

ARULMIGU PALANIANDAVAR ARTS COLLEGE FOR WOMEN,

PALANI

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

LEARNING RESOURCES

INDIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS / UNIT - I

1. What simile is used by Kabir to denote his obedience to God? (Lotus Leaf on water)
2. What simile is used by Kabir to denote his wonder at God? (Chakor gazing all night at the moon)
3. What sort of relationship exists between God and Kabir? (Master – servant)
4. What simile is used by Kabir to denote the act of his heart touching God? (Amalgamation of river and sea)
5. What objects and happening are described in Song – 115? (The celestial bodies)
6. What simile is used by Kabir to denote the unity between life and death? (Similarity between the left and the right hand)
7. What are the pseudonyms of Asadullah Beg Khan? ('Asad' and 'Ghalib')
8. In which languages did Ghalib write his poems? (Urdu and Persian)
9. What was opposed by Ghalib? (Casteism and religious taboos)
10. What was supported by Ghalib? (Universalism and humanism)
11. Where did Ghalib stay in 1827? (Banaras)
12. In what state did Ghalib spend his time in Banaras? (State of trance)
13. What philosophy has a strong hold in the poems of G. M. Muktibodh? (Existentialism)
14. What does the term "Shoonya" in Hindi mean? (The Void)
15. What does the term 'Void' denote? (Rising and proliferation of meaninglessness)
16. Meaninglessness is a characteristic of ----- society (Post-modern)
17. Hollowness has jaws, which have "-----". (Carnivorous teeth)
18. What is passed from one to another, as said in "The Void"? (Seeds of emptiness).
19. To whom are the poems of Meera dedicated (Lord Krishna)
20. How does Meera address Lord Krishna? (Dark One or the Mountain Lifter)
21. To what genre do Meera's poems belong? (Lyrical *padas*)
22. In which language are the poems of Meera written? (Rajasthani)
23. What is the central idea of the poems of Meera? (Devotion to Lord Krishna)
24. What is Meera ready to renounce? ((Her royal name and life)
25. How is Subramania Bharathiyar popularly known? (Mahakavi Bharathi)
26. What do the fiery songs of Bharathi kindle in the mind of the reader? (Patriotism)
27. When were the patriotic songs written by Bharathi? (During the struggle for Indian Independence)
28. What is the meter used by Bharathi in his poems? (*Nondi Chindu*)
29. What is the first fear of which man is frightened? (Opposition by the whole world)
30. What is the last fear of which man is frightened? (Sky falling apart)

UNIT – II

31. What does the term '*Thirukkural*' mean? ('Sacred verses')
32. How is *Thirukkural* praised traditionally? (The Tamil Veda" and "the Divine Book")
33. How many short verses were written by Thiruvalluvar? (1330)
34. What are the major areas dealt with by Thiruvalluvar? (Virtue, wealth and love)
35. What moral virtues are prescribed for an individual? (Non-violence and moral

vegetarianism)

36. What will virtue confer on a virtuous man? (Heaven and wealth)
37. How is Vaikom Muhammad Basheer known to the world? (A humanist and writer)
38. Where did the doctor take his supper? (In a restaurant)
39. What was the doctor using in the absence of electricity? (A kerosene lamp)
40. On the entry of the snake, what creatures kept quiet? (The rats)
41. What was the title of the book, the doctor wanted to read? (Materia Medica)
42. What was the doctor conscious of, on looking at the mirror? (His beauty)
43. In which languages was Munshi Premchand writing fiction? (Hindi and Urdu)
44. What themes are dealt with in "The Shroud"? (Village life and social realism)
45. What was the profession of Ghisu and Madhav? (Cobblers)
46. Who was Ghisu? (Father-in-law of Budhiya)
47. Who was Madhav? (Husband of Budhiya)
48. How did Ghisu and Madhav manage the past year? (By Budhiya's hard work of grinding grain)
49. How much did Ghisu and Madhav borrow from the villagers? (Five rupees)
50. What is the job, found by Bhima in Mumbai? (Construction worker in a quarry)
51. How does Bhima become jobless? (The quarry is closed)
52. Who is the little daughter of Bhima? (Narbada)
53. About Mumbai, Sathe writes, "Mumbai had everything, except ----" (Work and shelter)
54. What is the new job started by Bhima? (Grave robbing)
55. Where is Guleri settled after her marriage? (Lakarmandi)
56. Which is the native village of Guleri's parents? (Champa)
57. How many years has Guleri spent with Manak in the same innocence? (Seven)
58. What is the secret plan of Manak's mother during Guleri's annual sojourn? (Manak's second marriage)
59. Who brings the news of Guleri's death to Manak? (Bhavani)
60. Why is Manak not ready to touch the infant? (Smelling kerosene)

UNIT - III

61. In which movement did Mohan Rakesh contributed? ('Nai Kahani')
62. What was the award won by Mohan Rakesh for his plays? (Sangeet Natak Academi)
63. What is the main theme of *Halfway House*? (*Marital discord*)
64. Who are the couple caught up in incompatibility? (Savitri and Mahendranath)
65. How many years of married life has been led by Savitri and Mahendranath? (22 years)
66. Who are the children of Savitri and Mahendranath? (Binny, Ashok and Kinny)
67. Who is the husband of Binny? (Manoj)
68. What is the impact of the unsuccessful married life of Savitri and Mahendranath on Binny? (Unhappy married life)
69. What is the impact of the unsuccessful married life of Savitri and Mahendranath on Ashok? (Lack of enthusiasm to get job)
70. What is the impact of the unsuccessful married life of Savitri and Mahendranath on Kinny? (Being insolent)
71. How is Savithri described as a mother? (Harried mother)
72. How is Savithri described as a wife? (Exasperated wife)
73. What is the major drawback of Mahendranath? (Unemployed)

74. Who is the only bread winner of the family? (Savithri)
75. What was the work done by Mahendranath earlier? (Business)
76. Who was the business partner of Mahendranath? (Juneja)
77. What does Mahendranath blame for his unsuccessful business? (Fortune)
78. Who is Singhania? (Authority of Savithri)
79. Why does Savithri invite Singhania to her house? (To get job for Ashok)
80. Who describes the physical torture done by Mahendranath to Savithri? (Binny)
81. To whom does Binny describe the physical torture done by Mahendranath to Savithri? (Juneja)
82. What is Savithri seeking from other men? (emotional support)
83. Whom does Juneja blame as the cause of the marital dissension? (Savithri)
84. What was the supporting act of Savithri to the blame of Juneja? (Savithri cried on his shoulders)
85. How did Savithri describe Mahendranath to Juneja? (Wimp and spineless person)
86. With whom did Savithri eloped once? (Jagmohan)
87. What is Mahendranath suffering from? (Blood pressure)
88. Why does Mahendranath leave the house? (Disharmony at home)
89. Why does Mahendranath come back home? (Love for the family)
90. As said by Leo Tolstoy, what is important in married life? (Dealing with incompatibility)

UNIT – IV

91. What are the eight forms of the universe in order? (Water, Fire, The Priest, Sun and Moon, Space, Earth, Air)
92. In what activity is King Duhsanta involved in the beginning of the play? (Chasing a fleet of antelope)
93. Where does the expedition of hunting take place? (On the foothills of the Himalayas)
94. Where is the hermitage of Kanva? (By the river, Malini)
95. What animal does King Duhsanta chase in particular? (A Blackbuck)
96. Why does an ascetic prevent Duhsanta from hunting the deer? (A scared animal, living in hermitage)
97. Why does Duhsanta enter the hermitage? (To pay his respect and enjoy the hospitality)
98. What is Shakuntala doing, when Duhsanta enters the hermitage? (Watering the plants)
99. Who is Shakuntala to Kanva? (Adopted daughter)
100. Whose daughter is Shakuntala? (Meneka and Visvamitra)
101. Why does an elephant wreak havoc in the forest? (Frightened by the hunting party)
102. Who is the court jester and friend of Duhsanta? (Madhavaya)
103. What is the request made by the ascetics to Duhsanta? (To protect their sacred rites from demons)
104. Who are the two companions of Shakuntala? (Priyamvada and Anasuya)
105. Who is Gautami? (The Matron of the Hermitage)
106. How do Shakuntala and Duhsanta get married? According to the Gandharva rites)
107. Who is the great sage, who visits the hermitage? (Durvasa)
108. What is the curse of Durvasa to Shakuntala? (Duhsanta's oblivion of her)

109. Why did Durvasa curse Shakuntala? (For not attending him)
110. Who pleads to Durvasa for the sake of Shakuntala? (Anasuya)
111. When will the curse be lifted? (At the presentation of a token of recognition)
112. Why could Duhsanta not able to recognize Shakuntala? (Because of the curse)
113. To whom does Shakuntala cry to swallow her up? (Mother Earth)
114. What carries away Shakuntala, when she is in tears? (A bright light from Apsara Pool)
115. Where does Shakuntala lose her ring? (In the river)
116. Who finds the ring finally and brings it to Shakuntala? (A fisherman)
117. Who conveys the poignant pain of Duhsanta to Shakuntala? (Misrakesi)
118. Who is Misrakesi? (A friend of Menaka)
119. What is Bharatha doing, when Duhsanta sees him? (Playing with a lion's cub)
120. Who reveals the truth about Durvasa's curse to Duhsanta? (Marica)

UNIT – V

121. What is the autobiographical work of Bama? (Karukku)
122. With whose story does *Sangati* start? (Velliamma Kizhavi)
123. What was the main profession of the women in *Sangati*? (Daily wage earners)
124. Who is the grandmother of Bama? (Velliyamma)
125. Where did Velliyamma's husband go, deserting the family? (Sri lanka)
126. How did Velliyamma manage the family? (By selling her mangal sutra)
127. Who was the first woman in Velliyamma family to get educated? (Sebasthiamma)
128. Who is the mother of Bama? (Sebasthiamma)
129. How did Samundrakani meet her end? (Killed by her husband)
130. Who were the daughters of Samundrakani? (Mariamma, Annamma and Seyakkodi)
131. Who had the courage to question the headman? (Susaiamma)
132. Who suffered as a child labourer? (Seyarani)
133. Why was Thaayi beaten by her husband? (Suspicion)
134. Why were the ant-hills dug, during the period of famine? (To find stored food grains)
135. Bama says, "We must strengthen our ----- in order to survive." (Hearts and minds)
136. What is the title of *Untouchable Spring* in Telugu language? ("Antarani Vasantam")
137. What does Kalyan Rao say about *Untouchable Spring*? ('Written out his life')
138. How many generations are discussed in *Untouchable Spring*? (Five)
139. How was Yellana called by the people? (Singing Yelladu, dancing Yelladu)
140. What was the theme of Yellana's song? (Untouchability and hunger)
141. What did Booma Devi want to enjoy? (*Chenchu Natakam*)
142. Where should the malas and the Madigas sit? (On the mound)
143. Where should the Karanams and Kapus sit? (Close to the performers)
144. When would the *Chenchu Natakam* start? (After the arrival of the the Karanams and Kapus)
145. Why did the crowd pelt stones at Yellana? (A Mala, standing near the performers)
146. Who brought up Yellana after he left his native? (Naganna)
147. Whom did Naganna marry? (Ramulu)
148. What was Naganna's dance known as? (Vermillion dance)
149. Who resembled the Karanam's daughter? (Subadhra)
150. Yellanna thought not to perform would be the best way to save ----- . (Self-respect)

POETRY
KABIR – SONGS – 91, 112

Text:

SONG – 91

HOW could the love between Thee and me sever?

As the leaf of the lotus abides on the water: so thou art my Lord, and I am Thy servant.

As the night-bird Chakor gazes all night at the moon: so Thou art my Lord and I am Thy servant.

From the beginning until the ending of time, there is love between Thee and me; and how shall such love be extinguished?

Kabîr says: "As the river enters into the ocean, so my heart touches Thee."

SONG - 112

THE light of the sun, the moon, and the stars shines bright:

The melody of love swells forth, and the rhythm of love's detachment beats the time.

Day and night, the chorus of music fills the heavens; and Kabîr says

"My Beloved One gleams like the lightning flash in the sky."

Do you know how the moments perform their adoration?

Waving its row of lamps, the universe sings in worship day and night,

There are the hidden banner and the secret canopy:

There the sound of the unseen bells is heard.

Kabîr says: "There adoration never ceases; there the Lord of the Universe sitteth on His throne."

There falls the rhythmic beat of life and death:

Rapture wells forth, and all space is radiant with light.

There the Unstruck Music is sounded; it is the music of the love of the three worlds.

There millions of lamps of sun and of moon are burning;

There the drum beats, and the lover swings in play.

There love-songs resound, and light rains in showers; and the worshipper is entranced in the taste of the heavenly nectar.

Look upon life and death; there is no separation between them,

The right hand and the left hand are one and the same.

Kabîr says: "There the wise man is speechless; for this truth may never be found in Vadas or in books."

Introduction:

Kabir lived in the 15th century. He was a medieval Muslim mystic, who is well remembered even today for his simple life and extraordinary devotional fervour. He lived in Benares, the famous Hindu pilgrim center and led a very simple life as an ordinary weaver. Born to Mohammadan parents, he came under the influence of the famous Hindu saint, Sri Ramananda and delved deep into the mysteries of Hindu mysticism. A true worshipper of God, he emphasized the purity of mind and selfless devotion to God. He openly opposed the

weaknesses of both Hinduism and Islam. During his life time Kabir composed many poems. They are usually two line couplets, known as dohas, denoting deep philosophical truths. Rabindranath Tagore, the mystic poet and the Noble Laureate has translated the songs of Kabir into English.

No rituals nor austerities:

Kabir was a hater of religious exclusivism. He sought above all things to initiate men into the liberty of the children of God. In his poems, a wide range of mystical emotion is brought into play. He explains the most intimate and personal realization of God and expresses them in homely metaphors and religious symbols drawn indifferently from Hindu and Mohammedan belief.

Kabir speaks of the "simple union" with Divine Reality, the duty and the joy of every soul. He wants to avoid ritual and of bodily austerities. The God whom he proclaimed was "neither in Kaaba nor in Kailâsh." Those who sought Him needed not to go far; for He awaited discovery everywhere, more accessible to "the washerwoman and the carpenter" than to the self--righteous holy man.

Communion with God:

Kabîr achieves the synthesis between the personal and cosmic aspects of the Divine Nature. He eludes the three great dangers which threaten mystical religion. First, he escapes the excessive emotionalism, sentimental extravagances and the incarnational form. Last, the warmly human and direct apprehension of God as the supreme Object of love, the soul's comrade, teacher, and bridegroom, which is so passionately and frequently expressed in Kabîr's poems, balances and controls those abstract tendencies which are inherent in the metaphysical side of his vision of Reality.

Love between God and Man:

Love is throughout his "absolute sole Lord": the unique source of the more abundant life which he enjoys, and the common factor which unites the finite and infinite worlds. All is soaked in love: that love as the "Form of God." The whole of creation is the Play of the Eternal Lover. Beyond the mists of pleasure and pain, Kabîr finds them governing the creative acts of God. His manifestation is love; His activity is joy. Creation springs from one glad act of affirmation.

In the collection of songs, every song illustrates every aspect of Kabîr's thought and his emotions like the ecstasy, the despair, the still beatitude, the eager self-devotion, the flashes of wide illumination and the moments of intimate love. His wide and deep vision of the universe, the "Eternal Sport" of creation, the worlds being "told like beads" within the Being of God is here seen balanced by his lovely and delicate sense of intimate communion with the Divine Friend, Lover, Teacher of the soul. The paradoxical views of Reality are resolved in and reconciled in Him: bondage and liberty, love and renunciation, pleasure and pain. Union with Him is the one thing that matters to the soul, its destiny and its need. This union and discovery of God are the simplest and most natural of all things.

The union, however, is brought about by love, not by knowledge or ceremonial observances. Real worship and communion is in Spirit and in Truth Since all things, and especially the heart of man, are God-inhabited, God-possessed He may best be found in the here-and-now: in the normal. human, bodily existence, the "mud" of material life.

GHALIB – TEMPLE LAMP

Text:

In my imagination, there's a city full of flowers,
Where always lives spring — the most loveable city.

It is such a city, which Delhi has to praise
It comes to circumambulate this city.
When eyes see this city, visioned it like spring,
As they perceive innumerable scenes of beauty.

Those writers who praise the city of Kashi
Their works got the merit of heavenly bliss.
From the evil eye, may God in his greatness
save Banaras as it is a grove in paradise.

There's no wonder that even the departed soul
Never wishes to leave this city.
O ignorant people! Come and see —
The great heavenly nymphs of Banaras.

See body-less souls! These icons are without water and mud,
It means heavenly nymphs are soul from head to foot.
Their faces are like light as the flowers' sweet smell
And pious from head to foot like the pure soul.

Even thorns and grasses are like flowers in Banaras
Moreover, even a particle of dust is full of soul.
In this transforming world, Banaras' glory and beauty
Are protected from all the changes that time brought.

Either be spring, or cold or summer season
Banaras' environment presents heavenly glory in all.
All the springs of the world came to Kashi
To pass the cold and summer pleasantly here.

Although even autumn has the quality of sandalwood
Yet it always opens its wing to complete its cycle here.
In the city of gardens, Banaras, to get popularity
Even spring use to wear a sacred thread of flowers.

The courtesans have the dazzling beauty of the Tur-hills,
a divine brightness from head to toe.
May this radiance be safe from the evil eye!
Their waists are tender but their hearts are passionate.

They may look innocent but they are clever too
and skilled in the business of love.

Their smiles enrapture the heart and their beauty
would cause even spring roses to blush with envy.

Introduction:

The original name of Ghalib was Asadullah Beg Khan, and ‘Asad’ and ‘Ghalib’ were his pseudonyms. He wrote twelve books of poems and writings in Urdu, four in Persian and many other collections. His most famous book of Urdu poetry is the *Diwane-i-Ghalib*. Ghalib, considered as one of the greatest poets of Urdu and Persian literature, was greatest among all in crafting symbols, metaphors and words, altogether to make the poetry a continuous flow of feelings, experiences and thought.

Being a Muslim-Sufi by belief, he was against casteism and religious taboos, therefore he used to think of himself as a follower of universalism and humanism. Ghalib wrote both in Persian and in Urdu. His remarkably modern thoughts and philosophy were far more meaningful than those of his contemporaries.

Ghalib wrote both in Persian and in Urdu, and what he had to say was often beyond the imaginative reach of the men of his days. Readers today, however, are able to relate to his words and meaning, and comprehend. Ghalib’s remarkably modern thoughts and philosophy were far more meaningful than those of his contemporaries.

Ghalib prophesied the fate of his poetry when he wrote:

“Today none buys my verse’s wine that it may grow in age,
To make the senses reel in many a drinker to come,”
My star rose highest in the firmament before my birth,
My poetry will win the world’s acclaim when I am gone.”

His confidence has proved to be well founded. He further added:

I do not long for people’s praise; I seek no one’s reward,
And if they say my verses have no meaning, be it so.

In the context of his case for pension in the Calcutta High Court, he started his journey for Calcutta (now called Kolkata) on August 1826 from Delhi and *en-route* he visited Lucknow, Kanpur, Banda, Modha, Chillatara and Allahabad. In August-September 1827 he reached Banaras and stayed there for over four months. But if Ghalib did not achieve the purpose for which he set out for Calcutta in 1826, he gained greatly in other ways. The experience of such a long and arduous journey was itself an exciting and interesting one for him. Large parts of the journey were over unmetalled roads; part of the way he travelled by river; and the final stage, from Banaras to Calcutta, he did on horseback. The journey brought him in personal contact with men of letters in all the important centres along his route, and he continued to maintain this contact by letter in the years to come.

Ghalib at Benaras:

Mirza Ghalib came to Banaras while he was sick, but the weather and natural beauty of the city helped him to relax and get healthy. He stayed for a few days in the Sarai of Navarangabad with an old woman, and later shifted to the palace of Mirza Gulam Ahmad. During his four-month stay in Banaras, Ghalib developed a high sense of attachment (topophilia) to this great place, and insightfully experienced the *genius loci* of the place, which are profusely reflected in his poetry. The Hindu rituals and festive acts attracted him

so much that he wrote to his friend Mohammad Ali Khan: “This city (*Banaras*) is so beautiful and lovely that even a stranger misses counting his sufferings. If I would have no fear of religious contempt and criticism from my enemies, I would have left my religion and used to count beads, bear sacred threads, put a mark on the forehead and in this way I would have passed my life on the bank of the Ganga”

Ghalib’s Sense of Attachment to Banaras:

Even forty years after of his visit to Banaras Ghalib remembered the city with great respect and love. In a letter to his student Miyan-Dad Khan Sayyah he wrote

“Oh ! Banaras is a unique city. What to say more about! When is such city born? At the end of my life I visited the city. If I had been young, then I would have settled there and left Delhi” .

Ghalib saw the fantastic view of the meeting of the sky and the Ganga at dawn, when the city-edge of the river looks like a garland of oil lamps; while in the morning the reflection of sunlight on the *ghats* and their shades in the Ganga is another scenic beauty. With this view in mind Ghalib wrote a poem of 108 stanzas in Persian called ‘*The Lamp of the Temple*’ of which 69 stanzas directly narrate his feelings for Banaras. Even poets earlier to him also wrote poems describing the glory of Banaras, about whom sometimes he refers.

The Feelings

The sensitivity of the Banaras-dwellers was exposed in Ghalib’s stanzas in at least three ways — the fantastic scenes, the religious tradition, and the degraded situation. Ghalib’s visit took place during the reign of Udaya Narain Singh (CE 1795-1835), the king of the Banaras State. Ghalib never encouraged negativism; he felt that everywhere there are dark spots but also some rays of light, whatsoever may be — city or man. This thought is seen in the *Chiragh-e-Dair*, where he said:

“Ghalib ! Don’t be upset if some calls you bad,
Is there somebody to whom everybody says good!

I know the inside reality of heaven,
To please the mind, this mirage is good medicine.”

Ghalib seems to have lived in a unique state of trance during his four-month stay in the city. His description of Banaras is an excellent example of the secular spirit, which is the life-breath of India as a nation. He was well aware of the spiritual insights and the beauty of the city, and also of the downward trend of the society during his times— the period referred to as a transitional phase — and he presents both faces in his poem. Some of his verses remind us of similar ones of the English poet Matthew Arnold (1822- 1888), who was his contemporary:

“Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.” (*The Grande Chartreuse*, 85)

G. M. MUKTIBODH – THE VOID

Text:

The void inside us
Has jaws,
Those jaws have carnivorous teeth;
those teeth will chew you up,
those teeth will chew up everyone else.
The dearth inside
Is our nature,
Habitually angry,
In the dark hollow inside the jaws
There is a pond of blood.
This void is utterly black,
Is barbaric, is naked,
Disowned, debased,
Completely self-absorbed.
Scatter it
They let it grow
spread it around
scatter it and give it away
to others,
raising the children of emptiness.
The void is very durable,
It is fertile.
Everywhere it breeds
Saws, daggers, sickles,
breeds carnivorous teeth.
That is why
Wherever you look,
There is dancing, jubilation,
Death is now giving birth
To brand new children.
Everywhere
there are oversight
with the teeth of saws,
there are heavily armed mistakes;
the world looks at them
and walks on
rubbing its hands.

Introduction:

G. M. Muktibodh an Indian writer of the twentieth century, was a versatile genius, writing across many genres of literature. He also functioned as editor of prestigious journals. *Chand ka Munh Tedha Hai* is one of his masterpieces. He is known for his powerful imageries and experimentalist writing. Existentialist philosophy has a strong hold in his works, including "The Void."

Muktibodh's "The Void" ("Shoonya" in Hindi) denotes the rising and proliferation of meaninglessness in postmodern society at an interpersonal level as well as in a collective level.

The Brutality of Void within:

Muktibodh begins the poem by giving a pictorial presentation of the hollowness within. Hollowness has jaws, which have "carnivorous teeth." The use of the adjective 'carnivorous' suggests the wild nature of the emptiness. The teeth in those jaws will chew up or eat up everybody. It will grind or squash people to pieces. This reflects the intense pain one undergoes, because of the empty space within. The emptiness is not only individual but also collective.

"The void inside us
has jaws,
Those jaws have carnivorous teeth;
those teeth will chew you up,
those teeth will chew up everyone else."

Muktibodh continues with the pictorial image when he says that in the hollow space within the jaws of the void, there is a pool of blood. Blood often stands for life. Thus, the pool of blood can symbolize the void sucking the blood out of people.

Characteristics of the void:

The void is "utterly black." It means the absolute absence of everything good or joyful. The void is then explained to be violent, cruel and blatant. It is disowned by most people. But, it is nevertheless present. Disownment also suggests that the void is not liked or it is not something that can be enjoyed, by anybody. The use of words like 'us' and 'everyone else' suggests that nobody is free of this emptiness. The void is debased. It is often not given much attention to. It is totally self-absorbed i.e. it is full of itself, which again suggests its callous nature. The qualities that have been attributed to the void are similar to the qualities of the ones who have the void inside themselves.

"This void is utterly black,
Is barbaric, is naked,
Disowned, debased,
Completely self-absorbed."

Effect of Void on People:

The people who are being tormented by the void turn into cruel beings. They become naked or too vulnerable to all pain and evil. They become too sensitive. The void also makes them feel disowned and debased. Such people also become narcissistic and full of themselves, which implies that they turn into individuals, who least bother about other people's feelings and emotions.

Spreading Void:

The ones who have the void within them scatter it or spread it among the people who belong to their social network, with their furious words and quick-tempered deeds. The people who happen to meet them also recognize the void in the wounds imposed on themselves by the ones with the void. Those, who are hurt, in turn, let it develop or widen its influence by doing the same and thus rearing the children or the seeds of the void. Thus the gloominess or the seeds of emptiness is passed from one to another.

The Sturdy Nature of Void:

When they are first sown, the seeds of emptiness appear trivial or petty like children, but they are raised with fuel fire. Here, the spread of the void is done on a one-to-one level or at an individual level. The void is sturdy and lasting. This denotes its robust nature and that it cannot be easily done away with. It is a fertile soil to breed saws, daggers, and sickles. These objects conjure up another important characteristic of the void, i.e. the void strikes people of all caliber from people as strong as wood to those as frail like grass.

Void as a Post-modern Aspect:

G. M. Muktibodh says that it is because of this kind of destructive nature of the void, that there are dancing and jubilation on every side. In fact, this is true because people often try to disguise their grief within and project a great feeling of happiness and success to falsely, convince themselves and others that they are enjoying their lives. Thus, the void, in a way, becomes the cause of the celebration. This is the reaction that some people give, in response to the void inside. Here, the postmodernist's celebration of meaninglessness comes in.

“Everywhere
there are oversight
with the teeth of saws,
there are heavily armed mistakes;
the world looks at them
and walks on
rubbing its hands.”

Baldrick mentions that “the postmodernist greets the absurd or meaningless confusion of contemporary existence” (288). Celebrating, while hiding the void within, together becomes a trend and many others follow. Death or the void is now giving rise to brand new kinds of people. This can be a reference to the stimulation of weird behavior in individuals, as a result of the void. Everywhere there are people who bounce into failure, despite having tried to avoid it and on the other hand, there are folks who deliberately commit deadly blunders. People behave in the above-mentioned ways because they have been sawn by the teeth of the void.

MIRABAI – NO ONE KNOWS MY INVISIBLE LIFE

Text:

No one knows my invisible life.

Pain

and madness for Rama.

Our wedding bed is high up
in the gallows.
Meet him?
If the dark healer comes,
we'll negotiate the hurt.
I love the man who takes care
of cows. The cowherd.
Cowherd and dancer.
My eyes are drunk,
worn out from making love
with him. We are one.
I am now his dark colour.
People notice me, point fingers at me.
They see my desire,
since I'm walking about like a lunatic.
I'm wiped out, gone.
Yet no one knows I live with my prince,
the cowherd.
The palace can't contain me.
I leave it behind.
I couldn't care less about gossip
or my royal name.
I'll be with him
in all his gardens.

Introduction:

Meera, better known as Mirabai and venerated as Saint Meerabai was a 16th century Hindu mystic poet and devotee of Krishna. She is a celebrated Bhakti saint, particularly in the North Indian Hindu tradition. Mirabai was born into a Rathore Rajput royal family in Kudki (modern-day Pali district of Rajasthan) and spent her childhood in Merta. She is mentioned in *Bhaktamal*, confirming that she was widely known and a cherished figure in the Bhakti movement culture by about 1600 CE.

Most legends about Mirabai mention her fearless disregard for social and family conventions, her devotion to Krishna, her treating Krishna as her husband and being persecuted by her in-laws for her religious devotion. She has been the subject of numerous folk tales and hagiographic legends, which are inconsistent or widely different in details. Millions of devotional hymns in passionate praise of Krishna are attributed to Meerabai in the Indian tradition.

Meera unwillingly married Bhoj Raj, the crown prince of Mewar, in 1516. Her husband was wounded in one of the ongoing wars with the Delhi Sultanate in 1518, and he died of battle wounds in 1521. Both her father and father-in-law (Rana Sanga) died a few days after their defeat in the Battle of Khanwa against first Mughal Emperor Babur. After the death of her father-in-law Vikram Singh became the ruler of Mewar.

According to a popular legend, Meera's in-laws tried many times to assassinate her, such as sending Meera a glass of poison and telling her it was nectar or sending her a basket with a snake instead of flowers. According to the hagiographic legends, she was not harmed in either case, with the snake miraculously becoming a Krishna idol or a garland of flowers depending on the version. In another version of these legends, she is asked by Vikram Singh to go drown herself, which she tries but she finds herself floating on water. Other stories state that Mira Bai left the kingdom of Mewar and went on pilgrimages. In her last years, Meera lived in Dwarka or Vrindavan, where legends state she miraculously disappeared by merging into an idol of Krishna in 1547. It is widely acknowledged that Meera dedicated her life to Lord Krishna, composing songs of devotion.

Most of Meera's poems are dedicated to God in the form of Krishna calling him the Dark One or the Mountain Lifter. Some Meera songs include Radha, the lover of Krishna. All her poems have philosophical connotations. One of her most popular compositions remains "I have been given the richness of Lord's name blessing". She viewed herself as a learner at his feet, waiting for him to take her away as his true wife into a higher realm. Meera's poems are lyrical *padas* (metric verses) in Rajasthani language. They are short, spiritual songs, with simple rhythms and often with repeated lines.

Meera's Life of Pain and Madness:

"No one knows my invisible life" is a short poem of Meera, speaking out her love for Lord Krishna. The phrase 'invisible life' denotes the inner and hidden life that Meera has been living with Krishna. It is an imaginary abode in which both live a life of love. Such life is filled with pain and madness as far as Meera is concerned. This is a life of pain because Meera could never attain the physical and nuptial pleasures out of her union with Krishna. It is a life of madness because the real world will consider the passionate love of Meera to be sheer madness. In other words, Meera herself is mad after Lord Krishna.

Meera is conscious that her wedding with Krishna would never come true. In other's view, it is a criminal act as she is already married. That is why Meera says, "Our wedding bed is high up in the gallows". She has no chance to meet him in the day light. She is greatly hurt by the hidden side of hers that she has to maintain without the sight of others. Krishna appears in darkness and Meera gets a chance to heal her wound.

Meera expresses her passionate love for Lord Krishna. Instead of naming him, she mentions him as "The cowherd." It is because he takes care of cows. Krishna, by profession is a cowherd. Yet, he is a dancer. With all his merits, Meera has witnessed and enjoyed a life of love with him. At one stage, she feels one with Krishna. She describes the communion by identifying herself with his dark colour. She says,

"..... We are one.

I am now his dark colour."

Meera knows well how she will be noticed and criticized by the society around her. When she walks along in the midst of people, they give special attention to her behaviour.

According to them, she must be a lunatic. There is no more regard for her. So, Meera says, "I am gone."

Meera's Decision:

Meera becomes revolutionary. She is in a point to prioritize – the society or her secret lover Krishna. People think the unfulfilled desire of Meera has driven her mad. They do not know that she has been living with the cowherd. Now, she has to take important decisions. She is ready to give up her life in the palace as a princess. She does not want to be addressed as a princess, at all. She pays no heed to the gossips going around about her. Her stern decision is to live with Lord Krishna in his garden.

“The palace can't contain me.
I leave it behind.
I couldn't care less about gossip
or my royal name.
I'll be with him
in all his gardens.”

SUBRAMANIA BHARATHI – THERE IS NO FEAR

The people of this world, if against they stand,
There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear.

Although, we are counted cheap and rebuked,
There is no fear , there is no fear , nothing like fear.

If to beg for food, would be a life attained,
There is no fear , there is no fear, nothing like fear.

Loveable possessions if, are lost,
There is no fear , there is no fear , nothing like fear.

2. If clothed bosomed damsels, cast their eyes
There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear.

Poison in the mouth, if fed by friends
There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear.

Shielded armies, if to attack approach
There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear.

On the acme of my head, if the sky did crash and plummet down
There is no fear, there is no fear , nothing like fear.

Introduction:

Subramania Bharathiyar was a Tamil writer, poet, journalist, Indian independence activist, social reformer and polyglot. Popularly known as "Mahakavi Bharathi" ("Great Poet Bharathi"), he was a pioneer of modern Tamil poetry and is considered one of the greatest

Tamil literary figures of all time. His numerous works included fiery songs kindling patriotism during the Indian Independence movement. He fought for the emancipation of women, against child marriage, stood for reforming Brahminism and religion. He was also in solidarity with Dalits and Muslims. His influence on Tamil literature is phenomenal. He was prolific in his output. He covered political, social and spiritual themes.

Bharathi is considered one of the pioneers of modern Tamil literature. Bharathi used simple words and rhythms, unlike his previous century works in Tamil, which had complex vocabulary. He also employed novel ideas and techniques in his devotional poems.^[1] He used a metre called *Nondi Chindu* in most of his works, which was earlier used by Gopalakrishna Bharathiar.

When the Indian independence movement was oscillating between phases of vigour, dullness and momentum, Bharathi sang for political freedom and emancipation from social stagnation. Bharathi's poem "There is no Fear" is short but retains its poignancy. It is sure the poem will kindle the spirit of self-confidence, courage and positivity in the mind of the readers.

Fear is a feeling that something dangerous, painful or frightening might happen. When Bharathi wrote this short lyric, India was under the British rule and the struggle for freedom was in its peak. Bharathi felt the need to rouse the public from its dormant state. The poet's responsibility is to imbibe the feeling of patriotism and the courage to stand against the British rule.

When not to Fear:

Bharathi explains his stand as a courageous man. He quotes occasions when he will never be frightened. He says, even if the whole world stands against him and opposes him, he will not be frightened. The world quoted by Bharathi definitely refers to the Britishers, against whom the whole India should stand united, especially without fear.

"The people of this world, if against they stand,
There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear."

Bharathi quotes another occasion, when the heart of a man is filled with fear. When a man is underestimated or put in disgrace or being hurt, he has no mind to face the society around him. At such occasions, the man should wipe away all discouraging feelings and face the world boldly.

"Although, we are counted cheap and rebuked,
There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear."

Life takes its own twists and turns. It brings unexpected good as well as bad things in our life. We are happy to face any positive happening in our life. At the same time, if any unexpected negative things happen, we are ready to lose our heart. Bharathi goes to the extreme level to say that even if our life is lowered to the level begging for our food, we should not lose courage nor hope.

"If to beg for food, would be a life attained,
There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear."

During his earthly life, man considers material possessions as much more important than anything else. There are variety of possessions which are immaterial and short-lived. Bharathi

tries to change the mentality of man saying even if one loses his possessions, he should not be frightened.

“Loveable possessions if, are lost,

There is no fear , there is no fear , nothing like fear.”

Next, Bharathi speaks of the emotional disturbance, created in the heart of man by some women. The latter enchant the attention of men. At such moments of luring, man should retain the strength of his mind. He should not give place for temptations.

“If clothed bosomed damsels, cast their eyes

There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear.”

The greatest evil in the world is treachery or betrayal. We have strong faith and reliability in friendship. But such a friend, if by some reasons does an evil deed to us, we need not lose hope on friendship itself. A friend may pour poison into our mouth. Being aware or unaware of his misdeed, we need not be in fear.

“Poison in the mouth, if fed by friends

There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear.”

Bharathi's next advice is to face the huge war force with courage. When one stands alone armless and if he is confronted with an army, he need not be frightened. He should face the enemy boldly. His courage itself is enough to bring him victory.

“Shielded armies, if to attack approach

There is no fear, there is no fear, nothing like fear.”

Finally, Bharathi quotes an occasion when no human being can escape from the shackles of fear. He says the utmost danger will come to man when the sky breaks into pieces and falls on the head of man. He will be done with it. Even then, Bharathi advises amn nt to yield to fear.

“On the acme of my head, if the sky did crash and plummet down

There is no fear, there is no fear , nothing like fear.”

PROSE

THIRUKKURAL - THIRUVALLUVAR

Introduction:

Thiruvalluvar commonly known as Valluvar, was a celebrated Tamil poet and philosopher. He is best known as the author of the *Tirukkural*, a collection of couplets on ethics, political and economic matters, and love. The text is considered an exceptional and widely cherished work of Tamil literature.

The *Thirukkural* or shortly the *Kural*, meaning 'sacred verses' is a classic Tamil language text consisting of 1,330 short couplets, or kurals, of seven words each. The text is divided into three books with aphoristic teachings on virtue (*aram*), wealth (*porul*) and love (*inbam*), respectively. Being the greatest work in Tamil Literature, Thirukkural is known for its universality and secular nature. The traditional accounts describe it as the last work of the Third Sangam.

The Kural text is among the earliest systems of Indian epistemology and metaphysics. The Kural is traditionally praised with epithets and alternative titles, including "the Tamil

Veda" and "the Divine Book." Written on the foundations of *ahimsa*, it emphasizes non-violence and moral vegetarianism as virtues for an individual. In addition, it highlights truthfulness, self-restraint, gratitude, hospitality, kindness, goodness of wife, duty, giving, and so forth, besides covering a wide range of social and political topics such as king, ministers, taxes, justice, forts, war, greatness of army and soldier's honour, death sentence for the wicked, agriculture, education, abstinence from alcohol and intoxicants. It also includes chapters on friendship, love, sexual unions, and domestic life. The text effectively denounced previously held beliefs that were common during the Sangam era and permanently redefined the cultural values of the Tamil land.

The Power of Righteousness:

Man cannot possess greater source of happiness than being virtuous. Virtue will confer heaven and wealth to him. Virtuousness brings greater gain, whereas if a man is oblivious of the laws of virtue, his life will be inflicted with greater loss. There can be no greater source of good than the practice of virtue; there can be no greater source of evil than the forgetfulness of it. **Kural – 32** is:

“It yields distinction, yields prosperity; what gain
Greater than virtue can a living man obtain?”

When man involves himself in any work, he must do it in the ways of virtue. All his efforts must be focussed on it only. If it is so, wherever the doer is and whatever he does will come out well as it is done according to the standards of virtue. **Kural – 33** is:

“To finish virtue's work with ceaseless effort strive,
What way thou may'st, where'er thou see'st the work may.”

When man is ordained to do greater deeds, the first and foremost quality he needs is keeping his mind clean and clear without blemishes. Only then, the deeds done by him will speak out his greatness as a virtuous man. All the other ways and means followed by him will create meaningless and sluggish sounds. It is just a show of his pomp. He can never claim the real worth of his deed. **Kural – 34** is:

“Spotless be thou in mind! This only merits virtue's name;
All else, mere pomp of idle sound, no real worth can claim.”

Man should know what is virtue and what is not. When he walks along the way of life, his footsteps should not slide through with certain hideous attributes. Those are malice, desire, anger and bitter speech. Giving up these ugly qualities. Every activity of man will move him forward in the ordered and righteous path. **Kural – 35** is:

“'Tis virtue when, his footsteps sliding not through envy, wrath,
Lust, evil speech-these four, man onwards moves in ordered path.”

Man is perplexed when and how to start deeds of virtue. But the right time to do a good deed is the present and the right place is the present space where man is fixed. Virtue is not to be deferred for even one more day. At the time death, virtue is the only companion awaiting to be man's companion. **Kural – 36** is:

“Do deeds of virtue now.
Say not, 'To-morrow we'll be wise';”

While doing a deed, adhering to virtue, the doer need not think of the result of his deed. The fruitful outcome to be brought by such a virtuous deed needs no description. It is like the

bearer of the palanquin thinking of the comforts enjoyed by the rider inside the palanquin. Such a thinking will make the bearer more and more tiresome. **Kural – 37** is:

“Needs not in words to dwell on virtue's fruits: compare
The man in litter borne with them that toiling bear!”

Man should resolve his mind to do good deeds and actions every day. He should never while away the time in idleness. If time is spent by a man in waste, the outcome will be dangerous. His future way will be blocked by the idleness and the rest of his days will push him to yet more hard work. Ultimately, the result of his deeds will be worse. **Kural – 38** is:

“If no day passing idly, good to do each day you toil,
A stone it will be to block the way of future days of toil.”

Man should decide to do only virtuous deeds and activities every moment. He can attain pleasure, in the true sense of the word. All the other deeds of man will lack the glory of light and they will never yield true happiness. **Kural – 39** is:

“What from virtue floweth, yieldeth dear delight;
All else extern, is void of glory's light.”

On the whole, the question arises regarding virtue and vice. Man should comprehend the generalization done for his easy understanding. The deeds and activities that are to be done compulsorily by man are virtuous. The deeds and activities that are never to be done and shunned by man are vicious. **Kural – 40** is:

“'Virtue' sums the things that should be done;
'Vice' sums the things that man should shun.”

Gratitude:

It is an accepted truth that if one is in the receiving end from others, the receiver should always retain the policy to pay back whoever needs help. At the same time, while seeking the help of someone to shoulder and share our responsibilities, we should have rendered our service to them in one way or other earlier. Forgetting this, if we utilize the service of someone, without having ever done anything good to them, the rewards of heaven and earth will be lesser and poorly paid. **Kural – 101** is:

“Assistance given by those who ne'er received our aid,
Is debt by gift of heaven and earth but poorly paid.”

Helping others is a virtuous action. Yet, any help or assistance, which is done in time is a real gift to the receiver. Such a help may seem to be smaller but it has its own value. In its worth, it excels all other good deeds done on the earth by human beings. **Kural – 102** is:

“A timely benefit, -though thing of little worth,
The gift itself, -in excellence transcends the earth.”

While extending charity or help to others, the giver should not calculate what yield his good deed will bring to him as a reward. It goes without saying that the every act of charity is so good. Its merits are vaster than the sea. **Kural – 103** is:

“Kindness shown by those who weigh not what the return may be:
When you ponder right its merit, 'Tis vaster than the sea.”

The act of charity or help to others may seem to be small and insignificant to the giver. He may compare his activity to the size of a millet. But the receiver of the help will be amazed at

the help and consider it to be so big as a palm tree. So the help extended by one is never to be under-estimated and discarded. **Kural – 104** is:

“Each benefit to those of actions' fruit who rightly deem,
Though small as millet-seed, as palm-tree vast will seem.”

Any act of kindness, aid, help or kindly assistance is not to be measured by the weightage of the activity. The acts of kindness are to be measured by the goodness that it has brought in the life of the receiver. The act of the receiver will be simple to him but not to the receiver.

Kural – 105 is:

“The kindly aid's extent is of its worth no measure true;
Its worth is as the worth of him to whom the act you do.”

Gratitude is the greatest virtue. When a man receives the help of someone, he should always remember the deed and the giver for two reasons. The first one is, when he was in affliction, the giver came in his life and saved him from it. The second one, the receiver can extend his act of goodness by being thankful to the giver of the help. If any friend forsakes you at times of your need, it is good to give up the friendship of such persons. **Kural – 106** is:

“Kindness of men of stainless soul remember evermore!

Forsake thou never friends who were thy stay in sorrow sore!”

When a man is in sorrow and his eyes are filled with tears, a good friend will appear there and redeem him from the pitiful condition by extending his help. Among all the acts of charity, such a help by the good friend is the best. So, the receiver of the help should remember him in all his seven births in this world and even in life beyond the earth. **Kural – 107** is:

“Through all seven worlds, in seven-fold birth, remains in mem'ry of the wise.
Friendship of those who wiped on earth, The tears of sorrow from their eyes.”

The best advice that one should follow is on the act of remembering and forgetting. Man should never forget the good things and happenings in his life time. At the same time, he should be ready to forget all the bad happenings in his life on the day it happens itself. **Kural – 108** is:

“ 'Tis never good to let the thought of good things done thee pass away;
Of things not good, 'tis good to rid thy memory that very day.”

It is true any injury or hurt is deadly. But it is always good to wipe away the injury and the result of it at once by recollecting any one good deed done to us by the same person, who causes this injury. **Kural – 109** is:

“Efface straightway is deadliest injury,
By thought of one kind act in days gone by.”

The next definition is about who will meet the real destruction. Even a man who kills all goodness will not be punished. But, one who forgets the benefits that he enjoyed by seeking the help of others will definitely meet destruction. **Kural – 110** is:

“Who every good have killed, may yet destruction flee;
Who 'benefit' has killed, that man shall ne'er 'scape free!”

THE SNAKE AND THE MIRROR

- V. M. BASHIR

Introduction:

Vaikom Muhammad Basheer (1908-1994) was a Malayalam fiction writer. He was a humanist, freedom fighter, novelist and short story writer. He is known for his path-breaking, disarmingly down-to-earth style of writing that made him equally popular among literary critics as well as the common man. He is regarded as one of the most successful and outstanding writers of India. Basheer is fondly known as the 'Beyepore Sultan'. Basheer is known for his unconventional style of language. He was awarded with Padma Shri in 1982 for his overall contributions to the nation as a freedom fighter, writer, and as a political activist. An astute observer of human character, Vaikom Mohd Basheer skilfully combined humour and pathos in his works. Love, hunger and poverty are recurring themes in his works. "The Snake and the Mirror" presents a contrast between dreams and reality. This contrast has been depicted in a humorous manner.

The Poverty-stricken Life of the Doctor:

"The Snake and the Mirror" is a story about a doctor, who had only recently commenced his practice. His earnings were, therefore, meagre. The narrator lived in a small, poorly furnished rented room infested with rats. It was an outer room, its one wall facing the open yard. The room had two windows and its tiles were supported by gables that rested on the beam over the wall. There was no ceiling. The room was not electrified. Outside the room there was a veranda. The room was meagrely furnished; among the few pieces of furniture, there was his bed, a chair, a table with his medical books, usual accessories, a kerosene lamp and a mirror on it. The doctor had only sixty rupees in his bag. Apart from a few shirts and dhotis, he had one solitary black coat. The room was infested with rats. However, his dreams and ambitions were in contrast to this.

The Doctor's Self Admiration:

One hot summer night, the doctor had his meal at the restaurant and returned home. He lighted the kerosene lamp, took off his coat and shirt and opened the two windows. He settled on the chair and took out a medical book to read. There was a large mirror on the table on which stood a lamp. Since it was too hot to sleep, and he had nothing better to do, he sat down in front of the mirror, admiring himself, admiring his looks and smile and planning that he should do to look more presentable. He was a great admirer of beauty and he believed in making himself handsome. He also laid great emphasis on the fact that he was unmarried and a doctor. Pleased with his appearance, he decided to shave daily and grow a thin moustache to look more handsome. The manner in which he decided that this decision was an 'important' one, and his 'earth-shaking decision' to always keep smiling in order to look more handsome bring out the contrast between the kind of person he was and the kind of person he wanted to be and make the story humorous.

Planning for Future Marriage:

Gradually, his thoughts shifted from self- admiration to planning his future marriage. He wanted to marry a woman doctor who had plenty of money and a good medical practice because he did not have either. He wanted a fat wife so that whenever he made a mistake, he would run away and his wife would not be able to catch him.

The Snake Coiling around the Doctor:

The doctor was so engrossed in his daydream that he did not give much importance to the sudden silence. The rats had stopped scampering and there was a sound of something falling behind him. He brushed it aside, but even before he could turn around to have a look, a snake had slithered over the back of the chair and perched itself on his shoulder. The doctor was extremely frightened as the snake was only a few inches away from his face. Horrified, he sat turned to stone. The snake slithered along his shoulder and coiled around his left arm above the elbow. The doctor felt a crushing force on his arm.

Acceptance of True Worth:

Moments ago, the doctor who had been feeling so proud of his looks and his profession, was weak with fright. He thought of various medicines he had and if any was good enough to save him if the snake did bite him. In this moment of fear of death, he realized that he was but a mere human, a poor man, nothing to boast about. He felt the presence of God near him. In his imagination, he tried to write 'O God' in bright letters outside his heart. He felt pain in his left arm where the snake was coiled. He realized that if the snake struck him, he did not even have any medicines in his room for the same. That was when he thought that he was a poor, foolish, and stupid doctor. In this way, his thoughts changed from calling himself a handsome, unmarried doctor to calling himself a poor, foolish, and stupid doctor.

The moment he accepted his true worth, the Gods appeared pleased and the snake of its own free will left him and sat on the table in front of the mirror. The doctor got up silently and rushed out of the door. Next morning when he came back, all his belongings had been pilfered but for his dirty vest which was too dirty even for the thief.

The Title:

The Snake and the Mirror is a very apt title for this frightening tale presented in a very humorous manner. The story narrates a young doctor's encounter with a snake. The doctor is sitting on a chair, looking at himself in the mirror when a snake lands on his shoulder and coils itself around his left arm, its hood only three or four inches away from his face. The doctor sits turned to a stone, but reprieve comes when the snake turns its head, and looks into the mirror. It sees its reflection and is so enamoured with its image that it slithers across to the mirror, sparing the life of the narrator.

Thus, the story revolves round the snake and the mirror. The vain narrator, who has been at the centre of the narrative until the snake appears, turns into an unimportant spectator. It is the snake who is so enamoured of its own reflection that it spares his life. Had the snake not moved to the mirror, and had bitten him, he would have surely died for there was no medicine in his room for snake-bite.

Themes:

The humorous narrative is based on the theme of human vanity and fears and how they affect people. The young doctor is a homeopath, struggling with his poverty and a fledgling practice. However, he is vain about his looks and as he admires himself in the mirror, he thinks of ways in which he can look more handsome – by smiling more, or by growing a moustache. He also hopes to marry a fat woman doctor with a large practice and lead a happy life. The sudden arrival of a snake on the scene turns him to stone, but fate intervenes, when the snake, attracted by the mirror, decides to ignore him. The narrator takes this opportunity to make good his escape. The snake seems to be almost as vain as the doctor himself, and is

too busy gazing at itself in the mirror to bother about the escaping prey. An additional theme in the story is how crises make people turn to God for help.

Conclusion:

“The Snake and the Mirror” gives the message that faith in God and humility in thoughts are what make a person strong enough to face any adversity. The doctor in the story is cured of his arrogance after a close brush with death. He is young, arrogant, lull of himself, because he is unmarried and is a doctor. As he sits admiring himself, his only thought is of improving his looks. However, faced with death, he realizes the futility of worldly possessions as he prays to God as he feels “the great presence of the creator of this world and this universe.” He feels maybe he was being taught a lesson for his arrogance and his pride in his appearance. Thus, the lesson learnt by the narrator is the writer’s message – one should never be proud of one’s beauty, strength or achievements.

PREM CHAND – THE SHROUD

Introduction:

Munshi Premchand is one of the greatest Indian writers in Hindi and Urdu. He is best-known for his novels. He also wrote a few short stories, and among these is "The Shroud," published in 1935. ‘The Shroud’ is considered to be one of the best written short stories in India. It has been translated and reprinted many times. Telling the story of a poor man who collects money to pay for his deceased wife's funeral but spends the money on food and drink instead, "The Shroud" has been praised not only as one of Premchand's finest but also as one of the finest short stories in the history of modern Indian literature.

Written when Premchand was living in the city of Benares (Varanasi), "The Shroud" was published just a few months before the author's death, and displays the author's usual themes of village life and social realism. It also illustrates Premchand's persistent critiques of poverty and inequality in the Hindu social and religious system.

“The Shroud” deals with themes like caustic satire, the gritty reality, and the harshness of life of the lower caste cobblers in India and especially their women. ‘The Shroud’ is an ironic title because the dead woman whose name was Budhiya did not get a shroud for herself even in death. Even the dignity of death could not pierce the stony heart of her aged father-in-law Ghisu, and her husband, Madhav. Premchand, in this realistic story, has focused on two aspects vital to the workings of an Indian village in pre-independence India - the abuse of women in India and the sexism rampant in the country and the poverty.

The Cruel and Heartless Men:

The short story takes place in an unnamed village in India. From the beginning, the setting of "The Shroud" is bleak. Ghisu and Madhav were not only lazy but also ungrateful louts. They lived their lives without bothering about their responsibilities. It was as if they did not even have a properly functioning conscience. Poverty and their low caste status made them so hardhearted that they never cared for anyone but themselves. They were extremely poor. They had hardly anything in their home. All they had to eat were potatoes that they steal from someone else’s field. Both father and son were lazy. Even though there were jobs

in the village, they refused to work. For the past year, they had only eaten due to Budhiya's hard work grinding grain. Yet, even as she was dying in childbirth, Ghisu and Madhav refused to go check on her. When Ghisu told his son to go check on Budhiya, Madhav replied that he was afraid to do so. But in reality, he was only afraid that his Ghisu would finish eating all the potatoes while he was gone. In this way, the narrator presents them as cruel and heartless.

Ghisu recalls a feast he attended twenty years ago. The occasion was the wedding procession of a landowner. Ghisu said that he has never eaten that kind of food or had such a full stomach since. He praises the generosity of the landowner, who kept serving his guests as much food as they wanted without limit. Madhav expresses the wish that someone would offer them such a feast now. But Ghisu says that such a feast would never happen nowadays, since everyone is worried about "economy." They would prefer to save money rather than spend it on weddings and religious ceremonies.

When they finish eating, Ghisu and Madhav cover themselves and curl up to sleep by the fire.

The narrator remarks that Madhav and Ghisu's careless, selfish, and cold mentality "was no cause for surprise" in "[a] society in which those who labored night and day were not in much better shape than these two; a society in which compared to the peasants, those who knew how to exploit the peasants' weaknesses were much better off."

Pathetic Death of Budhiya:

Budhiya was dying during childbirth. Though she had done her best, Ghisu and Madhav, they made no move to call a doctor to save her life. By not calling a doctor or wet nurse to attend to Budhiya, they became her murderers when she died after a painful night. Despite the closely-knit village they lived in, no one came to see why there was so much shrieking and screaming going on in Ghisu's hut. They were fed up with the lazy ways of Ghisu and Madhav and wanted nothing to do with them. They were cruel as well as negligent of the fact that no one was attending to the wailing Budhiya. Thereby, they were murderers, because they were 'deaf' to her screaming for help during the birth of her child. Poverty had hardened them so much that they were not bothered that there was a commotion in Ghisu's home. They did not want to get mixed up in Ghisu and Madhav's affairs as they were always hard up. Their carelessness led to Budhiya's death. However, no one felt that they were at fault.

The Pretending Ghisu and Madhav:

Ghisu and Madhav cried crocodile tears and lied that they had sat by Budhiya's side all night while, in reality, they were fast asleep as she died. They had no medicines to give her, and that was why she died. Although the villagers did nothing to help the shrieking Budhiya in life, they congregated around the hut once she was dead. Their main concern was to make sure she got a proper cremation. Women of the village who did not stir from their homes while Budhiya wailed her lungs out, cried over her dead body.

Feast instead of Shroud:

Ghisu and Madhav borrowed the five rupees from the villagers intending to buy a shroud for Budhiya to cover her dead body, a sacred custom in Hindu society in India. However, instead of quickly buying the shroud for Budhiya, they shop for it as if they were shopping for a woman's wedding saree. They made excuses for not liking the plain white cloths presented to them, and at the end of it, they gave in to their stomachs and base instincts

and spent the money on food and alcohol. They spent the entire day and night drinking and eating without even caring that the money they were spending was for a deceased woman's shroud. The desire for food and drink was their primary motive in getting the money in the first place. They knew they would get a lot of money from the fickle-minded pretentious villagers out of sympathy for their dead Budhiya. They only wanted the money to satisfy their desire for a feast. They eat a lavish feast. They screamed and toasted the dead Budhiya's soul, as, in her name, they had managed to get such a royal feast. They gifted the remaining puris to a beggar and intoxicated make their way home. They told the beggar to bless Budhiya, who was dead. They praised her verbally and brazenly many times.

The Paradoxical End:

It is Madhav who suddenly, in the midst of his revelling, feels a slight prick in conscience. He wonders what answer would he give his dutiful wife when he would enter eternity. She was sure to ask him why, despite being her husband, he did not even give her a shroud. Ghisu, the sixty-year-old experienced lout, declares to the spirit dampened Madhav that the villagers are so superstitious where a dead body is concerned that they will again contribute a few rupees to buy a shroud. Though this satisfies Madhav's good-as-dead conscience, he often brings it up, which irritates Ghisu. These two individuals, Ghisu and his son Madhav are showing a mirror of the paradox of Indian village society who ignore the living but have a lot of respect for the dead. Premchand declares towards the end that more than Budhiya, it seemed that everyone in the story was truly dead because their respect for humanity was dead, and their priorities were not where they should be. Ghisu and Madhav fall in a heap due to their drunken state. So too falls the opinion of people concerning the village life of pre-independence India.

GOLD FROM THE GRAVE - ANNA BHAU SATHE

Introduction:

Tukaram Bhaurao Sathe, popularly known as Annabhau Sathe, was born in the Dalit community (Matang) on 1 August 1920 in Wategaon village in the Sangli district of Maharashtra. Poverty and caste discrimination stopped him from getting any formal education and forced his family to move to Mumbai in 1931, where he worked in various jobs such as porter, shoe polisher and daily wage labourer, before finally ending up as a mill worker. While working in the textile mill, he got attracted to the Communist ideology. 'Gold from the Grave' is a story about the hardships of a construction worker named Bhima. This story is based in the early part of the twentieth century in Mumbai which was then known as Bombay.

The Jobless Bhima:

Bhima had left his village to come to work in the bustling city of Mumbai. He found a job at a nearby quarry as a construction worker. But when the place shut down, Bhima was left without a job. He becomes so desperate for money to fill the stomachs of his wife and little girl Narbada Bhima. He is so hard-pressed for money. Sathe writes, "Mumbai had everything, except work and shelter."

Grave robbing:

Grave robbing is a stealthy theft, very much abhorred by the Indian society. Bhima starts grave robbing. This is a very unusual type of grave robbing. He steals gold rings, earrings, bracelets, anklets, coins, and even the gold teeth from the dead remains of a person. This includes people who are buried or cremated sloppily. When one sees the ardent manner in which Bhima seeks out the gold in the dead, one realizes that he is slowly losing his sanity as well as his morals.

Even in a bustling urban city like Mumbai, Bhima couldn't manage to secure a job for himself. One can easily see the immense disparity between the rich and poor in this story. Even in twenty-first-century Mumbai, the huge disparity between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' remains. It seems as if the rich are 'dead' to the poor whether they are alive or dead.

Bhima Justifies his Job:

On the other hand, Bhima feels that he is doing nothing wrong by robbing from the dead. He even makes a statement that it is only the rich who should live and the rich who should die, because when they die, they leave behind gold which can be of great use to a poor man. He dresses almost like a 'Grim Reaper', his weapon to break the bones or open up the mouths of the dead being a pointed crowbar. He is a strong person. He can break bones and wrists of the dead to extract even the melted or molten gold from the bones of the dead.

Bhima dresses in the Satara Maharashtra fashion and it is said in the story by Sathe that: '... yet fiery features had struck fear into many a ruffian.'

Even when his wife begs him to leave such a disreputable and terrible way of earning a living Bhima tells her to stay quiet on the subject.

Bhima's Fight with the Jackals:

The jackals in the story is quite a dangerous area to deal with. The jackals could be symbolized as the underbelly of the city of Mumbai which normally consists of the people doing menial jobs: the ragpickers, beggars, etc. They always work together in a group, that is their strong point and they are a united community. Bhima is almost at war with these jackals who have always had a raw deal when it comes to their fundamental rights in India. Bhima fights with them with his crowbar. He kills one jackal, but the others bite him terribly. They are ruthless because this is their turf, and Bhima has no right to trample down what they consider as their food.

Bhima Losing his Fingers:

At the end of the story, the terrible incident happens. In reckless desperation, Bhima has to get his two fingers amputated. Bhima is at work getting gold from the mouth of a powerful but dead moneylender. The mouth clamps shut on his fingers to such a terrible extent that his two fingers got festered, and torn and finally have to be amputated. The dead moneylender's teeth clamping on Bhima's fingers was a symbol of the eternal tyranny of the 'haves' over the 'have nots' especially those who are indebted to a moneylender.

The Sad End:

The story ends sadly, with a moral. If only Bhima had not been so desperate and had waited a while longer, the quarry would have eventually opened again, which it did. But alas! Bhima wouldn't be able to work in the quarry due to the amputation of his two fingers, the two fingers he lost while trying to rob the dead.

THE STENCH OF KEROSENE - AMRITA PRITAM

Introduction:

Eminent Panjabi writer Amrita Pritam began her career as early in her life as when she was only sixteen years old. Her unconventional views provoked her readers into thinking critically about the contemporary society of India, and the Indian fraternity gave immediate recognition to her seminal collection of poems *Sunehra (Messages)* which was published in 1955. That made her the first woman recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1956. Her short story "The Stench of Kerosene" presents her radical abolition of a traditional Indian prejudice about womanhood.

Guleri at Lakarmandi.:

Guleri is an unsophisticated girl with a few simple delights. She has got married and settled down with her husband Manak in Lakarmandi. Amrita Pritam portrays her ingenuous character through her uncomplicated ways of finding solutions to her day-to-day problems and her plain childlike ambitions in life.

"Whenever Guleri was homesick she would take her husband Manak and go up to this point[from where] She would see the homes of Chamba twinkling in the sunlight and would come back with her heart aglow with pride."

Guleri is not so happy at Manak's house due to her in-laws but draws inspiration from the sight of her parents' village Chamba to sustain her hope for life. She is indeed satisfied with her husband's concern and care and enjoys his company in her struggle to make up her mind to continue her life at Lakarmandi.

Invitation for Champa from Parents:

The story begins with Guleri's warm, open, and innocent but emotional welcome to the mare, which appears at the onset of the story to take her to her parents' village Chamba for the harvest festival, as an annual feature.

This festival is very important in her life as it gives her the opportunity to meet "two of her friends married to boys outside Chamba"; to talk "about their experiences, their joys and sorrows"; to walk "about the streets together"; and to enjoy wearing "new dresses," "dupattas dyed, starched and sprinkled with mica," and "glass bangles and silver ear-rings." All these activities in her agenda for the harvest festival represent some innocent childhood delights. In anticipation of an invitation from her father to this festive occasion, she continues to attend to her daily chores in her husband's home, but her heart is in her parents' home. "Guleri always counted the days to the harvest." Her excitement is implied in her pleasure over the invitation and her reactions to the ones who brought it to her. "She caressed the mare joyfully, greeted her father's servant Natu, and made ready to leave next day."

Manak's Reaction to the Invitation:

Guleri makes a humble demand to her husband to attend the Chamba festival with him as usual. To all her pleading and coaxing Manak's response is silence. However, he manages later to utter a few words to the childishly stubborn Guleri, "Just this time," "My mother..." But Guleri does not try at all to understand these words he utters with difficulty or the "strange anguished wail of sound" he blows with his flute. Finally, he begs her, "Guleri, do not go away," ... "I ask you again, do not go this time."

Guleri's is innocent enough and so she is not capable of thinking analytically about her in-laws even after seven years of her married life in their company. Unconscious of the

gravity of her failure to have a child of her own and her in-laws' displeasure over it, she takes for granted Manak's behaviour on the occasion of her departure. Manak's reaction to the situation implies his consciousness of what Guleri's destiny would be after her departure for Chamba. "Her husband pulled at his hookah and closed his eyes." This is a culturally and psychologically representative gesture any man would make at a time like this. Manak makes another unusual gesture by giving away to Guleri his flute to take with her. But even that does not stir Guleri's curiosity and alarm her about the on-coming danger or the problem Manak has about her departure.

Manak and his Mother's Plan:

Manak is technically an independent person married and settled down. Yet Manak does not have any self-esteem, dignity, independence, or individuality in the company of his parents because Manak's mother seems to be a dominant character in the family. This is clear in the way in which she treats Manak after Guleri's departure. When Manak enters the house after seeing Guleri off, she speaks to him like a small boy still needing parental attention and still depending on parental support. "You have been away a long time. Did you go all the way to Chamba?" He is so scared of his mother that he does not reveal to Guleri the impending threat to their marriage. In fact Manak knows the plan his mother has already made to bring in a new wife for him during Guleri's annual sojourn in Chamba this year and does not want Guleri to make room for it by leaving Lakarmandi. His inability to tolerate this situation is expressed in his closed eyes but Guleri does not follow it.

Guleri's failure to bear a child even after seven years of marriage to her son disappoints Manak's mother and makes her devise a plan to get rid of her. So cunning and hypocritical, she pats Guleri's head and blesses her when she is to leave for the harvest festival, pretending that she still respects the latter as her daughter-in-law. In Guleri's absence she organises for Manak to marry another woman, implementing her secret resolve, "I will not let it go beyond the eighth year." Manak does not have his own individuality and has to act according to his mother.

Guleri's Death and Manak's Guilty Conscience:

Manak suffers after his second marriage forced upon him by his mother. He becomes guilty-conscious under the circumstance of betraying his beloved Guleri. Bhavani, a travelling businessman provokes Manak into thinking, imagining, and suffering. Bhavani, mentions about going to Chamba and on hearing it, Manak is tortured. Bhavani's words pierced through Manak's heart like a needle. The following day Manak tries to avoid Bhavani but the latter invites himself to Manak's compound and announces the news about Guleri's death. The announcement reaches Manak as a vertical attack on his mind. When Guleri heard of Manak's second marriage, she soaked her clothes in kerosene and set fire to them. Manak, mute with pain, could only stare and feel his own life burning out. Life expires from Manak in the same fashion as from Guleri. He burns in the same fire that consumed Guleri. From Manak's reactions to Guleri's death it is understood that he genuinely loves Guleri but his chief defect is his lack of resistance to the traditions of his clan, and especially to his dominant mother.

Manak's Destiny in his Second Marriage

Wounded deeply in his heart Manak leads a life of a dead man. His second wife complains about his

indifference to her. Manak's mother pacifies her daughter-in-law. Her success at conceiving a child pleases Manak's mother but not him. The dream of having a grandson that Manak's mother has had for quite a number of years materialises when Manak's new wife delivers a boy. Proud of her achievement, she puts the boy in Manak's lap, "bathed" and "dressed in fine clothes", presuming that Manak would be extremely happy about it. Nevertheless, Manak reacts to this in a totally different way: "He stared a long time uncomprehending, his face as usual, expressionless. Then suddenly the blank eyes filled with horror, and Manak began to scream. "Take him away!" he shriek ed hysterically, "Take him away! He stinks of kerosene." The newborn appears as a parasite of his beloved Guleri's and opens his long-sustained psychological wounds. The "kerosene" smell it emanates reminds Manak of the terrible death of Guleri. The story ends with the implication that Manak would not be a happy man for the rest of his life though his mother feels proud of his progeny.

SAKUNTALA - KALIDASA

Drama as a distinct genre of Sanskrit literature emerges in the final centuries BC, influenced partly by Vedic mythology. It reaches its peak between the 4th and 7th centuries before declining together with Sanskrit literature as a whole. Famous Sanskrit dramatists include Śhudraka, Bhasa, Asvaghosa and Kālidāsa. One of the earliest known Sanskrit plays is the *Mrichakatika*, thought to have been composed by Śhudraka in the 2nd century BC. The *Natya Shastra* is a keystone work in Sanskrit literature on the subject of stagecraft.

Kālidāsa qualified easily as the greatest poet and playwright in Sanskrit. He deals primarily with famous Hindu legends and themes; three famous plays by Kālidāsa are *Vikrama and Urvashi*, *Malavika and Agnimitra* and the play that he is most known for: *The Recognition of Shakuntala*. It is a well-known Sanskrit play by Kālidāsa, dramatizing the story of Shakuntala told in the epic *Mahabharata*. It is considered to be the best of Kālidāsa's works. Its date is uncertain, but Kālidāsa is often placed in the period between the 1st century BCE and 4th century CE. Kalidasa wrote in a mixture of both classical *Sanskrit* - spoken by the royals, courtly figures, upper caste figures and *Prakrit*, consisting of different types of vernaculars - spoken by the commonpeople including women and children.

The title of the play *Abhijnana Shakuntala* can be translated as *The Recognition of Shakuntala*. The play is an extension of an episode from the *Mahabharata*. Kalidasa's prowess as an exemplary dramatist can be seen in way he has lent complexity to the characters - to *Shakuntala* and *Duhsanta*. He adds innovative elements such as the curse and the ring to enhance love as well as, making *Duhsanta*'s character more appealing to the audience. The ultimate union of the hero and the heroine does not occur in the royal Palace of the King but in the heavenly hermitage of *Marica* and *Aditi*, years after the birth of their son. Thus, his retelling of *Shakuntala* is significantly different from its original source.

Story:

The heroine of this play is Sakuntala. She is a daughter of the nymph Menak and the sage Visvamitra, but is raised by her foster father, the ascetic Ksyapa, in his hermitage. She grows up as an innocent young Lady who lives in close contact with nature. In spite of her

simple garments and austere lifestyle, she is extremely beautiful. The names of her two young female companions are Anasüy and Priyamvad. The female ascetic who is in charge of her welfare during the absence of her foster father, and who accompanies her to the court later on, is called Gautami.

During a hunting party in the forest where the hermitage is located, the king of Hastinapura, named Dusyanta, meets her and is absolutely infatuated with her. The locals provide him with a good excuse to hang on for a while in the vicinity of the hermitage (they need his protection) and he coaxes Sakuntal, whose resistance is soon broken, into a Gandharva marriage (an impulsive, non-arranged love marriage). He gives her a ring as a token of his love and returns to the city with the promise that he will soon send for her.

In the meantime, love-smitten as she is, Sakuntalä forsakes to properly welcome the ascetic Durvasa who fumingly curses her, the curse being that her husband will instantaneously forget about the wedding. Thanks to the pleas of one of her female companions, the sage somehow modifies his curse: The king will recognize her when she shows a recognition sign. Since the king's ring is in Sakuntala 's possession, her friends are not in the least worried about this rather sinister event, and even decide to let the case rest.

As the king fails to come and pick up his bride (who turns out to be pregnant), her foster father sends her to the court with a small delegation of his confidants - the ascetics Sradvata, Srngarava and Gautami. As foretold by the sage Durvsas, the king does not recognize her and thinks she is an impostor. The only thing that could have triggered his memory, i.e. the ring, got lost during the journey. Even though the king rejects her, the hermits decide to leave her behind at the court. Her mother, a nymph, however, takes pity on her and takes her to heaven where she gives birth to a son.

Meanwhile the ring has been found by a fishmonger in the belly of a fish and the king is painfully confronted with his erroneous judgement. Consumed by remorse he searches for her, but all his efforts are in vain. Finally, during a sky-ride, (he has defeated some demons for Indra) he runs into a little boy who turns out to be his son. The king and Sakuntal are reunited and the sage Marica explains the curse of Durväsas.

Detailed Summary:

Prologue:

The play opens with a benediction or a prayer to Lord Shiva.

That first creator of the Creator

.....

That which is proclaimed the Universal Womb of Seeds:

That which fills all forms that breathewith the Breath of Life.

May the supreme Lord of the Universe

who stands revealed in these eights Forms*perceptible preserve you.

*The eight forms are in order: Water, Fire, The Priest, Sun and Moon, Space,Earth, Air)

This invocation follows the Epic tradition and seeks blessing and inspiration fromthe divine, thereby sanctifying the play. The Sutradhar/Narrator/ Director, then,addresses the Actress/wife, introducing in the progress of the dialogue the playbeing performed for the audience. The Narrator/ Director deftly moves to presenting the Hero/Nayank of the play- King Duhsanta- as the latter

arrives on stage in full hunting regalia chasing a fleet of antelope.

Act I: The Chase

Act 1 takes place in the forest on the foothills of the Himalayas and moves to the hermitage of the great sage *Kanva*, by the river *Malini*. The King *Duhsanta* appears, followed by his Charioteer, in hot pursuit of a deer, specifically a Blackbuck, which is a sacred animal. *Duhsanta* is stopped in his hunt by an ascetic who reminds him of his duty

This deer is of the Hermitage, O King! He should not be killed...no...no...do not strike him down.

How fragile the life of this deer!

How cruel your sharp-pointed arrows, swift-winged!

Never should the tender frame like tongues of flame on a heap of flowers.

Quickly withdraw your well-aimed arrow, bound to protect the distressed, not strike the pure. (p. 173)

Furthermore, *Duhsanta* has entered the sacred Hermitage, where such slaughter is sacrilegious. At the ascetics urging, *Duhsanta* decides to go to the Hermitage of *Kanva*, to pay his respect as well as enjoy the hospitality offered there. As they near the Hermitage, *Duhsanta* takes off his royal ornaments and weapons, as it seems unfit for such a spiritual space. On entering he sees three women watering plants and one of them is *Shakuntala* whose extraordinary beauty immediately captivates *Duhsanta*. He hides behind some trees to further observe the trio and finally reveals himself to them. The women welcome a disguised *Duhsanta* into their midst, where he learns that *Shakuntala* is the adopted daughter of the sage *Kanva*. She is in fact the daughter of the *Apsara*/celestial nymph, *Menaka* and the seer *Visvamisra*. *Duhsanta*'s questions lead him to figuring out her *Kshatriya* origin, which makes *Shakuntala* a suitable bride for him. Before *Duhsanta* can learn of *Shakuntala*'s feelings for him, they hear the news of how the arrival of *Duhsanta*'s hunting party has frightened an elephant and that the elephant is now wreaking havoc in the forest. As the party splits, *Shakuntala* realises that she has fallen in love with *Duhsanta*, and the two depart with longing for the other in their hearts.

Act II: Concealment of the Telling

Act II takes place in the forest and introduces *Madhavya*, the Court Jester, and a close friend of *Duhsanta*, who complains about the physical pains he is undergoing because of following *Duhsanta* on his hunting expeditions. *Duhsanta* is presented as suffering from lovesickness, and describes *Shakuntala* to *Madhavya* in sensual terms. He then asks *Madhavya* to help him gain entry into the hermitage on some pretext or the other. Characteristic of a jester, *Madhavya* is quick to respond in a witty manner and tells *Duhsanta* that as the King, he can rightfully enter the hermitage to demand the royal tax owed to him by the ascetics. Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of two ascetics who request *Duhsanta* to protect their sacred rites from demons bent on disturbing them. *Duhsanta* readily agrees as it complements his desire to visit the Hermitage without arousing any suspicion. However, his joy is cut short by the arrival of *Karabhaka* with a message from the Queen Mother asking for his immediate return to *Hastinapur*. Torn between his duty towards the ascetics and his mother, *Duhsanta* finally decides to go to the hermitage and sends *Madhavya* in his stead to *Hastinapur*. *Duhsanta*, however, is careful to mask his interest in *Shakuntala* and tells *Madhavya* that his interest in her was just "a whim" (197).

Act III: Love's Fruition

This Act continues in the forest and opens with a Prelude which functions to inform the audience of events that have occurred off stage. Here the audience is told of *Duhsanta's* success at thwarting the demons and how *Shakuntala* is suffering from a 'heat stroke' making her feel hot and feverish. *Shakuntala* is actually shown to be suffering from lovesickness, unable to keep *Duhsanta* out of her thoughts, she longs for his company. Her two companions, *Priyamvada* and *Anasuya* try to soothe her. *Duhsanta* presently arrives at the bower where the three women are resting and on hearing *Shakuntala* confess her love for him, reveals himself to them. *Shakuntala's* companions leave the two lovers alone and in the process *Duhsanta* tries to woo *Shakuntala*. However, their love play is interrupted by the arrival of *Gautami*, the Matron of the Hermitage, and the lovers separate. A despondent *Duhsanta* is called to fight the demons tormenting the ascetics.

Act IV: Shakuntala's Departure

The scene is still the forest and much has happened in the meantime. The Prelude in this Act reveals that *Shakuntala* and *Duhsanta* have married according to the *Gandharva* rites. *Duhsanta* has since then left for *Hastinapur*. While *Shakuntala's* companions discuss *Duhsanta's* dedication to her, the great sage *Durvasa Rishi* arrives at the Hermitage. *Shakuntala*, distracted by the thoughts of *Duhsanta*, does not attend to the great sage.

Durvasa Rishi, known for his temper, immediately curses her saying:

... you shall be lost in his thoughts:

though you goad his memory hard

he shall fail to remember you,

(215)

As *Durvasa Rishi* storms off, *Anasuya* attempts to plead with the sage and manages to extract a reprieve wherein, at the presentation of a token of recognition, the curse will be lifted. The companions are reassured at this because *Duhsanta* had given a ring to *Shakuntala* as a token of his love and so believe that the curse will be broken without much harm. The Prelude ends with both the companions deciding to spare *Shakuntala* from the knowledge of the curse.

Worried for *Shakuntala*, *Anasuya* begins to question *Duhsanta's* actions and wonders how to inform *Kanva* of his daughter's marriage and pregnancy. The resolution arrives in the form of a spiritual voice that announces the union of *Shakuntala* and *Duhsanta* to the great sage. *Kanva* is overjoyed at this and decides to send *Shakuntala* to *Duhsanta's* court with a few ascetic escorts. *Shakuntala's* departure from the Hermitage is poignantly described. Everyone is filled with sorrow seeing her leave even the plants and animals forsake their natural routines and grieve her absence from the holy Grove. As *Shakuntala* bids farewell to her home and embraces her family and friends for the last time, *Kanva* instructs her on her duty to the King and others at the palace. The finality of *Shakuntala's* separation from the world of the Hermitage is established through *Kanva's* words where he says that she can only return after fulfilling her duties as wife and mother, in the final years of her life with her husband.

Act V: The Repudiation of Shakuntala

The Prelude takes place in *Duhsanta's* Royal Palace and begins with the Chamberlain praising the King's hard work in maintaining peace and prosperity in the kingdom and his exemplary behavior in all things concerned with the welfare of the state and his subjects.

Shakuntala and her entourage appear at the Royal Palace and wait for an audience with *Duhsanta*. One of the ascetics, *Sarngarava*, relays *Kanva*'s message and asks him to accept *Shakuntala* as his wife. *Duhsanta*, under the influence of the curse does not remember *Shakuntala* and refuses to acknowledge her as his wife. *Shakuntala* tries to prove her claim by presenting the token of recognition but realises instead that she has lost it. *Duhsanta* casts doubts on *Shakuntala*'s virtuosity and honesty and tells the accompanying ascetics to take her back with them. The ascetics, however, refuse to take her back, saying that if she is lying then she will be a stain on *Kanva*'s honour and therefore, cannot be allowed to go back and, if she is indeed speaking the truth then she must be with her husband, even if it means living in servitude to him. *Shakuntala* is thus, left stranded and alone with no one by her side and she cries for Mother Earth/ *Dharti Mata* to open up and swallow her whole. Note, three important issues here: a) women's position in society; b) the notion of honour; c) the similarity between this particular episode and a similar scene from another famous epic. Women were positioned in the safe keeping of their father or the husband as it is clear from the various references in the text. Secondly, if a woman were not married conventionally as is the case with *Shakuntala* and the husband refused to acknowledge her then she would be a stain on the honour of the father. Thirdly, *Sita* in the *Ramayana* is faced with a similar situation when a washer man/ *dhobi* casts aspersions on her chastity on her return from *Lanka*. Finally the King's High Priest comes up with a solution to let her remain in the King's palace till she gives birth and should the child she bear be the son prophesied (King *Bharata*) to *Duhsanta*, then *Shakuntala* may be accepted as his lawful wife and take her rightful place by his side. No sooner do the ascetics, High Priest, and *Shakuntala* leave that the High Priest rushes back to *Duhsanta* and tells him how as *Shakuntala* wept, a bright light in the form of a woman from the *Apsara Pool* came and took *Shakuntala* with her. *Duhsanta* dismisses the whole affair and yet he feels a strange sensation of missing something and a "poignant ache" (243) in his heart that seems to validate *Shakuntala*'s claim.

Act VI: Separation from *Shakuntala*

The Prelude informs us about a fisherman who has been found with the lost royal ring (originally given to *Shakuntala*). The guards/ soldiers/ law enforcers accuse him of stealing the ring, but he claims to have found it in the stomach of a fish he caught. The fisherman's innocence is proven once *Duhsanta* sees the ring, and rewards the man for finding it. *Duhsanta* then remembers *Shakuntala*, their marriage, and his promise to bring her to his palace. He is ashamed of his behavior and cannot figure out why his memory lapsed at that particular moment. He is distraught about how he repudiated *Shakuntala* and the cruel ways in which he doubted her. His sorrow at having lost his beloved is so severe that he orders the cancellation of the celebration of the Spring Festival. *Duhsanta* tries to recreate his first encounter with *Shakuntala* by painting it and conversing with the painting. *Madhavya* laments how the king has become so despondent that he has lost all vitality. Meanwhile, *Misrakesi*, a friend of *Shakuntala*'s mother *Menaka*, quietly observes *Duhsanta*'s behavior. Finding his remorse genuine, she goes back to the *Apsara Pool* to report her findings to *Shakuntala*. Even as *Duhsanta* is wracked with remorse, he deals with matters of the state and is approached with the problem of solving the inheritance rights of a rich merchant who dies without a legal heir. The merchant's wealth is set to be appropriated by the royal treasury but *Duhsanta* asks for the wealth to be given to one of the merchant's pregnant wife, thereby

ensuring that the child to be born is not left penniless.

Act VII - *Shakuntala's Prosperity*

This Act occurs in the realm of the celestial beings and then moves to the Hermitage of *Marica/Prajapati* and *Aditi* (*Indra's* father and mother). After defeating the demons, *Duhsanta* and *Matali* are on their way back to earth when *Duhsanta* sees the holy Hermitage of sage *Marica* and expresses his desire to seek his blessings. At the Hermitage, *Matali* requests an audience with *Marica* and in the ensuing wait *Duhsanta* comes across a young boy playing with a lion's cub and playfully tormenting his caretakers. He notices the mark prophesied that was meant to be on his son, on the young boy and begins to yearn for a child. In the course of the conversation with the caretakers, *Duhsanta* realises that the boy might indeed be his son and after picking up the boy's magical amulet that only his parents or *Marica* could touch, it cements *Duhsanta's* belief of being the father. *Shakuntala* appears at the news of a stranger's arrival and at first is unable to recognise *Duhsanta*. In a touch of irony, it is *Duhsanta* now who asks to be recognised as the boy's father. *Duhsanta* explains his loss of memory and how he regained it at the sight of the ring and a happy *Shakuntala* accepts his explanation. The reunited family goes to *Marica* to seek his blessings where *Marica* reveals the truth about *Durvasa Rishi's* curse. *Duhsanta* is relieved at this revelation and is absolved of his cruel behavior. *Kanva* is also informed of the events and the family leaves for earth from the celestial realm. The play ends here. In the next sections we will take a look at the critical themes that the play deals with.

Themes in the Play:

Abhijnana Shakuntala deals with many themes, such as love, memory, concealment, duty versus desire, courtly world versus the hermitage etc.

The Theme of Love

Abhijnana Shakuntala is a heroic drama of a romantic nature. The *rasa* invoked here is *srngara* or love and according to the *Sanskritic* dramatic order, love poetry consists of *sambhoga*, love in union and *vipralambha*, love in separation. In the play, **Kalidasa** first creates a temporary union of the protagonists, King *Duhsanta*, the hero or *nayaka* and *Shakuntala*, the heroine or *nayaki*, as the play narrates the burgeoning and consummation of their love. It is then followed by separation caused by the loss of memory and the token ring due to the curse. The play ends with the reunion of not only *Shakuntala* and *Duhsanta* but also of their son *Bharata*.

The initial courting and marriage takes place in the forest of the Hermitage, where the King had come to hunt. It's a world that is an intrinsic part of *Shakuntala's* character; even the plants and animals are her kin. *Duhsanta* has thus entered her world. The interruption of this love happens when *Duhsanta* leaves this world to go back to the Royal Palace, where his duties as a king await. When *Shakuntala* goes to claim her right to be by his side at his Court, the device of the curse delays that union and both the ascetic companions and *Duhsanta* desert her. Their final union happens around six years later in the celestial realm on a heavenly mountain in the Hermitage of *Marica* and *Aditi*. In portraying the development of their love in such a way *Kalidasa* highlights the differences between the world of the Hermitage and the world of the Royal Court. Paradoxically, it is in the world of the Hermitage, a place for austerities and meditation that *Shakuntala* and *Duhsanta* find love and it is the Royal Court,

a place ideal for the intrigues of love that their separation occurs.

Shakuntala born and bred in the innocent and pure world of nature puts her faith in words rather than objects thus, consenting to a Gandharva marriage. This form of marriage does not require the consent of the parents/elders and is primarily foregrounded on the desires of the lovers. However, this love cannot disrupt the established caste hierarchy and therefore, we see how Duhsanta pursues Shakuntala once he ascertains her Kshatriya varna. Duhsanta represents the world outside the secluded and protected Hermitage, which is filled with deceit and cunning. In this world, Shakuntala's word is not sufficient but needs tangible proof to be validated, in the form of the ring, in front of everyone in the Royal Court. The contrasting nature of their worlds necessitates that their union occurs in a different world altogether, moreover specifically after Duhsanta becomes a more considerate and compassionate man.

Kalidasa seems to bring in an element of sadness in the prologue and some might even say unnecessary delaying of their union. Kalidasa shows us the intoxicating nature of passion and love and how it might lead to a neglect of one's duty/*dharma*. For *Shakuntala* that results in the curse which leads to her repudiation. This curse can only be broken on the presentation of a token of recognition, which is the royal signet ring.

Kalidasa's depiction of love is thus nuanced and complicated and does not shy away from making his audience ask uncomfortable questions regarding it.

The Theme of Concealment

The theme of concealment becomes evident in Act 1 itself when Duhsanta takes off his royal garments and weapons on entering the Hermitage of Kanva. Even though he undertakes this action as a sign of respect for the sacred space, it allows him to take off the mask of a king and conceal his real identity. He introduces himself to Shakuntala as a court official out inspecting the penance grooves. This deception makes space for a much more relaxed interaction between Duhsanta and Shakuntala and her companions, without the strict rules of engagement mandated for royals. Literally throwing off the mantle of his kingship, Duhsanta presents himself as a man first and Shakuntala is attracted to this noble court official at first. When Duhsanta comes again to woo her, he can no longer hide his true identity as he is performing his kingly duty of protecting the Hermitage from demons.

The second act of concealment occurs in Act II when Duhsanta is urgently called by his mother to the Royal Palace. He is torn between his duty towards his mother and his kingdom, and his desire to see Shakuntala again. The dilemma is solved when the ascetics' request his help. As he sends Madhavya in his stead to the capital city, he tells Madhavya that he is staying back to do his duty towards these ascetics and not out of his desire for Shakuntala. He further tells his friend to consider all he said about Shakuntala as a fun. Duhsanta therefore, conceals his true feelings for Shakuntala as well as his reason for staying back at the Hermitage. This concealment creates a sense of foreboding in the play as it allows their marriage to be a secret from everyone outside the Hermitage and therefore, there are no witnesses who can support Shakuntala when she comes to the Royal Court.

The next concealment takes place in Act III when a lovesick Shakuntala writes a love letter to Duhsanta. The problem, however, is its delivery since Duhsanta is busy protecting the ascetics in their ritual. It is Priyamvada who devises a plan to disguise the letter with other offerings for the ritual, thus allowing her to give it to Duhsanta. Duhsanta's timely

appearance saves them from actualising the plan. This event again points to the incongruity of love's actualisation in the hermitage, where such actions don't sit well with a holy space established on abstinence and austerity.

In the same act we see one of the most important scenes of concealment. Shakuntala is so disheartened and distracted by the thoughts of Duhsanta that she unknowingly angers the sage Durvasa Rishi, who then curses her. She also fails to register the curse and is oblivious of it. It is her companions who hear the curse and on receiving the reprieve from the sage decide not to inform Shakuntala about the curse. Thus, it is their concealment of the truth of the curse that leads her to arrive at Duhsanta's court unaware of the reason why he no longer remembers her.

The final concealment occurs in Act VI, where Misrakesi hides herself to observe the repenting king. She observes how deeply Duhsanta regrets not just his rejection of Shakuntala but also the loss of the son who could have continued the Puru clan. Even as Misrakesi feels sad for both the suffering lovers, she does not intervene because the gods have a plan for Duhsanta and have devised their reunion in accordance to Indra's wishes.. The reunion only occurs according to the plans of the gods. Even the curse and the subsequent loss of memory cannot be controlled by either of the two, as both are unaware of it. This makes the audience aware of the ambiguous and complex nature of Fate.

Throughout the play, we see how the King is forced to choose between the two worlds and must sacrifice or neglect one for the other. Similarly Shakuntala too must sever her contact with the hermitage if she is to be accepted into the courtly world. Her return can only be realised once she reaches the third stage of her life, i.e, vanaprastha, where both she and the king will give up and retire from the worldly life.

DRAMA

MOHAN RAKESH – HALFWAY HOUSE

Mohan Rakesh is renowned as one of the brains behind the 'Nai Kahani' (New Short Story) literary movement of Hindi literature in the 1950s. Besides drama, Rakesh made noteworthy contribution to other forms of literature like novels, travelogues, memoirs and criticism. However, he is best remembered as a master playwright. In 1959 he was awarded the I prize of the Sangeet Natak Academi for his first play .

Apart from his full length plays, Rakesh wrote some one act plays and a number of radio plays. His life span was very short . When he died he was only 48 years old. Yet the popularity of his works has remained intact. His plays, especially his Magnum Opus *Halfway House* has withstood the changing time. It is still relevant and continues to be staged by well known theatre groups across India . The undiminishing popularity of the play is perhaps due to the incisive depiction of real life human issues like the husband-wife relationship.

The play *Halfway House* displays the crumbling relationship between Savitri and Mahendranath and its impact on their children. They have spent 22 years of married life but are utterly unhappy. They have three children: Binny, Ashok and Kinny. Their unsuccessful marriage has a strong impact on the lives of their children too. The elder daughter Binny is not happy with her husband Manoj. Ashok, an unemployed young man does not have any enthusiasm for getting a job. Kinny , the younger daughter is totally insolent. Instead of a unit

of love and care, their family appears to be a materialistic unit without any concern for one another.

The root cause of the disintegration of the family is nothing else but the discord between Savitri and Mahendranath. A careful study of the play suggests that both are responsible for their disturbed married life. When the play begins, we are introduced to a harried mother of three children and an exasperated wife of an unemployed husband, Savitri who seems to be exhausted to the bone as she has to juggle with her household chore and her profession. Her vexation can be felt in the very first dialogue, when she finds her house in a mess after returning from her work place. Being the only bread winner of the family, she manages everything. No one is there to extend a helping hand especially her husband Mahendranath who whiles away the time idly without doing anything. As Savitri says:

“Idle all day but he can’t look after his clothes...or even clear the table! Everything is left to me to do.”

Mahendranath could not handle his business and screwed that up. He and his friend Juneja cofounded a factory by investing equal amount of money. However, Juneja became successful as if fortune favoured him but not Mahendranath. Savitri says: Both you and Juneja invested equal amount of money. there was one factory. Yet, fate favoured him not you ? From Savitri’s dialogue it is evident that Mahendranath is neither successful in his profession nor in his personal life. The onus of handling everything has been shifted over to Savitri.

Critic R.L.Nigam has reprehended Mahendranath in his essay, as per him , “The family has been held together for so long by the unaided labours of the lady of the house ,Savitri, wedded to a husband who is apparently a stupendous nincompoop”. It is only Savitri but not Mahendranath who tries her level best to find an employment for their unemployed son Ashok. For this purpose when Savitri invites her Boss Singhanian , Mahendranath shows his displeasure. He doesn’t like Savitri’s association with other men. From this it is easy to discern that Mahendranath is under the influence of patriarchal culture. Though he is unable to find an employment for himself he can’t easily accept the reversal of roles. Perhaps because of this mentality he hesitates to help his wife in doing house hold work. He has always tried to be assertive and dominative in the house.in the words of Savitri : “He wants to change the way I walk, the way I talk, the way I ...” That same Mahendranath who smiles meekly among his friends , becomes a fiend when he comes home.

Through the character of Savitri, the playwright Mohan Rakesh has articulated the plight of all working women who unleash themselves from the shackles of domesticity, toil a lot to manage everything perfectly but don’t get a little love and support from their husbands. In some cases , they even become the victims of domestic violence, as it has happened in case od Savitri. The readers get shocked when Binny informs Juneja that Savitri had to bear physical torture from Mahendranath. Binny says to Juneja:

“You can’t even imagine what it was like ...Daddy’s rages when he tore Mama’s clothes to shreds..when he gagged her and beat her up behind closed doors.. dragging her by the hair to WC...”

Savitri arouses compassion for her in the hearts of the readers due to her sufferings and mental anguish. She could have shunned this restrictive relationship and lived a happy life of her own but continued to live with Mahendranath for twenty two years. If

she got emotional support from her husband she would not have tried to get that from other men. Mahendranath could have changed their bitter relationship to a sweet one by accepting Savitri heartily and providing her the sought after love and support rather than being an unsupportive and nagging husband. Savitri enjoys the empathy of the readers until Juneja , a sagacious character of the play puts forth his assessments on Savitri, Mahendranath and their relationship. Juneja's words like ,

“He never slept a wink last night ”, “Still I say he loves her”, “He would have come back”, “...without giving a thought to his blood pressure”, create soft corner for Mahendranath. Juneja confides that Savitri never accepted Mahendranath with sincere feelings. Before 20 years also Mahendranath was worthless and contemptible for her.

Juneja divulges that once Savitri had gone to meet with him and cried on his shoulder for a long time by telling that Mahendranath was a wimp and spineless person. Savitri can't contradict Juneja when he asserts that she has never accepted Mahendranath from the core of her heart. Savitri can't prove him wrong when he says : What you wanted from me at the time , I'm not quite sure but it was obvious even then that you didn't consider Mahendra to be the man with whom you could spend your life.

According to Juneja Savitri's inclination towards other men like himself, Shivjeet, Jagmohan and others is because they are not Mahendra . The root cause is her aversion and repulsion for her husband. Savitri appears to be an extremely ambitious lady with an insatiable desire in the following words of Juneja :

“...the meaning of life to you is how many different things you can have and enjoy at the same time. One man alone could never have given them to you, so no matter whom you married, you would always have felt as empty and as restless as you today... “

Critic Pratibha Agrawal has mentioned in her essay that Juneja is the strongest character in the play who through his pointed arguments made it clear that Savitri is equally responsible for their corrosive relationship. She says:

“The fault lies not only with Mahendranath or with their circumstances. Savitri herself is responsible for much of what has happened and she is forced to admit this”.

Critic Girish Rastogi also has the similar opinion. According to him whatever Juneja tells seems genuine and plausible. His arguments are so forcible that Savitri has to concede. he says that Savitri has no answer to any of Juneja's pointed questions. She seems to us to be either false, or attempting to protect herself, or silent and asking meaningless questions. Juneja advocates in favour of his good friend Mahendranath and urges Savitri to support him in his helpless situation. He even tells that Mahendranath's distress and enervation are the result of Savitri's constant castigation and bickerings. As living with Savitri is the only way left for Mahendranath , Savitri ought to accept him. Juneja tells Savitri:

“.....And haven't you done everything to ensure that , if nothing else , you should at least be able to hold this wretched pawn in your hand ?”

But Savitri remains obstinate and tells him :

“.....I have absolutely no need for this pawn as you say, this man who neither moves ahead himself nor permits anyone else to do so !”

But the unwanted Mahendranath returns home in the end of the play as Savitri had returned earlier after leaving house to live a life of her own with Jagmohan.

In the words of critic R.L.Nigam,

“Mahendranath who too had left this time apparently not to return , also stumbles in , unable to keep himself away from her whom he loves, perhaps in spite of himself”. Mahendranath’s return in the end despite his indisposition evokes pity for him in the hearts of the readers making them feel that Savitri could have avoided their marital dissension by accepting her husband leading to their peaceful coexistence.

The play begins in tension and the tension persists till the end of the play. The return of Savitri and Mahendranath is indicative of the continuation of bickerings and unpleasant confrontations. Both of them have never tried to understand each other.

According to critic Girish Rastogi , “ We get the impression that the two do not know each other properly, and caught in misunderstandings, they quarrel constantly as if this were their fate. During one of the rituals of Hindu Marriage “Saptapadi ” , the newly wed couple take seven vows to lead their lives together sharing joys and sorrows But this married couple has never been together. Critic R.L.Nigam mentions in his essay , “ A situation which needs to be faced jointly by both is regarded from the very beginning in terms of man vs woman, husband vs wife. The consequence is that neither learns anything from experience and, therefore, can only repeat the unhappy experience. It seems as if both of them have got bogged down in a mire and there is no effort from either of them to escape.

The story of Savitri and Mahendranath is not constricted to a particular family , we can easily find a lot of such couples ,at loggerheads with each other in the contemporary society. Though the characters of the play bear names , they are mentioned as The First Man, The Second Man, The Third Man, The Fourth Man, The Boy, The Woman, The Older Girl, The Younger Girl etc. Perhaps this technique was adopted by the playwright in order to emphasize the similitude rather than individuality. He wanted to send out a message that it is not the story of a particular family but the story of all. The play has a universal appeal and timeless relevance. In the words of critic Sanjay Kumar, “ ...the themes and tropes of the play place it in universalist idiom. It seeks to say that what it says is true for all time and everywhere”. Moreover, delineation of Savitri and Mahendranath along with their follies and foibles has added verisimilitude, sending out a message to the married couples who are going through the same ordeal that instead of being involved in blame games and ceaseless conflicts , they should be more accepting and amenable . They should try to refrain from conflicts as much as possible and survive with equanimity. Every happy and successful married life transpires the virtues as it’s direct quid pro quo in respect of mutual acceptance, trust and belief leading to lasting harmony. Nobel laureate and one of the great visionaries of the world Leo Tolstoy has rightly said: “What counts in making a happy marriage is not so much how compatible you are , but how you deal with incompatibility.

FICTION

BAMA – SANGATI

Introduction:

Bama (born 1958), also known as Bama Faustina Soosairaj, is a Tamil Dalit feminist, committed teacher and novelist. She rose to fame with her autobiographical novel *Karukku* (1992), which chronicles the joys and sorrows experienced by Dalit Christian women in Tamil Nadu. She subsequently wrote two more novels, *Sangati* (1994) and *Vanmam* (2002)

along with two collections of short stories: *Kusumbukkaran* (1996) and *Oru Tattvum Erumaiyum* (2003). In addition to this she has written twenty short stories.

The novel *Sangati* (Events) deals with several generations of women. The older women belong to narrators narrating the grandmothers' generation, VelliammaKizhavi's generation and downward generation. If a woman belongs to Dalit community, she has to suffer in two ways. The first being a woman and second is belonging to the lowest community. Bama's *Sangati* is a unique Dalit feminist narrative carrying autobiographical elements of the whole community. It focuses the double oppression of females. The novel has several individual stories, anecdotes and memories that portray the events taking place in the life of women in Paraiyar community in Tamilnadu. Women are presented in *Sangati* as daily wage earners. They earn less than men do. However, the money earned by men, can spend as they please whereas women have to bear the financial burden of running the family. Women are also regular victim to sexual harassment and abused in the place of work. In this novel Marriamma tells a lot about the sexual assault faced by her and her community women and their inability to stand up against it. The physical violence is realistically portrayed in this novel like lynching, whipping and canning by fathers, husbands and brothers.

The Velliyamma Dynasty:

Velliyamma is Bama's grandmother. It is believed that Velliyamma's husband Goyindan deserted Velliyamma and went to Sri Lanka as a tea plant labourer, who never turned back. In the famine of 1940s, Velliyamma sold her mangal sutra and managed her family and two daughters. She is the first revolutionary woman of traditional India Bama ever met. She made Bama's mother Sevathi (Sebasthiamma) educated up to Fifth Class and first daughter was married off without education. The Christian schools also gave education to converted dalits. Velliyamma respected her daughters a lot. She is not like other women in her locality. Fortunately, Sebasthiamma reached primary education. Similarly, Sebasthiamma gave education to Bama upto B.Sc., (Maths), and B.Ed., at St.Mary's College, Thuthukkudi.

The Plight of Women:

The women were denied education and as soon as girls attain puberty, they were married off. Bama's aunt Samundrakani was beaten and killed by her husband. Her three daughters Mariamma, Annamma and Seyakkodi were left uneducated. Here, Mariamma's life is emphasized in half of the novel. Velliyamma took Mariamma to the nearest hospital for the treatment of the delayed puberty. Bama asks her grandmother to accompany to the town. Since Bama is at puberty stage, she was left at home. Similarly, her father never took them to any places. Women worked in farm lands even during the last months of pregnancy. Sebasthiamma did the same and breast feeding to baby is very short. At least after five days, the mother has to work in the farm of the child birth.

Mariamma, as usual, returned after collecting firewood. After tedious walk, she unloaded the firewood and went to the Kumarasamy Ayya's pump-set to drink water. Mercilessly, Kumarasami dragged her inside and tried to molest her. Mariamma fortunately escaped from him. Her village mates who came on the way found the assault and took Mariamma home. Kumarasamy Ayya spread the scandal that Mariamma has an illegal relation with Manikam. In the Panchayat, the headman ordered Mariamma to prostrate before the village gathering. As a symbol of resistance, she never agreed. Susaiamma questioned the headman for punishment only to woman and also not bringing the eyewitness to the enquiry.

The headman said “if we bring the upper caste people to the Panchayat, who will give us job in the farm?”. Finally, Mariamma prostrated. She was fined two hundred rupees and Manikam was fined hundred rupees. Bama observed these events as child and burst into anger, “The position of women is both pitiful and humiliation, really.” (35).

Thaayi was a fair skinned woman. She was unwillingly married off to a man but she was beaten by her husband every day. He believed that Thaayi is a prostitute as she was more beautiful than others in the locality. Bama’s mother says that “it’s as if you become a slave from the very day you are married. That’s why all the men scold their wives and keep them under control” (43). Rakkamma is a vibrant woman and her husband Pakkiaraj beats her. He called her as a whore. She did all sort of activities to escape from her husband. Bama’s neighbour Kaaliamma fought and won her husband Chinnapan. She is also voice of voiceless. Her husband took the saving amount of Kaaliamma for drinking alcohol. Yet she never left him freely.

Maikkanni (Seyarani) is eleven years old and fair but not healthy. Her father deserted the family. Maikkanni, as a driving force, worked in match factories and farm lands to manage family. In the factory, she was beaten for throwing away two labels. As a child labourer, she also suffered and assaulted by co-child workers.

Bama learnt from her grandmother that in the late 1940s there was terrible famine. These poor people ate grass – seeds. Bama’s mother was married off at this crisis period and there is also M.K. Gandhi’s assassination 1948. People dig out ant-hills to find stored food grains.

Pecchiamma is from Chakkili sub-caste. She is a class-mate of Bama but she is dropped out of her studies at fifth standard itself. She got married to fellow caste man. Due to domestic violence by her husband, she left her husband and married another man. She got two children from both husbands. Bama says men are “devil” (96) in this regard.

Vellaiamma, Sebasthiamma, Mariamma, Susaiamma, Arokkyam, Rakkamma, Kalliamma, Maikkani, Bhakkiyam and Rendupalli are revolutionary women. Their consciousness of ignorance and marginalization burns in the heart of Bama. Samundrakani (Periamma), Thaayi and Pecchiamma are victims of various means of marginalization. By observing these facts in her community, Bama is still hopeful and that both boys and girls should be given freedom equally in order to establish equality and justice. And the saying will come true that “... Women can make and women can break” (123).

Bama says in *Sangati* “we must be strong. We must show by our own resolute lives that we believe ardently in our independence. I told myself that we must never allow our minds to be worn out, damaged, and broken in the belief that this is our fate, just as we work hard so long as there is strength in our bodies, so too, we must strengthen our hearts and minds in order to survive.”

G. KALYAN RAO – UNTOUCHABLE SPRING

Introduction:

Mr. G. Kalyan Rao, the author of *Untouchable Spring* is a contemporary writer and a Dalit convert Christian. He believes in the revolutionary ideology and armed struggle of

leftists to propagate and promote the need for social, economical, and political share of Dalits on par with upper castes. *Untouchable Spring* is an English translation of Telugu literary work “Antarani Vasantam” published in the year 2000. It is significant for its critique of literary historiography. Kalyan Rao claimed that, he has ‘written out his life’ and also expressed the hope that ‘those who have read it found their lives in it.’ Therefore, the novel is to be seen as an autobiography of the author.

In *The Untouchable Spring*, the author talks about the grim state of Dalits (Untouchables) in India. Dalits, as he pointed out, are born artists - —Art was in their veins’, in their blood ,in the depths of their hearts, in their very sweat. Set in the Telugu, Dalit community, the novel discusses the lives of a Dalit family through five, different generations. It talks about the struggles, horrors and atrocities the community faces on a daily basis. At the end, Rao also brings forward the theme of emancipation.

In male canonical literature, often the agency of the women is portrayed from the point of view of a man. The novel, *Clarissa* by Samuel Richardson is often accused of this as it stereotypes women, their desires and journeys. *Untouchable Spring*, however, stands out in its portrayal of women. The women in the text do not fall prey to stereotypes and instead are independent, self-willed and equal to the men in the novel. Their agency is not lost on the male writer.

Yellanna's Sign:

Reuben’s father Yellanna sang songs and danced. Yellanna was born like everyone. “Oh, you upper caste people! I, an untouchable, am walking on your pure, regal paths. Move aside. Move aside”. He announced his birth like anyone else. Like each one’s birth touching one father’s heart, his too, touched his father’s heart. ‘A male’, he shouted out to the caste elder. He filled with caste elder’s stomach with toddy and felt elated. They named the child after his grandfather’s name. Yellanna did not write songs he knew no alphabet. “All he had was a feeling heart, a sharable experience, tear-shedding eyes, swelling nerve, a turbulent blood-stream... that was it, the song would weave itself.” They called him singing ‘Yelladu, dancing Yelladu’ but his father’s sister Boodevi called him Yellanna. Yellanna was a great artist. Reuben was born in a great artist’s family. When Yellanna sings the moving tune that combined untouchability and hunger would be heard.

The Yerra gollalu Festival:

When *Yerra gollalu* came to the ooru there was excitement all over because they would put up street plays for ten to fifteen days in a row. Boodevi was crazy for *Chenchu Natakam* she would go to play taking her nephew along. Karanams and Kapus would sit close to the performers. Behind them, people from the washerman, barber and potter castes would sit. The malas would sit on the mala mound. The madigas would sit on the madiga mound. Those two groups would be far away from the arena. Sitting like that they would not be visible to the village elders and the elders of the other caste. The play would not begin till the Karanams and Kapus arrived. After they arrived they would praise him on skies. Then the *sutradhara* would begin the performance.

Yellanna’s Wish:

Yellanna told his aunty that he cannot see the play she would get up and lift him and if the Karanams and Kapus see her standing that would be in trouble. But she dare to stand

for her nephew because of the play he would sacrifice his sleep. He asked his aunty whether he could near the yerra gollalubut she refused. In spite of her refusal Yellanna went near the performing stage and he stood and after sometime he found some people staring at him. When they came to know he was from *mala* they started attacking him. They pelted stones on him.

Yellanna with Urumula Naganna:

Yellanna jumped into the water and reached the shore and only then he knew that there was no waist cloth he started walking on the path. There he saw a crowd and he entered into it. The people were singing, dancing and applying vermilion all over the body. Yellanna too applied vermilion oil, danced and shouted. Urumula Naganna saw Yellanna and mistook him for nude Siva. Yellanna told him he was a mala from Yennela Dinni. Then he collapsed to the floor. When he woke up he he was in Pakkela Dinni.

Yellanna was sleeping but Urumula Naganna was not able to sleep. Yellanna's arrival seemed to have caused some turmoil in him. It was three days since Naganna came to Pakkela Dinni. Urumula dancers were leaving but Naganna stayed to collect money. He did not know what to do with Yellanna. He gave him dress and food and he asked him about his past. Yellanna narrated the whole story with tears.

Naganna's Past Days:

The place where those who belonged to the four castes lived was *ooru*. The place where malas lived – *malapalli*, where the madigas lived- *madigapalli* and all these parts put together formed Yennela Dinni.

Dharamaram Urumula Naganna was famous not only in Anantapuram but also in the coastal areas. It was Urumula Chandrappa who had taught Naganna the nuances of playing the Urumulu. He told him the secrets of puranas. Naganna had a special place in Ruth's memories the same intensity of rage Reuben experienced when he spoke about Yellanna. In reality Chandrappa is like Sinnabba father's younger brother. But when he was about to die he told Naga to call him Appa and he shouted at him calling Appa and he passed away smiling. The left out money of the Chandrappa was distributed among the troop and he formed a new troop and he gained a name as Rayalaseema. As soon as he heard that Yellanna was *mala* and he was from Yennela Dinni he remembered the hurt that the past has inflicted.

Naganna has been born in Yennela Dinni. His father was Narigadu and mother was Latchimi. He tells about the days he spent with his mother and father in Yennela Dinni. Naganna's childhood was spent among the palm trees by eating the kernel and drinking the palm juice and in the shade of tamma groves of Yennela Dinni. Yellanna said he was Yerrenkadu's son and nephew to Boodevi. When Yerrenkadu was a small boy at that time even Boodevi was not born. Yerrenkadu's father was working as a watchman at the elder karanam's mango grove. It was a kind of bonded labour.

Heavy rain and Malas and Madigas on the Mound:

Once, there was heavy rain and continuous storm in the place. The malas and madigas would almost be covered by water. People gathered and talked about going to mound where upper caste people lived. The father took Naganna on his hip and mother placed the basket on her hand. The people started following him. For the first time in the Yellena

Dinni, the malas and madigas were walking amidst houses of uppercaste, on their paths, in the middle of the ooru, crossing the lanes of the temple. They were on top of the mound at higher level than upper caste. They had confidence that they will not die.

Naganna's father Bringing Rice:

In the morning it appeared as if *malapalli* and *madigapalli* were washed away. With the minimum things they carried, they cooked and ate. The water wiped out malapalli and madigapalli. That day no one had food to eat it was getting dark. Naganna's father was missing and in the night the four people came on the heads with bags full of rice. They broke the sahuakar's shop and took away the rice. They started cooking the rice and they ate greedily. The people spoke "They tell us not to live on heights. The stream tells us not to live on low-lying areas. If we come to the top, they'll kill us. If we are in the lower areas, the stream will kill us. No matter what, death is inescapable. But ... listen...listen to our words. We aren't born only to die." Naganna could not sleep he was awake listening to the conversations of the elders.

Death of Naganna's Father:

The next day it was normal. Nothing happened but in the evening the people carried a corpse and it was the death of his father. People cried aloud and they knew who was behind the murder. A month after father's death it became necessary to bid farewell to Yennela Dinni. When he was leaving Yennela Dinni he cried a lot. He felt uneasy leaving father, palm trees, ridges of the rice field, crabs running, tumms grove and everything else. He felt as if his childhood came to an end in Yennela Dinni.

The Unfortunate Life of Naganna:

Then he came to know Urumula Chandrappa and they drove in the cart and got down in Dharmaram. It was the birth place of Chandrappa. They stayed there. Naganna grew and got married to Ramulu. After his marriage his mother died. Ramulu was pregnant and Chandrappa said that if it was a baby girl he would name it as Latchmi and if it was a boy he would name it as Naraiah. Unfortunately Chandrappa died and unable to deliver, Ramulu also died.

From then Naganna started performing for Gangamma's songs with vermilion dance. He lost everyone in his life. When he saw Yellanna he felt like telling Yellanna the *Puranic* secrets. Naganna asked Yellanna to come to Dharmaram to learn Urumu.. Yellanna said that his aunt would be crying for him. Naganna used to think his dance was only to worship Ganga and only to please Siva. He entered Yennela Dinni with Yellanna after many years. When he left he went with his mother and now he came back as a companion to Yellanna.

Yellanna's Marriage with Subhdra:

Pittodu brought up Yellanna in a different way. Yellanna got married to Subhdra. When Sulochannamma saw her, she said "She looks like the Karanam daughter and praised the girl's colour, hair and dress." Pittodu gave three rupees and six anas as bride price. Subhdra did not come in the way of Yellanna. She got pregnant and delivered a male baby. Naganna named it as Sivaiah.

The Trouble by Karanams and Kapus:

Naganna and Yellanna started enacting the puranas in the stage. Naganna taught all the

things which Chandrappa had taught him. It took three months for him and the other artist to learn the dance and drama and one day they started to enact on the stage. Enacting in the stage gave them fame. The problem arose in a different way one day. The performance started even before the arrival of the Karanams and Kapus. Naganna and Yellanna appeared like big criminals. When Atchi reddy's father-in-law came to visit his daughter he heard the happenings. He said after listening to everything "If it were me, I would kill those two bastards". When he knew that there was a performance in his place Dibbalamitta, he sent word to a man of what must be done. Bukki reddy sent word to the mala and madigas elders the day before the performance. He told that "if Atelladu's performance took place in Dibbalamitta both the palles would be reduced to ashes." (80) If they want to perform they should not call the pedda mala and the pedda madinga the way the karanams and kapus were called. Naganna found it strange and felt that the life was taking him on a different direction.

No more Mound – Cultivable Land:

Naganna convened a meeting with Polayi and Mataiah's nephew Musalaiah. All gathered and they planned to make the mala mound cultivable as the karanams used the land for bonded labour. People started clearing the land of the mala. Only after the third day the elders in the ooru arranged the meeting. Naganna came forward to tell that it was he who did it and he thought to tell it to Karanam when the work was over. This time the Karanam found many differences in the way the people talked. The malas and madigas made the malas mound cultivable. They shared the piece of land with each other. They ought to remember Narigadu and Mataiah. Their sacrifice, courage, the blood they shed and the history continued like that. The karanam did not consider much for the mala's land but it irritated him.

Death of Naganna:

The day for the performance in Dibbalamitta was nearing. Naganna felt why should he perform in the ooru. The day of the performance came and it was a dilemma whether to address the gathering or to perform. Yellanna thought not to perform would be the best way to save self-respect. It was a great defeat to Naganna. He never spoke a word. In the night he sang the song and Yellanna was with him. After sometime he told that he felt sleepy and he closed the eyes and died. Life was full of inexplicable agony, dryness, a loss that could not be filled. Yellanna became completely sage-like and dumb. The relationship between the society and himself was weakening. He sang about the story of Naganna. Everyone around cried he said "One brave man died a heroic death. Another brave man repaid the debt of blood of that brave man. There was land behind both these people. There was self-respect." Yellanna left the village and he had no intention to come back. He roamed around and sang song which ever village he went he went first to malapalli and madingapalli and in every song he remembered Subhadra.

OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR SECTION - A

UNIT - I

1. In which language was *Panchatantra* originally written? (Sanskrit)
2. Where did the *Panchatantra* tales originate from? (The Rig-Veda and the Upanishads)
3. Which Sanskrit word denotes “A book of wise conduct in life”? (Nitishastra)
4. Who warned the birds about the danger by the hunter? (Laghupatanaka)
5. Who was the king of the doves? (Chitragreeva)
6. Whose help was sought by Chitragreeva to escape from the net? (Hiranyaka)
7. What is Hachiko? (A Japanese Akita dog)
8. Who was the owner of Hachiko? (Dr. Ueno)
9. Where was Hachiko waiting for his master? (At the train station)
10. How many years have passed after the death of Hachiko’s master? (Nive years)
11. Who became friendly with Hachiko? (Kentaro)
12. How had Dr. Ueno named Hachiko? (Timidity)
13. Name the festival in Rajasthan, occurring two days after Diwali? (Bhai Dooj)
14. What is glorified in “Brother’s Day”? (Love between brother and sister)
15. What do the brothers gift their sisters on the day of Bhai Dooj? (New clothes)
16. What does the mother prepare for her daughter as a gift? (a long skirt and a wrap)
17. Who threatened the brother on his way? (Animate and inanimate objects)
18. What denotes the danger awaiting the brother? (A broken thread)
19. Where does the story “A Handful of Nuts” set? (In Dehradun)
20. Who are referred as ‘nuts’ in “A Handful of Nuts”? (Ruskin Bond and his friends)
21. Who is Sitaram? (Son of a washerman)
22. Name the friends of Bond, referred as ‘nuts’? (Matheson, Jai Shankar & Suresh Mathur)
23. What are the two inseparable aspects in the life of the ‘nuts’? (Vagrancy and infatuation)
24. What is the nature of Maharani of Magador? (Seductive)
25. Why does everyone hate Rahim Khan? (For his harsh and cruel behaviour)
26. What is the profession of Rahim Khan? (Peasant)
27. Whom does Rahim Khan love and wish to marry? (Radha)
28. Whom does Rahim Khan treat badly as a revenge? (His wife, sons and bullocks)
29. What makes Bundru run away from home? (Severe beating by his father)
30. What does Rahim Khan compare his wife’s absence to? (Removal of a furniture)

UNIT - II

31. Who is the Afghan money lender in “Kabuliwala”? (Abdur Rahman)
32. Whose mutual affection is highlighted in “Kabuliwala”? (Minnie and Rahamat)
33. How old was Minnie? (Five years old)
34. How did Minnie refer Rahamat? (Kabuliwala)
35. How did Minnie mistake Rahamat at the beginning? (A kidnapper)
36. Who was angry about Minnie talking to the Kabuliwala? (Minnie’s mother)
37. What subject of Kabuliwala’s talk interested Minnie’s father? (Stories of Afghanistan)
38. Why was the Kabuliwala sent to jail? (For stabbing a customer)
39. What did the Kabuliwala bring to Minnie after coming out of the jail? (Grapes, nuts and raisins)

40. What was in the paper, kept safe by the Kabuliwala for long years? (His daughter's handprint)
41. What was the nationality of Pearl. S. Buck? (American)
42. Name the book in which "India through a Traveller's Eyes" occur? ((My Several Worlds)
43. Whom does Pearl. S. Buck praise in her essay? (The Indians)
44. What appreciable qualities does Buck find in Indians? (Unity, purity, hospitability and idealism)
45. Pearl. S. Buck portrays India of the ----- . (nineteen-fifties)
46. What is the gift given by the British rule to the Indian intellectuals? (English language)
47. What does Buck identify as the rare thing among the Indians? (Indian Freedom Movement)
48. What was loftier than the American War of Independence? (Indian Freedom Movement)
49. ----- is the supreme example of good man of Indian conception. (Mahatma Gandhi)
50. What makes Indians assimilative and pragmatic? (Indian ways of life and philosophy)
51. What is the title of Gandhi's autobiography? (My Experiments with Truth)
52. In which weekly journal was Gandhi's autobiography published? (Navjivan)
53. Who compelled Gandhi to write his autobiography? (Swami Anand)
54. What is the nature of Gandhi's autobiography? (Moralistic and spiritual)
55. Name the places where Gandhi spent his early days? (Rajkot and Porbandar)
56. Which plays inspired Gandhi? (Harishchandra and Shravana)
57. What lesson did Gandhi learn from Shravana? (Deep respect for parents)
58. How was Gandhi in studies? (A mediocre student)
59. Which word was written wrongly by Gandhi? (Kettle)
60. What did the teacher prompt Gandhi to do? (To copy from his neighbour)

UNIT - III

61. What countries were visited by Toru Dutt? (Britain and France)
62. Which flower holds a specific significance in Indian culture? (The lotus)
63. What does the lotus symbolize? (Purity, divinity, and enlightenment)
64. Who is the Greek Goddess of Nature? (Flora)
65. What is personified in Toru Dutt's "The Lotus"? (Love)
66. What does Love ask Flora to choose? (The Queen of flowers)
67. Among the flowers, there has been a rivalry between --- and ---. (the Lily, the Rose)
68. To whom is the Lily sacred? (Juno, wife of Jupiter)
69. Juno is the Goddess of ----- and ----- . (Fertility, protection)
70. With whom is the Rose associated? (Psyche)
71. Who is Psyche? (Greek Goddess)
72. What is the unique quality of the Lily? (Stateliness)
73. What is the unique quality of the Rose? (Loveliness)
74. How must be the colour of the chosen flower? (Blend of white and rose)
75. What flower is chosen by Flora as the Queen of flowers? (The lotus)
76. Where does the lotus emerge from? (The murky depths of water)
77. What ability of the lotus is highlighted by Toru Dutt? (Thriving in adverse conditions)
78. Name the epic, written by Sri Aurobindo? (Savithri)

79. What does Sri Aurobindo long for in “The Tiger and the Deer”? (A peaceful and harmless world)
80. How are the eyes of the tiger described in “The Tiger and the Deer”? (Gleaming eyes)
81. What does the tiger symbolize in “The Tiger and the Deer”? (Death, darkness & arrogance)
82. What is the deer doing when the tiger comes to attack him? (Drinking water)
83. Whom does the deer think about at the time of his death? (His companion)
84. How is the beauty of the deer described in “The Tiger and the Deer”? (Mild & harmless)
85. How is the beauty of the tiger described in “The Tiger and the Deer”? (Strong & cruel)
86. What are the attributes of the deer? (Innocence, softness and love)
87. What does the death of the deer denote? (Destruction of values of life)
88. What causes the death of values of life? (The modern civilization)
89. Those who harm others will be destroyed like the ----- . (mammoth)
90. Who will meet the same end as the mammoth? (The tiger)

UNIT - IV

91. Who is called “the Nightingale of India”? (Sarojini Naidu)
92. Who gave the title “Bharat Kokila” to Sarojini Naidu? (Mahatma Gandhi)
93. What type of song is Sarojini Naidu’s “Village Song”? (Traditional folk song)
94. What rustic scene is presented in “Village Song”? (Women fetching water)
95. Where does the rural girl collect water from? (The Yamuna River)
96. What is the girl afraid of in “Village Song”? (Approaching darkness)
97. What other danger awaits the girl on her way in darkness? (Snake bite)
98. Which sound frightens the girl in “Village Song”? (Hooting of the white crane)
99. How does the girl mistake the hooting of the crane? (Hooting of an owl)
100. What delayed the walk of the girl in “Village Song”? (Boatman’s song)
101. What will cause the death of the girl in “Village Song”? (Snake or spirits)
102. What is the only hope of the girl in “Village Song”? (Chanting God’s name)
103. What will be the reaction of the brother in “Village Song”? (Suspicion)
104. What will be the reaction of the mother in “Village Song”? (Cry in despair)
105. How will the mother conclude if the girl does not return in time? (Drowned in Yamuna)
106. To whom will the mother pray for the safe return of the girl? (The great Gods)
107. What does “Indian Women” deal with? (Sufferings of Indian women)
108. Indian women are the most oppressed and exploited in ---- society. (Patriarchal)
109. What are the triple-baked sufferings of Indian women? (The sun, sex and poverty)
110. What does the phrase “the mud walls” indicate? (Poverty)
111. How is the status of women within their home? (Insignificant)
112. Where do the women go to fetch water? (To a far off well)
113. Why do the women look deep into the water? (To see their own tears)
114. What do the women in “Indian Women” resemble? (Empty pitchers)
115. Why do the women wait for a long time to get water? (Scanty of water in the well)
116. In what mood do the women peep into the well? (Hopeless despair)
117. The women plead hope in each braid of their ----- (Mississippi-long hair)
118. What do the women draw on the sand? (Zodiac doodling)
119. What does the tattoo on the skin of the women indicate? (Ownership of their femininity)

120. ----- is the virtue for the most cherished women in India (Patience)

UNIT - V

121. In which language did Tagore write “Muktadhara”? (Bengali)

122. What does the term ‘Mukthadhara’ mean? (The Waterfall)

123. What does the play “Muktadhara” symbolize? (Tagore's critique of colonial exploitation)

124. Who stands as an example to Gandhi’s non-violent spirit? (Dhananjoy)

125. What is the profession of Dhananjoy? (A singer sage)

126. Who is the ruler of Chitrakoot? (King Ranajit)

127. Which state is extending financial support to Chitrakoot? (Shibtarai)

128. How does Ranajit deny water to the people of Shibtarai? (By building a dam)

129. What does Abhijit love most? (Free flow of Mukthadhara)

130. What is the sad end of Abhijit? (Swept away by the freed water)

131. What is the message in *Siddhartha-Man of Peace*? (Love and Peace)

132. To whom is *Siddhartha-Man of Peace* dedicated? (Jawaharlal Nehru)

133. When was Siddhartha born? (On Purnima)

134. Who was the boastful rival of Siddhartha? (Dev Dutta)

135. To Dev Datta, killing big animals or fight in a war is the ----- of a Kshatriya.

136. To Siddhartha, it is ----- and not killing is the sign of a warrior.

137. According to Dev Datta, Siddhartha lived in ----- . (False ascetic dreaming)

138. Name the wife and son of Siddhartha:- (Yashodara and Rahul)

139. Who showed the sufferings of the world to Siddhartha? (Channa)

140. Who was Channa? (Siddhartha’s charioteer)

141. Who accompanied Siddhartha on his way? (Channa and Kanthak)

142. What was the name of Siddhartha’s horse? (Kanthak)

143. Where did Siddhartha attain his wisdom? (Under a Bo-tree)

144. What was the charge laid on Siddhartha by the monks? (Sundari’s murder)

145. What aspects of the modern society are exposed in *Nalini*? (Hollowness & pretensions)

146. How does Bharat justify his idleness? (Reduction in evil-doing)

147. What was the profession of Bharat and Raj? (Business executives)

148. What was the profession of Nalini? (A painter)

149. Why does Nalini approach Bharat and Raj? (To seek publicity for her paintings)

150. How is Nalini presented in the play *Nalini*? (A dream and a reality)

VISHNU SHARMA – “WINNING OF FRIENDS” FROM *PANCHATANTRA*

Introduction:

The original text of the *Panchatantra* in Sanskrit was probably written about 200 B.C. by a great Hindu scholar, Pandit Vishnu _Sharma. But some of the tales themselves must be much older, their origin going back to the period of the Rig-Veda and Upanishads (from 1500 B.C. to 500 B.C.). According to scholars of the Indo-European languages, the *Panchatantra* is the oldest collection of Indian fables surviving. In course of time, travellers took these stories with them to Persia and

Arabia and finally through Greece, they reached Europe. So far it has been translated into 50 or more languages of the world.

The *Panchatantra* is essentially connected with one of the branches of science known by the Indians as the 'Nitishastra' which in Sanskrit means 'A book of wise conduct in life'. It attempts to teach us, how to understand people, how to choose reliable and trust-worthy friends, how to meet difficulties and solve problems through tact and wisdom, and how to live in peace and harmony in the face of hypocrisy, deceit and many pitfalls in life.

Winning of Friends:

The second Tantra in "Panchatantra" is titled "Winning of Friends". It starts with the verse:

"Clever people and those well versed in nitishastras,
Even when they are without means,
Achieve success very quickly
Just like the crow, the mouse, the turtle and the stag."

It comprises four stories. Among them "The Story of the Sadhu and the Mouse" is an interesting story.

Laghupatanaka's Wise Advice to the Birds:

In the south of India, there was a city called Mahilaropuram. Not far from the city, there stood a very big tree. All kinds of birds ate its fruits and many travellers rested - under its shade. On the branches of the tree, there lived a crow, by the name of Laghupatanaka. One day, as he was flying towards the city in search of food. His eyes fell upon a black hunter, creeping towards the tree. He looked like a servant of Yama. When Laghupatanaka saw this, he was scared that the birds residing in the tree will be in danger. He flew back to the tree and advised the birds not to touch the rice spread on the net under the tree. Meanwhile, the hunter had reached the tree. He spread out his net, scattered the shining white rice on the ground underneath and hid himself nearby. As the birds had been warned in advance by Laghupatanaka, they did not touch the rice and avoided being caught in the hunter's net.

Chitragreeva's Wise Plan:

Chitragreeva, the king of the doves, happened to be flying in the neighbourhood at that time. He and his retinue were looking for food. They came to this tree and saw the ripe grains of rice. Laghupatanak warned them in the same way, not to touch it, but they took no notice of him, and Chitragreeva and his entire court were caught in the net. "This is what happens when fate is hostile it's nobody's fault:

When the hunter saw that he had caught the doves, he was overjoyed and went up to the tree. Seeing him coming, Chitragreeva said to his retinue, "He who holds on to his courage, In the face of disaster, Will, with the help of his intelligence, Ultimately surmount all his difficulties.' He asked them to unite, lift the net together and fly off with it. 'Small things united become strong: Even delicate threads of cotton, Woven together, Are very hard to break.' When they were out of the hunter's sight, they could free themselves. The doves followed

Chitrageeva's plan. When the hunter saw them flying away with his net, he ran after them. He thought the doves would fight among themselves and fall to the ground.

Flight to Hiranyaka's Place:

Laghupatanaka, the crow, was so curious to know what would happen that he forgot all about his food and followed the doves. When the hunter saw the doves vanishing out of sight, he sadly recited the following shloka: "Nothing happens that is not predestined, And what is predestined, always comes to pass." He felt sad that he had lost the net, the only support to his family.

When Chitrageeva saw the hunter disappearing out of sight, he advised the retinue to fly to Mahilaropyam. Hiranyaka, his friend would bite through these meshes and set them free. "When calamity befalls a man, Only a true friend will help him; Others offer only lip-sympathy." The doves agreed to Chitrageeva's suggestion and made their way to the mouse's home.

Chitrageeva's Generosity:

The hole, where Hiranyaka was living, had innumerable entries and exits. For the mouse, it was an excellent stronghold-he lived there quite fearlessly. When Chitrageeva reached the hole, he called loudly. When Hiranyaka recognised his friend's voice, he came out immediately, beaming with delight. But when he saw the king of doves and his retinue, all caught in the net, his face fell. He began to free the king of the doves. But Chitrageeva asked him to free the other doves first. He quoted many reasons for doing so. As a king he should respect his followers and show consideration when they were in distress. When Hiranyaka heard this, he was happy and he assured that for this noble action, Chitrageeva's followers would respect him as their king. Hiranyaka bit through all the meshes of the net and set the doves free. Chitrageeva thanked the mouse and flew off with his court. Hiranyaka also went back into his hole.

Friendship between Laghupatanaka and Hiranyaka

Laghupatanaka was amazed. He wanted at the talent of the mouse and wanted to become his friend. He flew down to the mouse's hole and called Hiranyaka imitating Chitrageeva's voice. Hiranyaka was suspicious. Laghupatanaka introduced him as the crow. On hearing it, Hiranyaka refused to come out because the crow would make him his prey. Both of them discuss about two types of enmity. The hereditary enmity exists between certain species and another enmity arises as a result of some quarrel. Laghupatanaka argued that there was no reason for them to develop enmity. Yet, Hiranyaka was suspicious of the hereditary enemy. He said that a strong man who put too much faith others could be killed by a mere weakling. When Laghupatanaka heard this clever reply from the mouse, he was amazed at Hiranyaka's knowledge of nitishastras and was at a loss for an answer. He asked the mouse to stay safe inside the hole and at least talk to him on certain general matters. The mouse agreed. And so, from that day onward, the two of them became good friends. The crow would bring fruits and delicacies for the mouse and the mouse, in return, would save a few titbits for the

crow. And they would entertain each other, telling stories. In the course of time, the mouse trusted the crow so much that he would even sit under his wings and talk to him.

The New Life of the Trio:

But one day, Laghupatanaka came to Hiranyaka with tears. He was starving because of the famine. He expressed his longing to fly off to a lake, deep in the jungle. But he did not want to lose Hiranyaka's friendship. Mantharaka, his turtle friend in the lake had invited him to stay with him. Hiranyaka travelled with Laghupatanaka to the new place by sitting on his back. They reached the lake safely. Mantharaka gave a hug and welcomed them. Hiranyaka moved to a hole. Thus the trio continued their friendship.

PAMELA S. TURNER – HACHICO

Introduction:

Hachikō was a Japanese Akita dog who lived in Tokyo in the early 1900s. He is remembered for his remarkable loyalty to his owner, Hidesaburō Ueno. He continued to wait at a train station everyday for over nine years following Ueno's death. Hachiko has been honored in Japanese culture as a symbol of loyalty and companionship and statues of Hachiko can be found all over the world. Pamela S. Turner has an abiding fascination with science, animals, and evolution. She is the author of several award-winning books for young readers. In the book "Hachiko" tells the story of Hachiko through the eyes of Kentaro, a young boy whose life is changed forever by his friendship with this very special dog.

Timidity – the Faithful Dog:

When Kentero was six years old, his family moved to a little house in Tokyo, near the Shibuya train station. He was frightened of the sound of the train at the beginning, but he got accustomed to the furious sound as days passed on. One day, he went to the train station with his mother to pick up his father, who came by the afternoon train.

At the entrance of the train station, Kentero met the dog. He was sitting all alone by a newspaper stand. He had thick, cream-coloured fur, small pointed ears and a broad and bushy tail, that curved up over his back. Kentero was sure it was not a stray dog because he was wearing a leather harness and looked healthy and strong.

The eyes of the dog were fixed on the station entrance. Kentero's father arrived and started talking with an old man. He introduced him to Kentero as Dr. Ueno, who works at Tokyo Imperial University. As they were talking, Kentero noticed the reaction of the dog on seeing the old man. The dog bounded over to Dr. Ueno. His entire body was quivering with delight. His eyes shone. His mouth curled up as though he was smiling. Kentero came to know from Dr. Ueno that the name of the dog was Timidity.

The first meeting of Kentero and Timidity was a bit terrible to the former. Timidity was big in size though he was a puppy. His sharp face reminded Kentero of a fox. Once introduced, Timidity jumped and landed his fore legs on the shoulders of Kentero. He started

sniffing the face of the boy. Kentero hid himself behind his mother. He was convinced by Dr. Ueno that Timidity was harmless and he knew human beings well.

The meeting of Kentero and Timidity continued at the train station every day. Kentero carried a morsel out of his food plate to compliment Timidity. Kentero enjoyed pushing his face into the thick fur of the dog. The sad event happened in the month of May. Dr. Ueno died in the university campus itself. Without knowing this, Timidity was waiting at the train station. From the next day, Kentero could not see Timidity at the station. His father told him Timidity was left in the care of Dr. Ueno's relative, living far off from their place. Kentero expressed his wish to adopt Timidity. But that was not possible as the family could not afford a room to Timidity.

Honour Paid to Timidity:

Just after a few days, Timidity was seen again in the station. He had come back to Dr. Ueno's house and started waiting for Dr. Ueno as usual. Kentero met Mr. Kobayashi, the gardener in Dr. Ueno's house. Kobayashi was still taking care of Dr. Ueno's house and garden. He fed the dog daily. But he could not divert Timidity from his visit to the station. Till the laast train left the station, Timidity awaited the arrival of Dr. Ueno. Timidity might not be aware of Dr. Ueno's death. But waiting for his master was the honour he paid.

The final blow came. Timidity was dead at the station itself near the newspaper stand. The whole town paid homage to the faithful dog. In his memory, the statue named 'Hachico' was built. Even after many years, it is a common scene that people unite and depart at the train station near the Hachico.

A.K. RAMANUJAN – “BROTHER’S DAY” FROM *FOLKTALES*

Introduction:

A. K. Ramanujan was a trans-disciplinary scholar, poet, translator, linguist, philologist, playwright and folklorist. Ramanujan was among the first Indian thinkers to take a serious look at oral tales, lullabies, proverbs and songs. He published a collection of folktales.

Bhai Dooj takes place twice a year on the second day following Diwali, the festival of lights. For this day, daughters, fetched by their brothers, return to their parent's villages. If a sister/wife is unable to attend, her brother comes to visit her with gifts. "Brother's Day" portrays the loving brother who visits his sister. Versions of Brother's Day are common not only in Rajasthan but all over North India. "Brother's Day" is adapted from Rajasthani. Rituals and beliefs are part of the life of Rajasthani people. Brother's Day celebrates the love of a brother and sister. It is the custom of the Rajasthani to see their sister on a brother's day. The brothers bring new clothes and they like to see their sisters dressed well on that day.

Brother visits his sister

The brother expressed his wish to his mother to see his sister with new clothes. Sending new clothes to the girl in the family and her husband is a practice among the Rajasthani. The mother prepared bundle with a long skirt and a wrap for her daughter, and a turban and a shirt for her daughter's husband. "Go safely and see your sister dressed in new clothes for brother's day", said the mother. The brother and the sister, each in their own way tries to rescue the life of one another. The love and affectionate bond are woven with silken

threads by the narrator in such a way that the love and sacrifice seems dear and divine. Just like all fairy tales and bed time stories, “Brother’s Day” narrates the story of the celebrated love and sacrifice of a brother and sister.

Difficulties on the way

The brother meets many difficulties on his way to his sister’s house. Animate and inanimate objects speak and their words are given due importance in the story. The conversations between the brother and the enormous tree, river, snake and lion which threaten the brother’s life form the core of the story. The tree said, “Brother, I’m going to fall on you”, and the river said, “I’m going to wash you away”. But the brother told them that “I’m on my way to see my sister dressed in new clothes for Brother’s day” and asked them to take his life on his way back. Sisters rely on their brothers for many things in their life. Brothers are their links with their parental home.

Sister trying to save her brother’s life

It is believed that “if you greet a guest when your thread is broken, harm will come to that guest”. So the sister did not get up and greet her brother and said “Oh! Brother, I couldn’t greet you with a broken thread”. The brother and sister went into the dangerous jungle together. His sister took her necklace to give the river, a cup of milk for the snake and a goat kid to feed the lion. She took five toy pebbles to please the enormous tree. The sister saved her brother from the lion, the snake, the river, and the tree by offering them the things she had brought for them.

The sister ran to Mother Fate to save her brother’s life. Mother Fate told her, “After Holi and after Diwali, on Brother’s Day, tell the story and worship your brother. Worship him, but on Brother’s Day curse him. By these curses your brother will be saved”. The sister started cursing, “May my brother’s bones be gathered! May my brother die!” She behaved like a mad lady asking her parents to do everything that was done to her brother.

At last, on the nuptial night of the brother, the sister waited patiently in her brother’s room, “spotted the snake, struck it, cut it into three pieces, and hid the pieces under a shield. Then she went to sleep in peace”. The sister saved him first from the perils on the road and finally from the dreaded snake enemy.

The rituals of the festival are performed near an outside wall, with cow-dung figures of brother, sister, bride and snake, as well as the inside of the house with a cooking hearth. The figures are made before the story is told. Offerings of food are made and left to be eaten by stray animals like dogs, goats and birds.

At the end of the story, all the women whose brothers are alive, stretch their hands up as far as they can reach, repeat the curses from the story as well as the blessing. “May he live long!” The ritual is said to promote long life for all brothers of the women who participate in it.

RUSKIN BOND – A HANDFUL OF NUTS

Ruskin Bond wrote his first short story, 'Untouchable', at the age of sixteen, and has written memorable fiction ever since. He is famous not only for his love of the hills, but for imbuing the countryside with life and vibrancy. The simple people who inhabit his stories

evoke sympathy and laughter in equal measure. His book “A Handful of Nuts” takes the readers to small-town culture and make them feel between the characters.

The Eccentric Friends of the Narrator:

“A Handful of Nuts” means a few friends who roam around the small town and make each other’s lives tough. It is a story of Ruskin Bond – especially when he newly entered into the vertices of adolescent. The story is set in Dehradun – of 1950s – where the narrator lives alone. He is accompanied by few friends. They are ambitious but empty on pockets. Thus, he being a struggling writer often gives them his money, which he receives from newspapers or magazines that publish his work. The only worry of his life is that the pay cheques do not come regularly. Despite having less money, his life is at large good and going.

Bond is initially hesitant, but soon he develops friendship with a funny Sitaram, son of a washerman. Sitaram is tired of his quarrelsome parents, thus he begins living with him. He proves to be a good and valuable company to the narrator. Sitaram brings pot plants and a pair of trousers and bed sheets for him not with money but by lifting.

Friends like William Matheson, Jai Shankar, and Suresh Mathur are of the narrator’s age. But they all have one or more pesky habit which pushes the narrator’s life on a backseat whenever he stumbles upon them, or they meet with him. Vagrancy and infatuation are two inseparable aspects of being young, in the early 20s. The narrator thinks that in early 20s one needs to have girlfriends and money. Otherwise the punch of good life remains missing. But sadly, he has neither of them.

To try his luck, the narraator thinks of Indu, the daughter of the Maharani of Magador. He chases her and also invites her to his birthday party. But he notices that her mother is interested in rich men for her daughter. He always dreams about her. But one day he is taken up by Maharani of Magador, the seductive mother. With this event, all his hopes of marrying Indu vanish away, and he hopes that Indu does not turn out to be like her mother when she grows into womanhood.

The funny Sitaram falls in love with a South Indian girl who works in a circus. Gradually, Sitaram enters into the lives of circus people and helps them with their petty needs, and also manages to win the heart of that girl and joins the circus. When the circus moves to Ambala, Sitaram flees with them in such a hurry that he forgets to bid farewell to his friend, the narrator. This hurts the narrator and he is back to the terms of solitude, and continues his life with writing. But soon Sitaram makes a return complaining that Ambala is too hot to live. But in real, he missed both – the narrator and the sublime weather of Dehradun.

K.A. ABBAS – SPARROWS

Introduction

‘The Sparrows’ written by K. A. Abbas tells the importance of displaying our sense of love and affection to our fellow human beings beginning with our own family. Through this story, the author can show that anything can be achieved under the sun. All that is needed is a sense of compassion and sincere love expressed towards worldly creatures. Only true love can elicit a true relationship is the message in this story.

The most hated person

Rahim Khan was a fifty-year-old peasant. Everybody in the village hated him for his harsh and cruel behavior. He was not kind even to children and animals. No one dared to talk to him. The children would run away from their play if they saw him. But he was a very different man when he was young. His parents squashed his ambitions of joining the circus and marrying a Hindu girl, Radha. He loved Radha and found in her his soul mate but his parents had other plans for him and got him to marry a girl of their choice and community, Radha in turn also married and settled in life.

Reason for Rahim's brutality

Rahim once heard his father boasting to his mother how well he succeeded in getting his son to accept his words obediently. Rahim Khan then decided to avenge his defeat at the hands of his parents, his family, and society. Having decided to take revenge, his first and immediate target was his wife. He saw her as the scapegoat for all his misadventures. His kind soul suddenly became as hard as iron. For nearly thirty years, he ill-treated his wife, his two sons, and his two bullocks. He quarreled with everyone in the village. Subsequently, the entire village developed a deep-seated hatred for him.

Six years earlier his elder son Bundu ran away from home after an unusually severe beating. Three years later his second son Nuru also joined his brother. One day when he returned home from the fields an old lady from the neighborhood told him that his wife had gone to her brother's place and that she would be back shortly. Rahim Khan knew that she would never come back. He suddenly began to feel lonely not because he loved his family but because he had no one now to display his anger. Nobody was there to wash his feet; to give him food and other eatables. His wife's absence made him feel uncomfortable as though a piece of furniture had been removed from his house.

Brave sparrows

One day, as he was cleaning the roof, spotted a small nest of sparrows in a corner. He initially wanted to exert his might on them but good sense prevailed upon him after a long gap and he left them undisturbed. He pulled a stool and climbed on it to have better look at them. But the parent sparrows would not allow him to breach their privacy they threatened him by hovering around him and fluttering their wings hard at his face. He was amused at the little bird's heroic efforts to save the young ones. He realized their love and care for the family. Soon the young ones grew well and began to move around inside his house. He started feeding them with breadcrumbs and other grains. He called them Bundu and Nuru after his two sons. There was now a total transformation in his temperament and outlook on life. The villagers too took note of the change in him. But they had their reservations against him. He even stopped shouting at the children.

Rahim, a transformed man

On a day that brought in a heavy downpour, he noticed that the roof had begun to leak near the sparrow's nest. He immediately climbed his roof to close the gap. He came back fully drenched. He had already started sneezing. He failed to take care at once. He woke up the next day with a high fever. His only companions now were the two sparrows. He was worried as to who would take care of the two birds after he dies. A couple of days passed. There was no sign of Rahim Khan walking out. The villagers grew suspicious. They sent for his wife who arrived with her sons. When they came in, they could see his body lying still and the fluttering of the birds the only sound to be heard.

Conclusion

'The Sparrows' is a wonderful story where nature teaches man to behave himself. What human beings could not demonstrate nature's tiny creation a happy sparrow-couple could effortlessly achieve this story is remarkable not just for its narration but also for its characterization of the inhuman, yet ultra-humane sparrows. This is a very moving story of the sorrow and disappointment of a supposedly hard-hearted man. His transformation from utter cruelty to one of endearing love and compassion forms the lifeline of the narrative.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE – KHABHULIWALA

Introduction

"Kabuliwala" by Tagore is a tale of heart-rending friendship between a five year old Bengali girl Minnie and an Afghan money lender, Abdur Rahman or Rahamat. The story ties a bond of mutual affection and the unconventional relationship between the two.

Mini Meets Rahamat:

"Kabuliwallah" opens with the narrator describing his five-year-old daughter, Mini. She "can't stop talking for a minute" and is frequently scolded by her mother for it. The narrator thinks that it's "unnatural" when Mini is quiet. He spends a lot of time talking to her and answering her many questions. One morning, Mini chats with her father while he is working on an adventure novel. She looks out the window and spots a Kabuliwallah named Rahamat and starts calling to him. However, when he comes over, Mini runs into another room, thinking that his large bags are full of children, not goods.

Bond between Mini and Rahamat:

A few days later, the narrator finds Mini sitting next to Rahamat and talking to him with a pile of raisins and nuts in her lap. The narrator tells Rahamat not to give her any more treats and gives him a half-rupee, which Rahamat takes. Later, Mini's mother scolds Mini for having a half-rupee, which Mini says Rahamat gave her. The narrator saves Mini "from her mother's wrath" and brings her outside where she tells him that Rahamat has come by almost every day to listen to her talk. Among the numerous jokes they have together, one starts with Rahamat telling Mini, "don't ever go off to your *śvaśur-bāri*." Mini doesn't understand what this means because the narrator and his wife are progressive people. They do not keep talking to their young daughter about her future marriage. Mini innocently asks him if he is going to *his*. Rahamat jokingly shakes a fist and says he'll "settle him". Thus he makes Mini laugh.

Attitude of Mini's Parents:

It is autumn season. During this season, the kings will set out "on their world-conquests." But, the narrator never left Calcutta even though he longs to explore the world. He frequently imagines distant lands. But he is "a rooted sort of individual". Whenever he leaves his "familiar spot" he will "practically collapse." Because of this, the narrator is happy to spend a morning just listening to Rahamat's stories of Afghanistan and travelling. Mini's mother is different. She is scared of the outside world and imagines it is full of extreme dangers. She is unhappy with Rahamat because he is a complete stranger, spending so much

time with Mini. She warns the narrator to keep an eye on him. When the narrator tells her there is nothing to worry about, she talks about the possibility of Mini being kidnapped and sold into slavery. Rahamat, however, continues to come and the narrator continues to enjoy seeing him with Mini.

Rahamat Sent to Jail:

Rahamat is preparing to go home. He goes around Calcutta and collect money that customers owe him. Yet, he makes time in the evening to stop at the narrator's house to talk with Mini. One morning, the narrator hears something going on in the streets and looks out the window to see Rahamat, covered in blood, being led down the street in handcuffs. The narrator runs outside, and Rahamat tells him that he got into a physical altercation with a customer who had refused to pay. During the fight, he stabbed the customer. Mini comes out and asks Rahamat if he is being taken to his *śvaśur-bāri*, and he says that he is. Rahamat is sent to jail. Mini forgets Rahamat and finds new friends, first with the groom (someone who takes care of horses) and then with girls of her age. She stops visiting her father's study and the narrator says he "dropped her," as well.

Return of Rahamat:

A few years later, the narrator and his wife are preparing for Mini's wedding day. The house is full of people setting things up. Rahamat arrives and tells the narrator he had been released from jail the day before, which reminds the narrator of his crime and sets him on edge. The narrator wants Rahamat to leave the place. Rahamat expresses his wish to see Mini. The narrator tries to brush him off. Before leaving, Rahamat wants to give Mini some grapes, nuts, and raisins he brought for her as a reminder of their past friendship. The narrator gets some money to pay Rahamat for them, but he refuses payment and tells the narrator that he had come with his own daughter "in mind," not to do business.

The True Fatherly Love of Rahamat:

Rahamat pulls "a crumpled piece of paper" out of the breast pocket of his shirt and shows the narrator the handprint of his daughter, Parvati, that he carries with him while he travels for work. Seeing it, the narrator recognizes the father in him. He calls Mini down. When she comes in, she's "dressed as a bride" and acts shy and uncomfortable. Rahamat tries to joke with her as he used to, asking if she is going to her *śvaśur-bāri*. Instead of laughing and asking questions, Mini "blushed [...] and looked away." When Mini leaves, Rahamat realizes that his daughter also will have grown up. The narrator pulls out some money and asks Rahamat to use it to get home. He tells Rahamat that, "by your blessed reunion, Mini will be blessed."

PEARL S. BUCK – "INDIA THROUGH A TRAVELLER'S EYE" FROM *MY SEVERAL WORLDS*

Introduction:

“India through a Traveller's Eyes” is an inspiring essay by the Nobel Laureate Pearl S. Buck, an American writer of world-repute. It has been taken from her famous book 'My Several Worlds'. Buck praises Indian people and their life for their variety, unity, purity, hospitality and idealism.

Greatness of Freedom Movement

Pearl Buck gives her personal impression of India. She portrays India of the nineteen-fifties. The writer is a fond lover of India and the Indian people. So she sees only bright sides of Indian life. She speaks about India's superior individuals who have influenced the course of modern history with their non-violent freedom movement. She finds that Indian intellectuals have made excellent use of the good gifts including the English language that the British rule gave to India. She is charmed by quality calibre and self-confidence of the Indian intellectuals. She finds Indian Freedom Movement a rare thing in which the intellectuals and the peasants participated. It was loftier than the American War of Independence. It was the triumph of a bloodless revolution. It has a great lesson for the world as it shows the futility and destructiveness of movement carried on by violence and blood-shed.

The message behind Freedom Movement is of crucial significance. Mrs Buck thinks that the Americans have not fully understood this message of India - “mighty triumph of a bloodless revolution of our war of Independence” The great lesson of India's Freedom Movement has total relevance to the present world.

Greatness of villagers

Mrs Buck gives an impressive picture of Indian village life. The natives of villages live according to the great ideals of their tradition. Their conception of good man is lofty. They think only those people good who practise self-renunciation rather than self-seeking. Such people sacrifice their personal good for the sake of noble ideals. Mahatma Gandhi is the supreme example of such great good man of Indian conception. People flock to them and follow their wise advice in a village

Mrs Buck finds a paralytic elderly man who for being such a liberated man is surrounded by people all through the day. Despite his suffering, he lives in a cage-like enclosure where people may come unrestricted. All his life he has been a selfless wiseman. Now he has become a saint for the people. In the same way, the writer is impressed by the cleanliness and clean habits of Indian villagers. Even the paralytic man was spotlessly clean. In people's home, she found homespun towels to cleanse the hands. The custom of taking food from green banana leaves through the right hand only convinced Mrs Buck of the clean habits of the Indian people. Thus the portrait of India seen through Mrs Buck's eyes is impressive. It has an idyllic charm that is very appealing.

Greatness of Indians

The Indians as a whole are of the Caucasian race. There are variations from the white-complexioned and green-eyed Kashmiris to black coloured people of the south. But qualitatively the Indians have an innate dynamism. They are assimilative, adjustable and pragmatic. The Indian ways of life and philosophy have made them so. They are living decently and doing well in different parts of the world in different capacities. They may be alone as family doctors in the interiors of China or one-third of the whole population of a country as in South Africa. Then the Indians to Mrs Buck are “a memorable people.

The influence of Indian ways of life is being pervasive within a few years of her independence. India has made a mark on the international scene through her superior individuals. Nehru turned out to be a great and noble leader. An Indian woman became the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations. An Indian army general did exemplary impartial work in effecting an exchange of prisoners in Korea. The newly emerged independent India has been full of quiet confidence because of her unyielding idealism.

Spirit of the young Indians

The spirit of India is reflected in the young intellectuals of Indian cities and the peasants of Indian villages. She met the young intellectuals about the second world war period. Puck found them seething with anger for their British rulers. They bluffed India during the First World War and were likely to do the same after this war. So they wanted that India should be given freedom first. Then India would decide the way to meet the war.

Fascism and Japanese adventurism forced India to fight the war from the side of the Allies and not from the side of the Axis. India had enough wisdom to choose civilization rather than barbarism. The saner leaders of Britain gave India her freedom. There was no other option left to Britain because the Freedom Movement under the banner of Mahatma Gandhi involved all sectors of the people. The whole nation and this people's non-violent war proved more powerful than the bloody wars.

Destructive British Rule

Puck talks about the pitiable condition of India as a result of British colonialism. Indian intellectuals despite their immense abilities and calibres had been left, languishing. All top positions went to white Englishmen though they were in second rate or even worse. So the country was in ferment state. However, the worst effects of British Imperialism were most obvious in India's miserable villages. The condition of the Indian peasants was worse than that of the Chinese peasants. This was very much like the condition of the Russian peasants before the Bolshevik Revolution. But Russian peasants were culturally much inferior to the Indian peasants. Indian peasants were very much like the Chinese in being "innately civilized". Indian culture has been maturing through the age. It is stable because it is based on intact family life. India's pragmatic and philosophical religions have shaped the mind and soul of the Indian. So even the illiterate Indian peasant has been innately civilized.

Under British rule, India was sucked by the white of people of their good things. The Indian children were deformed, diseased and died too young. The rickety big-bellied and skeletal babies with sunk dark eyes were the worst indictment of the British imperialism. The English people could be so diabolically corrupted by colonialism. The Imperialists did not work for the welfare of people. They rather sat on their back and demoralize them.

Of course, caste system existed in India. system no doubt. There was also crankish behaviour of people in matters of religion and worship. But they were mostly harmless. The worst aspects of religion were there too including fanaticism. But, the religious ways of life had not corrupted or poisoned the social life. Above all the spirit of self-sacrifice was present. The simple unsophisticated Indians stood firm in supporting their idealism. The Christian Missionaries had failed to effect brotherhood of man. But the simple poor Indian masses by their sheer sacrifice had implemented their innate idealism in the practical life of their society.

Pearl S. Buck came to India in the period just before and after India's independence. During that period India was what the British rulers had made her. She found India in a pitiable condition. The condition of the villages was deplorable. People suffered from poverty and starvation. The fertile land stretching from Bombay to Madras was dry and without crops due to lack of irrigation facilities. Centuries of colonialism had taken all strength and vitality out of India. The Indians were sunk in sloth and idleness. They were full of excuses for not working and remaining helpless. They blamed the Britishers for all the ills of their society. They thought that their British rulers had taken all the responsibilities to feed and clothe them. If they suffered and died of hunger and disease it was the fault of the foreign government. The people in themselves were not responsible for it. Such behaviour of the people showed that the colonialism of centuries had made them lose their heart and their spirit. So ultimately the British imperialists were responsible for this all-round degradation and backwardness of India and her people.

M.K. GANDHI – “EXAMINATION” (INSPECTION EPISODE) IN PART I / CHILDHOOD FROM *MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH*

Introduction:

The Story of My Experiments with Truth is the autobiography of Indian activist Mohandas K. “Mahatma” Gandhi. Published in a weekly journal, *Navjivan*, between 1925 and 1929, it covers the span of time between Gandhi's early childhood through roughly 1921. Gandhi was compelled to write the autobiography by his close friend, Swami Anand, who would become his literary manager. The autobiography seeks to explain the experiential roots of Gandhi's activist vocation. The book has been recognized as one of the most important spiritual works of the twentieth century.

In the Introduction of the book, Gandhi disclaims that the opinions and ideas expressed in his autobiography are subject to change. Its purpose is not to relay a static picture of himself, but to show how personal truths evolve over time. He also claims that the book is moral and spiritual in nature, mostly straying from politics.

The beginning of the autobiography traces Gandhi's childhood and young adult life in Rajkot and Porbandar. Gandhi recalls eating meat, a practice he later renounced. He relates that he had a rather hedonistic lifestyle in general. He admits to stealing and drinking excessively – all actions from which he now aspires to redeem himself. He explores some of his first favourite books, including the plays *Harishchandra* and *Shravana Pitrabhakti Nataka*. The latter play, in which the central figure Shravana realizes a deep respect for his parents, moved Gandhi to do the same. Gandhi married when he was only thirteen, and expresses deep regret for it, calling it “preposterously early” and fully denouncing its moral basis. Another of Gandhi's most formative experiences was the early death of his father, Karamchand Gandhi. His later activist work was heavily informed by his early losses and mistakes. At age 7, Gandhi is a mediocre student but does not lie.

Gandhi's Experience at School

When Gandhi was seven years old, his father left Porbandar to Rajkot to become a member of the Rajasthanik Court. There Gandhi was put into a primary school. Even now, he could recollect those days, including the names and other particulars of the teachers who taught him. There was no greater progression in Gandhi's studies, even after coming to Rajkot. He was only a mediocre student.

Gandhi moved to a suburban school and then to the high school, having already reached his twelfth year. He had never told a lie either to his teachers nor to his school-mates. He used to be shy and avoided all company. His books and his lessons were his sole companions. He used to be at school at the stroke of the hour and run back home as soon as the school closed. He could not bear to talk to anybody. He was even afraid lest anyone should poke fun at him.

An incident occurred at the examination during his first year at the high school. Mr. Giles, the Educational Inspector, had come on a visit of inspection. He had set the students five words to write as a spelling exercise. One of the words was 'kettle'. Gandhi had mis-spelt it. The teacher tried to prompt Gandhi with the point of his boot. But Gandhi would not be prompted. The teacher wanted him to copy the spelling from his neighbour's slate. All the boys, except Gandhi were found to have spelt every word correctly. The teacher tried later to teach this stupidity of copying to Gandhi but without effect.

Yet the incident did not diminish Gandhi's respect for his teacher. Gandhi was by nature blind to the faults of elders. Later he came to know of many other failings of that teacher, but his regard for him remained the same. He had learnt to carry out the orders of elders, not to scan their actions.

Gandhi on Shranavana story

Gandhi remembers two other incidents of the same period. He had a distaste for any reading beyond his school books. The daily lessons had to be done, because he disliked being taken to task by his teacher as much as he disliked deceiving him. Therefore he would do the lessons, but often without mind in them. But somehow his eyes fell on a book purchased by his father. It was Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka, a play about Shravana's devotion to his parents. Gandhi read it with intense interest. The itinerant showmen came to Gandhi's place and showed the picture of Shravana carrying, by means of slings fitted for his shoulders, his blind parents on a pilgrimage. The book and the picture left an indelible impression on Gandhi's mind.

Gandhi on Harishchandra story

Once, Gandhi secured his father's permission to see a play performed by a certain dramatic company. This play was Harishchandra. It captured Gandhi's heart. He could never be tired of seeing it. But he would not be permitted to go to the play many times. Instead, Gandhi would enact it out. The question that haunted Gandhi was 'Why should not all be truthful like Harishchandra?' To follow truth and to go through all the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal it inspired in Gandhi.

Gandhi concludes saying Harishchandra and Shravana could not have been historical characters. Still both were living realities for Gandhi.

TORU DUTT - THE LOTUS

Text:

Love came to Flora asking for a flower
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
The lily and the rose, long, long had been
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power
Had sung their claims. "The rose can never tower
Like the pale lily with her Juno mien"-
"But is the lily lovelier?" Thus between
Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche's bower.
"Give me a flower delicious as the rose
And stately as the lily in her pride"-
"But of what colour?"- "Rose-red," Love first chose,
Then prayed, -"No, lily-white,-or, both provide";
And Flora gave the lotus, "rose-red" dyed,
And "lily-white,"- the queenliest flower that blows.

Toru Dutt was an educated young woman who had traveled to Britain and France during her childhood. British literature and culture influenced her and is demonstrated in various works by Toru, including "The Lotus". In the poem, Toru presents the idea that the lotus is the most beautiful of all flowers in order to establish superiority of the Hindu religion over other world religions.

In Indian culture, the lotus has always held a special significance. It is revered as a sacred flower, symbolizing purity, divinity, and enlightenment. Dutt expertly utilizes this symbolism in her poem to reflect the central themes of spirituality, transformation, and the cyclical nature of life.

Toru Dutt personifies 'Love', Love asks Flora, the Greek Goddesses of Nature to provide a flower, a flower that has an undeniable ability to be the Queen of all the flowers in the world. Among the flowers, there has been a well-known, long-standing rivalry between 'the Lily' and 'the Rose'. Popular Poets claimed their beauty through songs (both got equal praises). They both have their own uniqueness, both couldn't beat the other. A Rose cannot be pale or tower splendid like a Lily and a Lily cannot be as lovely as a Rose (Lily is sacred to Juno, the wife of Jupiter, Goddess of fertility and protection. Rose is associated with the Greek Goddess Psyche). Considering all these factors Love claims a flower that has both Lily and Rose's unique qualities together- A flower that is as lovely as a Rose and as stately as a Lily with pride. Flora, listening to his queries asks a question "But of what colour?" At first, Love chooses red (Rose- red) then he prays for white (Lily- white). Finally, he asks for both the colours and so, Flora gave him the beautiful, elegant, pale, Rose-red and Lily-white dyed Queenliest of all flowers- Lotus in his hands.

The Rivalry:

"The Lotus", begins with a conflict between the rose and the lily flower. The goddess of love, Aphrodite, approached the flower goddess, Flora to create a flower who would undisputedly be the queenliest of all flowers. Both the lily and the rose, used their "bards of power" in their fight over the queenliest flower title. Bards is associated with Gaelic spiritual power

traditions of England, Scotland and Ireland. Toru uses Greek and Roman mythology as support for her Hindu beliefs and to establish her stand. The rose is described as never reaching the level of the lily flower, because the lily has a strong willed demeanor. Dutt introduces the lotus as a "flower of God," establishing its importance and supernatural qualities. She then portrays the lotus as emerging from the murky depths of water, highlighting its ability to thrive in adverse conditions. This metaphorical representation resonates strongly with the Indian attitude to life, which emphasizes finding beauty and spirituality amidst hardships and challenges.

Dutt elaborates on the unique characteristics of the lotus, describing its petals as untouched by the impurities of the world. This portrayal reflects the Indian belief in detachment and the ability to remain unaffected by the transient nature of existence. The lotus, with its pristine and unblemished appearance, serves as a symbol of the ideal life according to Indian philosophy – one that remains untarnished by the chaos and materialistic desires of the world.

The lotus serves to depict the concept of rebirth and transformation. Dutt describes how the lotus rises anew every morning, signifying the continuous cycle of life, death, and rebirth. In Indian spirituality, this cyclic nature is a fundamental concept, emphasizing the eternal nature of the soul and the potential for spiritual growth and enlightenment. Dutt ingeniously captures this idea, evoking a sense of hope and resilience in readers.

"The Lotus" also encapsulates the Indian reverence for nature and its intrinsic connection to spirituality. Dutt portrays the lotus as a mirror to the heavens, emphasizing its ability to reflect the magnificence and serenity of the divine realm. This connection between nature and spirituality is deeply ingrained in Indian culture, where the natural world is seen as an extension of the divine. By showcasing the lotus as a translucent, magical entity, Dutt asserts that nature holds the key to unlocking our spiritual potential.

In conclusion, Toru Dutt's poem, "The Lotus," stands as a testament to her achievement in presenting the Indian attitude to life and culture. Through the symbolism of the lotus, Dutt effectively captures themes of spirituality, transformation, and the cyclical nature of existence. Her poignant portrayal of the lotus as a sacred flower reflects the Indian belief in purity, detachment, and the ability to find beauty amidst adversity. Furthermore, Dutt's depiction of the lotus serving as a mirror to the heavens reflects the Indian reverence for nature and its integral role in spiritual enlightenment. Ultimately, her masterful use of the lotus as a central symbol in the poem showcases Dutt's ability to encapsulate the essence of Indian philosophy and spirituality in her literary works.

SRI AUROBINDO - THE TIGER AND THE DEER

Text:

Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart of the forest,
Gleaming eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of grandeur and murder?
The wind slipped through the leaves as if afraid lest its voice and the noise of its steps perturb
the pitiless Splendour,
Hardly daring to breathe. But the great beast crouched and crept, and crept and crouched a

last time, noiseless, fatal,

Till suddenly death leaped on the beautiful wild deer as it drank

Unsuspecting at the great pool in the forest's coolness and shadow,

And it fell and, torn, died remembering its mate left sole in the deep woodland,—

Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in Nature.

But a day may yet come when the tiger crouches and leaps no more in the dangerous heart of the forest,

As the mammoth shakes no more the plains of Asia;

Still then shall the beautiful wild deer drink from the coolness of great pools in the leaves' shadow.

The mighty perish in their might;

The slain survive the slayer.

Introduction:

Sri Aurobindo is one of the supreme masters in Indian English Literature. His poetry may be divided into two broad groups, i.e., poetry of action and poetry of meditation. He is not only a poet but also a philosopher, short story writer and dramatist. He gives charming descriptions of nature in his writings. Savitri is the epic written by Aurobindo. It marks the culmination of his poetic career. Aurobindo's short poem 'The Tiger and the Deer' is a didactic poem. It is a contrast between good and evil, innocence and experience, and life and death. The poem expresses the poet's longing for a peaceful and harmless world.

The Mighty Tiger:

The poem begins with a description of the tiger. The tiger crouches and slouches brilliantly through the green forest. It has gleaming eyes, mighty chest and soft soundless paws. The brilliant character is creeping and moving forward slowly in the bushes of the woods. His eyes are shining and he has a muscular body. His paws are not making any sound. His actions show that he is going to do something evil. He looks like a murderer.

"Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept
through the green heart of the forest,"

Generally, people are afraid of the tiger. They hate it because it is rough and dangerous. In the poem, the world of tiger stands for death, darkness and arrogance.

The Innocent Deer:

The innocent deer drinks water from the great pool in the forest. It is unaware of the tiger's plan of attack. The tiger crouches slowly to attack the deer:

"..... the great beast crouched and crept, and crept
and crouched a last time, noiseless, fatal".

The wind is moving slowly from the leaves. It seems like it is afraid that any noise can disturb the pitiless and proud tiger. The Tiger is hardly breathing. But for the last time he moved slowly and soundlessly. This last step was fatal. The Tiger attacked on the beautiful deer who was drinking water from a pond and enjoying the shadow in the forest. He was unaware of this fatal attack and the pitiless tiger killed him. He was only remembering his companion who is left behind in the forest alone while dying. The tiger has destroyed the mild and harmless beauty of nature in few minutes. Then the fierce tiger has leaped up over the deer and torn it to pieces. The deer died pathetically thinking about its mate.

"Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by
the strong cruel beauty in Nature"

The Justification:

The deer in the poem suggests innocence, softness and love. The killing of the deer by the tiger suggests the death and destruction of healthy values of life by the cruelty of modern civilization. The poet closes the poem with a note of optimism. He says that in spite of the various blows of death and darkness, life is a thing to be enjoyed. Sufferings are not eternal. He teaches the lesson that those who harm others will be destroyed like the mammoth. The mammoth shook the plains of Asia once upon a time. But it is extinct now. Since the tiger kills and harms other animals, the same fate of mammoth would come to it. But then the deer would drink without any fear in the cool ponds of the forest. The poet beautifully tells, "The mighty perish in their might The slain survive the slayer".

SAROJINI NAIDU - THE VILLAGE SONG

Text:

Full are my pitchers and far to carry,
Lone is the way and long,
Why, O why was I tempted to tarry
Lured by the boatmen's song?
Swiftly the shadows of night are falling,
Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling,
Is it the wild owl's cry?
There are no tender moonbeams to light me,
If in the darkness a serpent should bite me,
Or if an evil spirit should smite me,
Rām re Rām! I shall die.
My brother will murmur "Why doth she linger?"
My mother will wait and weep,
Saying, "O safe may the great gods bring her,
The Jamuna's waters are deep." . . .

Introduction:

Sarojini Naidu is known as the Nightingale of India. She was one of the greatest poets, short story writers, freedom fighters, and social activists. She has earned a respectable place in the English language and literature. She received many awards for her work. Sarojini was so good at poetry, that the reason she started getting called The Nightingale of India or Bharat Kokila by Mahatma Gandhi. Her poetry imagery, color, and lyrical quality were so amazing. Her famous poem collection included – The Golden Threshold, The Temple, The Birds of Time, Awake, Indian Weavers, and The Feather Of The Down.

"Village Song" is a traditional folk song from Sarojini Naidu's second collection of poems, "The Bird of Time". The rustic environment reflects the daily ritual of Indian village

women fetching their daily pitcher of water from a great distance. The rural girl in the poem has returned home after filling her pitchers with water from the Yamuna River.

Fear and anxiety of the rustic girl

The poem is about the traditional village way of life, as well as the young girl's attachment to her family and how the darker surroundings creates anxiety in her thoughts. The speaker of the poem a little rural girl who has gone to gather water from a river that is far away from her house. There are numerous regions in India where people do not have access to running water and must go long distances to gather water from wells, rivers, ponds, or other bodies of water. It is a duty usually performed by women of the house, in which they bring pitchers or vessels full of water to meet the household's water needs. The poet describes a circumstance in which a girl goes to gather water from a river.

The path to her house is lonely, and she feels fearful as darkness closes in. She regrets succumbing to the lure of invisible things. She is waiting to listen to the boatman's mesmerising song. The white crane's hooting frightens her and fools her into believing it is the owl hooting. Without moonlight to guide her, she is fearful of being stung by a serpent. Born and raised in a rural Indian hamlet where folk beliefs are prevalent, she thinks that malevolent spirits roaming the area will cast wicked charms on her, causing her death. The darker surroundings create anxiety in her thoughts.

The girl explains that she is bringing pitchers of water and has not yet reached her home. She must walk a considerable distance carrying the pitchers of water to her home. Then she explains why she was late: she got distracted by the boatman's music and slowed down.

“Swiftly the shadows of night are falling,
Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling,
Is it the wild owl's cry?”

It is nearly nightfall, the sky is darkening rapidly, and the girl is becoming afraid due to the sound of the birds surrounding her. Additionally, the road she took is not clean or straight; it passes through a jungle.

The girl's belief in chanting Rama's name

As the poem refers to twilight, it is becoming darker and the moonlight is not visible at that time. According to the girl, the soft moonbeam may provide her with respite from the fear she is experiencing. The girl's route is not straight and clean, and she is fearful of being bitten by a snake or being haunted by evil spirits. In this condition of dread, she assumes the name of God Rama in order to be delivered from her torment. Additionally, many Indian traditions believe that chanting God Rama's name keeps evil away from people, and it is possible that the girl is taking Rama's name in order to ward off such harmful forces.

Worry about her family

The second stanza demonstrates a shift in the speaker's thought process, as she now imagines her brother and mother's reaction. She becomes agitated as she recalls her brother and mother. She imagines her brother will express concern about her tardiness. On the other hand, her mother will wait and mourn, fearful that something awful has happened to her daughter, as the Jamuna River's water is deep and swift. She would pray to God to guide her daughter safely home, as the rapid and deep waters of the Jamuna river and the dense

shadows that had gathered in the dusk like blackbirds in the sky are obstructions to her daughter's route.

“O! if the storm breaks, what will betide me?
Safe from the lightning where shall I hide me?
Unless Thou succour my footsteps and guide me,
Ram re Ram! I shall die.”

Her mind returns to her own fearful ideas. She sobs as she considers what would happen to her if a storm strikes. Or, if the lighting begins, where should she seek refuge? Her fear grows as she considers these things. She repeatedly invokes her god, pleading with him to guard her footsteps and guide her safely home.

SHIV K KUMAR - INDIAN WOMEN

Text:

In this triple-baked continent
women don't etch angry eyebrows
on mud walls.
Patiently they sit
like empty pitchers
on the mouth of the village well
pleating hope in each braid of their Mississippi-long hair
looking deep into the water's mirror
for the moisture in their eyes.
With zodiac doodlings on the sands
they guard their tattooed thighs
Waiting for their men's return
till even the shadows
roll up their contours and are gone beyond the hills.

Introduction:

The poem “Indian Women” by Shiv K Kumar deals with endless story of sufferings of Indian women. The patriarchal society evolved in India through its long history of political and historical upheavals. In it, women are the most oppressed and exploited. In such distressed conditions, the Indian women practice their infinite patience in their lives while they go through triple-baked sufferings at the hands of the sun, sex and poverty. The harsh sun makes them to trek long distances to fetch water. In this process, the women are baked like a pitcher in the hot sun. The women are the worst sufferers from the excruciating poverty of her family.

Plight of Indian women

The Indian women do not etch their angry brows on the mud walls. Their status remains so insignificant within their home. Their emotions are completely neglected. Within the mud walls of their homes, they are the passive receivers of male love and anger without

their participation. “Mud walls” indicate the existing poverty, a condition which does not affect the women alone but all members of the household.

“looking deep into the water’s mirror
for the moisture in their eyes.”

This beautiful image evokes the typical Indian village woman who spends much of her time like an empty pitcher in the mouth of the village well. It is the duty of the woman to fetch the required amount of water for the domestic purpose by trekking long distance. She sits on the mouth of the village well like an empty pitcher waiting for her turn to collect water from the well. But, the water is just trickle and is not so deep to read her reflection with tears in her eyes. Even in this hopeless distress, they plead hope in each braid of their Mississippi-long hair.

“Guarding their tattooed thighs
waiting for their men’s return
till even the shadows
roll up their contours and are gone beyond the hills.”

‘Tattooed thighs of women’ refers probably the names their men (hubands) are tattooed to indicate the ownership of their femininity. The female has only the duty to preserve her chastity of her femaleness by guarding her thighs against possible intruders. The guarding of her chastity is done not for herself but for the man whose name is tattooed on her thighs. She waits for her man’s return who has gone beyond the hills. It is now dusk and all the women have already left the well for their homes. The shadows have vanished and the Sun has sunk beneath hills. But, the woman is still waiting for the return of her spouse. Hence, Patience is the virtue for the most cherished women in India.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE – MUKHTHADHARA

Introduction:

“Muktadhara” (The Waterfall), written in 1922, is widely acclaimed as one of Tagore's finest dramatic work. The symbolic play has been interpreted as Tagore's nationalist critique of colonial exploitation. Many believe the play also indicates Tagore’s admiration for Gandhi and his rejection of the machine in favour of humanism. The character of Dhananjoy Boiragi has been seen as a reference to Gandhi's non-violent spirit. Many suggest that the play is far more complex, and deals with Tagore's interactions with science and the concept of nation.

Chitrakoot, ruled by the despotic King Ranajit, is dependent for its financial might on Shibtarai. Ranajit attempts to control it by denying the Shibtarai water. He builds a dam across the waterfall Mukthadhara. The play chronicles the hostilities between the denizens of the two states and the non-violent resistance to Ranajit by the enigmatic singer-sage, Dhananjoy Boiragi. Lurking in the background is the mammoth machine built by the royal engineer Bibhuti. The heir to the throne, Abhijit, nurtures a deep attachment with the free flowing Muktadhara. His love for the waterfall and his refusal to allow the King to exploit the people of Shibtarai prompts him to demolish the dam. The force of the waterfall is let loose and in the process Abhijit too is swept away.

The Water Fall, published in 1922 with its Bengali original Muktadhara. The insatiable craving of capitalist industrialization and imperialism had been temporarily diminished by the First World War. The war had deeply distressed the poet and the contradiction of what he called the Machine-Civilization was stark. Muktadhara, thus even being a Tagore play with its symbolic elements and allegories in it, is much more concrete in its set-up. With a proper background of the incidents and the incidents placed in a proper geometry of incidents, Muktadhara, somehow releases Tagore from his poetic dialogue to a more prose world, a world of incidents and actions.

King's plan to build dam

'Muktadhara' (meaning free stream in Bengali) is a Waterfall in fictional Uttarkut, ruled by an autocratic king, Ranajit. The waterfall flows from Uttarkut to an adjoining valley 'Shiv Terai'. The people of 'Shiv Terai' lead their lives with the river. The tyrant king wants to bring 'Shiv Terai' under his control and decides to vanquish the people by damming the waterfall thus denying them water. So, the King employs the royal engineer Bibuti to go as to build a great dam to prevent the water reaching the plains below. When the people of 'Shiv Terai' are informed about getting jobs, they welcome the idea of building the dam and celebrate in honour of the machine along with Bibuti. They realise their mistakes when the water is stopped from the mountain. The prince, Abhijit, learns that he was discovered by the side of the waterfall and adopted by the king. His love for the waterfall and sympathy for the people lead him to stop the King. He demolishes the machine and makes the waterfall free. In the process the prince is swept away with his mother 'Muktadhara'. By giving freedom to the waterfall, Abhijit releases the people of Shiv-Terai also to a new dawn.

Significance of Names

The play has significant names of the places, of the characters, attached with the Hindu mythology of India. Shiva being the god of both creation and destruction becomes an important figure in this play. Firstly with the temple of Bhairav, who destroys all evils. The devotees describe him as a Lord of Terror, as a Wrecker of Wrath and a Conqueror of Evil. Bhairav represents within his body the eternal peace of Shiva, his spirit of renunciation and simultaneously reminds us of the destructive powers. Then the place Shiv-tarai becomes important, as ruled by the rulers of Uttarakut, tarai is a place which means it is situated in the foothills of a mountain. Therefore it suddenly reminds of the geographic location of India and then remains the name of the character. 'Ran' in Bengali refers to war, an autocratic king who won wars, is termed as 'Ranajit', and 'Bibhuti' means a state of mind or salvation which is arrived through celibacy. Therefore the autocratic king and the inhuman scientist attached with the making of the dam, reveals the underlining imperial grab in India, where there is a resolution comes from a person named 'Abhijit', relating to the Vedantic idea of 'fearless' and thus dissociated from the heritable background of Ranajit. Thus Muktadhara, layered in the mythological attributes with the purpose of exposing the reality, engages with symbols in different planes.

Character of Dhananjaya

Tagore's engagement with the machine and the practices it generated was deep and philosophical. The play *Muktadhara* in Tagore's own words "is a representation of a concrete psychology" which is explained further in a letter to Kalidas Nag that outlined the play's treatment of this issue. Tagore wrote: "The machine is an important part of the play. This machine has injured the spirit of life and it is with this spirit that Abhijit has destroyed the machine, not with another machine." Dhananjaya, a character of Tagorean dramatic attributes, who sings and who empathises with Abhijit, on the other hand, represents the humanity which is being oppressed by the machine and his message clearly is that, "I will triumph because I will not allow the machine and its injuries to overcome my inner spirit" Finally, the play in its innate symbols reveals Tagore's idea of Nation. As in many critiques of the play the urbanisation and modernisation during the imperial era was debated in Gandhian contour of rural upliftment. Tagore has a more profound symbol for Dhananjaya as revealed in the play. Dhananjaya, has the ascetic qualities in a humane manner, his devotion is towards the betterment of the men, placed in the contrast of Bibhuti, another devotee, who doesn't have the 'humane' nature in the process of devotion. Thus *Muktadhara*, while being a play with the elements of on-going political ailments in the colonies, has the literary outreach as a drama even more. The grasp of imperialism whenever tracks back and ruin the society of 'have nots', it reminds the lines of Abhijit said to Prince Sanjay, "You will not fully understand it. For how are you to know that my life is a stream which must have its free course over the stones of the king's house. Every man has the mystery of his inner life somewhere written in the outer world. The secret of my own life has its symbol in that waterfall of *Muktadhara*. When I saw its movements shackled I received a shock at the very root of my being".

HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA – SIDDHARTHA-MAN OF PEACE

Introduction:

Harindrath Chattopadhyaya is known as a poet, a playwright, a musician a philosopher a painter and an actor. He has a versatile personality. His plays like 'The Window', 'The Sentry's Lantern', 'Siddhartha - Man of Peace' have been read as social plays which make us think over various social follies.

Chattopadhyaya gives his message of love and peace through his powerful historical play *Siddhartha-Man of Peace* to the present world which is filled with war, hatred, selfishness and tension. Chattopadhyaya judiciously chose the life of Siddhartha for a message to the modern world so that it may rise above narrow loyalties of caste, colour, language, religion, and other differences. He believed that no man could live in peace in this temporary physical world. The Buddha is worshipped for his practical way of life.

Lord Buddha's life his principles, his teachings are really relevant of time when humanity is form with foolishness of man and his distractive inventions. He propagated the idea hostility cannot end hostility.

Chattopadhyaya wrote *Siddhartha-Man of Peace* after destructive Second World War which resulted in another cold war between the two super powers. The playwright

was inspired by the lofty ideas and philosophy of J.L. Nehru who devoted his life of peace and happiness for entire humanity i.e. why he dedicated his play *Siddhartha-Man of Peace* to Nehru.

Dev Datta and Siddhartha with different principles

In the play Chattopadhyaya presents the incidents from the life of Prince Siddhartha. It starts with royal house of Suddodhana, Buddha's father and the King of Kapilvastu and his queen Mayadevi who is blessed with a son on Purnima. After watching the shining face of his son the King became certain that his son would be a generous and kind King. So he established cordial ties with other states. Act II deals with the expectations of the glory of Siddhartha and his achievements as a King. Saint like Buddha becomes a rival for the boastful Dev Dutta and his servants in court. He is taught the true dharma of a Kshatriya. He is told that it is dharma of a Kshatriya to kill big animals or fight in the war. But Siddhartha rejects this idea of violence by saying:

“No, No! Dev Dutta! he is not a warrior who intrigues against others; he is not a warrior whose blood craves for the blood of others..... The true warrior is tender and compassionate; he is brimful of love and understanding; true marks of heroism.

Therefore, understand Dev Dutta; that killing is not the sign of warrior hood; but on the otherhand, saving.”

Suddodhana's worry

These principles of Siddhartha also disturb the King. He tries his best to involve the young prince into secular affairs. But Siddhartha's cold resignation to life gives a deep shock to King. Dev Dutta tells the King: “He sits, the very image of God.... / We are men, / We live, we love, we dream of war, we build, Ambitious Fortunes, not waste our lives away / In False ascetic dreaming.’

Suddodhana expected his son to extend the boundaries of his kingdom and increase wealth and happiness. But Siddhartha's future plans steal the sleep from his father's eyes.

Siddhartha's life with Yashodara

Act III portrays the tension and disturbance in the royal family. Act IV starts with a verbal conflict between the King and the Prince. In spite of his various attempts to draw the interest of his son in this physical world he has to face failure. At last he makes the last attempt by getting his son married to a beautiful maiden Yashodara, the King of Dandapani. But after sometime Yashodara comes to know that she may lose her prince. She reveals her heart to prince:

“Your heart is clouded Prince. That cloud shall pass. No stone shall be left unturned to gladden your life... Your life shall find complete fulfillment.”

Siddhartha tries to convince her that one who serves humanity is greater than others and serving is also true dharma of a Kshatriya.

Acquaintance with Channa

The Prince who grows up in riches and royalty does not know the meaning of sorrow and miseries. He has not seen grief and suffering of man. Channa, his charioteer makes him acquainted with the harsh realities of life. The Prince gradually learns that this material world which is a house of misery is infested with pride, lust, selfishness and ignorance. So he deeply feels that peace in life must be the main objective of man.

He abandons the sensual pleasure and material life.

Suddodhana's attempt

The king tries to change the mind of his son:

'What suffering that makes you decide to leave us and go away. Are you thinking of going to a forest? And do you think you can find peace there? If the forest could yield peace, then tigers and panthers would have found it long ago. You are mad, raving mad...!'

The King also tries to convince him by saying that God has created life and its disparities and not man. But the Prince who has already recommended his escape from physical and temporary world tells his future plans to his father: "I want the world to be freed of all suffering....." This particular plan has lofty aims which need great responsibility.

Lastly the king tries to arouse his sense of duty towards his pregnant wife and coming child but fails in his attempt.

Siddhartha leaves home

Siddhartha decides to renounce the world and to seek peace and truth. Channa his charioteer and his horse Kanthak also accompany him in his mission. He wanders from place to place in search of truth and peace. On a full moon day, he sits under a Bo-tree. Maya, the God of love and His sons Desire, Discontent, Thirst, Caprice and Gaiety try to assail him but he remains unaffected.

Monk Gautam becomes famous and a host of heretics try to trap and defame him. He is charged with the murder of a Sundari. But Siddhartha brings the real culprit to book and he is proved innocent publicly. His return is celebrated in chorus: "He has come back with his banner of peace unfurled. Not prince of an earthly kingdom but lord of the world".

Siddhartha, the monk is accepted

After some days, Siddhartha meets his wife, son Rahul and parents. They readily embrace the gospel of peace. Siddhartha wants to reach the suffering humanity. He sends his disciples to distant lands to spread his message of peace:

"And peace shall only come when it has attained enlightenment after conquering wrong desires, great, hatred and lust; and then no man shall exploit another and equality shall reign in the world. Equality and understanding and Peace. Peace! Peace! Peace!"

Chattopadhyaya The writer finds out remedy for the torn humanity in the ideals of the Buddha.

NISSIM EZEIKEL – "NALINI: A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS" FROM *THREE PLAYS*

Introduction:

Nissim Ezekiel – poet, playwright and art critic – ranks for most in contemporary Indo – Anglian poetry and among the very best in post – Independence Indo – Anglian literature. His output has been quite significant and of almost consistently high quality from the point of view of craftsmanship as well as subject matter. He is the writer looking at literature in relation to society.

Nalini: A Comedy in Three Acts is the only full length play among the six plays of Nissim Ezekiel. It is based on the playwright's personal experience and observations. Ezekiel has worked as an art critic of "Time of India" and also as a manager in Shipli Advertising. He was familiar with art exhibitions of painters like Nalini and the fake world of business executives. He has subtitled *Nalini as a comedy* with reveals hollow life of business executives. But it is more a tragedy of human life which is successfully portrayed through the characters Bharat and Raj.

Nalini is considered the most ambitious and full – length play exposing the hollowness and pretensions of contemporary society by its realistic portrayal of life. There are only three characters in the play, quite differenced in approach and action moving between reality and fantasy. The entire action is woven around one central figure Nalini. The play moves from reality to fantasy and again to reality.

Bharat's Stillness:

The play opens humorously and ironically. Bharat is listening to music, gets disturbed by the entrance of Raj. Bharat's sitting still shows the idleness in his life. He quotes Pascal's theory and says the sum of evil in the world will diminish if men could only learn to sit quietly in their rooms. So, he is busy, diminishing the sum of evil in the world. A very trivial situation is interpreted seriously. We find the juxtaposition of opposites: action and inaction which creates the humour.

Nalini's painting becomes the subject of discussion between Bharat and Raj. In the second act, Bharat's encounter with two Nalinis – one in fantasy and the other in reality – is presented. The third act brings back Bharat and Raj to their own life – style. Thus, the play ends where it began. The play exposes man's interest in "shadow rather than in substance". The very opening dialogue between Raj and Bharat establishes the kind of relationship between them.

Bharat and Raj, the business executives are portrayed as skilled players of the game of deceit. Nalini, young woman painter, wants an exhibition of her paintings. Bharat and Raj are advertising executives. Nalini approaches Bharat asking for his help to organize publicity for her paintings. Bharat too agrees to help as he has more contacts with the journalists and especially "contacts in the right places". But Bharat is totally ignorant of art. He cheats people by manipulating words. The hollowness and insincerity of his life is revealed in his encounter with Nalini. Nalini rejects his help.

Raj, who has no idea about the art of painting, is interested in the exhibition of Nalini's paintings. When Bharat asks him whether the paintings are worth exhibiting, he replies: "Does it matter? They are paintings, canvases with colour on them, plenty of colours in various forms."

Nalini is a social satire on the executives like Bharat and Raj. They are modern but hollow inside and full of vanity. Nalini exposes him by pulling his mask. She does not fall prey to the magical words of Bharat. She exposes Bharat's two lives- the outward and the inward.

Bharat expects Nalini to fulfil his sensual desires. She lets herself to be seduced by him. It is only the illusion of Nalini. But the dream gets shattered when he encounters the real Nalini. The real Nalini is an intelligent woman but not as attractive as in the dream of Bharat.

Raj is also struggling with alienation. It is seen through his dialogue: "I have eyes and I can see, I have ears and I can hear. Though I do nothing about it, I feel everything."

Reason for Raj's Alienation

Raj's helplessness is not fixed. He feels that he could get rid of his passivity. He narrates his first love affair when he was just thirteen years old. He describes his early experiences in a school hostel where he used to go to meet Sally. He climbed over a glass-covered wall and fell. His bleeding knees were being licked by her. But they never met in future. The sadness is abiding on him and he continues to live in isolation. His failure to communicate continues right from his childhood.

Nalini – a dream or a reality:

Raj and Bharat both encounter the first Nalini which is visualized by them. She is just a female for them; a dreamt woman. They praise her unnaturally. When Bharat compliments Nalini as, "you are not a virgin". She slaps him. Now the first Nalini disappears and the bell rings for second Nalini. But she does not appear. The bell continues to ring loudly like a roar.

Nalini is a dream as well as a reality. She is the main focus of the dramatist. Nalini and Bharat are put in contrast to each other so as to reveal the difference between the genuine and the fake. Bharat imposes himself upon her even after he is fully exposed. Raj is revealed as a romantic, lonely, agonized, shaky and non-conformist gentleman. He lives in the present. But, the hangover of his adolescent experience with Sally makes him fully nostalgic. Bharat cannot gainfully do any other work, except becoming a promoter of art. He fails to be one of those living on the soil of the earth. He belongs to an ivory tower of social prestige, a circumstance that is not exactly enviable for the aloofness it imposes.
