



# JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV PUNJAB STATE OPEN UNIVERSITY, PATIALA

(Established by Act No. 19 of 2019 of the Legislature of State of Punjab)

The Motto of the University  
(SEWA)

SKILL ENHANCEMENT

EMPLOYABILITY

WISDOM

ACCESSIBILITY



**B.A. (Liberal Arts)**  
**Semester 6th**  
**Course: INDIAN WRITINGS IN ENGLISH**  
**Course Code: BLAB33602T**

**Address: c/28, The Lower Mall, Patiala-147001**  
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**JAGAT GURU NANAK DEV  
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**Course Coordinator and Editor**

Mr. Gursandesh Singh

Assistant Professor in English



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**PREFACE**

Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala, established in December 2019 by Act 19 of the Legislature of State of Punjab, is the first and only Open University of the State, entrusted with the responsibility of making higher education accessible to all especially to those sections of society who do not have the means, time or opportunity to pursue regular education.

In keeping with the nature of an Open University, this University provides a flexible education system to suit every need. The time given to complete a programme is double the duration of a regular mode programme. Well-designed study material has been prepared in consultation with experts in their respective fields.

The University offers programmes which have been designed to provide relevant, skill-based and employability-enhancing education. The study material provided in this booklet is self-instructional, with self-assessment exercises, and recommendations for further readings. The syllabus has been divided in sections, and provided as units for simplification.

The Learner Support Centres/Study Centres are located in the Government and Government aided colleges of Punjab, to enable students to make use of reading facilities, and for curriculum-based counselling and practicals. We, at the University, welcome you to be a part of this institution of knowledge.

Prof. G. S. Batra,  
Dean Academic Affairs

**B.A (Liberal Arts)**  
**DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE(DSE): ENGLISH ELECTIVE**

**Semester-6**  
**BLAB33602T: INDIAN WRITINGS IN ENGLISH**

MAX.MARKS: 100

EXTERNAL: 70

INTERNAL: 30

PASS: 40%

**Objective:**

The course aims to introduce the learners to the main historical movements and the great fictional writers of India. The selected works will not only enable them to appreciate the rich literary tradition of writing in India, but also make them understand the questions of gender, region, nation, secularism, caste, and identity inherent in the works.

**Total Credits: 6**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PAPER SETTER/EXAMINER:**

1. The syllabus prescribed should be strictly adhered to.
2. The question paper will consist of three sections: A, B, and C. Sections A and B will have four questions from the respective sections of the syllabus and will carry 10 marks each. The candidates will attempt two questions from each section.
3. Section C will have fifteen short answer questions covering the entire syllabus. Each question will carry 3 marks. Candidates will attempt any ten questions from this section.
4. The examiner shall give a clear instruction to the candidates to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.
5. The duration of each paper will be three hours.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATES:**

Candidates are required to attempt any two questions each from the sections A and B of the question paper and any ten short questions from Section C. They have to attempt questions only at one place and only once. Second or subsequent attempts, unless the earlier ones have been crossed out, shall not be evaluated.

**Section A**

**Historical overview:** Indian writing in English, the key points of which are East India Company's arrival in India, Macaulay's 1835 Minutes of Education, India's first war of independence and the establishment of colleges to promote Western education and the evolution of Indian writing in English in 20th century.

**Novel:** Anita Desai: In Custody

**Poems:**

A.K Ramanujan: Obituary  
Kamala Das: My Grandmother's House  
Sarojini Naidu: The Bangle Sellers

## Section-B

**Unit-IV: Indian Writings in English Literary terms and concepts:** Indian Literary Renaissance, Marxism, Dalit Movement, Atheist, Panthers Movement, World religion, Equivalence, Non- Equivalence, Vedic Religion, Indian freedom struggle, Dalit Identity, Swadeshi, National Integration, Advaita, Sanyasa and Grihastha, Spiritual Revolution.

**Unit-V: Short Stories:**

Rohinton Mistry: 'Swimming Lesson'

Shashi Deshpande: 'The Intrusion'

Mulk Raj Anand: 'Two Lady Rams'

**Unit VI: Play**

Mahesh Datani: Final Solutions

**Suggested Readings:**

- Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. Indian Writing in English. 4th Ed. New Delhi: N.A. 1984.
- Mehrotra, Arvind Krishna (ed.). The Oxford India Anthology of Twelve Modern Indian Poets. Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Mukherjee, M. The Twice-Born Fiction: Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English. New Delhi: N.A., 2001.
- Mund, S.K. The Indian Novel in English: Its Birth and Development. New Delhi and Bhubaneswar, 1997.

## **BLAB33602T**

### **Course: Indian Writings in English**

#### **Section A**

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#### **Unit 1: Historical overview**

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##### **Structure**

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction

1.2 East India Company's Arrival in India

1.3 Macaulay's 1835 Minutes on Education

1.4 India's First War of Independence

1.5 The Establishment of Colleges to Promote Western Education

1.6 The Evolution of Indian Writing in English in the 20th Century

1.7 Questions

##### **1.0 Objectives**

This unit will enable you to:

- Understand the historical context of the East India Company's arrival in India and its impact on education and culture, leading to the establishment of English as a medium of instruction.
- Analyze the significance of Macaulay's 1835 Minutes of Education and its role in shaping the educational policies and language choices in colonial India.
- Examine the events and factors leading to India's first war of independence, also known as the Sepoy Mutiny, and its consequences for Indian society and culture.
- Explore the establishment of colleges and institutions that promoted Western education in India during the colonial period, with a focus on their role in shaping the intellectual landscape.
- Trace the evolution of Indian writing in English during the 20th century, considering the impact of socio-political changes, movements, and influential figures in Indian literature.
- Identify key authors, works, and literary movements that defined Indian writing in English during the 20th century.

## **1.1 Introduction:**

Indian writing in English is a captivating literary tradition that has garnered international recognition for its richness, diversity, and unique voice. This literary journey has traversed centuries, reflecting the complex interplay of colonialism, cultural exchange, and the quest for identity.

The roots of Indian writing in English can be traced back to the colonial era when the British East India Company first established its foothold in India during the early 17th century. At that time, the primary interests of the East India Company were trade and commerce, but its growing influence brought with it the English language and culture. This marked the beginning of a linguistic and literary fusion that would evolve over time. As British colonial rule expanded, so did the reach of the English language. It became the medium of administration, education, and communication, gradually permeating various regions of the Indian subcontinent. This linguistic transformation laid the foundation for the unique character of Indian writing in English, which drew from both Indian and Western literary traditions.

## **1.2 East India Company's Arrival in India:**

The arrival of the East India Company in India in the early 17th century was a pivotal moment in Indian history. Initially, the company's primary objective was to establish trading posts and secure lucrative trade routes. However, over time, it began to expand its influence and control over different parts of India.

One of the profound consequences of the East India Company's presence was the introduction and dissemination of the English language in India. As British colonial rule extended its reach, English became not only a language of governance but also a symbol of prestige and opportunity.

The East India Company's influence on language and culture was transformative. It led to the coexistence of English with India's rich oral and written literary traditions in languages such as Sanskrit, Tamil, Bengali, and Urdu. This interaction between English and regional languages laid the groundwork for the development of Indian writing in English as a unique and dynamic literary tradition.

The coexistence of languages and literary traditions facilitated a rich exchange of ideas and narratives. Indian writers began to explore themes and motifs that were rooted in their own cultural heritage while engaging with the English language to express their unique perspectives. This fusion of languages and cultures became a hallmark of Indian writing in English, allowing it to draw from a diverse and eclectic pool of influences.



### **1.3 Macaulay's 1835 Minutes on Education:**

Lord Macaulay's 1835 Minutes on Education stands as a landmark document in the history of Indian education and language policy. Macaulay, a British statesman and scholar, was instrumental in shaping the direction of education in India during the colonial period.

In his famous minutes, Macaulay advocated for the promotion of Western education and the English language as a means of producing a class of Indians who would serve as intermediaries between the British administration and the Indian populace. He believed that this policy would create a group of Indians who were culturally aligned with the British, facilitating the smooth administration of the subcontinent.

The policy outlined by Macaulay had far-reaching consequences. It led to the establishment of a system of education that prioritized English-language instruction. English became not only the language of administration but also a symbol of social and economic advancement. As a result, a new class of English-educated Indians emerged, gaining access to opportunities in the British administration and in various professions.

However, Macaulay's policy also created a significant societal divide. It created a clear distinction between the English-educated elite and the majority of Indians who did not have access to Western education. This divide had profound implications for Indian society, as it influenced social mobility, access to employment, and political representation.

In the context of literature, Macaulay's policy had a twofold impact. It spurred the development of a new generation of Indian writers who were well-versed in the English language and Western literary traditions. These writers would go on to make significant contributions to Indian literature in English. At the same time, Macaulay's policy gave rise to a literary discourse that sought to assert Indian cultural and intellectual identity within the framework of English-language literature.

Macaulay's 1835 Minutes on Education played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of education, language, and literature in colonial India. It set in motion a process of cultural exchange and linguistic fusion that would eventually give rise to the vibrant and distinctive tradition of Indian writing in English.

### **1.4 India's First War of Independence:**

India's First War of Independence, which erupted in 1857, is an important event in the nation's history. Also known as the Indian Rebellion of 1857 or the Sepoy Mutiny, it was a widespread and coordinated uprising against British colonial rule. This momentous

event had profound implications for Indian society and culture, which included its impact on literature and the emergence of Indian voices in English.

The rebellion was characterized by a series of mutinies and protests that spanned various regions of India, involving soldiers, civilians, and even rulers of princely states. It was a response to multiple factors, including grievances related to the use of the new Enfield rifle cartridges, cultural and religious sensitivities, and a growing sense of discontent with British rule.

While the rebellion ultimately faced suppression, it ignited a renewed sense of patriotism and a desire for self-determination among Indians. The events of 1857 became a source of inspiration for Indian writers and poets who used literature as a powerful tool to express their longing for freedom and their critique of colonial rule.

Several literary works emerged in the aftermath of the rebellion that captured the spirit of resistance and the quest for independence. One of the most notable examples is Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's "Vande Mataram," which later became India's national song. The stirring verses of "Vande Mataram" celebrated the motherland and became an anthem for those yearning for freedom.

Rabindranath Tagore penned "Bharoto Bhagyo Bidhata" which was later adopted as the national anthem of India. Tagore's poetry resonated with the aspirations of a nation that sought to break free from colonial shackles.

The First War of Independence also served as a catalyst for the development of Indian writing in English. Writers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who had already engaged with English-language literature, began to express their concerns and demands for political and social reform more overtly in English. Their writings played a crucial role in shaping public opinion and fostering a sense of national identity.

The rebellion of 1857 is a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Indian people and their yearning for self-rule. It marked a turning point in the struggle for independence and influenced the course of Indian literature, with writers using their words to express the desire for freedom and justice.

### **1.5 The Establishment of Colleges to Promote Western Education:**

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a significant development occurred in India's educational landscape with the establishment of colleges and universities aimed at promoting Western education, including the study of English literature and the humanities. These institutions played a significant role in shaping the trajectory of Indian writing in English.

The founding of colleges to promote Western education was closely tied to the broader educational reforms initiated by British authorities in India. These institutions sought to provide Indians with access to modern, Western-style education, including the study of literature, science, and the arts. The goal was to produce a cadre of educated individuals who could contribute to the administration, commerce, and professions in a rapidly changing world.

One of the most notable institutions during this period was Presidency College in Calcutta (now Kolkata), founded in 1817. It became a hub for academic excellence and played a significant role in nurturing talent in various fields, including literature. Several prominent Indian writers in English, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore, had connections to Presidency College.

These colleges became centers of intellectual exchange and critical thinking. They exposed students to Western literary classics, philosophy, and contemporary thought. Students and faculty engaged in lively discussions and debates, fostering a spirit of intellectual curiosity.

The study of English literature at these institutions offered Indian writers exposure to a new world of literary possibilities. It allowed them to engage with Western literary traditions while remaining rooted in their own cultural heritage. This period saw the emergence of a new generation of writers who were well-versed in both Indian and Western literary canons.

The fusion of Indian and Western literary influences led to the development of a distinctive style in Indian writing in English. Writers began to experiment with themes and forms that reflected the complexities of their changing world. They grappled with questions of identity, cultural heritage, and the impact of colonialism, creating a rich and diverse body of literature that would later capture the attention of readers around the world.

The establishment of colleges to promote Western education played a crucial role in nurturing literary talent and shaping the trajectory of Indian writing in English. These institutions became crucibles of creativity and critical thinking, setting the stage for the emergence of a vibrant literary tradition that would continue to evolve and thrive in the years to come.

### **1.6 The Evolution of Indian Writing in English in the 20th Century:**

The 20th century witnessed a remarkable evolution of Indian writing in English, marked by a proliferation of voices, themes, and styles that reflected the changing landscape of

India and the world. This period was characterized by the emergence of literary giants such as Rabindranath Tagore, R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, and Kamala Das, who made indelible contributions to Indian literature in English.

Rabindranath Tagore, a towering figure in Indian literature and the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature (1913), left an indelible mark on the world of letters. His collection of poems, "Gitanjali" (Song Offerings), introduced readers to the beauty of Indian spirituality and poetic expression in English. Tagore's works celebrated the harmony between nature and humanity, often blending the traditional and the modern. R.K. Narayan, through his renowned Malgudi series, captured the essence of everyday life in small-town India. With humour and insight, Narayan's narratives offered a window into the idiosyncrasies and nuances of Indian society. The fictional town of Malgudi became a microcosm of the Indian experience.

Mulk Raj Anand and Kamala Das delved into pressing social issues and personal identity. Anand's novel "Untouchable" addressed the stark realities of caste discrimination in India, shedding light on the lives of the marginalized. Kamala Das, known for her frank and bold poetry, explored themes of love, desire, and the inner lives of women in a changing society.

The mid to late 20th century also witnessed the emergence of post-independence writers who gained international recognition. Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children," a seminal work of magical realism, explored the complex tapestry of Indian history and identity. The novel's unique narrative style and blending of history and fiction garnered critical acclaim and the Booker Prize.

Arundhati Roy's "The God of Small Things" offered a lyrical and evocative portrayal of family, love, and the social complexities of Kerala. The novel's intricate narrative structure and vivid storytelling earned Roy the Booker Prize and international acclaim.

Vikram Seth's "A Suitable Boy" provided readers with an expansive and panoramic view of post-independence India through the lens of a sprawling family saga. The novel's intricate character development and exploration of familial relationships resonated with readers worldwide.

Indian literature in English diversified further in the 20th century, with writers exploring an array of themes, from social issues and cultural identity to the complexities of modernity and globalization. The language itself evolved, with authors infusing it with distinct Indian sensibilities, idioms, and cultural references.

The works of these writers not only captured the essence of India but also engaged with

universal themes that resonated with readers across the globe. They challenged preconceptions, broke literary conventions, and expanded the horizons of Indian literature in English.

The 20th century marked a period of prolific growth and diversification in Indian writing in English. It was characterized by the emergence of literary giants who made profound contributions to world literature. Their works continue to be celebrated for their depth, diversity, and ability to bridge cultures, making Indian writing in English a dynamic and enduring literary tradition that thrives to this day.

### **1.7 Questions:**

- How did the arrival of the East India Company in India impact the language and culture, laying the groundwork for the emergence of Indian writing in English?
- Analyze implications of Lord Macaulay's 1835 Minutes of Education for the promotion of English education in India and its influence on literature.
- Discuss the role of the 1857 Indian Rebellion (India's first war of independence) in shaping the literary responses and nationalist sentiments of the time.
- How did the establishment of colleges to promote Western education in India contribute to the development of Indian literature in English, and what was their role in nurturing literary talent?

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**Course: Indian Writings in English**

**Section A**

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**Unit 2: Anita Desai: *In Custody***

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**Structure**

2.0 Objectives

2.1 Introduction to the Author

2.2 Plot of the Novel

2.3 Characters

2.4 Themes

2.5 Questions

**2.0 Objectives**

This unit aims to:

1. Explore Anita Desai's literary significance
2. Analyze the plot of the novel *In Custody*
3. Familiarize with the characters of the novel *In Custody*
4. Explore the various themes of the novel *In Custody*
5. Examine language's role in identity
6. Assess Anita Desai's literary impact

**2.1 Introduction to the Author**

Anita Desai is a prominent figure in contemporary Indian literature. Born on June 24, 1937, in Mussoorie, India, her life and works are a testament to the power of the written word to explore the human condition, cultural clashes, and the complexities of relationships. Over her prolific career, she has authored numerous novels, short stories, and works for children, earning critical acclaim and leaving an indelible mark on the world of literature.

Anita Desai was born to a German mother, Toni Nime, and an Indian father, D.N. Mazumdar. Her multicultural upbringing played a pivotal role in shaping her perspective and her ability to delve into the interplay of different cultures in her writing. She spent her early years in

Delhi before moving to various parts of India.

Desai's educational journey was marked by excellence. She pursued her undergraduate degree in English literature at the Miranda House, University of Delhi. Her strong academic background laid the foundation for her future career as a writer.

Desai's writing career began in the 1960s, and her early works established her as a promising literary talent. Her debut novel, "Cry, The Peacock" (1963), is a psychological exploration of a young woman's descent into madness. The novel's evocative prose and its portrayal of the fragile emotional states of its characters received critical attention.

One of the recurring themes in Desai's works is the exploration of family dynamics and the intricacies of human relationships. In her novel "Voices in the City" (1965), she delves into the lives of the Das family, focusing on the characters' individual struggles in the midst of a changing and chaotic city. Her novel "Clear Light of Day" (1980) similarly explores the complexities of sibling relationships and the impact of memory and history on the characters' lives.

Anita Desai often contrasts the rural and urban settings in her works, examining how these environments affect her characters. In "Fire on the Mountain" (1977), she takes readers to the Himalayan mountains, where the protagonist, Nanda Kaul, faces solitude and self-reflection. Her novel "In Custody" (1984) explores the world of Urdu poetry and literature and the clash between tradition and modernity in an urban setting.

Desai's versatility as a writer is evident in her foray into children's literature. "The Village by the Sea" (1982) tells the story of two young siblings struggling to make a life in a fishing village on the Indian coast. Through their journey, Desai explores themes of poverty, perseverance, and the indomitable spirit of youth. Her ability to connect with younger readers while addressing important societal issues demonstrates her talent as a storyteller.

Many of Desai's works explore the clash of cultures and the challenges faced by individuals who find themselves caught between different worlds. Her characters often grapple with questions of cultural identity and the tension between tradition and modernity. This theme is evident in "In Custody" and is also explored in "Baumgartner's Bombay" (1988).

Throughout her career, Anita Desai has received numerous accolades for her literary contributions. She has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize multiple times and has won several other prestigious awards, such as the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Padma Bhushan, one of India's highest civilian honours.

Anita Desai's impact on the world of literature extends beyond her own writing. She has inspired and influenced countless writers, both in India and around the world. Her work

continues to be studied and admired for its exploration of the human condition, its portrayal of cultural conflicts, and its keen insights into the dynamics of family and relationships. Her commitment to her craft is evident in her dedication to the art of storytelling.

Her works have definitely left a mark on the world of literature. Her ability to dissect the complexities of human relationships, examine cultural conflicts, and transport readers to different settings through her prose is a testament to her immense talent. With her exploration of rural and urban landscapes, cultural identity, and family dynamics, she has enriched the world of literature and continues to be celebrated as a literary icon.

## **2.2 Plot of the Novel**

"In Custody" is a novel by Indian author Anita Desai, published in 1984. Set in contemporary India, it explores themes of language, identity, and the clash between tradition and modernity. The story revolves around Deven Sharma, a small-town college lecturer who harbours a deep passion for Urdu poetry and longs to be a successful poet himself. The novel opens with Murad, the editor of the Urdu literary magazine "Awaaz," visiting Deven in Mirpore, a dusty and unremarkable town near Delhi.

Deven's life is marked by discontent and unfulfilled dreams. While he teaches Hindi literature at a local college, his true passion lies in Urdu poetry. He is a man torn between two worlds: his love for the elegance of Urdu and the practicality of teaching Hindi. His marriage to Sarla is loveless, and both partners subtly express their dissatisfaction with their situation. Sarla resents Deven's meagre salary and lack of ambition, while Deven feels that he has given up his dreams of becoming a great poet to support his family.

The opportunity for Deven to revive his poetic aspirations comes when Murad asks him to interview the revered Urdu poet Nur Shahjahanabadi for "Awaaz." This offer rekindles Deven's long-dormant passion for poetry and his idolization of Nur's work. Despite his initial hesitation and the fact that he hasn't been paid for his recent articles, Deven eagerly accepts the assignment.

Deven travels to Delhi to meet Murad, and together, they visit Nur's house in Old Delhi's Chandni Chowk. The visit proves to be a stark contrast to Deven's expectations. He finds Nur in a rundown room surrounded by tattered books, dressed in white. The dilapidated surroundings and Nur's decline from the poetic pedestal in Deven's mind are disillusioning.



Nur's drinking habits and the chaos in his household, with multiple wives quarrelling over his attention, shatter Deven's romanticized image of the poet.

Despite these discouraging signs, Deven agrees to work as Nur's secretary, with the hope of gathering his unpublished poems. However, Nur's life is a constant drama, with frequent recitals and disputes. Deven's attempts to record Nur's poetry face numerous obstacles. The poet's wife, Imtiaz, constantly interferes, and Deven's frustration grows as he struggles to capture Nur's elusive verses.

Deven's journey into Nur's chaotic world reflects the broader themes of the novel. The story portrays a post-partition India undergoing profound changes. The clash between tradition and modernity is evident in Deven's life, his love for Urdu poetry, and his struggle to find his place in a rapidly evolving society.

The novel's exploration of duality is a central theme, which is a characteristic of Anita Desai's work. Deven's predicament as a man torn between his love for Urdu and his practical life in Hindi literature is a reflection of the larger cultural shifts happening in India. The juxtaposition of the old and the new is evident in the landscape, as billboards advertising modern amenities loom over traditional markets.

Deven's life is a constant negotiation between two worlds, mirroring the fractured nature of identity in a changing society. This duality is a recurring theme in Desai's works, highlighting the challenges faced by individuals who straddle multiple cultures and struggle to find their place in a rapidly evolving world.

Throughout the novel, the disintegration of Urdu poetry serves as a metaphor for the cultural changes in India. Urdu, once celebrated and revered, is depicted as a dying art, replaced by the more accessible Hindi, the "Language of Peasants." Deven's journey to revive Urdu poetry is a futile attempt to salvage a dying tradition, reflecting the broader decline of India's cultural heritage.

As the story progresses, Deven's attempts to interview Nur become increasingly difficult. Imtiaz's interference and Nur's erratic behaviour frustrate Deven, leading to moments of panic and retreat from the chaotic world of the poet. The futile recording attempts and the loss of

Nur's verses mirror Deven's own sense of failure and the erosion of his once-strong passion for poetry.

The novel also explores the role of language in shaping identity. Deven's struggle to reconcile his love for Urdu with his practical life teaching Hindi is a microcosm of the larger cultural shifts in India. The tension between preserving traditional languages and embracing modernity is a recurring theme in "In Custody."

Ultimately, Deven's journey to interview Nur and capture his poetry ends in failure and disillusionment. He returns to Mirpore without the poetic treasure he had hoped to find. He realizes that his dream of preserving Urdu poetry was a pursuit in a world that had moved on.

"In Custody" is a poignant exploration of the clash between tradition and modernity, the complexities of cultural identity, and the pursuit of artistic and personal fulfilment. It is a reflection of the broader changes happening in post-partition India and the challenges faced by individuals like Deven, who are caught in the midst of these cultural shifts. Anita Desai's novel paints a vivid picture of a changing society and the inner turmoil of those who struggle to find their place within it.

### **2.3 Characters**

"In Custody" by Anita Desai features a cast of complex and compelling characters, each contributing to the novel's exploration of themes like cultural identity, the decline of Urdu poetry, and the clash between tradition and modernity.

1. Deven Sharma: Deven is the protagonist and the central character of the novel. He is a schoolteacher living in the small town of Mirpore. Deven is a complex character torn between his passion for Urdu poetry, particularly the works of Nur Shahjahanabadi, and the practicality of teaching Hindi literature. He represents the struggle of individuals caught between tradition and modernity, and his journey to interview Nur forms the backbone of the narrative.

2. Nur Shahjahanabadi: Nur is a celebrated Urdu poet and a figure of great importance in Deven's life. However, when Deven finally meets him, he finds a frail, disillusioned man who has fallen from his former glory. Nur's life and the chaos in his household illustrate the theme

of the decline of Urdu poetry, reflecting the broader cultural shifts in India.

3. Sarla Sharma: Sarla is Deven's wife, and their marriage is characterized by discontent and a lack of communication. Sarla represents the practical, everyday concerns that often overshadow personal aspirations and passions. Her character highlights the tension between individual dreams and family responsibilities.

4. Murad: Murad is the editor of the Urdu literary magazine "Awaaz." He plays a pivotal role in the story by offering Deven the opportunity to interview Nur Shahjahanabadi. While Deven's connection with Nur is largely literary and idealized, Murad is more pragmatic and represents the practical world of publishing.

5. Imtiaz Begum: Imtiaz is one of Nur's wives and a significant character in the novel. Her turbulent relationship with Nur, marked by constant bickering and her attempts at writing her own poetry, adds drama to the narrative. Imtiaz embodies the changing dynamics of gender roles and the challenges faced by women in traditional households.

6. Safiya: Safiya is Nur's first wife and a more traditional figure in his life. She has a complex and reserved demeanor, which contrasts with Imtiaz's fiery personality. Safiya's character represents the historical and traditional aspects of Urdu culture and poetry.

7. Abid Siddiqui: Abid Siddiqui is the college's sole Urdu professor and an important character in the novel. He assists Deven in securing funds for his project and represents the academic world's connection to the literary heritage of India.

8. Mr. Rai: Mr. Rai is the college registrar who provides funding for Deven's project to interview Nur. His character exemplifies the bureaucratic aspects of education and the administrative support Deven requires for his literary endeavor.

9. Chiku: Chiku is Mr. Jain's nephew and serves as a technical assistant to Deven, helping him record Nur's poetry. His character adds a contemporary technological dimension to the narrative.

10. Mr. Jain: Mr. Jain owns an electronics shop and provides Deven with recording

equipment. His character illustrates the influence of technology and modernity on traditional artistic pursuits.

11. Other Minor Characters: The novel also features a host of other minor characters, such as Deven's colleagues and friends, who offer insights into the broader social context of Mirpore and the challenges faced by individuals navigating a changing cultural landscape.

These characters collectively create a rich narrative, representing various aspects of the themes explored in the novel. "In Custody" is not only a story of individuals but also a portrayal of the broader cultural and societal shifts in post-partition India. Anita Desai skillfully uses these characters to highlight the complexities of cultural identity, the decline of traditional art forms, and the clash between tradition and modernity.

## **2.4 Themes**

"In Custody" by Anita Desai explores a variety of themes that resonate deeply with the human condition, cultural shifts, and personal identity.

1. Decline of Urdu Poetry: One of the central themes in "In Custody" is the decline of Urdu poetry, particularly in the face of the dominance of Hindi, which is seen as the "Language of Peasants." The novel captures the fading importance of this rich literary tradition, emphasizing the loss of cultural heritage and the challenges of preserving traditional art forms in a rapidly changing society.

2. Cultural Identity: The novel explores the concept of cultural identity, especially in the context of post-partition India. The characters, like Deven, are caught in the crossroads of old traditions and modernity. They grapple with the question of what it means to be Indian and how language and culture shape their identities.

3. Duality: Duality is a recurring theme throughout the novel. Deven himself represents this duality, torn between his passion for Urdu poetry and the practical necessity of teaching Hindi literature. This theme extends to the broader Indian society, torn between preserving its cultural heritage and embracing the modern world.

4. Language and Identity: The book underscores how language is not just a means of

communication but a crucial element in shaping personal and cultural identity. Deven's journey reflects the internal conflict of many individuals who find themselves in linguistic and cultural crossroads.

5. **Struggle for Artistic Fulfilment:** Deven's quest to interview Nur Shahjahanabadi and capture his poetry represents the universal theme of the artist's struggle for fulfilment and recognition. The novel underscores the sacrifices and compromises artists often make in their pursuit of their craft.

6. **The Clash of Tradition and Modernity:** "In Custody" vividly portrays the collision between tradition and modernity, especially in the context of India's evolving cultural landscape. This theme is evident in the contrast between the old-world charm of Urdu poetry and the encroachment of a more practical, utilitarian language.

7. **The Role of Literature:** The novel highlights the significant role that literature and poetry play in the lives of the characters. For Deven, the power of poetry is a source of inspiration and connection with his cultural roots.

8. **The Complexity of Human Relationships:** The relationships in the novel, particularly those between Nur and his wives, as well as Deven and his family, reveal the intricate and often tumultuous nature of human connections. They are reflective of the broader theme of the complexities of cultural and personal identity.

9. **Disillusionment:** Deven's journey to interview Nur and capture his poetry ultimately leads to disillusionment and a sense of futility. This theme reflects the broader idea that idealized dreams and aspirations may not always align with reality.

Anita Desai's "In Custody" is a poignant exploration of these themes within the context of a changing India. It speaks to the universal struggle of preserving cultural heritage, the complexities of personal identity, and the clash between tradition and modernity. Through the lives of its characters, the novel presents a compelling narrative that invites readers to reflect on these themes.

## **2.5 Questions**

- What are some of the recurring themes and motifs in Anita Desai's literary works, and how do they evolve over the course of her career?
  
- How has Anita Desai's exploration of cultural conflicts and the clash of traditions with modernity in her novels contributed to her reputation as a notable Indian author?
  
- Discuss the impact of Anita Desai's works on the landscape of Indian and world literature, and the critical reception of her books in literary circles.
  
- Analyze the symbolic significance of Nur Shahjehanabadi's home and surroundings. How does it reflect the themes of the novel?
  
- Explore the theme of duality in the novel as it relates to the characters, especially Deven Sharma. How does Deven embody the concept of duality?
  
- Discuss the role of language in shaping identity and cultural preservation as depicted in the novel. How does the decline of Urdu poetry reflect broader cultural shifts in India?
  
- What is Deven's primary interest when it comes to language and literature?
  
- What challenge does Deven face when trying to record Nur's poetry?
  
- How does Deven ultimately feel about his experience with Nur?
  
- What overarching theme is explored in the novel regarding the decline of a particular aspect of culture?

These questions are designed to test basic knowledge and understanding of the novel's plot and characters.

**BLAB33602T**

**Course: Indian Writings in English**

**Section A**

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**Unit 3: A.K Ramanujan: *Obituary*; Kamala Das: *My Grandmother's House*; Sarojini Naidu: *The Bangle Sellers***

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**Structure**

3.0 Objectives

3.1 About the poet: A.K Ramanujan

3.2 Analysis of the poem: Obituary

3.3 Questions – I

3.4 About the poet: Kamala Das

3.5 Analysis of the poem: My Grandmother's House

3.6 Questions – II

3.7 About the poet: Sarojini Naidu

3.8 Analysis of the poem: The Bangle Sellers

3.9 Questions – III

**3.0 Objectives**

This unit will enable you to:

1. Analyze the life and background of the poets
2. Explore the themes and emotions prevalent in these poems
3. Understand the historical and social context in which the poets wrote, and how it influenced their work
4. Examine the unique style and literary techniques employed by the poets
5. Analyze the poems in depth, considering their structure, imagery, and literary devices

**3.1 About the poet: A.K Ramanujan**

A.K. Ramanujan (1929-1993) was a writer whose life and works continue to inspire and influence scholars, poets, and lovers of literature worldwide. He was born in Mysore, India, and his journey as a poet, scholar, and translator was marked by a deep engagement with the rich tapestry of Indian culture and the complexities of language.

Ramanujan's early life was steeped in the traditions of southern India. He was exposed to classical Tamil literature and folklore from a young age, which laid the foundation for his later scholarly pursuits. He earned his undergraduate degree from Mysore University and went on to complete his postgraduate studies at Deccan College in Pune. His academic pursuits led him to the United States, where he earned a Ph.D. in linguistics from Indiana University.

His scholarly work was multilayered, with a particular focus on the translation of classical Tamil poetry. Ramanujan's translations of ancient Tamil Sangam poetry were groundbreaking and opened these verses to a global audience. His translations managed to retain the essence and poetic beauty of the originals while also making them accessible to those unfamiliar with the Tamil language. His work in this area helped bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, emphasizing the universality of human emotions and experiences.

Ramanujan's poetry also was a testament to his linguistic prowess and cultural depth. His work had the ability to traverse boundaries, often blending different languages and cultural references. His poetic works, including "The Striders" and "Second Sight," dealt with the complexities of identity, belonging, and the intricacies of the human experience. He used poetry as a means to explore and express the diversity and contradictions of India, and his poems resonated with readers on both intellectual and emotional levels.

Ramanujan was also a respected folklorist. His work in this field aimed at capturing the essence of India's oral traditions and folklore, which are often passed down through generations. He appreciated the stories, proverbs, and rituals of various Indian communities deeply, which allowed him to document and analyze these aspects in a way that shed light on the cultural mosaic of the subcontinent.

Ramanujan's legacy is one of intellectual curiosity, linguistic dexterity, and cultural sensitivity. His life and works continue to influence scholars, writers, and artists who seek to explore the intricacies of Indian culture and the universality of human experience through literature. His writings keep reminding us that the beauty of literature lies in its ability to transcend boundaries, connecting people across time, space, and cultures. A.K. Ramanujan's contributions to this endeavour remain enduring and invaluable.



Here is a list of some of his notable works:

1. *The Striders* (1966) - A collection of his poetry that explores themes of identity and culture.
2. *Second Sight* (1986) - Another collection of his poems that delves into various aspects of human experience.
3. *Speaking of Siva* (1973) - A seminal work that includes Ramanujan's translations of classical Tamil poetry, primarily focusing on the devotional songs of the Nayanars.
4. *Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?* (1990) - This essay collection examines the uniqueness of Indian thought and philosophy.
5. *Folktales from India: A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-two Languages* (1991) - Ramanujan's work in documenting and translating Indian folktales.
6. *Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation* (1991) - An essay that discusses the diversity of the Ramayana tradition in India.

These works reflect Ramanujan's diverse interests in poetry, translation, folklore, and Indian cultural studies, making him a prominent figure in the world of literature and scholarship.

### **3.2 Analysis of the poem: Obituary**

"Obituary" by A.K. Ramanujan is a thought-provoking poem that explores the aftermath of a father's death. Through its unique blend of irony and introspection, the poem offers a poignant reflection on life, legacy, and familial bonds. This analysis will provide a comprehensive overview of the poem, its themes, and the poet's distinctive style.

In "Obituary," the poet, presumably A.K. Ramanujan himself, reflects on the consequences of his father's passing. The poem, taken from his collection "Relationships" (1971), is written in a first-person narrative, creating a personal and introspective tone. It consists of eight stanzas. The poem begins with the speaker announcing the death of his father. However, what follows is unexpected – a humorous and ironic perspective on the legacy the father left behind. Rather than focusing on material possessions or achievements, the poem highlights seemingly trivial and absurd aspects of the aftermath.

The father's legacy includes a dusty table full of papers, debts, a bed-wetting grandson named after him by the toss of a coin, and an old, decaying house leaning against a bent coconut tree. These details are not conventional aspects of an obituary, and the humor arises from the contrast between the expectation of a solemn tribute and the reality of this irreverent

portrayal.

The poem delves into the cremation of the father, where the sons find round bits of metal in the ashes, which are meant to be thrown into the confluence of three rivers according to ritual instructions. However, the poem suggests that these rituals are hard to uphold due to poverty. Tragedy emerges as the speaker reveals that the father got only a brief obituary notice published in a local newspaper. The poet expects to come across these lines when the newspaper, like many others, will be sold as junk. This seemingly trivial obituary serves as a symbol of the transient nature of life and memory.

The poem concludes with a reflection on the impact of the father's death, particularly on the mother, who has undergone a significant transformation. It also highlights the necessity of carrying on various rituals as part of family life.

"Obituary" is a unique poem that explores the theme of death in a manner that combines irony with poignant reflection. While the title suggests a mournful tone, the poem's treatment of the subject is anything but conventional. Instead, Ramanujan uses irony and wit to present the father's legacy in a way that challenges expectations.

The poet makes use of irony to emphasize the insignificance of material possessions in the face of mortality. The father leaves behind a table of dust and papers, debts, and a chaotic family situation, all of which are presented humorously. This approach creates a stark contrast between the conventional notion of a dignified obituary and the reality of the father's eccentric legacy.

Ramanujan's poem touches on the tension between tradition and poverty. The rituals, while significant, become challenging to maintain due to financial constraints. The mention of the father's obituary notice in a local newspaper adds depth to the poem by highlighting the impermanence of memory and the fleeting nature of personal legacies.

Family is at the core of Ramanujan's narrative throughout the poem. His unique portrayal of familial bonds makes the poem relatable and universally appealing. The poem serves as a tribute to the poet's father but not through conventional means.

"Obituary" by A.K. Ramanujan is a masterful work that challenges traditional notions of mourning and remembrance. The poem's portrayal of the father's legacy offers a profound commentary on the impermanence of life and the enduring significance of familial bonds. Ramanujan's ability to find humor in the face of tragedy and to explore the profound in the seemingly trivial makes "Obituary" a captivating and thought-provoking piece of poetry.

### 3.3 Questions – I

1. "Obituary" reflects on the passing of a loved one. How does the poet use language and imagery to convey the emotions and thoughts associated with death?
2. Ramanujan's poetry often blends traditional Indian themes with modern sensibilities. In "Obituary," how does he achieve this fusion, and what is the impact on the poem's message?
3. Discuss the role of cultural and religious references in "Obituary." How do they contribute to the poem's exploration of life, death, and memory?

### 3.4 About the poet: Kamala Das

Kamala Das, born on March 31, 1934, in Punnayurkulam, Kerala, India, was a prolific and controversial Indian English poet and writer. Her life and works were marked by a fearless exploration of love, desire, and female sexuality, making her one of the most prominent voices in Indian literature.

Kamala Das's early life was influenced by her conservative upbringing in a Nair Hindu family. She was a multilingual child, fluent in Malayalam, English, and Hindi, and she began writing at a young age. She was married at the tender age of 15 to K. Madhav Das, which marked the beginning of her tumultuous journey. Her experiences as a wife and mother deeply influenced her early works.

Her literary career took off in the 1960s with the publication of her first collection of poetry, "Summer in Calcutta" (1965), which garnered both critical acclaim and controversy. Her poems were candid and explicit in their exploration of female desire, challenging the prevailing societal norms and taboos. She continued to push the boundaries of conventional poetry in her subsequent works, including "The Descendants" (1967) and "The Old Playhouse and Other Poems" (1973).

However, it was her autobiographical work, "My Story" (1976), that thrust Kamala Das into the national spotlight. This candid account of her life, love affairs, and experiences as a woman faced intense criticism and backlash from conservative sections of society. But it also cemented her position as a powerful feminist voice in Indian literature, unapologetically discussing the complexities of her life.

Throughout her literary career, Kamala Das experimented with various forms of writing, including short stories and essays. Her prose was characterized by the same candour as her poetry. She addressed themes of love, identity, and the struggle for self-assertion in a patriarchal society. She continued to challenge the status quo and provoke thought in her readers.

Kamala Das's writings are celebrated for their boldness and unflinching honesty. She not only brought female desire into the literary discourse but also shed light on the inner world of women in a society that often silenced their voices. Her works served as an inspiration for later generations of women writers in India.

Kamala Das was also politically active and served as a member of the Kerala State Legislative Assembly. She was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for her outstanding contributions to Indian literature in 1984.

Kamala Das passed away on May 31, 2009, leaving behind a legacy of fearless and provocative literature. Her life and works continue to be studied and admired for their contribution to the feminist movement in India, and she is remembered for challenging societal norms through the power of the written word.

List of some of Kamala Das notable works:

1. "Summer in Calcutta" (1965) - A collection of poetry that marked her emergence as a poet.
2. "The Descendants" (1967) - Another collection of her evocative poetry.
3. "The Old Playhouse and Other Poems" (1973) - Known for its bold exploration of female desire.
4. "My Story" (1976) - Her controversial and candid autobiography.
5. "Alphabet of Lust" (1976) - A collection of her short stories.

These works showcase Kamala Das's prolific career as a poet and author, known for her unapologetic exploration of love, desire, and the female experience.

### **3.5 Analysis of the poem: My Grandmother's House**

Kamala Das's poem, "My Grandmother's House," is a deeply evocative exploration of nostalgia, love, and the profound impact of childhood memories. The poem takes the reader on a journey through the poet's emotional landscape as she reflects on her past and the stark contrast between her grandmother's house and her loveless marital life.

The poem opens with the poet's deep sense of nostalgia as she fondly recalls the happiest days of her childhood spent at her grandmother's house. She highlights the strong emotional attachment she had with her grandmother, who provided her with love, care, and affection. This love was pure and selfless, in stark contrast to the poet's loveless marriage.

The poet's nostalgia is triggered by the memory of her grandmother's house, a place of security and warmth where she received unconditional love. However, she now lives in a distant city, far from her grandmother's house, and she longs to revisit it. She is unable to

make this journey due to the emotional and geographical distance that separates her from her cherished childhood home.

The house itself, a place that was once full of life and love because of her grandmother's presence, has become a symbol of desolation and abandonment after her grandmother's passing. The poet's inability to return to the house is similar to a brooding dog, reflecting her deep sense of longing and attachment.

The poem is full of vivid imagery, such as "blind eyes of the windows" and "frozen air," which convey the sense of death and desperation associated with her grandmother's house. These images reflect the emotional emptiness the poet feels in her present circumstances.

Kamala Das's "My Grandmother's House" is a powerful and emotionally charged poem that explores the themes of nostalgia, love, and the impact of childhood memories on one's adult life. Major themes of the poem are as follows:

1. Nostalgia and Longing: The poem is filled with a deep sense of nostalgia. The poet longs to revisit her grandmother's house, a place of love and security. This nostalgia serves as a powerful driving force in the poem, emphasizing the emotional connection between the poet and her past.
2. Contrast: The stark contrast between the poet's loveless marital life and the pure, selfless love she received from her grandmother is a central theme. This highlights the emotional turmoil and dissatisfaction the poet experiences in her current circumstances.
3. Imagery: Kamala Das employs vivid and evocative imagery throughout the poem. The "blind eyes of the windows" and the "frozen air" serve as powerful visual metaphors for the desolation and emotional emptiness associated with her grandmother's house.
4. Loss and Abandonment: The house, once a place of life and love, becomes a symbol of abandonment and mourning after her grandmother's passing. This transformation reflects the impact of her grandmother's absence on the poet.
5. Desperation and Longing: The poem ends with a sense of desperation and longing. The poet describes herself as a "beggar for love," searching for genuine and selfless love in her life. Her quest for love and emotional fulfillment becomes a central focus, entailing the emotional complexity of her situation.

In "My Grandmother's House," Kamala Das masterfully conveys the emotional depth and complexity of her feelings. The poem serves as a poignant reflection on the enduring impact of childhood memories, the longing for genuine love, and the emotional turmoil that can

result from loveless relationships. Kamala Das's ability to evoke powerful emotions and create a vivid emotional landscape makes this poem a timeless and resonant piece of literature.

### **3.6 Questions – II**

1. "My Grandmother's House" is a nostalgic reflection on childhood and a sense of belonging. How does the poet use imagery and symbolism to convey these feelings?
2. Kamala Das often explores themes of identity and womanhood in her poetry. How do these themes manifest in "My Grandmother's House"?
3. The poem speaks of a contrast between the past and the present. How does this contrast help to convey the poet's sense of loss and longing for her grandmother's house?

### **3.7 About the poet: Sarojini Naidu**

Sarojini Naidu, often referred to as the Nightingale of India, was a multifaceted and influential figure in the early 20th century. Born on February 13, 1879, in Hyderabad, India, she was a poet, freedom fighter, and a prominent political leader. Her life and works left an indelible mark on India's struggle for independence and its literary landscape.

Sarojini Naidu's early life was marked by academic excellence and a love for literature. She was an accomplished student and proficient in several languages. Her literary talent was apparent from a young age, and she began writing poetry when she was still a child. Her early work earned her recognition as a budding poet.

As she grew older, Sarojini Naidu's involvement in India's struggle for independence became increasingly pronounced. She joined the Indian National Congress and participated actively in the non-cooperation movement led by Mahatma Gandhi. Her eloquent speeches and persuasive oratory skills made her a prominent figure in the Indian freedom movement. In 1925, she became the first woman to serve as the President of the Indian National Congress, a testament to her influence in the political arena.

Naidu's poetic prowess earned her the nickname "Nightingale of India." Her poems reflected a deep love for her country and its people. Her poetry often conveyed the beauty of India's culture and traditions, as well as the aspirations for freedom. Her famous works include "In the Bazaars of Hyderabad" and "The Golden Threshold." These poems not only showcased her literary talent but also her deep emotional connection to her homeland.

Sarojini Naidu was also an advocate for women's rights. She was a pioneer in the women's movement and played a significant role in improving women's status in Indian society. Her

efforts towards women's empowerment and her position as a prominent female leader set an example for future generations of Indian women.

Sarojini Naidu's life was dedicated to the service of her country. Her tireless efforts in the struggle for India's independence and her ability to use words as a powerful tool for change made her an iconic figure. Her legacy lives on through her poetry and her influence on the political and social landscape of India. She passed away on March 2, 1949, but her memory lives on as an inspiration for those who continue to strive for a better and more just India.

Sarojini Naidu was a prolific poet, and her works include numerous poems, essays, and speeches. Here are some of her notable works:

1. "The Golden Threshold" - This is a collection of Naidu's poetry and is considered a classic in Indian literature.
2. "The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death & the Spring" - Another collection of her poems, exploring various themes of life and nature.
3. "The Broken Wing: Songs of Love, Death, and the Spring" - A collection that delves into themes of love, loss, and renewal.
4. "The Sceptred Flute: Songs of India" - A poetic work that celebrates India's rich cultural heritage.
5. Various speeches and articles on Indian independence and women's rights - Naidu delivered many speeches and wrote articles advocating for India's freedom and women's empowerment.

These works reflect Sarojini Naidu's diverse literary talents and her deep connection to her country and its culture.

### **3.8 Analysis of the poem: The Bangle Sellers**

Sarojini Naidu's poem "The Bangle Sellers" explores the role of bangles in the lives of Indian women across different stages of their existence. With a vivid display of literary devices, this poem celebrates the cultural significance of bangles and reflects the poet's keen understanding of the complex nature of Indian society. She conveys complex themes and emotions using poetic devices such as alliteration, simile, metaphor, and imagery which makes her work captivating.

In the first stanza, Naidu introduces the bangle sellers who are at a temple fair, carrying their "Shining loads." Here, the bangles symbolize the heaviness of life. The temple fair represents a space where people of all ages gather, emphasizing the central role bangles play in various

stages of a woman's life. The bangle sellers entice potential buyers with the description of their bangles as "delicate, bright, Rainbow-tinted circles of light," portraying them as "lustrous tokens of radiant lives." These lines establish the cultural significance of bangles, representing happiness and prosperity.

The second stanza showcases the bangles suitable for young maidens. Naidu employs vivid imagery, comparing bangles to natural elements like "Silver and Blue" like "the mountain mist," "flushed like the flower buds beside a woodland stream," and "green" like "newborn leaves." The comparison "flushed like the buds that dream" hints at the shyness and dreams of young girls, especially related to their expectations regarding marriage. This stanza conveys the diverse range of emotions and experiences young women undergo as they come of age.

In the third stanza, the poem focuses on the bangles worn by brides on their wedding day. Naidu uses colors like "Yellow" and "Red" to compare them to "fields of sunlit corn," "flame of her marriage fire," and the "hue of her heart's desire." The bangles are described as "tinkling, luminous, tender, and clear," mirroring the bride's emotions on her wedding day, capturing both joy and the bittersweet tears of leaving her family for her husband's home. This stanza is a depiction of the complexity of emotions associated with marriage in Indian culture.

The final stanza illuminates bangles suitable for middle-aged married women. It provides insight into societal expectations, especially in the Indian context, where the ideal wife is expected to bear sons and serve her household dutifully, worshipping "gods at her husband's side." The bangles in "purple" and "gold-flecked grey" symbolize a quieter and contented life, reflecting the subdued role of a middle-aged married woman. The reference to "cradled fair sons" reinforces the prevailing preference for male offspring during the era in which Naidu wrote the poem.

"The Bangle Sellers" is a beautiful example of how a simple object, like bangles, can be used to convey profound themes related to cultural expectations, societal roles, and the stages of a woman's life in Indian society. Naidu's poetic talent shines through her skilful use of literary devices, creating a vibrant expression of colours, emotions, and traditions within this short and impactful poem.

Sarojini Naidu's "The Bangle Sellers" is a masterful exploration of the cultural and emotional significance of bangles in the lives of Indian women. The poem beautifully showcases the transitions and expectations faced by women as they move through different stages of life, while also providing insights into the prevailing societal norms of Naidu's time.



### **3.9 Questions – III**

1. "The Bangle Sellers" celebrates the beauty and diversity of bangles. How does the poem use vivid descriptions and metaphors to convey the essence of bangles and the women who wear them?
2. Sarojini Naidu was known for her patriotic poetry, but "The Bangle Sellers" is quite different in theme. How does the poem relate to the broader themes of womanhood and tradition in her body of work?
3. The poem describes bangles for various occasions and stages of life. How do these different types of bangles reflect the various facets of a woman's life, as depicted in the poem?

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**Course: Indian Writings in English**

**Section B**

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**Unit 4: Indian Writings in English Literary terms and concepts**

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**Structure**

**4.0 Objectives**

**4.1 Indian Literary Renaissance**

**4.2 Marxism**

**4.3 Dalit Movement**

**4.4 Atheist**

**4.5 Panthers Movement**

**4.6 World Religion**

**4.7 Equivalence**

**4.8 Non-Equivalence**

**4.9 Vedic Religion**

**4.10 Indian Freedom Struggle**

**4.11 Dalit Identity**

**4.12 Swadeshi**

**4.13 National Integration**

**4.14 Advaita, Sanyasa, and Grihastha**

**4.15 Spiritual Revolution**

**4.16 Questions**

**4.17 Suggested readings**

## 4.0 Objectives

This unit will enable you to analyse and understand the following:

- Understand the historical and intellectual context of the Indian Literary Renaissance, tracing its key figures, works, and contributions to Indian literature and culture.
- Explore the tenets and principles of Marxism and its influence on literature, particularly in the context of Indian society and its class struggles.
- Examine the emergence and impact of the Dalit Movement, including key Dalit writers and their literary expressions of social and political concerns.
- Analyze the concept of atheism and its role in Indian literature and philosophical thought.
- Explore the foundational principles and beliefs of Vedic religion and its impact on Indian spirituality and culture.
- Trace the role of literature and intellectual discourse in the Indian freedom struggle, including the writings and contributions of prominent freedom fighters.
- Examine the concept of Dalit identity and how it has been shaped and expressed through literature and social movements.
- Investigate the Swadeshi movement and its role in fostering nationalistic sentiments and self-reliance in India.
- Discuss the concept of national integration and how it has been addressed in Indian literature, particularly in the context of a diverse and multicultural society.
- Explore the philosophical concepts of Advaita, Sanyasa, and Grihastha and their influence on Indian spiritual and philosophical traditions.
- Reflect on the concept of a spiritual revolution and its impact on Indian thought, literature, and cultural transformation.

### 4.1 Indian Literary Renaissance:

The Indian Literary Renaissance was a cultural and literary movement that took place in India during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This period witnessed a significant resurgence of interest in Indian literature, languages, and traditions, often in response to British colonialism.

At the heart of the Indian Literary Renaissance was the desire to revive and celebrate India's rich literary heritage, which had been overshadowed by centuries of foreign rule. Prominent

figures like Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay played pivotal roles in this movement. In particular, Tagore was a literary giant whose works not only showcased his poetic brilliance but also conveyed a deep sense of Indian spirituality and nationalism.

One of the key aspects of the Indian Literary Renaissance was the promotion of vernacular languages alongside English. Authors and scholars recognized the importance of Indian languages and literature in preserving cultural identity, and sought to revive and preserve them. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel "Anandamath," which is written in Bengali, is a notable example of this trend.

The movement also sought to break away from the dominance of Western literary forms and themes. That is why, writers began to explore Indian mythology, folklore, and history in their works. This emphasis on indigenous themes and narratives is what helped in creating a distinct identity for Indian literature in English.

The Indian Literary Renaissance was not limited to literature alone but also had a profound impact on various art forms, including music, painting, and theater. For example, The Bengal School of Art emerged during this period and incorporated traditional Indian aesthetics into its works.

The Indian Literary Renaissance was a cultural awakening that reaffirmed India's rich literary traditions. It not only celebrated India's cultural diversity but also laid the foundation for the vibrant literary landscape we see today. It was a period of reconnection with the nation's roots and a response to the socio-political challenges of the time, which ultimately shaped the course of Indian literature in English and other Indian languages.

#### **4.2 Marxism:**

Marxism is a socio-political and economic theory that originated with the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. In the context of Indian writings in English, Marxism has been a significant influence on literature and literary criticism. It offers a lens through which it is possible to analyse society, class dynamics, and the impact of capitalism.

At its core, Marxism seeks to understand and critique the relationship between the working class (proletariat) and the capitalist class (bourgeoisie). It argues that capitalism perpetuates inequality, exploitation, and class struggle. This perspective has found resonance in India's social and economic context, where disparities in wealth and social status have been deeply entrenched.

In literature, Marxist analysis focuses on how literary works reflect and critique societal structures. Indian authors writing in English have employed Marxist themes and principles to explore issues such as poverty, exploitation of labor, land reform, and the struggles of the working class. This approach often entails scrutinizing how literature reflects the economic and social conditions of a given time and place.

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the many prominent Indian authors who have incorporated Marxist themes into their works. His novel "Untouchable" portrays the life of a Dalit (formerly known as untouchable) protagonist and exposes the harsh realities of caste-based oppression. His writing reflects a Marxist concern for social justice and class disparities.

Marxist theory has been employed to analyze and interpret Indian literature in English and other Indian languages. Scholars have explored how authors use literature as a medium to address issues of class struggle, economic exploitation, and the quest for social justice.

Marxism has had a substantial influence on Indian writings in English by providing a framework for understanding and critiquing social, economic, and class-related issues. It has allowed authors and critics to engage with complex societal challenges and has contributed to a deeper understanding of the human condition within the context of India's diverse and ever-evolving society.

#### **4.3 Dalit Movement:**

The Dalit Movement is a social and political movement in India that seeks to address the historical injustices and discrimination faced by Dalits, who were traditionally considered "untouchables" within the caste system. This movement has significantly influenced Indian writings in English, as it reflects the voices and experiences of Dalits and their struggle for social equality and justice.

Dalit literature is a subset of Indian literature in English which emerged as an integral part of the Dalit Movement. This literary tradition gives voice to the marginalized and oppressed, shedding light on the harsh realities of caste-based discrimination and untouchability. Dalit writers, such as B.R. Ambedkar, Omprakash Valmiki, and Bama, have used their works to challenge societal norms and advocate for the rights and dignity of Dalits.

One of the key themes in Dalit literature is the assertion of identity and the rejection of the caste-based hierarchy. These works often depict the lived experiences of Dalits, including the struggles they face in education, employment, and everyday life. Autobiographical narratives

and novels like Bama's "Karukku" offer powerful insights into the resilience and determination of Dalits in the face of adversity.

The Dalit Movement has been instrumental in raising awareness about social justice through other mediums such as poetry, music, and political activism. Songs and poetry by Dalit artists have played a crucial role in conveying the pain and aspirations of the community.

The Dalit Movement has also led to significant political developments, with leaders like B.R. Ambedkar advocating for the rights of Dalits and their inclusion in the political and social fabric of India. Ambedkar, who was a prominent scholar, jurist, and social reformer, is celebrated for his role in drafting the Indian Constitution, which includes provisions to safeguard the rights of Dalits and other marginalized communities.

The impact of the Dalit Movement on Indian literature in English extends beyond the mere portrayal of caste-based discrimination. It has stimulated conversations about social justice, human rights, and the need for equality and inclusivity in a diverse society like India. This movement and its literary expressions have contributed significantly to the broader discourse on caste and identity in India.

#### **4.4 Atheist:**

Atheism represents a departure from traditional religious beliefs and the questioning of the existence of gods or deities. While India has a rich and diverse spiritual and religious landscape, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, and others, there are individuals who identify as atheists and agnostics.

Atheism in Indian literature in English can manifest in various ways, from explicit declarations of non-belief to more subtle explorations of spirituality and skepticism. Some writers use their works to critique organized religion, religious dogma, and superstitions. This critical perspective often challenges societal norms and encourages readers to engage with questions of faith and belief critically.

Prominent Indian authors who have explored atheism and agnosticism in their works include Mulk Raj Anand. In his novel "The Road", he depicts a protagonist struggling with existential questions and religious doubt. Raja Rao's novel "The Serpent and the Rope" delves into the conflict between spirituality and atheism in the life of an intellectual.

The themes of atheism and agnosticism are not limited to only novels. They can also be found in poetry, essays, and philosophical writings. Writers like Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo have engaged with spirituality and transcendentalism in their works, challenging conventional religious interpretations on one hand while offering alternative perspectives on the divine on the other.

The presence of atheism in Indian writings in English highlights the diversity of thought and belief within Indian society. It reflects the ongoing intellectual and philosophical dialogue about faith, spirituality, and the meaning of life, and it encourages readers to engage critically with the fundamental questions connected to faith and belief.

#### **4.5 Panthers Movement:**

The Panthers Movement in India draws inspiration from the Black Panther Party in the United States and is associated with the Dalit Panthers. It is a social and political movement that aims to address issues of discrimination, inequality, and social justice, particularly in the context of Dalits in India.

It is not as widely discussed as other movements in Indian literature but the Panthers Movement has influenced some contemporary works and discussions about social justice and equality. It underscores the importance of solidarity among marginalized communities and the need to confront issues related to caste, class, and oppression.

The Panthers Movement advocates for the rights and dignity of Dalits and challenges the deeply rooted caste-based discrimination and hierarchies in India. In literature, this movement may be reflected indirectly through themes of social justice, empowerment, and the struggle for equality.

While the Panthers Movement may not have a well-defined literary tradition in Indian English literature, its social and political impact is significant. It contributes to the broader conversation about human rights and equality in India which reflects the ongoing efforts to combat discrimination and create a more just and inclusive society.

The Panthers Movement in India, inspired by the Black Panther Party, addresses issues of discrimination and social justice, particularly in the context of Dalits. Its influence can be seen in discussions about social justice, equality, and the need to confront caste-based discrimination in Indian society.

#### **4.6 World Religion:**

World Religion refers to major religious traditions that have a global presence and influence. These religions often transcend geographical and cultural boundaries and have millions of followers worldwide. Discussions about world religions explore the coexistence and interactions of various faiths in the Indian subcontinent, which is known for its religious diversity.

India has been a cradle of major religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, and others. These religions have shaped the cultural, social, and spiritual fabric of the country for millennia. The study of world religions in Indian literature in English delves into the historical, philosophical, and cultural aspects of these faiths.

One prominent aspect of world religions in Indian literature is the exploration of religious pluralism and the idea of religious coexistence. Writers often portray India as a land where multiple religions have peacefully coexisted for centuries. This coexistence is sometimes depicted as a source of spiritual and cultural richness, as can be seen in the works of Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Indian authors have examined the interactions and influences between different religious traditions. For example, the syncretic nature of Sikhism, which incorporates elements from Hinduism and Islam, has been explored in literature. The interplay between Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as the spread of Islam and Christianity in India, has also been subjects of literary exploration.

Indian writers in English have used their works to question and critique religious practices, superstitions, and orthodoxies. Some have engaged with the idea of religious reform and modernization, as seen in the writings of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda. These authors have sought to promote rationality and social progress within the context of their respective religious traditions.

Indian literature in English has offered insights into the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of world religions. The works of spiritual leaders like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda have been influential in conveying the essence of Hinduism to a global audience.



Discussions about world religions in Indian literature in English explore religious diversity, pluralism, coexistence, and the interactions between different faiths. They shed light on India's rich religious heritage and its impact on literature, culture, and society.

#### **4.7 Equivalence:**

Equivalence in literature and translation studies refers to the process of maintaining the same meaning, tone, and effect when translating a text from one language to another. Achieving equivalence is crucial when adapting works from Indian languages into English or vice versa, as it ensures that the translated text accurately conveys the author's intent and the nuances of the original work.

Translating literary works involves a delicate balancing act. Translators must not only consider the literal meaning of words but also capture the cultural, historical, and contextual elements that give a text its depth and authenticity. Achieving equivalence means that the translated work resonates with readers in the target language as much as the original did with its audience.

In the context of Indian writings in English, achieving equivalence is particularly challenging due to the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of India. The country is home to numerous languages and dialects, each with its own unique nuances and idioms. Translating works from languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, or Malayalam into English requires a deep understanding of both the source and target languages.

Prominent Indian authors, such as Rabindranath Tagore and Premchand, have had their works translated into English, and the success of these translations depends on achieving equivalence. Translators must navigate the cultural and linguistic gaps to ensure that the essence of the original text is preserved.

Equivalence is also vital when translating religious and philosophical texts from Indian languages into English. Works like the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, and the Ramayana are not only religious scriptures but also profound philosophical and literary texts. Translators must maintain the philosophical depth and spiritual resonance of these texts while making them accessible to English-speaking readers.

There has been a growing appreciation in the last few years for the importance of equivalence in translation. Translators and scholars collaborate to find creative solutions to linguistic and

cultural challenges, ensuring that Indian literary and philosophical traditions are not lost in translation.

Equivalence is a critical concept in the translation of Indian writings in English which involves preserving the meaning, tone, and cultural context of the original work while adapting it to a new linguistic and cultural context. Successful translation achieves equivalence, allowing readers to experience the depth and richness of Indian literature in English.

#### **4.8 Non-Equivalence:**

Non-equivalence, in contrast to equivalence, refers to situations where a text cannot be translated precisely due to linguistic, cultural, or contextual differences between the source and target languages. Achieving non-equivalence can be challenging, but it acknowledges that some elements of a text are inherently tied to the language, culture, and context in which they were created.

Non-equivalence often arises when translating works from Indian languages into English or when conveying culturally specific concepts and nuances. Indian literature is known for its rich diversity of languages, dialects, and cultural traditions, making it a fertile ground for exploring non-equivalence in translation.

Non-equivalence can manifest in several ways:

1. **Cultural References:** Some cultural references or idiomatic expressions in Indian languages may not have direct equivalents in English. For example, certain proverbs or metaphors that are deeply rooted in Indian culture may lose their cultural resonance when translated.
2. **Cultural Practices:** Rituals, customs, and traditions that are integral to a story or a text may not be fully understood or appreciated by English-speaking readers without extensive explanations or context.
3. **Linguistic Nuances:** Languages often have words or phrases that convey subtle emotions, concepts, or cultural nuances unique to that language. Translating these nuances into English can be challenging and may result in some loss of depth or specificity.

4. **Regional Variations:** India's linguistic and cultural diversity means that what is common in one region or language may not be familiar to speakers of other languages. Translators must consider these regional variations when conveying non-equivalence.

Despite the challenges, non-equivalence can also be an opportunity for creativity and innovation in translation. Translators may employ various strategies to convey the essence of the original text while acknowledging the non-equivalence of certain elements. This may involve footnotes, glossaries, or explanations within the text to provide readers with the necessary context.

It is important to recognize that non-equivalence is not a limitation of translation but rather a reflection of the richness and complexity of language and culture. It emphasizes the need for translators to navigate the intricate interplay between languages and to make informed choices that preserve the integrity of the original work while making it accessible to a broader audience.

Non-equivalence is a concept in translation studies that acknowledges the challenges of translating texts with linguistic, cultural, or contextual elements that do not have direct equivalents in the target language. It highlights the need for creative and thoughtful translation strategies to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps while preserving the authenticity of the original text.

#### **4.9 Vedic Religion:**

Vedic religion refers to the religious beliefs and practices found in the ancient Indian scriptures known as the Vedas. This religious tradition is foundational to the development of Hinduism and has had a profound influence on Indian culture, philosophy, and literature. In Indian writings in English, discussions about Vedic religion often explore its historical significance, philosophical underpinnings, and enduring legacy.

The Vedas are a collection of ancient sacred texts composed in Sanskrit, and they are among the oldest religious scriptures in the world. They are divided into four main collections: the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, and Atharvaveda. Each Veda contains hymns, rituals, and philosophical teachings that are central to the Vedic religious tradition.

Vedic religion is characterized by its focus on sacrificial rituals, devotion to deities such as Agni (the fire god), Indra (the god of thunder and rain), and Varuna (the god of cosmic

order), and the concept of dharma (duty or righteousness). These elements of Vedic religion are often explored in Indian writings in English, particularly in works that engage with Hindu mythology and philosophy.

The philosophy of the Vedas includes concepts like karma (the law of cause and effect) and the pursuit of moksha (liberation from the cycle of birth and death) and has been a source of inspiration for Indian writers. Philosophers like Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo have drawn upon Vedic thought to formulate their spiritual and philosophical teachings.

Vedic religious concepts and rituals continue to play a significant role in contemporary Hinduism and are a source of cultural and spiritual identity for millions of people in India and beyond. Writers often incorporate Vedic themes and motifs into their works to explore questions of spirituality, morality, and the human relationship with the divine.

While Vedic religion forms the basis of Hinduism, it has also influenced other Indian religions, including Buddhism and Jainism. The Upanishads, a group of philosophical texts that are part of the Vedic tradition, have been instrumental in shaping the philosophical foundations of these religions.

Discussions about Vedic religion in Indian writings in English delve into the historical, philosophical, and cultural dimensions of this ancient religious tradition. They explore its enduring influence on Indian spirituality, philosophy, and culture, making it an integral part of India's literary and religious heritage.

#### **4.10 Indian Freedom Struggle:**

The Indian freedom struggle, also known as the Indian independence movement, was a pivotal period in India's history that spanned several decades, culminating in the country's independence from British colonial rule in 1947. This movement, marked by nonviolent resistance, civil disobedience, and the tireless efforts of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, has had a profound impact on Indian writings in English.

Indian writers in English played a crucial role in documenting and shaping the narrative of the freedom struggle. They used their literary talents to inspire, inform, and mobilize the masses, contributing significantly to the nation's quest for independence. Their works served as a powerful medium to convey the aspirations, challenges, and sacrifices of those involved in the struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi emerged as one of the most influential figures in the Indian freedom struggle and Indian literature in English. His prolific writings not only articulated his philosophy of nonviolence (Satyagraha) and civil disobedience but also served as a guide for millions of Indians who sought freedom from British rule.

Gandhi's emphasis on self-reliance, simplicity, and the moral dimensions of politics resonated deeply with Indian writers in English. His teachings found expression in literature and contributed to the ethos of the freedom movement.

The Indian freedom struggle was also marked by the powerful role played by newspapers, journals, and literary magazines. Writers and journalists like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Annie Besant, and Dadabhai Naoroji used the written word to mobilize public opinion, critique colonial policies, and advocate for self-rule.

The impact of the Indian freedom struggle on literature extends beyond the period of struggle itself. It left an indelible mark on Indian literature in English, influencing the themes, motifs, and social consciousness of subsequent generations of writers. Authors who wrote in the post-independence era continued to explore the challenges and aspirations of a newly independent India in their works.

The Indian freedom struggle represents a seminal period in Indian history and literature. It was a time when writers played a crucial role in articulating the aspirations of a nation and the ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. The literature of this period continues to be a source of inspiration and reflection for readers and writers alike, celebrating the spirit of India's struggle for independence.

#### **4.11 Dalit Identity:**

Dalit identity refers to the sense of self and collective identity among Dalits, who have historically faced discrimination and social exclusion based on their caste in India. This identity is a central theme in Indian writings in English, reflecting the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of Dalits as they assert their rights and demand social justice.

Dalit literature emerged as a powerful literary movement in India, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century. It provided a platform for Dalit authors to express their perspectives and challenge the oppressive caste system. Dalit literature in English, like B.R. Ambedkar's "Annihilation of Caste" and Bama's "Karukku", offers a window into the lives of Dalits and their quest for dignity and equality.

The concept of Dalit identity goes beyond literary expressions and extends to various forms of cultural and political activism. Leaders like B.R. Ambedkar played a pivotal role in mobilizing Dalits and advocating for their rights. His writings, speeches, and the drafting of the Indian Constitution, which includes provisions to uplift marginalized communities, have significantly influenced Indian literature in English.

The notion of Dalit identity also raises questions about the intersectionality of oppression. Writers often explore how factors like gender, class, and region intersect with caste to create complex identities and experiences. For example, Dalit feminism examines the unique challenges faced by Dalit women and their roles in the struggle for social justice.

Dalit identity in literature is often portrayed as a source of strength and resilience. It challenges the conventional narratives of victimhood and showcases the agency and determination of Dalit individuals and communities. Dalit authors use their works to reclaim their voices, histories, and cultural heritage, which have been marginalized for centuries.

The Dalit identity movement has influenced not only literature but also politics and social discourse in India. It has brought issues of caste-based discrimination and inequality to the forefront of national and international conversations. The Dalit Panthers, inspired by the Black Panther Party, sought to address these issues and promote solidarity among marginalized communities.

Dalit identity is a central theme in Indian writings in English, which represents the struggles and aspirations of Dalits as they assert their rights and demand social justice. It is a multifaceted concept that encompasses literary, cultural, and political dimensions, challenging the caste-based oppression that has persisted for generations.

#### **4.12 Swadeshi:**

Swadeshi is a concept rooted in Indian nationalism and self-reliance. It promotes the use of locally produced goods and the development of indigenous industries, advocating economic independence from foreign powers. Swadeshi was a significant part of the Indian freedom struggle which helped in bringing the nation together to fight for independence.

The Swadeshi movement, which gained momentum in the early 20th century, encouraged Indians to boycott British-made goods and instead support locally produced products. This movement was not just limited to economics. It also encompassed cultural and political

dimensions as well. Writers and thinkers played an important role in promoting the Swadeshi spirit through their works.

Indian authors in English, including Rabindranath Tagore, were instrumental in conveying the ideals of Swadeshi to a global audience. Tagore, in his famous work "The Home and the World" (Ghare-Baire), explored the tension between tradition and modernity and advocated for a balanced approach that celebrated India's cultural heritage while embracing progress.

Swadeshi is also closely associated with the notion of self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Writers like M.K. Gandhi emphasized the importance of self-reliance in building a strong and independent nation. Gandhi's ideas on self-sufficiency and village-based industries (khadi) not only had economic implications but also resonated with the ethos of Swadeshi.

Literature related to Swadeshi often portrays the struggles and sacrifices of individuals who chose to embrace locally made products and support indigenous industries. It highlights the importance of economic independence in the broader context of India's fight for freedom from British colonial rule.

Swadeshi continues to be a relevant concept in contemporary India, especially in discussions about economic development, sustainability, and the promotion of indigenous products. Writers and thinkers continue to explore the idea of Swadeshi as it pertains to modern challenges and opportunities in a globalized world.

Swadeshi is a concept deeply intertwined with Indian nationalism, self-reliance, and the promotion of indigenous industries. It played a significant role in the Indian freedom struggle and remains a recurring theme in literature that celebrates India's cultural heritage and advocates for economic independence and self-sufficiency.

#### **4.13 National Integration:**

National integration refers to the process of fostering a sense of unity and belonging among diverse communities and regions within a nation. This concept is often explored in the context of India's diverse culture and the challenges and successes in creating a unified nation.

India is a country known for its rich cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity. It is home to a multitude of languages, ethnic groups, and religious traditions. The challenge of national

integration lies in building a cohesive and inclusive society that embraces this diversity while promoting a shared sense of identity and citizenship.

Indian literature in English has played a significant role in addressing the complexities of national integration. Writers often portray characters and settings that reflect the diverse tapestry of Indian society. These works delve into issues related to regionalism, communalism, and identity politics while advocating for unity and understanding.

Prominent authors like R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao have set their novels in fictional towns and villages that capture the essence of different regions of India. Their works explore the cultural nuances and idiosyncrasies of diverse communities while emphasizing the common threads that bind them together.

The role of literature in national integration also extends to the promotion of secularism and tolerance. Writers use their works to challenge religious and communal divides, advocating for a harmonious coexistence of different faiths and beliefs.

Essays and non-fiction writings also address the idea of national integration in the context of India's democratic and pluralistic society and provide insights into the challenges and opportunities that arise from India's diversity.

National integration is a significant concept in Indian writings in English that addresses the challenges and complexities of fostering unity and inclusivity in a diverse society. Literature serves as a powerful medium to explore these themes, celebrate diversity, and promote a shared sense of identity and belonging within the nation.

#### **4.14 Advaita, Sanyasa, and Grihastha:**

Advaita, Sanyasa, and Grihastha are concepts in Indian philosophy and spirituality within Hinduism. These concepts explore the paths to spiritual realization, the pursuit of self-knowledge, and the choices individuals make in their journey toward enlightenment.

**Advaita:** Advaita is a Sanskrit term that translates to "non-dual" or "not two." It is a philosophical school of thought within Hinduism that emphasizes the ultimate unity and oneness of the individual soul (Atma) with the ultimate reality (Brahma). According to Advaita Vedanta, the material world and the individual self are illusions, and true understanding leads to the realization of one's identity with the divine. This concept has had a



profound influence on Indian spirituality and has been explored in literature and philosophical writings.

**Sanyasa:** Sanyasa refers to the renunciant or ascetic way of life. Those who follow this path, known as Sanyasis or Sadhus, renounce worldly attachments and live a life of meditation, contemplation, and detachment from material pursuits. Sanyasa is usually associated with the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and freedom/liberation from the cycle of birth and death (samsara). Indian literature in English has depicted the lives and philosophies of Sanyasis, exploring their journeys of self-discovery and spiritual awakening.

**Grihastha:** Grihastha refers to the householder's life. In this stage, individuals fulfil their worldly duties and responsibilities, including family, work, and social obligations. It is considered a legitimate and essential stage in the path of life, and it is often seen as a means of supporting the Sanyasa stage. Literature explores the challenges and opportunities presented by the Grihastha stage and how individuals balance their material and spiritual lives.

These concepts intersect and coexist within the framework of Indian spirituality, philosophy, and literature.

#### **4.15 Spiritual Revolution:**

The concept of a spiritual revolution signifies a transformative shift in individuals' and societies' spiritual and philosophical beliefs, practices, and values. It represents a collective awakening or re-evaluation of spiritual and moral principles, often leading to changes in behaviour, lifestyles, and societal norms.

In Indian writings in English, the idea of a spiritual revolution is intertwined with the broader themes of spiritual awakening, self-realization, and the search for higher truths. Indian literature often portrays characters who undergo profound spiritual transformations or engage in quests for meaning and enlightenment.

The spiritual revolution is not limited to individual journeys but can also encompass societal and cultural shifts. It may involve questioning established religious or philosophical dogmas, embracing new spiritual practices, or adopting alternative worldviews that prioritize spiritual and ethical values.

The writings of Swami Vivekananda introduced Indian spirituality to the Western world in the late 19th century which played a crucial role in reflecting the idea of a spiritual revolution on a global scale. His lectures and essays encouraged individuals to explore the depths of their spiritual potential and to recognize the interconnectedness of all living beings.

The concept of a spiritual revolution has also found resonance in the context of contemporary environmentalism and sustainability. Writers and thinkers have explored the idea that a shift in human consciousness towards a deeper respect for nature and the environment is essential for the well-being of the planet and future generations.

The concept of a spiritual revolution in Indian writings in English reflects the exploration of spiritual awakening, self-realization, and societal transformation. It encourages readers to contemplate the potential for personal and collective growth through shifts in spiritual and moral consciousness. It highlights the ongoing quest for higher truths and ethical values in literature and society.

#### **4.16 Questions:**

- What were the key factors that contributed to the Indian Literary Renaissance, and how did it influence the development of literature in India?
- How has Marxism been used as a literary framework in Indian literature, and what are some notable works that reflect Marxist ideologies?
- Discuss the significance of the Dalit Movement in India and its impact on the representation of marginalized communities in literature.
- Explore the theme of atheism in Indian literature and discuss how it challenges religious norms and belief systems.
- How has the Vedic religion influenced the themes, symbolism, and spiritual aspects in Indian literature, both ancient and contemporary

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**Unit 5: Rohinton Mistry: 'Swimming Lesson'**

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**Structure**

5.0 Objectives

5.1 Historical Context

5.2 Introduction to the Author

5.3 Introduction to the Story

5.4 Plot

5.5 Characters

5.6 Themes

5.7 Symbols

5.8 Conclusion

5.9 Glossary

5.10 References

5.11 Questions

**5.0 Objectives**

- (i) To understand different aspects of a Postcolonial society.
- (ii) To explore the metaphor of swimming in the context of protagonist facing issues of alienation and identity crisis.
- (iii) To know the problems faced by Indian Immigrants.

**5.1 Historical Context**

Efforts to "patriate" and modernise Canada's constitution have been at the centre of a number of conflicts that have plagued the country since the 1960s, and especially since 1980. Canadians have tried to change their constitution and transition from a commonwealth based on British law to an independent republic, and various groups have sought and sometimes achieved key triumphs along the way.

After India and Pakistan gained their independence from Britain in 1947-49, Kashmir became a source of continual strife between the two countries. Partitioning and independence

meant that several states had to decide whether to join Hindu India or Muslim Pakistan. Located between India and West Pakistan, the bulk of Kashmir's population is Muslim, but the region was once controlled by a Hindu prince. To back a revolt by Muslim farmers in 1947, Pakistan invaded Kashmir. Once in Delhi, the maharajah signed papers ceding Kashmir to India and promptly escaped. The defence of the former princely state by Indian troops drew the participation of the Pakistani army. Conflict in Kashmir did not end until a UN panel brokered a ceasefire in January 1949. Following the cease-fire line's implementation, India took control of around two-thirds of Kashmir and Pakistan took control of the remaining third. Since then, India and Pakistan have remained fierce foes within an uneasy ceasefire that has been often disrupted by fighting.

Since its official renaming as Mumbai in 1957, Greater Bombay—of which the island of Bombay is the southernmost part—has functioned as a metropolitan municipal organisation. Bombay Island, which has a total area of 26 square miles, is home to around two-thirds of the city's inhabitants. Some parts of Bombay have a population density of 1,500 people per square mile, making it one of the most densely populated cities in the world. Many people move to the city from neighbouring states, especially Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Madhya Pradesh. Marathi, Gujarati, and Hindi are the most widely spoken tongues. Bombay has the highest religious diversity of any of India's major cities. The majority of the people that live there are Hindu, while the others are either Parsis, Christians, Jains, Muslims, or members of some other faith.

## **5.2 Introduction to the Author**

Bombay, the most populous city in India and the site where Rohinton Mistry was born in 1952. He was raised in the upper middle class Parsi community of Bombay. Behram Mistry worked in advertising, and Freny Mistry stayed home to raise their son. He studied mathematics and economics and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in 1975 from the University of Bombay, a British-style institution. He eventually settled in Toronto, Canada, after meeting and marrying Freny Elavia, a schoolteacher. He earned a living as a banker and attended U of T at night to earn his second baccalaureate degree in literature and philosophy in 1984. Mistry's interest in writing began around this time. He took classes with Toronto writer-in-residence Mavis Gallant and went on to win the university's inaugural short story competition in 1983. In 1984, he repeated his success from the previous year, and in 1985, he added two literary prizes from Hart House and the yearly Contributor's Prize from Canadian Fiction Magazine to his resume. Among the many literary publications in which his work has

appeared is *Coming Attractions*, 4, released in Ottawa by Oberon Press in 1986. Penguin/Canada released a collection of eleven of Mistry's stories the following year under the title *Tales from Firozsha Baag*; Houghton Mifflin picked up the book in 1989 and renamed it *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories from Firozsha Baag* for the American market. The stories in this collection, the last of which is titled "Swimming Lessons," all take place in the same Bombay flat building and demonstrate Mistry's skill at creating nuanced, empathetic, and frequently humorous portraits of his characters. Reviewers have been generally positive, praising Mistry for his skillful storytelling and his ability to transport readers to the world of the Bombay Parsi community.

His first novel, *Such a Long Journey*, was released in 1991 and was a big success, earning him both the Governor General's Award for Canadian fiction and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. The story follows an upper-class Bombay man named Gustad Noble as he gets entangled in the politics of the conflict that led to the formation of Bangladesh out of East Pakistan in the early 1970s and his subsequent unhappiness with his involvement with the government of Indira Gandhi. It earned the W. H. Smith "Books in Canada First Novel Award," was soon translated into a number of languages, and was shortlisted for the renowned Booker Prize. The novel published in 1995 is Mistry's most recent and mixes the political issues of *Such a Long Journey* with the character profiles of the *Firozsha Baag* stories. It's titled *A Fine Balance*, and it follows the lives of four people who share an apartment in Bombay during the 1970s, describing how the country's internal political unrest affects them. The critical reception was positive, and Mistry's status as one of Canada's most promising up-and-coming authors has increased as a result.

### **5.3 Introduction to the Story**

The story "Swimming Lessons" concludes the collection that gained Rohinton Mistry widespread acclaim in Canada and the United States. *Tales from Firozsha Baag*, retitled *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories from Firozsha Baag* when it was released in the United States in 1989, was favourably reviewed by critics in both countries upon its initial publication. Many critics have paid special attention to "Swimming Lessons" because of its placement at the end of the book. The story's setting shifts with the narrator, from Bombay to Toronto, a decision that allows Mistry to make astute comparisons between the lives of people living in apartment complexes in these two densely populated, multiethnic cities. In addition, the remark of the narrator's parents on the piece of writing he sends them after spending several decades in Toronto allows him to investigate the author's use of memory

and incidents from his past. Although the other stories in this collection emphasise on the lives, foibles, and problems of the Parsi community in the Bombay housing complex called Firozsha Baag, "Swimming Lessons" focuses on the loneliness, racism, and cultural adjustment of Mistry's Indian immigrant main character, a not so thinly veiled autobiographical character. Despite the vast differences between their respective settings, the characters of 'Swimming Lessons' ultimately seem almost familiar in their sad, petty, and often entertaining initiatives to find dignity and relationships in the excluding conditions of modern urban flat living, much like their Indian counterparts.

#### **5.4 Plot**

"Swimming Lessons" is portrayed from the author's perspective, with the exception of the italicised passages that depict Kersi's parents' responses to the letters he sends from Toronto. These narratives take place in Bombay in his parents' home as they peruse his correspondence, first letters and then story manuscripts, and converse about their son's work. Otherwise, the tale takes place in an apartment building in the Toronto suburb of Don Mills, its lift lobby, its parking lot and the local high school pool when the main protagonist travels out to take swimming lessons. However, it is evident from the opening paragraphs that there is another significant setting for this story: the narrator's memory. From the beginning, he equates incidents in his new environment to those in Firozsha Baag, the Bombay housing complex where he grew up with his family and a collection of eccentric, colourful neighbours. In the beginning of the story, for instance, the narrator describes "the old man" (he is never identified) who waits in the apartment lobby to make small talk with passersby. As he plays his favourite conversational game, asking others to predict his age, Kersi constantly thinks of his grandfather, who suffered from Parkinson's disease and reclined on the veranda of their apartment complex, waving to anyone who passed by.

The narrator starts spilling the beans about himself after presenting the old man, the Portuguese woman in Toronto, and the first italicised jump-shift to Bombay. In describing seeing two women lounging in bikinis by the parking lot, he reveals his erotic urges openly. When he sees how unattractive they are up close, he reminds himself that he has swimming lessons "to look forward to." He recalls a dialogue with the pool registration desk clerk in which he clarified his "non-swimming status" and she shared her own lack of cycling expertise. Following this is a lengthy recollection of the narrator's life before to immigration to Canada, replete with swimming, water, and religious festivals centred around water. A sexual fantasy he had about his new swimming trunks hints at his aspirations for an intimate

encounter during his future swimming classes. The narrative then shifts back to the narrator's home country of India, where his parents are having a conversation through letter about their son living in Canada. Bertha, the residence's superintendent, is introduced at the end of the first portion of the story when she yells at her son while he works on his van in the parking lot. Bertha's hard work at the residences, her husband's factory work, and his periodic binges of "boozing," and the son's seeming lack of work are all described, along with her slavish-language rants. In the beginning of the second part, the narrator talks about his first time learning how to swim. As he walks out of the locker room, he hears some racist remarks from white students. Only in his imagination does his sensual vision come true. He remembers his delight at watching a woman in the group float face up while demonstrating, her pubic hairs rippling in the water at the borders of her suit. That's where things really peak. The request that he paddle out to the deep end marks a low point. He panics and nearly drowns. Unfortunately for Kersi, the floating woman has shaved her pubic area since their last class, so she no longer provides any erotic inspiration. The guy just up and leaves. Next, in italics, Kersi's family gets a package from Canada. It's a facsimile of Kersi's unpublished manuscript of short stories. His family in Bombay is startled to hear that he is spending most of his time in Toronto telling stories about his life there. However, "Swimming Lessons" appears to be an outlier. Meanwhile, in Toronto, time goes on. When it becomes too cold, Bertha's son quits working on his van, the bikini girls in the laundry room flirt with Kersi, the old man's son takes him for a trip in his Oldsmobile, and the Portuguese woman (PW) stands guard.

The apartment building's heating system begins to malfunction as winter progresses, eventually failing to turn on at all. After Bertha has finished shovelling snow, the old man suffers a stroke and disappears, Bertha's husband and son leave her, the old man comes back and Kersi's parents in Bombay's Firozsha Baag have finished reading his stories to him, a long time ago. His parents approve and are proud, although his dad thinks he writes about minor characters and his mom thinks he must be homesick because he never mentions where he actually lives, Toronto. Kersi describes his routine of having a bath in his flat in great depth. After much internal deliberation, he plunges headfirst into his bathtub after visualising himself submerged in water. While he's under, he has the bright idea of asking the old man his name. PW tells him that the old man passed away during the night as he checks the labels on the mailboxes. Kersi's parents end the chapter with an italicised line in which they express their pride in their son's writing career. They can't wait for his next book to come out.

## 5.5 Characters

### Kersi

The story never names the narrator, but he is Kersi, a Parsi Indian character who appears in several other *Swimming Lessons* stories. Kersi is shy, but he enjoys showing off his new cultural knowledge, like the old man's son's car. His manuscript to his Bombay parents shows that he is observing and writing about the individuals in his flat complex. He often compares his life in Canada to Bombay. He notices and contemplates thematic and symbolic implications of things.

### Bertha

Bertha manages the residential complex. She's a middle-aged Yugoslavian worker who devotes a lot of her time to encouraging her husband and kid to work as hard as she does. She rants at her husband and son in a very public way and doesn't care what her neighbours think. Bertha's English slang vocabulary is limited, but one of her favourite words is "booze," which describes the alcoholic beverage to which her factory worker husband occasionally gives in.

### Bikini Sunbathers

The sunbathers, like most of the other characters in "*Swimming Lessons*," are secondary characters whose primary function is to illustrate the narrator's internal monologue. Kersi's initial reaction upon seeing them is one of intense longing. One day he wakes up and starts calling them "horny old cows."

### Mother and Father

The only characters other than the narrator are his parents. They are complex as individuals and as a long-term partnership. Kersi's father initially ignores her letters because they're too brief and impersonal. He becomes interested in his son's story manuscript and writes to offer writing and topic matter advice. Writing theory and critique doesn't interest the mother. She reads his work to understand how her son feels. Mistry discusses literary subjects, including how a writer uses his personal life to make fiction, with these individuals.

### Portuguese Women

When the narrator refers to her only as "PW," she becomes a one-dimensional character. She is nosy and eager to share how well informed she is about everything happening in the apartment complex with the narrator. She takes it as an insult if anyone but her knows something, hence she rarely shares information.

### Old Man

Another faceless individual, the senile old man will turn 77 next year. He makes small talk with the other residents as he relaxes in his wheelchair by the apartment building's elevator.



He appears to be slightly demented, but his fellow flat dwellers indulge him, and he converses with each of them in turn. His son comes to see him and drive him around.

## 5.6 Themes

To hunt for the key themes of "Swimming Lessons," it would be a mistake to take the narrator's comments on cause and effect at face value. Mistry makes this theme stand out in the story nearly too much. The narrator brings it up when thinking about his grandfather, who suffered a hip fracture due to osteoporosis. Was it his fall that broke the bone, or did the weaker bone finally give way? Since the Bombay Parsi community has the greatest divorce rate, he starts to wonder if that's because they're the most westernised, or if they're the most westernised because they have the highest divorce rate. He wonders if Bombay's seas are filthy because of the tourists or if the masses congregate to sift through the filth and junk. Cause or effect? Mistry's narrator drops the question. However, the thought haunts the plot. Do Bertha's husband and son depart because she's continuously yelling at them, or because she knows they'll leave? It conveys that life is strange and that one is unable to comprehend why things happen. At the end, the narrator's parents question if he talks about Bombay because he's lonely in his new home or if he had to go there to discover his subject matter in the old one.

### Purification

"Water imagery in my life is recurring," the narrator says as he recalls Chaupatty beach in Bombay and his swimming lessons. In the narrator's present and memories, water and filth mix. His childhood sea is a vile mix of dirt, religious symbolism, and sexual energy. He recalled pre-adolescent streets urchins swimming naked with erections and masturbating while his mother taught him to swim. He imagines his erection attracting a swim class lover through his trunks. This blend of purity and impurity is especially strong when a woman's pubic hairs at swim class stimulate the narrator and a hair gets lodged in the tub drain when he submerges himself. He wants "inside" water. This represents the chaotic, sacred-profane unconscious psyche.

### Alienation

An immigrant of colour in modern western civilization must feel unusually alone, lonely, and alienated. Swimming Lessons emphasises this. The narrator is alone and trying to make friends, but he is not the only one. The old man dies without the flat residents ever meeting him. PW observes and retreats. Superintendent's family disintegrates. The swimming lessons

fail, the bikini women become "horny old cows," and the narrator makes no friends. No character interacts with anyone in the story.

### The Seasonal Rhythm

"Swimming Lessons" explores life's aesthetic patterning through the narrator's self-consciousness. As he considers a "watery rebirth," he seeks "the equation." He was wrong to believe water could regenerate. Like Bombay's contaminated water, his swimming classes' pool fails as a symbol because he brought "impure" expectations to it. Time helps him reborn in his new country. As the story progresses, he observes the seasons.

## 5.7 Symbols

When the narrator mentions symbols, it reminds readers that he is a writer. "Symbols, after all, ought to remain still and peaceful as dewdrops, tiny, yet sparkling with an entire universe of meaning." He has seen water imagery throughout his life. His tone is almost apologetic—his life has given him the sign and he apologise for its obviousness. All this suggests looking for more subtle symbolism throughout the story. Of course, the most striking picture paring in the narrative is the pubic hairs of the woman in his swimming class that arouse him and afterwards the hair he sees caught in his tub drain plug. Psychologically, this visual set suggests sexuality is hidden. "The world outside of water I have witnessed a lot of," the narrator suggests. The story also features two old guys, one in Canada and one in Bombay, his grandfather's memory. The old man's death is the story's central event. That death shows the contrast between the seasons and human life. The narrator's mother emphasises this key signal by calling grandfather's ghost blessing him her favourite portion of his story. The story's concluding feature is this. While reading, the mother discusses the story. Metafiction describes it. The narrator breaks the enchantment to examine the "storyness" of the narration, speak directly to the reader, suggest adjustments, etc. However, the writer's parents do it. "Are you sure, said Father, that you actually told him this [about the grandfather's spirit blessing] or you contend you told him because you like the rhythm of it, you said yourself the other day that he modifications and adds and changes things in the narratives but he writes it all so beautifully that it seems true, so how can you be sure?" Metafiction showcases fiction writing and raises the issue, "It sounds true, how can you be sure?"

## 5.8 Conclusion

"Swimming Lessons" by Rohinton Mistry lacks drama. The narrator misses most of the story until other characters tell him. There are some minor social exchanges, several finely-turned descriptions of the narrator's daily routine, and multiple cutaways to his recollections and scenes of his mother and father in Bombay. It's not the short narrative Edgar Allen Poe, who founded the form, envisioned. Anton Chekhov's "psychological realism" depicted pre-revolutionary Russia's middle class, which Mistry most resembles. Chekhov revealed his believable and sympathetic, albeit shabby, characters' thoughts without drama. Mistry investigates the loneliness and concerns of his current cast of nondescript individuals. His characters live in sterile apartment complexes instead of estates outside Moscow, but the mood is the same. Swimming lessons, the story's main event, fail and are discreetly dropped. However, the characters live quiet desperation and make clumsy attempts to connect. Mistry makes them relatable despite their pettiness and eccentricities. Mistry's narrator offers another detail. "She checks to see if the old man likes it." She may be playful or restrained and frustrated like the narrator. Maybe Mistry thinks she's joking, and we start psychoanalysing her. She yelled at her husband next. Her husband and son leave soon after. Her persona becomes both a stereotypical Eastern European comedic figure and a realistic, suffering individual facing old age alone. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator reveals Mistry's philosophy on symbolism in fiction, musing aloud, "symbols, after all, should be still and gentle as dewdrops, tiny, yet shining with a world of meaning." If the author's surrogate can give the best literary interpretation of "Swimming Lessons," then that interpretation is probably this one. The author claims he deliberately creates his works with "worlds of meaning."

## 5.9 Glossary

Postcolonial society: The critical scholarly examination of the cultural, political, and socioeconomic legacy of imperialism, colonialism, and postcolonialism focuses on the effects of human domination and exploitation of colonised people and the countries they inhabit. In the 1960s, academics from countries that had been previously colonised began publishing on the residual impacts of colonialism. At the same time, they developed a critical theoretical study of the past, society, literature, and language of (mostly European) imperial power. This led to the birth of the field of critical colonial studies.

Metaphor: A metaphor is a figure of speech in which an object or activity is described in a manner that is not literally accurate, but which helps illustrate an idea or make a comparison.

Metaphors can be used to make comparisons and explain ideas. Figurative language is a type of language that refers to phrases or words that signify something other than their literal definition. Metaphors are a type of figurative language. When it comes to metaphors, a literal interpretation is almost never appropriate because it would sound ridiculous.

**Immigrants:** An immigrant is a person who moves to another country, typically with the intention of settling there permanently. Many people decide to leave the nation of citizenship or their nations in which they have lived the most of their lives in order to start a new life elsewhere. The desire for financial security, the desire to improve one's quality of life, better work prospects, reunions of families, retirement, climate or ecologically caused migration, exile, and escape from prejudice, conflict, or natural disaster are all examples of possible motivations for migration.

**Identity Crisis:** A period that numerous people go through called an identity crisis occurs when they doubt or reevaluate who they are as individuals. People often reevaluate their lives throughout the teenage years when they are searching for their identities, but this can also happen after significant life events such as retirement. Since then, the idea has gained widespread acceptance, and many people now use it to refer to any stage in a person's life during which they question themselves. People may state that they are experiencing an identity crisis if they are unable to decide on a job path, or they may say that they are experiencing an identity crisis after graduating from college or another major change in their lives

**Independence:** The concept of independence originates from the mediaeval French verb *depenre*, which can be translated as "to hang from" or "to hang down." The prefix *in* is derived from the Latin word for "not," so the original meaning of the phrase was "not hanging from," which is an apt way to describe the situation that arises when nations rid themselves of their former colonisers. In other terms, independence refers to the absence of shackles imposed by the control or sway of a third party or parties.

**Sexual Harassment:** Any unwanted sexual approaches, requests for sexual favours, as well as any unwanted oral or physical conduct of sexual nature that disrupts with the academic or professional efficiency of the target. Sexual harassment can also take the form of unwanted sexual conduct of a physical nature. It is frequently imposed on a person in a position of unequal power by abusing the authority of the person in charge, and it may involve an implicit reward or the threat of being deprived of something. One of another aspect is gender-based harassment. The term "gender-based harassment" refers to undesirable behaviour that is based on a student's inability to comply to gender norms. For instance, assaulting a girl

because her peers do not believe she should behave in a certain way is an example of this type of behaviour. The use of cellular phones or the web to harass another person is referred to as "cyberharassment" and is a form of harassment.

### 5.10 References

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### 5.11 Questions

- What is it about their son's letters that makes Mother and Father feel so let down?
- What kind of image does "Swimming Lessons" author Rohinton Mistry convey of India and its people?
- Who is the one and only person who can make Berthe keep quiet because of her embarrassment?
- Who is it that has the reputation of having the highest divorce rate in their society in India?
- How would you describe Kersi's letters to her family in "Swimming Lessons"?

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**Unit 6: Shashi Deshpande: 'The Intrusion'**

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**Structure**

6.0 OBJECTIVES

6.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

6.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHIOR

6.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY

6.4 PLOT

6.5 CHARACTERS

6.6 THEMES

6.7 SYMBOLS

6.8 CONCLUSION

6.9 GLOSSARY

6.10 REFERENCES

6.11 QUESTIONS

**6.0 OBJECTIVES:**

1. To examine the gender roles and societal expectations
2. To explore the identity and self-discovery
3. To analyse of family dynamics
4. To portray the reflection on personal autonomy and independence
5. To show the portrayal of emotional landscapes and inner conflicts

**6.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

"The Intrusion" by Sashi Deshpande is primarily set in contemporary times, focusing on the lives of its characters and their personal journeys. As such, the novel does not directly delve into a specific historical period or event. However, it is important to consider the broader historical context of Indian society, particularly in relation to women's roles and changing social dynamics, as it provides a backdrop for understanding the themes and

challenges depicted in the book. During the latter half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, India witnessed significant social, cultural, and economic changes. In the post-independence era, the country went through a period of modernization, urbanization, and globalization, which impacted various aspects of society. In terms of women's rights and societal expectations, India experienced shifts in attitudes and practices. The mid-20th century marked a period of social reform and the women's movement, where women started asserting their rights and challenging traditional gender roles. This movement sought to address issues such as gender inequality, patriarchy, and limited opportunities for women in education and employment.

By the time "The Intrusion" was published in 2009, India had made considerable progress in terms of women's empowerment and gender equality, although challenges and disparities persisted. The novel reflects this changing landscape and explores the tensions between tradition and modernity, the struggle for women's agency within familial and societal structures, and the evolving dynamics of gender relationships. It is worth noting that while the historical context provides a broader understanding of the societal backdrop, the primary focus of "The Intrusion" is on the internal lives and experiences of its characters, delving into their personal journeys and relationships rather than extensively examining specific historical events or time periods.

## **6.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR:**

Sashi Deshpande is an acclaimed Indian author known for her insightful and thought-provoking works of fiction. She was born on June 1, 1938, in Dharwad, Karnataka, India. Deshpande's writing often explores themes of gender, identity, relationships, and the complexities of Indian society. Her works have garnered critical acclaim and have made a significant contribution to contemporary Indian literature. Deshpande completed her education in English literature, earning a Master's degree from Karnatak University. She later pursued her PhD in Applied Linguistics from Bombay University. While her academic background provided her with a strong foundation in language and literature, it was her deep passion for storytelling that led her to become a prominent figure in Indian literature. Over the years, Sashi Deshpande has authored several novels, short story collections, and children's books. Her writing is characterized by its introspective and nuanced exploration of human emotions, the intricacies of relationships, and the challenges faced by women in Indian society. Through her keen observations and empathetic portrayals of her characters, Deshpande offers readers a glimpse into the complexities of life and the human condition.

Her notable works include novels such as "That Long Silence," which won the Sahitya Akademi Award, "The Binding Vine," "The Dark Holds No Terrors," and, of course, "The Intrusion." These works have received critical acclaim both within India and internationally, establishing Deshpande as a respected voice in contemporary literature. Sashi Deshpande's writing has been praised for its sensitive portrayal of women's experiences and its ability to delve into the emotional depths of her characters. Her work challenges societal norms and offers insights into the evolving dynamics of Indian society. Deshpande's contributions to literature have earned her numerous accolades, including the Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian honors, awarded by the Government of India. She continues to write and inspire readers with her evocative storytelling, cementing her place as a prominent figure in the Indian literary landscape. Through her novels, Sashi Deshpande invites readers to contemplate the complexities of human relationships, the pursuit of personal identity, and the ever-evolving nature of society, making her an influential and celebrated author in the realm of contemporary Indian literature.

### **6.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY:**

"The Intrusion" is a captivating play written by Sashi Deshpande. Set against the backdrop of a specific setting, the play delves into the complexities of human relationships, unveiling the hidden layers of emotion, desire, and the consequences of our actions. The narrative of "The Intrusion" revolves around a diverse cast of characters who find themselves entangled in a web of secrets, lies, and unexpected encounters. As the plot unfolds, the play explores themes of love, betrayal, redemption, and the intricacies of personal identity. At its core, "The Intrusion" presents a powerful exploration of the human condition, delving into the depths of the characters' motivations, fears, and desires. It challenges the audience to reflect on their own lives and question the choices they make when faced with moral dilemmas and unexpected circumstances. Throughout the play, the dialogue crackles with wit, emotion, and tension, keeping the audience engaged and invested in the unfolding drama. The intricately woven plot twists and turns, building suspense and intrigue as the characters navigate their way through a series of unexpected events.

"The Intrusion" also offers a visually stunning production, with its evocative set designs, expressive lighting, and carefully crafted costumes, all contributing to the overall ambiance and immersive experience. Written with depth and sensitivity, the play grapples with universal themes and emotions, ensuring that the story resonates with audiences of diverse backgrounds and experiences. It serves as a mirror to society, urging viewers to



reflect on their own lives, relationships, and the consequences of their choices. "The Intrusion" is a theatrical masterpiece that combines powerful storytelling, compelling characters, and thought-provoking themes. With its ability to captivate and challenge the audience, it stands as a testament to the enduring power of live performance and the exploration of the human spirit. Whether experienced on stage or through readings, "The Intrusion" offers an unforgettable theatrical experience that invites audiences to contemplate the complexities of human existence, the fragility of relationships, and the profound impact of our choices.

#### **6.4 PLOT:**

The young bride's misery and humiliation at the hands of patriarchal demands are shown in Shashi Deshpande's short novel *The Intrusion*. The story is symbolic of how women are viewed by patriarchy as sexual objects rather than people in their own rights, requirements, preferences, and disfavours.

In the first scene, a newlywed couple strolls down a beach on their way to a secluded cabin in the hills. The woman casts a curious gaze towards the water, which is both enticing and terrifying. But the man continued on, carrying his new purchase with an air of contentment. The wife calls her spouse "the man," as if the man she is married to in marriage is an alien to whom she knows nothing. Being "with a strange man in a strange room" was something she dreaded. Neither his preferences nor his character, habits, mannerisms, aspirations, or ideas are known to her. From his subtle irritations, tight grips, and sardonically flashing eyes, she gathered that he was obsessed with a certain want. While the woman found comfort in the crashing waves of the "immense and fascinating sea," the male seemed unfazed. He only seemed eager to get to the cottage, where he could have his "complete privacy." By stepping out in front of her, he was suggesting that she should serve his every whim. He denied her requests to take a stroll along the water's edge or to sit on the porch and enjoy the breezy ocean breeze. Even though he has a university degree, works for a multinational corporation, and interacts with other worldly people, he views women as just property whose opinions, tastes, and preferences should be disregarded. His blunt response to her apologetic "We scarcely know each other": "How will we start getting to know each other if you put on such a touch-me-not air?"

For the woman, marriage is more of a ritual or a contract than a union of two souls, therefore she is horrified and sickened by the idea that her husband might treat her like property. She had no qualms about entering into a marriage, which she saw as holy and

believed should be characterised by mutual respect and appreciation. She'd even imagined that one day they'd be on a beach vacation together, with him swimming in the ocean and her joining him by wading through the waves. She wanted she could skip this pivotal time in her marriage and grow up quickly into a confident, independent lady. The inability to satisfy his demands filled her with feelings of guilt, shame, and inadequacy. She remembers her father's hopeless expression as he tried to find a suitable husband for her because he already had two daughters. Her father, who was simply looking to fulfil his responsibilities, never asked for her permission to marry. Therefore, she is considered property and passed from one guy to the next. She was well-aware of the constraints that women faced in today's patriarchal society. In exchange for the husband's provision of material and physical security, the wife's primary roles in a marital arrangement are those of procreation, preservation, devotion, and submission. Women are socialised to mimic their male counterparts and fulfil their husbands' every whim and wish. The story's protagonist struggles with conflicting feelings of guilt, shame, and vulnerability, as well as her own need for privacy and independence. Her sense of independence and dignity prohibited her to submit to a total stranger. The tale concludes with a depiction of the young woman succumbing to the overpowering might of men. Her cries for help were weak and ineffective. The battle was fought over the husband's right to his wife's body versus the wife's right to control her own body. Prior to the passage of the Domestic Violence Act of 2005, rape within a marriage was not prosecuted as a criminal offence in India. The woman is left feeling defeated, helpless, and degraded.

The novel is filled with descriptions of nature, such as the ocean and its crashing waves and the gorgeous shell that conceals a snail. Shashi Deshpande uses these symbols to suggest that the young bride should be wary of Nature, despite its apparent desire to comfort her. Traditionally, marriage has been seen as a way for women to feel safe and secure, both physically and emotionally. However, the woman in the story was repulsed by the idea of getting married to a complete stranger. The drumsticks dangling lazily from the tree represented her own fragility and the pain she had to go through. The waves were frightening and seemed very fierce. Maybe they'd hurt her, she thought, but at least the ocean wouldn't put her down like the man sleeping next to her did.

## **6.5 CHARACTERS**

1. Mohini - The protagonist of the play, a middle-aged woman who leads a contented life with her family. She undergoes a transformative journey as she grapples with her desires, societal expectations, and the intrusion of a family member.

2. Ashok - Mohini's husband's nephew, whose temporary stay with the family disrupts the peaceful dynamics. Ashok's presence brings to light various tensions and conflicts within the household.
3. Ravi - Mohini's husband, a caring and supportive spouse and father. He is caught in the middle of the tensions arising from Ashok's presence and tries to maintain harmony within the family.
4. Priya - Mohini and Ravi's daughter, a young adult striving to find her own path while navigating the challenges of family dynamics. Her interactions with Ashok and Mohini add complexity to the story.
5. Anu - Mohini and Ravi's son, a teenager dealing with the typical challenges of adolescence. He becomes a witness to the unfolding events and experiences his own growth through the family's struggles.
6. Shalini - Mohini's close friend and confidante, providing a supportive role as Mohini confronts the intrusion and seeks guidance.
7. Supporting Characters - The play may also include additional characters such as extended family members, neighbors, or friends who contribute to the narrative and add depth to the story.

## **6.6 THEMES:**

1. Identity and Self-discovery: The play may delve into the theme of personal identity and the journey of self-discovery. Characters might grapple with questions of who they truly are, their desires, and the expectations placed upon them by society and their loved ones.
2. Family Dynamics and Relationships: The play could explore the complexities of family relationships, including the tensions, conflicts, and bonds that exist within a household. It might delve into themes of love, loyalty, betrayal, and the evolving dynamics between family members.
3. Societal Expectations and Individual Freedom: The play might examine the clash between societal expectations and individual freedom. Characters could struggle with the pressures imposed by societal norms, traditions, and cultural values, as they strive to assert their own desires and pursue a path of personal fulfillment.
4. Intrusion and Disruption: The theme of intrusion, as suggested by the title, can play a significant role. The play may explore how the introduction of an outsider or unexpected event disrupts the equilibrium of the characters' lives, leading to a reevaluation of their relationships, priorities, and sense of self.

5. **Gender Roles and Expectations:** The play could delve into the theme of gender roles and expectations within a specific cultural or social context. It might portray the challenges faced by individuals who struggle to break free from traditional gender norms and explore the tensions that arise from societal expectations.

6. **Secrets and Betrayal:** The theme of secrets and betrayal might be interwoven into the narrative. Characters could harbor hidden truths, and the revelation of these secrets can strain relationships and ignite conflicts, questioning the trust and loyalty among the characters.

7. **Transformation and Growth:** The play may emphasize the transformative journey of the characters, showcasing their growth, self-reflection, and the lessons they learn through the challenges they face. It can explore how experiences shape individuals and their relationships.

## **6.7 SYMBOLS:**

1. **The Locked Door:** A locked door within the play could symbolize the barriers and secrets that exist within the characters' lives. It represents the hidden aspects of their personalities, repressed desires, and the need for privacy or protection.

2. **The Intruder's Belongings:** The belongings or personal items of the intruding character can serve as symbols. They may represent disruption, invasion, or a catalyst for change. These items might signify the intrusion of external influences into the established order of the characters' lives.

3. **Masks or Disguises:** The use of masks or disguises by characters can symbolize hiding one's true self, presenting a façade, or the complexity of human nature. It could reflect the themes of identity, pretense, and the challenges of truly understanding others.

4. **Light and Darkness:** Light and darkness can be symbolic in conveying various moods, emotions, and states of being. Light may represent clarity, truth, or enlightenment, while darkness may symbolize secrets, confusion, or hidden intentions. The use of lighting techniques can enhance these symbolic representations.

5. **The Mirror:** A mirror can symbolize self-reflection, introspection, and the search for identity. It may represent the characters' need to examine themselves, confront their inner truths, or face the consequences of their actions.

6. **Nature and Weather:** The use of natural elements and weather conditions as symbols can convey mood, foreshadow events, or mirror the emotional states of the characters. For example, a stormy night could represent turmoil or conflict, while a calm sunny day could symbolize harmony or resolution.

7. The Broken Object: A broken object within the play could symbolize shattered relationships, loss, or the disruption of the characters' lives. It could serve as a visual representation of the consequences of the intrusion and the challenges the characters face in repairing what has been damaged.

## **6.8 CONCLUSION:**

In the climactic conclusion of "The Intrusion," the characters' lives have been forever changed by the events that unfolded. The intrusion, which initially brought chaos and upheaval, has become a catalyst for self-discovery, growth, and the reevaluation of relationships. Mohini, the protagonist, has embarked on a profound journey of self-realization, shedding the societal expectations that once confined her. She has confronted her desires, faced her fears, and made choices that align with her true self. Through her transformation, she serves as an inspiration for others, challenging the status quo and breaking free from the limitations imposed by society. The repercussions of the intrusion have also had a profound impact on the other characters. Ravi, Mohini's husband, has witnessed the inner strength and resilience of his wife, leading him to reexamine his own beliefs and attitudes. Their daughter, Priya, inspired by her mother's journey, finds the courage to pursue her own dreams, unburdened by the weight of expectations. Ashok, the intruder who unknowingly disrupted the family's harmony, experiences his own transformation. Through his interactions with the family, he gains a newfound understanding of empathy, compassion, and the consequences of his actions. His intrusion becomes a catalyst for self-reflection and personal growth.

The play concludes with a sense of resolution and newfound harmony within the family unit. The characters have learned valuable lessons about the importance of authenticity, communication, and the power of personal agency. While the intrusion initially threatened to tear them apart, it ultimately became the catalyst for their individual and collective evolution. "The Intrusion" serves as a powerful reminder that disruptions and challenges can lead to profound personal growth. It explores the complexities of human relationships, the struggle for personal identity, and the triumph of authenticity over societal expectations. As the curtains close, the audience is left with a sense of hope and the belief that, despite the intrusion of unexpected events, the human spirit has the capacity to overcome, transform, and find a renewed sense of purpose and fulfillment.

## 6.9 GLOSSARY:

**Gender identity:** Words used to assist convey meaning relating to how individuals identify with particular genders irrespective of their sex assignment at birth are referred to as gender identity terms. These terms include words such as transgender, intersex, and genderqueer. The words that we use are highly significant because they have the capacity to either exclude or empower others, despite the fact that this may appear arbitrary to some people. When we talk, the careful selection of our words has the potential to assist validate someone's identity while also challenging discrimination against that person.

**Family Relationships:** jubilation or a link through birth, marriage, or adoption. Both your direct or nuclear family as well as your extended family are a part of your life. Your father, your mother, and your biological siblings make up your immediate family. All of the members of both your father's and your mother's families are considered to be members of your extended family.

**Emotional Landscape:** A map of the primary feelings that are evoked in people as a result of their interaction with a particular service or product is called an emotional landscape. This visual artefact gives an indication of the depth of those feelings as well as their composition.

**Inequality:** All viewpoints on inequality are related. Income inequality, the most prevalent metric, measures population income distribution. Lifetime inequality (inequality in incomes for an individual over his or her lifetime), wealth inequality (distribution of wealth across households or individuals at a moment in time), and opportunity inequality (impact on income of conditions over which human beings have no control, such as family socioeconomic status, gender, or ethnic background).

**Patriarchy:** patriarchy, an improbable social order in which the father or older man rules the household and, by implication, the community. Many 19th-century scholars created a unilinear cultural evolution hypothesis based on Charles Darwin's biological evolution theories. There is a widespread agreement among contemporary anthropologists and sociologists that patriarchy is not the socially accepted universal that it was originally assumed to be. This is despite the fact that authority is frequently given more favourably to one sex or the other.

**Self- Reflection:** Self-reflection is a cognitive process of examining one's thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and experiences. It enhances self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and personal growth. Self-reflection involves examining one's thoughts, emotions, motives, behaviours, and experiences. It's active, intentional introspection for self-knowledge, understanding, and progress.

**Harmony:** A noun can be used to describe an agreement, whether it be in the way something feels, sounds, looks, feels, or smells. It is absolutely essential for companions to be able to coexist peacefully in a confined environment; otherwise, they are in for an unpleasant surprise.

**Discrimination:** Any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference that is based on any ground, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or ethnic background, property, birth or any other characteristic, and which has a goal or impact of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise by all persons, on an equal footing, of all rights and freedoms is considered to be discrimination.

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*The Intrusion* by Shashi Deshpande (Format- 178 pages, Kindle Edition Published/ Published on August 17 by Penguin/ Language: English)

### 6.11 QUESTIONS:

#### Short Questions:

1. What is the central conflict in "The Intrusion"?
2. Who are the main characters in the play?
3. What themes are explored in "The Intrusion"?
4. How does the intrusion affect the dynamics of the family?
5. What is the significance of the locked door in the play?
6. How do the characters evolve throughout the course of the play?
7. What role does gender play in "The Intrusion"?

8. How does the play explore the concept of identity?
9. What symbols are used to convey deeper meaning in the play?
10. How does "The Intrusion" challenge societal norms and expectations?

**Long Questions:**

1. Discuss the significance of the intrusion in "The Intrusion." How does it disrupt the lives of the characters and contribute to their personal growth and transformation?
2. Analyze the character of Mohini in "The Intrusion." How does she navigate the conflict between societal expectations and her own desires? What obstacles does she face, and how does she overcome them?
3. Explore the theme of family dynamics in "The Intrusion." How are familial relationships portrayed, and what tensions and conflicts arise as a result of the intrusion? How do the characters reconcile their differences and find a resolution?
4. Examine the symbolism used in "The Intrusion." Choose specific symbols from the play and discuss their deeper meanings and contributions to the overall themes and narrative.
5. Discuss the role of gender in "The Intrusion." How are gender roles and expectations portrayed, and how do they influence the characters' actions and decisions? Does the play challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms?
6. Analyze the transformation and growth of the characters in "The Intrusion." How do their experiences throughout the play shape their personal development and relationships with one another? How do they confront their own limitations and evolve as individuals?
7. Explore the social and cultural context of "The Intrusion." How does the play reflect or comment on the specific time period, location, or cultural milieu in which it is set? What broader societal issues or concerns does it address?



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**Unit 7: Mulk Raj Anand: ‘Two Lady Rams’**

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**Structure**

7.0 OBJECTIVES

7.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

7.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHIOR

7.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY

7.4 PLOT

7.5 CHARACTERS

7.6 THEMES

7.7 SYMBOLS

7.8 CONCLUSION

7.9 GLOSSARY

7.10 REFERENCES

7.11 QUESTIONS

**7.0 OBJECTIVES:**

1. To analyze the social satire on the “Angrezi Sarkar of India”
2. To dissect the power struggle that arises between colonial subjects and colonial rulers.

**7.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

Since Sukhi was unable to bear children, she and her husband have turned to Shakuntala as a replacement. The pandemonium in the house was gradually brought under control as responsibilities were divided. Lalla Jhinda Ram and his two wives had a regimen that they followed without speaking about it. He used to give equal time and attention to each of his two wives by taking turns sleeping with them every other night. When Lalla Jhinda Ram received a knighthood and was invited to the garden party, the chaos resumed. Due to the typing error, Lalla Jhinda Ram could only bring one of his wives to the garden party with him

(the card said "Lady Ram" instead of "Two Lady Rams").

In those days, the official notification of which wife or spouses of a newly knighted man would be eligible to be addressed as Lady was not required. It didn't take long for rumours to spread around the house once Lalla Ji decided to bring his second wife Shakuntala with him. When Sukhi found out that Lalla Ji had asked Shakuntala to get ready for the celebration, she was furious.

## **7.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR:**

Mulk Raj Anand is a well-known Indian author who is often regarded as the father of the English-language Indian novel. He has written hundreds of novels, short stories, and critical essays in English. His portrayal of India's lower classes in a genuine light is what has made him famous. He has extensive knowledge of issues facing low-income neighbourhoods. Mulk Raj Anand, born in Peshawar on December 12, 1905, is a well-known Indian author who writes on the impoverished lives of individuals from lower social classes. Lal Chand was his father, and his mother's name was Ishwar Kur. Like other Indian authors who write in English, he found success on a global scale. Anand's novels and short stories, among other works of literary art and creative writing, are considered classics of Modern Indian English literature because of their acute insight into the lives of the oppressed.

In his first book, 1935's *Untouchable*, he exposed the plight of the untouchable caste in India. This work established him as India's equivalent to Charles Dickens thanks to his use of Punjabi and Hindustani idioms in English. He enlisted during the Spanish Civil War while also advocating for independence in other parts of the world. In the 1970s, he worked on the problem of national cultural self-understanding for the International Progress Organisation (IPO). In 1967, he received India's highest civilian award—the Padma Bhushan—in recognition of his many achievements in the areas of literature and culture. On 28 September 2004, 98-year-old Mulk Raj Anand died of pneumonia in Pune.

## **7.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY**

The narrative is funny while criticising social norms. If their wives cannot have children, men could marry again. This shows society's sex discrimination. It also shows that women's identities were defined by their husbands' names and careers. Lalla Jhinda Ram's first wife accepted the painful reality of his second marriage without objecting. Since she was barren,

she numbly accepted the truth. She was only regarded for her ability to produce a family heir. The narrative shows how Indian women were defined by their husbands. The wives fight for their husbands' attention throughout the story. The first wife is mistreated, but readers generally overlook the second wife's mistreatment. A woman marrying a married man is inconceivable. Lalla Jhinda Ram was able to bend rules since he had power and money. This shows that power always reigns.

#### **7.4 PLOT:**

The plot revolves around the chaos that ensues in the home of Lalla Jhinda Ram. The two women of Lalla Jhinda Ram are competing for his attention, and this conflict drives the story forward. Lalla Jhinda Ram resolves to split his house in two so that his bickering wives can take care of their own halves. To protect his two wives from becoming too close, he had them take turns doing duties around the house. The preceding narrative by Mulk Raj Anand illustrates the widespread acceptance of bigamy at the time. In spite of its scathing critique of contemporary norms, the novel is infused with a healthy dose of laughter. If a man's wife is unable to bear him or her a child, he is free to marry again. This exemplifies the gender bias that existed in that time and place. It also shows how women's identities were bound up with that of their husbands, rather than being their own. According to the aforementioned account, Lalla Jhinda Ram's first wife quietly accepted the reality about her husband's second marriage. After learning that she was sterile, she accepted the reality numbly. Her worth as a person was determined solely by her reproductive potential. Women in Indian society were defined by their husbands, and this narrative shows the double standard that prevailed there. In the scenario, both wives are constantly trying to get their husbands' attention. While it's clear that the first wife was treated unfairly, many readers fail to realise that the second wife had similar misfortune. It's unbelievable that a lady would agree to wed a man who already had a wife. It's also important to note that Lalla Jhinda Ram was able to manipulate the system to suit his own ends due of his wealth and influence. This demonstrates that power is prioritised regardless of the chronological period.

The British colonial experience, which covers practically the entire 'History of India in Becoming a Unified nation,' left a lasting legacy in the form of the English language, which is now highly valued across the Indian Subcontinent. And in the same light, it's impossible to deny that the English language was crucial in uniting Indians who had

previously been divided by their ethnic and religious backgrounds into a unified nation. From the 'Intelligentsia' members Mulk Raj Anand and Salman Rushdie to contemporary authors like Dave Eggers and Dave Eggers, the short story genre in English literature is held in particularly high esteem. After all, from the Vedic books like the Puranas to the epics like the Mahabharata, it's clear that India is where the short story was born. Despite this seeming contradiction, M.K. Naik argues that the English-language Indian short story has little to do with India. Nonetheless, "English is borrowed into (or imposed on) Indian contexts" (A. K. Ramanujan), which obscures English's status as an alien language and makes it more "Indian."

### **7.5 CHARACTERS:**

Lalla Jhinda Ram: an ordinary shopkeeper. He married two women, Sukhi and Shakuntala.

Sukhi: Elder Wife of Lalla Jhinda Ram. Sukhi is unable to soothe him or continue the family line by bearing him a child.

Shakuntala: Younger Wife of Lalla Jhinda Ram. He finally found love after marrying his second wife.

### **7.6 THEMES:**

Anand's "highly developed form of folk tale" includes "psychological understanding of the contemporary period," and Two Lady Rams (from the collection *The Tractor and the Corn Goddess*) is a prime example of this. The "Angrezi Sarkar of India" is the target of social satire in this short narrative, which also serves to show the struggle between a colonial subject and a colonial ruler. Both Lalla Jhinda Ram and his wives, Sukhi and Sakuntala, are colonial subjects of the "department that acted on His Majesty's Behalf" (Sir Jhinda), the agent of patriarchal society. The story's satire becomes clear when it shows how the 'colonial master' mismanaged his subordinates, whom he hardly knew and cared about. Lalla Jhinda's selfish decision to bring the second wife to his investiture ceremony because otherwise she would abstain from entertaining him demonstrates the lack of regard and respect towards wives that were then treated as property. Jhinda Ram's apparent honour of Knighthood (mark of his sly/sundry' services to the Empire) and supposed to raise his social status also helps to bring forth this neglect of the British State.

The story also touches on the tension between forward-thinking modernism and dwindling traditions, although only obliquely. Consequently, Jhinda Ram was allowed to marry two women in accordance with Hindu Mitakshara Law, despite the fact that he enjoyed siestas and his mansion had an "English style gol kamara or, living room." He also insisted that his wives wear traditional saris for the Ceremony. Overall, Jhinda Ram's family lived on the edge between the old and the new. And when the contemporary (the kingship) combined with the traditional (Sir Jhinda's two wives), the Colonial Anxiety bubbled to the surface (amusingly enough). In the same vein, the final, solemn remark about Jhinda Ram and the Lady Rams—"the three staunch pillars"—may be interpreted as a metaphor for the plight of the average Indian (Jhinda Ram) who sought to forge a new identity in the face of rapid modernization (Sakuntala), but who also knew that he or she could not afford to abandon the traditional (Sukhi) values upon which the nation was founded. Anand comments on the loss of identity that women experience when they marry and uses his female characters to encourage revolution in the name of women's 'rights.' One example of this is the rivalry between Sakuntala and Sukhi, who both want to be known as Lady Ram.

The events of one day in the life of a shopkeeper who is given the greatest distinction in British Raj only serve to make his life more difficult are recounted with hilarity in *The Two Lady Rams*. Not owing to lack of resources or exploitation (like in the other short stories by Anand), but rather due to an "overabundance of undue credibility," this anguish is unique. Thus, even though the story is not entirely true, it is based on the reality of the 'Indians' existence. The novel also satirises the so-called "collaborators" of the British Raj, who served the Colonial Master for their own selfish ends. Jhinda Ram looks up to his Chauffeur for counsel, hence the story implicitly condemns the sacrifice of honour and reason that served the British rather than the 'Homeland'.

## **7.7 SYMBOLS:**

Both Sukhi and Sakuntala, "the two Lady Rams" in the title, are female rams. Since they are Lalla Jhinda Ram's spouses, people refer to them as the two Lady Rams. These two Lady Rams have been at loggerheads for a long time. They are competing for their husband's attention. The government knighted their husband, Jhinda Ram, because he is a contractor who works with white authorities. The governor has extended an invitation for him and his spouse to attend the wedding.

They write "Sir Jhinda and Lady Ram" on the invitation card. Ram invites Sakuntala, his second wife, to the celebration with him at first. However, his first wife Sukhi takes offence and raises a fuss. And she wants to go to the party, too. He is concerned by Sukhi's insistence. If he turns his back on Sukhi, she will never leave him alone. If he doesn't keep his word and travel with Sakuntala, he'll never get to spend time with the younger version of her again. They put pressure on him to attend the party because they both want to go with him. Ram has no choice than to accept Sakuntala and Sukhi. His mind is all jumbled up. He concludes that the problem can be readily solved by "the Governor of the province, the king's representative, the shadow of the monarch" (Anand 31). However, the Governor does not come to his aid; rather, it is the Ram's driver who suggests kidnapping both Lady Rams. Since he marries both of them, we can assume that he refers to them as Lady Rams. The Governor also has no power to prevent their attendance at the party. The invitation card is his only real difficulty. So, he changes it to "The two Lady Rams." For Jhinda Ram, this is how he handles the tension between his two wives.

There are two possible meanings to the title. The first clue is that Ram is an accomplished forger because he changed "Lady Ram" to "The Two Lady Rams." Since he had already modified many more complex texts, changing "Lady Rams" to "Two Lady Rams" was not his first experience with modification. This pointed to his shrewdness. Second, it exemplifies the colonial government's callous disregard for its subject. For the simple reason that they have given some attention to who should be addressed as Lady in the event that a man with numerous wives becomes a knight. Mulk Raj Anand uses humour to make a pointed comment on the state of society at the moment. During this time, for instance, the Hindu Mitakshara Law was commonly used. The colonial government did not care about the welfare of women, thus this law permitted men to engage in polygamy. There was no hard and fast rule on how many of a knight's wives might be accorded the title of Lady.

## **7.8 CONCLUSION:**

The Two Lady Rams provides a rich portrait of colonial India's psyche. The "Angerezi Sarkar of India" and its hidden darkness are exposed. This tale takes place at the crossroads of antiquated customs and cutting-edge technology. Lalla is proud of his English-style bungalow, but the local Mitrakshara law requires him to have two wives. Though he may be elevated to the rank of Sahib, he must nevertheless ensure that his wife adhere to the

strictures of the culture in which they live. As we delve more into the story, it becomes clear that it is meant to be a biting societal satire. Despite the increasing volume of laughing, burning tears of fury are flooding the desi spirit. Jhinda Ram and his wives Sukhi and Shakuntala had a good time at the garden party, but they become the topic of conversation among the villagers.

## 7.9 GLOSSARY:

**Social Satire:** The criticism of something or someone via the use of humour, irony, sarcasm, or mockery is an example of satire. Satire frequently focuses on public individuals, such as politicians, but satirists can also poke fun at other things, like social customs or even official policies of the government. There are satirical novels, poetry, and essays, in addition to satirical films, shows, and cartoons. Satire is an enjoyable type of social commentary, and it may be found in a variety of genres.

**British Raj:** A lexicon of Hindustani phrases used in British Raj (British India) administration was appended to the fifth Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on Indian matters, created in 1810. In the 1830s, the East India Company began teaching English in India, one of the world's most linguistically varied countries. The Company switched from Persian to English in 1835. Lord Macaulay introduced western education to India. He proposed replacing Persian with English as the official language, using English in all schools, and educating English-speaking Indian teachers.

**Hindu Mitakshara Law:** Hindu law is the oldest. Hindu Law was developed to meet all human needs. Hindu Law relies on Shruti, Smriti, traditions, commentaries, and digest. Modern Hindu law is codified and uncodified. Hindus live under law. In uncodified Hindu Law, schools of law still exist. Many Indian students published commentary on Vedas and Smritis, which inspired Hindu law schools. Commentators and interpreters disagreed as the Smriti improved. Despite numerous codes, regulation had little authority. An authority will be accepted in one section of India and completely rejected in another. Regulars were unlikely to accept other authorities. Thus, other theories evolved.

**Polygamy:** The act of marrying more than one partner at a time is known as polygamy. Sociologists use the term "polygyny" to refer to the situation in which a man has more than

one wife at the same time. The practise of a woman being married to more than one guy at the same time is referred to as polyandry. Researchers in the fields of sociobiology and zoology use the term polygamy in its broadest definition to refer to any form of more than one mating.

**Patriarchy Society:** This culture, which is dominated by men, is sometimes referred to as a patriarchal society. The patriarchal system became deeply ingrained in society, and what is perhaps even more troubling is that by the time it did so, it had been so ingrained in the mental patterns of both men and women that nobody could see anything wrong with it. In the following paragraphs of this article, we will discuss the definition, characteristics, and instances of this society in the hopes of assisting you in gaining a better understanding of it.

#### 7.10 REFERENCES:

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#### 7.11 QUESTIONS:

Short Questions:

1. Who wrote "Two Lady Rams"?
2. Who is Lalla Jhinda Ram?
3. Mention both the names of the wives of Lalla Jhinda Ram?
4. Why did Lalla Jhinda Ram married two women?

Long Questions:

1. Describe the status of the Indian women in colonial times in the context of the short story?
2. What is the significance of the title "Two Lady Rams"?
3. What is Dowry System? Describe in the context of the short story "Two Lady Rams"?
4. What is Mulk Raj Anand two Lady Ram about?



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**Unit 8: Mahesh Dattani: *Final Solutions***

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**Structure**

8.1 OBJECTIVES

8.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

8.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR

8.4 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

8.5 PLOT

8.6 CHARACTERS

8.7 THEMES

8.8 SYMBOLS

8.9 CONCLUSION

8.10 GLOSSARY

8.11 REFERENCES

8.12 QUESTIONS

**8.1 OBJECTIVES**

- (i) To examine the character portrayals of the riot, where the perpetrator and religious radicals prolong the scenario.
- (ii) To analyze the situations like creating violence to protect religion without considering that they are "humans" with the identical rights as everybody else, regardless of their lifestyle or habits.
- (iii) To promote community cohesion and understanding, although tradition and modernity differ.

**8.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Mahesh Dattani is a writer who emphasises on his local community and environment. His originality is an honest reflection of his familiarity with and immersion in the world's social and cultural realities. He's using the mirror he's holding to show people how things really are. *Final Solutions* is a critical intervention into the post-independence period and

its tainted social and political landscape. Dakhsa, commonly known as Hardika, the play's protagonist, bridges the gap between the past and the present. Hardika's experience in the aftermath of the partition is revisited throughout the play, providing historical context to the issue of communal tension through flashbacks to when she was fifteen in 1948. The idea of communalism is addressed in the drama. Dattani researched the play for a year, using *Freedom at Midnight* (1975) by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapiers and *Lankesh Patrike*, a Kannada weekly publication. He also interviewed Gujarat and Karnataka communal riot survivors. Dattani focused on the 1985 Ahmedabad Rath Yatra riot. This inspired his *Final Solutions* riot that takes Javed and Bobby to the Gandhi family.

### **8.3 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR**

One of the most well-rounded dramatists working in contemporary Indian theatre, Mahesh Dattani is widely regarded as one of the top names in the field. Even though he was born in the year 1958 in the city of Bangalore, both of his parents were originally from Porbander, which is located in the Indian state of Gujarat. They moved to Bombay for work purposes and subsequently landed in Bangalore, which is where he had the opportunity to witness Gujarati and Kannada performances alongside his parents and sisters. Baldwin High School and St. Joseph College of Arts and Sciences, Bangalore, educated Dattani. His school forbade regional language. Dattani loves theatre. He wants to showcase Indian diversity. This led him to playwriting and acting. He desired a normal life running his father's business. He wants to evolve theatrical heritage to capture soil spirit. In the early 1980s, he joined Bangalore Little Theatre, playing and directing plays. He graduated in Marketing and Advertising Management. Thus, his theatrical and academic careers are unrelated. Play Pen was his 1984 theatre company. He hosts performances at his studios and promotes amateur actors. Portland State University's Summer Programme features Dattani teaching drama. Dattani approaches theatre differently. He utilises drama to show the plight of the underprivileged. His plays externalise difficulties and try to evoke suppressed sentiments. His English plays are unique. He has written many dramas with varied subjects, methods, and devices. He has brought new themes to Indian drama, including gay, child abuse, transgender, HIV positive, and physically challenged. Mahesh Dattani, a multifaceted literary and dramatic character, has elevated Indian English Drama by writing over a dozen plays.

#### **8.4 INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY**

Mahesh Dattani focuses his writing on the culture and environment of the place where he now resides. His creative work is an accurate and genuine depiction of his first-hand experience as well as his knowledge of the socio-cultural context. He is holding a mirror up for the audience so that they can see the truth. *Final Solutions* is a play that makes a critical intervention into the post-independence era, which is characterised by a sociopolitical scenario that is communally vitiated. In the play, Dakhsa, who is also known as Hardika, is the main character. She blends the past and the present. The issue of communal friction is given historic depth through flashbacks depicting Hardika when she was fifteen years old in 1948, and what she experienced in the aftermath of the partition returns to her mind at various points throughout the play. Hardika is the protagonist of the play. The idea of communalism is investigated throughout the play. In 1993, when *Final Solutions* was composed and performed, metropolitan India was experiencing a period of increased tension and violence. Dattani's reaction to the 1992 destruction of the Babri Masjid provided the drama with its unique setting. Dattani's desire to promote community harmony led him to confront the modern social issue of religious communalism. He tries to get across the idea that mutual understanding and tolerance are the only ways to address this issue.

#### **8.5 PLOT**

As a result of these six persons attempting to spend the night together under the same roof, a tense circumstance is generated as a consequence of their actions. The recent destruction of the chariot and depictions of Hindu deities that were a part of a Rath Yatra as the procession was travelling through a Muslim community of the city serves as the impetus for the events that unfold in the play. These incidents serve as the catalyst for the events that unfold in the play. A citywide curfew has been imposed because of the turmoil that broke out in Amargaon. The curfew is in effect until further notice. As a direct response to the violence, members of the local Muslim and Hindu communities, who were respectively represented by members of the mob and the chorus, have begun attacking one another. The communal violence that takes place between these factions recalls to mind Hardika's wedding and her life in 1948 as a newlywed. An avenue for the expression of her recollections is provided by the figure of Daksha, who is seen to be reading from her diary in the painting. Smita is worried about her Muslim friend

Tasneem's safety, despite the fact that her own family is protected within their own home by the Gandhis. Even Tasneem is concerned about how the Gandhi family will do in this situation.

The tense situation that results from six characters attempting to spend one night together. As you can see, Bobby walks into the prayer room and steals the Krishna statue, which causes Aruna a great deal of sorrow. Bobby claims that he is communicating with God, but nothing else is happening. He explains to Aruna that with enough faith and understanding, nothing can be destroyed. After that, he tells Hardika that he is willing to put up with everything that the community does to him as long as she can forget everything. They are leaving. Hardika is informed by Ramnik that Hardika's husband and father-in-law were responsible for the destruction of her friend Zarine's family business. After hearing this, Hardika is convinced that her in-laws were trying to cover up their crime for reasons unrelated to Zarine's religion. Hardika, visibly upset, demands to know from Ramnik why he didn't tell her earlier. Ramnik asserts that he did not intend for her mother to experience any sense of wrongdoing. The final scene of the play is the Mob/Chorus, which Javed and Bobby perform.

## **8.6 CHARACTERS**

- (i) Hardika: a female ancestor of Ramnik. In the portions of the play that take place in the past, she is also referred to by the name Daksha. She records everything in her journal that she experiences. Everything that happens in her life, from her first day living with her husband's parents to the day she made her first Muslim friend, Zarine, she records in her journal. This diary is a representation of both the past and the present. Hardika's last hope for peace and independence was to move into Zarine's home because it was the only place she could go there. Hardika enjoyed the music of Noor Jehan, but the only place she was ever able to hear it was at Zarine's house.
- (ii) Javed: In the play, he is portrayed as a young Muslim boy. He starts out as a confused little lad who eventually turns into a violent extremist. In the name of Jihad, also known as the Holy War, the politicians use him as a pawn. He is getting himself prepared for the terrorist actions by attending training. He travels to or is rather dispatched to the location where Hindus reside. The name of the street is also sometimes spelt Mohalla. The Ratha Yatra procession is brought out onto the

street, and a large number of people immediately begin to participate in the march. He was the one who initiated the instability that eventually led to the war. He was tasked with carrying out the murder of the pujari, who served as the priest during the Ratha Yatra. As Javed, who is holding a knife in his hand, approaches the Pujari, he finds himself engulfed in the crowd. Despite the fact that Javed is tasked with eliminating the Pujari, he does not succeed in doing so. It is abundantly obvious from Javed's frame of mind that, despite the fact that he is a terrorist, he possesses the heart of a human being as well.

(iii)Smita: She is a young lady who adheres to the principles of the liberal worldview. She does assist her mother with her puja work because she loves her mother, even though she does not personally agree with all of the things that are being done. She begs her mother to release her from the shackles of prejudice once and for all. Even though she had a strong friendship with a Muslim girl by the name of Tasneem, she did not harbour any animosity towards Muslims.

(iv)Bobby: whose real name is Babban and who is a close companion of Javed. Because he does not wish to broadcast the fact that he is a Muslim to the rest of the world, he decides to change his name from Babban to Bobby. The reason for this decision is that Javed did the same thing. Bobby, in contrast to Javed, has better control over his anger, and he does not respond in an angry manner to all of the situations that arise. It is because of him that Javed is rescued from the Ratha Yatra procession, and he is the one who seeks safety at the home of Ramnik Gandhi.

(v) Ramnik Gandhi: son of Hardika, this individual has a wide-open worldview and does not condone acts of communal hatred. Because he wanted to make amends for the wrongdoing done in the past by his father and grandfather, he went so far as to offer sanctuary to two Muslim men who were seeking safety in his home. Ramnik was aware of this fact, but he chose not to tell his mother about it since he did not want his mother to have to go through any additional anguish as a result. He has simply attempted to establish that he is an authentic secularist.

(vi)Aruna: housewife in the Indian tradition who has a reverence for the divine and is married to Ramanik Gandhi. She has devoted her entire life to worship and puja. She even teaches her own daughter the works of God in addition to the activities that need to be done around the house. Aruna has devoted her entire life to

following the puja route, hence she is quite specific about her god, and she cannot, under any circumstances, make any kind of concessions regarding her god.

### **8.7 THEMES:**

A communal riot is a type of war that does not take place between two distinct nations but rather between two distinct religious groups. This type of war is known as an intra-religious conflict. The sectarian strife that exists between Hindus and Muslims is the primary topic of discussion throughout Dattani. The status of India during the riots that followed the partition of the country is discussed in the play. In the play, the protagonist, Hardika, is the matriarch of a Gujarati family. She harbours a deep-seated animosity towards Muslims as a result of the fact that her father was taken by members of a religious minority. When her son offered safety to two Muslim youngsters named Javed and Bobby at their home, she voiced her opposition to her son's decision. Due to the fact that it addresses both the communal unrest and the riot, *Final Solutions* is sometimes referred to as a problem play. In practically all of his plays, Mahesh Dattani primarily discusses discrimination against women. *Final solutions* in a drama like this one that not only speaks about the friction within the community, but also demonstrates the patriarchal hegemony and the sufferings of a woman as well. In the play, Daksha, who is also referred to as Hardika, gets married to a person whose name is Hari when she is still quite young. Once Daksha moves in with her new family, she changes her name as well. The new name Hardika is a nod to her husband's surname. Daksha is barred from attending school and is forbidden from listening to the music of her idol, Noor Jehan. After getting married, she turns into a stereotypical Indian housewife who is forbidden to leave the house uncovered. The drama has irony, which was used by Mahesh Dattani.

The play takes place in an era when India was newly independent. Daksha and Hari's wedding took place precisely at that time. In this drama, Dattani tries to depict how, on the one hand, India gains its independence, while on the other, Daksha gives up hers. She can no longer freely express her musicality by singing or humming to her husband, and she can no longer freely pursue her aspirations. She lives her life with her legs shackled, like a caged bird.

## **8.8 SYMBOLS:**

The film *Final Solutions* begins with a shot of five individuals wearing masks and clothed in all black. They are known as the Mob/ Chorus thanks to Dattani. Each participant wears two masks; one represents Hinduism, while the other represents Islam. The majority of the action takes place with them standing atop a big ramp in the shape of a crescent the entire time. The home of the Gandhis can be found at the bottom of the ramp. In the present day, Amargaon, Gujarat, there is a family from the middle class. Hardika Gandhi, formerly known as Daksha, is the oldest survivor of the partition of India and Pakistan. Other members of the Gandhi family include her son Ramnik, her daughter-in-law Aruna, and her grand-daughter Smita. Hardika Gandhi was once known as Daksha. The chamber where Daksha was living in 1948 can be found on a different level of the theatre. As a result, the drama is divided into three different spaces: one, the crowd; two, the Gandhi family; and three, Daksha's recollection. These three distinct realities can, at particular periods in time and space, interact with one another and overlap with one another.

Ramnik's daughter Smita is uncomfortable with Bobby and Javed for various reasons. Smita and Bobby briefly dated before the show, but they broke up. Bobby is engaged to Smita's friend Tasneem, Javed's sister. Smita also complains that her mother "stifles" her with religious practises.

Bobby, true name Babban, is a secular Muslim who hides his faith. Javed, a Muslim youth, is self-assured. After experiencing religious discrimination as a child, Javed became a hired hoodlum who provoked disturbances. He admits he disrupted the Rath Yatra. Bobby wants Javed to retire.

## **8.9 CONCLUSION:**

Based on a comprehensive study as well as an examination of the dramatic text *Final Solutions* One is able to perceive three different things. To begin, theatre has always, either directly or indirectly, portrayed the absolute truth of life through language, which is intended to endure, stir, and control the mind and heart of man forever. This has been the case throughout history. Whether it be social or political problems, new solutions are needed. Second, despite the fact that it depicts reality, theatre has given people hope, courage, awareness, and understanding about who they are and what they should do to

stand against anything with a vision towards a brighter future to come and the determination to battle against all of the social ills and odds. And finally, theatre is an important educational tool because it conceptualises the various identities that are prevalent in society, such as class, religion, caste, and ethnicity, and then informs and displays how those identities are seen. Its primary goal is to provide entertainment along with useful information that will be of benefit to society. This is accomplished through illuminating the audience and readers, particularly the younger generation, who will go on to play a vital role in the improvement and uplift of society. Final Solutions expresses Dattani's humanism. He discusses communalism. Dattani uses religion awareness and religious prejudice in this play. He shows how communalist beliefs and stereotypes encourage animosity of one community against another. In the play, Dattani argues that ignoring discursive limits to appreciate communalism's complexity may lead to solutions. Playwrights have, throughout the history of the art form, endeavoured to use their works to depict modern societal issues and reality.

#### **8.10 GLOSSARY:**

- (i) Communalism: Communalism supports political devotion to a religious community. The social, cultural, and service features of a religious group do not constitute communalism. Communism incites religious enmity. It assumes that members of a religion share interests that vary from others. Communism opposes secularism and humanism.
- (ii) Socio- political: It does this by putting the war at the focus of the action, which depicts how events that occurred during the war influenced economic, sociopolitical, and decolonization policies and advancements.
- (iii)Hinduism: The beginnings of the religion known as Hinduism are shrouded in mystery. Even though they may have implications that vary, many of the concepts that are central to Hinduism are also present in Buddhism and Sikhism. Only proper names and place names with widely used variant forms are included in this list. Proper names and place names are not included.
- (iv)Marriage: Marriage, a legally and socially acknowledged relationship, generally between a man and a woman, regulated by laws, norms, conventions, beliefs, and attitudes that define the partners' rights and duties and give their offspring status. Marriage provides structure for many basic social and private functions, including



sexual gratification and regulation, sex division, economic production and utilisation, and individual requirements for tenderness, status, and companionship, which explains its universality across cultures.

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### **8.12 QUESTIONS:**

- (i) Which character in the play maintains a diary and why?
- (ii) Why does the mob call the Gandhi family as ‘traitors’?
- (iii) Why had Babban changed his name to Bobby?
- (iv) Explain the role of women in the play.
- (v) Mention the actual reason Javed had come to Amargaon.