Chapter : 1

Background to 
Indian English Poetry

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1.0 Objectives

Friends, this paper deals with Indian English Literature and we are going to begin with Indian English verses. After studying this chapter you will be able to -

● Elaborate the literary background of the Indian English Poetry
● Take a review of the growth and development of Indian English verses
● Describe different phases and the influence of the contemporary social and political situations.
● Narrate recurrent themes in Indian English poetry.
1.1 Introduction

Friends, this chapter will introduce you to the history of Indian English verses. It will provide you with information of the growth of Indian English verses and its socio-cultural background. What are the various themes in Indian English poetry? Who are the major Indian English poets? This chapter is an answer to these questions with a thorough background to Indian English verses which will help you to get better knowledge of the various trends in Indian English poetry.

1.2 History of Indian English Poetry

Poetry is the expression of human life from times eternal. India in fact has a long tradition of arts and poetry from ages. Colonialism gave a new language, English for the expression of Indians. The poetry written by the Indians in English in the last 150 years may be said to have three phases: the imitative, the assimilative and the experimental.

The period from 1850 to 1900 is the imitative phase when the Indian poets were romantic poets in the Indian garb or in George Bottomley's words "Matthew Arnold in a saree" or as some derogatively observes "Shakuntala in a mini-skirt". The chief sources of inspiration were the British romantic poets: Wordsworth, Scott, Shelley, Keats, Byron.

The period from 1900 to 1947 is the assimilative period when the Indian poets still romantic tried to assimilate the romanticism of the early nineteenth century British poets and the "new" romantics of the decadent period for expressing the consciousness of the Indian renaissance between nationalism and political changes which ultimately led to the attainment of political freedom in 1947.

1.2.1 Poetry of first phase

The first phase of Indian poetry was the period of literary renaissance in India. Derozio's poems, Kasiprasad Ghose's The Shair or Ministrel and other poems, Michael Madhusudan Dutt's The Captive Lady, Manmohan Ghose's Love Songs and Elegies are a testimony to the creative upsurge occasioned by the romantic spirit kindled by the literary renaissance. Toru Dutt alone among these romantic poets of
the first phase puts an emphasis on India and her heritage by putting into verse a large number of Indian legends. The romantic Toru Dutt is also a predecessor in respect to the use of the tree in verse as demonstrated by "Our Casuarina Tree", a predecessor in respect of childhood memories recalled with nostalgia or regret.

1.2.2 Poetry of second phase

The poets of the second phase, still romantic in spirit were Sarojini Naidu, Tagore, Aurobindo Ghose and Harindranth Chattopadhyaya. The poetic output of these poets was prolific. Romanticism of these Indian poets was fraught with nationalism, spirituality and mysticism. It was therefore different from English romanticism. Indian romanticism widened the poet's vision. While Aurbindo's was the search for the Divine in Man and Tagore's was the quest for the Beautiful in Man and Nature. Both were philosopher poets. Sarojini Naidu's romantic muse underscored the charm and splendor of traditional Indian life and Indian scene. She had a fine ear for verbal melody as she was influenced not only by English poetry but also by the Persian and Urdu poetry. She excelled in lyricism. She was a true nightingale of India.

Poetry written in the colonial period with a view to establish Indian identity by the Indian poets was an explosion or rather outburst of emotions: the nationalistic, philosophical, spiritual or mystical emotions. The appeal was to the heart of the readers. The poetry of Toru Dutt, Sri Aurbindo, Tagore and Sarojini Naidu could not be romantic since they had to express the ethos of the age. They were not merely imitating the English romantics, Victorians and Decadents blindly. Their poetry was the best voice of the contemporary Indian time - spirit. It would be fair to say that Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu constitute a kind of watershed between the first two phases, in that they share their predecessor's individual nostalgia as well as their successor's sense of crisis and quest for identity.

1.2.3 Post independence poetry

The ethos of the post-independence phase of Indian English literature is radically different from the first two phases. Its relation to the first two phases is that of the modern age in English literature to
Victorianism. When the question of political independence was resolved in 1947 with the partition of India, the tensions of the Indian psyche suddenly relaxed. The post-independence era of hope and aspiration was replaced by an era of questioning and ironic exposure. The national identity achieved after independence gave Indian writers a new confidence to be the critic of the present, the past and of themselves. In this new spirit and confidence the Indian poets found themselves in line with Modern English and American poets. So once again there was borrowing up to some extent as in the first two phases of Indian poetry. While the pre-1947 poets borrowed from the romantics, Victorians and “new” Romantics of the decadent period, the post-1947 poets borrowed from the modernist poets like Yeats, Eliot, Pound and Auden.

It is ironical that the word “romantic” should become a veritable red tag to the post-independence poets. If the word “romantic” is a red tag, the word “mystical” drives them to a fury. Adil Jussawalla, for example, finds Sri Aurbindo’s Savitri “unwinding like an interminable sari”. Parthasarthy declares that “Savitri fails as a poem because Ghose’s talent and resourcefulness in the use of English was limited.” About Toru Dutt, Parthasarthy says, “Toru Dutt’s poems mean little to us because our idea of poetry has changed since her day.”

If the succeeding generation denigrates the preceding generation so vehemently, all past poetry - Valmiki, Homer, Dante, Kalidas, Shakespeare, Goethe, Whitman - would become irrelevant. No true poet can escape tradition for tradition haunts the poet. The radical past is stored in the poet’s deeper consciousness what the psychologist Jung calls “the blocked off radical unconscious”. At the same time, no poet can escape the present also because he is in it and of it. The best that the poet can do is to relate the immediate present to the living past and if possible to a future that is in the process of becoming.

The later phase of Indian English poetry is of the modern and post-modern phase. The modern or experimental Indian English poetry is part of the process of modernization which includes urbanization, industrialization, mobility, independence, social change, increased communication (in the form of films, television, radio, journals and newspapers) national and international transportation networks, mass education and the resulting paradox that as an independent culture emerges, it also participates in the international, modern usually
westernized world. Following are some of the factors responsible for the emergence of "new", "modernist", "experimental" Indian English poetry:

1. The economic progress achieved through the government's policies of democratic socialism and five year plans.
2. The social progress achieved through the rise in mass education.
3. The economic and social progress resulted in the broadening of the middle class sections of the society.
4. The spread of the English language and the evolution of the English culture alongside Hindi and the regional languages hastened the process of modernization. English has been Indianised in pronunciation, intonation, stress parts, idioms, word order and the syntax.
5. The scientific and technological advancement, the scientific temperament and modern sensibility has given rise to agnosticism and atheism among the educated intellectual. The modern educated intellectual Indian is critical of the formal and ritualistic religion.
6. The modern sensibility has led to an open mode of expression in social relationships.
7. Modern poetry deals in concrete terms with concrete experiences in free verse. Rhyme and other devices are of meter and stanzaic forms are discarded.

The major post - independence Indian English poets are:


The models of the modern Indian poets are neither exclusively Indian nor British but cosmopolitan. Europe, Africa, America and Asia have all become a part of our cultural consciousness and offer impetus and stimulation. So the poets have cosmopolitan culture to fall back on, though the preference is shown for Eliot, Pound, Yeats, Auden, Dylan Thomas, Wallace Stevens, Ginsberg, Sylvia Plath,
devotional poetry of saints like Tukaram.

Contemporary Indian English poetry is the expression of certain attitudes and values believed in by certain sections of today's Indian society, wholly urban, middle class. The poets are realistic and intellectually critical in the expression of their individualized experience. The poets go in for precision at all levels.

The poems are not didactic but thought provoking as they fall back on psychological problems presented in a psychoanalytical manner. So most of the poems do not strive for resolution of themes or conclusive stance. Modern Indian poems are by the poet turned psychologist, psychoanalyst, existentialist, surrealist etc. They are purely an expression of thoughts felt.

There is a lot of experimentation in the modern Indian poetry with a view to achieving modernity. Rhyme and stanzaic forms were replaced by free verse. Verbal melody came to be evoked through the use of alliterative and assonant words. The tone was one of intellectualized irony and sarcasm. The stance of the poets was one of complete detachment and objectivity. The other innovation of the modern Indian poets is the use of symbolism. The poets use modern techniques used by the film industry and advertising industry, besides the stream of consciousness and free association of ideas. There is much "word-hunting" and "image-hunting" which reflects the medium of consciousness on the part of the poet. The Indian poets therefore borrow words from their regional languages. To be Indian, poets have to be rooted somewhere in India - geographically, historically, socially or psychologically.

1.2 Check Your Progress.

Fill in the blanks in the following statements:

1. Indian poetry written by the Indians in English can be divided into three phases: _______, _______, and ________.

2. George Bottomley's has described Indian English Literature as "Matthew Arnold in a ________".

3. The pre-independence poet, Toru Dutt's poem ________ describes the use of the tree in verse.
1.3 Major Indian English Poets

Before Indians could write poetry in English, two related preconditions had to be met. First, the English language had to be sufficiently Indianised to be able to express the reality of the Indian situation. Secondly, Indians had to be sufficiently Anglicized to use the English language to express themselves. In 1780 India’s first newspaper, ‘Hicky’s Bengal Gazette’, was published in English. In 1817, the Hindu college, which later became Presidency College, the premier educational institution of Bengal, was founded. More significantly, in 1835, Viceroy Macaulay, in his famous Minute, laid the foundations of the modern educational system, with his decision to promote European science and literatures among Indians through the medium of the English language. The result was that English became in India, as later in other British colonies, a passport to privilege.

Indian poetry in English began in Bengal, the province in which the British first gained a stronghold. In addition, his poetry was largely an urban phenomenon centered in Calcutta. In fact, for the first fifty years, it was confined entirely to a few Bengali families who were residents of the city. Then, gradually it moved to other urban centers such as Madras and Bombay; even today, Indian poetry in English remains largely urban. Moreover, because English was an elite language in India, Indian poets in English came from the upper classes and castes.

When Indians first began to write poetry, it was not distinguished from that of the British in India, or Anglo-Indians as they were called. Indeed, because India was a part of the British Empire, Indian poets in English were not given a separate national identity; their early efforts were considered tributary to the mainstream of English Literature.
Perhaps it is best to see Indian poetry in English as a phenomenon as valuable for what it symbolizes as for its own achievements. It embodies the legacy of colonialism, our struggle against colonialism and oppression. It is also the site for the continuing Indo-western encounter and the evolving culture of post-colonial India. It is still a literature of major aspirations, a literature which has access to a national consciousness and to some of the best minds produced by this country.

1.3.1 Pre - independence Poets

The nineteenth century saw the institutionalization of British imperialism in India. An oppressive economic, political and social system was put into place which emphasized the inequality between the minuscule British ruling class and a vast populace of Indian subjects. Indian English poets displayed various degrees of compromise and resistance to it. The fact that they wrote in English itself showed the extent of their capitulation. On the other hand, they tried to make up for this by writing in a manner which emphasized their difference, their Indianness. The tension between the alienating language and the Indian sensibility is as old as Indian poetry in English itself.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) is generally credited as being the first Indian poet in English. He was born in Calcutta and especially remarkable because he was Christian and reared among Eurasians who were closer to the British. Infact, many of his Hindu Bengali contemporaries too strove to identify themselves with the latter. Derozio's love for India is revealed in several of his poems. He had an extraordinary career as a journalist, teacher, poet and a leading intellectual of his day. In poems like, "The Harp of India" and "My country! In thy day of glory past", he strikes a nationalistic note, trying to revive in English a moribund indigenous tradition of poetry. His long poem, "The Fakeer of Junghheera" is an interesting attempt to fuse the Byronic romance with social criticism of contemporary Indian mores. He died before he could fulfill the great promise that he showed as a poet and intellectual. Despite this he is counted among the major Indian poets in English for both historical and artistic reasons.
A contemporary of Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose, published The Shair and other poems (1830). Ghose has the distinction of being the first Hindu to write original English verse. He wrote several pieces on Indian festivals which were meant for his British and Eurasian readers. His best work, perhaps, is "To a dead Crow", a semi-comic poem which is a parody of an elegy.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824 - 1873) whose long narrative poem, 'The Captive Ladie', failed to earn him the fame he so aspired for, is an interesting, almost archetypal figure in modern Indian poetry. Dutt is remembered today not as an English poet but as the first and one of the greatest of modern Bengali poets. After his failure at English verse, he turned to Bengali, embarking on a brilliant literary career which after producing a series of original plays and poems, culminated in a Miltonic epic in blank verse, Meghnathbadh Kavya (1861).

Another family with the same surname, Dutt, brought out an anthology called The Dutt Family Album (1870), featuring about two hundred poems by Govin Chunder Dutt (1828 - 1884), his two brothers and a nephew. The Dutt family was to produce another generation of poets in Govin's daughters Aru and Toru. Another noteworthy poet of his time was Ram Sharma, born Nobo Kissen Ghose (1837 - 1918). He wrote volumes of satiric verse and also introduced a religious dimension to Indian poetry in English. In this period, Indian poetry in English moved out of Bengal for the first time with the publications of the Bombay Presidency poets, B. M. Malabari's Indian Muse in English Garb (1876), Cowasji Nowrosi Versuvala's Counting the Muse (1879) and A. M. Kunte's The Risi (1897).

There is almost complete critical consensus that Toru Dutt (1856 - 1877) was an original talent in Indian poetry in English. Like Derozio she died young, and like Emily Bronte, her life has been the object of as much curiosity as her poetry. One year after her sister, Aru's death, Toru published A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields (1875), which also featured eight pieces by Aru. These poems, "renderings" from the French, were enthusiastically received in England and India, and soon went into three editions, the third published by Kegan Paul, London, in 1880, with a Foreword by Arthur Symons. In 1875, Dutt took up the study of Sanskrit and ten months later, she was proficient enough in it to think of producing a "sheaf" gleaned from Sanskrit fields. This
volume was published posthumously in 1882 as Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan by Kegan Paul, London, with a Foreword by Edmund Goose. Before she died, she had written one French novel and left incomplete another in English, both of which were published after her death. The most significant aspect of Dutt's literary career was her use of the rich Indian heritage of myth and folklore. In Ancient Ballads she converted popular stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas into English verse. In this, she pioneered a way for several later Indian writers in English who had similar problems regarding their poetic identity. The best of these, probably one of the best individual compositions in Indian poetry in English is "Our Casuarina Tree". This poem, reminiscent in both form and content of Keats' odes, is about memory, imagination and transcendence. The beautiful tree in the poet's garden at Baugmareae becomes, by the end of the poem, a symbol not only of the poet's joyous childhood but also, through an extension in time and space, of the poet's longing for permanence and eternity. Similarly, "Sita" is a remarkable poem whose subject is not much the pathos of the banished Sita in exile but the power of poetry to produce emotion, much in the manner of Valmiki's 'shoka' (sorrow) leading to the 'shloka' (verse).

Manmohan Ghose (1869 - 1924) went to win an open scholarship to attend Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1887. There he befriended Stephen Phillips and Lawrence Binyon. While at Oxford, Manmohan's poems appeared in Primavera (1890) along with those of three other poets. Oscar Wilde reviewing the book in the 'Pall Mall Gazette' commented favorably on Manmohan's poetry. During his lifetime just one collection of his poems, Love Songs and Elegies, was published in London by Elkin Mathews in the Shilling Garland series in 1898. He remained a dedicated poet and wrote a number of longer, more ambitious works including 'Perseus', 'the Gorgon Slayer', 'Nala and Damayanti', 'Orphic Mysteries', 'Immortal Eve' and 'Adam Alarmed in Paradise'. After his death, Binyon published some of his shorter poems as Songs of life and death (1926), prefaced by a memoir. Later, the Calcutta University, where he was remembered fondly as one of their greatest teachers of English, commissioned his daughter to publish his complete works in five volumes (1970 - 1971).
Sri Aurobindo (1872 - 1950) probably has the best claim to be regarded as the greatest Indian poet in English. He wrote a vast body of verse in almost every available genre during his poetic career of over fifty - five years. He wrote lyrics, sonnets, long narrative poems, dramatic poetry and epics. He was well - versed in both European and Indian classics, proving his command over them in his brilliant translations. He was also one of India's most significant philosophers and critics in recent times, thereby originating a new, and evolutionist Yoga philosophy. He founded an original school of thought and religious sect as the head of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. He used his original English poetry equally with prose as the vehicle of his ideas. Aurobindo is the most discussed of the Indian poets in English; there are more books and articles on his epic of over 24,000 lines, Savitri. In Savitri he used the story of Savitri's conquest of death in the Mahabharata - a story which has influenced Indians for centuries as an exposition of perfect womanhood - and expanded it to create his epic. Savitri realizes her divine potential and like Christ worsts Death; afterwards, she returns to the earth as a symbol of what humanity can achieve. A mystic and a seer, Aurobindo claimed to have described his own, palpable experiences in writing the poem. Savitri is one of the longer poems in the English language (it is roughly twice the length of John Milton's Paradise Lost). It took about fifty years to write - from the germ of the idea to the final written version - and complete and faithful reading demands a long time; nevertheless, year after year, it continues to attract, repel and challenge critics, students and other readers.

If Aurobindo is the greatest, Sarojini Naidu (1879 - 1949) is among the most popular and accessible of Indian poets in English. Naidu's poems are deliberately grounded in an anti - intellectual aesthetics of ephemeral beauty. She was primarily a lyric poet whose mastery of rhyme and meter is unmatched. The chief quality of her poetry is melody - sound and sense combine to produce an emotion, as in music. She is remarkably versatile. She draws on the rich traditions of several Indian languages, regions and religions. Naidu's images are stylized and sophisticated, not naïve or simplistic. She uses several discourses - types from Indian traditions of poetry: some of her poems are monologues or duets; still others are communal songs in separate voices and in chorus. Naidu was chiefly a love poet and her poetry
explores the many facets of love as outlined in classical texts: love in union, love in longing, love in separation; the pain of love, the sin of love, the desire of love; earthly love, divine love and so on.

Indian poetry in English of this period can also claim Rabindranath Tagore (1861 - 1941) as one of its own. Though strictly speaking, Tagore wrote only one poem, "The Child" (1931), in English, his own English renderings of his famous poem, Gitanjali (1912) won him the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 and world-wide renown. After that, Tagore continued to "translate" several of his works into English, deviating considerably from the Bengali in the process. Tagore bestrides the world of Indian culture like a colossus. Poet, dramatist, novelist, short-story writer, critic, musician, educationist and savant, he was one of the most remarkable figures in the recent history of India, besides being almost certainly the greatest Indian poet of the century. We find a chiseled perfection to his work. His poems are strikingly finished, rich in texture and profound in thought. He celebrated and affirmed his pleasure in the world of the senses. He saw the world as imbued with the glory of God. He carried over the plaintive longing for the beloved, the self-chastisement and the humility of the Bhakti poets, but in a more formal, sophisticated and self-conscious manner. He aligned himself with the down-trodden and the suffering masses of India, criticizing the oppression of the British. His sensibility was idealistic and romantic, but his romanticism grappled with modernism and survived it.

Sri Ananda Acharya (1881 - 1941) wrote over thirty-five books, out of which ten were collections of verse. All of these have been collected in the volumes, Snow Birds and other poems and Arctic Swallows and other poems both edited by K. V. Sharma. Acharya's poems are spiritualist and mystical. They propound a philosophy of life which emphasizes self-transformation and pacifism. Many of his poems use esoteric imagery and symbolism. The poems show overall, a combination of Vedantic and Buddhist influences.

Puran Singh (1881 - 1931) is chiefly remembered as a pioneering figure in twentieth century Punjabi literature. Besides poems, novels, short stories, drama and criticism, he also wrote extensively on Sikh culture and history. His form and technique were influenced by Tagore, while his ideas were inspired by Sikh scriptures and devotional literature.
J. Krishnamurti (1895 - 1986) wrote poetry for a brief but crucial juncture in his long career as a philosopher and teacher. From 1927 - 1931 he published three collections of poetry. His poems are all in a poetic prose, the form which Tagore popularized. They are basically devotional and mystical poems, passionately didactic but rich in imagery and metaphor. He underwent a spiritual transformation. Since then he toured the world speaking against occult hierarchies and authority in matters of spirit.

Humayun Kabir (1906 - 1969) was an individual of vast and varied accomplishments - scholar, educationist, administrator, politician, trade union leader, poet, novelist and translator. He wrote over thirty books in English and Bengali. Besides two volumes of poems, he wrote a novel, Man and Rivers (1945). His poems are far more concrete, realistic and modern in sensibility than those of his contemporaries; in fact, in tone and character.

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya (1898 - 1989), brother of Sarojini Naidu showed great promise in his first collection, The Feast of Youth (1918). Both Tagore and Aurobindo were impressed by his talent; the latter wrote a glowing review of the book, while the former hailed him as his successor. His output is varied in theme, ranging from Aurobindonian idealism to Marxist materialism. He usually writes rhymed and metric verse.

1.3.2 Post - Independence Poets

There is no doubt that during the 1950's the dominant tone in Indian poetry in English shifted. The impact was swift and sweeping. What had been a minority voice suddenly became that of the majority. A readymade aesthetic was available to the new poets - the modernism of Eliot and Pound, of Richards and Leavis and of Picasso and jazz music. This aesthetic found rapid acceptance in the disillusionment of the post - independence era. Instead of ushering in the promised golden age, independent India became a typical third world country, backward, corrupt and hypocritical. The new generation which had come of age in the 1950's and 1960's found itself betrayed by its elders. It was impatient for change and fed up with the platitudes of the past.
The first major characteristic of the modernists was a rejection of the past. This was suggested in the title of Ezekiel’s first book of poems, A Time to Change (1952). A whole generation turned its back on tradition and found itself alienated in the new India. Secondly, they declared themselves opposed to the idealism and romanticism of their predecessors. They wanted a poetry which was without escapism and flights of fancy, a poetry written in a clear, hard, unsentimental voice and in everyday language. Thirdly, the poets believed in a secular muse. They had little faith in mysticism and other-worldly ideologies. Instead with relish, they introduced a bold, new frankness into their poetry. Turning away from religion, they sought meaning and order in personal relationships. They wrote about the city and its dirty, poverty-stricken and dehumanizing environs. Finally, the poets increasingly resorted to irony as the best means of representing their love-hate relationship with their surroundings. They believed they were alienated from their society and irony was the only way of expressing their ambivalence towards themselves and their world.

Moraes chooses “Babur” as a persona to suggest his own sense of alienation from India; Jusawalla finds himself filled with revulsion and pain upon “Approaching Santa Cruz Airport, Bombay”, in Kamala Das’ “The Sunshine Cat”, the speaker castigates all the men who abused her, Ramanujan wonders if he is really himself in a characteristic self-reflexive “Self-Portrait”. Mehrotra resorts to a surrealistic subversion of meaning in very discontinuous “Continuities”; Parthasarthy’s “Homecoming” is loaded with self-criticism and loss; in Daruwalla’s “Routine” the police officer cynically prepares himself for another riot; Mahaputra’s “Dawn at Puri” links the temple at Puri with crows and skulls’ Chitre’s speaker regards his “Father returning Home” with dispassionate and ironic detachment. Kolhatkar turns the whole idea of the traditional pilgrimage inside out in “Jejuri”. The situation is Indian; the observer is critical and alienated. Sometimes the detachment turns into attachment and the irony into anger. But often the attitude is as troubling and uncertain as the language is precise and clipped.

The poets seem unable to commit themselves to any ideology but remain on neutral, treacherous ground. Alienation is the tension between the English medium and the Indian experience is the source of the poetry. The sort of sensibility which came into vogue during this
time is characterized by Mokashi - Punekar's phrase, "cultural allotrophy".

On the other hand, even the first of our modernist poets, Shahid Suhrawardy was quite aware of not just the tension between his mother tongue and his language of expression but the allegiance that modernism bears to trends in western literature and art.

By the 1960's the West was entering a new age, what came to be known later as "post - modernism". At that time the modernist sensibility in India had, paradoxically, just taken root: the sixties saw the publication of a vast number of "new" poets: Jussawalla, Das, Mehrotra, Ramanujan, Patel, Nandy and so on, who are now acknowledged as the protagonists of the movement. Hence, modernism in Indian poetry in English was established about twenty years after it had passed into history in Europe and America!

Those who started as modernists became affirmers of the past and of tradition. Eliot himself is a paradigm of this pattern; starting as a literary radical he ended as a conservative. Two Eliot figures in India, one a poet, the other, a critic, who are greatly responsible for the popularity of modernism, too, follow a similar paradigm. Both Lal of the Writers Workshop and Professor C. D. Narasimhaiah of the 'Literary Criterion' started as radical modernists, but have now mellowed into upholders of Indian traditions in literature and criticism.

Such a return is discernable in other modernists too. Ezekiel's poetry is increasingly spiritual in theme; Daruwalla's last book of new poems ends with a passionate plea to God for knowledge and truth; Parthasarthy and Ramanujan have both been obsessed with discovering their Tamil heritage. After the initial revolt against tradition, the modernist poet seems to be turning back to tradition to discover the roots of his identity. Alienation, the very condition which made poetry possible, is now being cured through poetry.

The very poets who dismissed their predecessors as being inferior and derivative can themselves be accused of being imitative and contrived today. They formed themselves into clichés and groups and launched attacks on those they considered their opponents. They polemicised poetry. And through their anthologies, introductions, critical commentaries and interviews, they sometimes descended to bitter wrangling and mud - slinging.
Straight away, one can separate the high modernists from the neo-romantics. To the latter category belong not only Lal and Nandy, but Moraes, Meena Alexander and to an extent, Mahaputra; romanticism, no doubt, continued to be the minor mode throughout this period, with numerous practitioners. Among the romantic poets we find a variety of styles and modes. Lal is witty and dainty in his gestures; Moraes very conservative in form, but always experimental with his numerous personae; Nandy is excessive and expressionistic; Mahaputra emotional and sentimental; and Alexander dreamy and academic.

Within the high modernists, essentially two traditions can be posited: the clear and the obscure, or the conversational and the esoteric. The first, best exemplified by Ezekiel, is poetry of communication. The poet tries to speak to his readers as clearly as possible, almost in a manner of a British movement poet like Philip Larkin. There is no attempt to subterfuge or complexity, through irony is the chief vehicle of evasion. To this group belong the majority of the poets like Ramanujan, Patel, Parthasarthy, Kumar, Daruwalla and Peeradina. The other tradition is of obscure and esoteric poetry which resists easy decoding. Practitioners include Mehrotra, Kolhatkar and Mahaputra. Finally, there are the confessional poets like Das.

Of course, all the poets write about personal relationships, growing up, city scapes, tradition-modernity conflicts and their identity crises.

Post-modernism seems to promise a variety of new devices including parody, pastiche, collage, intertextuality and literary cannibalism of varying degrees. One of the main subjects for poetry is the nature and problematic of poetry itself. There is, at the same time, a return of involvement in the Indian context, celebration of difference and the exploitation of ethnicity. This period has already produced noteworthy talents like Agha Shahid Ali, Saleem Peeradina, Manohar Shetty, Vikram Seth and Imtiaz Dharker. There are other poets, with published collections to their credit, waiting in the wings. Among these are Melanie Silgado, Bibhu Padhi, Sujata Bhatt, R. Raja Rao, Sanjiv Bhatia, Charmayne De Souza, Menka Shivdasani, Hoshang Merchant, Sudeep Sen, Tara Patel, Tabish Khair, Ranjit Hoskote, Jeet Thayil and Vijay Nambisan.
1.3 Check Your Progress.

Answer the following questions:

1. Which is India's first newspaper?

2. Who laid the foundations of the modern education system?

3. What is the poem 'The Fakeer of Jungheera' about?

4. Which Bengali epic did Michael Madhusudan Dutt write?

5. Which poet converted popular stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and the Puranas into English verse?

6. What does Aurobindo's Savitri symbolize?

7. Why is Sarojini Naidu called 'the nightingale of India'?

8. Which are the various facets of love highlighted in Naidu's poetry?

9. Which is the only poem written in English by Tagore?

10. Which is the first collection of poetry by Ezekiel?

11. What does Moraes "Babur" suggest?

12. Who are the two Eliot figures of India?
1.4 Major themes dealt in Indian English Poetry

One cannot deny the fact that Indian poetry in English in the post-independence period is different from the poetry in the pre-independence period or rather colonial period. All literature, as Taine, the French critic said, is the product of the triad, the race, the moment and the milieu and since for the Indians the attainment of independence in 1947 marks a great watershed in the annals of India's political history, the period preceding independence was naturally full of political ferment and turmoil and the urge of the nationalist Indians to acquire a distinct national identity to avoid being brow-beaten by the imperialist forces.

The Time-spirit that permeated colonial India and began to permeate independent India were different. The sources of inspiration derived from the Indian ethos were ipso facto different. What England and America witnessed in the early part of the 20th century, India witnessed in the post-independence period. Indian English poetry therefore acquired a new dimension of modernity and modernist trait in the 50s when the English and the American poetry had acquired it in the 20s.

1.4.1 Pre-independence poetry themes

Poetry in English written in the colonial period, though of a different order, cannot be just dismissed as insignificant however imitative or derivative it may be. Whatever its deficiencies, it has no doubt certain areas of excellence in the works of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, Tagore and Ghose. Literary history shows how the succeeding generation tends to run down and disown the preceding generation, the predecessors.

Most of the early poetry was inspired by the Indian freedom struggle and the western romantics. Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose and the Dutt family wrote romantic poetry highlighting the Indian culture and ethos. The themes were vivid like Indian legends and myths, epics like Ramayana, childhood memories under the Indian sun etc.

Sarojini Naidu with a deep sense of rhythm wrote romantic poetry basically. She also wrote about the unique Indian culture and nationality. Tagore and Aurobindo Ghose were philosophers and mystics. They put in the Indian philosophy of oneness of God, religion,
childhood, spirituality etc. Infact they both are even today the most widely read and critically evaluated Indian English poets.

1.4.2 Post - independence poetry themes

The post - independence poetry underwent a sea change as far as the themes are concerned. The poets are faced with the crisis of identity so their poetry is one of quest, a search of their self, a search for their cultural roots. The reason for such a theme of Indian poetry is not far to seek. The Indian poets who express themselves in English have their cultural roots in their community. Many of these Indian poets have been educated abroad but since they belong to the middle - class, they find themselves alienated within their own immediate circle and even from the westernized ethos.

Some of the poets come from different racial backgrounds but are nationals of India for example, Nissim Ezekiel is a Jew, Dom Moraes is an Anglo - Indian, Daruwalla and Jussawalla are Parsees, Eunice De Souza is a Goan Christian. The Indian poet writing in English therefore finds himself alienated. So the poetry of modern Indian poets naturally turns on the theme of identity crisis. Poets like Ramanujan, Parthasarthy and Arun Kolatkar are preoccupied with the problem of roots. Their examination of Hindu ethos has been in several directions. Ramanujan, for example, conjures up his early childhood memories with strong sense impressions. At the same time his mind keeps examining the strong and weak points of his cultural heritage. Parthasarthy too is obsessed with his roots in India while leading a westernized life style. His poem 'Rough Passages' is an attempt to deal with the theme of identity exposed to two cultures namely the Indian and the Western.

The scrutiny of society is another subject matter of modern poetry. The poets who write in English were born, say in the twenties and thirties of this century and on growing up they have been a part of independent India. They are a witness to and a part of socio - economic and political changes. They cannot but be critical of all that happens around. So the socio- political and economic scene as it impinges on the poet's consciousness becomes the subject - matter of modern poetry. Arun Kolatkar's Jejuri is an example in point. A mood of disillusionment and despair, cynicism and sarcasm characterizes
modern Indian poetry.

Alienation and exile, the crisis of personal identity and of cultural identity, childhood memories, familial relations, and love, nostalgia for the past and cultural traditions therefore constitute the themes of Indian poets. In the case of some poets, the sense of alienation from the family or the community becomes so overwhelming that they turn completely inward. The result of such inwardness is a highly personal poetry, confessional in tone and obsessed with loneliness and insecurity from which the escape is sought either in the erotic fantasies or the self-probing of a tortured soul. Such is the poetry of Kamala Das, Eunice de Souza and Shiv Kumar.

The poets of the 80s seem more interested in depicting and evaluating their family background, personal and social landscapes. So do the poets Agha Shahid Ali, Dilip Chitre. Mahaputra portrays the rural Indian landscape of the state of Orissa.

The poets thus reveal their awareness of raw Indian identity. The poetic sensibilities are oriented along three distinct avenues: the modes of affirmation in terms of myth and history, quest for the self in and through love, modes of negation in terms of longing for dissolution and death. In other words, modern Indian poetry has centered itself around self in relation to society, history with family as the core unit and in relation to self, its own propelled emotions and feelings. So the themes of modern Indian poetry are secular and more introspective-contemplative.

1.4 Check Your Progress.
1. According to Taine, what is literature?
______________________________

2. Name the two pre-independence poet-philosophers.
______________________________

3. What were the pre-independence themes of Indian English poetry?
______________________________

4. Name some of the poets who come from different racial backgrounds but are nationals of India.
______________________________

Background to Indian English Poetry / 20
1.6 Conclusion

This chapter enables us to know that when one surveys the history of the evolution of Indian English poetry we realize that Indians have mastered the alien language, English with perfection. It was in an infant stage during the pre-independence stage but now it has grown up. Its increasing number of poets proves that it has been a successful medium of expression. At the same time, we find a variety of themes prevalent both in the pre and past independence period. There have been much experimentation in the past and they are ongoing still. The future may bring for admirers of Indian English poetry a new refreshing change.

The next chapter deals with the Indian English poet, Nissim Ezekiel with reference to his selected poems.

1.7 Summary

The Indian English poetry began far back before the independence. The credit of introducing Indians to English goes to Lord Macaulay. The Indian value of cultural assimilation was applied to English language. With English education, Indians befriended English making it a language of their intellectual as well as emotional make-up.

The pre-independence period poetry had imparted some great minds like Tagore, Dutt family and Aurobindo. Their poetry had themes like nationalism, nature, Indian culture, love etc. Most of the poets of those times wrote poetry in imitation but there were few genuine
figures too. Their poetry reflected their individualism.

Post - independence brought in a dawn of a new era of disillusionment and identity crisis. The promises of a bright future of India and the bitter experience of partition had made life miserable. A new elite middle class had come into existence bringing in a quest for identity as Indians and as humans. Diaspora and culturally rootedness had its own problems. These themes gave birth to new techniques and experimentation in poetry. Confessional mode of poetry explores the trauma of modern life. The poetry of the modern and the post - modern Indian poets reflect the contemporary society and life. It can be called an India in a miniature form.

**Answers to Check Your Progress**

1.2
1. The imitative, the assimilative and the experimental.
2. Saree
3. "Our Casuarina Tree"
4. free verse
5. "image-hunting"

1.3
1. 'Hicky's Bengal Gazette'
2. Lord Macaulay
3. Fusion of Byronic romance with social criticism of contemporary Indian mores
4. Meghnathbadh Kavya
5. Toru Dutt
6. Savitri realizes her divine potential and she returns to the earth as a symbol of what humanity can achieve.
7. Her poetry is melody - sound and sense combine to produce an emotion, as in music.
8. Love in union, love in longing, love in separation; the pain of love, the sin of love, the desire of love; earthly love, divine love and so on.
9. 'The Child'
10. A Time to change
11. Suggests his own sense of alienation from India
12. Lal and D. Narasimhaiah

1.4
1. literature, as Taine, the French critic said, is the product of the triad, the race, the moment and the milieu
2. Sri Aurobindo and Tagore
3. The themes were vivid like Indian legends and myths, epics like Ramayana, childhood memories under the Indian sun etc.
4. Nissim Ezekiel is a Jew, Dom Moraes is an Anglo-Indian, Daruwalla and Jussawalla are Parsees, Eunice De Souza is a Goan Christian.
5. Ramanujan, Parthasarthy and Arun Kolatkar
6. The result of inwardness is a highly personal poetry, confessional in tone and obsessed with loneliness and insecurity
7. Kamala Das, Eunice de Souza and Shiv Kumar

Field work

Read few poems of the poets we have examined in the chapter and try to critically analyze them on the basis of this background chapter.
Nissim Ezekiel (1924 - 2004) was educated in Mumbai and London. Returning home he took up teaching and retired as Professor of English at the University of Bombay. A winner of Sahitya Akademi Award, Ezekiel has edited several journals including 'Quest' and 'Imprint'. His verse collections are A Time to Change (1952), Sixty Poems (1953), The Third (1959), The Unfinished Man (1960), The Exact Name (1965), Hymns and Darkness (1976) and Latter day Psalms (1982). He also has the title Collected plays to his credit. He emerged as a leader, encouraging new talent in modern Indian English Poetry. A poet with a professional attitude, his poetry is chiefly introspective and self-analytical and expresses modern concerns in contemporary voice and manner. Love, sex, death, loneliness and prayer are the themes in his poetry. The distancing of emotions and ironic perception are the major features of his poetry.
2.0 Objectives

Friends, this chapter deals with the Indian English poet, Nissim Ezekiel. This chapter deals with his two poems and Ezekiel as a poet. After study of this chapter you will be able to:

- Explain the themes of given poems.
- Explain the poem 'Night of the Scorpion'
- Explain the poem, 'The Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher'
- Explain Ezekiel's contribution to Indian English poetry.

2.1 Introduction

Friends, in the last chapter we have studied about the history of the Indian English Verses. This chapter will introduce you to one of the pioneer figures of modern Indian English poetry, Nissim Ezekiel. It will inform about Ezekiel's poetry and its various facets. What are the
various themes of Ezekiel's poetry? What were the contemporary times when he wrote poetry? How does his poetry reflect Indianness? This chapter is an answer to these questions and it will help you to get a better understanding of Ezekiel's poetry.

2.2 Night of the Scorpion

‘Night of the Scorpion’, written with a touch of gentle irony, is a poignant and touching poetic portrayal of a rustic situation evocative of the Indian ethos. Written in free verse, the poem has a terse ending characteristic of the style of many modern Indian poets writing in English. It is believed that this poem is an expression of his childhood experience when his own mother was stung by a scorpion. He witnessed the drama of the aftermath of the scorpion bite. The poem is just a reaction of his experience.

2.2.1 Theme of the poem

Ezekiel narrates how the speaker's mother is stung by a poisonous scorpion. He juxtaposes the pain and horror of the event alongside a humorous depiction of the attitudes of simple and ignorant but concerned villagers. The poem depicts the supernatural elements that are strongly believed by the villagers. We come across some irrational beliefs prevalent in the rural society like the movement of the scorpion would speed up the movement of the poison in his mother's body. It also highlights the concern of the villagers for even a small incident like a scorpion bite in the neighborhood. It also shows the affection a mother has for her children and the pain she undergoes silently as it assures the safety of her children.

2.2.2 Reflection of superstition in the poem

Through the poem, he emphasizes the hold of superstition on the Indian social psyche with rare insight and sensitivity. The poem conveys the typical superstitious attitude of the Indian peasants to life through an ordinary happening in which a scorpion stings the speaker's mother and the neighbors respond impulsively. The neighbors even in the dark are equipped with candles and lanterns to locate the culprit scorpion as they want to kill it. They believe that the
death of the scorpion would nullify the effect of the poison in the victim's body. At the same time, the villagers were continuously chanting the name of God to paralyze the scorpion. They feel that the mother is suffering because of the sins of her previous birth or is reducing the sufferings of her next birth. They also believe that her suffering will reduce the sum of evil and add to the sum of the good in this world. It is believed that the poison will purify her soul from the material desires and her spirit of its ambitions. A holy man is also summoned to perform various rites to tame the poison with his incantations. Thus the poem is a lovely picture of a typical Indian scenario of a trivial incident like a scorpion bite and its post effects.

2.2.3 Traditional Approach versus modern approach

The poem shows the traditions and beliefs that the villagers possess at a scorpion bite. As mentioned earlier, the poem moves around the traditional approaches of the villagers to cure the mother of the poison of a scorpion bite. They try every possible traditional remedy like holy incantations, hunting the scorpion for killing it, prayers and so on. On the other hand, we find only one rational figure amidst the chaos around, that is, the poet's father. He is skeptic and a rational person. Rather than believing in the curses and the blessings, he feels practical efforts are more fruitful. He tried every available powder, mixture, herbs and hybrid. He performed an experiment to cure his wife of the bitter poison. He poured a little paraffin upon her bitten toe and lighted it with a match. The toe was in flames and he expected the poisoned blood to burn up thereby curing her. Somehow after several efforts, she finally was cured after twenty long painful hours. The poem keeps moving between the traditional and modern approach for curing a victim of a poisonous scorpion bite.

2.2.4 Indian philosophy followed by the villagers

The poem depicts many beliefs prevalent in the Indian philosophy. One of the dominant ideologies of Indian philosophy is the 'karma' theory which believes in rewards or punishments inflicted upon an individual are the result of his own 'karma' or deeds. The villagers in the poem believe that the mother was suffering due to the scorpion bite because of the sins of her past birth or maybe she was reducing
her sufferings of the next birth. They also feel that her suffering will balance the sum of good against that of the sum of the evil.

The Indian philosophy of purification in suffering is highlighted in the poem. The villagers say that the suffering of the victim will purify her of her material bodily desires and ambitions. It will thereby bring her soul close to that of the Almighty God.

2.2.5 Paraphrase of the poem

The poem is written in a typical Indian convention using Indian English and Indian culture. It shows the reactions of a typical lower middle class peasant family upon a scorpion bite. The poem highlights the superstitions and beliefs that an average Indian possesses.

The poet uses flashback technique to recall the incident. He remembers the night when as a child he witnesses the entire drama of scorpion bite. We find a variety of responses by the family and the neighbors. Most of the responses are irrational but at the same time they depict the concern and fellow-feeling amongst each other. The poem highlights the helping nature of Indians.

The poem begins with the recalling of the poet of the incident of his mother being stung by a scorpion. The night was dark and dreary accompanied by the rains. It had been raining steadily for ten long hours. It was at this time that the scorpion had crawled near the sack of rice.

The poet compares the scorpion to the Devil who has a devilish or diabolic tail. The scorpion comes out of his hiding and his devilish tale flashes in the dark. He risks the rain by coming out and bites his mother. Swiftly the scorpion moves out in the rain. At the very next moment, the neighborhood peasants gather like swarms of flies into the poet's hut. The peasants are chanting the prayers to God to relieve his mother from the torturous pain. They had a belief that by doing so they could paralyze the scorpion poison. They also attempt together to find out the evil scorpion in the dark. The peasants are holding lanterns and candles and casting their giant scorpion shadows on the sun-baked walls. Unfortunately, their efforts are in vain. They were clicking their tongues in disappointment. Actually, they believed in the superstition that if the scorpion is found and killed, it will kill the poison in the body of his mother. But since it's not found, they believe that as
the scorpion is moving around alive, its poison is moving in his mother's blood.

They start praying to God that the scorpion should remain still. For his mother, the peasants say that his mother is suffering due to the sins of her previous birth and they wish that these sins get burnt with her suffering that night. Also they believe that since she is suffering in this birth that will decrease the misfortunes of her next birth.

They pray that her pain should balance the sum of evil balance in this world with the sum of the good. They firmly believe that the poison will purify her body and mind from the various desires and ambitions. The peasants had seated around the mother in pain and she was lying at the centre. Their faces were serene with peace and understanding. As the number of people visiting increased, the number of candles, lanterns, insects and rain increased in torrents.

The mother was twisting on the mat with endless pain. The poet's father was skeptic and rationalist but he tried every available herb, hybrid, powders, mixtures and also curses and blessings. He experimented scientifically on the bitten toe by pouring a little paraffin and lighting it. A holy man was ushered in to perform rites and rituals to nullify the effect of the poison with his holy incantations.

Trying every possible remedy, everyone was incessantly engaged in saving the life of the mother. Finally their efforts did bear fruits after twenty hours and the effect of the poison disappeared.

When the mother was back to life, she didn't curse or regret the disastrous scorpion - bite. Instead she thanked God for spacing her children from the deadly pain for she felt she could tolerate any pain to rescue her children from it. This shows the universal loving and caring nature of a mother towards her children.

In short, the poem depicts the Indian temperament in its lively tone. The use of present tense highlights the typical Indian manner of narration. The poem is a truthful representation of India in its true colors.

2.2 Check Your Progress.

Answer the following questions in brief.

1. What are the villagers searching for in the dark of the night?

__________________________________________________

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2.3 The Poet, Lover and Birdwatcher

Nissim Ezekiel tries to highlight the common qualities in a poet, lover and the bird watcher. The poem is a testimonial of the good observation of the poet. He compares and contrasts the qualities of all the three revealing how their quest ends.

2.3.1 Theme of the poem

Ezekiel tries to locate the common qualities of a poet, a lover and a bird watcher. He focuses on their quest for appropriateness and the unending efforts all the three put in. All the three take pains for perfection but their paths are different. Their destinations are different but the quest for perfection is the same. The poet through the medium of the poet, lover and the bird watcher wants to highlight the quest of every individual for the perfect in their lives.
Nissim Ezekiel examines common qualities between a poet, lover and a bird watcher. A bird watcher is never still in his curiosity for birds. His mind is always in search of something novel about birds. He observes the birds in a still motion. He never speeds up as far as his observation is concerned. Same rule applies to both lovers and poets. The lover studies women and the poet studies words or language. They wait for the right woman and the right words respectively.

The hunt of all three is an exercise in itself. At the same time, the hunt is not based upon their own will. The situation and needs shape up their untiring hunt. Their hunt needs persistent tolerance and patience. A bird watcher needs to relax on a hill for long hours even to note a single movement of the wings of a bird. He has to be motionless since the birds are timid by nature.

Whereas a lover waits till he is sure that a woman loves him. The immediate action by his is he stops waiting and surrenders himself. He even at times risks by surrendering.

A poet never speaks or expresses himself until his spirit is moved by something. When he proves that his morals are turning right, then he moves to write poetry. All the three: poet, lover and birdwatcher move in a slow pace though they say much more than one can understand. Their creativity demands untiring efforts.

If a bird watcher wants to study rare species of birds, he has to ungrudgingly move in deserted lanes and rivers, shores where there is a company of silence only. The path of all three is very remote and thorny i.e. full of hurdles. The poet compares this path to one's heart which has a dark floor because it is difficult to comprehend the depth of one's heart.

The poet feels women are not just a bunch of flesh and bones but are like incomprehendable myths of light whose depth has no concrete limits.

The search of all three is in the darkness without any concrete path of their aspirations. At the centre of their quest there is darkness but it is full of meaning for them. They all are moving in an impractical world according to the sensible beings. Their credit lies in giving meaning even to the senseless quest. The outcome of their quest is almost out of the world and something miraculous.
All the three move in a crooked path and are restless in their flights of search. For a poet even a deaf can hear and a blind can recover sight since he believes in incredible things.

Thus all the three love to move in a fantasy world of their own. Their quest gives them surprising results which astonish the world with their creation.

### 2.3 Check Your Progress.

1. What do the best poets wait for?  
2. Are the three in a hurry?  
3. How and why does the birdwatcher wait patiently?  
4. What does a lover do when he gets the right opportunity?  
5. When does a poet express himself?  
6. What efforts does a birdwatcher make to watch rarer birds?  
7. Where are the poets lost?

### 2.4 Conclusion

This chapter deals with Nissim Ezekiel, who as a poet deals successfully with a variety of themes. The ‘Night of the Scorpion’ deals with a simple rustic incident of a scorpion bite and the response to it at various levels. It introduces us to the rural Indian culture and their dominant beliefs. The poem brings out the various Indian philosophies.

On the other hand, ‘The poet, the lover and the bird watcher’ takes us to the flights of the fancy of the poet. He compares and highlights the common features of all the three. We come across the excellence
of Ezekiel's fertile imagination.

The next chapter deals with another Indian English poet, Arun Kolatkar with reference to the selected poems from his poetry collection Jejuri.

### 2.5 Summary

This chapter has introduced the poetic skills of Nissim Ezekiel. The study of the two poems has highlighted him as a modern poet capable of dealing with the Indian scenario neutrally. We also come across his experimentation with English language. His use of free verse gives him more space for expression. His uniqueness lies in his good observation. His poems are a pleasure to read and analyze.

### 2.6 Glossary

#### 2.6.1 Night of the Scorpion

1. Diabolic - devilish
2. Buzzed- uttered or chattered
3. The Evil One - the scorpion, a creature associated by villagers with evil and darkness
4. Skeptic - one who doubts the truth of accepted beliefs
5. Rationalist - one who bases opinions on reason
6. Hybrid - combining several remedies
7. Paraffin - oil from petroleum used as fuel
8. Rites - religious rituals or ceremonies
9. Incantation - musical chanting of words or 'mantras' believed to have magical powers

#### 2.6.2 The Poet, the Lover and the Birdwatcher

1. pace - speed
2. hunt - search
3. timid - shy, somewhat scarred
4. lanes - paths
5. core - centre

Answers to check your progress.

2.2
1. The scorpion
2. The poet's father
3. She will either reduce her sins of past birth or her next birth
4. beneath a sack of rice
5. The scorpion is compared to the devil and the devil is supposed to be diabolic.
6. To paralyze the scorpion
7. The poison will purify the flesh of desire and the spirit of ambition
8. The father poured paraffin on the bitten toe and put a match to it.

2.3
1. Words
2. No, but at the same time they are never still
3. He waits with relaxation on a hill even to watch a wing movement of a timid bird.
4. A poet risks surrendering
5. When he finds something which moves his spirit
6. He moves along the deserted lanes with rivers flowing in silence near the source in a thorny and remote path
7. The poets are lost in crooked and restless flights.

Field work

Read other poems of Nissim Ezekiel to find out some common features of his poetry highlighted in the study of his prescribed poems.
Arun Kolatkar (b. 1938) was educated in Mumbai where he works as a graphic artist. A winner of Commonwealth Poetry Prize, Kolatkar has contributed to 'Kavi', 'Opinion Literary Review', 'New Writing in India' and 'The Shell and the Rain'. He is a bilingual poet and has translated the Marathi poets, especially Tukaram, into English. His long poem, 'The Boatride' was published in the magazine, 'Damn You'. Jejuri appeared in 1976. Jejuri, Kolatkar's most controversial book, is commonly viewed as a quest poem: a presentation of an encounter between modern consciousness and ancient religious tradition.
### 3.0 Objectives

Friends, this chapter introduces you to the poetry of Arun Kolatkar through the study of his selected poems from his poetry collection Jejuri. This chapter will help you to explain:

- Background of the Jejuri poems
- Theme of the Jejuri poems
- His poems: ‘The Door’, ‘The Butterfly’ and ‘Between Jejuri and the railway station’

### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we studied the Indian English poet, Nissim Ezekiel with reference to his selected poems. This chapter will discuss Arun Kolatkar, who is a bilingual poet. In Jejuri he writes about his various observations about the things he comes across in his visit to Jejuri. The study of the original text is recommended. We are going to critically analyze his following poems from the text Jejuri:

1. ‘The Door’
2. ‘The Butterfly’
3. ‘Between Jejuri and the Railway station’
3.2 Background of Jejuri poems

Jejuri is a village situated about 30 miles (48 km) from the city of Pune in the state of Maharashtra. At Jejuri there is a holy shrine of Khandoba to which hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from all sections of the Hindu community particularly from Maharashtra and North Maharashtra visit all through the year. Khandoba gradually evolved from his status of a folk God and has been accepted as a family God by Brahmins as well as non-Brahmins in Maharashtra. Khandoba is accepted as a protector God. It is believed that he can bestow wealth, health and children on his devotees. Like all protector Gods, Khandoba must be propitiated by making suitable offerings to him in his shrine at Jejuri.

3.3 Theme of Jejuri poems

Jejuri poems oscillate between faith and skepticism. In his plat and colloquial tone, Kolatkar ironically treats the parallel scenario reinforcing it with concrete imagery. Kolatkar's use of concrete imagery, subtle irony and symbolism reinforces the central theme of alienation and perception.

3.4 Summary of the selected poems

Following are the summaries of the selected poems for study:

3.4.1 Paraphrase of 'The Door'

The poem is in three line stanzas and is a description of sundry objects that catch the narrator's attention. The object is seen on two levels: mundane and the sacred, religious. The narrator sees a plain, old dangling door, hanging on the hinge but describes it in terms of 'a prophet half brought down / from the cross' and 'a dangling martyr'. Thus the dilapidated condition of the door, perhaps suggests from the narrator's point of view, the decay of religion and religious practices. It is significant that the door should make the narrator think of Christ and crucifixion.

The use of word 'medieval' situates Jejuri historically and suggests that what was sturdy and functional in the medieval age is now just a
broken down, decaying pathetic object. The wood grain stands out because of the constant exposure to the sun, cold and dust. The narrator suggests that the door remembers the days when the tradition was alive. The poem evokes irreversible decay, degeneracy and squalidness of the place.

"The pair of shorts / left to dry upon its shoulders" is certainly no reason why the heavy door should not walk out. The image, thus, arouses the feeling that the dysfunctional objects continue their meaningless existence of irrelevance because they just cannot be anything else.

3.4.1 Check Your Progress.

Answer the following in brief:

1. What is the structure of the poem ‘The Door’?

2. Describe the door in the poem.

3. What does the door symbolically represent?

4. What feeling does the poem evoke in the mind of the narrator?

5. What is the symbolic significance of the use of the word ‘medieval’?

3.4.2 Paraphrase of ‘The Butterfly’

‘The Butterfly’ is a lovely lyric consisting of four stanzas of three lines each and a single line. The butterfly symbolizes life, sheer existence and joy of existence, something that can be accepted for what it is without a legend or myth to explain it.

The two halves of the wings open and close quickly in a second.
Also the body of the butterfly is whole and not broken like the hinge of the door in the poem ‘The Door’. When a butterfly is pinned down, it is dead, a thing of the past like the many things in Jejuri. The word ‘present’ is used in two senses: the present time and a gift from life.

The poet feels the lively butterfly takes under its wings the wretchedness of the sterile and dead hills. The butterfly is of the same color as of turmeric powder and celebrates life. Its quick movement is suggested by O (opens). The butterfly is gone even before the narrator can say - "opens". ‘Just a pinch of yellow’ is an expression that occurs repeatedly in the Khandoba legends. ‘Chimubhar bhandar’ works like a magic. The narrator wants to suggest that the ‘tiny butterfly’ is itself ‘a magic’.

3.4.2 Check Your Progress.
Answer the following in brief:
1. What does the butterfly symbolize?
   ____________________________________________________
2. What does the word ‘present’ imply?
   ____________________________________________________
3. What does the butterfly take under its wings?
   ____________________________________________________
4. What is the color of the butterfly?
   ____________________________________________________
5. What does the existence of the tiny butterfly imply?
   ____________________________________________________

3.4.3 Paraphrase of 'Between Jejuri and the Railway Station'

The title of this poem is significant. The narrator is, as it were, poised between two worlds: the world of Jejuri and the world represented by the railway station; that world from which the narrator came and to which he must return after his brief visit to bewildering Jejuri.

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The text of this poem is so arranged as to make its impact on the reader by its physical appearance. If we simply look at the graphic shape of the poem, we feel that we are looking at one of those figures one finds in a Rorschach test or at the figure of an hour glass with its two compartments brought together by 'The end' (line 15). In the second part of the poem this order is broken down. That the narrator at that moment belongs neither to Jejuri nor to the railway station is suggested by the 'up and down' movements of the cocks and hens.

Like 'The Butterfly', this poem is again a celebration of life in contradiction with the arid, stagnant hoary tradition ridden Jejuri and equally mechanical and in a sense 'in - human' paraphernalia at the railway station. The narrator is aware that as he stands, 'still like a needle in a trance / like a needle that struck a perfect balance', he must look silly to those who belong comfortably and securely to either of the worlds.

Words like 'little' or 'huddled' show the smallness or diminutive status of the temple down. Once again we note that in Jejuri the sacred and the profane exist side by side. The narrator sardonically notes that the house next to the priest's houses belongs to 'the temple dancer', a euphemism for a prostitute. The narrator, perhaps, wants to suggest also that the priests (supposedly connected with sacred duties) and 'the temple dancers' function in tendem to 'soak' the pilgrims. Note the reticence of the priest's son. Obviously the presence of the temple dancer's house is an irritant to him for it could also be a standing temptation for him - note that he 'hopes' he will never step inside her house.

The narrator is obviously struck by the coexistence of the ancient as well as Indian names - Gorakshanath and Mhalasakant - and the modern or English words - 'hair cutting saloon, 'café' etc. The reader will note that this feature in a colonized country has always attracted the writers in these countries who write in English for an English reading audience and who because of their western education and urbanization, find the coexistence of something deeply native with an English complement rather comic and sometimes ludicrous. We find a similar juxtaposition when the narrator carries a coconut in his hand, given to him after he performed the pooja - and the priest's visiting card in his pocket. The poem presents the two scales or pans i. e. Jejuri and the railway station. The repetition of the words 'like a needle'

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suggests the narrator's desperate attempt to find an exact verbal equivalence for the nearly incommunicable experience he is going through. The phrase 'harvest dance' evokes associations with fertility rites and hence celebrates the continuance of life. 'Craziest' is probably used in two senses: maddening, not making any sense and yet unlike the maddening crazy experience of Jejuri, this celebration of life makes a strange sense or it could be strange and unusual for an urbanite spectator who can never hope to see it in a city. The stillness of the narrator is the sanity of one who belongs neither to Jejuri nor to the railway station but to Chaitanya (life).

3.4.3 Check Your Progress.

Answer the following questions in brief.

1. What does the title of the poem signify?

2. What is different about the form of presentation of the poem?

3. What does the 'up and down' movement of the cocks and hens suggest?

4. What does the use of words like 'little' and 'huddled' suggest?

5. What suggests that the priest's son considers the temple dancer's house to be a standing temptation?

6. What does the narrator realize when he comes across the ancient and modern Indian names?

7. What does the repetition of the words 'like a needle' suggest?

8. What does the stillness of the narrator signify?
3.5 Conclusion

This chapter deals with Jejuri, which is a bunch of short poems and tells about the narrator's journey to a place of folk worship, covered in a single revolution of the sun. The place, the time and the narrator provide unity of a sort to the collection. The juxtaposition and the contrastive placing of the human, the natural and the animal, the graphic portraits of fellow travelers and their experiences, the priest and his son, the beggar woman, Vaghya and Murali and their songs introduced for local color and the site of ruin that is Jejuri itself - all these contribute to a skillful patterning of details that claims to have a poetic logic of its own.

The next chapter deals with Indian English Poetess, Kamala Das with reference to the selected poems from her poetry collection The Old Playhouse and other poems.

3.6 Summary

The recurring theme in Jejuri is Time. The entire sequence is framed between sun-rise and sun-set, the sun appearing in the poem from time to time as a significant central symbol. The other important theme is the very existence of life and the variety of forms it has. Jejuri celebrates life in all its varieties and the reverent openness to life in its livingness is one of the most endearing qualities of the poem. The poet presents through a special kind of consciousness of microcosm reflecting in some significant way the macrocosm of the universe. He also puts forth man's quest for his identity in this vast universe. Infact his journey to Jejuri is his journey towards eternity. The poems prescribed although represents three different themes, the common link between them is that they are the poet's account of experience at Jejuri.

Answers to check your progress

3.4.1

1. The poem is in three line stanzas
2. The door is a plain, old dangling door, hanging on the hinge
3. The door symbolically represents the decay of religion and religious practices.

4. The poem evokes irreversible decay, degeneracy and squalidness of the place.

5. The use of word 'medieval' situates Jejuri historically and suggests that what was sturdy and functional in the medieval age is now just a broken down, decaying pathetic object.

3.4.2

1. The butterfly symbolizes life, sheer existence and joy of existence, something that can be accepted for what it is without a legend or myth to explain it.

2. The present time and a gift from life.

3. The wretchedness of the sterile and dead hills.

4. Color of turmeric powder

5. The 'tiny butterfly' is itself 'a magic'.

3.4.3

1. The narrator is poised between two worlds: the world of Jejuri and the world represented by the railway station.

2. If we simply look at the graphic shape of the poem, we feel that we are looking at one of those figures one finds in a Rorschach test or at the figure of an hour glass with its two compartments brought together by 'The end' (line 15).

3. The narrator at that moment belongs neither to Jejuri nor to the railway station is suggested by the 'up and down' movements of the cocks and hens.

4. Words like 'little' or 'huddled' show the smallness or diminutive status of the temple down.

5. The presence of the temple dancer's house is an irritant to him and he 'hopes' he will never step inside her house.

6. The narrator realizes that this feature in a colonized country has always attracted the writers in these countries who write in English for an English reading audience and who because of their western education and urbanization; find the coexistence of something
deeply native with an English complement rather comic and sometimes ludicrous.

7. It suggests the narrator's desperate attempt to find an exact verbal equivalence for the nearly incommunicable experience he is going through.

8. The stillness of the narrator is the sanity of one who belongs neither to Jejuri nor to the railway station but to Chaitanya (life).

Field Work

Compare and contrast T. S. Eliot's Waste Land with Arun Kolatkar's Jejuri as both are based on some common themes.
Kamala Das (b. 1934 - 2009) was educated mainly in Kerala. She was born in Malabar and as she herself said, "speak (s) three languages, write in / Two, dream in one". A bilingual writer, she prefers to write poetry in English and fiction in Malayalam. The literary awards she has won include the Asian Poetry Award (1963) and the Sahitya Akademi Award (1984). Her collections of poems are Summer in Calcutta (1965), The Descendants (1967), The Old Playhouse and other poems (1973) and Collected Poems Volume I (1984). My Story, her autobiography, was published in 1975. Kamala Das is essentially known for her bold and frank expression. Her work is both acerbic and tempestuous and she has no qualms about writing boldly, frankly and radically. An acute obsession with love and the use of the confessional mode are the prominent features of her poetry. She has written profusely in Malayalam under the name 'Madhavi Kutty'. Against the frustrating emotional experience, guilt and depression expressed in her autobiography, there is a section of poetry where she writes about an idealized childhood and of a nostalgic yearning for her grandmother's Nalpat House symbolizing freedom, love and protection.
4.0 Objectives

Friends, in this chapter we are going to study a modern poetess, Kamala Das and her two poems. This chapter will enable you to:

● Explain the background to Kamala Das' poetry.
● Discuss the major themes in her poems.
● Analyse her two poems 'My Grandmother's House' and 'The Old Playhouse'.

4.1 Introduction

Friends, in the last chapter we have studied Arun Kolatkar's Jejuri with special reference to some of his selected poems. This chapter will acquaint you to the first modern woman confessional Indian English poetess, Kamala Das. We are going to examine her in the light of the narration of her personal experiences through her poetry. Both the poems under study are different in themes and tone. 'My Grandmother's House' deals with cherished memories and love for her grandmother. On the other hand, 'The Old Playhouse' is about painful experiences of her married life. The loss of freedom in her life is irreplaceable.
4.2 Background of the poems

'My Grandmother's House' is one of the nostalgic poems first published in Summer in Calcutta. It is nostalgic because it portrays the happy, carefree days of the poetess when she was a child (before her marriage). She yearns for the return of those days. In Malabar, she used to live in the aristocratic parental home which was affectionately supervised by her grandmother. The permanent departure of the dear and near ones marks almost all her literary pieces, whose dominant mood is one of melancholy and pathos and nostalgia.

'The Old Playhouse', selected from the book with the same title deals with Das' recurrent theme of failure and frustration in love and marriage. It vividly reveals the plight of a housewife who bewails that her egocentric and male chauvinist husband has virtually reduced her full-blooded and aspiring self to a mere entertaining toy. Consequently, the caged wife, with her stifled and crippled spirit, is helplessly destined to witness the pathetic transformation of her mind into 'an old playhouse with all its lights put out'. The network of evocative and concrete imagery and imaginative symbols transcends an individual's suffering and makes it a generic experience.

4.3 Major themes of the poems

Kamala Das is a confessional poet. Most of her poems carry the theme of nostalgia for her past sweet memories and a frustration for her failure in married life. She is eternally in search of true love and affection which unfortunately she was unable to find in her lifetime except her wonderful childhood days. Also in some of her poems like "A Hot Noon in Malabar" she attempts to recapture and sustain her childhood memories.

4.4 Summary of the selected poems

'My Grandmother's House' expresses Kamala Das' brooding for her wonderful childhood days spent at her ancestral home. She is nostalgic for her past memories. On the other hand, 'The Old Playhouse' shows her depressed attitude towards life due to her
dominating husband. She longs to live humanly.

4.4.1 Summary of 'The Grandmother's House'

Kamala Das provides us detailed information regarding the genesis of this poem in Chapter 33 of her Autobiography, My Story. She writes:

"After the sudden death of my grand-uncle and then that of my dear grandmother the old Nalpat House was locked up and its servants disbanded. The windows were shut, gently as eyes of the dead are shut.

My parents took my great grandmother to the house called Sarvodaya where she occupied noiselessly the eastern bedroom on the ground floor, shaded by the tall mango trees through the leaves of which was visible the beloved house. The rats ran across its darkened halls and the white ants raised on its outer walls strange totems of burial."

The grandmother has been a source of affection and inspiration to the poetess but her death has rendered her sorrow-stricken and desolate. The house looks totally deserted, now inhabited by snakes and rats. Kamala feels lonely and depressed. During one of her illness - during her nervous breakdown in the noisy city of Bombay - she had taken shelter in Malabar and nursed back to perfect health by her anxious grandmother, but, alas, she is now no more alive. The expression 'blind eyes of windows' and 'the frozen air' reinforce the idea of death and desperation.

The grandmother's house is associated with an impenetrable sense of security and protection, which is now missing in her married life. Even the 'darkness' of the grandmother's house was secure for her instead of terror or violence. Kamala Das rather wants that darkness to be lifted bodily and shifted to her new married home flooded with light (but with no security). She expresses this feeling of hers through an evocative image:

"Pick an armful of

Darkness to bring it here to lie"
Behind my bedroom door like a brooding

Dog ..."

A 'dog' is a trusted companion keeping an unerrring eye on the door to scare away the strangers and the enemies and to safeguard the inmates with all main and might.

The last few lines are addressed to the 'darling', i.e. her husband. Kamala Das tells him that:

"I lived in such a house and

Was proud, and loved ..."

How nostalgic and pathetic these lines are! The sense of pride and love she once had in the house of her grandmother is now no more her property, since she has become a beggar for love who knocks helplessly at strangers' doors to receive it at least in a small measure. She has lost her way in quest of true love. This situation is in utter contrast to her previous life lived in the soothing company of her grandmother. Kamala Das tells us that she has often remembered her with a sense of nostalgia and beggarliness. That her present life is sans love, sans pride, is emphatically conveyed by her begging for love at 'strangers' doors. There can possibly be no worse pathetic situation for a married woman than this.

4.4.1 Check Your Progress

Answer the following in brief :

1. What is Kamala Das' profession?

2. Name one more poem by Kamala Das where she fondly cherishes her childhood memories?

3. Name the poetess' grandmother's house?
4.4.2 Summary of 'The Old Playhouse'

This poem is a title piece of Kamala Das' third volume of verse, The Old Playhouse and other poems (1973). It is addressed to 'you', to the husband, who wanted to curtail her freedom of movement and action through his subtle maneuverings. The poetess does not like this, just as she does not like him or his ways. His 'monstrous ego' comes under fire herein, since it has totally reduced her and disappointed her. As a result, her mind becomes 'an old playhouse with all lights put out.'

The poetess needed love and tenderness, security and permanence, from her strong man but he could not satisfy her on these scores. Hence her unredeemed damnation and suffering in his company.

The possessive instinct of the man is stressed in the opening of the poem. The man (or better, the poetess' husband) tried to tame a free bird that she was and subject her to sexual torture so that she should forget her happy seasons, old homes and her intrinsic value as a woman. But she had come to him not to learn of him but of herself and thereby 'grow' in a carefree atmosphere. He was pleased with her body's response and its fragile convulsions. He made hectic love to her and overwhelmed her by his forceful physical contact. He rather

4. Which expressions reinforce the idea of desperation?

5. Which feeling does the poetess miss in her married life?

6. Why has the poetess become a beggar for love?

7. How is the present life of the poetess?
over flooded the organs of her body by an energetic mating and dribbled his spittle into her mouth. He called her 'wife', who was taught to attend to her domestic duties ungrudgingly and look after him properly by supplying him tea, food and vitamins at the needed moments. She tried to adjust herself in accordance with his wishes but she lost her individuality in the process and became a mere dwarf under his disastrous male ego. She was totally reduced and annihilated in due course:

"Cowering

Beneath your monstrous ego I ate the magic loaf and

Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason, to all your

Questions I mumbled incoherent replies."

The days of happiness came to a grinding halt in her case. She began to feel the arrival of the autumn for her and the suffocating atmosphere of the burning leaves and the rising smoke. The man she loved adopts artificial measures to satisfy himself - 'artificial lights' - and grows indifferent and insolent towards her by keeping his windows shut. But the artificial measures have not helped him in any way to override his dominating male impulse. Even his 'breath' is strongly masculine. The overall impact of all this on her is dejection and cheerlessness, with no hope of regeneration. Her singing is gone, her dance is forsaken, and her mind becomes 'an old playhouse with all its lights put out.' As contrasted to this, the man adopts a hard line towards her and serves his love in deadly doses, whereas for her love is self-obsessed and unenjoyable and yet it seeks its fulfillment in freedom rather than in bondage. Love for its healthy growth wants to be pure and emotional, and not lustful and muddy. The expressions like 'the water's edge' and 'to erase the water' signify sexual consummation between the man and the woman, which the woman does not like.

In this poem, the poetess' personal predicament is expressed. She who was as free as a swallow has now been domesticated with all her wings severed. She desired to discover a meaning, a perfect fulfillment through love, but her man broke her completely by thrusting household responsibilities on her shoulders and by creating
barricades for her in life. He asserted his marital prerogatives, curtailed her freedom totally, and showed his masculine power to her. Consequently, she became a dwarf under the heavy weight of his lustful masculinity and monstrous ego. All her hopes were dashed into pieces; all her cheerful spirits disappeared for good. She began to feel a great emotional vaccum and couldn't enjoy sexual encounters with him. She got possessed with an abnormal psychology and sought love at strangers' doors. The lustful advance of her man grew distasteful to her and she took revenge upon him by craving for freedom from his snares and by seeking shelter in others' arms (to use her own expression).

In its tone and temper, the poem is gloomy and pessimistic. In its language, it is fiery and charged. At places it gives the impression of being verbose and long-winded. The metaphorical expression - "my mind is an old playhouse with all its lights put out" (p 1) - is highly impressive and truculent. There are difficult words used here and there in the poem, but the meaning is quite plain everywhere. The central idea is 'freedom'. The woman was free as a swallow in the beginning and she aspires for freedom in the end:

"... and yet it must seek at last

An end, a pure, total freedom ..." (pp 1-2)

The middle of the poem strikes the note of paradox in her situation; her 'freedom' so long cherished and so highly valued is completely curtailed and her personality totally annihilated. She had never dreamt of it, and when it stood as a reality before her she was terribly shocked, she felt utterly lonely and miserable.

4.4.2 Check Your Progress

1. To whom is the poem addressed?

2. Why does the poetess call herself 'an old playhouse with all its lights put out'?

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4.5 Conclusion

Through this chapter, we find Kamala Das' poetry is confessional. Most of the poems are an expression of the sufferings of her own life. We find a young child in the poetess who is craving for love and attention which she had enjoyed in her childhood days at her grandmother's house. We also experience her tortures and sufferings as a subjugated wife in ‘The Old Playhouse’. The poetess is able to move the spirit of her readers along with making her experiences alive before them.

The next chapter will describe the historical background of the Indian English Prose.

4.6 Summary

‘My Grandmother's House’ reflects the pleasant memories of Kamala Das at her ancestral house of her dear grandmother. She cherishes those warm days even after years to such an extent that the memory itself makes her nostalgic. She also confesses that it was the only place where she received unconditional love. It also highlights her quest for true love but she is not successful in locating it.

‘The Old Playhouse’ is a poem which deals about the poetess' own autobiographical experiences. The poem highlights frustration of her married life. The poem, which was first published in ‘The Illustrated Weekly of India’, is a strong indictment against injurious male behavior. It protests against the manner of treatment meted out to her
by her own man. She also highlights the injustices levied upon her as a wife and the sufferings she has undergone. Also she regrets her lost freedom.

4.7 Glossary

4.7.1 My Grandmother’s House

1. withdrew into silence - sank into silence

2. turned cold like the moon - became very chilly, like the moon.

3. Blind eyes of windows - coloured curtains or window panes.

4. A brooding dog - is a visual image of a watchful and wary sentinel.

4.7.2 The Old Playhouse

1. tame - spiritless

2. raw - in a natural state

3. urge - strong desire

4. shallow - of little depth (not serious)

5. convulsions - violent irregular movement of body caused by contraction of muscles

6. dribble (of liquid) - flow drop by drop or in a slow trickle

7. spittle - spit

8. nook - inside corner

9. cranny - small crack or hole

10. embalm - prevent (a corpse) from decaying by using spices and chemicals; fill with fragrance

11. cower - lower the body, crouch in fear

12. mumble - speak indistinctly

13. pall - become distasteful or uninteresting
14. pervasive - tending to spread through; get into every part of
15. playhouse - theatre (also, a child's toy house)
16. lethal - causing death
17. saccharine - extremely sweet substance from coal-tar.
18. Narcissus - A youth in Classical Mythology who fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool and wasted away from unsatisfied desire, whereupon he was transformed into a flower.

Answers to check your progress

4.4.1
1. Housewife
2. "A Hot Noon in Malabar"
3. Nalpat House
4. 'blind eyes of windows' and 'the frozen air'
5. sense of security and protection
6. She has become a beggar for love who knocks helplessly at strangers' doors to receive it at least in a small measure.
7. Her present life is sans love, sans pride, is emphatically conveyed by her begging for love at 'strangers' doors.

4.4.2
1. The poetess' husband
2. Her husband wanted to curtail her freedom of movement and action through his subtle maneuverings. The poetess does not like this. His 'monstrous ego' comes under fire herein, since it has totally reduced her and disappointed her.
3. The poetess needed love and tenderness, security and permanence, from her strong man but he could not satisfy her on
these scores.

4. The poetess was taught to attend her domestic duties ungrudgingly and look after him properly by supplying him tea, food and vitamins at the needed moments.

5. Fiery and charged

Field work

Read and analyze the poems from Kamala Das' two poetry collections: Summer in Calcutta and The Old Playhouse and other poems.
Chapter 5

Background to the Indian Prose

5.0 Objectives
Friends, the Second Semester of Indian English Literature paper deals with the Indian Prose works. Study of this chapter will help you to:

● Describe the literary background of the Indian English Prose.
● Take review of the growth and development of Indian English Prose.
● Describe different phases and the influence of the contemporary social and political situations.
● Explain recurrent themes in Indian English prose.
● Write about major Indian English prose writers.

5.1 Introduction
Friends, this chapter will introduce you to the history of Indian English prose. It will provide you with information of the growth of Indian English prose and its socio-cultural background. What are the various themes in Indian English prose? Who are the major Indian English prose writers? This chapter is an answer to these questions with a thorough background to Indian English prose works which will

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help you to get better knowledge of the various prevailing trends in Indian English prose works.

5.2 History of Indian English Prose in brief

Indo - Anglian Literature 1800-1970 is broadly speaking a development from poetry to prose and from romantic idealization of various kinds to realism and symbolism. But one has to admit that Indian writing in English is the off - spring of the English impact on India. The English had begun to have a hold on India because the Moghul Empire had begun to collapse and the Princely states began to seek the political help of the English. Hindu culture had in such unstable political situation sustained a set - back. There was a sort of vacuum of culture. So the western education in English brought about a renaissance and a reawakening in India. This renaissance first broke out in Bengal in the early years of the nineteenth century.

The pioneer of the Renaissance in India was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He was the most articulate spokesman of intellectual opinion in Bengal. He urged his fellow Indians to embrace European civilization through the medium of the English language and literature, English ideas and institutions. He believed in the worship of One Supreme Soul and was a great humanitarian and a social reformer. Macaulay's Minute on Education, which made the study of English a compulsory subject in schools in India, was welcomed by Raja Ram Mohan Roy.

It was in Bengal that a literary renaissance first manifested itself but almost immediately afterwards its traces could be seen in Madras, Bombay and the other parts of India. The first Indian English novel was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's Raj Mohan's Wife (1864). It is different from his Bengali novels such as Durgesh Nandini or Kopal Kandla. In fact, it paved the way for Anand Math (1884), Indian's first political novel which gave the Indians their national anthem, "Vande Mataram". Then arrived Manoj Basu's Jaljiangal in the form of the English translation as The Forest Goddess by Barindra Nath Bose.

The novels published from the eighteen sixties up to the end of the nineteenth century were written by the writers belonging to the Presidencies of Bengal and Madras. Most of these novels are on the social and few on the historical issues and for their models they drew
upon eighteenth and nineteenth century British fiction, especially that of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Walter Scott.

The novels published between 1864 and 1900 include Ram Krishna Punt's The Bay of Bengal (1866), Anand Prasad Dutt's The Indolence (1878), Shoshee Chunder Dutt's The Young Zamindar (1883), Trailokya Das's Hirimba's Wedding (1884), Krupabai Satthianandan's Kamala: A Story of Hindu Child Wife (1894) and Saguna: A Story of Native Christian Life (1895), Michael Madhusudan Dutt's Bijoy Chand: An Indian Tale (1888) and Lt. Suresh Biswas: His Life and Adventures (1900) and Yogendra Nath Chattopadhyaya's The Girl and Her Tutor (1891).

The twentieth century began with novelists of more substantial output. Romesh Chandra Dutt translated two of his own Bengali novels into English: The Lake of Palms: A Study of Indian Domestic Life (1902) and The Slave Girl of Agra, an Indian Historical Romance (1909). The first, a realistic novel, seems to have been written with the aim of social reform with its theme being widow remarriage while the latter is set in the Mughal period.

Sarath Kumar Ghosh, another Bengali novelist wrote Verdict of Gods (1905) and The Prince of Destiny: The New Krishna (1909). A. Madhaviah and T. Ramakrishna Pillai, belonging to the Madras presidency were two important contemporaries of these Bengali novelists. Madhaviah wrote Satyananda (1909), Thrillai Govindan (1915), Nanda, the Pariah Who Overcame Caste (1923) and Lt. Panju-A Modern Indian (1924). T. Ramakrishna Pillai wrote Padmini (1903) and A Dive for Death (1911).

Another Indian English novelist of prominence was a Punjabi writer Jogendra Singh. His fictional work includes: Nur Jahan, The Romance of an Indian Queen (1909), a historical novel; Nasrin, An Indian Medley (1911), a realistic novel depicting the fall of the aristocratic life in North India, Kamala (1925) and Kamni (1931), dealing with the social themes. The first three were published in London and the last in Lahore.

Then appeared on the scene novels such as S. T. Ram's The Cosmopolitan Hindusthani (1902), L. B. Pal's A Glimpse of Zanana Life in Bengal (1904), S. B. Banerjee's The Adventures of Mrs. Russell (1909), Balkrishna's The Love of Kusuma: An Eastern Love Story.
(1910), B. K. Sarkar's Man of Letters (1911), M. M. Munshi's Beauty and Joy (1914) and T. K. Gopal Pannikar's Storm and Sunshine (1916).

The Indo-Anglian Literature in the colonial period, 1800 - 1947 when India became free, reveals three clear-cut phases:

a) The outbreak of the literary renaissance in Bengal under the impact of the Western culture i.e. 1800 - 1857.

b) Roughly, from 1857 when the Indian Mutiny or Revolt broke out in India and the winds of change began to blow to 1920 when Gandhi returned from South Africa and the freedom struggle gathered momentum under the leadership of Gandhi.

c) Roughly, from 1920 to 1947, historically known as the Gandhi era.

Development and Characteristics of the Indo-Anglian Literature from about 1800 to 1857

This period is of literary renaissance which began chiefly with journalism and pamphleteering. The articles may therefore be called "literature of Knowledge" rather than the "Literature of Power". The Indo-Anglian Literature produced during this period is characterized by the attempt on the part of the writers to connect the two cultures East and West. Raja Mohan Roy was a master of two styles:

a) Lofty and unimpassioned for his positive philosophizing.


Raja Mohan Roy is regarded as a great Indian master of English prose. His English works are mostly journalistic essays which appeared in his own weekly papers. The essays were on Vedanta, to uphold the quintessence of Hindu religion, on Christianity, on social reforms particularly the need to restore self-respect and dignity of Hindu women as individuals, on political issues etc. At the request of his friends, Raja Ram Mohan Roy wrote a short autobiographical sketch. This sketch is the first exercise in the Indian English literature in a prose style which was later on emulated by Nehru and Nirad Chaudhary. Inspired by Ram Mohan Roy's journalistic articles, other Indians converted to Christianity. They began to attack the errors and inconsistencies of Hinduism through journalism. Some of them are:
Krishna Mohan Banerji, Ram Gopal Ghose and Harish Chunder Mukerji who championed the cause of widow - remarriage.

In Bombay, Bal Shastri Jambhekar, the first Sanskrit Pandit to study English became the founder of English - cum - Marathi journal to encourage among his countrymen the pursuit of the English literature and to open a field for free and public discussion. Others who trailed along the same path to restore among their countrymen a sense of national self - respect were Dadoba Pandurang and Bhau Daji, Kashinath Telang and Mahadev Govind Ranade.

In Madras, Gazulu Lakshmi Narasu started a newspaper with the aim of ameliorating the condition of the Hindus. But Cavelly Venkata Ramaswami got published Biographical Sketches of the Dekkan poets, the first literary biography in Indian English Literature of about hundred Indian poets in Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and Marathi. So the literary renaissance in India was ushered in by the journalistic articles and pamphleteering.

The first period of Indian writing in English may be said to end in the fifties of the nineteenth century, a few years before 1857, the year of Mutiny, the Indian Revolt. During this first period, the British rule in India was accepted by most of the Indians as a great boon. Western education had opened the gates to knowledge, science, freedom and literature and educated Indians took to freeing themselves from their blind adherence to the Hindu customs. The attempt of the writers was no doubt to bridge the two cultures but the inclination was more towards the western culture than to the Indian culture. This tilt towards the Western culture became a cause of great concern to some educated Indians like Keshab Chunder Sen, Dayanand Saraswati, Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath Tagore. While Keshab Chunder Sen, the founder of the Brahmo Samaj tried to build a bridge between the Hindu spirituality and the Christian thought. Dayanand Saraswati wanted only a return to Hinduism and he organized the Arya Samaj. So from the fifties onwards, there is an effort on the part of the educated Indians to revive Hinduism, to re - discover the cultural past of India.

**Development and Characteristics of the Indo - Anglian Literature from about 1857 to 1920**

The Mutiny of 1857 brought to end the rule of the East India
Company and with that ended the sympathetic attitude of the Britishers towards the Indians. The bureaucrats who came to India after 1857 had nothing but contempt for the Indians. So the post 1858 era reveals the estrangement between the two races - the Indians and the Englishmen, the Brown and the White. The revival of Hinduism became dominant. The caste system was being disapproved but the return to the Vedic Age was being approved and strengthened under the leadership of Swami Shraddhanand, Lala Lajpatrai and Swami Dayanand Saraswati. The emergence of Swami Ramakrishna cast a spell on the youth of modern Bengal and modern India.

The religious resurgence enabled Indians to acquire an Indian identity and this in turn strengthened political awakening for freedom. So from 1857 to 1920 the Indian ethos underwent a sea-change from the trauma of inferiority feeling to a new-found self-awareness and self-confidence. India's re-discovery of her identity became a vigorous, all-absorbing quest and from imitation and assimilation of the Western influences in literary works, it moved with confidence to creation.

The period from the fifties of the nineteenth century to 1920, witnessed the development of English prose by the Indian writers. Biography, autobiography, essays, criticism came to be written. The causes of the development of the Indian English prose were:

a) The desire to re-discover the Indian past
b) The desire to be aware of the problems of the day

Bengal and Bombay dominated in the development of English prose. Bengal saw the rise of Bankim Chander Chatterjee, renowned Bengali novelist and the author of an English novel who wrote essays in English on the Hindu festivals, philosophy, Vedic literature and Bengali literature. His spirited defence of Hinduism appeared in Letters on Hinduism appeared only after his death. Bankim is credited with having restored for his countrymen national self-respect. The scholarly work of the poet Romesh Chunder Dutt in his history book A History of Civilization in Ancient India in three volumes and the two volumes of The Economic History of India are ably researched and documented. He is also a pioneer in the literature of travel and literary history. His work Three Years in Europe 1869 - 1871 is a fine travelogue with picturesque detail. His The Literature of Bengal is a
good survey which concludes with a chapter on the impact of the Western ideas on Indian life and thought. Surendranath Banerjea, one of the most powerful orators of his times pledged himself to the political uplift of his countrymen. His autobiography, A Nation in the Making: Being the reminiscences of fifty years of public life traces the growth of the national movement. Banerjea showed himself a master of the impassioned prose.

Another Bengali leader of great stature was Bipin Chandra Pal who wrote on politics and religion. The two volumes of his Memoirs of my Life and Times appeared in 1932 and 1951 and a collection of his essays in 1958.

The trio - Tagore, Aurbindo and Vivekananda - produced the most noteworthy prose, Tagore's prose writings were essentially lectures. His first lecture was delivered at Harvard University in 1913. Tagore in this lecture gives a clear exposition of his philosophical position. He considers the individual's relation to the universe, the problem of evil and the way to the realization of the infinite through love, action and beauty. A conducted tour in the USA in 1916 yielded two more collections of speeches: Personality and Nationalism. The ten lectures collected in Creative Unity give an analysis of the East - West relationship. The Religion of Man comprises a series of lectures delivered in Oxford at Manchester College. The theme is the divinity of man. Tagore's prose in English reveals him to be an internationalist and a humanist preaching the gospel of harmony between Man and Man, Man and Nature, Man and God. Though his thoughts are derived from the Upanishads, Buddhism, Vaishnavism, there is a ring of personal conviction in his words.

Vivekananda wished to bring home to the West the true nature of Hinduism. His works also consist of his speeches. In his lectures abroad, he stressed the essential unity of all religions and gave an exposition of Vedanta. He preached that India had to rediscover her true religion and rid herself of superstition and meaningless orthodoxy and also European materialism. He drew analogies from science when he spoke and exhorted his countrymen to attain union with the Divine.

Sri Aurbindo also produced a mass of prose writings on religious, metaphysical, social, political, cultural and literary subjects. His prose writings were articles contributed to journals and newspapers. He
wrote Essays on the Gita, The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga and Heraclitus. The Life Divine is regarded as his best prose work. The theme is the affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence. In conception, thought structure, vision and dignity and elevation of style, The Life Divine has no equal in the history of Indian English prose. Aurbindo wrote a number of essays which were serialized in the monthly Arya founded by him. His poetic essay The Mother celebrating the “Divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence” in her four forms representing “Wisdom, Strength, Harmony and Perfection” is notable for its lyrical fervor. His prose writings show a large variety and shows Aurbindo capable of effecting tones of irony and sarcasm.

Bombay literary scene was dominated by Dadabhai Nowroji, the Grand Old Man of India and a freedom fighter who shaped Indian history before independence. Nowroji dared to accuse the British government of their faulty administrative and economic policies which undermined the real interests of India. His speeches have been collected in Essays, Speeches, Addresses and Writings.

Another dominant personality was that of Mahadev Govind Ranade, a scholar with encyclopedic interests, a patriot, social and religious reformer. His Rise of the Maratha Power laid the foundations of the historical research in Maharashtra. His essays in Indian Economics earned him the title of “The Father of Indian economics”. His speeches and writings were later published. His mind was deeply rooted in the Hindu tradition and was enriched by the study of the modern Western thought. So the synthesis of the East and the West is the characteristic of his world view.

Kashinath Trimbuck Telang was one of the effective public speakers. His essays on the Ramayana and the Bhagawad Gita are the most outstanding. Two prominent Parsi contemporaries of Ranade were Phirozeshah Merwanjee Mehta and Dinshaw Wacha. In politics, Mehta was a moderate Congressman. His speeches and writings appeared in 1905. Wacha was a more copious writer. He wrote biographies of Premchand Roychund and J. N. Tata and his autobiography Shells from the Sands of Bombay.

Bal Gangadhar Tilak was an aggressive and blunt personality who relied on logic, argument and precise presentation in expressing itself. His English speeches are collected in Writings and Speeches.
Tilak, a scholar and indologist is revealed in The Orion: Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas and The Artic Home of the Vedas.

Gopali Krishna Gokhale was the ablest disciple of Ranade and was acknowledged by Mahatma Gandhi as his political guru. His speeches reveal the characteristics of an earnest and upright, gentle and cultured soul, dedicated to his country’s cause. His prodigious memory, patient industry, careful preparation, balanced and fair presentation, sweet reasonableness in argument and sonorous voice made him an outstanding speaker. His use of English was appreciated for precision and is free from magniloquence.

Fiction was the last literary genre to arrive on the Indian English literary scene. Shoshee Chunder Dutt's Republic of Orissa is a fantasy which depicts a British defeat leading to the establishment of a democratic republic in Orissa. Bankim Chundra Chatterjee's first and only novel in English Rajamohan's Wife was serialized in the ‘Calcutta weekly’. It is a melodramatic tale of the trials of a long-suffering Hindu wife at the hands of her husband who is a bully. Bankim has used Indian words liberally creating local color.

Most of the novels published in London not in India were social and a few historical. Their models were Fielding, Defoe and Scott. Some of the novels published were: The Young Zaminderar by Shoshee Chunder Dutt, Bijoy Chand: an Indian Tale by Madhusudan Dutt, Toru Dutt’s unfinished novel Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden.

**Development and Characteristics of the Indo-Anglian Literature from about 1920 to 1947**

If the second phase of the Indo-Anglian literature was dominated by Bankim Chatterjee and Tagore, Aurbindo and the Dutts, the third phase of the Indo-Anglian literature was dominated by Mahatma Gandhi. The three decades of the Gandhian era were marked by far-reaching changes. On the political front, India acquired an all-pervading national consciousness. With a distinct Indian identity, the nationalists cooperated with the British in their war effort in the First World War. The Jallianwala Bagh Massacre was an eye-opener to the nationalists who had got more involved till 1920 in the exotic metaphysical aspect of the Indian culture. The nationalists felt irritated by their preoccupation with religion, with India of the Sanyasi and the
Yogi, the ill-fed, over-populated and full of spirituality. Therefore after the World War I, the literature of the Indo-Anglian writers became more realistic, less idealized and more down-to-earth image of India was sought. The writers' pre-occupation with the present, instead with India's past or future had became for the nationalists a convenient way to dramatize and popularize their cause of the freedom struggle.

A strong sense of disillusionment and disenchantment in consequence of the fall in human values had made the writers turn away from the physical reality to the inner reality and Freudianism had begun to influence the writers. The result in the twenties of the twentieth century was the rise of the modernistic trends in literature. In the thirties, Marxism had begun to fascinate the writers.

The Indian consciousness under the leadership of Gandhi with a look turned to the present was consolidated because of the following factors:

1. The participation of the Indian women in the freedom struggle. Gandhi was instrumental in underscoring women's emancipation.
2. The rise of a strong youth movement in response to the call of Gandhi for freedom struggle.
3. Gandhi's championing of the cause of the untouchables, called 'harijans', to be brought into the mainstream of Indian ethos.
4. The rapid development of Indian industries which led to the Marxian ideology influencing Indian intellectuals.

A highly significant feature of all these factors was the sudden flowering of the novel during the thirties when the Gandhian movement was at its strongest. The themes of the Indian English novel became the ordeal of the freedom struggle, East-West relationship, the communal problem and the plight of the untouchables, the landless poor, the economically exploited and the oppressed. So the Indian English novel flourished but the other forms of literature did not flourish to that extent.

**Mahatma Gandhi's English writings fall in three periods:**

1. The early London period when he wrote essays on subjects like Indian vegetarianism, foods of India, some Indian festivals.
2. The South African period when he showed himself good at
argumentative prose, campaigning for the cause of the South African Indians.

3. The period in India when he returned from South Africa and started two journals 'Young India' and 'Harijan'.

But his autobiography My Experiments with Truth translated by Mahadev Desai is the most outstanding. But some of his lectures in English for example, the Benares Hindu University speech of 1916, the speech at the Trial of 1922, his English articles in his journals and letters showed Gandhi solidly grounded in the ancient Indian tradition. He possessed a profound moral earnestness which enabled him to rediscover the ethical values of Indian tradition. He applied his findings boldly to the political and social realities of the colonial India.

Gandhi's purpose in committing his thoughts to writing was "to propagate my ideas". He believed that art and literature must teach and in this respect was influenced by Ruskin and Tolstoy. His prose was simple, free from all oratorical flourishes but it bears testimony to Gandhi's knack of coining phrases like Himalayan blunder, Satanic Government and the puckish sense of humor.

The contemporaries of Mahatma Gandhi who showed their mastery in English prose were Rajagopalachari, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, Jaya Parakash Narayan and V. D. Savarkar etc.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the political heir of Gandhi was a public speaker and a prolific writer. His first book Soviet Russia is a collection of sixteen articles, giving Nehru's impressions of Russia after his visit in 1927. Letters from a Father to his Daughter consists of thirty - one letters written to Indira Gandhi, who then was ten years old. Glimpses of World History comprising letters written to his daughter from prison during 1930-1933 is a summary of the world history from the very beginning of the civilization to 1930s. The book reveals Nehru's secularism, his scientific temper and socialist sympathies. Nehru's Autobiography is the crowning achievement of Nehru as a writer. The autobiography presents a vivid picture of both the man and his milieu. Many faces of Nehru's complex personality are revealed here - his scientific outlook, his aversion to organized religion, his admiration for Marxism and his nationalism. The autobiography also reveals Nehru's emotional and imaginative nature and his aesthetic sense. Nehru's sincerity, objectivity and his capacity for self - analysis are also
evident. The autobiography is also a record of the eventful course of
the Indian history for over a generation and presents many pen-
portraits of people which reveal Nehru’s shrewd understanding of
human nature, his ability to use small and concrete details and
interesting anecdotes and his judicious mixture of irony and sympathy.

The Discovery of India was written by Nehru in 1944 during his
imprisonment at Ahmednagar fort. Nehru surveys the history of India
from the times of the Indus Valley Civilization to the 1940s. The survey
reveals Nehru’s secularism, democratic socialism and humanism.

Nehru’s prose reflects his personality: sincere and idealistic,
urbane and cultured, vigorous and graceful, endowed with sharp
mind, strong emotions, a feeling for beauty and a keen comic sense.
His prose is free from Latinized words and phrases. His language is
simple but the choice of words is apt and remarkable, for example,
tryst with destiny.

Sir Radhakrishnan was the exponent of religious and
philosophical prose. His first work The Reign of Religion in
Contemporary Philosophy examined western philosophical thought.
His second book Indian Philosophy is a comprehensive account of the
Indian philosophical thought. The Hindu view of Life is a forceful
vindication of Hinduism as a way of life and refutes the popular notion
that it is only a rigid set of outmoded doctrines and superstitions. The
Future of Civilization emphasizes the perils of mechanization and
standardization in the modern technological civilization and pleads for
a world order based on harmony of the spirit. In An Idealist View of
Life, Radhakrishnan states the fundamentals of his personal faith and
examines the nature of religious experience and its affirmations from
the idealist point of view. East and West in Religion is a contrasting
study of the oriental and occidental values. Eastern Religion and
Western Thought is a fervent plea for toleration. Radhakrishnan wrote
quite a large number of books after India gained independence. Being
a good speaker, his style is rhetorical but also epigrammatically brief.
Occasionally, his sweet-sounding words and phrases affect his sharp
argumentation and logic. Radhakrishnan was a bridge builder
between the two cultures of the East and the West.

The Indian English novel during this period was greatly influenced
by the epoch-making political, social and ideological ferment caused
by the Gandhian movement. But at the same time, the Indian English
novel reflected the trend towards social realism which had been set in the English literature as a result of the Marxian influence. So the Indian English novel was both an Indian phenomenon (related to the nationalist movement among the intellectuals and the masses under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi) and was a part of the English social realism of the period.

The Gandhian whirlwind blew across the country during 1920-1947. Under the dynamic leadership of Mahatma Gandhi established political notions started vanishing from the scene and in turn new ideas and methods appeared not only in the political field but also in almost every walk of the Indian life. The inevitable impact of the Gandhian movement on the Indian English literature was the sudden flowering of realistic novels during the 1930s. The novelists turned their attention away from the past to concentrate on the contemporary issues. In their novels, prevailing social and political problems that Indians found themselves in were given prominence. The nation-wide movement of Mahatma Gandhi not only inspired the Indian English novelists but also provided them with some of their prominent themes such as the struggle for freedom, the East-West encounter, the communal problem and the miserable conditions of the untouchables, the landless poor, the downtrodden, the economically exploited and the oppressed.

The impact of the far-reaching change on the Indian social and political scene caused by the Gandhian movement can be perceived in K. S. Venkatramani’s Murugan, The Tiller (1927) and Kandan, The Patriot: A Novel of New India in the Making (1932). The former reflects Gandhian economics while the latter reflects his politics. Then came A. S. P. Ayyer, whose novels like Baladitya (1930) and Three Men of Destiny (1939) although untouched by the twentieth century models and set in ancient Indian history, are Gandhian in spirit.

These novelists and their novels paved the way for the great trinity: Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao whose emergence was the most remarkable event in the realm of Indian English fiction. They were the harbingers of the true Indo-English novel. These novelists began writing around the mid 1930s. Bhabani Bhattacharya was also a contemporary of these novelists by birth but he started writing fiction just after Indian independence.
The writings of these novelists moved the Indian English novel in the right direction. They discovered a whole new world in the Indo-English fiction and the Indian novel owes much to their efforts for gaining solid ground and achieving an identity of its own. They defined the area in which the Indian novel was to operate, and brought the Indo-Anglian novel within hailing distance of the latest novels of the West. They established the suppositions, the manner, the concept of character and the nature of the themes which were to give the Indian novel its particular distinctiveness. They "laid the foundation for the genuine Indo-Anglian novel, each imparting to the Indian experience a dimension of individuality based on their particular approach to content and form."

**Indian English Literature after Independence in 1947**

The ethos of the post-independence phase of the Indian English literature is radically different from that of the previous colonial periods. Independence brought a new spirit of challenges and changes in the Indian life. The word "modern" in English literature came to imply in the twentieth century a total rejection of all that Victorianism stood for in life and literature. To question, to examine and to test became the watchwords of the modern approach to life and literature. The result of this modern approach was literature of socialist criticism under the influence of the Fabians and the Marxist ideology. Equally potential was the influence of the Freudian psychology and the emphasis on the expressionistic and psychoanalytical approach. The word "modern" implies two basic characteristics:

1. A fine awareness of isolation from the contemporary social scene.
2. A strong awareness of relationship with the changing moral scene.

So the first problem facing the post-independence Indian writers has been a growing desire to be differentiated from the pre-independence writers and yet to conform to the literary traditions so far laid down. The Indian English writers after independence have sought this ideal of humanism - they write of people and for the people, not the faceless "masses" or abstract crowds but the real person as an individual. So the modern Indian writer owes his art to his individualized experience.

The grip of the tradition on the sub-conscious and the
unconsciousness of the Indian English writers were strong and deep. The modern sensibility shook the faith of the writers in the Indian tradition. Modern sensibility was a break-through. It was the product of the dual pull, the desire to imitate and even compete with the West and also the nostalgic complex of not-leaving-the-past. This schizophrenic frame of mind created multi-colored designs in prose and poetry. In fiction, the modern sensibility is manifested in the novelists depicting the naturalistic technique of the less known and hitherto neglected parts of life, underscoring local color and using slang and dialect words. Another development in fiction is the psychoanalytical fiction based on the stream-of-consciousness and flash-back free association style.

The writers turn to the contemporary social scene, throwing off the conventions and prefer writing on subjects ranging from political corruption to patriotism, sexuality to romantic love, city to countryside landscape. The writer is thus free to comment in his individual way and therefore not the universal but the individualized experience matters. The modernist writer also explores human character and psychology in depth and also the impact of social setting on the character. So the attitude of the writer is one of cynicism and sarcasm. Yet another feature of the modernistic literature is the discontinuous composition since it is based on the theory of the stream of consciousness and free association of ideas. The modernist style is also different from the traditional. It makes use of the words and phrases from any subject and from any dialect and slang. The modernistic piece of writing is just a dramatized consciousness which transcends all the barriers of time, space and culture.

What urged Indian writers in the post-independence period was the desire to cope with the occidental ways of life. It was in fact “living” not life that mattered to Indian writers at that moment. This preference for living to life actually took hold of writers in the thirties when they came to be influenced by Marxism after the First World War.

**The Indian English Novel in the Post-independence Era**

The Indian trio - Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao - have continued to write novels after independence:

Anand's post-independence novels do not deal with the social
problems but with the personal problems. For example, The Private Life of an Indian Prince (1953) which apparently has a political theme viz the merger of the princely states within the Republic of India deals with the psychological theme viz the tragic collapse of the hero's will - power, his self - destruction in the face of events that are beyond his control. Anand presents the prince as the epitome of the feudal India wrongly idealized by the European 'Orientalists', Vedantists and British imperialists. His novels are The Old Woman and the Cow (1960), The Road (1963), Death of Hero (1964) and his autobiographical novel; Seven Summers of which Morning Face (1970) and Confession of a Lover (1976) are the parts of the fictional autobiography.

R. K. Narayan's post - independence novels deal with the coming of freedom to India and the encroaching advent of modernization in consequence of the industrialization and technological progress. Mr. Sampath deals with the effects of modernization on the sleepy old community of Malgudi. The Financial Expert is the other novel of Narayan. The hero is Margayya, a financial expert to his village peasants with his headquarters under a banyan tree. He is lured by Dr. Pal to regularize his banking transactions and get into big business. He no doubt becomes a great businessman but his family life is ruined. Modernization brings him unhappiness - the alienation of his family and the corruption of his son both sexually and financially by Dr. Pal, the benefactor turned monster. Much more somber is the conclusion of Waiting for the Mahatma, Narayan's only novel dealing directly with Gandhi's Satyagraha and assassination in 1947. Narayan is ironical about the youthful hero Sriram's involvement with Mahatma Gandhi's political activities during World War II. Narayan's purpose in this novel is to underscore the Gandhian non - violence.

The famous novel of Narayan in the post - independence era is The Guide. It develops the theme of the bogus Sanyasi in the character of a tour guide, Raju. The other novels of Narayan have been The Man Eater of Malgudi, The Sweet Vendor. If the story has been of prime importance for Narayan, it is of secondary importance for Raja Rao, as his Sahitya Akademi Award winning novel The Serpent and the Rope shows. The story is only a means to convey the unique vision of India embodied in its culture, religion and philosophy. The narrative is a retrospect of a South Indian Brahmin, Rama Swamy, who recounts his marriage to an intelligent French girl, the
death of their children, the collapse of their marriage and his return to India to pursue spiritual salvation by traditional Indian methods. So Raja Rao's novel is at once psychological and metaphysical. His next novel The Cat and Shakespeare is a symbolic exploration of the Indian consciousness.

5.2 Check Your Progress

1. What did Raja Ram Mohan Roy urge his fellow Indians to do?

2. What is the specialty of the novels published from the eighteen sixties up to the end of the nineteenth century?

3. What were the themes of Raja Ram Mohan Roy's works?

4. What were the causes for the development of English prose?

5. What does Vivekananda's works consist of?

6. Which qualities of Gopal Krishna Gokhale made him a good speaker?

7. Which factors contributed in changing the Indian consciousness under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi?
5.3 Major Indian English Prose Writers

India enjoys an enriched heritage of different genres of literature - drama, poetry and fiction. Indian literature like many other literatures of the world too has undergone many changes. This shows that Indian English literature is in the making through the emergence of new traditions, by means of a process of negation and assimilation. Earlier English literature was qualitatively quite different from the present ones and centered on issues of a relatively peripheral nature. Indian English literature has steadily been enriched by shifting patterns and new traditions. One can easily notice a remarkable change in contemporary discourses on the Indian English novel.

Today the author or novelist or dramatist has learnt to address himself to the fundamental issues intrinsic to creative and critical activity in the Indian English situation. Now issues like postcoloniality, multiculturality, indegenization, nativism, the social and political

8. What were the themes of the Indian English novel from 1920 to 1947?

_________________________________________________

9. What are the different periods which categorize the writings of Mahatma Gandhi?

_________________________________________________

10. What are the features of Jawaharlal Nehru's Autobiography?

_________________________________________________

11. What does the term "modern" in the post - independence era imply?

_________________________________________________

12. How have the Indian English writers after independence tried to seek the ideal of humanism in their writings?

_________________________________________________
agenda of criticism and the like are being treated with great importance in preference to a variety of relatively inconsequential issues. By and large, the Indian English novelist has attempted to face the reality around him with greater courage and responsibility. Masterpieces like Untouchable, Kanthapura, The Guide, All about H. Hatterr, Midnight's Children and a large number of good Indian English novels which stand the test of time are sufficient proof for the maturity this genre seems to have attained.

Some of the major writers of the Indian English Literature are:

**Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)**

Mahatma Gandhi was no writer nor was he at anytime particularly interested in the act of writing. The period between the two world wars is called the ‘Gandhian Age’. The arrival of Gandhiji during the Indian struggle for freedom was a period of awakening. Life could not be the same as before and every segment of our national life, politics, economics, education, religion, social life, language and literature acquired a more or less pronounced Gandhian hue. Several regional languages acquired a new power and many of the political leaders of the Gandhian Age - Abul Kalam Azad, Rajaji, Rajendra Prasad, Nehru and Vinoba Bhave - were themselves thinkers, writers, agitators and social reformers rolled into one.

The greatness of Gandhi was the greatness of an ordinary man who through a long process of trial and error, aspiration and endeavor, achieved a greatness indubitably his own. The story of his My Experiments with Truth is one of the imperishable classics of our time. In this autobiographical record, described in candid detail the events and circumstances of his life from birth to the launching of the non-cooperation movement in India in 1920. The latter part of his life till his death is the history of India as well. So he was called as the ‘Father of the Nation’.

The Gandhian impact on the contemporary Indian literature has brought about results at various levels one result was; a general preference for the mother tongue or regional language or bilingualism. And whatever the medium chosen, the stress has been more on simplicity, clarity and immediate effectiveness.

Regarding themes and characters, there has been a conscious
shift from the city to the village or a sharp contrast between the two. The works of Venkataraman, R.K.Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Kamala Markandaya etc are suitable examples.

In some novels, Gandhian thoughts and feelings are there and R.K. Narayan made Gandhi a character in Waiting for the Mahatma. The important events in the pre independent period and the freedom beautifully blended in most of the works of literature. There were a lot of writers, writing on Mahatma, his biographies, memoirs, critical studies and discussions, apart from the immense mass of Gandhi's, own writings and speeches. Mahatma by D.G. Tendulkar, P.A. Wadia's Mahatma Gandhi, E.M.S. Namboodiripad's The Mahatma and the 'the Ism' are the important studies on Gandhi. For the last 60 years, Gandhi has been the subject of biographical and expository studies.

**Gandhi as a man of letters**

Gandhi had no literary ambitions though he wrote some verse and a great deal of prose. In fact he was a journalist. He himself edited South African and Indian Journals, like the Indian Opinion, Young India and Harijan. His writings had no literary graces, suggestiveness, allusiveness or the power to conjure up associations but whatever he wrote one could see a transparency and absolute sincerity and often a profound aspiration. His twin values of Truth and Non violence gave him a stand point from which he could speak or write about even trivialities and it is that which makes his work alive for all times. His major work, his autobiography, My Experiments with Truth is written in Gujarati. His personality as revealed in his Autobiography is ethico-religious whether it is operating in the political, social or domestic sphere.

**Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 - 1964)**

The history of Nehru's writings and speeches merge with his life and his life likewise merges with the life of the nation. He was a fascinating writer too. Glimpses of World History, The Discovery of India, Autobiography, his Speeches, Letters from a Father to a Daughter bears the varied talent of the great statesman. He was tutored and given the best education that money could buy but he used those powers in his speeches and literary works. He plunged into the cauldron of freedom struggle and politics and his literary pursuits
came along with him....... written when he was in jail. Later his political involvement prevented him from writing more but was famous for his great speeches. He rose to the high office as the Prime Minister of India. He was an avid reader and appreciated quality in them. Many eminent writers were his friends and he used to write to them even in his busy political career.

The most important writers in the new wave of realism that swept over the Indian literature in the 1920s and 1930s were Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan.

**Mulk Raj Anand**

Anand could not help being influenced by the political events in India: Gandhi’s Salt Satyagraha Movements in 1930 and 1932, the Government of India Act 1935, the Gandhian movements for Harijan upliftment and Basic Education, the breakup of the Congress Party leading to the expulsion of Subhash Chandra Bose, India’s involvement in the Second World War. The political events with Gandhism as the main plank of the freedom struggle made Anand give expression to the political and the social consciousness of the thirties in his novels. Anand may therefore be said to have written in his novels of the people, for the people and as a man of the people.

To Mulk Raj Anand goes the credit for establishing the novel as the much favored medium for Indo-Anglians and for deflecting Indo-Anglian literature from an outdated romanticism in poetry to socially realistic fiction.

Anand’s six novels published between 1930 and 1942 provide a discontinuous but homogenous picture of the urban proletariat (worker), the low castes and the peasantry before and after the First World War. His first three novels form a trio: Untouchable, Coolie and Two Leaves and a Bud. All the three novels present a hero who is an outcaste proletarian, victimized and oppressed on two counts:

1. Casteism in the Indian society
2. Capitalist system and imperialistic policy of the British

He tried to replace this romantic image by socially realistic image of India with the observation of a naturalist like Zola and Balzac and in Marxian terms underscoring the class struggle between the upper and the lower castes and between the capital and the labor. His novels
reveal his humanism and humanitarian compassion for the underdog and the oppressed.

In his next trilogy, The Village, Across the Black Waters and The Sword and the Sickle, Anand traces the life of a young Sikh Lalu Singh from boyhood before World War I through the war itself in which he serves as a loyal British soldier to the nationalism and socialism of the 1920s. In Lalu Singh, Anand has a hero who is simple and exploited but is heroic, wild, passionate, angry - a fighter for his honor, a true 'Sikh'.

Anand's short stories particularly The Barber's Trade Union and other Stories develop the themes and characters of novels like Coolie and Untouchable. Most of the stories are bitter revelations of the misery of Indian poor and the underdog.

Anand's novels written after India's independence are Private Life of an Indian Prince which is a pathological study of a neurotic Maharaja, The Old Man and the Cow which is the tale of a peasant girl Gauri forsaken by her husband and sold to a rich merchant by her mother but which is a rehash of the Untouchable theme and The Death of a Hero which is about a Kashmir freedom fighter. In the 1970s, Anand has tried autobiographical novels Seven Summers, Morning Face and Confessions of a Lover.

As a novelist, Anand reveals his skill in creating living characters and a keen sense of actuality. He generally presents his characters with a lively curiosity and a deep compassion. The titles of his novels Untouchable, Coolie and Two leaves and a Bud emphasize the universal as against the particular. So Anand makes the individual assert his uniqueness and yet symbolize the class or the universal. He is ruthlessly realistic in depicting the social scene and underscoring his indignation at social evils and strong humanitarianism.

**Raja Rao**

Raja Rao is a child of the Gandhian age and reveals in his novels and short stories an awareness of the forces let loose by the Gandhian Revolution and the pull of the past tradition. Raja Rao has written only four novels: Kanthapura was the only novel Raja Rao written before the independence. The Serpent and the Rope, The Cat and Shakespeare and Comrade Kirillov were written after India's
independence. His short stories have been collected in a volume
entitled The Cow of the Barricades.

Raja Rao's forte is romantic-realism. Kanthapura is the finest
evocation of the Gandhian age in the Indian English fiction. It is the
story of a small South Indian village, Kanthapura, which is caught in
the thick storm of the freedom struggle of the 1930s and in the end the
village is so transformed that there is "neither man nor mosquito" left
in it. On the one hand, Raja Rao gives a realistic picture of life in an
Indian village and the impact of Mahatma Gandhi's political and
religious ideology. On the other hand, he reveals his interest in history,
folk-memory, metaphysics and racial self-consciousness. He makes
the reader see the reality as symbolic of the higher reality. Raja Rao's
purpose is to make the readers see the conflict between the villagers
and the British capitalists and imperialists as a conflict of people and
principles, not of individuals.

His second novel, The Serpent and the Rope written after
independence in 1960, was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in
1963. It is the tragic story of a marriage of minds which drifts apart. It
is the spiritual autobiography of a sensitive and learned modern Indian
intellectual. So it is Raja Rao's attempt to create a truly Indian novel
with its roots firmly rooted in tradition and to create an Indian English
style which expresses its vision authentically.

R. K. Narayan

R. K. Narayan is essentially a humorous writer interested in the lower
middle classes of South India, in a world relatively free from the
terrible privations and agonies, political conflicts and economic
problems. Narayan sees South India as a fundamentally conservative
Hindu society changing under the impact of the West, industrialism,
modern ideas. Narayan has written about ten novels set in the
imaginary South Indian town he calls 'Malgudi'.

Narayan's first novel, Swami and His Friends, is a humorous
study of the life of a school boy growing up in Malgudi in the 1920s
and 30s. The Bachelor of Arts is the story of Chandran, a sensitive
youth caught between the Western ideas of love and marriage instilled
into him by his college education and the traditional set-up in which
he lives. The third novel of Narayan The Dark Room introduces the
theme of the modernization of Malgudi. It is a serious tale of the heroine Savitri's silent suffering and abject surrender to her unfaithful husband. The English Teacher is Narayan's last novel before independence. The novel is divided into two halves of equal length. The first half is a charming prose idyll centered round Sushila, Krishnan's wife "The Angel in the House" and brings out the poetry of the daily routine in the life of Krishnan, the college lecturer in love with his wife Sushila. The idyll of marital love ends in Sushila's death. The second half of the novel describes Krishnan's attempts to seek relief in spiritualism and establish connection with the spirit of his dead wife. He concerns himself with the Indian life beneath the changes and challenges of the modern world. So his realism is of a different nature, different from the social realism in the novels of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. His realism brings out the universal in the particular as it deals with ordinary, everyday aspects of Indian life, the little ironies of life.

The trio - Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao - took the Indian English novel in the right direction. They did not much tap the dimension of the psychological realism but while Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao dealt with the socio - political aspect of Indian life, R. K. Narayan in a good-humored manner, within his limited range, created a typical Indian picture in a typical Indian small town rooted in the Hindu orthodoxy but being over - taken gradually by modernization. The Indian English novel thus acquired an individuality of its own.

During the period of the major trio, Anand, Narayan and Rao, who produced epoch-making pieces of Indian English fiction writing, many other novelists were active and a considerable number of novels were produced. Many of these novelists, being Muslims, depicted in their works life in Muslim households. These novels are Ahmed Ali's Twilight in Delhi (1940) and Ocean of Night (1964), Iqbalunnisa Hussain's Purdah and Polygamy: Life in an Indian Muslim Household (1944), Humayun Kabir's Men and River (1945), a novel based on a folk tale, Amir Ali's Conflict (1947), Via Geneva (1967) and Assignment in Kashmir (1973), K. A. Abbas's Tomorrow is Ours: A Novel of the India of Today (1943) and Inquilab: A Novel of the Indian Revolution (1955). Among others who deserve mention are: Dhan Gopal Mukherji's four novels: Kari, the Elephant (1922), Hari, the Jungle Lad (1924), The Chief of the Herd (1929), and Ghond, the Hunter (1929).

Besides "the Big Three" the Indian novelists who have contributed to the development of Indian English Fiction in the post-independence period are:

**Bhabani Bhattacharya (1906-1988)**

The earliest of the social realists of the period is Bhabani Bhattacharya, a novelist strongly influenced by Tagore and Gandhi. Bhattacharya's first novel, *So Many Hungers* (1947) is set against the background of the 'Quit India' movement and the Bengal famine of the early forties. The novel deals with the theme of exploitation - political, economic and social. The 'so many hungers' of the title are those of the political freedom (in the case of India); for the imperial expansion (in the case of the axis powers); for money (in the case of the capitalists who create an artificial food scarcity by hoarding rice), for food (in the case of the starved Bengali poor); for sex (in the case of sex - starved soldiers and those who frequent the Calcutta brothels); for the human dignity and self - respect and the hunger as a spiritual weapon employed by the freedom - fighters who go on a hunger strike in jail, 'Devata' even undertaking a fast unto death. Of these several hungers, the novelist has succeeded best in dealing with the hunger for food, and the scenes depicting the havoc wrought by the famine among the rural poor in Bengal constitute some of the finest examples of social realism in the Indian English fiction.

Music for Mohini (1952) moves on two levels. On the personal level, it is the story of Mohini, a 'city - bred', village - wed girl’ and her adjustment to her new life - style. On the social plane, the narrative presents an attempt to 'connect culture with culture … Our old eastern view of the life with the new semi - western outlook' - an attempt to wed the 'horoscope' with 'microscope'.

In *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952) - easily Bhattacharya's finest novel - many serious questions are posed through an absorbing
narrative of ironic reversal. The novel tells the story of Kalo, a poor blacksmith, who, jailed for stealing a bunch of bananas (the magistrate's question to him is "Why did you have to live?") vows revenge on society. He poses as a holy Brahmin, who has been vouchsafed the miraculous vision of a Siva idol and thrives on the fraud, until he discovers the age-old truth that he cannot dismount the tiger of his own creation without ruining himself; but he must dismount in the interest of mental peace.

In A Goddess Named Gold (1960), a slow-moving allegorical exercise, in which a fake magic talisman raises great expectations which are finally frustrated.

Shadow from Ladakh (1966) which won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967, a topical novel set against the background of the Chinese invasion of 1962, Shadow from Ladakh contrasts the Gandhism of Satyajit Sen of Gandhigram with the scientism of Bhashkar, Chief Engineer of Steeltown. The narrative, which ends with a dubious compromise (Steeltown will postpone its takeover of Gandhigram) can hardly be stated to have done justice to its avowed theme.

In A Dream in Hawaii (1978), Bhattacharya returns to the theme of East-West encounter, this time in Hawaii, 'no better meeting ground of east and west'. The encounter is abortive because while the East with all its spirituality has not yet completely mastered the flesh, the West continues to remain commercialized and confused.

Manohar Malgonkar

Manohar Malgonkar is a realist, who believes that art has no purpose to serve except pure entertainment. Malgonkar's is a male-dominated world in which women seem to be little more than instruments of masculine pleasure. Malgonkar's novels are neatly constructed and entertainingly told narratives which, however, present a rather limited view of life and human nature seen through the eyes of a hard-boiled man of the world for whom there is little to admire and respect in human nature.

A retired Indian army officer, Malgonkar began his novelistic career with Distant Drum (1960), a story of army life with a wealth of engaging detail. The title and the epigraph of Combat of Shadows
The Princes is indubitably Malgonkar's best novel. His grandfather was a minister in a Princely State and hence, Malgonkar's involvement with what he deals with in the novel was perhaps deeper than what the demands of a merely readable story would require. The result is a memorable picture of the troubled times of the merger of the princely states into the Indian Union with special reference to the small state of Begwad. The narrator is Abhayraj, the Crown Prince of Begwad, an insider - outsider, who views the entire merger drama as both actor and spectator. Malgonkar's depiction of the feudal way of life is scrupulously fair. He reveals both its strength and its limitations.

A Bend in the Ganges (1964), an ambitious novel and the setting of the novel is Partition. The title and the epigraph are drawn from the Ramayana: "At a bend in the Ganges, they paused to take a look at the land they were leaving". Malgonkar works on a large canvas; the scene shifts from India to the Andamans and back and the racy narrative is full of exciting action.

The Devil's Wind (1972) deals with the great Revolt of 1857, Malgonkar claims to have told 'Nana's story as I believe he might have written it himself'. The novelist, however, appears to be far more interested in Nana's 'personal involvements' than in the 'national struggle'. This is clear from the fact that both Tantya Topi and Mani (Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi) who played roles in the national struggle remain pale sketches.

Khushwant Singh

The realism of Khushwant Singh is of an earthier variety. He has declared that his "roots are in the dunghill of a tiny Indian village" and his fiction reeks with the odor of his roots. His style, hard and vigorous, employs colorful Punjabi expletives. His first novel, Train to Pakistan (1956) depicts the impact of Partition on a small village on the Indo - Pakistan border and shows with pitiless realism of description and the swift tempo of the narrative carries the reader along.

I Shall not Hear the Nightingale (1959) presents an ironic picture of a Sikh joint family illustrative of different Indian reactions to the
freedom movement of the forties, including double-dealing, posing and treachery.

**S. Menon Marath**

The realism of S. Menon Marath is securely rooted in the soil of his native Kerala. His *Wound of Spring* (1960) describes the disintegration of a traditional matriarchal Nayar family in Kerala during the second decade of the twentieth century. There is also an ironical picture of the Gandhian movement. The *Sale of an Island* (1968) is a slighter work, depicting the conflict between Kumaran, who returns from the war to find the island on which his house has been built sold to the rich landlord, Shekhar Menon. It ends with the eviction of all the tenants and the death of Kumaran.

**Balachandra Rajan**

Balachandra Rajan illustrates both the strains prominent in the Indian English fiction of the fifties and the sixties - viz. realism and fantasy. In his first novel, *The Dark Dancer* (1959), Krishnan, a South Indian youth, who on his return from England to post-Partition India, finds himself torn between his love for the British Cynthia and his loyalty to Kamala his wife, the novelist's intention appears to be to pose the problem of East-West confrontation in terms of the protagonist's quest for identity.

Rajan's second novel, *Too Long in the West* (1961) is a comic extravaganza in which the central figure is Nalini, a South Indian girl, who returns from an American university to face the problem of choosing a suitable husband. The breezy, facetious style harmonizes admirably with the tone of the narrative.

**Sudhindra Nath Ghose**

The novels of Sudhindra Nath Ghose are an exciting experiment in the expression of the Indian ethos in a form firmly grounded in the ancient native tradition of story-telling. The four novels - *And Gazelles Leaping* (1949), *Cradle of the Clouds* (1951), *The Vermilion Boat* (1953) and *The Flame of the Forest* (1955) - form a tetralogy knit together by the central figure of the protagonist-narrator, about
twenty years of whose life and career they cover.

**G. V. Desani**

G. V. Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* (1948) revised is easily one of the most daring experimental novels in Indian English Literature. All about H. Hatterr is a novel extremely complex both in the theme and technique. It is at once a diverting autobiography of a Eurasian, who is as avid for experience as he is incapable of learning from it; the story of the hero's spiritual quest for understanding the meaning of life; a social chronicle revealing aspects of White, Eurasian and Indian character. It is a triumphant experiment in blending Western and Indian narrative forms, and an astonishing exhibition of a seemingly unlimited stylistic virtuosity.

**M. Anantanarayan**

In his *The Silver Pilgrimage* (1961), M. Anantanarayan adopts a purely oriental form while narrating a story set in the sixteenth century Ceylon and India. It tells how Prince Jayasurya of Ceylon, sent on a pilgrimage of Kashi with his friend Tilaka, undergoes several adventures, meeting robbers and scholars, tyrants and sages and even a tree-dwelling demon on the way. The narrative is punctuated with the long dialogues and discourses and digressions.

**Arun Joshi**

Arun Joshi's recurrent theme is alienation in its different aspects and his heroes are intensely self-centered persons prone to self-pity and escapism. In his three novels, Joshi attempts to deal with three facets of the theme of alienation, in relation to self, the society around and humanity at large, respectively. Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* (1968) is a born 'foreigner' - a man alienated from all humanity. The only son of an Indian father and an English mother and born in Kenya, he is orphaned at an early age and grows into a youth without family ties and without a country.

The Strange Case of Billy Biswas (1971) presents a protagonist alienated from the higher middle-class society in which he is born and brought up and in which he is compelled to live though he finds in
himself an over-powering urge to march to a different drum together. Right from his adolescence Billy has been conscious of an 'urkraft' - 'a great force - a primitive force' within himself, which continues to register its presence time and again. His higher training in anthropology in the USA accentuates this consciousness further. After his return to India, marriage and a secure teaching job in a major University failed to stifle the nagging, strident primitive voice within and Billy runs away during an anthropological survey expedition to join a primitive tribe, where he is soon accepted as an incarnation of a legendary ancient king.

The most acute kind of alienation is that from self and the victim in The Apprentice (1974) is Rathor, a minor government official. The son of a middle class freedom-fighter, he had been a poet and an athlete in youth and his ambition had been 'to be good! Respected! To be of use!' The imperatives of making a living however, compel him to be a clerk and the prevailing atmosphere of corruption and Mammonism in the post-Independence period soon corrodes his soul.

Joshi is a novelist seriously interested in existential dilemmas and equally acutely aware of both the problems of post-Independence Indian society and the implications of the East-West encounter.

**Chaman Nahal**

Chaman Nahal is a novelist of the painful odysseys presented in different contexts. In his first novel, My True Faces (1973), Kamal Kant, whose wife, Malati, has left him, goes in search of her throughout Delhi and its outskirts but having found her in the end, realizes that their marriage is broken beyond repair.

Azadi (1975), which won the Sahitya Akademi award for the year 1977, is an account of the migration of Lala Kanshi Ram, a Sialkot grain merchant and his family to India at the time of the dismemberment of colonial India into two nations in 1947, is easily one of the most comprehensive fictional accounts of the Partition holocaust in the Indian English Literature. Chaman Nahal turns to the East-west encounter in Into another Dawn (1977). His hero, Ravi Sharma, hails from an orthodox Brahmin family from holy Hardwar; goes to the United States for higher studies and duly falls in love with
an American woman, the unhappy wife of a business executive. They elope but Ravi discovers that he has terminal cancer and returns to Hardwar to die.

In his novel, The English Queens (1979), Nahal narrates tale of the love of Rekha, an army officer's daughter living in a select colony, for a poor musician from an adjoining slum. The hero is revealed at the end to be new incarnation of Vishnu. Both the satire and the extravaganza have their moments of success.

Vikram Seth

He is an Indian poet, novelist, travel writer, children's writer, biographer and memoirist. An unusually forthcoming writer whose published material is replete with thinly-disguised details as to the personal lives of himself and his intimates related in a highly engaging narrative voice. In each of Seth's novels and in much of his poetry, there have been central or peripheral gay themes and characters. Seth is now best known for his novels, though he has characterized himself as a poet first and novelist second. He has published five volumes of poetry. His first, Mappings (1980), was originally privately published. His travel book From Heaven Lake: Travels Through Sinkiang and Tibet (1983) was his first popular success and won the Thomas Cook award for travel writing. The first of his novels, The Golden Gate (1986), is indeed a novel in verse about the lives of a number of young professionals in San Francisco. The novel is written entirely in rhyming tetrameter sonnets after the style of Charles Johnston's 1977 translation of Aleksandr Pushkin's Eugene Onegin. The verse novel received wide acclaim and achieved healthy sales. After the success of The Golden Gate, Seth took up residence in his parents' house back in Delhi to work on his second novel, A Suitable Boy (1993). The 1349-page novel is a four-family saga set in post-independence, post-Partition India and alternatively satirically and earnestly examines issues of national politics in the period leading up to the first post-Independence national election of 1952, inter-sectarian animosity, land reform and the eclipse of the feudal princes and landlords, academic affairs, inter- and intra-family relations and a range of further issues of importance to the characters. His most recent book, Two Lives (2005), is a non-fiction family memoir written at the suggestion of his mother. Seth's considerable range is
demonstrated by the meticulous historical accuracy of A Suitable Boy, with the finely nuanced cultivated-Indian English of the narrative voice and the entirely in-character voices of the principals of the story. In most of Seth's writing there is a strong, and always engaging and attractive, narrative persona.

**Shashi Tharoor**

Born in London in 1956, Shashi Tharoor was educated in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and the United States. Since 1978, he has worked for the United Nations. On 1st June 2002, he was confirmed as the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information of The United Nations. At the age of 22, he joined the United Nations - one of the most prestigious Organizations of the world- and the world witnessed his meteoric rise through the years. At the age of 48, he was a candidate to succeed Kofi Annan as the next UN Secretary General. Tharoor is the author of numerous articles, short stories and commentaries in Indian and Western publications and the winner of several journalism and literary awards, including a Commonwealth Writers' Prize. His books include Reasons of State (1982), a scholarly study of Indian foreign policy; The Great Indian Novel (1989), a political satire; The Five-Dollar Smile & Other Stories (1990); a second novel, Show Business (1992), which received a front-page accolade from The New York Times Book Review and was made into a motion picture titled Bollywood; and India: From Midnight to the Millennium (1997), published on the 50th anniversary of India's independence. On August 13, 2001 Penguin Books (India) published Tharoor's latest novel Riot.

**Salman Rushdie**

He was born in Bombay on 19 June 1947. His first novel, Grimus, was published in 1975.

His second novel, the acclaimed Midnight's Children, was published in 1981. It won the Booker Prize for Fiction, the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction) and Arts Council Writers' Award and the English-Speaking Union Award and in 1993 was judged to have been the 'Booker of Bookers', the best novel to have
won the Booker Prize for Fiction in the Award's Twenty five years' history. The publication in 1988 of his fourth novel, The Satanic Verses, lead to accusations of blasphemy against Islam and demonstrations by Islamist groups in India and Pakistan. It won the Whitbread Novel Award in 1988. Salman Rushdie continued to write and publish books, including a children's book, Haroun and the Sea of Stories (1990), a warning about the dangers of story-telling that won the Writers' Guild Award (Best Children's Book) and which he adapted for the stage. His most recent novel, Fury, set in New York at the beginning of the third millennium, was published in 2001. He is also the author of a travel narrative, The Jaguar Smile (1987), an account of a visit to Nicaragua in 1986. Salman Rushdie is also co-author (with Tim Supple and Simon Reade) of the stage adaptation of Midnight's Children, premiered by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 2002. His latest novel is Shalimar, The Clown (2005), the story of Max Ophuls, his killer and daughter, and a fourth character who links them all. It was shortlisted for the 2005 Whitbread Novel Award.

Amitav Ghosh

Indian born Amitav Ghosh demonstrates the blend and interstitial nature of diverse cultures, in his writings. Ghosh has already bagged several prestigious awards for his works. Some of these awards are Prix Medicis Etranger for The Circle of Reason (1986), the Sahitya Akademi Award for The Shadow Lines (1988), the Arthur C. Clarke Prize for the Science Fiction for The Calcutta Chromosome (1996), the Pushcart Prize for his essay, "The March of the Novel through History: My Father's Bookcase".

Upamanyu Chatterji

Delhi-based bureaucrat Upamanyu Chatterji made his debut on the Indian literary scenario with his novel English August?An Indian Story centering on the bizarre experiences of a young IAS officer, who is sent to the remote, nondescript town of Madna, for training. The language is colloquial Indian English with generous dosages of Hinglish.
**Hari Kunzru**

Hari Kunzru is a young author of English and Kashmiri descent, who shot into fame with his novels *The Impressionist* and *Transmission*. Having grown up in Essex, he studied English at Wadham College, Oxford University then gained an MA in Philosophy and Literature from Warwick University. He has worked as a travel journalist since 1998, writing for such newspapers as The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph and Time Out magazine. He has also published a short story collection *Noise*. Moreover Kunzru was named by Granta magazine as one of twenty 'Best of Young British Novelists'.

**Sasthibrata**

Sasthibrata appeared on the Indian literary scene in the late 1960's with *My God Died Young*, an autobiography. Its unassuming style and youthful angst addressed an entire generation, and the book was an instant success. In this explicit and irreverent autobiography, Sasthibrata mainly deals with the social milieu he was born into, the experiences which left him shattered and disillusioned and isolated. Alternately tender and brutal, he exposes the double standards and hypocrisies of the tradition-bound society in India as well as in the West with his no-holds-barred honesty and astonishing insight and understanding.

Other novelists of repute are G.V. Desani (All about H. Hatterer) M. Ananthanarayanan, Arun Joshi, Khushwant Singh, O.V. Vijayan and Salman Rushdie. Among the critics and historians of literature are K.R. Sreenivasa Iyengar, C.D. Narasimhaiah and M.K. Naik. Other big names in Indo-Anglian writing include Ruskin Bond (The Room on the Roof), Vikram Chandra (Red Earth and Pouring Rain), Shobha De and Ginu Kamani. There are many other talented writers like Manjula Padmanabhan (The Harvest) Arundhati Roy (The God of Small Things), Rajkamal Jha (The Blue Bed Spread), Rohinton Mistry (Family Matters), Anurag Mathur (The Inscrutable Americans) Manil Suri (The Death of Vishnu), Ruchira Mukherjee (Toad in My Garden), Kavita Deswani (Everything Happens for a Reason).

**The Women Novelists**

Toru Dutt's *Bianca* is considered to be the first novel written by a
woman. It was unfinished. There followed a lot of women writers but only after the Second World War that women novelists of quality have begun enriching Indian fiction in English. Some of the outstanding Indian English women writers are:

**Kamala Markandaya**


Her fiction has a broad range and offers a great variety of characters and setting though her quintessential themes are few viz East - West encounter and women in different life roles. The East - West encounter takes two forms:
1. A direct relationship between the Indian and British characters
2. The impact of the modern urban culture brought in by the British rule on the traditional Indian life.

Markandaya's first novel Nectar in a Sieve shows all these preoccupations. The narrator is a rustic woman, Rukmini. She narrates her hard peasant life which illustrates the truth "work without hope draws nectar in a sieve". Rukmini through the ordeal of poverty and suffering emerges as a woman of great strength and character, emotional, loyal and courageous but totally unsentimental. Markandaya shows that human dignity survives especially in the passionate and loyal Rukmini. The dignified religious sense of fate in the Indian peasant is presented with sympathy. She shows Indian peasants betraying the characteristics of self - delusion, pride, self - destruction, meanness, mixed with optimism, endurance and magnanimity.

Markandaya's second novel Some Inner Fury is a contrast to Nectar in a Sieve. Here also the narrator is a woman, Mira, the daughter of a rich Indian family, who falls passionately in love with an English government official, Richard, who returns her love. But this love of theirs is cut short because of India's freedom struggle which
gathered momentum during the Second World War. Richard is murdered by a mob. This tragic event makes Mira narrate her life in retrospect. Markandaya underscores in this novel the wastefulness that ensues from social change and from idealistic movements which seek to establish justice and peace, the movements which crush the individual and private emotions.

Markandaya's novel Possession also deals with the Indo-British personal relationships. It is the story of a clash between an aristocratic English lady, Caroline Bell who gets interested in a South Indian boy Valmiki because of his talent for painting. The novel has symbolical significance. Valmiki's transformation into the British lady's image of the Indian and the British Lady's possession of the artist symbolize India's possession by the British. The novel is an artistic exploration of the distortion of India's national character by the British and India's effort to free herself from it.

Markandaya is able to create living characters when she subjects her theme of the East-West encounter to a deeper probing. This she achieves in her novel, A Silence of Desire. In this novel, the wife of a modern government official in Indian countryside finds herself suffering from a tumor. She goes to a faith-healing Swami, who is revered by the villagers. Her husband wants to find out if Swami is genuine. Though he may be a fake Swami, the husband thinks that Swami is necessary for the poor villagers who seek Swami's help in their miseries. So then the novel, A Silence of Desire, is a subtle study of the reality of the religious faith and of the opposition between man's modern quest for scientific truth and technological certainty and a sense of mystery in human life.

A Handful of Rice is the story of Ravi, an urban vagabond. Ravi represents the Indian proletariat who has left his work on land in a village and come to a large city to seek his fortune.

The Coffin Dams marks a distinct watershed in the development of Kamala Markandaya as a novelist. In this novel, Markandaya offers one of her most comprehensive pictures of East-West encounter. The story is about a firm of British engineers that comes to India to construct a river dam. The British engineers express their attitude to India. Kamala Markandaya presents the reaction of the Indians to these Britishers objectively.
The Nowhere Man deals with the same theme more intensely. It has an English setting. Srinivas, an old Indian widower, an expatriate, finds drawn towards an old British lady, Mrs. Puckering, a divorcee. But during the sixties, when anti-immigrant movement had started in England, Srinivas is persecuted and dies. Kamala Markandaya has focused on the thoughts and feelings of an expatriate, his loneliness, rootlessness and nostalgic memories of the days in India etc. In the character of Srinivas, the novelist has presented the tortured psychology of a whole class of the people, who find themselves sucked into the "brain drain".

Two Virgins is about two village girls, the sisters, the elder running after a film director and coming to grief and the younger moving from innocence to experience by living through the family's traumatic experience.

The Golden Honeycomb is Kamala Markandaya's first attempt at the historical fiction. It covers the period from late nineteenth century to the post - First World War period. The scene is Devapur and the action embraces the times of Bawajraj II and III and of Bawajiraji III's illegitimate son, the rebel Rabi.

In her novel, Pleasure City, Kamala Markandaya artistically portrays a pleasure resort called ‘Shalimar’ in an isolated fishing village in South India. The East - West theme once again becomes paramount.

All these novels show that Kamala Markandaya has been one of the most dedicated and sustained writers of fiction. The cross-cultural relationship also forms one of the significant directions in Markandaya's novel but the traditions and values of India and the West show fundamental differences.

In her portrayal of Westerners as individuals, Markandaya is on the whole, objective and points out features which are both favorable and unfavorable.

The message of Markandaya's novels is that India should confidently pursue her own path holding fast to her traditional values and using methods appropriate to her culture. It is true that while the novelist recognizes the evils and deficiencies in the Indian life and society and warns her country men against a slavish imitation of the West, she does not offer any ready-made solutions to the many
problems facing the country. In religion, she should be proud of her
great legacy and her constant aim should be the attainment of the
purity, equipoise and altruism.

Anita Desai

Anita Desai has published Cry the Peacock (1963), Voices in the
City (1965), Bye - Bye Black Bird (1971), Where shall we go this
Summer? (1975), Fire on the Mountain (1977), Clear Light of Day
(1980), The Village by the Sea (1983) and In Custody (1984). She got
the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1978 for her Fire on the Mountain.

As a novelist, Anita Desai is more interested in the interior
landscape of the mind than in the political and social realities. Her
protagonists are generally women who, though they have reached
different stages in life, from school girl to grandmother, are all fragile
introverts "trapped in their own skins." They seem to be alienated from
their family and their surroundings and the reader feels that the
women protagonists are the victims of obsession. Even the male
characters are no better than the women protagonists. The emotional
traumas the women protagonists suffer from sometimes lead them to
violent death in the end.

Cry, the Peacock, Anita Desai's first novel, is in the form of interior
monologue, delineating the tragic mental breakdown of a young Indian
woman, Maya. The novel is a stream of consciousness novel and
through Maya's consciousness, thoughts of Maya are revealed. Her
obsession with her father and her hyper sensitively sensuous reaction
to experience are dramatized in poetic prose. Desai's chief skill lies in
her vivid characterization of Maya. It is a brilliant impressionistic novel
though the total effect is one of despair.

Voices in the City has for its setting Calcutta, city of Kali, goddess
of Death. The novel is the spiritual odyssey of three Indians - a brother,
Nirode and two sisters Monisha and Amla, who rebel against the
conventions of middle class life and long for creativity and self -
expression, for self - discovery and self - realization at the expense of
abandoning the old guides and mentors of family, religion, custom and
tradition. Here also Desai uses the stream of consciousness
technique, focusing on the illusions and conflicts that beset modern
Indian young people who are educated, sensitive and very self -
conscious. The conflicts of these three brothers and two sisters - with their mother are the result of the circumstances of living in Calcutta, without any goals in their life. They have to choose a style of life in which they can resolve their relationship with their strong - willed mother, they have left in Kalimpong. All the three are artists of a sort.

Calcutta in the novel is personified as a monster slowly sinking down back into the marshes from which the British raised it. Anita Desai is a poet of urban horror, skillfully evoking a picture of streets and lanes scarred by poverty, the haunt of beggars, lepers and rickshawmen brushing against white - dhoti clad babus and the colorful sarees of their wives. The trams and overloaded buses, stinking and cracking at the rush hours, blaring taxi horns start from the filth and refuse. Over every part of Calcutta broods the specter of decay, the odor of lurking death. Smoke becomes a symbol of darkness and despair for Monisha, Amla and Nirode.

Voices in the City is an "existential" novel that explores the inner climate of youthful despair in the character of extremely self - conscious Nirode, who finds no meaning in his life or in life at all. Each man or woman has to make his own life and face up to his inevitable fate. Each is alone in the terrible city of death. Though there is a satire on the Indian middle classes, satire on phoney artists and tyrannous parents, on the British who still hold the economic power, on social conformity. Voices in the City remains primarily a tragic exploration of personal suffering, which is the consequence of the feverish sensitivity of young intellectuals, who have lost their way in contemporary India.

Desai's third novel, Bye Bye Blackbird, is the only novel in which social and political realities are given more importance than the probing of the mind. The novel highlights the problem of the Asian emigrants in the UK often complicated by inter - racial marriages. Desai has called this novel of hers as "the most rooted in experience and the least literary in derivation."

Her novel Where Shall we go this summer? has been compared with Virginia Woolf's novel To the Lighthouse. Anita Desai returns to her theme of probing the inner reality of the human mind. The heroine is Sita, who has four children. In her fifth pregnancy, Sita leaves her husband, in a little disturbed mood, to seek peace in an island Manori, off Bombay where her father had once reigned as the local father - figurehead. The novel has been structurally divided into three parts:
from Monsoon 1967, Sita travels back in her memories to winter 1947.

Her next novel is Fire on the Mountain. This novel is set in Kasauli on the Simla Hills and is about two alienated souls that confront each other. Nanda, an unsentimental widow, lives as a recluse in an isolated house in the hills. Raka, her great granddaughter, is a shy lonely school girl, who is a “recluse by nature, by instinct” as opposed to Nanda who is “a recluse out of vengeance for a long line of duty and obligation.” The sudden death Nanda’s friend, a social worker, who is raped and strangles, compels Nanda to review her past life. She realizes that she has been a self - deceiver but the recognition comes too late because Nanda dies of shock and Raka has begun to set fire to the forest which threatens to destroy the house. The violent ending appears to be contrived. But the novelist succeeds in underscoring an intense sense of loneliness and alienation experienced by Nanda and even her friend Ila Das.

Clear Light of Day indicates the main theme of the novel viz to see the light. It is the story of an elderly spinster, Vimla, who lives in a decaying house surrounded by a neglected garden containing a black well, no longer in use. She is a lecturer in a Delhi college and has sacrificed herself for the sake of her mad aunt and neurotic brother, who have to be looked after. Her younger sister, Vimla, is married and has two daughters but she is mentally troubled by a sense of guilt for having been of no help to her problem ridden family. Vimla visits her parental home with her daughters during her sister’s vacation. The visit stirs up the childhood memories of the sisters and their past sufferings. The shift in the narrative from the present to the past and back to the present creates the mood of nostalgia, of long - forgotten impressions, words and actions which are suddenly suffused with “the light of her days”. The focus is on Vimla’s consciousness alone. Vimla seeks relief from the traumatic past and pines for the vacation to end so that she can forget everything in her lectures, time table etc.

In Custody published by Desai in 1984 shows the protagonist Deven confronted with failure and frustration at every step. He is therefore sad, bitter and sardonic till the end. Several obstructions come in his way but he does not know how to overcome them. He is befooled and cheated everywhere. Deven faces failure and frustration from the beginning to the end of the story. Though the protagonist here is a man and not a woman as in other novels of Desai, she yet
presents the same agony and helplessness on the part of the protagonist.

The view of life that emerges from the novels of Anita Desai is one of despair. Beneath the glitter of success and veneer of sophistication, vain self-seeking and hypocrisy, life is painful and futile. She thus becomes an "existential" novelist in the making unraveling the torturous complexities of sensibility with subtlety and finesse.

Anita Desai's another asset is evoking the changing aspects of nature to suit the human moods. Her mastery of the language and her use of image and symbol lend a poetic and lyrical touch to her novels. Her verbal artistry and her evocation of atmosphere compel the reader to gain any entry into the personal experience of her character and accept unquestioningly the manner in which it resolves itself.

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala

Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's eight novels fall into two distinct and evenly matched groups - viz, comedies of urban middle class Indian life, especially in undivided Hindu families and ironic studies of the East-West encounter. The first group comprises To Whom she will (1955), The Nature of Passion (1956), The Householder (1960) and Get Ready for Battle (1962) to the second belong Esmond in India (1958), A Backward Place (1965), A New Dominion (1973) and Heat and Dust (1975). The two motifs are combined in some of the novels, always with the one subordinated to the other.

Arundhati Roy

She is a novelist, activist. She won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her first novel The God of Small Things. Roy was born in Assam to a Keralite Syrian mother, the women's rights activist Mary Roy and a Bengali Hindu father, a tea planter by profession. She spent her childhood in Aymanam in Kerala and went to school in Corpus Christi. She then studied architecture at the Delhi School of Architecture. Roy began writing The God of Small Things in 1992 and finished it in 1996. She received half a million pounds as an advance, and rights to the book were sold in 21 countries. The book is semi-autobiographical and a major part captures her childhood experiences in Aymanam.

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**Kiran Desai**

She is a South Asian American author. Her novel *The Inheritance of Loss* won the 2006 Man Booker Prize. She is the daughter of the noted author Anita Desai, who short-listed for the Booker prize three times. Her first novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, was published in 1998 and received accolades from such notable figures as Salman Rushdie. It went on to win the Betty Trask Award, a prize given by the Society of Authors for the best new novels by citizens of the Commonwealth of Nations under the age of 35. Her second book, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) has been widely praised by critics throughout Asia, Europe and the United States and won the 2006 Man Booker Prize. *The Inheritance of Loss*: Among its main themes are migration and living in between two worlds and in between past and present.

**Bharati Mukherjee**

Bharati Mukherjee who describes herself as an American of Bengali Indian origin deals with the themes of the Asian immigrants in North America, and the change taking place in South Asian Women in a New World. *The Tiger’s Daughter*, *Jasmine* and *The Wife* are her landmarks.

**Shobha De**

Shobha De writes racy thrillers with urban India as their backdrop and these are invariably bestsellers. The erotic content of her novels has been somewhat controversial with some reviewers being contemptuous of her work while others feel that she is blowing away the taboos adhered to, by many women writers. Her novels include *Starry Nights*, *Sisters* and *Socialite Evenings*, to name a few. The speeding up of the sexual revolution in India with her sensuous novels and the Western outlook may largely be attributed to her.

**Gita Hariharan**

Gita Hariharan is a journalist by profession and based in New Delhi. Her first book, *The Thousand Faces of Night* won the Commonwealth Prize for the best first novel. Her other works include...
The Art of Dying (a collection of stories), The Ghosts of Vasu Master, When Dreams Travel (both novels), A Southern Harvest and In Times of Siege. She has also co-edited Sorry, Best Friend, a collection of stories for children.

**Manju Kapur**

Manju Kapur is a Professor of English at the prestigious Miranda House in Delhi. Her first novel, Difficult Daughters, received the Commonwealth Award for the Eurasian region. The book is set during India's independence struggle and is partially based on the life and experiences of the author's own mother. Her other novel, A Married Woman, is a seductive story of love, set at a time of political and religious upheaval within the country. Narrated with sympathy and intelligence, it is the story of an artist whose canvas challenges the constraints of middle-class existence.

**Shashi Deshpande**

Shashi Despande's first novel, The Dark holds no Terrors presents an unusual character, Sarita, who defies her mother to become a Doctor, defies her caste to marry outside and defies social conventions by using Boozie to advance her career. Shashi Deshpande began her literary career in 1970. At first, she wrote short stories. She wrote four children’s books. Her other novels are That Long Silence, If I Die Today, Come up and Be Dead and Roots and Shadows.

**Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni**

Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni’s works are partly autobiographical with most plots set in the Bay Area of California (where she lives). She also deals with the immigrant experience, an important issue in the contemporary world. Arranged Marriage is a collection of short stories about women from India caught between two worlds. The protagonist of The Mistress of Spices, Tilo, provides spices, not only for cooking but also for the homesickness and alienation of the Indian immigrant clients frequenting her shop. She writes to unite people, fiercely breaking down all kinds of barriers.
**Nayantara Sahgal**

Nayantara Sahgal is from the famous Nehru clan, a feminist writer, advocating women's emancipation. She is a child of the tradition, where the women are deified as an epitome of power (Shakti). Her novels try to highlight the independent existence of women and their efforts to thwart attempts to isolate them from the centre-stage of human existence. Sahgal has the honour of being the first Indian woman novelist writing in English dealing with political themes. She has bagged two prestigious awards for her sixth novel, Rich like Us published in 1985. In the same year she was awarded Sinclair Prize for Fiction and in 1986 the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award bestowed upon her for this novel. Nayantara Sahgal is usually regarded as an exponent of the political novel but politics is only one of her two major concerns. Along with the obvious political theme, her fiction is also preoccupied with the modern Indian woman's search for sexual freedom and self-realization. A Time to be Happy (1958) is a loose chronicle dealing with two north Indian families during the last stages of the freedom struggle and the arrival of Independence. In Storm in Chandigarh (1969), the political background is that of the division of the Punjab into the two states of Punjab and Haryana. The Home Minister is a thinly disguised portrait of Lal Bahadur Shastri and Gyan Singh of Pratap Singh Kairon, the former Chief Minister of Punjab. The domestic plot dealing with a broken marriage in The Day of Shadow (1971) was obviously inspired by the personal experience of the novelist. Here again, while Sardar Sahib, the Deputy Minister, who is a 'glamour boy' are well realized, the private world of the divorced Simrit bears little organic relation to the political background. Nor is the disintegration of the marriage presented with the necessary analytical power. A Situation in New Delhi (1977) deals in a rather superficial manner with the aftermath of Nehru's death, the Naxalite movement and the student unrest. In a sense, this novel registers a definite advance in Nayantara Sahgal's fictional art, since there is no cleavage here between the political and the private worlds, the main actors in both being are the same.

**Uma Vasudev**

Uma Vasudev joined the bandwagon of non-fictional writers with her three exhaustive biographies of Mrs. Indira Gandhi ? Courage

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under Fire, Revolution in Restraint and Two Faces of Indira Gandhi. However she also has two novels—Shreya of Sonagarh and The Story of Anusuya— to her credit.

**Nergis Dalal**

Nergis Dalal’s experience of journalism has hardly proved a salutary influence on her fiction. Her Minari (1976) is an account of high-class life at a hill station, with conventional characters in stock situations. Two Sisters (1973), a contrastive study of twins at opposite poles both physically and mentally, starts promisingly as a keen probe into jealousy but ends in melodrama. And in The Inner Door (1976) the Guide motif of enforced sainthood is handled as crudely as the stock theme of East-West encounter is treated in The Girls from Overseas (1979).

**Shama Futehally**

Shama Futehally was an academician by profession. She lived in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and finally Delhi. She has two anthologies of short stories to her credit, and her first novel, Tara Lane, won great critical acclaim. Her other novel, Reaching Bombay Central, is written with astonishing economy; it is an elegant and heart-warming novel. In pared down, poetic prose, Shama writes about the fears and hopes of an individual life which bring into sharp focus the larger realities of contemporary India.

**Manjula Padmanabhan**

Manjula Padmanabhan is an author, playwright and artist. Her books include Hot Death, Cold Soup (1996), a collection of short stories and Getting There (1999) a travel memoir. Harvest, her fifth play, won first prize in the 1997 Onassis Prize (The foundation has its headquarters in Greece) for theatre. Kleptomania (2004), a collection of short stories, was published in 2004. She has illustrated 23 books for children including, most her own two novels for children, Mouse Attack and Mouse Invaders.

The other women novelists of the fifties, sixties, seventies and eighties are:


**PROSE**

**The Emergence of Prose in English in India**

The western impact, the infusion of English literature and European thought and the resulting cross-fertilization have been the means of quickening the interplay and circulation of ideas and the emergence of a new literature, a new climate of hope and endeavor in the country and a bold marching towards new horizons. From the great Ram Mohan Roy flowed diverse streams of renaissance activity - religious awakening, social reform, the new education, women's emancipation, literary river and political consciousness - each carried forward by its own dedicated spirits. India is blessed with many great political personalities, religious men, aesthetes, men of letters and scholars. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Vivekananda, M. N. Roy, Mahatma Gandhi etc and the list goes endless. Vivekananda's appearance and speech in 1893 at the Chicago Parliament of Religions is a part of history. Several volumes of his complete works, published by the Advaita Ashram comprise courses of lectures on different Yogas, on Gita and numerous other essays. The great freedom movement brought various orators to the front. Rajaji, Ranade, Gokhale, Tilak, Nehru are only a few of them. Besides orators and journalists, there are historians, philosophers, the jurists, the biographers, the auto-biographers, essayists, critics, scientists, economists and sociologists.
Dr. Radhakrishnan (1888 - 1975)

Dr. Radhakrishnan is a philosopher - statesman with an international reputation, a scholar with a phenomenal memory, a resourceful and eloquent and effective speaker and a voluminous writer with an uncanny flair for lucidity and epigrammatic strength. The range of his interests, the sweep of his mind, the commendable Catholicity of his tastes and the temper and quality of his eloquence have marked Dr. Radhakrishnan a man of ‘words and wisdom’, a Guru for his contemporaries. The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore, The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy, Indian Philosophy, Eastern Religion and Western thought, the English renderings of Bhagavad Gita, Dhamma Pada, The Principal Upanishads, Brahma Sutra were some of his works. An Idealist View of Life is unquestionably his most valuable contribution to constructive philosophy. He was indeed the greatest, gift given to Indians and to the world.

Nirad C. Chaudhuri (1897 - 1999)

Nirad C. Chaudhuri is the ‘Grand Solitary’ among Indian writers. His works include The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian, A Passage to England, The Continent of Circe and To live or not to live. The Autobiography made him suddenly famous. It is confessedly, more of a ‘national than personal history’, the environment being given precedence over the product. The continent of Circe is described as ‘an essay on the people of India’. Apart from his shortcoming as a writer - a sort of love hate relationship with India and the people of India - his great merit as an intellectual is that he is not ever too lazy to avoid doing his own thinking or too timid to hesitate to give outspoken expression to his own views. He has the supreme faith of the moral man in an amoral society.

The Indian English Short Story

Like the novel, the Indian English short story too came into its own during the Gandhian age. There are also writers who devoted themselves exclusively to this form. T. L. Natesan, who wrote under the pen name Shankar Ram, is an early example. His stories in The Children of Kaveri (1926) and Creatures All (1933) - a selection from
both the books appeared under the title The Ways of Man (1968) -
deal mostly with the rustic life in Tamil Nadu. Most of the stories are
artless and some sentimental. Many others rest upon shaky
conventional motifs like an estrangement between two near and dear
ones, finally ending in reconciliation. Shankar Ram recaptures the
village scene evocatively and his literal translation of rustic nicknames
like 'Barrel - nose Grandpa' and 'spider - leg' anticipates Raja Rao's
effective use of this device in Kanthapura.

A.S.P. Ayyar, the novelist and playwright, published three
collections of stories: Indian after - Dinner Stories (1927), Sense in
Sex and other Stories (1932) and The Finger of Destiny and other
Stories (1932), besides retelling ancient Indian legends in books like
Tales of India (1944) and Famous Tales of India (1954). As in his
plays, Ayyar's constant theme in his stories is social reform and
especially the plight of woman in traditional Hindu society. His women
include young widows, who successfully re - marry in the teeth of
opposition, young girls married by their parents to old men for money,
abandoned or persecuted wives, victims of the dowry system or of the
absence of birth control etc.

Many of S. K. Chettur's stories in Muffled Drums and other Stories
(1917), The Cobras of Dhermashevi and other Stories (1957) and
Mango Seed and other Stories (1974) seem to be based on material
collected during his official tours as a member of the Indian Civil
Services. Village feuds, murders and local legends about serpents,
ghosts and omens are his staple themes and he seems to have a
special fascination for fantasy and the supernatural. He uses a variety
of narrative modes including the autobiographical method, the device
of the observer - narrator, and the epistolary method.

Two other writers, who have a single collection each to their
credit, are the novelists, K. S. Venkataramani and K. Nagarajan. In his
preface to Jatadharan (1937), Venkataramani characterizes his work
as 'sketches rather than short stories'. Many of his heroes are the
products of the Gandhian ferment. Of the dozen tales in Nagarajan's
Cold Rice (1945), some obviously draw upon the author's experiences
as a Government pleader and read like court cases dressed up for
narration, while others are anecdotes. His art is seen to better
advantage in the roomy form of the novel.

The most productive of the Indian English short story writers,
Manjeri Isvaran, the poet, has not yet received the recognition due to him, since most of his books are now out of print. He is the author of The Naked Shingles (1941), Siva Ratri (1943), Angry Dust (1944), Rickshawallah (1946), Fancy Tales (1947), No Anklet bells for her (1949), Immersion (1951), Painted Tigers (1956) and A Madras Admiral (1959). Isvaran's keen interest in the form is revealed in his attempt to discuss the theory of the short story in some of his prefaces. Apart from Isvaran, the most single contribution to the short story of this period came from the three major novelists - Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao.

Mulk Raj Anand has brought about seven collections of short stories. The Lost Child and other Stories (1944), The Barber's Trade Union and other Stories (1944), The Tractor and the Corn Goddess and other Stories (1947), Reflections on the Golden Bed and other Stories (1953), The Power of Darkness and other Stories (1959), Lajwanti and other Stories (1966) and Between Tears and Laughter (1973). Anand has also retold the traditional Indian tales in his Indian Fairy Tales (1946) and More Indian Fairy Tales (1961). Anand's aims and methods are explained at length in his Prefaces.

Mulk Raj Anand's short stories are wide-ranging in mood and tone. First, there are stories of 'lyric awareness' (to use his own phrase). Another prominent group is that of the stories of strong social awareness revealing Anand's acute understanding of the complex social forces at work in the modern India. The range and variety of Anand's short stories are evinced not only in mood, tone and spirit but also in locale and characters, form and style. The forms Anand draws upon are the fable, the parable, the folk-tale, the narrative and sometimes even the well-made story and his style can be in turn lyrical and satirical, light-hearted and indignant.

R. K. Narayan's career as a short story writer began almost a decade after Anand's, with Cyclone and other Stories (1943), Dodu and other Stories (1943) and Malgudi Days (1943). His subsequent collections are An Astrologer's Day and other Stories (1947), Lawley Road and other Stories (1956) and A Horse and Two Goats (1970). Gods, Demons and Others (1964) is a retelling of well-known ancient Hindu legends. Narayan's most characteristic note in his short stories is a gentle irony. In some other stories, the irony arises out of the comic complications creating predominantly humor of situation.
Narayan's stories are uniformly compact and are told in his usual seemingly artless style. Though Narayan's stories are always readable, they are perhaps not as significant an achievement as his major novels.

True to his characteristic lack of fecundity, Raja Rao has published only a dozen stories which are collected in The Cow of the Barricades and other Stories (1947) and The Policeman and the Rose (1978), which is actually only a revised version of the earlier collection, containing all but two of its stories and adding three more. Nevertheless, these dozen stories exhibit considerable thematic and formal variety.

Of K. A. Abbas's four short story collections, the first appeared in the year of Indian Independence: Rice and other Stories (1947), the others being Cages of Freedom and other Stories (1952), One thousand Nights on a Bed of Stones and other Stories (1957) and The Black Sun and other Stories (1963). Most of these stories are strongly colored by Abbas' militant Leftism and not a few carry tell-tale marks of his journalistic and film-world experience, both in conception and technique.

Of Santha Rama Rau's two novels, Remember the House (1956) is a charming picture of the East-West encounter, particularly as it affects young Indira, whose growth from adolescence to maturity is another theme. The Adventuress (1970), the story of a young Philippino girl stranded in post-war Japan, however, fails to raise above the level of superficiality, though the exotic setting is portrayed with some expertise.

After 1980, began the period of the so-called "new" fiction. In this period a breed of new novelists emerged. It includes Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Shashi Deshpande, Shashi Tharoor, Shobha De, Amitav Ghose, Amit Choudhary, and Arundhati Roy.

Shashi Deshpande is the novelist with the most sustained achievement, having published eight novels. She seems to grapple with the identity crisis of the contemporary women in her works. Her important novels include The Dark Holds No Terrors (1980), If I Die Today (1982), A Matter of Times (1996) and Small Remedies (2000).


Another writer of immense worth is Arundhati Roy. She won the Booker Prize for her maiden novel, The God of Small Things (1997). It is a tale of shock and horror with theme of death and decay. In it Roy reveals immorality in public life, too, which is rocked by party politics and selfish motives.

5.3 Check your Progress
1. What is Gandhi's My Experiments with Truth about?

2. In which works are Gandhian thoughts and feelings reflected?

3. What has made Mulk Raj Anand a writer of the people?
4. Comment on the style of Mulk Raj Anand.

5. Comment on Raja Rao's presentation of Indian life in Kanthapura.

6. Comment upon R. K. Narayan's South India.

7. Comment upon Bhabhani Bhattacharya's So Many Hungers.

8. What is Bhattacharya's He Who Rides a Tiger about?

9. Comment on Manohar Malgonkar as a writer.

10. How is East-west encounter reflected in Balachandra Rajan's The Dark Dancer.

11. What is the theme of G. V. Desani's All about H. Hatter?

12. Explain the role of 'urkraft' in Arun Joshi's.

13. What is different about Vikram Seth's novel, The Golden Gate?
5.4 Major themes dealt in Indian English Prose

Indian English literature originated as a necessary outcome of the introduction of English education in India under colonial rule. In recent years it has attracted widespread interest, both in India and abroad. It is now recognized that Indian English literature is not only part of Commonwealth literature but also occupies a great significance in the World literature. Fiction, being the most powerful form of literary expression today, has acquired a prestigious position in the Indian English literature. It is generally agreed that the novel is the most suitable literary form for the exploration of experiences and ideas in the context of our time and Indian English fiction occupies its proper place in the field of literature. There are critics and commentators in England and America who appreciate Indian English novels. Prof. M. K. Naik remarks:

"...one of the most notable gifts of English education to India is prose fiction for though India was probably a fountain head of story-
telling, the novel as we know today was an importation from the West.”

Indisputably, the Indian English novel has gained a unique viability, vibrancy and vitality, attracting a remarkably wide readership and universal acclaim to which the new novelists have made a positive contribution.

The Indo-English fiction has so many novelists but very few sympathetic critics. Meenakshi Mukherji expresses her sympathy to conclude her Twice Born Fiction with a comment:

"Indo-English fiction, which has served for so long as a file or document of sociology of anthropology or educational theory must now be regarded as literature and evaluated as such."

A survey of the beginnings of the Indian novel in English shows that the novelists largely wrote either romances like Bianca and Kamala, or sociological novels like The Garden Keepers and The Cage of Gold, or historical novels like The Fatal Garland and Shivaji, or at best novels dealing with east-west encounter like Hindupore or The Prince of Destiny. It is only after the nationalistic stirrings gained momentum in India during the independence movement that the novel changed its direction and attention from romances, history, sociology and culture to politics revealing a new kind and pattern of awareness and relationship of the individual with the specific of the milieu.

It is not the fact that all the novels and novelists turned political but the impact of the political upheaval was so great that even a novelist of such intense sociological concern as R.K. Narayan and one of deep metaphysical concern like Raja Rao could not but help writing at least one political novel each. The progress of the Indian English novel reveals the way the national struggle for independence in its various aspects and stages impinged upon the imagination of the writers to produce a new genre called the political novel.

Every age has its own compulsions, tensions, fears, aspirations and logic and accordingly finds a genre suitable to it. Even a cursory glance at the history of English Literature would approve it. The sensibility conditioned by the industrial progress had altogether different hopes, wishes, fears, anxieties, feelings and emotions and so it found itself authentically reflected in the novel genre. Industrialization led to the rise of the middle classes which found novel as the most suitable literary form for itself. Since the West was the
early cradle of the Industrial Revolution so it was but natural that it was
the cradle of the novel form, too, which reached far flung countries of
the world along with the colonizing west and to an extent, explored it
as a part of their colonial project.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the number of
western educated people increased because of the spurt in
educational activities and establishment of Universities in India. Prose
writing came into vogue during those days and through English prose
only, regional languages of India were cast into prose style. The prose,
initially functional, was also used later on as a medium of artistic
expression and a class of native writers could even use English prose
creatively for their purpose. Of all forms of literature, novel perhaps, is
driven the most by the sense of past in context of the political present.
In case of the Indian novelists writing in English, it is truer. Even slight
glances at the works of pre-independence novelists like our trio-R. K.
Narayan, Raja Rao, Mulk Raj Anand - indicate strong traits of the past
in their works.

The post-independence scenario, more so, feels uprooted and
searches for the base to have strong foothold in the Indian origins. For
instance, the expatriate writers like Salman Rushdie, Rohinton Mistry,
Vikram Seth, Farrukh Dhondy and M G Vasanjee among others,
present a strong case of alienation in their fictional works and
whatever they present is the sense of their past with the country. It was
Bengal that led the Indian reception of the novel form and its use for
creative endeavors with its writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee,
Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Tarashankar
Bandyopadhyay, Bibhuti Bhushan, Naini Bhaumik and Manoj Basu
among others. Writers from other Indian regions - Nirad Chaudhary,
Rajnikant Bardoloi, K.S. Venkatramani, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Sir
Jogendra Singh and the famous trio R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand
and Raja Rao, to name only a few - soon joined the league. They all
engaged themselves in the art of novel writing following the model of
English type, for it was easily accessible to us and it was practiced by
the master colonizers. With colonial complex in operation, the English
novel came to be the western novel for us and became the pole
guiding novel for our writers though there were the few like Bankim
Chandra and Govardhanram Tripathi, who resisted colonial influence
in the ways as different as they themselves were. The novel, primarily,
is of the middle class - of the Man of the Masses. In that vein, the early
Indian fiction in English by Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Manohar
Malgonkar, G.V. Desani and others depict the world which is ruled, not
by individuals or kings but by masses. The heroism in their works
depicted the movement of masses and crowds in revolution and war
gripped by the savagery of Nature in famine and flood. The masses in
these works - identifiable with certain groups, cities, towns, slums or
colonies - assume the role of the hero or the protagonist. For instance,
in Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan Juggat, the protagonist
becomes a convincing figure only in the background of the village,
Mano Majra and the community to which he belongs.

Among other works like Tamas by Bhishma Sahani and Adha
Gaon by Rahi Masum Raza also tell the stories not of the individuals
but of masses gripped in the woes caused by the partition of the Indian
subcontinent. Among the recent works, in Upmanyu Chatterjee's
English, August: An Indian Story, Madna, "a dot in the hinterland", as
the writer called it, emerges as the real protagonist of the novel. All
these are either the examples of community literature or literature of
Places in which community or place emerges as the protagonist
or hero.

The Indian novel in English thematically before independence
preoccupied itself with the subject matters like Indian freedom
movement, patriotism, evils of feudalism and the matters of national
concern before the Independence and social reforms after
independence. Mulk Raj Anand, a novelist himself, traces the march
of the Indian novel in one of his articles. He considers Bankim
Chandra Chatterjee's Anand Matha, the first novel on the Indian
Freedom Movement. Tagore's Gora, according to him, was a novel
about national concerns and Ghare Baire, a stream-of-consciousness
novel. After Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee wrote about the lower
middle classes and the evils of terrorism. Then there were Tara
Shankar Bandyopadyay and Bibhuti Bhushan who wrote about tribals,
fisher folk and the village life of Bengal.

Then, the writers with socialistic concerns emerged on the scene,
which included Prem Chand, Anand himself, Shivram Karanth,
Yashpal, Amrit Lal Nagar, Phaneshwar Nath Renu, Ismat Chughtai,
Krishnan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi and Qurrutulain Haider. The
voice of women novelists, urging emancipation in forceful terms has
also been heard after Independence, particularly in the novels of Kamala Markandya, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal and Uma Vasudeva.

However, the Indian novel in English during the recent years - especially in 1980s, 90s and after - revealed new heights with sudden spurt in creative activities rich in quality and quantity as well. Viney Kirpal observes in this regard:

"In this significant decade, a gorgeous collection of several magnificent Indian novels seems to have garnered, almost overnight.... In the 1980s, however, not less than two dozen notable novels have already been produced..."

Amazingly many of these novels have either been awarded or short listed for one prize or the other of international repute. Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children, which gave new purpose and direction to Indian fiction in English with its publication in 1981, got the Booker prize of the year and subsequently it also won the Booker of Booker. The experimentation and innovation at the levels of language, theme and style in this novel have been consolidated and extended by many other Indian English novelists in their works.

The Indian novelists writing in English, especially of eighties and nineties, strove hard to overcome the so-called "colonial hangover" and "Raj Syndrome" and the fiction of this period is marked by the experimentation at various levels of language, theme and technique. For instance, The Golden Gate by Vikram Seth explores new avenues of craftsmanship and technical excellence, and Shobha De and Firdaus Kanga experiment with heretofore unexplored and even prohibited themes. Other contemporary writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee and Shashi Deshpande, to name only a few, have also captivated the literary scene around the world with their experimental yet gripping creative endeavors of fiction. The mind and milieu projected in the works of these writers are prominently urban and cosmopolitan. Simultaneously, they have added new meanings to their novels in their postmodernist garbs. For instance, a master stroke like that delivered by Rushdie's Satanic Verses defamed the whole of community around the world. That of course, came in the wake of Ayatollah Khomeini’s Fatwa to kill the author of Satanic Verses. At the outset, the attempt may look like a petty gimmick of a berserk author but the deeper we dig; we are likely to
stumble upon a graver meaning. The works of other authors writing in English, especially minority writers, have striven too hard to lend voice to similar feelings occurring out of similar angst. Infact, their rootlessness or their so called minority status and threats related to it are vociferated in the expatriate writers like Rohinton Mistry, Meenakshi Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie and Farrukh Dhondy and native writers like I. Allan Sealy, Firdaus Kanga, Esther David and Keki Daruwala among others. With the intentions of perennial rule over the Indian sub-continent's colonies, British had indigenous plans. One of them, as our history states and though it did not see its hay-day, was their game-plan to divide and rule. However, the idea succeeded at the cost of their reign. The Indian subject was almost perennially divided among the majorities and minorities. Almost two hundred years' British rule over India has taught many worthy lessons to the people of this country and has given many scars to the face of the Indian history as well. And the culmination was the holocaust tragedy of a country divided into two. A country was transformed into a sub-continent. And today the scenario that persists is of the grave concern to the statesmen and of the petty gimmicks for politicians. There is no dearth of examples of the latter aspect and the former also found its reflection in various manners. The most worried were the artists of the different genres. Literature vociferated the pangs of the division among castes and countries. In fiction, especially, Bhishma Sahani's Tamas, Rahi Masum Raza's Aadha Gaon, Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan and Sadat Hasan Manto's various works, among others, adequately tell the stories to this effect. Such fiction spoke of the dissection of the country. What followed were the hushed voices, within the country, of the minorities. Since the independence and the inception of our own Republic sovereignty, perhaps, the most discussed issue has been that of minorities and the related ones. The ruling parties have been accused of appeasing one or the other community according to their respective design.

The novels as surveyed above try to answer the questions of the Indian identity in myriad ways. The age in which they are written are invariably reflected with undoubted deliberations on the various aspects of India. For instance, writers of pre - independence days had a different set of themes and projections to make. Whereas, the post-independence writers defy all canons and masters to be imitated by
would-be authors of novel. However, the country, which emerges from these works, is quintessentially a tangible, touchable, perceptible, discernible and unmistakably India, with all its follies and foibles, virtues and wisdom intact and as represented by their respective authors.

5.4 Check your Progress

1. How did the novel change its direction during the independence movement struggle?

2. Name few Bengali writers who have led the Indian reception of the novel form.

3. How are the masses depicted in the early Indian fiction in English?

4. What were the subject matters of Indian novelists before and after independence?

5. Name some writers with socialistic concerns.

6. Comment on the experimentation of the Indian novelists writing in English, of the eighties and nineties.

7. Name some writers whose works vociferated the pangs of the division among castes and countries.
5.5 Conclusion

This chapter enables us to know that when one surveys the history of the evolution of the Indian English prose works; we realize that Indians have mastered the alien language, English with perfection. It was in an infant stage during the pre-independence stage but now it has grown up. Indian English Literature unlike the European literatures did not begin with poetry but with the political writings of the great political philosophers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. At the same time, we find a variety of themes prevalent both in the pre and past independence period. There has been much experimentation in the past and they are ongoing still. Many writers have bejeweled the Indian English Literature with prestigious awards like Booker Prize. Indian English Literature is widely acclaimed and popular with the readers all over the world.

The next chapter deals with one of the pioneering Indian English writers, Raja Rao with reference to his novel, Kanthapura.

5.6 Summary

The Indian English fiction owes its origin to the writers of the pre-independence period. The credit of introducing Indians to English goes to Lord Macaulay. The Indian value of cultural assimilation was applied to English language. With English education, Indians got acquainted with the subtleties of English language and it became a part of their intellectual as well as emotional make-up.

The pre-independence period fiction was limited to political writings focused on motivating people and creating awareness for the Indian freedom struggle. Some great minds like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Surendranath Banerjee, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi etc wrote enlightening prose for the Indians. The prose of this period had themes like nationalism, nature, Indian culture, love etc.

Post-independence brought in a dawn of a new era of disillusionment and identity crisis. The promises of a bright future of India and the bitter experience of partition had made life miserable. A new elite middle class had come into existence bringing in a quest for identity as Indians and as humans. Diaspora and cultural rootlessness had its own problems. These themes gave birth to the new techniques and experimentation in fiction. The short story, as a form of literature
had lost its luster in the pre-independence Indian English Literature. As far as fiction is concerned, Indian English Literature reached new heights in experimentation, variety of themes and expression. Indian English writers have won prestigious awards like the Brooker prize etc and is acknowledged worldwide as a form of English literature. It has its own class of admirers and readers today who appreciate and criticize the Indian English Literature.

**Answers to check your progress**

5.2

1. Raja Ram Mohan Roy urged his fellow Indians to embrace European civilization through the medium of the English language and literature, English ideas and institutions.

2. The novels published from the eighteen sixties up to the end of the nineteenth century were written by the writers belonging to the Presidencies of Bengal and Madras. Most of these novels are on the social and few on the historical issues and for their models they drew upon eighteenth and nineteenth century British fiction, especially that of Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding and Walter Scott.

3. Raja Mohan Roy is regarded as a great Indian master of English prose. His English works are mostly journalistic essays which appeared in his own weekly papers. The essays were on Vedanta, to uphold the quintessence of Hindu religion, on Christianity, on social reforms particularly the need to restore self-respect and dignity of Hindu women as individuals, on political issues etc.

4. The causes of the development of the Indian English prose were:
   a) The desire to re-discover the Indian past
   b) The desire to be aware of the problems of the day.

5. Vivekananda stressed the essential unity of all religions and gave an exposition of Vedanta. He preached that India had to rediscover her true religion and rid herself of superstition and meaningless orthodoxy and also European materialism. He drew analogies from science when he spoke and exhorted his countrymen to attain union with the Divine.

6. Gopal Krishna Gokhale's prodigious memory, patient industry, careful preparation, balanced and fair presentation, sweet
reasonableness in argument and sonorous voice made him an outstanding speaker. His use of English was appreciated for precision and is free from magniloquence.

7. The Indian consciousness under the leadership of Gandhi with a look turned to the present was consolidated because of the following factors:

1. The participation of the Indian women in the freedom struggle. Gandhi was instrumental in underscoring women's emancipation.
2. The rise of a strong youth movement in response to the call of Gandhi for freedom struggle.
3. Gandhi's championing of the cause of the untouchables, called 'harijans', to be brought into the mainstream of Indian ethos.
4. The rapid development of Indian industries which led to the Marxian ideology influencing Indian intellectuals.

8. The themes of the Indian English novel from 1920 to 1947 were the ordeal of the freedom struggle, East-West relationship, the communal problem and the plight of the untouchables, the landless poor, the economically exploited and the oppressed.

9. Mahatma Gandhi's English writings fall in three periods:

1. The early London period when he wrote essays on subjects like Indian vegetarianism, foods of India, some Indian festivals.
2. The South African period when he showed himself good at argumentative prose, campaigning for the cause of the South African Indians.
3. The period in India when he returned from South Africa and started two journals 'Young India' and 'Harijan'.

10. Many faces of Nehru's complex personality are revealed in his Autobiography - his scientific outlook, his aversion to organized religion, his admiration for Marxism and his nationalism. The autobiography also reveals Nehru's emotional and imaginative nature and his aesthetic sense. Nehru's sincerity, objectivity and his capacity for self-analysis are also evident. The autobiography is also a record of the eventful course of the Indian history for over a generation and presents many pen-portraits of people which reveal Nehru's shrewd understanding of human nature, his ability to use small and concrete details and interesting anecdotes and his
judicious mixture of irony and sympathy.

11. The term "modern" in the post-independence era implies two basic characteristics:

1. A fine awareness of isolation from the contemporary social scene.
2. A strong awareness of relationship with the changing moral scene.

12. The Indian English writers after independence have sought the ideal of humanism in their writings - they write of people and for the people, not the faceless "masses" or abstract crowds but the real person as an individual. So the modern Indian writer owes his art to his individualized experience.

13. As a novelist, Anita Desai is more interested in the interior landscape of the mind than in the political and social realities. Her protagonists are generally women who, though they have reached different stages in life, from school girl to grandmother, are all fragile introverts “trapped in their own skins.” They seem to be alienated from their family and their surroundings and the reader feels that the women protagonists are the victims of obsession.

5.3

1. The autobiography, My Experiments with Truth is one of the imperishable classics of our time. In this autobiographical record, described in candid detail the events and circumstances of his life from birth to the launching of the non-cooperation movement in India in 1920.

2. In some novels, Gandhian thoughts and feelings are there and R.K. Narayan made Gandhi a character in Waiting for the Mahatma. The important events in the pre-independent period and the freedom beautifully blended in most of the works of literature. There were a lot of writers, writing on Mahatma, his biographies, memoirs, critical studies and discussions, apart from the immense mass of Gandhi's, own writings and speeches. Mahatma by D.G. Tendulkar, P.A. Wadia's Mahatma Gandhi, E.M.S. Namboodiripad's The Mahatma and the 'the Ism' are the important studies on Gandhi. For the last 60 years, Gandhi has been the subject of biographical and expository studies.
3. The political events with Gandhism as the main plank of the freedom struggle made Mulk Raj Anand give expression to the political and the social consciousness of the thirties in his novels. Anand may therefore be said to have written in his novels of the people, for the people and as a man of the people and is a writer of the people.

4. As a novelist, Anand reveals his skill in creating living characters and a keen sense of actuality. He generally presents his characters with a lively curiosity and a deep compassion. The titles of his novels Untouchable, Coolie and Two leaves and a Bud emphasize the universal as against the particular. So Anand makes the individual assert his uniqueness and yet symbolize the class or the universal. He is ruthlessly realistic in depicting the social scene and underscoring his indignation at social evils and strong humanitarianism.

5. Kanthapura is the finest evocation of the Gandhian age in the Indian English fiction. It is the story of a small South Indian village, Kanthapura, which is caught in the thick storm of the freedom struggle of the 1930s and in the end the village is so transformed that there is “neither man nor mosquito” left in it. On the one hand, Raja Rao gives a realistic picture of life in an Indian village and the impact of Mahatma Gandhi’s political and religious ideology. On the other hand, he reveals his interest in history, folk-memory, metaphysics and racial self-consciousness. He makes the reader see the reality as symbolic of the higher reality. Raja Rao’s purpose is to make the readers see the conflict between the villagers and the British capitalists and imperialists as a conflict of people and principles, not of individuals.

6. R. K. Narayan is essentially a humorous writer interested in the lower middle classes of South India, in a world relatively free from the terrible privations and agonies, political conflicts and economic problems. Narayan sees South India as a fundamentally conservative Hindu society changing under the impact of the West, industrialism, modern ideas. Narayan has written about ten novels set in the imaginary South Indian town he calls ‘Malgudi’.

7. Bhabhani Bhattacharya’s So Many Hungers (1947) is set against the background of the ‘Quit India’ movement and the Bengal famine of the early forties. The novel deals with the theme of
exploitation - political, economic and social. The 'so many hungers' of the title are those of the political freedom (in the case of India); for the imperial expansion (in the case of the axis powers); for money (in the case of the capitalists who create an artificial food scarcity by hoarding rice), for food (in the case of the starved Bengali poor); for sex (in the case of sex-starved soldiers and those who frequent the Calcutta brothels); for the human dignity and self-respect and the hunger as a spiritual weapon employed by the freedom-fighters who go on a hunger strike in jail, 'Devata' even undertaking a fast unto death.

8. Bhattacharya's He Who Rides a Tiger tells the story of Kalo, a poor blacksmith, who, jailed for stealing a bunch of bananas (the magistrate's question to him is "Why did you have to live?") vows revenge on society. He poses as a holy Brahmin, who has been vouchsafed the miraculous vision of a Siva idol and thrives on the fraud, until he discovers the age-old truth that he cannot dismount the tiger of his own creation without ruining himself; but he must dismount in the interest of mental peace.

9. Manohar Malgonkar is a realist, who believes that art has no purpose to serve except pure entertainment. Malgonkar's is a male-dominated world in which women seem to be little more than instruments of masculine pleasure. Malgonkar's novels are neatly constructed and entertainingly told narratives which, however, present a rather limited view of life and human nature seen through the eyes of a hard-boiled man of the world for whom there is little to admire and respect in human nature.

10. Balachandra Rajan illustrates in his first novel, The Dark Dancer (1959), Krishnan, a South Indian youth, who on his return from England to post-Partition India, finds himself torn between his love for the British Cynthia and his loyalty to Kamala his wife, the novelist's intention appears to be to pose the problem of East-West confrontation in terms of the protagonist's quest for identity.

11. G. V. Desani's All About H. Hatterr is a novel extremely complex both in the theme and technique. It is at once a diverting autobiography of a Eurasian, who is as avid for experience as he is incapable of learning from it; the story of the hero's spiritual quest for understanding the meaning of life; a social chronicle revealing aspects of White, Eurasian and Indian character. It is a triumphant
experiment in blending Western and Indian narrative forms, and an astonishing exhibition of a seemingly unlimited stylistic virtuosity.

12. The Strange Case of Billy Biswas (1971) presents a protagonist alienated from the higher middle-class society in which he is born and brought up and in which he is compelled to live though he finds in himself an over-powering urge to march to a different drum together. Right from his adolescence Billy has been conscious of an 'urkraft' - 'a great force - a primitive force' within himself, which continues to register its presence time and again. His higher training in anthropology in the USA accentuates this consciousness further. After his return to India, marriage and a secure teaching job in a major University failed to stifle the nagging, strident primitive voice within and Billy runs away during an anthropological survey expedition to join a primitive tribe, where he is soon accepted as an incarnation of a legendary ancient king.

13. Vikram Seth's novel, The Golden Gate (1986), is indeed a novel in verse about the lives of a number of young professionals in San Francisco. The novel is written entirely in rhyming tetrameter sonnets after the style of Charles Johnston's 1977 translation of Aleksandr Pushkin's Eugene Onegin. The verse novel received wide acclaim and achieved healthy sales.

14. Kamala Markandaya's fiction has a broad range and offers a great variety of characters and setting though her quintessential themes are few viz East-West encounter and women in different life roles. The East-West encounter takes two forms:

1. A direct relationship between the Indian and British characters

2. The impact of the modern urban culture brought in by the British rule on the traditional Indian life.

15. The message of Markandaya's works is that India should confidently pursue her own path holding fast to her traditional values and using methods appropriate to her culture. It is true that while the novelist recognizes the evils and deficiencies in the Indian life and society and warns her country men against a slavish imitation of the West, she does not offer any ready-made solutions to the many problems facing the country. In religion, she should be proud of her great legacy and her constant aim should be the attainment of the purity, equipoise and altruism.
16. Some women novelists of the fifties, sixties, seventies and eighties are:


17. Mulk Raj Anand's short stories are wide-ranging in mood and tone. First, there are stories of 'lyric awareness' (to use his own phrase). Another prominent group is that of the stories of strong social awareness revealing Anand's acute understanding of the complex social forces at work in the modern India. The range and variety of Anand's short stories are evinced not only in mood, tone and spirit but also in locale and characters, form and style. The forms Anand draws upon are the fable, the parable, the folk-tale, the narrative and sometimes even the well-made story and his style can be in turn lyrical and satirical, light-hearted and indignant.

5.4

1. It is only after the nationalistic stirrings during the independence struggle gained momentum in India that the novel changed its direction and attention from romances, history, sociology and culture to politics revealing a new kind and pattern of awareness and relationship of the individual with the specific of the milieu.

2. Bengal led the Indian reception of the novel form and its use for creative endeavors with its writers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay, Bibhuti Bhushan, Naini Bhaumik and Manoj Basu among others.

3. The early Indian fiction in English depicts the world which is ruled,
not by individuals or kings but by masses. The heroism in their works depicted the movement of masses and crowds in revolution and war gripped by the savagery of Nature in famine and flood. The masses in these works - identifiable with certain groups, cities, towns, slums or colonies - assume the role of the hero or the protagonist.

4. The Indian novel in English thematically before independence preoccupied itself with the subject matters like Indian freedom movement, patriotism, evils of feudalism and the matters of national concern before the Independence and social reforms after independence.

5. The writers with socialistic concerns are Prem Chand, Anand himself, Shivram Karanath, Yashpal, Amrit Lal Nagar, Phaneshwar Nath Renu, Ismat Chughtai, Krishnan Chander, Rajinder Singh Bedi, Qurrutulain Haider, Kamala Markandya, Kamala Das, Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal and Uma Vasudeva.

6. The Golden Gate by Vikram Seth explores new avenues of craftsmanship and technical excellence, and Shobha De and Firdaus Kanga experiment with heretofore unexplored and even prohibited themes. Other contemporary writers like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee and Shashi Deshpande, to name only a few, have also captivated the literary scene around the world with their experimental yet gripping creative endeavors of fiction.

7. In fiction, especially, Bhishma Sahani’s Tamas, Rahi Masum Raza’s Aadha Gaon, Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan and Sadat Hasan Manto’s various works, among others, adequately tell the stories of the dissection of the country and show the effect of the divide and rule policy of the Britishers.

**Field work**

Read some prose works of the fiction writers we have examined in this chapter and try to critically analyze them on the basis of this background chapter.
Chapter 6

Raj Rao - Kanthapura

About the Author, Raja Rao

Raja Rao was born in 1909 in the village of Hassana, in Mysore in a very old South Indian Brahmin family. He lived in France from 1928 to 1939, returned to India on the outbreak of World War II in 1940 and again went to France in 1946 and lived there till 1956. It was in France, thousands of miles away from India that his first novel Kanthapura (1938) was written. His love for Indian culture and philosophy colors his second novel The Serpent and the Rope (1960). He accepted Swami Atmanand, the great Vedantic scholar as his guide and mentor. So the quest for a 'Guru' is an ever-recurring theme in his novels. He spent some months in 1942 in Gandhiji's 'Ashram' and some time at Mahakal Temple at Ujjain. In 1950 he visited USA and was fascinated by American culture and way of life. He studied avidly the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman and was a great admirer of these writers because they too were deeply interested in Indian philosophy particularly Vedantic philosophy. He worked as a visiting philosopher, lecturing at various American universities and expounding Hindu philosophy to American students. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his The Serpent and the Rope which has been called the best Indo-Anglian novel ever written. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Government of India.
Summary of the novel Kanthapura

This is the first novel of Raja Rao and in many ways his most perfect and satisfying work. It was written in France thousands of miles away from India and yet it gives a most graphic, vivid and realistic account of the Gandhian freedom struggle in the 1930s and its impact on the masses of India.

The time of action is 1930 and the scene of action is Kanthapura, a typical South Indian village on the slopes of the Western Ghats. Moorthy, the central figure, is a young man educated in the city. He is a staunch Gandhi man and the Gandhian Civil Disobedience movement comes to this remote secluded village when Moorthy comes from the city with the message of the Mahatma. He goes from door to door even in the Pariah quarter of the village and explains to the villagers the significance of Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle for independence. He inspires them to take to charka - spinning and weaving their own cloth. Soon the Congress Committee is formed in Kanthapura. Publicity material is brought from the city and freely circulated in the village. A volunteer corps is formed and the volunteers are trained and educated as so that they may remain non - violent in the face of government repression. In this task of organizing the freedom struggle in Kanthapura, he is helped by Ratna, a young lady, of progressive and enlightened views and Patel Range Gowda, the Sardar Patel of the village.

The Red - man's Government, on its part, takes prompt steps to counter the moves of the Gandhi - men and to contain the movement. Policeman, Bade Khan, is posted in the village and he is actively helped and supported by Bhatta, the Brahmin. Bhatta enlists the support of a Swami in the city, who seems to be a powerful religious authority and wields much influence on the ignorant people of the village. He threatens to excommunicate all those who fraternize with the Pariahs. Moorthy is actually ex - communicated and a few desert him but on the whole, the people remain undaunted and firm in their support to the Gandhi movement. Reports regarding the Dandi march of the Mahatma to break the Salt Law and the enthusiasm it had evoked throughout the country, reach the village and do much to boost the public morale.
Soon there are satyagrahas and picketing. The villagers under the leadership of Moorthy offer Satyagraha outside the toddy plantation. There is police lathi-charge and many are wounded and hurt seriously. A large number of people are arrested and sent to jail. This is followed by the picketing of the toddy booth outside the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Government repression is even more ruthless this time. Even women, children and old men are not spared. The suffering of the fellow-villagers touches the heart of the workers of the Skeffington Coffee Estate and they too join their suffering brethren. The atmosphere resounds with shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai". Even larger numbers are arrested. Moorthy is also arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In his absence Ratna looks after the Congress-work in the village. Women are organized and trained.

Then comes the no-tax campaign. The people are directed not to pay land revenue to the unjust Red men. They should remain peaceful and non-violent even if their fields, crops, cattle and houses are auctioned and occupied. They remain non-violent in the beginning but soon violence breaks out. Government is ruthless in its repression. There are merciless lathi-charges and even shootings. The atmosphere resounds with shrieking and crying as well as with shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai".

The villagers put up a brave resistance but ultimately they are compelled to flee. Their morale is broken. They have to leave Kanthapura, trudge along for miles over unknown territory and finally find shelter in a remote village. They have been defeated but in their very defeat lay their victory. Their brave resistance has given a jolt to the government and as such jolts were being administered all over the country, the British government was bound to be shaken and overthrown in the course of time. It was so over-thrown in 1947; and the British were forced to withdraw. The heroic struggle of the people of Kanthapura is thus a milestone in India's march towards independence.
6.0 Objectives

Friends, in this chapter we will study a classic novel from Indian English Literature i.e. Raja Rao's Kanthapura. Studying this chapter will enable you to discuss

- The pre-independence times.
- The freedom movement all over the nation.
- The role of Gandhi and his influence on the masses.

6.1 Introduction

Friends, in the last chapter, we have studied the history of the Indian English Prose. In this chapter we are going to examine critically Raja...
Rao's novel Kanthapura. It describes the simple rustic life of a South Indian village, Kanthapura. The whirlwind of Gandhian freedom struggle reaches Kanthapura and the village enthusiastically participates in the movement. The novel describes the impact of the movement on the masses and its aftermath.

6.2 Its Historical Background

Kanthapura is a novel dealing with the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on a remote South Indian village of that name and what happens in Kanthapura was happening all over India in those stirring years from 1919 to 1931 of the Gandhian non-violent, non-co-operation movement for the independence of the country. Gandhi does not make a personal appearance in the novel but he is constantly present in the background and at every step there are references to important events of the day such as the historic Dandi March and the breaking of the Salt Law. Hence for the better understanding of the novel it is essential to form a clear idea of the important political and social events connected with the Indian freedom struggle.

India's struggle for independence from the colonial rule of the British goes back to the war of 1857 which was dismissed by the Britishers as a mere mutiny. The battle for India's freedom continued to be fought on the social and economic fronts. Social reformers worked ceaselessly for the eradication of social evils like child-marriage, Sati, untouchability, 'purdha' system and the exploitation and ill-treatment of widows. They waged a constant war against illiteracy, superstition, blind faith and orthodoxy. They highlighted the grinding poverty of the Indian masses that were being rendered poorer as a result of the economic exploitation on the part of their foreign rulers.

In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded by an Englishman, A. O. Hume. Indians like Surendra Nath Banerjee, Feroze Shah Mehta, Dadabhai Nowrosjee and many others voiced the Indian demand for 'home rule'. These leaders were moderate in their outlook as they were aware of the good which their contact with the Britishers had done to them in bringing about a political and cultural regeneration in the country. The division in the rank and file of the party was perceptible at the Surat Session of the Congress in
1907. The Extremists led by Tilak assailed the Moderates and the session broke up in confusion. The Congress remained under the leadership of the Moderates from 1907 to 1917.

Indian masses are deeply religious and so religion was freely exploited by Indian patriots all through the freedom struggle. The religious sentiments of the rural folk were fully exploited by Tilak by introducing Ganesh festival and Shivaji Jayanti festivals in Maharashtra and instilling in them courage, patriotism, discipline and unity. Athletic performances, patriotic and religious songs, kathas and ballads were recited on a large scale, resulting in a sense of pride in the glorious and worthy past of India. It may be mentioned that religion is used in this very way in the novel. There were recitals of Kathas and holding of Harikathas and festivals all over the nation. It was under the guise of a procession of Ganapati that the people of Kanthapura try to make good their escape. Religion played an important part in the Indian struggle for independence and so it does in the novel.

It was the arrival of Gandhi from South Africa which infused a new life and vitality into the Indian struggle for independence. He had already acquired considerable experience in the use of non-violence and non-co-operation as a political weapons but it was in India that he perfected his technique and used it with success. During the war years 1914 - 1918, he made a forceful plea for extending all possible help to the British in the hope that after the war some measure of autonomy would be granted to the Indian people. When the war was over, the thankless British government did not fulfill the promises made to the Indian leaders but brought in the notorious Rowlatt Act, 1919. The result was that Mahatma Gandhi gave the clarion call for Civil Disobedience. There was an upsurge of Indian nationalism and patriotism such as had never been witnessed before. Public meetings were organized all over the country and leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Gopal Krishna Gokhale etc freely voiced the demand for independence. As public enthusiasm mounted, government repression also increased till there the tragedy of the Jallianwala Bagh was enacted on 13th April, 1919, which sent a wave of horror throughout the country. There were signs of increasing violence resulting in unprecedented violence of Chouri-Chaura. Gandhi was shocked, regarded it as a personal failure and suspended the movement.
Gandhi continued to prepare the nation for the prolonged struggle which lay ahead before independence could be gained. He aimed at the total involvement of all sections of the Indian people and so launched a comprehensive programme of economic, social and religious uplift and emancipation of the Indian people. His programme of action was fourfold:

a) Spinning of the charkha, weaving of one's own cloth and boycott of foreign clothes

b) Eradication of untouchability and other social evils like the purdah system so that women and the so-called lower castes may play their part in the freedom struggle.

c) Village upliftment, eradication of poverty, illiteracy, casteism etc

d) Hindu-Muslim unity.

In the novel Moorthy places this very Gandhian program of action before the people of Kanthapura. Gandhi's stress was on truth and non-violence and this message was carried to the remote parts of the country by devoted Congress workers. Congress Committees were formed in every nook and corner of the country and Satyagrahis were trained to carry out the programme at the call of the Mahatma.

The second phase of the Gandhian Civil Disobedience began in 1929. This time the movement was more militant though Gandhi still insisted on non-violence. There were meetings and Satyagrahas all over the country. There were picketings and boycotts. Then Gandhi undertook his historic march to Dandi beach to prepare salt there and thus break the unjust and anti-people Salt Law. He started with a few followers but thousands and thousands joined him on the way. Raja Rao has succeeded in capturing the thrills and sensations as well as the brutality and suffering of those tumultuous days when the whole nation was enthused with patriotism during the historic Dandi March.

The British government was shaken. Gandhi was invited to England for talks. He accepted the invitation and went for the Round Table Conference dressed in his usual loin cloth and the result was the well-known Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The pact left the Indian people dissatisfied. Gandhi did two things in 1930: he made the British people aware that they had cruelly subjugated India and he gave Indians the conviction that they could, by lifting their heads and straightening their spines, lift the yoke from their shoulders. The British beat the Indians.
with batons and rifle - butts. The Indians neither cringed nor complained nor retreated. This made England powerless and India invincible. It is exactly such a psychological victory which the people of Kanthapura enjoy in the moment of their defeat. It was this very Gandhi - Irwin Pact which paved the way for the establishment of the Indian Federation and the formation of Congress Ministries both at the Centre and the States. It was soon clear that the British Government was on the way out and independence was round the corner. The Indian people - like the people of Kanthapura - had to pass through an ordeal of fire but as Gandhi himself taught, "Swaraja obtained without sacrifice never endures."

### 6.2 Check your progress

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. **Which years of Gandhian movement are covered in the novel Kanthapura?**

   

2. **Why is it important to know about the important political and social events related to the Indian freedom struggle?**

   

3. **What were the social reformers working for?**

   

4. **What was the result of the economic exploitation by the foreign rulers?**

   

5. **Who and when was the Indian National Congress formed?**

   

6. **Who voiced the Indian demand for ‘home rule’?**

   

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6.3 Characterization in Kanthapura

1. Moorthy, the Village Gandhi: Moorthy or Moorthappa is an educated young man of Kanthapura. It is he who organizes the work of the Congress in the village and hence he is the central figure in the novel. He has nothing heroic about him nor can he be called the hero of the novel. He is an ordinary young man, with common human weaknesses. He is one of those thousands of young men who were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi to give up their studies, risk the wrath of the government and become fighters for the cause of their motherland.

   He is considerate and respectful is obvious from the affectionate
way in which he is referred to by the people of Kanthapura. He is called "Corner - House Moorthy", "our Moorthy". Moorthy who has gone through life "like a noble cow, quiet, generous, deferent, Brahminic and is a very prince." He is considered to be honest like an elephant and is spoken of as "our Gandhi", "the Saint of our Village". It seems that the impact of Gandhi's personality has transformed him from a common village lad, into a young man capable of leadership and the self - sacrifice and devotion which leadership entails. Of course, he has never come into personal contact with Gandhi. Moorthy was in college when he felt the full force of Gandhi and he walked out of it, a Gandhi - man. From the time we meet him in the beginning of the novel to the very end of the book, Moorthy is perched at the top in his ascetic strength and his capacity for action comes as a surprise in a visionary ascetic strength and in a visionary like Moorthy.

There is, no doubt, the novelist has endowed him with numerous good qualities of head and heart. He has extraordinary capacity for inspiring the people. On his return from the city, he at once proceeds to organize the Gandhi work in the village. The Gandhian struggle for independence had three strands - political, religious and social (including economic) - and all these strands meet in Moorthy. He works on all these three levels. Religion is the most potent force in Kanthapura and so its action begins with religion. Before there is any mention of Gandhi or Swaraj, there is tremendous religious activity. Starting from an invocation to "Kenchamma, Goddess" to the end of the novel, religion seems to sustain the spirits of the people of Kanthapura. The action begins with the unearthing of a half sunken linga by Moorthy and its consecration. The boys of the village hold a grand feast to celebrate the occasion. One thing leads to another. Soon they observed Sankara Jayanthi, Sankara Vijaya etc. Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is then invited to the village, Harikathas are held every evening and these Harikathas serve as a clock for Gandhi propaganda. The Harikatha man is arrested and taken away and so the Gandhi movement comes to the village.

It is Moorthy who organizes the Gandhi - work in the village and he shows a rare devotion and insight for a village youth. He goes from door to door carrying the message of Mahatma Gandhi. It is he who explains the economy of the Khaddi and the importance of the
charkha to the ignorant and superstition - ridden women of the village and persuades them to take to spinning despite stiff opposition from all quarters. It is he who forms the Congress Committee in the village and is unanimously elected as its President. Even Range Gowda, the Patel, 'the Tiger' of the village, is deferential to him and calls him 'learned master'. He has full confidence in him, uses all his authority and prestige in his favour and permits him to have his way in everything. The women too must be enthused and so Moorthy sets about organizing them. A Women Volunteer Corps is thus formed with Ratna as the head of this organization of Swayam Sevikas or Sevis. Like Gandhi, Moorthy, too, undertakes a fast, organizes picketings and Satyagrahas, courts arrest and is sent to jail. Throughout, he is shown to be an ideal Gandhite.

One of the important planks of the Gandhian movement was the eradication of untouchability. Moorthy implements this programme and goes in the Pariah quarter from one college to another exhorting the women to take to spinning in their spare time. He is excommunicated by the Swami for this Pariah business and his aged mother dies of grief and shock at this disgrace. Still he persists in his mission but after all he is a human being, with common human weaknesses, and this Pariah business is too much even for him. He hesitates and falters and thus shows that he is made of the same common clay.

Moorthy is a creature of flesh and blood with ordinary human weaknesses. He is no hero but an average young man, who like thousands others in those days, were enthused by Gandhi to come out of their shells and do their best for their motherland.

2. Ratna, the Progressive Widow

Ratna is a young widow. She became a widow when she was hardly fifteen years of age. She is attractive and charming as is clear from the attention which Moorthy pays to her. There is just a hint of a love - affair between the two. However their love and liking for each other has not been properly developed and hence the novel lacks in love - interest.

Ratna is an young educated woman of progressive views. Though she is a widow she does not dress and live in a conventional style of a widow. She wears bangles; colored sarees (and not the white dhoti of a widow) uses the kumkum mark on her forehead and parts her hair
like a concubine, as Waterfall Venkamma puts it. She is also bold and witty in conversation and can hold her own against heavy odds. She is much criticized for her unconventional ways but she does not care for such criticism. She chooses her own path and sticks to it with firmness and determination.

She takes keen interest in the Gandhian movement and is a source of inspiration and help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is arrested, she conducts the Harikathas. After Rangamma's death, she reads out the newspapers and other publicity material of the Congress for the benefit of the villagers. When Moorthy is arrested, she carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organizes the women volunteer corps and imparts to the Sevikas the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of government repression and police action. She is dishonored, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence. She suffers everything patiently and unflinchingly. As the narrator of the story tells us, she comes out of jail a changed person, more humble and more courteous to her elders but more matured and determined. When Gandhi goes to England, for the Round Table Conference, reaches a settlement with the Red-man's Government and the movement is withdrawn, Ratna is disappointed like countless other freedom fighters in India. She goes over to Bombay and through her letters we learn of her great admiration for Nehru, "the equal distributionist".

Ratna stands for the educated, progressive womanhood of India whom Gandhi had enthused with his own ideals and who came out of their homes in their thousands to fight shoulder to shoulder with their men folk for the freedom of their motherland. She is the female counterpart of Moorthy.

3. Patel Range Gowda, the Tiger of the Village

Range Gowda is the Patel of Kanthapura and as such a government servant. He, too, is a Gandhi man and a staunch supporter of Moorthy. He throws all his weight and authority in his favor and is of a considerable help to him in organizing the Congress work in Kanthapura.

He is a man of forceful, commanding personality and wields considerable power and authority in the village because of his forceful personality and determination he is known as the 'Tiger' of the village.
Nobody dares to oppose him or disobey his orders. Nothing can be done in the village without Range Gowda. He is also kindly, sympathetic and generous and does his best to help the poor, the needy and the suffering of the village.

This powerful man uses all his authority and influence in support of Moorthy and his cause. He realizes the worth and integrity of the young Gandhite and is deferential to him. When Moorthy approaches him for help he says, "Do what you like, learned master. You know things better than I do and I know you are not a man to spit on our confidence in you. If you think I should become a member of Congress, let me be a member of the Congress."

Range Gowda speaks with the voice of authority and speaks with forthrightness that no self-respecting man can withhold his cooperation. He says, "If you are the sons of your father, stand up and do what this learned boy says." And Range Gowda himself proposes Moorthy for the Presidentship of the Village Panchayat.

When Bade Khan, the policeman, approaches him and requests him to arrange a house for him, he treats him with scant respect.

He explains to the people the significance of spinning and weaving, of non-violence and of the value and meaning of independence. During Moorthy's period of imprisonment, he boosts the morale of the people, guides and encourages them and sees to it that none falters and falls away. Without his active help and cooperation, Moorthy would not have been so successful in his mission. He alone of the Kanthapurians ever returns to Kanthapura. It is he who brings to them news from Kanthapura. In this way he serves to round up the novel and it is in the fitness of things that it is with his appearance and with his words that the novel comes to an end. His dramatic appearance is like the fall of the curtain after the catastrophe.

4. **Bhatta, the First Brahmin**

Bhatta, the first Brahmin, is the opposite of Moorthy - the agent of the British government, in league with the Swami in the city and works ceaselessly to frustrate and defeat the Gandhi movement. If at all there is any villain in the novel, it is he.

Bhatta began life with a loin cloth at his waist and a copper pot in his hand but went on adding several acres of the peasants' lands to his own domain. Today Bhatta means money and money means
Bhatta and he charges ten percent interest and has gone upto twenty percent interest even. The novelist, who has a higher conception of the avocation of the Brahmin, the type of whom he sees in men like Ramakrishnayya of the older generation and Moorthy, of the coming generation, now has witnessed his degradation in Bhatta - and yet he is the first Brahmin of Kanthapura.

Bhatta is very learned in his art. Bhatta was always the first to reach the home of his host on a ceremonial occasion, say a death anniversary. He could make perfect grass rings and such leaf cups. It was also pleasant to hear him recite the 'Gita'. Then would begin the ceremony and such was Bhatta's skill that it would be over in the twinkling of the eye.

Bhatta is an unworthy husband, too, with his lack of consideration for his wife at home. On the days he dines out, his poor wife has only dal - soup and rice. Bhatta has no thought of her. His wife dies and soon this middle - aged, pot - bellied priest marries a girl of twelve and half years old. There is dowry too: A thousand rupees cash and five acres of wet land and a real seven days marriage.

Besides his business contracts, he owed to government patronage. He was also the Election agent and got two thousand for it. It is he who is responsible for the excommunication of Moorthy. It is he who keeps the Swami in the city informed of the happenings in the village, incites the people against Moorthy and other Gandhites and does his best to sabotage the movement. He sides with Bade Khan, sets afloat the rumors regarding Moorthy's excommunication and so hastens the death of his mother. Ultimately, he goes to Kashi to wash off his sins. Through him the novelist has exposed the greed and gluttony of the Brahmins as well as the crooked ways of those who worked as stooges of the imperial rulers of the country.

However, even Bhatta has been humanized. He is no unredeemed monster. He too has something good in him. He has his moments of magnanimity too. Someone said, "Hadn't he sent our Fig - tree House Ramu to the city for studies?" Bhatta said, "If you bring a name to Kanthapura - that is my only recompense. And if by Kenchamma's grace you get rich and become a Collector, you will think of this poor Bhatta and send him the money - with no interest, of course, my son, for I have given it in the name of God. If not, may the Gods keep you safe and fit."

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5. Bade Khan, the Policeman

Bade Khan, the Policeman, with his long beard, is a symbol of the British Raj. He is the symbol of the British presence in Kanthapura. It is his duty to maintain law and order and put down the Gandhi movement and it may be said to his credit that he performs his duty loyally and sincerely. The Gandhites may consider him a villain but judged impartially, he is a loyal Government servant performing his duty in every circumstance. He may be an instrument of the foreign Government but it would be wrong to dismiss him as a heartless monster of wickedness.

On arriving at Kanthapura, the initial difficulty he has to face is that of accommodation. Being a Muslim, he finds it difficult to find a house in the village. He goes to the Skeffington Coffee Estate, where a hut is allocated to him in which he settles down with one of the Pariah women.

Once settled comfortably, he moves about the villagesecretively watching the people, collecting information and passing it on to the city authorities. Very soon he is in league with Bhatta and others who are opposed to the Gandhi movement. When Moorthy goes to meet the workers on the Coffee Estate, it is he who keeps watch and rains lathi blows on him and his supporters, as he approaches the gate of the Estate.

In short, he is one of those unpatriotic Indians, who made it possible for the British to rule India for such a long time.

6. The White Owner of the Skeffington Coffee Estate

The Skeffington Coffee Estate is a very large coffee plantation at a stone's throw from Kanthapura. It is owned by a white man, who is popularly known as the "Hunter Sahib" because he always carries a hunter or whip in his hand and freely uses it on all those workers on his estate who neglect their duty. He is a symbol of the imperialist rulers of India who exploited Indians in various ways.

A large number of workers are needed on the estate and they are recruited by the white owner's Maistri of Steward under false promises. They are brought to the estate from distant parts of Mysore. Promises of attractive wages are made. Visions of happy, comfortable life with practically no work to do are held out to them. It is said that one who enters the gates of the coffee plantation never comes out of it.
The coffee workers are exploited in many ways. They are given wretched one-room huts to live in which they are provided little protection against the rains which are heavy and frequent. No wages are paid - they are deposited on their behalf with the 'Hunter Sahib' and they remain with him. Only the meagerest food is allowed to them. They are made to work from early in the morning till late in the evening, till it is dark. If there is any slackness or if they rest a moment, the Maistri or the Sahib is always there to whip them. There is a worst kind of economic exploitation. The workers are exploited sexually also. If the Sahib takes a fancy to any of their women then she is sent to his house at night or he would even have her, then and there in the plantation.

His character has been humanized by showing the good that is in him. We find that he distributes peppermints and toffees among the children of the workers. The climate is damp and the outbreak of malaria is frequent. When the workers are ill, he goes from hut to hut distributing quinine tablets. It is another matter that the ignorant, superstitious workers don't take the medicine due to their superstitions and hence deaths are frequent. The Sahib does what is best under the circumstances.

7. The Swami

The Swami lives in the city. He remains in the background. Like Mahatma Gandhi he never appears on the scene. He is an orthodox Brahmin, narrow and conservative in his views. He is a traitor to the cause of the freedom of India. He is in the pay of the British government. He has received twelve hundred acres of wet land from the Government. So he is a willing stooge of the Britishers. In league with Bhatta, he does his best to defeat the freedom struggle in Kanthapura. It is he who excommunicates Moorthy for "the Pariah business" and thus is indirectly responsible for the death of his mother who is unable to bear the shock.

8. Advocate Sankar

Sankar, the advocate, is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He believes in his principles of truth and non-violence and tries to follow in his footsteps. He is a true patriot and does his best for the cause of freedom. He wears Khadi and does not go to functions where people come wearing dresses made of foreign cloth. When Gandhi is
arrested and sent to jail, he keeps fast with Gandhi. He believes that fasting is a means of self-purification. It gives him spiritual strength and illumination. He loves truth and does not undertake false cases. Bold and fearless, he is not afraid of the Government and takes up the defence of Moorthy, when he is arrested and tried in the city courts. He is noble, generous and kind-hearted. When his first wife dies, he does not marry a second time. He remembers his wife and regards it a sin to marry again.

9. Waterfall Venkamma

Like a waterfall, she is always shedding tears and roaring. She rails against practically everybody in the novel. She is a woman of a petty, jealous nature. She cannot bear to see others prosperous or successful. There is no end to her spite, jealousy and vindictiveness. She is jealous of Rangamma because she has a much larger house and constantly rails against her. She would like to put lizard poison into her food and thus cause her death.

She is also against Moorthy because he refused to marry her second daughter. She nurses this grudge against him and does her best to have her revenge upon him. Orthodox, conservative and narrow in her views, she has no sympathy with the Gandhi movement. She therefore sides with Bhatta and the Swami. It is she who spreads the rumor that Moorthy is to be excommunicated. In this way, she causes his mother much pain which ultimately derives her to death. She also hates Ratna for her progressive views and constantly hurls abuses at her. She rails and rails against everybody and thus justifies the nick-name the novelist has given to her.

Waterfall Venkamma symbolizes all the pettiness, the jealousy, the triviality and the orthodoxy of Indian village life.

10. Narsamma

She is the old widowed mother of Moorthy. She is orthodox and conservative unable to understand the implications of the Gandhi movement and the noble work in which her son is engaged. She has a great love for her son and has high hopes of a brilliant career for him. Her hopes and dreams are shattered when he joins the freedom movement. She is literally shocked and her feelings are intensely hurt when Moorthy is ex-communicated by the Swami for the "Pariah business".
Being the youngest of her sons, Moorthy is deeply loved by her. Instead of becoming a Sub-Collector as she hopes he would become, she is told that he has frequent intercourse with the Pariahs. This is a terrible blow to her. Excommunication is regarded by her as nothing less than a sin. She is shocked terribly and dies as a result of this shock.

She is good and noble and we love and respect her despite her orthodoxy and lack of sympathy for the freedom movement. She is not wicked and crooked but only orthodox, credulous and a little dull-headed. She is the most pathetic character in the novel.

11. Rangamma

She is one of the few educated women in the village. She reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and others acquainted with the day to day developments elsewhere. Waterfall Venkamma is jealous of her and roars and rails against her day and night. It is from her railings that we learn much about her. She is a childless widow but she has a very big home, much larger than that of Venkamma herself. Her relatives are in the city and visit her frequently. She is of a great help to Moorthy in organizing the Congress work in the village. She is a lady of enlightened views actively involved in the freedom struggle.

6.3 Check your progress

Answer the following questions briefly:

1. Describe Moorthy.

_________________________________________________________________________________

2. How is Moorthy referred to by the people of Kanthapura?

_________________________________________________________________________________

3. Which three strands of Gandhian struggle are found in Moorthy?

_________________________________________________________________________________

4. Which religious occasions are observed by the Kanthapurians?

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<th>Question</th>
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<td>5. How does Moorthy explain the economy of Khadi at Kanthapura?</td>
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<td>6. What did Moorthy do to organize the women in the village for the freedom movement?</td>
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<td>7. Why does Moorthy’s mother die of grief and shock?</td>
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<td>8. Describe Ratna.</td>
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<td>9. Why is Ratna criticized by the villagers?</td>
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<td>10. Comment on Ratna’s contribution to the freedom struggle?</td>
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<td>11. Why is Range Gowda known as the ‘Tiger’ of the village?</td>
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<td>12. How does Range Gowda help Moorthy in organizing the freedom movement in Kanthapura?</td>
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<td>13. Who plays the role of the villain in the novel?</td>
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<td>14. Why is Bhatt a an unworthy husband?</td>
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### 6.4 Significance of the title Kanthapura

The title of the novel should be apt and suggestive. Just as a sign board tells us of the contents of a shop so a good title should indicate the contents of the novel. The title ‘Kanthapura’ is apt and suggestive because the novel is about a South Indian village named Kanthapura.

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15. How does Bhatta create hindrances in the freedom struggle?

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16. What is Bade Khan's duty?

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17. How does Bade Khan collect and pass on information about the village?

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18. Why is the White Man at the Skeffington Estate known as ‘Hunter Sahib’?

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19. How were the Coffee Plantation workers exploited at the Estate?

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20. How is the Sahib humanized?

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21. How is Sankar a staunch follower of Gandhi?

---

22. Why is Venkamma nicknamed ‘Waterfall Venkamma’?

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and if there is any hero in the novel it is the people and the community of the village named Kanthapura.

The novel opens with an account of the situation, the locale, of the village. We are told in the very beginning that Kanthapura is a village in Mysore in the Province of Kara. It is situated in the valley of Himavathy; there it lies "curled up like a child on its mother's lap". This single image makes the village spring into life and the readers are able to visualize it as it lies sheltered and secluded like a child in its mother's lap. It has four and twenty houses in the Brahmin quarter; it has a Pariah - quarter, a Weavers' - quarter and a Sudra - quarter. These socio - economic divisions in a village which has in all sixty or hundred houses, at once strikes one with its novelty. In this way, by telling us of the various quarters into which the village is divided, the novelist has highlighted the fact that the Indian villages are caste - ridden and that there is no free mixing of the people even in the small and limited community of a village.

Having described the village, the novelist comes to the people. There is a Postmaster Suryanarayana with his two - storeyed house. Patwari Nanjundiah who had even put glass - panes to the windows; the thotti - house of pock - marked Sidda, which had a big veranda, large roof and a granary; Waterfall Venkamma, who roared day and night and Zamindar Bhatta, who has gone on adding peasants lands to his own domain; the young, idealistic corner - house Moorthy, who is destined to shake the village out of its complacency and put it on the map of Mysore and India; and the nine - beamed house of Patel Range Gowda, the vigorous peasant chief of the village wedded to the soil from immemorial generations. It is obvious he knows them just as well but if he does not individualize them it is obviously because he doesn't like to crowd his canvas. Thus we are told of the people, their poverty, their ignorance and their petty jealousies. The villagers are depicted in their realistic colors. Their names are made descriptive in nature - it is a typical rural way. For instance: Bent legged Chandrayya, Cardamom - field Ramachandra, Coffee - planter Ramayya, Corner - house Moorthy etc.

The people are ignorant, poor and superstitious. At the same time, they are also deeply religious. They have full faith in Goddess Kenchamma, the presiding deity in the village. Right in the centre of the village is a temple dedicated to Kenchamma, "Great Goddess,
benign one." Kenchamma is the centre of the village, forms the still -
- centre of their lives and makes everything meaningful. Marriage,
- funeral, sickness, death ploughing, harvesting, arrests, release - all
- are watched over by Kenchamma.

The picture of village life is filled up by giving further accounts of the
- grinding poverty, illiteracy and the conflicts and tensions that mark the
- Indian village life. Indeed, there is a constant shifting and ordering of
- material, selection of significant details so that Kanthapura acquires a
- symbolic significance. It becomes a microcosm of the macrocosm,
- one out of the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages.

It is to this remote South Indian village that there comes the Gandhi
- movement through Moorthy and other city boys. It is Moorthy, who
- organizes the Gandhi work in the village. He is indeed life and spirit
- behind the movement in Kanthapura just as Gandhi was the life and
- spirit of the freedom struggle in India. But very soon the people of
- Kanthapura as a whole are actively involved and the novel becomes
- an account of their suffering and their heroic sacrifice. An unequal fight
- it inevitably proves to be, as the Satyagrahis are maimed and broken
- and scattered, and a remnant reaches - after soar trials and
- vicissitudes - another village, Kashipura, beyond the border where
- they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis - Rangamma, Ratna,
- Moorthy - spend an allotted span in jail.

Thus Kanthapura is not a novel dealing with the life and doings of
- any individual hero. It is certainly not the story of Moorthy but of the
- masses of the village, of their suffering, of their exile, of their
- momentary defeat which has in it the seeds of ultimate victory. It ends
- with an account of their life in Kashipura and gives us a sense of
- abiding fulfillment which they have attained. Hence if there is any hero
- in the novel, it is Kanthapura itself and its people.

### 6.4 Check your progress

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Where is Kanthapura located?
   
2. How is Kanthapura divided into various quarters?
6.5 Raja Rao’s use of Mythical Technique

In Kanthapura, Raja Rao has made effective use of the mythical technique used with such success by English writers like T. S. Eliot and James Joyce. The use of the mythical technique means that the past is juxtaposed with the present and in this way the past may serve as a criticism of the present or it may be used to heighten and glorify the present. Raja Rao has used this very technique to glorify the present and to impart to the novel the dignity and status of an epic or Purana. By the use of the mythical technique, the novelist has enriched the texture of his novel and imparted to it a rare expansiveness, elevation and dignity. Just as in a myth some of the chief characters are Gods and other beings larger in power than humanity, in this tale, Moorthy is presented as a figure much above the common run of men. He is a dedicated and selfless soul, who is idealized to the extent of being regarded as a local Mahatma. And of course, there is the real Mahatma Gandhi also, always in the background, though he is nowhere physically present. The village women think of him as the big mountain and of Moorthy as the small mountain.

Past and present are freely mixed up and Gods and Goddesses and heroes and heroines of epics freely jostle with contemporary personalities. Mahatma Gandhi is Rama, the red foreigner or the brown inspector of police who flourishes a lathi and is but a soldier in ten-headed Ravana’s army of occupation and oppression. Nay more: the Satyagrahi in prison is the divine Krishna himself in Kansa’s prison.
The use of the mythical technique is seen at its best in the strange kind of Harikathas recited by Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man. In his Harikatha, the past and the present are juxtaposed and contemporary events and personalities are constantly linked up with Puranic Gods and epic heroes and heroines. One of the Harikathas he recites is about the birth of Gandhi.

The use of the mythical technique makes Gandhi, the invisible God and Moorthy, the invisible avatar. The reign of the Red men become Asuric rule and it is resisted by the Devas, the Satyagrahis. Jayaramachar jumbles with splendid unconcern traditional mythology and contemporaneous politics: Shiva is three-eyed and Swaraj too is three-eyed: self-purification, Hindu-Muslim unity and Khaddar. Gandhi is Shiva himself in human shape: he is engaged in slaying the serpent of foreign rule as the boy Krishna killed the serpent Kaliya.

Bhajans and Harikathas mix religion and politics freely and often purposefully, the reading of the Gita and hand-spinning are elevated into a daily ritual, like Pooja. This juxtaposition of the past and the present, of men and Gods, is kept up throughout the novel upto the very end. Mahatma Gandhi's trip to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference is invested with Puranic significance.

It is the use of the mythical technique that makes Kanthapura a unique novel almost a new species of fiction. In this way, it becomes Gandhian or Gandhi-epic.

6.5 Check your progress
Answer the following questions briefly:

1. How has Raja Rao utilized the mythical technique in the novel?

2. How are the characters in the novel and their activities compared to Gods?

3. How is mythical technique used in Harikathas in the novel?
6.6 Kanthapura as a Gandhi - epic

Kanthapura is a great village novel but it is greater still as a novel depicting the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote and obscure Indian village and what happens in Kanthapura under the impact of the Gandhian non-violent non-cooperation movement was happening all over India, in the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages during those stirring days from 1919 - 1930 when Gandhi transformed the entire nation in a single lifetime into an army of disciplined and non-violent freedom fighters. There were at least three strands in the Gandhian movement - the political, the religious and the social (including economic) and the three have been woven inextricably into the complex story of the regeneration of Kanthapura as a result of the freedom struggle. It is not merely a political novel but a novel concerned as much with the social, religious and economic transformation of the people as with the struggle for political freedom.

Kanthapura, is an obscure, out of the way, slumbering South Indian village. This obscure village, slumbering for centuries, suddenly comes to life thanks to the non-violent, non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi in the twenties. It is in the handling of this theme that the novelist quickens it to activity and thus gives us an insight into the appalling social conditions of our villages as also into the values that have preserved our people against flood, fire, famine and exploitation from within and from without - and more than all, that incomparable manner in which Mahatma Gandhi tapped the deeply religious and spiritual resources of our people living in the remotest parts of India and built up a national movement in one lifetime.

But it is no political novel any more than was Gandhi’s movement a mere political movement and pictures so vividly, truthfully and touchingly the story of the resurgence of India under Gandhi’s leadership: its religious character, its economic and social concerns, its political ideals, precisely in the way Mahatma Gandhi tried to spiritualize politics, the capacity for sacrifice of our people in response
to the call of one like Gandhi - not the spectacular sacrifice of the few chosen ones who later became India's rulers - but the officially unchronicled, little, nameless, unremembered acts of courage and sacrifice of peasants and farm hands, students and lawyers, women and old men, thanks to whom Gandhi's unique experiment gathered momentum and grew into a national movement.

It was Mahatma Gandhi's greatness that he produced hundreds and thousands of little Gandhis throughout the country. To be young was very heaven in those days. The Corner - House Moorthy, our Moorthy, as the villagers called him, was young. Moorthy was in college when he felt the impact of Mahatma Gandhi and he walked out of it, a Gandhi man. There is nothing extraordinary in it though, for in those days hundreds and thousands of young men throughout the country gave up their studies and courted arrest. But about the manner in which Moorthy walked out of the college: he is said to have had, not an actual, firsthand experience of Gandhi by personal contact but a vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting and Moorthy pushing his way through the crowd and joining the band of volunteers and receiving inspiration by a touch of Gandhi's hand. And that very evening Moorthy went out alone and came back to college and walked out of it, for good.

Back in Kanthapura, Moorthy organizes the Mahatma Gandhi - work in the village. The entire novel bristles with action and all that action is centered around Moorthy. He forms the Congress Committee in the village, maintains constant touch with the city Congress Committee and through newspapers and other publicity material keeps the people constantly in touch with events in other parts of the country. It is he who calls the Harikatha man, mixes religion with politics and likens Mahatma Gandhi to Ram and Redman to Ravan and calls Swaraj, the three - eyed. He gives a practical form to the Gandhian programme of Swadeshi and eradication of untouchability by going from door to door even to the Pariah quarters and explaining to the people the economics of the Charkha and Swadeshi. He enthuses the women of the villages to take to charkha - spinning and later on organizes the women voluntary corps. There is considerable opposition from the ignorant, the conservative and the people with vested interests but the opposition is faced with courage and determination and the help of influential people like Range Gowda is enlisted. There is a general
awakening and the atmosphere grows highly charged with emotion and enthusiasm as the news of the Dandi March reaches Kanthapura, of the enthusiastic public support of the miracle that Mahatma Gandhi was performing, reaches like a wild fire at Kanthapura.

Those were tumultuous, stirring times and this atmosphere of tumult, of a national upheaval, under the impact of a single personality, has been successfully captured by the novelist. There are dharnas, picketings and satyagrahas. People, even children and old men are injured and wounded in large numbers. Women, like Ratna, are beaten up and dishonored but their spirit is not crushed. When Moorthy is arrested his place is taken by Ratna and so the movement continues. There is the no - tax campaign and when the people refuse to pay the land revenue, their lands are laid waste and they are compelled to flee the village. In the end it truly becomes a mass movement, the villagers comprising men and women of all the castes and professions and laborers of the Coffee Estate readily meeting the onslaught of the bureaucracy. An unequal fight it inevitably proves to be for the Satyagrahis are maimed and broken and scattered and a remanent reaches - after sore trials and vicissitudes - another village, Kashipura, beyond the border, where they settle down. Some of the Satyagrahis - Rangamma, Ratna, Moorthy- spend an allotted span in jail but the Gandhi - Irwin Pact and the political truce that comes in its wake hasten the release of the Satyagrahis.

Kanthapura has rightly been called a Gandhi - epic for it conveys the very spirit of those stirring days when a single individual in a single life - time could so enthuse the people and so transform the entire nation. The readers feel the charisma of his personality but the great Mahatma himself does never appear on the scene. He remains in the background but his presence is always felt through the transformation he is causing in Kanthapura and in every other village of India, for Kanthapura is but a microcosm of the macrocosm.

It should also be noted that Raja Rao’s presentation of the Gandhian movement is impartial and objective. There is no idealization; both the dark and the bright sides of the picture have been presented. The depiction of the Gandhi movement goes along with the depiction of the petty jealousies and trivialities of village life. If there are Ratna, Rangamma and Patel Range Gowda, there are also Bhatta, Waterfall Venkamma and Bade Khan. Even the character
of Moorthy has not been idealized for he displays the necessary human weaknesses and hesitation in entering a Pariah's hut and tasting the drink offered by him. Throughout the novel, idealization is accompanied by constant disapprovals of this Gandhi-business and Gandhi vagabondage, the cynicism of friends and hostilities - veiled and open - from neighbors - all making for constant vigilance against the dangers of the thesis novel.

In short, Kanthapura is a great work of art presenting realistically, impartially and artistically the impact of the Gandhi movement on the masses of India. It is not a propaganda piece or thesis novel but a work of art characterized by the necessary artistic detachment and impartiality.

### 6.6 Check your progress

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. How Moorthy received inspiration from Gandhi?

2. How is the working of the Congress Committee maintained in the village?

3. How does Moorthy involve the women of the village in the freedom movement?

4. Where do the villagers move at the end of the novel?

5. How is Raja Rao's presentation of the Gandhian movement impartial and objective?
6.7 Elements of poetry, fantasy and lyricism in Kanthapura

One of its distinctive features is the imaginative coloring which is imparted to the ordinary and the commonplace and the known and the familiar is thus made to look unfamiliar and uncommon. The narrator is an old woman with a highly poetic imagination and consequently there is a constant mingling of poetry and politics, constant heightening and transmuting of reality. Everything is seen as colored by her poetic imagination.

A common place, yearly event like the coming of rains in Vaisakh is described in highly poetic terms so that it seems to be something uncommon and unfamiliar. The rain is humanized and its arrival is described in human terms. Equally poetic is the description of Diwali, the festival of lights. The mythopoeic imagination of the narrator is at work and Gods freely jostle with men in her account of the festival. Her essentially romantic imagination heightens, transfigures and irradiates with the divine light of poetry what would be prosaic, matter of fact account of a common, yearly occurrence in the hands of a less gifted artist.

Rangamma, one of the more cultured and educated women of the village, discourses on science in an easy, popular way and the narrators account of her discourse is a curious mixture of science, poetry and fantasy. She lets her imagination go, uses the known and the familiar to illuminate and explain scientific truths till science is poetized and the entire account becomes a curious piece of poetry and fantasy.

The description is vivid and graphic, a poetic and whimsical rendering of reality. The radio becomes the speech that goes across the air; Jagdish Chandra Bose's discovery gets expressed as the plants that weep and Darwin's Theory of Evolution as the monkeys that were the men we have become; of the seventeenth century French scientist's germ theory as worms thin - as - dust that get into your blood and give you dysentery and plague and cholera.

Just as science so also politics is charged with poetry and is transmuted and glorified. There is also the vivid description of the soldiers and coolies being asked to walk over the prostrate Satyagrahis and many of them joining the Satyagrahis instead.
this constant fusion of desperate elements - poetry, fantasy, science, politics etc - that gives Kanthapura its distinctive place in the work of the Indian writers of fiction in English. Raja Rao has poetized the Indo-Anglican novel and imparted to it the intensity and poignancy of a lyric.

6.7 Check your progress
Answer the following questions briefly:
1. Comment on the style of the narrator of the novel.
________________________________________________________________________

2. What does Rangamma discourse on?
________________________________________________________________________

3. How are the various scientific discoveries and inventions interpreted by the villagers?
________________________________________________________________________

4. How is politics charged with poetry?
________________________________________________________________________

6.8 Kanthapura as a fictional concretization of Gandhian Thought

Kanthapura is a great village novel but it is greater still as a novel depicting the impact of the Gandhian freedom struggle on the life of a remote and obscure Indian village and what happens in Kanthapura under the impact of the Gandhian non-violent, non-cooperation movement, was happening all over India, in the lakhs and lakhs of Indian villages during those stirring days from 1919 - 1930. Mahatma Gandhi had transformed the entire nation in a single lifetime into an army of disciplined and non-violent freedom fighters. There were at least three strands in the Gandhian movement - the political, the religious, the economic and the social - and the three have been woven inextricably into the complex story of the regeneration of Kanthapura as a result of the freedom struggle. It is not merely a
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6.9 Indianness of Kanthapura

The novel is a western art-form but Raja Rao has used it to express an essentially Indian sensibility. Kanthapura is Indian both in theme and treatment. It is an Indian novel and it expresses the Indian
sensibility to perfection. Laws of the western novel cannot be applied to it. Raja Rao says the Indo-English novel must use the traditional Indian form of story-telling. The same is true of characterization. Characters in Indo-English novels are seldom defined and would be called caricatures by the standard criteria of prose criticism. Raja Rao has suitably modified a borrowed art form to express Indian sensibility. He has in this way achieved a rare synthesis of the East and West.

Kanthapura is a typical Indian village and it has been described minutely with great realism. We are told of its location, of its crops, of its grinding poverty, illiteracy and superstition. The coming of the Gandhi movement to it enables the novelist to penetrate to the rivalries, jealousies and the rigidities of the caste system that lie below the surface. The villagers are represented in realistic colors. Their names are made descriptive in a typically rural way. They live in close intimacy with nature and are a part of it. For them nature is a living being and even hills, rivers, fields and animals have a distinct presence, a personality of their own.

Indian sensibility is essentially religious and even politics gets spiritualized. India's most important political leaders and social reformers have all been great religious figures and social and political ends have been attained through the guise of religion. This was also so in the case of Mahatma Gandhi and his non-cooperation, non-violent movement. To the peasants, Kenchamma is a goddess, benign and bounteous. They are deeply religious in outlook. Moorthy, initiated into Gandhi faith becomes a veritable force in the village. Slowly and steadily Moorthy becomes a Gandhi man with a mysterious power to move the people. As the story progresses the three threads of experience tend to be one; the religious, social and political issues become one and the same. The blend is achieved when the villagers consider Moorthy to be the Small Mountain. It is to be remembered that the Big Mountain is Siva, their Protector. Here the Gandhian ideal and the religious spirit merge together. The religious elements and the social and political issues are artistically transformed into one entity. It is natural that prayers and national songs are sung side by side. The objective is to attain independence but the means adopted are religious: Harikathas, Bhajans, fasts, prayers and non-violent resistance.

In the struggle, women's role is important. The author presents them
as various forms of Shakti. Whereas Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive, she is also firm as rock, great in suffering. Psychologically prepared for the titanic encounter, they get much inspiration from other examples. It is to be noted that in the last phase of peaceful resistance it is Ratna, a woman, who takes over from Moorthy and leads the Satyagrahis.

Shakti worship is an essentially Indian theme and it runs through the novel. Different forms of Shakti are manifested through the women of Kanthapura. Shakti's indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha (non-violent struggle) against the British government. When the police ill-treats them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move and act as one, for they are more distinct and pervasive in the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, Shakti kneeling in rapt adoration in front of Siva, reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures. The most touching example of their edifying faith is the narrator's musing on the ruins of Kanthapura. She dreams of a happy ending to a modern 'Ramayana' where Rama (Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi), Bharata (Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot.

The theme is Indian and the treatment of the theme is also typically Indian. The method of narration is typically Indian. The Indian grandmother is the most ancient and most typical of story-tellers and the narrator in the novel, Achakka is just such a grandmother, narrating the story for the benefit of a new comer, years later. Raja Rao has used the ancient Indian way of narration. It is a breathless story illustrating the age old Indian tradition of story-telling. The detailed accounts of Sankar, Rangamma and Bhatta are revealing, essential for the narrative. It is a long interminable tale and its essential Indianness is seen in its long interminable sentences, long paragraphs and the absence of division into chapters.

In order to convey an essentially Indian sensibility - we may say peasant sensibility - Raja Rao has evolved a suitable style. It is not "Babu English" that he has used. The words are English but the organization is Indian and the novelist had to organize it himself. The
language is saturated with Indian idiom, Indian imagery and rural color. Sometimes there are literal translations from Kannada and sometimes there is breaking up of the English syntax to convey emotional upheavals and agitations. Many words are imported from Indian languages and used as they are without any translation. For example, we get Ahimsa, Dhoti, Harikatha, Maistri, Mandap to name a few. He frequently uses village proverbs, legends and concrete imagery in Indian context. For instance, in his similes, familiar animals and birds figure most:

1. Our hearts beat like the wings of bats;
2. Every squirrel has his day;
3. The youngest is always the holy bull;
4. And yet he was as honest as an elephant;
5. A rasping hiss as though a thousand porcupines have suddenly bristled up;
6. Does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant?

Numerous proverbs find a natural place in the peasant speech:

1. the policemen are not your uncle's sons;
2. saw you like a rat on your mother's lap;
3. the first daughter milks the cow when the mother is ill;
4. you cannot straighten a dog's tail;
5. there is neither man nor mosquito in Kanthapura;
6. only a pariah looks at the teeth of dead cows;
7. Land, lust and wifely loyalty go badly together.

Sometimes the peasant's use an abusive, vulgar language and Raja Rao also does not hesitate to use such a language when the occasion demands it though his use of it is more restrained and judicious. Such language is an integral part of peasant speech and so its use is essential to express peasant sensibility. This is indeed the natural speech of the rural folk transmuted into English. With the effective use of the "dialect" and village material the novelist has succeeded in conveying, "In a language not one's own the spirit that is one's own." Kanthapura is Indian both in theme and treatment. Raja Rao has shown to other Indians writing in English how best to express in a foreign art - form a sensibility which is essentially Indian.
Art and Technique of narration in Kanthapura

Raja Rao's Kanthapura is a triumph of narrative art. It is perfectly suited to the ends he wanted to achieve. Raja Rao has been eminently successful despite the difficulties of the task. He succeeded in bringing into his compass an amazing amount of heterogeneous material and still move ahead swiftly towards the end he had in mind. The narration is straightforward and chronological; there is no backward and forward movement as in a stream of conscious novel. The tale has not been narrated by the novelist himself but by a persona, (imagined character) called Achakka. Achakka is an old grandmother that most ancient of story-tellers. She had been personally involved in the events which form the substance of the novel and she narrates them years later for the benefit of a newcomer. Thus the substance of the novel is made up of the stream of her memory, in which many events and characters have been blurred.

6.8 & 6.9 Check your progress

Answer the following questions briefly:

1. How do the villagers view nature?

2. How does the author present women?

3. How are the different forms of Shakti manifested through the women of Kanthapura?

4. What does the narrator muse on the ruins of Kanthapura?

5. Which technique of narration is adopted by Achakka?
by the passage of time and many others have been heightened by her imagination. She is a woman with a balanced mind, sound common sense and the gift of shrewd and intelligent observation. Her personality colors the whole non - cooperation movement, the brave resistance of the people and their consequent suffering. All is recollected and narrated by a naiveté which is not the author's but the narrator's.

The choice of such a narrator serves several useful purposes. Making this old woman the narrator enables Raja Rao to mingle fact and myth in an effective manner. For the old woman, Jawaharlal is a Bharata to the Mahatma - the Mahatma who, she believes, will slay Ravana so that Sita may be freed. For her Gandhi has attained the status of God and Moorthy is regarded as his avatar in Kanthapura. To her the Satyagraha becomes a religious ceremony to which she devotes her sacred ardour.

The second advantage derived by this choice of narrator is that the language used by her is of an elemental quality. Her reaction to things is direct and vivid, not literary and second - hand. She talks of "the pumpkin moon", "the stream of milk splashed in a moonlit night"; "Young boys bright as banana trunks", all are images taken from familiar phenomena which would come naturally to a village woman. The character also enables Raja Rao to achieve his professed aim of reproducing the rhythm of Indian speech in English as well as of coming closest to the oral tradition of story - telling. In Kanthapura the constant shuttling back and forth in time is easily justified as an old woman's leisurely manner of story - telling.

The narrator thus provides a convenient point of view, though she is never sharply individualized. We know nothing about her beyond the fact that she is a widow who has now no one except Seemu (who may be her son or grandson) and has seven acres of wet land and twelve acres of dry land. This numerical precision is again meant to convey the simplicity of the way of life where a man's property is measured not in terms of money but in terms of cattle and land. Her function is representative and her strength lies in being anonymous. She is just one of the many women of Kanthapura who responded to the call of the Mahatma, conveyed through Moorthy. Her faith in the goddess Kenchamma, her respect for the local scholar Rangamma, her unquestioned affection for Moorthy and her trust in him, all these
feelings she shares with other women of the village. No quality is given to her that detracts from her representative nature.

Achakka is both the narrator and the commentator. The narrative is hardly very straightforward: there are involutions and digressions, there are meaningful backward glances. There are rhythmic chains of proper names (Rachanna and Chandranna and Madanna; Satamma and Rangamma and Puttamma and Seethamma), there are hypnotic repetitions and refrains and there are also sheer poetic iridescences.

A village, a picturesque region, an epoch of social and political change, a whole complex of character and motive, reason and superstition, idealism and cold calculation, all spring up before our eyes demanding recognition and acceptance.

Not only does Achakka narrate, she also comments and her comments are balanced and shrewd. They serve to place both character and incident in a correct perspective and are a constant check on over-idealization. They serve to impart realism and authenticity to the narrative. Here are a few instances of her racy comments:

1. To tell you the truth, Bhatta began all this after his last visit to the city.
2. Rangamma did not understand all this, neither, to tell you the truth, did any of us.
3. Bhatta left us after harvest on a pilgrimage to Kashi. I tell you, he was not a bad man, was Bhatta.

The story is thus narrated simultaneously on two levels and thus acquires a dramatic character. Narration and description go hand in hand with a chorus-like evaluation of character and action. They increase our understanding of events and character serve as a unifying force in the work. The narration is dramatic; it varies according to the requirements of the action and the situation. The language, the accent, the tone, the tempo, constantly keeps changing.

A considerable part of the book is taken up with life on the coffee estate, the crudities and vulgarities of the Red-man; the humiliations of the poor and the helpless (except Bade Khan, the policeman, who has just to sneeze or cough and everybody will say "I lick your feet") the sickness that broke them and the violation of their women's honour - all have been portrayed most vividly and convincingly to the last
detail of credibility.

Moorthy has been released from jail and the villagers wait eagerly for his arrival. Their suspense and their anxiety have been adequately conveyed through the use of a repetitive language replete with a sense of urgency.

Achakka is garrulous, as a grandmother usually is, and words, words, words flow out of their mouth in quick succession. When a sense of largeness is to be conveyed there is a liberal piling up of epithets and images. The picketings and satyagrahas are narrated, we should say visualized, in this way, and the very atmosphere of those tumultuous days conveyed to the readers. Coolies come out of the Gates of the Skeffington Coffee Estate in large numbers and move towards the toddy booth. The sense of the largeness of their numbers is conveyed through a multiplicity of images and epithets.

At other times, there is a mingling of fact and fancy and sheer poetry comes out of the narrator's lips as in the rhythmic account of the coming of Kartik, the month of the festival of lights.

The narrative art of Raja Rao is the novel's crowning charm. Achakka's gossipy digressions and circumlocutions are in the hoary Indian tradition of storytelling. In this way the happenings in a remote, obscure, out of the way village are transformed into a Gandhian or Gandhi-epic. In this way, instead of remaining a mere sthala-purana or regional novel, Kanthapura acquires the dimensions of an epic - the epic of India's struggle for freedom.

### 6.10 Check your progress

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Why has Raja Rao chosen an old woman as a narrator?

2. How does Achakka mingle myth and fact?

3. What purposes do Achakka's comments serve?
Kanthapura is a novel in the Indian tradition and it is not to be judged by western standards. The plot of the story is episodic. There are numerous digressions and there is much that is superfluous. The old narrator is garrulous and gossipy and brings in much that is heterogeneous and irrelevant into the compass of her tale. It has a well-formed and well-organized structure, a coherent and well-knit plot.

The plot of the novel is made up of a main plot and a sub-plot. The main plot deals with the impact of the Gandhi movement on a remote South Indian village, called Kanthapura, a village which is a microcosm of the macrocosm, for what happens in this remote village was happening all over India in those stirring decades. The sub-plot deals with the happenings on the Skeffington Coffee Estate in the neighborhood and throws a flood of light on the exploitation of the brutality of the Englishmen and the various ways in which they exploited the people and later in the novel, the coolies of the coffee-plantation join the Satyagrahis from Kanthapura in their Satyagraha outside the toddy booth.

The plot has a beginning, middle and an end. It begins with an account of a small South Indian village called Kanthapura, its locale, its crops, its poverty and the ignorant and superstitious nature of the people. Though it is a small village, it is divided into a number of quarters - the Brahmin Quarter, the Potters Quarters - the Sudra Quarter and the Pariah Quarter. The society is caste-ridden and it has its own local legends. Kenchamma is the Presiding goddess and a detailed account is given of the legends connected with the benign goddess. Then follows an account of its people and a number of characters, destined to play significant roles in the action are introduced, petty rivalries and jealousies of the village society come to surface.

There is a development of action with the arrival of Moorthy from
the city, a staunch Gandhi man. He is an educated man who has a true Brahmin's heightened awareness of his social and spiritual obligations and sets out to fulfill them and he is best equipped for his task thanks to the fertilizing impact of this life-making influences. It is interesting to note that before there is ever any mention of Mahatma Gandhi or Swaraj in the novel there is tremendous religious activity. Starting from an invocation to Kenchamma, goddess benign, to the end of the novel, religion seems to sustain the spirits of the people of Kanthapura. The action begins with the unearthing of a half-sunken lingam by Moorthy and its consecration. The boys of Kanthapura had a grand feast to celebrate the occasion. And one thing led to another. Soon they observed Sankara Jayanti, Sankara Vijaya etc and this became the nucleus of social regeneration in Kanthapura in the true tradition of India where social reformers have invariably been profoundly religious men. When Moorthy threw out a hint that somebody will offer a dinner for each day of the month, there was spontaneous response from everyone and this is not stated by the novelist but comes home to us through the characters themselves.

Political propaganda is carried on in the guise of religion. The Harikatha-man, Jayramachar, tells strange Harikathas, in which there is a curious mingling of religion and politics. Gandhi is likened to Ram and the Red-man to Ravana and the freedom struggle becomes a fight between the two incarnations of good and evil for the sake of Bharat Mata or Sita. The use of the mythical technique is kept up up to the very end.

The action develops through conflict. Moorthy forms the Kanthapura Congress Committee, maintains contact with the city Congress, brings in newspapers and keeps the people informed of the stirring events taking place elsewhere. In this way, though Mahatma Gandhi does never appear on the scene, his presence is constantly felt. He goes about from door to door; carrying the message of Charkha and Swadeshi. He is a Brahmin but a true Gandhite. He goes even to the Pariah Quarter with the message of the Mahatma Gandhi. A Women's Volunteer corps is also organized. Efforts are thus made to bring about political, social and economic resurgence simultaneously. The Government, too, is not idle and soon he has to meet with stiff opposition. Policeman Bade Khan arrives on the scene finds shelter on the Skeffington Coffee Estate and soon is in league with Bhatta, the
first Brahmin and Waterfall Venkamma. Contacts are also maintained with the Swami in the city, who wields considerable influence and whose threat of ex-communication sends Moorthy's mother to death.

Battle lines are sharply drawn and the atmosphere is tense. Before the battle actually begins, there is a detailed account given of the goings on the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Into the calm valley of Himavathy there comes not merely Congress politics but there is an exodus of population - poor and half-starved people - from below the Ghats from Andhra Pradesh and from Tamil Nadu and armies of coolies march past to work in the Skeffington Estate owned by the Red-man. Life on the Red-man's estate with its brutalities and humiliations is, speaking in a limited way, like the sub-plot of a tragedy. It is part of the general tragedy depicted in the rest of the book; with this difference, though, that while their suffering brought the victims a chastening, ennobling feeling now and then and left them with perhaps a distant hope, if any, suffering on the estate was soul-destroying and absolutely devoid of compensations.

As soon as the call comes from the city Congress, the Kanthapurians, lead by Moorthy, march to picket the toddy plantations, with shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' and 'Inquilab Zindabad'. There is a cruel lathi-charge even women and children are beaten up and in large numbers are arrested. Next follows the Satyagraha outside the Toddy Booth near the gate of the Skeffington Estate. The workers come to drink; the Satyagrahis lie down in the path as lathi blows after blows are showered on them. The entire atmosphere resounds with shouts of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai'. And then the unexpected happens, the coolies' side with the Satyagrahis, refusing to march over their bodies, lie down by them and are brutally beaten up by the police. The two plots, thus, fuse and mingle and become a single whole. Those were thrilling, sensational times and the novelist has succeeded in conveying to the readers those thrills and sensations, exactly and precisely.

There are countless arrests and Moorthy is also arrested. He is tried and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In his absence, Ratna takes up the work of the Congress and becomes the leader of the movement and then comes the no-tax campaign. Government repression and police brutality reach a climax. Workers from Bombay arrive, their crops are reaped and taken away and their houses burnt
and destroyed. Women are dishonored and even children and old men are mercilessly beaten up. They are compelled to flee to their native place and are obliged to seek shelter in distant Kashipur where they are welcomed as, “The Pilgrims of Mahatma Gandhi”. Kanthapura has been laid waste, the people have suffered terribly but they experience a sense of fulfillment. The denouement while stressing tragic waste and desolation also leaves the victims much chastened and ennobled.

6.11 Check your progress

Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What is the main plot of the novel about?
   ____________________________________________________

2. What does the subplot of the novel deal with?
   ____________________________________________________

3. What does the plot of the novel begin with?
   ____________________________________________________

4. How does the religious action in the novel begin?
   ____________________________________________________

5. What do the coolies do to the Satyagrahis?
   ____________________________________________________

6.12 Role of the Coffee Estate Workers in the Gandhian Movement in Kanthapura

Just as Kanthapura is representative of thousands of Indian villages so is the coffee estate representative of scores of British-owned estates in India, whether they are coffee plantations, or some other plantations. Conditions on all of them were more or less like that they are depicted in this novel. Raja Rao included its depiction in the novel because he wanted to include an insistence of large-scale economic
exploitation of Indians by Britishers and the depiction of the coffee estate enabled him to do that.

The Skeffington Coffee Estate is described vividly and elaborately in the novel. The estate is pretty old for no one knows exactly when it was founded. Nor does anyone know its size for certain, though it is said to be at least ten thousand acres wide. However, some people in Kanthapura still remember the first owner of the estate, who was known as Hunter Sahib, from his habit of wielding his hunter on the laborers. The estate had been expanding rapidly ever since that time and more and more coolies had been coming from beneath the Ghats. The estate went on growing bigger till it touched all the hills around Kanthapura. Some of them spoke Tamil or Telugu instead of Kannada which was spoken at Kanthapura. The Kanthapurians knew about the coolies because they passed through the village as they marched to the estate.

The coolies, who worked on the Estate, were recruited from the plains below up to the Ghats stretching up to the river Godavari. A foreman or Maistri as he was called was sent from time to time to recruit coolies according to the requirement of the coolies at the plantation. They were enticed to leave their hearth and home by false promises. They were given one rupee each as advance and were promised a four-anna bit for a man and a two-anna bit for a woman as daily wages. They were also told that they would get plenty of white rice and they would merely be required to pick coffee leaves. The foreman would speak to them kindly. Their march to Skeffington Coffee Estate has been described by Raja Rao at length in his usual graphic and picturesque style.

Once the coolies were brought to the coffee plantation, the manners of the Foreman changed and he grew harsh and threatening. They were exploited in many ways. All promises were forgotten. No wages were given. Indeed, the white owner did not even know that they had promised four-anna bit for a man and two-anna bit for a woman. They were given small huts to live in which they had to repair or thatch themselves. They were provided with a frugal diet and were made to work hard from five in the morning till late in the night. If anybody took rest or was slow, he was severely whipped by the Maistri who was ever on the watch. No wages were paid and the old hands knew that one, who came to the Estate once, never went out of
Again. He must work, suffer and die there.

The workers were also exploited sexually. The white Sahib would have this or that woman who tickled his fancy. If a woman refused him, the husband's or father's wages were cut or he was given a whipping.

The workers were also exposed to dangers and diseases of various kinds. The Estate was infested with snakes and many died of snake-bites while at work. Besides this, there were heavy rains and the workers would have to work in rains drenched to their very skin. With the rains, there would come Malaria and take a heavy toll of life. Men, women and children would die in large numbers. No doubt, the Sahib would distribute pills among the coolies but they were superstitious and many would not take the pills. They also suffered from cough, vomiting and dysentery. Many would have liked to go back to their homes but they had no money and anybody who dared to ask for his wages was mercilessly beaten.

The work on the Estate was not just picking coffee berries as it was promised. In fact, it turned out to be a back-breaking drudgery. The men had to dig pits and hew wood and the women had to pluck weeds and to kill vermin. As the sun rose high, working with the axe or the spade became more and more difficult but even if they rested for a moment, they would find the Maistri before them, who would tell them to return to work, saying that nobody's marriage procession was passing. Or they would see the red face of the Sahib himself peeping at them so that they would all begin to work vigorously.

The coolies of the Skeffington Coffee Estate were a miserable lot and had to suffer terrible hardships. The arrival of Bade Khan, the policeman, has further strengthened and encouraged the Sahib because an officer of law was with him. The majority of the coolies were Pariahs. But there were also a few Brahmans who could not be suppressed so very easily. Among them were two young Brahmin clerks, Gangadhar and Vasudev, of progressive and enlightened views. They took the Pariahs to Kanthapura to take part in the Gandhi-Bhajans and invited Moorhty to come to the Estate to teach the ignorant coolies.

However, Moorhty's entry was barred by Bade Khan and there was a scuffle between Bade Khan and the Maistri on the one side and Moorhty's supporters on the other. As a sequel of this incident,
Rachanna was dismissed from service on the estate and came down to live in Kanthapura. Rachanna and his wife played an important part in the Gandhian movement. Infact Rachanna was an elected member of the Congress Committee at Kanthapura. During the struggle with the authorities he was arrested along with the other Satyagrahis. It was Rachanna, who objected to Moorthy being bound with ropes when the police came to arrest him. A very important confrontation between the Gandhians and the authorities took place at the Skeffington Coffee Estate. That was the picketing of the toddy booth situated there. During the no-tax campaign the proprietor of the estate tried to use the coolies against the people but he did not succeed in this and many of them raised slogans like ‘Vande Mataram’ etc. The city-coolies looked at them and at once stopped work. The lights were all put out. The Skeffington coolies continued to march towards them shouting slogans. They were ordered by a white officer on horseback to stop. On their refusal to do so, shots after shots were fired and cries, groans and laments resounded in the air. They ran forward and the police could stop them no more and they jumped over field-bounds and tumbled against gaslights and fell over rocks and sheafs; sickles and scythes. Three thousand men in all and from the top of the mound soldiers opened fire which they bore bravely.

6.12 Check your progress

Answer the following questions briefly:

1. What are Kanthapura and the Coffee Estate representative of?
   ____________________________________________________

2. Why does Raja Rao depict the Coffee Estate?
   ____________________________________________________

3. What was the duty of the foreman on the estate?
   ____________________________________________________

4. What promises were made to the coolies during recruitment?
   ____________________________________________________
6.13 Treatment of Freedom Movement in Kanthapura

Literature is a medium of political and social awakening in a country and it is natural that during India's struggle for freedom, literature played its own part. For thousands of India's illiterate peasants Gandhi came to stand for a religious 'Avatar' or incarnation of a God and even many of the more sophisticated city-dwellers looked upon him as a prophet as well as a savior. The distinction of Kanthapura is that it depicts an early stage in Mahatma Gandhi's career when few people were able to recognize his greatness adequately. Kanthapura is, of course, not the first creative work which projects Gandhi's life and ideals though it is perhaps one of the few which did so directly.

Kanthapura is not only a fine work of art but it also aims at rousing the conscience of the country and even of the world at large, at the ills and injustices which plagued Indian life in the 1930s. Though the novel depicts the freedom movement led by Gandhi as the main theme, it also aims at social reform. It is so because the Gandhian movement did not aim at Swaraj only but also at social reform. Infact, Gandhi believed that Swaraj itself could be attained after certain social reforms and social awakening. These social reforms included freedom from economic exploitation by the West by boycotting foreign goods and by spinning yarn and wearing Khadi made from it, also the eradication of untouchability and the rigidities of the caste system and removal of illiteracy, ignorance and superstition.

In the novel, we have more than a glimpse of the freedom movement in India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. We see how the name of Mahatma Gandhi acts like a charm in every part of India and how the people in the remote and far-away Kanthapura wait with baited breath and observe a fast in order to show their solidarity with Mahatma Gandhi as he sets out on his historic Dandi
March. In cities as well as villages there are volunteer groups which organize the people, distribute charkas and yarn and even form an ambulance corps to take care of those who are wounded in the firing and lathi charges on Satyagrahis. Moorthy is a typical example of the thousands of young men who were fired with patriotic zeal by Mahatma Gandhi’s inspiration and who, under his programme, left schools, colleges and universities, or resigned from their jobs and made a bonfire of their costly imported clothes. Rangamma and Ratna represent the women’s side of the movement, while Range Gowda and Rachanna show how even the people of the lower castes picked up courage or curbed their natural instinct for retaliation and accepted the voluntary restraint of non-violence. Peasants refused to pay revenue and other taxes to the Government with the result that many of them were evicted from their lands and lost all means of earning a livelihood. There are Dharnas, Picketings and Satyagrahas. Kanthapurians, even children and old men are injured and wounded in large numbers. Women, like Ratna, are beaten up and dishonored but their spirit is not crushed. Shouts of ‘Gandhiji ki Jai’ and ‘Inquilab Zindabad’ resound in the air and boost the morale of the people. Large numbers are arrested and sent to jail. When Moorthy is arrested his place is taken by Ratna, who zealously leads the movement and the movement continues.

The ideals of patriotism and national integration are depicted through one of the minor characters, Advocate Sankar. He is a Khadi-clad advocate, who has been named the ‘walking advocate’ because of his simple ways. His professional attitude reflects that of Mahatma Gandhi of the days when he worked as a lawyer in South Africa. Sankar never took up a false case and would either give up a case or make the client confess his crime if he later found out that his case was false. He did not charge a fee from the poor and even paid their court fees and stamp charges himself. Inspite of this, he got many cases and soon became very rich. But still Sankar would keep up his austere ways. In his spare time, he went to a school where Hindi was taught and helped the teacher with the work. Inspite of being a South Indian, Sankar had a firm belief that Hindi would one day become the national language of India. It was not just a theoretical belief with him but something that he actually practiced, for he used the North Indian way of greeting when he met anyone, spoke in Hindi to his old mother.
who could not understand a word of it and spoke nothing but Hindi when he talked to his daughter. He did not like people using the English words or language in conversation and when anyone did so inadvertently he had to drop a small coin into a box kept for this purpose, the collections from which were contributed to the Congress funds.

In the case of Khadi, he was a fanatic. He would never attend a wedding party if anyone did not exclusively wear Khadi. He would not even make an exception in the case of the bride, telling them that the showy sarees they wore only enriched Italian yarn-makers and German dye manufacturers. Sankar, who was no doubt a fanatic but he admitted this fact and claimed that a few fanatics were necessary in every field. His fanaticism was revealed in the matter of fasting for he observed a fast and made the members of his family also observe a fast, on most of the days connected with Mahatma Gandhi of other patriotic leaders, or days of national importance, e.g. the anniversary of the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh. Such people may be eccentric and extremists but their example does not fail to impress and inspire others.

British Government in India, its laws and ways are also depicted vividly in the novel. The White Man, who owns the Skeffington Coffee Estate, is a symbol of the imperialist rulers of India, who exploited Indians in various ways. They employed paid agents like Bhatta and the Swami to oppose the freedom movement. They send policemen like Bade Khan to harass the patriots and cook up false cases against them. Their treatment of peaceful Satyagrahis is extremely inhuman. They do not spare even women and children. Inside the prisons, people are treated with great cruelty and forced to salute the Union Jack. Even such movements as prohibition are opposed because these would loosen the hold of the foreigners upon the poor masses.

Many of their laws, for example, those relating to the ban on the making of salt, are extremely discriminatory against the poor people. Moreover, there are references to the atrocities committed by the authorities in the other parts of India, e.g. the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. The British policy of divide and rule is also seen in operation, for the loyal Swami is given a gift of twelve hundred acres of land so that there is no chance of his joining the patriotic movement.

One of the most important evils in Hinduism is the caste system. In
the novel, Kanthapura there is much implied criticism of it. It is described through Bhatta and later through Swami. Both are conservative and orthodox Brahmins and are the agents of the British government and work together to frustrate and defeat the Gandhi movement. Since the Swami’s power rests on the superiority of the Brahmins over other castes, he takes the view that the caste system is the very foundation of Hinduism. He maintains that no Brahmin should have contact with the Pariahs and threatens to excommunicate Moorthy because he does so. Later this threat is actually carried out. People of the lower castes are not admitted inside temples but must have darshna of the God from outside. Though the pariahs do not seem to mind this much, there is a movement that the doors of the temples should be thrown open to all classes. One of the followers of Mahatma Gandhi in Karwar has already done that. He is Advocate Ranganna who describes his meeting with the Swami. The Swami had sent a message to the advocate that he desired to see him. The Swami told him that for some time there had been too much of this Pariah business. According to him, it was polluting for a Brahmin to mingle with a Pariah. He maintained that the Pariahs could not be uplifted through the efforts of others.

The Swami was also critical of Mahatma Gandhi because the latter was meddling with the dharma - shastras. The Swami wanted the advocate’s help in opposing the movement for the abolition of untouchability, telling him in confidence that the Government was at his back. The advocate pointed out that the Hindu dharma - shastras referred to the foreigners as ‘mlechas’ so how could there be any cooperation with them. To this Swami’s reply was that Governments are sent by the Divine Will and their authority must not be questioned. The Swami again said that the Government had promised to help them morally and materially. This angered Ranganna so much that he left immediately. It was as a reaction against this that he decided to throw open his temple to the Pariahs that very day. Another speaker at the meeting criticized not only the Swami but the system of Muts. "I have grown in the Mutt", says one, "and I have known what they do." Later, the Swami’s agent, Bhatta is exposed as an agent of the Government and when he goes on a pilgrimage to Kashi everybody makes fun of his hypocritical gesture.

The boycott of foreign goods was meant to cripple the efforts of
the foreign manufactures to exploit and impoverish India and the insistence was on spinning because that taught the people of the dignity of labor as well as of self reliance. In a poor country like India, simple living must be practised. Moreover, spinning could provide a regular income to the common masses, especially to women who have no other means of earning available to them. Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on education and avoiding alcoholic drinks had both a moral and an economic aim. If the poor coolies, who are grossly exploited by the owners of the various plantations, learn to read and write, they would become better acquainted with their rights and would not be cheated so easily. Drink is the greatest enemy of the poor because it never allows a person to spend his income on essential items or make a saving for a rainy day. The Picketing of the toddy grove and the toddy booth has the immediate effect of making the coolies realize how evil toddy - drinking is so that some of them even take a pledge that they would never touch the poisonous drink again in their lives. Thus the political movement of Swaraj is closely linked with religious reforms and social upliftment in Kanthapura.

6.13 Check your progress
Answer the following questions briefly :
1. What are Gandhi's views about social awakening?
   ______________________________________________________

2. What did the people of Kanthapura do to show their solidarity with Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March?
   ______________________________________________________

3. How did the peasants participate in the freedom struggle?
   ______________________________________________________

4. What would Sankar do if people use English in conversation?
   ______________________________________________________
6.14 Depiction of the Women Characters in Kanthapura

As the purpose of the novel was to depict a mass-movement and its impact, a highly individualized characterization would have deflected attention from such a depiction. Thus the characters in the novel are not sharply and distinctly individualized. The emphasis is more on themes and ideas rather than on people. Characterization takes a secondary place in Kanthapura yet it is not without significant and fine characterization.

The women characters have been skillfully delineated by Raja Rao. There is a great variety of them in the novel. At the foremost we have Rangamma. She is one of the few educated women in the village. She reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and other people in Kanthapura acquainted with the day-to-day developments elsewhere. She knows many things of general interest. She is never befooled by Bhatta. She helps Moorthy literally, although, she does not seem to share his belief that Pariahs and Brahmins are all equal. After meeting Sankar, Rangamma develops into a fine leader and speaker. She is able to fill the void created by the death of her father, who used to expound the Vedantic texts at Harikatha.

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5. How is Sankar's fanaticism revealed as far as fasts are concerned?

6. Who practices the evils of caste system in the novel?

7. Why were foreign goods boycotted?

8. Why does Gandhi emphasize on education and avoiding alcoholic drinks?
meetings. It is Rangamma, who plays the major part in organizing the women of Kanthapura into a Sevika Sangh. She is practical-minded for when she comes to know that some husbands are complaining that they are not receiving proper attention at home because their wives are away to participate in drill, she at once takes proper measures and explains to the Sevikas that they must not neglect their household duties.

Next woman character who deserves attention is Ratna. She is a child widow, who has been powerfully influenced by modern ideas and who does not regard being a woman as a matter of shame and inferiority. She is much criticized for her unconventional ways but she does not care for such criticism. She chooses her own path and sticks to it with firmness and determination. She takes keen interest in the Gandhian movement and is a source of inspiration and a great help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha-man, is arrested, she conducts the Harikathas. After Rangamma's death, she reads out the newspapers and other publicity material of the Congress for the benefit of the Kanthapurians. When Moorthy is arrested, Ratna carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organizes the women volunteer corps and imparts to the Sevikas the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of the government repression and police action. She is dishonored, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence. She suffers all patiently and unflinchingly. When Mahatma Gandhi goes to England for the Round Table Conference, reaches a settlement with the Red-man's Government and the movement is withdrawn, Ratna is disappointed like countless other freedom fighters in India. She goes over to Bombay and through her letters we learn of her great admiration for Nehru, "the equal distributionist".

Achakka, the narrator, though she is never sharply individualized, is revealed by her manner of narration and her comments on persons and events. In the novel, her function is representative and her strength lies in being anonymous. She is just one of the many women of Kanthapura, who responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi, conveyed through Moorthy. Her faith in the Goddess Kenchamma, her respect for the local scholar Rangamma, her unquestioned affection for Moorthy and her trust in him, all these feelings, she shares with other women of the village.
However, Achakka is a woman with a balanced mind, sound common sense and the gift of shrewd and intelligent observation. Her personality colors the whole non-cooperation movement, the brave resistance of the people and their consequent suffering.

One of the simplest women in the village is poor Narsamma, the mother of Moorthy. She cannot understand the ideals dear to her son but who only knows that she did nothing to deserve the calamity of excommunication of the society that befalls her family. She is the most pathetic character in the novel.

Through the character of Waterfall Venkamma, Raja Rao brings out the pettiness, the jealousy, the triviality and the orthodoxy of the women folk. Venkamma is a woman of a petty and jealous nature. She cannot bear to see others prosperous or successful. The sight of the happiness of others arouses her wrath and she rails and rails against them. There is no end to her spite, jealousy and vindictiveness. She is jealous of Rangamma because she has a much larger house and constantly rails against her. She would like to put lizard poison into her food and thus cause her death.

She is also against Moorthy because he refused to marry her second daughter. She nurses this grudge against him and does her best to have her views; she has no sympathy with the Gandhi movement. She, therefore, sides with Bhatta and the Swami. It is she who spreads the rumor that Moorthy is to be excommunicated. In this way, she causes his mother much pain which ultimately derives her to death. She also hates Ratna for her progressive views and constantly hurls abuses at her. She rails and rails against everybody and thus justifies the nick-name the novelist has given to her.

However, it is only against her meanness, frivolousness and conservatism that the character of Ratna shines out.

In Kanthapura, Raja Rao presents women as various forms of Shakti. A typical Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive and she is also as firm as a rock, great in suffering. Shakti rises in them and each of them is enthused at the proper time. Psychologically prepared for the titanic encounter, they got much inspiration from other examples. It is to be noted that in the last phase of peaceful resistance it is Ratna, a woman, who takes over from Moorthy and leads the Satyagrahis.
Different forms of Shakti are manifested through the women of Kanthapura. Shakti's indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha against the British Government. When the police ill-treat them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move and act as one, for they are more distinct and pervasive in the devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, Shakti kneeling in rapt adoration in front of Siva, reveals herself through them as they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures. The most touching example of their edifying faith is the narrator's musing on the ruins of Kanthapura. She dreams of a happy ending to a modern Ramayana where Rama (Mahatma Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England) with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British) and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi) Bharata (Jawaharlal Nehru) who has been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot.

6.14 Check your progress

Answer the following questions briefly:

1. How does Rangamma acquaint herself with the day to day developments?
   ____________________________________________________

2. What did Rangamma's father do at Harikatha meetings?
   ____________________________________________________

3. How do we come to know that Rangamma is a practical minded woman?
   ____________________________________________________

4. Who conducts Harikathas after Jayaramachar's arrest?
   ____________________________________________________

5. What characteristic traits of women are presented by Raja Rao through the character of Venkamma?
   ____________________________________________________
6.15 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the novel, Kanthapura, which is a microcosm of what was happening during the freedom struggle movement in the nation. Though it tells about a remote Indian village, Kanthapura, it is representative of all the villages in India. Every village had at least one Moorthy inspired by the golden influence of Mahatma Gandhi. People were giving in their whole-hearted contributions for the mass movement of freedom struggle. They had their own sets of victories and failures in the movement. Also the freedom struggle had united the diverse variety of Indian people, irrespective of their differences, to move towards a common aim of attaining freedom which in itself was an achievement. So though Kanthapura is a piece of fiction, it realistically represents the contemporary Indian situation. The next chapter deals with Lokmanya Tilak's five Essays which deal with the contemporary times of freedom movement.

6.16 Summary

Kanthapura is set in 1930s and the scene of action is the village Kanthapura, a typical South Indian village. Moorthy, a young man educated in the city, is the central figure in the novel. He is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He comes to the village with an aim of organizing the villagers to play a role in the freedom movement of the nation. He goes from door to door even in the Pariah quarter of the village and explains to the villagers the significance of Gandhi's struggle for independence. He forms the Congress Committee in Kanthapura. A Volunteer Group is formed to face the Government repression. Moorthy is supported by the villagers especially, Ratna and Patel Range Gowda.
He is opposed by the Government to curb the movement. Policeman, Bade Khan is posted in the village to curb down the movement and he is supported by Bhatta whereas, Bhatta is supported by the Swami in the city, who is strongly supported by the Government. Swami has a powerful religious authority and has much influence on the ignorant people of the village. He excommunicates Moorthy and his family and Moorthy's mother, Narsamma dies of this shock. In the meanwhile, Gandhi's historic Dandi March to break the salt law casts a strong influence all over the nation and Kanthapura is no exception to this.

There are satyagrahas and picketings in the village. They offer Satyagraha outside the toddy booth. There is a lathi charge by the police and many are wounded and hurt badly. Many are arrested and sent to jail. This is followed by the picketing of the toddy booth outside the Skeffington Coffee Estate. Government turns ruthless this time. The suffering of the fellow villagers touches the heart of the workers of the Skeffington Coffee Estate and they join their suffering brethren. Moorthy is arrested and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. In his absence, Ratna carried the freedom movement forward.

The next movement to come is the no-tax campaign. The villagers decide to not to pay the taxes. They decide to remain non-violent no matter whatever the consequence would be. Soon the movement turns violent. There are merciless lathi-charges and even shootings. The villagers put up a brave resistance but ultimately they are compelled to flee. Their morale is finally broken. They have to leave Kanthapura and find shelter in a remote village, Kashipur. They have been defeated but in their very defeat laid their victory. Their brave resistance gave a jolt to the Government and such jolts were experienced all over the country. In the course of time, British Government was shaken and overthrown. The heroic struggle of the people of Kanthapura is a milestone and representative of the spirit of the crores of Indians marching ceaselessly towards independence.

**Answers to check your progress**

6.2

1. 1919 to 1931

2. There are many references in the novel related to the political and
social major events and knowing them will give better understanding.


4. Grinding poverty of the Indian masses

5. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was founded by an Englishman, A. O. Hume.

6. Indians like Surendra Nath Banerjee, Feroze Shah Mehta, Dadabhai Nowrosjee and many others voiced the Indian demand for 'home rule'.

7. The division in the rank and file of the Congress party was perceptible at the Surat Session of the Congress in 1907.

8. The religious sentiments of the rural folk were fully exploited by Tilak by introducing Ganesh festival and Shivaji Jayanti festivals in Maharashtra and instilling in them courage, patriotism, discipline and unity.

9. Rowlatt Act, 1919

10. Gandhi's programme of action for independence was fourfold:
    a) Spinning of the charkha, weaving of one's own cloth and boycott of foreign clothes
    b) Eradication of untouchability and other social evils like the purdah system so that women and the so-called lower castes may play their part in the freedom struggle.
    c) Village uplift, eradication of poverty, illiteracy, casteism etc
    d) Hindu-Muslim unity.

11. The Gandhian Civil Disobedience began in 1929. This time the movement was more militant, though Gandhi still insisted on non-violence. There were meetings and satyagrahas all over the country. There were picketings and boycotts. Then Gandhi undertook his historic march to Dandi beach to prepare salt there and thus break the unjust and anti-people salt law.

12. Gandhi did two things in 1930: he made British people aware that they were cruelly subjugated India, and he gave Indians the conviction that they could, by lifting their heads and straightening their spines, lift the yoke from their shoulders.
6.3

1. Moorthy or Moorthappa is an educated young man of Kanthapura. It is he who organizes the work of the Congress in the village and hence he is the central figure in the novel. He is an ordinary young man, with common human weaknesses. He is one of those thousands of young men who were inspired by Mahatma Gandhi to give up their studies, risk the wrath of the government, and become fighters for the cause of their motherland.

2. He is called "corner-house Moorthy", "our Moorthy". Moorthy who has gone through life "like a noble cow, quiet, generous, deferent, Brahminic, a very prince." He is considered to be honest like an elephant and is spoken of as "our Gandhi", "the saint of our village".

3. The Gandhian struggle for independence had three strands - political, religious and social (including economic) - and all these strands meet in Moorthy.

4. The Kanthapurians observed Sankara Jayanthi, Sankara Vijaya etc. Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is then invited to the village, Harikathas are held every evening and these Harikathas serve as a clock for Gandhi propaganda.

5. Moorthy explains the economy of the Khaddi and the importance of the charkha to the ignorant and superstition - ridden women of the village and persuades them to take to spinning despite stiff opposition from all quarters.

6. A woman volunteer corps was formed with Ratna as the head of this organization of Swayam Sevikas or Sevis.

7. Moorthy goes in the Pariah quarter from one college to another exhorting the women to take to spinning in their spare time. For doing so, he is excommunicated by the Swami for this Pariah business and his aged mother dies of grief and shock at the disgrace.

8. Ratna is a young widow. She became a widow when she was hardly fifteen years of age. She is attractive and charming.

9. Ratna is young educated woman of progressive views. Though she is a widow she does not dress and live in a conventional style of a widow. She wears bangles; colored sarees (and not the white dhoti of a widow) uses the kumkum mark on her forehead and parts her hair...
hair. She is also bold and witty in conversation and can hold her own against heavy odds. So she is much criticized for her unconventional ways.

10. She takes keen interest in the Gandhian movement and is a source of inspiration and help to Moorthy. When Jayaramachar, the Harikatha man, is arrested, she conducts the Harikathas. After Rangamma’s death, she reads out the newspapers and other publicity material of the Congress for the benefit of the villagers. When Moorthy is arrested, she carries on his work and serves as the leader. She organizes the women volunteer corps and imparts to the Sevikas the necessary training. She displays great courage and resourcefulness in the face of government repression and police action. She is dishonored, beaten up and sent to jail as a consequence.

11. Range Gowda is the Patel of Kanthapura. He is a man of forceful, commanding personality and wields considerable power and authority in the village because of his forceful personality and determination he is known as the ‘Tiger’ of the village.

12. Range Gowda explains to the people the significance of spinning and weaving, of non-violence and of the value and meaning of independence. During Moorthy’s period of imprisonment, he boosts the morale of the people, guides and encourages them and sees to it that none falters and falls away. Without his active help and co-operation, Moorthy would not have been so successful in his mission.

13. Bhatta, the first Brahmin.

14. Bhatta is an unworthy husband with his lack of consideration for his wife. On the days he dines out his poor wife has only dal - soup and rice. Bhatta has no thought of her. His wife dies and soon this middle-aged, pot-bellied priest marries a girl of twelve and half years old. There is dowry too: A thousand rupees cash and five acres of wet land and a real seven days marriage.

15. It is Bhatta, who is responsible for the excommunication of Moorthy. He keeps the Swami in the city informed of happenings in the village, incites the people against Moorthy and other Gandhites and does his best to sabotage the movement. He sides with Bade Khan, sets afloat the rumours regarding Moorthy’s
excommunication and so hastens the death of his mother.

16. It is Bade Khan’s duty to maintain law and order and put down the Gandhi movement.

17. Bade Khan moves about the village secretly watching the people, collecting information and passing it on to the city authorities.

18. The white man at the Skeffington Estate is popularly known as the "Hunter Sahib" because he always carries a hunter or ship in his hand and freely uses it on all those workers on his estate who neglect their duty.

19. The coffee workers are exploited in many ways. They are given wretched one-room huts to live in which they are provided little protection against the rains which are heavy and frequent. No wages are paid - they are deposited on their behalf with the ‘Hunter Sahib’ and they remain with him. Only the meagerest food is allowed to them. They are made to work from early in the morning till late in the evening, till it is dark. There is worst kind of economic exploitation. The workers are exploited sexually also.

20. The Sahib has been humanized by showing that he distributes peppermints and toffees among the children of the workers. The climate is damp and the outbreak of malaria is frequent. When the workers are ill, he goes from hut to hut distributing quinine tablets.

21. Sankar, the advocate, is a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He believes in his principles of truth and non-violence and tries to follow in his footsteps. He is a true patriot and does his best for the cause of freedom. He wears Khadi and does not go to functions where people come wearing dresses made of foreign cloth. When Gandhi is arrested and sent to jail, he keeps fast for with Gandhi he believes that fasting is a means of self-purification.

22. Like a waterfall, Venkamma is always shedding tears and roaring. She rails against practically everybody in the novel. She is a woman of a petty, jealous nature. She cannot bear to see others prosperous or successful. There is no end to her spite, jealousy and vindictiveness.

6.4

1. Kanthapura is a village in Mysore in the Province of Kara.
2. Kanthapura has twenty - four houses in the Brahmin quarter; it has a Pariah - quarter, weavers - quarter and a Sudra - quarter.

3. There is Postmaster Suryanarayana with his two - storeyed house. Patwari Nanjundiah who had even put glass - panes to the windows; the thotti - house of pock - marked Sidda which had a big veranda, large roof and a granary; Waterfall Venkamma who roared day and night; and Zamindar Bhatta who has gone on adding peasants lands to his own domain; the young, idealistic corner - house Moorthy who is destined to shake the village out of its complacency and put it on the map of Mysore and India; and the nine - beamed house of Patel Range Gowda, the vigorous peasant chief of the village wedded to the soil from immemorial generations.

4. Kenchamma is the village goddess and marriage, funeral, sickness, death ploughing, harvesting, arrests, release - all are watched over by Kenchamma.

5. Kanthapura deals with the masses of the village, of their suffering, of their exile, of their momentary defeat which has in it seeds of ultimate victory.

6.5

1. Raja Rao has used mythical technique to glorify the present and to impart to the novel the dignity and status of an epic or Purana. By its use, the novelist has enriched the texture of his novel and imparted to it a rare expansiveness, elevation and dignity.

2. Mahatma Gandhi is Rama, the red foreigner or the brown inspector of police who flourishes a lathi is but a soldier in ten - headed Ravana's army of occupation and oppression. Nay more: the Satyagrahi in prison is the divine Krishna himself in Kansa's prison.

3. In Harikathas, the past and the present are juxtaposed and contemporary events and personalities are constantly linked - up with Puranic Gods and epic - heroes and heroines. One of the Harikathas he recites is about the birth of Gandhi.

4. Jayaramachar jumbles with splendid unconcern traditional mythology and contemporaneous politics: Shiva is three - eyed and Swaraj too is three - eyed: self - purification, Hindu - Muslim unity, Khaddar. Gandhi is Shiva himself in human shape: he is engaged in slaying the serpent of foreign rule, as the boy Krishna killed the
serpent Kaliya. Bhajans and Harikathas mix religion and politics freely and often purposefully, the reading of the Gita and hand-spinning are elevated into a daily ritual, like Pooja. Gandhi's trip to England to attend the Second Round Table Conference is invested with Puranic significance.

6.6

5. Moorthy is said to have had, not an actual, firsthand experience of Gandhi by personal contact but a vision of Gandhi addressing a public meeting and he pushing his way through the crowd and joining the band of volunteers and receiving inspiration by a touch of Gandhi's hand.

6. Moorthy formed the Congress Committee in the village, maintained constant touch with the city Congress Committee and through newspapers and other publicity material keeps the people constantly in touch with events in other parts of the country.

7. Moorthy enthuses the women of the villages to take to charkha-spinning and later on organizes the women voluntary corps.

8. Kashipura

9. Raja Rao's presentation of the Gandhian movement is impartial and objective. There is no idealization; both the dark and the bright sides of the picture have been presented. The depiction of the Gandhi movement goes along with the depiction of the petty jealousies and trivialities of village life.

6.7

1. The narrator is an old woman with a highly poetic imagination and consequently there is a constant mingling of poetry and politics, constant heightening and transmuting of reality. Everything is seen as colored by her poetic imagination.

2. Rangamma, one of the more cultured and educated women of the village, discourses on science in an easy, popular way and the narrators account of her discourse is a curious mixture of science, poetry and fantasy.

3. The radio becomes the speech that goes across the air; Jagdish Chandra Bose's discovery gets expressed as the plants that weep; and Darwin's Theory of Evolution as the monkeys that were the men we have become; of the seventeenth century French
scientist's germ theory as worms thin - as - dust that get into your
blood and give you dysentery and plague and cholera.

4. There is a vivid description of the soldiers and coolies being asked
to walk over the prostrate Satyagrahis and many of them joining
the Satyagrahis instead.

6.8 & 6.9
1. For the villagers, nature is a living being and even hills, rivers, fields
and animals have a distinct presence, a personality of their own.

2. The author presents them as various forms of Shakti. Whereas
Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive, she is also firm as
rock, great in suffering. Psychologically prepared for the titanic
encounter, they get much inspiration.

3. Shakti's indomitable spirit possesses them in their Satyagraha (non
violent struggle) against the British government. When the police
ill-treats them with their sticks and boots, the women think, move
and act as one, for they are more distinct and pervasive in the
devotional aspect. Woman as the Eternal Devotee, shakti kneeling
in rapt adoration in front of Siva, reveals herself through them as
they listen to Jayaramachar retelling epic stories and to
Ramakrishnayya reading passages from the Scriptures.

4. The narrator dreams of a happy ending to a modern 'Ramayana'
where Rama (Gandhi) will return from his exile (visit to England)
with Sita (India) who had been captured by Ravana (the British)
and as he returns to Ayodhya (Delhi) Bharata (Nehru) who has
been reigning as regent, will welcome him and there will be
celestial flowers showered upon his aerial chariot.

5. Achakka has used the ancient Indian way of narration. It is a
breathless story illustrating the age old Indian tradition of story-
telling.

6.10
1. Making an old woman the narrator, enables Raja Rao to mingle fact
and myth in an effective manner. The language used by her is of
an elemental quality. Her reaction to things is direct and vivid, not
literary and second-hand. The character also enables Raja Rao
to achieve his professed aim of reproducing the rhythm of Indian
speech in English as well as of coming closest to the oral tradition
of story-telling.
2. For Achakka, Jawaharlal is a Bharata to the Mahatma - the Mahatma who, she believes, will slay Ravana so that Sita may be freed. For her Gandhi has attained the status of God and Moorthy is regarded as his avatar in Kanthapura. To her the Satyagraha becomes a religious ceremony to which she devotes her sacred ardour.

3. Achakka's comments are balanced and shrewd. They serve to place both character and incident in a correct perspective and are a constant check on over-idealization. They serve to impart realism and authenticity to the narrative.

4. The story is on two levels and thus acquires a dramatic character. Narration and description go hand in hand with a chorus-like evaluation of character and action. They increase our understanding of events and character serve as a unifying force in the work. The narration is dramatic; it varies according to the requirements of the action and the situation.

6.11

1. The main plot of the novel deals with the impact of the Gandhi movement on a remote South Indian village, called Kanthapura, a village which is a microcosm of the macrocosm, for what happens in this remote village was happening all over India in those stirring decades.

2. The sub-plot of the novel deals with the happening on the Skeffington Coffee Estate in the neighborhood and throws a flood of light on the exploitation of brutality of the Englishmen and the various ways in which they exploited the people.

3. The plot of the novel begins with an account of a small South Indian village called Kanthapura, its locale, its crops, its poverty and the ignorant and superstitious nature of the people.

4. The religious action begins with the unearthing of a half-sunken lingam by Moorthy and its consecration.

5. The coolies' side with the Satyagrahis and refuse to march over their bodies lie down by them and is brutally beaten up by the police.

6.12

1. Just as Kanthapura is representative of thousands of Indian
villages, so is the coffee estate representative of scores of British-owned estates in India, whether they are coffee plantations, or some other plantations.

2. Raja Rao included the depiction of the coffee estate in the novel because he wanted to include an insistence of large-scale economic exploitation of Indians by Britishers and the depiction of the coffee estate enabled him to do that.

3. A foreman or Maistri was sent from time to time to recruit coolies according to need.

4. The coolies were given one rupee each as advance and were promised a four-anna bit for a man and a two anna bit for a woman as daily wages. They were also told that they would get plenty of white rice and they would merely be required to pick coffee leaves.

5. The workers were exposed to dangers and diseases of various kinds. The Estate was infested with snakes and many died of snake-bites while at work. Besides this, there were heavy rains and the workers would have to work in rains drenched to their very skin. With the rains, there would come Malaria and take a heavy toll of life. Men, women and children would die in large numbers. They also suffered from cough, vomiting and dysentery.

6. Rachanna and his wife played an important part in the Gandhian movement. Infact Rachanna was elected member of the Congress Committee at Kanthapura. During the struggle with the authorities he was arrested along with the other Satyagrahis. It was Rachanna who objected to Moorthy being bound with ropes when the police came to arrest him.

6.13

1. Mahatma Gandhi believed that Swaraj itself could be attained after certain social reforms and social awakening. These social reforms included freedom from economic exploitation by the West by boycotting foreign goods and by spinning yarn and wearing Khadi made from it, also eradication of untouchability and the rigidities of caste system and removal of illiteracy and ignorance and superstition.

2. The people in remote and far-away Kanthapura wait with baited breath and observe a fast in order to show their solidarity with
Mahatma Gandhi as he sets out on his historic Dandi March.

3. The peasants refused to pay revenue and other taxes to the government, with the result that many of them were evicted from their lands and lost all means of earning a livelihood.

4. Sankar did not like people to use English words in conversation and when anyone did so inadvertently he had to drop a small coin into a box kept for this purpose, the collections from which were contributed to the Congress funds.

5. Sankar's fanaticism was revealed in the matter of fasting for he observed a fast and made the members of his family also observe a fast, on most of the days connected with Mahatma Gandhi of other patriotic leaders, or days of national importance, e.g. the anniversary of the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh.

6. Bhatta and Swami

7. The boycott of foreign goods was meant to cripple the efforts of foreign manufactures to exploit and impoverish India and the insistence on spinning taught people the dignity of labor as well as self reliance.

8. Gandhi's emphasis on education and avoiding alcoholic drinks had both a moral and an economic aim. If the poor coolies who are grossly exploited by the owners of plantations learn to read and write, they would become better acquainted with their rights and would not be cheated so easily. Drink is the greatest enemy of the poor because it never allows a person to spend his income on essential items or make a saving for a rainy day. The picketing of the toddy grove and the toddy booth has the immediate effect of making the coolies realize how evil toddy - drinking is, so that some of them even take a pledge that they would never touch the poisonous drink again.

6.14

1. Rangamma reads the newspapers herself and thus keeps herself and others acquainted with the day to day developments elsewhere.

2. Rangamma's father used to expound the Vedantic texts at Harikatha meetings.

3. Rangamma is practical - minded for when she comes to know that
some husbands are complaining that they are not receiving proper
attention at home because their wives are away to participate in
drill, she at once takes proper measures and explains to the
Sevikas that they must not neglect their household duties.

4. Ratna

5. Through the character of Waterfall Venkamma, Raja Rao brings out
the pettiness, the jealousy, the triviality and orthodoxy of women.

6. Rangamma is against Moorthy because he refused to marry her
second daughter.

7. A typical Indian woman is coy, delicate and submissive; she is also
firm as rock, great in suffering.

Field work

Compare and contrast R. K. Narayan's novel Waiting for the
Mahatma with Raja Rao's Kanthapura. They share the common
experience of Indian freedom struggle with a difference. Note the
similarities and the differences.
Lokmanya Tilak - Essays

Chapter 7

About the Author, Bal Gangadhar Tilak

Tilak was born as Keshav Gangadhar Tilak on 23rd July 1856 and died on 1st August 1920 (aged 64). He was an Indian nationalist, teacher, social reformer and independence fighter who was the first popular leader of the Indian Independence Movement. The British colonial authorities derogatorily called the great leader as "Father of the Indian unrest". He was also conferred with the honorary title of Lokmanya, which literally means "accepted by the people (as their leader)". Tilak was one of the first and strongest advocates of "Swaraj" (self-rule) in Indian consciousness. His famous quote, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it!" is well-remembered in India even today.

Tilak was born at Chikhalgaon, Ratnagiri in Maharashtra to a Chitapavan Brahmin family. His father was a famous schoolteacher and a Sanskrit scholar who died when Tilak was sixteen. His brilliance rubbed off on young Tilak, who graduated from Deccan College, Pune in 1877. Tilak was among one of the first generation of Indians to receive a college education.

Tilak was expected, as was the tradition then, to actively participate in public affairs. He believed that "Religion and practical life
are not different. To take to Sanyasa (renunciation) is not to abandon life. The real spirit is to make the country your family instead of working only for your own. The step beyond is to serve humanity and the next step is to serve God." This dedication to humanity would be a fundamental element in the Indian Nationalist movement.

After graduating, Tilak began teaching mathematics in a private school in Pune. Later due to some ideological differences with the colleagues in the New School, he decided to withdraw from that activity. About that time he became a journalist. He was a strong critic of the Western education system, feeling it demeaned the Indian students and disrespected India’s heritage. He organized the Deccan Education Society with a few of his college friends including Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Mahadev Ballal Namjoshi and Vishnu Shastri Chiplunkar whose goal was to improve the quality of education for India’s youth. The Deccan Education Society was set up to create a new system that taught young Indians nationalist ideas through an emphasis on Indian culture. Tilak began a mass movement towards independence that was camouflaged by an emphasis on a religious and cultural revival. He taught Mathematics at Fergusson College. Tilak joined the Indian National Congress in 1890. He opposed its moderate attitude, especially towards the fight for self government. He was one of the most eminent radicals at the time.

In 1891 Tilak opposed the Age of Consent bill. The act rose the age at which a girl could get married from 10 to 12. The Congress and other liberals supported it but Lokmanya Tilak was set against it, terming it an interference with Hinduism. A plague epidemic spread from Mumbai to Pune in late 1896 and by January 1897, it reached epidemic proportions. In order to suppress the epidemic and prevent its spread, it was decided to take drastic action, accordingly a Special Plague Committee, with jurisdiction over Pune city, its suburbs and Pune cantonment was appointed under the Chairmanship of W. C. Rand, I. C. S, Assistant Collector of Pune by way of a government order dated 8th March 1897. Tilak took up the people’s cause by publishing inflammatory articles in his paper ‘Kesari’[Kesari was written in Marathi and Maratha was written in English], quoting the Hindu Scripture, the Bhagavad Gita, to say that no blame could be attached to anyone who killed an oppressor without any thought of reward. Following this, on 22nd June, Rand and another British officer
Lt. Ayerst were shot and killed by the Chaphekar brothers and their other associates. Tilak was charged with incitement to murder and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. When he emerged from prison, he was revered as a martyr and a national hero and adopted a new slogan, "Swaraj (Self-Rule) is my birth right and I shall have it." Following the partition of Bengal in 1905, which was a strategy set out by Lord Curzon to weaken the nationalist movement, Tilak encouraged a boycott, regarded as the Swadeshi movement.

Tilak opposed the moderate views of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and was supported by fellow Indian nationalists Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai in Punjab. They were referred to as the Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate. In 1907, the annual session of the Congress Party was held at Surat (Gujarat). Trouble broke out between the moderate and the extremist factions of the party over the selection of the new President of the Congress. The party split into the "Jahal matavadi" ("Hot Faction," or extremists), led by Tilak, Pal and Lajpat Rai, and the "Maval matavadi" ("Soft Faction," or moderates). The radicals like Aurobindo Ghose were supporters of Tilak.

On 30th April 1908 two Bengali youths, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose, threw a bomb on a carriage at Muzzafarpur in order to kill the Chief Presidency Magistrate Douglas Kingsford of Calcutta fame but erroneously killed some women travelling in it. While Chaki committed suicide when caught, Bose was hanged. Tilak in his paper Kesari defended the revolutionaries and called for immediate Swaraj or Self-rule. The Government swiftly arrested him for sedition. He asked the young Muhammad Ali Jinnah to represent him. But the British judge convicted him and he was imprisoned from 1908 to 1914 in the Mandalay Prison, Burma. While imprisoned, he continued to read and write, further developing his ideas on the Indian Nationalist movement. While in the prison he wrote the famous "Gita Rahasya". Lots of copies of which were sold and the money was donated for the freedom fighting.

Much has been said of his trial of 1908, it being the most historic trial. His last words on the verdict of the Jury were such: "In spite of the verdict of the Jury, I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destiny of men and nations and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free". These words now can be
seen imprinted on the wall of Room No. 46 at Bombay High Court.

Tilak had mellowed after his release in June 1914, more because of the diabetes and hardship in Mandalay prison. When World War I started in August, Tilak cabled the King Emperor in Britain of his support and turned his oratory to find new recruits for war efforts. He welcomed The Indian Councils Act, popularly known as Minto-Morley Reforms which had been passed by the British parliament in May 1909 terming it as 'a marked increase of confidence between the Rulers and the Ruled'. Acts of violence actually retarded rather than hastened the pace of political reforms, he felt. He was eager for reconciliation with Congress and had abandoned his demand for direct action and settled for agitations 'strictly by constitutional means' - a line advocated by his rival, Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Tilak saw the spark in Gandhi and tried his best to convince Gandhi to leave the idea of "Total Ahimsa" and try to get "Swarajya" by all means. Gandhi though looked upon him as his guru, did not change his mind.

Later, Tilak re-united with his fellow nationalists and re-joined the Indian National Congress in 1916. He also helped found the All India Home Rule League in 1916-18 with G. S. Khaparde and Muhammad Ali Jinnah. After years of trying to reunite the moderate and radical factions, he gave up and focused on the Home Rule League, which sought self-rule. Tilak travelled from village to village trying to conjure up support from farmers and locals to join the movement towards self-rule. Tilak was impressed by the Russian Revolution and expressed his admiration for Lenin.

Tilak, who started his political life as a Maratha propagandist, progressed into a prominent nationalist after his close association with Indian nationalists following the partition of Bengal. When asked in Calcutta whether he envisioned a Maratha type of government for Free India, Tilak replied that the Maratha dominated Governments of 17th and 18th centuries were outdated in the 20th century and he wanted a genuine federal system for Free India where every religion and race was an equal partner. He added that only such a form of Government would be able to safeguard India's freedom. He was the first Congress leader to suggest that Hindi written in the Devanagari script be accepted as the sole national language of India.

In 1894, Tilak transformed household worshipping of Ganesha into Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav and he also made Shiva Jayanti (birth
anniversary celebrations of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj) as a social festival. It is touted to be an effective demonstration of festival procession. Gopal Ganesh Agarkar was the first editor of Kesari, a prominent Marathi weekly in his days which was started by Lokmanya Tilak in 1880-81. Gopal Ganesh Agarkar subsequently left Kesari out of ideological differences with Bal Gangadhar Tilak concerning the primacy of political reforms over social reforms, and started his own periodical Sudharak. Lokmanya Tilak established the Shri Shivaji Raigad Smarak Mandal along with Senapati Khanderao Dabhade IInd of Talegaon Dabhade who became the Founder President of the Mandal. In 1895, Tilak founded the Shri Shivaji Fund Committee for celebration of ‘Shiv Punya Tithi’ and for the reconstruction of the Samadhi of Shivaji Maharaj at Fort Raigad.

Tilak said, "I regard India as my Motherland and my Goddess, the people in India my kith and kin, and loyal and steadfast work for their political and social emancipation my highest religion and duty"

In 1903, he wrote the book The Great - Copyrtyr Dev Karki. In it he argued that the Vedas could only have been composed in the Arctics and the Aryan bards brought them South after the onset of the last Ice Age. He proposed the radically new way to determine the exact time of Vedas. He tried to calculate the time of Vedas by using the position of different Nakshatras. Positions of Nakshtras were described in different Vedas.

Tilak also authored 'Shrimadbhagwadgeetararhasya' - the analysis of 'Karmayoga' in the Bhagavadgita, which is known to be gist of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

Other collections of his writings include:

- The Hindu philosophy of life, ethics and religion (published in 1887).
- Vedic chronology and Vedanga Jyotisha.
- Letters of Lokamanya Tilak, edited by M. D. Vidwans.
- Selected documents of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, 1880-1920, edited by Ravindra Kumar.
- Jedhe Shakawali (Editor)
7.0 Objectives

Friends, this chapter discusses about the selective essays which were a part of Tilak's popular public speeches. Study of this chapter along with Lokmanya Tilak's original speeches will enable you to explain the contemporary times of the British rule and the various opinions of Lokmanya Tilak on issues like:

- Education
- Celebration of festivals
- Language
- Swadeshi movement

7.1 Introduction

Friends, in the last chapter we have studied one of the classic novels of Indian English Literature, i.e. Raja Rao's Kanthapura which deals with the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian struggle for independence. In this chapter, we are going to study another great national hero, Lokmanya Tilak and his views on contemporary conditions of the society and his attitude towards the British regime especially regarding education, Swadeshi movement, celebration of festivals and national language.

7.2 A Standard Character for Indian Languages
This essay is a public speech by Lokmanya Tilak. He was delivering a speech at Nagri Pracharini Sabha. He spoke after the preface speech of the President of the Sabha. As there were many speakers who were to speak, Tilak restricted himself to a few minutes. The Nagri Pracharini Sabha worked also for arriving upon a common language for the Indians. He emphasized that having a common language for the whole of India is a National Movement. Also having a common language is an important element of nationality. Tilak says that through common language, one can express his thoughts to others. He also gives reference of Manu who said that everything can be comprehended or preceded with the help of ‘vak’ or language. Tilak believes that no other force is as powerful as a common language. Tilak had made it clear that the aim of having a common language is not limited to Northern India but to the whole of India including the Southern of the Madras Presidency and so a lot of efforts are needed to achieve this aim. Higher the aim, the greater are the difficulties confronted. Tilak has enlisted the various difficulties in his speech. They are as follows:

1. The first difficulty is historic. India has been a target to various nations and races. It was attacked and conquered by many people right from the Aryans to the Mohammedans and this has destroyed the linguistic harmony of the country. The people of Northern India are mostly Aryan in origin and speak languages derived from Sanskrit. Whereas people from South speak languages that are Dravidian in origin. There is a difference in languages used by the North and the South of India. The difference is in the words and script.

2. The second difficulty is of script. There is a difference between the Urdu script and language and that of Hindi script and language. Also there is a difference between ‘Modi’ or running script character and Balabodha or Devanagari.

3. Even if one has to harmonize a common character for Hindus, one needs to harmonize Aryan or the Devanagari character and the Dravidian character and the Dravidian or Tamil character. There is a difference in the sounds used by both the languages.

Before Tilak began with the speech, the President of the Nagri Pracharini Sabha had cleared that at present they were going to
consider only Aryan group of languages i.e. those derived from Sanskrit i.e., Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarathi and Gurumukhi and their sub-dialects. These languages are written as modifications of the ancient characters of India. However, in the course of time, these languages developed its own peculiarities in grammar, pronunciation and characters and their alphabets are nearly same.

The Sabha aimed at having a common character for all the Aryan languages so that when a book is published, it is readily intelligible to all the Aryan people speaking Aryan languages. Everyone will admit that such common character has many utilities. But the problem arises when a certain character is proposed as best-fitted for all. There will be debates and arguments so as to which language's character is the oldest and the best to be used as a common character.

Tilak opines that one cannot arrive at a conclusion of common character on the basis of poor historic grounds. He gives reference of ancient inscriptions, where less than ten different characters were used since the days of Ashoka. Kharosthi or Brahmi is supposed to be the oldest character. Later on all letters underwent a change and all the present characters are modifications of the ancient characters. So he considers that there is no point in the question of common character on purely historic basis.

To overcome this difficulty, it was suggested that one should adopt Roman characters as it would give a common character to both Asia and Europe. But Tilak finds this suggestion absurd as the Roman alphabet is defective and entirely incapable for expressing the Indian sounds. Even the English grammarians had found it defective because a single letter has three or four sounds and a single sound is represented by two or three letters. To add to the difficulties, to represent the Indian sounds through the Roman characters without using diacritic marks is a Herculean task. So the Roman characters can never be perfect for the Indians. Tilak says that the European Sanskritists had declared that the Devanagari alphabet is more perfect than any that is used in Europe. So Tilak feels that one need not search for a common character for the Aryan languages in India. Infact Tilak confidently ascertains that Indians had put in hard efforts in classification of the Indian letters and sounds and it is perfected in the works of Panini and this perfection is not found in any other language in the world. So the Devanagari alphabet is best suited to
represent different Indian sounds. To prove his thoughts of perfection, Tilak has given an example of the different characters given at the end of each book published in the Sacred Books of the East Series. Finally, Tilak advocates the use and adoption of Devanagari alphabet as a common character. He repeats himself that the question of common character cannot be solved on historical basis.

Tilak makes ironical statements about Lord Curzon’s standard time. He criticizes Lord Curzon for attempting to give standard time rather than standard Sanskrit. Since Indians were then adopting new ideas from the West, people were coining new terms with the help of Sanskrit to express these new ideas. He has also praised the Sabha for preparing a dictionary of scientific terms in Hindi which is a step in securing a common language for all. With this Tilak ends his speech, keeping in mind the speakers that are to follow him.

### 7.2 Check your progress

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Where was Tilak delivering the given speech?
   ____________________________________________________

2. Why does Tilak want a common language?
   ____________________________________________________

3. What does Manu say about language?
   ____________________________________________________

4. Why Tilak feels lots of efforts are needed to achieve the aim of common language?
   ____________________________________________________

5. Enlist the various difficulties in the way of common language.
   ____________________________________________________

6. Which is the Aryan group of languages?
   ____________________________________________________
7.3 Shivaji Festival

This essay is a speech delivered originally in Marathi on the occasion of the Shivaji Coronation festival in Pune on 25th June, 1907.

Tilak begins his essay by saying that it is a pity that government cannot yet understand that the objective of celebrating festivals is not to create disturbances. But the government thinks so because its mind is enveloped in undeserved suspicion. Tilak claims that even in the present public meeting, there were a dozen of detectives and reporters present. He feels it is unreasonable on the part of the government to have suspicion and distrust. Infact he feels, the District Magistrate should have himself attended the meeting to get first hand information of what people say and how they celebrate festivals like Shivaji festival. Tilak says that whatever he is saying then is right from his heart and is his honest opinion so he is ready to say it before His Excellency, the Governor from the housetops, detectives and even before God himself. He feels one should not put forth his views secretly for there is absolutely no need for it. He feels that Indians are not robbers in their own nation. They have every right to proclaim their aspirations openly. Tilak says he is not scared of being put behind the
bars or to face a hearing provided it should be a full and fair hearing. He feels that it is very mean to lay the nets when a person speaks any unguarded word and to penalize and punish the speaker for it. Government should be tolerant and patient enough to hear the entire truth. He feels it is foolish on the part of the government to spend two lakhs on maintaining short-hand reporters and detectives and men of the Intelligence Department. He feels instead this money should be spent on technical education. He criticizes government since it believes that the celebration of the Shivaji festival raises the standard of revolt but Tilak says the idea itself is foolish and absurd since they do not have arms and ammunition. He says that the government is capable of good military strength and its single machine-gun can shower hundreds of bullets per minute which is sufficient to kill hundreds of people in a public meeting.

Tilak feels a detective can never enter the mind of the educated classes. But they need not worry. God is a divine people's detective upon Kings and governments and he will bring justice to the British government. The reason for the mischief of the government is that it considers the educated classes to be its enemy. He refers to Mr. Morley who said that the proletariat should not believe in what the educated men say. Tilak feels the illiterate man of the masses cannot know the cunning way of bureaucratic functioning. He feels that Mr. Morley considers the knowledge of educated men to be his enemy. If this is the case, then he is an enemy of knowledge itself. Tilak here compares Indians with Adam, who was condemned for eating the fruit of knowledge. Similarly, educated Indians are treated for the knowledge they possess. In that case government is classing with those who are the enemies of knowledge itself.

Coming back to the Shivaji festival, Tilak says that he wants to inculcate knowledge among the people about the spirit which Shivaji inculcated in the people of his times. Festivals are infact an incentive for the ambitions of people for a great historic past. Festivals appreciate the courage of the historic heroes who secured salvation inspite of obstacles. They are like antidote to vague despair and manure to the seeds of enthusiasm and the spirit of nationality. Wickedness is never the aim of people when they come together for festivals. Tilak feels there is no lawlessness in his speech and whatever he is propagandizing is legitimate and lawful action. But it is a
pity that government treats lawful actions to be unlawful. He gives here example of Lala Lajpat Rai who didn't do anything unlawful yet the government conspired against him and deported him. This Tilak feels is a sign of doom, decay and demoralization of the British government.

Mr. Morley is compared to the orthodox Pundits of Benares since both of them are strangers to worldly wisdom, according to Tilak. Tilak feels that is an irony of fate that the greater the scholarship, the less is the statesmanship. Mr. Morley had ridiculed the educated classes for being poor though he himself had suffered the same lot. The educated Indians and English Pundits share a common quality of high aspirations to rise to high office. Tilak has criticized Mr. Morley's analysis of the factors of Indian population. Morley has claimed that the Princes and the Notables are at his side. Whereas, the fact is that the very existence of the Princes is dependent on the British government because the Princes are mere puppets at the hands of the government. Mr. Morley had claimed the support of the merchant class. The merchant class is engaged in British trade so they will never speak against government since they are enjoying luxuries of life. Lastly, Tilak says that the lowest and the poorest classes and the illiterates are the supporting factors of the government. He says that Mr. Logan also shares the same view with Tilak. Tilak feels that the false pretensions of these illiterates will be doomed with extension of education and so the government is reluctant at extending.

The educated class has knowledge and the courage for agitation so the State Secretary treats them as enemies. The educated classes need not feel despair as they have one compensating advantage of knowledge which has the potential for wealth. Government can think of relying on those classes who can support them. History has proved that Kingdoms were undone by the dissatisfaction of beggars. Tilak has given an example of Chanakya who was poor but exterminated the whole race of the Nandas in return for the insult he had suffered. So he feels that Mr. Morley should not scorn the power of the educated men for being poor. Infact his attitude shows the decline of the British Empire. Mr. Morley is criticized by Tilak that he has disillusioned the over credulous and optimistic souls and has proved that the greatest Radical is as worst as a Conservative. Tilak is hopeful about the younger generation as it is not disillusioned by
deluding optimism and has ample of courage and perseverance. He criticizes the Proclamation of 1858 for being called a Contract whereas Tilak feels no Contract can exist between unequals. Also the contract was calculated one to make peace. It is the belief of the Britishers that a political agitation is an attempt to enforce terms of such contracts and agreements. Whereas, the Eastern belief is that agitation does not control the power of the King. Some foolish people have tried to fling the belief among Indians that a King is a part and parcel of the Godhead. By saying so it is believed that people are detracted from the demand for popular institution. The canons of interpretation of a text are as important as the text itself and it is true in all the senses. According to the Vedanta, the King or Sovereign is a part and parcel of the God - head and so is every member of the subject people. Every soul, according to Tilak, is a part of the soul of the Almighty God so all are equal. So it is absurd that the old Indian law - givers regarded a King to be absolved from all duties towards his subjects. He gives example of Manu who has said that a King who does not judge his subjects precisely is entitled to go to hell. The duty of such punishment was not an agreement but was imposed by such Rishis who were totally disinterested in worldly affairs so the holy work of legislation was assigned to them. The Hindus believe in a variety of Gods and their incarnations and the belief in the divine punishment to Kings if being undutiful. The King is also considered to be a deity but the conflict between him and his subjects begets another deity superior to him. If the course of the subjects is just, the second deity silently absorbs the first. Tilak here gives example of Parashurama and Rama who were incarnations of God. It is a belief of Puranas that when the sixth incarnation was numbered, the flame of glory and power came out from the month of Parashurama and entered that of Rama. After this event, Parashurama was a mere human being deprived of divinity. The oriental ideas believe that the divine element in kinship has its own limitations and it never propagands that the tyranny of a ruler should be tolerated. A king is divine only until he is a just king. He becomes an "asura" when he ceases to be just.

Shivaji, says Tilak, never followed any text like "Na Vishnu Prithivipathi" or any philosophy of the principles of the political government of Hobbes, Locke or Rousseau. He did not follow Encyclopaedists who tried to replace the old religious theory of kinship
by a Secular Theory of Contract. Shivaji knew Vedanta both in theory and practice. The Vedanta is capable of supplementing the foolish theories of government but a wise Vedantin knows how to refute those theories in terms of Vedanta itself. Tilak feels one needs to empathize with others. The path of duty is full of hurdles. For Indians, the “theory” of the government of India initiated by the bureaucracy appears to be a revolution. The revolution though must be bloodless implies that people do not undergo sufferings. Tilak believes that one needs to suffer for winning and achieving success. The war between selfishness and reason if is fought with the weapons of syllogism results in a victory of selfishness. It is an established fact that an appeal to the good feelings of rulers displays narrow limits. Tilak feels even if the revolution is bloodless, one needs to suffer and go to prison. The fight is with bureaucracy who tries its best to curb and suppress people. One needs to be consistent with the spirit of laws and the bloodlessness of the revolution. There are many means to achieve the object of resisting the tyranny of bureaucracy to bring in reforms and get privileges. Tilak appeals people to realize that they are a great factor in the administration of India. Infact they are lubricants of the huge machinery of administration.

If people decide, they can make administration impossible. They can have non-cooperation in managing the rail-road, telegraph, settlement and collection of revenues which will lead to collapse of administration. Tilak wants people to change their lot of suffering at the hands of the Britishers. He questions whether the Europeans will work on the Indian wages of eight annas a day. One needs to consider if their present conduct is self-respectful to themselves and the nation. People are suffering humiliation when foreigners wonder how three hundred millions of Indians are suffering injustice without protest. In putting forth these views, Tilak does not feel he is violating the spirit of laws of any constitution. He is sure that he is not violating the sense of God’s justice. Infact opposing the reasonable demands of the Indian people is offending against God’s justice.

Tilak is not just criticizing the Britishers but also expresses appreciation. He praises the government for maintaining an unfailing succession of public workers and wants Indians to imitate them. He gives example of Lala Lajpat Rai who when went abroad should be replaced by someone else like a junior Collector who steps into the
shoes of a Senior - it is useless to hope that petitions will help in releasing Lalaji though government has no intention of giving him a punishment of life imprisonment. Lalaji's deportation is meant to terrorize those who follow his footsteps. If people stop their agitation, government will think that its terrorism has triumphed. Tilak also confesses that declaring loyalty to Lalaji at a public occasion is liable to punishment. He feels anyhow government is shrewd enough to know the real sentiments of the people no matter whether people openly confess it or not. The government also puts down agitation as a sign of disloyalty whereas, it is aware of the real character of those who claim loyalty. Tilak feels it needs courage to declare that there is disloyalty in agitating for constitutional rights and one needs courage to continuously demand rights though it is treated to be a sign of disloyalty. Tilak feels it is high time to formulate and consistently demand for important rights and privileges. Tilak is aware that the reporters present in the meeting will report about his speech and that will help to promote the cause for which he is fighting. Tilak further argues with the view put forth by Mr. Kinckaid's lecture on Peshwas where he differs with the reasons of the downfall of the Peshwas but at the same time Tilak appreciates him for his correct view of the period of the Maratha history. Mr. Kinckaid had expressed an opinion that there was a downfall of the Peshwas because they were usurpers of the political power. But Tilak argues that any single family or dynasty cannot produce an unbroken succession of men who have incomparable valor, ability and statesmanship like the family of Balaji Vishwanath. He further compares the situation of the downfall of the Peshwas to that of the Britishers. The British dynastic rule did not collapse because of the Parliament which is composed of many individuals amongst whom the power is segregated. Indians out of their own sufferings and exploitations have realized the importance of popular and representative government and so the aspirations of the Indians are diverted from the patent oriental ideal.

7.3 Check your progress
Answer the following questions briefly:
1. What is the occasion of the speech?
2. Why does Tilak pity the British government?

3. Why does Tilak feel that the District Magistrate should have himself attended the meeting?

4. Why does Tilak feel that government is foolish to spend money?

5. To whom does Tilak compare Indians to?

6. Explain the importance of festivals.

7. To whom does Tilak compare Mr. Morley? Why?

8. Why does the State Secretary treat the educated class as enemies?

9. Why is Tilak hopeful about the younger generation?

10. What are the views of Tilak about a King?

11. Explain the oriental views about King and kinship.
The present speech focuses on the concept of education and how national education should be. The speech was delivered at Barsi in 1908. Tilak begins his speech by saying that the concept of education is not limited to reading and writing but it is just a means of attainment. Education aims to give knowledge of the experiences of our ancestors. This knowledge could be conveyed through books or any other means. Education is a pre-requisite for every business and everyone needs to pass it on to his children. Every business needs education. Tilak says that Indians have hardly realized that their industries have been taken away by the Britishers. He gives example of a potter who knows how to shape a pot of China - clay but is reluctant about what is China clay made of and so he loses his trade to others. Similarly, there is a need for religious education. Tilak feels a person cannot be proud of his religion if he is ignorant of it. The need for religious education has brought in missionary influence all over the country. Uptil now, Indians had not thought of whether they are getting the right sort of education or not. He gives example of some tradesmen who are reluctant to send their children to school because they do not get the education which they really need. Besides, after getting education, their sons are keen to become clerks. They also
feel ashamed to sit on the 'Gaddi' of their forefathers who earned a living out of it. The root cause of the problem lies in the education which is one-sided. The government was in need of engineers, doctors and clerks and so it started a system of education which could complement its needs. So the recipients of this education chose services. In the past, if one passes three or four classes it was sufficient to get through in life. But now this is impossible as one need to live hand to mouth with this meager education. So Tilak says that now Indians have become conscious. Inspite of getting higher education, one is unable to fulfill the basic necessities as the problem lies with the faculty educational system. So the question is how to reform the present system of education? The solution to this problem was simple if the Educational Department was under the control of Indians, necessary changes would be immediately implemented. At first, the Indians would make a demand to the government to transfer the control of educational department to Indians so that the selection of the textbooks etc could be done. There is a need for such education to prepare good citizens as the present system of education does not inspire patriotic sentiments among students. Tilak here gives example of America which teaches the Proclamation of Independence to fifth or sixth classes. This is how they train their children at politics. He gives second example of German government. Around eighty or ninety years ago, the German industries declined due to rivalry between England and Germany. German government immediately took steps of starting scientific and mechanical education in the nation. The result was Germany became so powerful in the area of Commerce that it is dreaded by other nations. Infact, Tilak feels it is the duty of the government to take care of the educational system as it receives taxes to carry out welfare of its citizens. The British government aspires to keep the Indians lame as the commercial interests of England and India are in conflict. So the British government is least interested in having any welfare of its citizens.

The second section of the speech is devoted to the discussion on starting national schools all over India. Tilak feels there have been no convenient schools in our villages where villagers can train their children. So we need to begin the work of starting schools in the villages of India. After a lot of discussion, it was decided for proper education, national schools must be started in the country. Already
private schools were there but they did not give necessary education as they feared losing the grant - in aid. So there is a need for starting national schools. This needs to be done selflessly and for it efforts are already made all over the nation.

The first prime necessity of religious education will be fulfilled in these schools. Tilak feels secular education is not helpful in building up character but religious education studies high principles which keeps away evil pursuits. Religion reveals different forms of the Almighty God and it believes that Man by virtue of his action can even become a God. Tilak questions if Man can turn into a God due to the virtue of his actions, then why Indians cannot become wise and active by means of action like the Europeans. Some people argue that religion instigates quarrels. Tilak questions that how can religion initiate quarrels when all the religions of the world advocate tolerance and respect for all the religions and also to stick to one's own religion. In national schools, Hinduism will be taught to Hindus and Islam to the Muslims. Along with it, they will be taught to forgive and forget the differences of other religions.

The second aspect that Tilak focuses on is to lessen the burden of the study of the foreign languages. He gives example of the Europeans who are hardly able to speak fluent Marathi for a few hours inspite of their long stay in India but the Indian graduates are required to obtain proficiency at English language. These days, one who speaks and writes good and fluent English is considered to be educated. But only knowledge of language is not true education. A compulsion for the study of foreign languages exists only in India for which one needs to spend twenty or twenty - five years for education. But if one studies through the vernacular medium, we will need only seven or eight years. One cannot go through life without learning English but it need not be made compulsory. The Mohammedan rule required learning Persian but it was never a compulsion to study it. So to save time, it was proposed to impart education through one's own vernacular.

The third factor which will be included is the industrial education. No school in India provides industrial education but it is an important thing. Tilak says that in the whole of the century, we do not have the knowledge of preparing a match. At Sholapur, matches are manufactured from straw and India has ample of straw available. If
this industry is overtaken by Indians, the importation of matches will
decrease in India. He gives example of sugar industries. We can get
good quality sugarcane in India as that of Mauritius. Scientific
experiments have proved that sugarcane found in the suburbs of
Poona is as good as the sugarcane of Mauritius. It is a sad reality that
six crores of rupees are drained out of the nation only due to sugar.
Tilak questions whether Indians can try to get sugarcane or the
necessary machinery for its manufacture in our own nation. The
reason for this inefficiency is that our schools do not provide
necessary education for its manufacture. He gives here example of
Germany and England. The British and German government studies
in their nation about which industry is decaying and provides
substantial support to revive it. But the British government does not do
that in India. The government is either doing it purposefully or maybe
not. One fact is clear that Indians must not be silent regarding this
issue. Tilak says we are intending to start a large mechanical and
scientific laboratory. Sugar produces 'rab' from which liquor is
extracted but the government does not allow this extraction. So we
cannot get cheap sugar. Mauritius imports twenty thousand tons of
sugar annually to India and this is possible because of the policies of
the British government. We were unaware of this fact as Indians and
came to knew about these things quite late but we expect that our
young Indians know it quite early in their lives.

The fourth factor that needs to be included in education is politics.
Unfortunately, Tilak says that this subject is not taught in the schools.
Every student must know that the Queen's Proclamation is the
foundation of the rights of the Indians. So the government is
purposefully shutting the young Indian men out of it. Reverend
Dadabhai Naoroji, after untiring efforts of over fifty years has proved this
fact which should be understood by our young students. Every year
around thirty or forty crores are drained out of India without any returns
which has resulted in wretched state of poverty in India. So if our young
students learn these things early, it will have a lasting impression over
their hearts. So this knowledge should be provided through education.
No nation, says Tilak, can progress without difficulties. Indians do not
get the right education because they are demanding for self
government. At the end, Tilak appeals Indians need not wait for these
rights but should wake up and work hard for getting it.
### 7.4 Check your progress

**Answer the following questions briefly:**

1. Where and when was the speech on National Education delivered?

2. How does Tilak emphasize the importance of education?

3. How does Tilak analyze the need for religious education?

4. Why did the government introduce a different system of education?

5. What is the solution to the problem of reforming the present system of education?

6. How does Tilak give example of other nations who have tried to reform their education system?

7. Why is the British government least interested in the welfare of its Indian citizens?

8. Why does Tilak feel there is a need for starting national schools?

9. According to Tilak, how is religious education helpful?
7.5 Honest Swadeshi

The present essay is a speech delivered on Sunday, 23rd Dec, 1906 at Bendon Square, Calcutta under the Presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai. Tilak begins his speech by saying that he had to speak very unexpectedly after his long journey came to an end from Poona. Lord Minto had opened the Industrial Exhibition and at the inauguration said that honest Swadeshism should be disassociated from political aspirations. The Swadeshi agitation had been carried out by workers for motives other than professed and for ends not yet disclosed from the last eighteen months. It is said to be an unfair representation of the state of things and it is an injustice to think so. Tilak questions here that if Lord Minto thinks that Swadeshi workers are dishonest, why did he at all consent to inaugurate the exhibition. If the Swadeshi workers are dishonest and Lord Minto honest, why did they invite him to the formal and ceremonious occasion of opening the Exhibition? So the conclusion is that Lord Minto and the Swadeshi movement leaders cannot get along well together. Tilak feels that if Lord Minto does not need the Swadeshi leaders, the leaders too do not need him. Infact, Lord Minto has made a great blunder by giving consent to open the exhibition. Tilak is questioning if the Swadeshi movement is really
dishonest. He says that governments of Germany, France and America protect their infant industries by imposing taxes on imports. Tilak believes that the Britishers too should do the same if they claim to rule India in the interest of the Indians. Since the government has failed to do its duty years ago, people are themselves trying to do it. He question how can Lord Minto dare to call the Indian leaders dishonest. He further questions if the Indians are abused because they are making an effort to do what the British government has failed to do from years. Maybe, since Lord Minto is the head of a despotic government, his Lordship cannot sympathize with the political aspirations and agitations of the Indians and therefore is expected to be silent on the issue. Tilak says if he had been Lord Minto, he would never call Indians dishonest and he is impolitic to have said so. Previously it was said that Swadeshi is an industrial movement with nothing to do with politics. It is an established fact that the British government is not engaged in Commerce. It began with Commerce but it does not trade now. Infact British trade was adopted and promoted. If the Indian government disassociates itself from commercial aspirations of the Britishers, then Swadeshi workers will disassociate their movement from politics. Tilak is firm at his view that as long as politics and commerce are associated together in the Indian government, disassociating Swadeshi from politics would be a great blunder. Swadeshi is a wide encompassing term which includes politics and a true Swadeshi considers it on political, industrial and economic lines. This will lead Indians towards the status of a civilized nation. Tilak concludes his speech by strongly insisting on repudiating the charge of dishonesty put upon the Swadeshi workers and the movement itself.

7.5 Check your progress

Answer the following questions briefly:

1. When and where was the speech on Honest Swadeshi delivered?

2. How does Tilak defend the honesty of Swadeshi workers?
To conclude this chapter, Tilak expresses his dissatisfaction regarding British regime in an extremist fashion. He voices the injustice done to the fellow Indians in every walk of life even in basic things like choice of a national language. He also wants his countrymen to awaken to the injustices bombarded upon them. He wants Indians to actively participate in the freedom struggle no matter how high it costs.

The next chapter deals with the short story, ‘An Astrloger’s Day’ by R’ K. Narayan as a form of Indian English literature.

### 7.7 Summary

In the present chapter, Tilak expresses his views on varied issues of political and public life of the Indians. He strongly criticizes the Britishers for their oppressive rule imposed upon the Indians through his public speeches. The present chapter studies these selective essays which infact voice out various issues. Tilak speaks about having a common national character for all the Indian languages because he feels that will bring in some unity in the diversity of Indian traditions. Also all the Indian languages would then reach every Indian as comprehension would turn easy. He was a pioneer who began with the celebration of Shivaji festival to bring about awakening about the rich history of the Indians. He also intended people to unite to celebrate the festival and get motivated by the heroic figures and their
charisma. He in fact wanted to use it as a tool of public interaction against the Britishers. He expresses his views on national education which should be based on reasoning and free knowledge and not selective knowledge. He also comments on the quality of education offered by the Britishers. Lastly, he speaks about people’s cooperation for the Swadeshi movement. He wants people to actively participate and fight for political freedom so that all of them can bring into existence the legendary India of their dreams into reality.

**Answers to check your progress**

7.2

1. Tilak was delivering a speech at Nagri Pracharini Sabha.

2. Tilak says that having common language is a part of the National Movement and through common language, one can express his thoughts to others.

3. Tilak gives reference of Manu who said that everything can be comprehended or preceded with the help of ‘vak’ or language.

4. Tilak says that the aim of having a common language is not limited to Northern India but to the whole of India including the Southern of the Madras Presidency and so a lot of efforts are needed to achieve this aim.

5. The difficulties in achieving the aim of common language are: historic, script. Also one needs to harmonize Aryan or the Devanagari character and the Dravidian character and the Dravidian or Tamil character. There is a difference in the sounds used by both the languages.

6. Aryan group of languages are those derived from Sanskrit i.e., Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarathi and Gurumukhi and their sub-dialects.

7. The Sabha aimed at having a common character for all the Aryan languages so that when a book is published, it is readily intelligible to all the Aryan people speaking Aryan languages.

8. The Roman alphabet is defective and entirely incapable for expressing Indian sounds. Even the English grammarians had found it defective because a single letter has three or four sounds and a single sound is represented by two or three letters. To add to
the difficulties, to represent Indian sounds through Roman characters without using diacritic marks is a Herculean task. So the Roman characters can never be perfect for the Indians.

9. Tilak confidently ascertains that Indians had put in hard efforts in classification of Indian letters and sounds and it is perfected in the works of Panini and this perfection is not found in any other language in the world. So Devanagari alphabet is best suited to represent different Indian sounds.

10. Tilak has praised the Sabha for preparing a dictionary of scientific terms in Hindi which is a step in securing a common language for all.

7.3

1. The occasion of the speech is Shivaji Coronation festival in Pune on 25th June, 1907.

2. Tilak feels that it is a pity that British government cannot yet understand that the objective of celebrating festivals is not to create disturbances. But the government thinks so because its mind is enveloped in undeserved suspicion.

3. Tilak feels the District Magistrate should have himself attended the meeting to get first hand information of what people say and how they celebrate festivals like Shivaji festival.

4. Tilak feels it is foolish on the part of the government to spend two lakhs on maintaining short-hand reporters and detectives and men of the intelligence department. He feels instead this money should be spent on technical education.

5. Tilak compares Indians with Adam, who was condemned for eating the fruit of knowledge. Similarly, educated Indians are treated for the knowledge they possess.

6. Festivals are an incentive for the ambitions of people for a great historic past. Festivals appreciate the courage of the historic heroes who secured salvation inspite of obstacles. They are like antidote to vague despair and manure to the seeds of enthusiasm and the spirit of nationality. Wickedness is never the aim of people when they come together for festivals.

7. Mr. Morley is compared to the orthodox Pundits of Benares since
both of them are strangers to worldly wisdom, according to Tilak.

8. The educated class has knowledge and the courage for agitation so the State Secretary treats them as enemies.

9. Tilak is hopeful about the younger generation as it is not disillusioned by deluding optimism and has courage and perseverance.

10. The King or Sovereign is a part and parcel of the God - head and according to the Vedanta, so is every member of the subject people. Every soul, according to Tilak, is a part of the soul of the Almighty God so all are equal.

11. The oriental ideas believe that the divine element in kinship has its own limitations and it never propagands that the tyranny of a ruler should be tolerated. A king is divine only until he is a just king. He becomes an "asura" when he ceases to be just.

12. Tilak appeals people to realize that they are a great factor in the administration of India. Infact they are lubricants of the huge machinery of administration.

13. People can have non - cooperation in managing the rail - road, telegraph, settlement and collection of revenues which will lead to collapse of administration. Tilak wants people to change their lot of suffering at the hands of the Britishers.

14. He praises the government for maintaining an unfailing succession of public workers and wants Indians to imitate them.

15. Mr. Kinckaid had expressed an opinion that there was downfall of the Peshwas because they were usurpers of the political power. But Tilak argues that any single family or dynasty cannot produce an unbroken succession of men who have incomparable valor, ability and statesmanship like the family of Balaji Vishwanath.

7.4

1. The speech was delivered at Barsi in 1908.

2. The concept of education is not limited to reading and writing but it is just a means of attainment. Education aims to give knowledge of the experiences of our ancestors. This knowledge could be conveyed through books or any other means. Education is a pre - requisite for every business and everyone needs to pass it on to his
children. Every business needs education.

3. Tilak feels a person cannot be proud of his religion if he is ignorant of it. The need for religious education has brought in missionary influence all over the country. Uptil now, Indians had not thought of whether they are getting the right sort of education or not.

4. The government was in need of engineers, doctors and clerks and so it started a system of education which could complement its needs. So the recipients of this education chose services.

5. The solution to this problem was simple if the Educational Department was under the control of Indians, necessary changes would be immediately implemented. At first, the Indians would make a demand to the government to transfer the control of educational department to Indians so that the selection of the textbooks etc could be done. There is a need for such education to prepare good citizens the present education does not inspire patriotic sentiments among students.

6. There is a need for such education to prepare good citizens the present education does not inspire patriotic sentiments among students. Tilak here gives example of America which teaches the Proclamation of Independence to fifth or sixth classes. This is how they train their children at politics. He gives second example of German government. Around eighty or ninety years ago, the German industries declined due to rivalry between England and Germany. German government immediately took steps of starting scientific and mechanical education in the nation. The result was Germany became so powerful in the area of commerce that it is dreaded by other nations.

7. The British government aspires to keep the Indians lame as the commercial interests of England and India are in conflict. So the British government is least interested in having any welfare of its citizens.

8. Tilak feels there have been no convenient schools in our villages where villagers can train their children. So we need to begin the work of starting schools in villages. After a lot of discussion, it was decided for proper education, national schools must be started in the country. Already private schools were there but they did not give necessary education as they fear of losing the grant - in aid.
So there is a need for starting national schools.

9. Tilak feels secular education is not helpful in building up character but religious education studies high principles which keeps away evil pursuits. Religion reveals different forms of the Almighty God and it believes that man by virtue of his action can even become a God.

10. Tilak questions that how can religion initiate quarrels when all the religions of the world advocate tolerance and respect for all the religions and also to stick to one's own religion. In national schools, Hinduism will be taught to Hindus and Islam to the Muslims. Along with it they will be taught to forgive and forget the differences of other religions.

11. A compulsion for the study of foreign languages exists only in India for which one needs to spend 20 or 25 years for education. But if one studies through the vernacular medium, we will need only 7 or 8 years. One cannot go through life without learning English but it need not be made compulsory. So to save time, it was proposed to impart education through one's own vernacular.

12. No school in India provides industrial education but it is an important thing. He gives here example of Germany and England. The British and German government studies in their nation about which industry is decaying and provides substantial support to revive it. But the British government does not do that in India. Indians are purposefully kept away from such knowledge so that British government keeps prospering economically and so there is a need for industrial education.

13. Tilak says that politics is not taught in the schools. Every student must know that the Queen's Proclamation is the foundation of the rights of the Indians. So the government is purposefully shutting the young Indian men out of it. So if our young students learn these things early, it will have a lasting impression over their hearts. So this knowledge should be provided through education.

7.5

1. The present essay is a speech delivered on Sunday, 23rd Dec, 1906 at Bendon Square, Calcutta under the Presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai.
2. Tilak questions here that if Lord Minto thinks that Swadeshi workers are dishonest, why did he consent to inaugurate exhibition. If the workers are dishonest and Lord Minto honest, why did they invite him to the formal and ceremonious occasion of opening the Exhibition? So the conclusion is that Lord Minto and leaders cannot get along together. Tilak feels that if Lord Minto does not need the leaders too do not need him.

3. Tilak is questioning if the Swadeshi movement is really dishonest. He says that governments of Germany, France and America protect their infant industries by imposing taxes on imports. Tilak believes that Britishers too should do the same if they claim to rule India in the interest of the Indians. Since the government has failed to do its duty years ago, people are themselves trying to do it. He further questions if the Indians are abused because they are making an effort to do what the British government has failed to do from years.

4. Since Lord Minto is the head of a despotic government, his Lordship cannot sympathize with the political aspirations and agitations of the Indians.

5. If the Indian government disassociates itself from commercial aspirations of the Britishers, then Swadeshi workers will disassociate their movement from politics. Tilak is firm at his view that as long as politics and commerce are associated together in the Indian government, disassociating Swadeshi from politics would be a blunder. Swadeshi is a wide encompassing term which includes politics and a true Swadeshi considers it on political, industrial and economic lines. This will lead Indians towards the status of a civilized nation.

Field work

Compare and contrast Gandhian ideology and philosophy as expressed in Raja Rao's Kanthapura with Tilak's ideology and philosophy. They share the common objective of Indian freedom struggle with a difference. Note the similarities and the differences.
R. K. Narayan's 'An Astrologer's Day'

About the author, R. K. Narayan

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan (1906 - 2002) is one of the best-known Indian English writers. He was born and brought up in Madras. He began by contributing items to a city newspaper. When Punch accepted one of his pieces, he embarked in earnest on his career as a novelist and a short story writer. His writings portray the Indian ethos with remarkable simplicity and humor. He created the fictional world of Malgudi. A winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award (1960) and the Padma Vibhushan (2000), he was nominated for a term in the Rajya Sabha. His novel, The Guide (1958), has been made into a popular film. Narayan also wrote essays, both personal and general, an autobiography (My Days, 1974), a travelogue (My Dateless Diary, 1964) and retold Indian epics and myths (The Ramayana, the Mahabharata and Gods, Demons and Others).

In addition to his fifteen novels, Narayan has written more than two hundred short stories. He is a prolific writer whose works usually culminate in an ironic twist. He declared, "Only the story matters that are all ... if a story is in tune completely with the truth of life, truth as I perceive it, then it will be automatically significant."
“An Astrologer's Day” is a story about a man who runs away from his home and pretends to be an astrologer after imagining that he has committed a murder. In a strange situation, an ironic twist of fate, he runs into the very man he thought he had killed.

8.0 Objectives

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Short Story as a form

8.3 R.K. Narayan as a short story writer

8.4 Theme of “An Astrologer's Day”

8.5 Summary of "An Astrologer's Day"

8.6 Conclusion

8.7 Summary

- Answers to check your progress
- Field work

8.0 Objectives

Friends, in this chapter we are going to study Short Story as a form of Indian English Literature through the short story, 'An Astrologer's Day' by R. K. Narayan. The study of this chapter will enable you to:

- Discuss short story as a form of literature.
- Explain the style and various techniques used in the story under discussion.

8.1 Introduction

Friends, in the last chapter, we have studied one of the great classic novels of Indian English Literature, i.e. Kanthapura written by one of the big three early novelists of Indian English Literature, i.e., Raja Rao. The novel describes the simple rustic life of a South Indian village, Kanthapura which undergoes a sea change when the whirlwind of Gandhian freedom struggle reaches Kanthapura and the village enthusiastically participates in the movement.
In the present chapter, we are moving from the novel to a short story, 'An Astrologer's Day' by R. K. Narayan. The story deals with a day's events in the life of a good for nothing fellow turned into an astrologer to earn his bread and butter. A single day brings in his drastic past back before him but being a smart fellow, he finely deals with it.

### 8.2 Short Story as a form

Short Story signifies brevity, economy of words and short of length. It is not just a story that is brief - it requires a particular kind of literary construction. A broad analysis of a short story signifies three characteristic elements:

1. **Recognition of the familiar**: Vivid details to create the illusion of reality and actuality, of course, suggesting undercurrents of meaning. Though familiar, the writer has to rid it of any kind of banality, cliché or formula. A short story is, after all, not a transcription of life but a dramatization of life itself.

2. **Empathy**: Identifying ourselves very sympathetically and closely with the characters and situations so as to feel a part of this actuality - the well worn theme and thus get vivified by being individualized and

3. **Readability**: The good yarn pleasure tale - being absorbed by the fascination of the tale, we are unable to put it down until we have found out what happened. Of course, beyond the yarn lies a whole range of meaning to be explored.

The traditional notions associated with the short story such as design, continuity, effect, change etc are essential ingredients of a short story. Even without the formal narrative parameters, a story can be exciting and evocative. Due to new fissures and new frictions, new expectations and new equations at every level, personal, family, state, national, international, the modern short story has traversed new grounds both in content and form. A short story is a voyage of discovery, of self - discovery, of self - realization for the character but more than the character, for the reader.

A short story has to have a formal plot or structure and the skill of the author lies in making it appear as natural, as lifelike, and as spontaneous as possible. The artist wants to make incidents or situations appear natural rather than contrived. A well thought out plot
is one in which nothing is superfluous or superficial. A story has to have a beginning and should convey a constant sense of movement. Therefore, an ideal structure would make the story interesting and true to life as also build up suspense and arouse the reader's curiosity to know what happens next or how the situation gets resolved at the end. It should also give meaning to the narrative.

A good short story should strive for a unity of effect - a "single effect". That is, a story should be compressed and economical the way a poem is, free from digressions and irrelevancies and marked by its intensity. It should be complete in itself and must have unity and wholeness. A story is meant to be read at one sitting; a novel may take days to read. So the story's effect must be sudden, powerful and revealing whereas a novel can involve readers at a more leisurely pace, slowly illuminating complexities and nuances.

Stories also convey psychological reality. Much of what happens in the modern story happens in the character's minds and in the interior world. Therefore, in attempting to reveal the drama of human consciousness, many modern writers have stopped stressing the orderly progression of plots, have played down external action, and have often abandoned photographic realism in favor of a more complex psychological realism.

In a short story, there is nothing to follow, nothing to look forward to. The end of the short story is the end. It is marked by a sense of finality, of definiteness, of tautness from beginning to end. It is self-contained. Its compression induces a feeling of expanding into life, an awareness of life expanding into our consciousness, enlarging our consciousness. In this sense a short story imparts the sense of a discovery.

8.3 R. K. Narayan as a short story writer

R. K. Narayan is one of the three leading figures of early Indian literature in English, along with Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. He is credited with bringing Indian literature in English to the rest of the world and is regarded as one of the India's greatest Indian English novelists. The setting for most of Narayan's stories is the fictional town of Malgudi, first introduced in Swami and Friends. His narratives highlight social context and provide a feel for his characters through
everyday life. He has been compared to William Faulkner, who also created a fictional town that stood for reality, brought out the humor and energy of ordinary life and displayed compassionate humanism in his writing. Narayan's short story writing style has been compared to that of Guy de Maupassant as they both have an ability to compress the narrative without losing out on elements of the story. With this book, Narayan created Malgudi, a town that creatively reproduced the social sphere of the country; while it ignored the limits imposed by colonial rule. Malgudi also grew with the various socio-political changes of British and post-independence India.

He also published two collections of short stories: Malgudi Days (1982), a revised edition including the original book and some other stories and Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories, a new collection. Narayan's writing style was simple and unpretentious with a natural element of humor about it. It focused on ordinary people, reminding the reader of next-door neighbors, cousins and thereby providing a greater ability to relate to the topic. Unlike his national contemporaries, he was able to write about the intricacies of Indian society without having to modify his characteristic simplicity to conform to trends and fashions in fiction writing. He also employed the use of nuanced dialogic prose with gentle Tamil overtones based on the nature of his characters. Critics have considered Narayan to be the Indian Chekhov, due to the similarities in their writings, the simplicity and the gentle beauty and humor in tragic situations. Greene considered Narayan to be more similar to Chekhov than any Indian writer.

According to Pulitzer Prize winner, Jhumpa Lahiri, Narayan's short stories have the same captivating feeling as his novels, with most of them less than ten pages long, and taking about as many minutes to read. She adds that between the title sentence and the end, Narayan provides the reader something novelists struggle to achieve in hundreds more pages: a complete insight to the lives of his characters. These characteristics and abilities led Lahiri to classify him as belonging to the pantheon of short-story geniuses that include O. Henry, Frank O'Connor and Flannery O'Connor. Lahiri also compares him to Guy de Maupassant for their ability to compress the narrative without losing the story and the common themes of middle-class life written with an unyielding and unpitying vision.
Critics have noted that Narayan's writings tend to be more descriptive and less analytical; the objective style, rooted in a detached spirit, providing for a more authentic and realistic narration. His attitude, coupled with his perception of life, provided a unique ability to fuse characters and actions and an ability to use ordinary events to create a connection in the mind of the reader. A significant contributor to his writing style was his creation of Malgudi, a stereotypical small town, where the standard norms of superstition and tradition apply.

Narayan's writing style was often compared to that of William Faulkner since both their works brought out the humor and energy of ordinary life while displaying compassionate humanism. The similarities also extended to their juxtaposing of the demands of society against the confusions of individuality. Although their approach to subjects was similar, their methods were different; Faulkner was rhetorical and illustrated his points with immense prose while Narayan was very simple and realistic, capturing the elements all the same. There are some critics who find fault with Narayan for the ending of his stories in an unconvincing way. Just like O'Henry, he ends some of his stories with a 'sudden reversal of situation.'

Narayan's greatest achievement was making India accessible to the outside world through his literature. He is regarded as one of the three leading Indian English language fiction writers, along with Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand. He gave his readers something to look forward with Malgudi and its residents and is considered to be one of the best novelists India has ever produced. He brought small-town India to his audience in a manner that was both believable and experiential. Malgudi was not just a fictional town in India but one teeming with characters, each with their own idiosyncrasies and attitudes, making the situation as familiar to the reader as if it were their own backyard.

8.4 Theme of "An Astrologer's Day"

The theme of the story focuses on a single day in the life of an ordinary astrologer who suddenly faces past life in the present drastic situation. The story has a twist in the tale. The otherwise adventure less life of the astrologer suddenly poses a grave problem from his past life and demands alertness to tackle the situation. The story
describes of a single day in the lives of the sleepy town of Malgudi. The story also deals with the darker side of human nature with its hypocrisies, shrewdness, revengeful nature and selfishness. The characters in the story are no exception to these qualities of human nature. Finally all is well that ends well with the astrologer coming out with flying colors in his examination of befooling his opponent, saving his life and also saw to it that he does not face the man again in future.

8.5 Summary of "An Astrologer's Day"

"The Astrologer's Day" is a short story which deals with a day in the life of an ordinary but fake astrologer. The setting of the story is a town, Malgudi which is located in South India, near to Madras. It is not a story of contemporary times but pre - independence times.

The story opens at the midday. This is the time when the astrologer opens his business. The writer describes how he begins his business. He removes all his professional equipment like cowries shells, charts, Palmyra writing etc. He is also dressed typically like an astrologer to attract customers. His forehead is bright with sacred ash and vermilion. His eyes are assumed to have a prophetic light by his customers. He wears a saffron turban. Thus the astrologer presented himself so perfectly that he was consequently a point of attraction for all the people.

The writer describes the path along the Town Hall Park where the astrologer sits to lure his prospective customers. He carried on his business under a tamarind tree on the Town Hall road. The path was the right place to carry on his business as it was amply crowded with different trades and traders like medicine sellers, hardware and junk, magicians, cloth - sellers etc. Next to him sat a fried groundnut vendor whose gas light enabled him to carry on his business even after sunset.

The astrologer was a shrewd person who hardly had any knowledge of astrology. He just made a guess work when people approached him. He had to work hard to earn his wages. He had absconded from his native village since he didn't want to continue the traditional occupation of his forefathers i.e. farming. He never had any plans to return to his native village.

He was a mastermind at analyzing human mind and psychology.
His strong perception made him diagnose the exact problem of his customers. His customers would finally leave satisfied.

He closed his shop for the day when his neighbor, groundnut vendor blew out his light. On the day under description in the story, the groundnut vendor left and the astrologer was packing up his wares when he located a man standing before him. He perceived him to be his prospective customer. When the astrologer invited him, he posed a challenge before him and his astrological science. They have a deal between them. The man gave him an anna and asked the astrologer to answer his questions and if he doesn't answer satisfactorily he will have to return the anna with interest. At the same time if the astrologer is able to answer the questions satisfactorily he would give him eight annas. But if the astrologer fails, he would pay double amount i.e., sixteen annas to the man. Thus the deal was finalized between them. The astrologer prayed to the heaven. Then suddenly the astrologer denied the challenge and requested the man to let him go. The man said that he will not let him give in. He holds him in his grip thereby making the astrologer shiver. Finally, the astrologer realized that he is trapped and has no chance of moving out. The man turned out to be a criminal by profession.

The astrologer shivered and unwillingly accepted the challenge. He started telling about some woman but the man was not satisfied and stopped him. He had a single question that whether he would get what he was searching for. The man promised the astrologer that if he is satisfied with his answers, he would pay him a rupee. The astrologer prayed a few incantations before replying. The astrologer began with his prophecies by saying to the man that you were left for dead in the past and a knife has passed once on your chest. The man was excited at this information since he had really faced it. After he got wounded, he was thrown into a well nearby to die. A passerby saw him and rescued him and that is how he was saved from dying. The man was waiting to revenge the culprit who had attacked him and was in search of the culprit who had tried to kill him. The only thing which the man wanted to know from the astrologer was if he can find his killer.

The astrologer instantly replied that the culprit had died four months ago in a far-off town. The man was disappointed to hear this. The astrologer identified the name of the man before him as Guru Nayak. He told the man that his village was a two days’ journey to
north and warned him to go back home and never to travel south again. He asked him to return to his hometown immediately as his life was in danger if he left his hometown again. The man replied that he left home just to search the culprit who had tried to kill him and was interested in knowing if he had died in a worst way. The astrologer satisfied him by informing that the culprit was crushed under a lorry. The man left after giving the astrologer a handful of coins. The astrologer too winded up his belongings and went home.

The astrologer's wife was waiting for him worriedly since he was unusually late that day. The astrologer flung the coins at his wife to count. They were twelve and a half annas in all. She was extremely happy to encounter that big amount. She planned to buy jaggery and coconut for their child, who was demanding for sweets from a long time. However, the astrologer looked worried and was not happy like his wife. He was angry at Guru Nayak as he had cheated him. He promised to give a rupee and actually gave only twelve and a half annas. After dinner, he shared the secret of his life with his wife. He said that a great burden of his life was gone that day. He always felt that he had killed Guru Nayak. So the astrologer had run away from his native village due to the fear of being accused as a murderer. He settled in Malgudi and married and decided that he would never return back to his native village. Actually the man who tried to kill Guru Nayak was the astrologer himself. So he was able to make accurate predictions about him though he hardly knew astrology. The astrologer confessed to his wife that in his youth he was into bad company with Guru Nayak. He drank, gambled and quarreled badly one day and had a fight and had almost killed Guru Nayak.

This is how life with its unpredictable twists and turns had created an astrologer out of a vagabond.

**Check your progress**

A. Choose the correct alternative:

1. From the twelve and a half annas that the astrologer earned, his wife planned to

2. To answer his questions, the man first gave the astrologer
   a. Three pies  b. Four pies  c. Five pies
3. The astrologer was able to please customers because of
   a. His humor  b. His honesty  c. His clever guessing

B. The story contains synonyms of the expressions given below. Locate them in the text and write them down:
1. Bright red in color
2. Expressing opinions or feelings in a loud and confident way
3. Willing or prepared to do something
4. Words that are spoken or sung to have a magical effect
5. With no people in it

C. Read the story carefully and find single words for each of the phrases given below:
1. Bright and colorful in an impressive way
2. To hang about aimlessly
3. Showing good judgement and likely to be right
4. Acting without thinking of results
5. A large number of objects or personal possessions

D. The story contains the antonyms of the words given below. Locate them in the text and write them down.
1. Amateur
2. Unremarkable
3. Guilty
4. Interior
5. Safety

E. Answer the following questions:
1. When did the astrologer usually start his day's business?
2. Why did the astrologer think he had committed a murder?
3. What mark did Guru Nayak have on his chest?
4. How much money did the astrologer usually charge per question?
8.6 Conclusion

Overall in this chapter, the short story 'An Astrologer's Day' describes about a single day in the life of the astrologer. The story has suspense and a twist in the tale towards the end. The story also uses the co-occurrence factor where the astrologer is shocked and is hardly able to cope with the situation. His alertness of mind and smartness as an astrologer come to his rescue. Finally, he is freed from the burden of killing Guru Nayak.

The next chapter deals with the post-modern novel, A Fine Balance of the diasporic writer, Rohinton Mistry.

8.7 Summary

The short story 'An Astrologer's Day' by R. K. Narayan deals with a single day in the life of an ordinary astrologer. His day begins as any other day but the day ends with unexpected events. When he is about to wind up his business, he meets a rogue character, Guru Nayak who is a part of the past life of the astrologer. Towards the end, as readers, we receive a shock that Guru Nayak and the astrologer belong to the same native towns. They were once upon a time good friends and had a quarrel one day. The result was that both were into bad company and had a fight. The astrologer tried to kill Guru Nayak by attacking him with a knife and when Guru Nayak fainted, he threw him into a nearby well. Fortunately, a passerby saved Guru Nayak. The astrologer left his native village forever and became an astrologer. Thus suddenly he confronts his past unexpectedly but smartly tackles the situation.

Answers to check your progress

A. Choose the correct alternative:

1. C

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2. - A
3. - C

B. The story contains synonyms of the expressions given below. Locate them in the text and write them down:
1. Vermilion
2. Vociferousness
3. Dallied
4. Incantations
5. Deserted

C. Read the story carefully and find single words for each of the phrases given below:
1. Resplendent
2. Surging
3. Shrewd
4. Impetuous
5. Paraphernalia

D. The story contains the antonyms of the words given below. Locate them in the text and write them down.
1. Professional
2. Remarkable
3. Proud
4. Exterior
5. Dangerous

E. Answer the following questions:
1. Punctually at midday the astrologer usually started his day's business.
2. The astrologer had a fight with Guru Nayak and had thrown him in a well and he supposed him to be dead. So the astrologer thought he had committed the murder of Guru Nayak.
3. Guru Nayak had a mark of injury of knife on his chest.
4. The astrologer usually charged three pies per question.
5. The astrologer's forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion and his eyes sparkled with abnormal gleam and this made the astrologer’s forehead look grand.
6. The astrologer knew the name of his customer because he was from his hometown and an old friend of him.
7. The astrologer set up his daily business at a path running through the Town Hall Park. He sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through the Town Hall Park. It was remarkable in many ways: a surging crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way: medicine sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians and above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to attract the whole town. Next to him in vociferousness came a vendor of fried groundnut, who gave his ware a fancy came each day, calling it “Bombay Ice Cream” one day, and on the next “Delhi Almond” and on the third “Raja's Delicacy”, and so on and so forth and people flocked to him. A considerable portion of this crowd dialed before the astrologer too. The astrologer transacted his business by the light of a flare which crackled and smoked up above the groundnut heap nearby. The place was lit up by shop lights. It was a bewildering criss-cross of light rays and moving shadows. In short, the place was perfect for the astrologer's business.

### Field work

Read the stories of other contemporary short story writers like Mulk Raj Anand and compare them with the stories of R. K. Narayan. Try to study the difference in their techniques of story writing.
Rohinton Mistry - The Fine Balance

About the author, Rohinton Mistry

Rohinton Mistry was born in 1952 in Mumbai, India, of Parsi descent and now lives in Canada, near Toronto. In 1975, after being awarded a B.A. in Mathematics and Economics at the University of Bombay, he emigrated. In Canada, where he received a B.A. in English and Philosophy at the University of Toronto, Mistry started writing short stories. He has won two Hart House literary prizes and the Canadian Fiction Magazine's Annual Contributor's Prize for 1985. Finally, in 1987, he published a collection of short stories called Tales from Firozsha Baag.

A born story teller, in his tales Mistry depicts middle class life among the Parsi community, as he recalls it from abroad. Mistry describes daily life among the Parsis of Bombay touchingly, at the same time deals with meaningful themes and significant issues of contemporary multicultural and migrant realities. To understand Mistry's work, one must never forget that Zoroastrian Parsis experienced mass migration to India from the very beginning of their history, in the 8th century, being persecuted in Iran after Islamic conquest. Then, they suffered again diaspora, this time to the West, after the independence of India, when having being the favorite of the British rulers, they fell to disgrace at the end of the Raj. Mistry gives voice both to the feeling of malaise of his people, after decolonization
made their elitist position and Westernized attitudes very unpopular and to his own sense of displacement in Canada. First of all, he tries to show the uniqueness of the Parsi community by focusing on their way of living and their cultural heritage. Then, he stresses the diasporic nature of Parsi social and historical experience, seeking the justification and the sense of his own story of migration in the perspective of the Parsi 'double displacement'.

Coming from people who today feel they are at the margins of the Indian society, refusing nevertheless the dominating Hindu culture, in his stories. Mistry tries to preserve the memory of his native environment and to testify the specificity of his being a Parsi, both in India and in Canada, Mistry points to the problems of East - West relationships and focuses on the difficulties of immigration.

Summary of the novel A Fine Balance

The novel is a saga that spans the momentous events of India's history from the turbulent times of the country's Partition in 1947, to the macabre aftermath of its Prime Minister's assassination in 1984.

The story is built upon four characters whose predicaments intersect during the "State of Internal Emergency" declared by Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Two tailors, Ishwar and Omprakash Darji, along with a student, Maneck Kohlah, are propelled by circumstances into the life of Dina Dalal, a Parsi widow, who struggles to make ends meet in a heartless metropolis, ostensibly Mumbai. Mistry manipulates the story in a way that the reader is shuffled between various time phases that mark each major historical upheaval. He highlights crucial events in the country's chronicle by depicting the background of each protagonist. The lives of the tailor's forefathers reflect the tyranny of the caste system in rural India where unimaginable horrors are perpetrated on the lower castes. In Maneck Kohlah's background lies the pathetic story of India's partition when religion became the unnatural reason for the birth of two nations. Dina's past underlines the sense of squalor and failure that middle classes of ten face rather helplessly in an underdeveloped nation struggling to improve its economic status. It is an effort at interweaving national history with the personal lives of the protagonists in a manner that is characteristic of immigrant Indian English writing.
9.0 Objectives

Friends, in this chapter we will study a postcolonial Indian English novel i.e. Rohinton Mistry's A Fine Balance. This chapter will enable you to discuss:

- The postcolonial Indian themes in the novel.
- The historical era of Emergency.
- The shattering of the lives of the common masses due to politics.

9.1 Introduction

Friends, in the last chapter, we have studied short story as a literary form through the short story 'An Astrologer's Day' by R. K. Narayan. In this chapter, we are going to examine critically Rohinton Mistry's novel A Fine Balance. It describes the life in Mumbai through the lives of some characters from different backgrounds facing Political Emergency declared by the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi. It had its impact on all the sections of India. The novel focuses on the human relationships and the shattering of the same.

9.2 Background to the novel "The Fine Balance"

The novel has as its milieu the "City by the Sea" - Mumbai or Bombay, a city marked by constant and permanent changes in its landscape, skyscrapers and in the people who inhabit it. Here more than anywhere else in India, one witnesses the lives of the people
being governed and even enmeshed by globalization, by networks of new and foreign media images on the one hand, and by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, exploitation and homelessness, on the other. This gives the impression of identities getting detached and disembodied from specific places and times and becoming free floating. The novel deals with characters that are displaced, isolated and estranged, framed against the background of the anonymous, impersonal and terrifying metropolis.

The footpaths, the slums, the teeming offices, the tenements, the Parsi enclaves are all created and then recreated, in the fiction of Mistry, just as they continue to form and reform in reality. The Congress Party led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi whom Mistry seems to be blaming for the "worst of times" in modern India in both of his novels, Such a Long Journey and A Fine Balance, is here involved in raising funds for the Jawaans who are fighting for the pride of the nation and for the liberation of East Bengal.

\subsection*{9.3 Emergency and Politics in "The Fine Balance"}

The period of Emergency is as much a blotch on the country's conscience as partition had been, not of think of the riots following the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

\textbf{Realistic portrayal of Emergency}

Every atrocity that is known to have been committed during the Emergency occurs to Mistry's characters and the novel becomes a template for a stark and unsparing portrait of that time in India. With the curtailing of the fundamental rights of the people, everything became topsy turvy, the press was censored, with the new law MISA anybody could be imprisoned without trial and there were countless deaths in police custody. Valmik, the proof-reader says, I am inspired by the poet Yeats. I find his words relevant during this shameful Emergency -

"Things fall apart; the center cannot hold,
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world".

(p 556)

Under the City Beautification Scheme, hutment colonies were
demolished and millions were rendered homeless, a new strategy was formulated for beggary problem and the pavement dwellers were made to slog like bonded laborers. The most brutal aspect of Emergency was that anyone, young or old, married or unmarried was compelled to undergo Family Planning Operation. Ration cards were issued only to those who had a Family Planning Certificate and people had to choose between food and manhood. Incentives like transistors were offered for this. Ishvar and Om too, became victims of Emergency and the writer gives a heart-rendering account of their vasectomization, the removal of Om's testicles just before his wedding and the amputation of Ishvar's legs, turning them into crippled beggars.

The Internal Emergency forms the backdrop for the entire novel. The condition of the common man, especially those who chose to oppose this anti-democratic period was a very pathetic one. It is during this period that every Indian was under surveillance. As Mistry, describes it, the gaze was everywhere now. Everyone was suspect, everyone had to be investigated and suddenly new Student Unions sprang up which expected total submission to their demands and their codes of conduct. Students and teachers who voiced their honest opinion were promptly arrested and never heard of again.

One of the many horrendous atrocities unleashed during the Emergency was under the name of the Beautification Campaign of the cities. Entire slums were demolished and reduced to rubble in areas like Turkman Gate. Mistry describes how Om and Ishvar learn from Rajaram that the hutment dwellers were tricked into leaving their huts. The poor are rendered homeless in this new insistence on the Beautification of the City. In this period, one arm of the law - the police - is actively involved in the process of discipline in a number of ways. The accumulation of capital needs a labor force. In the totalitarian regime that existed during the period of Emergency (1974 - 77), a work force was organized - created - very much on the lines of slave workers. Beggars, pavement dwellers, tailors, carpenters, rag pickers, scrap dealers and hair collectors are all herded into trucks to be driven to work sites because

"In a huge city like this there is work even for a corpse."

(p 404)

The brutality in the treatment of these bonded laborers is
presented graphically by Mistry - their living conditions, food and clothing, the total disregard for even the minimum concern for human dignity or even life etc and its subjection seemed to be the sole aim and no one was expected to question it. Mistry draws a vivid picture of the reign of terror that was unleashed in the name of national security and welfare. Protests were met with bullets and all semblances of fundamental rights or liberty and freedom of expression were totally nullified.

Emergency, a defence of an insecure leader, disturbs the coherence of routine of the average lives of Ishwar Darjee and his youthful nephew, Omprakash Darjee and their employer Dina Dalal, middle - aged widow and her paying guest, Maneck Kohlah. Dina and Maneck are only the indirect victims of Emergency as their lives are dependent on the lives of the tailors, Ishvar and Om. All of them are aware of something stifling their lives though they cannot link of the existing political scenario of the country. Their struggle for survival, as far as they are concerned does not have a political angle to it. They all believe that the oft heard word ‘Emergency’ is a sort of a game played by the power center and it would really affect the ordinary people like them. Hence each in his way tries to connect the pervading discomfort and insecurity to their problems of the here and now. Very soon when their simplest dreams get thwarted they are forced into realizing the mayhem created by the Emergency.

For Ishwar and Om, the huge cut - outs of the Prime Minister with inspiring slogans for hard work and sincerity are mere markers in the confusing labyrinth of the city streets. However, they realize the implication when they are forcibly bundled away to the Prime Minister's meeting to fill in the numbers. With neither the promised tea nor the free bus ride, Ishvar and Om return thirsty and tired. For Dinabai their absence is the usual sign of arrogance of the labor class, once their meal is assured.

The second blow is when the tailors’ shack is bulldozed to ground as part of the Slum Evacuation Programme. Ishvar is content that at least their sewing machines are safe at Dinabai’s. They stuff all their belongings in a trunk and sinking under its weight, go all over the city in search of a place to live in. They realize that even to sleep on the platform they must pay the policeman.

The third blow of Emergency in their lives is when Ishvar and Om
are picked up by the police from their rented footpath dwelling to work as construction workers as part of the City Beautification Project. Ishvar's protest that they are not street urchins or beggars falls on deaf ears. They are forced into a truck and are compelled to abandon their daily bread and butter for a number of days for reasons far beyond their control. Maneck tries to pacify the agitated Dina Aunty during this period.

The final and fatal blow to their lives is an unwarranted police raid at the market place on their return to the small town near their ancestral village. Ishvar and Om are forcibly taken to a sterilization camp of the town near their ancestral village. People like Thakur Dharamsi were surviving by auctioning their patients who come to clinics, for unless a Government employee produces two or three cases of sterilization; his salary for a month is held back. Provoked by Om's act of spitting towards him, in an act of vendetta, the Thakur, the villain of their family's ruin, orders another operation on the already sterilized Om - the Thakur has a special interest in the boy who is suffering from a testicular tumor, is the justification provided by the nurses. Ishvar's hope of getting a reverse operation of Om done gets sterilized. Ishvar's feet wounded at the beautification project develop gangrene and his legs are to be amputated. They return to 'our city', Mumbai with a little trolley fitted with small wheels for Ishvar and a rope for Om to pull it and finally, turned into beggars. Dina, back at her brother's covers herself with the unfinished quilt recollecting the events and experiences concealed in the rightly knit patches.

Some of these upheavals, like the emergence of competition in the cold drinks business, occur as part of life's struggle. However, in the novel, most upheavals take place because of the imposition of Internal Emergency. The evictions of the poor from the cities, the forced labor camps, the sterilizations are all the various manifestations of the Internal Emergency. Mistry sharply criticizes the Internal Emergency. He shows that all the avowed promises of the Emergency to abolish bonded labor, child labor, sati, dowry system, child marriage and harassment of backward castes by upper castes never have materialized. Instead as Mistry shows in several instances in the novel, a nexus emerges between the police and the established hierarchy either the upper dominance in the villages or the land or building mafias in Mumbai.
Various episodes in the novel reveal Mistry's sympathy for the oppressed and concern at authoritarian, oppressive practices during the two year period of Internal Emergency. During the course of the narrative, Mistry makes some revealing political insights. The transition in rural life, the change in aspirations of the lower castes, the attempts by the upper castes to preserve the old order is aptly delineated. A major instance is the violence perpetuated by Thakur Dharamsi and his henchmen against Narayan's family during the week of parliamentary elections. The generation gap is shown in the aspiration of the lower castes. Narayan's father tells his son,

“You changed from Chamar to tailor. Be satisfied with that.”

(p 143)

However, Narayan who is educated wants to exercise his rights. He wants to actually vote in the elections and not let the blank ballots be filled by the landlords’ men. Mistry in succinct prose shows the cynical manipulation of elections in rural India. Two years later when elections take place, Narayan tries to assert his democratic right and cast his own vote instead of abetting the process of rigged elections. For his defiance, Narayan and two other ‘Chamars’ are forcibly gagged, flogged and tortured.

Narayan’s family for defying the existing social order pays an extreme price. Dukhi (Narayan and Ishvar’s father), Roopa, Radha and the daughters are bound and burnt alive. Mistry implies that the needless arrogance of the upper castes in trying to maintain social supremacy led to the consolidation and emergence of the Dalits in Indian politics. The rise of the Dalits as a political and social force in the 1990s in India and the caste warfare in the countryside is hinted at by the novelist, Omprakash's contempt and defiance of Thakur Dharamsi on their return to the small town near their ancestral village. Mistry's novel makes an astute political comment because it shows that in rural India, the upper castes aggravated social tensions by their insensitive and churlish behavior.

The ultimate indictment of the Internal Emergency comes in the description of the ‘Nusbandi Mela’ in the closing chapters of the novel. The author aptly describes the callous indifference of the authorities who are more keen on “targets have to be achieved within the budget” rather than human welfare and the upliftment of the poor. The author lucidly shows the involvement of the entrenched, insensitive
bureaucracy in the demolitions of 'jhuggi - jhopris', forced labor camps and sterilization drives. Senior administrators from the Family Planning Centre admonish doctors for not achieving targets. Operations are conducted with partially sterile equipments due to the harsh reprimands of the bureaucrats who are only interested in achieving targets rather than demolishing human sufferings. The euphemism of 'efficiency' and 'the sense of duty' are used to ensure that the Sterilization Operations are preformed even under unhygienic conditions but the planned target of sterilization is achieved.

Very clearly, the author shows that the vested interests are combined with the bureaucracy to perpetuate the status quo under the guise of saving the nation from population explosion. Thakur Dharamsi, the upper caste ring leader, achieves respectability as a political leader during Emergency because he organizes many sterilization camps. He uses his superior position to see that Omprakash is castrated, his testacles are removed. In this way Thakur Dharamsi takes revenge on the lower castes in his village whose only crime was to achieve some social mobility by getting their children educated and sending them to be trained as tailors instead of working with leather as 'Chamars', their traditional occupation. Thakur Dharamsi's cruel misuse of authority shows that the trend of criminalization of politics and the politicization of crime has been rampant in India in the last decade of the twentieth century. It started in the period of Internal Emergency. This is an astute political insight by the author. Mistry also hints in his novel that constant oppression by the upper castes would lead to violence and an uprising by the lower castes. When Ishvar goes to register a complaint at the Police Station about his nephew's castration, the constable on duty is perturbed. So, in a way, Mistry is being quite clairvoyant and hints at the rise of the numerous Dalit Senas in several states in India, as retaliation against the upper caste oppression they had to suffer.

**Politics in the novel**

In an inventive manner of characterization, the author creates the persona of the administrator, the Facilitator, the Motivator, the Slum-lord, the Thakur and the Bal Baba. Each of these men is parasites feeding on the helplessness and gullibility of the common man, destroying those who dare to question their ideology or defy their
commands. The administrator represents the state machinery involved in brutal coercive sterilizations; the Facilitator and the Motivator represent the corrupt bureaucracy that takes a hefty cut for providing basic amenities; the Slum - lord and the Thakur are the agents of social repression, letting loose their goons on all those who try to break free from the chains of the strict codification of social groupings. Bal Baba symbolizes the hold that ruthless god men have over an illiterate, superstitious populace whose monetary donations pander to the desires of the God man's body rather than the spirit. History reasserts itself in macabre ways in the novel. The story of Avinash has strong allegorical undertones as it has parallels with the tragic murder case of the engineering student, Rajan, during the Emergency. The suicide of Avinash's sisters is reminiscent of the combined suicide of three young girls in India's industrial city of Kanpur, who could not bear to see their father's humiliation and social scorn for not being able to provide them respectable dowries for marriage.

Mistry's perception of and reaction to the dark periods of Indian history are never clearly stated but are always implicitly conveyed. The book stands as a scathing attack on the degeneration of political morals, agonizing over the insensitivity of the ruling classes and coming down heavily on the subversion of the various institutions. Mistry makes no secret of his loathing for the powers and places the blame at the door of the heartless politicians.

While dealing with the lives of common people in post - independent India, the novel captures the socio - political - cultural turmoil of this period. Mistry achieves the remarkable feat of mixing historical slices with the personal lives of the characters and attempts to portray the reality of India by weaving together four worlds in the fabric of the novel. The first is the middle class, urban world of Dina Dalal, a pretty widow in her forties. Then there is a glimpse into the rural India provided by Ishvar Darji and his nephew Omprakash - who are Chamars and have liberated themselves from caste stereotypes by becoming tailors in Bombay and gradually got caught in the quagmire of this nether world. There is another world symbolized by Maneck Kohlah, a sensitive Parsi boy, whose perambulations bring the reader occasionally into the predatory world of the university student. The novel is not only about the shared lives of these four major characters, which at one stage live under the same roof, but it
also speaks about their separate entities.

The novel, on the one hand, is a realistic portrayal of trains crossing the new border, carrying nothing but corpses, the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims, fanatics burning shops and houses, involved in arson and bloodshed and the entire country in the grip of communalism. On the other hand, it faithfully describes the communal conflicts of 1984 caused by the death of Indira Gandhi when the Sikhs were ruthlessly burnt alive.

Mistry stresses the fact that in postcolonial India the plight of common people has not ameliorated and they have to face the same exploitation and injustice as in the rule of the British colonizer, as one of the characters says,

"Of course, for ordinary people, nothing has changed."

(p 581)

It seems as if the native rulers have merely replaced the foreign rulers and the Indian government in the post - independence period has failed to resolve the basic problems of poverty, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy and disease. A considerable percentage of people live below the poverty line leading a hand to mouth existence and the gap between the rich and the poor has widened. The writer draws a pathetic picture of near - naked people in Bombay slums, with meager possessions, lean, emaciated babies, hungry and crying. Through the world of Maneck and his friend Avinash, Mistry gives us a glimpse into the evils of the Indian college campuses, the shameful ragging, the nepotism in staff hiring, the bribery for admissions, the sale of examination papers, the special privileges for politicians' families, the government interference in the syllabus, the intimidation of the faculty members and the student politics in the campus. Avinash's death remains a mystery and the burns on the shameful parts of his body reveal that he did not fall off a fast train but it was a case of student politics and of wrongful death in the police custody.

The Indian society is decaying from the top to downwards. The corrupt leaders have exchanged wisdom and good governance from cowardice and self - aggrandizement. For votes and power, they play with human lives and accept money from businessmen needing favors. The pre - election speeches of leaders are crammed with false promises of powerful laws. For them "Passing laws is like passing
water, it all ends down the drain."

(p 143)

During elections, the illiterate villagers are cheated and the ballot papers are filled by men hired by the politicians. The novelist lays bare the election system of the world's largest democracy and the hypocrisy of the politicians.

The novel focuses on the display of the various forms of power and the violence in the novel. The power in the novel is mainly of five types: exploitative, manipulative, competitive, nutrient and integrative. Exploitative power is the most prevalent type in the novel. This form of power is always associated with force. The potential of violence is inseparable from exploitative power. The sway of the upper caste Thakurs in Dukhi's village is a good example of it. The Thakurs are indulged in a perennial caste war against the "Untouchables" of the village. This stranglehold is achieved through recurrent violence - beatings, torture, rape etc. The killing of Narayan is notable for the raw savagery of their power.

The Monkey Man likewise tortures his animals, the two monkeys Laila - Majnoo and the dog Tikka. The wretched animals perform antics to entertain people under the perpetual threat of beatings from their master. Later, after the death of the animals, the Monkey Man substitutes two children. Thus he extends the cruelty into the human dimension.

The Beggar Master, a Fagin - like character, leads a team of mutilated beggars. They surrender their earnings to him. The Beggar Master's cruelty is also well - known. We are informed by the Monkey Man that Beggar Master may have mutilated them to enhance their potential as beggars.

The landlord, who harasses Dina Dalal, never appears in person. His power is embodied in the thugs and the Rent Collector, who terrorizes the tenants. Their power manifests as violence when they beat up Ishvar, Omprakash and Maneck and vandalize Dina's flat. The Beggar Master offers protection to Dina. Paradoxically, his protection to Dina operates through violence wrought upon others; in this case, the landlord's ruffians. The Beggar Master breaks their fingers and they are thus "persuaded" to leave Dina alone. In return for his protection he has to be paid. Dina and the tailors make veiled
references to their own fate if their "Protector" is not paid in time.

If exploitative power hinges upon violence, it is also inextricably linked to profits for the exploiter. The threat of force is used to enhance their own advantage. The Thakurs, for example, obtain cheap labor from the lower caste villagers. When the workers demand their due wages, they are threatened with violence. The Monkey Man earns his living by his animals. The Beggar Master's income accrues from the earnings of his beggars. The landlord of course collects the rent from his terrorized tenants.

For the Thakurs, exploitation follows a thorough understanding of the conditions of the lower castes: their poverty, ignorance and ill health.

A false epistemic base is also established by the exploiters. In the village, the Thakurs connive with the Brahmins for the purpose. They defend their emphasis on purity and caste distinctions as being sanctioned by the scriptures. The "Divine Law" is invoked to reinforce the system. The Brahmin Pandit Lalluram pacifies Dukhi by reiterating the "dharmic duty" of all castes. He enjoins Dukhi to preserve, since the system was required to prevent universal chaos.

If exploitative power depends on violence, manipulative power occurs more covertly. In the novel, characters like Nusswan illustrate this power. Nusswan runs the Shroff household after his father's death. From then on, he controls the other members of the family. Dina's young age and their mother's approaching senility make for their total dependence upon Nusswan. He therefore regulates Dina's money, dresses, education and friendships. Later this power is used to induce Dina into marriage. This move however does not work. After a span of time, with widowhood and subsequent penury, she is forced to approach Nusswan for help. Nusswan's monetary assistance helps him retain his hold over her.

Dina herself is not beyond manipulative moves. Ishvar and Omprakash Darji are desperate for jobs. Dina hires them to sew for her, at a meager wage. She is careful not to give them undue importance, even though they sustain her own existence. Dina does not allow the two to know her suppliers or market. To this end, she seals them, literally, away from business. She padlocks the front door when she goes to the export house.
As may be deduced from the above readings, manipulative power is frequently indistinguishable from exploitative power. The major differentiating factor is the lessened potential of violence in this type of power. It is more sophisticated in its pervasiveness as exemplified by Dina’s strategies of using affection and kindness to overcome any resistance from tailors. The victims almost consent to the manipulation. Most of the time, the exploiter uses tactics (coercion, persuasion, emotional blackmail - all seen in Dina’s methods) in proportion to the ignorance or lack of ability of the victim. This is demonstrated in Dina’s quiet conversion of Omprakash: the pain in his arm, her concern, and the medical attention given to him and of course, his gratitude for it.

A third kind of power is competitive power. This power can also be constructive because it produces a healthy rivalry between people, thus improving productivity. Dina Dalal’s attempts to squeeze out profits from her small venture are regulated by the constant threat from other similar businessmen. Shankar, the mutilated beggar is highly regarded by the Beggar Master because he is the best earner in comparison to others.

Government officials in the novel compete with each other to perform more Family Planning Operations. Their promotions (over others), salaries and even jobs are at stake. Hence they strongly compete with each other in the programme.

The Kohlah family ruins its business because they do not envisage competition. Maneck’s father refuses to compete with rivals. Here absence of competitive power spells doom.

The fourth category of power is “nutrient power”. This is the power “for” the other, suggestive of a certain care and responsibility. This power generally manifests as paternalism. Nutrient power is also embedded alongside the other kinds of power. For instance, Dina’s brother, Nusswan, inspite of his bullying and manipulation, obviously cares for her. He frequently helps her out during difficulties and concerned for her safety and health, her lonely life and future. In turn, Dina’s awareness of her brother’s sarcastic tongue and inherent selfishness (Nusswan dismisses the servant each time Dina moves into the house) is tempted by the knowledge of his affection.

Dina is not merely an exploitative employer to Ishvar and Omprakash.
She is protective and caring on occasions. When Omprakash develops a painful arm, she herself rubs an ointment much to the surprise of the two men. Later she allows them to stay in her tiny flat to protect them from police atrocities. When the novel concludes, Dina even risks Nusswan's wrath by feeding the two (now reduced to beggars) secretly. She herself wonders how long her conspiratorial good deeds can go on.

The Monkey Man adores his pets as his own children. The Beggar Master is actually quite protective towards his "wards", as the handicapped Shankar keeps repeating.

The above illustrations reveal how most of the exploitative powers are also paternalistic. In Mistry, it is the government which is castigated as undemocratic and unpatriotic. Throughout the novel, the Government's exploitative power, cruelty and the evil of juridical - political machinery is emphasized. The Government installed to protect actually robs, maims and kills its own people. The lower level exploiters - individuals - at least temper their exploitative power with gestures of filial affection. Mistry seems to suggest that it is in institutions that exploitations remain "unadulterated", impersonal and inhuman.

Integrative power is the final category. Here opposites - thesis and anti-thesis - may come together in a synthesis. In Mistry's novel, the synthesis occurs among the marginalized and the exploited. This group forges its own power links. For example, Narayan and the two other lower caste villagers rebel against the Thakurs. They oppose them during election time. Dina and the tailors barely manage to keep poverty away by their unity. They also in a symbolic instance, ward off peril from the rent collector. The doctors are also the exploited, since Government policy forces them into unethical activities through threats. The doctors therefore unite against the victims by refusing to take their complaints seriously. The victims are themselves integrated against the common oppression.

Mistry's novel is tragic in that this integrative power is never successful in its manifestation. The rebel lower caste villagers are tortured and murdered. The landlord manages to evict Dina. The victims of the forced sterilization programme do not get justice. Here we reiterate our reading of Mistry: that the system prevents and prohibits validation of any integrative move by individuals. Mistry
demonstrates this failure of the system in the character of the Facilitator. These "types" are stooges of the Government, who run their business out of purely personal considerations and with no human feelings. The system thus creates fifth columns within the people to prevent integration. The powers remain unaffected and the result is violence.

9.2 & 9.3 Check your progress

1. Describe the background city in the novel.

_____________________________________________________________________________

2. How do Mistry's characters' lives change due to Emergency?

_____________________________________________________________________________

3. How did the City Beautification Scheme affect the hutment colonies?

_____________________________________________________________________________

4. Describe the Family Planning Programmes organized under the Emergency?

_____________________________________________________________________________

5. What was the condition of students and teachers during Emergency?

_____________________________________________________________________________

6. Describe the labor force of the poor organized during Emergency.

_____________________________________________________________________________

7. How are Ishvar and Om treated when they are picked up for City Beautification Programme?

_____________________________________________________________________________
8. What are the avowed promises of Emergency?

9. How is Narayan punished for asserting his democratic rights?

10. Describe the involvement of bureaucracy in the Family Planning Programmes.

11. What does the administrator represent?

12. What does the Motivator represent?

13. What are the Slum - lord and Thakur agents of?

14. What does Bal Baba symbolize?

15. With whom do the story of Avinash and his sisters run parallel to?

16. Describe the conditions of Indian people under the post - independence government.

17. Which are the evils of the Indian college campuses?
9.4 Plot of the novel in "The Fine Balance"

The novel begins in 1975 with the accidental meeting of Ishvar, Omprakash and Maneck Kohlah in a train. Within a page or two of the novel's opening, we find a dead body lying on the railway tracks near the level crossing. Emergency has just been declared in the country and the common people have yet to understand the threat awaiting them. Ishvar, Omprakash and Maneck head for Dina's home where they will share lives for a while before their lives are irretrievably shattered. The two tailors are hired to enable Dina to earn a living through selling dresses on contract to Au Revoir Export Company. And Maneck is an old school friend's son, who will live as a paying guest in her apartment. All this we learn in the prologue itself. A series of temporal shifts mark the narrative. The first chapter recounts the story of Dina Dalal from the age of twelve and the death of her father to the age of forty - two and the hiring of the tailors. The second chapter

18. Which are the types of power displayed in the novel?
__________________________________________________

19. How does the Monkey Man use exploitative powers?
__________________________________________________

20. Describe the use of manipulative power by Nusswan.
__________________________________________________

21. How does Dina exert manipulative powers?
__________________________________________________

22. What is 'nutrient power'?
__________________________________________________

23. How does the government use power, according to Mistry?
__________________________________________________
returns to the present and introduces us to the manager of Au Revoir Exports, Mrs. Gupta. Through Mrs. Gupta's approval of Mrs. Gandhi's actions, we are confronted with the complicity of the Indian business houses with the outrages committed during this period.

Dina's assumption that the Emergency is irrelevant from the point of view of the common people turns out to be woefully misguided. As she struggles to eke out a living for herself, events conspire for her; events conspire to strip each character of dignity and humanity. The acrimony that marks the relationship between Dina and the tailors at the start of the novel transforms itself during the course of the narrative to mutual respect and compassion. Ibrahim, the rent collector, who plays multiple roles of spy, blackmailer and deliverer of threats and harasser of tenants, carries a folder with many compartments and pouches to sort out these roles. Ironically, the landlord finally sacks him, ostensibly for wearing out too many folders but in truth because he has become a compassionate rent collector, an oxymoron in motion.

The third chapter again goes back in time to Ishvar and Omprakash's story. In this section, we are confronted with caste oppression at its starkest. Ishvar's father, Dukhi violates caste restrictions in attempting to make his sons into tailors. This shows surprising courage in a man who has been socialized into accepting his position in the caste hierarchy unquestioningly.

During his childhood years, he mastered a full catalogue of the real and the imaginary crimes a low-caste person could commit and the corresponding punishments were engraved upon his memory. By the time he entered his teens, he had acquired all the knowledge he would need to perceive that invisible line of caste he could never cross, to survive in the village like his ancestors, with humiliation and forbearance as his constant companions. This is a particularly moving section of the novel bringing to life the sordid conditions of the lower caste Indians living in the rural India. Even the upper caste women are not exempted from oppression. We are told that they resented the birth of the two sons to Dukhi.

Through Dukhi's story we are brought back to the time of the Independence struggle in India. It is ironic that pledges of fighting against caste injustice were taken then but are still to be redeemed. Dukhi works towards an individual revolution - breaking with lifelong
In the end of the course "everything ends badly". Twenty years pass after independence and nothing changes. Narayan points to the fact that as a Chamar he cannot drink water at the village well, worship in the temples of the upper castes or walk where he likes. When he attempts to assert his right to vote, he is brutally tortured and then hanged in the village square. Other untouchables are beaten up at random, their women are raped and their huts are burnt down. The Thakur decided that Dukhi's family deserves special punishment because he had turned cobblers into tailors and distorted society's timeless balance.

Dukhi, Roopa, Radha and the daughters along with Narayan's corpse are burnt alive at the behest of the Thakur. Omprakash dreams of revenge but both Ashraf and Ishvar know the futility of such dreams and instead decide to send Om to Mumbai. With this move, a new phase starts in the lives of Om and Ishvar. In the city, it is class rather than caste that oppresses them. They are forced to stay in jhopadpattis that are mowed down. They are rounded up with the street beggars and forced to work as unpaid labor. Their attempts to live their lives with some semblance of dignity are frustrated at various points. On the other hand, they do meet an interesting variety of characters such as the Monkey Man or Rajaram. Though Mistry's tone through this section of the novel is slightly jocular, he does manage to let us see the reality behind the glamour of the Dream city, Mumbai.

The fifth section of the novel deals with the story of Maneck. His story is the story of the ecological denudation of the Himalayas through the forces of "development" and the death of the indigenous enterprise through the entry of the multinationals. Mr. Kohlah's increasing sense of loss colors his relationship with his son who becomes increasingly alienated from his father. Maneck is sent to study air conditioning and refrigeration in Mumbai and meets the dynamic student leader, Avinash. Avinash really represents the voice that is silenced by Mistry's narrative. For every display of force, there is always resistance. That resistance was not less heroic in the period of the Emergency than during the course of the freedom struggle. That is heroism is not officially documented or publicized but it nevertheless existed. For a brief while we are given a glimpse of that aspect of the Emergency in the portrayal of Avinash.
Mistry describes the brief spell of optimism, the formation of student bodies, the agents adopted and the resolutions passed. But his emphasis is on the experience of Maneck, who refuses to get involved in any of such activities and resents the fact that he has lost the company of his friend, Avinash because of his involvement with such work. Avinash mysteriously disappears. Maneck makes only a half-hearted attempt to find Avinash. The mysterious disappearance of Avinash meets the narrative logic of Mistry's novel: that everything ends badly.

9.4 Check your progress
1. How does the first chapter describe Dina?

2. How does the second chapter describe the Indian Business Houses?

3. Who is Ibrahim and why is he fired from his job?

4. Describe Dukhi's story in the third chapter.

5. How do Ishvar and Om suffer from class oppression in Mumbai?

6. What does Maneck's story inform us about?

9.5 Themes in the novel "The Fine Balance"

The novel is set in India in 1975, during Indira Gandhi’s state of Emergency; it is a neo-realist story of extreme poverty and true friendship among outcastes. In this novel, Mistry does not only deal
with the misery of common people and the brutality of tyrannical politics: he also describes the horrors of a government work-camp, the tortures in state prisons. In short all the humiliation, the suffering and the wrong that poor people have to suffer under fascist governments. Actually, Mistry sees Indira Gandhi's politics as decidedly fascist, to the point that even the everyday life of ordinary people under her rule appears to be characterized by sheer brutality.

**Father - son Conflict**

The father-son conflict, is characterized by the unwillingness of the father to read the writing on the wall, as it were. Rustom Kolah runs a small family business in the idyllic hills of North India. His specialty is the Kayceee (Kolah's Cola), which he makes according to a secret formula handed down to him over the generations. When the multinationals invade the hills, with their new-fangled technology and hard-hitting advertising campaigns Kayceee is on its way to a slow but sure death. Maneck exhorts his father to advertise, to adopt new technologies but to no avail. Modernization, like death, is a great leveler. Here it is the survival of the fittest.

Industrialization and capitalism are responsible for progress, prosperity and the rising living standards and also for the angst of displacement and in extreme cases, even for aggression against self. These constitute the worst of modernism and find a poignant reflection in the novel. The novel opens with Om, Ishvar and Maneck meeting for the first time on a local train. All the three are unknown to each other but are bound for a common destination - Dina Dalal's residence. The train is delayed because a man has committed suicide by throwing himself on the railway tracks.

Mistry cleverly foregrounds displacement and suicide, the key motifs in the opening pages of the novel. Dina Dalal, Parsi widow lives in genteel poverty trying to maintain a fine balance between her financial independence and destitution, which would result in her dependence on her brother Nusswan, who happens to be a petty tyrant. She seeks to employ two tailors to do the piece-work for an export company and have a paying guest stay in her tiny flat to supplement her meager income. Ishvar - Om, the uncle-nephew pair of tailors, who have come to Mumbai in search of an employment and dream of returning home after having made a lot of money, come to Dina's flat in response to her search for tailors. Maneck, who has been
flushed out of the hills has come to Mumbai for higher studies and finds the rat-infested students' hostel and ragging too much to bear and has come to Dina's shabby flat in response to her offer made to Maneck's mother of paying guest accommodation to 'a nice Parsi boy'. Thus the exigencies of displacement bring these four people together. Ishvar, Om and Maneck all of them represent the 'transitional man'. They are men whose roots have been torn asunder from the soil of their respective traditional lives.

**Diaspora**

If the multi-nationals are indirectly responsible for Maneck's diaspora from the hills, Om and Ishvar are propelled from the "Village by the River" to the "City by the Sea" to escape the atrocities of caste-based politics and the virtual collapse of retail family run enterprises in the face of growing industrialization. The diaspora of Om and Ishvar epitomizes the widespread phenomenon of casteist politics and communal riots uprooting whole populations of poor, ragged, unsuspecting and politically unawakened masses and casting them into new identities. This is further compounded by economic and financial losses in the wake of modernization and capitalist enterprise.

**Displacement**

As a Parsi and then an immigrant in Canada, Mistry sees himself as a symbol of double displacement. This sense of displacement is a recurrent reality in the lives of the novel's protagonists. Ishvar and Omprakash traditionally belonged to the low caste of cobblers that is of "Chamars". Social repression and bleak prospects made their forefathers push them into a more respectable profession - tailoring. It highlights the human will to disengage from the fetters of the subaltern existence. In the novel, these men, though employed as tailors, are constantly aware of their roots within the Indian social framework and are beset always by a sense of fatalism and guilt that is the lot of the lower castes. As history would bear testimony, dwindling avenues of work economic compulsions and the lure of the metropolis take them away, like many others, from their familiar rural environment. They are two of the thousands of such displaced, hesitant, struggling individuals who fight incessantly to secure a place in the maddening crowd of the urban life. The emotional displacement of adopting a new professional identity and the physical displacement of moving to the city combine to give Om and Ishvar a yearning to repossess the
simple pleasures of rural life. Such feelings are accompanied by a complex sense of alienation to which they finally succumb and end up as beggars on the streets of the metropolis.

Maneck Kohlah, the young man from the pristine slopes of the Himalayas, is another victim of this sense of double displacement. Apart from the geographical transition from the secure recesses of the parental home, Maneck has to face the disturbing emotional displacement into urban college life. In an India trying to reconcile it to the Emergency, Maneck has to swallow the insults of seniors and has to endeavor to adapt himself to the repressive political atmosphere in college. Mistry creates the character of Avinash, a fiery student activist, as a foil to Maneck and in the brutal political murder of Avinash; Maneck understands his own limitations and escapist tendencies. Unable to confront these realities, Maneck seeks a way out in suicide. This brings into focus yet another perspective on the sense of displacement in the novel.

For Dina life is a series of emotional upheavals and relocations of emotional anchors. Traversing the road of life, she is a lonely figure who experiences shocking forms of abuse. Her acute sense of displacement is more emotional than physical as her consciousness flits between ephemeral periods of happiness and seemingly endless bouts of pain. This may be marked in the dichotomy between her brief marriage to Rustom Dalal, her fleeting affair with Freedon, her successful but short lived tailoring enterprise and the abuse at the hands of her brother, physical intimidation by her landlord, the collapse of her tailoring venture with Ishwar and Omprakash and her final humiliating return to her brother's house as an unpaid domestic maid. Dina's transition through life is cyclic in a sense. She begins life in her brother's house and after experiencing the vagaries of life, returns to it in a pathetic state of self-defeat.

Mumbai in the novel

The writer presents a cross-section of Mumbai - the huge slum across the road wearing its malodorous crown of cooking smoke and industrial effluvium, the long queue for water, accompanied by quarrels, lack of basic amenities, open air toilets, the familiar sights of beggars with their begging bowls and the Beggar Master paying the police every week to avoid harassment. Mistry authentically portrays Mumbai and its social ills such as child labor and beggary problem.
The description of the Beggar Master with his imaginative mind, training his beggars and dressing them with a variety of wounds manages to raise a laugh as their chill penury is juxtaposed with the lighter side of their lives.

Depressed and demoralized by the ruthless murder of their entire family, pressured by joblessness and hunger and envisioning a bright future for them, Ishvar and Omprakash migrate to Bombay like Rajaram who says,

"Thousands and thousands are coming to the city because of bad times in their native place. I came for the same reason"

(p 171)

"The city grabs you, sinks its claws into you and refuses to let go."

(p 172)

Their lives in Bombay symbolize the anguish, pain, anxiety and restlessness of the people cut off from their native village. Like nomads, they moved from Nawaz's awning to their slum dwelling, then to the railway platform and then to the entrance of a chemist's shop where they are mistaken for beggars, compelled to slog as laborers and finally are released from this inviolable hell by the Beggar Master. Their incapacity to find a home, despite numerous efforts is touching and pitiable. They are caught in an inescapable dilemma, between two worlds - their native village which they abandoned because it held a bleak chance and Bombay which has failed them despite promises - they stay on as marginal men, unable to discard the old and to find peace in the new.

**Depiction of casteism**

Mistry has concentrated on the pessimistic image of his lost motherland, gives an insight into the rural India and mentions the atrocities committed on the untouchables. The Chamars spent their life in obedient compliance with the traditions and of the caste system and survived with humiliation and forbearance as their constant companions. Buddhu's wife refused to go to the field with the Zamindar's son so they shaved off her head and walked her naked through the square and Dukhi's wife was raped in the orchard. They were helpless victims and their crimes were varied and imaginative; a Bhungi had dared to let his unclean eyes meet Brahmin's eyes; a Chamar had walked on the wrong side of the temple road and defiled
it; another had strayed near a Puja that was in progress and allowed his undeserving ears to overhear the sacred shlokas. When Dukhi became the father of two sons, he feared for his family’s safety and as a precaution, he went out of the way to be obsequious. The children of the low castes were denied the right to education; Ishvar and Narayan were canned severely when they entered the classroom. When Naayan wanted to assert his right to vote, he and his companions were hung naked by their ankles from the branches of a banyan tree and the Thakur’s men brutally killed them. Their bodies were displayed in the village square and their entire family burnt alive. The writer here focuses on man’s inhumanity to man and on the deprivation, inequities and injustice faced by the underprivileged in India.

**Struggle for identity and survival**

All the four main characters are lonely and struggling for identity and survival. Social circumstances, loneliness and a sense of rootlessness bring them together and forge a bond of understanding as they struggle to survive. The human spirit displayed by these four characters of different class backgrounds and ages, despite repeated setbacks upholds Mistry’s subtle political theme of how human beings can endure and survive with some dignity despite oppressive circumstances. Ultimately, the four main characters are struggling to maintain ‘a fine balance’ in their lives.

The novel starts on a note of coincidence. Maneck and the two tailors are sitting in the same compartment of a local train, travelling to the same destination, Dina’s house. As is typical in the Indian trains, they start conversing and realize that they are in search of the same address. Initially, both Ishvar and Omprakash are apprehensive that Maneck is a rival for the job. However, they become friendly once they realize that Maneck is not seeking employment with Dina. The months they spend in Dina’s house helps this friendship bloom and grow. The plight and sufferings of Omprakash gives Maneck a wider perspective of life and human suffering. Remaining cheerful and retaining a sense of humour despite excessive adversity are admirable qualities in both Ishvar and Omprakash. Maneck also benefits by participating in Dina’s struggle to retain her sense of independence. The travails of Ishvar, Omprakash and Dinabai make Meneck realize that his mates in college are trivial comparison. The sense of camaraderie that
develops as this quartet struggle to meet the export order deadlines (Dinabai earns her income by providing tailored clothes to an export firm) gives Maneck a more mature attitude to life. The trials, the tribulations, the shared jokes, the intimacies, eating the same food and a sense of adventure enables Maneck realize that life is often "a fine balance" between happiness and despair. There are always upheavals, whether at the slums where Ishvar and Omprakash reside in Mumbai or problems of food and political disturbance at the residential block at Maneck's college, amongst the beggars in the streets or the emergence of competition which shatters Maneck's father's monopoly of the Cola drinks in his hometown.

9.5 Check your progress

1. What does Mistry describe in the novel?

2. How is modernism poignantly found in the novel through Kohlah's story?

3. How have Ishvar, Om and Maneck come together at Dina's home?

4. What does the diaspora of Ishvar and Om represent?

5. How is Maneck suffering from double displacement?

6. How is Dina's life a series of emotional upheavals and relocations of emotional anchors?
9.6 Conclusion

Ironic in vision, brooding in tone, amorphous in realities, A Fine Balance needs to be read as an expression of the predicament of self in the Indian urban or rural context. In spite of the stark life that it represents, the novel reveals an underlying moral purpose and a positive commitment to justice and humanitarian concerns. Mistry, as a diasporic writer, holds literary thought and literary language in a fine balance that is as much an act of affiliation and establishment as an act of disavowal, displacement, exclusion and cultural contestation.

9.7 Summary

The novel, A Fine Balance begins with the accidental meeting of Ishvar, Omprakash and Maneck Kohlah in a train. Emergency has just been declared in the country. Ishvar, Omprakash and Maneck head for Dina's home where they will share lives for a while before their lives are irretrievably shattered. The two tailors are hired to enable Dina to earn a living through selling dresses on contract to Au Revoir Export Company. And Maneck is an old school friend's son, who lives as a paying guest in her apartment. The novel recounts the story of Dina Dalal from the age of twelve and the death of her father to the age of forty-two and the hiring of the tailors.

Dina struggles to eke out a living for herself. The acrimony that marks the relationship between Dina and the tailors at the start of the novel transforms itself during the course of the narrative to mutual respect and compassion. Ibrahim, the rent collector, who plays multiple roles of spy, blackmailer and deliverer of threats and harasser of tenants, carries a folder with many compartments and pouches to sort out these roles.
The novel also goes back in time to Ishvar and Omprakash's story. In this section, we are confronted with caste oppression at its starkest. Ishvar's father, Dukhi violates caste restrictions in attempting to make his sons, Narayan and Ishvar into tailors. This is a particularly moving section of the novel bringing to life the sordid conditions of the lower caste Indians living in the rural India. Even the upper caste women are not exempted from oppression. Through Dukhi's story we are brought back to the time of the Independence struggle in India. It is ironic that pledges of fighting against caste injustice were taken then but are still to be redeemed. Dukhi works towards an individual revolution - breaking with lifelong traditions - to apprentice his sons as tailors with Ashraf. In the end of the course "everything ends badly". Twenty years pass after independence and nothing changes. The untouchables are beaten up at random, their women are raped and their huts are burnt down. Omprakash dreams of revenge but both Ashraf and Ishvar know the futility of such dreams and instead decide to send Om to Mumbai.

With this move, a new phase starts in the lives of Om and Ishvar. In the city, it is class rather than caste that oppresses them. They are forced to stay in jhopadpattis that are mowed down. They are rounded up with the street beggars and forced to work as unpaid labor. Their attempts to live their lives with some semblance of dignity are frustrated at various points. Mistry's tone manages to let us see the dark reality behind the glamour of the Dream city, Mumbai. Their story ends pathetically with Om being turned into a eunuch and Ishvar's legs are amputated. They finally become beggars and are fed by Dina who has turned into an unpaid maid servant at her brother, Nusswan's home.

Maneck's story is the story of the ecological denudation of the Himalayas and the death of the indigenous enterprise through the entry of the multinationals. Maneck is sent to study air conditioning and refrigeration in Mumbai and meets the dynamic student leader, Avinash. Avinash really represents the voice that is silenced by Mistry's narrative. Mistry describes the brief spell of optimism, the formation of student bodies, the agents adopted and the resolutions passed. Avinash mysteriously disappears. The mysterious disappearance of Avinash meets the narrative logic of Mistry's novel: that everything ends badly.
The rebel lower caste villagers are tortured and murdered. The landlord manages to evict Dina. The victims of the forced sterilization programme do not get justice. The powers remain unaffected and the result is violence.

**Answers to check your progress**

**9.2 & 9.3**

1. The novel has as its milieu the "City by the Sea" - Mumbai or Bombay, a city marked by constant and permanent changes in its landscape, skyscrapers and in the people who inhabit it. Here more than anywhere else in India, one witnesses the lives of the people being governed and even enmeshed by globalization, by networks of new and foreign media images on the one hand, and by poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, exploitation and homelessness, on the other.

2. Every atrocity that is known to have been committed during the Emergency occurs to Mistry's characters and the novel becomes a template for a stark and unsparing portrait of that time in India. With the curtailing of the fundamental rights of the people, everything became topsy turvy, the press was censored, with the new law MISA anybody could be imprisoned without trial and there were countless deaths in police custody.

3. Under the City Beautification Scheme, hutment colonies were demolished and millions were rendered homeless, a new strategy was formulated for beggary problem and the pavement dwellers were made to slog like bonded laborers.

4. The most brutal aspect of Emergency was that anyone, young or old, married or unmarried was compelled to undergo Family Planning Operation. Ration cards were issued only to those who had a Family Planning Certificate and people had to choose between food and manhood. Incentives like transistors were offered for this.

5. Everyone was suspect, everyone had to be investigated and suddenly new Student Unions sprang up which expected total submission to their demands and their codes of conduct. Students and teachers who voiced their honest opinion were promptly arrested and never heard of again.
6. In the totalitarian regime that existed during the period of Emergency (1974 - 77), a work force was organized - created - very much on the lines of slave workers. Beggars, pavement dwellers, tailors, carpenters, rag pickers, scrap dealers and hair collectors are all herded into trucks to be driven to work sites. There was brutality in the treatment of these bonded laborers is presented - their living conditions, food and clothing, the total disregard for even the minimum concern for human dignity or even life etc and its subjection seemed to be the sole aim and no one was expected to question it. Mistry draws a vivid picture of the reign of terror that was unleashed in the name of national security and welfare.

7. Ishvar and Om are picked up by the police from their rented footpath dwelling to work as construction workers as part of the City Beautification Project. Ishvar's protest that they are not street urchins or beggars falls on deaf ears. They are forced into a truck and are compelled to abandon their daily bread and butter for a number of days for reasons far beyond their control.

8. All the avowed promises of the Emergency to abolish bonded labor, child labor, sati, dowry system, child marriage and harassment of backward castes by upper castes never have materialized.

9. Narayan tries to assert his democratic right and cast his own vote instead of abetting the process of rigged elections. For his defiance, Narayan and two other 'Chamars' are forcibly gagged, flogged and tortured. Narayan's family for defying the existing social order pays an extreme price. Dukhi (Narayan and Ishvar's father), Roopa, Radha and the daughters are bound and burnt alive.

10. The author lucidly shows the involvement of the entrenched, insensitive bureaucracy in the demolitions of 'jhuggi - jhopris', forced labor camps and sterilization drives. Senior administrators from the Family Planning Centre admonish doctors for not achieving targets. Operations are conducted with partially sterile equipments due to the harsh reprimands of the bureaucrats who are only interested in achieving targets rather than demolishing human sufferings. The euphemism of 'efficiency' and 'the sense of duty' are used to ensure that the Sterilization Operations are preformed even under unhygienic conditions but the planned...
target of sterilization is achieved.

11. The administrator represents the state machinery involved in brutal coercive sterilizations.

12. The Facilitator and the Motivator represent the corrupt bureaucracy that takes a hefty cut for providing basic amenities.

13. The Slum - lord and the Thakur are the agents of social repression, letting loose their goons on all those who try to break free from the chains of the strict codification of social groupings.

14. Bal Baba symbolizes the hold that ruthless god men have over an illiterate, superstitious populace whose monetary donations pander to the desires of the God man's body rather than the spirit.

15. The story of Avinash has strong allegorical undertones as it has parallels with the tragic murder case of the engineering student, Rajan, during the Emergency. The suicide of Avinash's sisters is reminiscent of the combined suicide of three young girls in India's industrial city of Kanpur, who could not bear to see their father's humiliation and social scorn for not being able to provide them respectable dowries for marriage.

16. The Indian government in the post - independence period has failed to resolve the basic problems of poverty, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy and disease. A considerable percentage of people live below the poverty line leading a hand to mouth existence and the gap between the rich and the poor has widened. The writer draws a pathetic picture of near - naked people in Bombay slums, with meager possessions, lean, emaciated babies, hungry and crying.

17. Mistry gives us a glimpse into the evils of the Indian college campus', the shameful ragging, the nepotism in staff hiring, the bribery for admissions, the sale of examination papers, the special privileges for politicians' families, the government interference in the syllabus, the intimidation of the faculty members and the student politics in the campus.

18. The power in the novel is mainly of five types: exploitatve, manipulative, competitive, nutrient and integrative.

19. The Monkey Man likewise tortures his animals, the two monkeys Laila - Majnoo and the dog Tikka. The wretched animals perform antics to entreat people under the perpetual threat of beatings.
from their master. Later, after the death of the animals, the Monkey Man substitutes two children. Thus he extends the cruelty into the human dimension.

20. In the novel, characters like Nusswan illustrate manipulative power. Nusswan runs the Shroff household after his father's death. From then on, he controls the other members of the family. Dina's young age and their mother's approaching senility make for their total dependence upon Nusswan. He therefore regulates Dina's money, dresses, education and friendships. Later this power is used to induce Dina into marriage. This move however does not work. After a span of time, with widowhood and subsequent penury, she is forced to approach Nusswan for help. Nusswan's monetary assistance helps him retain his hold over her.

21. Dina herself is not beyond manipulative moves. Ishvar and Omprakash Darji are desperate for jobs. Dina hires them to sew for her, at a meager wage. She is careful not to give them undue importance, even though they sustain her own existence. Dina does not allow the two to know her suppliers or market. To this end, she seals them, literally, away from business. She padlocks the front door when she goes to the export house.

22. The fourth category of power is "nutrient power". This is the power "for" the other, suggestive of a certain care and responsibility. This power generally manifests as paternalism. Nutrient power is also embedded alongside the other kinds of power. For instance, Dina's brother, Nusswan, inspite of his bullying and manipulation, obviously cares for her. He frequently helps her out during difficulties and concerned for her safety and health, her lonely life and future.

23. In Mistry, it is the government which is castigated as undemocratic and unpaternal. Throughout the novel, the Government's exploitative power, cruelty and the evil of juridical - political machinery is emphasized. The Government installed to protect actually robs, maims and kills its own people.

9.4

1. The first chapter recounts the story of Dina Dalal from the age of twelve and the death of her father to the age of forty - two and the hiring of the tailors.
2. The second chapter returns to the present and introduces us to the manager of Au Revoir Exports, Mrs. Gupt a. Through Mrs. Gupt a's approval of Mrs. Gandhi's actions, we are confronted with the complicity of the Indian business houses with the outrages committed during this period.

3. Ibrahim, the rent collector, who plays multiple roles of spy, blackmailer and deliverer of threats and harasser of tenants, carries a folder with many compartments and pouches to sort out these roles. Ironically, the landlord finally sacks him, ostensibly for wearing out too many folders but in truth because he has become a compassionate rent collector, an oxymoron in motion.

4. Ishvar's father, Dukhi violates caste restrictions in attempting to make his sons into tailors. This shows surprising courage in a man who has been socialized into accepting his position in the caste hierarchy unquestioningly.

   During his childhood years, he mastered a full catalogue of the real and the imaginary crimes a low-caste person could commit and the corresponding punishments were engraved upon his memory. By the time he entered his teens, he had acquired all the knowledge he would need to perceive that invisible line of caste he could never cross, to survive in the village like his ancestors, with humiliation and forbearance as his constant companions. Dukhi works towards an individual revolution - breaking with lifelong traditions - to apprentice his sons as tailors with Ashraf. In the end of the course "everything ends badly". When his son, Narayan attempts to assert his right to vote, he is brutally tortured and then hanged in the village square. The Thakur decided that Dukhi's family deserves special punishment because he had turned cobbler into tailors and distorted society's timeless balance. Dukhi, Roopa, Radha and the daughters along with Narayan's corpse are burnt alive at the behest of the Thakur.

5. In the city, it is class rather than caste that oppresses Ishvar and Om. They are forced to stay in jhopadpattis that are mowed down. They are rounded up with the street beggars and forced to work as unpaid labor. Their attempts to live their lives with some semblance of dignity are frustrated at various points.

6. Maneck's story informs us about the ecological denudation of the
Himalayas through the forces of "development" and the death of the indigenous enterprise through the entry of the multinationals.

9.5

1. In this novel, Mistry does not only deal with the misery of common people and the brutality of tyrannical politics: he also describes the horrors of a government work - camp, the tortures in state prisons. In short all the humiliation, the suffering and the wrong that poor people have to suffer under fascist governments.

2. Rustom Kolah runs a small family business in the idyllic hills of North India. His specialty is the Kaycee (Kolah's Cola), which he makes according to a secret formula handed down to him over the generations. When the multi - nationals invade the hills, with their new - fangled technology and hard - hitting advertising campaigns Kaycee is on its way to a slow but sure death. Maneck exhorts his father to advertise, to adopt new technologies but to no avail. In Modernization there is the survival of the fittest. Industrialization and capitalism are responsible for progress, prosperity and the rising living standards and also for the angst of displacement and in extreme cases, even for aggression against self. These constitute the worst of modernism and find a poignant reflection in the novel.

3. Dina Dalal, Parsi widow lives in genteel poverty trying to maintain a fine balance between her financial independence and destitution. She seeks to employ two tailors to do the piece - work for an export company and have a paying guest stay in her tiny flat to supplement her meager income. Ishvar - Om, the uncle - nephew pair of tailors, who have come to Mumbai in search of an employment and the dream of returning home after having made a lot of money, come to Dina's flat in response to her search for tailors. Maneck, who has been flushed out of the hills has come to Mumbai for higher studies and finds the rat - infested students' hostel and ragging too much to bear and has come to Dina's shabby flat in response to her offer made to Maneck's mother of paying guest accommodation to 'a nice Parsi boy'. Thus the exigencies of displacement bring these four people together at Dina's home.
4. The diaspora of Om and Ishvar epitomizes the widespread phenomenon of casteist politics and communal riots uprooting whole populations of poor, ragged, unsuspecting and politically unawakened masses and casting them into new identities.

5. Maneck Kohlah, the young man from the pristine slopes of the Himalayas, is another victim of this sense of double displacement. Apart from the geographical transition from the secure recesses of the parental home, Maneck has to face the disturbing emotional displacement into urban college life. In an India trying to reconcile it to the Emergency, Maneck has to swallow the insults of seniors and has to endeavor to adapt himself to the repressive political atmosphere in college.

6. For Dina life is a series of emotional upheavals and relocations of emotional anchors. Traversing the road of life, she is a lonely figure who experiences shocking forms of abuse. This may be marked in the dichotomy between her brief marriage to Rustom Dalal, her fleeting affair with Freedon, her successful but short lived tailoring enterprise and the abuse at the hands of her brother, physical intimidation by her landlord, the collapse of her tailoring venture with Ishwar and Omprakash and her final humiliating return to her brother's house as an unpaid domestic maid. Dina's transition through life is cyclic in a sense. She begins life in her brother's house and after experiencing the vagaries of life, returns to it in a pathetic state of self-defeat.

7. Mistry presents a cross-section of Mumbai - the huge slum across the road wearing its malodorous crown of cooking smoke and industrial effluvium, the long queue for water, accompanied by quarrels, lack of basic amenities, open air toilets, the familiar sights of beggars with their begging bowls and the Beggar Master paying the police every week to avoid harassment. Mistry authentically portrays Mumbai and its social ills such as child labor and beggary problem.

8. The Chamars spent their life in obedient compliance with the traditions and of the caste system and survived with humiliation and forbearance as their constant companions. Buddhu's wife refused to go to the field with the Zamindar's son so they shaved off her head and walked her naked through the square and Dukhi's wife was raped in the orchard. They were helpless victims and their
crimes were varied and imaginative; a Bhungi had dared to let his unclean eyes meet Brahmin's eyes; a Chamar had walked on the wrong side of the temple road and defiled it; another had strayed near a Puja that was in progress and allowed his undeserving ears to overhear the sacred shlokas. When Dukhi became the father of two sons, he feared for his family's safety and as a precaution, he went out of the way to be obsequious. The children of the low castes were denied the right to education; Ishvar and Narayan were canned severely when they entered the classroom. When Naayan wanted to assert his right to vote, he and his companions were hung naked by their ankles from the branches of a banyan tree and the Thakur's men brutally killed them. Thus every possible atrocity is levied upon the untouchables.

Field work

Collect information about the Emergency period and study its various impacts on the lives of the people of those contemporary times. Study the Parsi culture and try to locate the elements of Parsi culture in the novel, A Fine Balance.
SECTION - A

QUESTION BANK

1. What, in your opinion, is Arun Kolatkar's contribution to Indo - Anglian poetry?

2. Jejuri has certainly enlarged the themes of Indo - Anglian poetry. Discuss this with reference to Jejuri.

3. Do you agree that the theme of Jejuri is pilgrimage?

4. Do you agree that almost all the poems in Jejuri show Arun Kolatkar as a satirist? Illustrate your answer.

5. State the salient features of Kolatkar's poetry with reference to Jejuri.


7. Attempt a critical estimate of Kolatkar as a poet on the basis of your reading of Jejuri.

8. Evaluate Kamala Das as a feminist poet.

9. Write a critical note on the theme of Kamala Das' poems you have studied.

10. Bring out the qualities of Kamala Das as a poet on the basis of your reading of the prescribed poems.

11. Comment on the themes of Kamala Das' poetry with reference to the prescribed poems.

12. Discuss Kamala Das' contribution to Indo - Anglian poetry.

13. Critically examine Kamala Das' treatment of the themes of love and sex.

14. Assess the poetic achievement of Kamala Das giving illustrations from the prescribed poems.

15. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem "Night of the Scorpion".

16. Which qualities of Nissim Ezekiel as a poet does "Night of the Scorpion" reveal?

17. What impressions of Nissim Ezekiel as a poet have you formed on the basis of your study of prescribed poems?

18. What are the salient features of Nissim Ezekiel's poetry?

19. Discuss the contribution of Nissim Ezekiel to Indo - Anglian poetry?

20. Elaborate the history of Indian English poetry in brief.
21. What are the dominant themes of Indian English Poetry?
22. How is the Indian philosophy and culture reflected in the poem “Night of the Scorpion”?
23. Critically appreciate Nissim Ezekiel's poem "The poet, lover and birdwatcher".
24. Describe the traditional folklore of Ajamil and the Tiger with reference to Kolatkar's "Ajamil and the Tigers".
25. Critically appreciate the poem, "Between Jejuri and the Railway Station".
26. Critically appreciate Kamala Das' poem, "The Old Playhouse".
27. Discuss the themes of the poem, "My Grandfather's House".
28. Discuss Kamala Das as a modern feminist poetess.

**Write Short Notes on:**

1. Problems confronted by Indian creative writers in English
2. Indianness of Indian writers in English
3. Distinctive features of Indian English Poetry
4. The satire in Jejuri
5. Kamala Das' traits of modernism in India
6. Theme of Ezekiel's "Night of the Scorpion"
7. Social and literary insight of Nissim Ezekiel
8. Aspects of rural life in the poem "Night of the Scorpion"
9. Pre - independence poets
10. Nostalgia in Kamala Das' poetry
11. Critical appreciation of Kolatkar's "The Door"
12. Paraphrase of Kolatkar's "The Butterfly"
A) Answer the following questions:

1. Elaborate the history of Indian English fiction.
2. Discuss the major themes dealt in the Indian English fiction.
3. Discuss the contribution of the post-independence Indian English writers to Indian English literature.
4. Discuss the historical background of the novel, Kanthapura.
5. Comment on the use of the mythical technique used by Raja Rao.
7. Comment on the use of poetry and fantasy in Kanthapura.
8. Comment on the Gandhian thought reflected in the characters of Kanthapura.
9. Discuss the depiction of Indianness in the novel, Kanthapura.
10. Describe the place where the astrologer in An Astrologer's Day set up his daily business.
11. How did the astrologer convince Guru Nayak about his future?
12. Elucidate the plot of the novel Kanthapura.
13. What is the role of Coffee Estate Workers in the Gandhian Movement in Kanthapura?
15. What is the message given by Tilak through his essay, ‘A Standard Character for Indian Languages’?
16. How has Tilak elucidated the importance of celebrating Shivaji Festival?
17. How does the essay, ‘National Education’ underline the importance of national education for Indians?
19. Discuss the plot of the novel A Fine Balance.
20. Discuss the concord of various themes in the novel A Fine Balance.

B. Write short notes on:
1. Pre - independence Indian English fiction writers
2. Major pre - independence fiction writers
3. Post - independence Indian English novelists
4. Significance of the title Kanthapura
5. Moorthy, as a protagonist
6. Minor characters of Kanthapura
7. Lyricism in Kanthapura
8. Narrative technique in Kanthapura
9. Women characters in Kanthapura
10. Importance of Swadeshi
11. Role of ‘Emergency’ in A Fine Balance
12. Background of the novel A Fine Balance
REFERENCE BOOKS


SECTION - B

REFERENCE BOOKS


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