore from his original work in Bengali, out of which 53 were from original *Gitanjali*, 17 from *Giti Malya*, 15 poems from *Naivedya* and 11 poems from *Kheya*.

The literal meaning of *Gitanjali* is ‘song offering’. The poems are spiritual and mystical in nature. The first introduction to the first collection of these poems was written by William Butler Yeats. Tagore was well versed in both English and Bengali. The subject of *Gitanjali* was devotion of God. The Bengali version was published in 1910, the English *Gitanjali* was published in 1912 and Tagore received a Nobel Prize for Literature for this work in 1913.

He follows a simple style of writing, sharing the bond between the poet and his Lord whom he addresses directly just as a friend. Critics have identified the theme of humanism, spirituality, humanity, nationalism and realism throughout his compositions. His notion of God appears to be that of a power which has created this universe out of love and the best service man can do is to sustain and maintain this love giving up all divisions of class, caste, gender, race or nation.

The summary of the first two poems is given below along with the text for your reference:

### 1

*THOU hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This frail vessel thou  
emptiest  
again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life.( stanza 1)*

*This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast  
breathed through  
it melodies eternally new.( stanza 2)*

*At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and  
gives birth to  
utterance ineffable1.( stanza 3)*

*Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass, and  
still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.( stanza 4)*

### Summary 1

In the first stanza the poet says that O lord it is your grace that has given me immense potential and existence. You are the source of all life and all creations — you created me and inspired me and I know that when I cease to exist you will fill me again with fresh zeal, ideas, potential and life. Here, it could be a reference to the life and death cycle, where in it is said that the soul is immortal and finds a new body and existence. It could also refer to the emotional turmoil faced by the poet, how when he is in the midst of hopeless situations, God comes as a harbinger of new hope and opportunities. The poet expresses his complete faith and surrender to God. His full faith that whatever is happening is happening with the God’s direction and there must be something good for the poet. The disturbing events of his life do not depress him – for God is there with him in his highs and lows.

In the next stanza the poet says that he is a human being, who is weak, imperfect, fragile such as a reed which can be easily broken, but with God’s inspiration the poet is able to ‘breathe’ melodies which are eternal (stanza 1). The poet appears to be thanking God for the inspirations he has received from God while composing his literary work – it would not be possible without this divine intervention, for the poet himself is imperfect. It is the ‘immortal’ touch of the

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Supreme being that the poet's heart sings songs 'utterance' which are deep and overwhelming (stanza 3). Here, one must recall that Tagore faced tremendous personal loss during the time he composed this collection.

In the last stanza, the poet draws a paradox that the gifts showered by God are 'infinite' but his hands are 'small'. He appears to be saying that it is the God whose infinite blessings we humans must always remember and be thankful. The poet expresses his craving for more of God's blessings in his endeavours. He acknowledges that God has never let him down, he always remains by his side: 'Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.'

## 2

*WHEN thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride; and*

*I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes. ( stanza 1)*

*All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony –# and my*

*adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea. ( stanza 2)*

*I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy*

*presence. ( stanza 3)*

*I touch by the edge of the far spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never*

*aspire to reach. ( stanza 4)*

*Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord. ( stanza 5)*

## Summary 2

In the first stanza, the poet says that he composes poems on God's command, and this makes him emotional and more humble.

In the second stanza, he says that God's inspiration has the power to take away his anger, pain, suffering and sadness and his poetic sensibility is awakened to its fullest and he gets motivated just like a bird ready to take its 'flight across the sea'. With God's inspiration the poet is ready to delve into the depth of spirituality, life and existence.

In the third stanza, the poet once again reaffirms the belief that God loves him due to his composition. God wants the poet to compose and sing and continue his work. Here it could be said that the poet wants to paint a more humanistic picture of the divine. The Supreme Being can be appeased by our action and service to humanity – in the real, mundane life and work. 'I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence' – the poet's work defines his existence for the divine life force.

Tagore's humanism and realism is reflected in the last stanza when he says: 'I touch by the edge of the far spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.' The poet says it is only when he does something which God wants, he will be able to reach him. Here, the divine force has directed him to compose a poem, so when he does it, he will actually be able to reach God. In the



last stanza, he mentions how his involvement in this great task makes him believe that God is his friend: 'Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord'. God for him is someone who can be reached easily, one who is akin to a friend, who stands by the side of the poet in good times as well as the bad ones.

Hence, composing a poem for Tagore was not simply a literary journey but a spiritual journey as well that of strengthening his bond with his Lord.

## 2.6.6 The First Two Songs of *Gitanjali*: Critical Appreciation

### Song 1

The first poem begins with a personal reference to God – thou, thy. It reveals his connection and familiarity with God. The song is interspersed with the use of archaic diction which lends it a touch of the infinity existing since time immemorial, similar to the bond between the poet and God, human being and the divine, it is eternal. The following words are used: 'hast, thy, thou, emptiest, breathed, pourest and so forth. To bring rhythm in the poem, the poetic device of alliteration has been used by the poet:

'... thou emptiest again and again' – sound 'a'

'...fillest it ever with fresh life' – sound 'f'

Symbolic imagery has also been judiciously used by the poet in Song 1. The metaphor of – Frail vessel has been used in stanza 1 to refer to human beings. Another metaphorical use is that of Little flute in stanza 2 which again refers to the human beings.

Tagore has used paradox / antithesis in this collection beautifully. For instance, 'infinite gifts' compared to 'small hands' ( stanza 4)

### Song 2

In the second song archaic diction has been used such as hast, commandest and so forth. The personal tone of affinity with the supreme being is evident in several instances such as when thou, 'I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes' (stanza 1). He has used simile in this song for comparing his soul's journey to meet the divine through the medium of the poem: 'like a glad bird on its flight across the sea' (stanza 2) which he extends later on 'I touch by the edge of the far spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never' aspire to reach (stanza 4). This extension and repetition of the imagery brings a flow and rhythm in the poem.

The words of W B Yeats in his preface to the first publication of *Gitanjali-Song Offering* summarizes the experience of readers after reading these poems:

' A FEW days ago I said to a distinguished Bengali doctor of medicine, "I know no German, yet if a translation of a German poet had moved me, I would go to the British Museum and find books in English that would tell me something of his life, and of the history of his thought. But though these prose translations from Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years, I shall not know anything of his life, and of the movements of thought that have made them possible, if some Indian traveller will not tell me." It seemed to him natural that I should be moved, for he said, "I read Rabindranath every

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day, to read one line of his is to forget all the troubles of the world.” I said, “An Englishman living in London in the reign of Richard the Second had he been shown translations from Petrarch or from Dante, would have found no books to answer his questions, but would have questioned some Florentine banker or Lombard merchant as I question you...”.

*Source* : Introduction by W B Yeats, *Gitanjali* E book presentation by the Spiritual Bee available online

As a poet, Tagore talks of his direct relationship with the eternal being, just as a lover and beloved, friend and friend, husband and wife, a servant and master, a statue and a sculptor. According to some critics, the poetic renditions were an attempt by Tagore to reconcile with the harsh realities of his life. He expresses his depth emotions using words, vivid symbols and imagery. His poems are a form of prayer to the divine for continuing the shower of enlightenment and illumination. His immortality lies in his creation, by means of which he intends to meet the immortal.

Tagore’s poem is exhibiting realism in the sense that he has delineated human emotions, relationships, agony and suffering in his work. This he expresses through the use of archaic and colloquial diction in his poems. He used the prose verse for his poems which again indicates his realism. Another aspect to be observed in his poems is his naturalism, love of nature and vivid nature imagery used by the poet to express himself. His use of nature imagery and symbols also indicates how significant ‘nature’ was for him in his personal and spiritual journey. Man must realize that without preserving nature realization of the eternal would be impossible. He was not in favour of the fixed routinized manner of schooling, so he founded the Vishwa Bharati University which is based on the philosophy of education in the midst of nature. For him personal and spiritual elevation takes place in close affinity with nature, materialism only destroys the true reality.

The language of *Gitanjali* is infused with paradox, something which Tagore faced in his real life itself. This paradox makes the poems complex as well as worthy of appreciation.

### Check Your Progress

12. When did Rabindranath Tagore receive the Nobel Prize for literature?
13. Mention the prominent works written by Rabindranath Tagore.
14. What is the meaning of the word *Gitanjali*?

## 2.7 SAROJINI NAIDU: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Naidu was an Indian political activist and poet. She was a freedom fighter, a social reformer who worked for women’s liberation and emancipation, provision of civil rights to all and freedom from British Raj. In those times, when women were not being given equal rights and opportunity she was a perfect example of an orator, writer and reformer. Her poems largely dealt with the themes such as freedom, reformation, liberation of women. Her excellent rendition of sense and sensibility in her poems earned her the title of **Nightingale of India**.

She was born in an educated Bengali family. She was later educated in Chennai, London and Cambridge. She actively worked as a suffragist in England. (The suffragists were members of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and were led by Millicent Garrett Fawcett during the height of the suffrage movement, 1890-1919. They led peaceful protest for procuring votes for middle-class women who owned property). She was a woman of clear thinking and strong conviction and her social activism led her to take a significant role in India's struggle for Independence. She was impressed by the philosophy of Gandhiji and became a follower of Gandhiji and worked together with him for the freedom of the country. She was appointed the President of the Indian National Congress in 1925. Later she became the Governor of the United Provinces (now UP) in 1947, thus, becoming the first woman bearing the office of Governor in Independent India.

She was married to Govindarajulu Naidu, and had five children. Naidu wrote poems on several themes including childhood, girls, women, patriotism, romance and tragedy. *In the Bazars of Hyderabad* happens to be one of her most popular poems. She died of a cardiac arrest in 1949.

Sarojini Naidu was born to Aghor Nath Chattopadhyay, a Bengali Brahmin who was the principal of the Nizam's College in Hyderabad. Her parental home was at Brahmangaon in Bikrampur (now Bangladesh). Her mother, Barada Sundari Devi Chattopadhyay, was a poet and used to write poetry in Bengali.

She was the eldest of the eight siblings and her siblings were well known personalities in the Indian subcontinent. Her brother Virendranath Chattopadhyay was a nationalist, a revolutionary, and another brother Harindranath was a poet, a dramatist and an actor. In the times of British Raj their family was hailed in high respect as its members were some of the best artists of those times. The family was progressive in its values and ideals.

She passed her matriculation examination from the University of Madras and took a four-year break from her studies. In 1895, she got a chance to travel abroad for study. She was supported by the H.E.H. the Nizam's Charitable Trust to study in England, first at King's College, London and later at Girton College, Cambridge.

Sarojini Naidu was a liberal, a social reformer and a crusader for women's rights and emancipation. At the age of 19 she decided in favour of inter-caste marriage with Paidipati Govindarajulu Naidu, a physician, though there was no objection from both sides. It was a bold decision as inter-caste and inter-regional marriages were not common in those times in the Indian society. Sarojini was from Bengal, and Paidipati Naidu was from Andhra Pradesh, thus making their marriage a marriage of North and South India, with diverse social and cultural values and traditions. The couple had five children.

Sarojini Naidu was active in Indian politics between 1915 and 1918 and worked as a social reformer travelling to different regions of India and delivering lectures in favour of uprooting the social evils of gender disparity, social inequality and nationalism. She made significant contribution in the establishment of the Women's Indian Association (WIA). She supported Annie Besant, her colleague and the president of Home Rule League and Women's Indian Association (WIA) in her presentation on universal suffrage in London, UK.

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In 1920, she joined Gandhi's Satyagraha Movement. She presided over the 1925 Annual Session of the Indian National Congress at Kanpur. It was the first time that an Indian woman presided over the INC session. Naidu said in her address, 'In the battle for liberty, fear is one unforgivable treachery and despair, the one unforgivable sin.'

She participated in the Dandi March in 1930 along with Gandiji, Nehru and Pt Madan Mohan Malviya for which she faced arrest.

Following the Gandhi-Irwin pact in 1931, Naidu and other leaders of the Congress party participated in the Second Round Table Conference headed by Viceroy Lord Irwin; they had refused to attend the first round table conference earlier. She spent considerable time in jail owing to her active involvement in the Non-cooperation movement and the Quit India Movement in 1921. She was able to impress people with her intellect, strong personality, humour, charm, sweet voice, courage, steadfastness and cultural rootedness.

Some of her major literary contributions are listed below:

- 1905: *The Golden Threshold*, her first major collection of poems at the age of 26, published in the United Kingdom; she dedicated this book to Edmund Gosse
- 1912: *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death & the Spring*, published in London with an introduction by Edmund Gosse
- 1917: *The Broken Wing: Songs of Love, Death and the Spring*, was her third publication
- 1919: Muhammad Jinnah: An Ambassador of Unity
- 1937: *The Sceptred Flute: Songs of India*, published by Dodd, Mead and Co., New York in and in 1943 Indian edition published by Kitabistan: Allahabad
- 1961: *The Feather of the Dawn*, posthumously, twelve years after her death, edited by her daughter, Padmaja Naidu
- 1971: *The Indian Weavers*

Here is a list of Awards and honours conferred on Sarojini Naidu.

Naidu was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal by the British government for her work during the plague epidemic in India, which she later returned in protest against the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

For her work in the field of poetry writing, Naidu was given the title of *Nightingale of India*.

Naidu was listed among '150 Leading Women' in a list prepared by the University of London to commemorate 150 years since women gained access to higher education in the United Kingdom in 2018.

In 1990 an Asteroid 5647, was discovered by Eleanor Helin at Palomar Observatory in 1990 and it was named in her memory – Sarojini Naidu.

She was considered as a pioneer in shaping the image of India in West especially, the women in India. It is said that she 'stirred the soul of the East long before the West had begun to dream that it had a soul' (cited in Iyengar).

Her poetry has been generally classified thematically into three main groups: poems of personal experience, poems of Indian life and nature poems. Her literary

works largely concentrated on the theme of love. She was not only well versed in vedic concepts of Indian mythology but also had a deep understanding of Islamic beliefs. She was a great admirer of Almighty God (Allah in Arabic) and Ahle Bait (The family of Prophet Mohammad). Her poetic volumes occupy a prestigious position in the anthologies of Indo-Anglican poetry.

Many of her poems which portray Muslim life and Islamic culture include the following:

- (i) The Pardah Nashin
- (ii) A Song from Shiraz
- (iii) The Imambara
- (iv) The Prayer of Islam
- (v) Wandering Beggars and
- (vi) The Old Woman
- (vii) The poem titled *The prayer of Islam* was composed by Sarojini Naidu on Id-Uz-Zoha in the year 1915. It is taken from her volume *The Broken Wing*. This poem provides an insight into the well-acquaintance of Sarojini Naidu with Islamic mode of worship.
- (viii) The subsequent poem *Imam Bara* is also taken from Sarojini Naidu's volume *The Broken Wing* (1917).

In the following section, a famous poem composed by Sarojini Naidu is discussed to get an understanding of her style of writing.

### 2.7.1 *The Flute-Player of Brindaban: Summary*

In this poem, the poet addresses her love, Krishna, the flute player of Brindavan.

*WHY didst thou play thy matchless flute  
'Neath the Kadamba tree,  
And wound my idly dreaming heart  
With poignant melody,  
So where thou goest I must go  
My flute-player with thee?*

*Still must I like a homeless bird  
Wander, forsaking all  
The earthly loves and worldly lures  
That held my life in thrall,  
'And follow, follow, answering  
Thy magical flute-call.  
To Indra's golden-flowering groves  
Where streams immortal flow,  
Or to sad Yama's silent Courts  
Engulfed in lampless woe,  
Where'er thy subtle flute I hear  
Belovèd I must go!*

*No peril of the deep or height  
Shall daunt my wingèd foot;  
No fear of time-unconquered space,*

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*Or light untravelled route,  
Impede my heart that pants to drain  
The nectar of thy flute!*

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She says that the tune of the flute mesmerizes her and stirs her soul to the chore. She is enchanted by its tune and confirms that under its influence she will forsake all worldly pleasures and follow him. She expresses her doubt of whether she will be led to the garden of Indra (pleasure) or the court of Yama (pain), but she is fearless and she has surrendered her faith and fate to her Lord. She has strong faith in the Lord and she fears nothing in his company 'No peril of the deep or height Shall daunt my wingèd foot'. She is looking forward to spiritual elevation in his guidance.

### 2.7.2 *The Flute-Player of Brindaban: Critical Appreciation*

This poem is based on the love theme, depicting love between the lover and the beloved though with a difference. It is a spiritual, mystical poem expressing the poet's love for Krishna. She begins the poem with a rhetorical question:

*WHY didst thou play thy matchless flute  
'Neath the Kadamba tree,*

She answers this question herself at the end of the poem, 'The nectar of thy flute!.' It is the purity, spiritual aspect of the tune that inspires the poetess to think of gaining eternal bliss. Her idly dreaming heart is touched and moved by the divine music played on the flute near the Kadamba tree. The poet's enchantment reveals the timelessness experienced by the poet. She enquires the lord of the path she must follow to reach him and experience the bliss. She compares herself to a homeless bird, in her eagerness to unite with the One, she is ready to give up all her worldly pleasures.

In the second stanza, the poet expresses that she is not concerned whether the flute leads her to the pleasures of Lord Indra or to the pains of Yama—she is prepared for everything. Her equanimity is expressed in both situations. It reveals that she is set on her path to spiritual journey. For spiritual bliss, Krishna in Gita says one must maintain equanimity – remain calm and serene amongst all circumstances – extreme happiness or sadness. As she states:

*'Where'er thy subtle flute I hear  
Belovèd I must go!'*

In the last stanza, the poet reiterates her firm faith that nothing will deter her progress on the spiritual path:

*No peril of the deep or height  
Shall daunt my wingèd foot;  
No fear of time-unconquered space,  
Or light untravelled route,  
Impede my heart that pants to drain  
The nectar of thy flute!*

Sarojini Naidu characteristically uses Indian symbols, ideals, themes and motifs in her poems. In this poem, she uses the Krishna imagery, his flute, Kadamba tree, reference is also made to Lord Indra and the pleasures of his abode alongside Yama and the associated danger with its place. The reference reflects the typical Hindu concept of 'swarg' and 'narak' - one place is that of pleasure and the second one is of pain. In Indian mythology, it is firmly believed that our actions on this earth determine our fate in after life. The poet expresses that she has surrendered herself to Lord Krishna and she has prepared herself for the future. The faith she has in her Lord is unshakeable.

Her poem is well-known for metrical felicity. Notice the rhyming words used in the poem:

Stanza 1: tree, thee

Stanza 2: all, thrall, call

Stanza 3: flow, woe

Stanza 4: foot, route, flute

The literary device of alliteration is used: earthly loves and worldly lures; golden-flowering groves.

Repetition is used to add to the lyrical quality of the poem: 'And follow, follow, answering'

It is a poem which reiterates the Indian philosophy which calls for salvation through subjugation of the self to the Lord. This mingling of the self with Lord is the ultimate desire of the poet – Moksha as is referred by Lord Krishna in Gita.

### Archaic words used in this poem: thou, woest

The symbolism and imagery used by the poet in this poem adds value to its depth and makes it more vivid to feel and enjoy. The poet has used words such as 'matchless flute', 'winged foot', 'idly dreaming heart', 'untravelling route', 'time-unconquered space', 'lampless woe' which lend charm to the poem. Naidu has picked up purely Indian themes and festivals and cultures as objects of her literary work. One of the mythological images picked up by her in this poem is mentioned below:

*'To Indra's golden-flowering groves*

*Where streams immortal flow,*

*Or to sad Yama's silent Courts'*

Her poems reflected a strong note of nationalism, mysticism, nature, humanism, cultural identity. Her poetic style has inspired many Indian poets to pick up the English language to express their thoughts, emotions, values and concerns using their own imagery, motifs and style. She is a crusader for Indian women— expressing herself freely, without any inhibitions of love and emotions.

### Check Your Progress

15. When did Sarojini Naidu become the governor of the United Provinces?
16. Mention some of the significant initiatives taken by Sarojini Naidu.

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## 2.8 A LOVE SONG FROM THE NORTH: TEXT, SUMMARY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

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Let us study the poem *A Love Song from the North* in detail.

#### 2.8.1 A Love Song from the North: Text

*Tell me no more of thy love, papeeha,  
Wouldst thou recall to my heart, papeeha,  
Dreams of delight that are gone,  
When swift to my side came the feet of my lover  
With stars of the dusk and the dawn?  
I see the soft wings of the clouds on the river,  
And jewelled with raindrops the mango-leaves quiver,  
And tender boughs flower on the plain.....  
But what is their beauty to me, papeeha,  
Beauty of blossom and shower, papeeha,  
That brings not my lover again?  
Tell me no more of thy love, papeeha,  
Wouldst thou revive in my heart, papeeha  
Grief for the joy that is gone?  
I hear the bright peacock in glimmering woodlands  
Cry to its mate in the dawn;  
I hear the black koel's slow, tremulous wooing,  
And sweet in the gardens the calling and cooing  
Of passionate bulbul and dove....  
But what is their music to me, papeeha  
Songs of their laughter and love, papeeha,  
To me, forsaken of love?*

#### 2.8.2 A Love Song from the North: Summary

Sarojini Naidu in the poem *A Love Song from the North* portrays a lover who is speaking to a papeeha (a bird who usually sings melodious notes in the season of spring) who supposedly is narrating in its melodious voice the tale of its love. The poet assumes that the papeeha is singing of its love. The melodious song of papeeha cannot be about anything else except for its love and therefore the poet assumes that the song of papeeha is making him aware of her love when the affair has long ended. It is not sure why the poet's love affair – 'Dreams of delight that are gone' is not mentioned in the poem. It can be assumed that the poet has lost her lover or perhaps the lover has left or it can be that they are separated. Nonetheless, it is certain that the poet has immense love for her lover and remembers him again and again.

The poet, therefore, grows conscious of her lover as she listens to the song of papeeha. It is probably the season of spring when the bird sings and the beauty and freshness of spring makes the poet evermore conscious and desirous of her



lover; though he is nowhere to be found. The poet then compares her love with the picturesque beauty of nature:

*'When swift to my side came the feet of my lover  
With stars of the dusk and the dawn?  
I see the soft wings of the clouds on the river,  
And jewelled with raindrops the mango-leaves quiver,  
And tender boughs flower on the plain.....'*

But the poet says that the bounteous beauty of nature is not of any consequence to her as one wants to look beautiful and becomes conscious of the beauty only when one is in a happy state of mind. It is a general saying that 'Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder.' When one's soul is happy, one feels the surrounding to be happy and becomes a part of it.

But when the lover is gone, the beauty of nature is of no significance to the poet. The 'beauty of the blossom and shower' has, as if, become meaningless to the poet in absence of the lover. One needs to realize here that the poet is in love with her lover in such a fashion that her whole world revolves around him, even though he is not physically present with her.

The poet feels that the nature's beauty or papeeha's song is not going to bring her lover back to him. The poet seems to be in a state of perpetual grief and nothing joyous appeals to her anymore. The peacock's call to its mate, black koel's wooing makes her more and more conscious of her lover. Therefore, she feels that the song of papeeha is inconsequential to her.

### 2.8.3 *A Love Song from the North*: Critical Appreciation

Apparently when we read the poem *A Love Song from the North*, it seems that the poet Sarojini Naidu feels that papeeha's song, koel's cooing and peacock's calling for its mate, nature's blossoming in bounteous beauty, etc., are inconsequential as she is engrossed in her lover who is not there anymore with her. The loss of the lover seems to have created a permanent state of desolation in the sensitivity of the poet, leading to her being indifferent to the outer beauty of the environment. She feels as if all things beautiful around her have lost their due importance as her life is barren without the lover. This seems to be the impression that we get from the poem, but when one reads the poem deeply and critically one comes across many other issues which are of supreme significance in better understanding the poem:

- (a) The poet seems to be not so much indifferent to nature's beauty: It is not that she does not see the beauty of nature. It is not that the bounteous beauty which we have referred to earlier is too inconsequential to her. It is just that the beauty of nature and papeeha's song though beautiful do not make any sense to her as she is not in a happy state of mind, but she perceives the beauty.
- (b) She can perceive beauty of the nature: She understands that the papeeha's song is about its love and that nature blossoming is beautiful. This shows that the sensitivity of the poet towards natural things is not yet dead. They are still alive and the poet can see beauty in them. She can do so as she is

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still in love. The lover may have gone away, but her love has not perished. The absence of the lover does not diminish her love as she loves him truly and his physical absence causes tensions and anguishes in her.

- (c) It is to be presumed that she believes in a kind of love which is immortal: The physical nearness or distance does not matter so much when one loves truly. It is true that physical nearness of the lover makes the beloved happy; but physical distance does not in any way diminish the love. Moreover, the physical distance makes the beloved think and remember her lover at every instance of her life.
- (d) The imageries of nature are used to talk about the love: Love is a feeling which is not just typical of human beings, according to the poet Sarojini Naidu, but animals also tend to shower love on each other. In the poem, the papecha is singing about its love, the peacock is calling its mate, the black koel is also cooing for its partner. Thus, in the season of spring, when nature has blossomed to its best, all the animals are busy in looking for their respective mates/ partners. In such a state of things, it is evident that the poet also longs for her partner's physical nearness as that would bring immense joy to her.
- (e) The difference between the imageries of the animal world calling for their respective mates and that of the poet is that the birds calling would make them get near to their mates, while the poet's longing will remain unfulfilled. Therefore, in the very beginning of the poem, in the third line, the poet has written 'Dreams of delight that are gone'. For the poet, being one with the love is only possible in her dreams as physically he is not present. She will be delighted to be in physical nearness to her lover; but the word 'gone' suggests that her dreams are never going to see the light of the day.
- (f) It may be assumed from the word 'gone' that either the lover has left the beloved and gone away forever or it may suggest that he is not in this world anymore. The word 'gone' suggests the thud of reality to the poet's mind to the otherwise dreamy atmosphere of the poem.
- (g) Sarojini Naidu is able to evoke the feelings in the readers that the romantic ethos of one's existence is supremely significant in life and that one should carry on loving despite being in a sad state of mind. To love someone is a greater feeling and that feeling is being championed in the poem, even though the feeling has caused the poet to be dejected. Even in her state of dejection, the poet Sarojini Naidu is not suggesting that one should stop loving. Moreover, she presents the sweetness of her existence even in her dejection.
- (h) As discussed earlier, it was extremely essential for Sarojini Naidu to champion love in the colonial context because it not only provides certain aesthetic beauty to life but also it is the only way in which violence can be dealt with. The violence of the colonial powers needs to be countered with love. Mahatma Gandhi, as Ashish Nandy points out in the book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, championed 'passive resistance' (non-violence) as a means to deal with colonial violence. To love is not only an emotional state of being, but also a political tool to

deal with the British regime which believes in doing violence as a means of achieving their profit. The world does not run in terms of profit and loss, but in terms of the cordial relationships one builds, and love is the basis of any cordial relationship. Though, no mention of the political context is being done in the poem, but a poem written in the colonial context of India can be read with this particular angle.

- (i) Moreover, one can also look at the poem from the feminist viewpoint. From the very beginning of the analysis of this poem, we have assumed that the voice of the narrator of the poem is that of the poet herself and we have moreover assumed that it is a female persona who is speaking in the poem. If we take this premise to be true, then it can be assumed that the female persona is talking about nature a lot, as she equates herself with the natural surroundings. The world is structured in human language in terms of binary opposites – man / woman; nature/culture and so forth. In a patriarchal context, it is the man who decides, rules and makes norms while the women becomes the victim of the gender prejudices and norms of the patriarchy.
- (j) It is not to be said that Sarojini Naidu is asking the readers to assume the same kind of cultural conditioning of women to the patriarchal hegemony as she makes an effort in the poem to show how the women are made to suffer in love even when the lover has ‘gone’ away leaving the beloved alone. Even though, the poem cannot be read to be a feminist championing of women’s cause; yet reference to Nature so many times in the poem makes the readers feel that it is justified for women to be desirous of their respective partners, than just being an object of desire. Usually, in a patriarchal context, women are seen to be objects of desire and women’s desires are not tended to, and moreover overlooked. Sarojini Naidu makes her female voice in the poem to speak about her desire to be physically near to her partner even though he may be far away from her. Thus, in some ways, we can also make a feminist analysis of the poem *A Love Song from the North*.
- (k) The Nature /Culture debate also needs to be pondered deeply as it is done in the poem. When trying to define love in the poem *An Indian Love Song*, we have seen how love is often seen as a cultural construct which is defined and thought from the point of view of the cultural set-up in which one is living. The culture of the land decides the terms and conditions of the love and therefore, it is often thought to be a cultural construct. But the question is: Is love really a cultural construct or is it a natural desire of the animal world? The poet presents love in the poem, as has been mentioned earlier, as a natural desire. All the birds in the poem – papeeha, peacock, koel – are shown to be calling their mates or singing about their love. This shows that it is but natural to desire physical closeness of one’s partner. In such terms, love is moreover seen as a natural feeling – a part of nature, rather than being a cultural construct. It is to be kept in mind that the binary opposition of Nature vs. Culture is as dubious as other binaries are not so much in opposition with each other as they are presented to be. One of the questions that Sarojini Naidu seems to be dealing with in the poem is to think in terms of questioning this binary of nature/ culture.

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- (l) Last, but not the least, it can also be said that the poem *A Love Song from the North* is a beautiful rendition of a feeling which captures the essence of being in love. It is one of the most sublime feelings in the world and that feeling is being rendered aesthetically in sweetest words in the poem.

**Check Your Progress**

17. What is the bird papeeha singing in the poem *A Love Song from the North*?
18. Why is the poet in a state of grief in the poem?

## 2.9 AN INDIAN LOVE SONG: TEXT, SUMMARY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Let us study the poem *An Indian Love Song* in detail.

### 2.9.1 *An Indian Love Song*: Text

**He**

*Lift up the veils that darken the delicate moon  
of thy glory and grace,  
Withhold not, O love, from the night  
of my longing the joy of thy luminous face,  
Give me a spear of the scented keora  
guarding thy pinioned curls,  
Or a silken thread from the fringes  
that trouble the dream of thy glimmering pearls;  
Faint grows my soul with thy tresses' perfume  
and the song of thy anklets' caprice,  
Revive me, I pray, with the magical nectar  
that dwells in the flower of thy kiss.*

**She**

*How shall I yield to the voice of thy pleading,  
how shall I grant thy prayer,  
Or give thee a rose-red silken tassel,  
a scented leaf from my hair?  
Or fling in the flame of thy heart's desire the veils that cover my face,  
Profane the law of my father's creed for a foe  
of my father's race?  
Thy kinsmen have broken our sacred altars and slaughtered our sacred kine,  
The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles sever thy people and mine.*

**He**

*What are the sins of my race, Beloved,  
what are my people to thee?  
And what are thy shrines, and kine and kindred,  
what are thy gods to me?*

*Love recks not of feuds and bitter follies,  
of stranger, comrade or kin,  
Alike in his ear sound the temple bells  
and the cry of the muezzin.  
For Love shall cancel the ancient wrong  
and conquer the ancient rage,  
Redeem with his tears the memoried sorrow  
that sullied a bygone age.*

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### 2.9.2 An Indian Love Song: Summary

Sarojini Naidu's *An Indian Love Song* deals with two protagonists – a lover and a beloved – referred to as 'He' and 'She' in the poem as the poem is written in the forms of dialogues. These two people are in conversation with each other regarding how they can come together when their respective families are antagonistic to each other because of their enmity, which is probably to some extent because of the communal tensions between the two religions. Such stories are apparently not new in the field of literature or cinema as opposing families and their offspring falling with love has been a popular narrative which has got much attention from the readers.

In the poem *An Indian Love Song* an attempt has been made by the poet Sarojini Naidu to represent the popular narrative with a twist where the lover and the beloved are discussing the problems that their love may face. The poem is divided into three sections:

- (a) The first section of the poem is where the lover 'He' asks for the love and benediction of the beloved. In this section of the poem, the lover is primarily describing the beauty of the beloved. Though the lover is primarily talking of the outward beauty of the beloved, it is to be understood that the passionate recounting of the beauty is to not only woo the beloved to agree to his demands, but also to make the readers aware of the fact that there is a certain degree of sublimity in the beloved's beauty which has attracted the lover towards her and which has made the lover not only profess his love for her but also to be rhetorical with his language.
- (b) The second section of the poem is the reply of the beloved 'She' where she enumerates the fact that they cannot come together and that the lover and beloved cannot think of fruition of their love as their families are at war against each other. The enmity between their families deters the beloved from granting the request / prayer of the lover.
- (c) The third section of the poem is a reply of the lover 'He' to the idea that the beloved has given in the earlier section. The lover is of the opinion that he merely thinks of the beloved and does not care about what the father or the family thinks and feels. He is not concerned about the enmity, but more concerned with the beloved and is therefore concerned with getting her in his life. The poem ends on a note where the lover has made the proclamation that love has the power in it to do away with ancient wrongs, to wash up the enmity as well as conquer the 'ancient rage'.

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The three sections of the poem, thus, represent the viewpoints of the lover and the beloved as they vie for each other's love, though the beloved is worried that she will not be able to reciprocate her love for her lover as the family feuds between the two families comes in the way of the fruition of their love. The poem seems to be a melodious rendition of the way the Indian lovers, especially the 'He' and the 'She' in the poem, find it difficult to achieve their desired end in love.

### 2.9.3 *An Indian Love Song: Critical Appreciation*

Sarojini Naidu's *An Indian Love Song* seems apparently to be a story of the lover and beloved apparently are in love with each other; but the family feud (which is racial/ communal in colour) seems to be coming in between the fruition of their love story. What the poem tries to connote is the notion of love? How do we define love? What are the parameters by which we fall in love? How does love achieve fruition? These are complicated questions which different societies and cultures are trying to deal with in different fashions so as to reach various conclusions which may lead them to better relationships and better world. It is to be understood here that it is not 'hatred' or 'enmity' that has kept the world moving, but 'love' has conquered more people and lands than did hatred. Loving someone means to think about the good of the other person before anything else. Loving means sharing and caring. To love someone is to make attempts to look forward to a better life with him or her. To love is to look for prosperity for both the loving partners and the power and will to survive all odds together. There are many such notions about love and therefore from time immemorial, poets and writers throughout the world have made attempts to creatively write myriads of love poems and stories. Such works have not only enlightened and enlivened the hearts of millions of people but also at the same time have provided much emotional purgation to the readers.

Sometimes, one may feel that the notion of love is so simple, then why is there a need of so many renditions of the simple concept in such melodious notes in different cultures in different languages. It can be understood simply with its dictionary definition. Then what is the need of writing so many poems on the idea of love. The answer to this question lies in the fact that even though the notion of love is simple; yet from one context to another, the nature and intensity of love varies, from person to person the notion of love finds different expression, from culture to culture the notion of love has different connotations, from time to time the ways of loving someone has changed. With all the societal changes happening all around us all the time, it is evident that the notion of love is also changing. The ways of loving someone in the ancient world is not the same as that of today. So when a poet today writes about love, he or she may render his idea of love in a completely different way than what the poets would have done a century back.

Sarojini Naidu in the poem *An Indian Love Song* makes an attempt to understand the notion of love between a lover and his beloved when their families are not in good terms with each other. The beloved warns the lover that she cannot in any way grant his request for a 'kiss'. She says:

*'Profane the law of my father's creed for a foe  
of my father's race?  
Thy kinsmen have broken our sacred altars and slaughtered our sacred kine,  
The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles sever thy people and mine.'*

What she means is that she cannot go against her father and the honour of the family to bestow a kiss on someone who is a foe to her family. The lover's kinsmen are not only enemy to the girl's family but also someone who have —

- (a) Broken the sacred altars: Each house in India has a worshipping place (a *mandir*/ temple often for the rich) where the altars of Gods and Goddesses (often household deity) are kept and worshipped. The lover's family members have entered the beloved's house and have destroyed the altar of the deities in their rage against the family.
- (b) Slaughtered our sacred kin: It suggests that not only there is an enmity, but the enmity has also resulted in the boy's family to even kill members of the girl's family.

It is because of this that the beloved thinks that there is a 'feud of old faiths' between the two families which have severed the ties between them. It is 'the blood of old battles' between the two families which comes in the way of beloved granting the lover with a kiss. It suggests the following:

- (a) The beloved has a liking for the lover and could have granted his request for love if the lover would not have been from the family of enemies.
- (b) The beloved is a thinking individual who is very much aware of her family's honour and keeps that on priority in her mind.
- (c) The beloved remembers the feud between the two families, but at the same time is not someone who keeps any animosity against the lover as she does not accuse the lover for any enmity. Moreover, she talks to him in a manner which suggests that she can think logically and does not hold any grudge against him.
- (d) The beloved with her arguments tries to justify her choice and does not merely rubbish the lover for making physical advancements of love which suggests that she is a flesh and blood human being who has her feelings, desires and wishes.
- (e) The 'feud of old faiths' may also suggest that the lover and the beloved belong to different religious communities which may be a reason of the enmity between the two families. India is known to be a land where communal harmony has been achieved with much prowess; but it is also a land where we can see many communal clashes happening from time to time. The 'old faiths' may refer to those communal clashes whose victims seem to be the lover and the beloved who cannot see the fruition of their love.

Thus, the girl's plea to the lover seems to be of much significance in the poem *An Indian Love Song* as she brings to the fore the socio-cultural, religious issues that tends to mar their love. By rendering her speech in a direct manner, she makes it clear to us that love in the Indian context is not something which often happens in terms of just having a physical and emotional attachment to one another; but the parameters of religion, caste, ethnicity and even class factors often influence the choice of partners that we choose in our lives. In such a situation, when the choice of partners to be in a love relationship is dictated by so many parameters,

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it ceases to be love. And where real love happens, all these parameters are brought forth in such a manner that the lovers cease to love or are coerced or forced to be distant from each other.

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The lover in the third section of the poem *An Indian Love Song* refers to this aspect when he mentions that they should not be perturbed by what others think or feel, as he says:

*What are the sins of my race, Beloved,  
what are my people to thee?  
And what are thy shrines, and kine and kindred,  
what are thy gods to me?*

In the initial reading of the poem, it feels as if the lover is saying that he is not interested in the beloved's family or her shrines and gods. However, when one reads the poem critically one understands that the lover is saying something much deeper than that as he feels that shrines, gods, racial considerations, etc., are of no concern when one has fallen in love with someone. When one falls in love, it is not a rational choice or decision that one makes; but an emotional one – he/ she is dictated by the heart and its desires and therefore all rational and reasonable considerations do not count. The lover has fallen in love with the beloved and he feels that his only consideration is the beloved and no one else. It does not matter to him that the beloved belongs to the family of his enemies, that the gods of these two families are different. The lover thinks that the 'sins of ... race' cannot and should not be a consideration when love is concerned. Love is a meeting of two souls and there is something divine about it which surpasses all religious and racial considerations.

The lover thinks in terms of his emotional entanglement with the beloved and his only consideration is to get his beloved in his life and nothing else. He does not feel or think that it would be unfit and unfair as the beloved is from a different race and religion and that she belongs to the family with which there is enmity. It may seem sacrilegious to many that the lover is making attempt to woo someone belonging to a different race and religion, but the fact remains that it is because of people like the lover in the poem that the multicultural ethos of India finds its expression in the best of minds. It is this cosmopolitan nature of the lover which mesmerizes the readers' minds as they feel that the lover can go beyond the considerations of race and religion to get someone in his life whom he considers to be greater than anything else.

*Further, the lover adds in the end of the poem An Indian Love Song”:*  
*Love recks not of feuds and bitter follies,  
of stranger, comrade or kin,  
Alike in his ear sound the temple bells  
and the cry of the muezzin.  
For Love shall cancel the ancient wrong  
and conquer the ancient rage,  
Redeem with his tears the memoried sorrow  
that sullied a bygone age.*



What the lover says in these lines is more profound as he believes that it is love which can make the world a better place to live in as love does not pay heed to feuds and follies of people. Love does not distinguish between temple bells and muezzin (A muezzin is a man who calls Muslims to prayer from the minaret of a mosque). Love transcends all the petty man-made considerations which are discriminating and aspires from a much greater world where divinity and humanity becomes one and the same thing. The power of love is such that one cannot but feel tied down by the religious distinctions and ancient feuds. Therefore, the lover is of the opinion that love can 'cancel the ancient wrong and conquer the ancient rage' – that is, love has the power to undo the mistakes committed in the past and also to pacify the anger which was caused in the past.

Love is an answer / a solution to all the historical wrongs and therefore it can make way for a better world. Instead of sullying over what has happened in 'a bygone age', love aspires for a better cordial future. So the lover suggests to the beloved that instead of wasting tears on the 'memoried sorrows', one should look forward and grasp the love with open hands and heart as that leads to doing away of the wrongs and accepting life for a better tomorrow.

It is interesting to note that the poem *An Indian Love Song* is written in the form of dialogue where the protagonists are not named but referred to as 'He' and 'She'. Two things are apparent from this kind of use of generic pronouns and dialogic form:

- (a) The dialogic form makes it clear to the readers that the difference of opinion is what makes the world beautiful. It is the difference of opinion which makes us human and which leads to dialogues and discussions. Such dialogic form suggests that the world can carry on only when dialogues happen between people. Progress is not achieved when one idea is being forced or coerced on to the other person; but when clashing ideas are discussed to come to a resolution. The very nature of dialogic form is such that it provides equal footing to both the parties and therefore each voice has a chance of being heard with equal emphasis and concern as the other. Each voice is significant and it should be given equal significance as the world is created in such a manner where each individual thinks differently and yet is always ready to accept the other. The other is not to be hated and despised; the other opinion is not to be derided at; but there should be an attempt to accept and assimilate so that fruitful conclusion can be reached.
- (b) The dialogic form ensures that both the lover and beloved are on an equal footing and their concerns and voices are given due significance. It is to be remembered here that almost the whole world is patriarchal in nature and therefore women's voices are neither heard nor given any importance. But in the poem, Sarojini Naidu gives due significance to the female voice as she is not only being heard but is also being answered. Females are usually perceived by the male-dominated patriarchal society to be individuals who need to be kept under restrictions so that they obey the gender rules and remain faithful to the patriarchal whims and dictates. In the poem, *An Indian Love Song*, Naidu shows that the female is not only voicing her own version

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but also at the same time is making an attempt to put forward her logic to her lover. Thus, a significant feminist stance is taken by the poet so as to make the world realize that the women's voices not only need to be heard but they should be provided with much ears so as to make the society work towards a more gender equitable world.

Feminism, as we all know, a political stance which tries to look forward to a world where women can realize their potential and not become victims of the gender biases that exist in a patriarchal world. Feminism as a branch of theory developed coherently in the West only in the second half of the twentieth century, but the feminist viewpoints started emerging in literary and other writings much earlier. At a time, when Sarojini Naidu was writing, there was no coherent feminist theory, but even then Naidu goes on to point out the feminist stance in the poem so as to present the fact that women need to be heard and respected for their voices and desires.

In the poem, 'She' is a desired object for the lover, but at the same time, she is also a desiring subject which tells us that women cannot and should not be made to be merely objects of desire, but their desires should also be given their due. But at the same time, it is to be kept in mind that Indian society is deeply patriarchal and therefore there are many gender biases and violence that mars the Indian women and their sensibilities. In such a deeply entrenched patriarchal society, when Naidu is writing the poem *An Indian Love Song* she is not just representing the Indian set up; but moreover, is making a critique of the same so as to suggest that even in love, women and their desires as well as their viewpoints need to be respected.

Now the question which naturally arises when one reads the poem is – How is the story or the love song 'Indian'? What is typical about the song which makes it Indian? Or is it that the story and the poem have some kind of universal appeal. Apparently, when we read the poem we are reminded of the story of Romeo and Juliet (the famous play by William Shakespeare) and also about Heer and Ranjha (the Indian love story). In both these love stories, we witness that the lover and the beloved belonged to the families which have certain enmities among themselves leading to the lover and the beloved not being able to achieve any kind of fruition of their love.

Sarojini Naidu's poem is different from them as these love stories present the fact that the world does not allow the man and the woman to come together even when they are in love with each other. Whereas Romeo and Juliet fails to become one in this mortal world, the lover and beloved of the poem *An Indian Love Song* are paving their path towards loving each other as they have made it a point to discuss their differences and accept each other so as to pave a path for the better world. As mentioned earlier, the lover's appeal to the beloved in the last stanza of the poem where love is thought to be conquering all feuds and ill-wishes of the people makes it evident to us that the poem is not just a love story, but also a tale to the world that love is what makes the world a better place and not violence. Violence can lead to more and more violence and that way the world progresses towards its destruction. What is required is that one chooses love over violence and hatred and that way one looks towards a more equitable and sustainable world.

One also needs to remember that Sarojini Naidu was a political activist, a freedom fighter who actively participated in the Indian freedom struggle, apart from being a poet of extraordinary calibre. Her political activities, her love for India often manifests itself in her creative writing as she tries to write with a commitment to awaken India from its slumber and make India achieve the greater heights so as to drive out the British from India.

The poem *An Indian Love Song* does not directly refer in any way to the colonial situation. However, as the poem is written in a colonial context of India, therefore, it becomes necessary that we take the colonial parameters into account when we are trying to analyse the poem. Colonialism is a political rule of one nation over the other which the colonizing nation does for reaping economic profits though the worst effect of the colonial encounter can be seen in the psyche of the colonized who are made to look down upon their own history, their own culture, their own civilization and cultural artefacts, leading to self-denigration. What the writers and the activists of the colonized spaces do is to revive that lost glory and self-respect of the colonized so as to make them inspired and motivated enough to fight against the colonial forces.

In the poem, the colonial forces are not being mentioned; but the poem is a critique of violence and the way out of violence is also provided which is to love. Colonialism is an ideology whose direct fall out is the use of martial strength by the colonizer over the colonized which needs to be given a befitting reply. The reply can be on two accounts:

- (a) To fight the colonized (British in case of India) in martial terms and prove that the Indians are also martial enough to fight back the mighty West. Many writers in the nineteenth century try to celebrate the Indian *Khatriyahood* to oppose the masculine West and its martial strength. They do it as they think that the masculine West can be encountered with Indian masculinity and therefore the reaction to violence is violence itself – that a violent force can only be dealt with another kind of violence which is superior. But when one carries on thinking and acting in this fashion, one merely perpetuates more and more violence and society goes towards a situation when there cannot be any peace, stability and progress of the society.
- (b) The second way to react to the colonial parameter of violence is to tell the west that violence is not the way out to solve problems and it is not the means to achieve any objective. The answer to Western use of violence is love – love is to have a feeling for the opponent which will make the opponent not able to carry on victimization. Mahatma Gandhi believed in this sort of a view when he talked about ‘passive resistance’ or Satyagraha as a means of dealing with the colonial situation. Ashish Nandy in the book *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self Under Colonialism* is of the opinion that Gandhi championed the ‘perfect weakness’ as a means to fight the martial West. If the martial West thought about itself to be ‘masculine’ and carried on rendering violence on the colonized across the world for their economic profit and political rule of the world, then the Indians reacted in the twentieth century with their non-violent Satyagraha, the Gandhian way

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which not only was aimed at opposing the British, but moreover focused on building India from within so that the British are forced to quit India by themselves.

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In such a political atmosphere, Sarojini Naidu was initiated into Indian freedom struggle in which she actively participated to emancipate India from colonial domination. At the same time, she carried on writing as a tool to celebrate the Indian ethos, the Indian culture and civilization as she thought only when the Indians will gain the necessary self-respect that they will be able to make the British emancipate India. One of the main focus areas of any national movement or freedom movement is to bring back the masses to have conviction in themselves to respect their culture and civilization, to realize their self-worth, to believe that their culture is equally, if not more, capable of achieving greater heights. Sarojini Naidu through her poems is trying to deal with all these and many more issues.

In that sense, she can be termed as a post-colonial writer as she is opposing the colonial parameters through her writings and actions. Her writing in some ways makes the readers aware of their own plight, makes Indians feel that they own things and cultural artefacts and practices are something that they can be proud of.

Moreover, as in this poem *An Indian Love Song* and also in the poem *A Love Song from the North*, Sarojini Naidu celebrates the Indian love – love which may have a universal appeal. However, in the Indian context, it means something unique and extraordinary. In *An Indian Love Song*, the lover and beloved from the opposite camps of foes and also from different religions fall in love with each other. Here the parameters of communal distinction are being overruled so as to achieve a kind of union which can only lead to a much more cosmopolitan character of the Indian civilization. Even today, we see that such union of people in love affair who belong to different religion is seen to be blasphemous and often leads to many ‘honour killings’ and other sorts of violence. But Sarojini Naidu in the beginning of twentieth century is making the lover and beloved fall in love who are from two different faiths.

Naidu seems to be achieving something unique in the poem as she is making efforts to present love which does not abide by any racial, communal or casteist colours and parameters. Rabindra Nath Tagore in his essay on ‘Nationalism of India’ starts by saying that ‘India’s problem is not political, but social’. What he meant was that India was divided within itself due to many reasons such as sometimes by religion, language, caste system, class and its affiliations, gender, and by other parameters. And these man-made distinctions and ways of discrimination have divided India leading to the Indians fighting amongst themselves and thus providing the chance to the colonial forces and outsiders to come and invade India and to take over political control of the country.

What India should do is to focus on its own inherent social problems and try to solve them as quickly as possible so as to realize its potential and make adjustments which will lead to its progress. At the local level, these kinds of adjustments can be seen when Indian youth comes out of the man-made prejudices and achieve union of some kind which will lead to their achieving a greater unity. The lover in the poem speaks about these aspects in different terms to the beloved.

The lover mentions that it is with love that they will try to conquer all these rivalries and hatred so that they can look forward to a better world and also create a world for future where such rivalries do not take place. In that sense, the lover is not just making a personal appeal to the beloved to agree to his love proposal; but is also making a deeply political statement which is in tune with the decolonizing tendencies of the times.

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19. What is the subject matter of the first section of the poem *An Indian Love Song*?
20. What is the significance of the dialogue form used in the poem?

## 2.10 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. One main feature of lyric poetry is that it connects with the emotions of a reader and arouses certain emotions which one experiences in day to day life of the people such as the anxiety of death, the sadness disappointments in life, the grief of losing people and so on. It can also inculcate happy feelings such as emotions related to love, friendship, companionship and so on.
2. Some of the 20th century modern poets are T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Carlos, etc.
3. The rhyme scheme of an irregular ode requires just the lines to rhyme anywhere, and not in a specific place.
4. The main parts of ode poetry are opening of the ‘strophe’, followed by the imaging verse known as the ‘antistrophe’. The meter and length of this is same as that of the ‘strophe’. The last and the concluding verse is called the ‘epode’.
5. The main theme of *Victory Ode* by Pindar is that it depicts the magnificent theme of triumph and the glory of man.
6. *Ode on Solitude* by Alexander Pope is a lovely specimen of a Horatian ode which lives up to the tradition in real spirit. In this ode, four-line stanzas have been used by Pope, which is characteristic of all Horatian odes.
7. The main theme in the Petrarchan sonnet is usually the unattainable love of the beloved. However, this is mostly unrequited love. As a result, in the sonnet, the lover will be seen praising the beloved and justifies his love for her.
8. ‘Metaphysical conceit’ is an extended metaphor that combines two immensely diverse ideas into a single idea, often using imagery.
9. William Wordsworth defined ‘poetry’ as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquillity.
10. The main theme in *The Role of Elegy* by Mary Jo Bang is that the poet ponders over the role of elegy, and concludes that elegy is ‘the attempt / to rebreathe life / into what the gone one once was’.

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11. Some of the famous elegy poets are Thomas Gray, Rainer Maria, John Donne, Anna Akhmatova, Johannes Secundus and Joachim du Bellay.
12. Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his work *Gitanjali*.
13. *Choker Bali* (1903), *Gora* (1906), *Chitrangandha* are some of his famous novels. . Two of his famous compositions were selected as national anthem: *Jana Gana Mana* (India) and *Amar Shonar Bangla* (Bangladesh).
14. The word Gitanjali combines two Hindi words 'git', that is, song, and 'anjali', meaning offering, and, thus, means 'prayer offering of song'.
15. Sarojini Naidu became the Governor of the United Provinces (now UP) in 1947, thus, becoming the first woman bearing the office of Governor in Independent India.
16. Sarojini Naidu was active in Indian politics between 1915 and 1918 and worked as a social reformer travelling to different regions of India and delivering lectures in favour of uprooting the social evils of gender disparity, social inequality and nationalism. She made significant contribution in the establishment of the Women's Indian Association (WIA). She supported Annie Besant, her colleague and the president of Home Rule League and Women's Indian Association (WIA) in her presentation on universal suffrage in London, UK.
17. The papeeha (a bird who usually sings melodious notes in the season of spring) in *A Love Song from the North* is supposedly narrating in its melodious voice the tale of its love. The poet assumes that the papeeha is singing of its love. The melodious song of papeeha cannot be about anything else except for its love and therefore the poet assumes that the song of papeeha is making him aware of her love when the affair has long ended.
18. The poet seems to be in a state of perpetual grief because her lover is not beside her; as a result, nothing joyous appeals to her anymore.
19. The first section of the poem *An Indian Love Song* is where the lover 'He' asks for the love and benediction of the beloved. In this section of the poem, the lover is primarily describing the beauty of the beloved. Though the lover is primarily talking of the outward beauty of the beloved, it is to be understood that the passionate recounting of the beauty is to not only woo the beloved to agree to his demands, but also to make the readers aware of the fact that there is a certain degree of sublimity in the beloved's beauty which has attracted the lover towards her and which has made the lover not only profess his love for her but also to be rhetorical with his language.
20. The poem *An Indian Love Song* is written in the form of dialogue where the protagonists are not named but referred to as 'He' and 'She'. The dialogic form makes it clear to the readers that the difference of opinion is what makes the world beautiful. It is the difference of opinion which makes us human and which leads to dialogues and discussions. The dialogic form ensures that both the lover and beloved are on an equal footing and their concerns and voices are given due significance. It is to be remembered here that almost the whole world is patriarchal in nature and therefore women's voices are neither heard nor given any importance.

## 2.11 SUMMARY

- The word 'lyric' is derived from the Greek word *lyre* which is an instrument used by the Greeks as an accompaniment to a poem. Poets who use lyrical form of poetry exhibit particular temperaments and sentiments by means of words.
- Generally, lyric speakers are symbolized as poets who see themselves in a world of loneliness. However, in dramatic lyrics, nevertheless, the speaker of a lyric poem is denoted as speaking to another person in a particular condition or circumstance.
- During this period in Britain, an English composer, Thomas Campion composed lute songs and the sonnet gained popularity due to ardent efforts of poets like Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare.
- During the period of 18th century, countries such as England and France saw a decline in the lyrical form of poetry. Places of congregation such as the English coffeehouses and French salons, which were frequented by poets, authors and other literary intellectuals witnessed atmosphere of literary conversation which was not amiable to lyric poetry.
- In the beginning of the 20th century, American poetic scene was influenced by rhyming lyric poetry, which was generally an expression of the poet's. Europe and the British colonies also witnessed similar kind of changes in lyric form of poetry.
- An ode is a form of lyric poetry which is based on a grave theme and follows a definite structure. The style of ode is elevated and is structurally intricate. In the words of an American author, Norman Maclean, 'the term now calls to mind a lyric which is massive, public in its proclamations, and Pindaric in its classical prototype'.
- The ode form of lyric poetry has been at an exalted position in the history of English literature. Since a long time in history, Pindaric odes have often been written and performed in order to commemorate victories in the athletic field.
- The sonnet form is one of the most enduring literary forms of poetry in English. The sonnet form was introduced by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey in the sixteenth century in English.
- Wordsworth and Coleridge heralded a new era in English Literature with their publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*. This period came to be known as the 'Romantic period'. Wordsworth defined 'poetry' as the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected in tranquility.
- The word elegy originated from the Greek word 'elegeia,' which means to lament or to be sorrowful. In Greek and Roman literature, any poem which was written in elegiac meter, meant irregular hexameter and pentameter lines was denoted by the term 'elegy'.
- In the existing times, 'threnody' is used primarily as an equivalent of dirge and monody for an elegy or dirge which is offered as the expression of one

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single individual. John Milton describes his *Lycidas* (1638) in the subtitle as a 'monody' in which the author bewails a learned Friend.

- An elegy is a poem which expresses gloomy thoughts of a person. It is commonly written in praise of the deceased and has an air of sorrow around it. An 'elegy' is very different from 'eulogy' which is an account that is put together in prose.
- Pastoral elegy is a poem which dwells upon the combined subject of death and sublime country life. This form of poetry usually includes shepherds who express their emotions. The pastoral elegy takes the pastoral or rural components and connects them to expression of sorrow on a loss.
- The pastoral elegy form of poetry prospered in Europe during the period of Renaissance and the 19th century. In the modern era however, poets like J V Cunningham and Alan Dugan worked towards re-imagining the pastoral elegy and giving it a new form.
- Elegy was a prominent form of lyric poetry prevalent during the era of the classical Greek literature.
- The elegies written in the modern European literature era, express gloomy and forlorn feelings after some passionate experiences or they are enthused by reflection on insubstantiality of human existence. For Nicolas Boileau-Despreaux, a French poet, the elegy is mourning in funeral cloth.
- Tagore was a well renowned, multitalented, intellectual poet, musician, dramatist, lyricist, painter, an artist, nationalist and a politician all rolled in one. He is admired and referred to as Gurudev, kaviguru, 'bard of Bengal' and viswaguru.
- Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* is one of the most celebrated works in modern Indian literature. The word *Gitanjali* combines two Hindi words 'git', that is, song, and 'anjali', meaning offering, and, thus, means 'prayer offering of song'.
- It is very difficult, if not impossible, to summarize this collection of poems in a couple of hundred words. What we have here is a collection of over 103 poems and each will have to be summarized individually because they are all interrelated yet uniquely different.
- Tagore in a letter to his niece Indiradevi Chaudhurani, written in Bengali, described the conditions in which the English version of *Gitanjali* was created. Indiradevi has herself translated that letter into English.
- *Gitanjali* is at its heart a deeply religious poem. If you question whom these songs or verses are being offered to, the only answer you are likely to receive is the divine. However, the concept of divine that inspires Tagore is very different from the concept of divine as it exists in conventional sectarian Hinduism that believes in worshipping a deity in the name of religion and follows a set of elaborate rituals in doing so.
- The English *Gitanjali-Song Offering* is a translation of poems composed in Bengali by Rabindranath Tagore. This original Bengali collection had 156-157 verses.



- Naidu was an Indian political activist and poet. She was a freedom fighter, a social reformer who worked for women's liberation and emancipation, provision of civil rights to all and freedom from British Raj.
- Naidu was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind Medal by the British government for her work during the plague epidemic in India, which she later returned in protest against the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre.
- *The Flute-Player of Brindaban* by Sarojini Naidu is based on the love theme, depicting love between the lover and the beloved though with a difference. It is a spiritual, mystical poem expressing the poet's love for Krishna.
- Sarojini Naidu in the poem *A Love Song from the North* portrays a lover who is speaking to a papeeha (a bird who usually sings melodious notes in the season of spring) who supposedly is narrating in its melodious voice the tale of its love.
- The poet feels that the nature's beauty or papeeha's song is not going to bring her lover back to him. The poet seems to be in a state of perpetual grief and nothing joyous appeals to her anymore.
- Apparently when we read the poem *A Love Song from the North*, it seems that the poet Sarojini Naidu feels that papeeha's song, koel's cooing and peacock's calling for its mate, nature's blossoming in bounteous beauty, etc., are inconsequential as she is engrossed in her lover who is not there anymore with her.
- The Nature /Culture debate also needs to be pondered deeply as it is done in the poem. When trying to define love in the poem *An Indian Love Song*, we have seen how love is often seen as a cultural construct which is defined and thought from the point of view of the cultural set-up in which one is living.
- Sarojini Naidu's *An Indian Love Song* deals with two protagonists – a lover and a beloved – referred to as 'He' and 'She' in the poem as the poem is written in the forms of dialogues.
- The lover says something profound as he believes that it is love which can make the world a better place to live in as Love does not pay heed to feuds and follies of people.

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### 2.12 KEY TERMS

- **Elegy:** It refers to a sorrowful, gloomy or forlorn poem or song which states sadness with regard to something lost or someone dead.
- **Lyric poetry:** It refers to a type of formal poetry which expresses a person's feelings and is usually spoken in first person.
- **Sonnet:** It refers to a type of poem which is written in fourteen lines. This form of lyrical poetry follows iambic pentameter with five pairs of accented and unaccented syllables.

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- **Ode:** It is an intricately arranged poem which praises or glorifies an event or a person.
- **Pindaric Ode:** It refers to a type of ceremonious ode which has a definite meter and style.
- **Petrarchan sonnet:** It is defined as a sonnet form popularized by Petrarch which consists of an octave with the rhyme scheme *abbaabba* and of a sestet with one of several rhyme schemes, as *cdecde* or *cdcdcd*.
- **Sonnet:** It is defined as a fourteen line poem which is written in iambic pentameter and follows a structured thematic organization with any rhyme scheme.
- **Spenserian stanza:** It is defined as a stanza which consists of eight iambic pentameters and an alexandrine, with the rhyming scheme *ababbcbcc*.
- **Elegy:** It is defined as a poem which expresses gloomy thoughts of a person and is commonly written in praise of the deceased and has an air of sorrow around it.
- **Eulogy:** It is defined as a piece of writing which praises someone and is usually a tribute to the deceased person.
- **Parody:** It is defined as a form of mock-epic poetry which imitates the style of a particular artist with intentional exaggeration to create a comic effect.
- **Patriarchy:** It is a socio-cultural system in which males are the figures of authority and central to social organization.
- **Non-violence:** Non-violence, as the term literally means, is not to take recourse to any kind of violent activity or thought to harm or kill someone or even not to have any ill intention for anyone. It is not merely a political tool of resistance, but also a way of life which all satyagrahis must practice.

## 2.13 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

### Objective Questions

- I. Fill in the blanks appropriate words.
  - (a) A poet writes lyric poetry with an aim to establish direct contact with the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (b) \_\_\_\_\_ is a form of lyric poetry which is based on a grave theme and follows a definite structure.
  - (c) \_\_\_\_\_ elegy is a poem which dwells upon the combined subject of death and sublime country life.
  - (d) The setting for the Bengal Renaissance was the colonial metropolis of \_\_\_\_\_.
- II. State whether the following sentences are true or false.
  - (a) Generally, lyric speakers are symbolized as poets who see themselves in a world of loneliness.

- (b) The irregular ode has found its name from the Roman poet Horace.
- (c) A sonnet is a poem which expresses gloomy thoughts of a person.
- (d) *An Indian Love Song* is written in the form of dialogues.

### Short-Answer Questions

1. What are the main characteristics of lyric poetry?
2. Why is it believed that lyrical poetry has a universal appeal to the readers?
3. Write a short note on the history of lyric poetry.
4. Write a short note on the concept and evolution of odes.
5. What is the rhyme scheme in the *The Progress of Poesy*?
6. How is Pindaric ode different from Horatian ode?
7. How has Shakespeare divided his sonnets?
8. Why does William Shakespeare use the three quatrains in his sonnets?
9. Briefly mention the concept of elegy as a literary form.
10. How is elegy treated as literary form in the contemporary days?
11. What are the main characteristics of a traditional elegy?
12. How is ordinary pastoral elegy different from pastoral elegy?
13. Write a short note on the life and works of Rabindranath Tagore.
14. Mention the significant achievements of Sarojini Naidu.
15. Do you feel that the poem *An Indian Love Song* is 'Indian' in its essence or does it have any universal appeal?

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the development of lyric poetry as a prominent form of poetry.
2. Analyse the purpose behind writing lyrical poetry in detail.
3. Evaluate the significance of odes in literature.
4. Analyse the importance of elegy in English literature.
5. Critically analyse the first two songs of *Gitanjali*.
6. Discuss the significant motifs used in the poem *The Flute-Player of Brindaban* by Sarojini Naidu.
7. Critically comment on the nature of love as it is portrayed in the poem *A Love Song from the North*.
8. Write a critical appreciation of the poem *A Love Song from the North* which specific reference to the way in which Nature has been presented in the poem.
9. Compare and contrast the two poems – *An Indian Love Song* and *A Love Song from the North* to suggest the ways in which Sarojini Naidu has presented different facets of love in these two poems.

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10. Identify, explain and critically comment on the following lines:
- Thy kinsmen have broken our sacred altars and slaughtered our sacred kine, The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles sever thy people and mine.
  - Love recks not of feuds and bitter follies,  
of stranger, comrade or kin,  
Alike in his ear sound the temple bells  
and the cry of the muezzin.  
For Love shall cancel the ancient wrong  
and conquer the ancient rage,  
Redeem with his tears the memoried sorrow  
that sullied a bygone age.
  - I hear the black koel's slow, tremulous wooing,  
And sweet in the gardens the calling and cooing  
Of passionate bulbul and dove....  
But what is their music to me, papeeha  
Songs of their laughter and love, papeeha,  
To me, forsaken of love?
11. Do you think the poem *An Indian Love Song* makes an attempt to redefine love? Why do you think so? Give reasons for your answer.
12. Critically comment on the female voice in the poem *An Indian Love Song*.

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## 2.14 FURTHER READING

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## UNIT 3 PROSE

### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Objectives
- 3.2 Essay: An Introduction
  - 3.2.1 Types of Essays
- 3.3 M.K. Gandhi: About the Author
  - 3.3.1 Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi
  - 3.3.2 Gandhism: Ideas and Ideals
- 3.4. 'National Education': Text, Summary and Critical Appreciation
  - 3.4.1 'National Education': Text
  - 3.4.2 'National Education': Summary
  - 3.4.3 'National Education': Critical Appreciation
- 3.5 Jawaharlal Nehru: About the Author
- 3.6 'Will and Testament': Text, Summary and Critical Appreciation
  - 3.6.1 'Will And Testament': Text
  - 3.6.2 Will and Testament: Summary
  - 3.6.3 'Will and Testament': Critical Appreciation
- 3.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.8 Summary
- 3.9 Key Terms
- 3.10 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 3.11 Further Reading

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## 3.0 INTRODUCTION

A prose is a form of language that is not bound by any metrical structure. It is characterized by a natural flow of speech and has ordinary grammatical structure. It is in a conversational tone and everyday grammar and language is used to express one's thoughts, ideas, reflections, beliefs and philosophy. A famous quote by S.T. Coleridge differentiates the terms prose and poetry:

'I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry; that is, prose words in their best order; poetry the best words in the best order.'

It usually refers to the essays, human conversations, textbooks, short stories, novels, political speeches, critiques, sermons and other forms written on various subjects and themes of contemporary and eternal relevance. In this unit, you will study two prose writings of great Indian politician, social reformers and leaders of Indian origin—M. K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. They played a catalytic role in the freedom movement and they worked with strong conviction towards the freedom of India and creation of a new India.

In this unit, you will study about M. K. Gandhi's essay 'National Education' published in *Young India* and J. L. Nehru's foreword 'Will and Testament'.

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### 3.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Differentiate between a formal and informal essay
- Discuss the types of essays
- State the educational philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi
- Analyse Gandhiji's views on education as highlighted in 'National Education'
- Summarize the main points of 'Will and Testament'

### 3.2 ESSAY: AN INTRODUCTION

Essay is one form of prose and we will begin our discussion with the study of an essay.

An essay is actually a short prose composition which discusses a matter, expresses a viewpoint, persuasive to accept a thesis on any subject, or just entertains. An essay is not the same as from a 'treatise' or 'dissertation' because of its lack of affectation to be a methodical and absolute elucidation. Rather than being addressed to a particular readership, an essay is addressed to the general public at large. That is the reason why, the focal subjects on essays are discussed in a non-technical manner. The use devices such as anecdotes, outstanding images, and comedy has also often been seen, they in fact amplify the appeal of the essay.

#### Formal and Informal Essay

A formal essay, or article, is written on topics which are comparatively not very personal to the author; rather he has an authority over the subject. Being extremely well-informed about the subject, the author explains the same in a methodical manner. Instances of formal essays can be found in many academic bulletins or magazines. The target reader of these formal essays is an audience which is reflective and serious.

Informal essays are also known as familiar or personal essays. In the expression of these essays, an intimate tone of the author can be observed. These are focused on everyday things instead of matters related to masses at large or specialized topics. Informal essays are written in a peaceful, self-expressive or at times creative manner. Theophrastus and Plutarch from Greece and Cicero and Seneca from Rome penned down these kind of essays even the genre of informal essays was formally recognized by the name of 'Essais' coined by a French author named Montaigne in 1580. The term 'Essais': technically means attempts and was expected to show the unsure and haphazard fashion of Montaigne's observations on topics related to 'Of Illness' and 'Of Sleeping' quite opposite to formal and methodical essays on similar topics.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century Francis Bacon, inducted the English use of the term in his own essays. Almost all his essays were short debates on topics 'Of Truth', 'Of Adversity', 'Of Marriage and the Single Life'. Though widely

written in prose form but there were some authors who used verse to craft essays. Alexander Pope is one such person to have achieved this feat, the 'Essay on Criticism' (1711) and the 'Essay on Man' (1733) are example of verse essays but this version of essays lost the little importance that it had in the 18th century.

In the beginning of the 19th century the institution of magazines of new kinds and their slow and steady propagation, gave immense push to essay writing, thus essays became an important part of literature. It was during this time that authors like Thomas De Quincey, Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, and Robert Louis Stevenson gave essay a position which still remains unsurpassed. They gave specific impetus to the informal or personal essay.

Mark Twain, Emerson, James Russell Lowell, Washington Irving and Thoreau are some prominent American essay writers of the 19th century. Magazines, newspapers and other means of print media circulation in the 20th century are flooded with essays on a regular basis, most of these essays are formal essays. George Orwell, James Thurber, E M Forster, E B White, James Baldwin, Susan Sontag, Virginia Woolf, Joan Didion and Toni Morrison, are some noteworthy essayists of the contemporary literary era.

### **The essay as literary genre**

These views of Aldous Huxley, a leading essayist, put things in the right perspective. Quite similar to the novel, the essay also works as a literary tool to express one's views about anything in the world. Traditionally, the essay has been a short literary expression, in fact so short that it is not possible to do justice to everything completely, within the bounds of one essay. On the other hand, an assortment of essays written on the same topic can touch upon nearly as much required, and do it practically in a thorough fashion, just as a novel would do. *Third Book* by Montaigne is the very closely comparable, to a worthy text of the *Comédie Humaine*.

Essays are that variety of literary class the great unevenness of which can be calculated in a very effective manner inside a three-poled referral structure. Out of the three referral poles the first one is subjective pole or documentary pole; the i.e., the objective pole is, facts oriented and the material-specific; and the third pole is of ambiguity, it is more oriented towards being universal. Most essay writers feel comfortable with touching upon only one of the three poles of essay writing. There are, however some who extend their comfort zone to two poles out of the three while framing their thoughts in an essay. Inclusion of all three poles in one essay by a single essayist however is a very rare phenomenon. Some personal or informal essay writers include pieces of contemplative memoirs and who view the world through the spectacle of narrative and depiction. On the other hand, objective essayists do not voice their life's happenings on their own in a direct fashion. Rather, they have a more outward focus and their attention is on some fictitious, empirical or radical theme.

### **The essay as an instructional tool**

In contemporary educational field, essay occupies a very significant place in the realm of formal education. Secondary class students are trained how to formulate

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essays using structured formats, this improves their writing abilities manifold. Essays are also an important part of higher education system students seeking admission into universities are expected to write an essay on a given topic as a part of their selection process. The formation of an essay gives out the writer's comprehension of the topic and his or her expertise over of the language. Students are expected to elucidate remark on, or evaluate the given topic in an essay form. Academic essays are generally more formal in comparison to literary essays. They may be a demonstration of the personal views of the writer, but the essayist formulates the presentation in a coherent and actual manner. The use of the first person in personal or informal essays is not permitted.

Let us now have a look at a few more types of essays:

**The five-paragraph essay**

Almost all students get introduced to essay writing in early years of their schooling and the first of essays that they learn to write is the five paragraph essay. This is a very organized method of essay writing which requires to be begun with an introduction giving statement of the thesis. Next three paragraphs constitute the main body of the essay; each paragraph offers an idea in order to back the thesis. The last or the fifth paragraph is the concluding paragraph, which repeats the thesis in brief and reviews the supporting points written throughout the essay. Though a very systematic way of writing an essay, yet it has been opposed by many scholars and termed as a rigid and dreary approach.

**Academic essays**

An academic essay is a literary composition which supports one assertion or impression which is helpful in establishing the general purpose of the work. The content of the academic essay should be concentrated upon one main idea or opinion, and there should be an unambiguous relation between the content spread through the essay.

Academic essays may be short or long, long academic essays are generally more expansive. Authors of long and descriptive essays generally give a small summary breakdown of the earlier written works on the same topic. This analysis is known as 'literature review.' These types of long essays may also comprise an opening page containing tight definitions about words and phrases in the title. It has been seen that all facts, the entire reference and supporting text used in an essay, is referred to in the bibliography at the end of the essay. Such reference of the reference material in the essay lets all readers of the essay understand the foundation of the details and excerpts used to back the arguments in the essay. The academic essay assesses the ability of students to showcase their views and opinions in a structured manner. Academic essays are also numerous in varieties, some of which have been discussed below for your better understanding:

**Descriptive essays**

Descriptive essays are a clear representation of an individual, place, thing, happening, or deliberation. Descriptive essays give out details which enable the reader to form a vivid imagination of the thing being described in the essay.



## **Narrative essays**

Narrative essays are a subjective description; these are sometimes even written in first-person present. The topics touched upon in a narrative essay generally identify more vividly with the narrator's opinion and his subjectivity.

## **Compare and contrast essays**

Compare and contrast essay is aimed at developing a relationship amongst two or more than two people, things, situations and principles. Normally, the reason behind writing a compare and contrast essay is to bring out that apparent dissimilarities or resemblances are insufficient, and that a nearer scrutiny of things discloses their imperceptible, yet important, associations or dissimilarities.

## **Persuasive essays**

The writer's aim behind writing a persuasive essay is to influence the reader to agree with a notion or approve of a viewpoint. This essay is written with a motive to persuade the reader about the reasonability of the writer's opinion. That is the reason why persuasive essays are written in a manner which takes hold of and retains the attention of the reader. All opinions expressed by the writer are supported by strong references and details.

## **Argumentative essays**

Argumentative essays are those that address contentious matters e.g., grave issues over which there are large evident disagreements in the society. Literal meaning of the word 'argument' is a situation accompanied by its supportive details. Therefore, argumentative essays are written to make a major claim and then offer explanations for opining that the claim to be correct and factual.

## **Imitation essays**

These essays are the kind where the essayist, builds the thesis and outline of his essay imitating another piece of such work but presents the borrowed ideas in his own particular style.

## **Visual Arts essay**

Essays are not written only in text form, rather a portrayal in the form of an initial illustration or drawing upon which a finished portrait or statue is created, is called a visual arts essay.

## **Musical essay**

An essay based on the procedure and subject matter of the music, written to guide the listeners of that piece of musical creation is called a musical essay.

## **Film essay**

An essay written in a cinematic form, consisting of the development of the film's theme or the idea behind the film is called a film essay. This genre of essays is not very widely acclaimed and very few people related to the film industry have ventured this side e.g., the Soviet documentation expert, Dziga Vertov, from earlier times and the contemporary filmmakers Michael Moore and Errol Morris.

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### 3.2.1 Types of Essays

As discussed, an essay is a short piece of writing reflecting writer's own point of view about a particular subject. They may have diverse elements to focus on, such as, literary criticism, political manifestos, observations of daily life, reflection of an author, recollection, personal philosophies, learned arguments, criticism of life, and events or happenings. The Oxford English Dictionary describes essay as a 'composition of moderate length on any particular subject, or branch of a subject; originally implying want of finish, but now said of a composition more or less elaborate in style, though limited in range'.

A philosophical essay may turn into a treatise in length. It is subjective because it is a literature of self expression (W. H. Hudson). Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) 'An Essay on Criticism' (1711) and 'An Essay on Man' (1734) are essays in verse being an exceptional variation to the form. John Locke's (1632-1704) 'An Essay Concerning Human Understanding' (1690), 'Some Thoughts Concerning Education' (1693), 'Two Treatises on Civil Government' (1689), 'A Letter Concerning Toleration' (1689), and Thomas Malthus' (1766-1834) 'An Essay on the Principle of Population' (1798) are a few great examples of essay.

An essay should be brief, precise, argumentative, fact or philosophy-based, and logically satisfying. It should aim to fulfil or give some understanding of a certain aspect of a subject. Francis Bacon's essays are the best examples of the kind. Also, essay is any short composition in prose that undertakes to discuss a matter, express a point of view, and persuade to accept a thesis on any subject, or simply entertain. (M. H. Abram)

#### Philosophical, Aphoristic, Political and Didactic Essays

The word 'philosophy' means study of the nature and meaning of the universe of human life. It is also a particular set or system of beliefs resulting from the search for knowledge about life and the universe. Philosophy is also a set of beliefs or an attitude to life that guides somebody's behaviour (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). If an essay is concise, clear or abstract having argument or analysis on a particular subject reflecting strong logical currents through it, it is called a philosophical essay. It relates more to an intellectual activity than a physical one. It shows views of a person who has explored a specific subject-matter deeply with a lot of studies and researches. Therefore, a philosophical essay should necessarily contain such intellectual activity at work in the form of an intelligent discussion on a particular philosophical issue or problem either defending or criticizing it.

In a philosophical essay, the object of the writer is constructive having positive vision defending a cause. That cause may exist already, or may be an assumption. Besides it may be a disagreement or a critical agreement reflecting a philosophical point of view, standing against a purport with a set of logic of the writer. In any of these, a philosophical essay must argue having strong reason and evidence as its background.

Philosophical means related to thinking which is study-based. It requires giving powerful and influencing thoughts. In it a writer may present his own view after a particular research in a particular field. He may follow some established

way of thinking also. Thus, a philosophical essay should begin to search and establish a view in the context of a problem. It should take a proper side of argument either in support or against. The problem and the person in its defence or disagreement should focus on a particular point of interpretation based on assumptions sprouting from the problem itself. Its implications, critical assessment and a critical defence with a past, present and future should be part of the essay. Generally, it should give proper meaning and support to that particular subject of philosophy or idea. Its range is very wide.

Essays are of many kinds: cause and effect, classification and division, compare and contrast, descriptive, dialectic, exemplification, familiar, history, narrative, critical, economics, and logical. Familiar essay is a type in which the essayist addresses a single person and he speaks about himself and a particular subject. In such a type, both heart and brain are used equally. Charles Lamb is regarded as one of the greatest exponent of familiar essays.

Critical essays are those where the subject-matter is impersonal. It is kindred to brain, intellect and intelligence. It is generally an evaluation of a subject or work of art. All the important critics of English letters come in this category. It also aims at theorising literature. We have chiefly two types of critics in English—classic and romantic. But in the post-war period, we have numerous variations in this genre.

Aphoristic essay is a short essay with brilliant exhibition of aphorism: an art of speaking things on a subject with brevity of wit and precision of diction. Sir Francis Bacon is its chief propagator in English literature.

Didactic essay is a type of philosophical essay which is meant to educate or instruct about life and education. Alexander Pope is its chief practitioner in English.

Formal in form, political essays consist of pamphlets, propaganda, manifestos posters and similar items. Apart from the medieval writers, John Milton, Jeremy Collier, Samuel Johnson, John Stuart Mill, George Orwell, John Ruskin, Daniel Defoe, Herbert Spencer, Jonathan Swift, and Virginia Woolf.

Plato's (429-347 BC) *Republic* (380 BC) argues that knowledge equals virtue and he defends his cause by giving logical support to it. If he states that half of the population should be prepared for army in a nation, he means then only the rest in that nation may go to have a sound sleep and proper development. Aristotle (384-322 BC) argues in his essay 'Poetics' (335 BC) that all art is *mimesis* and he proves the point that all art imitate life. To prove this he gives a long list of arguments which rule the formal ground of any literary writing. Such essays were relevant not only to their own period but to all the times.

**Structure:** A philosophical essay should have the following components:

- Clarification
- Justification
- Evaluation

Under clarification, it should explain and make a lucid picture of the issue which is a sole problem to be discussed. In justification he can either present another reference and justify that with his own views, or show one's own stand on the issue with strong arguments. At the end of conclusion, there should be evaluation

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of the given argument, and also that of those presented as references. It should make critical arguments in order to reach a conclusion most plausible and tentative. A philosophical essay should have a purpose, an argument, facts, negative or positive stand, a unique view, a critical connectivity or chain of thoughts in relativity. It should follow the following pattern—purpose, justification, argument and evaluation.

Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles (496-406 BC), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), John Milton (1608-1674), Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682), John Donne (1572-1631), John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), Karl Marx (1818-1883), and Adolf Hitler are writers of philosophical essays.

Bacon's 'Of Truth, Of Adversity, Of Marriage and the Single Life', Addison (1672-1719) and Steele's (1672-1729) 'Tatler and Spectator' (1709) are a few notable philosophical essays.

David Hume (1711-1776), J. J. Rousseau, Adam Smith (1723-1790), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) William Hazlitt (1778-1830), Thomas de Quincey (1785-1829), Charles Lamb (1775-1834), R. L. Stevenson, Emerson (1803-1882), Thoreau (1817-1862) are also very famous writers of this genre.

'The Spectator', the 'Story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus' from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1694), Aristotle's 'Poetics', Plato's 'Republic', Francis Bacon's 'Of Reading, Of Studies', 'Elements of the Common Law of England', 'Advancement of Learning, John Locke's 'Glorious Revolution of 1688', and Thomas Hobbes's 'Leviathan' are a few famous essays of philosophy.

'Rights of Man' (1791-92) is one of the greatest classics on democracy, which praises the French Revolution and criticises the English governing system, made up of aristocratic people. It is written by Thomas Paine (1737-1809) as an answer to the British statesman Edmund Burke's notable political essay 'Reflection on the Revolution in France' (1790). In simple, straightforward and vigorous prose here, the author defends the rights of ordinary men by speaking of their natural and civil rights, liberty, forcibly throwing away of a corrupt government, universal society and universal commerce. He was a radical political philosopher who believed in the French ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity among all nations. He emphasizes universal trade and criticizes the idea of English policies in national and international trade. He strongly promotes the idea of reason behind a governing system. He was, in true sense, a revolutionary thinker who justified revolution if the government did not agree to the common interests of man. In both the parts of this political treatise, he fiercely attacks the foul political systems around the world and approbates the new representative government in America and France as an ideal example of democracy.

A philosophical essay is placed under the category of informal essays. Aphoristic essay is usually formal in disposition. James Russell Lowell (1819-1891), Mark Twain, George Orwell (1903-1950), Forster, Toni Morrison (1931-

) are a few modern philosophical essayists. However, as an exception, the Romantic poet John Keats' letters may be placed as one of the great philosophic channels to English letters from where his poetical thoughts sprang up and blossomed. They can be reckoned as a monument of someone's record of growth from being into a trans-visitor of another world, away from our sickening life, a philosophy which Keats was desperately up to evolving. The chief correspondents, to whom Keats wrote, were Benjamin Bailey, George and Thomas Keats, John Hamilton Reynolds, John Taylor, Cowden Clarke, Richard Woodhouse, George and Georgiana Keats, Fanny Brawne, Charles Armitage Brown, Charles Clarke, Charles Wentworth Dilke, Percy Bysshe Shelley, etc. His letters are important because of his development as a poet and the record of his painful life. As Eliot put it, his letters are 'the most notable and most important ever written by any English poet.' They mirror the growth of his art and development of his poetic theory. They portray his life and imagination's most beautiful picture.

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### Scientific Essay

Scientific essay is objective in style and is devoted to recounting of facts and events as per their real existence. It should be fact-based and that fact should either exist or should have proofs to prove its occurrence in future. In a scientific essay the writer uses certain terminology related to certain branch of study to which the essay explores.

### Elements of scientific essay

A scientific essay will always be concerned with a branch of science.

- It will be objective.
- It shall deal with fact and truth.
- It will use the terminology related to a specific branch of science to which it will be subjected.
- It will have limit of pages as it will always be fact-based.
- It will discover or invent an idea/fact/subject/topic, etc.
- It will have references of people, inventions or discoveries related to the subject.
- It comes under the category of formal essays.

### Critical Essay

Criticism is a vast panorama if we trace the history of world literatures. In England, this literary genre was revived during the Renaissance when writers and poets looked back to revive old classics and came to imbibe their style as well as emancipated the world by their learning and translations of the Greek and Roman classics. Every age and century paved way for improvisations and gave birth to new ideas. Aristotle remained a sole controller of this 'golden age' which still continues to impress modern theorists. There is long trail of great voices till we reach the post-modernist literary theorists where we mark that criticism is more of a science than literature.

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**Romantic or Personal Essay**

Michel de Montaigne initiated the style of personal essays which the writers of the 19th century carried forward. The most important of them was Charles Lamb ('Essays of Elia'). Personal or romantic essay contains the components of autobiography, pedantry, fancy, sentiment, humour and poetic diction. They are also called subjective essays.

Other writers of this style are E V Lucas, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Thackeray, De Quincey and R. L. Stevenson.

**Periodical Essay**

Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and Richard Steele (1672-1729) founded together the most influential literary periodical of the 18th century, called the *Spectator*. Addison was an English essayist, playwright, poet and politician. He was perhaps the most influential and popular person of the Augustan Age of English literature. Sir Richard Steele was an Irishman, a writer and politician of excellent worth. The *Spectator* began to be published first from Thursday 1 March 1711. It was published all the six days a week except for Sunday and continued being published till its last issue 555, on December 6, 1712. Each paper or number had to contain 2,500 words in a sheet. All the 555 issues of this literary daily, made seven volumes. This paper was revived in 1714 without the co-authorship of Richard Steele when it came thrice a week for six months. The later publications added the eighth volume where Addison's cousin called Eustace Budgell lent his voice too. In the first issue of this literary magazine, the author is Addison himself who quite satirically sketches his character declaring himself a man of distinguished talents and ostensibly reserved in nature. In the second paper, Steele gives us the introduction of the six revered members of the honourable Spectator Club.

Steele maintained the same sarcastic manner, initiated by Addison in the first issue. In the tenth paper, authored by Addison, we are told the purpose and the kind of readers, to whom this daily is addressed. Both the writers essayed to reach the common mass through simple language of ordinary speech and lucid expression of our day to day businesses. The *Spectator* retains a very high and significant place in English letters for its wide reading in its age, outstanding essays on different social topics, objective style, genteel language and its elevated message. These essays corroborated ethics, good nature, sagacity, sound judgement, propriety, prudence, serenity, high moral, merit and chastity. The writers were keen, poignant, witty, learned and virtuous men whose collective aim was to uplift the morality and sow the seeds of virtue through the spread of their readership. It was so because the moral standards and social values, in the 18th century English town life, were on the verge of extinction. The men and women, mad after fashion and sex, had lost their sense of judgement of good and evil. They were mostly of fallen character. In such a society, the two proprietors of this daily magazine earned a large number of followers and readers by their regular discourse. Mr. Spectator's voice is both Addison and Steele's. He is a gentle, pleasant, scholarly, wise and witty man. The essays instruct elevated moral lessons for a higher human conduct. They deal with human characters in their ambitions, jealousy, envy, ardour and

many other psychological abstractions developing in different social circumstances with their actions and reactions.

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They also encompass social ideas regarding shamelessness, mockery, disgrace, decency, insolence, happiness, respect, marriage and courting. Almost every article of the *Spectator* takes an epigraph from the ancient classics of Roman, Greek or Latin great literature. Many of the essays are criticisms on the 18th century theatre and plays exclusively. Steele created the Spectator Club and rendered a definite structure and plot to this daily. The most heard voice is that of Sir Roger De Coverly, often transcribed 'Coverley' later, who is a bachelor even at the age of fifty-six. He hails countryside and is a man of high social repute in town and country both. Beside his central role, we have many other members of the club, a lawyer, Sir Andrew Freeport who is a rich merchant, Captain Sentry, a clergy and Will. The effect that this paper had on people, assures its high repute and wide circle in its era. Its universal themes and characters make it relevant even today because all it teaches are the best arts of living.

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### Check Your Progress

1. What is a formal essay?
2. Why are informal essays also known as personal essays?
3. What are descriptive essays?
4. What is a philosophical essay?
5. Why is scientific essay objective in style?
6. What is an aphoristic essay?

## 3.3 M.K. GANDHI: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The full name of Gandhiji was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He was born on 2 October 1869 in Porbandar, a coastal town in Gujarat, India. His father, Karamchand Gandhi (1822–1885), belonged to Hindu Modh community, a high caste family and held the respected position of 'diwan' of Porbander state. Porbandar was a small princely state in Kathiawar of British India. His initial schooling happened in Rajkot. At the age of 13 years he was married in 1883 to Kasturbai Makhanji. It was an arranged child marriage. In 1888 he travelled to London to study law at University College London and to get training as a barrister. It was a time of association with the Theosophical Society which was founded in 1875. It was devoted to Buddhist and Hindu literature such as reading and interpretation of *Gita*. The society worked on principles of universal brotherhood. Here he developed interest in religious thoughts of all religions. Upon his return, Gandhiji made unsuccessful attempts to establish a career in law in Mumbai but failed. M. K. Gandhi made efforts to establish his career in India between 1891-1893 and this objective he returned to Rajkot. But somehow things did not work out and he had to accept a year-long contract from Dada Abdulla & Co., an Indian firm for a post in the Colony of Natal, South Africa, which was again a part of the British Empire. The coming years proved to bring tremendous development

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in his life. It was during Gandhiji's tenure in South Africa (1893- 1914) that he faced discrimination directed at Indians. He was brutally shoved off from a train at Pietermaritzburg. He refused to move from first class to a third class coach as he had a valid ticket. Later on, he was beaten by a stagecoach driver for refusing to travel on the foot board. The driver wanted him to make room for a European passenger. These events awakened in him the desire to fight against social injustice and, thus, he became a social activist. Gandhiji came back in 1915 to India to settle here and work for the masses. Gopal Krishna Gokhale became his mentor in Indian social issues and politics. Gradually, he led India to independence in 1947 through peaceful manner of retaliation such as non-cooperation and salt satyagraha. During this time, he gained tremendous knowledge about Indian people—their lives, personality, aspirations and values. He also chanced to see the education system prevailing in the pre- independence India. He was convinced that the British manner of school education was useless for the Indians. He reflected, engaged in a lot of thinking with the objective of carving out a suitable system of education for the people of India. This was his concept of 'National Education'.

### 3.3.1 Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi

Education is not mere literacy; it is much more than that. It means character building and a knowledge of duty, to do good to others without 'egoism'. True education prepares an individual to apply his mind to the best use, to live a life of ethics. In this pursuit of wisdom, self-discipline and a sense of social responsibility is a must.

#### Aims of Education

Gandhi on numerous occasions vocalized his views and ideas of what kind of 'education' must be given to children in school. Some of the aims of education, as evinced from his writings and speech have been mentioned below for the reference of students. The main aims of education, according to Gandhiji, are the following:

- Build nationalism and serve the country
- Acquire social responsibility: Education must prepare the learners to serve as change agents in social transformation.
- Engage in character building to live a life of values
- Provide education which should not be merely for seeking employment
- Acquire knowledge of self, god and truth
- Build self-respect and manliness
- Inculcate a sense of selfless service to humanity
- Inspire courage and fearlessness to do what is right in the face of all odds
- Exercise self-control and humility
- Develop independent thinking
- Appreciate the value of dignity of labour

Gandhi had said, 'By education, I mean an overall all round drawing out of the best in child and man, in body, mind, and spirit.' His concept of '*nai talim*' is pivoted around the above mentioned aims (immediate aim of understanding self,



serving the society as well as ultimate aims of following the path of Truth for an ethical conduct and realizing the self and God). In his words: 'My nai-talim is not dependent on money. The running expense of this education should come from the educational proceeds itself'. Some of the salient features of '*nai talim*' also referred to as basic education are given below:

- Free and compulsory education for all children for seven years (7-14 years).
- Curriculum must be integrated with vocation such as handicraft, agriculture, weaving, carpentry and other such jobs as per the social location.
- Mother tongue should be medium of instructions.
- This scheme must be self-financed, managed by the funds generated through marketing of products created there itself.
- Teachers must engage learners in experiential learning.
- Teachers must build a strong rapport with students, without hesitating to learn from them if required.
- Education for Gandhi had both social aims as well as individual aims and the teacher needed to work towards the fulfillment of these aims of education in a just manner.

One of the main principles of his basic education is that education must not separate the head from hand. According to him, the root cause for the prevalence of social injustice in society is due to the illiteracy of the labour class. Education, according to him, must be intricately linked with human experience. Through education he wanted to develop an individual who was socially conscious and dedicated to the eternal values of truth and non-violence. Education for him was a tool to create a '*sarvodaya samaj*' where everybody grew and evolved together without prejudices. He called for an education that would nurture nationalism, make learners watchful of their words, thoughts and deed, aiming at social transformation and spiritual development. He called for 'free education'. This term did not imply that the government supported the schooling of child from state funds, rather it had other two implications:

- Free in the sense that the school community becomes self-sustaining, generating funds through their work in school.
- Free in the sense of ideology, independent thinking was to be encouraged, not bound by curricular restraints and school timings.

Learners must know how to meaningfully use every single minute of their life. They should learn to be inquisitive by nature and attempt to seek knowledge through participating in deliberations. In the contemporary times, we find that the learners mind is full of knowledge, but that knowledge remains unassimilated throughout life as there is no application of it in real life. It is indeed necessary that practitioners in the field of education work towards an education which incorporates Gandhi's vision as well as that the life lead by people is more meaningful, leading to a peaceful coexistence on this beautiful planet 'earth'.

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**3.3.2 Gandhism: Ideas and Ideals**

Gandhi was a man of action, a realist and a pragmatist. Even though he was an ordinary man like any other, he was able to achieve that realization, which made him the 'Mahatma'. He was essentially a religious man. He was not a politician. In his own words, he was not a politician masquerading as a religious man, but a religious man, who had been dragged into politics because of his great concern for his fellow human beings. He, therefore, practiced whatever he professed and never asked to follow anything that he had not practised in his own life. Thus, it was intuition and action rather than logic and system-building, which characterized the political philosophy of Gandhi. He entered the hot-bed of politics to emancipate the people from the yoke of foreign domination. Swaraj, therefore, was the most important thing, which he kept in the forefront of his political programme. To achieve Swaraj, Gandhi adopted certain means and worked out his programme with the help of these means. The principles, which were followed by Mahatma Gandhi, were woven into a political philosophy by his followers. Gandhi did not differentiate between thought and action; for him, to think was to act.

With his novel method of non-violent struggle against the British imperialists, Gandhi became a dynamic force in the political and spiritual life of India. The Indians could have never fought the British with force because it would have been suppressed by still greater force, which the British commanded. The symbolic use of the weapons of non-violence and Satyagraha were responsible for spreading patriotic fervour throughout the country. The British were not prepared for such an attack and had to surrender. During this period, Gandhi became the most vital force and his life and activities were identified with India's struggle for independence. His spiritual and moral impact was so great that after his assassination, the Manchester *Guardian* rightly commented that 'he was a saint among politicians and a politician among saints'. Gandhi's sincerity of purpose, his devotion to duty and the noble principles that he practiced made him the ideal of many national leaders in India.

**The Influence on the thought of Gandhi**

Gandhi read little in the realm of political theory or political thought. But whatever he read, he assimilated perfectly. He read the Bhagavad Gita and so gave it a novel interpretation. He read it several times and considered it as the book of spiritual reference. He learnt about truth and non-violence from the Bhagavad Gita. He was also influenced by Patanjali's *Yogasutra*, the Ramayana and Mahabharata. He read some of the Jain and Buddhist writings and was deeply influenced by the principles of truth and non-violence. From the Upanishads, he got the inspiration for his faith in non-possession. He read the New Testament of the Bible and was greatly influenced by the 'Sermon on the Mount'. The dying words of Jesus: 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do', awakened Gandhi's faith in the rightness and value of Satyagraha.

The teachings of Lao-Tse and Confucius also influenced Gandhi's thought to some extent. Lao-Tse had taught the philosophy of non-assertiveness of ideal life. From the writings of Confucius, Gandhi learnt the principles of reciprocity.

The principle means that men should not do to others what they would not do to themselves.

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Secular writers like Thoreau, Ruskin and Tolstoy also influenced the moral and political philosophy of Gandhi. He learnt the principle of civil disobedience from Thoreau. Ruskin instilled in Gandhi, respect for manual labour. Tolstoy inspired him to think in terms of philosophical anarchism.

Comparing Thoreau and Gandhi, Pyarelal Nayyar said, 'Neither of these thinkers was a system-builder but both were profound thinkers, truth-seekers and truth-speakers. Both had a passion for truth and both represented a philosophy in action. Both also believed in the ideal of voluntary poverty.'

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### 3.4. 'NATIONAL EDUCATION': TEXT, SUMMARY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

It is a compilation of Gandhiji's views on education, school system, education of youth and teachers in India. It offers insight on what should be the spirit of education in our country.

#### 3.4.1 'National Education': Text

The essay (text) on 'National Education' by Gandhiji is given below:

#### *NEW EDUCATION*

New Education to be rooted in the Culture and Life of the People  
National Education

The curriculum and pedagogic ideas which form the fabric of modern education were imported from Oxford and Cambridge, Edinburgh and London. But they are essentially foreign, and till they are repudiated, there never can be national education. For the moment, we are not going to discuss the problem whether it is possible for India to do without European education ; ( and in this connection let us say that we regard the English as a mere special phenomenon of the European system). If India decides in the light of the need there is of fighting Europe with her own weapons, Industrialism, Capitalism, Militarism, and all the rest, in favor of making counterfeit Europeans of her children, soldiers, inventors of explosives, prostitutes of Science, forgetters of God, she must go forward on her path stern and open-eyed, whatever the disaster. But in that case, she should make up her mind to do without national education, for, national education will not secure those ends, will not make her sons and daughters fit for the fulfillment of those functions. The fact to be realized is that India by the very fact of her long established and elaborated civilization had once the advantage of an educational system of her own, the only thing entitled to be called 'national'. But it was fundamentally distinct from the Anglo-Indian type and from the pseudo-national type that is its descendant. The question then is this: The choice must be clearly and finally made between national and foreign education, the choice of type and archetype, of meaning and purpose, of end and means. It

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has so far not been made. We are almost certain that the necessity for choosing is hardly realized. As long as confusion on this matter exists, 'national' education cannot flourish. And that for a simple reason. The Government is already imparting one type of education in respect of which it is impossible for any purely non-official body to complete. Official organization is bigger, it has more money, it has more prizes to offer. We believe that this root paradox will last as long as there is no hard and clear thinking about fundamentals. If, as a result of careful decisions, we promise to the people that the education we offer will be truly Indian and not a mere inferior prototype of the education offered in the schools and colleges of Government, people are bound to listen to us. We believe that the folk who suffer from the effects of the existing arrangements, who deplore social disruption, who are stricken by the waste of youth, will be thankful to find an avenue of escape. Institutions that stand for the inevitable revolution for the restoration of national and social continuum will have in their hands the secret of the future. For that which should be remembered is this. The greatest visible evil of the present educational method, in itself evidence of deeper defects, is, that it has broken up the continuity of our existence. All sound education is meant to fit one generation to take up the burden of the previous and to keep up the life of the community without breach or disaster. The burden of social life is continuous, and if at any stage one generation gets completely out of touch with the efforts of its predecessors or in anywise gets ashamed of itself or its culture, it is lost. The force that maintains society together is a series of high loyalties, loyalty to faith, calling, parents, family, dharma. The ancient educational system in India certainly maintained the long tradition of pride and service, the place of every order within the body social and body politic. It is equally certain that modern, foreign, non-national education makes young people unfit for any useful function in life. The vast majority of people that sent their children to the English schools were agriculturists, men and women with a deep and abiding faith in God. There is no doubt that the young people when they came back knew not a thing about agriculture, were indeed deeply contemptuous of the calling of their fathers and professed to have outgrown all faith in God or in His fulfilling providence. The fact that the tragedy of this destructive breach was limited by the need of Government for only a specified number of clerks and deputies, should not really mask the reality of the transaction. 'Reforms' have succeeded 'Reforms' in the educational system, Commissions have considered the case of the Universities, primary instruction has been sought to be made compulsory ; but there has never been the remotest perception of the fact that the whole thing is an evil because it was destroying the very foundations of all national life and growth. The system must be scrapped ; enquiry must be made promptly as to what constituted the elements of education before Indian Universities were constituted, before Lord Macaulay wrote his fatal minutes. Promptness is essential, because the race of old teachers is nearly extinct and the secret of their methods may die with them. The resuscitation of those curricula may mean the disappearance of political history and geography; but the prospect does not disturb us in the slightest. We have been trying to get at the elements of the old curricula at least in one part of the country and we

dare aver in all conscience that they strike us as infinitely more efficient and satisfactory than the latest thing come out of Europe. But we confess it is a layman's opinion. That is why we should like to have the matter investigated by experts. If it is done and its consequences faced, we are confident that the people of the land will have reason to be highly thankful.

#### **Young India, 20-3-"24**

Almost from the commencement, the text-books (today) deal, not with things the boys and the girls have always to deal with in their homes, but things to which they are perfect strangers. It is not through the text-books that a lad learns what is right and what is wrong in the home life. He is never taught to have any pride in his surroundings. The higher he goes, the farther he is removed from his home, so that at the end of his education he becomes estranged from his surroundings. He feels no poetry about the home life. The village scenes are all a sealed book to him. His own civilization is presented to him as imbecile, barbarous, superstitious and useless for all practical purposes. His education is calculated to wean him from his traditional culture. And if the mass of educated youths are not entirely denationalized, it is because the ancient culture is too deeply imbedded in them to be altogether uprooted even by an education adverse to its growth. If I had my way, I would certainly destroy the majority of the present text-books and cause to be written text-books which have a bearing on and correspondence with the home life, so that a boy as he learns may react upon his immediate surroundings.

#### **Young India, 1-9-"21**

No Relation to Environment Unfortunately the system of education has no connection with our surroundings which therefore remain practically untouched by the education received by a microscopic minority of boys and girls of the nation.

#### **Young India, 11-7-1929**

To Develop Character Education of the Heart One word only as to the education of the heart. I do not believe that this can be imparted through books. It can only be done through the living touch of the teacher. And, who are the teachers in the primary and even secondary schools ? Are they men and women of faith and character ? Have they themselves received the training of the heart ? Are they expected to take care of the permanent element in the boys and girls placed under their charge ? Is not method of engaging teachers for lower schools an effective bar against character ? Do the teachers get even a living wage ? And we know that the teachers of primary schools are not selected for their patriotism. They only come who can not find any other employment. Young India, 1-9-"21 Freedom but under Discipline The pupils must have initiative. They must cease to be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves and yet be thoroughly obedient and disciplined. The highest form of freedom carries with it the greatest measure of discipline and humility. Freedom that comes from discipline and humility can not be denied, unbridled license is a sign of vulgarity injurious alike to self and one's neighbours.

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**Young India, 3-6''26*****Purity of Heart***

Indispensable Purity of personal life is the one indispensable condition for building a sound education. And my meetings with thousands of students and the correspondence which I continuously have with students, in which they pour out their innermost feelings and take me into their confidence, show me quite clearly that there is much left to be desired. I am sure that all of you understand thoroughly what I mean. In our languages there is a beautiful word, equivalent for the word student, that is, brahmachari. Vidyarthi is a coined word and a poor equivalent for brahmachari. And I hope you know what the word brahmachari means. It means searcher after God, one who conducts himself so as to bring himself nearest to God in the least possible time. And all the great religions of the world, however much they may differ, are absolutely one on this fundamental thing that no man or woman with an impure heart can possibly appear before the Great White Throne. All our learning or recitation of the Vedas, correct knowledge of Sanskrit, Latin, Greek and what not will avail us nothing if they do not enable us to cultivate absolute purity of heart. The end of all knowledge must be building up of character.

**Young India, 8-9-1927*****Service a Part of Education***

Whilst Sir M. Vishweshwarayya has emphasized one grave defect of our present education which places exclusive emphasis on literary merit, I would add a graver defect in that students are made to think that whilst they are pursuing their literary studies, they may not do acts of service at the sacrifice of their studies, be it ever so small or temporary. They will lose nothing and gain much if they would suspend their education, literary or industrial, in order to do relief work, such as is being done by some of them in Gujarat. The end of all education should surely be service, and if a student gets an opportunity of rendering service even whilst he is studying, he should consider it as a rare opportunity and treat it not really as a suspension of his education but rather its complement.

**Young India, 13-10-'27*****Unity of All Life***

Real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity ? What better education can there be than to go, day in and day out, to Harijan quarters and to regard Harijans as members of one human family ? It would be an uplifting, ennobling study. Mine is no narrow creed. It is one of realizing the essential brotherhood of man.

**Young India, 19-11-'31*****Not Mere Text-Book Learning Pupils to Learn Discrimination***

Pupils should know to discriminate between what should be received and what rejected. It is the duty of the teacher to teach his pupils discrimination. If we go on taking in indiscriminately we would be no better than machines. We are thinking, knowing beings and we must in this period distinguish truth from untruth, sweet from bitter

language, clean from unclean things and so on. But the student's path today is strewn with more difficulties than the one of distinguishing good from bad things. The rishis taught their pupils without books. They only gave them a few mantras which the pupils treasured in their memories and translated in practical life. The present day student has to live in the midst of heaps of books, sufficient to choke him.

### **Young India, 29-1-1925**

#### ***Text-books***

For India a multiplicity of text-books means deprivation of the vast majority of village children of the means of instruction. Text-books, therefore, in India must mean, principally and for the lower standards, text-books for teachers, not pupils. Indeed, I am not sure that it is not better for the children to have much of the preliminary instruction imparted to them vocally. To impose on children of tender age a knowledge of the alphabet and the ability to read before they can gain general knowledge is to deprive them, whilst they are fresh, of the power of assimilating instruction by word of mouth. Should, for instance, a lad of seven wait for learning the Ramayan till he can read it? The results that we arrive at when we think of the few lakhs living in the cities of India are wholly different from those we obtain, we think, in terms of the millions of rural India.

### **Young India, 16-9-1926**

#### ***Teachers and Text-books***

There seems to me to be no doubt that in the public schools the books used, especially for children, are for the most part useless when they are not harmful. That many of them are cleverly written cannot be denied. They might even be the best for the people and the environment for which they are written. But they are not written for Indian boys and girls, not for the Indian environment. When they are so written, they are generally undigested imitations hardly answering the wants of the scholar. In this country, wants vary according to the provinces and the classes of children. For instance, wants of Harijan children are, in the beginning stages at least, different from those of the others. I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that books are required more for the teachers than for the taught. And every teacher, if he is to do full justice to his pupils, will have to prepare the daily lesson from the material available to him. This, too, he will have to suit to the special requirements of his class. Real education has to draw out the best from the boys and girls to be educated. This can never be done by packing ill-assorted and unwanted information into the heads of the pupils. It becomes a dead weight crushing all originality in them and turning them into mere automata. If we were not ourselves victims of the system, we would long ago have realized the mischief wrought by the modern method of giving mass education, especially in a case like India's. Attempts have undoubtedly been made by many institutions to produce their own text-books with more or less success. But in my opinion they do not answer the vital needs of the country. I lay no claim to originality for the views I have endeavoured to set forth here. They are repeated here for the benefit of the managers and teachers of Harijan schools, who have tremendous task before them. They dare not be satisfied with mere mechanical work resulting in simply

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making the children under their charge indifferently and in a parrot-like manner learn the books chosen anyhow. They have undertaken a great trust which they must discharge courageously, intelligently and honestly. The task is difficult enough but not so difficult as one would imagine, provided the teacher or the manager puts his whole heart into the work. If he becomes a parent to his pupils, he will instinctively know what they need and set about giving it to them. If he has it not to give, he will proceed to qualify himself. And seeing that we have stated with the idea that the boys and girls have to have instruction in accordance with their wants, no extraordinary cleverness or possession of external knowledge is required in a teacher of Harijan and for that matter, any other children. And when it is remembered that the primary aim of all education is, or should be, the moulding of the character of pupils, a teacher who has a character to keep need not lose heart.

**Young India, 1-12-1933*****To Teach Self-reliance and Respect for Manual Labour***

Self-reliance As a lover of the Gurukula, I may be permitted to offer one or two suggestions to the Committee and the parents. The Gurukula boys need a thorough industrial training if they are to become self-reliant and self-supporting. It seems to me that in our country in which 85 per cent of population is agricultural and perhaps 10 per cent occupied in supplying the wants of the peasantry, it must be part of the training of every youth that he has a fair practical knowledge of agriculture and hand-weaving. He will lose nothing if he knows a proper use of tools, can saw a piece of board straight and build a wall that will not come down through a faulty handling of the plumber's line. A boy who is thus equipped, will never feel helpless in battling with the world and never be in want of employment. A knowledge of the laws of hygiene and sanitation, as well as the art of rearing children, should also form a necessary part of the Gurukula lads. The sanitary arrangements at the fair left much to be desired. The plague of flies told its own tale. These irrepressible sanitary inspectors incessantly warned us that in point of sanitation all was not well with us. They plainly suggested that the remains of our food and excreta need to be properly buried. It seemed to me to be such a pity that a golden opportunity was being missed of giving to the annual visitors practical lessons on sanitation. But the work must begin with the boys. Thus the management would have at the annual gathering three hundred practical sanitary teachers. Last but not least, let the parents and the Committee not spoil their lads by making them ape European dress or modern luxuries. These will hinder them in their afterlife and are antagonistic to brahmacharya. They have enough to fight against in the evil inclinations common to us all. Let us not make their fight more difficult by adding to their temptations.

**Young India, 1-9-1921*****The Duty of Spinning***

In any curriculum of the future, spinning must be a compulsory subject. Just as we cannot live without breathing and without eating, so is it impossible for us to attain economic independence and banish pauperism from this ancient land without reviving and without reviving home-spinning. I hold the spinning wheel to be as much a necessity



in every household as the hearth. No other scheme that can be devised will ever solve the problem of the deepening poverty or the people. How then can spinning be introduced in every home? I have already suggested the introduction of spinning and systematic production of yarn in every national school. Once our boys and girls have learnt the art they can easily carry it to their homes.

### **Young India, 19-1-1921**

To be Self-financing If every school introduced spinning, it would revolutionize our ideas of financing education. We can work a school for six hours per day and give free education to the pupils. Supposing a boy works at the wheel for four hours daily, he will produce every day 10 tolas of yarn and thus earn for his school one anna per day. Suppose further that he manufactures very little during the first month, and that the school works only twenty-six days in the month. A class of thirty boys would yield, after the first month, an income of Rs. 48-12-0 per month. I have said nothing about literary training. It can be given during the two hours out of the six. It is easy to see that every school can be made self-supporting without much effort and the nation can engage experienced teachers for its schools. The chief difficulty in working out the scheme is the spinning wheel. We require thousand of wheels if the art becomes popular. Fortunately, every village carpenter can easily construct the machines. It is a serious mistake to order them from the Ashram or any other place. The beauty of spinning is that it is incredibly simple, easily learnt, and can be cheaply introduced in every village. The course suggested by me is intended only for this year of purification and probation. When normal times are reached and Swaraj is established, one hour only may be given to spinning and the rest to literary training.

### **Young India, 2-2-” 21**

Our education should not be financed out of the excise revenue, neither out of land revenue. Under Swaraj its main prop should be the spinning wheel. If the spinning wheel and the loom are introduced in every school and college, our education would easily pay its way. Today, I would like our boys to give all their time to spinning. After Swaraj is attained, at least one hour will have to be given. Swaraj must react in each and every department of our life. Our schools today are so many factories to turn out slaves from. Education under Swaraj will aim at making boys self-supporting from their youth. Any other profession may be taught them, but spinning will be compulsory. The spinning wheel ought to be the solace of the miserable. Nothing else has its virtues, for it alone can supplement agriculture. All cannot be carpenters, nor smiths, but all must be spinners, and must spin either for their country or to supplement their own earnings. Because the need of clothing is universal the spinning wheel must needs be universal. Let us have spinning introduced from now as a necessary adjunct to literary education, so that under Swaraj we may not have to fight over this question a new.

### **Young India, 30-3-1921**

I venture to suggest to you, that it is a matter of deep humiliation for the country to find its children educated from the drink revenue. We shall deserve the curse of posterity if we do not wisely decide to stop

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the drink evil, even though we may have to sacrifice the education of our children. But we need not. I know, many of you have laughed at the idea of making education self-supporting by introducing spinning in our schools and colleges. I assure you that it solves the problem of education as nothing else can. The country cannot bear fresh taxation. Even the existing taxation is unbearable. Not only must we do away with the opium and the drink revenue, but the other revenues have also to be very considerably reduced if the ever-growing poverty of the masses is to be combated in the near future.

**Young India, 8-6-1921**

Who does not know what questionable things fathers of families in need of money for their children's education have considered it their duty to do? I am convinced that we are in for far worse times, unless we change the whole system of our education. We have only touched the fringe of an ocean of children. The vast mass of them remain without education, not for want of will but of ability and knowledge on the part of the parents. There is something radically wrong, especially for a nation so poor as ours, when parents have to support so many grown up children, and given them a highly expensive education without the children making any immediate return. I can see nothing wrong in the children, from the very threshold of their education, paying for it in work. The simplest handicraft suitable for all, required for the whole of India, is undoubtedly spinning along with the previous processes. If we introduced this in our educational institutions, we should fulfil three purposes, make education self-supporting, train the bodies of the children as well as their minds, and pave the way for a complete boycott of foreign yarn and cloth. Moreover, the children thus equipped will become self-reliant and independent.

**Young India, 15-6-1921**

If we expect, as we must, every boy and girl of school going age to attend public schools, we have not the means to finance education in accordance with the existing style nor are millions of parents able to pay the fees that are at present imposed. Education to be universal must therefore be free. I fancy that even under an ideal system of Government, we shall not be able to devote two thousand million rupees which we should require for finding education for all the children of school going age. It follows, therefore, that our children must be made to pay in labour partly or wholly for all the education they receive. Such universal labour to be profitable can only be (to my thinking) hand-spinning and hand-weaving. But for the purpose of my proposition, it is immaterial whether we have spinning or any other form of labour, so long as it can be turned to account. Only, it will be found upon examination that on a practical, profitable and extensive scale, there is no occupation other than the processes connected with cloth production which can be introduced in our schools throughout India. The introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in afterlife, if they choose for earning a living. Such a system must make our children self-reliant. Nothing will demoralize the nation so much as that we should learn to despise labour.

***To Promote All-Round Development of the Pupil***

Integrated Education I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another. The baneful effects of absence of proper co-ordination and harmony among the various faculties of body, mind and soul respectively are obvious. They are all around us; only we have lost perception of them owing to our present perverse associations. Take the case of our village folk. From their childhood upward they toil and labour in their fields from morning till night like their cattle in the midst of whom they live. Their existence is a weary, endless round of mechanical drudgery unrelieved by a spark of intelligence or higher grace of life. Deprived of all scope for developing their mind and soul, they have sunk to the level of the beast. Life to them is a sorry bungle which they muddle through anyhow. On the other hand, what goes by the name of education in our schools and colleges in the cities today is in reality only intellectual dissipation. Intellectual training is there looked upon as something altogether unrelated to manual or physical work. But since the body must have some sort of physical exercise to keep it in health, they vainly try to attain that end by means of an artificial and otherwise barren system of physical culture which would be ridiculous beyond words if the result was not so tragic. The young man who emerges from this system can in no way compete in physical endurance with an ordinary labourer. The slightest physical exertion gives him headache ; a mild exposure to the sun is enough to cause him giddiness. And what is more, all this is looked upon as quite 'natural'. As for the faculties of the heart, they are simply allowed to run to seed or to grow anyhow in a wild undisciplined manner. The result is moral and spiritual anarchy. And it is regarded as something laudable. As against this, take the case of a child in whom the education of the heart is attended to from the very beginning. Supposing he is set to some useful occupation like spinning, carpentry, agriculture etc. for this education, and in that connection is given a thorough comprehensive knowledge relating to the theory of the various operations that he is to perform, and the use and construction of the tools that he would be wielding. He would not only develop a fine, healthy body but also a sound, vigorous intellect that is not merely academic but is firmly rooted in and is tested from day to day by experience. His intellectual education would include a knowledge of mathematics and the various sciences that are useful for an intelligent and efficient exercise of his avocation. If to this is added literature by

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way of recreation, it would give him a perfect well-balanced, all-round education in which the intellect, the body and the spirit have all full play and develop together into a natural, harmonious whole. Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education.

### 3.4.2 ‘National Education’: Summary

Mahatma Gandhi’s article titled ‘National Education’ was published in *Young India* on 1 September, 1921.

In this compilation, Gandhian views on education have been expressed based on his lived experiences and critical reflection. Some aspects of ‘national education’ as highlighted in these sections include vocational self sufficiency, dignity of labour, universal brotherhood and craft/ skill centred nature of learning and this skill learning must be carried out in a scientific manner. He made it explicitly clear time and again that the existing British system of education will be useless for Indian population in the long run. He wanted the teachers, curriculum developers and other stakeholders to look inward for teaching concepts and skills to young learners in the classroom. He declared that the current education system will prepare kids for nothing.

Gandhiji outrightly rejected the school education system and its curriculum prevailing in his contemporary times:

‘The curriculum and pedagogic ideas which form the fabric of modern education were imported from Oxford and Cambridge, Edinburgh and London. But they are essentially foreign, and till they are repudiated, there never can be national education.’ He is an idealist who holds the timeless nature of ancient Indian education system as truly national: ‘her long established and elaborated civilization had once the advantage of an educational system of her own, the only thing entitled to be called “national”. But it was fundamentally distinct from the Anglo-Indian type and from the pseudo-national type that is its descendant.’ He finds the current education system as an ‘inferior’ one. It does not provide firm grounding in the Indian soil and culture. It is ‘The greatest visible evil of the present educational method, in itself evidence of deeper defects, is that it has broken up the continuity of our existence. All sound education is meant to fit one generation to take up the burden of the previous and to keep up the life of the community without breach or disaster.’ Gandhiji advocated a system of education based on the socio cultural soil of the country and not something begged and borrowed from the Western world. Upholding the sound education system in ancient India, he said:

‘The ancient educational system in India certainly maintained the long tradition of pride and service, the place of every order within the body social and body politic. It is equally certain that modern, foreign, non-national education makes young people unfit for any useful function in life.’ The time is opportune for an upheaval as ‘the race of old teachers is nearly extinct and the secret of their methods may die with them.’

In another instance, Gandhiji made the following comment on textbooks: ‘the text-books (today) deal, not with things the boys and the girls have always to deal with in their homes, but things to which they are perfect strangers.’ Instead, he asks for books to be written keeping the immediate environment of the learners in mind, so that it is relevant to him.

Further, Gandhiji was a strong advocate of practical —hands on experience training. He said that only that education is good which enables an individual to do things on his own. He wanted education to be imparted in vocational skills:

‘But if a vocational training in keeping with their surroundings was given to the children, they would not only repay the expenses incurred in the schools but would turn that training to use in afterlife’.

He wanted to give character education an esteemed place in the curriculum. He was convinced that it cannot be held through books, but through experiences. He calls this training as the ‘training of heart’.

He also talked about children being given training in exercising ‘freedom’, but this freedom he warned must be ‘disciplined’. Freedom that comes from discipline and humility cannot be denied, ‘unbridled license is a sign of vulgarity injurious alike to self and one’s neighbours.’

Education, as per Gandhiji must have a spiritual nature. It must be remembered that ‘the end of all knowledge must be building up of character.’ It must develop purity of heart, respect of all religions.

Gandhiji wanted children to become responsible citizens of society. Hence, he recommended that the school curriculum may invite students to engage in social service.

India is a land of plurality—multiple languages, multiple culture, multiple religion and social cultural context. He was, thus, of the opinion that the students must be taught unity. ‘It is one of realizing the essential brotherhood of man’.

Elsewhere, his notion of education as ‘an education for peace’ is evident in his response to Maria Montessori. He also expounds that true education is one that teaches students how to discriminate: ‘We are thinking, knowing beings and we must in this period distinguish truth from untruth, sweet from bitter language, clean from unclean things and so on. But the student’s path today is strewn with more difficulties than the one of distinguishing good from bad things.’

He is not in favour of textbooks, instead he wants the teachers should be given a handbook. For textbook preparation, he holds that it should be a careful exercise: ‘Real education has to draw out the best from the boys and girls to be educated. This can never be done by packing ill-assorted and unwanted information into the heads of the pupils.’

Gandhiji wanted school education to make students ‘self-reliant’ and develop a sense of ‘dignity of labour’. He wanted hand spinning to be taught to all students and that this activity must be cultivated with meticulous planning as it can have a lasting impact on the psychology of the learners. He also emphasized that ‘Not only must we do away with the opium and the drink revenue, but the other revenues

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also have to be very considerably reduced if the ever-growing poverty of the masses is to be combated in the near future.’ He wanted school education to work for all round development of learners: ‘Integrated Education I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, etc. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect.’

An essential aspect of his ‘national education’ was the craft education. According to him: ‘Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically, i.e., the child should know the why and the wherefore of every process.’

Thus in this essay, Gandhiji’s concept of a national education system has been carved, which should be based on the education of head, heart and hand. Such an education, he believed will bring about an all-round development of the child.

### 3.4.3 Critical Appreciation

Gandhi has written that it might be true regarding other countries but in India where 80% of the population is occupied with agriculture and 10% of it with industries, it is an offence to make education merely literary. It is apparent from these lines that according to Mahatma Gandhi, education is not only to gain literary knowledge. Although he has tried to confine his above mentioned statement within the Indian perspective, education cannot be restricted to the knowledge of letters of alphabet or the study of literature irrespective of the circumstances or the economic resources of any nation in the world. In addition to literary knowledge, education should include the moral, physical and mental development of a person. In course of time, education has to develop a person in all respects in order to enable him to become self-reliant. To become self-dependant or for his all-round development, it is necessary that he should have moral upliftment in addition to his physical or intellectual development. It is absolutely necessary that he should not only be able to earn his bread, but should be able to fulfill the obligations of his family and in carving the path of his progress, should ultimately be able to achieve his goal in life.

A young man or woman may pass the Graduate or the Post-graduate examination with first division or may further acquire the M. Phil. or Ph.D. degree, but still he/she does not become self-dependant and is not able to channelize his/her future along successful lines by worrying about his/her day-to-day problems. In such a case, will the education received by him/her or the degrees acquired by him/her be regarded as meaningful? In my opinion such an education or degree is useless. This reality can be perceived not only in India but in other countries also. Therefore, Mahatma Gandhi’s statement that education does not mean getting literary knowledge is true even in the context of the world.

It is a fact that our system of education has been defective for the last many decades. Even after independence, our leaders have not taken such steps as they should have to reform our defective educational system. Since independence and till now, many committees and commissions have been formed, but how much

improvement has been made in the sphere of education still remains a question. People like Dr. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Zakir Hussain, well-known educationists on national and international levels, have been the Presidents of our country. It is an anomaly that education has not been able to give right direction to our youths, or to provide them opportunities for their all-round development or to make them self-dependant. The number of students for higher education increases every year and is still growing further. If we do not awaken at the right time and bring changes in our defective educational system according to the view-points of Mahatma Gandhi, the situation would become so serious that we would not be able to manage it.

Mahatma Gandhi, an advocate of a solid foundation for human beings was firm on giving free and compulsory elementary education to all. In Harijan of 9 October, 1937, he wrote that he was firmly in favour of the principle of free and compulsory education for India. He further wrote that at this level along with the training in any trade, their physical, mental and spiritual potentialities also be developed.

Imparting of physical and mental training for the growth of good physique and mind and moral education for the formation of character and good conduct on the elementary and the secondary levels should be the priority. Besides, students should have technical knowledge according to their interest at these levels so that it may enable them to become self-dependant in future. This type of education imparted at the secondary level will incorporate four kinds of education, viz. technical, physical-mental, moral and general. After having received this secondary education, students would certainly become self-dependant and would be able to choose the career they would like to follow.

Each and every student should have a definite aim before he enters the field of higher education; otherwise it is meaningless to pursue higher education.

It will be in proximity to his statement in which he expressed his desire that by changing the nature of college education, he would make it conform to the needs of the nation.

Having become a graduate with technical knowledge any young boy or girl would be capable of seeking self-employment in a country with a population as large as in India and it will be comparably easy for him/her to get a government or non-government job. He or she can also pursue his or her studies further while doing his/her job. In this way, being self-dependant, a young boy/girl can continue his/her studies further to fulfill his/her aim and object. This is what Gandhi wanted. One who is self-employed will not have to run about after graduation for post-graduation or any other higher degree. Apart from this, he will not be required to waste precious time and money. It will naturally bring down the unnecessary crowding in colleges and universities. Besides, education will be purposeful and will be able to guide in the right direction. In short, these are Mahatma Gandhi's views on higher education and keeping them in mind, the system of education in India will have to be reformed. These views of Mahatma Gandhi can be our guide and can contribute to the management of our educational system.

Mahatma Gandhi had talked about self-sufficiency of colleges and universities. It meant that these institutions instead of depending on government aid should be

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self-financed. India is an agricultural country. Most of the industries are based on agriculture. Gandhi wanted that more and more self-financed Agriculture-Colleges should be opened and they should be attached to related industries which would turn out graduates according to their requirement. Not only this, they should bear the expenses of their education and the training-staff. Gandhi wanted the same system to be adopted for graduates of engineering and medical colleges. Engineering graduates should be attached to the related industry and medical graduates to hospitals. Law, Commerce and Arts colleges can be managed by voluntary organizations and donations can be procured according to their requirement. Mahatma Gandhi was never in favour of government aid. He, however, wanted the universities' control over the colleges and that of the government over the universities.

It is another matter that under the present circumstances, we have not been able to incorporate his views in our system of higher education, but they are worth giving a thought. The self-dependence he has talked about is certainly significant, otherwise how long will the colleges and the universities thrive on government aid? Keeping it in view, we will have to make a firm and well planned schedule and put it into practice.

**Check Your Progress**

7. Which system of education did Gandhiji aspire for newly independent India?
8. State four aims of education as put forward by Gandhi.

### **3.5 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU: ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Nehru was born to Motilal Nehru and Swarup Rani at Allahabad in India. He was the first of three children to the couple. His father being a barrister was actively engaged in the Indian independence movement. He had also served as the President of Indian National Congress, twice.

Nehru received most of his primary education at home from several tutors and governess. At the age of sixteen, Nehru was enrolled at the Harrow School in England after which he got admission at the Trinity College, Cambridge where he earned his honours degree in natural science. He was highly influenced by the writings of Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, J.M. Keynes and G.M. Trevelyan who shaped much of his political and economic thinking.

After attaining his graduate degree, Nehru relocated to London in 1910 and enrolled himself at the Inns of Court School of Law where he studied law for two years. After completing his bar examination, he was offered to be admitted to the English bar but Nehru returned to his homeland in 1912 and started practicing law as a barrister at the Allahabad High Court and gradually, he involved himself in Indian politics.



### Nehru's contribution to India's freedom struggle

At the time when Nehru joined Indian National Congress, he was not happy with its functioning as it was dominated by the English knowing upper class elite, yet he participated in the civil rights campaign initiated by Gandhi. Nehru condemned the Indian Civil Service for its support of British policies radically. He was not happy with the slow progression of the nationalist movement, so he joined his hands with aggressive nationalist leaders who were demanding Home Rule for Indians. He argued for self-government and a status of Dominion within the British Empire as enjoyed by Australia, Canada, South Africa and New Zealand. In 1916, Nehru met Gandhi first time and nobody knew that this relationship would turn for the lifetime of both of them. Under Gandhi's tutelage, Nehru was raised to the position of General Secretary of the Congress. Nehru not only contributed to national movement of India but also gave the freedom struggle an international outlook in 1927 when he attended the congress of oppressed nationalities in Brussels in Belgium.

Nehru appealed for complete independence but he was objected to by Gandhi who proposed a dominion status for India in two years' time frame. When Gandhi's plea was rejected, and so was Nehru's presidency over the Lahore session in 1928, Nehru demanded for complete independence. This resolution made him the most significant leaders of the independence movement. Due to his participation in the salt Satyagraha, he was put into prison with a large number of nationalists. During the World War II, Nehru demanded for full assurance for India's independence and also the share of power and responsibility in the central government but the British did not oblige. In 1947, as India enjoyed the British departure from the Indian soil, it also suffered the pain of partition as the British had decided to divide the country into two-India and Pakistan.

### Nehru's contribution to the country as a Prime Minister

Nehru was appointed the head of the interim government. Though he opposed the partition of India initially, due to Jinnah's powerful opposition, communal violence and political disorder, he was forced to accept this decision. Pakistan was formed on 14 August 1947 and Nehru became the Prime Minister of India. Nehru propelled India towards technological advancements and innovations. He also professed equality for all, irrespective of caste, colour or creed. He brought many radical changes in domestic, international and social policies. Nehru established several industries and also advocated for a mixed economy where the government controlled public sector co-existed with the private sector. He was passionate about education. He believed that only education can bring reformation in young India. Under his administration, he established many higher institutes for learning including All India Institute of Medical Sciences, The Indian Institute of Technology, The Indian Institute of Management and the National Institutes of Technology. He brought free and compulsory education to all children in his five year plan. Nehru also laid the stepping stone for the foundation of National Defense Academy, India. He realized the importance of defense and tried to equip the nation with the best modern equipment. Thus, Nehru toiled hard for the fast growth and development of India.

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**Jawaharlal Nehru as a Prose Writer**

Nehru was not only a chief Indian spokesman for political affairs, but also a great thinker and writer of India. Next only to Gandhi, his writings and speeches have brought a new shape of things to be followed in the years to come. In his writings, his mind ranges over all human problems with equal interest. An avid reader, he inspires the youth of India to be proud of their national heritage along with the rational points of the scientific temper.

Nehru's contribution is immense to Indo-English literature. He has enriched the store of Indian writing in English through voluminous works like *Letters from a Father to His Daughter* (1930), *Glimpses of World History* (1934), *An Autobiography* (1936), *India and the World* (1936), *The Unity of India* (1941), *The Discovery of India* (1946) and *A Bunch of Old Letters* (1958).

As an Indo-English writer and as a politician, Nehru had chosen a vast area for his works. The crux of his writing comes from the freedom struggles of India. Hence, he came across several people with their different languages throughout India, more especially the languages of Northern India. The following words from *The Discovery of India* like *shikar*, *the satyagraha sabha*, *khilafat committee*, *moulvis*, *ulema*, *charkha*, *kuttaghar*, *lathi charges*, *bania*, to quote a few indeed, show his deliberate liking for the use of Indianised lexis items. Sometimes this code switching from English to Hindustani root words like 'Bramanisation' and 'Sahib log', develops a new syntax of sentence-formation. At times, he quotes the entire sentence in original form in order to emphasize his point. However, his language as a prose writer is simple and easy to grasp in spite of its complex structure. He has a wonderful mastery of language which provides a concrete shape to his prose writing.

**Nehru as a Democrat**

Jawaharlal Nehru was no Caesar, despite his obvious imperiousness. 'We want no Caesars' he said, when dictators were fashionable in Europe and many were fascinated by Hitler's or Mussolini's dazzling conquests of power. He had been a democrat for a long time before he took to the practice of parliamentary democracy. Nehru had watched with amusement and indifference, the burlesque of the Council entry programme of his father and others. He was an agitator and a soldier in the livery of freedom. He could not think of democracy without transfer of power and the sensation of real self-government.

For him, freedom of the people came first, freedom to shape their freedom as they liked, and they were not an abstraction. He thought of them as millions and millions of individuals, each with his individuality, each master of his fate; in spite of the exhilaration he felt before crowds, he did not think of them in mass or as groups. The ardent spirit with which he threw himself into the freedom struggle and the many battles he fought for civil liberties were a part of his passion for individual liberty, as a condition of national freedom.

Jawaharlal Nehru made no secret that he enjoyed power, not for itself but because it enabled him to make some history. Power does not rise from a vacuum, from adventurism or from the magic of personality. To be real, it must be a part of social power. He derived his power, not from the electorate, not even from

Parliament, but from the appeal to the mass mind which he achieved as a part of the social processes which Gandhi had released and he accelerated. He achieved leadership through rational means. However, he was a democrat by faith and self-discipline and was no less successful than Gandhi, because he was always prepared to take his chances in the inner party struggles of the Congress party.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the first to articulate the idea of a Constituent Assembly long before such an assembly was set up under the Cabinet Mission scheme. A Constituent Assembly had for him the implications of a revolution; and in spite of the limitations under which the Constituent Assembly met and the intransigence of the Muslim League, he sought to endow it with revolutionary temper, and when freedom was not yet in sight, he sought to make it the instrument of revolution, not merely political but social and economic. He could see that it was not enough to have a constitution, a concept of territorial integrity and armed forces to defend it.

The basis of the Constituent Assembly was the sovereignty of the people, and it was something more than a phrase for him. His speech on the Objectives Resolution was one of the greatest he ever made, not only eloquent in words but inspiring in its amplitude and depth. India was to be an Independent Sovereign Republic, wherein all the power and authority of the republic, its constituent parts and organs of the Government were derived from the people. Justice, social, economic and political, was to be guaranteed; there was to be equality of status and of opportunity; freedom of thought and expression and other freedoms were enumerated.

Despite his legal training, Nehru's mind was not legalistic and he did not profess to be learned in law, even in constitutional law, but he left his impress on constitution making, and even he could not make it as simple, easy and short as he would have liked. He thought much about its content and made provision for the future. The constitution had to be given the flesh and blood of an economic base, if it was not to be a paper constitution; it must serve the needs of the people, if it is not to be treated as a scrap of paper; and it must work, if it was not to break up. The problem was to make a nation from a confused, distraught people, and Jawaharlal Nehru sought to fit all problems into the framework of national unity. India was still a land of many races and religions and languages, and the diversity of its composite culture did not disturb Jawaharlal Nehru. He rather welcomed it as he understood the long drama of the past, of an India changing but with a continuity of tradition, and he also understood the transitional nature of the present and the unfolding of the future. The concept of a monolithic state in the name of oneness of culture was not acceptable to him, and he rejected the imposition of any majority culture. Behind the forms of democracy which the country was adopting, he saw the spirit of it in all its complex yet simple processes.

Nehru treated the Parliament with deference and respect because he believed in the virtues of parliamentary democracy, in the value of good precedents, and in the laying down and carrying out of policies with the consent of the people or their representatives. It was not easy, for with vast reserves of illiteracy the country had started with adult suffrage. However, he knew that there was no other way. With many limitations, he enabled three general elections to become an impressive demonstration of the working of the world's largest democracy. After all, any

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democracy, whatever the forms and the rules, is government by deliberation, and it demands capacity for debate, and he taught this lesson ceaselessly. Democracy must ensure good government; it must allow criticism and correction; it means balances and checks.

He had, however, no new fanciful notions about democracy. To him the content was more important than the form. He sometimes suggested reform and thought aloud about better methods. But as a democrat, he waited for a consensus to develop. He did not think of a party less democracy; he rather thought that a party system would help principled working. Among his feats was the way he preserved the strength of the Congress and used it as a mighty instrument of his purposes.

The democracy which developed under Jawaharlal Nehru was not Jeffersonian or Jacksonian democracy or even the slavery-free democracy of Lincoln. It was a twentieth century democracy based on social and economic equality, trying to develop the temper of peace and prepared to undertake an industrial and technological revolution. The democratic process cannot be free unless it is freed from the grip of vested interests. Parliamentary democracy in this sense was Jawaharlal Nehru's dream. Whatever its failures, whatever the setbacks whatever the variations that are possible, he largely fulfilled that dream.

### 3.6 'WILL AND TESTAMENT': TEXT, SUMMARY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

The following section contain the text, summary and critical appreciation of the 'Will and Testament' of Jawaharlal Nehru.

#### 3.6.1 'Will And Testament': Text



Source: <http://nehruvian.com/article/will-and-testament-jawaharlal-nehru>

#### Foreword

The following is the exact copy of India's former Prime Minister, Pandit Nehru's 'Will and Testament'.

1. I, Jawaharlal Nehru, of Anand Bhawan, Allahabad, am desirous of making my Will and indicating in it how I wish my property

and assets to be disposed of after my death. The circumstances of my life have been and are so uncertain that I do not know if there will be anything at all to dispose of it at the time of my death. The assets which I had inherited from my father, and for which he had taken steps with loving foresight and care to protect for me, have been largely spent by me. The capital at my disposal has progressively diminished, in spite of my income from royalties, on books and other writings, which have been considerable. I have not had much of a property sense and the idea of adding to my possessions has almost seemed to me an addition to the burdens I had to carry. The kind of journey through life I had undertaken long ago required as few encumbrances as possible. Also, believing in my capacity to add to my income if I chose to do so, I was not interested in making financial provision for the future. For this reason also I did not at any time insure my life.

2. Because of this and other reasons, it is exceedingly difficult for me to make any detailed provision for the future. I did not think it even necessary to make any kind of a Will as I doubted that I would have anything to dispose of in this way. In the normal course, I thought, that my daughter Indira Priyadarshini Gandhi, would inherit such property or assets that I might leave, as she was my natural and obvious heir.
3. When I was in Ahmednagar Fort prison and had leisure to think about the future, it struck me that it would be desirable to make some kind of a Will. The news of the sudden death of my brother-in-law, Ranjit Sitaram Pandit came as a great shock to me and induced me to think again of making a Will. I could not take any formal steps in prison though in December 1943, while still in Ahmednagar, I made a draft of a Will and Testament.
4. I was released from prison in the summer of 1945 and since then have had little leisure to think of personal matters. So, the draft has remained with me for over ten years now. These ten years have seen many changes in my life and the old draft is out of date. As a matter of fact, such assets as I possessed even ten years ago have largely vanished during this period. Since I became Prime Minister, I have been unable to add to my income by any fresh writing and I have had to draw repeatedly on what capital I possessed because my salary as a Prime Minister was not adequate for my needs, limited as they were. Nevertheless, I consider it necessary to make this Will now and so dispose of a matter which has been at the back of my mind for a number of years.
5. My daughter and only child, Indira Priyadarshini, married to Feroze Gandhi, is my only heir, and I bequeath to her all my property, assets and belongings, subject to such provision as may be hereinafter provided for.
6. My property at present consists of my house, Anand Bhawan, in Allahabad, with the land and buildings attached to it, and the furniture, books and other appurtenants thereto. I have also books, papers and personal belongings at present in the Prime Minister's house, New Delhi. I own a few securities, investments and shares and some cash in current and fixed deposits accounts in banks,

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though most of these securities and investments have already been transferred in favor of my daughter or have been otherwise disposed of. I have an uncertain and varying income also from royalties on the old books I have written. All these assets, that is, the house, Anand Bhawan, with all that appertains to it, and all my securities, investments and shares, cash in current and fixed deposit accounts, wherever they might be, and income from royalties on books, and any other property or assets belonging to me not herein mentioned, will be inherited by, and will belong after my death to, my daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, and she shall have full authority over them and can deal with them in any manner she chooses.

7. In the event of my daughter, Indira Priyadarshini, pre-deceasing me, her two sons, my grand sons, Rajivratna Nehru Gandhi and Sanjay Nehru Gandhi, will be my heirs, and all my property and assets will be inherited by them absolutely in equal shares, which they may hold jointly or otherwise, as they choose.
8. In the course of a life which has had its share of trial and difficulty, the love and tender care for me of both my sisters, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Krishna Hutheesing, have been of the greatest solace to me. I can give nothing to balance this except my own love and affection which they have in full measure.
9. Any of my father's or mother's personalia, still in my possession or in Anand Bhawan, will be given to my sisters for they will have a prior right to these than anyone else can have. They can share or divide these articles among themselves as they choose.
10. I have, by the above mentioned clauses, bequeathed Anand Bhawan, and such other property as I might possess, absolutely to my daughter and her children, as the case may be and she or they will have full proprietary rights over it, including rights of alienation and disposition of every kind. This house, Anand Bhawan, has become for us and others a symbol of much that we value in life. It is far more than a structure of brick and concrete, more than a private possession. It is connected intimately with our national struggle for freedom, and within its walls great events have happened and great decisions have been reached. It is my wish, and I am sure it is my daughter's wish also, that whoever lives in Anand Bhawan must always remember this and must not do anything contrary to that tradition. This wish of mine, as well as other wishes to which I refer in subsequent clauses, are not intended to be in any way a restriction on the proprietary rights conferred upon my daughter.
11. I should like my daughter, her husband Feroze Gandhi and their children to make Anand Bhawan their home, and, if owing to any reasons, they do not find it possible to do so, to visit Anand Bhawan frequently.
12. Our house, Anand Bhawan, in Allahabad, should always be open to my sisters, their children as well as my brother-in-law, Raja Hutheesing, and they should be made to feel that it continues to be their home where they are ever welcome. They can stay there whenever they like and for as long as they like. I should like

them to pay periodic visits to the house and to keep fresh and strong the bonds that tie them to their old home.

13. Our house, Anand Bhawan, has drawn many people to it from all parts of the country during past years, when my father was alive and subsequently. More especially, poor folk, peasants and others, from the surrounding districts and from more distant parts of India have come there for advice and help or solace, in their life-long suffering. I hope the doors of Anand Bhawan will ever be open to these countrymen of ours and every courtesy will be shown to them. It is a matter of deep regret to me that because of my duties and responsibilities as Prime Minister, I have been unable to visit our home, except rarely.
14. I should not like the house to be rented out to strangers. If my daughter or her children do not find it convenient to maintain Anand Bhawan as a family residence, they should use it or dedicate it for a public purpose. This may be in connection with the Kamala Nehru Memorial Hospital or the proposed Children's Home that is likely to be put up nearby or any like purpose.
15. I have collected a considerable number of papers and letters of national and historical interest. Many of these connected with various phases of our national struggle for freedom were unfortunately destroyed or mislaid during the long years when we were in prison. Still some remain. There are other papers and documents as well as letters relating to the subsequent period after I took office, which have also considerable historical value. All such important papers and documents and letters should be offered to the national Library or the National Archives.
16. I have from time to time given various articles, which had been presented to me, to public museums. I shall continue to do so. In case any remain, which are worthy of public display, these should be presented to the National Museum. Some of them may be kept in the Prime Minister's house which itself is a public building.
17. I have received so much love and affection from the Indian people that nothing that I can do can repay even a small fraction of it, and indeed there can be no repayment of so precious a thing as affection. Many have been admired, some have been revered, but the affection of all classes of the Indian people has come to me in such abundant measure that I have been overwhelmed by it. I can only express the hope that in the remaining years I may live, I shall not be unworthy of my people and their affection.
18. To my innumerable comrades and colleagues, I owe an even deeper debt of gratitude. We have been joint partners in great undertakings and have shared the triumphs and sorrows which inevitably accompany them.
19. Many of those who served my father or me faithfully and with affection have passed away. A few remain. They have been parts of our household and I should like them to be considered as such so long as they are alive. I cannot mention them all here, but I should particularly like to mention Shiv Dutt Upadhyaya, M.O. Mathai and Harilal.
20. I wish to declare with all earnestness that I do not want any religious ceremonies performed for me after my death. I do not

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believe in any such ceremonies and to submit to them, even as a matter of form, would be hypocrisy and an attempt to delude ourselves and others.

21. When I die, I should like my body to be cremated. If I die in a foreign country, my body should be cremated there and my ashes sent to Allahabad. A small handful of these ashes should be thrown in the Ganga and the major portion of them disposed of in the manner indicated below. No part of these ashes should be retained or preserved.
22. My desire to have a handful of my ashes thrown in the Ganga at Allahabad has no religious significance, so far as I am concerned. I have no religious sentiment in the matter. I have been attached to the Ganga and the Jumna rivers in Allahabad ever since my childhood and, as I have grown older, this attachment has also grown. I have watched their varying moods as the seasons changed, and have often thought of the history and myth and tradition and song and story that have become attached to them through the long ages and become part of the flowing waters. The Ganga, especially, is the river of India, beloved of her people, round which are intertwined her racial memories, her hopes and fears, her songs of triumph, her victories and her defeats. She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing and ever the same Ganga. She reminds me of the snow-covered peaks and the deep valleys of the Himalayas, which I have loved so much, and of the rich and vast plains below, where my life and work have been cast. Smiling and dancing in the morning sunlight, and dark and gloomy and full of mystery as the evening shadows fall; a narrow, slow and graceful stream in winter, and a vast roaring thing during the monsoon, broad-bosomed almost as the sea, and with something of the sea's power to destroy, the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future. And though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom, and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people, and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent the free development of the body and the spirit; though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from that past completely. I am proud of that great inheritance that has been, and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back in the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it. And, as witness of this desire of mine and as my last homage to the great ocean that washes India's shores.
23. The major portion of my ashes should, however, be disposed of otherwise. I want these to be carried high up into the air in an aeroplane and scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India. I have written this Will and Testament in New Delhi on the twenty-first day of June in the year Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-four.  
Signed/ Jawaharlal Nehru 21 June, 1954 Attestor 1: Kailas Nath Katju Attestor 2: N.R. Pilla



### 3.6.2 Will and Testament: Summary

Prose

The detailed summary of Nehru's Will is given below for your better understanding and comprehension.

1. Very specifically Nehruji states the primary objective of writing the will and testament- 'how I wish my property and assets to be disposed of after my death'. This shows that he was a visionary keen to wrap up all issues and concerns before he passes on to another world. In the very next line we get a hint on his 'simple living and high thinking' he says that his life events have been so uncertain in past that he never really thought about himself, his possessions and property. His life and action was a total commitment to the Nation – wherein he never thought of himself. Thus he says: 'I do not know if there will be anything at all to dispose of it at the time of my death.'. In the following lines he talks about ancestral inheritance. Here again he mentions the futility of the exercise of preserving property for the future generation (as his father had done). For he says, the savings have already been spent, his earnings from royalty and other sources has also diminished. So, in the name of capital he doesn't have much. For property, he says, he never had any broker sense. He considered the act of accumulating property a burden – so he did not indulge in it much. His dedication for National values and role in the freedom struggle movement did not require him to be bonded in the chains of property and other such encumbrances. He was a soul who was born to work for the Nation building and national wealth rather than accumulation of personal wealth. Very beautifully, Nehruji leaves a message for the reader when he mentions that (one should) 'believing in my capacity to add to my income if I chose to do so'. As there is an adage in Indian traditional literature that if you have a well-bred and well-groomed child you don't need to accumulate wealth for him (for he will acquire for himself), similarly if your children don't turn out well, there is no need to accumulate wealth for them as well because it will be wasted a spent in few days itself. So, there is no need to toil and exert yourself for saving for the future generation. Rather, parents must invest in building the capability of their child so that they are capable enough of earning for themselves and taking care of themselves. Appropriate parenting may be termed as the best insurance for a person.
2. In the second paragraph of the will, he endows his daughter all rights for inheriting his property and asset as she was the, 'she was my natural and obvious heir'. Here one can see that Nehruji was very proud of his daughter. He was a very broad minded leader, who was not touched by the social issues and stereotypes – usually 'males' in traditional Indian society are considered as the lawful inheritor of parents' assets and ancestral property. But Nehruji does not mention any regret over having a daughter instead of a son. Very strongly he advocates Indira Priyadarshini's right over his property and assets.
3. In this paragraph, he records that life is uncertain and one must plan ahead, so that things are in place in difficult times. These lines inspire the readers to plan ahead for the uncertain life events at the same time one must look

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around people and events around them as experiences which teach us something. So, one must be prepared to learn from both favourable as well as unfavourable life events. So that there is no regret later on.

4. This paragraph indicates the busy political life Nehruji experienced after becoming the Prime Minister. He was not able to finalize his will even after 10 years. On the one hand it reveals how responsible and committed he was for the Nation that he kept his personal life on the second pedestal. He also makes a mention of how his income in govt office was too limited, and he did not have much time left to engage in personal earnings through writing.
5. This paragraph once again reinstates his daughter as a lawful inheritor.
6. More specific details of property, income, assets to be inherited by his daughter is provided in this paragraph. It shows the love of a father for his daughter who is married. As a father he wants to secure her future – financially and personally. His love and care for his daughter is profound as is revealed in his letter as well.
7. In this point he indicates his preparedness for the future- that in case the daughter is not able to survive – the property and assets must be shared equally amongst her children Rajivratna Nehru Gandhi and Sanjay Nehru Gandhi, who will be his next heirs.
8. In this paragraph, he gives space to shower his deep love and affection for his sisters: Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit and Krishna Hutheesing.
9. In this paragraph, he demonstrates his caring nature and love and affection for his sisters when he says that any ancestral article of their ‘father’s or mother’s personalia’ present in Anand Bhavan will go to them. He has secured the sister’s interest and rights as well in this section. This shows that he was a social reformer as well who believed in practicing what he said and believed. We find he does not practice gender discrimination. His openness and broad mindedness is an example for others to follow.
10. In this point, Nehru acknowledges that being a public figure, his house Anand Bhavan does not remain solely an individual’s property rather it is a National wealth. He categorical mentions that the propriety rights may be with the legal heir but it must never clash with National values, national spirit, ideals and interest.
11. In this point he formally invites his daughter and her family to stay in Anand Bhavan or else visit it frequently.
12. In this point he extends this invitation to his other family members and relatives as well.
13. In this paragraph, Nehruji reveals his awareness of his legacy, he is very much aware of it and expresses his desire to continue it in future as well. Since the times of his father, Anand Bhavan was a place where the common man, peasants used to come to seek advice, comfort and help- such niceties and courtesies are to be continued in future as well. He once again reflects that his public life has prevented him in the past to frequent his ancestral house in the past and his yearning for the same is revealed here. This is a

message for the reader to cherish their personal inheritance, feel responsible for it and add value to it by means of work and personal conduct. This forms the social fabric of our family, society and nation.

14. Nehruji was a committed national leader who was not interested in personal welfare, rather, he tried to use every opportunity to be of some worth for his nation and countrymen. In this point he remarks that in case his children, lawful inheritor of this Anand Bhavan, are not able to maintain the property, they can put it to public use. Under no conditions it was to be used for commercial purpose.
15. He was a person with keen literary interest and it is revealed when he said that he has a collection of some valuable documents related to national freedom movement. He once again submits this personal possession to be maintained and documented by the national library or National Archive. This collection would serve as a great treasure for the future generation in understanding the pre independent India, its struggle for freedom and there after its efforts to rise up and acquire a position of its own in the world map.
16. Here we see his detachment and devotion to the nation, once again, when he mentions that any valuable / worthwhile artefact accumulated by him over the years may be put up in the National Museum, if it is worthy. Once again, he gives away his personal collection to the National museum.
17. This paragraph expresses the gratitude he feels for his people, who have always showered unconditional love on him. He wishes that in future also, this same love and affection may remain in the heart of his countrymen.
- 18-19. In these paragraphs he remembers his friends, colleagues and partners and expresses his gratitude towards them
20. Nehruji was a Kashmiri pandit, but in his will, he proves that he was a progressivist, who does not want to be tied down by social customs and practices. Very strongly, he puts that he does not want to practice hypocrisy, and that no religious rites/ ceremonies should be performed after his death.
21. He mentions in details what should be done after his death. His body must be cremated and the ashes must not be retained / preserved. Rather the ashes must be taken to Allahabad and major part of it be thrown in the Ganga.
22. In this paragraph, he mentions the specific reason for throwing his ashes in Ganga. It is not to be done due to some religious feeling, rather he perceives Ganga as a perennial reminder of the history of India, 'She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing and ever the same Ganga.' He wants to become a part and parcel of this great river. He expresses his vision for the New India, when he says:  
 'the Ganga has been to me a symbol and a memory of the past of India, running into the present, and flowing on to the great ocean of the future. And though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom, and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people, and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent the free development of the body and

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the spirit; though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from that past completely. I am proud of that great inheritance that has been, and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back in the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India. That chain I would not break, for I treasure it and seek inspiration from it. And, as witness of this desire of mine and as my last homage to the great ocean that washes India's shores.'

He wishes the New India would be strong, united, broad minded, progressive, free from bondages and divisions based on caste, creed, language and religion.

23. In this last paragraph of the will, Nehruji expresses his desire that his ashes may be mingled inseparably with the soil of his motherland, in the fields where the peasant work hard to raise crops for the citizens of the motherland. There selflessness, hard work, perseverance, positivity is what he wants to embrace whole heartedly.

In his will, once again this great leader proved that he was a social reformer, a true national and a great revolutionary of his times.

### 3.6.3 'Will and Testament': Critical Appreciation

In his 'Will and Testament', Nehruji has written about his ancestral property Anand Bhawan to be transferred to his daughter Indira Gandhi. The tone is one of disengagement and removal of attachment from any worldly belonging and heritage. He wants to assign all responsibility and property to the rightful owner. This reveals that Nehru, like any great leader, had a strong sense of responsibility. In points 20- 23, we get a glimpse of his philosophy and idea of religion.

A will and testament is a legal document that expresses a person's wishes as to how their property is to be distributed after their death and as to which person is to manage the property until its final distribution. Nehru's 'Will and Testament', other than giving out the mundane information of who to inherit what, also tells us the testator's reasoning for making out the Will the way it had been made out. This enables us to look into the mind of Nehru and understand him a little better, without always agreeing with him. In the essay, from point 1 till point 19, he talks about the distribution of his property and inheritance to the rightful owners. It is in point 20- 23 that we get to see some inner beliefs and preferences of this great political leader.

In point 20 he clearly mentions that he is against any kind of hypocrisy. He is a spiritual person who does not believe in religious practices.

In point 21 he clearly shows that he is very much rooted in the culture and soil of his country and place of birth, Allahabad. He wants his ashes to be brought back to Allahabad, if he happens to die in a foreign land.

In the next point 22, he explains the reason behind expressing the desire to have his ashes thrown in the Ganga. He states, 'She has been a symbol of India's age-long culture and civilization, ever-changing, ever-flowing and ever the same Ganga.' By mingling his ashes with the water of Ganga, he wants to pay homage to its rich cultural diversity and become a part of this great civilization. He expresses his

desire to see India progress, give up its orthodox beliefs and practices. He mentions ‘And though I have discarded much of past tradition and custom, and am anxious that India should rid herself of all shackles that bind and constrain her and divide her people, and suppress vast numbers of them, and prevent the free development of the body and the spirit; though I seek all this, yet I do not wish to cut myself off from that past completely. I am proud of that great inheritance that has been, and is, ours, and I am conscious that I too, like all of us, am a link in that unbroken chain which goes back in the dawn of history in the immemorial past of India.’

He wants Indians to get rid of inhibitions, superstitions and any other social/religious belief or practices which prevents it from soaring ahead. At the same time, he is careful, not to hurt the religious sentiments, he wants to be remembered as a part of the Indian history, he wants the ‘link’ between the new and old to be preserved.

In point 23, he describes how he wishes his remnant ashes to be spread: ‘I want these to be carried high up into the air in an aeroplane and scattered from that height over the fields where the peasants of India toil, so that they might mingle with the dust and soil of India and become an indistinguishable part of India.’ His core wish is to become one with his motherland. He wants his ashes to be spread over the field of the peasants – this shows Nehru’s recognition of India as an agriculture based country. The farmers and peasants toil so hard to make the land fertile, Nehru’s will to throw his ashes over the field indicates his gratitude to the peasant and common man.

Thus, the Will of Nehru reveals the inner core of this great Indian nationalist leader, as a true patriot, one who has worked for the freedom of this land and who will always remain an integral part of this nation.

### Check Your Progress

9. Whose writings influenced Jawaharlal Lal Nehru’s thinking?
10. What propelled Nehru to become a highly significant leader of the Indian freedom struggle movement?

## 3.7 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. A formal essay is written on topics that are comparatively not very personal to the author; rather he has an authority over the subject.
2. Informal essays are also known as familiar or personal essays because in the expression of these essays, an intimate tone of the author can be observed. These are focused on everyday things instead of matters related to masses at large or specialized topics.
3. Descriptive essays are a clear representation of an individual, place, thing, happening, or deliberation. Descriptive essays give out details which enable the reader to form a vivid imagination of the thing being described in the essay.

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4. Philosophical essay is an essay which is concise, clear or abstract having argument or analysis on a particular subject reflecting strong logical currents through it.
5. Scientific essay is objective in style because it is devoted to recounting of facts and events as per their real existence. It is fact-based and the fact either exists or has proofs to prove its occurrence in future. In a scientific essay the writer uses certain terminology related to certain branch of study to which the essay explores.
6. Aphoristic essay is a short essay with brilliant exhibition of aphorism: an art of speaking things on a subject with brevity of wit and precision of diction. Sir Francis Bacon is its chief propagator in English literature.
7. Gandhiji aspired for a national education system.
8. The main aims of education as per Gandhiji are the following:
  - (i) All- round development of child
  - (ii) Development of character
  - (iii) Development of vocational skills
  - (iv) Education for 'heart'
9. Jawaharlal Nehru was highly influenced by the writings of Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, J.M. Keynes and G.M. Trevelyan who shaped much of his political and economic thinking.
10. Nehru's demand for total independence after the Lahore session in 1928 propelled Nehru to become a highly significant leader of the Indian freedom struggle movement.

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### 3.8 SUMMARY

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- A prose is a form of language that is not bound by any metrical structure. It is characterized by a natural flow of speech and has ordinary grammatical structure.
- An essay is actually a short prose composition which discusses a matter, expresses a viewpoint, persuasive to accept a thesis on any subject, or just entertains. An essay is not the same as from a 'treatise' or 'dissertation' because of its lack of affectation to be a methodical and absolute elucidation.
- A formal essay, or article, is written on topics which are comparatively not very personal to the author; rather he has an authority over the subject. Being extremely well-informed about the subject, the author explains the same in a methodical manner.
- In contemporary educational field, essay occupies a very significant place in the realm of formal education. Secondary class students are trained how to formulate essays using structured formats, this improves their writing abilities manifold.

- Descriptive essays are a clear representation of an individual, place, thing, happening, or deliberation. Descriptive essays give out details which enable the reader to form a vivid imagination of the thing being described in the essay.
- Aphoristic essay is a short essay with brilliant exhibition of aphorism: an art of speaking things on a subject with brevity of wit and precision of diction. Sir Francis Bacon is its chief propagator in English literature.
- Scientific essay is objective in style and is devoted to recounting of facts and events as per their real existence. It should be fact-based and that fact should either exist or should have proofs to prove its occurrence in future. In a scientific essay the writer uses certain terminology related to certain branch of study to which the essay explores.
- The full name of Gandhiji was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. He was born on 2 October 1869 in Porbandar, a coastal town in Gujarat, India.
- It was during Gandhiji's tenure in South Africa (1893- 1914) that he faced discrimination directed at Indians.
- Education is not mere literacy; it is much more than that. It means character building and a knowledge of duty, to do good to others without 'egoism'. True education prepares an individual to apply his mind to the best use, to live a life of ethics. In this pursuit of wisdom, self-discipline and a sense of social responsibility is a must.
- Gandhi was a man of action, a realist and a pragmatist. Even though he was an ordinary man like any other, he was able to achieve that realization, which made him the 'Mahatma'. He was essentially a religious man.
- Gandhi read little in the realm of political theory or political thought. But whatever he read, he assimilated perfectly. He read the Bhagavad Gita and so gave it a novel interpretation. He read it several times and considered it as the book of spiritual reference. He learnt about truth and non-violence from the Bhagavad Gita.
- Gandhiji outrightly rejected the school education system and its curriculum prevailing in his contemporary times.
- Nehru was born to Motilal Nehru and Swarup Rani at Allahabad in India. He was the first of three children to the couple. His father being a barrister was actively engaged in the Indian independence movement. He had also served as the President of Indian National Congress, twice.
- Nehru was not only a chief Indian spokesman for political affairs, but also a great thinker and writer of India. Next only to Gandhi, his writings and speeches have brought a new shape of things to be followed in the years to come.
- In his 'Will and Testament', Nehruji has written about his ancestral property Anand Bhawan to be transferred to his daughter Indira Gandhi. The tone is one of disengagement and removal of attachment from any worldly belonging and heritage.

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- The will written by Nehru is a personal document which reveals the thought processes of Nehruji. From point 1 till point 19, he talks about the distribution of his property and inheritance to the rightful owners. It is in point 20- 23 that we get to see some inner beliefs and preferences of this great political leader.
- Thus, the Will of Nehru reveals the inner core of this great Indian nationalist leader, as a true patriot, one who has worked for the freedom of this land and who will always remain an integral part of this nation.

### 3.9 KEY TERMS

- **Academic essay:** It refers to a literary composition which supports one assertion or impression which is helpful in establishing the general purpose of the work.
- **Didactic essay:** It refers to a type of philosophical essay which is meant to educate or instruct about life and education.
- **Essay:** It refers to a short prose composition which: discusses a matter, expresses a viewpoint, persuasive to accept a thesis on any subject, or just entertains.
- **Imitation essays:** It refers to the essays in which the essayist builds the thesis and outline of his essay imitating another piece of such work but presents the borrowed ideas in his own particular style.
- **Salt Satyagraha:** Salt Satyagraha refers to the civil disobedience movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi as a non-violent act of rebellion against the British law that prohibited Indians from producing salt. It is also known as the Dandi March.
- **Home Rule:** Home Rule referred to the movement started by Indian nationalists that wanted India to be considered a dominion within the British Empire, a status that was enjoyed by some other colonies of Great Britain. The Home Rule movement wanted India to have a government of its own choosing.

### 3.10 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Objective Questions

- I. Fill in the blanks using appropriate words.
  - (a) A philosophical essay should have a clarification, justification and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (b) \_\_\_\_\_ initiated the style of personal essays which the writers of 19th century carried forward.
  - (c) Gandhi's article 'National Education' was published in \_\_\_\_\_.



II. State whether the following sentences are true or false.

- (a) Descriptive essays is a literary composition which supports one assertion or impression which is helpful in establishing the general purpose of the work.
- (b) Samuel Johnson established the most influential literary periodical of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, called the *Spectator*.
- (c) Nehru was no Caesar, despite his obvious imperiousness.

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### Short Answer Questions

1. Differentiate between formal and informal essays.
2. What are argumentative essays?
3. Write a short note on essay as an instructional tool.
4. What are the main components of a philosophical essay?
5. Write a short note on the significant events of the life of M. K. Gandhi.
6. Summarize the main points of 'National Education'.
7. What is a will and testament?
8. Write a short-note on Jawaharlal Nehru as a democrat.
9. Briefly state the main points of the Foreword of 'Will and Testament'.
10. State some of the aims of education according to Mahatma Gandhi.

### Long Answer Questions

1. Analyse the importance of essay as one of the major forms of literary genre.
2. Discuss the aim of compare and contrast essay.
3. Why is philosophical essay subjective in nature? Discuss in detail.
4. How are Gandhiji's views on education expressed in 'National Education' relevant in the modern times?
5. Critically analyse Nehru's 'Will and Testament'.
6. Explain Gandhi's view on the type of curriculum that should be established in India.
7. Nehru's 'Will and Testament' enables us to look into the mind of Nehru and understand him a little better. Discuss.
8. Describe Nehru as a democrat.
9. How does 'Young India' promote the all-round development of students? Discuss.
10. Does 'Young India' convey the true essence of education in our country? Analyse the statement.

## 3.11 FURTHER READING

Surendran, K. V. 2000. *Indian Writing: Critical Perspectives*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.

Prose

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Kumar, Ravindra. 'Mahatma Gandhi and Higher Education: A Critical Analysis.  
mkghandhi.org

### ***Website links***

<https://www.gandhiashramsevagram.org/on-education/gandhi-views-on-education.php>

<https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/gandhian-educational-system.html>

## UNIT 4 DRAMA

### Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Objectives
- 4.2 English Drama: An Overview
- 4.3 Indian English Drama: Drama in the Indian Context
- 4.4 Girish Karnad: About the Author
  - 4.4.1 Master of Structure and Paradoxes
- 4.5 Tughlaq: Structure and Critical Appreciation
  - 4.5.1 The Subtext
  - 4.5.2 The Structure
  - 4.5.3 Tughlaq: Critical Appreciation
  - 4.5.4 A Note of Existentialism
  - 4.5.5 Literary Techniques Used in Tughlaq
- 4.6 Tughlaq: Character Analysis
  - 4.6.1 Man of Contradictions
  - 4.6.2 A Visionary but not a Strategist
  - 4.6.3 A Man ahead of Times
  - 4.6.4 Projecting Contemporary Disillusionments
- 4.7 Asif Currimbhoy: About the Author
- 4.8 Goa: Summary, Characterization and Critical Appreciation
  - 4.8.1 Goa: Critical Appreciation
  - 4.8.2 Setting of the Play
  - 4.8.3 Characterization
- 4.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.10 Summary
- 4.11 Key Terms
- 4.12 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 4.13 Further Reading

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## 4.0 INTRODUCTION

Drama is an art, a form of literary writing which demands great efforts, deep insight and acute observation skill. In this unit, you will get to understand the genre of drama and the types of dramas. Also, this unit will help you critically analyse two plays written by significant Indian dramatists namely, Girish Karnad and Asif Currimbhoy.

Girish Karnad has written this drama *Tughlaq* featuring Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq, bringing to light his idiosyncrasies, his life and his work. The author delineates Tughlaq as both a generous and a cruel sovereign. Karnad's presentation of Tughlaq is intended to show the king's weaknesses and irregularities, proving that he was a hypocrite and a tyrant of the worst kind. Karnad has also depicted the other officials of the court and showed how they deceived the Sultan.

Asif Currimbhoy is an Indian playwright who has produced more than 30 plays. His play *Goa* deals with the theme of post-colonialism, lust, sexuality and corruption. He has written plays on contemporary themes which made him achieve critical acclaim in India and abroad.

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## 4.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Prepare an overview of the genre drama
- Discuss the growth of drama in the Indian context
- Identify the significant works of Asif Currimbhoy
- Critically analyse the play *Tughlaq* as a historical play
- Evaluate the play *Goa*

## 4.2 ENGLISH DRAMA: AN OVERVIEW

Drama is an ancient form of art written in prose or verse accompanied by various tools and techniques meant to be staged.

Plays, on the contrary, involve ‘multiple art, using words, scenic effects, music, the gestures of the actors, and the organizing talents of a producer’. It is written with the purpose of presenting a fiction or reality in front of people. Its main objective is successful representation of a plot to be viewed by audience. Therefore, the textual portion in a drama is always dependent on love and acceptance of the viewers.

An essential quality of drama is its objectivity. A play whether divided into acts or not, has plot, characters, background, theme, dramatic unities, and techniques and so on. Beside them all, it must aim to please its audience and has to be acted by people in public. Its duration is short and everything has to produce an exemplary effect within the few hours on stage in a play: drama is ‘a composite art, in which the author, the actor, and the stage manager all combine to produce the total effect’.

A play must seek perfect economy in choice of words, actions, deliverers of those actions, time, and place, so that all may synthesize into bringing the desired end or effect. The novelist’s art is leisurely, but the dramatist’s art is too strategic to escape his limitations. He or she is always handicapped. His is a weaver’s hand because a play is shaped by both internal and external agencies.

A playwright cannot speak his emotions directly; he or she has to use his characters to express them. The action has to be divided into the share of some characters and every character must act the intended way to achieve the expected end. Then only a drama would be successful. The dramatist’s identity, behaviour, character and feelings need not be seeking direct expression. He has to maintain complete objectivity and impersonality.

In England, as a form of literary art, drama began in the Middle Ages. However, it is difficult to trace the exact period of its beginning in the English scene. When the Romans came to England, they set up huge amphitheatres and certainly, plays were being acted in those times. As the Romans left, the culture too came to a standstill. In the Middle Ages minstrels, clowns and tumblers used to sing long heroic poems or epics or ballads in praise of the court. Even their

costumes were motley ones and were easily recognized as those welcomed figures at ceremonies, public places, the King's court, or anywhere. They used to boost the morale and passionately moved all those who heard them: it could be also traced as the inception of drama, yet it was not an organized establishment.

Undoubtedly, there has been an intricate relation between Christianity and plays when it comes to trace the origin or genesis of drama in England. In medieval England, the minstrels at church used to act stories from the Bible after the sessions of sermons would be over. It was done in order to entertain and impart on people the religious sentiments. Drama at this stage was acted and managed by the minstrels and clerics. The common cult of drama was not accepted by the then church and court because it exuded the message of too much freedom in the society, hence the Roman theatres were closed and condemned. Later on this style of acting by a person or two from church developed into a group of people consisting of priests and choir-boys acting biblical themes enthusiastically with words and chorus. These 'liturgical dramas' based on the birth of Christ developed as supporting church and the church promoted them on several festive occasions beside its normal proceedings. Liturgical plays used religious spectacles as their themes. Although church has been the authority to reestablish drama, soon it was felt that the interest in plays were larger than being restricted merely under the precincts of church, or considering it a mere religious activity. Dramatic enterprise proliferated. It also entailed the element of comic and variegated attires.

In England, if we go by the chronology, such religious plays have been valued as the greatest part of the national tradition and culture. They also became precursors of 'morality' and 'mystery plays'. In the morality plays, people acted as virtues and vices. These plays were written by religious authors or church clerics. 'Everyman' is regarded as the most popular morality play till the late 15th century. The morality plays were based on religious lessons and they developed naturally. They mirrored genuine truth and realism and evoked pathos. In style and treatment, they were direct and sincere.

Between the proceedings of the church, a new berth of short and direct play was acknowledged, called the 'Interludes'. These interludes were also based on the popular themes like the morality plays, but they were not allegorical in nature. Most of the times these interludes were enacted to entertain the gentries of the period. These interludes often slipped into depicting a theme, which was not a biblical narrative. *Fulgens and Lucretia* is an example of such an interlude, but it is quite developed in its plot-construction. An interlude had more entertaining dialogues, less number of characters, small plot and interesting stories to woo its audience. Especially, meant for the Tudor families, these interludes were the combination of rough humour, complicated action, little instruction where happenings were mostly 'sudden and unexpected.'

At the same time, the English soil was witnessing the production of a new type of drama called 'miracle plays,' the newest in growth of its kind. It was a forceful say which paved way for the modern drama that culminated into the productions contributed by the University Wits and Shakespeare. It is surprising and strange how native English drama, that started from the clerics acting in the outer precincts of a church, developed into morality, interludes and mystery plays

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gaining the beauty as well as gaiety of essence, theme, structure, the dramatic unities, the various kinds, pathos, irony, humour and the art of sublimation in the hands of Marlowe and Shakespeare.

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Probably the development of drama owed its growth to new scholars from the universities in England and the Renaissance, which forcefully pushed the active and ambitious minds to explore and inculcate the classical literature. The University Wits enunciated the art of drama in the forms of tragedy and comedy both with innovation and tradition in the Elizabethan Age. Then Shakespeare's Age followed together with Ben Jonson's 'comedy of humours'. The Restoration comedy of manners followed next, which tended to be on the verge of obscene, vulgar and socially disreputable that raised brows of common men, especially the Puritans.

Again drama developed its pace in the 18th century with Johnson's historical plays, but they were not that recognizable as their predecessors. In the 20th century, William Butler Yeats brought drama back in the Irish theatre exploring the medieval age with Celtic undercurrents, and many followed his trend.

George Bernard Shaw and Thomas Stearns Eliot were two major 20th century figures who used drama to convey their ideas, exploring different themes. Twentieth century theatre introduced many new styles and trends in modern drama from all over the world. In the 20th century English drama, trends dominated, which were subtle and thought-stimulating such as realism and myth introduced by the psychological studies inspired by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung (his theory of collective unconscious). With the insight of psychology, they expressed myth and 'a poetic form of realism' based on the search conducted by these two psychologists. They mention and aim at truth common to all humans.

Yeats and Synge with Lady Gregory aimed to portray and develop poetic realism describing the Irish peasant life. The audience did not accept their themes with a pleasant nod and their concept of poetic realism was doubtfully questioned by the spectators.

Following the steps of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, who created drama of ideas by using realism, George Bernard Shaw discovered the 'problem play' or 'drama of ideas' in England, where he picked up social issues or drawbacks and tried to give solution to them. It was Shaw who stressed on emancipation of women and promoted the thought of raising the importance of women in our lives rather than treating them as subordinate members of our society. Surprisingly, he himself preferred to stay single.

After the First World War, political theatre became a trend where social and political issues and propaganda became vehicles to reach the masses. The Women's Rights Movement of the 1930s was voiced by 'agitprop', which was a renowned political theatre. The Dada Movement was related to World War I. Ibsen's idea of 'realism' was related to representation of human behaviour as it was seen in real life: it mirrored the society that a human being observed, what we call the human nature. Such a play concentrated on the present and described every strata of population rather than idealizing or worshiping a hero. They picked up characters from normal life focusing on any gender, race or strata of the society.

Samuel Beckett's *Theatre of the Absurd* introduced the existentialist theory that abstract existence played great role in life above everything in it. This type of drama in being was essentially poetic and full of imagination and exhibited the downplay of language. This theatre gave rise to many other types of drama like 'Symbolism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Drama of Cruelty, Expressionism, and so on'.

Dadaism was a protest against colonialism and the subsequent World War I in most of the European nations. It was a movement carried by those literary artists who opposed nationalism. Dadaists were 'anti-art' or avant-garde who went against expressing too pleasing an art or value. There were mainly French, Swiss and German writers involved in this movement. Major dramatists like Yeats to Pinter were an inseparable part of the Symbolist or Aesthetic Movement in theatre. They used underlined symbolism as their plot or structure of a play. From plot to stage everything used to be stylised in a specific mood. The movement took surge in the beginning of the twentieth century to influence all the later generations which followed them.

Surrealist Movement was next to the Aesthetic Movement. Both these trends were founded in the mystic. Surrealist Movement changed the stage set up like the Symbolist Movement. In it, action sounded louder and words were downplayed. Such plays exhibited unsurmised happenings and surprise. Samuel Beckett was an outstanding surrealist. The aim of the *Theatre of Cruelty* was to portray 'representational medium' and focussed on dealing with the current situations. They took the responsibility of 'presenting' and 'representing' both.

The art of 'expressionism' in theatre was the gift of the German playwrights. It either gave short, straight sentences, or long, and poetical speeches. Such play would not specify names for characters and dealt with current reality looking forward to a safe and happy future, rather it aimed to incorporate 'spiritual awakening' presenting plot in various episodes.

The modernist approach of Bertold Brecht came up with 'epic theatre' with rejection of realistic theatre. He took inspiration from the Greek form of epic poetry for epic theatre. Jacobus describes it as a dramatic vision arrayed with 'stark, harsh lighting, black stages, placards announcing changes of scenes, bands playing music onstage, and long, discomfiting pauses.' Brecht applied that a play must signify to the audience as its own rather than alienating them to feel detached while watching it. He thought epic theatre plays would relate to people as their part, and be not just its silent spectators. Its theme would be theirs rather than a remote sense or relation to them. It often aimed at presenting a social issue.

### Indian Drama

Indian drama and theater is one of the oldest art forms. The history of Indian drama, began from the Vedic Age, the classical theater traditions of that time influenced the Hindi, Marathi and Bengali theaters down the line. The beginning of the ancient dramas can be observed in the Rig Veda, together with Pururava - Urvashi, Yama-Yami, Indra-Indrani, Sarma-Pani and Ushas Suktas. Even the epics Ramayana, Mahabharata and Artha Shastra are instilled with dramas.

The next section will provide a detailed history of the development of theatre in India.

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## NOTES

**Check Your Progress**

1. What is an essential quality of a drama?
2. State the main characteristic of Samuel Becket's *Theatre of the Absurd*?
3. What was Dadaism movement?
4. What was the aim of the 'Theatre of Cruelty'?

### 4.3 INDIAN ENGLISH DRAMA: DRAMA IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

Indian English drama owes its origin to Krishna Mohan Banerji and his play *The Persecuted* written in 1837. Though, the real journey of Indian English Drama was launched by the efforts of Michael Madhusudan Dutt through his play, *Is This Called Civilization* published in 1871. To this, one may add the contributions of Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. While Bengali remained Tagore's choice of language, his works are also available in English (most of which have been translated by Tagore himself). His corpus of writing is essentially rooted in the Indian tradition.

Sri Aurobindo wrote five blank verse plays that were complete. That apart, he also composed six incomplete plays. Some of his complete plays are *Radoguna*, *Vasavadutta*, *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Eric* and *The Viziers of Bassora*. Each of these complete works adheres to a five act structure. His incomplete plays include: *The Witch of Ilni*, *The Maid and the Mill*, *The House of Brut*, *The Birth of Sin* and *Prince of Edur* and *Achab and Esarhaddon*. Being incomplete, these plays range from one scene to three acts.

One of the most notable features of Sri Aurobindo's plays is that they narrate lives of people from various parts of the globe that echo a multitude of experience, moods and emotions. *Perseus the Deliverer* is based on the myth of Persues (from the ancient Greek source); *Vasavadutta* has been influenced from the romantic tale of ancient India. The romance, *Rodoguna*, owes its origin to Syria; *The Viziers of Bassora*, which is a romantic comedy, is set during the times when the great Haroun al Rashid lived. The romance of *Eric* is set within the boundaries of Scandinavia and narrates the tale of love and war that takes place between the offsprings of Odin and Thor. Aurobindo was an artist par excellence who dealt with all the major genres — comedy, tragedy, romance, heroic play and farce. On analyzing the texts we realize that Aurobindo is highly influenced by Elizabethan drama in terms of plot construction and characterization. In his works, Aurobindo employs the English blank verse to perfection.

Playwright Harindranath Chattopadhyay is an important figure in Indian English drama. He made his debut as a dramatist with *Abu Hassan* (1918). He published seven verse plays under the title *Poems and Plays* (1927). Interestingly all the seven plays revolve around the lives of Indian saints. The collection, *Five Plays* (1929) are composed in prose. While *The Window and The Parrot* narrates lives of the deprived, *The Sentry's Lantern* is a symbolic work that talks about the harbinger of a new era for the people who are deprived. And *Siddhartha: Man of Peace* is a dramatization of Buddha's life.



The other name that deserves mention is A.S.P. Ayyar who composed six plays. *The Clutch of The Devil*, published in 1926, was his first play while *The Trial of Science for the Murder of Humanity* was his last. The literary world remembers him for his unusual verse in the play *The Flute of Krishna*.

The other notable playwright is T.P. Kailasam. He composed both in English and Kannada languages. Kailasam is called the father of modern Kannada drama. His plays in English include *The Burden* (1933), *Fulfillment* (1933), *The Purpose* (1944), *Keechaka* (1949) and *Karna* (1964).

During the colonial era, many women writers emerged as significant playwrights. A prominent name is Bharati Sarabhai. She had written two plays titled *The Well of the People* (a symbolic and poetic text echoing Gandhian social ideology) and *Two Women* (a realistic play prying into the private world of individuals).

Another pre-Independence Indian English dramatist who deserves mention is J.M. Lobo Prabhu. He had composed more than a dozen plays of which two plays have become iconic. These are, *Mother of New India*, a play of Indian village in three acts (1944) and *Death Abdicates* (1945). These were published before Independence. Lobo Prabhu's *Collected Play* came out in 1956. Prabhu's strength was in his dialogues and situation. His characters, however, were devoid of lifelike conviction.

In post-Independence era, as far as drama composition in Indian English language was concerned, there was a silence of sorts. Though pre-Independence Indian English drama was rich in creativity, it failed to establish subsequent stage productions.

In post-Independence era, Indian English drama witnessed growing interest among people outside India. A decent number of plays composed by Indian playwrights such as Pratap Sharma, Asif Currimbhoy and Gurucharan Das were staged in England and the USA with unexpected success. But unfortunately India was unable to set up a regular platform to stage Indian English drama. One chief reason for this was that the Indian theatre was monopolized by regional language theatre productions, which had more popularity and demand. In other words, Indian English drama was yet to become a theatre of the masses.

Though plays in the post-Independence period were mostly written in prose, poetic plays were also plentiful. Writers such as G.V. Desani, Lakhan Dev, Manjeri Isvaran, and Pritish Nandy made their contributions to theatre but with own specific style and deliberate deviations. Manjeri Isvaran's *Yama and Yami* (1948) narrates the incestuous love Yami nurtures for her brother. The play is composed in dialogue form, written in poetic prose that contains a prologue and an epilogue. G.V. Desani's *Hali* (1950) is immersed in symbolism and imagery that talks about transcending human love; Lakhan Dev's *Tiger Claw* (1976) is a three act historical play centered around the controversial murder of Afzal Khan by Shivaji. His *Vivekananda* (1972) and *Murder at the Prayer Meeting* (1976) display an effortless use of blank verse. Other authors, who composed verse plays during this period include M. Krishnamurti (*The Cloth of Gold*, 1951), P.A. Krishnaswami (*The Flute of Krishna*, 1950), S. Raman (*Karme*, 1979), Satya Dev Jaggi (*The Point of Light*, 1967), S.D. Rawoot (*Immortal Song; Karm and the Killers*, 1959), Pritish Nandy

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(*Rites for a Plebian Salute*, 1969), P.S. Vasudev (*The Sunflower*, 1972) and Sree Devi Singh (*The Purple Braided People*, 1970).

The most celebrated playwright of the post-colonial era is Asif Currimbhoy. He is credited for having composed and published more than thirty plays. Some of his popular titles include *The Tourist Meeca* (1959), *The Doldrumness* (1960), *The Restaurant* (1960), *The Captives* (1963), *Goa* (1964), *Monsoon* (1965), *An Experiment With Truth* (1969) and *Sonar Bangla* (1972) among many others. Despite being comprehensive, Currimbhoy's plays have been critiqued for lacking in plot coherence, obscure language and imperfect characterization.

Currimbhoy was succeeded by Pratap Sharma. He wrote two prose plays: *A Touch of Brightness* (1968) and *The Professor Has A War Cry* (1970). Sharma's plays were staged successfully in foreign shores though they failed to be staged in India.

Discussing about Indian drama, Nissim Ezekiel deserves a special mention. He was a prolific poet and playwright. Ezekiel's *Three Plays* (1969) (*Nalini: A Comedy*, *Marriage Poem: A Tragi Comedy* and *The Sleep Walkers: An Indo-American farce*) were creative excellence in Indian English drama. *Songs of Deprivation* (1969), composed by Ezekiel is a short play. Ezekiel is known for his coherent settings, irony, minute observation of human life and behavior and yet somewhere the poet always took over the dramatist.

### Contemporary Period

In the present times, Indian drama, shedding its classical and European inspiration, is experimental and innovative from the thematic and technical point of view. It is not derived from any specific tradition and has emerged as a distinctive tradition within the history of world drama by reintroducing and recreating myth, religion, history, legend and folklore that are based on contemporary socio-political issues. A theatrical tradition that was given shape by names such as Badal Sirkar, Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh and Vijay Tendulkar paved the way for contemporary Indian English theatre.

Girish Karnad, in his versatile role as writer, director and actor, enthusiastically contributed to the world of Indian English theatre. Karnad's dramatic sensibilities, were shaped by the influential touring undertaken by 'natak' companies and, especially Yakshagana, that was not considered as classical art till recently. Karnad's famous plays include *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1962), *Hayavadana* (1970) and *Nagmandala* (1972). His plots came from mythology, history and old legends laced with symbolism. Credit goes to Karnad for trying to reintroduce their relevance in the contemporary socio-political milieu. The play *Yayati* retells an ancient story from the Mahabharata with a modern sensibility. The narrative of the play *Hayavadana* comes from *Katha Saritsagar* (ancient collection of stories composed in Sanskrit). *Tughlaq* is a historical play where he blurs facts with fiction through the presentation of the complex personality of Sultan Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. Through his play *Tale Dande*, he unravels the significant relationship between the contemporary world and literature. His play *Nagmandala* deals with the conflict existing in the patriarchal and matriarchal order of society. Though critics suggest that Karnad's dramatic works are devoid of stability his success unfolds through the technical innovation sowed within traditional dramatic form.

Another notable name that Indian English theatre can boast of is Vijay Tendulkar. Tendulkar began his professional career as a journalist but he was always interested in theatre. His very first play was *Grihasth* (1955) and last one was *Safar* (1992). His plays provided Indian theatre with a fresh perspective on arts. He was one of the leading figures of the Vanguard (the avant-garde Marathi Theatre). Tendulkar's plays represented new awareness as they voiced the sufferings, pains and agonies of middle class society. His plays, more often than not, highlighted the theme of isolation of the individual and the individual's effort to combat hostile forces of nature. Tendulkar did not consider recurring violence within humans as something to be ashamed of because it was part of human nature. The representation of violence on stage never translated into anything grand, they were always natural. His plays *Chimanicha Ghor Hote Menache* (1960), *Kalojanichi Shalai* (1968) and *Ek Holti Mugli* (1967) display his concern with the idea of exploitation and authoritarian powers. The theme of oppression takes over the plays such as *Silence! The Court Is In Session* (1968) and *Ghasiram Kotwal* (1972). *Sakharam Binder* (1972) narrates the gory tale of human violence. *Kamala* (1982) and *Kanyadaan* (1982) look into the complexity of the domestic space to understand the predicaments of marriage and exploitation. Tendulkar was associated with the New Theatrical Movement (Maharashtra) for a long time.

Badal Sircar is another name that vibrates throughout contemporary theatre. He was associated with the New Theatrical Movement in India. He created 'people's theatre' (a theatre that was run with the support of the people and was created by the people). His initial plays, *Evan Inderjit* (1962), *That Other History* (1964) and *There Is No End* (1971) showcase his concern with social, psychological, political and existential problems. *Evan Inderjit* depicts the tale of a playwright who tries hard to script a play. His play *Procession* tries to decipher the meaning of a 'real home' within the context of new society based on equality. *Bhoma* is again a fictional dramatization of oppressed peasants who survived in India. Sircar's association with Grotowski's Poor Theatre worked as an impetus for him to create his Third Theatre.

Indian English drama would be incomplete without the mention of Mohan Rakesh. He originally wrote in Hindi but his plays were translated into English and other regional languages for their exceptional qualities. His first prominent play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* was published in 1958. After that *Leharon Ke Rajhansa* appeared in 1963. His famous play *Adhe Adhure* was first staged in 1969 and the play *Pair Tale Ki Zamin* was completed by Kamleshwar and published posthumously in 1974. In his plays, Mohan Rakesh highlighted the crisis of contemporary society. He considered drama as a complex system of production involving actors, light, special effects, sound and stage direction. He was well known for his extensive experiments in his plays.

Apart from male play writers, women dramatists also contributed a great deal to Indian English drama. They brought to Indian theater the inner feminine psyche which was missing in earlier productions. Women's theatre movement started off with Street Theatre movement. It was a kind of Theatre Of Protest where women writers voiced their disagreement over politics of exploitation that was based on gender discrimination. They also reworked on myths of *Sita* and *Savitri* and interpreted stories from the woman's point of view. The plays of Usha Ganguli

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and Mahasweta Devi fall under this category. Mahasweta Devi's feminist and social protest texts include *Mother of 1084*, *Aajer Urvashi O' Johnny*, *Byen* and *Water*.

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Mahesh Dattani indeed is one of the best playwrights of the contemporary times. Born on 7 August 1958 Bangalore, Dattani expressed himself in the English language to voice the ideas and dilemmas of the Indian sentiment and sensibility in the context of globalization. Some of his plays are *Where There is a Will, Final Solutions*, *Dance like a Man* and *Tara*.

Indian novelists of contemporary times who are writing in English include names, such as, Salman Rushdie, Shashi Deshpande, K. Nagrajan, Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Raj Kamal Jha, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee, Bharti Kirchner, Amit Chaudhuri, Vikas Swarup, Rohinton Mistry, C.R. Krishnan, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamla Markandya, Vikaram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee and Arundhati Roy to name a few. Among these most of the writers are settled in the West. Through their plays these writers are trying to portray a hybrid identity. Their novels echo a post-colonial world which is haunted by neo-colonial troubles such as social evils, economic catastrophes, governmental corruption and other forms of oppression. Their experience relating to cultural migration provides new perspectives as well as creative avenues that form the aesthetic impulse of new Indian writing in English. Mostly set in the urbanized West these authors show a tendency to stage contemporary social issues and cultural troubles in their own geography and put an effort to redefine it through the postcolonial context. In their fiction they add the past, the present and the future along with the imperial and colonial experiences, thereby, blurring the distinction of time and introducing a new scope and purpose.

As far as the poetical scenario is concerned, today Indian English poetry holds a place of its own in the milieu of world poetry. Though years ago when poets, such as, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Arun Kolatkar, Gieve Patel, Adil Jussawalla, Jayanta Mahapatra and Dilip Chitre, who ruled the writing world during fifties, sixties and seventies, found themselves struggling to get published. To combat this, they jointly started a small press and produced magazines. Subsequent poets include names such as Sarang, R Parathsarathy, Pritish Nandy, K Ayyappa Paniker, Kamala Das and others who experimented with theme and structure and provided a new lease of life to Indian poetry in English.

### Forms of Indian Theatre

Let us discuss the various forms of Indian theatre.

#### *Traditional Indian theatre*

Kutiyattam, the only surviving specimen of the ancient Sanskrit theatre is thought to have originated around the beginning of the Common Era. It is officially recognised by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. In addition, many forms of Indian folk theatre abound.

Bhavai (strolling players) is a popular folk theatre form of Gujarat, said to have arisen in the 14th century AD.

Bhaona and Ankiya Nats have been practicing in Assam since the early 16th century which were created and initiated by Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardeva.

Jatra has been popular in Bengal and its origin is traced to the Bhakti movement in the 16th century.

Swang, which is dialogue-oriented rather than movement-oriented is considered to have arisen in its present form in the late 18th – early 19th centuries. It is a folk theatre form popular in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh.

Yakshagana is a very popular theatre art in Karnataka and has existed under different names at least since the 16th century.

Kathakali is a form of dance-drama, characteristic of Kerala, that arose in the 17th century, developing from the temple-art plays Krishnanattam and Ramanattam.

### **Urdu/Hindustani Theatre**

Urdu Drama is also an essential element on Indian theatre. It evolved from the prevailing dramatic traditions of North India shaping Rahas or Raas as practiced by exponents like Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh. His dramatic experiments led to the famous Inder Sabha of Amanat and later this tradition took the shape of Parsi Theatre. Agha Hashr Kashmiri is culmination of this tradition.

### **Mobile Theatre**

Mobile theatres can be seen as popular theatre forms that exist only in Assam. For staging their plays, theatre groups travel different places with their casts, singers, musicians, dancers and entire crew. Even the tent and chairs for the audience are carried with them.

Mobile theatre was first staged on 2 October 1963 in Pathshala, Assam. Achyut Lahkar is known as the father of mobile theatre.

### **Notable Theatre Groups in India**

- Aasakta Kalamanch
- Chilsag Chillies Theatre Company
- Dramanon
- Indian People's Theatre Association
- Kerala People's Arts Club
- Mandap
- Manch Theatre
- Madras Players
- Nandikar
- Ninasam
- Platform for Action in Creative Theater
- Prithvi Theatre
- Rangayana
- Ranga Shankara
- Samahaara

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- Theatre Arts Workshop (TAW)
- Theatre Formation Paribartak
- WeMove Theatre

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5. Mention one feature in Aurobindo's plays.
6. Name any woman playwright of the colonial era.
7. What was unique about R.K.Narayan's writing?
8. Who were the important playwrights of the post-Independence era?
9. Name any two contemporary playwrights.
10. Name any three Indian novelists writing in English.

**4.4 GIRISH KARNAD: ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Girish Karnad was born on 19 May 1938 in Matheran, a town near Mumbai, India. He has earned international acclaim as an actor, poet, playwright, director, critic and translator. Karnad hails from the Marathi-Kannada-speaking Saraswat community. While growing up in Sirsi, he had ample opportunity to watch plays in Kannada, the language that he later chose to write his plays in. He used to go to company *Natak* performances with his father, who was a doctor and always had free passes. This made a lasting impression on him. Though his parents did not approve of them, young Karnad also attended traditional *Yakshagana* performances with the servants.

During his formative years, Karnad went through diverse influences and was exposed to a literary scene where there was a direct clash between the Western and the native tradition. The India of the 1950s and 1960s saw two streams of thought in all walks of life—the adoption of new modernistic techniques—a legacy of the colonial rule—and adherence to the rich cultural past of the country.

Karnad was fascinated by the traditional Indian theatre and it has strongly influenced the technical aspects of his plays. Nonetheless, the Western playwrights he had read during his college days opened up for him 'a new world of magical possibilities' and he has absorbed the best from Western theatre too. Attempt to trace the influence of the World Drama on him and one can find infusion from the double plot of William Shakespeare, the comic genius of Moliere, the social problems of Henrik Ibsen, the dramatic lyricism of Anton Chekhov, the naturalism of John Strindburg, the symbolic expressionism of Eugene O'Neill, the epic theatre of Bertolt Brecht, and the religious quest of T.S. Eliot. These qualities of the Indian and the global traditions of drama enabled him to portray the contemporary psycho-religious, socio-political and literary and cultural turmoil authentically and admirably.

Like traditional Indian drama, including Kannada theatre, Karnad too took legend, history and myth as the main source for his three important plays, *Yayati*, *Tughlaq* and *Hayavadana*. But compared to other plays in Kannada literature, Karnad's plays are innovatively directed. In other words, Karnad moved away from the regionalist tradition that had given Kannada literature its identity in the

early years of the century. He has also completely rejected the professional stage established by Kailasam and Sri Ranga and tried to bring to his plays first-hand knowledge of the practical demands of the stage and a better understanding of dramatic style and technique. Like the Irish playwright Samuel Beckett who wrote his immortal plays, *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame*, in French and then translated them into English to become an icon of contemporary British drama, Karnad too has authored his monumental plays—*Yayati*, *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Mandala*, *Tale-Danda* and *The Fire and The Rain*—in Kannada and then translated them into English to emerge as the emblem of a vibrant and rich contemporary Indian English drama for the whole world.

Critics like V.K. Gokak and A.K. Ramanujan explore the characteristic qualities of Karnad's 'Indian imagination', a phrase, which embraces the vast labyrinth of the multicultural sub-continent of India 'encompassing the philosophical and religious beliefs, the flora and fauna, the historical developments and the political, social, and scientific transformations.'

Karnad's creative imagination is Indian thoroughly and originally. So much so that he once remarked, 'My three years in England had convinced me Western theatre had nothing to offer us.' Karnad was preparing himself assiduously to 'own up' the British culture, but he found himself 'nailed to my past', to borrow his own words.

### List of works

- *Yayati*
- *Tughlaq*
- *Hayavadana*
- *Naga-Mandala*
- *Agni Mattu Male*
- *Taledanda*
- *Maa Nishaadha*
- *Bali*
- *Tippuvina Kanasugalu*
- *Odakalu Bimba*
- *Maduve Album*

#### Exhibit 4.1

Scene from the play *Tughlaq*



[http://www.anktheatregroup.com/plays\\_brief1.htm](http://www.anktheatregroup.com/plays_brief1.htm)

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### 4.4.1 Master of Structure and Paradoxes

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Karnad, who is the pioneer of new drama, shows how drama is meant to fulfill a serious purpose of highlighting the disparities in our social life. It is also aimed at reconciling paradoxes and contradictions in life, which lie at the root of all sufferings.

The plots of his plays are precise which are worked out by devices like parallelism and contrast, suspense and surprise in the logical progression. Karnad deftly organizes the incidents and situations into an artistic design and correlates them with the characters in such a way that it creates a unity of impression. For example, consider *Tughlaq* where the incidents and events originate from the paradoxical actions of the protagonist and the plot is based on opposites and paradoxes. The devices of parallelism and contrast have been vividly employed and the intrigues manipulated to create the discipline of art. In this context, Anatha Murty observes in the 'Introduction' of the play *Tughlaq*:

'Both Tughlaq and his enemies initially appear to be idealists; yet in the pursuit of the ideal, they penetrate its opposite. The whole play is structured on these opposites; the ideal and the real, the divine aspiration and the deft intrigue.'

Out of the tensions and conflicts, which weave the texture of the plot, emerges the climax that resolves into denouement. The plots of his plays are well knit and marked by the architectonic quality. In depicting his characters, Karnad observes economy, precision and conciseness as they are meant to fulfill certain demands of the plot through their action and dialogues. Karnad creates a kind of rapport between the character and the situation. For example, take the following dialogue of *Tughlaq* which reveals his disillusionment with himself to the same degree as is the disillusionment of the people with him:

'I am teetering on the brink of madness, Barani, but the madness of God still eludes me, (shouting).

And why should I deserve that madness? I have condemned my mother to death and I'm not even sure she was guilty of the crime.'

It is action or intention, dialogue or some comment by other characters that precipitates or intensifies the inner conflict and thus throws light on other characters and develops the plot.

Karnad's language is appropriate and effective. With great command over English and rich vocabulary, he manages to write dialogues which are flexible and precise, and which change according to the nuances of the plot and characters. For instance, consider the opening scenes where Tughlaq's language is highly poetic and imaginative as it communicates his idealism:

'Let's laugh and cry together and then let's pray. Let's pray till our bodies melt and flow and our blood turns into air. History is ours to play with – ours now! Let's be the light and cover the earth with greenery. Let's be darkness and cover up the boundaries of nations. Come! I am waiting to embrace you all.'

Karnad's characters use language that suits their status and temperament. The cheat, Aziz, uses matter-of-fact and even crude language. The language becomes symbolic and other items and events like chess, prayer and python become



symbols in the play. The chess suggests the quality in Tughlaq's nature. Being a skillful chess player, he uses his political opponents as pawns on the chessboard of politics. Prayer is the leitmotif of the play and the python suggests Tughlaq's inhumanity and barbarity. There are many mythical references which are meant to add an epic-like quality to his plays or make them amusingly ironical. There are certain references from Persian and Greek drama. In the case of *Tughlaq* they hold a special appeal because Tughlaq was a scholar.

A number of the Indian habits and beliefs are also reflected in Karnad's plays. Aziz the scoundrel in *Tughlaq* is appointed a state officer for looking into cases of tampering with the law and cozening the crown. Such scandalous persons are very much active in the contemporary political scenario too. It shows Karnad's perception of Indian reality. It also confirms A.K. Ramanujan's observation on the Indian characteristic of inconsistency and hypocrisy.

Karnad's plays depict the conflict between the ancient and the modern, karma and individual freedom, old and young, religion and science, high caste and low caste and many other dichotomies. The conflict, interestingly, provides him ample opportunities to reveal his sense of humour and response to the stratified society of India as can be seen in *Tughlaq*.

Among other characteristic features of drama like plot, character dialogue and language, there are two important factors which make Karnad one of India's greatest playwrights:

- (a) His view or vision of life and
- (b) Exemplary Indian imagination seen in his choice of subject matter, dramatic form, setting, myths and legends, literary allusions, philosophy of karma and rebirth, other social stratifications and practices and language.

All of Karnad's eight plays have been translated into major Indian languages and five of them into English. Karnad has also forayed into the world cinema, working alternately as an actor, director and screenwriter. He has won numerous awards in his various avatars, including the President's Gold Medal for the Best Indian Film for *Samskara* (1970), the Homi Bhabha Fellowship for creative work in folk theatre (1970-72), the Sangeet Natak Academy and the National Award for Excellence in Direction.

### Check Your Progress

11. In what way are Karnad's plays similar to traditional Indian drama, especially Kannada drama but yet different?
12. What is meant by the term 'Indian imagination'?
13. How is *Tughlaq* a play of paradoxes?
14. Mention two characteristics about Karnad's use of language.
15. What factors make Karnad one of India's greatest playwrights?

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## 4.5 TUGHLAQ: STRUCTURE AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

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*Tughlaq* explores the paradox of the idealistic Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, whose reign is considered one of the most spectacular failures in Indian history. What is most interesting and striking in *Tughlaq* historically is the fact that the ruler is the most intelligent king ever to ascend the throne of Delhi and one of the greatest disappointments too. Within a span of 20 years this man of tremendous potential whittled away an entire empire.

Karnad's main objective is to highlight the contradictions in the Sultan's complex personality, who is a visionary and a man of action; devout and irreligious; generous and unkind; humane and barbarian.

### 4.5.1 The Subtext

One can enjoy the play on the stage without paying much attention to its rich and complex symbolism and subtle weaving of different motifs. The play has an interesting story, an intricate plot, scope for spectacle and dramatic conventions like the comic pair, Aziz and Aazam – the two opportunists who take the best possible advantage of Tughlaq's idealistic policies and befool him. Another reason for *Tughlaq*'s appeal to Indian audience is that it is a play of the 1960s and reflects, as no other play perhaps does, the political mood of disillusionment which followed the Nehru era of idealism. In other words, there is something contemporary about Tughlaq's story. Karnad himself commented on the contemporaneity of *Tughlaq* in *Enact*, June 1971:

‘What struck me absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary. The fact that here was the most idealistic, the most intelligent king ever come to the throne of Delhi... and one of the greatest failure also. And within a span of twenty years this tremendously capable man had gone to pieces. This seemed to be both due to his idealism as well as the shortcomings within him, such as his impatience, his cruelty, his feeling that he had only correct answer. And I felt in the early sixties India had also come very far in the same direction – the twenty-year period seemed to me very much a striking parallel.’

The play tends to be more than a political allegory. It has an irreducible, puzzling quality which comes from the ambiguities of Tughlaq's character and relates to the philosophical questions on the nature of man and the destiny of a whole kingdom which a dreamer like him controls.

Karnad's *Tughlaq* bears several resemblances with Shakespeare's *Richard II* as in both the plays the protagonists are temperamental and whimsical. *Tughlaq* is noticeable for consummate and flawless technique, precision and compactness, irony and paradox, symbolism and modernity.

### 4.5.2 The Structure

Karnad's account of Tughlaq's character, administration, politics, ruthlessness and even savagery is based on Zia-Ud-Din Barani's *Tarikh-I-FiruzShahi* as well as

other historical accounts. He has however deviated a little from the facts, to aid the dramatic purpose. The play has been written in the episodic, scenic division like Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. However, Karnad has used the Company *Natak* convention of the comic pairs, Aziz and Aazam. There is also the Company *Natak* technique of deep and shallow scenes, the interior of the palace and the exterior of the street. The cat-and-mouse game between Tughlaq and Aziz ends up in an ironic equation between the two inside the palace at the end of the play. Karnad ingeniously creates the atmosphere of Tughlaq's days, an atmosphere of distrust, communal intolerance, frustrated idealism, endless corruption, religious bigotry and Tughlaq's mindless bloodthirstiness and final disillusionment.

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### **Exhibit 4.2**

#### *Tughlaq: A Review*

'You know Sultan, I'm just beginning to understand why they say you are the cleverest man in the world.' This is what, in the course of the play *Tughlaq* by Girish Karnad, well-known actor, Jnanpeeth Awardee and one of the most important playwrights living today, Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, an important character, has to say about Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, now remembered as the most foolish king ever to have ascended to the throne of Delhi. *Tughlaq*, Karnad's second Kannada play and now widely recognized as a classic, first appeared in print in 1964; and was an immediate success on the stage. Karnad's earlier play, *Yayati*, had been a similar success too. In its canvas and treatment, *Tughlaq* is both huge and contemporary. It is a tale of the crumbling to ashes of the dreams and aspirations of an over-ambitious, yet considerably virtuous king. Contemporary in the sense that one can see flashes of Tughlaqi (almost a proverb now in the Hindi) attitude – callous yet well-meaning – in contemporary political structures too. It was long after I had read *Tughlaq* that I realized it was more than what I was taking it to be. More than a great plot, gripping characters, beautiful speeches and a pinch of history. Despite the foolishness of deciding to shift the capital of India from Delhi to Daulatabad to 'centralize administration,' despite the highhandedness of making copper coins equal in value to silver dinars, despite the shamelessness of designing a conspiracy to kill his own brother and father at prayer hour, what is remarkable, and relatively unknown, in the much-infamous character of Tughlaq is the willingness to work for his people and to ensure their happiness, the courage to take initiative in the direction of communal-equality; and a keenly observing and ever-diligent mind. The disappointment in the end when he is not understood by his people and followers is obvious. And Karnad captures it all beautifully in his inimitable style. The translation of the original Kannada play I'm talking of here is done by Karnad himself. I could read the book again at least half-a-dozen times more for the pure lyrical beauty of some of the statements. Take for example the following: 'But do you know you can love a city like a woman?' or 'Nineteen. Nice age! An age but you think you can clasp the whole world in your palm like a rare diamond.' Reading an author's translation of his own work is always comforting. One can at least hope for some finer aspects of the original. Be it the witty dialog between the Sultan and Imam-ud-Din or a comical conversation between Azzam and Aziz, Karnad's genius prevails. A must read for the love of New Drama. A serious uncovering of a famous historical notion. A string of questions to ask yourself. But then you would expect all that of a classic, wouldn't you?

**Source:** Extract from a review by Samartha Vashishtha <http://www.zine5.com/archive/book12.htm>

### 4.5.3 *Tughlaq*: Critical Appreciation

Let us go through the critical analysis of the play *Tughlaq*.

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#### A Historical Play

Karnad's *Tughlaq* is featured upon the life and turbulent reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, who ruled over India for almost twenty-six years from 1324 to 1351. However, Karnad has taken only five years (1327 to 1332) from the total duration of these many years. The action of the play begins in the year 1327, and proceeds on the road from Delhi to Daultabad and lastly in and around the fort in Daultabad.

Karnad is indebted to the contemporary historians like Zia-ud-Din Barani and Ibn Bututah. Karnad follows the traditional sources which present Tughlaq as one who combines in him the opposites – a dreamer and a man of action, extremely benevolent and unpredictably cruel, devout and godless. Tughlaq, both in history as well as in Karnad's play, is a profound scholar, idealist and visionary. He stands for administrative reforms, for the policy of Hindu Muslim amity and friendship and due recognition of merit irrespective of caste and creed. He is a keen administrator who reorganizes administrative machinery and taxation structure for the establishment of an egalitarian society in which all his subjects would enjoy fundamental human rights and justice, equal opportunities and freedom of faith or religion. This departure from the holy tenets enrages the orthodox people and they oppose and condemn him. They think of him as a misbeliever in Islam simply because he abolishes *jiziya* tax and treats Hindus and Muslims with equal respect. This aspect is dramatized in the opening scene of the play through the Old Man who represented the orthodox Muslim and the Young Man who stood for Sultan's point of view. The opening lines make this conflict absolutely clear:

#### Old Man: God, what's this country coming to!

Young Man: What are you worried about, grandfather? The country's in perfectly safe hands – safer than any you've seen before.

The Old Man accuses the Sultan and calls him 'a thing'. He feels that he has been insulting Islam despite the fact that the Sultan made five times prayers a day compulsory as no earlier Sultan had done. Karnad's account of the behaviour of Tughlaq in this respect corroborates with that of Ibn-I-Bututah. Karnad closely follows history in showing Tughlaq's liberal and rational religious views, humanism and idealism being a celebrated scholar. Tughlaq tells Imam-ud-Din who warns him against his liberal attitudes in religion and politics:

'I still remember the days when I read the Greeks – Sukarat who took poison so that he could give the world the drink of gods, Aflatoon who condemned poets and wrote incomparably beautiful poetry himself – and I can still feel the thrill with which I found a new world, a world I had not found in the Arabs or even the Koran. They tore me into shreds. And to be whole now, I shall have to kill the part of me which sang to them. And my kingdom too is what I am – torn into pieces by visions whose validity I can't deny. You are asking me to make myself complete by killing the Greek in me and you propose to unify my people by denying the visions which led Zarathustra or the Buddha.'

Karnad follows history in presenting Tughlaq as a shrewd politician guilty of fratricide and patricide. He killed his father at prayer time. Karnad uses prayer as a leitmotif with a rare dramatic effect in a way not employed earlier. In the introduction to the play, Anantha Murty has written:

‘Although the theme of the play is from history - there are many such plays in Kannada – Karnad’s treatment of the theme is not historical. Take, for instance, the use Karnad makes of the leitmotif of the play, ‘prayer’ in the scene where the Muslim chieftains along with Sheik Shams-ud-din, a pacifist priest, conspire for the murder Tughlaq while at prayer. The use of prayer for the murder is reminiscent of what Tughlaq himself did to kill his father. That prayer which is most dear to Tughlaq, is vitiated by him as well as his enemies, is symbolic of the fact that his life is corrupted at its very source. The whole episode is ironic.’

Karnad’s Tughlaq is not repentant over the murder of his father and brother but according to history he attempted to atone for the crime and immediately after his coronation saw to it that his father’s name was inscribed on coins, as Ishwari Prasad mentions in his book *A History of Quraunah Turks in India*.

Karnad gives historical evidence about Tughlaq’s decision to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. These evidences prove the decision to change the capital is taken for effective administration and control of the South and in particular Daulatabad itself. Being a Hindu-dominated town the king wanted to weaken its strength. The Amirs and Sayyids were against the Sultan’s decision. Tughlaq explains in the first scene the reasons for his decision:

‘My ministers and I took this decision after careful thought and decision. My empire is large now and embraces the South and I need a capital which is at its heart. Delhi is too near the border and as you know its peace is never free from the fear of invaders. But for me the most important factor is that Daultabad is a city of the Hindus and as the capital it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my kingdom. I invite you all to accompany me to Daultabad. This is only an invitation and an order.’

Modern historians have discovered that the plan of building an empire with Daultabad as its capital was implemented in stages keeping in mind the convenience of the people. At the distance of every two miles along the road from Delhi to Daultabad, the Sultan got constructed halting station and developed the entire uninhabited area into a habitation. He was so considerate that before shifting the people of Delhi he had purchased houses for them and provided facilities of travel and conveyance to the migrants. Even Barani, who was dead against the Sultan, writes ‘he made liberal gifts to the people both at the time of the departure, and on their arrival at Daultabad.’

Girish Karnad, who presents his act of transferring the capital as an act of personal whim, ignores the fact of generosity. He describes the move as a whim of the tyrant and as a mass exodus. In this aspect Karnad follows the contemporary historians like Barani who focus on Sultan’s inhumanity and callous attitude.

Karnad’s Tughlaq is a ruthless and vindictive person. In the sixth scene of the play, he tells Najib:

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‘Najib, I want Delhi vacated immediately. Every living soul in Delhi will leave for Daulatabad within a fortnight. I was too soft, I can see that now. They’ll only understand the whip. Everyone must leave. Not a light should be seen in the windows of Delhi. Not a wisp of smoke should rise from its chimneys. Nothing but an empty graveyard of Delhi will satisfy me now.’

This sort of forced exodus caused immense sufferings, destitution and starvation on men, women and children. Whatever relief measures were provided by Tughlaq were misused and even misappropriated by the corrupt officers like Aziz in the play. In scene eight, the Old Man talks to the Young Man about it thus:

‘The merciful Sultan had made perfect arrangements. But do you know, you can love a city like a woman? My old father had lived in Delhi all his life. He died of a broken heart. Then my son Ismail. He was six year old – would have been ten now! The fine dust that hung in the air, fine as silk, it covered him like a silken shroud. After him, his mother.’

Historians like Barani and Isami magnified the limited exodus of the upper classes from Delhi into a mass exodus. It is significant to state that when Ibn Batutah reached Delhi in 1334, he found it full of scholars, literati and mystics and no after effects of the exodus were visible. The Sultan also permitted the people to return to Delhi in 1335-37.

However, it is a historical fact that no other event brought so much of unpopularity and infamy to the Sultan as the forced exodus which provoked strong reactions and the behaviour of Sultan’s corrupt officers like Aziz and Aazam in *Tughlaq* who misappropriated the relief measures. Hence, Girish Karnad does not deviate from history so far as the untold miseries and sufferings of the people due to exodus are described. The Sultan lost the confidence of the people though the change of the capital strengthened the feeling of national integration about which Karnad is absolutely silent because he has a different purpose in mind, that is to describe the political situation of the India of the Nehru regime and secondly to project Tughlaq as a cruel but weak character.

Karnad ignores the achievements of Tughlaq altogether. It is pertinent to note that Karnad has taken only a partial and even one-sided view of the history of Tughlaq’s reign and considers the historical sources provided by Barani only and the group of historians who were biased to the Sultan. There were numerous rebellions during Tughlaq’s time which made him ruthless and he inflicted ‘draconian punishments’ on his subjects, as Nizami mentions in *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. 5:

‘The Sultan began to punish both the guilty and the innocent on very suspicion in the hope that bloodshed on a large scale would terrorize his officers and make them obedient; on the other hand, his officers, knowing his military weakness, preferred rebellion to punishment without trial.’

Actually in an atmosphere of perpetual distrust and rebellion Tughlaq became suspicious and vindictive but there are evidences with historians like Dr. Ishwari Prasad, who says in the book quoted above that

‘We have sufficient data to prove that Muhammad was no monster who took delight in shedding blood for its own sake and those who stigmatize him as a callous tyrant forget the age in which he lived and the circumstances in which he was placed.’

Tughlaq himself called the historian Barani and described to him the condition of his kingdom in these pathetic words: ‘My kingdom is diseased and no treatment cures it.’ Similarly, in Karnad’s play also Tughlaq says to Barani:

‘What should I do Barani? What would you prescribe for this honeycomb of diseases? I have tried everything. But what cures one disease just worsens another..... It isn’t as easy as leaving the patient in the wilderness because there’s no cure for his disease.... Don’t you see that the only way I could abdicate is by killing myself?... But what can you do when every moment you expect a beak to dig into you and tear a muscle out? What can you do? Barani, what vengeance is driving these shapes after me?’

Girish Karnad greatly alters the historical facts of the rebellion of Ain-ul-Mulk, perhaps to expose the weaknesses of Tughlaq and to show that he was the worst kind of daredevil. He sends Sheikh Imam-ud-Din as his official envoy with the message of peace to Ain-ul-Mulk. The Sheikh resembles the Sultan. Dressed up in ceremonial clothes the Sheikh marched toward Ain-ul-Mulk’s army. The elephant on which the Sheikh was riding halted about a hundred yards from the enemy and the Sheikh stood up on it to say something when a trumpeter on the Sultan’s side sounded charge. The Sheikh was wounded and succumbed to his injuries. Thus, Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, who had led a rebellion against Tughlaq in Danpur, was murdered. Ain-ul-Mulk was pardoned and the governorship of Avad was restored to him. And later he was transferred to Deccan. Thus, it is obvious that Karnad deviates from history in the depiction of the rebellion of Aim-ul-Mulk in order to prove that the Sultan was a vindictive and revengeful, intriguing and treacherous man.

Karnad takes up the issue of the token currency only to emphasize the Sultan’s failure and makes no comment on his farsightedness and on the unimaginative and non-cooperative approach of his officers as well as his subjects. Tughlaq’s policy of taxation, which deviated from canon law, offended the orthodox Muslims. Karnad follows Barani and other historians who opposed Sultan’s rationalized tax-structure and enlightened measures and does not appreciate his moves. Karnad refers to famine and plague that ravaged India during Sultan’s reign but he does not sympathize with Tughlaq who faced a number of natural and man-made calamities. Karnad has portrayed Najib as an important character who exerts influence on the Sultan. He is presented as the Sultan’s evil genius and is later on murdered by the machinations of his stepmother. In history Najib is not such an important character.

The episode of Aziz and Aazam is also included with the view to creating humour, irony, paradoxes and parallels and highlighting the failure of Tughlaq’s administration. There is enough evidence to prove that Karnad departs from history when it suits him as per the needs of his dramatic art. He has drawn the plot of *Tughlaq* from Barani and other orthodox historical sources and lacks the just and impartial treatment of the historical theme. M.K.Naik comments in his book, *A History of Indian English Literature*:

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‘Tughlaq fails to emerge as tragedy, chiefly because the dramatist seems to deny himself the artist’s privilege to present an integrated vision of a character full of conflicting tendencies.’

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### 4.5.4 A Note of Existentialism

The term existentialism means ‘pertaining to existence’; or in logic, ‘predicating existence’. Philosophically, it now applies to a vision of the condition and existence of man, his place, and function in the world, relationship or lack of one with God. This philosophical label is applied to several differing schools of thought. Existentialism is widely believed to have derived from the thinking of Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55). He repeatedly expressed and elaborated his faith that tensions and discontent may be freed and man may find peace of mind and spiritual serenity through God and in God. Kierkegaard became the pioneer of modern Christian existentialism. An important feature of atheistic existentialism is the argument that existence precedes essence which is the reverse of many traditional forms of philosophy, for it is held that man fashions his own existence and only exists by doing so, and in that process, and by the choice of what he does or does not do, gives essence to that existence.

Jean Paul Sartre is the hierophant of modern existentialism. In his vision man is born into a kind of void, a mud. He has the liberty to remain in this mud and thus lead a passive, acquiescent existence in a ‘semi-conscious’ state and in which he is scarcely aware of himself. If he comes out of his passive situation and would become increasingly aware of himself, he would have a sense of the absurdity of his predicament and suffer moral anguish and despair. The energy deriving from this awareness would enable him to ‘drag himself out of the mud’, and begin to exist. By exercising the power of choice he can give meaning to existence and the universe. Thus, in brief, the human being is obliged to make himself what he is, and has to be what he is.

Both the groups of existentialists, however, hold certain elements in common: the concern with man’s being, the feeling that reason is insufficient to understand the mysteries of the universe, the awareness that anguish is a universal phenomenon, and the idea that morality has validity only when there is positive participation.

Existentialism has influenced all genres of literature of the twentieth century world over. It is a philosophy based on the concrete experiences of life and puts stress on the dignity of man. It is generally believed that poetry and fiction offer a better scope for subjective consciousness and internalization of experience and confessional mode while drama is expected to present more objective and externalized conflict between the individual protagonist and a hostile, indifferent society, or a meaningless universe. However the continental drama, especially the plays of Sartre and Camus, reveal that existentialist situations can be effectively depicted in drama as the urgent predicament of man’s being in the world, along with an individual’s ‘crucial and terrible freedom of choice’.

Girish Karnad’s plays are imbued with existential thought and deal with freedom of choice, alienation, despair, anguish and absurdity, which characterize all schools of existentialism. *Tughlaq* too is an existentialist play, which deals with philosophical questions on the nature of man and the destiny of the whole kingdom,



which a dreamer like Muhammad Tughlaq controls. His alienation from traditional religion arises primarily from the fact that he is an existentialist in his religious beliefs, which come into conflict with the orthodox and fundamental faith.

Tughlaq faces an existential predicament – a situation of confrontation with orthodox and fanatic Muslims who intend to oppose him at every step. He tries his level best to put his ideals into practice and fully realizes his duties to the kingdom and his subjects both Hindus and Muslims. He makes an independent choice to convert India into an egalitarian society based on secularism and mutual amity of these communities. Like a true existentialist, he sees to it that justice works in his kingdom and convinces the crowd in the opening scene that it would be all possible without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed. His intention is to guarantee freedom of choice to his countrymen. In other words, he tries to promote the understanding of human situation amidst the dearth and disparities and wants them to rise above the sufferings and insecurities. He is restless because he feels his primary responsibility is to awaken his countrymen to feel the truth. He identifies himself with their sufferings and spends sleepless nights. He tells his stepmother in scene two:

‘I pray to the Almighty to save me from sleep. All day long I have to worry about tomorrow but it’s only when the night falls that I can step beyond all that. I look at the Pleiades and I think of Ibn-ul-Mottazz who thought it was an ostrich egg and Dur-rumma who thought it was a swallow. And then I go back to their poetry and sink myself in their words. Then again I want to climb up, up to the top of the tallest tree in the world, and call out to my people: ‘Come, my people, I am waiting for you.

Confide in me your worries .... Let’s be light and cover the earth with greenery. Let’s be darkness and cover up the boundaries of nations. Come I am waiting to embrace you all!’... I wish I could believe in recurring births like the Hindu but I have only one life, one body, and my hopes, my people, my God are all fighting for it.’

Karnad’s Tughlaq finds himself in the tight existential condition and makes a difficult choice. Otherwise too choosing is to commit oneself to one’s decision. Tughlaq is convinced about the authenticity of his choice and refuses to relent to the tough opposition from the narrow-minded citizens who question his integrity. He frankly admits how other philosophical thoughts of the Greeks, especially of Sukrat and Aflatoon, have shaped his personality when he talks to Imam-ud-Din in scene three.

In her article ‘Introducing Existentialism’, Margaret Chatterjee highlights another characteristic of existentialism, that is, the indefinable nature of man who remains a bundle of contradictions despite the freedom of choice. She observes that various schools of existentialist thought have emphasized the need for ‘the quest for meaning in a world which has become opaque to human understanding and intransigent to human effort, especially, ameliorist effort to transform it.’ Tughlaq always faces such situations, which are demanding and complicated, where his idealism and policies are resisted and challenged. Such responses make him rash and reckless. He adopts the tricks of masking himself and behaves treacherously. He recourses to stratagems and manages to kill Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, Shihab-ud-Din, and millions of innocent people. He becomes pretentious, poses to be religious

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and acts in a totally irreligious and even inhuman manner. According to Ratan Singh, Tughlaq is 'an honest scoundrel'. In order to achieve his ideals and execute his policies Tughlaq deliberately chooses to indulge in patricide and fratricide, murders his opponents and uses religion as a political game. Tughlaq's willful acts are the worst example of the freedom of choice that a man can avail himself of as every choice he makes leads to crisis, to situations which are totally absurd and drag him down in the 'mud'. All these acts are the result of 'bad faith' and cause self-deception, sense of guilt, anguish, despair and dread. In utter despair he says:

'God, God in Heaven, please help me. Please don't let go my hand.  
My skin drips with blood and I don't know how much of it is mine  
and how much of others I started in Your path, Lord, why am  
I wandering naked in this desert now? I started in search of You. Why  
am I become a pig rolling in this gory mud?'

In *Tughlaq* Karnad focuses on the existential problem, i.e., of action and not of contemplation. Man should choose, decide and act accordingly. Then not only is the riddle of existence solved, it would also create the perfect climate for moral growth. The comic pair Aziz and Aazam are in the beginning totally desperate, alienated individuals but they form what the critics call an 'alternative society'. Aziz is a *dhobi* and Aazam is a pickpocket but once they develop an understanding the former assumes the role of a leader and the latter acts as a detached philosopher. These two derelicts are shown by Karnad as estranged from society and alienated. Aziz, who is an opportunist, misappropriates Tughlaq's plans to suit his own interests and assumes several disguises, kills people and commits all sorts of crimes and in the end, succeeds. Aziz's deliberate acts of choice are existentialist decisions and despite being immoral bring him success. He lives in the present and makes efforts to gain power despite the absurdity in the act and situation. He tells Aazam, who is sick of the existential absurdities and wants to live an honourable life:

'Only a few months in Delhi and I have discovered a whole new  
world— politics! My dear fellow, that's where our future is – politics!  
It's a beautiful world - wealth, success, position, power – and yet it  
is full of brainless people, people with not an idea in their head.... It's  
a fantastic world.'

Aziz kills Aazam when he decides to get rid of his company. In complicated existential game/situation both Tughlaq and Aazam fail while Aziz succeeds. As it occurs in majority of existentialist literature, Karnad's *Tughlaq* also handles the problem of discovering the truth of human existence. Even after the emergence of truth Tughlaq fails miserably. Life remains as unpredictable and meaningless as it ever is.

The only message, which the play leaves behind, is that man should try to cultivate understanding and compassion for one another in the pursuit to make life and world worth living. It may then offer an opportunity of ideal existential condition and reduce the existential absurdity to a great extent.

#### 4.5.5 Literary Techniques Used in *Tughlaq*

Drama is 'literature that walks' as Marjorie Boulton states. It is the plot of the play which is the source of all the action, development of its characters and dialogues. Its language imaginatively carries the meaning of all the sights, sounds and action of the play and makes a demand on the visual imagination of the reader or the

viewer. The plot is an essential framework of incidents, simple or complex happenings and events. It is not the theme; it is an artistic organization of the events and incidents upon which the drama is constructed.

The plot of Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* grows out the paradoxical events of the protagonist and his opponents. It is woven by the conflict between opposites. In the first scene the old people who are the staunch followers of Islam think that their country is unsafe in the hands of the liberal ruler who deviates from the holy Koran. The young admire him for his rational and modern outlook. One of the young men says, 'The country's in perfectly safe hands. . . . safer than you've seen before' because he wishes to be 'human' first.

The opposites keep playing the central role in constructing the plot. It is sheer irony that Aziz, disguised as Brahmin Vishnu Prasad, exploits Tughlaq's policy of Hindu-Muslim unity. It is also ironical that the Sultan punishes all those who oppose his scheme of shifting the capital. Both Hindus and Muslims unite to hatch a conspiracy to kill him at prayer time. Ratan Singh is the first to initiate the idea but when the rebellion is crushed the Hindu soldiers protect the Sultan. The Hindus whom the Sultan supported disagree with his policy of introducing token currency but misuse it and make counterfeit coins. The Sultan's move to shift the capital was meant to help the Hindus but it is a great paradox that it causes disaster to both Hindus and Muslims. Both suffer poverty and death.

Idealism and realism are two opposite poles on which the plot of the play is erected. They crumble like a pack of cards when the king's idealism dashes against the hard rock of reality. Notorious murderers and cheats like Aziz attain success and prosperity and the virtuous suffer an idealist like Tughlaq turns a murderer and becomes lonely and frustrated. He finds himself on the 'brink of madness', which 'the madness of God eludes'.

Another powerful opposite that clings to the plot of the play is between religion and politics. Tughlaq punishes even the learned religious leaders for hobnobbing with politics but ironically he stoops down to petty political tricks to get the better of his political opponents. Sheikh Imam-ud-Din warns him: 'Religion! Politics take heed Sultan, one day these verbal distinctions will rip you into two.' Thus, Karnad skillfully employs opposites to build the structure of the plot.

In the play both Tughlaq and his political rivals misuse religion to fulfill their political ends. Both corrupt religion. In other words, Karnad employs opposites to develop the plot structure and these opposites carry the implicit irony of human existence. In *Tughlaq* irony finds its most eloquent expression through the contradiction in the character of Tughlaq. Idealism and intrigue build the duality of his character. The surprises are knitted into the plot of the play, which Karnad does through the symbol of chess – a game traditionally known for the element of surprise and suspense. He maintains the suspense till the end about Aziz who gets rewarded for his misdeeds.

The play has a great symbolic significance as Karnad himself stated that he felt 'in the early sixties India had also come very far in the same direction (of failures) – the twenty year period seemed to me very much a striking parallel.' From this point of view, the critics have called *Tughlaq* to be 'a political allegory'.

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There are many important symbols used to submit the details, e.g. the symbol of chess where he has ‘solved the most famous problems’ or the prayer symbol which is used as leitmotif for the central theme of the play. The word ‘prayer’ is used so often in various ways and even in an ironic manner. Similarly, the python symbol in scene eight indicates Tughlaq’s utter cruelty and inhumanity. When the Old Man and the Young Man talk about a passage in the Fort in Daulatabad, the former says:

‘Yes, it’s a long passage, a big passage, coiled like an enormous hollow python inside the belly of the fort. And we shall be far, far happier when that python breaks out and swallows everything in sight – everyman, woman, child, and beast.’

The very opening sentences of the play make an artistic use of the verbal irony as does the speech of Tughlaq when he elaborates his ideals and administrative reforms. Tughlaq’s diplomatic moves are marked by ironical implications as in the following lines:

‘You can’t deny that this war will mean a slaughter of Muslims at the hands of fellow Muslims. Isn’t that enough for the great Sheikh Ima-ud-Din?’

It is the inharmonious situations, created by the Sultan’s complicated personality, that constitute the dramatic irony in the play. Take the lines of Aziz who calls himself to be the Sultan’s close disciple:

‘It’s hardly flattering you, Your Majesty, to say I am your disciple. But I have watched Your Majesty try to explain your ideas and acts to the people. And I have seen with regret how few have understood them.’

The plot reaches its climax in scene seven when the capital has been shifted to Daulatabad. There has been a mass exodus. This unfortunate decision of the Sultan makes him unpopular and precipitates his downfall. Those who oppose his decision are killed even on suspicion. His kingdom is stricken with rebellions. His policy of introducing token currency fails badly. He is frustrated. His idealism gradually vanishes. Najib, who acts as his evil genius, gets killed by his stepmother and she in turn is sentenced to death. This is the turning point in the play because without Najib the Sultan he is all alone and none understand him. As the plot develops the kingdom gradually sinks into utter chaos.

Karnad uses the flashback technique to give glimpses of his youthful idealism and skillfully knit the comic story of Aziz and the tragic tale of Tughlaq’s life. Girish Karnad does not follow the pattern of observing three dramatic unities of time, place and action but builds tempo and sustained intensity to create unity of effect. In other words, all the episodes contribute to the unity of impression.

*Tughlaq* is unique in the use of humour, irony and satire. They are meant to provide comic relief and at the same time create a sense of horror and farce. Tughlaq’s humour is sinister, sardonic and devoid of geniality, frankness and humanity. When he plays a sinister joke with his mother, stating, ‘Look at the past Sultans of Delhi. They couldn’t bear the weight of their crown,’ she, knowing fully well about his patricide and fratricide, grimly says: ‘Nothing – I can’t bear to see you joking about murder.’

It is in the last scene that Tughlaq loses his grim and sardonic humour and he is trapped in the net of Aziz's words. Aziz and Aazam are the comic pair and they provide comic relief after the scenes of tension. Aziz, who is *dobhi* by caste but is disguised as a Brahmin, has a very fertile imagination comparable to the Sultan himself. He has unfailing sense of humour, which results from the success of his tricks and cunningness. He employs them to exploit the Sultan. Aziz delights in his perversions and has no kindness. In other words, his humour grows out of the enormity of crime. He rejoices and dances after killing Ghiasuddin Abbasid. He is a black humourist. For instance, consider the following dialogue with the Sultan:

'We had to shift the corpses of all the rebels executed by the State and hang them up for exhibition. Such famous kings, warriors and leaders of men passed through our hands then! Beautiful and strong bodies and bodies eaten-up by corruption – all, all were stuffed with straw and went to the top of the poles.'

When Sultan calls him 'a *dobhi* masquerading as a saint?' Aziz replies:

'What if I am a *dobhi*, Your Majesty? When it comes to washing away filth no saint is a match for a *dobhi*.'

His comment is pungent and sarcastic. There is comedy and irony when the Sultan promotes him to be an army officer instead of punishing him. Thus, *Tughlaq* is known for grim and sardonic humour as well as contrast and irony which weave the texture of his play.

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### Exhibit 4.3

Girish Karnad's play *Tughlaq* explores the character of one of the most fascinating kings to occupy the throne in Delhi, namely, Mohammed-bin-Tughlaq. He ruled for 26 years, a period of unparalleled cruelty and agonising existence for his subjects.

He is fascinating because though he was one of the most learned monarchs of Delhi, and had great ideas and a grand vision, his reign was also an abject failure. He started his rule with great ideals — of a unified India, of Hindus and Muslims being equal in the eyes of the state (he abolished the onerous tax *Jaziya* on the Hindus) and the Sultan being the first among equals.

**Source:** News by S Manikuttu and Sampat Singh on November 5, 2004. [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2004-11-05/news/27379866\\_1\\_girish-karnad-tughlaq-hindus](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2004-11-05/news/27379866_1_girish-karnad-tughlaq-hindus)

### Check Your Progress

16. How is *Tughlaq* a political allegory?
17. Is *Tughlaq* an authentic historical account?
18. In what respect has Karnad followed history in writing his play *Tughlaq*?
19. What purpose do Aziz and Aazam serve in the play?
20. Why does Karnad deviate from history?
21. Why is Tughlaq called an "honest scoundrel"?
22. How does Karnad create unity of effect?

## 4.6 TUGHLAQ: CHARACTER ANALYSIS

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Karnad has presented the titular hero of the play, Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, with a great psychological depth and dexterity. The other characters dramatize various aspects of his complex personality and at the same time they also exist as individuals in their own right. For example, consider the character of Barani, the scholarly historian, and Najib, the shrewd politician. These two characters form the two opposite selves of the Sultan. Aziz, the notorious cheat, represents the imaginative, shrewd, intelligent and pragmatic side of the ruler's personality. The whole play revolves around Tughlaq who seems to be a unifying factor for the play.

### 4.6.1 Man of Contradictions

Tughlaq's character is self-contradictory. He is at once an idealist and a man of quick action; a man of cruel and base mentality, but also just and humane. In the opening scene of the play Tughlaq is portrayed as an idealist and visionary, a forward-looking emperor. In his first address to the crowd he says:

'My beloved people, you have heard the judgement of the Kazi and seen for yourselves how justice works in my kingdom – without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed. May this moment burn bright and light up our path towards greater justice, equality, progress and peace.'

Karnad delineates Tughlaq as both a generous and a cruel-hearted sovereign. On the one hand some people like Aziz, who is disguised as Brahmin Vishnu Prasad, enjoy the king's bounty liberally and on the other there are people like Sheikh Imam-ud-Din who get killed ruthlessly and unscrupulously. Ratansingh talking to Shihab-ud-Din says:

'I have never seen an honest scoundrel like your Sultan. He murders a man calmly and then actually enjoys the feeling of guilt.'

In the face of opposition from priests and courtiers to his plans of shifting the capital from Delhi to Daultabad, Tughlaq issues a mindless and inconsiderate order:

'Najib, I want Delhi vacated immediately. Every living soul in Delhi will leave for Daultabad within a fortnight...Everyone must leave. Not a light should be seen in the windows of Delhi. Not a wisp of smoke should rise from its chimneys.'

When thousands of people die of hunger in the scorching heat of the sun enroute to Daultabad, Tughlaq is not moved with pity or remorse.

But Tughlaq also comes across as a profound man. He is a great admirer of Greek thinkers like Socrates and Aristotle. His philosophy of life has a deep influence of these great thinkers of the time. It is of a great disadvantage to him as a ruler because the orthodox Muslims criticize him for it and even oppose him. He asks Imam-ud-Din:

'I still remember the days when I read the Greeks... I can still feel the thrill with which I found the new world, a world I had not found in the Arabs or even the Koran...You are asking me to make myself

complete by killing the Greek in me and you propose to unify my people by denying the visions which led Zarathustra or the Buddha.'

*Drama*

#### 4.6.2 A Visionary but not a Strategist

Tughlaq applies unconventional methods and techniques to the problems of life and does not believe in the stereotyped solutions. His outstanding original bent of mind makes the public issues still more complex and far-fetched. He is a visionary politician and wishes to achieve political and administrative unity for India. According to him, the North and South should join hands and all religious and cultural barriers should be neutralized. He kept the same views in his mind while shifting his capital to Daultabad but he becomes extremely unpopular because his decision brings untold sufferings to the people.

Similarly, his decision to release token currency fails miserably as instead of boosting the economy it shatters it completely. It encourages corruption in form of minting imitative coins. Here it is pertinent to note that his subjects are given to intellectual lethargy and offer no cooperation, discouraging his forward-looking thoughts.

These plans are rightly proposed but badly executed and 'disastrously abandoned'. Tughlaq was superb in formulating new plans but he lacked the psychological understanding of his subjects – something which is absolutely necessary for a successful ruler. His failures made him doubt his own people and they in turn suspected his motives and designs. The result was a gulf between him and his people and it filled the atmosphere with bitterness and hostility on both the sides.

#### 4.6.3 A Man ahead of Times

Tughlaq strives to build an egalitarian society in which justice would prevail. He seems to be an enlightened person who seeks the support and cooperation of the people to execute his new plans to reform the society. He is liberal to the Hindus but this invites bitterness from the Muslim community.

He believes in offering any office to a person rich in talent rather than preferring the caste and creed of the person. For doing so he invites only ill will and hatred and is called 'Mad Tughlaq.'

However, it is also true that Tughlaq surrounded himself with the worst kind of opposition because of the Islamic leaders regarding him as 'a disgrace to Islam'. He made the Muslims pray five times a day but in a fit of utter frustration, prohibited prayers until Caliph Abbasid visited India.

On the surface this may seem erratic, but a close look at the Sultan's life tells us that he was deeply religious and philosophical. It was sheer frustration that made him behave in such an unpredictable manner. He knows well that when religion becomes a ritual it loses its substance; and agnosticism and atheism can never be answers to human problems and needs. He ultimately takes a rationalistic stand to deeply probe into the religious situations but to the religious people this approach seemed like a denial of religious sentiments.

From the opening scene, Tughlaq is seen as a man estranged from his society, primarily because he is a man ahead of his age. He is misunderstood by the society

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because his ideas and ideals are far above the comprehension of his contemporaries. However, he is not alienated from the human existence and craves for being ‘understood’. He says to Barani, ‘All your life you wait for someone who understands you. And then – you meet him – punishment for waiting too much.’ This sort of realization is not of a mad man but of a tragic character who is misunderstood through and through, whose every effort to do good yields negative consequences, who is betrayed by fate, chance and his own people, and whom even ‘sleep avoided’ for ‘five years’.

#### 4.6.4 Projecting Contemporary Disillusionments

Girish Karnad’s presentation of Tughlaq’s character is intended towards showing his weaknesses and irregularities, proving that he was a hypocrite and a tyrant. It is due to two important factors:

- (a) Karnad follows the historical records of Barani and other orthodox historians who were biased against the Sultan and
- (b) Karnad’s purpose of writing this play to exhibit the political disillusionment prevailing in the 1960s in India and this made him highlight the negative aspects of the Sultan’s personality.

The play is a projection of Muhammad’s ‘divided self’. This ‘divided self’ of Muhammad symbolizes Tughlaq’s incomplete kingdom. It is in this very context that U.R. Ananthamurthy in his Introduction to Tughlaq observes:

“The whole play is structured on these opposites: the ideal and the real: the divine aspiration and the deft intrigue. Tughlaq is what he is in spite of his self-knowledge and an intense desire for divine grace. He is aware of the irony of his life when Aziz, the only character in the play who has skilfully used all the schemes of Tughlaq for his designs, kills Ghiyas-ud-din and comes in his guise as a holy messenger of peace to purify the land and revive the banned prayer. The irony is deeply tragic. In the end Tughlaq and his kingdom are one in their chaos, and he knows it. “(U.R. Ananthamurthy, “Introduction to Tughlaq,” pp. 144-145.)

Muhammad’s kingdom is a reflection of his own dichotomous personality. Thus the kingdom and the king symbolize each other.

Tughlaq is a humanist yet a tyrant, an idealist yet a crafty politician. The two aspects are clear opposites and naturally do not gel, hence the confusion that his kingdom is in. Muhammad’s kingdom is in a state of unrest because the Sultan himself is in a state of unrest. In fact, he is at war with himself. Muhammad is basically a poet, and not a ruler. He reads the Greeks and is aware of the ‘Greek in me’ (Tughlaq, p. 165). He enjoys reading Sadi’s poems. He is a visionary who builds a utopia for his people in his visions. Muhammad is all the time waiting for a new future, a tomorrow, which will come.

The state of Tughlaq’s kingdom is symbolic of the total depravity that infests humanity, thus projecting the contemporary disillusionment. The social and political set-up of Tughlaq’s kingdom is true for our times too. Tughlaq’s stepmother tells him:

“It’s only seven years ago that you came to the throne. How glorious you were then, how idealistic, how full of hopes. Look at your kingdom now. It’s become a kitchen of death “(Tughlaq, p.204)



**Check Your Progress**

23. What is unique about the characterization of roles other than the Sultan's in the play *Tughlaq*?
24. How can you tell that the Sultan is sometimes mindless and inconsiderate?
25. Give examples to prove that Tughlaq was a man ahead of his times.
26. Why does Karnad project his protagonist as a hypocrite?

**NOTES****4.7 ASIF CURRIMBHROY: ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Asif Currimbhoy was born in Mumbai, India in the year 1928 in an illustrious, reputed Khoja Muslim family. His father was an industrialist and his mother worked as a social worker. At an early age he was fortunate enough to get sound education and exposure to English language and literature. His family was honoured by the British for their contribution in industrialization. Thus, Asif Currimbhoy had the rare exposure of the British Raj during his growing up years. Later on, he worked in a French company, where he got exposed to French language and culture. He was a person with keen observation and full of insights. In the field of Indian drama he was one of the few who exhibited excellent command over English Language and expressed his thoughts, ideas and emotions skillfully to an international audience. He wrote exclusively in English language, picking up themes from national, local and social contexts and real life events. He wrote profusely and produced over thirty plays employing several genres. He was a creative writer making use of different dramatic techniques such as songs, monologues, choruses, slide projection, filmed footage, chants, local images/symbols in his plays. He studied at the prestigious St Xavier's College, University of Wisconsin, US. His academic interaction and pursuit in US lead him to Shakespearean drama and developed a passion for playwriting.

Currimbhoy laid the foundation of modern Indian drama in the 1950s. His initial playwriting reflected the tremendous impact of the Western world—sensuality, openness, crudity, challenging the conventional values and beliefs. The theme of his plays usually related to the contemporary issues, inviting critical debate in the literary and social world. Hence, he was not very popular in India in his initial career. He loved taking up stories of the underdog, the downtrodden and the victimized. His plays offer an interesting parallel between the real and the fiction. He recreates the reality in his plays through fiction, creative use of his imagination and depicts the reality in all its vividness and crudeness. Although his plays do not claim to be a social documentary, yet the reader can observe and interpret the contemporary socio-political-cultural contexts in the plots and characterization of his plays. His plays do not reflect a discerning structure; however, like a skillful craftsman he orchestrates the physical action in his plays through impressing juxtaposition of dramatic elements such as songs, dialogues, diction, music and display. His plays depict socio-political and cultural conflict in full swing, as he himself believed that the essence of theatre / play lies in its 'conflict'. Hence, in his

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plays, one can discover conflicts of contemporary times. He uses language skillfully – coining new terms, using local vocabulary as well. Bower commented on the talent of Currimbhoy as displayed in his plays as ‘India’s first authentic voice in theatre’. Currimbhoy also wrote movie scenarios and television scripts. He died in 1994.

Currimbhoy exhibited amazing skills in the use of theatrical devices in his plays. His works were widely appreciated abroad in USA and London.

In the following sections, a brief introduction is given for understanding his range and style of dramaturgy. His plays gave an identity and new life to Indian English Drama.

**Major Works**

*Goa* (1966): This is one of the early plays written by Asif Currimbhoy. It deals with the issue of independence of Goa and circumstances following the state of affairs in post-colonial Goa. This play received a full Broadway production in 1968. *Goa* was later selected to inaugurate the Shri Ram Centre, Delhi in 1970.

*The Doldrums* (1961): This play featured four youths who are dissatisfied with life. The play was banned in Bombay owing to its complexity.

*The Dumb Dancer* (1961): This play was staged Off-Off-Broadway at Café La MaMa in 1966. Currimbhoy was impressed by American Experimental drama. Off-off-Broadway theatrical productions in New York City were a part of an experimental movement which was against commercialization of drama and theatre. Off-off-Broadway theatres are said to be smaller than Broadway and off-Broadway theatres and usually have limited number of seats for audience (100 seats).

*The Hungry Ones* (1965): In this play, the dramatist shows that love and hunger are beyond any control. They are the basic human needs.

*The Refugee* (1971): It is a one-act play depicting the turmoil faced by people in East Pakistan in 1971. This play has been grouped by some critics along with *Inquilab* and *Sonar Bangla*. These two plays were written in the seventies and were referred to as ‘the Bengal trilogy’. The themes of *The Refugee* and *Sonar Bangla* were related to social-political conflict of those times, they are connected with the problems of Bangladesh. However, *Inquilab* is based on the Naxalite revolt which surfaced during 1960s in West Bengal. *Inquilab* (1971) is based on the contemporary Maoist Naxalite movement in Bengal. *Sonar Bangla* (1972) is based on the Bangladesh war. Its Bengali translation was produced by Tarun Roy in Calcutta in 1973.

*The Dissident M.L.A* (1974): This play is based on the life events of a dissident MLA of Gujarat. This politician makes use of students to get the assembly dissolved. This play depicts reality in totality. With great skill and artistry, the playwright has portrayed the situation prevailing in Gujarat in 1974.

**Check Your Progress**

27. When and where was Asif Currimbhoy born?
28. Mention the significant works of Asif Currimbhoy.

## 4.8 GOA: SUMMARY, CHARACTERIZATION AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

*Goa* consists of two Acts with six scenes, closely knit plot, smooth delineation of characters and perfect setting for the action.

This play deals with the role of the Indian government in fetching independence for Goa in 1961. Currimbhoy picked up a critical theme for his play. The dramatist, in the beginning of the play is shown to be with a Portuguese local administrator, named Mario. Mario is proud of Goa and he is filled with love and praise for his motherland and its picturesque beauty. The natural, pure and pious beauty of this village is emphasized here 'nestling amidst green hills and valleys'. The people in this village enjoy this natural beauty and spend time on the 'patio' benches in the evening. The dramatist then brings on the scene a 40 years old fair woman, Senhora Miranda, dressed as per the latest Portuguese fashion. She is shown to carry a colourful parasol in hand, who comes from the west side of the stage. She steps down the steps of the tavern and walks across patio over to the east side of the stage to make entry into her house.

When this woman enters her house, it is shown that there is a young man talking to a girl at the 'patio'. She is a young girl of fourteen with 'a beautiful innocent face and a strange voice.' It is heard that the girl is telling something hesitatingly to the young man:

'It's getting dark now. I can see your lips no longer: I do not know what you say. . . . But my heart is full of love . . . and I would love .  
.. this secrecy. . . . '

The scene ends showing the boy's yearning for the girl and the girl's faded, hesitant acceptance of his love. The next action takes place in the house of Senhora Miranda. Another love story unfolds, as it is revealed that this woman is in love with Alphonso, the Portuguese administrator. From her dialogues it is revealed that she has migrated to Goa after she lost her husband. In Goa she is in relationship with the natives and is happy about this fact, as she is able to maintain her lifestyle here. Alphonso, is shown to be in relation with her and gives her a necklace as a present.

Alphonso's corrupt nature is revealed when she introduces her daughter Rose to him. He develops an instant liking for her and calls her 'the fairest flower in the whole world' and makes a very revealing statement 'Rose is Goa and Goa is Rose'.

This oft quoted lines from the play reveals the subtle symbolism used in this play between Rose and Goa by the writer and how the play proceeds on two different planes. As the plot unfolds, we get to witness the inner turmoil of the characters. Currimbhoy gave a distinct psychological underpinning to his characters. Krishna, the Indian boy declares to Senhora Miranda, that he loved Rose:

'I've waited for her too long. It took care and patience, and long years of understanding. You see, we had something in common. It rhymed; it matched. But it was more than that. I love her.'

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The pure declaration of love by Krishna falls on deaf ears. Miranda, is too selfish and blinded that she refuses to look at the bright future prospects of her daughter. And she says:

‘ Nobody’s going to stop you, Krishna, but you’ll have to get by me first. . . . (Her hands go up to his black hair)’

Thus, Krishna has to fight her lust and passion along with the vicious nature of the Portuguese administrator who tries to bribe her by giving the promise of giving a good administrative position in Goa, but the young Krishna refuses to give in. This hints at India’s conviction that Goa is an integral part of the Indian subcontinent and the Indian government will liberate Goa from the imperial rule of the Portuguese without fail. He says:

‘ You could float this enclave in milk and honey and yet we would want for ourselves that abstraction with all our hearts, and nobody, no one will ever be able to stop us, even though we may be ruthless to ourselves and others in getting it.’

These words reveal the desperation of the Indian nationalists to get rid of the colonial rule and seize freedom for Goa. It also suggests Krishna’s yearning for Rose and how prepared he is to go to any extent to fetch Rose, his love of life. In Act I, Scene III, Miranda passionately tries to persuade Krishna to have physical relationship with her, but the boy refuses to get lured. He is so much in love with Rose that he cries:

‘ She’s tender to the touch, though I never touched her. She watched my lips . . . speak through the night, afraid to close her eyes, and be embalmed in the terrifying stillness of it all.’

This increases the aggression of Miranda and she asks him to leave her house immediately. In Act II, Scene I, the success of Miranda in seducing Krishna is revealed, who is shown ‘caressing his black hair and holding it in her hand behind the nape of his neck from time to time.’

With this surrender, Krishna hopes to get true love of Rose and is shown that Rose advances in free will towards him; Rose ‘advances and is almost in his arms.’ However, there is a twist in the plot and Miranda announces that Krishna’s love is no longer pure, she has blemished him. This announcement has a catastrophic effect on Rose:

‘Rose raises her hand to her mouth to stifle the agonizing scream. Krishna’s face contorts with fury. . . . He flings himself towards Rose, crushing her in his arms, trying to kiss her frantically.’

This is followed by the desperate and frantic attempt of Krishna to win over Rose again, but he is stopped by Alphonso who physically abuses and beats him up. Krishna leaves the scene with a bruised heart and body ‘blood flowing from his face’.

The next scene happens on the day when Goa was invaded by Indians, i.e., on 18 December 1961. After 14 years of India’s independence, Goa was liberated and the colonizers were uprooted from the soil of Goa. This external event of great significance parallels the turning point in the play. The pure, loving, innocent Krishna becomes a murderer, he enters Miranda’s house and attacks Miranda for her abuse of Rose over the years:

‘ You . . . dangled Rose before us, not through competition for you, but for her. Made us whore with you, not for yourself, but for her. Used us, not to rape one who had already been raped, but to rape one who had not been raped!’

These are very painful lines; Krishna is shown to be unsympathetic and full of hatred for both mother and the daughter. He pressurizes the mother:

‘ Pour your hate not on me but on Rose. Relieve yourself of this guilt through Rose. For she was the cause of it all. Then remember; did she scream like you? Feel your pain and horror. For then only she becomes you.’

The mother gets convinced somehow and helps Krishna to rape Rose. The last scene is the point of culmination, where the liberation of Goa and its aftermath is depicted in the play. There is silence, complete silence everywhere; both mother and daughter have lost their purity and innocence. Miranda and Rose, had become whores and they see ‘see each other . . . as patches of darkness.’

Krishna is shown to go towards Rose who ‘wants only darkness. She wants to hear . . . only silence.’ Krishna follows Rose as she ascends the stairs. Suddenly, a voice is heard from the balcony and Rose recognizes Krishna by touching his body. She is shown to suddenly get active and her voice changes, courageously she entreats her mother:

‘ Take the blind off, mother! Take the blind off! I want to see . . . I want to see . . . I won’t have to wait any longer.’

Rose is full of hope of a new beginning and her mother removes the blind. Rose slowly walks up to her room and shifts the curtain aside only to get a shocking revelation:

‘Krishna’s nude body falls out, with a dagger in his heart.’

Thus, the play is a unique story of love with four angles. Both Krishna and Alphonso loved and wanted to court Rose but Miranda sets an obstacle. The playwright skillfully highlights colonialism and colour prejudice in a light humorous and ironic tone. Though it appears to be a simple love story with a sad ending, it opens itself to multiple interpretations owing to its symbolism. Krishna can be said to clearly represent India. The girl, Rose represents Goa. She is fourteen years old and Goa also sought its independence after 14 years of Portuguese governance. Rose is the child of a half-Portuguese mother and a native father. Krishna’s waiting for fourteen years for Rose, can be said to symbolize India’s waiting for fourteen years (1947 to 1961) to make Goa an integral part of India.

Currimbhoy himself reviewed this critically ‘some of the speeches in the play are interminably long and there are certain actions in the play which are slow’ but he would not change it for according to him it was a complete ‘whole’. As a writer he believed that the contemporary audience was looking for ‘a lot quicker action’ and is in haste. He was happy with the way the play was scripted owing to the balancing forces in the play.

The main aspects which are reviewed while analysing a play include the following:

- Structure
- Setting

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- Plot
- Time
- Characterization
- Genre
- Types of dialogues

### 4.8.1 *Goa*: Critical Appreciation

The play *Goa* is in two Acts and six scenes. The setting is that of a market place, in a town of Goa. The main characters of the play are Krishna, Rose, Portuguese administrator, Goan Nationalist, Goan Hindu, Vicar, Old Woman, Old Man, Smugglers, Senhora Maria Miranda, Alphonso and some young people and singers. The action is interspersed with folk songs and dances of Goa.

The plot is that of a love triangle – one girl and two lovers. This is entangled with the subplot of a woman struggling to find security and lost comforts of aristocracy. A parallel story subtly revealed by the dramatist is that of the decolonization of Goa by the Indian government.

In the year 1497, Vasco de Gama, the Portuguese explorer discovered the sea route to India. He established control over this part of India at the close of the 15th century. Hindu rulers ruled over Goa till the time the Portuguese invaded and acquired control over Goa in 1510. It was through an organized and massive effort that the Indian government was able to free it from the colonizers in 1961, after 14 years of India's independence in 1947. Almost twenty years later, it became a state in 1987.

The Indian dramaturgy was evolved significantly in the works of playwrights such as Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani, Asif Currimbhoy and Nissim Ezekiel. They brought Indian drama to the heights of international drama. In post-independence India, they wrote on themes emerging from their local social context, the conflicts and their treatment in the plays was original, enabling Indian dramatists to carve an identity for themselves.

It was during this time of turbulence, that Currimbhoy's work received appreciation at the international and national level. His plays were staged at Broadway theatre. His plays were thought provoking and invited the audience / reader to critically reflect on the political scenario of the country. As observed by Peter Nazareth,

‘Asif Currimbhoy interweaves the public event with the private to create exciting drama which asks moral questions about humanity in the cataclysmic period of de-colonisation.’

His life experiences had a tremendous impact on his work. He joined the Burma Shell in India as an executive. In this position, he had to undertake extensive travel across India. It helped him in gaining familiarity with the true Indian spirit, its locale, society and challenges in post-independent India. This experience enriched his theatrical style and brought variety and versatility into his plays.

*Goa* is often referred to as a political play by critics of Currimbhoy exposing and analysing the postcolonial theme, bringing in the element of colour and racism.

This notion of cultural superiority was attached with the skin colour and race of the individual. It divided the social fabric of society of those times, and it is reflected in Currimbhoy's *Goa* as well. It brings about the racial discrimination experienced by the natives during this time, their knowledge, skills and values were brutally ignored and looked down upon by the 'white' who claimed to be God's messenger and the 'superior' race.

The natives were disregarded and abused by the colonizers, their sense of 'self' and 'identity' was never allowed to develop. Due to their dark skin, they were traumatized and made to feel inferior. The after effects of colonization were still evident in India for instance, people belonging to a certain class assumed to be superior just because they possessed knowledge of English language. This mindset arrested the development of pride in one's own culture and language. The natives were forced to appreciate the culture and language of the colonizers. They were made to feel that their culture and language was useless and inferior. The feeling of disrespect for their own culture and language was incrementally instilled in the mind and soul of the natives. This struggle of the natives to withstand the pressure of colonizers to forget their own culture and get subdued by the foreign culture is evident in the play. The Goan nationalist is shown to exhibit tremendous pride and love for his native land. He does not get influenced by the power factor of the administrator. Miranda's attitude to the natives and their dark skin tone is contemptuous. She is proud of her skin colour and is too conscious of her foreign origin. It gives her 'self-confidence'; which is found lacking to a certain extent in her daughter Rose, who seldom talks boldly, confidently and convincingly, as she has a dark skin which hints that her father was a native. She articulates her self-confidence with enthusiasm,

'See how white my skin is?'

She treats the dark skinned people derisively and says:

'They make me feel dirty.'

Miranda's colour consciousness extends even to her daughter and due to this perceivable disdain of the coloured, she does not allow anyone to approach her dark coloured daughter.

She knows that:

'Only I am fair, and she's dark'.

Even the traditional maternal attitude is destabilized by colour difference, which in turn functions as a harsh irritant and reminder to Miranda of her daughter's inferiority as demonstrated in her statement thus:

'They say it should give rise to love when it's cut out from your own flesh. But the colour is different. A constant reminder.'

Krishna, is the black native in Portuguese colonised Goa and is ironically referred to as a stranger and alien by the colonizers. Repeatedly, it is suggested throughout the play that white is neat and black is dirty. Senhora Miranda speaks about Krishna:

'He is a stranger here. I can make it out. He is not like the others. Dark, yes, but not like the others.'

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In the play, the mindset of the colonizers is exposed who believed that dark skin means a dark soul, whereas white skin means a pure soul. This belief dehumanizes the natives and they treat this defect as ‘congenital’ i.e., it is beyond repair / correction. This emotion is shown to be so strong that it is shown to overpower the sacred bond of love and trust between a baby and mother:

Senhora Miranda: ‘... I always thought Rose’s defect was congenital having been originally there, rather than by accident. ...If something is inevitable, it becomes congenital rather than accidental...’

Rose, is shown as a victim of double forces – outside colonial forces and inside her home by the strong control of her mother. She is not developed as a strong woman. The mother is not shown to love Rose whole-heartedly due to her black skin, she sees this ‘blackness’ as congenital and somewhere hates it in her heart. She is of the opinion like the colonizers that this blackness is due to the ‘ignorance’, ‘impurity’ and ‘sin’ of the natives. Miranda was fair, so she had that natural superiority over the black, as if she was pure, wise and ‘perfect’ and it is on her race to enlighten the natives. This stand is challenged by Krishna, who says there is blackness within the white people, which they never allow to surface. In his opinion, the white coloured people are similar to albinos and strongly remarks: ‘You may have white skin, but so also have albinos. It doesn’t prove a thing.’

The struggle of the nationalist to keep his ‘identity’ and ‘self’ intact shows the struggle of the natives to withstand the pressure of the colonizers to give up their norms, values and ‘identity’. The great effort that is required to preserve one’s identity is portrayed by the playwright in the struggle of Krishna. Krishna feels pure love for Rose, but her mother Miranda (foreigner) forces him to behave in a manner which is not his nature. In the process, he loses the purity of his soul, he forces himself on Rose. The play ends with Krishna’s death – with no indication of how it happened? This probably indicates that one must preserve one’s identity, culture, traditions and values otherwise it will have a drastic effect – leading to the death of a culture and language and loss of identity and existence.

This play also reveals the notion of ‘power’ – the one who is in power looks down upon the others crushing all basic human values. Alphonso is a powerful man, owing to his race, colour and position in society he is rich. Krishna, on the other hand, is not allowed to express his love for Rose and his love for Rose is not respected. The social-political conflict between the Goa Hindu nationalists and the Portuguese is neatly displayed in this play where the latter exploits the former.

The play also shows how the colonizers developed contempt for traditional culture and knowledge to develop awe for science and advancement. The way the colonizers marginalized knowledge, traditions and customs of the natives reveals their shrewdness in getting control over the mind and land of the natives. The dialogues of the Hindu Goan and the Vicar reveals how religion was used a tool for controlling the mind and life of the natives by the colonizers:

VICAR: Don’t forget to come to church now, both of you.

(The Portuguese Administrator and Goan Nationalist wave back their consent to the Vicar. The Vicar turns benignly to his companion on the bench, the GOAN HINDU.) And when will you come to my church, brother...



GOAN HINDU: I'll worship from outside, father.

VICAR: Why from outside ?

GOAN HINDU: My temple, father. You built your church on it.

VICAR: What do you mean ?

GOAN HINDU: (Pointing to the foundations of the church) See the foundation stone to the church, father ? Look closely. That ancient carved motif is the lotus flower, and my gods sublime. That was my House of God...

VICAR: ...and still is, my son. Come inside.

GOAN HINDU: No.

*Goa*, contains a socio-realistic plot where forceful liberation of Goa from the Portuguese has been presented in the allegory of a personal, physical assault such as 'rape'. It is one of the worst personal abuses, leading the victim to disintegration and immense suffering. It appears that Currimbhoy had his doubts on whether this liberation of Goa would help it retain its 'originality' and its 'identity'. India, is a land of multiplicity, it celebrates its multilingual and multicultural nature. The dramatist might be questioning the readers if the 'liberation' would actually be a 'liberation' for Goa. Will the 'Goan' maintain and preserve its 'identity' in the aftermath of post colonialism. There is a state of confusion, a state where nobody has the accurate answer. It is a challenge for the natives and the Indian government to ensure that cultural identities are not lost.

Krishna's use of the metaphor of albinos points that the 'whites' lack colour. This absence of colour indicates the absence of the 'pigment' which may be referring to a true 'self'. Thus, he seems to question the personality of Senhora Miranda and people like her. Miranda is no longer living in the aristocratic times, but she refuses to accept it and still carries all the airs of a superior and an elitist class member. Krishna probably derides this duplicity and dishonesty, when he says 'You've got shades of black within you, Maria. See it right and you won't be conscious of it anymore.' (p.61)

Rose is shown to represent the internal dark side of Miranda. The mother's unconscious black identity gets revealed in the birth of Rose. Krishna has accepted his 'black' persona but he questions the authenticity of racial discrimination being based on skin colour.

The colonizers used to colonize the natives for their selfish aims and they always represented the arduous task as 'white man's burden'.

The names of the characters are aptly selected to draw a parallel and bring unity of theme. Thus, Krishna is 'black' and the Portuguese people including 'Miranda' are white. 'Black' is referred as hard while the 'white' is 'soft'. As Senhora Miranda comments: 'You are not soft Krishna, you're hard. You don't have love Krishna, you have hate'.

Thus, we find Miranda working on her predispositions of white being pure, soft, refined, sophisticated and true whereas the black alludes to hardness, inflexibility, coarseness and hatred.

This reflects the ideology of the West to degrade the knowledge, culture and values of the orientals.

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Krishna, embodying the characteristics of an awakened native, exposes Miranda and her falsehood during their dialogue, labeling her as belonging to a category of white which has black spots on them. Thus, concluding that the natives can no longer be subdued by the white by any length of argument.

Asif Currimbhoy in his play reveals the postcolonial dichotomy between the self and other in *Goa*.

Asif Currimbhoy reveals that the human bond is weaker than the social status. He shows how a mother can ignore her daughter only because of her colour. In spite of living in India for so many years, the Portuguese treat the native as 'other'.

### 4.8.2 Setting of the Play

All the events of this play occur in the huge square in the Centre of the stage. There is a church towards the North of the square or patio (facing the audience). To the west of the Patio is shown Taverna. A balcony with a partial view of the residence is revealed on the east side of the Patio, around which most of the action of the play takes place. In the middle of the square there exist some benches and a statue of Vasco da Gama, the great explorer. This setting remains the same throughout the play with minor changes in between the scenes.

#### Time:

The action of the play takes place when Goa was a Portuguese colony and was not a part of the Indian territory.

The playwright is a great humanist and he does not have faith in the politicians. This is revealed in the dialogues and plot of the play and he sets the audience to think and critically analyse the situation.

### 4.8.3 Characterization

Currimbhoy emerges as a playwright of great psychological skill who lets his characters grow and evolve through numerous instances of contrast and parallel. Skillfully, he traces the development of the main characters in his play—Krishna and Rose. The other characters weaved in the subplot are flat characters, who are merely sketched as an outline.

#### Miranda

Senhora Miranda is shown to be a fair looking woman. She is fashionable and maintains her looks and charms in the play. She is shown to be splendidly dressed in the latest Portuguese fashion, carrying a colourful parasol in hand in the first scene of the play. She is 40 years old. She has a daughter named Rose who is 14 years old. The Portuguese administrator and Miranda are Portuguese natives. Her key trait is that of a 'foreigner', 'white' with a strong hatred for the 'natives' and 'dark skinned' individuals. She is ambitious and wants to enjoy life. She is proud of the fact that she belongs to the ruling class of the Portuguese. She treats the dark skinned people as 'other' and says, 'They make me feel dirty.' The play progresses with the constant reminders of white being pure and black being dirty.

She is confident and demanding due to her origin, she exudes the power vested in the whites. Her character is shown to dominate all the other characters in this play. Her colour consciousness extends even to her daughter as well.

She does not like her daughter due to her colour. She hates the black night when Rose was born. She says: 'Only I am fair, and she is dark'. For Miranda 'dark' is bad and is indicative of the original sin and is 'congenital', so it gets passed from generation to generation. She does want to be a part of this legacy, so she tries consciously as well as unconsciously to stay distinct from Rose.

**Portuguese administrator** is one of the characters in the play who reveals his power through his control over the natives. In his dialogues, he emphasizes that West is strong and East is weak. The Portuguese administrator has displayed a kind of 'supremacy' which is central to any colonialist intervention. He strongly opines that anyone who belongs to western countries can handle eastern countries very easily. This exhibits his sense of superiority over the natives.

He cries in the play:

" This is Goa...my home, no less than Lisbon where I was born. And when we, the Portuguese, came to India almost four centuries ago, we made of Goa an enclave...we feel the same way about Goa, despite our political differences...Goa...Goa...this is Goa, my own, nestling Goa amidst green hills and valleys, the rice fields and rivers that make this paradisaal land...Look at the patio in front of you. This is the heart of each village of Goa".

### Alphonso

Another character Alphonso, repeats this sense of superiority over the natives of Goa. He is shown to be giving expensive gifts to Miranda, but at the same time he is also lustful for Rose. It shows his selfishness, that he can go to any extent to get his wish fulfilled. He beats up Krishna, who has expressed true love for Goa. Whereas, this man is shown to court Miranda freely and at the same time, he is eyeing her daughter as well. His dialogues reveal his character.

**Krishna** also represents India and is shown to be dark coloured and is treated badly by the white Portuguese Alphonso and Miranda. But Krishna loved Rose and he stands with this love till the end of the play. He is portrayed as a strong, critical character with traits of loyalty for the one he loves. After Miranda's vicious act of luring him, he is shown to be going through psychological agony in his dialogues. His character is shown to express different emotions at different point of time. Thus, he is angry with Rose at one point of time, for her timidity and lack of confidence. Had she raised her voice and expressed her love for him initially, their love story would have been different. But Rose is revealed in the play as a victim. Her inaction compels him to behave in an unnatural way, which he never wanted to happen.

### Goan Nationalist

Another character portrayed by Currimbhoy in this play is that of the Goan Nationalist. He is shown to have the key quality of patriotism, which gets revealed in his dialogues during the play. He says to the Portuguese administrator: 'Your days are numbered friend.' He is a true nationalist accusing the administrator / foreigner of exploiting India. He says, 'What the hell do you think I'm doing here! spending my time usefully? I got my reputation too with the nationalists and it does me no good to sit here drinking with you.'

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## Vicar and Goan Hindu

Flat characters such as Vicar and Goan Hindu are also employed by the dramatist to discuss subthemes – here- religion— used as a bait by the colonizers.

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#### Old Woman and Man

Within the main plot there is a subplot of smuggling in Goa. The characters are revealed through their dialogues and are not designed or described in detail by the dramatist. This sequence also shows the art and skill of the dramatist to juxtapose music, dance and dialogues to create a lasting impact on the audience.

The dialogues:

Old Woman: ...and the sea waters rose like mountains around the old city of Goa, and the fires ranged, and pestilence came... but there was no repentance...

Old man: ...ahh...

Old Woman: ...who would have thought this paradisial island where peace flowed like the pure water of rain would form dreadful avalanches of death and destruction...

Old man: ...ahh... (Then the smuggler changes the melody, deliberately, offensively. A bright jarry tune. He dances half joyfully, yet with a sense of the macabre, and comes prancing up to the Old Woman, shaking his hips, suggestively, in an obvious imitation of Senhora Miranda.

Reactions of the group are as follows—a guffaw from the Portuguese administrator and the Goan nationalist—an amused smile from the Vicar and the Goan Hindu—frozen silence from the Old Woman, but a suppressed grin from the Old man.)

Old Woman: Oh go away, you filthy man.

Smuggler: (Raising himself up with hauteur, and putting a monocle to his eye) Me? Filthy? Why, you old crow, I give you satins and laces, genuinely smuggled at discounted rates.

#### Comments of Critics on the play

‘Yet another work of distinction is the connotative aptness of the titles of most of Currimbhoy’s plays. *Goa* is apparently simple enough: but when one of the principle characters, Alphonso, says ‘Rose is Goa, Goa is Rose’ the mind is alerted to the coiled symbolism of the play” (Iyengar, K.R.S.).

Graham Greene commented on this play:

‘It would require several readings before I could appreciate it fully, but it strikes me as a most remarkable piece of work.’

Walter Meserve remarks:

‘Currimbhoy’s plays are concerned with the problems of man everywhere. He lends breath to his thought...even when he deals with India, he becomes the voice of universal revolt and anguish screaming itself hoarse at the seemingly immovable societies around the world.’

Frantz Fanon has observed:

Western bourgeois' racial prejudice as regards the nigger and the Arab is a racism of contempt; it is a racism which minimizes what it hates....

The racial prejudice of the young national bourgeoisie is a racism of defence, based on fear. (1963: 131)

There is, for example, the bitter anguish Currimbhoy feels for 'Goa', created by the union of Portuguese and Indian only to be destroyed by conflicts with that union. His socio-realistic plotting, however, expands into allegory in 'Goa', where rape the most violent personal abuse, symbolizes the final suffering and disintegration. (Preface to *The Hungry Ones*, p.12-13)

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

29. Who are the main characters of the play *Goa*?
30. Who is Rose in the play *Goa*?
31. Name some of the famous playwrights who brought international recognition to Indian drama.

## 4.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. An essential quality of drama is its objectivity. Drama is a composite art, in which the author, the actor, and the stage manager all combine to produce the total effect.
2. Samuel Beckett's '*Theatre of the Absurd*' introduced the existentialist theory that abstract existence played great role in life above everything in it. This type of drama in being was essentially poetic and full of imagination and exhibited the downplay of language.
3. The Dadaism movement was a protest against colonialism and the subsequent World War I in most of the European nations. It was a movement carried by those literary artists who opposed nationalism.
4. The aim of the 'Theatre of Cruelty' was to portray 'representational medium' and focused on dealing with the current situations. They took the responsibility of 'presenting' and 'representing' both.
5. A notable feature of Aurobindo's plays was that they narrated lives of people from various parts of the globe that echoed a multitude of experience, moods and emotions.
6. A prominent name among women playwright that emerged in the colonial era was that of Bharati Sarabhai's.
7. Narayan presented a world immersed in humor and irony, sympathy and fantasy yet not undetached from realism. Narayan's writings displayed his inclinations towards philosophy. Narayan's endearing appeal also lay in his simplicity.
8. Some of the eminent Indian English playwrights of post-Independence era were Pratap Sharma, Asif Currimbhoy and Gurucharan Das. People like G.V. Desani, Lakhan Dev, Manjeri Isvaran, and Pritish Nandy also

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contributed to theater but with own specific style and deliberate deviations.

9. Girish Karnad and Badal Sirkar was among the famous playwrights of contemporary India.
10. Indian novelists of contemporary times who are writing in English include names, such as, Shashi Deshpande, K. Nagrajan, Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Raj Kamal Jha, Jhumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee, Bharti Kirchner, Amit Chaudhuri, Vikas Swarup, Rohinton Mistry, C R. Krishnan, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghose, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamla Markandya, Vikaram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upamanyu Chatterjee and Arundhati Roy to name a few.
11. Like traditional Indian drama, Karnad too took legend, history and myth as the main source for his important plays, *Yayati*, *Tughlaq* and *Hayavadana*. But compared to other plays, Karnad's plays are innovatively directed. He brings first-hand knowledge of the practical demands of the stage and a better understanding of dramatic style and technique.
12. 'Indian imagination' is a phrase which embraces the vast labyrinth of the multicultural sub-continent of India "encompassing the philosophical and religious beliefs, the flora and fauna, the historical developments and the political, social, and scientific transformations".
13. The incidents and events in play *Tughlaq* originate from the paradoxical actions of the protagonist and the plot is based on opposites and paradoxes.
14. Karnad's language is appropriate and effective. He writes dialogues which are flexible and precise, and change according to the nuances of his plot and characters.
15. Two important factors give Karnad the unique status of being one of India's greatest playwrights:
  - (a) His view or vision of life and
  - (b) Exemplary Indian imagination with reference to subject matter, dramatic form, myths and legends, literary allusions, philosophy of karma and rebirth, etc.
16. *Tughlaq* is an allegory to the political mood of disillusionment which followed the Nehru era of idealism.
17. No. The play *Tughlaq* is based on historical accounts of Barani and others but the writer has deviated from the facts to aid the dramatic purpose.
18. Karnad closely follows history in showing Tughlaq's liberal and rational religious views, humanism and idealism, his administrative skills. He also follows history in presenting Tughlaq as a shrewd politician guilty of fratricide and patricide.
19. The episode of Aziz and Aazam is included to create humour, irony, paradoxes and parallels and highlighting the failure of Tughlaq's administration.
20. Karnad departs from history when it suits him as per the needs of his dramatic art.

21. Tughlaq's policies and ideals are noble. But to achieve them he indulges in patricide and fratricide, murders his opponents and uses religion as a political game. So he is an "honest scoundrel".
22. Girish Karnad builds tempo and sustained intensity to create unity of effect.
23. The other characters dramatize various aspects of his complex personality and at the same time they also exist as individuals in their own right.
24. In the face of opposition from priests and courtiers to his plans of shifting the capital from Delhi to Daultabad, Tughlaq issues orders that Delhi be vacated immediately. He says, 'Every living soul in Delhi will leave for Daultabad within a fortnight... Everyone must leave. Not a light should be seen in the windows of Delhi. Not a wisp of smoke should rise from its chimneys.'
25. *Tughlaq* sought the support and cooperation of the people to execute his new plans to reform the society. He was liberal to the Hindus. He believed in offering office to a person rich in talent rather than preferring the caste and creed of the person.
26. Karnad follows the historical records of Barani and other orthodox historians who were biased against the Sultan. Also, Karnad's purpose of writing this play to exhibit the political disillusionment prevailing in the 1960s in India and this made him highlight the negative aspects of the Sultan's personality.
27. Asif Currimbhoy was born in Mumbai, India in the year 1928 in an illustrious, reputed Khoja Muslim family.
28. The significant works of Asif Currimbhoy are *Goa*, *The Doldrummers*, *The Dumb Dancer*, *The Hungry Ones*, *The Refugee* and others.
29. The main characters of the play *Goa* are Krishna, Rose, Portuguese Administrator, Goan Nationalist, Goan Hindu, Vicar, Old Woman, Old Man, Smugglers, Senhora Maria Miranda, Alphonso and some young people and singers.
30. Rose is the child of a half-Portuguese mother and a native father.
31. The Indian dramaturgy was evolved significantly in the works of playwrights such as Girish Karnad, Mahesh Dattani, Asif Currimbhoy and Nissim Ezekiel.

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### 4.10 SUMMARY

- Drama is an ancient form of art written in prose or verse accompanied by various tools and techniques meant to be staged.
- An essential quality of drama is its objectivity. A play whether divided into acts or not, has plot, characters, background, theme, dramatic unities, and techniques and so on.
- George Bernard Shaw and Thomas Stearns Eliot were two major 20th century figures who used drama to convey their ideas, exploring different themes.
- Indian English drama owes its origin to Krishna Mohan Banerji and his play *The Persecuted* written in 1837.

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- Playwright, Harindranath Chattopadhyay is an important figure in Indian english drama. He made his debut as a dramatist with *Abu Hassan* (1918).
- During the colonial era, many women writers emerged as significant playwrights. Prominent among them is Bharati Sarabhai who wrote two plays titled *The Well of the People* (a symbolic and poetic text echoing Gandhian social ideology) and *Two Women* (a realistic play prying into the private world of individuals).
- A theatrical tradition that was given shape by names such as Badal Sirkar, Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh and Vijay Tendulkar paved the way for contemporary Indian english theatre.
- Badal Sircar is another name that vibrates throughout contemporary theatre. He was associated with the New Theatrical Movement in India.
- As far as the poetical scenario is concerned, today Indian English poetry holds a place of its own in the milieu of world poetry.
- Girish Karnad was born on 19 May 1938 in Matheran, a town near Mumbai, India. He has earned international acclaim as an actor, poet, playwright, director, critic and translator. Karnad hails from the Marathi-Kannada-speaking Saraswat community.
- Karnad, who is the pioneer of new drama, shows how drama is meant to fulfill a serious purpose of highlighting the disparities in our social life. It is also aimed at reconciling paradoxes and contradictions in life, which lie at the root of all sufferings.
- A number of the Indian habits and beliefs are also reflected in Karnad's plays. Aziz the scoundrel in *Tughlaq* is appointed a state officer for looking into cases of tampering with the law and cozening the crown.
- *Tughlaq* explores the paradox of the idealistic Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, whose reign is considered one of the most spectacular failures in Indian history.
- Karnad's *Tughlaq* is featured upon the life and turbulent reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, who ruled over India for almost twenty-six years from 1324 to 1351. However, Karnad has taken only five years (1327 to 1332) from the total duration of these many years.
- The term existentialism means 'pertaining to existence'; or in logic, 'predicating existence'. Philosophically, it now applies to a vision of the condition and existence of man, his place, and function in the world, relationship or lack of one with God.
- Drama is 'literature that walks' as Marjorie Boulton states. It is the plot of the play which is the source of all the action, development of its characters and dialogues.
- Karnad has presented the titular hero of the play, Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, with a great psychological depth and dexterity. The other characters dramatize various aspects of his complex personality and at the same time they also exist as individuals in their own right.



- Asif Currimbhoy was born in Mumbai, India in the year 1928 in an illustrious, reputed Khoja Muslim family. His father was an industrialist and his mother worked as a social worker.
- Currimbhoy laid the foundation of modern Indian drama in the 1950s. His initial playwriting reflected the tremendous impact of the Western world—sensuality, openness, crudity, challenging the conventional values and beliefs.
- *Goa* consists of two Acts with six scenes, closely knit plot, smooth delineation of characters and perfect setting for the action.
- The main characters of the play are Krishna, Rose, Portuguese Administrator, Goan Nationalist, Goan Hindu, Vicar, Old Woman, Old Man, Smugglers, Senhora Maria Miranda, Alphonso and some young people and singers. The action is interspersed with folk songs and dances of Goa.
- Currimbhoy emerges as a playwright of great psychological skill who lets his characters grow and evolve through numerous instances of contrast and parallel.

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### 4.11 KEY TERMS

- **Catharsis:** It refers to the moment in which the hero of the tragedy would suffer some dramatic and damaging change into his fortune.
- **Drama:** It refers to an ancient form of art written in prose or verse accompanied by various tools and techniques meant to be staged.
- **Indian English:** It refers to works written by Indians in English language.
- **Babu English:** It was a term coined during the colonial era to mark the encounter between the language of the colonizers (English) and the natives.

### 4.12 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Objective Questions

- I. Fill in the blanks using appropriate words.
  - (a) An essential quality of drama is its \_\_\_\_\_.
  - (b) \_\_\_\_\_ discovered the drama of ideas in England.
  - (c) Badal Sircar was associated with the \_\_\_\_\_ Movement in India.
  - (d) Karnad's main objective in his play *Tuglaq* is to highlight the \_\_\_\_\_ in the Sultan's complex personality.
- II. State whether the following sentences are true or false.
  - (a) A playwright cannot speak his emotions directly; he or she has to use his characters to express them.
  - (b) The Surrealist Movement was a protest against colonialism and the subsequent World War I in most of the European Nations.

(c) In contemporary times, Indian dram continues to follow European inspiration.

(d) Jean Paul Sartre is the hierophant of modern existentialism.

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### Short-Answer Questions

1. What are miracle plays?
2. How is drama different from a play?
3. In theatre, what were the thematic preoccupations of the post-Independence era?
4. Write a short note on the characteristic features of Indian novelists of contemporary times.
5. In what respect has Karnad followed history in writing his play *Tughlaq*?
6. What was the modernism approach of Bertold Brecht in respect to theatre?
7. Discuss the various forms of Indian theatre.
8. Write a short-note on the subtext of the play *Tughlaq*.
9. What are the literary techniques used in the play *Tughlaq*?
10. Discuss briefly the life and works of the playwright Asif Currimbhoy.

### Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the intricate relation between Christianity and plays.
2. Indian English drama registered a marked change in its aesthetics post-independence. Explain.
3. Describe Muhammad bin Tughlaq's humour.
4. What is the purpose of using humour and satire in the play *Tughlaq*?
5. How is *Tughlaq* an existentialist play?
6. How is irony best brought out in *Tughlaq*?
7. Critically review the plot of the play *Goa* as an allegory to the decolonization of Goa by Indian government in 1961.
8. Analyse the dramatic style and techniques used in *Goa* by Asif Currimbhoy.
9. Explain how Karnad projects contemporary disillusionments in his play *Tughlaq*.
10. Examine the plot of the play *Goa* in detail.

## 4.13 FURTHER READING

Reddy, P. Bayapa. 1985. *The Plays of Asif Currimbhoy*. Calcutta: Writers Workshop.

Currimbhoy, Asif. 1964. *Goa*. Kolkata: Writer's Workshop.

Dhanavel, P. 2000. *The Indian Imagination of Girish Karnad*. New Delhi: Prestige Books.

Balachandran, K. 2006. *Critical Essays on Commonwealth Literature*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons.

## UNIT 5 FICTION

### Structure

- 5.0 Introduction
- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Short Story: An Introduction
- 5.3 Biography and Autobiography: An Introduction
- 5.4 Mulk Raj Anand: About the Author
- 5.5 *A Pair of Mustachios*: Text, Summary and Critical Appreciation
  - 5.5.1 *A Pair of Mustachios*: Text
  - 5.5.2 *A Pair of Mustachios*: Summary
  - 5.5.3 *A Pair of Mustachios*: Critical Appreciation
- 5.6 Khushwant Singh: About the Author
- 5.7 *The Mark of Vishnu*: Text, Summary and Critical Appreciation
  - 5.7.1 *The Mark of Vishnu*: Text
  - 5.7.2 *The Mark of Vishnu*: Summary
  - 5.7.3 *The Mark of Vishnu*: Critical Appreciation
- 5.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 5.9 Summary
- 5.10 Key Terms
- 5.11 Self Assessment Questions and Exercises
- 5.12 Further Reading

### NOTES

## 5.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to the literary genre of 'fiction'. Literally, the word 'fiction' means something that is not real, rather it is imaginative. Thus, writings in this genre are usually about imaginary people, incidents, contexts, conflicts and so on. It has the power to engage the reader to experience their emotions and reflect on their experiences while witnessing the life and conflict of the characters in a fiction. It has a sublimating effect and it enables the writer to draw the attention of readers to several themes of personal and social relevance.

As such a fictional work is far-fetched from reality yet it opens itself to multiple interpretations by the reader. The literary genre of fiction has several subgenres as well. This includes the following:

- **Fantasy:** It has monsters, magic and characters with superpowers.
- **Science Fiction:** It is set in the future or on other planets. It has aliens, robots, and/or futuristic creatures invented as an offshoot of advancement in science and technology.
- **Horror:** This type of literary work creates a feeling of fear in the readers with frightful delineation of characters and horrific contextual details.
- **Mystery:** It deals with suspense, the art of holding the reader's attention by keeping secrets and unexplained events. The writer leads the reader to a solution of a crime or the unravelling of closely guarded secrets. Anything that is kept secret or remains unexplained or unknown.

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- **Historical Fiction:** This type of text deals with real people and/or events that is set in the past. The context and conflict, settings and characters are imagined and visualized by the writer and penned down for the enjoyment of reader.
- **Realistic Fiction:** This is a special text which is a blend of reality and fiction.
- **Folktale:** This category of text has an ‘unknown’ author and the story is ‘retold’ or restyled by the author. It includes fable, mythology, tall tale, legend and fairytale.
- **Fable:** It is a short story characterized by personified animals and a moral.
- **Mythology:** It has gods/goddesses and supernatural beings as main characters.
- **Tall Tale:** These types of stories are set in the Wild West, the American frontier. The skills/ strengths and personality of the main characters is exaggerated to a great extent bringing humour and amusement
- **Legend:** This literary piece is based on a real person or place, however, the facts are stretched beyond non-fiction.
- **Fairytale:** It often starts with the customary ‘Once upon a time...’, has a supernatural element and magic in it making it full of enchantment and fantasy.
- Fables refers to a unique style of story which is very short, have talking animals, having one or none human element.

In this unit, two famous short stories penned down by M. R. Anand and Khushwant Singh have been explored at length for critical understanding of this type of literary genre. Both are contemporary writers and employ their distinct style of writing.

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## 5.1 OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the salient features of a short story
- List the significant works of M. R. Anand and Khushwant Singh
- Critically analyse *A Pair of Mustachios* written by M. R. Anand
- Evaluate the significant themes of *The Mark of Vishnu* written by Khushwant Singh

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## 5.2 SHORT STORY: AN INTRODUCTION

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A **short story** is one type of prose fiction. As per Wikipedia dictionary, it is ‘an invented prose narrative shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect and often concentrating on the creation of mood rather than plot’. The literary techniques used by a short story writer are similar to

those employed by a novelist.

The nature of short story is well expressed by the award winning British author and short story writer as thus :

[short stories] seem to answer something very deep in our nature as if, for the duration of its telling, something special has been created, some essence of our experience extrapolated, some temporary sense has been made of our common, turbulent journey towards the grave and oblivion.

The short story typically ranges anywhere from 1,000 to 4,000 words. Some short stories have as many words as 20,000 words and as less than as 1,000 words (also referred to as flash fiction or short stories). Given below are some interesting views on short stories, read along to develop an insight:

‘Short stories do not say this happened and this happened and this happened. They are a microcosm and a magnification rather than a linear progression.’ – Isobelle Carmody

‘Not that the story need be long, but it will take a long while to make it short.’ – Henry David Thoreau

‘I want my stories to be something about life that causes people to say, not, oh, isn’t that the truth, but to feel some kind of reward from the writing, and that doesn’t mean that it has to be a happy ending or anything, but just that everything the story tells moves the reader in such a way that you feel you are a different person when you finish.’  
– Alice Munro

### How to analyze a short story?

A short story is characterized by a single event around which situations and action sequences are crafted. The following aspects of the short story need to be explored while analysing a short story:

**Setting:** It is a description of where and when the story takes place. In contrast to a novel, there exist fewer settings in a short story. Let us observe the following:

- Location, place of action, weather, time of day, socio- cultural context and so forth
- Purpose of the setting; does it hold relevance for the sequence of event or is it just a backdrop
- What time zone is being referred to in the story, when did the writer pen down the story, does it have any impact on the themes explored the story? Is it a story written in the present, past or future?
- What impact does this time have on characterization, language, social milieu, themes delineated in the story?

**Characterization:** It forms the most significant aspect of a short story as it revolves around one or more central characters. Through characterization, the writer indicates the themes explored in the story. Thus, while analysing the characterization by a short story writer observe the following aspects:

- Which type of characterization has been used by the writer – flat or rounded?
- Are the dialogues and one liners used by the writer sufficient to draw his

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characters? Has the writer given much thought in delineating the physical appearance, emotional, psychological and moral characteristics of the central characters through interaction?

- Who is the central character and subordinating character?
- How many flat / static characters appear in the story?
- How many round/ dynamic characters are there in the story?
- How far are the characters believable and realistic? Are they stereotypes?

**Plot:** In a short story, the plot is structured around one key or significant event. Try to identify the following for a better understanding of the short story:

- Which is the key event being focused in the story?
- Is the plot construction linear, chronological or circular?
- Is the plot convincing, realistic or imaginary?

**The narrator:** Identifying the narrator is central to analysing and critically appreciating a short story. It is vital to comprehend who is telling the story? Who is the main character? Discerning the point of view holds the key to a fruitful interpretation of the story. Generally, in a short story, one character's point of view is employed by the writer for narrating the short story. The following questions would help you in this task of identifying the point of view:

- Who is the narrator or speaker in the story?
- Is the main character the spokesperson for the author?
- Is the first person narration 'I' being used in the story?
- Is the story written in a third person 'he/she' point of view of narration?
- Is there any omniscient narrator revealing what all the characters are feeling, thinking and doing at all times and in all places?

**Conflict:** A short story is usually woven around one key incident, highlighting a conflict faced by the main characters. The treatment given to this conflict brings a resolution of the problem, bringing to the forefront the themes of the story. Hence, in a short story, we observe the following aspects:

- The manner of describing the main conflict?
- Where does the conflict exist? Does it exist within the character or outside the character?
- Is this conflict an offshoot of the socio-political cultural context in which the character exists?
- What personality traits /values of the main character/s are revealed in the resolution of this conflict?

**The turning point/ climax:** It is the point of greatest intensity and tension, which holds the reader's attention. It is also a point of major action. Here, one needs to observe the following points:

- Is there a turning point in the story?
- When does the climax take place?

- What is the rising action?

**Theme:** Any work of literature serves as a tool in the hands of the writer to give a message to reader and the society on issues related to life, culture, education and other aspects. The writer provokes the reader to think on pertinent issues related to excellence of individual and society. This is achieved through weaving of this message intricately in the dialogues of main characters, interaction among characters and so on. This message is the theme, or main idea of the short story. Interpretation of a short story would remain incomplete in case the reader fails to discern this hidden message. So as a reader ask yourself the following questions:

- Which theme is being explored? How is it expressed?
- Is there a single or multiple theme?
- What is the underlying message of the writer?

**Writer's Style:** Just as our personality is determined by our dress up and language, the quality of a writer is determined by the style adopted by the writer in writing a short story. This style is visible in the choice of vocabulary, expressions, characterization, imagery, symbols, tone, emotions and values expressed in the story. This style enables the readers to interpret the attitude and inclination of the writer on the themes and issues explored in the short story. The tone in a short story is sometimes dramatic, comic / humorous, ironic, and stubborn/ cold. The writers use a lot of symbolism and figurative language to bring in a myriad of colours in the short story. While interpreting and analysing a short story, it would help the reader if the figurative use of language is captured appropriately.

### Significant elements of a Short Story

Having discussed at length the prominent features of the short story genre, let us briefly read through the significant elements of a short story.

- While writing a short story, you should introduce conflict to the reader right away.
- One should state the critical aspect or features of the story to the readers instead of beating about the bush.
- Do not use any flowery language or proverbial phrases. Get straight to the point with short and crisp sentences.
- Do ensure to build the ending of the story to your readers.
- Lastly, ensure that your short story has a clear conclusion which does not leave the readers confused.

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## 5.3 BIOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY: AN INTRODUCTION

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A biography or 'bio,' as it is commonly known is a comprehensive explanation of the life of an individual, authored by a person other than him. It is a detailed piece of intricate material with respect to all details about the person for example, his or her birthplace, academic background, profession, relations and death. A biography

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is a presentation about all intimate details of the life of the person in concern. It even touches upon the individual's success or failures, contributions to the society, drawbacks or strong point. It is an analysis of the individual's entire personality.

A textual representation of somebody's life is called a biography. A visual or interpretation in the form of a film is called a biopic.

It is reincarnation of an individual's life collected in textual or cinematographic form by a person other than himself. The writer collects all pertinent and fascinating details about the subject and packs them up in the form of a very palatable presentation for the readers to read, learn and enjoy.

### Autobiography

Autobiography means the life draft of an individual written by him or her. The suffix 'auto' in the word autobiography means 'self,' hence; an autobiography consists of all the components of a biography but it is written or narrated himself or herself by the writer. Sometimes, people even take help of others to write their autobiographies. Though written by another person called a 'ghostwriter, the work is published, however on the name of the individual himself.

### Biography and Autobiography: A History and an Overview

An autobiography and a biography is a somewhat detailed description of a specific individual's life, including the endeavour to describe the personality, disposition, and environment of his life. It is also inclusive of the person's life time undertakings, accomplishments and experiences. In the beginning of the establishment of the genre of biographies, ancient Greeks and Romans started to give brief formal written accounts of lives of people.

The most well-known existing instance of such work is the 'Parallel Lives of Greek and Roman' personalities written by the Greek author Plutarch, c. 46-120 AD. This work was translated by Sir Thomas North in 1579, and the translated version became a source of plays written by William Shakespeare on Roman people. Authors from the medieval ages used to write comprehensive records of the actions and activities of sovereigns and emperors. Besides this, hagiographies were also written which was an account of lives of Christian saints. These writings were generally founded on spiritual folklore instead of hard facts.

Seventeenth century was the time when a fairly reasonably nonspiritual biography came to recognition in England. A detailed account of the life of Izaak Walton is the most illustrious example of such sort, written somewhere in the later part of mid-17th century.

The 18th century was the time when biographies started to emerge on the social scene in full-scale in England. The theory of biography also took the shape of a distinct literary genre during this time. It was during this century that first Samuel Johnson wrote a beautiful biography on the *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-81) and later, James Boswell wrote a biography on the very *Life of Samuel Johnson* in 1791. By the turn of the century, biographies gained so much popularity that famous male and female wrote at least one biographical title either on the life of a notable individual or on their own lives.



Autobiographical works though are personal accounts of the author's life but the same, however, must not be mistaken with memoirs. In the former, importance is not given only to the author's development of self but the society around and contemporary happenings witnessed by the author also form a part of this private account. Latter, on the other hand is an everyday record of the happenings in the author's life, which is chronicled for personal contentment. Many of such works are sometimes not even published. Diaries of Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn written in the 17th century are examples of such memoirs.

The first ever, fully conceptualized and articulated autobiography is, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, this was written in the 4th century. The pattern of this reflective yet delicate transcendent autobiography is based on that which became the fundamental understanding in Christian autobiography: the agonized psychological disaster of the author, and his salvage and transformation upon discovering his Christian identity and sacred calling. Michel de Montaigne's *Essays*, published in 1580 and the later additions to it, together institute the first pronounced example of autobiographical self-disclosure written for its characteristic importance, instead of spiritual or moral motives.

Other later written illustrious accomplishments in mainly non-spiritual autobiographies are Rousseau's *Confessions*, written between 1764-70, Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit, Poetry and Truth*, written between 1810-31, and the autobiographies of Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, Sean O'Casey, Lillian Hellman, and Gertrude Stein (published in 1933 under the title *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*). Many spiritual self-histories for example, John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), were based on Augustine's instance of spiritual revelation of the self, focused on a disaster and transformation. A significant branch of such non-spiritual autobiographies representing a spiritual crisis settled by the author discovering his own individuality and calling, as a poet or artist rather than as a Christian, also rose to importance. *The Prelude* by Wordsworth published in revised form 1850 is a good example of such an autobiography in verse.

In recent years, the difference between autobiography and narrative has narrowed down to quite an extent. The reason behind that is that authors make themselves a part of the written work, their own names. The novels and autobiographies authored by them are written in the declared style of fiction. Sometimes they even mix narrative and individual experiences

### **Difference between Biography and Autobiography**

The two customary kinds of literary works which chronicle the pen picture and a person's course of life are biography and autobiography. After understanding the content and style of both, let us now try to appreciate the differences that exist between these similar yet different forms:

Biography is a comprehensive version of someone's life authored by somebody else, whereas an autobiography is a self-written account of a person's life.

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Biographies may be authorized, i.e., written with the subject's permission or unauthorized, i.e., written without consent of the subject or his next of kin (in case of his demise). In case of a biography being written without due consent or knowledge of the subject, chances of factual errors or slip-ups increase manifold. On the other hand, autobiographies are written by the person himself so there is less scope of mistakes. Secondly, there is no hassle of obtaining authorizations or permissions from the subject or his family.

Biographies are a collection of data which is painstakingly put together over a long time from various people and sources. As a result of this, a biography portrays a diverse viewpoint to the person who reads. In contrast to this, an autobiography is a self-written account by the subject himself consequently, the author puts across the factual happenings, his opinions, viewpoints and thinking in his personal way, which somehow narrows down the perception presented to the reader as the accounts are fixated and biased opinions of the only the author who is also the subject of the book.

While writing an autobiography, first narratives for example: I, me, we, he, she, etc, are used by the writer, which establishes a close connect between the reader and the author. Due to that the reader feels as though he or she has experienced the accounts of the autobiography himself or herself. Contrary to that, a biography is written in third person thus rendering the experience more impersonal comparatively less close.

The aim behind writing a biography is to familiarize and enlighten the readers about the life and personality of the subject, whereas an autobiography is an expression of one's first hand experiences, personal beliefs, accomplishments, realizations and opinions of the narrator.

Famous autobiographies of all times: *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller, *An Autobiography* by Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, *Memoirs of the Second World War* by Winston Churchill and *Wings of Fire* by A. P. J. Abdul Kalam.

Famous biographies of all times: Tolstoy's *A Russian Life* by Rosamund Bartlett, Joseph J Ellis', *His Excellency: George Washington* by Ronald William Clark's and Drew L. Crichton's *Princess Diana- A Biography Of The Princess Of Wales*.

#### Check Your Progress

1. What is a short story?
2. What is the difference between a biography and an autobiography?

## 5.4 MULK RAJ ANAND: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mulk Raj Anand was one of the few Indian writers who achieved appreciation from international readership. His subject of depiction in his literary work has been the lives and plight of the downtrodden and the subjected in the traditional

Indian society. In collaboration with literary giants such as R. K. Narayan, Raja Rao and Ahmad Ali, M. R. Anand pioneered Indo-Anglican fiction. His literary works comprise a good chunk of modern Indian Literature. He has received Padma Bhushan, the highest civilian honour conferred by the Indian government in recognition of his literary contributions. He employed Punjabi and Hindustani idioms skillfully in his novels and stories. Some of the key landmarks of his life have been listed below:

He was born on 12 December 1905 in Peshawar in present-day Pakistan. He graduated in 1924 from Khalsa College, Amritsar. He studied at the University College, London and Cambridge University. He completed his Ph D in 1929. His writing career began in England, published short reviews in T. S. Eliot's magazine, 'Criterion'. In 1939, he taught literature and philosophy at the London County Council Adult Educational Schools and the Workers' Educational Association till 1942.

During the 1930s and 1940s, he was very active in politics and was associated with politics in London and India— the British Labour Party as well as the Indian National Congress. He was deeply influenced by M.K. Gandhi. In his literary works, he has majorly dealt with social class divide existing in traditional Indian society.

In 1935, he actively engaged in laying the foundation of the Progressive Writers' Association in London along with writers Sajjad Zaheer and Ahmed Ali. He joined the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War in 1937. As a socialist, he wrote numerous articles and essays on Marxism, Fascism, Indian independence and other political issues.

He associated himself with the League of Nations School of Intellectual Cooperation as a student and lecturer. He joined India's freedom struggle and worked for BBC London, as a script writer during World War II. In 1946 he returned to India and settled down in Mumbai and founded the fine-arts magazine, 'Marg' in 1946. Later, he became a director of Kutub Publishers.

He spent the next several years from 1948 to 1966 teaching at various universities. During the 1960s he served as Tagore Professor of Literature and Fine Art at the University of Punjab and was appointed as the chairman of the Lalit Kala Akademi from 1965 to 1970. He became the President of Lokayata Trust in 1970. This literary giant of modern Indian English literature passed away on 28 September 2004.

### Awards

- In 1952, he was awarded the International Peace Prize of the World Peace Council for promoting peace among the nations through his literary works.
- He has been honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 1967 for his immense contribution in the field of art, literature and education.
- He won the Sahitya Academy Award for his novel *The Morning Face* (1968).

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- In 1978, he won the E.M. Forster award of Rs. 3000, the first such annual award instituted by M/s Arnold Heinemann for his *novel Confession of a Lover*. This work was judged as the best book of creative literature in the English Language.

**Major Work by M.R. Anand**

- *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937)
- *Across the Black Waters* (1940)
- *Seven Summers* (1951)
- *Morning Face* (1968)
- *Bubble* (1984)
- *Nine Moods of Bharata* (1999)
- *The Village* (1939)
- *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942)
- *Confession of a Lover* (1976)
- *Little Plays of Mahatma Gandhi* (1990)

Besides novels, Mulk Raj hand has written more than seventy short stories, published in various collections entitled:

- *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934)
- *The Barber's Trade Union and Other Stories* (1944)
- *Corn Goddess and Other Stories* (1947)
- *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories* (1959)
- *Reflections on the Golden Bed and Other Stories* (1953)
- *Between Tears and Laughter* (1973)
- *Lajwanti and Other Stories* (1966)
- *Indian Fairy Tales* (1946)
- *More Indian Fairy Tales* (1961)

**Check Your Progress**

3. When and where was Mulk Raj Anand born?
4. Mention the prominent works of Mulk Raj Anand.

## 5.5 A PAIR OF MUSTACHIOS: TEXT, SUMMARY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

In this section, we will study the text and the critical analysis of the short story, *A pair of Mustachios*.

### 5.5.1 *A Pair of Mustachios: Text*

Fiction

There are various kinds of mustachios worn in my country to mark the boundaries between the various classes of people. Outsiders may think it stupid to lay down, or rather to raise, lines of demarcation of this kind, but we are notorious in the whole world for sticking to our queer old conventions, prides and prejudices, even as the Chinese or the Americans or, for that matter, the English... And, at any rate, some people may think it easier and more convenient to wear permanent boundary-lines, like mustachios, which only need a smear of grease to keep them bright and shiny, rather than to wear frock coats, striped trousers and top hats, which constantly need to be laundered and dry-cleaned, and the maintenance of which is already leading to the bankruptcy of the European ruling classes. With them clothes make the man but, to us, mustachios make the man. So we prefer the various styles of mustachios to mark the differences between the classes.

And very unique and poetical symbols they are too. For instance, there is the famous lion moustache, the fearsome upstanding symbol of that great order of resplendent rajas, maharajas, nawabs and English army generals who are so well known for their devotion to the King Emperor. Then there is the tiger moustache, the uncanny, several-pointed moustache worn by the unbending, unchanging survivals from the ranks of the feudal gentry who have nothing left but pride in their greatness and a few mementoes of past glory, scrolls of honour granted by the former emperors, a few gold trinkets, heirlooms and bits of land. Next there is the goat moustache—a rather unsure brand, worn by the nouveau riche, the new commercial bourgeoisie and the shopkeeper class who somehow don't belong—an indifferent, thin little line of a moustache, worn so that its tips can be turned up or down as the occasion demands—a show of power to some coolie or humility to a prosperous client. There is the Charlie Chaplin moustache worn by the lower middle class, by clerks and professional men, a kind of half-and-half affair, deliberately designed as a compromise between the traditional full moustache and the clean-shaven Curzon cut of the sahibs like them to keep mustachios at all. There is the sheep moustache of the coolies and the lower orders, the mouse moustache of the peasants, and so on.

In fact, there are endless styles of mustachios, all appropriate to the wearers and indicative of the various orders, as rigorously adhered to as if they had all been patented by the Government of India or had been sanctioned by special appointment with His Majesty, the King, or Her Majesty, the Queen. And any poaching on the style of one class by members of another is resented, and the rising ratio of murders in my country is interpreted by certain authorities as being indicative of the increasing jealousy with which each class is guarding its rights and privileges in regard to the mark of the mustachio.

Of course, the analysis of the expert is rather too abstract and not all the murders can be traced to this cause but, certainly, it is true that the preferences of the people in regard to their mustachios are causing a lot of trouble in our parts.

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For instance, there was a rumpus in my own village the other day about a pair of mustachios.

It so happened that Seth Ramanand, the grocer and moneylender, who had been doing well out of the recent fall in the price of wheat by buying up whole crops cheap from the hard-pressed peasants and then selling them at higher prices, took it into his head to twist the goat moustache, integral to his order and position in society, at the tips, so that it looked nearly like a tiger moustache.

Nobody seemed to mind very much because most of the mouse-moustached peasants in our village are beholden to the local moneylender, either because they owe him interest on a loan, or an instalment on a mortgage of jewellery or land. Besides, the Seth had been careful enough to twist his moustache so that it seemed nearly, though not quite, like a tiger moustache.

But there lives in the vicinity of our village, in an old dilapidated Moghul style house, a *mussulman* named Khan Azam Khan, who claims descent from an ancient Afghan family whose heads were noblemen and councillors in the court of the great Moghuls. Khan Azam Khan, a tall, middle aged man, is a handsome and dignified person, and he wears a tiger moustache and remains adorned with the faded remnants of a gold-brocaded waistcoat, though he hasn't even a patch of land left.

Some people, notably the landlord of our village and the moneylender, maliciously say that he is an impostor, and that all his talk about his blue blood is merely the bluff of a rascal. Others, like the priest of the temple, concede that his ancestors were certainly attached to the Court of the Great Moghuls, but as sweepers. The landlord, the moneylender and the priest are manifestly jealous of anyone's long ancestry, however, because they have all risen from nothing—and it is obvious from the stately ruins around Khan Azam Khan what grace was once his and his forefathers. Only Khan Azam Khan's pride is greatly in excess of his present possessions and he is inordinately jealous of his old privileges and rather foolish and headstrong in safeguarding every sacred brick of his tottering house against vandalism. Khan Azam Khan happened to go to the moneylender's shop to pawn his wife's gold nose-ring one morning and he noticed the upturning tendency of the hair on Ramanand's upper lip which made the moneylender's goat moustache look almost like his own tiger moustache.

'Since when have the lentil-eating shopkeepers become noblemen?' he asked sourly.

'I don't know what you mean, Khan', Ramanand answered.

'You know what I mean, seed of a donkey!' said the Khan. Look at the way you have turned the tips of your moustache upwards. It almost looks like my tiger moustache. Turn the tips down to the style proper to the goat that you are! Fancy the airs of people nowadays!'

'Oh, Khan, don't get so excited,' said the moneylender, who was nothing if he was not amenable, having built up his business on the maxim that the customer is always

right. 'I tell you, turn the tip of your moustache down if you value your life!' raged Khan Azam Khan.

'If that is all the trouble, here you are', said Ramanand, brushing one end of his moustache with his oily hand so that it dropped like a dead fly. 'Come, show me the trinkets. How much do you want for them?'

Now that Khan Azam Khan's pride was appeased, he was like soft wax in the merchant's sure hand. His need, and the need of his family, for food, was great and he humbly accepted the value which the moneylender put on his wife's nose-ring.

But as he was departing, after negotiating his business, he noticed that though one end of the moneylender's moustache had come down at his behest, the other end was still up.

'A strange trick you have played on me, you swine,' the Khan said.

'I have paid you the best value for your trinket, Khan, that any moneylender will pay in these parts,' he said, 'especially in these days when the sarkars of the whole world are threatening to go off the gold standard.'

'It has nothing to do with the trinket,' said Azam Khan, 'but one end of your moustache is still up like my tiger moustache though you have brought down the other to your proper goat's style. Bring that other end down also so that there is no aping by your moustache of mine.'

'Now Khan,' said the moneylender, 'I humbled myself because you are doing business with me. You can't expect me to become a mere worm just because you have pawned a trinket with me. If you were pledging some more expensive jewellery I might consider obliging you a little more. Anyhow, my humble milk-skimmer doesn't look a bit like your valiant tiger moustache.'

'Bring that tip down!' Khan Azam Khan roared, for, the more he had looked at the moneylender's moustache the more the still upturned tip seemed to him like an effort at an imitation of his own.

'Now, be sensible, Khan,' the moneylender said, waving his hand with an imperturbable calm.

'I tell you, turn that tip down or I shall wring your neck,' said the Khan.

'All right, the next time you come to do business with me, I shall bring that tip down,' answered the moneylender cunningly.

'That is fair,' said Chaudhary Chottu Ram, the landlord of the village, who was sitting under the tree opposite.

'To be sure! To be sure!' some peasants chimed in sheepishly.

Khan Azam Khan managed to control his murderous impulses and walked away. But he could not quell his pride, the pride of generations of his ancestors who had worn the tiger moustache as a mark of their high position.

To see the symbol of his honour imitated by a moneylender—this was too much for him. He went home and fetched a necklace which

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had come down to his family. through seven generations and, placing it before the moneylender, said:

‘Now will you bring that tip of your moustache down?’ ‘By all means, Khan,’ said the moneylender. ‘But let us see about this necklace. How much do you want for it?’

‘Any price will do, so long as you bring the tip of your moustache down,’ answered Azam Khan.

After they had settled the business, the moneylender said: ‘Now Khan, I shall carry out your will.’ And he ceremoniously brushed the upturned tip of his moustache down.

As Azam Khan was walking away, however, he noticed that the other tip of the moneylender’s moustache had now gone up and stood dubiously like the upturned end of his own exalted tiger moustache. He turned on his feet and shouted:

‘I shall kill you if you don’t brush that moustache into the shape appropriate to your position as a lentil-eating moneylender!’

‘Now, now, Khan, come to your senses. You know it is only the illusion of a tiger’s moustache and nowhere like your brave and wonderful adornment,’ said the greasy moneylender.

‘I tell you I won’t have you insulting the insignia of my order!’ shouted Azam Khan. ‘You bring that tip down!’

‘I wouldn’t do it, Khan, even if you pawned all the jewellery you possess to me,’ said the moneylender.

‘I would rather lose all my remaining worldly possessions, my pots and pans, my clothes, even my house, than see the tip of your moustache turned up like that!’ spluttered Azam Khan.

‘*Achcha*, if you care so little for all your goods and chattels you sell them to me and then I shall turn that tip of my moustache down,’ said the moneylender. ‘And what is more, I shall keep it flat. Now, is that a bargain?’

‘That seems fair enough,’ said the landlord from under the tree where he was preparing for a siesta.

‘But what proof have I that you will keep your word?’ said Azam Khan. ‘You oily lentil-eaters never keep your promises.’

‘We shall draw up a deed, here and now,’ said the moneylender. ‘And we shall have it signed by the five elders of the village who are seated under that tree. What more do you want?’

‘Now, there is no catch in that,’ put in the landlord. ‘I and four other elders will come to court as witnesses on your behalf if he doesn’t keep his moustache to the goat style ever afterwards.’

‘I shall excommunicate him from religion if he doesn’t keep his word,’ added the priest, who had arrived on the scene on hearing the hubbub.

‘*Achcha*,’ agreed Azam Khan.

And he forthwith had a deed prepared by the petition writer of the village, who sat smoking his hubble-bubble under the tree. And this document, transferring all his household goods and chattels, was



signed in the presence of the five elders of the village and sealed. And the moneylender forthwith brought both tips of his moustache down and kept them glued in the goat style appropriate to his order.

Only, as soon as Khan Azam Khan's back was turned he muttered to the peasants seated nearby: 'My father was a Sultan.'

And they laughed to see the Khan give a special twist to his moustache as he walked away maintaining the valiant uprightness to the symbol of his ancient and noble family, though he had become a pauper.

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### 5.5.2 *A Pair of Mustachios: Summary*

This story is a humorous account of interaction between a moneylender Ramanand and his client Azam Khan. The story reveals the false pride upheld by certain castes and classes over petty things. The Indian society has often been blamed for unscrupulously upholding this so called 'family/clan' pride while forsaking the basic human values.

The story revolves around a Hindu moneylender, named Seth Ramanand and Azam Khan. Ramanand has made money for himself from the recent fall in prices of wheat. He is without any rich lineage. On the other hand, Azam Khan, claims descent from an ancient Afghan family which migrated to India during the ancient times along with the Muslim invaders. It is believed that several members of this old family were noblemen in the courts of Muslim kings. Having amassed wealth for himself, Seth Ramanand gets the notion that he should twist his goat moustache to give it the look of a tiger moustache. The story written by Anand pertains to the social milieu when classes were classified on the basis of moustachios.

The poor peasants who owed Ramanand 'interest on a loan, or an installment on a mortgage of jewellery or land' did not bother to look at the twist of his moustache. So Ramanand was able to fulfill his desire without annoying any individual.

The writer then introduces Azam Khan, a tall and middle-aged Muslim man who lives in a broken Mughal style house. He claimed to belong to an ancient Afghan family which had migrated to Indian along with the Muslim invaders. Azam Khan flaunted a tiger moustache and looked handsome. He usually wore a gold-brocaded waistcoat. However, it is to be noted that he did not even have a plot of land. There were some people in the society such as the priest who spread the word that Khan's ancestors were not noblemen but sweepers in the court of Mughal rulers.

Seth Ramanand is the protagonist of the story and Azam Khan has been presented as the foil to him. Mulk Raj Anand has presented the characters of his story in the milieu of the times. Seth Ramanand is the moneylender who enjoys a prominent position in the village. Anand highlights the belief that the moneylender and priest of the village are obviously jealous of anyone's long ancestry. Azam Khan is extremely proud of his faded lineage and is bent upon protecting his entity which is rather insignificant in this modern world.

One day, Azam Khan happened to visit Seth Ramanand to pawn his wife's gold nose-ring. At this moment, Azam Khan noticed that one end of Ramanand's

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moustache was turned upwards which made it look like a tiger moustache. Azam Khan got annoyed and immediately asked Ramanand to turn down the tips of his moustache: 'Look at the way you have turned the tips of your moustache upwards. It almost looks like my tiger moustache. Turn the tips down to the style proper to the goat that you are! Fancy the airs of people nowadays!'

Ramanand, quietly obeyed the demand of his customer but cleverly he did so with just one tip of his moustache. By this time, the transaction between the two of them was over. When Khan was about to return he noticed that one end of his moustache was still up in the air. Azam Khan again rigidly demand the tip to be put down; to this Ramanand replied: 'I humbled myself because you are doing business with me. You can't expect me to become a mere worm just because you have pawned a trinket with me. If you were pledging some more expensive jewellery I might consider obliging you a little more. Anyhow, my humble milk-skimmer doesn't look a bit like your valiant tiger moustache.' Azam Khan controlled his anger and went away. However, soon he came back and mortgaged all that was left with him through an agreement with Ramanand. Azam Khan had become a pauper now.

The short story is indeed worthy of appreciation in terms of characterization and the brevity of words making it a compelling short story for Indian readers.

### 5.5.3 *A Pair of Mustachios: Critical Appreciation*

This story appeared in a volume *A Pair of Mustachios and Other Stories* in 1966 and is said to be one of the most popular and anthologized stories of Mulk Raj Anand. The story begins with a vivid description of different types of moustaches which reveals the unique writing style of Anand— simple, precise and witty. Several themes are explored in this short story such as pride, power, class, freedom, conformity and so on.

'In fact, there are endless styles of mustachios, all appropriate to the wearers and indicative of the various orders, as rigorously adhered to as if they had all been patented by the Government of India or had been sanctioned by special appointment with His Majesty, the King, or Her Majesty, the Queen. And any poaching on the style of one class by members of another is resented, and the rising ratio of murders in my country is interpreted by certain authorities as being indicative of the increasing jealousy with which each class is guarding its rights and privileges in regard to the mark of the mustachio.'

The different social classes were permitted to keep a different style of moustache and any deviation from it would bring storm in the social milieu as he writes in the beginning of the story: '...So we prefer the various styles of mustachios to mark the differences between the classes...'

Anand uses the moustache and emotions attached with it to expose the mindset of Indians who

'... are notorious in the whole world for sticking to our queer old conventions, prides and prejudices, ...'

Perhaps, he is calling out the attention of his readers to tread the path carefully before committing themselves to any such false pride of their family/social class.

For it has been related to murders and crimes, for no reason at all, as a nation we need to give up such fixations and become more accommodating and progressive in our views, there is a need for change in mindset of people to bring about any kind of social change.

The theme of power also appears in the way the other villagers— Choudhary Chotu Ram and peasants are shown to support the moneylender during this conflict oblivious of the fact that it would further drift Khan into poverty. In the changed times, power rests with Ramanand, as he has money to lend so nobody want to offend him, so they unanimously support him in his trick.

‘That is fair,’ said Chaudhary Chottu Ram, the landlord of the village, who was sitting under the tree opposite. ‘To be sure! To be sure!’ some peasants chimed in sheepishly.’

During this conflict one can even observe the gender disparity existing in the society, Khan is shown to be selling off the jewellery of his wife with no feeling of guilt. He is only concerned with maintaining his false pride and is foolish enough not to see through the cunning behaviour of the moneylender. He is the sole decision maker in this deal, the status he enjoys in the family for being a ‘man’.

‘He went home and fetched a necklace which had come down to his family through seven generations and, placing it before the moneylender, said: ‘Now will you bring that tip of your moustache down?’

Another theme that may be identified in this text is the struggle between upholding one’s individuality and conformity to social norms. The moneylender wanted to keep a particular style of mustache – which is a very personal aspect of one’s personality, but he is not allowed to do so, as there are social norms which need to be valued. The hint is being made to the clash between individual and social values. Probably, Anand is suggesting that individual progression can be seriously hindered by false pride, tradition and perception of their class. Youth ought to be more alert to such things before blindly following them. In this modern age, we still, have numerous communities in our country where girls are not being educated and given equal rights due to adherence to stringent social norms, prejudices, traditions and customs.

An extrinsic feature—moustache is given such high priority in society. Adorning a particular style of moustache / clothes/ accessories does not really change one’s personality, what is within you is the real core and that needs to be developed and focused for individual and social development. Otherwise too much focus on the superficial and outwardly appearance will lead to downfall and stagnation.

The major theme expounded in this story is the theme of pride with a message to people that false pride leads to nothing rather the person becomes a subject to manipulation by clever people. Hence, we should stay away from false pride and invest our energies in more fruitful tasks. Traditional conventions and values need to be weighed in the contemporary times before going for their blind adherence and adoption.

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Anand has crafted his characters beautifully; they appear before us as living beings with emotions and aspirations. While describing the range of moustaches in the beginning of the story, he drops a hint on the nature of the two main characters of his story: Ramanand and Khan Azam Khan.

‘Then there is the tiger moustache, the uncanny, several-pointed moustache worn by the unbending, unchanging survivals from the ranks of the feudal gentry who have nothing left but pride in their greatness and a few mementoes of past glory, scrolls of honour granted by the former emperors, a few gold trinkets, heirlooms and bits of land’.

He describes the personality and key traits of his characters skillfully in the story: Khan Azam Khan:

‘Khan Azam Khan’s pride is greatly in excess of his present possessions and he is inordinately jealous of his old privileges and rather foolish and headstrong in safeguarding every sacred brick of his tottering house against vandalism.’

The language he assigns to this character shows his superiority in the social class milieu of the village.

- ‘Since when have the **lentil-eating shopkeepers** become noblemen?’ he asked sourly.
- ‘You know what I mean, **seed of a donkey!**’ said the Khan.
- ‘I tell you, turn the tip of your moustache down **if you value your life!**’ **ragged** Khan Azam Khan

In the bold words, you can see how Khan is using abusive words for Ramanand, he even threatens to kill him as well. He claims to be a descendent of the Moguls, Anand has made this character use this vocabulary to show the class divide and power play existing in the society. The ruling class could afford to threaten and abuse the people belonging to lower class, although he is shorn of the past glory of his ancestors.

On the other hand, we have the money lender and his descriptions and dialogues are entirely different, more polite, accommodating and appeasing: ‘I don’t know what you mean, Khan’, Ramanand answered.

He is shown to be a business person to the core, keen on building his profit and pleasing his client

‘Oh, Khan, don’t get so excited,’ said the moneylender, who was nothing if he was not amenable, having built up his business on the maxim that the customer is always right.... ‘Now Khan,’ said the moneylender, ‘I humbled myself because you are doing business with me. You can’t expect me to become a mere worm just because you have pawned a trinket with me. If you were pledging some more expensive jewellery I might consider obliging you a little more. Anyhow, my humble milk-skimmer doesn’t look a bit like your valiant tiger moustache.’

A hint to his personality, as a hard core business person focused on increasing profits, is given by the writer in the beginning of the story as well.

Next there is the goat moustache—a rather unsure brand, worn by the nouveau riche, the new commercial bourgeoisie and the shopkeeper class who somehow don't belong—an indifferent, thin little line of a moustache, worn so that its tips can be turned up or down as the occasion demands—a show of power to some coolie or humility to a prosperous client.'

The Choudhary is a flat and static character who is not given much attention by the writer in the story. 'That is fair,' said Chaudhary Chottu Ram, the landlord of the village, who was sitting under the tree opposite.

The writing style adopted by Anand is par excellence. The short story *A Pair of Mustachios* thus deals with the fortunes of two characters, the protagonist, Seth Ramanand and his foil, Khan Azam Khan. While Khan wears the moustache proper to his class, but Seth Ramanand approximates his moustache to that of Khan. Hence, he is a usurper. Both the characters have been treated with satire—one because he wears a moustache to which now he is not accredited (having gone poor and penniless), while the other approximates his moustache to another class, for which he is not entitled. In his characterization, Anand has shown great brevity and economy in the use of words to evoke the atmosphere vividly.

The story follows a first person narration, 'There are various kinds of mustachios worn in my country to mark the boundaries between the various classes of people.'

Anand has used noun phrases in the story while describing the types of moustache where a noun acts as a pre modifier lending itself to a deep yet crisp description 'goat moustache', 'lion moustache', 'sheep moustache' where the animal name adds value to the description.

Judicious use of adjectives has been made for adding finer details to the main characters and setting – Khan is 'foolish', 'headstrong' while the Seth is 'amenable' 'calm' and the peasants are 'hardpressed peasants', the house of Khan is 'old dilapidated Moghul style house' and so on.

Sentences with relative clauses are used in the story for providing more description to the readers:

It so happened that Seth Ramanand, the grocer and moneylender, who had been doing well out of the recent fall in the price of wheat by buying up whole crops cheap from the hard-pressed peasants and then selling them at higher prices. The relative clause reveals the unscrupulous nature of the Seth, his focus on making profit, bereft of any soft corner for others sufferings.

Exclamatory utterances are spread all over to bring in the dramatic tone and emotional aspects in the story. It breaks the monotony of the story and makes the characters more alive and vivid, provoking emotions in the readers as well.

- You know what I mean, seed of a donkey!
- Turn the tips down to the style proper to the goat that you are!

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- Fancy the airs of people nowadays!’
- ‘I tell you, turn the tip of your moustache down if you value your life!’

The literary style of Anand in this story makes it a master piece in Modern Indian English Literature. The dramatic rising action (conflict between Seth and Khan over the upturned moustache) leads to the climax where Khan is angered to the core and wants Seth to turn the tip of his moustache down.

The conflict is summarized in the following line: ‘Bring that other end down also so that there is no aping by your moustache of mine.’ (Khan)

The resolution occurs when Seth says: ‘If you were pledging some more expensive jewellery I might consider obliging you a little more.’

At this point Anand shows how the moneylender humbled Khan before him by playing a cunning trick on his misplaced emotions. The message is conveyed to the reader that adherence to false pride makes you susceptible to malicious intentions of people, so we must guard our emotions and passion well so that we do not hurt ourselves.

The last paragraph sums it all:

‘And they laughed to see the Khan give a special twist to his moustache as he walked away maintaining the valiant uprightness to the symbol of his ancient and noble family, though he had become a pauper.’

**Forms and Themes**

*A Pair of Mustachios* explores the themes of pride, class, liberty and acceptance.

The theme of pride has been exemplified through the character of Azam Khan. His sense of false pride does not lead to any consequential direction. He belongs to the class of people who held the tiger moustache as a sign of their high class and lineage. Azam Khan is so full of pride that he is willing to mortgage everything that he has in hand just to ensure that Ramanand lowers down his goat moustache.

On the other hand, the theme of liberty and acceptance is showcased through the character of Seth Ramanand. Through his business acumen, Ramanand has become rich and that too without any lineage. He is flexible enough to let his business grow and thus conforms to the notions of liberty and acceptance. He politely pulls down one tip of his moustache when asked by his customer Azam Khan to do so. He is wise enough to understand that his reluctance to do so might lead to loss of business.

**Character Analysis**

Let us now discuss the different characteristics in the story.

**Seth Ramanand**

Seth Ramanand is the grocer and the moneylender in the short story *A Pair of Mustachios*. He is cunning by nature which is the typical nature of a moneylender. He never gets angry easily and in fact acts in a servile manner. Ramanand boasts of a goat moustache which he had twisted upwards to make it look like a tiger moustache. He had made good money from his profession but had no lineage to boast of. He is proud of his achievement but does not let his pride come in the way

of his dealings with his customers. He knows how to deal with his customers in order to derive the maximum benefit from them. This becomes evident when Ramanand readily agrees to lower the tip of his moustache as demanded by Azam Khan which had been raised upwards to look like a tiger moustache.

Both Ramanand and Azam Khan belong to the social milieu where people are classified on the basis of their moustachios. It so happens that Azam Khan visits Ramanand- the moneylender to pawn a trinket for some money. This is when Azam Khan notices that Ramanand's moustache is going upwards to look like a tiger moustache which is the trade mark of the class of Azam Khan. Instantly, Azam Khan gets angry and asks Ramanand to lower his moustache. Without exhibiting any hesitancy, Ramanand cleverly lowers down only one side of his moustache. When Azam Khan notices that one side of his moustache is still held high, he angrily asks Ramanand to lower it. To this Ramanand shrewdly replies: 'I humbled myself because you are doing business with me. You can't expect me to become a mere worm just because you have pawned a trinket with me. If you were pledging some more expensive jewellery I might consider obliging you a little more. Anyhow, my humble milk-skimmer doesn't look a bit like your valiant tiger moustache.'

Azam Khan, who is so full of false pride instantly pawns his belongings just to satisfy the condition of Ramanand. However, Ramanand cleverly does business and lowers the other end of his moustache to satisfy Azam Khan.

This interaction between the two of them explicitly highlights the shrewd nature of Ramanand and his dexterity in handling customers with the sole objective of enhancing his business. Hence, Ramanand is a true representative of the business class who is flexible enough to take advantage of the situation and bent upon exploiting his customers to the fullest.

### **Azam Khan**

Azam Khan is a man full of false pride of his ancestors. He has no piece of land or money left with him still he proudly flaunts his tiger moustache. He is arrogant, short-tempered and full of ire. Mulk Raj Anand presents Azam Khan as a foolish character who adheres to his age old impractical values. He is ready to sell all his property just for bringing down the tips of Ramanand's moustache. He is ready to put at stake all his belongings for something which is in substantial in the modern world.

Here, Anand seems to be highlighting the fact that living by false pride does not seem to bring any consequential value to Azam Khan.

Azam Khan has been presented as a foil to the protagonist Ramanand. On the one hand, Ramanand has been presented as a clever and flexible person whereas Azam Khan is extremely rigid and short-tempered.

## **NOTES**

### **Check Your Progress**

5. When was the story *A Pair of Mustachios* first published?
6. Who are the main characters in *A Pair of Mustachios*?

## 5.6 KHUSHWANT SINGH: ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### NOTES

Khushwant Singh is a well-known name in Modern Indian English Literature standing in league with R.K. Narayan and others. He was an internationally acclaimed historian, novelist, political commentator par excellence, social critic, diplomat, journalist and politician. His works display the social and behavioural values of Indians with great wit, humour and satire.

He was born in the year 1915 in Hadali, Pakistan. He studied law at St. Stephen's College, Delhi, and King's College London. He worked as a lawyer in Lahore Court for eight years. He joined the Indian Foreign Service after India gained independence from British Rule. He was appointed journalist in the All India Radio in 1951. He founded and edited *Yojana* (1951-1953). He won international acclaim and Groove Press Award in 1954 for *Train To Pakistan* (first published in 1956). He published his most famous historical novel *Train to Pakistan* published in 1956. He moved to the Department of Mass Communications of UNESCO at Paris in 1956. He served as editor of the *Illustrated weekly of India*, Bombay, 1969-1978. He served as Editor-in-Chief of *National Herald*, New Delhi, 1978-1979. He served as Editor of the *Hindustan Times*, 1980-1983, his Saturday column 'With Malice towards One & All' in the *Hindustan Times* is by far one of the most well-liked columns of the day. He served as Member of Parliament in Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Parliament of India between 1980 and 1986. He was bestowed with the Padma Bhushan in 1974 which he returned in 1984 in protest against Operation Blue Star in which the Indian Army raided Amritsar. He was bestowed the 'Honest Man of the Year Award' by Sulabh International Social Service Organization for his bravery and sincerity in his 'brilliant incisive writing' In July 2000. He was awarded Punjab Rattan Award by the Government of Punjab in the year 2006. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the second-highest civilian award in India in 2007. He was given All-India Minorities Forum Annual Fellowship Award by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav in 2012. He was honoured with Order of Khalsa (Nishaan-e-Khalsa). He died on 20th March 2014.

### Books and Documentaries

***Train to Pakistan* (first Published in 1956):** It is based on India's partition in 1947. The agony and pain faced by people during the partition provided an apt subject to the writer and he has done full justice to it. It is a historical novel which fetched him international recognition and appreciation.

***I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale* (1959):** This was his second novel set in Amritsar, when the Indian freedom struggle was at its peak. It been accorded as one of the finest novels written by Khushwant Singh.

He wrote six different collections of short stories between 1950 and 1989.

- *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* (published in 1950)
- *The Voice of God and Other Stories* (published in 1957)



- *A Bride for the Sahib and Other Stories* (published in 1967)
- *Black Jasmine* (published in 1971)
- *The Collected Stories* (published in 1989)

Fiction

***A History of the Sikhs (1963):*** This work is based on his scholarly research, reading and reviewing of original texts written in Persian and English recounting the plight of the Sikhs.

***Delhi: A Novel (1990):*** Another enthralling book dedicated to his son Rahul Singh and Niloufer Billimoria. According to him, it took him 25 years to pen down his experiences of Delhi which he witnessed from his young age.

***Women and Men in My Life (1995):*** Another remarkable book tracing his close relationship with people from different walks of life.

***Truth, Love and a Little Malice: An Autobiography (2002):*** This is his autobiography with lots of insight on the relationship with political bigwigs of his time. It is said that the book is based on his famous column in the *Hindustan Times* with the title ‘With malice towards one and all’.

***Why I Supported the Emergency (Published in 2004):*** This included essays on emergency imposed in India during the period 1975-1977.

***Death at My Doorstep (2005):*** This book offers obituaries to Bhutto, Sanjay Gandhi, M.O. Mathai, Lord Mountbatten, and the author’s pet Alsatian Simba.

***The Sunset Club (2010):*** This book is based on the life of senior citizens, the loneliness and problems faced by the elderly, and it also reminisces nature and the challenges faced in contemporary India.

***The Portrait of a Lady: Collected Stories (2013):*** It contains all the short stories Khushwant Singh has ever written, including the *The Maharani of Chootiapuram*, written in 2008.

***The Good, The Bad and The Ridiculous (with Humra Quraishi) (2013):*** The last book written by him at the age of 98 years is a collection of pen portraits of many known Indian personalities by Khushwant Singh in his remarkable style. He co-wrote the book with Humra Qureshi. The personalities he chose for pen portrait included Amrita Sher-Gil, Begum Para, Bhagat Puran Singh, Dharendra Brahmachari, Faiz Ahmad Faiz, General Tikka Khan, Giani Zail Singh, Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, Krishna Menon, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, M.S. Golwalkar, Mother Teresa, Phoolan Devi and Sanjay Gandhi.

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### Check Your Progress

7. Mention few of the significant accolades won by Khushwant Singh?
8. What are the prominent works of Khushwant Singh?

## 5.7 THE MARK OF VISHNU: TEXT, SUMMARY AND CRITICAL APPRECIATION

### NOTES

In this section, you will study the text and critical appreciation of short story, *The Mark of Vishnu*.

#### 5.7.1 The Mark of Vishnu: Text

You can go through the text of this short story.

##### The Mark of Vishnu

‘This is for the Kala Nag,’ said Gunga Ram, pouring the milk into the saucer. ‘Every night I leave it outside the hole near the wall and it’s gone by the morning.’

‘Perhaps it is the cat,’ we youngsters suggested.

‘Cat!’ said Gunga Ram with contempt. ‘No cat goes near that hole. Kala Nag lives there. As long as I give him milk, he will not bite anyone in this house. You can all go about with bare feet and play where you like.’

We were not having any patronage from Gunga Ram.

‘You’re a stupid old Brahmin,’ I said. ‘Don’t you know snakes don’t drink milk? At least one couldn’t drink a saucerful every day. The teacher told us that a snake eats only once in several days. We saw a grass snake which had just swallowed a frog. It stuck like a blob in its throat and took several days to dissolve and go down its tail. We’ve got dozens of them in the lab in methylated spirit. Why, last month the teacher bought one from a snake charmer which could run both ways. It had another head with a pair of eyes at the tail. You should have seen the fun when it was put in the jar. There wasn’t an empty one in the lab. So the teacher put it in one which had a Russell’s viper. He caught its two ends with a pair of forceps, dropped it in the jar, and quickly put the lid on. There was an absolute storm as it went round and round in the glass tearing the decayed viper into shreds.’

Gunga Ram shut his eyes in pious horror.

‘You will pay for it one day. Yes, you will.’

It was no use arguing with Gunga Ram. He, like all good Hindus, believed in the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva – the creator, preserver, and destroyer. Of these he was most devoted to Vishnu. Every morning he smeared his forehead with a V-mark in sandalwood paste to honour the deity. Although a Brahmin, he was illiterate and full of superstition. To him, all life was sacred, even if it was of a serpent or scorpion or centipede. Whenever he saw one he quickly shoved it away lest we kill it. He picked up wasps we battered with our badminton rackets and tended their damaged wings. Sometimes he got stung. It never seemed to shake his faith. The more dangerous the animal, the more devoted Gunga Ram was to its existence. Hence the regard for snakes; above all, the cobra, who was the Kala Nag.

‘We will kill your Kala Nag if we see him.’

‘I won’t let you. It’s laid a hundred eggs and if you kill it all the eggs will become cobras and the house will be full of them. Then what will you do?’

‘We’ll catch them alive and send them to Bombay. They milk them there for anti-snake-bite serum. They pay two rupees for a live cobra. That makes two hundred rupees straightaway.’

‘Your doctors must have udders. I never saw a snake have any. But don’t you dare touch this one. It is a phannyar – it is hooded. I’ve seen it. It’s three hands long. As for its hood!’ Gunga Ram opened the palms of his hands and his head swayed from side to side. ‘You should see it basking on the lawn in the sunlight.’

‘That just proves what a liar you are. The phannyar is the male, so it couldn’t have laid the hundred eggs. You must have laid the eggs yourself.’

The party burst into peals of laughter.

‘Must be Gunga Ram’s eggs. We’ll soon have a hundred Gunga Rams.’

Gunga Ram was squashed. It was the lot of a servant to be constantly squashed. But having the children of the household make fun of him was too much even for Gunga Ram. They were constantly belittling him with their new-fangled ideas. They never read their scriptures. Nor even what the Mahatma said about non-violence. It was just shotguns to kill birds and the jars of methylated spirit to drown snakes. Gunga Ram would stick to his faith in the sanctity of life. He would feel and protect snakes because snakes were the most vile of God’s creatures on earth. If you could love them, instead of killing them, you proved your point.

What the point was which Gunga Ram wanted to prove was not clear. He just proved it by leaving the saucerful of milk by the snake hole every night and finding it gone in the morning.

One day we saw Kala Nag. The monsoons had burst with all their fury and it had rained in the night. The earth which had lain parched and dry under the withering heat of the summer sun was teeming with life. In little pools frogs croaked. The muddy ground was littered with crawling worms, centipedes, and velvety ladybirds. Grass had begun to show and the banana leaves glistened bright and glossy green. The rain had flooded Kala Nag’s hole. He sat in an open patch on the lawn. His shiny black hood glistened in the sunlight. He was big – almost six feet in length, and rounded and fleshy, as my wrist.

‘Looks like a King Cobra. Let’s get him.’

Kala Nag did not have much of a change. The ground was slippery and all the holes and gutters were full of water. Gunga Ram was not at home to help.

Armed with long bamboo sticks, we surrounded Kala Nag before he even scented the danger. When he saw us his eyes turned a fiery red and he hissed and spat on all sides. Then like lightning Kala Nag made for the banana grove.

The ground was too muddy and he slithered. He had hardly gone five yards when a stick caught him in the middle and broke his back. A volley of blows reduced him to a squishy-squashy pulp of black and

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white jelly, spattered with blood and mud. His head was still undamaged.

‘Don’t damage the hood,’ yelled one of us. ‘We’ll take Kala Nag to school.’

‘So we slid a bamboo stick under the cobra’s belly and lifted him on the end of the pole. We put him in a large biscuit tin and tied it up with string. We hid the tin under a bed.

At night I hung around Gunga Ram waiting for him to get his saucer of milk. ‘Aren’t you going to take any milk for the Kala Nag tonight?’

‘Yes,’ answered Gunga Ram irritably. ‘You go to bed.’

He did not want any more argument on the subject.

‘He won’t need the milk any more.’

Gunga Ram paused.

‘Why?’

‘Oh, nothing. There are so many frogs about. They must taste better than your milk. You never put any sugar in it anyway.’

The next morning Gunga Ram brought back the saucer with the milk still in it. He looked sullen and suspicious.

‘I told you snakes like frogs better than milk.’

Whilst we changed and had breakfast Gunga Ram hung around us. The school bus started came and we clambered into it with the tin. As the bus started we held out the tin to Gunga Ram.

‘Here’s your Kala Nag. Safe in this box. We are going to put him in spirit.’

We left him standing speechless, staring at the departing bus.

There was great excitement in the school. We were a set of four brothers, known for our toughness. We had proved it again.

‘A King Cobra.’

‘Six feet long.’

The tin was presented to the science teacher.

It was on the teacher’s table, and we waited for him to open it and admire our kill. The teacher pretended to be indifferent and set us some problems to work on. With studied matter-of-factness he fetches his forceps and a jar with a banded Krait lying curled in muddy methylated spirit. He began to hum and untie the cord around the box.

As soon as the cord was loosened the lid flew into the air, just missing the teacher’s nose. There was Kala Nag. His eyes burnt like embers and his hood was taut and undamaged. With a loud hiss he went for the teacher’s face. The teacher pushed himself back on the chair and toppled over. He fell on the floor and stared at the cobra, petrified with fear. The boys stood up on their desks and yelled hysterically.

Kala Nag surveyed the scene with his bloodshot eyes. His forked tongue darted in and out excitedly. He spat furiously and then made a bid for freedom. He fell out of the tin on to the floor with a loud plop. His back was broken in several places and he dragged himself painfully

to the door. When he got to the threshold he drew himself up once again with his hood outspread to face another danger.

Outside the classroom stood Gunga Ram with a saucer and a jug of milk. As soon as he saw Kala Nag come up he went down on his knees. He poured the milk into the saucer and placed it near the threshold. With hands folded in prayer he bowed his head to the ground craving forgiveness. In desperate fury, the cobra hissed and spat and bit Gunga Ram all over the head – the with great effort dragged himself into a gutter and wriggled out of view.

Gunga Ram collapsed with his hands covering his face. He groaned in agony. The poison blinded him instantly. Within a few minutes he turned pale and blue and froth appeared in his mouth. On his forehead were little drops of blood. These the teacher wiped with his handkerchief. Underneath was the V-mark where the Kala Nag had dug his fangs.

### 5.7.2 *The Mark of Vishu: Summary*

This story is one of the most appreciated stories written by Khushwant Singh. It successfully portrays the value crisis faced in the society of post-independence India. The clash between the young and old, tradition and modernity, science and superstition has been revealed skillfully by the writer.

The narrator and his gang of boys consider Gunga Ram a ‘Stupid old Brahmin’ who fed milk to the Kala Nag. Gunga Ram held the view: ‘As long as I give him milk, he will not bite anyone in this house. You can all go about with bare feet and play where you like.’ Gunga Ram is an ardent devotee of Vishnu and smeared his forehead with V mark. He revered all living creatures and advised children not to kill animals and birds. It was a regular practice for Gunga Ram to feed milk to the Kala Nag. On a daily basis he would place a bowl of milk near the hole every night and every morning he would collect the empty saucer.

One morning it rained heavily and the hole of the snake became flooded with water. This forced the cobra to come of its hole. The boys saw the cobra and decided to catch it. They put it in a biscuit bin and decided to take it to school. Unfortunately, Gunga Ram was not at home that day but he got to know about it the next day when he found the saucer full of milk.

The boys were extremely excited while handing over the tin box to their science teacher. The teacher decided to open the box and put the cobra into the bottle of spirit. As he untied the string of the box, the lid suddenly flew into the air. The wounded cobra raised its hood and fortunately, the teacher saved himself. The cobra moved towards the door.

‘Outside the classroom stood Gunga Ram with a saucer and a jug of milk. As soon as he saw Kala Nag come up he went down on his knees. He poured the milk into the saucer and placed it near the threshold. With hands folded in prayer he bowed his head to the ground craving forgiveness. In desperate fury, the cobra hissed and spat and bit Gunga Ram all over the head – then with great effort dragged himself into a gutter and wriggled out of view.’

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Gunga Ram collapsed on the floor. The teacher ran towards him and wiped his face. It is indeed very ironic that the very snake revered by Gunga Ram became the instrument of his death.

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Lord Vishnu is the preserver of this world, as per the Hindu mythology and Gunga Ram wears the mark of 'V' on his forehead in reverence of Lord Vishnu. He even displays his strong devotion and belief in the Kala Nag, black cobra, by daily serving a bowl filled with milk to the creature for drinking. The children of the family make fun of his superstition and would say 'You're a stupid old Brahmin'. However, his faith is not deterred and discouraged by the words and mockery of the kids in the family. He does not try to convince them either, but maintains his belief without fail. The story moves with the capturing of Kala Nag by the children and their display of this catch in their class. When Gunga Ram comes to know about it, he is disturbed; he goes to the school after them. Ironically, the snake bites Gunga Ram on his forehead when he places a saucerful of milk in front of it outside the classroom. The story ends here leaving the readers to guess what happened to Gunga Ram, the snake and the children.

### 5.7.3 *The Mark of Vishu: Critical Appreciation*

Khushwant Singh is well-known for his irony and satire. In few words, very suggestively, he questions the existing beliefs and challenges their vitality and strengths in the modern times when society needs to be progressive if it intends to sustain, survive and grow. One of the weaknesses of the traditional Indian society has been its adherence to traditions and age old practices. Their superstitions prevented them from becoming progressive in their thought and action. They were reluctant to accept science and technology because of their myths and superstition. India has been subjected for more than 100 years. And one of the reasons which Khushwant Singh appears to point is — superstition. In this story, he brings face to face the facts based on science and reality with religious beliefs. He leaves the reader to introspect and reflect on which option was better and has better prospects. Gunga Ram, representing the old traditional mindset, serves the Kala Nag, as a god, the one who would preserve human kind in all problems and circumstances, for which he very religiously offers milk every day. However, the same creature, in the end of the story leads to his doom, biting him all over and leaving a mark of 'V' with its fangs.

The writer seems to be suggesting that in the contemporary times, superstitions will lead you nowhere, only reason, science, logic and technology will lead to progression and development. Hence, one must give up blind adherence to religious practices. The school is displayed here as a place of reason and progression. Education is mandatory for liberation and freedom; it will unbound the human mind and its hidden potential.

The way the children speak to Gunga Ram also points that respect in the contemporary times comes to those who are educated, logical and who think clearly. Just because you are old does not guarantee respect from others and even the younger generation. The obvious indication is that authority now lies with the knowledgeable and not with the ignorant. Read the extract given below:

‘Your doctors must have udders. I never saw a snake have any. But don’t you dare touch this one. It is a phannyar – it is hooded. I’ve seen it. It’s three hands long. As for its hood!’ Gunga Ram opened the palms of his hands and his head swayed from side to side. ‘You should see it basking on the lawn in the sunlight.’ (Gunga Ram)

‘That just proves what a liar you are. The phannyar is the male, so it couldn’t have laid the hundred eggs. You must have laid the eggs yourself.’

The party burst into peals of laughter.

The story has been narrated in the first person by a young unnamed boy and the writer is exploring the theme of tradition, modernity, faith, loyalty, respect and change. The fact that Gunga Ram is blinded by the snake bite in the end emphasizes that blind faith leads to destruction. Thus, the writer may be reinforcing that an individual must be rational in thinking and not be misled by other peoples’ beliefs, even if it is religious faith. The fate of Gunga Ram may also lead to an interpretation that in the modern times, ‘change’ is pertinent – those who oppose change will not be able to survive, however, those who adopt changes, they will have better prospects in life (children going to school, analysing things in a scientific manner, to get sense of true reality – they brought Kala Nag to school in order to show it to their teachers to tell something more about it).

‘Don’t damage the hood,’ yelled one of us. ‘We’ll take Kala Nag to school.’...

‘There was great excitement in the school. We were a set of four brothers, known for our toughness. We had proved it again.

‘A King Cobra.’ ‘Six feet long.’ The tin was presented to the science teacher. It was on the teacher’s table, and we waited for him to open it and admire our kill.’

The all-pervasive power of Nature, may also be interpreted through the story, as despite the many blows Kala Nag suffered; it survived and managed to escape the captivity. Thus, the writer may be drawing our attention to the immense strength pervading in Nature and how it is still invincible to man. The following lines reveal the message of the writer that peaceful existence with Nature would assure human survival on this planet otherwise human existence would be in danger:

‘As soon as the cord was loosened the lid flew into the air, just missing the teacher’s nose. There was Kala Nag. His eyes burnt like embers and his hood was taut and undamaged. With a loud hiss he went for the teacher’s face. The teacher pushed himself back on the chair and toppled over. He fell on the floor and stared at the cobra, petrified with fear. The boys stood up on their desks and yelled hysterically.’

Khushwant Singh had a niche for storytelling, his detailed description creates a vivid imagery for the readers making the whole experience a realistic one:

‘The monsoons had burst with all their fury and it had rained in the night. The earth which had lain parched and dry under the withering heat of the summer sun was teeming with life. In little pools frogs croaked. The muddy ground was

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littered with crawling worms, centipedes, and velvety ladybirds. Grass had begun to show and the banana leaves glistened bright and glossy green. The rain had flooded Kala Nag's hole. He sat in an open patch on the lawn. His shiny black hood glistened in the sunlight. He was big – almost six feet in length, and rounded and fleshy, as my wrist.'

'Kala Nag surveyed the scene with his bloodshot eyes. His forked tongue darted in and out excitedly. He spat furiously and then made a bid for freedom. He fell out of the tin on to the floor with a loud plop. His back was broken in several places and he dragged himself painfully to the door. When he got to the threshold he drew himself up once again with his hood outspread to face another danger.'

### Forms and Themes

Fantasy, folk beliefs and ghosts are some of the common themes employed by Khushwant Singh in his short stories. Khushwant Singh has employed the themes of modernity against tradition, faith, loyalty, respect and change in *The Mark of Vishnu*.

The traditional beliefs of Gunga Ram have been highlighted in this short story when he pays respect every time he sees the cobra. This is in contrast to the theme of modernity according to which the cobra is a dangerous animal to be wary off as it can harm the person in front of it. Gunga Ram's faith and loyalty in the deity–snake also gets showcased in this short story. Gunga Ram believes that all living creatures on this earth should be respected and paid obeisance.

### Character Analysis of Gunga Ram

Khushwant Singh has presented Gunga Ram as an ardent believer in God. He blindly worships the Vishnu and Kala Nag is a symbolic presentation of Vishnu god. Gunga Ram pays utmost respect to the Kala Nag every time he sees it. He holds the firm faith that the Kala Nag is a supreme entity who cannot harm anyone. This perspective has been presented in contrast with the narrator and his brothers who try to harm the Kala Nag whenever they get an opportunity to do so. Moreover, it is very ironic that the very cobra who is revered by Gunga Ram leads to his death.

Probably, Singh here is trying to draw the attention of readers towards the clash between modernity and tradition. Gunga Ram appears to be completely blinded by faith and religion. Readers are made to think critically with regard to their belief and conviction.

It is also to be noted that the narrator highlights the fact that Gunga Ram has received little or no formal education. Hence, Singh here is emphasizing the importance of education in the life of an individual. Education opens the doors of rational thinking of every individual.

Thus, one can say that Singh through the delineation of Gunga Ram's character has highlighted the themes of ardent belief and conviction by presenting it in contrast with the change that is taking place in the Indian society.



**Check Your Progress**

9. Who is the protagonist of the short story *The Mark of Vishnu*?
10. What happens to Gunga Ram in the end of the story?

**NOTES****5.8 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’**

1. A short story is one type of prose fiction. The short story typically ranges anywhere from 1,000 to 4,000 words. A short story is characterized by a single event around which situations and action sequences are crafted.
2. Biography is a comprehensive version of someone’s life authored by somebody else, whereas an autobiography is a self-written account of a person’s life.
3. Mulk Raj Anand was born on 12 December 1905 in Peshawar in present-day Pakistan.
4. The prominent works of Mulk Raj Anand are *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937), *The Power of Darkness and Other Stories* (1959), *Morning Face* (1968) and *The Lost Child and Other Stories* (1934).
5. *A Pair of Mustachios* appeared in a volume *A Pair of Mustachios and Other Stories* in 1966 and is said to be one of the most popular and anthologized stories of Mulk Raj Anand.
6. The main characters in *A Pair of Mustachios* are the moneylender Ramanand and his client Khan Azam Khan.
7. Khushwant Singh was bestowed the ‘Honest Man of the Year Award’ by Sulabh International Social Service Organization for his bravery and sincerity in his ‘brilliant incisive writing’ In July 2000. He was awarded Punjab Rattan Award by the Government of Punjab in the year 2006. He was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, the second-highest civilian award in India in 2007. He was given All-India Minorities Forum Annual Fellowship Award by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav in 2012. He was honoured with Order of Khalsa (Nishaan-e-Khalsa).
8. Khushwant Singh is an internationally acclaimed author with numerous works to his credit. His significant works include *Train to Pakistan*, *I Shall Not Hear the Nightingale*, *The Mark of Vishnu and Other Stories* and *Women and Men in My Life*.
9. Gunga Ram, an ardent devotee of Vishnu is the protagonist of the short story *The Mark of Vishnu*.
10. In the end of the short story, Gunga Ram gets bitten by the Kala Nag.

**5.9 SUMMARY**

- A short story is one type of prose fiction. The literary techniques used by a short story writer are similar to those employed by a novelist.

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- The short story typically ranges anywhere from 1,000 to 4,000 words. Some short stories have as many words as 20,000 words and as less than as 1,000 words (also referred to as flash fiction or short stories).
- A short story is characterized by a single event around which situations and action sequences are crafted.
- A biography or 'bio,' as it is commonly known is a comprehensive explanation of the life of an individual, authored by a person other than him. It is a detailed piece of intricate material with respect to all details about the person for example, his or her birthplace, academic background, profession, relations and death.
- Autobiography means the life draft of an individual written by him or her. The suffix 'auto' in the word autobiography means 'self,' hence; an autobiography consists of all the components of a biography but it is written or narrated himself or herself by the writer.
- The most well-known existing instance of such work is the 'Parallel Lives of Greek and Roman' personalities written by the Greek author Plutarch, c. 46-120 AD.
- Seventeenth century was the time when a fairly reasonably nonspiritual biography came to recognition in England. A detailed account of the life of Izaak Walton is the most illustrious example of such sort, written somewhere in the later part of mid-17th century.
- The two customary kinds of literary works which chronicle the pen picture and a person's course of life are biography and autobiography.
- Mulk Raj Anand was one of the few Indian writers who achieved appreciation from international readership. His subject of depiction in his literary work has been the lives and plight of the downtrodden and the subjected in the traditional Indian society.
- In 1935, M. R. Anand actively engaged in laying the foundation of the Progressive Writers' Association in London along with writers Sajjad Zaheer and Ahmed Ali. He joined the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War in 1937.
- *A Pair of Mustachios* is a humorous account of interaction between a moneylender Ramanand and his client Khan Azam Khan. The story begins with a vivid description of different types of moustaches which reveals the unique writing style of Anand— simple, precise and witty. Several themes are explored in this short story such as pride, power, class, freedom, conformity and so on.
- Anand has crafted his characters beautifully; they appear before us as living beings with emotions and aspirations. While describing the range of moustaches in the beginning of the story, he drops a hint on the nature of the two main characters of his story: Ramanand and Khan Azam Khan.
- Khushwant Singh is a well-known name in Modern Indian English Literature standing in league with R.K. Narayan and others.

- Khushwant Singh is well-known for his irony and satire. In few words, very suggestively, he questions the existing beliefs and challenges their vitality and strengths in the modern times when society needs to be progressive if it intends to sustain, survive and grow.

*Fiction*

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### 5.10 KEY TERMS

- **Indo-Anglian Literature:** This is a term specifically used for Indian English writers marking the origin of Indian creative writing in English.
- **Fiction:** Literally, the word 'fiction' means something that is not real, rather it is imaginative.
- **Biopic:** It is a visual or interpretation in the form of a film.
- **Flat character:** This character does not evolve much right from the beginning till the end of the narrative.
- **Prose:** It refers to a form of writing which is written in an ordinary form and does not consist of a metrical structure.
- **Short Story:** It is as a 'prose tale' that can be read on one sitting covering the length of half an-hour to two hours and should be limited to 'a certain unique single effect' to which all the details would be subordinate.

### 5.11 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

#### Objective Questions

- Fill in the blanks using appropriate words.
  - A \_\_\_\_\_ is characterized by a single event around which situations and action sequences are crafted.
  - The first ever fully conceptualized and articulated autobiography is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Khushwant Singh is well-known for his irony and \_\_\_\_\_.
- State whether the following sentences are true or false.
  - Setting is the most significant aspect of a short-story.
  - Identifying the narrator is central to analysing and critically appreciating a short story.
  - The aim behind writing an autobiography is to familiarize and enlighten the readers about the life and personality of the subject.

#### Short-Answer Questions

- What are the salient features of a short story?
- Mention some significant biographies and autobiographies.
- Prepare a brief biographical sketch of Mulk Raj Anand.

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4. Briefly mention the significant events of the life of Khushwant Singh.
5. What is the plot in a short-story?
6. What is the turning point in a short-story?
7. Write a short-note on the character of Azam Khan.
8. Why was Gunga Ram referred to as old stupid Brahman?
9. What were the six different collections of short-stories written by Khushwant Singh?
10. State the themes of *A Pair of Mustachios*.

**Long-Answer Questions**

1. Analyse the differences between a biography and an autobiography.
2. Critically analyse the short story *A Pair of Mustachios*.
3. Evaluate the major themes explored by Khushwant Singh in *The Mark of Vishnu*.
4. Comment on the unique writing style of Khushwant Singh.
5. Discuss the themes of pride, class and liberty in the story *A Pair of Mustachios*.
6. Explain how one can analyse short-stories?
7. Examine the character of Gunga Ram in the story *The Mark of Vishnu*.
8. Analyse the statement, 'Must be Ganga Ram's eggs. We will soon have a hundred Ganga Rams.'
9. How that the language that Mulk Raj Anand assigns to his characters speak volumes about them? Analyse.

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**5.12 FURTHER READING**

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